UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

"Women's Work": Feminization and Media Production

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Satisfaction of the Requirements for the Degree

of Doctor in Philosophy

In Film and Television

by

Erin Truesdell Hill

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
"Women's Work": Feminization and Media Production

By
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This dissertation examines historically feminized professions in the American film industry, such as casting, script supervision and secretarial or assistant positions –work that remains female-dominated or feminized across gender today. To account for the continued existence of these gendered sectors of labor and illuminate the place of feminized labor in the industrial logic of media production, the dissertation locates the origins of industrial notions of "women's work" in the sex segregation practices which developed at the early studios of the 1910s and 20s. The dissertation then follows this logic of feminization, as well as the work sectors that grew up around it, through the 1930s and 40s, by which time "women's work" and feminized labor had become absolutely essential to the functioning of major U.S. studios' large-scale operations in the classical era. In this way, the study reveals how the industry's early practices of sex segregation and feminization continue to impact the industry today, half a century after the end of the studio system, when legal-political reforms have supposedly barred gender-based discrimination in American workplaces.

The project's thesis posits that the professions were feminized due to their work's roots in clerical or other traditionally feminized sectors, and developed additional gendered practices as women fit themselves to the work assigned to of them through culturally acceptable gender

performance in order to succeed, acquire additional responsibility, and in some cases expand their creative agency. As such, women's professions and workplace identities within media production culture were, in effect, co-constructed by the female media worker and the system, a negotiation between the worker's agency and that of the forces that acted upon her.

The research integrates a primarily archival methodology with conceptual tools from gender and media production studies. The project is grounded in an examination of the cultural and industrial causes of the feminization of certain types of film labor. It accounts for feminization and its effects through of both public and studio discourse around women's labor, and the statements of the workers themselves. As such, primary research materials include "official" studio accounts in the form of personnel records, production documents, trade and fan publications, studio newsletters, oral histories, memoirs and other private writings of female film workers, and cultural representations of the time. This top-down/bottom-up triangulation attempts to address historiographic concerns presented by subject matter that has largely been marginalized into the footnotes of other Hollywood histories of "great men" and great texts.

In this way, the study answers the following central questions: How did certain types of film work become feminized in the Hollywood studio system?; What did that feminization entail?; How did female workers negotiate imposed, gender-based limitations?; How did feminization reshape film production jobs?; Finally, why are these jobs still feminized? In considering these questions, the dissertation bridges the fields of feminist film history and contemporary feminist production studies. It also lays the groundwork for further study of gender in the contemporary film and television industry.

The dissertation of Erin Truesdel Hill is approved.

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2013

DEDICATION PAGE

For the Studio Girls.

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PREFACE

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I. Introduction:
Film History's "Invisible" Women

Few women writers seemed willing to undertake the research necessary to uncover the facts concerning women directors before the coming of sound. It was far easier to protest about discrimination against women than to accept that there were more women directors at work in the American film industry prior to 1920 than during any period of its history. It would almost seem that women's rightful place was in the home, cooking and bringing up children, rather than researching film history….During the silent era, women might be said to have virtually controlled the film industry. The stars were all women….and many stars, such as Mary Pickford, Conrinne Griffith, or Mabel Normand, but also relatively minor actresses like Leah Baird, Helen Gardner, Alla Nazimova and Olga Petrova boasted their own producing organizations. Certainly such companies might be managed by men, but if, say, Gloria Swanson chose Joseph P. Kennedy to manager her company, that in no way distracts from Ms. Swanson's integrity or power.

-Anthony Slide, Film Historian, 1977[1]

Some women became executives. In 1919 Mary Pickford—along with Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and D.W. Griffith—cofounded United Artists….Some women excelled in what became known as the "female professions," such as script continuity, makeup, and costumes (even though throughout the years there have been many males in these jobs).

-Linda Seger, Script Consultant/Author, 1996[2]

Feminists or not, most women working in film or television were secretaries, script supervisors and publicists. Only a few were editors, like Dede Allen and Verna Fields; only a few were agents, like Sue Mengers. Though women had produced, direct, written and acted in movies since 1910, by 1973 women did not make movies. They acted in them. Major female films tars did not have their own production companies. Women were not heads of networks. They did not run studios. From the 1920s to the 1970s, only a handful produced films. Almost no women directed, they did not run cameras or sound, they did not carry equipment or shout into walkie-talkies. No one said women couldn't do these things. It was assumed. It was the way things were.

-Mollie Gregory, Writer/Producer, Author, 2002[3]

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[1] Anthony Slide, *Early Women Directors* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1977), 9.
[2] Linda Seger, *When Women Call the Shots: The Developing Power and Influence of Women in Television and Film* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 10.

Project Origins

In 2004 I left a job in media production to study the industry's history. Yet, as early as my first quarter as a graduate student, I found my thoughts returning to my own workplace experiences, and what I perceived as gendered sectors within media production.[4] Where had they come from? If they were relics of the past, why did they still exist in an industry that, outwardly at least, strove to be socially progressive and politically correct? My first foray into the UCLA libraries to research the history of casting, a field I'd experienced first-hand as feminized, yielded just a few entries in collections of film industry interviews from the 1950s and 60s, and one scholarly article from the 1970s describing the casting process. Scholarly works on women in film production tended to be grouped around the turn of the 20th century –the early years of the industry when many reached positions of power as directors, producers and executives— but trailed off around the mid-1920s, when women began to be excluded from key creative fields and thus, it seemed implied, from production in general. There was a similar dearth material written for and by media professionals, outside of books about "great" women in film's key creative, above-the-line professions of writing and directing. These books' historical discussions tended to invoke women's past exclusion from production in order to

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[3] Mollie Gregory, *Women Who Run the Show How a Brilliant and Creative New Generation of Women Stormed Hollywood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 3.

[4] In referring to gender in general, or characterizing a field as gendered I refer to the social construction of gender, as opposed to sexual difference. So while the word sex on its own refers to the specific biological differences between men and women, traits or behaviors that are discussed as feminized, feminine or womanly and masculinized, masculine or manly refer to gender as co-constructed by individuals and their society through essentialist notions of characteristics that women or men inherently possess as defined by a society and enforced by its members and through its cultures. A few other terms will be useful further characterizing the social constructions around gender in general, and feminized labor in specific.

highlight their relative inclusion in the present, where they had successfully "broken in" to masculinized media professions. Neither academy nor industry histories contained much information about what role, if any, women played outside of those key fields or during the 60 or so years in between these two ostensibly "good" periods at the beginning and end of media history, or how any such history impacted women's experience of production today. In fact, outside of meditations on the problem of men's domination of above-the-line creative fields, there was little discussion at all of how women's history and women's present might inform one another. My experience as a female media worker had been far too complex to be reduced to the binaries of inclusion versus exclusion and present versus past. I doubted I was alone. And thus began my research in earnest.

Brief Description

Feminized labor[5] plays an important role in contemporary American media production. Certain jobs, such as script supervision, casting and publicity, are understood within the *U.S. media industry,*[6] as "women's work," and carried out by a

[5]Referred to interchangeably throughout this work with "women's labor." This term indicates a profession that has come to be associated primarily women through historical female-domination and/or feminization. More discussion of key contemporary feminized fields outside of the media industry in: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Future of Female-Dominated Occupations* (Paris: OECD, 1998).

[6]As John Caldwell points out in "Para-Industry: Researching Hollywood's Blackwaters," the media industry is chaotic and messy, and the industry researcher must resist the temptation to harden or tidy up its boundaries. For this reason, a few qualifications must be added here to explain what might seem to be simple or even simplistic terms such as this. Though digital technology, globalization and other prominent features of recent history have blurred geographic boundaries, made possible the shifting of space/time, and put tools in production in the hands of many independents and outsiders, for my purposes here, the continental United States and specifically Los Angeles and environs can still be considered the center of production for the major studios, networks and production companies with which the work is concerned. The words "American" and "U.S." are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation when referring to the country's media industry. After 1948, the industry's practices began to include television production. These media are perhaps distinct in the mind of the viewer, and were initially separated by a more solid professional boundary in terms of their key personnel. However, for most media workers and for many of the last 50 years, it was not unusual to move fluidly between film and single-camera television productions in accordance with models of freelance, flexible

predominantly female workforce.[7] Other sectors, such as film and television development or the work of assistants to directors, producers, writers and executives, are feminized across gender in that they retain feminine associations and characteristics linking them to past incarnations as women's work.[8] That many "women's fields" in media production were gendered as long as a century ago partially explains their gendered roots, but not their continued existence as feminized today. Nor does this explanation, on its own, speak to the ways in which feminized labor informs contemporary industrial practice or the products the media industry produces. It is only through tracing the path of these professions' feminization, from their origins in early film industry to their present state, that a clearer picture of these gendered sectors emerges. Such investigation is especially important in light of the fact that the feminization of some fields likely contributes to the continued male domination of others, since even official industrial sources state that occupational segregation typically "excludes women from occupations

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production. Outside of live, multi-camera television, with its slightly separate practices and larger share of East Coast productions, work systems are nearly identical for single-camera television and film, and the increased prestige of television in the last several decades has attracted A-list above-the-line talent to the small screen, further blurring the perceived boundary between the two. Though scholars are careful to distinguish between the two, often media professionals themselves are not. As such, references to the film industry and its movie workers will in later chapters be replaced by references to the *media* or *entertainment industry* and *media workers*. John Caldwell, "Para-Industry: Researching Hollywood's Blackwaters," *Cinema Journal* v.52.3 (Spring 2013), 157.

[7] Neither the 399 teamsters nor the Casting Society of America, of which most casting directors are members, collect gender data from members, but as of March 2012, the C.S.A. directory, cross-referenced with lists 131 male members (15 casting associates and 116 casting directors), –ambiguous names were verified against IMDB.com listings and casting company websites and 390 female members (42 casting associates and 348 casting directors), which translates to 74.8%. This figure includes a small number of overseas casting directors, and excludes the reportedly small number of casting directors unaffiliated with the CSA, nor does it include commercial casting directors, reality casting producers, and casting agents, which function as completely separate, distinct professions from that of casting director. *Casting Society of America,* "Find a Member Page," http://www.castingsociety.com/.

[8] The connection between women and certain "women's" jobs is often so strong that, even after gender integration, the profession is still assigned to or associated with women over men. Workers frequently describe these jobs as reliant on qualities traditionally associated with women.

associated with the greatest prestige and power and highest incomes."[9] Even in occupations considered to be of some status in production, such as casting, segregation may have this effect by ascribing some (but not other) skills, strengths and talents to female workers based on gender, implicitly excluding them from roles whose core characteristics fall outside that skill set.

This dissertation examines role of gender in film and television production through the study of jobs that began to be assigned to women in the early years of the studio system, beginning in the late 1910s, and that were, by and large, carried out by women throughout the studio era under tacit (and sometimes explicit) policies of *sex segregation*.[10] This is a study of female *movie workers*,[11] a term devised by Leo Rosten in his own study of Hollywood to describe the "anonymous people who swarm over the sound stages, the lots and the offices wherever pictures are fabricated," and who lead ordinary lives away from "the Hollywood which is the symbol of great affluence and allure." As with Rosten's movie workers, the female movie workers discussed throughout this dissertation lived and worked in Hollywood, but were not "of Hollywood," in that they weren't part of its circles of power (though many of them, particularly studio secretaries, worked closer to those

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[9] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Future of Female-Dominated Occupations* (Paris: OECD, 1998), 9.

[10] Here, sex segregation will refer to the demarcation of certain jobs, duties or spaces as strictly male or female ones, while "female domination" will refer to the specific gender makeup of a job or field, and feminization (used interchangeably with "gendering" or becoming "gendered-female") will refer to the process by which that field shifted toward a focus on/association with/job prerequisite of certain womanly/feminine/female characteristics. This distinction will come in handy when discussing workers such as studio secretaries in the Hollywood film and television industry, since the field was both female-dominated and feminized early on, but has recently begun to verge on total gender-integration, so that even though I argue that it is still feminized across gender, it can no longer be considered female-dominated.

[11] The term "female movie workers" is used throughout the dissertation to describe women who worked at film studios or production companies. However, just as it will be important to distinguish between female movie workers and their male counterparts, it is important to distinguish these female movie workers, the subject of my study, from women who I would characterize as "female movie makers."
Leo Rosten, *The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 32.

circles than any other movie workers). I use the term here (along with its present-day equivalent, media makers) to do the same, and to distinguish the women who worked "below-the-line"[12] at studios, from the *movie makers* (female and male directors, producers, writers and stars),[13] "who are powerful creative forces in Hollywood."[14] It focuses on the predominantly female ranks of clerical workers that rose up at these studios in the 1910's and 20's, the women's film professions that grew out of those feminized sectors during the big studio era of the 1930s and 40s, and those women's jobs which have subsequently feminized in post-studio Hollywood under the same, outdated logic. Understanding this sub-group "women's work" professions in media production provides a clearer sense of the industrial

[12] The terms *above-the-line* and *below-the-line*, used to distinguish these creatively important roles in production from other crew, are devised based on their position on a traditional movie budget: "There is actually a heavy black line on the budget sheet which separates these two types of costs." Thus, writers, producers, directors and stars are commonly referred to as above-the-line personnel, while technical crews are referred to as below-the-line. Below-the-liners are held to be a lower class in contemporary Hollywood, and the term is occasionally used here to invoke the lack of respect and consideration crewmembers and their labor are afforded by the rest of the industry. The movie maker/movie worker distinctions may at first seem very similar to these terms. However, above and below-the-line weren't common industry parlance for much of the last 100 years, and are less precise in that they leave out some key groups of workers for this study. Some women's jobs, such as assistants to producers or development workers today, do not fit in either the above or below-the-line categories, because the development process takes place separately from production as part of the ongoing operations of a particular company, network or studio. During the studio era, secretaries, other clerical workers, as well as other workers who maintained the studio's infrastructure, were typically included in the budget as part of the lump sum attributed to "overhead expense," but to eliminate confusion, *movie makers* will be used to distinguish elite, creative and executive players from those movie workers for whom films were a regular job. Mike Steen, *Hollywood Speaks* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1974), 187.

[13] Though they will be discussed in relation to their lower-status peers, female movie makers are not the focus of this history for a number of reasons. First, more attention has been paid to these movie makers (e.g. Frances Marion, Lois Weber, Mary Pickford, etc.) in other historical work. Second, their jobs were of relatively high-status, and for that reason the power dynamics in their work relationships were quite different from those of lower status women's movie work. Third, owing to their status and creative power, as well as the relative rarity of their existence in most fields, female movie makers tended to function as individual entities rather than as groups. Finally, with the exception of film actresses, in the 1930's and 40's period around which this work centers, female movie makers worked in male-dominated fields. However, the category of movie maker will frequently be invoked more generally, since it describes people with whom many feminized professions worked closely.

[14] Movie makers socialized within their own elite circles, and lived lives among affluent fellow members. They did not take part in many aspects of studio culture that developed on lots in the way that movie workers did. Instead, through the studio's caste system, workers of high status and lower status were segregated by geography, industrial mythology and practice, and even by personal choice. Leo Rosten, *The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 32.

logic that underlies all gendered media labor, and a true accounting of that labor's importance to the evolution and practice of film and television production.

The preliminary orienting question for this research is: What is "women's work" in media production? Female studio workers were marginalized to the point of invisibility by their low status within the production hierarchy, the perceived insignificance of their work to the creative processes of filmmaking and, indeed, the subsequent low level of scholarly interest in their work, resulting in a double exclusion from both industrial narratives and historical ones. Yet female workers, particularly the large numbers of "girls"[15] who worked in the studios' clerical sectors, were central and crucial to the functioning of the studios. Unpacking the concept of "women's work" can explain much about these workers' experiences on studio lots, how they were used by the system and how they in turn worked through and around its gender-related barriers to achieve greater levels of workplace responsibility and *creative agency*.[16] This work also seeks to enlarge understanding of these important workers and their positions by explaining how women's jobs at studios were different from their contemporary manifestations, how these women were seen by their co-workers, how they saw themselves, whether there was

[15] Groups of female movie workers are frequently referred to as "girls" in studio and in larger culture until the mid-late 20th century, when women began to object to the practice as implicitly condescending and disempowering. The term "girl" also referred to an unmarried woman under a certain age. Though evidence of a paternalistic, gender-normative culture, reference to a woman as a "girl" did not carry more negative connotations, as the phrase "working girl" does today, and though some women may have found it condescending, it was not viewed as an insult under the culture of the time.

[16] The term "creativity" is highly fraught, and elucidating and challenging the importance and definition of this term is an important objective of the overall project. However, in order for that to happen, a working understanding of the hierarchy of power at studios must be reached. Toward that end, the term creative agency will be used to indicate a worker or profession's proximity to and perceived impact on the studios' primary products: motion pictures. Whether through a mogul's executive/managerial decisions about which resources to allocate to which films, the creative leadership of a production department head, or the furthering of production goals through a stenographer's typing of a new script, this term will be used to indicate how much power various movie makers and movie workers were considered to have to impact the creative process during the time period in question.

something inherently feminine about their work that caused it to be assigned to women, and how an understanding of "women's work" in film history might help with the "gender trouble" that still exists in some media production sectors today. Though much of the work is centered on the studio era's full-blown feminization in the 1930s and 40s, I spend many of the first chapters' pages locating tools for that work in 1910s and 20s. I also briefly visit the post-studio industry at several key moments (the 1970s and the present) in the study's later chapters. These breaches of studio era periodization reflect the contemporary orientation of the underlying questions of this study. That question of contemporary feminization is used to guide an exploration of film history as we know it, with new goals in mind. Locating contemporary feminization's source in history reveals why, because of the industry's predilection for ad-hoc or retrofit adaptations, so much of the past remains present today.

The work is rooted in concepts and methodologies from contemporary production studies and owes much to the work of John Caldwell in *Production Cultures* and subsequent writings, in which he explains creative texts and processes through the work cultures that produce them. Here, I bring the methods Caldwell and others have used to illuminate contemporary studies of production to a historical subject matter. This dissertation's other foundational text is Janet Staiger's essential work on modes of production in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*. The dissertation's early chapters are organized around Staiger's explication of these production systems and seeks to complement to her thorough and perceptive

analysis of these systems by expanding on some of their smaller parts through very different research questions related to gender and labor studies.

The other part of this work's past-present hybridization project is to connect contemporary approaches to gender in media production labor with historical subject matter. Despite my initial lack of success in locating information on casting's history, I have been been aided by many other superb existing resources on both contemporary media production and feminist film history. Several recent studies of production workers have focused on gendered labor sectors, most notably recent work by Vicki Mayer and Miranda Banks.[17] While extremely insightful as to gendered labor today, these studies are centered on the contemporary present, and thus provide less insight into the role that the industry's past has played in the continued existence and maintenance of these sectors. Many of the latter category focus on notable women who worked in positions with a relatively high degree creative power, such as female stars who maintained control over their own careers, female silent directors who were for the most part pushed out from behind the camera with the coming of the studio system, or the few female creative figures (e.g. Frances Marion, Margaret Booth, and Dorothy Arzner) who remained in top creative positions well into the studio system.[18] While important, the focus on this more *visible minority* of individual

[17] Miranda Banks on and Vicki Mayer write on gender below the line, and Felicia Henderson on women in the writer's room. See: Miranda Banks, *Bodies of Work: Rituals of Doubling and the Erasure of Film/TV Production Labor*, (PhD. Dissertation: University of California, Los Angeles, 2006); Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), and, for work by Banks, Mayer and Henderson: Miranda Banks, John Caldwell and Vicki Mayer, eds., *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[18] Many of these works will be discussed in the next chapter, but recent works in this area include: Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, Eds., *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). Cari Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down: Frances Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Emily Carman, *Independent Stardom: Freelance Stars and Independent Labor in 1930's Hollywood*, (PhD diss., UCLA, 2008).

female movie makers leaves out the *invisible majority* of female movie workers who, as a group, were indispensable to the film industry at roughly the same time. These workers' experiences in and contributions to film, albeit from positions of limited power, must be accounted for, representing the opposite side of the feminist film history coin from that of the powerful female director, writer or star.

In the last several years, still more research has come to light in new works on the history of women in film production culture. Most notably, recent books by Karen Ward Mahar and Mark Garrett Cooper not only trace the careers of early women movie makers, but also link the narrowing of their professional prospects to those of women in other areas of production.[19] However, though both histories include discussions of the developing film studios' concurrent feminization of various low-status work sectors, they place primary focus on masculization above-the-line, and its contraction of the ranks of high-status female directors, producers, etc. This dissertation, then, turns its attention to the other side of an equation that, as it subtracted women from certain work sectors, assigned them to others according to the same set of gender-based assumptions. As such, it continues the work begun by these others, of putting feminist film history and contemporary feminist production studies in dialog with one another. In several chapters I engage directly with these feminist film historians, particularly Mahar and Cari Beauchamp, as I reexamine their valuable histories of female movie makers next to those of female movie workers and their contemporaries in feminized fields today, to further

[19] Karen Ward Mahar's *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006) examines the initial success of female movie makers in the 1900s and 10s, and their gradual exclusion from most movie maker roles in the late 1910s and 20s. Mark Garrett Cooper's *Universal Women: Filmmaking and Industrial Change in Hollywood*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010) focuses on this process as it affected the ranks of female directors at Universal in the 1910s.

demonstrate how the workplace fates and identities of these two groups were linked. In so doing, while constituting a production history of women's work, the project also contributes to a more general understanding of the role of gender in film and television production, both past and present. Further, through its bottom-up accounts of feminized labor within the Hollywood studios, this work seeks to complement existing, top-down accounts of both the studio system and the post-studio systems that have replaced it. [20]

The Challenges of Invisibility

When asked about her early work as a script supervisor, which she claimed she'd "hated," longtime Hitchcock assistant Peggy Robertson explained:

> When you go and see dailies or rushes, everyone sits down and they look and they say, "what a beautiful job of photography! What a wonderful job of set decoration!" No one ever says to the continuity girl, "what a wonderful job of matching you did!" They only notice "why is his cigarette halfway down?" they only notice when you make a mistake."[21]

Invisibility characterized much of women's labor at film studios, just as it had characterized women's labor in the home and elsewhere in American industry in the first part of the 19th century. In film and television work, women's invisibility existed on multiple levels. A unifying characteristic of feminized production professions, as well as the clerical work carried out largely by women throughout the production process, was that the success of the female worker (in continuity,

[20] Such seminal works as Thomas Schatz's *The Genius of the System* (New York: Metro, 1996), and Douglas Gomery's *The Hollywood Studio System: A History* (London: BFI, 2008), lay an excellent foundation for an understanding of the studio system through a top-down look at major players and the practices they developed and formalized, and are only meant to be complimented by this bottom-up intervention, which largely builds off of the historical frameworks they establish.

[21] Peggy Robertson, Oral History by Barbara Hall, transcript, 1995, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles.

costuming and, later, casting) was measured by how little their work drew attention to itself. Though many technical and craft workers were expected to fly their agency under the radar in the classical Hollywood era, women's jobs received the least creative and professional recognition among crews and were most often defined by their lack of visible product, rather than the subtlety of its effect (e.g. the script supervisor's lack of continuity errors). In most cases, women's work was also invisible in terms of creative credit and status since, again, when they did a good job, women's work blended into the background and allowed direction and performances to stand out. Indeed, success in women's crew jobs such as script continuity and, later, casting was measured by how little their work drew attention to itself. Further, as this dissertation will reflect, women's presence on the studio-era set was tolerated only because they were willing to do those jobs which were credited with the least creative impact and received the lowest pay. Secretarial labor received no credit at all, and signs of workers' agency was confined to the reference initials at the bottom of typed letters and memoranda, which were there for use in tracking down any mistakes that were made in their creation. Another level of invisibility existed in the workers' erasure of signs of their own authorship – by refusing to take credit for their work beyond saying they served as acolytes to directors and executives who were the real authors. This self-induced invisibility, compelled by studio and larger culture, caused them to disguise their already-inconspicuous work even further through implicitly normalized acts of conspicuous giggling, flirtation, gossip and other acts of gendered performance. The concept of invisibility is also central to women's studies and women's labor histories, and has

more recently been taken up by feminist media production studies scholars. Here I attempt to add a historical dimension to the erasure my colleagues and I have observed, locating the logic underlying it in historic areas of American women's labor, then working forward to explain how that logic was extended and reshaped when it reached motion picture work, appropriating some new film jobs but not others in a ripple effect that can still be felt today in contemporary sectors.[22]

The female movie worker's invisibility makes her labor both important and difficult to locate. In *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry,* Allen Scott writes of his attempts to examine the emergence of the early film industry through the conceptual lens of economic geography as fraught, since "the historical record of the business activities of early film production companies is extremely uneven," and the framework he offers is "provisional and speculative."[23] I have encountered similar difficulties in my study of these "invisible" female movie workers. On top of the general unevenness of records of early film practices, there exists a corresponding invisibility in terms of research materials related to that subject in the academy. Though their work was sometimes documented secondarily through paperwork, the workers that are the subject of this study left behind few traces of many of their

[22]Invisibility and erasure of women's labor has for years been the focus of women's studies and labor historians outside of media studies, and more recently has been explored by production scholars with regard to contemporary labor practices, most notably Miranda Banks and Vicki Mayer. Here, I explore this invisibility/erasure historical media production. Histories of women's clerical and manufacturing labor in other American industries which address this topic include Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); Alice Kessler Harris, *Out To Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Lisa Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). The Banks and Mayer works, listed earlier in this chapter, are: Banks, *Bodies of Work*; Mayer, *Below the Line.* My own work on this contemporary subject, some of which is revisited here, includes: Hill, Erin. *Secretaries, Stenographers and Assistants: A report funded by the California Women's Law Center.* Los Angeles, CA, 2007; "Women's Work: Femininity and Film and Television Casting." Presented at Console-ing Passions International Conference (Milwaukee, WI. 2006); "Re-Casting the Casting Director: Managing Change, Gendering Labor." In *Intermediaries: Management of Culture, Cultures of Management.* Eds. Derek Johnson, Derek Kompare and Avi Santo. New York: NYU Press, forthcoming.
[23] Allen Scott, *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5.

actual practices. And because women workers' contributions to film and television texts were, as a general rule, deemed less important than those of their male colleagues, materials relating primarily to these workers were seldom saved in studio archives. Documents that remain were typically preserved because they could help to tell the story of an important actor, writer, director, producer or film text. In my research, I have yet to find a collection specifically devoted to these women's jobs or the women who did them. Rather, collections containing relevant material are organized around the well-known players and productions in which and with whom female workers were involved. For this reason, making visible the invisible female studio worker has often involved locating her in peripheral ephemera documents –the footnotes, anecdotes and margins of other people's histories. Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to turn this arrangement inside out, collecting bits and pieces of information about the female worker in the main text, and confining their male superiors to the footnotes. Like many "lost" or "missing" films of the silent era, much of this history may truly be lost, but there is also much that may be rediscovered. Some of it currently is hiding in plain sight amid collections and papers which simply haven't been reviewed or indexed with these workers in mind. It is my hope that this research will represent a very small contribution to an area of study that will continue to grow. Through these chapters, I suggest parameters for the gathering of archival material related to female workers into a collection devoted to the subject, relocating accounts from different margins in order to construct their own center.

Another of my challenges has been the fact that this work primarily treats groups of people as it shifted over time, rather than individual figures (e.g. major directors who are often more characterizable based on their individual actions, projects and about whom more anecdotes remain) or finite events (e.g. the making of a specific film) or fixed places (e.g. the studios themselves). In *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema,* Jennifer Bean and Diane Negra call for feminist film history that embraces "a self-critical, self-reflexive scrutiny that rejects any epistemological guarantee suggested by the past in favor of embracing its complexity."[24] Like them, I do not simply relocate the historoigraphic light that had previously shone on major directors, producers, etc. to shine on a new heroine, the female movie worker, necessarily throwing other figures into shadow. Instead, I would use these workers to achieve greater total illumination by showing how a number of different aspects of the studio system fit together to gender studio labor, and how that gendering was sanctioned by and through studio culture.

Studying groups of "invisible" female workers offers additional challenges because so much of their labor was not considered labor at all, but was viewed instead as the natural product of their gender. Like feminized labor elsewhere, feminized sectors of film production were, and still are, characterized by conspicuous characteristics of gendered service and performance. Whether directed at employers, clients, or in support of a business enterprise, "the notion of a service

[24] While I believe that the women studio workers I describe are important and interesting, I don't want to tell their "new" story to the exclusion of other older or still untold ones. Jennifer Bean, "Toward a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, Eds., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 3.

relationship is central to female-dominated occupations."[25] Frequently, *service* requirements for these professions (e.g. in hospitality, sales, etc.) include components of emotion work or *emotional labor*, identified by Arlie Hochschild as labor requires employees to display organizationally-desired emotions while suppressing those not desired "in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others."[26] Emotion work includes any parts of workers' jobs in which "the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself.,"[27] and is more often expected of women based a set of traditional assumptions, based in essentialism, about their "natural" qualities. It often overlaps or is rendered through acts of feminine performance. Judith Butler advanced the concept of *gender performativity* to describe acts of performance that reinforce "static or normal gender while obscuring the contradiction and instability of any single person's gender act." Such acts as, in the case of women, being "led" by male dance partners, are carried out by individuals as part of "the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders" or risk the socially enforced "punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them."[28] Cultural expectations compel women to "perform" acceptable femininity, and associate them with service and emotion work over men. For these reasons, emotional labor is a gendered category of labor, since as Vicki Mayer explains, when women do emotion work, "they achieve membership in a group identity," while

[25] "While this is usually recognized as of central importance, the 'competencies' needed to carry out these tasks are not formalized in any way. It is even difficult to name them (reference is made to 'soft', or 'social' or 'non-objectifiable' competencies)." Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Future of Female-Dominated Occupations* (Paris: OECD, 1998), 9-10.
[26] Ibid 7.
[27] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press: 2003), 5.
[28] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1999), 21.

when men do it "it is likely to be seen as an individual trait."[29] This has the effect of devaluing or erasing women's emotional labor, while elevating the same labor as a skill when performed by male workers.

The association of women with some jobs and not others and the gendered expectations that arose from it were frequently tacit, but were also occasionally stated aloud in official studio documents. The continued development of gendered practice in the film industry was guided and enforced as much through behavior and industrial mythology as by any written rules or policies. In attempting to locate these low-status workers within historical production systems, it has been crucial to account for them within larger studio production culture, and also as individuals and as members of groups (as female workers and as members of specific feminized sectors) within that culture. Furthermore, the work of the women in question took place at studios, its gendering wasn't restricted to studio grounds, and this intersection of gender and film/TV labor must be therefore be traced not just in studio offices or on the backlot, but also in popular culture and workers private reflections. This range of material is necessary to capture the variety of factors, industrial, cultural and social that contribute to the construction of these gendered professions, while at the same time keeping in perspective their place within the larger context of studio work and studio culture.

[29] Mayer, *Below the Line*, 133-4.

A Multi-Sided Approach to "Women's Work"

Clearly, locating my "invisible" subject is a tall order. The complexity of this task suggests, even demands a combination of methods in order to move the female worker from film history's margins to its center. In doing so, I turn to disciplines outside of film history for tools. Particularly is Sherry Ortner's discussion of the need to integrate two distinct approaches to the study of a people and their identities—text-based interpretations of the cultural and historical discourses through which people are "constructed," and the more analytic, ethnography-based descriptions of how people enact, resist, negotiate and otherwise "make" their identities—since either type of approach is incomplete without the other.[30] A multi-lateral approach will be key to my project, which from its earliest stages has, for me, been one of negotiation between the lived experience and agency of the female worker and the forces that acted upon her.[31]Similarly, though the tools of contemporary production studies are not often used in interpreting historical subject matter, examining texts such as films, novels, manuals, newsletters, and writing generated by workers for audiences ranging from one private reader to the public at large, requires some consideration of how texts are co-constructed by author and context. John Caldwell's *Production Culture*,[32] with its discussions of critical industrial practice and taxonomy of inter, intra and extra-industrial deep texts and rituals, has been extremely useful in helping me to analyze texts together, while raising questions of where, why, by and for whom they were generated.

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[30] Sherry Ortner, *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1996), 1-4.
[31] Ortner took just this approach to the study of media production in her recent book *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of the American Dream* (London: Duke, 2013), mixing ethnography of independent filmmakers with textual analysis of their films.
[32] John Caldwell, *Production Culture* (NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

Through this method of critical analysis, historical accounts and artifacts can be made to reveal studios and workers' real "shop floor practices"[33] (what their work actually consisted of) that are often hidden within more the more official or formal stories told about them for posterity or as professional self-representation.

The approaches of both Ortner and Caldwell are have been models for this study's form of theoretical and methodological *triangulation*.[34] As I attempt to account for "Women's Work" –in film history and contemporary production—I frequently approach my subject from two (or more) sides, in order to locate it in the middle. Understanding gendered labor requires accounting for both gender and labor, at their most basic, the two sides represented by various chapters are *women's labor* –the types of work women were assigned due to gender— and *women's roles*— the ways female workers performed that labor in accordance with gender norms, which add to and are understood as a part of that labor over time. By working from the top down (through studio documents, films and the accounts of major figures) to locate feminized labor in studio logic, and from bottom up (through the individual and private accounts of workers themselves) to locate the added expectations of feminine performance, service and emotion work imposed on workers through studio and larger culture.

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[33] This is a subject of interest to the field business management, which seeks to mine the shop floor for its best practices in the interest of greater efficiency. Shop Floor Practice in sociology is discussed by Howard Becker in "An Epistemology of Qualitative Research," In R. Jessor, A. Colby, & R. A. Shweder (Eds.), *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and meaning in Social Inquiry,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 53-71.

[34] A term borrowed from sociology, which derives from land surveying techniques in which measurements from two points in space are used to determine a third in between them. It is a method of cross-verification reached through examining multiple kinds of evidence or using combining multiple methods to study the same subject. Paulette Rothbauer, "Triangulation," In Given, Lisa (Ed.), "The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods," Sage Publications, 892-894.

In this way, the two sides of "women's work" can be integrated to create a picture of what it meant and means to be a female production worker in the media industry. For, while studios established parameters for women's work based on gendered expectations, that the way that women maneuvered within those parameters (excelling, expanding duties, acquiring creative capital, moving into adjacent fields all through socially acceptable gendered performance and feminized labor) was what expanded women's work in importance, from typists in the secretarial pool in the early 19th century to domination of such creatively and managerial important fields as casting in the present. The fact that women had to work through the system in this way has also had lasting effects in terms of pay, status, and advancement to or infiltration of other fields. This, the *vocational fallout* of invisibility, will be the subject of the last third of the project.

In attempting to account for women's work across time, I've taken in a broad expanse of historical territory. This work moves through 120 years in its six chapters. However, it does not profess to account for all of them, but rather visits "women's work" in production at several points in the media industries development. These focus points are the growth spurt of the early studios late 1910s-early 1920s, the 1930s and 40s big studio era –the high point in studios development (in terms of their managers' much-desired "efficiency" and the feminized labor that supported it)—the late 60s and early 70s, when post-studio work systems shifted certain jobs toward feminization, and the present.

Somewhat analogous to how film theorists have debated the shot versus the cut as the most basic unit of the film, my two-sided approach involves two basic

paradigms: the map and the anecdote. The practice of mapping is an ideologically loaded one that has commonly documented historical change through they eyes of that change's chief architects: political leaders, military generals and other major historical figures or "great men." Not surprisingly, few of these "great men" were women. The map was much beloved by studio managers, who used it to represent their own interests and declare their ownership. Mapping (of geographic space, production hierarchy and workflow) played an important role in the scientific organization of labor practices that serves (in tandem with the advent of motion pictures), as this history's inciting incident. The term *mapping* is used here to refer to actual maps—those drawn by studio architects and managers and often published through trade and fan magazines to demonstrate the scope and majesty of studios operations a in all its various forms. It also invokes the various other studio-authored materials (e.g. labor charts, asset lists, diagrams, bird's-eye views, photographs) that were used to demonstrate studios' ownership and control over their contents. Such maps and mapping schema were forms of self-representation on the part of moguls and managers eager to convince themselves and each other of their own mastery. Maps relocated women via developing labor logic as earlier work systems gave way to practices adopted from the scientifically managed factories of major American industries. Similarly, maps and mapping schema were a means of women's exclusion at studios, which were styled after modern cities, complete with cities' infrastructure, as well as its gendered spaces.[35] Spatiality and geography continue to be important to

[35] Mapping has also been a cornerstone of the masculinized world-building practice inscribed within fantasy/science fiction narratives. A vast number of the genre's novels, role-playing games and, most recently, platform video games are organized around exploration of a map through over course of a work's narrative. Dungeons and Dragons and other fantasy RPM's are in fact called modules –another important part of ecology,

discussions of the media industry in the second half of the 20th century, when post-Fordist, post-studio clusters have grown up outside of and working in cooperation with studios. Due to their freelance, ad hoc nature, such clusters act as vacuums for skilled, contractual labor, resulting in the redistribution of less creative or high-status duties to unskilled laborers, and of unskilled labor to the margins of cultural production. Because of mapping's role in excluding women at studios, it seems appropriate that this work make its intervention into studio history by rereading studio maps and related documents to show where and for what purpose women were situated within the larger ecology of studio labor.

The anecdote represents a natural antidote to the public, top down modes of studio self-representation offered by maps. For, as with any large organization, studios and their practices were sustained not just by managerial or corporate infrastructure, but also by the interdependent relationships of the component parts, problems, and unintended consequences that existed around that infrastructure. This is especially true of "soft systems" –those which involve humans with multiple, ever-changing frames of reference.[36] Under this logic, any isolated aspect of studio culture can only be explained in relation to the whole. At the same time, an understanding of

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systems engineering and mapping— because they explored dungeons and the books served to map the game for the dungeon master. Gygax, Gary (1978). *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief*. TSR.

[36] In the forward to Brian Wilson's book on soft systems, Mike Duffy explains that though much development has been seen in top-down, executive-mandated corporate strategies, far less has been done to engineer consensus among the workers to whom those strategies trickle down, or to weigh those "best practices" often lauded by gurus from other businesses against a particular organization's "unique history and culture." His corrective, as he describes it, has been to adopt "a more holistic approach that took account of the softer issues that people bring in to any problem situation. In: Brian Wilson, *Soft Systems Methodology: Conceptual Model Building and its Contribution*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), ix. Peter M. Senge explains systems thinking at its most basic through the example of the rainstorm in which many events (rain, runoff, effects on groundwater) that are spatial-temporally separate from one another "are connected within the same pattern. Each has an influence on the rest, an influence that is usually hidden from view." Similarly, he explains, under systems thinking, "business and other human endeavors are also systems. They, too, are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other." *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of Learning Organizing,* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1990), 6-7.

the whole can be informed by examinations of sub-systems and their parts which, in the case of humans, are engaged in a constant process of relating to one another and the system and co-constructing it as they go.[37] Anecdotes help connect the worker to the system and make sense of the part in the context of the whole, representing specific, local, personal accounts that can both complicate and explain those depictions of the various production systems as naturally occurring or "the way things are," so often offered by mapping materials. As such, the anecdote may be viewed as both a counter-map, and as a companion to the map, in this case providing an unofficial vocational travel guide through the studio spaces maps purport to describe. This is crucial in accounting for studios both as systems and as cultures. It is also useful in locating gendered labor in an industry that has, over time, grown a compulsion to avoid discussing gender at all for fear of legal repercussions for discriminatory practices. This had led to gender being discursively coded in a number of ways which individual anecdotes and cultural artifacts help lay bare.

The use of evidence from many areas of a culture to illuminate an individual subject's context is a practice that has been commonly employed by anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz, for whom whole cultures stood as texts, and the context provided by those texts about a subject represented "thick description,"[38] and more recently by historians.[39] Most useful for me from discussions of Geertzian thick

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[37] Described in, among others: Brian Wilson, *Soft Systems Methodology: Conceptual Model Building and its Contribution*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), ix.

[38] Geertz advances his own definition of Thick Description, borrowing the term from Gilbert Ryle, in: Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books), 3-30.

[39] This practice has also been invoked by scholars whose research is done in libraries and archives rather than in the field. In *Practicing New Historicism*, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt make an argument for the use of the anecdote as thick description in literary criticism, both to present data in a more raw, empirical form, seized upon in traces that "seemed to be close to actual experience" and to "venture out to unfamiliar cultural texts, and these texts –often marginal, odd, fragmentary, unexpected, and crude—in turn could begin to interact

description is his (and others') insistence that people within a culture have their own critical interpretation of that culture long, and that rather than drawing on their own, outsider's perspective to explain that culture, it is the analyst's job simply to access that self-understanding. I take a similar approach to the collected anecdotes that comprise much of my research, bringing together bits and pieces formerly separated and collected around other figures or film texts to stand as their own account.[40] I attempt to balance existing historical explanations through these fragments, whenever possible, organizing explanations of worker culture around the words of film workers themselves, as collected in studio newsletters, interviews, oral histories, memoirs, letters and other writings.[41] Footnotes and anecdotes are important to this work both literally as evidence and figuratively as methodological or historiographic concepts, linking female workers to film history while simultaneously complicating it.

Through her mobilization of many kinds of materials, including personal recollection in *Dust*, Carolyn Steedman illustrates the flaws of historical approaches that try to write unambiguous stories of "how it really happened." Steedman points to the constructedness of archives themselves –their ability to structure history based on which data is preserved in them and how it is organized—and to the

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in interesting ways" with more familiar works. Katherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 28.

[40] Echoing Hayden White, Gallagher and Greenblatt also argue for the anecdote's usefulness in drawing attention to the constructedness of both itself and scholarly writing around it due to "the fact that neither is purpose-built for the other, that they make sharply different claims upon the actual."Ibid,31. In "Reevaluating Footnotes: Women Directors of the Silent era," Radha Vatsal argues for the excavation a "sidelined" text in the mining of footnotes for both their information and the "contradictions and equivocations" that are often discarded within them, pointing out the footnote's potential for self-reflexivity and the raising of new questions in the writing of history. Radha Vatsal, "Reevaluating Footnotes: Women Directors of the Silent Era," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, Eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 119.

[41] Though it is of course necessary to rely on secondary resources to explain film history, I attempt to let the words of workers supersede those of movie makers, and thus to avoid presenting a view of the past as shaped by my hypotheses, or by already written chapters of established film history.

dangers of collecting evidence as proof for an argument already formulated by the historian or existing history. Using Steadman as a guide, I view the location (or lack thereof) of my evidence as evidence itself, and attempt tell the story of women workers through the way that they were variously remembered, classified and erased in archives. And because my own relationship to the film/TV industry as both a worker and a scholar has informed this project, especially as I relate the studio period to the contemporary industry, Steedman's foregrounding of her subjectivity has helped me to parse my own relationship to my subject of study, which is addressed through several footnotes and in the epilogue from my experiences as a female media worker.[42]

Thus, the understanding of the women workers discussed in these chapters comes from two sides, both women's work (labor) and women's role (gender), from the perspective of both the system and the individual within it, and structured by both maps and anecdotes. Its evidence comes in the form of both the public, official, or studio-authored accounts of workers (through studio publications and paperwork, fan magazines, journalistic and trade discourse and vocational manuals), and private, individual accounts of the work as experienced (through memoirs, anecdotes, private letters and worker-penned fiction). Through this integrated approach, attempting to reach the center of the subject from both sides, emerges a form of triangulation which creates a more thorough understanding of women's work in the studio era.

[42] Since my work concerns not only films and the practice of filmmaking, but also groups of people, their subculture, and its place in the larger culture that surrounded them, I don't see this work as a strictly historical one, but as an interdisciplinary study that often views and interprets historical subject matter through different lenses.

Organization

The remainder of Chapter 1 provides a pre-history of *women's work* in the film industry by examining the rise of efficiency practices and its effect on the gender makeup of clerical and other workforces in American industry in the late 18th and early 19th century.

Chapter 2 traces the rise of efficiency in the early American film industry (centering on the late 1910s and early 20s) by following its paper trail –the increase in paper records and planning in production under scientific management—and ties studios increased infrastructure and clerical needs to the shift from the relatively flexible, heterosocial model of early film production to one of efficient cost control, redrawing the line between production and administration as well as the line between men's and women's work, as it mapped them onto new, purpose-built studio spaces.

Chapter 3 examines the film industry's conception of *women's labor* as it emerged in the 1920s in a system that segregated female movie workers into feminized production sectors grouped around traditional women's labor sectors (e.g. domestic service, clerical work). Feminized labor facilitated and, through women's low wages, subsidized studios growth into large factory-like plants while. At the same time, these new feminized associations diminished women's prospects as movie makers by the shifting of women's workplace identity from the center to the margins of production, identified primarily with clerical labor and film production's other detail or routine tasks.

Chapter 4 centers around the 1930s and 40s, when feminization and the logic underlying it were fully entrenched in studio culture, and adds to the definition-in-progress of "women's work" by examining *women's roles* at studios. In addition to performing their duties in feminized labor sectors, women were compelled by studio and larger culture to perform emotion work and play feminine roles on the job. Women's roles in society followed them to production jobs at studios. As women were incorporated into certain sectors, the workplace requirements there were reshaped to include expectations of them not only as workers but also as women. This chapter makes these gendered requirements visible in order to demonstrate their impact on film industry and its products. I characterize the mixture of feminized labor, emotion work, and feminine performance that resulted from gender-based expectations a *women's creative service*. The concept of creative service, which I suggest as a provisional framework through which to connect all women's work at studios, is then explored via an examination of the careers, core job characteristics and lived experiences of several "great" woman secretaries and executive assistants from the studio era.

Chapter 5 uses the concept of women's creative service as a means to connect women's work in the traditional categories of feminized labor that were transplanted to studios (particularly the clerical sector) to the various film-specific professions that have since emerged as women's fields. Beginning with those fields which feminized earliest and are most directly linked to feminized clerical work (film development, script supervision) and moving outward to jobs which deviated from the pattern of feminization that could be seen elsewhere or feminized later

(editing, publicity, casting), the chapter explains how these disparate fields are related through their basic creative service characteristics. In this way, it demonstrates how notions of "women's work" shaped film history and continue to shape not only women's professional identity, but also the industry's products and practices.

Chapter 6 revisits feminized clerical fields in the present day through the example assistants to media makers, whose work and compensation, despite the gender integration of their post-secretarial field, continues to mirror the role's feminized status and requirements. By way of a conclusion, this final chapter reflects on the dissertation's opening questions with the benefit of historical hindsight in order to look to the future.

Pre-History – Clerical Labor as "Women's Work" in The Gilded Age (1850s-1930s)

The story of "women's work" in media production begins before moving pictures were invented. This is because so much of the rationale around women's suitability for some production specialties but not others came directly out of the 19th century notion that the best and most proper use of the middle-class female workforce that emerged at the end of the Victorian age was to sit them down at typewriters. It did not happen by chance, but rather was part of a larger strategy designed by management to subsidized the massive growth of American businesses after the civil war. Once the idea took hold, however, it would become nearly impossible to separate women from clerical labor in the minds of their employers and colleagues, so much so that when the fledgling film industry hit its own growth spurt fifty years later, it reverted to the same logic. This pre-history of women's clerical labor might more aptly be called a *prequel*, establishing the pattern of clerical feminization as it arose in American industry, in order to understand that pattern's permutations as it was adapted to the early creative industry of motion pictures.

Though clerical work had become so associated with women by the 1930's that female secretarial archetypes such as the long-suffering "Girl Friday" were already well-established staples of films and novels,[43] the ubiquity of the male clerk or secretary in 19th century fiction is a reminder that this was not always so. Unlike

[43] Sam Spade's devoted secretary, 'Effie Perine,' first featured in *The Maltese Falcon,* leaps to mind. Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.), 1929.

other sectors of feminized labor that emerged during the 19th century, clerical labor didn't begin as feminized at all.[44] For centuries, male clerks and secretaries served as record keepers and letter writers for government and nobility in Europe and the United States.[45] In the 17th and 18th centuries, the rise of small businesses such as banks and insurance companies created increased demand for clerical workers in the world of commerce.[46] Legal offices and banks in the 1800's regularly employed copyists or scriveners –clerks hired exclusively for the hand-copying of documents—and clerks, and the clerical classes of bookkeepers and office boys and messengers rose up to create and distribute this paperwork.[47] As Gregory Anderson notes, in the pre-mechanized 19th century office, "organizationally, the boundary between clerical and managerial workers was not clearly drawn."[48] A single clerk would often master "the entire scope of an office's operations," as a craftsman might work to be proficient in various manual crafts needed to produce products.[49] Such mastery was a means to advancement in the business world –the only one for young men of lower class without access to higher education.[50] In these master-apprentice relationships, small business employers were responsible not only for office

[44] Male clerks appear and are sometimes central figures in most 19th century novels and plays that address problems of modernity, from Shaw plays to Melville short stories, but perhaps appear most commonly in the work of Charles Dickens. Clerk characters feature heavily in at least nine of his novels, most notably *A Christmas Carol* ('Bob Cratchet') and *David Copperfield* ('Uriah Heep'). Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843). Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850).
[45] "History of the Secretarial Profession," 2010.http://iaap-hq.org/newsroom/journalistresources/history.html (accessed January 16, 2011).
[46] Margery W. Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter,* 12.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Gregory Anderson, ed., *The White-Blouse Revolution: Women Office Workers since 1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 3.
[49] Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter*, 18.
[50] Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930,* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 175.

employees' daily for working conditions and experience, but also for their mobility through the business world and, to some extent, the class system.

It wasn't until the mid 1800's that women began to enter the clerical workforce in significant numbers.[51] In the wake of the Civil War, American businesses were expanding or merging from small, competitive firms to larger vertically and horizontally integrated corporations with monopolies on major industries such as steel, oil, and meatpacking.[52] The expansion was accompanied by changes in methods of production and distribution to allow for increased business over greater geographic range, all of which necessitated increased correspondence and more accurate record keeping to control expenditures, sales, even employees themselves as the close working relationship between clerk and employer in a single office gave way to a greater professional and geographic remove.[53] It was through increased paperwork that managers tracked and distributed information and workflow, discouraging or even disallowing clerks from making decisions on their own as they formalized previously idiosyncratic practices across whole corporations, reorganized firms into functionally defined departments, and developed hierarchical structures of authority.[54] However, organizational and managerial innovation could not be implemented effectively enough to catch up to the expansion and technological change of the industrial age. Rather than speeding up, factories were often initially slowed down by technological advancement as

[51] The British Post Office first used women as telegraph operators before embarking on the "experiment of employing ladies to do actual 'clerk work,'" A Government Official, "Ladies As Clerks." (*Fraser's Magazine*, September, 1875), 335. The United States Treasury began employing women in clerical positions due to a labor shortage caused by the Civil War. Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter*, 52.
[52] Ibid.,52.
[53] Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter*, 24.
[54] Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter*, 50.

laborers struck and resigned in reaction to the new pace of work demanded of them.[55] Order was eventually incorporated through the scientific management of production under principles developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor and a group of professional managers who believed firmly in the ability of rationality and efficiency to move the country forward.[56] Taylor studied different workers in order to synthesize their *best practices* –those techniques that evolved over time as most effective or successful—and standardize the steps of their work processes. The new, "scientifically managed" work process could then be imposed on workers in a reorganized workplace, maximized for efficiency and profitability.[57]

The influence and feverish adoption of Taylorist principles changed businesses and factories, as well as countless other aspects of American life as it was applied everywhere from steel mills to government offices to private homes. Sharon Hartman Strom writes that efficiency offered hope in that it represented a solution to the complex problems of industrialization bridging the gaps "between progressive reformers and railroad tycoons, efficiency experts and production managers, consumers and corporations, labor arbitrators and some labor unions," who put their faith in a common language of balance sheets and systematization.[58] Faith in scientific management's principals even over other, more tangible, humanist ones, played a major role in the feminization of clerical labor, catalyzing shifts in women's identity as workers in the home and elsewhere, the American film

[55] Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter*, 20-21.
[56] Ibid., 16.
[57] Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter*, 97.
[58] Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter,* 20.

industry's eventual delineation of certain jobs as "women's work," and the formation of women film workers' professional identity.

Efficiency set clerical labor on a path to feminization in a number of ways. First, Scientific management increased numbers of clerical workers and greatly raised clerical work in importance. In addition to new systems of paperwork and computation, it mandated increased managerial control over employee work practice through "the re-organization of the workplace and the appropriation of knowledge from machinists and other largely self-governed workers."[59] The number of management workers rose with the creation of planning departments, which were physically separate from production departments.[60] The relationship of clerical messengers to their messages also changed. Lisa Fine states that "clerical workers do not produce the good demanded" in a manufacturing context, "but they produce an intermediate good that economists call clerical output."[61] Under scientific management, *clerical output* was also a bridge between the "brain" of management planning and the "hands" of production. Through it, clerical workers were responsible for linking all of an organization's departments and employees through marching orders without which they could no longer function. Where previously it had been an ancillary part of production process that merely recorded it as it happened, clerical labor and the paper it produced now fueled it.

Scientific management's efficient re-organization was also used to neutralize the threat of increased clerical ranks to cost accountability, and the threat to

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[59] Ibid., 16.
[60] Lisa Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930,* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 11.
[61] Ibid., 12.

management's authority of the undermanaged knowledge and skills of the male clerks in older, more holistic work systems. Like that of production workers, the clerical worker's labor was measured and studied, then rationalized, standardized and specialized so that it might be carried out more quickly and cheaply by unskilled or semi-skilled workers.[62] Workers were separated into different administrative departments (e.g. production control, inventory records, payroll and pricing). Just as they had been taken from the factory foreman, managerial responsibilities related to clerical work were taken from the clerk or bookkeeper (a formerly high level clerical worker) and given to the manager, centralizing management's authority.[63] The bookkeeper's authority was decentralized by the additional delegation of "some of their mental responsibilities to subordinates like timekeepers and clerks,"[64] each of whom one specialized in a more narrow portion of work process. New clerical designations included timekeepers, payroll clerks, accountants, billing clerks, ledger clerks, cost clerks, key punch machinists, requisition clerks, shipping and receiving clerks, file clerks, stenographers, typists, Dictaphone transcribers, correspondents, messengers, secretaries, switchboard operators, and clerks to various production departments.

Finally, efficiency set clerical labor on a course for feminization through its use of new technologies that enabled the speedy, efficient completion of separated tasks. The late 1800's and early 1900's saw the invention of labor-saving technologies for clerical work of every kind, mechanizing tasks so that they could be

[62] Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter*, 26.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

performed identically each time no matter which worker performed them or how long they'd been on a shift. From filing cabinets and index cards to stencils, mimeographs and Dictaphones to message-passing pneumatic tubes, these inventions all facilitated faster compilation and circulation of paper records and messages, albeit often by an increased number of workers.[65] Arguably the most important of these was the typewriter, which came into use in the 1870s and, together with shorthand writing systems and stenographs, mechanized the writing process, allowing for rapid note-taking, followed by quick copying, without the need for handwriting skills of a copyist. The profession of steno-typist—the entry point for most women to offices near the turn of the century—was hardly unskilled since it required training in shorthand and typing. Nonetheless, stenography and typing technologies broke down the process of copying documents into multiple, mechanized steps that might be completed more quickly and with far less variation between operator than they would have been by a copyist writing in longhand. Unlike a longhand copyist, it was possible for a stenographer to type words faster than they could read and understand them.[66] In this sense, the operator became a conduit through which information passed, unaltered, from sender to receiver, rather than the active, human participant the copyist had been in message creation, acting as a filter, screening the message for information and shaping it as needed before passing it along.[67]

[65] Strom. *Beyond the Typewriter*, 179.
[66] Further discussion of copyists in: Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter*, 13-14.
[67] As Lisa Fine points out, notions of skill are themselves socially constructed, and that skill is something that men are considered to have and women are considered to lack, so the study of deskilling is often actually the study of demasculinization. This bias must be kept in mind when studying work that has been taken up by

Added together with other forms of mechanization, the typewriter would eventually allow for the completion of the reorganization process that had begun after the Civil War and culminated in the early 1900's with scientific management's machine-aided specialization and deskilling.[68] Where before, a few clerks mastered the entire sphere of one specific office, learning varied skills, managing their own workflow with little guidance, and making many decisions on their own as a part of their deep investment in their company and employers, the typical office worker now occupied a lower place in the chain of command, observed a more rigid set of practices, was afforded less status and chance of promotion, maintained a less intimate, loyal bond to their employers, not to mention their now-numerous co-workers, and as a result, one imagines, felt less pride in their work and the goods it produced. The benefits to efficiency were manifold: unlike earlier skilled workers, unskilled or semi-skilled laborers could start work after minimal training and, if they quit or were fired, would not represent a lost investment in terms of training, or disrupt the operation by taking unique skills or irreplaceable information with them.[69] They also demanded less pay than their skilled counterparts and had little expectation of promotion or of receiving the kind of training that might allow them to advance beyond the clerical sphere.

As a result of these shifts, in the 1880s-1910s extant male workers left clerical fields in large numbers, while those embarking on careers in business looked elsewhere the pay, training, and advancement potential they had once

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female workers with skills resulting from a technological change, to avoid mischaracterization. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers,* 83.

[68] Though historians differ over how various historical and technological factors interacted in the feminization of clerical work, there is no doubt that this reorganization of clerical workflow was a leading cause.

[69] Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter*, 173.

received as clerks. The male clerical workers who remained tended to occupy the office positions of higher skill and status, such as manager, accountant, or supervising clerk.[70] Meanwhile, a shift from agrarian to urban life had brought young, single women who had previously been employed by their relatives in small, rural businesses, on farms or in the home to cities. Where before they might have served their families in other ways, these young women now needed an income to help their families pay off debts or sustain class standards.

Young women were more likely to be literate than their brothers, who often left school for farms or factories.[71] They were also increasingly willing to work at this time due to a shift away from 18th century Victorian ideals under which women occupied the private sphere. Under the old model, the only acceptable types of employment for a woman had been forms of domestic service with similar duties to those she carried out inside the home, or temporary work for wages –taken on only due to dire need or prior to marriage—[72] in a few other related areas.[73] The work of wife and mother was held as her natural and preferred occupation, not to be imperiled through sharing the same physical space with unrelated men, or by placement in the unnatural position as superiors to men.[74] However, by the early 20th century, amid industrialization and urbanization, many working-class women could not find domestic service jobs and the ranks of literate, educated women had

[70] Sharon Hartman Strom. *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930.* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 175.
[71] Ibid., 57-59.
[72] This was because "a true woman, with the possibility of support as a wife within a family, would reject any self-supporting employment no matter how fulfilling or remunerative." Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers*, 22.
[73] For further discussion of these areas, see chapter 3.
[74] Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers*, 22.

so swelled that their numbers could no longer be absorbed by the available positions in "acceptable" women's jobs such as teaching and nursing.[75]

Debates raged about women's fitness for the workplace. It was feared that women's large-scale entrance into the public sphere would threaten the balance of perceived innate skills and qualities that were divided between the genders with women as the moral, religious, emotional, aesthetic, intuitive complements to more rational, logical, ambitious, strong, practical men. Counterarguments held that women would improve the workplace rather than be imperiled by it. From this debate emerged the progressive, feminist ideal of the New Woman, a figure who both sought and symbolized new social freedoms for women, and who was often conflated with the figure of the female typist in this debates, in which discourse often centered on clerical work specifically.[76] Employers in need of cheap, disposable labor had their own stake in the debate, and made arguments in favor of women's particular suitability for clerical labor along essentialist lines. One rationalized that women "have in an eminent degree the quickness of eye and ear and the delicacy of touch which are essential qualifications of a good operator," adding that they also "take more kindly than men or boys do to sedentary employment, and are more patient during long confinement to one place."[77] This language linked certain tools and tasks with gender and defined women by the

[75] Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter,* 71. The period between 1890 and 1910 also saw an unprecedented rise in other women's pursuits outside the home, including philanthropic, suffrage and even women's radical activities. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers,* 54.
[76] Ibid., 59-61. Arlene Young gives an excellent description of the general characteristics of the New Woman in her preface to a recent printing of *The Girl Behind the Keys*, one of a number of Victorian early detective novels with a female typist is the heroine, saying, "She is self-sufficient, both personally and financially, and independent in her thoughts and actions. Her interests and career are non-traditional for her day. She seems completely at home in the business world." *The Girl Behind the Keys*, Arlene Young, Ed, (Toronto: Broadview, 2006), 15.
[77] Hilda Martindale. *Women Servants of the State, 1830-1938.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 18.

products they used.[78] The earlier association of some women with "light" manufacturing work (textiles, etc.) was used as evidence that women might work in a similar capacity in the rationalized office,[79] where principles were "precisely similar" to that of light manufacturing."[80] The association of woman with the operation of office machinery was especially prevalent in discourse around the typewriter, which began to be marketed specifically to women fairly soon after its creation.[81] Purveyors of the new technology used female demonstrators to sell them on the basis of women's skill at playing pianos and sewing machines. It was held that women were "nimbler, neater and steadier" than their male counterparts since "the broad tipped fingers of a man do not fit him for a graceful operator on writing machines hired looking for piano players,"[82] while typing was ideally suited for women with "none of the physical exhaustion which causes the sewing machine to

[78] Ellen Lupton, *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to the Office* (New York; Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 7.
[79] Sharon Hartman Strom on light manufacturing: "Both electrical factory assembly lines and simplified office jobs relied on what amounted to piecework systems, systems with which women were already associated and the installation of which scientific managers saw as the crux of breaking the hold of male craft workers." Re: women's suitability: "It was reported that 'women on the day shift worked 50 percent faster than men and were 'more exact in touch, more expeditious in handling the schedules, more at home in adjusting the delicate mechanism of the electrical machines.' Strom is quick to point out that, more likely than their having some physical or mental predisposition to the work, was that the women in this example were motivated to prove their suitability for one of the few white-collar jobs they could get, the men in question, many of them students working for the census bureau at night, would have had more employment options. Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter*, 188. 178.
[80] "Precisely similar" in: George Frederick. "Standards for the Office: Applying the principles of Standardization of Factory Work to the Office," *OE* 2 (June 1920), 85.
[81] Typewriter ads equated women playing piano with female typists and showed miniaturized women draped across various models. Lupton, *Mechanical Brides*, 44. One inventor conflated woman with machine symbolically when he "had his daughter pose with his mechanical 'baby' for an early *Scientific American* ad," Jennifer L. Fleissner. "The Stenographer's Stake in Dracula," in *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, eds. Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 68.
[82] Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers,* 21-22.

be dreaded."[83] Catalogs and advertisements dubbing female operators "type-writers," further conflated women's bodies with the machines.[84]

It was also believed that women could and even should be compensated less than their male counterparts.[85] A maximum salary of $900 was established for female workers under federal law in 1866, compared with an $1800 maximum for men.[86] Lower wages for women were sanctioned under the logic that men should always be the primary and, preferably, sole breadwinners for their households. This value was reflected in the Victorian belief in a "family wage" –one high enough that a man could support his family on it allowing his wife to stay home," and in many firms was insured by an employer-mandated "marriage bar," which forced women to retire once they wed. [87] Female workers were typically ineligible for promotion as well. All of these practices ensured that women in low-level jobs were no threat to men's prospects higher up the office food chain, and that any information about their employers that had passed through their hands would pass harmlessly out of the office when they left it. In short, female clerical workers were viewed in their work culture as temporary and marked as recipients rather than originators of clerical documents, representing for management a kind of receptacle for the information they processed.[88]

With few other options for employment, women who took jobs as clerical workers had no choice but to accept the work on these terms. Women entered the

[83] Ibid.
[84]A semantic confusion that "quickly bred executives' jokes like 'I'm writing this letter under great difficulty with my typewriter in my lap." Fleissner *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, 68.
[85] Davies, *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter*, 73.
[86] One librarian of congress summed up the appeal of women employees by saying, "they could give good service for less pay than the men on his staff, thus resulting in economy." Ibid.
[87] Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter,* 175.
[88] Ibid, 189-191.

office in increasing volume as the 20th century dawned, bringing an end to the utterly masculinized office culture of the previous century, and ushering in a new age in which technologies for mass communication were gendered female and clerical work was feminized. By 1908 the U.S. census reported nearly half a million women in largely clerical roles related to trade and transportation.[89] The percentage of female bookkeepers, cashiers and accountants in the United States rose from 2% in 1879 to 51.9% in 1930, while percentage of female stenographers and typists rose from 4.5% to 95.4% of the total workforce during the same period.[90]

Fears of femininity imperiled in the workplace quickly proved unfounded since, along with their biological differences, like men, women lugged culturally maintained notions gender to the office with them. When they took over clerical roles, expectations of those roles almost immediately expanded to include aspects of feminine performance and emotional labor and thus "sustained women's roles by extending their home functions to the job."[91] The melding of woman's domestic identity to her clerical one was aided and abetted by the principles of scientific management, which had found their way to the domestic sphere the early 20th century, supplanting the Cult of Domesticity's subjectivity and emotionality with rationality and efficiency. As Kathleen McHugh explains in *American Domesticity,* an increasingly consumerist society required middle-class, white women, the buyers

[89] Agents (10,468k), bookkeepers and accountants (72896) Clerks and copyists (81,000), merchants and dealers (retail) (33,825, packers and shippers (17052), saleswomen (142,265), stenographers and typewriters (85,086, telegraph and telephone (21980) other (16587). Total of 481,159. Mary A. Laselle and Katherine E. Wiley, *Vocations for Girls* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 103.
[90] Alba M. Edwards, *Comparative Occupation Statistics for the United States, 1870-1940*, Part of the Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 (Washington, D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1943, Tables 9 and 10, reprinted in: Davies, *Women's Place is at the Typewriter,* Ibid., 178-79.
[91] Alice Kessler Harris, *Out To Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 233-4.

for their households, to be more visible as symbols of leisure, while rendering their labor increasingly invisible.[92] Scientific management of the homemakers' domestic labor was presented as a means to minimize labor and maximize leisure time. But it was an awkward fit, since it required the homemaker to perform as both manager and domestic laborer simultaneously; mobilizing mechanization and engineering principles while neutralizing their threat to femininity through "her physical appearance, her clothing, and her 'good taste' in home styling," presenting an idealized home to visitors while disguising the work involved through "an inordinately delicate feminine appearance and manner."[93] Woman's identity in the home was nonetheless expanded to include household manager while she was simultaneously exhorted to continue in her other, more feminine roles of wife, mother, hostess and, increasingly, symbol of leisure.[94]

Office labor underwent the same makeover in reverse, and was imbued with the emotional and maternal values espoused by the 19th century cult of domesticity. Business journals and women's magazines alike reconceived the new, feminine office as a home,[95] and the new, female clerical worker as its mother, mistress, wife, caretaker, and hostess. Trade journals reported co-workers' claims that women brightened the office with femininity, raised the moral tone (inhibiting swearing and smoking through their presence), and generally shifting the atmosphere of the office to be more like that of the parlor in the domestic sphere.[96] Viewed in this light, the

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[92] Kathleen Anne McHugh, *American Domesticity: From How-To Manual to Hollywood Melodrama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 76.
[93] Ibid., 74-75.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Discussed in Fleissner, "The Stenographer's Stake in Dracula," *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, 70.
[96] Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers*, 60.

masculinized world of business could serve as a perfect training ground for marriage. The woman who distinguished herself as a stenographer or –if she rose to such lofty heights—a secretary increased her value to a future husband, whom she could serve as "a business companion as well as a wife and a social companion,"[97] while a bad worker, it was thought, would be "badly prepared to make home a happy or comfortable place if she is undisciplined or irresponsible."[98] Though great secretaries were thought to make great wives, the reverse was not true. In fact, a married woman was seen as a lesser candidate for the role of secretary since "her primary loyalty had already been given to one man," and her "attitude toward men who come to the office is not at all the same as that of an unmarried woman."[99] When hiring a secretary, employers were advised to "Select a woman who you think could be married at any time if she chose, but just for some reason does not."[100]

As in the home, the female worker in the office was increasingly called upon to render her labor invisible by virtue of feminine qualities. Secretarial guides advocated a style of service in which work was performed without "attracting attention" to itself, in which workers "do things without seeming to do them," and expanding the female workers' to-do list by insisting that, in addition to all of this, they maintain a "pleasant and cheerful environment."[101] A worker's labor was only acknowledged –and then negatively—if the worker left a trace of herself within completed tasks in the form of typos or other errors made in recording, storing and

[97] "Women's Sphere in the Business World," *The Phonographic World*, March 1902,14-23.
[98] Mrs. Frank Learned, "The Young Woman in Business," *Gregg Writer,* July 15, 1915, 656.
[99] Responses to questionnaires sent to directors of "welfare Departments in Industry" c. March/April, 1918, file 177, box 14, BVI Collection, Quoted in: Harris, *Out To Work*, 234.
[100] Ibid, 233-4. Harris further states that in the eyes of many at this time, "A secretary could be a mother or sweetheart, but not a wife" an idea that was "self-reinforcing, rewarding personality traits considered feminine" in the right way for business, and punishing others.
[101]Quoted in: *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, 83.

circulating other workers' information. Where 19th century male clerks were apprentices and even future managers, the fusing of characteristics of domestic servitude with those of office work left early 20th century female clerical workers much closer to domestic servants in terms of workplace status. If women's labor posed a threat to Victorian values, this marrying of clerical labor to traditionally feminine traits, qualities and behaviors was one way in which that threat was neutralized.[102]

In many ways, the role of private secretary would seem to defy clerical feminization, since the secretary was a manager in her own right, running her employer's office like the clerks in the early 1800's businesses. In a 1926 manual which also described such women's office jobs as "office girl" (a runner job), dictation machine operator, file clerk and stenographer, secretarial positions were painted as being by far the most desirable.[103] Vocational materials from the first half of the 20th century reflect a similar hierarchy with typist (who merely typed up documents and notes, probably in a typing pool) held in low regard, stenographer (who took dictation in face-to-face sessions with executives) only slightly higher, and secretaries (who provided support to executives) placed at the top under the rationalization that the work required more intelligence and personality. As one secretary summed up "A stenographer…is paid to do do; a secretary is paid to think."[104]

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[102] Women were also lauded for such feminine qualities as keeping confidences, care for detail, "feminine conscientiousness and the charm of [her] pleasant voice and manner." Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscrapers,* 61.
[103] Miriam Simons Leuck, *Fields of Work for Women* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926), 45-63
[104] Lynn Peril, *Swimming in the Steno Pool* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 4.

Private secretaries often oversaw other clerical workers in their employers' offices, so that self-direction and other more solidly managerial skills were still required for the work. Yet the field did feminize, first, because the potential for promotion from secretarial positions was removed or limited as with other clerical fields, and second because secretaries were subordinates who effectively shared their jobs with their employers. Female candidates were an obvious choice to replace exiting male workers in the eyes of their culture as well since, as Margery Davies states, "in a patriarchal society it was natural that a male employer should give orders to and receive services from his female private secretary," and that as work was divided between them, "the man should do all the creative, 'important' parts and the woman all the routine, 'unimportant' ones."[105] Where tension might arise from male secretaries wanting credit, promotion or increased respect in exchange for a job well done, under gender norms of the time a woman's subordinate position as a man's little helper was constructed as its own reward.

In fact, women were deemed such "natural" fits for the work that they were almost immediately expected to expand their roles to include more feminine service and performance characteristics. Women in secretarial roles were encouraged to cultivate "an obedient and slavish type of mind, rather than a vigorous and constructive one,'" since a successful secretary, it was said "thinks *with* her employer, thinks *for* her employer, thinks *of* her employer.'"[106] Female secretaries, it was believed, could put to use the "social gifts" that a woman might be called upon

[105] Davies, *Women's Place is at the Typewriter*, 159.
[106] Also cited as valued qualities were "tact, and even disposition, quick work, endurance, and a winning personality ranked high." Harris, *Out to Work*, 234.

to use in the home.[107] Instead of dinner party guests, the private secretary hosted her employer's business associates as they arrived for meetings. Instead of managing her home and family, she managed an office. Instead of supporting an actual mate, she supported the workplace mate she was tied to in his endeavors, and benefitted from his successes and took part in his failures for, in the words of one handbook "every man needs a woman's tenderness and her pride and faith in his ability, to buck him up in the fight he must make in these days of terrific competition."[108] One other particularly striking example of the seemingly endless comparisons of secretary to wife that piled up starting around the turn of the century was a double-column comparison of the similar traits possessed by housewives and secretaries, under the heading, "TO PRODUCE SATISFACTORY RESULTS, THE SECRETARY AS WELL AS THE HOSUEKEEPER HAS TO COMBINE SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE WITH HER PERSONAL TRAITS [capitalization theirs]," with parallels drawn between such housekeeping tasks as "understand the tastes of the family" and "understand the personal requirements of her employer," as well as listing "be patient with interruption," and know how to use the telephone courteously" listed in both columns.[109] The conflation of secretary and wife was so common that it eventually gave rise to the term "office wife" or "work wife," still in use today.

Clearly, though hardly routine or unskilled, secretarial work was feminized. In fact, it exemplifies the aspects of emotion work and feminine performance that so

[107] M. Mostyn Bird, *Women at Work: A Study of the Different Ways of Earning a Living Open to Women* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1911), 135-6.
[108] Elizabeth Hillard Ragan, "One Secretary as per Specifications," *Saturday Evening Post* December 12, 1931, 10.
[109] Frances Avery Faunce with Jeffrey Nichols, *Secretarial Efficiency,* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1939) 10.

many women's labor sectors took on after feminization. A 1935 article from *Fortune* is illustrative of the compulsory gendered roles women were assigned in the new feminized office:

> The male is the name on the door, the hat on the coat rack, and the smoke in the corner. But the male is not the office. The office is the competent women at the other end of his buzzer, the young ladies chanting his name monotonously into the mouthpieces of a kind of gutta-percha halter, the four girls in the glass coop pecking out his initials with pink fingernails…and the elegant miss in the reception room recognizing his friends and disposing of his antipathies with the pleased voice and impersonal eye of a presidential consort."[110]

Here, the language used to describe the office's conspicuous femininity invokes spaces of domestic, feminine servitude –the harem is vaguely suggested, and its animal kingdom counterpart, the chicken coop, is referred to directly. This passage is evidence of far more than a bygone era's sexism. It also demonstrates that for female office workers, success came through willingness to play *through* gender, not around it. Female employees were seen as women first, and workers second as employers expectations expanded to include the sorts of compulsory femininity and gendered performance that were beneficial to their businesses.

Female clerical workers began to appear in novels and other cultural works in the late 1800s and soon permeated popular culture, all but eliminating the male clerk character of the Victorian era. "Girl" typist or secretary heroines were symbols of the modern age at turn of the century.[111] As Arlene Young explains, the female typist was many things at once:

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[110] From *Fortune* (August 1935), quoted in: Fleissner, *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, 69.
[111] E.g. Gallon, *The Girl Behind the Keys*; Allen Grant, *Typewriter Girl*, (New York: Street and Smith Publishers, 1987).

> attractive, independent, and skilled at using the technology that transformed the nineteenth century business office into the twentieth-century one—the typewriter; she is the virtual embodiment of modernity, the savvy young careerwoman at home in the urban landscape, a type that will become more prevalent as the 20th century progresses."[112]

For some this character was also frightening, embodying fears of technology and gender in the new age. While positive, optimistic characterizations of "type-writer girls" were the genres stock and trade, so was the notion of the typewriter as mystifying, even supernatural, and often the means through which to contact the spirit world or enact nefarious plans.

Frequent conflation of woman and machine could also be found in the early 20th century's newest popular entertainment: motion pictures. Movies that concerned themselves with the dehumanizing nature of life in the city frequently featured images of scores of women typing mechanically in large, stark rooms, looking more like automatons in a factory than human beings.[113] This notion of woman-as-machine is carried through to depictions of other groups of feminized office workers, most notably that of the switchboard operator connecting calls with machine-like speed and efficiency, her tinny, disembodied voice emerging robotically at the other end of a telephone line.[114] Not long after images of female office workers began to appear in early American films, notions of "women's work" would find their way to Hollywood film production, threatening women's early

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[112] Arlene Young, preface to Gallon, *The Girl Behind the Keys*, 10.

[113] Much like images of tract housing, this may owe to stock and newsreel footage of the same, but examples can be found in films throughout the century, such as King Vidor's *The Crowd* (1928), Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), Billy Wilder's *The Apartment* (1960), and Collin Higgins' *9 to 5* (1980) to name a few.

[114] The 1958 film adaptation of *Auntie Mame* takes a different approach to the same idea of the inhumanity of work in crowded cities, by showing the titular character attempting to work a switchboard to earn money while down on her luck, only to fail because she cannot speak as quickly or monotonously as those operators around her, who continue working as if she's not there while she self-destructs. Morton DaCosta, Director, *Auntie Mame*, 1958.

success in the burgeoning movie industry's elite creative professions by relegating many to feminized labor sectors and suitably feminine roles within studio culture.

II. Paper Trail: Efficiency, Clerical Labor and the Female Movie Worker

> Women have only been allowed to encroach on areas that have limited power. We can type up our own lists and make a deal at the same time.
>
> – Jane Jenkins, Casting Director[1]

Introduction

However unjust the logic that drove the film's workplace sex segregation, when its work was done, women continued to play important roles in the motion picture industry. Their exclusion from high-status fields did not equate with their exclusion from film production entirely. Instead, if individual female movie makers were crucial shapers of the pre-feminized film industry from positions of creative and managerial importance, after feminization, groups of female movie workers were a cornerstone of movies' mass production. Without them, the studio "system" of creative production could not have developed in the same way or functioned on the same scale. This is not to say that women's participation from feminized sectors in an industry built on their low-cost backs is comparable with their previous participation at higher creative or managerial levels. Simply that female workers, so often confined and devalued under the studio system, should not suffer the same fate in academic film history by being considered only for what they *could not* do as casualties of unjust gender politics. Examining the types of work women *could* and did do in the wake of sex segregation reveals their agency –both in their own

[1] "Janet Hirshenson & Jane Jenkins (casting directors: under their expert eyes, aspirants go from glossies to glory.)." (*People*, Spring, 1991, v.35), 71.

careers and in their industry's history—and also serves to reframe an understanding of contemporary gendered labor.

How did essentialist views of women's labor shape and sanction film production practices? To answer this question, this chapter will trace women's entry into the American motion picture industry after the first years of the motion picture business, their relatively high level of participation in the hetero-social workspaces of early film production as it evolved in the 1900s and early 1910s, and the shift in their workplace identity caused by efficient reorganization of studios and attendant sex segregation and feminization of the late 1910s and the 1920s, when women's work began to be separated, classified and relocated (as such) within studios' logic. Under this logic, the largest feminized labor sector –that of clerical work—emerged as a key component of efficient mass production, facilitating expanded management and cost accounting, reducing the expansion's cost by virtue of the lower wages commanded by its workers, and absorbing mass film production's lowest status, most repetitive, least desirable forms of labor on the basis that they were "women's work."

Building on Janet Staiger's essential work on studio organization, this chapter lays further foundation for the ones that follow by providing a picture of the early film industry both before and after the arrival of full-blown efficiency. As it had in the industries described in Chapter 1, efficiency shifted the film industry away from more informal, holistic early work systems that benefitted the female movie maker by allowing them to move fluidly between different work sectors (presenting a kind of unintended or *latent feminism*), to a highly structured, rigid organizational model

in which management was geographically and conceptually separated from production. After the split, women were increasingly identified with neither creative/managerial specialties nor with production jobs, but instead with the clerical sector that connected the two (manifesting an *overt feminization* more in line with cultural and professional norms in other industries).

In his economic geography of Hollywood, Alan Scott argues that the cultural economies' "spatial systems of production, work and social life" are permeated with the signs and values of the particular era, culture and geography in which they operate and that these embedded symbologies function as feedback inputs to new rounds of cultural production.[2] The same is true of production culture as it feeds back into itself and its spaces become similarly inscribed by their society and culture. Thus, to understand what types of labor constituted "women's work" at studios, it is also necessary to understand where that work was located. Once introduced, sex segregation's gendered geography became embedded in studio culture, both geographically–written into maps and displayed in filmed promotional tours of studio lots—and ideologically—in the production workflow and hierarchy of studio production. Mapping women's absence and presence on studio lots explains much about the historical practices of feminized film production labor and feminization's continued impact on a contemporary industry that claims or aspires to be post-gender.

[2] Alan Scott, *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 7.

Pre-Efficient Hollywood as Latent Feminist Work System
Women in Early Film Production (1890-1909)

As Chapter 1 detailed, sex segregation was yet another way for scientific managers to categorize, simplify and specialize labor and thus manage costs, and the female worker's incorporation into American industry in the late 19th and early 20th century was rationalized in part under the logic of extending women's "natural" roles in homes to the workplace. This was true not only for the clerical sector (where women were deemed fit to work based on their supposedly nimbler fingers, their "small-brained" suitability for monotonous, repetitive work, and their inclination toward wifely or motherly support), but also the labor sectors related to women's domestic service, arts and crafts, and home manufacturing. All of this in addition to those pre-existing women's professions(e.g. teaching and nursing), designated as such based on "natural" healing and childcare roles. In the American film industry, I argue, feminization was guided by these categories of women's labor, and all "women's" film professions that have developed subsequently, from craft service to casting, emerged from them. However, unlike older industries (e.g. banking), whose operations existed without female workers long before they were first incorporated through these feminized categories, female movie workers entered the fledgling film industry, with its low cultural status,[3] before such notions of "women's work" began to be adopted in a formal, widespread manner and thus could be said to have predated film industry's feminization.

[3] This was because the fledgling film industry, stigmatized as illegitimate and trafficking in low, vulgar, popular entertainments, was more open to women, immigrants and marginalized groups who were themselves stigmatized and had been excluded from established major industries. Additionally, moving pictures had no longstanding organizational or business model and, like theatre and vaudeville, required at least some women to work as performers. For all of these reasons, women found (and even founded) their way to movie production before their labor was incorporated along more rigid, gender-based lines.

The motion picture business at the turn of the 20th century was in its nascent stages, a long way from its eventual status as major American industry.[4] The first films emerged from what Karen Ward Mahar calls "the highly masculinized settings of the inventor's laboratory," and new film and projection technology was gendered male just as still photography had been.[5] Far from being mass-produced, these earliest films were short, experimental efforts concerning non-fiction subject matter and carried out by a only a few employees. For example, *Edison Kinetoscope Record of a Sneeze* (1894) was a shot of one employee in Edison's Black Maria Studio (Fred Ott) filmed by another (inventor W.K.L. Dickson), with no script, actors, costumes, sets, etc.[6] *Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory* (1895) was shot on location by Louis Lumiere himself, and starred actual workers who were captured on film as they exited the factory.[7] Though it is impossible to verify that women –or clerical workers for that matter— were completely absent behind the camera

[4] Thomas Edison introduced his Kinetoscope peep show to the American public in 1893, and it took several more years to develop projection systems and longer still for storefront theatres to spring up and demand to spread.

[5] Early cameras, which often weighed hundreds of pounds and required several operators to be moved, were considered heavy machinery –early still photographers were even replaced as operators by mechanics from the machine shop. Requiring mastery of photographic technology, outdoor shooting was also mythologized by early photographers and cinematographers as a manly adventure that demanded "personal risks to turn out footage of patriotic appeals, safaris, boxing matches and other forms of manly derring-do. Karen Ward Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006)9-11, 14-15. Mahar and others have pointed out how notions of the photographer's bravery and rugged, adventurous spirit were carried through to motion picture photography and highlighted in early journals such as *American Cinematographer*, the journal of the American Cinematographer's Society. John T. Caldwell has written of the ASC's long and continuing tradition of self-mythology through cinematographers' stories of their adventures in *American Cinematographer.* Caldwell observes that contemporary trade tales tend to be framed as "against-all-odds" allegories or war stories, which functions to raise the status of cinematography from mere machine operator with requisite technical knowledge, and to serve as pedagogical model of the traits a great DP should possess. See: John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 39-41.

[6] The subjects of Edison's earliest films were often laboratory personnel, who were all male, "congruent with the homosocial world of the lab," and who were filmed with a male audience in mind. Female subjects were introduced, but they were famous dancers and performers, again, shot with an eye toward appealing to a male viewer. Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 32, 39.

[7] Anthony Slide, *Early American Cinema*, (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1970), 4.

during the production of all of these early motion pictures, the evidence that exists about seems to testify to their absence as a general rule.

Film technology improved rapidly between 1894 and 1904 and demand for longer and, eventually, narrative or "story" films increased. Productions became larger and more complex, yet production staffs were still quite small by the standards of even a few years later and ran under the direction of cameramen who controlled their own productions from start to finish.[8] Janet Staiger has likened this 'cameraman system of production' to the work system of an artisan or craftsman under whom all stages of conception and execution are unified—basically the work of one man.[9] Women's participation in film production, beyond the level of actor, remained limited to nonexistent under this system. However, outside of production, the developing movie business was less exclusive to male workers. Photographic manufacturing was already associated with women,[10] and as evidenced by predominantly female staff pictured in *Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory*, there was no shortage of female workers in the photographic plate factory that is the subject of the film. Similarly, though Edison's laboratories were male spaces, other detail work such as the hand-coloring of early Edison films was farmed out to the

[8] Though some were responsible to managers or owners, some of these cameramen were so autonomous that owned and managed their own film companies, and had invented their cameras themselves. Edwin S. Porter, who shot *The Life of An American Fireman* for Edison Co. in 1903 relied a partner to deal with actors, but led on all other "filmic issues," selecting subject matter, lighting, shooting, and editing himself. Musser. *Before the Nickelodeon*, 51.

[9] Staiger, Janet, in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, eds., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 116. Charles Musser finds Staiger's 'cameraman system' classification inaccurate when applied outside of a few one-shot, improvised skits and actualitees captured by roving cameramen. He characterizes the more complex films, especially narrative "story" films of the early 1900's as resulting from a more collaborative approach, typically involving two key individuals and guided by an informal exchange of ideas and sharing of roles, but that often extended beyond these individuals to members of the staff, "whose contributions would never be expected (or even tolerated) in later, more hierarchical or labor-specialized organizations."Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon,* 161.

[10] Emile Colston, "Female Employment in Photography," *Photographic News 32,* no. 1547 (April 27, 1888), 266. Cited in discussion of female photo workers in Mahar, *Women Filmmakers,* 19-21. Further discussion of photographic work at studios later in this chapter.

wives of the male workers.[11] Accounts of women retouchers and negative cutters at Biograph in 1897 and elsewhere into the teens indicates this became a widespread practice.[12] Women were also present as clerical workers in areas of the business related to but not falling directly within the realm of film production. Still photography had been around long enough to necessitate sales and business offices and, since motion picture film was manufactured by the same companies, so female secretaries and clerical workers were important parts of the film manufacturing business. Most notable among accounts of secretaries at photography companies in the 1890's, was that of Alice Guy Blaché, who, before her rise to prominence in the American film industry, worked as a secretary at Gaumont in 1895 when it began developing motion picture cameras.[13] Other early accounts include secretaries working in the offices of film financiers, exhibitioners or the manufacturers of photographic equipment. Women also worked in exhibition as theatre owners and ticket takers, something carried through from theatre, and as office workers in film sales, rental, and booking offices, which could not function without paper record keeping. [14]

Between 1904 and 1907, directors, often from the theatre, began to be employed, to stage films' increasingly complex, choreographed action before cameras. This 'director' system of production took its cues from the production of stage plays in which the director managed workers on set and had ultimate

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[11] Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, 41.
[12] "The Art of Moving Picture Photography," *Scientific American*, April 17, 1897, 248-50; ten years later this continuing practice is commonly described in trade journals, as in: "Selig's—The Great Moving Picture Plant of the West," *The Moving Picture World*, Volume 5: August 21, 1909, 247.
[13] *Alice Guy Blaché*: *Cinema Pioneer*, Joan Simon, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 5.
[14] Discussed in Mahar, *Women Filmmakers,* 29-34. See also: Lant, Antonia, "Introduction to Part Five," *The Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writing on the First Fifty Years of Cinema,* (London: Verso, 2006), 548-9. Ibid.

authority.[15] Where before there was no hierarchy among craftsmen (though there might be between management and craftsmen), now there was a pyramid of workers with the director sitting at the top,[16] yet formal planning was still virtually non-existent. Outlines were constructed from a basic plot broken into parts for filming, or from "the casual scenario," which might be as short as a few lines scribbled on scratch paper, and which might change subject to the judgment of the director.[17] This meant that "those who actually made the films were craftsmen,"[18] functioning as generalized experts rather than specialists in only a few tasks. Thus, there were more workers under this system, governed by a loose hierarchy and some basic planning, but, importantly for female film workers who entered the industry in the first decade of the 20th century, they were still generalists with a more holistic view of the process, executing it in a way that was not separated, standardized or centrally managed. This meant a relatively informal, small-group filmmaking process from start to finish.

At this time, growing film production companies employed some clerical workers as secretaries in their business offices, and for bookkeeping and other paperwork-related tasks. But these workers were not present on a large scale, and were mostly located away from physical production.[19] Edison's New Jersey factories employed female secretaries, as did other business offices of some growing film

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[15] The system "separated conception and execution of the work among at least director, cameraman and writer." Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*,117.
[16] For example, D.W. Griffith, who began his directing career in 1908 at Biograph, had a cameraman and a sometime staff to help supply stories and edit films. Robert Sklar, *Movie Made America*, (New York: Vintage, 1994), 52.
[17] From a half-dozen words to describe each scene, to "the more formal play," which contained descriptions of characters, emotions, entrances and exits and some dialog for guidance. Ibid,119.
[18]Ibid, 116-117.
[19] "Putting the Move in the Movies" recalls these early production companies' disorganized purchasing agents and accounting practices. *Saturday Evening Post*, 13 May 1916: P. 14-15, 96-98, 100-101.

companies.[20] Some early directors and stars hired private secretaries for correspondence and other areas of their businesses, though this practice was individualized, not standardized throughout companies.[21] As with accounting and billing departments that did exist near production, private secretaries weren't necessarily present on early sets. Alice Guy Blaché became a director when she "borrowed"[22] a camera prototype and shot what was "arguably the first fictional film."[23] Another early secretary made the leap to working in production was Jeanie Macpherson, who was hired by Cecil B. DeMille's at $25/week as a longhand stenographer before eventually becoming DeMille's longtime screenwriting collaborator.[24] These examples highlight the fact that, though clerical workers were hardly fixtures on film sets at this time, fluid boundaries existed between different areas of filmmaking as the industry began to grow, making it increasingly possible for women in nearby sectors to enter production.

During that first decade of the 20th century, movies emerged as a lucrative popular entertainment in that they could attract both male and female customers. Though the motion picture business was on its way to becoming a major industry, under the relatively artisanal systems of production still in place at various film companies at this time, production roles were not as strictly defined as in more

[20] "Manager Hyman Increases Staff," *MPW* v.22 (November 28, 1914), 1220.
[21] Anthony Slide discusses the practice in explaining how "on a more mundane level" "secretaries to stars and directors" and describes a *Photoplay* article in which female secretaries are the norm: "Among the ladies featured were Margaret Neff, secretary to Valentino; Josephine Chippo, secretary to child star Wesley Barry; Marjorie Jordan; secretary to Marshall Neilan; Nellie Bly Baker, secretary to Charlie Chaplin; and Gladys Rosson, secretary to Cecil B. DeMille.were important to early Hollywood. Slide, *Early American Cinema*, 153.
[22] Blaché got her start as a film director by borrowing a prototype of a movie camera. Joan Simon, "The Great Adventure," in *Alice Guy Blaché*: *Cinema Pioneer*, Joan Simon, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 5.
[23]Anthony Slide, *The Silent Feminists: America's First Women Directors* (London: Scarecrow, 1996), vii.
[24] According to: Charles Highham, *Cecil B. DeMille,* (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1973), 39. However, McPherson was writing elsewhere prior to this time, and the longhand position is not mentioned in other accounts of her "origins story" and so may have been a writing position at a secretary's title and pay grade. Alice Martin, "From 'Wop' Parts ot Bossing the Job," *Photoplay,* October, 1916, 95.

established, recently Taylorized industries. And since many motion picture directors, writers, and producers were recruited from theatre, they brought with them the tradition of "doubling in brass," a minstrel term meaning to carry out multiple jobs when production required it.[25] Also imported from the theatre was a lack of formal boundaries between men and women's labor, since, among other things, male and female workers (actors, artists, etc.) shared the same workspace. The result was that when a need presented itself during early film production, anyone and everyone was expected to pitch in regardless of their station or gender. Absent a standardized production process, female workers were expected to cultivate a holistic understanding of the business alongside their male counterparts.[26]

Female workers' accounts of their early experiences in the film industry give a sense of the lesser role played by gender at this time (relative to other industries) in determining which duties were suitable for which workers. When later director/producer Dorothy Arzner was first hired to do typing for William DeMille, she was instructed that she should use this vantage point to learn the whole business.[27] Similarly, when director/producer Lois Weber hired Frances Marion as an actor –something Marion had little interest in –Weber assured her that at most studios, "everyone did a little of everything,"[28] and that "she was offering her a

[25] Discussed in Mahar, *Women Filmmakers,* 38. The term was used by women to describe their mishmash of jobs in early film in a number of profiles, such as "Interviewing Helen Gregg" in which a stenography department head describes how she and others "doubled in brass" at early studios. *RKO Studio Club News* (February 1941), 8.
[26] Later, more gendered versions of doubling in brass at early Warners described by Alma Young in: Anthony Slide and Robert Gitt, "Interview with Alma Young," Margaret Herrick Library, 1977.
[27] Adela Rodgers St. Johns, "Get Me Dorothy Arzner!" Silver Screen v4.2 (December, 1933), 24; see also: Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary, *Women and the Cinema*, "Interview with Dorothy Arzner," New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977. 154-5.
[28] Not unlike contemporary employers' expectation that their employees multitask on the job.

position as her assistant and protégée where she would work in every stage of production, including in front of the camera."[29] Said Marion of this experience, "during the weeks that followed I skittered around the studio doing every kind of job I could find except emptying the garbage pails."[30] In her first job under Weber, she worked every stage of production, doing "whatever needed doing: writing press releases, moving furniture on the sets, painting backgrounds, and mastering the art of cutting film."[31] Marion also wrote dialog for extras, learned set and costume design, rode horses as a stunt double, "read scripts and dared suggest changes, and even hauled furniture around to make the sets more attractive. No one would have been surprised to see us sweeping the floor."[32] Writer Beulah Marie Dix, who began her career at Famous Players-Lasky, described filmmaking as "all very informal, in those early days. There were no unions. Anybody on the set did anything he or she was called upon to do. I've walked on as an extra, I've tended lights (I've never shifted scenery) and anybody not doing anything else wrote down the director's notes on the script."[33]

In this somewhat casual work system, a few women were able to infiltrate such masculinized fields as cinematography, location scouting, publicity and even studio management.[34] And many others who emerged as figures of creative and/or managerial importance in the early film industry did so through similar experiences, as evidenced by their ascension through the lower ranks of film companies to roles

[29] Cari Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down: Frances Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 37.
[30] Frances Marion, *Off With Their Heads: A Serio-Comic Tale of Hollywood* (New York: Macmillan, 1972)13.
[31] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 39.
[32] DeWitt Bodeen, *More From Hollywood* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1977), 95.
[33] Quoted in: Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), 276.
[34] Slide, *Early Women Directors*, 10.

as writers, directors, producers, and production company owners.[35] As Cari Beauchamp explains, women such as Cleo Madison, Lois Weber, Margaret Booth and Ann Bauchens found success because, "with few taking moviemaking seriously at the time, the doors were wide open to women. "[36] Unfortunately, in the late 1910's those doors would begin to swing shut. Ironically, the achievements of filmmakers like Weber and Marion likely helped to hasten the end of this fluid, heterosocial work environment. For, with each successful film they made, early female filmmakers increased the viability of movies as an industry by increasing consumer demand. Movies would soon follow in the footsteps of other American industries, down the path of scientific management, standardization and sex segregation. Women's agency in production would have to take place through increasingly small openings, and in increasingly feminized forms.

Scientific Management as Anti-Feminist Trojan Horse: Efficiency in Developing Systems of Production (1910-15)

Though the film industry had grown in profitability throughout the 1900's, production practices for maximizing that profitability had not developed at the same pace. The director system provided little in the way of advance planning, as a *Saturday Evening Post* article explained:

> Because each director had his own staff, he kept people on salary, even when they were not needed. Purchasing was erratic and so were

[35] An issue of *Photoplay* on how some of the most famous female writers in Hollywood got their starts is demonstrative of women's frequent ascension form the role of actress or secretary to that of writer or director at this time: "How Twelve Famous Women Scenario Writers Succeeded," *Photoplay* (August 1923): 31-5. High numbers of female directors and screenwriters (44 of the latter in 1918) discussed in: Slide, *Early Women Directors*, 10. Mark Garrett Cooper states that in 1917 more women directed films at Universal than any year since in: *Universal Women: Filmmaking and Industrial Change in Hollywood*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 87.

[36] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 11-12.

> set and costume accuracy. The property people took his oral suggestions and either borrowed props from other sets, sometimes surreptitiously (thus wreaking havoc on other units) or rented supplies which no one remembered to return. He had at least three purchasing agents at once, and bills did not always make their way to accounting. No one seemed to care about the cost.[37]

In this way, directors divided their attention between resource management and artistic direction, and did so practically from scratch for each new film. This production system had sufficed for the early 1900s, but the increased popularity of movie going made plain its inadequacy to the increased volume of production.

To expand and meet growing demand, motion picture companies courted infusions of outside capital from investment firms in the late teens. They met with limited success due to the perceived instability of the fledgling film industry and its production practices.[38] This perception was bolstered by the failure of two companies, Triangle and the World Film Corporation, which attracted investments early on.[39] Like others before it, the film industry looked to the concepts of rationalization, efficiency and scientific management, first to solve its growing pains through cost reduction, and later to secure investments by cultivating the stability Wall Street investors required through professionalization.[40]

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[37] "Putting the move in the movies," *The Saturday Evening Post*, May 15, 1916: 14-15, 96-98, 100-1.
[38] For example: "It was only a few years ago that the motion picture business was looked upon with something akin to contempt by other so-called legitimate businesses. We can now take pride in our vocation and the fact that we have established ourselves on a high plane in the business world."[38] "American Film Company Banquet," *MPW* v. 11.2 (January 13, 1912), 121.
[39] Janet Wasko, *Movies and Money* (New York: Ablex, 1982), 11-12.
[40] One discussion of professionalization invoked included all these emerging efficiency practices: "Not only is this an era of specialization, but the making of a big feature play requires the differentiation of several crafts. One man's distinctive occupation is that of providing structure. Another adorns with treatment, involving appropriate settings and interpretation. The interpreter, especially one of strong personality, is another factor. When visualization is negatively complete it is made positively so by a scientific department. These divisions of duty should be treated as such. The finished product is then made a profitable agent through the ability of those engaged in marketing it. The final screen projection is also a particular matter, but the main issue is that of specialization, without which the initial investment becomes a dangerous risk." Louis Reeves Harrison, "Why Some Features Fail," *MPW* vol 22.4 (October 24, 1914), 464.

Efficiency was discussed with increasing frequency in motion picture trade and fan publications in the late 1900s, alongside discussions of the expansion and relocation of many companies to Los Angeles. Though the adaptation of scientific management principles to the process of film production garnered the most attention, efficient reorganization of the industry's administrative and planning processes was evident as well. This first occurred in film manufacturing, distribution and exhibition, which incorporated more paper planning and record keeping because their business was sales, not creative production. An early example of efficiency's impact on the industry in terms of clerical work/workers appeared in a 1909 issue of *The Moving Picture World*, which described on the same page expansions at Chicago manufacturing company Essanay,[41] as well as those at a newly merged film exchange, the H&H Film Service Company.[42] The article dwelled mostly on the increased space and top-notch, up-to-date fixtures, furniture and other "conveniences" of the expanded firms, but also evoked efficiency in descriptions of new systems of organization. It was reported that the H&H film exchange, whose sales and rentals of films would have required a large office staff, was to implement a new office system which would "include all the best points of other systems in use," or in other words: best practices.[43]

Journalists reported, many with growing enthusiasm, on the adoption of efficiency techniques in film production, praising those who implemented them,

[41] "Essenay Expands," *The Moving Picture World*, (Volume 5: July 24, 1909), 126.
[42] "An Important Change in the Motion Picture Map," v.5 (July 24, 1909), 126.
[43] Ibid. Another example: "The matter of a comprehensive system of keeping records and reports was discussed, and F. W. Tracy of the Exclusive Film Company was called in. Mr. Tracy is an experienced accountant and has had considerable experience in devising working systems. He submitted and outline and volunteered his services to the Alliance." From"The National Independent Moving Picture Alliance" *MPW,* (November 13, 1909), 681.

calling for further systematization of the production process, and arguing they were rendered necessary by the increase in business volume and film length,[44] since "the making of a big feature play requires differentiation of several crafts."[45] This zeal for scientific management in motion picture production echoed the excitement with which efficiency had been greeted earlier in the 20th century. [46] For efficiency's true believers, its methods were a cure-all for an array of problems, industrial, economic, even socio-cultural. This explains its liberal application in so many areas of American life, from businesses to charitable organizations to private homes.[47] With that in mind, it is not surprising that early adopters applied efficiency principles so directly to the problem of film production despite the individualized nature of its end product.

By the 1910s, attempts at efficient production were underway at many firms, and scientific management elicited the same kind of evangelism it had in other industries from only journalists and managers alike. A 1913 profile entitled "Studio Efficiency," detailed the application of efficiency practices to motion pictures by early scientific producer-manager Wilbert Melville with much enthusiasm.[48] Dissenting

[44] For example, a new employee cited as working out "details of certain improvements in the routine work of the Kinemacolor Company of America, especially in the shipping department, the great increase in the volume of business being done rendering this systematization necessary. Mr. Powell, who was formerly in the banking business in Buffalo, where he gained much reputation as a system man, will have charge of the film service department," from: "Recruits for Kinemacolor Company," *MPW* (February 1, 1913);"As all departments of the American are now thoroughly systematized, President Hutchinson, who presided, called in turn upon various department heads for short talks," from: "American Film Company Banquet," *MPW* v. 11.2 (January 13, 1912), 121.

[45] Harrison, "Why Some Features Fail," 464.

[46] For Example, one editor says of the coming New Year, "May it see efficiency replacing inefficiency all down the line; may it see better business methods applied in every branch of our own industry," in "Facts and Comments," *MPW,* (January 5, 1918), 49. Efficiency bluster pervades the advertisement, "Triangle is operated on U.S. Railroad Principles," *MPW,* (Jan 26, 1918), 460.

[47] This has been seen again in more recent late 20th and early 21st century zeal for efficiency/profit-driving fads such as Six Sigma and, more broadly, market fundamentalism and use of digital technology as a cure-all for every problem, seen by adherents as applicable everywhere and anywhere for society's general improvement.

[48] "Studio Efficiency. Scientific Management as Applied to the Lubin Western Branch by Wilber Melville." *MPW,* v.17.6 (August 9, 1913), 624.

opinions of efficiency were also voiced, usually in vague editorials.[49] However, these opinion pieces were outweighed by the frequent, glowing, positive profiles of new "Efficiency Men."[50] The voices of dissent would multiply as the decade wore on, but even early on, they did hit upon on the problem inherent in efficiency as applied to creative production by questioning the invasion of art by commerce. In "Out of Quantity—Quality," Harry E. Aitken of Triangle studios stated that when the popularity of movies increased, "it was a physical impossibility to give good quality in large quantity," and predicted that when the quality of features sank low enough due to the high volume of production, those pictures which strove for quality would triumph and "the real quality will come into its own and prevail."[51]

Efficiency experts were equally preoccupied by the challenges to scientific management represented by the unique, creative, individuated nature of motion pictures' production. This was not an admission of defeat, by any means. On the contrary, the conflict between art and commerce was cited as another argument *for* efficiency. They protested (a bit too much) that they sought not to systematize creativity, but as F.M. Taylor explained, to systematize everything else in order to "let

[49] In late August, the magazine's editors voiced doubts about the growing practice stating: "the efficiency expert who is turned loose in the studio MUST BE A MOTION PICTURE MAN" or "he will play more hob with the product of the studio than an intoxicated camera man." In "The Question of Efficiency in the Studio." *Motography*, v. 14.9 (Auguest 28, 1915), 413. The journal a letter from F.M. Taylor (in which Taylor signed off "one of those terrible efficiency experts") as a rebuttal to the editorial, and, later the same year, allowed the author to expand on his argument in the same magazine. "The Efficiency Expert," *Motography* v.14.13 (September 25, 1915), 610; F.M. Taylor, "The Efficiency Man," *Motography* v14.20 (November 13, 1915), 1010.
[50] H.O. Stetchhan, "Efficiency in Studio Management," *Motography* v.14.9 (Auguest 21, 1915), 353; "Freuler Appoints Efficiency Men," *Motography* v.14.10 (September 4, 1915), 445.
[51]Harry Aiken, "Out of Quantity—Quality" *MPW* v.21.2 (July 11, 1914), 211. *Motography's* "The Question of Efficiency" echoed this sentiment, calling commercialism inside the studio "fatal," and adding "Make Gabrielle d'annunzio punch a time clock and pay him by the hour; install an accounting system in Sarah Bernhardt's boudoir; turn a business systematizer loose in a picture studio. There you make dynamic the ever latent antipathy and antagonism between art and commerce." *Motography v.*14.9 (August 28, 1915), 413.

the directors and actors work when the mood is upon them."[52] For Wilbert Melville, efficiency increased creative freedom by removing those particulars that are "ordinarily a handicap against the highest artistic results." [53] H.O. Davis, Universal's systems man, echoed this sentiment, saying that the director, freed of earthbound concerns by efficiency, was "able to think of his story, to dream of it."[54] Though not an efficiency expert, Epes Winthrop Sargent of *Moving Picture World* made this argument from the creative end (as a screenwriter), writing that producer and script served as a check against directors who spoil films by making them the same as they've made others, "owing to the belief that a director must not be interfered with."[55] However, practically in the same breath, these experts voiced desire for the creative control they claimed not to want by concluding that "the goal is perfect pictures," for which efficiency was necessary since "no man can produce them by himself."[56] This insistence that perfection was possible makes plain the managerial control sought through efficiency, and its inherent tension with individual directors' creative freedom since, to increase their control over the creative product, scientific managers would increasingly attempt manage the creative process indirectly. The result was that perhaps even more than factories mass-producing nuts and bolts, the form efficiency most often took in film production was paper.[57]

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[52] Taylor, F.M., "The Efficiency Man," *Motography* v.14.20 (November 13, 1915), 1010.
[53] "Studio Efficiency" *The Moving Picture World*. v.17.6 (August 9, 1913).624.
[54] "H.O. Davis Talks System," *MPW*, v. 28.7 (May 13, 1916), 1142).
[55] "The Earmark on the Film," *MPW* v.9.7 (Auguest 19, 1911), 521.
[56] H.O. Stetchhan, "Efficiency in Studio Management," *Motography,* v.14.8 (August 21, 1915), 353.
[57] Captain Leslie T. Peacocke,"Studio Conditions as I know them: Wanton Waste and Ignorant Efficiency, the Besettling Evils of Studio Managment," *Photoplay,* vol. 12.1, (June 1917).

At the Bison Company in 1912, Thomas Ince reportedly split his staff into two units.[58] Later reports on his Inceville and Culver City ("InceCity") studios described his impressive systematization of production to eliminate time wastage.[59] Ince achieved much of his efficiency through the circulation of what would become known as the continuity script to workers on specific productions, to be used as a blueprint for the film, dividing tasks among departments. In addition to a synopsis and a script with numbered scenes, continuity scripts included lists of intertitles, locations, characters and the actors playing them, as well as a cover page on which was printed the names of the film's writer, director, and the dates it was shot, shipped and released. This was, in other words, a paper record of "the entire production process for efficiency and waste control."[60] Wilbert Melville innovated at Lubin by creating an editorial department where scripts were prepared "in such shape that they can be produced as written." He also relocated buildings and departments related to production so that they were in close proximity to one another, and imported new systems of accounting that kept data "segregated for each picture" so that it was possible at any time what various productions cost.[61] H.O. Davis took similar measures in his reorganization of Universal, where cost was estimated before a scene was taken with the end result producing "a variation of but 5 per cent from the first estimate of cost."[62] Similar planning and record keeping systems were adopted by other companies to streamline operations, as were more rigid hierarchies, headed up

[58] "Doings at Los Angeles," *MPW* v.12 (June 8, 1912), 913.
[59] "Ince Talks of Culver City," *MPW* v.28.10 (June 3, 1916) 1697.
[60] Janet Staiger, "Dividing Labor for Production Control: Thomas Ince and the Rise of the Studio System," *Cinema Journal* v.18.2 (1979), 20.
[61] "Studio Efficiency," *MPW* v.17.6 (August 9, 1913), 624.
[62] "H.O. Davis Talks System," *MPW* v.28.7 (May 13, 1916), 1142.

by a manager-producers like Melville.[63] Davis threw the entire production workforce into the same stock company, "breaking up the system of each director having his own group of players."[64] Edison separated management from production by, as one announcement explained, "placing the destinies of that company in the hands of two." Where previously, director of production Horace G. Plimpton had spent his time "both on the 'floor' and at the business executive's desk," he would now focus "more on the purely business end of the studio management," while a newly appointed director general would "devote his entire time to supervising and generally directing all the productions."[65]

A month later, E.D. Horkheimer of the Balboa Company wrote in *Moving Picture World* about his methods of efficient studio management, which included keeping snapshot records of locations, stills of every set built, a card index of props and sets dressings, and a system that ensured that all of these assets, plus the less-predictable human ones, were in place, ready to shoot the minute conditions were right.[66] A former engineer, Horkheimer grounded his discussion with the disclaimer that much of pictures could not be rationalized "following a uniform method of production as the carshops do," since "artistic considerations must be allowed for."[67] However, he was less willing to make allowances for the sun, which, despite its unpredictability, had been effectively rationalized through a system that would not only ensure that all was ready if the sun did shine, but also predict when that would happen:

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[63] Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 134.
[64] "H.O. Davis Talks System," *MPW*, v.28.7 (May 13, 1916), 1142).
[65] "Edison Makes Important Changes," Motography v.14.1 (July 3, 1915), 15.
[66] Horkheimer, "Studio Management," 982.
[67] Ibid.

> "We have a number of innovations at Balboa which help us to get results. For instance, we get daily reports from the U.S. Weather Bureau. They are tabulated. Then, we have instruments of our own for independent observations. By striking an average between the two, we are right 99 percent of the time."[68]

Horkheimer's confidence that the sun could be brought to heel through scientific management actually points at efficiency's limitations with regard to filmmaking, a process that, like the weather, requires adaptability to make the best of the intervening variable of creative, group authorship. Early film efficiency sought to rationalize a process that involved or even required emotion and sentiment (e.g. in interpersonal collaboration, storytelling), as well as individual judgment and subjective interpretation (in artistic and creative sectors of production, as well as acquisition of properties). Interestingly, As Chapter 4 will detail, many of these unrationalizable qualities were also unofficial job requirements for the female secretaries who would become so important under efficiency. George Mitchell, attributed the continuity script to "[Thomas] Ince's desire for control over what [director Francis] Ford did."[69] This statement would seem to apply to many studio managers, based on their own descriptions. Even as the word "efficiency" started to acquire negative connotations later in the decade,[70] owners and managers of studios continued to seek control over an inherently uncontrollable creative process by

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Staiger, "Dividing Labor for Production Control," 20.

[70] One example of efficiency fatigue and backlash from 1918 exclaims: "'Efficiency! What great crimes have been committed in thy name.' Efficiency has been the cause of an epidemic in many industrial institutions. It has become a disease in the motion picture industry. Most of the efficiency done by so-called 'efficiency experts' is done on paper and not in actual results. It is largely theoretical and not practical. Many an efficient hard working employee has been supplanted by an 'efficiency quack,' who squandered money to experiment with his own ideas at the expense of the concern which employs him."; A humorous article on outdated terms from the same year states: "Beginning immediately you will please discontinue the use of the following words or expressions in the titles, subtitles or advertising of any and all Universal moving pictures"[….] "Efficiency Expert – Because there is no such animal." From "Changes in Universal's Press Department," *MPW* (March 23, 1918), 1689. See also: Peacocke, "Studio Conditions," 127.

instead controlling everything around this process. Many built entire, self-contained worlds to keep assets, workers and their practices under the highest degree of control, predicting the theme park simulacra many studios would eventually become. In these studios, a place would be designed for women as well.

Mapping Efficiency's Interests: Spatialization and/as Feminization (1915-mid-1920s)

Managerial oversight took fuller and more complete form as it began to be designed into purpose-built spaces of production in the 1910s and early 20s. At least, that was what studio managers claimed outwardly as the process was detailed in trade and fan magazine, which printed descriptions of studios so numerous and similar to one another that common tropes can be identified among them.[71] In some cases, different journals didn't just print similar stories on a news item, but identical ones. The identical indicates that these "reports" were in fact press releases authored by the studios themselves, demonstrating just how enmeshed presses and studios were at this time, and how symbiotic their functions.[72] Such discourse around the growing studios served the needs of the fan and trade magazines, filling out their pages with the sort of "sneak peaks" into the movie factories of the future that would interest their readership, whether it was made up of trade insiders keeping up with the latest developments or fans looking for a behind-the-scenes views. However,

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[71] Particularly in *Moving Picture World, Motography* and *Photoplay*. The fact that some of the same authors are responsible for several of these articles accounts for some of the similarity, but the similarity between reports in separate journals indicates studio influence in the form of tours, interviews and press releases. Such materials were in a sense co-authored by studios because they were written with studio cooperation, and using access, input, and photographs, provided by the studios.

[72] For examples see: "Chantes at Edison Studio," *Motography* v.14.18 (October 30, 1915), 892; "Changes at Edison Studio," *MPW* v.26.5 (October 30, 1915), 768.

perhaps even more, these barely-disguised press releases on companies' latest additions to their growing production plants served the studios, functioning as promotional material on a number of levels. Of course, some self-promotion was to be expected from film companies, but the aggressive self-confidence conveyed by the tone, style and volume of this self-promotion is such that it requires some unpacking, since its true value is not as a factual record (of who built what, when) but rather an anthropological one (of the real meaning of these activities for the people engaged in them).

In *Production Cultures*, John Caldwell unpacks DVD featurettes through a taxonomy which categorizes the bonus materials not by subject matter, but by the overall strategy or function they serve for the network, studio, or media makers who produced them.[73] Several of the categories he isolates, in particular *cross-promotion* and *authorial control,* also apply to these early promotional materials since, at their most basic, they advertised studios as fantastical film cities, building their brand and creating audience interest in the pictures that might issue forth from within their walls (i.e. cross-promoting all products). However, a larger function seems to have been a demonstration of ownership, control and mastery over the means of production, and therefore its creative products. For, in addition to showing that had exciting stars and future products, these studio materials performed a function of *reassurance*, demonstrating visually that the companies in question were not going anywhere. When viewed through this lens of reassurance (via displays of mastery and control) the materials yield intelligence about how studios were beginning to regard

[73] John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (London: Duke, 2008), Appendix 2.

women and other "unruly" elements not typically present at high levels in established industries.

To exhibitors, studios promoted themselves as growing, capable suppliers of enough new and diverse content to meet audience demand. To their competitors they showed themselves as competitive and hardy, while to the prospective Wall St. investors they needed to continue growing, the self-representation was meant to show them as professionalized, going concerns with efficient practices. All of this was especially necessary in these early years, when screenwriter William Goldman's famous advice that in Hollywood "nobody knows anything," was far truer than it would ever be again. Nobody really knew what they were doing, where the movies were going or who would be there in the future. Everyone, even the confident Horkheimers and Melvilles, seemed to protest too much, reassuring themselves that they would remain a part of Hollywood's landscape by literally changing the face of it. And so the robust self-image the presented through trade articles and the studio-authored maps, diagrams and approved photographs were as much as a sign of anxiety as of confidence. Since nobody knew anything, everyone pretended they did by self-assuredly appropriating strategies of industries that *were* established, incorporating efficiency methods and buying up as much of the supply chain and means of production as possible.[74] These were aspirational texts in which managers and owners fantasized total control.

All of this self-reassurance would have lasting consequences for the women whose success as important players in the early industry was possible precisely

[74] A common practice of the Robber Baron corporations such as Standard Oil, which used vertical *and* horizontal integration strategies to achieve near total domination over their industries.

because the fledgling business had no fixed sense of self, nor rigid notions of what (or more importantly, who) it should look like. That began to change as trade-circulated mapping schema, representations of studios' interests, worked, as Denis Wood has argued all maps do, to show "*this*, but not *that* …. this *way…*but not *the other*"[75] and thus embodied their authors biases and values.[76] Discourse around the building of studios speaks to studios' desire to be viewed as booming, professionalized concerns, and thus good investments. This was conveyed through presences (what was represented or emphasized), and absences (what was minimized, marginalized or left out). It shows the interests of efficiency itself (order, hierarchy, control, standardization) and how it was applied to everything and everyone at studios. Viewed in this light, the focus on mapping schema in trade and promotional materials can serve as evidence of the process of sex segregation. By showing where and how female workers were (or, more often, were not) represented in studio self-promotion, such maps serve as evidence where they were being relocated (and, thus, ordered and controlled) in these studios' evolving logic.

Early film "studios" were typically located in existing houses and mansions that were adapted for their purposes.[77] However, larger studios began to be built

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[75] Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (New York: Guildford, 1992), 1.
[76] Ibid., 24.
[77]"Kinematography in the United States," includes pictures of first studios in its history to-date of the industry include the first "studio" of Vitagraph (a house), and the Kalem House in Jacksonville above pictures of the present-day Vitagraph factory, complete with smokestacks, and Universal's west coast studio under construction." *MPW* (July 7, 1914), 177-9; "In the Field with Hotaling: Lubin Jacksonville Company Winters in a Boat Club House on the Banks of the St. John's," states that Albert Hotaling has found for his Florida shooting, "The best outdoor studio this side of Los Angeles," but based on the description given, it is also a house:" The house is about forty feet wide by sixty feet deep with a porch in front and one at the rear. On either side of the entrance is a comfortable private office and then one passes into a huge room forty by fifty and thirty feet high." *MPW* v.15.2 (January 12, 1913), 139; In 1913, when Lubin arrived in Los Angeles and Melville starts looking for a studio of its own, he finds "a plot of ground 100 by 400 feet in dimensions, with a find Old Colonial mansion facing Pasadena Avenue, which makes a comfortable and not unpretentious residence for Mr. Melville. At one side is a smaller dethatched building with serves as an office. Beyond that is a third building which is used as a

specifically for the purpose of moviemaking in the mid-1910s for greater production capacity. Published layouts and descriptions from the 1910s and early 20s document the creation of new departments to both specialize in and anticipate the various needs of expanded production, and their location near to related departments. Layouts are commonly explained through straight description of buildings by size, shape, purpose, and spatial relationship to other buildings and sectors of production. An early example of this can be found in Eugene Dengler's description of Selig's "Diamond-S" Plant in Chicago, in which the author, started mapping the space from the road ("you notice somewhere the sign "Selig Polyscope Company") before continuing into the main building ("You enter by the main office, which is on the first floor of the large building with the glass roof") indicating the layout and contents of each floor complete with square footage ("On the third floor is the studio proper, an enormous room, 179 by 80 feet, whose solid glass walls and roof rise two and a half stories above the floor") and special features of each room such as the air conditioning ("forced up from the basement through large ventilating funnels such as are seen on ships"), elevator ("10 by 20 feet….It is a monster elevator, looking large enough to carry a house; but it is dwarfed to a modest perspective by the proportions if the gigantic room in one corner of which it finds a place"), etc.[78] Many such descriptions were later published of west coast studios, including the following of the Lubin Coronado plant, which stated:

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billiard room and a club room in general by the members of the company. At one side of the real of the lot is a large barn which accommodates the horses and ponies purchased by the company, and four automobiles. At the other side a stage 50 by 60 feet has been built of steel and reinforced concrete." From: "Doings at Los Angeles," *MPW* v.15.6 (February 8, 1913), 560.

[78] Eugene Dengler, "The Wonders of the 'Diamond-S' Plant," *Motography* v.6.1 (July, 1911), 7-8.

> The studio occupies some eight acres of ground. The office and administration building at one end, is of most attractive and pleasing design and provides ample quarters for the office force and laboratories. At the other end of the grounds is a structure running along the edge of the bay, thirty by one hundred and fifty feet and four stories high, designed of old English Castle style architecture. Between these two buildings are the garage, stage, dressing rooms, store rooms, wardrobe room and the various miscellaneous buildings…. When the new buildings have been completed it is figured that ample provision will have been made for the production of every style of motion picture under the most favorable conditions for directors and actors. [79]

This description is so detailed and specific as to the spatial relationships that it might be possible to draw a more or less accurate map from it. Such was the case with many other descriptions of developing studios at this time.[80] A *Motography* report on the Ince Culver City studio was composed almost entirely of dimensions of buildings, including:

> six stages, each measuring 60 by 150 feet, administration building, 60 by 150 feet, receiving room, 80 by 90 feet, wardrobe room, 60 by 150 feet, paint shop, 50 by 60 feet, property room, 50 by 200 feet, factory and cutting room (with which will be incorporated the projecting rooms), 100 by 150 feet, garage, 90 by 90 feet, carpenter sho, 100 by 200 feet, scene deck, 100 by 190 feet, commissary, 100 by 150 feet, power plant, 40 by 75 feet, sewing room, 50 by 50 feet, blumbing shop, 30 by 40 feet, fire house, 25 by 60 feet, and 300 dressing rooms.[81]

The building of Universal City was detailed at different stages in several trade articles in 1914. In one, each building on the lot was described as representing "a different

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[79] Lubin Coronado Plant Opened," *MPW* v.26.2 (October 9, 1915), 236-7.
[80] For example, "There are two stages in the older section of the plant, on the east side of the street. Theese are 90 by 120 feet and 70 by 90 feet. In the latter there is a cement tank 18 by 35 feet in size and 8 feet 6 inches deep. […] The executive offices are in the center of the block, adjoining the stages. On the other side of the driveway dividing the property are developing and cutting rooms and the projection room," George Blaisdell, "Where the Laughs are Made," *MPW* v.25.2 (July 10, 1915), 233-4. See also: "In the Field with Hotalling," *MPW* v15.2 (January 9, 1913) 139; "Lubin Company Located," *MPW* v.15.6 (February 6, 1913).
[81] "Ince Studios to Move to Culver City: Will Occupy Twelve Acres," *Motography,* v.14.15 (October 9, 1915), 725. See Also: "Fine Art Studio Growing," *Motography*, v14.26 (December 25, 1915), 1323; "Where Laughs are Made: Something about the Home of the Famous Keystone Comedies," *MPW* v.25.2 (July 10, 1915), 235.

kind of usefulness,"[82] with edifices purpose-built so their interiors served one function or department (a "grand" administration building, employment agency, and hospitals and infirmaries with onsite doctors and nurses),[83] while exteriors doubled (and sometimes tripled and quadrupled) as films locations, with different facades on different sides of the same building.[84] As in other descriptions, this article implies the presence of clerical workers (many of whom, it can reasonably be assumed, were women) rather than referring to them directly.

Universal's collection of exterior sets is an extreme example of how studios served not only to house film production, but as warehouses for resources not in use. Motion picture assets –from props and cars to exteriors to, to some extent, human beings—were increasingly acquired and stored. This makes sense under the logic efficiency, which sought to turn all of production into a matter of asset and resource management. Still, an almost inefficient relish characterized published descriptions of the wealth of assets at various companies. Some articles were composed almost entirely of asset lists so long and detailed as to give the impression of studios containing everything under the sun, in a tone not unlike the newsreel from the opening of *Citizen Kane* with its exclamations over the array of exotic animals, buildings, art, etc., in Charles Foster Kane's Xanadu. The lists of assets communicated bounty, celebrating the studio-as-warehouse, where necessary tools for any eventuality had been acquired, organized and stored (and thus controlled). A report beginning "there is rapidly rising a city capable of accommodating 15,000 souls, built

[82] "Building Universal City" *MPW* v.22 (October 31, 1914), 49-50.
[83] George Blaisdell, "Universal Growing: President Carl Laemmle Talks of His Company's Big Plant at Fort Lee and of Universal City," *MPW* v.22.8 (November 21, 1914), 1050.
[84] "Building Universal City," *MPW* v.22.1 (October 31, 1914), 49-50.

for the express purpose of making motion pictures," arrayed Universal's bounty, or the potential for it, before the reader. The wardrobe department, it explained,

> "contains wardrobe of every conceivable sort, which is valued in the rough at about $35,000. In addition to this the costume shops which are nearby are so arranged that they are built to turn out the designs which are covered by every period of dress from the era of palm-leaf girdles to the present time. Its costume shop contains twenty electrically operated sewing machines and the work is supervised by one of the best costume designers obtainable, who is able to outfit a picture with the proper costumes demanded by any age."[85]

Here, the work itself (i.e. how the costumes are actually designed and whether they'll make movies better) was seemingly irrelevant, an afterthought, since the real challenge— acquiring of the right machines, workers, and supervisors—had already been met. A month later, the same author assented to Carl Laemmle's request that he (and the reader) see for himself "evidence furnished by the camera as to what we are doing in Universal City." Another list followed, this time of assets pictured in a pile of photographs he was reportedly shown by Laemmle himself:

> Just some of them, are a panoramic view of the rear end of the city, with mountains in the background; the arena, 70 by 100, where animal pictures are taken; circular training cage, where animals are accustomed to the camera; exterior and interior saddlery storeroom, where are kept every kind of saddle known; dog kennels, animal property room, corral, vehicle repair shop, mill and sculpture department, carpenter shop, hay barn, pumping station, scene loft, recreation room in cavalry barracks, winter and summer quarters of Charley, largest elephant in captivity; long row of dressing rooms and shower baths; offices of Superintendent Wallace Kerrigan and Technical Director Lee Lawson, property room, exterior and interior of arsenal, wherein are stored hundreds of rifles and much ammunition; dormitory in cavalry barracks, horse shoeing and blacksmith shop, shelter for vehicles, showing a stage coach and Roman chariots; cages for wolves, coyotes, Eskimo dogs, lions, leopards and monkeys; restaurant, of hollow tile, 50 by 100 feet; stalls for English saddle horses and corral of Indian ponies; hospital, cavalry

[85] "Building Universal City," *MPW*, v.22.1 (October 31, 1914), 50.

> barracks, summer and winter quarters for dromedaries, cowboy's bunkhouse; one structure containing employment agency, extras' dressing rooms, water tank and engine room, costume department and tailor's shop, wardrobe storage—this latter building is two stories, 81 by 105 feet, of reinforced concrete. And there are others."[86]

Thomas Ince's Inceville and others were profiled through similar lists,[87] many with a similar sense of luxuriousness about them, delighting in the plenitude of studio resources they represent. These lists displayed studios as large-scale and professionalized by demonstrating that they were already rich in assets. This was perhaps next best thing to total cost control since the lists left (or attempted to leave) little doubt that it was possible to obtain and put under managerial control anything and possibly everything that will ever be needed to construct a motion picture. In August 1915, it was even reported that Tom Ince, "determined to have a studio equipment absolutely independent of weather conditions" had taken Wilbert Melville's attempts at weather control a step further. Instead of putting the sun on a schedule, Ince had eliminated it as a necessity altogether via the installation of "a new big power plant at Inceville," which was itself described in list form as "two three-cylinder engines, each of 125 horsepower, two thirty-five-kilowatt direct-connected Westinghouse generators, and a four-panel marble switch board, together with all the numerous smaller accessories."[88] Not to be outdone by Ince's private sun, Paramount

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[86] George Blaisdell, "Universal Growing," *MPW,* v. 22.8 (November 21, 1914), 1050.

[87] One list of Ince buildings includes "the carpenter shop, garage, receiving room, projection room, commissary, heating plant, directors' headquarters, factory, hothouse, natatorium, stars' dressing apartments and four stages," not to mention "the pretentious administration building" and the already complete scene dock, wardrobe, dressing room and props buildings. "Tom Ince and Inceville,"*MPW* v.21.2 (July 11, 1914), 182; "Mecca of the Motion Picture," *MPW*, v.25.2 (July 10, 1915), 216. "Forty-Three Acres for Incity," *MPW* (February 12, 1916), 958. Later descriptions of the Inceville studio list its buildings again, but dwell especially on the exteriors, stating that "In addition to the inexhaustible supply of natural settings for exteriors, Inceville has a Spanish Mission, a Dutch village with a genuine canal, old windmill, etc.; a Japanese village with jinrikishas; an Irish village; a Canadian Village; an East Indain street and a Sioux camp." "Ince to Move to Culver City," *MPW* v. 26.2 (October 9, 1915), 272.

[88] "Los Aneles Letter," *MPW* v.25.8 (August 21, 1915), 1301.

would later purchase its own forest. The tract of timber land was described in a 1918 issue of *Photoplay* via a list of the assets used to control lumber through every stage of life, including:

> "a private sawmill and steamers to carry the material to San Pedro harbor. The carpenter shop, planning mill, and other equipment for making the timber into scenery are organized on a scientifically economical basis, so that no splinter is wasted. Every stick is taken care of, after a set has been dismantled; sawdust and shavings are stored for various uses. And when a piece of wood has done its bit, it goes to the furnace room and serves its purpose even in death.[89]

Assets were also arrayed through photos crammed in batches of 6-10 onto full-page profiles. Captions discussed these assets in terms of their variety and bounty, and studio buildings were discussed in terms of their vastness. *Motography* accompanied its ten-page article on the Lubin "Diamond-S" Plant with multiple lists of assets, as well as photo lineups of its well-known actors and unusual assets, such as "A Stable of Splendid Horses," a room filled with machines labeled "A corner of the Machine Shop," "'Old Hickory,' the $2,000 Coach," and Todders the elephant, "the biggest actor" at the studio (Fig. 2.1).[90] These photo arrays appeared regularly in the magazine by the mid-teens, names like "Some Views of Metro's Gigantic New Studio," or "Scenes in the New Lubin Studio at Coronado," often accompanying stories on studio construction or improvement (Figs. 2.2 – 2.4). Ownership, bounty, and scale were emphasized through such captions as "part of the drying room, which gives but a faint idea of the total space devoted to drying,"[91] "the massive gate impresses all who seek entrance to the studio and is useful besides,"[92] "A Partial View of the big studio,

[89] "From Forrest to Film," *Photoplay* v.13.5 (April 1918), 91.
[90] Eugene Dengler, "The Wonders of the 'Diamond-S' Plant," *Motography* v.6.1 (July, 1911), 7-19.
[91] "Scenes in Big Addition to Selig Studio," *Motography,* v.14.14 (October 2, 1915), 674.
[92] "Scenes in the New Lubin Studio at Coronado," *Motography,* v.14.15 (October 9, 1915), 728.

which does not even faintly indicate its immensity,"[93] and "one of the pretty vistas adjoining the studio. Scenery of every variety is to be found within walking distance."[94]

Finally, efficiency was mapped directly onto studio spaces through published maps, diagrams, panoramas and birds-eye views, which represented the totality of the assets within.[95] Maps, too, were drawn and discussed in terms of control and bounty. A June 1919 *Scientific American* feature on William Fox's plans for a new studio in New York was illustrated with a map of the three story factory that promised to solve the problem of movie companies various parts being "scattered through city suburbs and far out in the country—wherever land and space could be obtained, with "the executive offices downtown, the laboratories uptown, a workshop in the business district, a storehouse in the factory district, and a property room in any available spot."[96] The Fox studio was mapped via a 3-D drawing of the building, with sections removed so show their contents. It described departments in terms of the bounty they contained, such as as on the studio floor "where 100 scenes may be enacted at one time"[97] (Fig. 2.5).

Perhaps the best example of these maps appeared in a 1918 *Photoplay* article entitled "A Bird's-Eye view of the Lasky Studio," which not only listed assets, but illustrated their efficient segregation with a map (Fig. 2.6). The map displayed the

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[93] See: "Some Views of Metro's Gigantic New Studio," *Motography,* v.14.11 (September 11, 1915), 510.
[94] Ibid. *Moving Picture World* featured similar full-page photo-arrays of ten to fourteen photographs also aimed at showing of studios' vast ownership. [94] For Example, "Views of the New York Motion Picture Plant at Santa Ynez Canyon, California," *MPW,* v. 25.2 (July 10, 1915), 235.
[95] For example of panoramas, see: "Many Novelties in Studio Construction: Horseley Plant Unique," *Motography*, v. 14.7 (August 14, 1915), 291; "Balboa Studios are Still Growing," *Motography,* v. 14.18, 898. See also: "Birds Eye View of Keystone Plant," *MPW* v.25.2 (July 10, 1915), 235.
[96] "Motion Picture Colony Under One Roof," *Scientific American*, (June 21, 1919), 651.
[97] Ibid.

newly expanded studio's buildings grouped to function, declaring the layout an improvement over previous configurations in which "in the one building, actors were engaged, accounts kept, scenarios written and scenery built." The old multi-purpose building (marked 11 on the map), was now just the property receiving room, in a plant that now covered two city blocks and was paradise of assets controlled down to the inch:

> This is a veritable city within a city. So much is this the fact that it has been found necessary to organize a service department, to include supervision of police, fire, street cleaning, water and electrical departments. A patrol system of twenty men to guard against fire and theft, has been established. Every inch of the grounds is inspected every thirty minutes, day and night. The fire department has four chemical engines and the studio employees are given a fire drill twice a week. Few cities have such an efficient public safety department."[98]

Such materials attempted to convey studios autonomy and sovereignty, implying ownership of even human resources by listing and mapping workers along with other assets. At some studios, more explicit attempts were made to mark ownership and code labor. Balboa's marked its property by painting buildings green with white trim, and carrying the color scheme through the whole plant down to its correspondence, which was written in green ink on white stationary, then "mailed with the green one-cent balboa exposition stamp."[99] Used as a point of interest around which to promote the studio in publications like *Motography*, this uniform color scheme might also be viewed as an early form of integrated branding. World Pictures Studio color- coded members of its crew ("Stage Hands, blue. Property men and carpenters, white. Electricians, brown.") to eliminate the confusion that had

[98] "A Bird's Eye View of the Lasky Studio at Hollywood, California" *Photoplay* v.13.6 (May 1918), 30-31.
[99] "Babloa Studios are Still Growing," *Motography,* v.14.18 (October 30, 1915), 898.

previously arisen "when a director wanted a piece of furniture or prop removed from a set," and didn't know which crew members were property men ("all he has to do now is look for a man in white").[100] Employees at Famous Players were given color-coded badges that were later abandoned when they didn't show up under the lights on set.[101] Though many ultimately proved unwieldy, these measures as reported by the trades and fan magazines were nonetheless effective in communicating the studios' message that they were systematized and controlled from top to bottom.

The new studios divided production among units headed by directors and later producers.[102] Production labor became increasingly specialized, as jobs were separated to simplify and standardize their tasks, just as the departments had been separated geographically. The effect of these changes was that the studio manager, who sat atop this hierarchy, was elevated even further in status, as reflected in numerous profiles of studio managers.[103] Though they emphasized the minimal impact of systematization on the work of the director, (other than to free him to focus only on the creative process) these profiles could not hide the fact that the creative process, along with every other link in the chain of film production had changed: it was now routed through or sometimes relocated completely to a manager's office. The specific impact of such changes on women's labor and

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[100] "Here's Efficiency for You," *Motography,* v.19.15 (April 13, 1918), 707.
[101] Mahar, *Women Filmmakers,* 194-5,
[102] Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 124, 134.
[103] A profile of Milton E. Hoffman, studio manager at Famous Players-Lasky in 1918 states that "with the increasing activities" of his studio, "the position of studio manager has become of prime importance." "Milton E. Hoffman, Studio Manager," *MPW* v.35.11 (March 16, 1918), 1487. This sentiment was echoed in profiles of Melville, Horkheimer (both E.B and his brother H.M.) and H.O. Davis: "Studio Efficiency," *MPW*, v.17.6 (August 9, 1913), 624; "Studio Management" *MPW*, (October 30a, 1915), 982; H.O. Stechhan, "Efficiency in Studio Management," *Motography,* 14 (August 21, 1915), 353. "H.O. Davis Talks System," *MPW,* v.28.7 (May 13, 1916), 1142.

professional identities within film production begins to emerge in the following description of manager Milton Hoffman's workday:

> Arriving at his desk early in the morning, Hoffman disposes of the mass of letters and telegrams and telephone calls and makes a round of the studio, and confers with the chiefs. His travel through the studio is usually stopped every ten feet by someone with a query, but he goes through the day unruffled. He has systematized his organization so as to obtain a maximum of efficiency with a minimum of friction, but no man regards him as a "boss"—he is and prefers to be considered "one of the boys."

Though Hoffman professed himself to be "one of the boys," he likely spent much time in the company of women, given the clerical labor required to dispose of masses of letters, "confer with the chiefs," link separated departments and supervise every aspect of film production from a central hub. Increased paperwork was the only way to efficiently reroute the production process through such a rigid, hierarchical chain of command, and shift decision-making and resource management responsibilities from individual creative workers on separate productions to executive-managers without creating more of the dreaded "time wastage" that scientific managers deplored.

A Place for Every Girl and Every Girl in Her Place: (Re)Locating Women through and on Paper (1910s – early 20s)

Studio managers made few direct references in published interviews to the increases in paperwork generated by their cost accounting, indexing, record-keeping, centralization and other efficiency measures. They mentioned increases in

clerical staffs even less.[104] Similarly, trade reports seldom devoted space to clerical hirings, and referred only occasionally to actual clerical workers generally and female clerical workers specifically.[105] More often, these workers were noted indirectly or their presence was implied by descriptions of studio improvements.[106] And yet, clerical expansion was most certainly happening all over the film industry, not just at those companies who disclosed it to trade reporters, not just in business offices where films were sold and financed, but on studio lots where clerical staff were incorporated into film production. The process had clearly taken place by the early 1930s when studios' period of growth and development began to plateau and the burgeoning cluster of businesses had, as Alan Scott describes it, "evolved into the dense agglomerated complex of production activities that subsequently became known as 'classical Hollywood.'"[107] By that time, feminized labor sectors and notions of "women's work" were operating at all the studios.[108]

The clerical expansion of the 1910s and 20s led to the feminization of certain types work related to filmmaking and to "women's work" that has guided

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[104] Managers and editors likely (and probably rightly) presumed that the public would be interested in the more novel film properties and technology that were being put under their efficient control.

[105] A report on World Film Corporation's hiring of necessary office workers lists the branch's clerical employees by name, indicating men in that company's upper-level clerical positions such as auditing and sales, and women doing the lower level typing and correspondence: "Manager Hyman Increases Staff," *MPW* vol. 22.9 (November, 28, 1914). 1220; *Motography* reported that efficient reorganization of the Edison Studio in 1915, necessitated moving the office staff (including the female aid to the organization's new manager) to new offices at the studio to "centralize each department's work for greater efficiency," in "Changes at the Edison Studio," *Motography*, v. 14.18, October 30, 1915; see also: "Centaur Activities," *MPW* vol. 22.2, (October 10, 1914), 175.

[106] For example, this description specifies down to name, square footage, etc., except when it comes to office workers, who are glossed over: "Besides Mr. Melville and the office employees, this company comprises Henry King, Leading man; Irene Hunt, leading woman; Herbert Von Schiller, juvenile; Joseph Holland, heavy and characters; Henry Nevius, James McDonald, B.C. Brackett, J.J. Blackwell, camera man; L.L Coakley, scenic artist; Charles Huff, stage carpenter, and Leon Abrams, property man." In "Doings at Los Angeles," *MPW,* vol. 15.6 (February 8, 1913), 560.

[107] Scott, *On Hollywood*, 11. Scott describes his reconstruction of early Hollywood's economic geography as fraught due to gaps in the records of business activities at early production companies." I experienced similar difficulties trying to track the system of feminized film labor as it evolved at studios, and share his concern over making "fragile" characterizations based upon that evidence.

[108] Much evidence of this shift will be presented later in this chapter.

their subsequent participation in film production through the present. In other industries, increased paper led to the feminization of the clerical fields to lower the cost of expanded ranks of typists, clerks, etc. Thus, tracking the paperwork created by efficiency measures also reveals the logic of feminization as it arose at studios.

Each aspect of comprehensive managerial control enacted at studios expanded the various forms of planning, accounting, record keeping, and message circulation. This expansion occurred first at business offices of studios, where global cost and process control were initially attempted. In 1915, V.L.S.E., announced that it had partitioned its New York offices to separate each of the company's executive branches, including publicity and accounting (Fig. 2.7).[109] Each office included desks and chairs for multiple underlings, with modern equipment for clerical and record-keeping processes (file cabinets, inboxes, typewriters, stenographs, etc.). Though some of the offices were photographed without occupants, the picture of "The accountant's room," showcased staffers in their proper sex-segregated roles, with men at the accountants' desks and a woman at a typewriter.[110] Famous Players remade a New York riding academy to suit increased needs, renovating the front portion of the building, "to accommodate the executive and directorial staff of the film producers." While mechanical parts of the process (cutting, assembling of films, etc.,) were relocated to a new site, the new Lasky offices were devoted "simply to

[109] Just five weeks later the same publication reports that "The photographs recently taken of the executive offices of V.L.S.E have already gone into the archive of that company, as records of the past," since the organization had already outgrown them. "The Executive Offices of V.L.S.E. Inc.," *Motography,* v. 14.3 (July 17, 1915), 104. Partitions mentioned in a subsequent article on another expansion: "for with the varnish hardly dry on the office partitions, it has become necessary to start the work of tearing them down" in: "V.L.S.E. Offices Enlarged," *Motography*, v.14.9 (August 28, 1915), 395.

[110]; "The Executive Offices of V.L.S.E. Inc.," *Motography,* v. 14.3 (July 17, 1915), 104. "V.L.S.E. Offices Enlarged," *Motography*, v.14.9 (August 28, 1915), 395.

the staging of features and to the executive needs of the company,"[111] which had grown considerably. An ad for the company's former executive office space explains, "Though these offices are most excellent and desirable in every respect, the Lasky Feature Play Company, after occupying them only six months, MUST MOVE TO QUARTERS AT LEAST THREE TIMES LARGER."[112]

Growth of these office forces alone does not signify an increase in paper efficiency practices at film companies in general or studios in particular. Still, based on the rationales offered by managers, many expansions were made not simply to keep pace with a growing business, but also to increase efficiency via a more formal hierarchy, increased record-keeping and cost accounting. Formalization of hierarchy at one company was reported as "centralizing the authority in the home office" to replace an older system in which authority was more evenly distributed among managers of its various branches, and appointing efficiency experts to standardize best practices (from shipping practices to "the appearance of an office") across all branches.[113] Around the same time, the New York headquarters of the Triangle Film Corporation moved to a larger building to accommodate increased record-keeping ("ample space for a library of 25,000 pictures of players and 100,000 items of literary data," and cost accounting ("extensive auditing and finance department.")[114] Similarly, when Metro Pictures Corporation moved its New York offices "to provide

[111] "Famous Players Gets Durland Academy, Will convert 56th Street Structure into Studio at Once—Laboratories Located Elsewhere," *MPW,* vol. 26.2 (October 9, 1915), 238.
[112] "BEAUTIFUL NEW OFFICES TO SUBLET," *MPW,* vol. 26.3 (October 16, 1915), 519.
[113] "Freuler Appoints Efficiency Men," *Motography*, v. 14.10 (September 4, 1915), 445.
[114] "Triangle in New Brokaw Building," *MPW* v.26.5 (October 30, 1915), 766. See also: "General in Impressive New Home," *MPW* v.35.7 (February 16, 1918), 988, which states: "General Film Company's executive force is now comfortably settled in the commodious and modern offices [….]. Ample accommodations have been provided for the executive officers, board of directors, auditing department, general sales department, legal, publicity and accounting departments. The modern office plan is in use throughout, partitions having been eliminated for the sake of better lighting and ventilation."

room for an increase in the executive and clerical force," it centralized various planning and executive branches, previously on separate floors, in one suite, where each department had a separate office opening onto a shared "general reception and waiting room" with clerical and planning departments (such as publicity and mailing) adjoining one another on one side of the suite, and executive offices grouped together on another."[115] In 1913, a visitor from the West Coast Studios wrote at length in the studio's house organ of the impressive operations taking place largely on paper at the company's New York headquarters. In a series of features, the visitor described the office's ten trunk phone lines and fifty extensions (handled by Miss Lillian Clair McGuinness), its "one-hundred percent" efficient accounting department, stenographic department with a "galaxy of pretty girls" operating their machines at astounding speed, a complex scenario processing and purchasing system, a payroll system providing for 400 eastern and 2000 west coast employees, and three "boy" clerks filing 3000 pieces of paperwork each day. As Mark Garret Cooper points out in his description of the series, "with the sole exception of the unnamed head stenographer, these managers are all men and 'attractive young ladies' play the parts of their helpers."[116]

Paper-induced efficiency was soon adapted to the process of film production itself, through the centralization of clerical and paper-based departments at studios, where, "the general manager established a production office in the center of the studio lot, which became a clearing house for all departments."[117] Though buildings

[115] "Metro Moving Offices," *Motogrpahy,* v.14.26 (December 25, 1915), 1325.
[116] Cooper, *Universal Women*, 56-7, 63.
[117] Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 135.

were seldom named for the paper workers who resided there, the increased importance of written planning was made plain by its place in the published layouts of studios, which included buildings or floors specifically marked out for executives and administration. The 1911 profile of Selig's "Diamond-S" plant invoked centralization in its verbal mapping of the studio's main offices "where the administrative ends of the building are brought to a center," containing the offices of Selig with "his lieutenants" in the outer room, with "a private branch exchange telephone switchboard near the door; an elaborate time-clock system with pockets for four hundred employees against one wall; various desks, some for clerks and some for bosses."[118] The Thanhouser studio in New Rochelle relocated its administrative staff from the "factory end" of the plant to a new, purpose-built structure on the other side with "special rooms for the bookkeepers and stenographers," as well as "uniformed attendants" stationed at the gates.[119] At Lubin Coronado, offices and administration sat at one end of the lot, with production facilities at the other,[120] while centralization of management was engineered into the new Fox studio building "by authorities on factory and office construction, with a view to speed, economy and concentration in every possible phase of efficient motion-picture production, from filming to bookkeeping to stenography to starring."[121] The map of the Fox building discussed earlier duly depicts the

[118] Eugene Dengler, "The Wonders of the 'Diamond-S' Plant," *Motography*, v. 6.1 (July, 1911), 7-8.
[119] "Notes of the Trade," *MPW*, v.18.6 (November 8, 1913), p. 621.
[120] "Lubin Coronado Plant Opened," *MPW*, vol. 26.2 (October 9, 1915), 236-7. For similar mention of centralization of offices see also: Balboa Studios are Still Growing" *Motography,* v14.18 (October 30, 1915), 898.
[121] "Motion Picture Colony Under One Roof," *Scientific American*, (June 21, 1919), 651.

administrative offices "from which the activities of 63 branch offices covering the world are directed" as centralized on the lower floors at the front of the studio.[122]

Though the clerical buildup was only beginning in the late 1910s, its importance to production could already be seen in the 1918 Lasky map illustrated earlier in this chapter. Figure 2.8 shows the same map with shading to indicate sites of primarily paper-based processes.[123] Buildings used for planning, record keeping, and cost-accounting were centralized on the east (Front) side of the lot with the "5. Engaging department" (early employment office), "6. Executive offices, 7. Cecil B. deMille's office, 8. Directors' offices, 9. Scenario department," but also included a purchasing department on the other side of the lot nearer the craft departments for on-site cost accounting.[124] The map does not refer to the secretaries, stenographers and clerks who would also have occupied these buildings, but the location and existence of such paper-based departments indicates that Lasky's is no longer a production system involving only occasional paperwork by a purchasing clerk here and a private secretary there. Instead, the Lasky map displays production process organized by efficiency and paper.

At the same time, the literal marginalization of clerical work on the map indicates female workers' exclusion from creative and technical production specialties in a system that would increasingly associate them with typing, filing and answering phones. Wilbert Melville used a domestic metaphor when describing his plant's efficient layout, saying that:

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[122] Ibid.
[123] Modified in this way as an illustration to this discussion only and by this author only.
[124] "A Bird's Eye View of the Lasky Studio at Hollywood, California" *Photoplay* v.13.6 (May 1918), 30-31.

> the relative locations of buildings were determined with a view to the part they play in the general scheme. Those which are most used in connection with the work on the stage are grouped around the stage. To use a homely illustration, when a producer goes into the studio to make a scene he finds everything as conveniently placed for him as does a housekeeper in a well-planned kitchen. There is no time or effort wasted because the property room, for example, is located remote from the stage.[125]

Ironically, under the developing, informal system of sex segregation that Melville's convenient rearrangement entailed, a large portion of female workers at studios would now be nowhere near the "kitchen." On the Lasky map, a similar spatial separation can be observed between production and the management sectors clerical workers serviced, with various clerical buildings located together at the front of the studio near other paper processes. As Figure 2.8 indicates, clerical workers were further from the stage and related production sectors than they had been before, and thus further from production jobs. At other studios, clerical and production processes were set apart in much the same way.[126] Aside from female actors (Mary Pickford and Geraldine Farrar), the Lasky map neither described nor implied the presence major female creative figures. Studio founder Jesse L. Lasky, along with male creative figures Cecil B. DeMille, art director Wilfred Buckland are all mentioned by name. Female directors, producers and executives are largely absent from the descriptions, photo spreads, and other reports on new studios detailed earlier in this chapter, while evidence of male directors and executives abounds within them.

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[125] "Studio Efficiency," *MPW* vol. 17.6 (August 9, 1913), 624.

[126] For example, at Universal, the administration building was located on the eastern edge of the property, with laboratory, purchasing, city buildings such as the barber shop and drugstore. Production facilities were located at the east end, separated by a service road. M. Quadrelli, "Map of Universal City" circa 1914, Margaret Herrick Library, AMPAS.

Writing of imperialism, sociologist John Galtung notes the discrepancy between a culture's *center and periphery*, delineated by the politically dominant people or nations, as a form of *structural violence*.[127] Delicately adapted, these concepts aid an understanding of how studios' systemic shifts affected women's prospects. As studios worked to project an image of professionalism and control, they relocated women as a group within their developing self-concept, to more culturally acceptable roles. Increasingly, women were represented in such discourse not as individual creative or managerial figures, but as groups of "girls" who worked behind the scenes under male leaders. However influential or important some women still continued to be, women in general had been rooted to a specific, peripheral place at studios, literally and figuratively. This meant fewer and fewer young women would be encouraged to move fluidly between jobs as a means to learn the whole business as Frances Marion had, and that more and more female jobseekers would be directed toward rooms full of typewriters, with little notion of their ever moving beyond them, other than to be promoted to different typewriters as secretaries or "script girls." This structural narrowing of women's' prospects only took place when studio managers began to think about how they looked to the outside world.

Paper Efficiency:
The (Female) Clerical Worker and/as Production System (1910s-30s)

With administration buildings and central offices as clerical hubs, work at studios was organized and managed through the record keeping and filing systems

[127] John Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* v.8.2 (1971), 81-117.

and the ledgers mentioned by E.D. Horkheimer and his peers. As larger plants opened on the West Coast, onsite accounting was ramping up to match that of more impressive operations back east. Less than a year after the western visitor marveled over the efficiency of the New York office paper pushers and number crunchers, an Eastern visitor for the same house organ reported "some thirty bookkeepers scratching in unison," at the west coast studio, where there was now "not a single picture made" whose cost couldn't be accounted for by the penny.[128] Work in production departments was also organized with new indexing and filing systems. Systematizations of props,[129] wardrobe[130] and locations[131] were frequently

[128] "All Aboard for Universal City," *Universal Weekly* (January 17, 1914), 4-5, 32. Per Mark Garrett Cooper (p. 58), the same publication explains that the Hollywood facility houses central management, auditing, scenario, extras booking and purchasing departments.

[129] For example: "Each item in our property rooms—and there are a hundred thousand of them—is card-indexed so that it can be found on the instant. All props must be kept clean and dusted. We have a complete stock of furniture of all periods and rent nothing" in E.D. Horkheimer, "Studio Management," *MPW*, v.18.6 (October 30a, 1915), 982. Similar measures are reported by, among others, H.O. Davis, whose "first move" in reorganizing universal "was in the property room. Everything was indexed and a place provided for it" in "H.O. Davis Talks System," *MPW* v.28.7 (May 13, 1916), 1142. Later props department at universal described with "men" ever on alert, who don't wait until something is requested, but get "a line upon everything which they think will ever be used as a prop and enter it in their index" and when they find something that they might need someday "which isn't on their lists, they get all possible information concerning such an article, where it may be found at a moment's notice and put that information down in black and white on department files," so that there are two files, one with the 65,000 props owned and one with many more items than the first, and where they may be obtained. Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet V – Properties," *The Photodramatist* v.3.11 (April, 1922), 25-6.

[130] In "From Pen to Silversheet III: Costuming the players," Melvin M. Riddle describes the process of costuming from the an immense wardrobe collection at Paramount which "is systematically indeed and listed and the members of the department can lay their hands on any certain costume or article at any time within a moment's notice," *The Photodramatist* v.3.9 (February, 1922), 30. For records, paperwork and costumes see also: "Melville Ellis Engaged to Supervise Costumes of Stars," *Motography*, v. 14.8 (August 21, 1915).

[131] In addition to the stockpiling of exteriors described on the lots of Universal and Inceville earlier in this chapter, pictures of off-lot locations were snapped and indexed: "A 'location book' is kept for the assistance of directors. It contains snap-shots of all sorts of locations. By consulting this our producers can find the spot they need without unnecessary loss of time. We also keep on record a "still" of every set erected on the stag," in E.D. Horkheimer, "Studio Management," *MPW* v.18.6 (October 30a, 1915), 982.; Importance of building up "a system of records by means of which these sites or structures may be easily located once they have been found and used, the majority of the larger studios have made a special provision for a department for this purpose," with a "location director," who knows the country well, since "one of the secrets of his efficiency is his ability to keep ahead of the game, as it were, by observing and taking note during his travels, of sites which might perhaps be valuable as locations at some future time and later, when such sites are needed, to be able to find them quickly by reference to his records," in Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet IX: Hunting Locations," *The Photodramatist,* v.4.3 (August, 1922), 9.

discussed in mangers' reports on studio organization.[132] There was also the matter of circulating messages about assets, either acquired or prospective. A clerical worker would likely have been needed, for example, when Tom Ince hired Melville Ellis to supervise costuming from New York.[133]

Control through record-keeping was also adopted in newly differentiated planning departments such as casting. Chapter 5 will expand on the shift from stock companies to a different kind of "typage" through locating and putting talent under contract. This process was already underway by the mid-teens when it was reported that Lubin would "do away with the special company system" in which each director had his own group of actors, in favor of a single, large company from which casts could be planned for the entire studio, allowing "greater variety not only in the stories but in the acting."[134] Premier simplified its casting process via record keeping, hiring a theatrical agent "to carefully tabulate all valuable data with regard to types suitable for use in motion pictures."[135] Several years later, others seemed to have followed suit. Melvin Riddle, reporting on casting at Lasky's, described an "average casting office" as having "a very complete set of files which are cross indexed to save time and make them more practicable, with large cards for

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[132] These instances of record keeping in production departments may seem to contradict the trend toward centralization of records and paperwork. However, for obvious reasons (the size of indexed assets housed there) these forms of record-keeping had to take place on-site, though by the 1930s these sorts of record-keeping were often done by a clerical worker who was dispatched and paid out of a clerical hub such as stenography or accounting. See discussions of tracking systems in Chapter 3.

[133] This was managed by sending reports of "his findings, in the nature of numerous designs and patterns, together with an assortment of the costliest and handsomest gowns available," to be modified for Ince stars "Melville Ellis Engaged to Supervise Costumes of Stars," *Motography*, v.14.8 (August 21, 1915).

[134] "Changes at Lubinville: Hereafter Script Department to Take its Proper Place in the Scheme of Things," *MPW,* v.16.6 (May 24, 1913), 790.

[135] "Casting Efficiency," *MPW*, v.26.11 (December 11, 1915), 1985. Also in: "Premier Simplifies Casting," *Motography* v. 14.25 (December 11, 1915), 1284. On the difficulties of securing "an interview with the man whose final judgment would be the deciding one for the applicant" because of bad/inefficient minor employees "while a less efficient but persistent applicant gains the coveted part"

principal, freelance and extra players "with figures giving his or her height, weight and other physical data."[136] At the same time as it appointed its new scenario and casting department heads, Premier announced E.A. Levy as head of the publicity department, the third part of the process by which products were planned for eventual sale to the public.[137] Increasingly, selling films would involve the selling of stars, as well as the management of their relationship to the public.[138] In 1917, Essanay announced a new "Investigation Department" to determine what its sales organization, theatre owners and public wanted by tracking feedback from business partners, but also "to keep a record of critic's reviews, and secure all available information from the public direct," all for use in selecting subsequent projects and stars.[139] Processing fan mail, as well as generating interest and revenue through fan magazines' articles, ads and contests, were becoming parts of an increasingly systemized, paper-based process around publicizing films, stars and celebrity.

While record keeping and planning systems increased the amount of clerical labor required for production itself, efficient film production's biggest increase in paper came in those parts of the pre-production process related to the script. In the name of efficiency, the use of screenplays as blueprints for their films had been widely adopted and studios circulated continuity scripts to various departments to serve as their marching orders. This meant more copies of scripts, to be sure, but that was just the last step in a larger progression toward the finished screenplay-as-

[136] Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet VI – Casting the Characters," *The Photodramatist* v.3.12 (May, 1922), 25-6.
[137] "Levy Premier's Publicity Man," *MPW* v.26.11 (December 11, 1915), 1985.
[138] As demonstrated by photograph of Mary Pickford dwarfed by towers of fan mail with the caption "Mary mailing a few pictures of herself to her admirers" in "Your Name, Please?" *Photoplay* v.12.4 (September 1917), 107.
[139] "New Department Installed," *Motography* v.18.2 (July 14, 1917), 98.

blueprint, since before scripts could be circulated they had to be brought into existence through other paper processes. Where once directors or cameramen had supplied the plots for pictures, the increased volume of films being made and the increased sophistication of the viewer necessitated more and different stories, which studios acquired through a number of means. One of the most important of these was to solicit scripts from writers outside of the studios, both professional and amateur.[140] Scenarios solicited through the mail became a prime source of material for early studios, as evidenced by the discussion in columns such as *Moving Picture World's* "The Photoplaywright," and Captain Leslie T. Peacocke's regular articles on scenario writing for *Photoplay*, not to mention magazines such as *The Photodramatist* which were devoted to the subject. Based on this evidence, mail-in solicitations alone would have greatly increased clerical needs of studios in the 1910s. The number of submissions accepted for production was estimated at 1% in 1911, implying more than a few sets of eyes required for the task of weeding out those 99 out of 100 submitted scenarios that would not suit.[141]

Basic formatting standards and other submission techniques developed rapidly.[142] They were circulated in trades and fan magazines as aspiring scenarists

[140] As when World announced changes "in the cause of increased efficiency" in its scenario department, where henceforth,"the leading authors will be got in touch with and their work purchased" and that "Likewise, the work of all new authors will be given consideration." "World Makes Changes in Scenario Room," *MPW* v.35.10 (March 9, 1918), 1389.
[141] R.V.S., "Scenario Construction," *MPW* v.8.6 (February 11, 1911), 294.
[142] References to format and typing in "The Photoplaywright," *MPW* v.14.4 (October 26, 1912), 340, (handling of carbons, whether to hire a typist). In "Scenario Winners Are Being Chosen," it is stated that "Manuscripts must be typewritten on one side only of the paper. Manuscripts in long hand will not be read," stated in reference to a contest as per Ince: *Photoplay* v. 11.4 (March 1917), 124. By 1922 ad for Corona typewriters with the headline "All scenarios must be typewritten," appears as the first page in the March issue of *The Photodramatist*. v.3.10 (March 1922), 2.

attempted to professionalize along with the industry.[143] Advice on the writing and submission process was often accompanied by reassurances that submissions were indeed being read. Epes Winthrop Sargent addressed many columns in 1912 to letter- writers who complained either that they had received no response to work submitted, or that "it was not possible that the script could have been read and returned in so short a space of time."[144] And in 1913 he insisted that "in practically every studio the script is read by the editor or his assistant and not by the first and second reader. That sort of thing does not exist. Each script gets an editorial hearing"[145] Whether this was true at the time or not, more workers would surely have been needed to process submissions, and studios began to organize scenario workers into more rigid departmental hierarchies. Scenario editors worked under a department head, whose supervisory role sounded a lot like that of the studio manager in that, despite high volume, all material would "pass his careful scrutiny before receiving consideration."[146]

An editor's "careful scrutiny" was not all that was necessary to process growing piles of submitted material. A 1913 *Motography* feature by Mabel Condon (Fig. 2.9) detailing what happened to scenarios once they arrived at film companies (and Essenay in particular), portended the variety of workers that the process would eventually necessitate:

> on receipt of a scenario its prompt acknowledgment is made by the scenario editor in the way of the printed postcard with the name and

[143] R.V.S., "Scenario Construction," *MPW*, v.8.6 (February 11, 1911), 294; Epes Winthrop Sargent, "The Photoplaywrite," *MPW* v.15.1 (January 4, 1913), 44.
[144] "The Photoplaywrite," *MPW* v. 14.2, (October 12, 1912), 140; "The Photoplaywrite," *MPW* v.14.4 (October 26, 1912), 340.
[145] Epes Winthrop Sargent, "The Photoplaywrite," *MPW* v.15.1 (January 4, 1913), 44.
[146] "Premier Scenario Department," *MPW* v.26.11 (December 11, 1915), 1985.

> reference number on the manuscript inserted….The story is read by the scenario editor and, if rejected, is returned to the author with the enclosure indicated in form 3, the reason for its return being checked off with a pen or pencil mark as shown in the example. If the reason for the manuscript's rejection comes after the eighth reason listed, a postcard giving information, as in the following, is enclosed…. But, should the scenario be available, its tale is a happier one.[147]

The writer went on to describe the fate of a different script (which was neatly typed on nice paper and "the work of someone who had given scenarios and their making careful and valuable thought") detailing the process of the editor's "approval of it on a blank for that purpose, using a carbon sheet" before it was sent to a producer, who signed "his O.K. upon it who places his 'O.K' upon it, then returned the original to the scenario department, and kept a duplicate for himself. For the same script, approval was also sent to the writer on a form made for the purpose, with a copyright blank, etc. More forms were dedicated to the script's preparation for production. The director dictated "his version of the story to his stenographer," assigned a cast from his company, compiled a list of props, diagrammed each setting on another form created for the purpose. All of this paper was used in shooting the script, and when physical production was completed, a producer's copy was "typed on crisp white paper and the whole is given a backing of heavy blue paper which will be filed for possible future reference."[148] In addition to the script itself, six forms were used in the submission and planning process as described by Condon (and printed as illustrations with the feature). Clerical staff involved in this process would have included some or all of the following: (1) the worker(s) who logged in the scripts, assigned them reference numbers, and sent correspondence to rejected authors, (2)

[147] Mabel Condon, "What Happens to the Scenario," *Motography,* v.9.2 (March 1, 1913), 147-151.
[148] Ibid.

the worker(s) who generated the forms and filed and recorded them, (3) the stenographer who typed the director's dictated script, and (4) the worker(s) who created the finished "producer's script" document and filed it. Some of these clerical roles might have been performed by editorial staff, and some jobs might have been done by the same person, but at least one clerical worker is directly referenced, and even if only one worked in this department in 1913, given the expansion studios would undergo, this one would likely have multiplied. By 1919, one scenario editor indicated that this was the case and that the association of these clerical roles with women had grown stronger when he wrote that, with few exceptions, "the editorial department of a picture concern has an outer room where a staff of young women opens and files incoming mail and correspondence."[149]

Still more workers were needed to prepare scripts for production as recognition dawned that "one man cannot do it all, no matter how hard a worker he may be."[150] Previously there had been a "chaotic" process of "selection and reconstruction" of scripts for production, with directors choosing or writing their own scripts without the involvement of the script or scenario department.[151] The process at Lubin was reorganized in 1913 "along more modern lines" requiring collaboration with the script department, which would now serve the dual purposes of "handling the incoming scripts as has always been done," and also putting those scripts approved for production "in perfect technical shape before they are handed to the director for production." And where previously "the director would have

[149] A Scenario Editor, "The Movies: A Colossus That Totters," *Bookman* v.48.6, February 1919, 655.
[150] Captain Leslie T. Peacocke, "The Scenario Writer and the Director," *Photoplay,* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 111.
[151] Changes at Lubinville," *MPW,* v.16.6 (May 24, 1913), 790

revised and edited a script for production, the task would now be handled by trained staff writers whose literary qualifications and technical training in combination better fit them for the work…."[152] In this way, the Lubin scenario department would prepare "perfect working scripts" to be cast and approved before being "given a director who will make the production without departing from the lines laid down, though any suggestion from the director will be welcomed by the script department."[153] In 1917, Fox's scenario director wrote that his department would not only write scripts but, using a similar system, shepherd projects through production and exhibition, making "for an enormously increased efficiency in the production of perfect picture stories –perfect pictures and perfect stories—a harmonious fusion of the literary and the mechanical."[154] Announced around the same time were systems in which directors were assigned staff writers to collaborate in translating their vision of the story to the screen.[155] The title of "continuity writer" was given to the job of writing detailed shooting scripts of accepted scenarios that contained "all that is embodied in a production before thousands of dollars necessary to make it are appropriate."[156]

Jeanie McPherson, never one to mince words, gave a more frank assessment of the role continuity writing played in managing the creative process, calling it a means to "director-proof" a script by making it "so complete and perfect in all its

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[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] This is achieved, seemingly, by giving orders for specific scripts to the laboratory, then to the director (who is given a conception of the story), then following up by watching dailies and giving notes to the director, then the working with the editor, then, upon approval from "the head of the corporation, who reads all accepted scripts and sees all of the completed pictures," the plant and lab are given instructions and it is distributed. Jack G. Leo, "Greater Scenario Department," *MPW*, v.33.3 (July 21, 1917), 382.
[155] Captain Leslie T. Peacocke, "The Scenario Writer and the Director," *Photoplay* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 111.
[156] Captain Leslie T. Peacocke, "Logical Continuity," *Photoplay* v. 11.5 (April 1917), 111.

details that no one but a fool could go wrong in its direction." She argued on the other hand that a skilled director WANTS the complete, detailed script," because "his work is made easier by having all the details before him, to consider and use unless he has something better to substitute."[157] In addition to continuity writers, there were also some early dialog writers at this time in the silent era according to Frances Marion who, early on, was assigned to write "pertinent lines of dialog for extras" after lip-reading viewers noticed them talking about topics unrelated to the scene.[158] Writers in all their various forms (scenarists, continuity writers, dialog writers, not to mention the originators of adapted plays, books, etc.) were not the only authors of the finished scripts. In 1917, Universal's H.O. Davis described a system under which a script selected for production would be checked over and adjusted by at least three other supervisors (scenario, editorial, studio manager) before it was given to the director to make his pass through the material.[159]

"Readers" –members of the scenario department who read and reported on submissions— took up a position between clerical and editorial/writing sectors in their role of filtering incoming material for producers, directors and executives. Despite reassurances by "The Photoplaywright" and others that editors were reading all incoming drafts, it would hardly have been possible or cost-effective to hire more editors in proportion to the increases in submissions. Readers began to be mentioned more frequently in the 1910s in trade discussions of screenplay acquisition, and by the mid-teens were an accepted part of the process at many

[157] Jeanie McPherson, "Functions of the Continuity Writer," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Industry* v.3 (Los Angeles, Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 29.
[158] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down,* 38-39.
[159] H.O. Davis, "A Kitchener Among Cameras," *Photoplay* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 129-131, 147, 168-9.

firms.[160] This seems clear in a *Photoplay* report on the 26,000 submissions received for an Ince scenario contest. The author reassured entrants that scripts would be narrowed down by "staff of experienced scenario readers," then be indexed and cataloged by Ince experts who were "trained in the adaptation of non-studio-made scenarios" before the finalists were handed off to Ince himself. [161] The same issue reported on reading as a means to break in to screenwriting, staying that "a great many 'Readers' are also being employed by the various companies to assist the scenario editors."[162]

Of course, spec script submissions were not the only place material was acquired. Plays, books, and other published material were considered as well, whether they had been submitted or not. Universal's readers, H.O. Davis enthused, "systematically read all the fiction in the current magazines." Davis also noted that after readers processed material from all sources, a short synopsis and opinion attached, then passed on to a scenario editor, who culled 95%. The remaining 5% of submissions were sent to a second reader and the process repeated, before the remainder was sent by the editor, "with his recommendations for purchase, to the production manager, who has a reading staff of his own, trained to read manuscripts not only from the story standpoint, but from the production standpoint."[163] In 1921, Bradley King of the Ince scenario department observed that all large studios had

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[160] "The Photoplaywright" addresses correspondence schools that promise to give pupils positions "as reader or critic of picture plays," questioning their legitimacy. The legitimacy of the position of reader is not questioned: *MPW* v.14.4 (October 26, 1912), 340; Later that year it is reported in the same column that Joseph Brandt has stated that universal is ready to accept outside scripts and that all scripts sent previously "have been held for reading and that now they are settled in their new quarters in the Mecca building they will hurry to catch up with hack submissions and handle more promptly the incoming scripts." MPW 14.10
[161] "Scenario Winners Are Bing Chosen," *Photoplay*, v.11.4 (March 1917), 124.
[162] Captain Leslie T. Peacocke, "Enter—the Free Lance Writer," *Photoplay,* v.11.4 (March 1917), 97.
[163]H.O. Davis, "A Kitchener Among Cameras," *Photoplay* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 130.

readers, any of whom might arrive at work each day to find their desk piled high with "seventy original scenarios, besides a score of magazines and books, all shouting to be read—and all one day's offerings!" King went on to describe the reader's job, including its more clerical aspects, saying "we open all the envelopes, get ready our little cards for criticism and filing—then get busy, reading, writing criticism on rejection cards and pass anything worthwhile up to an editor."[164] By 1922, Kate Corbaley described an independent story service which had further systematized the process of sifting through published material by sending "daily to every studio, synopses of all novels and magazines published in America, as stage plays produced in English, and all worthy original scenarios." The same company, she reported, was "making a systematic search of old books, and old magazines" but even then could not find "enough good screen stories to supply the annual needs of one big producing organization![165]

The independent story service did not become an industry institution, most likely because it did not fit with the studios' interests in gathering labor (in this case, the readers) under one roof along with the written material they acquired. Eventually, as Tino Balio observes, "all the companies had story departments with large offices in New York, Hollywood, and Europe that systematically searched the literary marketplace and the stage" for material.[166] By the 1930s at the major studios, "Twenty-five thousand pieces of material, in the form of short stories, articles, books, typed scripts, galleys, and plays were not only read each year by

[164] Bradley King, "Some Studio Secrets," *The Photodramatist* v.3.1 (June 1921), 19.
[165] Kate Corbaley, "Duties and Qualifications of the Scenario Reader," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Business* v. 2 (Los Angeles: Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 61-2.
[166] Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise,* (Berkeley; University of Califorina Press, 1993), 99.

studio analysts but synopsized and distributed to the studio's thirty to fifty producers,"[167] and purchased based on their interest. At Fox, a bulletin was issued by department head Julian Johnson based on reader recommendations so that producers could read synopses and request the full material as necessary."[168] Harry Warner eventually rationalized his studio's acquisition process further by using the studio's gross income to determine the story department's budget, allocating .5% of that total for the purchase of material. This measure was intended to limit the buying of costly properties, and as a further check, he stipulated that all major story expenditures be approved by his brother, Jack, who in turn required not only the short synopsis but, "a sixteen-page treatment before saying yea or nay."[169]

Reference libraries were built in or around scenario departments and their contributions to the paper-based planning process were described in all their efficient glory in the mid-late 1910s at Selig,[170] Balboa,[171] and Universal.[172] Eventually, these libraries grew into their own separate-but-related research departments. Lasky's research department was in operation by the late teens,[173] and

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[167] Beth Day, *This Was Hollywood: An Affectionate History of Hollywood's Golden Years,* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 228.
[168] Ronald L. Davis, *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood's Big Studio System,* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993), 162.
[169] Tino Balio, *Grand Design*, 99.
[170] "Editor Kenneth Langley at his desk nearest the camera, and some assistants. The large reference library is part of the equipment of the office." –text accompanies picture of Selig Editorial Dept. in: Epes Winthrop Sargent, "The Photoplaywright" *MPW* v.14.1 (October 5, 1912), 38.
[171] "Here, too, is the great reference library of the scenario department, the largest we have seen at any picture establishment." From: "The Balboa Enterprise," *MPW* v.25.2 (July 10, 1915), 246.
[172] "If the picture is in a foreign atmosphere or is of a certain period, the script goes to the research library. The librarian selects plates and books, accurately describing the architecture, customs and costumes of that particular period or locality and places them at the disposal of the director, so that the sets may be accurate." H.O. Davis, "A Kitchener Among Cameras," *Photoplay* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 129-131, 147.
[173] "Such a department was founded in the Lasky studio some years ago by Mrs. Elizabeth McGaffey. […] She realized the necessity of a duly organized research unit, where records and files could be made and literature on such subjects stored. She made the suggestion, it was approved, and the new department was created, with Mrs. McGaffey as its head." Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet II – Architecture, decoration, research," *The Photodramatist* v.3.8 (January, 1922), 37.

MGM's in 1924.[174] By the 1930s, all the major studios had followed suit.[175] Like reading, research was ascribed increasing importance and related to efficiency by studio managers like Melvin Riddle, who proclaimed that library students visited the Lasky "fact storehouse" to study the impressive systematization of its "voluminous masses of matter, keyed by the files and indexes." The library's staff, he continued, provided details about historical pictures to scenario and design departments, and added to the studio's research collection, "continually working ahead, storing up data and preparing against possible emergencies."[176] MGM's research department, begun by production designer Cedric Gibbons, amassed "the largest of all movie studio research libraries" and held "20,000 books and 250,000 clippings cross-referenced on 80,000 index cards" in its buildings, with staff to research up to 300 queries a day.

In addition to collecting, filing and organizing materials such as "plates and books" for use by production in the manner of a typical librarian,[177] researchers also produced written and photographic background research for use in the writing of films. In some instances, research helped steer the direction of a project before it was written. Interesting historical facts turned up by the department about Francis Drake motivated Howard Koch to reshape *The Sea Hawk*, which he had been

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[174] Steven Bingen, Stephen X. Sylvester, and Michael Troyen, *M-G-M: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot* (Solana Beach, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2011), 59.It was a researcher, Natalie Bucknall, who persuaded Ronald Coleman that he must shave off his famed trademark mustache—or run the risk of its being an anachronism—for his role of Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*." Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 128-9.

[175] "Working hand in hand with the art and costume designers, a studio's research department authenticated the setting, costumes, and other elements of the *mise-en-scene* that reflected the period of the picture. To aid them, specialists in the research department organized reference libraries containing art history books, prints and illustrations, and art and architecture magazines." Balio, *Grand Design,* 87.

[176] Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet II – Architecture, decoration, research," *The Photodramatist* v.3.8 (January, 1922), 37.

[177] H.O. Davis, "A Kitchener Among Cameras," *Photoplay* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 130.

assigned to write as a typical formula adventure vehicle for Errol Flynn, into a more character-driven swashbuckler with increased substance and credibility[178] Researchers also created briefs on periods and locations for use in production. Sometimes referred to as "bibles," briefs outlined relevant information for departments.[179] These compilations were kept on hand in the library, with relevant sections circulated to various departments, and were sometimes used by publicity departments and even sent to New York offices "for use in exploiting the picture."[180] Like other departments related to planning and script, the research department's chief product was clerical output, the intermediate good (research documents) that was necessary for production of the final product (finished films) to go forward. Growing studio legal departments produced additional clerical output as they came to work more and more closely with writers, sometimes on a day-to-day or even page-to-page basis, to manage risk around plagiarism, copyright and libel.[181] Still more paper was created by the censorship departments that arose with the Production Code Administration as studios attempted to anticipate code violations and eliminate them before they were flagged by the Breen office.[182]

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[178] Howard Koch, *As Time Goes By: Memoirs of a Writer,* (New York: Harcourt, 1979), 43.
[179] Lasky research department described as "outlining the kind of furnishings or properties require, to be in keeping with certain periods or locales," in: Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet V – Properties," *The Photodramatist* v.3.11 (April, 1922), 25-6. Full process at Warners in 1940, including "bibles" described by Carl Milliken in: "Information Please," *Warner Club News* (June, 1940), p. 3.
[180] Carl Milliken, "Information Please," *Warner Club News* (June, 1940), p. 3.
[181] Samuel Marx discusses the MGM Legal Department's constant seeking of background on stories or scripts under fire in the courts in: *A Gaudy Spree: Literary Hollywood When the West Was Fun,* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 119. During the time that the initial screen play was being prepared, [legal and censorship] departments worked along with the writer, keeping up with day-to-day progress of the script. The moment a writer finished a single "side" of a script, a legal researcher snapped it up and began planting the necessary "intentional accuracies" in the names of all persons, places, and products." Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 237.
[182] "M-G-M, Paramount and Twentieth Century-Fox all employed their own code man, who served both as liaison between the studio and the Production Code office and checked the script for acceptability on the world market. Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 238.
Appointing of PCA liaisons and their involvement screening content at scripting phase in: Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 131-2, 135-6, 164-6.

These examples highlight the greater importance of the script within production but, more importantly for further discussion of women's labor identity in the studio system, the greater importance of paper in general and clerical output in specific. Under efficiency's rule, scenario departments' ranks swelled to include not just a departmental head and staff writers (including scenario writers to generate new material and continuity writers to shape it), but the script-clerical hybrid positions of reader and researcher, and the strictly clerical support staff that made their work possible: typists, stenographers, clerks and others to generate, copy, circulate and file scripted material and messages related to it. In publicity around the buildup of the scenario and related departments in the late 1910s and early 20s, stenographers and other clerical or hybrid positions were mentioned alongside writers with increasing regularity in descriptions of scenario department work. In "How to Write Movies" Anita Loos and John Emerson wrote for example that, "We find it easiest to dictate our scenarios—saves time and facilitates concentration on the work," adding "when you're under contract to turn out a new photoplay every two months you'll hire a stenographer, too."[183] Though this instance of freelance writers hiring freelance stenographers represents an ad-hoc use of clerical labor rather than systemic one, the article, which included a photograph of the stenographer taking dictation (Fig. 2.10), is noteworthy in that it treats stenographers as an accepted component of the writing process. In a

[183] Anita Loos and John Emerson, "How to Write Movies," *Photoplay* v.17.2 (February 1920), 50. Frances Marion also employed a secretary, claiming not to type, though she was occasionally seen doing so, because "the secretary was an audience whose reaction she could gauge." Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down,* 79.

description of Keystone's scenario department, the hiring of stenographers was described as a formalized company practice:

> The offices occupied by the Keystone scenario department are being completely renovated and refurbished. Soft carpets, easy chairs, subdued colors and every little detail of comfort and restfulness have been resorted to with the idea that the staff of writers will do better in the improved surroundings. A library of reference books, individual stenographers for each writer, dictating machines and other conveniences are combined in the most up-to-date scenario department in the west.[184]

Though disconcerting, the inclusion of stenographers with books and dictating machines in the list of "conveniences" is a clear indication of developing logic under which efficient scenarios required paper and the people and machines to process it. By the time Melvin Riddle wrote about the Lasky scenario department in 1921, it was common practice for studios to have devoted story and/or scenario departments, served by large staffs. In addition to its actual screenwriters, the Lasky scenario department's "very large personnel" included chief supervising director, a film editor "and his assistants," as well as "Miss F. M MacConnell, and the scenario reader, who reads and passes upon all outside contributions, several title writers, a number of scenario writers, and a host of clerical assistants, stenographers, cutters, etc., under the direction of Miss R. B. Miller, chief clerk."[185] The inclusion of clerical workers in this list of employees, necessitated by "the growing importance of the story in film production and the manner in which it is handled and prepared for further treatment," denotes their growing importance to the studio's efficient machine, which could not function adequately without "each cog working in perfect

[184] "Los Angeles Letter," *MPW* v.25.8 (August 21, 1915), 1301.
[185] Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet ," *The Photodramatist* v.3.7 (December, 1921), 15-17.

unison."[186] Indeed, clerical workers, in their circulation of clerical output, were not only cogs in the studio machine, but also its fuel.

Conclusion:

Melvin Riddle's reference to a female reader and chief clerk hint at the direction in which women's labor at studios was to be channeled and the workplace identity that would, more and more, limit their prospects there to work at typewriters or other women's machines. Eventually, studios' "intellectual" staffs would be further subdivided into four to five departments, including writers, story, research, reading, and script/stenography. The latter three would be characterized by their female workers, clerical aspects, and the atypical placement of women in many of their leadership positions.[187] Melvin Riddle also named nine female writers out of a total of 17 in his 1921 description of the Lasky scenario staff and certainly their continued success in screenwriting might account for their dominance of related "intellectual" departments. However, I contend that the inverse was true: women were able to continue their work in screenwriting, story, and the lesser stepchildren of reading, research and script (also known as secretarial/stenography) because (not in spite) of their association with typing and other aspects of clerical labor. This explains women's continued participation as writers long after their prospects as directors, producers, and executives evaporated. It also explains the typical female *domination* and *leadership* of reading,

[186] Ibid, 17.
[187] For example, At MGM in the 30s, Samuel Marx oversaw five departments as story editor: The secretarial research, reading, story and writing departments. He focused on story, of which he considered all other departments tributaries, and attributed much of his success to the "trio of women " who supervised research, reading and secretarial. Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 9-10, 91.

research and script departments, when women supervised story or writers' departments at the major studios far less frequently,[188] and rarely, if ever, held managerial roles in any other creative, craft and technical departments. It is no coincidence that the three script-related departments women dominated were ineligible for official acknowledgment for their contributions to the finished screenplay. Under the rules that evolved around onscreen crediting for a film's written material, members of the remaining scripting departments—writers and story department personnel—might receive "story by," "screenplay by," or "written by."[189] The common thread of clerical labor and lack of creative rewards links these script-related women's jobs with the feminization of script supervision, and the eventual feminization of publicity and casting in post-studio feminization, and the rise of film development (itself a combination of reading, research, story and secretarial work) as a women's field. Before that link can be explored, it is necessary to understand the process by which female movie workers became associated with clerical and other pre-existing categories of "women's work" as their workplace identity diverged more fully from that of the earlier film industry's powerful, creative female movie maker.

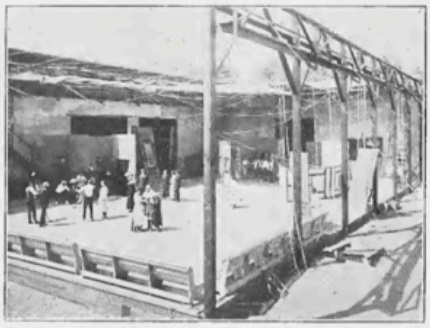
[188] One partial exception, Kate Corbaley, served as assistant to the story editor but according to Samuel Marx, who worked above her in the 1930s, she ran the department. She is discussed in depth in Chapter 5.
[189] Since 1941, the Writer's Guild of America has been the final arbiter of screen credit. Their designations are described in their Screen Credits Manual (downloadable at http://www.wga.org/subpage_writersresources.aspx?id=167). Explanation of basic credit designations can be found at http://www.imdb.com/partners/wga.

2.1 "The Wonders of the Diamond-S Plant (*Motography*, July, 1911)

Waiting for Their Cues; Looking Across the Yard. "Old Hickory," the $2,000 Coach. "Toddles," the Biggest Actor. Working Three Sets in the Studio. The Studio, Viewed from the Yard.

2.2 "Scenes in the Lubin Studio at Coronado" (*Motography,* October 9, 1915)

Scenes in the New Lubin Studio at Coronado



The big outdoor studio which gives space enough for the erection of many sets.

The scenic loft where talented artists paint the canvasses necessary for sets.

The carpenter shop is one of the busiest places in the entire plant.

The general offices are models of efficiency, equipped with latest devices.

The wardrobe room where are stored costumes of every variety and style.

This massive gate impresses all who seek entrance to the studio and is useful besides.

2.3 "Scenes in the Old Keystone Plant" (*The Moving Picture World,* July 10, 1915)

were just completing the repairs made necessary by the use of too much dynamite in an explosion scene. The bottom had been blown out. Of dressing rooms there are many; there have to be to accommodate the big force of 102 persons, which is the number on the Keystone pay roll. Each cameraman has his individual loading room.

The executive offices are in the center of the block, adjoining the stages. On the other side of the driveway dividing the property are the developing and cutting rooms and the projection room. In the latter Studio Manager George W. Stout, who showed the older site. Cottages that stood on the grounds have been moved closed together and converted into dressing rooms. Standing near the entrance were two automobiles, seemingly serviceable, awaiting destruction in a day or two. The Keystone company has contributed its share toward solving the problem of "What shall we do with our old automobiles?"

By the side of the big stage carpenters were completing a scene dock and paint room of a size sufficient to accommodate simultaneously four movable paint frames. In the top of the scene dock there will be a skylight 5 by 50. Two additional stages are con-

Scenes in Old and New Keystone Plants, at Los Angeles

World man over the big establishment, has just installed a Baird projector, with its big magazine capable of carrying from five to six thousand feet.

One of the chief points of interest in and around the studio is the breakaway shop. It is here that are produced the fragile articles which when smashed over more or less tender craniums are designed to do as little damage as possible. There are policemen's club's dishes, pitchers, flower pots, vases of many shapes, and a lot of other articles. At the northeast corner of the older property there is a bit of street that very likely is one of the best known thoroughfares in the world—and also very likely it bears no name. It has figured in numberless Keystone comedies, and to the eye of the picturegoer is as familiar as are two or three of the little Los Angeles lakes.

The newly acquired plot on the west side is 220 by 170 feet, approximately of the same dimensions as the templated, one daylight of the same size as the present one and an electrically lighted and glass inclosed one 60 by 100 feet in size. At the street end of the present stage there will be a two-story dressing room. The city authorities are putting in special hydrants that water facilities may be bettered and are planning to pave the street out front; in fact, they are showing a desire to do their share in furthering the interests of this representative of an industry which seems to be the city's greatest.

The diffusers are at a height of 18 feet. The floor of the new stage is of ballroom quality. It was filled with sets on the day of the visit. Mr. Sennett was busily engaged in directing a scene of a production in which Raymond Hitchcock is featured. The comedian was being initiated into the mysteries of the camera —he was being taught to walk backward that he might go forward. "Just a bit of trick work," ex-

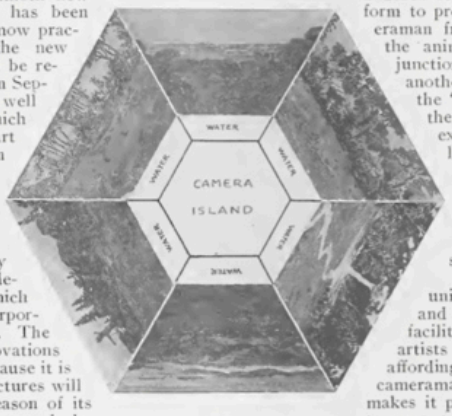
2.4 "Many Novelties in Studio Construction" (*Motography*, August 14, 1915)

Many Novelties in Studio Construction

HORSLEY PLANT UNIQUE

COINCIDENT with the alliance of David Horsley with the Mutual Film Corporation, under the terms of which all productions of the Centaur Film Company and the Bostock Jungle and Film Company, are to be released under the "Winged Clock," comes news that the mammoth new plant which Mr. Horsley has been building in Los Angeles is now practically complete. Here the new animal pictures, which will be released through the Mutual in September, will be produced, as well as many of the comedies, which will form no unimportant part of the Horsley contribution to the Mutual program.

The new plant, which covers a space of five acres in all located at Main and Washington streets, Los Angeles, contains many unique and entirely novel devices and appliances, which never before have been incorporated in studio construction. The most important of the innovations is the "arena," so called because it is there that all the animal pictures will be taken and which, by reason of its originality and construction and design, may be rated as among the most important of Mr. Horsley's numerous inventions.



Among the other devices and appliances installed in the Los Angeles studios, all of which were worked out by Mr. Horsley, are twelve modern dressing rooms which have a combination of 144 bungalow fronts of different design for exterior settings; a property room measuring 70x140 feet, spanned by sixteen massive steel trusses, the roofing and diffusers of which are operated by shaft gearings; and a stage large enough to permit six companies to work at the same time without interfering with each other.

Specially notable among the many new devices incorporated in the Los Angeles plant is the "arena," where, by means of a unique arrangement in the plan of construction, the wild beasts of the jungle can perform on the same stage with the human actors without the slightest danger to the latter.

The diagram shows the "arena" is hexagonal in shape. It measures 144 x 144 feet in area and is surrounded by walls twenty feet in height. In the center, at the apex of the six triangles, is a concrete platform on which the camera is mounted. Around the platform, or "island," is a moat six feet wide and four feet deep, which is constantly filled with water. Iron bars, a dozen feet high, surround the platform to protect the director and cameraman from any sudden attack by the animal or animals. At each junction of the different triangles, another row of bars extends from the "island" across the moat to the wall behind. These bars extend only a few inches below the water, when crossing the moat, so that all a performer has to do to escape a threatened attack is to dive into the water and come out in the adjoining section of the "arena."

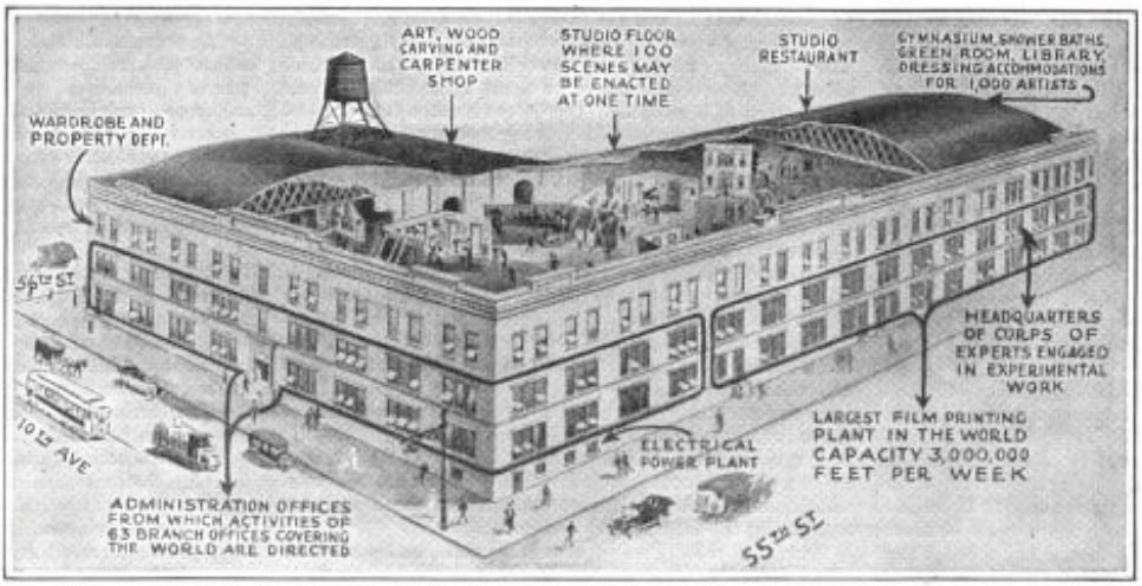
The advantages of this unique construction are many and obvious. Not only does it facilitate the escape of the human artists in time of peril, as well as affording complete protection for the cameraman and director, but it also makes it possible for the stage hands to remove one scene and erect another without interfering with the direction of the production, thus minimizing the delays which hitherto have been a serious factor in the manufacture of animal pictures.

Interesting and novel are the dressing rooms proper, twelve in number, including the office of the chief director. These rooms, like the "arena," and other modern devices and appliances employed in the studio, were designed and worked out by Mr. Horsley. The fronts of these dressing rooms have been built to represent bungalow fronts. They are all of different design, no two doors or windows alike, and have a combination of 144 fronts of different design for exterior work.

The property room, one of the largest and most modern on the Pacific coast, measures 70x140 feet. It is spanned by sixteen massive steel girders which carry the diffusers and canvas roof, which are operated by means of geared shafting. The laboratory, laid out by Mr. Horsley, is equipped with all the modern

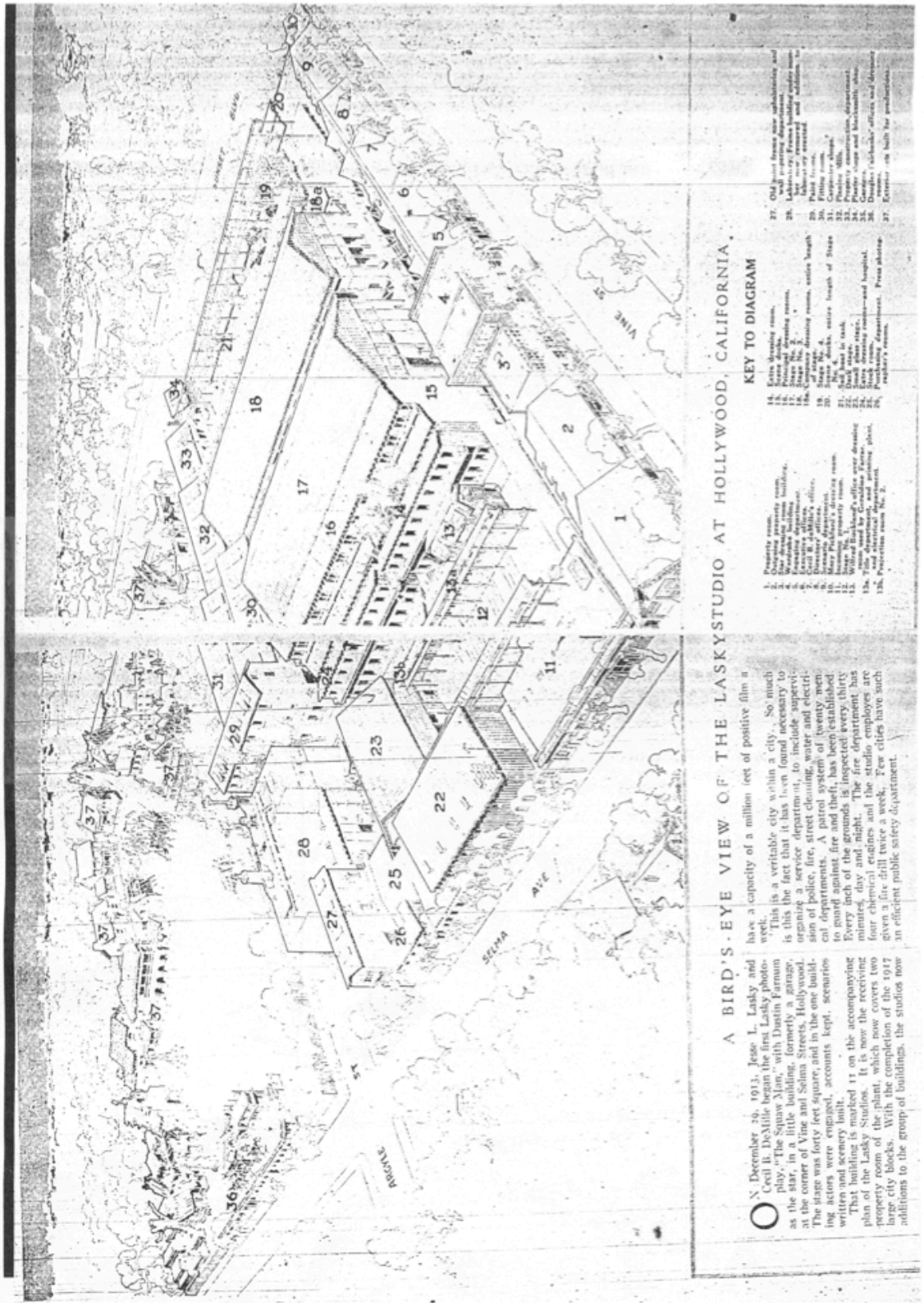
Panoramic view of Horsley plant.

2.5 “Motion Picture Colony Under One Roof” (*Scientific American*, June 21, 1919)



An entire motion-picture colony will be housed in this unusual building which is now being rushed to completion in New York City

2.6 “A Birds-Eye View of the Lasky Studio” (*Photoplay*, May 1918)



A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE LASKY STUDIO AT HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA.

KEY TO DIAGRAM

ON December 29, 1913, Jesse L. Lasky and Cecil B. DeMille began the first Lasky photoplay, "The Squaw Man," with Dustin Farnum as the star, in a little building, formerly a garage, at the corner of Vine and Selma Streets, Hollywood. The stage was forty feet square, and in the one building actors were engaged, accounts kept, scenarios written and scenery built.

That building is marked 11 on the accompanying plan of the Lasky Studios. It is now the receiving property room of the plant, which now covers two large city blocks. With the completion of the 1917 additions to the group of buildings, the studios now have a capacity of a million feet of positive film a week.

This is a veritable city within a city. So much is this the fact that it has been found necessary to organize a service department, to include supervision of police, fire, street cleaning, water and electrical departments. A patrol system of twenty men to guard against fire and theft, has been established. Every inch of the grounds is inspected every thirty minutes, day and night. The fire department has four chemical engines and the studio employes are given a fire drill twice a week. Few cities have such an efficient public safety department.

2.7 "The Executive Offices of V.L.S.E." (*Motography*, July 17, 1915)

The Executive Offices of V. L. S. E. Inc.

The general manager's office.

The assistant general manager's office.

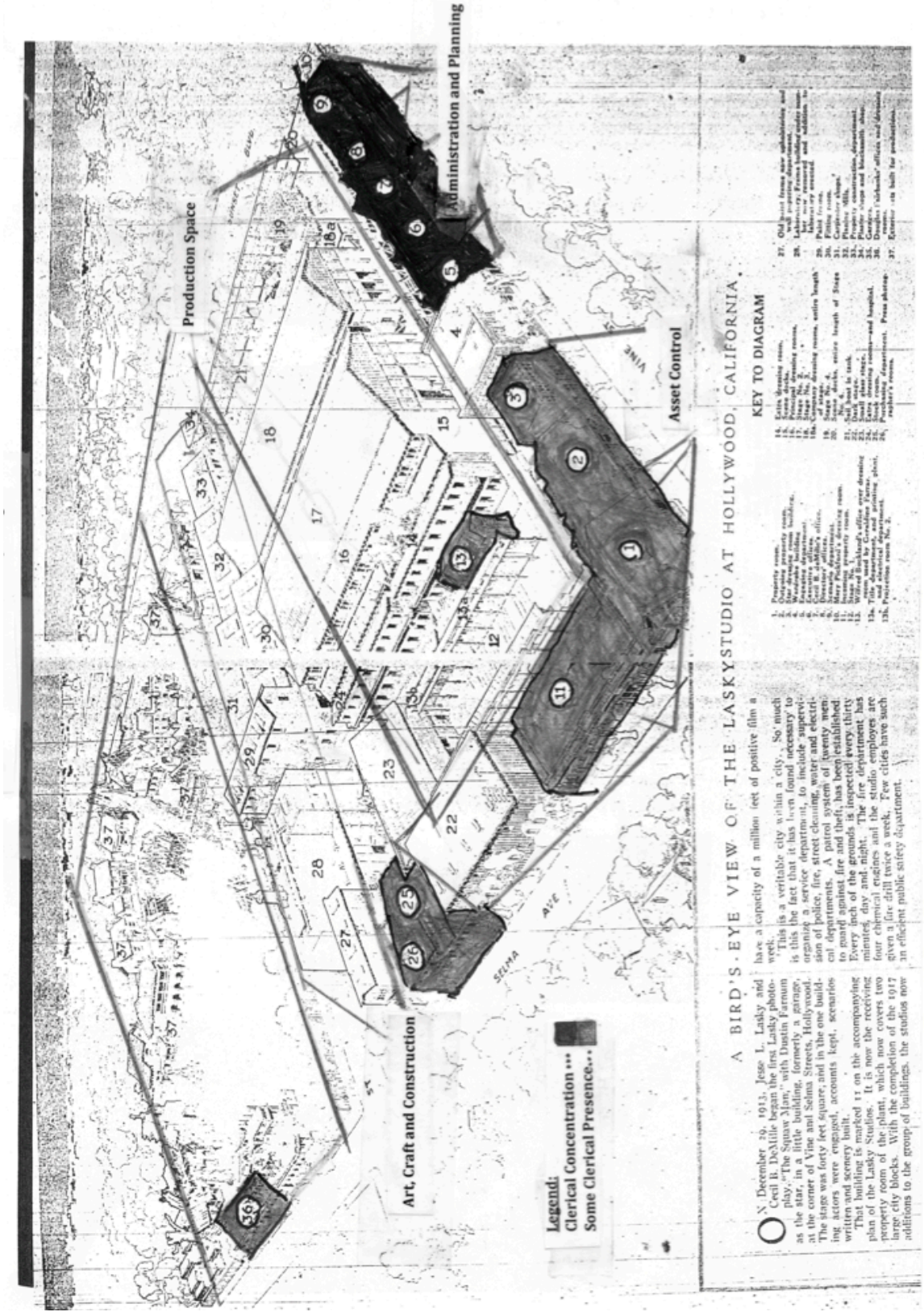
The special representative's room.

The publicity department.

The accountant's room.

The projection room.

2.8 Modified Lasky Map Denoting Clerical Presence



2.9 "What Happens to the Scenario" (*Motography*, March 1, 1913)

What Happens to the Scenario

By Mabel Condon

EACH motion picture producing company probably has its own individual method of dealing with the manuscripts submitted for its approval. In dealing with the fortunes and misfortunes of the scenario, from the brain of the author to the film synopsis, we will instance the method employed by the Essanay company.

The way of the scenario is devious. If it is accepted the incidents which center around it thereafter are many and varied, and if it is rejected it must try, try again.

On the receipt of a scenario its prompt acknowledgement is made by the scenario editor in the way of a printed postcard with the name and reference number of the manuscript inserted. It reads as shown in form 1.

The story is read by the scenario editor and, if rejected, is returned to the author with the enclosure indicated in form 2, the reason for its return being checked off with a pen or pencil mark, as shown in the example.

CHICAGO, ILL. Feb 6 1913

We have received from you today the following manuscript:

Dog Gone Dog

which will be given careful consideration.

Writers should retain carbon copies of any scenarios submitted us, as we are not responsible for MSS. lost in the mail.

Sufficient postage for return of MSS. must accompany all communications. Prints desired they be returned.

Yours truly,

Editor of Scenarios.

ESSANAY FILM MFG. CO.
1315-1333 ARGYLE STREET

Should you inquire about the above scenarios state our reference number.

Ref. No. 63

Form 1.

If the reason for the manuscript's rejection comes after the eighth reason listed, a postcard giving information, as in the following, is also enclosed:

Arrange your story in scenario form.

A synopsis of about 200 words followed by short scenes. All manuscripts must be typewritten.

We are in the market for original dramatic stories with strong strong heart interest for short stories with unusual themes and for bright sparkling high class comedies.

We are not soliciting Western scenarios, costume plays, war stories or plays with foreign settings.

Our prices vary according to the merit of the story.

Address all manuscripts submitted, to the
ESSANAY FILM MFG. COMPANY,
c/o Scenario Department,
1333 Argyle St.,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

And, as far as the company is concerned, that is the end of that scenario, unless it is rewritten to make the kind of a story for which the company happens to be in the market.

But, should the scenario be available, its tale is a happier one. That of "The Gum Man" is herewith instanced.

The story, as the scenario editor received it, was neatly typed on five sheets of Robin blue paper, typewriter size and from the general appearance of the copy, it was evidentally the work of someone who had given scenarios and their making careful and valuable thought. At the foot of the first page was the information, "An extra carbon copy of this script will be supplied to purchaser upon request."

This is how the scenario read. (It will be noticed that the author's title was changed):

BY GUM!

Rural Comedy. Twenty-four Scenes. Four Exterior, Four Interior Settings Required.

SYNOPSIS.

Fred Smith, chewing gum salesman, stops over at Cobb's Corners to introduce his wares at the general store. A Trubbell Hunter, constable, has just "got in" with a Detective Bureau and is highly elated. He has several run-ins with Fred and becomes antagonistic. Fred meets Mamie, hotel waitress and chambermaid. They like each other. Hunter gets word that a notorious burglar, "Iron-jaw" Pete, is thought to be in the neighborhood. This criminal's distinguishing trait is a fondness for gum-chewing. Fred is suspected. Everything points straight to him, in Hunter's estimation. Next morning a robbery has been committed, a valuable necklace is gone. Fred, ignorant of this, buys a cheap necklace to present to Mamie. Hunter surreptitiously sees the presentation, hastens away for a warrant and hurries back. Meanwhile a friendly hotel clerk has "tipped off"

Essanay

Your manuscript is returned for the reason checked below:

1. OVERSTOCKED.
2. NO STRONG DRAMATIC SITUATIONS.
3. WEAK PLOT.
4. NOT OUR STYLE OF STORY.
5. IDEA HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE. ✓
6. WOULD NOT PASS THE CENSOR BOARD.
7. TOO DIFFICULT TO PRODUCE.
8. TOO CONVENTIONAL.
9. NOT INTERESTING.
10. NOT HUMOROUS.
11. NOT ORIGINAL.
12. NOT ENOUGH ACTION.
13. NO ADAPTATIONS DESIRED.
14. IMPROBABLE.
15. NO COSTUME PLAYS, OR STORIES WITH FOREIGN SETTINGS DESIRED.
16. ILLEGIBLE.
17. ROBBERY, KIDNAPPING, MURDER, SUICIDE, HARROWING DEATH-BED AND ALL SCENES OF AN UNPLEASANT NATURE SHOULD BE ELIMINATED.

Yours very truly,

ESSANAY FILM MFG. CO.,

Studio and Laboratories
1333 Argyle St.

CHICAGO, ILL.

Form 2.

Fred, who has easily convinced the clerk of his innocence. Fred proposes a hasty marriage to Mamie; she agrees. As they are ready to start Hunter gets back. In order to get away from him Mamie devises a great scheme. It succeeds and they rush off, leaving Hunter stuck fast BY GUM to a chair. They rush to the station. Hunter, after herculean struggles, drags himself from the chair but the seat comes with him; in this position he hastens to the station in time to grab Mamie and Fred. But the real crook, who had ambled through the story unostentatiously, is now discovered by a trick of fate, and all ends happily for the lovers and embarrassingly for the over-zealous and misguided Trubbell Hunter.

CAST.

A. Trubbell Hunter.....“Rube” detective-constable
Fred Smith.....A young chewing-gum salesman
Mamie.....Hotel waitress and chambermaid

How To Write Movies

READERS of PHOTOPLAY are familiar with the work of Anita Loos and John Emerson, the best known collaborators in scenario writing in the realm of motion pictures. They wrote and directed the famous Douglas Fairbanks photoplays of last year—"Wild and Woolly," "Reaching for the Moon," "Down to Earth," etc. They have written many other photoplays for such stars as Elsie Ferguson and Mae Marsh, and they are now authors of all the Constance Talmadge screen dramas of this year. Miss Loos (Mrs. Emerson) has produced a steady stream of successful photoplays from the age of sixteen.

This series was posed by Mr. Emerson and his demitasse wife in order to show amateur scenario writers exactly what is expected of a movie writer under the present system. These pictures tell aspiring movie authors how to get the idea of how to assemble the completed film—a duty which producers expect from those from whom they buy their stories. Of course there are a few requisites for success in this work which cannot be given you in two pages—such as ability to write well, originality of ideas, knowledge of plot construction, and other trifles.

1—WHERE THE IDEAS COME FROM

"The greatest mine for movie stories is your daily newspaper. After reading hundreds of hackneyed ideas sent in from amateur scenarioists, we usually find the idea we're after in a headline. You don't think a coal strike makes a good story? We prophesy that more than twenty photoplays during the coming season will be based on that coal strike—just as every good news story forms inspiration for scores of scenarios. Do not work and fret over some flimsy, antique situation. Read the papers and you'll never lack a plot."

2—READING THE SCENARIOS

"Since the demand for movie stories this year is many times greater than the supply and since $5,000 is now the minimum price for a good plot, nearly 70,000 people throughout the country have started to write movies. Send your story to the scenario editor, for no matter how many tons of scripts he gets a week, he'll gladly read it in the hope of finding a good story—just as we do. The pile on the table, representing the stories received in a few days, will give you some idea of the competition in scenario work."

3—WRITING THE SCENARIO

"After you've got the plot, sit down and write it out in scenario form, numbering the scenes 1, 2, 3, etc. You'll find it simpler if you collaborate with someone else, for it's mighty easy to get mixed up if you haven't somebody to check you up and keep you from changing your hero's name or your heroine's character. We find it easiest to dictate our scenarios—saves time and facilitates concentration on the work. Composing a script with your own fingers often presents a conglomeration of figures and fancies that bewilder the most adamant of genius. It can be done—but slowly, and when you're under contract to turn out a new photoplay every two months you'll hire a stenographer, too."

4—PLANNING THE STORY WITH THE STAR

"Here you see us working out details of the scenario with our star, Constance Talmadge—something you will have to do when you sell your movie. Make your story fit the star and keep her—or him—on the screen in at least 50 per cent of the scenes, or you'll never sell the script. And when they call you in to town to confer with the star, prepare for shocks, for these notables usually have pretty definite ideas of their own—as in our tableau above where Miss Loos looks her dismay as Miss Talmadge and Mr. Emerson cheerfully set about dissecting a pet scene upon which the authoress had spent many ambitious hours. It's hard—but necessary—to let them revamp."

III. Studio Tours: Feminized Labor in the Studio System

> She finally took a job as a telephone operator in a studio and spent her evenings studying shorthand. It being true that if you aren't too big for your job you are too small in it, Mary soon loomed forth to the studio executives as too bright a girl to waste on a telephone board. When questioned, Mary asked for a job on the lot. She got one as script girl, using her newly-learned stenography. There she worked so well and made such clever suggestions on scenes, she won a place as assistant to a man writer. He recognized her talents and today Mary is turning out originals for one of the largest studios.
>
> -- Carolyn Van Wyck, Women's Advice Columnist, 1928[1]

Introduction

As the film industry courted Wall Street money and its earlier, more relaxed, individualistic practices gave way to "conservative, dollar-geared professionalism,"[2] Studios increasingly conformed to the professional gender norms established by these other "legitimate" industries through efficency practices. Contributing to the shift was the growing aversion on the part of studio managers, executives and moguls to what to the "risk" of placing women in highly visible leadership roles when the major, Wall Street-backed industries considered them unsuitable for such roles. Female movie makers' shrinking presence in leadership positions likely aided the ever-increasing association of women with certain types of professions (and only those professions) into which they'd been incorporated across the other industries through efficiency practices.

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[1] Carolyn Van Wyck, "Friendly Advice on Girls' Problems," *Photoplay* v.33.4 (March, 1928), 16.
[2] Beth Day, *This Was Hollywood*, (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 18.

Sex segregation was only a matter of time in the efficient re-organization of production, which standardized and classified not only work, but workers. As it had in other industries, efficiency considered women primarily in terms of their gender rather than their individual attributes, skills or goals. Female workers represented a particular type of labor, with a particular role to play in industrial production systems and a particular benefit to management. Female workers were now, as a rule, low-status workers associated almost exclusively with those low-status jobs rooted in traditionally feminized labor sectors. Though documentation exists to substantiate the claim that women were not allowed into most fields outside of feminized ones,[3] for the most part, no formal policy was required to limit women's roles in the workplace. Such limitations were the norm in American industry and had simply to be observed by studios where they had not been by early film companies.

The industry's previous (and possibly inadvertent) progressive practices of hiring and promoting women to higher levels of responsibility in production in the pre-studio era were gradually discontinued in the interest of running a "serious business," leaving open to them only those sectors increasingly considered to be "women's work." Labor associations (guilds, clubs, societies and, later, unions) reinforced many of these emerging production practices, since disputes over jurisdiction "were solved by the segregation of work functions to very specific job positions," and disseminated such distinctions through trade journals and unions, which "tended to codify whatever work arrangement on which all the disputing

[3] For example: "1938 Rejection Letter from Disney to a Female Artist" http://holykaw.alltop.com/1938-rejection-letter-from-disney-to-female-a September 19, 2010.

parties would compromise," and to solidify subdivisions of work.[4] Many early trade groups, such as the Screen or Reel Club, [5] formed as all-male fraternal organizations that socialized in masculinized spaces such as taverns and lounges. Other than the Writer's Club, a social arm of the gender-integrated Screen Writer's Guild with its own heterosocial clubhouse, most such groups eventually moved from heterosocial spaces in which they had previously congregated to such sex-segregated spaces as the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Into such clubs and taverns, female movie workers could not follow their male counterparts, barring the occasional ladies night.[6]

Similarly, the relatively heterosocial production environment at the fledgling studios was responsible for early occupational mobility, which would become more restricted as separations between sectors of production became formalized, and studio hierarchy became spatialized. The growing association of women with some jobs (e.g. secretary, seamstress, splicer) and not others (e.g. director, producer, camera operator) was reinforced spatially as female workers began to occupy very specific places on studio lots—and thus in the minds of studio workers—while their employment in others dwindled. Revisiting careers of women who had reached levels of power and creative importance before the "classical" era of the 1930s demonstrates the change in women's place at studios vis a vis their prospects as movie makers there.[7]

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[4] Janet Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, eds., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 106, 212.
[5] The Screen Club, was an early, all-male group formed in New York in 1912 comprised of multiple trades, including directors, producers and cameramen. The Reel Club, the Los Angeles version of this group, formed a few months later. Ibid., 105.
[6] Karen Ward Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins), 180.
[7] Again, I draw on the examples of these women, whose work has been well-detialed by Cari Beauchamp, Karen Ward Mahar, Lizzie Francke and others, in order to better understand the gender segregation below them, and

Dorothy Arzner, the only female director out of nearly 40 at MGM by 1937, was characterized more as the exception than the rule even ten years earlier when papers announced her first directing assignment with the headline "Lasky Names Woman Director." [8] She attributed the male domination of her field to the fact that "women are handicapped by a lack of avenues leading to direction."[9] And indeed, directing—a difficult job to learn without on-set training and exposure to camera equipment and technology—was increasingly out of reach for female workers due to geographic separation, since not only film sets but technical and machine departments, once formed, were considered province of men. Meanwhile, most female workers were spatially restricted to light machinery and office technology.

Like Arzner, Frances Marion's impression of women's mobility in earlier production systems sharply contrasted with her experiences as a writer at MGM in the 30s and 40s. There, she was frustrated by increasing specialization, which further divided the production process and limited her creative agency as a writer. She and other female writers had "fed the machine" of the studio by contributing in diverse ways for which they received no credit.[10] "Bess Meredyth, Anita Loos and I were asked our advice on virtually every script M-G-M produced during the Thirties," she recalled, adding that they felt obliged to conceal their power by carrying scripts in blank covers since they knew that "some male writers were complaining about the 'tyranny of the woman writer,'" and would have been embarrassed to discover Marion et al were being asked to give suggestions and

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to reflect on its effects via the inverse relationship that can be observed between women's numbers in feminized sectors below-the-line and women's status/propects above it as creative movie makers.

[8] Karen Kay and Gerald Peary, eds., *Women and the Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977), 158.

[9] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 352. quoting MGM Studio News September 28, 1937.

[10] Cari Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down,* 355.

make uncredited revisions of their work."[11] She reflected, "It was a ridiculous accusation—they were lucky to have us on their side."[12] Marion had seen her own scripts changed in a production system. She left MGM in 1937, vowing to return to screenwriting only if it came with "a production or directing deal – or both," since she had seen too many films marred by casting or production decisions into which screenwriters—no longer present in other planning processes or on the set—had little input.[13] She had come to believe that the only way to maintain control over written work was as a hybrid: writer-director or writer-producer.[14] Marion was successful in securing such a contract (to write and produce) at Columbia, but the project was shelved in accordance with her wishes after budget cuts across the studio's slate made it impossible for her to tell her story as she envisioned it.[15] It seems both poignant and ironic that this sojourn was the only time after 1930 that Marion was in the position to exert real control over one of her projects, and she felt duty-bound to use that power to kill it rather than see it compromised. No other directing or producing contracts followed and the independent company she set up with Beth Meredyth and Meredyth's husband, Michael Curtiz, never got off the ground. Marion eventually did return to screenwriting and MGM but served largely in an advisory and editorial capacity there, working with less experienced writers.[16] Meanwhile, Lois Weber, once a brand name with her own studio was, by 1932,

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[11] DeWitt Bodeen, *More From Hollywood* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1977), 113
[12] Ibid.
[13] Lizzie Francke, *Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood* (London: BFI, 1994), 41.
[14]Said Marion: "Writing a screenplay had become like writing on sand, with the wind blowing." Interviewed in: Bodeen, *More From Hollywood*, 113.
[15] Frances Marion, *Off With Their Heads* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 277-8.
[16] Bodeen, *More From Hollywood*, 116.

relegated to work as a script doctor and a "charity" job testing starlets for Universal.[17]

Marion's linkage of true power in the classical era to producing and directing –both highly visible, with a high presence on set—speaks to the creative and managerial importance of those roles. The failure of her attempt to either direct or produce for the majors, despite her status as one of the most successful screenwriters in the industry's history, indicates the difficulties faced by women with some standing in the industry at the time, let alone those with no standing at all. It is also further evidence that, though women worked and even thrived in "intellectual" professions related to scripting material, their inclusion there had as much to do with gender as their exclusion elsewhere did. Marion herself believed women succeeded in writing because "it was a creative outlet achieved in private and required relatively little bravado."[18] Joan Harrison who came to the movie business much later than Marion and actually achieved the level of producer in the 1940s, nonetheless concurred that it was difficult for a woman to succeed "except as an actress or, much down the scale, as a writer" because "the front office attitude resents a woman in authority and it probably always will – they recognize women writers but prefer to keep us in prescribed grooves."[19] Harrison would later advise female aspirants that women could not be directors without losing femininity,

[17] Kay, *Women and the Cinema*, 152.
[18] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 41.
[19] Myrtle Gebhart, "Her Film Hits Open the Way for More Women Producers," *Boston Sunday Post*, August 13, 1944. Quoted in Francke, *Script Girls*, 60.

saying "It doesn't make for a happy woman. […]To be a director you have to be a s.o.b. It is much harder for a woman to do this."[20]

Though many avenues to directing have been reopened for (and by) women since Marion and Arzner's time, occupational segregation by gender can still be observed in several fields both in and outside of the media industry, evincing continued gender inequality in society at large. Such segregation is both literal and figurative, as occupations of great power or prestige are typically "'reserved' for men," while the female-dominated professions into which women are segregated, and where they often work in isolation (the teacher in her class, the receptionist at the front desk, etc.), are undervalued "either in terms of salary, career prospects or social status."[21] At studios, the tying of women to "intellectual" fields (e.g. reading, research), so often framed as a compliment in trades and promotional materials from the 1910s and early 20s, was a backhanded one. There, the "woman writer" was allowed to succeed, but only through an emphasis on "woman" that segregated her from the place of true creative power through the old link between women and typewriters. More and more, women's agency was geographically tied to writers' buildings while, at the same time, true creative agency became accessible only from the masculinized spaces behind the camera and in executive suites. Put bluntly, in the medium of *film*, female movie makers' agency was limited to paper, just like that of the clerical worker. This arrangement also codified the developing logic around women's labor below the line, through which studios exploited female movie

[20]Lizzie Francke points out Harrison's stated interest in directing earlier in her career as an indication that "such aspirations were quickly cut down to size." Francke, *Script Girls*, 60.
[21] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Future of Female-Dominated Occupations* (Paris: OECD, 1998), 9.

workers using a line of reasoning drawn from traditional gender norms. By the 1930s, the newly delineated role of female movie workers and makers would converge in "intellectual" departments which, with their female writers, readers, researchers, and growing squadrons of female secretaries, stenographers, and script clerks, comprised the centermost point of women's sphere at studios.

Studio Tours: Sex Segregation on the (Real and Imagined) Studio Lot

As Chapter 2 explained, early studios engaged in near-constant self-representation during construction of their purpose-built "plants" or "works," which they promoted by releasing photographs, drawings, maps and other related information to their industry and the public at large through symbiotic trade and fan publications such as *Motography* and *Photoplay*. This material was often packaged along with articles on their reporters' (clearly staged) "visits" or "tours" of studios-in-progress. Once construction was complete, many studios took this strategy of publicity via self-representation to another level by producing and releasing their own promotional films. Much like their print precursors, these pseudo-documentary short subjects, mainly released in the late 1910s to the mid-1920s, were framed as "tours" of newly built works. Though all were planned, choreographed and staged for the camera to some degree, the films nonetheless represent useful evidence of studios' gendered logic if analyzed interms of the reflexive function they served, revealing much even in their attempts to control their self-image. Like the mapping schema, these tours were demonstrations of ownership and mastery over the entire production process, providing reassurance (to the studios themselves, their New

York business offices, their exhibitors, potential Wall St. backers and audiences) that they were solid, going concerns worthy of investment of confidence, cash and consumer loyalty.

1915's *Behind the Screen* gives a fairly candid, backstage view of Universal City as a producer preps a film for production, while *Universal Studio and Stars* gives a more staged tour of the studio.[22] *A Tour of the Thomas H. Ince Studio, 1920-22* and 1922's *A Trip to Paramountown* each contain both candid and composed scenes at the studios, mixing more straightforward "touring" of stages and sets with staged bits of business.[23] Some films "map" the production process and thus reproduce studio hierarchy. Others, as walking tours, reproduce studio geography instead. MGM's *1925 Studio Tour* does both, and is perhaps closest to a straightforward industrial film, offering seemingly candid shots of facilities and the workers within them, but also including a "class picture" shot of workers from each department standing together on the studio lawn.[24] A 1927 Goodwill Pictures short entitled *Life in Hollywood* shows scenes from a number of studios, including footage of major Warner Brothers and Fox stars and directors.[25] Two other films fall too late to be considered alongside the others as evidence of studios' developing self-image and representations of feminized labor. Instead, they offer a self-representation in which

[22] *Behind the Screen,* excerpt, directed by Al Christie, Universal, 1915, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog # VA11747 M. *Universal Studio and Stars*, Universal, 1925, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog #VA19365 M.
[23] *A Tour of the Thomas H. Ince Studio, 1920-22*, Hunt Stromberg, director, Ince Studio, 1924, accessed at UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog #VA2945 M; *A Trip to Paramountown*, directed by Jack Cunningham, Paramount, 1922, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog # VA4707 M.
[24] *1925 Studio Tour*, MGM, 1925, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog # VA13208 M.
[25] *Life in Hollywood*, directed by L.M. Be Dell, Goodwill Pictures, Inc., 1927. Accessed online at http://youtu.be/EPLMHHZeKqE (May 1, 2013). The films *Warner Bros Studios and Stars* (William Horsley, producer, made between 1923-27, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog #VA22187) and *William Fox Studio and Stars* (William Horsley, producer, made between 1915-27, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog #VA19592 M) each contain some footage from this film, along with additional shots of their respective stars, making it possible to identify which sections come from which studio.

systems of feminized labor are fully formed and incorporated within the larger studio system. These are the 1934 Warner Bros short, *A Trip Thru a Hollywood Studio*,[26] and a 1935 tour of 20th Century Fox. First filmed for the corporation's convention, the Fox tour is more straightforward in its approach than the staged vignets of the Warners tour, illustrating the production process by displaying the buildings in which various stages take place, as well as their contents and workers.[27]

The studios' self-representations varited based on which assets they chose to emphasize. Generally, they focused either on upcoming products through displays of stars and other movie makers, or on bolstering the studio brand through display of the filmmaking process with various movie workers in departments. Much like trade and fan magazine coverage of early studios, they all shared the same basic purpose of presenting new or expanding studios for promotional purposes. But unlike written descriptions or drawn maps, they all included some representation of "real" of film workers. Instead of implying the presence of feminized labor sectors in displaying their operations and assets, these promotional films often captured studio workers deemed beneath mention anywhere else. Conversely, in displaying studios to what filmmakers believed to be their best advantage, the films frequently omitted female creative personnel. Appendix 1 records these representations of labor, tracking either the department or job of visible workers by gender. This data has been included at the back of this study for reference. However, the tracking exercise is not intended as an accurate instrument with which to measure the actual

[26] *A Trip Thru a Hollywood Studio,* Ralph Staub, director, Vitaphone, 1934, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog # M108519.
[27] *20th Century Fox Tour with Darryl F. Zanuck*, 20th Century Fox, 1935, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog #VA4480 M.

percentages of women versus men or produce accurate totals of workers in some fields versus others. These were, after all, self-reflexive paratexts in which images were selected with regard to how they might advertise the studio in question. The gathering of data instead indicates significant areas in which women were represtented in these films, as well as where they were not. This exercise enables comparison between the films' display of women in some sectors but not others, and suggests the traditional categories of women's labor, outlined in subsequent sections of this chapter, which by the late 1910s had begun to be incorporated by studios' production systems. Below is a list of all jobs in which women are visible in all films, compiled using the data from Appendix 1:

<u>Women in Studio Tours</u>

Actor
Dancer
"Mannequin"/Model
Screenwriter
Scenario Writer
Scenario Department
Reader
Researcher
Publicity
Copyist/Typist
Note-Taker
Mail
Art Director's Assistant
Costume Designer/Dept. Head
Modiste
Modiste Assistant
Wardrobe Mistress
Wardrobe Staff
Wardrobe Assistant
Seamstress
Pianist
Dance Instructor
Script/Continuity (script girl)
Cutter
Film Inspector
Negative Cutter
Patcher/Assembler
Film Lab Worker
Nurse
Hairdresser
Maid/servant

As this list reveals, all the tours display women in some high-status creative roles. However, the majority of these roles are as performers,[28] a fact that attests to

[28] Though extras and most dancers or models were hardly powerful enough to be considered movie makers, they are included with stars as performers in this discussion for purposes of clarity and because of their front-

the value of female stars in studios' economies.[29] On the other hand, though most if not all of the studios in question employed female writers throughout the 10s and 20s, they were shown or referred to in only three of the films. The partial Universal film from 1915 includes a visit to "The Scenario Department," in which four men and one woman are pictured sitting on one side of a long conference table. The MGM tour, which arrays the studio's human assets by department, also includes female writers. Three women (Agness Christine Johnson, Jane Murfin, and Fanny Hatt) are present in the group of seven M-G-M screenwriters shown to illustrate the claim that "some of the foremost writers of the day contribute original stories to M-G-M." In a separate shot of the group of scenario writers who "arrange" picture stories for the screen once written, roughly eight out of 18 total scenario writers are female.[30] The Fox tour ten years later includes shots of four female writers (Bess Meredith, Sonya Levien, Helen Morgan, Gladys Lehman) out of a total of 20 screenwriters, department heads or story editors shown. The absence of female writers in the other films does not indicate their absence from those studios, but might instead evince the lack of importance conferred on the writing process at the time. For example, female screenwriter Bradley King was definitely employed at Ince in the early 20s when the Ince studio tour was supposedly shot.[31] It is impossible to say whether gender had anything to do with her omission from the film, since writing

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of-camera roles set them apart from other lower status women's jobs represented because, along with well-known actors they are treated as a different kind of prized asset.

[29] For example, *A Trip to Paramountown* spends several scenes with Gloria Swanson, while the MGM Tour displays many of its female stars, highlighting Norma Shearer collecting a pile of fan mail. Each film spends considerable time on performers, male and female.

[30] A completely accurate count is not possible due to picture quality and the fact that the available copies seem to have been cropped slightly on the left and right sides of the frame, either when original released or when scanned.

[31] See: Bradley King, "More Studio Secrets," *The Photodramatist* v.3.12 (May 1922), 5-6.

itself seems to have been omitted (as it has at Paramount, despite what earlier in the decade had been a male-led but female-dominated writing staff). The planning process is instead represented by a shot of Ince himself "as he confers with his production staff," which consists of seven men in business suits, working at a table behind Ince's own large, wooden desk. This masculine tableau seems a fitting representation of executive and managerial (and male) power at efficient studios like Ince's.

Though Anthony Slide has said that women "virtually controlled" the silent film industry, he attributes much of that control to the influence of female stars, saying "certainly such companies might be managed by men, but if, say, Gloria Swanson chose Joseph P. Kennedy to manager her company, that in no way detracts from Ms. Swanson's power."[32] Perhaps not, but it also does not indicate that official, wieldable power or authority was invested in women in this developing system. The attribution of dominance to female screenwriters by Slide and others is based seemingly on their individual legacies and the lasting importance of the films they wrote.[33] Real—not virtual—power, would have existed in the open, rather than hiding behind a closed door in the form of influence. It would also have carried with it explicit, observable career capital (e.g. additional titles, salary, place in the chain of command) with trade value in the industry at-large. And if women as a group really possessed such power in the silent industry, it would have been indicated by their widespread placement in major leadership positions as studio managers, executives,

[32] Anthony Slide, *Early Women Directors* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1977), 9. Antonia Lant, *The Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writing on the First Fifty Years of Film,* (London: Verso, 2006), 549.
[33] Slide, *Early Women Directors*, 10.

or department heads. But this was not the case. Though historians have described scenario departments as places where female leadership and domination was common,[34] just how common is unclear. The scenario department was one of the few at studios where there was at least partial gender integration of leadership positions, but women's solid footing there was hardly assured moving forward into the era of specialization. June Mathis led Metro's scenario department in 1919 before accepting a similar position as editorial director at Goldwyn and later, First National. And at Universal, Eugenie Magnus Ingleton ran the scenario department in the late teens with five female staff writers out of fourteen. Mathis was fired when Goldwyn merged with MGM in 1924. As for Magnus, Mark Garret Cooper points out that she was the only production department head at Universal in the late teens, despite the popular notion that women ascended to high positions there based on job performance, not gender. In the end, though powerful, female scenario heads, in the studio tours films and in the studios themselves, were few in number and their reigns were concentrated in the late teens. As such, available evidence attests more to a mixed-gender sector than a female-led or dominated one, and supports the notion that women's authority to lead other workers openly—rather than indirectly through influence via their lovers or their writing—was limited and waning. This is not to say that women's preeminence as writers in the silent era is a myth, but simply to point out that talent did not translate directly into the kind of power Frances Marion found herself in search of by the 1930s. That power had instead

[34] Cooper, *Universal Women*, 44.

been distributed in line with the male-dominated display in the Ince Studio tour and the other promotional tours.

Indeed, despite the roles women had been playing in high-status production fields in the 1910s, no female directors, producers or executives were visible in any of the tours films, and none were identified or referred to, either. As in the Ince tour, moguls, studio heads, producers or executives were shown conferring with other men to manage studio assets. Directors were shown managing male crews in production. The absence of such female personnel accurately reflects that there were no female executives at most studios at this time. It also indicates that if there were female directors or producers at the studios in question (as there still were at a few studios in the early 20s), they were not selected for front-and-center display in the tours.[35] Thus, in these representations of creative and managerial power, women are limited to spaces in front of the camera as talent or behind typewriters and in the minority at writing departments. Their lack of representation and actual presence in other movie maker roles illustrates their shift toward staffing and representing themselves as big businesses with "serious" practices, managed and controlled by men.

The exclusion of women from leadership positions might be viewed as another indirect attempt at controlling the creative process by narrowing the range of acceptable candidates in certain roles, and thus, the outcomes of their creative labor. Danae Clark describes a similar effect on the careers of actors under the

[35] Jane Murfin became RKO's first female production supervisor in 1934 and, along with Margaret Booth, was one of only a few women to ascend to such executive status in the 30s or 40s. It is noteworthy that both of these women began their careers in the silent era and the significance of this characteristic, common to powerful female editors as well, will be discussed in chapters four. Paramount employed Elinor Glyn as producer in the 20s and Jane Murfin wrote and coproduced for First National. Mahar, *Women Filmmakers*, 199.

practice of typecasting at studios, saying that "actors were categorized according to social types, based on race, age, sexual stereotype, and so on," fragmenting actors' labor power "by limiting their range of performance and preventing the full potential of their skills."[36] The characteristics associated with directing both in and outside of the industry narrowed at studios as well. "Typical" directors were not just white, heterosexual, middle-to-upper class and male but, also styled in the mold of Cecil DeMille, a highly masculine and authoritative figure with a dominant, commanding manner and interests in hunting and other rugged outdoor sports. As Karen Mahar points out, DeMille's hypermasculine persona was something he consciously created to instill respect in his underlings, yet this "type" predominated in the minds of the public, as well as at studios, where successful, mainstream directors tended to be rugged men's men (e.g. Victor Fleming, John Ford) who wore jodhpurs or safari hats and relished hunting like DeMille. Directors who fell outside of this group, such as sensitive, nurturing actor's director George Cukor, often worked in women's genres, which were themselves imbued with lower status than macho, men's pictures.[37]

Perceptions of which "types" fit roles as producers, writers, designers, etc., developed as well. Dalton Trumbo identified the practice's benefits to management, saying "the front office likes to type writers, actors, everybody. It saves them having

[36] Danae Clark, *Negotiating Hollywood: The Cultural Politics of Actors' Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 19.
[37] One rationale given for David Selznick's decision to replace Cukor, the producer's best friend at the time, with Fleming as director on *Gone with the Wind* (1939) was that Cukor's sympathy lay with the female stars, and, unlike man's man and action director Fleming, he lacked the temperament and pacing to helm an epic of such scale, or win the respect of Clark Gable. Detailed in Marcella Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick: Recollections of Hollywood's Golden Era* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance, 1999), 85; *Gone With the Wind: The Making of a Legend*, (David Hinton, director, 1988).

to do any original thinking, which isn't their strong suit." [38] One cannot help but assume that, in addition to excluding women and other would-be interlopers from these media maker roles, the practice of hiring based on such limited sets of characteristics also resulted in a more predictable production process, leading to a narrower range of creative products. This may have made film production easier to manage while reducing its artistic potential. Many areas of production labor were typecast in similar fashion throughout the studio system until the studios perceived some benefit in hiring new and different "types" for the role.[39] In the case of directors, such a shift came in the late 1960s, when a younger generation, perceived as outside of the mainstream, was hired to break studios and their aging cadre house directors out of a box office rut.[40] This ultimately led not to a more heterogeneous workforce, but a new director "type" –that of the young, brooding artist, product of film schools and counter-culture and, yes, white, middle-class, and male.[41] The homogeneity of certain roles remains a fact within production culture and its mythology today, a testament, perhaps, to the course that efficiency set not just for women, but also for all film workers.

Though some creative sectors (the scenario department, on-camera talent) appeared to be relatively heterosocial in many of the studio tours films, even in

[38] Quoted in Howard Koch, *As Time Goes By: Memoirs of a Writer* (New York: Harcourt, 1979), 24.
[39] John Caldwell writes about industrial self-reflexivity and trade narratives of various crafts in *Production Culture* (Durham: Duke, 2008), while Felicia Henderson discusses the casting of television writing staffs according to the interpersonal and political roles they are expected to perform in relation to Showrunners and fellow writers, in "Both Sides of the Fence: The Writer's Room," *Production Studies,* Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, eds. (London: Routledge, 2009), 224-9.
[40] This shift and the rise of the new generation of directors (often referred to as the American New Wave) is the subject of Peter Beskind's *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and Rock 'N Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).
[41] "Real life" examples include Stephen Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, John Cassavetes, Dennis Hopper, Peter Bogdanovich, etc., and fictitious director characters in this mold abound, to the near-total exclusion of all other "types," in 90s and 2000s films about Hollywood, such as *Living in Oblivion* (Tom DiCillo, director, 1995), *Mulholland Drive,* (David Lynch, director, 2001) to name just a few.

these higher status roles, female workers' femininity was emphasized over work. In nearly all of the films, some sort of feminine "eye candy" was presented to sex up explanations of the production process. Shots of scantily clad female performers were typically delivered complete with catcalling intertitles. The Ince tour included scenes of a fashion show in which studio-made garments were displayed on "manikins," who are actually live models on a runway. *A Trip To Paramountown* visited the production of *Her Gilded Cage,* where a number of dancers in short, glittering costumes performed on a stage before director Sam Wood and his camera crew. This segment included several cutaways to the film's tuxedoed, male cast members, not acting in the scene, but instead standing to one side of the camera, smiling, watching, smoking pipes and, per an accompanying title, enjoying "the antics of the birdies." The MGM Tour contains similar bits of business, including shots of dancers kicking in a chorus line and a dolly shot of showgirls getting dressed in a scene from a "backstage" musical. Ten years later, Fox showed a similar lineup of "dancing girls" in shorts and tank tops, trying out for male casting and dance directors, prompting narrator Jimmy Fidler to interject "ahem, those you don't want, boys, I'll take," as the men onscreen turn conspiratorially to the camera.[42] None of this is surprising in the ritual of asset display, where "pretty girls" would surely rank high even today. It is simply one link in a chain of evidence that female workers at studios, regardless of their status, were displayed (and thus regarded in studio culture) primarily in terms of gender and sexuality, with any

[42] Similar eye-candy sequences appear in *A Trip Thru a Hollywood Studio*, which shows several female chorus lines dancing in short shorts to give the viewer "an eyeful of pretty girls." Other films (e.g. Ince, Paramount) show their major female stars kissing, being made love to, etc.

other qualities, skills or characteristics running a distant second if they were displayed at all. While they helped the studios sell products, these displays also came at very real personal cost to the "birdies" involved, as evinced by the studio-abetted sexual assaults of dancer Patricia Douglas and singer Eloise Spann by male MGM employees in the 1930s, and the atmosphere of sexual harassment described by other former chorus girls.[43]

Following the same gender-normative line of reasoning as the chorus girl scenes, *Life in Hollywood*, presents Fox actress Bessie Love sitting next to a motion picture camera, sewing between takes with the title card: "If needle-work interferes with your art, stick to your needle-work, is Bessie Love's axiom." Love demonstrates her commitment to this motto when male crewmembers ask her to resume shooting and she resists, seeming to prefer sewing to acting. Though this bit of business was likely staged to amuse, it is a fairly accurate reflection of what by the 1920s was becoming a typical notion of women's "place" behind the scenes in the developing studio system. For, if these tours showed women as unacceptable or not the right "type" for some roles, they typed women as the *only* acceptable candidates for others. As such, in keeping with practices from other industries, female workers in the studio tours films were frequently shown as segregated from men in departments that specialized in gendered labor not far off from Love's needle-work.

[43] Described by David Stenn in "It Happened One Night…At MGM," *Vanity Fair* (April 2003), http://www.vanityfair.com/fame/features/2003/04/mgm200304.

"Stick to Your Needle-Work": Studio Adaptations of Pre-Existing Women's Fields

Writing and performing roles made up just a few of the jobs in which women were pictured in the studio tours films (other jobs denoted by italics):

Women in Studio Tours

Actress
Dancer
"Mannequin"/Model
Screenwriter
Scenario Writer
Scenario Department

Reader
Researcher
Publicity
Copyist/Typist
Note-Taker
Mail
Art Director's Assistant
Costume Designer/Dept. Head
Modiste
Modiste Assistant
Wardrobe Mistress
Wardrobe Staff
Wardrobe Assistant
Seamstress
Pianist
Dance Instructor
Script/Continuity (script girl)
Cutter
Film Inspector
Negative Cutter
Patcher/Assembler
Film Lab Worker
Nurse
Hairdresser
Maid/servant

Categories of acceptable women's work in major industries derived from essentialist views of women's "natural" sphere, qualities, and skills that were popular at the time. Studio adaptations of these basic women's labor sectors shared common characteristics which not only ensured that these jobs would retain their gendered status after transplantation to film production, but also affected which new, film-specific labor would later be absorbed by these sectors as "women's work," even when the connections to traditional notions of femininity were less literal. The first of these common characteristics was the undesirability of the work to male workers, based on cultural norms, status, compensation, or standing in the studio hierarchy. In *Out to Work,* Alice Kessler-Harris describes a hierarchy of

desirability within the emergent class of 19th century women's fields. The hierarchy reflected a cultural emphasis on the goal of marriage, home and family by defining vocational success for women "in terms of values appropriate to future home life: gentility, neatness, morality, cleanliness," and "affirmation of home roles and possibilities of remaining 'Good.'"[44] These values were largely opposed to the values encouraged in young men seeking workplace success, such as "ambition, competition, aggression," income and acceptance of risk in the interest of upward mobility. Under these gender-normative workplace values, many of the very jobs deemed least desirable by and for men were deemed most desirable for women. Aligning socio-cultural with industrial-economic imperatives, the values system helped render women's presence in the workplace less threatening to men's prospects there. Conveniently, the "natural" social order guidied women to the very jobs which, in an era of efficient mass production, cost too much (due to the sizeable labor force required) to fill with white male workers. Bound up with these notions of cleanliness and gentility were notions of race, class and ethnicity. The most desirable jobs for white, middle and lower-class workers were segregated along those lines as well, which meant that ethnic and racial minorities were hired into those jobs least desirable to white women.[45]

Domestic Service:

Domestic service roles, particularly those related to cleaning, were perhaps least desirable of those open to women under cultural and social norms, (and were

[44] Alice Kessler Harris, Alice. *Out To Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 128-37.
[45] Ibid.

not desirable at all to white men due to their domestic ties and service aspects). They were also some of the most common women's jobs in American industry in the teens and 20s.[46] A similar state of affairs could be found at studios, which presented themselves as mini cities with all a city's needs and its social strata.[47] Women and people of color could be seen in studio tours films in roles as laundresses, butlers, maids, waitresses and other domestic service workers. The Ince tour showed a woman in a maid's uniform, cleaning the wardrobe department, while in *A Trip To Paramountown,* Gloria Swanson is attended in her dressing room by a serving woman in a similar uniform. Service jobs were shown as gender-integrated and even male-dominated in a few of the films. However, the presence of the male waiter, butler and porter in the Ince film may owe less to gender than to the fact that these workers are either black or Asian men, reflecting the practice at the time of hiring immigrant workers and people of color as low-cost household servants.[48] Both white and African American female domestic servants were observed working

[46] "Domestic and personal service" positions comprise roughly 1/3 of the total number of positions held by women in (1,953,467 out of a total of 4,833,630) as described by Mary A. Laselle and Katherine E. Wiley, *Vocations for Girls* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 103.

[47] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 19. "Here the thousands of workers who poured into the carefully guarded gates each day found the necessities of a highly urbanized life. There were the private electric and water systems; the private telephone exchange; the barbershop and drug counter and magazine stand; the bootblack and the dentists, the doctor, the nurse and infirmary; fleets of shots which turned out one-of-a-kind items on a production-line basis; and tractor-drawn portable restrooms which tagged along after the actors as they moved from stage to stage. There was a giant commissary equipped to feed thousands which also provided special arterial service to the private dining rooms ruled by the company's top executives and key producers. Also, for the elite of these caste-conscious worlds, there were such added refinements as a heated swimming pool, a Turkish bath staffed with a fleet of masseurs, a sundeck, and a vitaminologist who did nothing but administer shots to high-salaried posteriors."

[48] It is uncomfortable for this author to identify these workers' racial or ethnic backgrounds based on grainy images in old films and photographs, and impossible to do so by drawing assumptions from descriptions given by studio workers from the era, which imply but do not state explicitly the racial background of other studio workers. And yet, it seems a worse sin to omit race and ethnicity altogether from this description of the lowest levels of studio labor and the role played by race, class and privilege the assignment of work. With those explanations of my intentions, I will proceed carefully in the area of race, with more direct quotes than interpretation.

as "maids" at a number of studios in the 20s and 30s.[49] Costume designer Walter Plunkett described a "black girl" serving as maid to an actress or in the costume department at FBO in 1926.[50] An African American woman in a maid's uniform is pictured on the with Jean Harlow in *M-G-M: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot*, with the caption "Jean Harlow and an assistant walk past a sounds stage on Lot One 1930s."[51] Rosalind Russell recalled that at MGM, Gretta Garbo was attended by a maid named Hazel Washington, whom Russell later hired as her own maid.[52] As this description indicates, some domestic servants were hired by the stars themselves, with their wages paid by the studio in some cases, as with Mary Pickford's United Artist's Bungalow, where "a butler and a cook were always on duty." Others were employed by studios directly, as was the case with Marion Davies' MGM bungalow, which was "run by a full staff of servants" catering not only to Davies, but also to studio executives who entertained distinguished guests there. And many studio workers in service professions, "in effect, doubled as domestics."[53] At Disney, one such domestic worker, a "uniformed maid" served tea to Ink and Paint workers.[54]

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[49] Alice Kessler Harris discusses the discrimination faced by black and immigrant workers, especially women, in the early 1900s, confining them "to the bottom of the labor market pool," in roles as household servants, agricultural labor, and in the most difficult kinds of factory work. *Out to Work*, 137.

[50] Saying, "The first day I went to work there they told me that a girl who was playing a mysterious queen in a Tarzan picture was having trouble with her costume and they asked me if I would get to her dressing room and see what I could do. When I got there, I found her maid—a clumsy black girl—trying to pin three or four yards of beaded chiffon. She had no idea what she was doing, so I pinned it onto the actress's bra and draped it around her and the was the costume for the day." Christopher Finch and Linda Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), p. 68

[51] Steven Bingen, Stephen X. Sylvester, and Michael Troyen, *M-G-M: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot* (Solana Beach, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2011), 99.

[52] Russell interviewed in: Mike Steen, *Hollywood Speaks: An Oral History* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1974), 100.

[53] Christopher Finch and Linda Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood: The Movie Colony in the Golden Age* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 88, 89.

[54] Patricia Zohn, "Coloring the Kingdom," *Vanity Fair*, March 2010, http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2010/03/disney-animation-girls-201003.

Growing studios hired other domestic servants such as custodians, janitors and laundresses, to maintain the small cities' order and cleanliness. Though not represented in promotional films, there were female and male custodial workers at studios.[55] Work in and around barbershops was one of the areas adjacent to women's service sectors where men of racial or ethnic minorities were employed at studios, [56] working as shoeshiners.[57] Barbers tended to be white and male like the two visible on the MGM tour.[58] Women's hairdressing in production, however, was a female-dominated profession.[59] The women's hairdressing trailer served a similar social gathering function for female stars at studios like Paramount, which had one large room for all hairdressing.[60] At MGM, hairdressing was the first stop of the day for most actresses and was where "gossip was bandied about" concerning the

[55] Three female workers were pictured and mentioned in the "Custodians" column, which was written by custodian Louise Johnson for the *Warner Club News* in the 1940s. *Warner Club News* (January and May 1944). Louise Johnson writes the column and describes Della Robinson and Mrs. Rae along with several men as part of dept. and in second column talks about Virginia "a beautiful and loveable young matron who has been with us for quite a while

[56] One other area was low-level construction work. Seven Slovenians made up the "cement gang" at Warners in 1937. "Our Slovenians," *Warner Club News* v1.12, (February, 1937), 6.

[57] At MGM, the barber shop and newsstand was a gathering spot, and the shoeshine parlor was described in 1932 by *Fortune* magazine as staffed by "the colored shoeshine boy" who frequently earned "a day's pay in an African mob scene," and also "worked as chauffeur of one of MGM's sixteen company limousines." This passage may have referred to Harold Garrison, who some employees called "Slickem," and who "was known for his skill at accompanying his work with song and dance routines." Garrison chauffeured Thalberg and other studio executives, and was a reputed confidant executives and stars ("it was he who gave the police an account of Paul Bern's moments on the night he died.") Several African American shoeshine workers were also visible in a 1950s still of the shoeshine stand, indicating the continued practice of hiring men of color into those roles, at least at MGM (Caption reads "Howard Keele reads the latest issue of *Look* magazine in the Barbershop and newsstand during the 1950s"). A similar shoeshine parlor/barbershop arrangement existed at other studios. "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer," *Fortune* v.6 (December, 1932), 51-58. Reprinted in Tino Balio, ed., *The American Film Industry* (Madison" University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 311. Garrison described as 'Slick'em in Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 88. Garrison's chauffeur/confidante role in: Bingen, Sylvester, and Troyen, *M-G-M,* 26, 64.

[58] The barber shown on this tour was likely "Fritz, the veteran barber," who was said to have "trimmed more wealthy and famous persons than anybody else in Hollywood."Barbershops existed (and still exist) at Paramount and Universal, and are described at Warner Bros. in: E.J. Stephens and Marc Wanamaker, *Early Warner Bros. Studios* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2010), 51.

[59] Day, *This Was Hollywood,* 171; Women's hairdressing described as women's profession by Meta Wilde, quoted in: Linda Seger, *When Women Call the Shots The Developing Power and Influence of Women in Television and Film* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 14.

[60] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 223-5.

previous evening, ongoing productions, even domestic squabbles.[61] Nellie Manley, who started the hairdresser's guild with 13 other women, said actresses often preferred to have the same hairstylist every day because "you become rather personally involved with them," and as the first person they see in the morning, "you become quite the confidante. It's almost like being a wet nurse!"[62]

Domestic service jobs related to food were also open to women in the 1910s and 20s, as reflected by the female workers in white aprons who appeared in the MGM tour among the studio's commissary staff. However, the wait staff shown in the Universal commissary ten years earlier in *Behind the Screen* were male, white, and dressed in black coats with white bib shirts. Front-of-house restaurant service was a men's service job in many fine dining establishments, as well as masculine spaces such as saloons, and therefore was somewhat more desirable than other service jobs to working class white or possibly immigrant men.[63] Though a white, male waiter is visible in a pictures of the Ince commissary in 1918, as the studio system developed through the 20s and 30s, the white, male server largely gave way to female commissary waitresses, with a few exceptions, usually in the case of higher-status positions at table or as majordomo. Nick Janos was headwaiter at the Fox commissary, having come there from a similar position at the Brown Derby at the request of his friend Darryl Zanuck[64] Studio boss Jack Warner ate his meals in a

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Steen, *Hollywood Speaks*, 276, 284.
[63] Men had traditionally served "at table" in large households, with women working behind the scenes as cooks and scullery maids. Restaurant service followed suit and integrated at a different pace than related areas such as food production or processing, or related women's service professions such as nursing or teaching.
[64] "Here there was a travelling cart from which roasts were carved to order and what many considered to be the best food in town." Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 61. Zanuck friendship discussed in: Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 318.

separate dining room from his workers, with its own white-gloved butler.[65] The executive dining room was also available for the other Warner brothers, Warner executives and Warner star, Al Jolson.[66] A similar arrangement existed at MGM, where L.B. Mayer and executives ate in a private room just off the main dining area that included a Directors' Table where for seven years waiter Billy Fies served the same, all-male group of high-profile actors, directors and executives. They played dice to determine who would pay his tip.[67] For the most part, however, white, female waitresses were the norm. They were the only uniformed servers captured in photographs of the Goldwyn commissary in 1922. Likewise, photos of the MGM Commissary in 1932 and 1939, and the Warners commissary in 1937 and the 1940s showed female waitresses in uniforms.[68] A member of the Paramount commissary wait staff said in 1936 that it was made up of twenty-five waitresses,[69] and Ronald Davies describes female servers as having worked at other studios[70] Of course, men of color, and white adolescent boys and young men did carry heavy trays and clear tables as busboys, and are visible in the MGM studio tour film, the Ince tour, and in photographs,[71] These were some of the only jobs available to people of color on studio lots, where they were subjected to the same racism and prejudice as elsewhere at the time. Meta Carpenter described typical film sets as narrow-minded

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[65] Davies, *The Glamour Factory*, 319.
[66] Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood*, 60.
[67] The only exception to the all-male rule was made for Katherine Hepburn, who was invited to dine with Spencer Tracy. Christopher Finch and Linda Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 57-8.
[68]Warners commissary pictures in: Stephens and Wanamaker, *Early Warner Bros. Studios*, 51, 94; 1939 MGM picture in: Bingen, Sylvester and Troyen, *M-G-M*, 62; All other photographs can be found in: Julie Lugo Cerra and Marc Wanamaker, *Movie Studios of Culver City* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2011), 26, 36, 43.
[69] Julie Lang Hunt, "They Aren't all Actresses in Hollywood," *Photoplay* (September, 1936), 92.
[70] Employees at Warner Brothers described being served "waitresses" at Paramount and Warner Bros. Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 316.
[71] They were also occasionally described by workers like Marjorie Fowler, who said that at Fox "they had a wonderful black man, Emmett, who walked around with a rolling cart." Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 319. Photo in: Julie Lugo Cerra and Marc Wanamaker, *Movie Studios of Culver City* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2011), 43.

and bigoted spaces, with union crews who were "–Jew-haters, Roosevelt-cursers, Communist-fearers, denigrators of Catholics and blacks and Mexicans, espousers of the Silver Shirts, opponents of liberal legislation."[72] Below-the-line crewmembers were not the only guilty parties. Marcella Rabwin remembered that while David Selznick expressed empathy for the African American actors who worked on *Gone with the Wind*, other key creative personnel affected a similar attitude to what Carpenter described:

> There was an anti-black sentiment on the sound stage. I knew the director, Victor Fleming, to be a bigot. He and his good friend Clark Gable assumed airs of superiority over most of the cast, but especially over the many blacks who took the roles of slaves. They were not indifferent to their skills; not one of them gave less than a fine performance. But the sense of superiority over them by Fleming and Gable did not escape me.[73]

For Gable and Fleming, African American men and women were acceptable in few jobs at MGM outside of those in domestic service sectors. When Lena Horne and other black cast members from *A Cabin in the Sky* were refused seating by Louis B. Mayer's brother Jerry, L.B. opened his private dining room to them.[74] At that studio, at least, black movie workers might work at the commissary, but they were not served there.

The management of restaurant service labor in America was, by the early 1900s, one of the few business professions deemed "feminine" enough for women (and undesirable enough to white men) due to the service aspects involved in

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[72] Meta Carpenter Wilde and Orin Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman: The Love Story of William Faulkner and Meta Carpenter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 121
[73] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 97.
[74] Bingen et al., *M-G-M,* 44.

managing personnel while catering to clientele.[75] At studios, it was one of the few places where women typically supervised others' labor. Though the aforementioned Nick Janos managed Fox's Café de Paris commissary, by the 1930s, Katherine Higgins managed the Warner commissary. She was responsible for its diners, as well as for catering meals to stages in production. She conferred daily with assistant directors in order to supply food on set and her department provided 120,000 boxed lunches yearly for location production.[76] Pauline Kessinger performed similar duties as manager of the Paramount commissary, where she stayed for 35 years, rising from a waitress position in the 20s. She also supervised the backlot café and coffee shop, managing a staff of 80 waitresses, busboys, cooks and dishwashers, some of whom worked late into the night to put up as many as 1500 lunches for location crews who might pick them up as early as 4am. Kessinger's other duties included attending production meetings every day to know how much coffee to cater to sets ("We made money on that because the company paid for it,") convening regular instructional sessions on service and swapping in "new uniforms for the girls" every six months since "people got tired of seeing the same old dresses."[77] Meanwhile, at MGM "seating was controlled by efficient hostess Frances Edwards."[78] Commissary spaces were generally not feminized beyond the service jobs. Positions in the kitchen (other than as bakers) were and still are male dominated, as reflected

[75] Restaurant and hotel dining hall management and personnel and employment manager all discussed as viable, accepted field for women in: Miriam Simons Leuck, *Fields of Work for Women* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926), 74-5. Personnel management as "most 'feminine'" of business professions discussed in: Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 81.
[76] Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 60.
[77] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 318-319.
[78] RKO workers boycotted its Commissary in the 1930s because it was non-union, but Helen Woodhouse reported regularly from the café for the *RKO Club Studio News.* MGM and Boycott discussed in: Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 61.

by male chefs, cooks and dishwashers at the bottom end of the kitchen hierarchies.[79] For example, though Higgins managed the Warner commissary personnel in the thirties, the kitchen staff worked under the direction of Charlie Bader who headed the Food Department to Higgins' Service department.[80] Still, for workers dining at studios, commissaries and food service were experienced as feminine, with Kessler and others cast as "den mothers" charged not only with serving good food, but with providing an inviting atmosphere and making outsiders and regulars alike "feel they were the most important of all" in studios full of V.I.P.'s[81] This feminine touch at the front of the house reflected the interests of L.B. Mayer, who had his commissary serve his mother's chicken soup to create a family atmosphere and, it was hoped, dissuade workers from the inefficient practice of leaving the lot for meals.[82] Along with domestic service professions, commissaries and their gendered and/or raced workers were displayed in promotional material to impress outsiders by presenting studios as cities, complete with servants, women, etc.

Domestic Arts and Crafts:

Women's labor was also deemed culturally acceptable in areas related to domestic arts and crafts, including the middle-class women's parlor art of piano playing, and "home arts" such as sewing and interior decoration. While many men were visible playing violins, pianos and other instruments in many of the

[79] Vocational manuals for girls and women, from the 20s and 30s contain sections related to food production and service, but generally do not discuss cooking as an option for women, except in the case of selling baked goods, working as cooking teachers (at home economics schools and classes) or running tea rooms. Leuck, *Fields of Work for Women,* 41 (cooking jobs), labor statistics on 102 do not include cooking since women's baking is all that's covered in the book. Tea Shops discussed on 198-199.
[80] Fred Wagner, "What it Takes," *Warner Club News* v.2.2 (April, 1937), 1.
[81] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 316.
[82] Ibid., 313.

promotional films, apart from one female violinist pictured with members of the orchestra units at MGM, the only 2 female musicians among roughly 30-35 total musicians pictured in all the films were seated at pianos, and one of them was positioned in such a way as to indicate she may only be a page-turner. While their representation was scarce, inconsistent or non-existent in so many other sectors of labor, in every studio tour film in which the costuming process was shown, women could be seen engaged in work related to the design, construction and fitting of clothing as costume designers, wardrobe mistresses and assistants. Judging by the Ince film, only women fit and managed the costuming process and only women sit at sewing machines. These representations may seem to imply female domination and feminization of the costuming field. However, the presence of male wardrobe assistants and designers in the Universal, MGM and Fox films indicates a mixed-gender labor sector. In truth, by the 1920s,[83] only certain phases of costume production were considered strictly women's work: those with domestic rather than artistic associations (e.g. direct work with a needle and thread) that were of low status in the creative process and hierarchy, and that involving repetition and/or what might be called detail work such as embroidery, making use of women's "natural" dexterity, tidiness, attention to detail, and aptitude for carrying out routine tasks.

Feminization did not extend to those aspects of costuming that were considered to be of either creative or managerial importance, namely, the roles of

[83] The field was characterized as a women's field by Edith Clark of the Christie Film Company in 1922, but there is little evidence that women supervised costume departments. Edith Clark, "Designing Clothes for Movie Folk," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Industry* v.3 (Los Angeles: Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 79-81.

designer or supervisor. Certainly, the field of costuming was more open to women than the other areas of production design at studios, such as art direction,[84] set design[85] and make-up,[86] which were almost exclusively male fields in the studio tours and in other accounts. And many of the most successful and well-known costume designers of the classical era were women. The notability of these female figures and the female domination of costume design today has led to the impression that costume design was a women's profession in the studio era as well.[87] However costume designers and heads of departments were at least as likely to be men as women, if not more so.[88] Though female designers worked at studios throughout the 20s and 30s, top designers tended to be male. At Paramount, Edith Head was outranked by the studio's head designers, Travis Banton and Howard Greer until the late 1930s, when according to Linda Seger she became "the only woman to oversee the design department of a major studio."[89] Adrian was costume

[84] Though there appears to be a female worker among the art director's assistant in the MGM film, both Anthony Slide(through archival research) and Karen Ward Mahar (through a survey of Wid's Yearbook) found no evidence female art directors in investigations of the teens and early 20s. Slide, *Early Women Directors*, 10-11; Mahar, *Women Filmmakers,* 196;

[85] At MGM, a newsletter article about a female set designer, hired to fill vacancies created by WWII enlistment, describes the well-known architect, Lutah Riggs, as the first set designer at that studio. "Art Sketches," *MGM Studio Club News* (October, 1942), 15.

[86] As with wardrobe, early make-up departments were mixed gender because women made up women and men made up men (women's v. men's makeup discussed in Seger, *When Women Call the Shots,* 9-10; Mary Alden, "The women making up for the screen," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Industry* v. 3, 13). However, in numerous accounts of studio personnel, make-up departments were led by men and make-up artists were typically male, though the profession was not altogether closed to women. George Westmore and his six sons dominated leadership positions at studios, but supervisors not from their clan, such as Jack Dawn at MGM, were also men (discussed in: Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood*, 313-15). The job of make-up artist was typically sex-typed as male (referred to generally as 'make-up men') and cast as male in films about moviemaking such as the "Broadway Brevity," *Out Where the Stars Begin* (Bobby Connelly, director, Vitaphone, 1938). The beauty industry in general was masculinized as well according to Mahar, *Women Filmmakers*, 203.

[87] For example, Karen Ward Mahar, cites costume design as a profession that became sex-typed under the studio system as "mostly female" *Women Filmmakers*, 196.

[88] "Hollywood's leading costume designers—Adrian of MGM, Travis Banton of Paramount, Orry-Kelly of Warner's, and Walter Plunkett of RKO," discussed, among other places, in Balio, *Grand Design,* 92.

[89] Seger seems to be referring to supervision at the five largest studios during the sound era, since there are examples of heads of departments in the late teens and early 20s. Seger, *When Women Call the Shots*, 10. There is some evidence in the studio tours films to the contrary. Gwen Wakeling is referred to as head of studio wardrobe along with fellow designers Arthur Levy and Royer.

supervisor in MGM until 1941, when Irene Sharaff took his place, joined later by Walter Plunkett and Helen Rose. Orry-Kelly was the major designer at Warners for much of the thirties and forties, Edward Stevenson served as head designer at RKO from '36-51. According to the Fox tour, Gwen Wakeling shared supervision of wardrobe (which at Fox included costuming), with Arthur Levy and Royer, and Charles LaMaire headed the department in the 1940s.[90]

Many female designers worked in these departments, but the breakdown between male and female workers leaned toward men at these top-level positions at most studios, or was at best evenly split between gender until the late 1940s. This was reflected in the MGM tour film, which made clear that wardrobe mistress E.F. Chaffin and her staff produced costumes, but that the designs originated "with the great Romain de Tirtoff, Erte, the world's foremost designer," who was depicted fitting one of the studio's stars in a far more glamorous setting than Chaffin's wardrobe department. Other male workers were pictured among wardrobe department's staff when arrayed for their group shot on the lawn, but they do not appear in subsequent scenes of the workroom, where only women sew with needles and thread or at machines. Male wardrobe workers apeared at work in subsequent shots of the men's wardrobe department, where they seemed to be serving as clerks, checking men's wardrobe in and out to male cast. However, no sewing machines or other tools were present in the men's department, and no workers were filmed sitting down, working on costume production. It is unclear whether men in MGM's

[90] For further evidence of this breakdown see also: Finch and Rosenkranz, *Gone Hollywood, 68-72*, or chapters on costuming in *The Glamour Factory, This Was Hollywood,* or *Grand Design*, where male and female personnel are discussed.

wardrobe department typically performed this type of costuming labor, but, significantly, their work as depicted in the films is free from duties associated with home arts.

A similar state of affairs was reflected by other promotional films' displays of male wardrobe and/or costume workers, which showed them either in supervisory roles (standing, conferring with managers while women sit working at machines)[91] or specifically identified them as costume designers, fashion designers or departmental supervisors.[92] On the other hand, only three[93] of the roughly 50 women visible in the same films' costume and wardrobe departments[94] were identified with supervisory or creative design work.[95] The other 40+ female workers were shown either assisting in fittings or doing the actual sewing labor of hand and machine stitching. In the world of film production as these studios presented it, the design of costumes (where all artistic and production value resides), was a masculinized or mixed-gender profession at best, while the actual labor required to produce costumes was shown as women's work.

This filmic self-representation of costuming by studios seems accurate in terms of the actual division of labor at studios' wardrobe departments, which expanded throughout the teens and 20s along with film production to include "a chief designer who was assisted by the head of wardrobe, several junior designers,

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[91] In *Behind the Screen, 20th Century Fox Tour*.
[92] At Universal the producer speaks to a costume department worker as he picks out the clothes he'll need. This supervisor is male. His staff is made up of women only. At MGM, several men are pictured in the group shot of the costume department, but it's impossible to say for certain that they were designers because the workers are not identified individually.
[93] The wardrobe mistress at MGM, The wardrobe mistress at Ince, and Gwen Wakeling, one of three costume supervisors at Fox, the other two of whom are male.
[94]Estimates are all that is possible due to film condition and shot distance in some films.
[95]Wardrobe Mistress at MGM, Glen Wakeling at Fox, and potentially a wardrobe worker at Ince. Clear up numbers once revisited films. At MGM, again,

sketch artists, period researchers, wardrobe assistants, and seamstresses."[96] The work in these departments included sewing, dyeing, beading, millinery work,[97] and many other sub-specializations which, together, allowed studios to costume any role from head to toe. Melvin Riddle stated that 100-125 "girls and women" were "employed at all times" in Lasky's fashion department in the early 1920s, including thirty or forty seamstresses at sewing machines.[98] Men were less commonly employed for lower level costuming work outside of a few specific roles. One of these was that of wardrobe assistants or clerks like the male wardrobe workers displayed on the MGM tour. In earlier years, studios' male stars brought their own wardrobe to wear in films with modern settings, and male wardrobe workers were present on set largely to assist male actors, rather than to create their garments.[99] The practice of men dressing men continued as costume designers began to design male stars' attire along with that of their female costars. There were also a few masculinized specialties related to costume production, such as bushelmen, menswear tailors, and drapers (who also worked in set design).[100] On the whole,

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[96] Balio, *Grand Design*, 92. "Like the art department, the costume department of a Hollywood studio was hierarchically organized, supervised by a chief designer who was assisted by the head of wardrobe, several junior designers, sketch artists, period researchers, wardrobe assistants, and seamstresses."
In "From Pen to Silversheet III" Melvin Riddle describes the expanding department as made of up five distinct branches including the dressmaking room, the stock room, the finished wardrobe, the millinary shot, and the fancy costume shop for period attire. *The Photodramatist* v.3.10 (March 1922), 31-2.

[97] In "What it Takes," studio worker Fred Wagner described the wardrobe department as being made up of fitters, cutters, drapers, finishers, beaders, milliners, tailors, and bushelmen. *Warner Club News* v.2.2 (April 1937), 1.

[98] Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet IV – Filmland's Fashion Shop," *The Photodramatist,* v.3.10 (March 1922), 31. See also: Davis, *The Glamour Factory,* 216. Dye lady and tailors described, night wardrobe woman came to prepare costumes for day (216) fabric store and descriptions of women sitting at looms making fabric (220).

[99] In the early days of studios, male stars supposedly supplied their own costumes for contemporary roles. Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 71.

[100] Per Walter Plunkett, some early studios had minimal costume departments, and when he worked at FBO, costuming "was part of the drapery department. The men in charge of drapery went out and bought or rented clothes, or gave yardage to the maids who pinned it on" Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood*, 68. Shoes other leather goods might also be farmed out to a studio leather shop, which also made saddles. Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 131-2.

though, staffs of workers responsible for constructing and maintaining collections of costumes were largely made up of women throughout the 30s and 40s. This division of labor, displayed on the studio tours, is perhaps even clearer in a photograph of Howard Greer in his wardrobe department at Paramount in the 20s.[101] Though over 20 workers are visible in the photo, it is not difficult to pick out Greer, the only man, dressed in an eye-catching vest, at the center of the workroom filled with women in black dresses, most of them with heads bowed over their work.

Light Manufacturing

The low status and low level of creative agency, as well as the domestic associations of the actual production of costumes contributed to the perception that the work was for women, not men. However, adding to this perception was costume production's characteristics of repetition, detail and tedium, as required in sewing with a needle and thread, cutting out patterns, etc. This, combined with the domestic associations of wardrobe's requisite cleaning and maintenance of clothes, would have led to these jobs being "saved," as it were, for women. Indeed, there were some parts of costume production process which were so specialized, repetitive, detailed, and in some cases mechanized that they might be more accurately be grouped under another category of traditionally feminized labor: women's light manufacturing. This sector arose in the 1800s when factories began mass-producing wares that women had previously supplied for their own families through home manufacture,

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In pictures from MGM in the studio era, men are shown sewing draperies on heavy-duty sewing machines, and punching holes in leather. Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 34-5.

[101] Reproduced in: Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 69.

and "taken in" for wages (e.g. textiles, piecework). Home manufacturing associations sanctioned the hiring of women for corresponding specializations within factory production. Under this logic, the work was deemed "light" enough for women (and, frequently, adolescents) who, conveniently, were also deemed better suited to such up-close, detailed work than higher-priced male workers men.[102]

Even after women's manufacturing jobs became mechanized and the labor required ceased to resemble that of home manufacture, the link remained between women, work involving fine detail and light manufacturing. And so, women were linked to sewing machines in factories just as they were linked to typing machines in offices. It was this type of light manufacturing in which female wardrobe and costume workers were most frequently engaged when they appeared onscreen in the promotional studio tour films. Furthermore, they were depicted nearly identically in all of the studio films that showed actual costume production (Universal's *Behind the Screen*, and the Ince, M-G-M, and Fox films). All included shots of three or more women in near-identical postures, bent over sewing machines, seemingly unaware of the camera, their fellow workers, themselves or anything other than their machines. Depicted in this way, the workers appeared mere extensions of the technology they operate, mechanical assets rather than human resources. Similar tableaux were standard in trade and fan magazines representations of these sectors as well,[103] recalling fictive trope of woman-as-

[102] For a description of this process, see Harris, *Out to Work*, 21-44.
[103] For example, female workers also pictured in this posture in the wardrobe department at Lubin Coronado in "Scenes in the New Lubin Coronado Studio at Coronado" *Motography* v.14.15 (October 9, 1915), 728.

machine, used as an emblem of modernity in films such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).

Beading and embroidery, though they did not typically involve machines, might also be categorized as domestic manufacturing due to their characteristic repetition and detail, and the fact that similar jobs were done by female workers in the garment industry. The fact that they involved the same repetition and tedium as machine work, but had to be done by hand, made these jobs even less desirable to female workers than machine sewing. At least one studio, such jobs were carried out by immigrant women. Ronald Davies describes the separateness of the "sixteen Mexican women" who did all of MGM's embroidery by quoting a studio publicist Ann Straus, who said that they brought brown bag lunches and never left the second floor of the wardrobe department. Said Strauss, "They just sat and beaded and embroidered all these beautiful costumes that were designed by the MGM designers," never knowing the people whose clothes they worked on a given film, but only that "it was production number 1420 and that was all."[104] Beth Day similarly states that in the same wardrobe department, "fine seamstresses from Mexico and Japan and Puerto Rico made exquisite hand embroideries and decorations," including one costume for Garbo that "took eight needlewomen from Guadalajara nine weeks to make."[105]

Women's light manufacturing sectors were also displayed in the film laboratory, where, in the studio tours, women equaled or outnumbered men. In all of the films in which the laboratory processes were explained in any depth, female

[104] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 216.
[105] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 128-9.

workers were pictured in groups of 7-10, performing identical, repetitive tasks.[106] This is one area of "women's work" in which female staff were frequently pictured in many studio tours. They were also specifically mentioned in trade reports on growing studios, rather than implied through descriptions of facilities or workflow like other workers. In fact, based on the frequency and type of discussion, the gender of the employees seems to have been highlighted in the display of laboratory assets as a demonstration of modern efficiency, for example in features published on Selig's growth and development. "Rooms of girls" were describing in the lab in 1909, while a 1911 report explained that "deft-fingered girls" were required in order to carefully watch negative printing for errors under the lab's dim red lights, and a later photo spread displayed the women's sectors where "hundreds and hundreds of girl operators" were employed in several pictures. A 1915 an array of women's labor was presented in a photoarray of "Scenes in Big Addition to Selig Studios"[107] At Paramount, "50 men and girls" were hired by and in many cases trained for their work in the laboratory, where prints were "projected on a tiny screen by a girl operator" who inspected it, "marking all flaws, scratches, cloudy or foggy pictures, etc."[108]

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[106] Photographic manufacturing began to make use of women's labor before the advent of motion pictures, working in photo-finishing laboratories, photographic plate manufactures, and drying, cutting and retouching film. See: Mahar, *Women Filmmakers,* 20-21. Women took up similar work in the burgeoning motion picture industry, along with film tinting. See: Charles Musser, *Beyond the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 41. This association with women and photographic manufacturing continued into the studio era, and has been remarked on, among others, by Ronald Davis, who mentions women graduating from negative cutting to editing in the 1920's, while still being barred from "more prestigious crafts." In: *The Glamour Factory,* 284.

[107] "Selig's The Great Moving Picture Plant of the West," *MPW* v.5.8 (August 21, 1909), 248. "Scenes in Big Addition to Selig Studios," *Motography* v.14.14 (October 2, 1915), 674.

[108] Melvin Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet XIV – The Film Laboratory" The Photodramatist v. 4.9 (February, 1923), 6, 38.

The “girl operators” were perhaps referenced so frequently to explain their presence (in terms of their deft fingers and attention to detail, a necessity for delicate work in dim light) in a sector filled with prized studio assets, which might otherwise have been assumed to be a male sanctuary, given the technological competencies required to process film. These images of women and machines, presented so similarly by different organizations and journalists, also recall the woman-as-machine trope as used to signify the brave new world of modern, mass-production. That this mode of filmic and photographic representation was a deliberate choice on the part of the studios or journalists (surely there were moments when the women were standing, looking up, or assumed different postures from their neighbors) seems even more likely when compared with representations of male lab workers. Unlike the groups of seated female workers, bent over small machines, performing seemingly identical, repetitive actions, male lab workers were almost always pictured in a variety of poses (standing, sitting, walking between tasks) even when they all seemed to be doing the same job. In the studio tours, male workers depicted in this way appeared engaged in multi-staged, active and self-directed work (Fig. 3.1).

These modes of representation evince the female-versus-male workplace values that caused certain types of lab work to be singled out for feminization. Stages of the process involving heavy machinery (large drying racks and bins, mechanized baths, etc) individual judgment (timing of exposure, negative density, etc), and technological knowledge (of developing and transfer machines) were assigned to men, along with supervisory positions over both male and, often, female

work sectors.[109] Standardized, "de-skilled"[110] portions of the process involving repetitive movements and requiring little technological or mechanical knowledge were separated out for female workers.[111] Thus, it fell to women to cut negatives according to the editor's specifications and to assemble prints by patching the different shots together with the small splicers and film cement. Women also inspected film for defects, again using only light, simple tools for tasks that required only a few movements of their "deft" fingers. And for less money, too.[112] Only two exceptions to this rule can be seen in the filmed studio tours of editorial and film processing departments. A woman was captured in the group shot of the MGM "cutters," and a female worker, who may or may not have been as assistant, appeared in a shot of the Fox editorial department, sitting behind and deeper in the frame than the male editor and supervisor working there. Many early cutters had been women, but that changed under the studio system, accelerating after the advent of sound when, as Edward Dmytryk recalled, "there was a stream of personnel flowing into the cutting department, and because of the real and imagined difficulties involved in cutting sound, that stream was almost exclusively male.

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[109] For example, men supervise women in the Ince film.

[110] This term undercuts the fact that there was some skill involved in many of these jobs. For example, Edward Dmytryk called hand-splicing, which was done in the Paramount sample-copy room where there were no splicing machines, "a lost art" adding that it "was a skill, though a minor one. Splicers had to learn just how much of a frame to cut, how to lick the overlapping bit of film with just enough spit to soften the emulsion that had to be removed, how to scrape it off with an Eveready razor blade without weakening the celluloid base underneath, how to apply the right amount of cement and then fit the pieces together so precisely that the doubled film would ride smoothly through the sprockets of the projection machine." In: Edward Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life But Not a Good Living: A Hollywood Memoir* (New York: Times Books, 1978), 5.

[111] "Indeed, a writer from *Moving Picture World* exclaimed after a 1910 visit to the Vitagraph plant that film joining was "a most congenial occupation for a number of girls and young women." The workplace was tidy, the women seemed happy, and he bragged that "this branch of service had opened up new and clean opportunity for many to earn a good living, free from many of the objectionable features of factory life." Mahar, *Women Filmmakers,* 23.

[112]Early female lab workers received $7-12/week, while men received $2-5 more. Mahar, *Women Filmmakers*, 24.

Fortunately, I was a man."[113] Film editing and its status as a "female friendly" field will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. For now it is worth noting that female editors were less rare at studios in the teens and 20s than female workers in most other sectors, but this was not reflected by the tours' display of a mere two female studio workers who might possibly be editors. Otherwise, the films' 40+ female lab workers were confined to light manufacturing. Photographic work of this sort had been gendered-female prior to the advent of motion pictures, but the application of the same logic of feminization to the film-specific job of lab work shows that that logic was not merely imported with old jobs at new studios, but extended to new jobs as well.

The logic of feminization was similarly extended to an area of animation labor that grew significantly with the introduction of animated features. Though the upper levels of the animation process continued to be reserved for men, women began to be hired at Disney in the 1930s due to the large number of workers needed in other sectors of animated feature production. As artist Mary Ford was told after submitting work for consideration to the Disney animation training school, women did not do "any of the creative work in connection with preparing the cartoons for the screen," and "the only work open to women consists of tracing the characters on clear celluloid sheets with India ink and filling in the tracings on the reverse side

[113] His account of this change at RKO, when after the advent of sound "Some of the women, intimidated by the new complexities, voluntarily retired. Others were replaced by department heads who felt that the ladies couldn't cope; the fact that at least some of these ladies remained top editors right through the transition had little effect on their prejudices." Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life,* 17-18.

with paint according to directions."[114] Inking and painting, as these jobs were known, required more skill and initial training than most light manufacturing jobs. However, many aspects of the work and the conditions in what by the mid-30s had become an all-female Ink and Paint department at Disney, connect it strongly with women's manufacturing labor.[115] Walt Disney's "girls," as he called them, were hired to defray the high cost of producing animated feature by carrying out the actual production (applying the paint that would show up onscreen to animation cels).[116]The ink and paint process itself was rationalized, through training of the workers for only a few specialized tasks, and the separation of the work. Other similarities between ink and paint and light manufacturing existed in the segregation of female from male workspaces, which was made concrete (with separate buildings) after the company's move to its Burbank studios, and increasingly underscored by a production culture in which heterosociality was discouraged, and the Ink and Paint Department became known as "The Nunnery."[117] Working conditions in the department were also comparable with women's light manufacturing. Inkers and painters worked in low light, were monitored for speed and accuracy, and pushed to produce 8-10 cels per hour with only short, 15-minute breaks. They sometimes worked over 80 hours a week to keep films on schedule. In

[114] "1938 Rejection Letter from Disney to a Female Artist" http://holykaw.alltop.com/1938-rejection-letter-from-disney-to-female-a September 19, 2010.
[115] Also not unlike contemporary Inbetweeener work (the process of generating an intermediate frame between two frames to give the appearance of motion.
[116] Patricia Zohn, *Coloring the Kingdom, Vanity Fair* (March 2010), http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2010/03/disney-animation-girls-201003, Last Accessed September 3, 2013.
[117] Ibid.

return, they were compensated with low pay and status amongst their male peers, receiving $18/week in 1941 to some animator's $300.[118]

The boundary between women and men's animation work was maintained via the same normative gender values, which placed women's eventual marriage over their careers. Disney Ink and Paint workers seeking advancement were told that when a woman became skilled enough to animate, she quit to get married. The rationalization implied that the investment of time might be wasted on women whose primary interest lay outside the workroom.[119] Really, the policy served management's interests, sustaining its source of cheap, feminized labor by restricting women's workplace mobility. Other studios saw the benefits of the practice and followed suit with their animation departments.[120] In 1935, Max Fleisher made Lillian Friedman the first female animator at his New York studio (and in America), which released cartoons through Paramount. Friedman's salary was $40/week while the average weekly of her male colleagues was $125.[121] When she was hired in 1936 by Leon Schlessinger Productions, the producer of Looney Toons and Merry Melodies cartoons for Warner Bros. in 1936, Martha Sigall's

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] "The Ink and Paint departments of most studios were jokingly referred to as "hen houses" because of overwhelming predominance of women." Tom Sito, *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 2006), 26. An all-female department is described at UPA in the 1950s (with 15 to 20 women supervised by 2 women) in: Adam Abraham, *When Magoo Flew: The Rise and Fall of Animation Studio UPA* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2012), 108. Martha Sigall characterized the ink and paint staff who worked on Warners Looney Toons and Merry Melodies cartoons as all-female, naming her chapter on her department "The Ink and Paint Girls" and listing the names of everyone who worked there. Martha Sigall, *Living Life Inside the Lines: Tales from the Golden Age of Animation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 110-115. There are also frequent mentions of "beauties" who work in the cartoon departments in their columns in the *Warner Club News.* For examples see July 1936 and April 1942 issues.
[121] Sito, *Drawing the Line*, 19-20.

apprentice painter salary was $12.75 for a 40 hour week.[122] As the Disney animation rejection letter stated, the possibility of advancement beyond the feminized sector of Ink and Paint remained non-existent until World War II, when a few women were promoted, and earlier conditions largely resumed after the war up through the 1980s. By 1989, ink and paint made up the largest category of workers at animation studios, and it was still largely made up of "women who were held back from moving into the ranks of animator, layout, or direction."[123] Had these women been eligible for promotion and the higher wages it brought, their numbers would have threatened not only the masculinized power structure, but also, the very cost control they were originally hired to ensure.

Women's Professions

The lack of advancement prospects was a common characteristic among all women's jobs to some degree or other. This was even true of teaching and nursing, the most desirable of feminized sectors, which because of their professionalization, training requirements and the elevated status and pay (relative to other women's work), can be grouped together under the category of women's professions. Women's employment in these fields was deemed acceptable because of their ties to women's domestic roles as mothers and wives, which had required them to be midwives, healers, nurturers and teachers. For that reason, it was thought that teaching and nursing "did not require sacrifice of the feminine role" as other professions did, and such roles were primarily associated with women by the late

[122] Sigall, *Living Life Inside the Lines*, 110.
[123] Sito, *Drawing the Line*, 336.

1800s.[124] Significantly, these professions also required elements of service and emotion work, delivered not just laterally to equals and upward to "betters" (as a lawyer serves wealthy clients) but downward, to some of the weakest members of society. This characteristic also ties women's professions to other types women's work, and indeed, a 1913 vocational manual lists nursing, which was still gaining respectability because it required little formal training before the Civil War, under Domestic and Personal Service.[125]

At studios, traditionally domestic workspaces were built for the benefit of the studios' workers. While spaces in production such as the camera department were marked, through their heavy machinery and male technicians, as the realm of men,[126] such spaces as hospitals and schools were marked as the realm of women. This enhanced the sense of studios as simulations of the outside world, complete with masculine and feminine spheres. It also tied women to certain roles in the minds of studio workers, whereas earlier, more individualistic production systems, in their pioneering, improvisational spirit, had often allowed more freedom from traditional social roles and class distinctions than other workplaces. An image of women bandaging of a patient appeared in the August 1917 issue of *Photoplay* under the title "The Triangles Doing Their Bit." A caption explained that a nurse's class had been formed at the Ince studio and "a perfectly equipped hospital ward has been fitted out" to train female studio workers such as actresses Enid Bennett

[124] Harris, *Out to Work,* 127.
[125] Laselle and Wiley, *Vocations for Girls*, 73.
[126] Shots taken of MGM and Fox's camera-related departments in those studios' respective promotional tour films show men actively operating all camera-related technology. At MGM, the department's several dozen members face the camera, each holding a camera of their own and operating the crank. Inside fox's maintenance and camera repair department, a dozen or so men move in and out of several rooms filled with machines, each in a different posture, working on a different machine.

and Olive Thomas for Red Cross work.[127] While the preparation was clearly being made with possible wartime service in mind, the gendered division of labor (a doctor observing as nurses minister to the patient) and the feminine tableau also hint at the Ince hospital as a gendered space. A woman (Nurse Peterson) appeared in the *1925 Studio Tour,* standing in front of the MGM hospital, referred to elsewhere as the First Aid Department. Though MGM did have doctors, a dentist and even a chiropractor in residence, at most studios doctors were not kept on staff full-time.[128] Nurses typically staffed on-site hospitals or first aid clinics.[129]

Though dance instructors are the only teachers displayed in the studio tours (at MGM and Fox), many others were present at studios. Child actors typically took classes at studios' schoolhouses if they had them,[130] worked with tutors on set, or some combination of the two.[131] Perhaps most well-known was MGM's Little Red Schoolhouse, a red, Spanish revival building where, Mary McDonald was the head instructor for years. For pupils who attended classes in the mornings and met with tutors onset in the afternoon, McDonald functioned as a principal, directing teachers

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[127] "The Triangles Doing Their Bit," *Photoplay* v.12.3 (August, 1917), 132. One example of an earlier hospital that was not staffed by women was the Vitagraph Scientific Department, which was commissioned for first aid, but seems to be mostly intended as a film set/medical prop shop. It was staffed by Professor Sig Stark, who was to consult on pictures but was not a practicing physician. Even so his presence in the large room, "lined with white tile, and every surgical instrument and appliance known to modern science" was held out as a source of new confidence to studio employees, "should any of them be unfortunate to meet with an accident." Discussed in: "Vitagraph's Scientific Department," *Motography* v.14.8 (August 21, 1915) 344.

[128] Two nurses are shown ministering to a studio worker in the First-Aid Department, "where—unlike at most other studios—actual doctors, nurses, and even a dentist kept office hours." Some others came from the Roach Studios for a doctor because they only had nurses on staff. Bingen et al., *M-G-M,* 78.

[129]At Universal, a nurse was one of the few employees who actually lived at the ranch in its early days. Discussed in: Cooper, *Universal Women*, 79.
Beth Day says of MGM, "a nurse, dentist and occasionally a doctor were on hand to save the costly delay of sending minor accident cases off the lot for treatment" and occasionally nurses and doctors were kept standing by in production to consult or lend first aid as needed. *This Was Hollywood*, 176-7. For example, studio nurses Elise Donohue and Mary McArdle reported from the RKO Hospital for the first issue of that studio's house organ, writing about the store of information they gathered about studio workers' recreational activities "in the course of administering to the various ills of our patients. "Immateria Medica," *RKO Studio News* (October, 1935), 33.

[130] See for example, Warner Bros. school pictured in 1939: Stephens and Wanamaker, *Early Warner Bros. Studios*, 77; MGM Schoolhouse pictured in: Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 77.

[131] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 92-3.

who came from the Los Angeles public school system to teach the studio's children.[132] Ida Koverman, L.B. Mayer's secretary, took a great interest in the lives of children at the studio, and reported for the studio newsletter in 1936 that the studio had taken additional steps on behalf of its younger contract players. On Mayer's authority (and, seemingly, Koverman's initiative), a recreational area was built for the children in a bungalow that came to be known as "The Little Green Room." There, in the charge of "studio mother" Caroline "Muzzy" McPhail, children and adolescents at studios reported and a "record of their whereabouts at all times" was to be kept. The Green Room, staffed by "various tutors and coaches employed by the studio" was host not only to tea and birthday parties, but to distinguished visitors as well. One frequent guest was studio talent scout (and later casting director) Bill Grady, who "drops in on the bungalow family very often to see how his 'chicks' are coming along, and give them good advice to help them on their way to success and stardom." Koverman's article was accompanied by pictures of McPhail teaching a group of children, which further underscore the Little Green Room's representation of traditional notions of home and family as the feminine sphere.[133]

Though framed in less familial terms, Bill Grady and other executives associated with casting and talent departments used teachers and coaches to nurture their adult "chicks" as well. Newly discovered actors under contract were subject to a process of grooming and training.[134] This process was carried out by a fleet of speech and diction coaches, singing and dancing teachers, and other coaches

[132] Bingen et al., *M-G-M,* 77.
[133] Ida R. Koverman, "The Little Green Room," *MGM Studio News* v.1.7 (July, 1937).
[134] Described in: Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 85-93.

and teachers of anything a motion picture career might call for, including etiquette, riding, swimming, language or anything else that motion picture acting or promotion might call for. Talent-grooming wings of studios were dominated (and often led) by women, including Lillian Burns at MGM, Alice Kelly and Helena Sorrell at Fox, Zee Silvonia and later Phyllis Loughton and Charlotte Clary at Paramount, Malvina Dunn and Sophie Rosenstein at Warner Bros., and Benno Schneider at RKO and Columbia.[135] Some talent workers, along with workers in publicity, were also responsible for organizing stars' private lives to fit their public personas, since even featured players "were expected to drive expensive cars, live in impressive houses with servants, and dress stylishly.[136] Though there were many male teachers and coaches,[137] the field was female-dominated, as the characteristics of the work of teaching and grooming tied it with similar feminized fields.

Clerical Labor:

Finally, there was the women's sector of *clerical labor,* which may at first seem to have less connection to the domestic sphere than these other categories of women's labor, given clerical workers' frequent proximity to high-status, male-dominated sectors (e.g. as a secretary in an office of male managers and executives), and the fact that many male studio employees worked in clerical capacities. However, as Chapter 1 explained, clerical technology (typewriters, stenography machines, etc.) had been gendered female because of their routine processes and requisite attention to detail, putting clerical machines more in line with "light"

[135] Christopher Finch and Linda Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 45-9.
[136] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 132.
[137] For example, men were more heavily concentrated in the areas of dancing and singing.

manufacturing machinery than masculinized technologies or heavy machinery. Further, clerical labor's proximity to high-status, male-dominated sectors was cancelled out by its low status, lack of advancement potential, and service aspects, which placed it closer in status to domestic service or women's professions. Finally, the presence of male workers in earlier clerical sectors was explained by the subsequent separation, standardization and de-skilling of the clerical sector by efficient reorganization which led to a gradual departure of male workers from roles that didn't retain some managerial agency, or advancement potential or involve some more masculinized technology or machinery. These parameters also guided men's participation in clerical sectors at early studios, as evidenced by male workers' presence at the head of clerical departments such as accounting in trade discussions,[138] as well as their occasional appearances in the promotional tour films.

MGM's five, male "reception clerks," presented at the start of its 1925 tour film, were shown standing in front of the studio gates rather than seated at desks or typewriters. The shot of the clerks was sandwiched between title cards that state first, "It would take a 'One-Eyed' Connelly to crash this gate!" and then "Unless these reception clerks had been tipped off to Okay your visit." Positioned as literal gatekeepers with power to grant passage beyond the studio walls, these roles were framed as necessarily masculine (in terms of the male authority and physical size needed to keep out riffraff). The same could be said of the male clerk in the 1925 Universal tour, who was shown sitting as a gatekeeper outside of the studio manager's office. The later use of police and security guards as studio gatekeepers

[138] Discussed earlier in chapter.

seems to corroborate the notion that, like movies under the studio system, "security at studio gates was a serious business."[139] The only other male workers displayed in roles related to clerical labor (all of whom are shown in the Fox tour) were two leaders of administrative departments, whose positions are managerial or executive rather than clerical (the Personnel Executive and Treasurer), and a male clerk shown at the paymaster's window as it is swamped by male workers. The latter was another area of male clerical participation explainable by requirements of gatekeeprism and/or male technology.

In his February, 1937 "Studio Tours" column for the Warner Club News, Fred Pappmeier gave the history of the timekeeping and tabulation departments at Warner Bros., which, in keeping with the pattern outlined thus far, developed from the early film model of clerical and accounting as a minimal and haphazard presence at the studio, ancillary to the production process, with "only one man for 300 people" located "in a corner of the purchasing department."[140] Over time, the department grew along efficient lines, with a large staff of clerical workers undergirding the production process. By the 30s, 31 assistant timekeepers were "dispatched to various departments to keep track of who is working on which project." Female clerical workers in the time office supported the timekeepers and managed a mechanical payroll system for the studio's 3000 employees.[141] Pappmeier's history of the department also reflects the transition from the Victorian model of masculinized clerical work—under which one or a few self-directed, male

[139] Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 38.
[140] Fred Pappmeier, "Studio Tours: Timekeeping," Warner Club News, v.1.12, February 1937, 1.
[141] Ibid.

clerks worked as masters of an entire office or department's processes— to the efficiency model, in which clerical tasks were separated, mechanized and deskilled, and lowliest among them were reserved for female workers. In Warners' mechanized system, it was the male timekeepers who used their individual judgment to assess labor use across the studio,[142] while "girl operators" filled in time cards for employees, punched them as workers came to and from work, so that they could be run through tabulation's new "brain" machine, which calculated pay, overtime, etc., every Saturday.[143] This gendered breakdown of labor was in evidence in the tabulation department's leadership–it was run by a male department head and his male assistant— and the male gender of operators who maintained the heavier technology of its 12 IBM "brain" machines, leaving women the lighter, detail work of maintaining the files of time cards and punching holes in them.[144] Male timekeepers also seemed to be the norm at MGM in the 20s, when James Pratt was hired through a friend in the department.[145]

The male wire operator shown in the MGM tour was representative of hiring practices at that studio until 1942, when the studio newsletter reported that the "first ever girl" had been hired as an assistant telegraph operator in the telegraph department, with its masculine technology, due to wartime staff shortages.[146] Meanwhile, jobs answering telephones and operating switchboards had been feminized by the 1880s in America under the rationale that women were better

[142] Fred Wagner, "What's What and Who's Who on the Backlot: Timekeeping" Warner Club News, v1.12, February 1937, 7.
[143] Fred Pappmeier, "Studio Tours: Timekeeping," Warner Club News, v.1.12, February 1937, 1.
[144] These departments seem to be linked, with Gertrude Archer mentioned in both places. Fred Wagner, "What's What and Who's Who on the Backlot: Tabulating Department," Warner Club News, v1.12, February, 1937, _.
[145] Pratt interviewed in: Steen, *Hollywood Speaks*, 183.
[146] Robert L. Boggs, "Telegraph," *MGM Studio Club News* (October, 1942), 8.

suited to the technology because of their "gentle voices, nimble fingers, and mild tempers," and because operators were needed in high volume and women could be paid low wages.[147] These jobs were likewise feminized at studios,[148] as well as in the works of popular culture produced there, in which the female operator is a common figure.[149] Similarly, mimeograph machines, considered heavy machinery, were run by men in clerical departments such as Script and Stenography, and male clerks were sometimes assigned to clerical roles in departments with heavy machinery, such as the camera department.[150]

Female clerical workers appeared in nearly all of the studio tours films, though in the Universal and Ince tours, this presence was merely implied by shots of woman in or around production, taking notes on scripts. Note-takers and script girls were visible at Vitagraph in *A Trip Thru a Hollywood Studio*, and related workers are shown at Fox in the research department. By far the biggest clerical presence was displayed in the MGM tour, where a title card explained that after stories were written, "Miss Underwood, Miss Remington, et al. make copies of stories for all departments," and led into a shot of an arrayed group of 17-18 smartly dressed women, presumably comprising an early stenography or typing pool. However,

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[147] Ellen Lupton, *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to the Office* (New York,; Princeton Architectural Press, 1993).
[148] Telephone operators discussed exclusively as female at all studios whenever the gender of workers is identified. However, the work is mostly discussed in genderless terms of "operators" and "lines." In *MGM Studio Club News* v.2.1, 18 operators are discussed as working 900 lines.
[149] See, for example, *Auntie Mame* (Morton DaCosta, director, 1958).
[150] A few examples of what was seems to have been a typical gendered split between mimeographs and typewriters: "All This and Sadie, Too," *Warner Club News* (November, 1940), 3. Rex Haslam, Buddy Hiatt and Dan Kraus (whose departure for war was reported six months later (Sylvia Rosenthal, "Secretaries," *Warner Club News, May, 1941,* 6) identified as "the boys who ably handle" mimeograph work. Along with the female worker who was moved to the telegraph department in the fall of 1942 to take the place of one of the 500 employees who were by then involved in the war, six girls were moved to the printing room of the laboratory, with its heavier machinery, and three female employees were moved to the mimeograph room, where previously men had done the work. Evelyn Felder, "Script," *MGM Studio Club News* (October, 1942), 9.

much of the typing and stenography work that was surely being carried out by large numbers of female clerical workers in the late teens and early 20s was not shown on the tours, since there were more than 1 and probably more than even MGM's 17 clerical workers on most lots at the time they were shot. Presumably, these workers were omitted in favor of showcasing studio assets more directly related to film production, or the more novel features of the studio-as-city (e.g. hospitals, barber shops, etc.). The only reason female note-takers were visible was because they were present in and around rolling cameras.

Whether described explicitly or merely implied (for example by shots of the large, imposing administration buildings),[151] clerical workers, most of them women, were a growing presence in nearly every department. By the 1920s they were a necessity for doing business all over the studio. Pandro Berman found this out the hard way when he was fired as supervisor of the Columbia cutting department for what he described as his "ignorance of the techniques of running an office." Berman didn't have a secretary and instead wrote longhand letters with instructions related to cutting to the New York office until, "one day Jack called me into his office and said, 'Let me see a copy of that letter you sent to New York.' And I said, 'I haven't got a copy.' He threw me out."[152] Thus, the relative lack of female clerical workers visible in the studio tours, given their ubiquity by the 1920s, demonstrates not their absence from the production process, but their spatial and hierarchical remove from the movie sets and their lack of creative and managerial status.

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[151] Clearly identified in Universal *Behind the Screen*, *20th Century Fox* tour, MGM *1925 Studio Tour*.
[152] Berman interview in: Steen, *Hollywood Speaks*, 168-9.

Women in Studio Tours – Revisited

Below, the list of women's jobs generaged earlier in this chapter from the studio tour films has been sorted into the various categories of feminized labor:

Performance
Actress
Dancer
"Mannequin"/Model

"Intellectual" Sectors
Screenwriter
Scenario Writer
Scenario Department
Reader
Researcher

Clerical
Copyist/Typist
Note-Taker
Mail
Script/Continuity
(script girl)

Domestic Service
Maid/Servant

Domestic Arts/Crafts
Costume
Designer/Dept. Head
Modiste
Modiste Assistant
Wardrobe Mistress
Wardrobe Staff
Wardrobe Assistant
Hairdresser
Pianist
Dance Instructor

Domestic /"Light" Manufacturing
Seamstress
Cutter
Film Inspector
Negative Cutter
Patcher/Assembler
Film Lab Worker

Women's Occupations
Nurse
Shopper
Wife/Mother/Sister

Exceptions
Art Director's Assistant
Publicity Department

This re-organized list demonstrates that whether women had really been successfully sorted out of all other labor sectors by the time of each of these films, or were simply not selected for display when they were present in outlying fields, their prospects at growing studios were narrowing. Nearly all of the female workers shown in the films did so under one of the feminized categories that had been incorporated into studio labor systems. Those that did not, with but two exceptions, fit either under the category of women's performance (actors, singers, dancers) that was acceptable under gender norms, or in the female-friendly subset of

"intellectual" professions,[153] many of them tied to clerical labor, the rest rendered acceptable in part because, per earlier discussion, of the feminine associations of the work (typing, done in private). Of the remaining two exceptions, only one—the female art director's assistant shown on the MGM tour—is likely a true exception. Though there had been some female publicists in earlier film companies, and some women did work in publicity departments in the early 20s, the practice of hiring them did not catch fire at MGM until Howard Strickling's tenure later in the decade.[154] It seems just as likely that, instead, the female worker shown with MGM's publicity department was present in that sector to help meet its heavy clerical requirements.[155]

"Perfect Pictures": Paper Efficiency and Clerical Divisions in Full Bloom

In addition to creating paper planning and paper jobs, studio efficiency exacted a form of control over the creative process that was hinted at by various early studio managers references to "perfect pictures" in their plans to engineer scripts (via efficiency) to be directed as written. Studios had finally attained this level of control by the late 1920s, when studio efficiency flowered into full bloom out of the first decade of experiments in efficient film production. Richard Koszarski calls efficient production systems developed by even such pioneers as Thomas Ince

[153] More discussion of this sector is given in Chapter 5. Departments related to scripted material and the process of acquiring literary and other source material were often referred to under the headings of "Intellectual" or "Literary." Sometimes these departments were collectively referred to as "Story" as well.
[154] "Women as well as men work in the publicity departments of some companies, though the latter are in the majority." Adam Hull Shirk, "Breaking into the publicity end of pictures," Opportunities in the Motion Picture Industry v.2 (Los Angeles: Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 57.
[155] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 138. Strickling can be seen standing with a staff of male and female employees in a later photograph in: Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 30.

"primitive in comparison with those employed later in the silent period by more mature studios such as Paramount and MGM." [156] The latter studio grew from 6 glass stages and 42 buildings in 1924 to 30 concrete stages and 177 administrative and support buildings at the height of its development, when, as one executive reflected "you could get anything done on the lot except be born or buried—and there was a mortuary down the block." [157] Anne Strauss remembered that efficiency experts, dispatched from MGM's New York offices, required every studio worker to write out a detailed description of their job, then undergo an interview, after which "they fired a number of people and put a stapler on everybody's desk. That was to make them more efficient!"[158] At the same studio, piles of chains outside the workshop were painted red and yellow "to denote their length so workmen did not waste time measuring them." [159] Robert Parrish recalled Fox's control of assets and personnel extending all the way down to the parking spots:

> When a firing was imminent, the studio management notified the payroll department and the sign-painting department. When these departments were poised and ready to strike, the unlucky employee was notified. On D-day a signal was flashed form the front office (Zanuck? Koenig? Goetz? Schreiber? Somewhere up there), and the departments sprang into action. A final check was sent to the now ex-employee's agent, and as the ex-employee drove off the lot, the sign painter rushed out and blotted his name off the asphalt forever.[160]

Departmentalization and separation of work processes allowed for the management of creativity and subjectivity at a remove by expanding fleets of

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[156] Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 109.
[157] Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 22.
[158] Davis, *The Glamour Factory,* 313.
[159] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 128-9.
[160] So named because of its shape when viewed from above and its primitive air conditioning. Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 43. Described as "unaffectionate" in Robert Parrish, *Growing Up in Hollywood* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 119.

managers who controlled the assets and labor surrounding creative labor, and thus isolating creative processes from other work. At the height of MGM's development, its films were supervised by executives and producers in 235 offices, totaling 115,000 cubic feet in the Thalberg Building, unaffectionately known by studio workers as "The Iron Lung."[161] Whether or not Wilbert Melville envisioned such a high managerial body count when he wrote about his efficient management in 1913, he did predict an important management strategy by claiming his efficiency relieved directors of the "detail and routine which ordinarily are a handicap against the highest artistic results."[162] Attention to detail was a much-mentioned requirement for efficient production as outlined by early studio managers, in terms of both onscreen visuals (aka accuracy and continuity),[163] and those off-screen production responsibilities not directly related to the purely creative work of direction.

Executives and producers in the studio era made good on their precursors' promises to render everything and everyone efficient, "except the director," from whose shoulders would be lifted "a thousand and one mechanical details that could do nothing but interrupt him," [164] leaving him free of such "details that can be better attended by others," to "concentrate all his faculties on his story."[165] While cited as an aid to creativity, viewed from another angle, this managerial attention to detail also relieved the director of much of his relevance in the chain of command at studios, as the head of his own crew, and thus as the center of creative power. King

[161] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 43.
[162] "Studio Efficiency," *MPW* vol.17.6 (August 9, 1913), 624.
[163] Thomas H. Ince, "Ince Makes War on Inconsistency: Producer, Citing Many Errors in Films Generally, Tells How He Keeps Them Out of Own Pictures," *Motography*, v.19.8 (February 23, 1918), 361; "Devotion to Detail at Lasky's" *Photoplay,* v.14.1 (June, 1918), 34; E.H. Calvert, "Attention to Detail Makes for Success," *Motography,* v.14.19 (November 6, 1915), 947.
[164] H.O. Davis, "A Kitchener Among Cameras," *Photoplay* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 130.
[165] "H.O. Davis Talks System," *MPW,* v. 27.8 (May 13, 1916), 1142.

Vidor summed up succinctly the effect of big studio efficiency on the creative process, saying "the multiplication of men and machines behind the camera made it increasingly difficult for the director to retain his individual viewpoint."[166] While studios producer ranks swelled to 220 producers/484 pictures by 1927 from 34 producers/ 7324 films ten years earlier, the studio director, according to then-independent producer David Selznick, had become "a cog in the machine" who was simply handed his next project in script form, "usually a few days before he goes into production."[167] Frank Capra echoed these sentiments in a 1939 letter to the New York Times in which he estimated that "80 per cent of directors today shoot scenes exactly as they are told to shoot them without any changes whatsoever, and that 90 per cent of them have no voice in the story or in the editing."[168] Writers felt similarly disempowered by the compulsory collaboration required under the rationale of making full use of multiple writing talents. Many writers believed the real reason for team writing was producers' compulsive need for control over the process.[169]

Female studio workers became the means of this executive/managerial control, both monitoring of on-screen details to ensure pictures' consistency and accuracy (as researchers and continuity-minding "script girls") and filtering "detail" work away from high-status movie makers (as secretaries and assistants). Through multiple systems of record-keeping, cost-accounting, message circulation, etc., studio managers collectively planned production through executive, script, publicity

[166] King Vidor, *King Vidor on Film Making* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972).
[167] Producer numbers in: Balio, *Grand Design*, 76. Selznick quoted inIbid., 79.
[168] Frank Capra, "By Post from Mr. Capra: Disputing Mr. Aisner," *The New York Times* (April 2, 1939), 134.
[169] Ibid., 84.

and casting departments, tracked products through circulating paperwork between production and management by secretaries and clerical workers, and managed contracted studio resources and assets through cost accounting, record keeping and other administrative departments.

Paper-based efficiency now included hourly weather reports not just for Los Angeles, but all over the country,[170] and massive libraries not just of books or research materials, but of sheet music,[171] backdrops,[172] even plaster molds.[173] The overhead cost of maintaining all of these assets (which included studio lots themselves) had risen steeply since the late teens, when overhead seldom referred to on budgets and pre-production costs were relatively minor,[174] to 20% of production budgets in the 1920s,[175] rising ever higher heading into the 1930s when King Vidor glumly described the massive organization and attendant costs in his biography, saying:

> I was a victim of a large studio with two-thousand telephones, a police and fire department, a mail department, camera department, laboratory, carpenter shops, plaster shop, wardrobe department, publicity department, commissary, barber shop, accounting, casting, and on and on, ad infinitum. This jumble all came under an overhead of four or five thousand dollars a day, very little of which actually went into the finished film.[176]

Hortense Powdermaker questioned the validity of overhead figures in her anthropology of Hollywood, saying they were inflated to conceal studios' profits for

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[170] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 156.
[171] MGM's sheet music library "eventually swelled to over 4,000,000 selections, ranking with the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library as one of the three largest in the world. Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 47.
[172] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 134.
[173]"An entire storeroom at the side of the plaster and sculptor shop was filled with stone walls, filed in sections, which could be fitted into each other to make walls of any desired length" Ibid., 128-9 .
[174] On one budget script preparation, staff, etc., was assessed $1000 out of a total budget of $17,000. Anthony Slide, *Silent Topics* (London: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 23.
[175] Koszarski, *An Evening's*, 119; Slide, *Silent Topics,* 23-27.
[176] Vidor, *King Vidor on Film Making*, 14.

taxes and to prevent actors and directors for wanting a cut.[177] Whatever percentage of total costs overheads comprised, simply maintaining studio lots and their assets necessitated massive organization and large numbers of workers. Women's labor was mobilized to achieve this organization at lowered cost.

By the 1930's, women's workplace identity was increasingly tied to overhead and planning departments, and their prospects elsewhere largely restricted to areas of feminized labor. In 1936, *Photoplay's* "They Aren't All actresses in Hollywood" profiled eight female studio workers "each representing one of the eight studio trades open to women" outside of acting. The trades, introduced with the preface, "these, then, are your chances in Hollywood," were that of seamstress, costume designer, interior decorator, waitress, hairdresser, secretary, writer and singer.[178] Female aspirants were given a slightly wider variety of career possibilities in a women's vocational manual from the mid-30s, with acting topping the list of possibilities (seemingly arranged in terms of desirability), followed by screenwriting, where "quite a group of women" were said be extremely successful.[179] Female editors were also discussed, along with fields related to scripting, including continuity and dialog writing, reading and research. The chances seemed even better, though, for women to secure work in wardrobe, as script girls and patchers, and better still in "all the positions common to every business, such as stenographers, typists and secretaries."[180] However, the manual cautioned, "there is but one full-fledged woman motion-picture producer in the business, Dorothy

[177] Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (New York, Little Brown and Company, 1950), 88-90.
[178] "They Aren't all Actresses in Hollywood," *Photoplay* (September, 1936), 92.
[179] Catherine Filene, ed., *Careers for Women,* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 432-33.
[180] Ibid., 433.

Arzner." [181] No further mention was make of directing, offering a stark contrast to the 1920 edition of the same manual, in which an entire article is devoted to women's considerable qualifications for and prospects in the field.[182] Women had stopped being promoted to the director's chair, and those female directors who remained were outmoded under the system that was developing,[183] and outnumbered by the bulk of female studio workers in feminized work identities more integrated with studio interests, clerical workers most prominent among them in terms of their numbers and representation within studio culture.[184] The range of jobs in these accounts had narrowed considerably from the already limited range offered by Mertyl Gebhart in 1923, who listed the following as jobs held by women in Hollywood:

> Typists, stenographers, secretaries to stars and executives, telephone-operators, hair-dressers, seamstresses, costume-designers, milliners, readers, script-girls, scenarists, cutters, film retouchers, film-splicers and other laboratory work, set-designers and set-dressers, librarians, artists, title-writers, publicity writers, plaster-molder, casting-director, musician"[185]

Also a testament to the narrowing of prospects from the 20s to the 30s is feature in the 1936 issue of the MGM studio newsletter, which listed the names and

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[181] Ibid., 431. Former Secretary to David O. Selznick, Sylvia Schulman characterized the range of women's studio jobs even more narrowly in her account of her time in Selznick's office (loosely disguised as fiction). Describing the population of a studio club-like boarding house, she states: There are ninety of us here, all career-bound in pictures but in the tadpole stage. The majority are extra girls on the break for the big chance, frighteningly young for the most part and devastatingly pretty. There is an odd sprinkling of stenographers, script girls, assistant cutters, designers, a librarian or two and one honest to goodness writer." Jane Allen (pseud.) *I Lost My Girlish Laughter* (New York: Random House, 1938), 5.

[182] Ida May Park, "Motion Picture Work: The Motion-Picture Director," *Careers for Women*, ed. Catherine Filene (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 335-7.

[183] Where once the rise of women was reported as an upward trend –as in Elizabeth Peltret's "Frances Marion Soldieress of Fortune" *Photoplay* v.12.2 (November 1917, May 1923) 31-33, 124— it was by the 20s reported as a rarity as with the "stranger in this case than fiction" tale of Grace Haskins, a producer –the only successful female save Lois Weber, according to the writer—who could not get money for production until borrowing it from a rich woman. Detailed in: Janet Reid, "From Telephone Operator to Motion Picture Producer," *Motion Picture Magazine* (May 1923), 66, 100.

[184] These representations will be taken up in depth in the next chapter.

[185] Quoted in: Anthony Slide, *Early American Cinema* (London: Scarecrow, 1994), 151.

departments of all workers continuously employed by the studio since its opening, and the only women left standing appear to be in the feminized sectors of clerical (accounting, script, printing, telephone), hairdressing, wardrobe and negative cutting.[186] Women's prospects expanded briefly during World War II in relation to the military service of male workers, then retracted when the soldiers returned home. Far from infiltrating production and other masculinized specialties in the 1930s and 40s, women's options only seemed to become more limited as time went on. By the early 1950s, wrote Script Supervisor May Wale Brown, "If you were a female who wanted to work on a movie set, but didn't have exceptional beauty or talent, you had five choices," including among them character actress, extra, wardrobe, hairdresser, or script supervisor.[187]

Though women's production prospects gradually receded under studio efficiency, the female movie worker was at least powerful in terms of her significance to the studio system. For, as the primary producers, distributors, and custodians of the clerical output, women were the reason studios could function on such grand scale. And as the designated recorders and rule minders of the creative process, they provided rationality and control in a process in which they could no longer directly participate. In order to understand just how significant women's clerical labor was to studios, it is necessary to examine how these classes of workers were distributed across the lot.

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[186] *MGM Studio Club News* v.1.6 (June, 1936).
[187] May Wale Brown, *Reel Life on Hollywood Movie Sets* (Los Angeles: Ariadne, 1995), 3.

"All This and Sadie, Too": Clerical Distribution Across the Lot

Surviving issues of the major studios' newsletters (e.g. the *Warner Club News, MGM's Studio News*, *RKO Studio News*, etc.), provide a detailed picture the life and culture of movie workers at major studios in the classical era of the 1930s and 40s, by which time multiple clerical and administrative departments could be found on each lot. Though they varied slightly in their structure, department or job titles, the same basic categories into which labor was divided could be found at each studio, along with the same or similar job titles and departments. Appendix 2 organizes the data from various discussions of studio specializations in newsletters and other studio documents into a general list of studio departments and the jobs contained within them.[188] The film-specific jobs in each department existed in similar or the same form at each studio, and the other jobs listed there, though not identical from studio to studio, are meant to give a sense of the various and specialized labor that existed at studios. The number of departments and array of jobs alone demonstrates the scale on which studio managers' efficiency dreams took shape.

Appendix 2 is laid out in terms of studio and department hierarchy, but also according to the relationship of various sectors to the production process. Many of these were devoted not to work on any specific film or stage of production, but to the ongoing operation of the studios as a whole and the management of the larger categories of studio assets. Administration was largely carried out by what were

[188] The list of "Studio Jobs by Department"(Appendix 2) was populated with lists and breakdowns of labor from various sources in which studio departments and hierarchies are comprehensively described, including Davis's *The Glamour Factory*, which describes the studios from the top down, an organizational chart from RKO in 1934 reprinted in Richard Jewell's *The Golden Age of Cinema: Hollywood, 1929-45* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2007) and "What It Takes," Fred Wagner's 1937 *Warner Club News* article cataloguing of the jobs done by the Warner Bros. 3000 below-the-line employees (v. 2.2, April, 1937, p. 1). The list was then verified against many of the various other articles and books referenced in this chapter.

variously referred to as Overhead Departments, infrastructure or plant operations. Overheads included cost accounting functions such as purchasing and inventory departments, asset-management functions such as personnel and legal, plant maintenance departments, not to mention the human maintenance functions fulfilled by food and service departments. Overseeing all of these departments were the executives of the Front Office, which also collaborated and oversaw what I distinguish as Planning departments, devoted to preparing projects for production and eventual release (including script, casting and publicity). Finally, all departments devoted to physical Production processes are grouped together. Clearly, workers such as directors, producers and writers were actively involved in the production processes of films and might easily be grouped under the heading of production. However, I have placed them under the heading of planning because of their role in planning films, their location within studio hierarchies (under presidents and executives, not production manager

Overhead Departments

Clerical workers were been heavily concentrated in the Overhead departments which, not surprisingly, were furthest from production both, hierarchically and geographically. Accounting, Tabulating, Timekeeping, Personnel, Payroll, Inventory, Insurance, Stores, Purchasing, Cost, Legal, Mail and Receiving, Telephone and Telegraph, and Stenography/Secretarial departments were all primarily clerical departments devoted to processes carried out on paper. It is hard to say for certain exactly which jobs in these departments were carried out by women at each studio. However, evidence from specific departments at different

studios gives the sense that, on the whole, Overhead clerical labor at studios was divided between men and women in much the same way it had been in other industries. For example, according to a women's vocational from 1926, in accounting departments in America at that time, positions as head bookkeeper, accountant and CPA were still heavily male-dominated, since "the average business man has been unwilling to concede that the judgment, initiative, and general background essential, for instance, in an accountant, could be found even in a woman trained in the science of the work." [189] Female infiltration of these positions was held to be dependent on "the woman and the situation," in a sector that was "only now beginning to admit women."[190] The only offered exception to this rule was government work, and the rationale for its favorability was that its salaries were not as high, nor was its potential for generating larger profits and business opportunities, which meant less competition "from the masculine contingent."[191] If anything, this is further evidence of women's typical exclusion from high status fields.

A similar exclusion could be found in administrative and clerical departments at studios in the 1930s and 40s where, outside of personnel departments,[192] managerial, supervisory or otherwise high-status positions were typically held by men, while lower level roles with lower salaries and more routine and standardized duties tended to be carried out by women, with relative gender

[189] Leuck, *Fields of Work for Women*, 56-7.
[190] Ibid., 57.
[191] Ibid., 8.
[192] As discussed with regard to female commissary managers, personnel-related professions were more female-friendly because of their interpersonal and communication factions, and the service aspects of middle-management of human resources

integration (depending on the department) in the mid-level, mixed roles in-between.[193] Departments with heavier concentrations of high-status clerical/financial roles tended to have more men working in them than those with purely clerical work, which were more often female-dominated. For example, the basic processes at the MGM purchasing department –those involving the typing of purchase orders—seems to have been carried out entirely by women based on photographs of the department, in which 26 women sit at typing machines processing orders, with a male supervisor.[194]

There were some exceptions in terms of this gendered continuum between high-status/management and low-status/standardized jobs. As previously discussed, the male-to-female ratio was higher in the relatively low-status, low-paying job of machine operator in clerical departments, with men operating anything considered heavy machinery and women operating anything "light" enough to qualify for feminization. Messengers at studios were male, despite the low pay there, in part because of the physical requirements of lifting and carrying sacks of fan mail and canisters of film around the lot, and in part due to existing gender norms.[195] Director Edward Dmytryk explained that when he started his show business career as a messenger boy "no well-brought-up lady would be caught dead carrying a package in public."[196] This claim is substantiated by frequent references

[193] Before the 1940s I have found no evidence of female accountants at any studios. While comprehensive employment information is not available on any studio and there were likely occasional exceptions, this seems to testify to women's absence in general from these positions.
[194] Bingenet al., *M-G-M,* 32.
[195] Messengers discussed in general, and the 24 messenger boys at Warners in 1938 in discussed in specific in: Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 312
[196] "Those were the days when, even in America, no well-brought-up lady would be caught dead carrying a package in public. And that's how I got to meet my first star. A hurry-up call from the main entrance, across the

of messengers as "boys" in studio newsletters outside of World War II, when female "messengerettes" are described as filling in for "boys in the armed forces" overseas.[197]

Perhaps the most complete surviving record of the gender breakdown within administrative or office spaces at a studios exists for Warner Bros. Records from the studio's Screen Office Employees Guild (WBSOEG) in the 1940s paint a far more detailed picture of gender and labor at the time.[198] Though they fall quite late in the studio era after Warners had already begun layoffs due to the postwar recession, the WBSOEG records are nonetheless illustrative of the studio infrastructure at the height of its development. This is especially true of overhead departments and their clerical positions, which would be greatly reduced in the process of divestiture and recession-induced cutbacks, but which were still on the rolls of the WBSOEG in the late 1940s. These records paint a picture of the full proliferation of clerical jobs at that particular studio and providing a good indication of what would have existed in slightly less developed form earlier in the decade and in the 1930s, when Fred Pappmeier described a similar breakdown in departments. Not only that, but the WBSOEG materials suggest such extensive and complex paper systems and records

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lot on Vine Street, told me I was needed. It turned out that Lillian Gish had been given a large box of flowers, and her car was parked some distance away." From: Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life*, 3-4.

[197] "500 From Studio in War," *MGM Studio Club News* (October, 1942), 3.

[198] In 1940, all major studios' office and clerical employees voted in National Labor Relations Board elections to unionize under the Screen Office Employees Guild and be represented by them in collective bargaining with the Producer's Guild. Groups of guild representatives–elected officers from among the studios' office workers—were set up at studios to adjudicate concerns within the studios. At Warner Bros., the WBSOEG guild was well established by the late 40s and produced much paperwork in its process of determining pay grades and wages for various empoyees. A cover story on the election in the RKO Studio News gave the percentages of 'Yes' votes at the major studios (in a fruedian slip of sorts, the author typed "Wagner" (perhaps thinking of the Wagner Act, the title by which the National Labor Relations Act was informally known) among the major studios but it is presumed they meant to type "Warner." The figures were: Columbia – 99% for 'yes,' MGM – 93%, Republic – 100%, Univeral – 98%, Wagner [sic, Warner] – 71%. At RKO, out of 235 eligible employees, 181 voted 'yes,' 5 said 'no' and others abstained. "SOEG Victor in Studios' Balloting: NLRB Election Decides Problem," *RKO Studio News* (November, 1940), 2.

relating merely to the employment of paper-workers as to give an impression of a studio permeated by paperwork.

A 1949 ledger of Job Titles and Classifications listed all office-related positions at the studio in November of that year, based not on workers' departments, but on their inclusion in the studio's self-styled guild.[199] The ledger also ranked the positions in terms of pay grade, which was adjudicated based on job title and requirements.[200] 251 office worker positions were listed across 38 departments. Though some gender integration can be seen in female dominated departments such as research (7 women, 2 men), the ledger generally evinces the breakdown of men versus women along lines of status, technology and gender norms. For example, in the accounting department, which had more clerical workers than almost any others, the breakdown between male and female workers was nearly equal, with 12 men and 13 women on the payroll. However, more men occupied upper-level supervisory positions (head clerk, senior clerk, etc.) and men held 9 of the top 13 highest paid positions (with pay grades of A-E). Most of the female clerical workers in this department were secretaries, mid - junior-level clerks and IBM punchcard operators. Though there were some female workers in departments such as insurance and purchasing, the gender breakdowns there followed a similar pattern, with more men in senior positions, and more women in secretarial or junior level accounting/clerk positions. In terms of sheer numbers, overhead departments at Warners tended toward female-domination at the level of

[199]"Job Titles and Classifications," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380b, dated November 1949.
[200] The rating system and pay scale is explained in "Initial Rating Record," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380b, undated, and "Rating Ledger," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380b, undated.

clerical labor. For example, in the business office (which housed a number of office machines), the eleven clerical workers were broken up into female telephone operators (8) and male heavy machine operators (3). The legal department's clerical force was all female because it was comprised entirely of secretaries. Meanwhile, the transportation, tabulation, and telegraph departments were male-dominated because of their heavy machinery and masculinized technology requirements, with only a few female clerks and operators of light machinery. Also male-dominated were departments requiring lifting and carrying along similar lines as the messengers described before, such as the mail department (all male, both clerks and messengers), the receiving department and the stores department (which had 9 clerks and "checkers" who inventoried lumber and other materials).

Planning Departments

The other areas of highest clerical concentration at studios were those departments related to planning, where female clerical workers were almost as common as male executives, directors, producers and writers. Stenography departments were located differently depending on other factors in studios' organization. Often housed with planning departments but also supplying workers to overheads departments, they effectively bridged these two areas of studio operation. One reason for locating steno pools with or near planning was the large amount of scripted material that stenographers typed every day for use in all other departments. In an RKO newsletter profile, secretary Helen Gregg describes the early days job proliferation, when departments were numerous but small, saying "the stenographic department was Betty Roberts, who also doubled in brass as the

story department, reading department and personnel department in her spare time."[201] Scripts also seemed to be handled by one of a few women since, as Gregg states, "whenever a script came in, all of us secretaries dropped whatever we were doing and typed it."[202] Gregg's account speaks to increasing clerical needs accompanying these new departments, which only grew over time as the stenography department became responsible for typing, proofreading and assembling scripts, and for mimeograph work (done by men), as were story synopses and department forms.[203] "Script" (not to be confused with Story or Writing Departments) was later grouped with the reading and stenography department in the hierarchy and was largely comprised of female secretaries and stenographers, evincing the heavy clerical needs of these departments.[204] A photo of the script department at MGM, located in the writer's building, also attests to the large amount of copying done by women there. In it, two female workers collate copies atop a counter filled with hundreds of scripts and standing in front of floor to ceiling shelves of paper.[205]

At other studios, stenographers served the script and related departments within the stenography department or were farmed out to those departments. When given her choice of entry-level work by William DeMille at Famous Players-Lasky, Dorothy Arzner decided on a job typing scripts, believing it to be the best place to learn the business since "all the departments, including the director's, were

[201] "Interviewing Helen Gregg," *RKO Studio Club News*, February 1941, 8.
[202] Ibid.
[203]Described in: "Interviewing Wynn Haslam," *RKO Studio Club News*, April 1941, 9, 12.
[204]Secretaries and stenographers were assigned to that department in enough numbers to have their own column with which to send dispatches to their fellow stenographers, " "News From the Story Department Girls," *RKO Studio Club News* (November, 1940). For Hierarchy see "RKO Studio Organization Chart from 1934," reproduced in Richard Jewell, *The Golden Age of Cinema* (London: Blackwell, 2007), 67.
[205] Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 45.

grounded in script." She was introduced to Ruby Miller, "typing department head," and given the first job that opened up there," at $15 per week.[206] Former Goldwyn secretary Valeria Beletti described a loose system used by MGM to hire secretaries and stenographers in 1927, under which producers or executives often hired their own secretaries, and the script and scenario department brought in temporary stenographers to take dictation from its writers when extra were needed, hiring them on permanently when space became available.[207] A year later, Beletti found herself temporarily in charge of the MGM stenographic department where a more formal system for distributing workers had taken shape: "all the men on the lot who want work done have to call me and I had to hire and fire girls according to our needs."[208] By the 1930s, according to Ronald Davies, Metro employed "some 125 secretaries, not counting the typists' pool," and though not all writers were given their own secretary,

> "If a 'rush' script came through, secretaries across the lot discovered that before they could punch out for the evening, they were expected to type three pages of script. Those pages would be rushed to the mimeograph room so that copies could be distributed to the set the next morning."[209]

For scripts in production at MGM, production manager J.J. Cohn routed "25 copies to the various studio departments to cast, design and build sets, and promote the

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[206] Interviewed in: Karen Kay and Gerald Peary, eds., *Women and the Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977). 154-5

[207] Beletti describes her efforts to find secretarial work at MGM through her old friend Frances Marion, saying that Marion "has spoken to the head of the scenario department at Metro Goldwyn Mayer and the first opening I am sure I will get," later adding that after working in the department for a while, girls can move to more permanent, better paying assignments. Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, November, 1927, in Cari Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary: Her Private Letters from Inside the Studios of the 1920's,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, p 167.

[208] Valeria Beletti, letter to Irma Prina, December 15, 1928, in Cari Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 200.

[209] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 168.

new production."[210] In the 1930s, Edith Farrell supervised the secretarial department, supervising "her girls" who "were tested note-takers and speedy typists."[211] A similar system was in place at Fox in the 1930s, where secretaries were hired or farmed out to new writers to take dictation, and finished scripts were "sent on to the secretarial pool to be retyped and mimeographed."[212]

Wynn Haslam, later of RKO, organized Warners first stenographic department upon their move to First National in 1928, [213] and Sadie Freyer, who came to the Warner lot as Henry Blanke's secretary, was soon put at the head of the department in the mid-1930s.[214] The department's "main concern" was typing those scripts "that come in that have to be changed and gotten out right away, which, incidentally, is always."[215] By 1940, Freyer was keeping "an eye on the careers of some seventy-five girls,"[216] a common practice among heads of stenographic departments. For, in additon to typing and printing larger jobs, stenographic departments filled another major clerical need at studios, which was for devoted secretaries in various departments and in the offices of individuals with large clerical needs.

Many secretaries came to studios with some previous training, obtained either from secretarial school or a stenography class, or through training books and home practice. Marcella Rabwin, who was hired into the secretarial department of Warner Bros. on a Friday, recalled how she "rented a $5 a month typewriter and

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[210] Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 22.
[211] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree,* 10.
[212] As described by Meta Carpenter Wilde in: *A Loving Gentleman*, 86.
[213] "Interviewing Wynn Haslam," *RKO Studio Club News*, April 1941, 9.
[214] "All This and Sadie, Too," *Warner Club News* (November, 1940), 3, 12.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.

borrowed a Gregg shorthand manual from the library and planted myself at my kitchen table for the weekend."[217] In addition to the preparation they already had, new secretaries were often vetted and trained on the job as well. A *Warner Club News* cover story devoted to the Stenographic Department discusses the department through dialog between two fictional stenographic employees, one experienced and the other "a new girl" explains how the system works:

> The department acts like sort of a date bureau for the whole studio. When a new executive comes on the lot (but that's not often), or a writer or such, he naturally wants to meet his girl Friday as soon as possible, so his first telephone call is to Sadie Freyer who ably equips his office with its first requisite. […] One morning when you come in all resigned to tap out another script you'll be informed that you're to go over somewhere and relieve somebody in so-and-so's office, so off you'll patter, notebook in hand, not knowing who so-and-so is, or what on earth he does. From that day forward you're off on a long routine of baffling the messenger boys and popping up all over the studio in the most amazing places. […] After you've passed all the tests and got to know who everybody is and the workings of each department you will eventually be assigned to a more permanent job. There's a host of writers who always need little helpers like you and the other girls, then there's the various department heads, and other offices around the lot where our assistance is needed, but of course the girls have to be ready for those jobs and I know a nice one will come your way after you've gone through the preliminaries. Then in ten or fifteen years if a new executive is appointed you might be in—who knows.[218]

This system made it difficult for writers or other workers to hire on their own secretaries or stenographers as had been done before.[219] A similar modus operandi was in place at RKO, when the department is described similarly:

> "Girls come in on a temporary basis. The department is really like a training school. After they are here awhile (seniority rules when possible), they go out on office assignments. Their work and

[217] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 163.
[218] "All This and Sadie, Too," *Warner Club News* (November, 1940), 3, 12.
[219] Howard Koch's request to hire a secretary of his own choosing from New York was greeted as somewhat unusual and high-maintenance by the time he was working them in the 40s: Koch, *As Time Goes By*, 46-7.

> personalities help make or break the girl. The girls are shifted around, too, at times. They must take sick reliefs, executive reliefs, vacation reliefs; so they are in and out. Every girl is potentially available for the best job on the lot. Every girl has an equal possibility—tempered by her own personality and ability. By being 'bounced' about the lot (from one spot to another), they often are in demand for the better assignments."[220]

As these accounts indicate, secretaries and stenographers were present in largest numbers in script and planning departments. The individual executives and producers who led these departments generally had at least one secretary each, as did directors and some senior writers. Additional secretaries and stenographers were assigned to groups of writers without their own, devoted secretaries, and more were attached to other planning departments to assist with the large number of their processes that took place on paper.

Like planning departments in other industries, studio planning departments did not produce a finished product, but rather, the intermediate good or "clerical output" that would later guide the actual product and its sale. Planning in the studio era took up more time –1/2 of the total time spent on production- than actual shooting, which comprised a mere 1/6).[221] Much of the early planning took place in the form of memos and meeting notes, which circulated between executives, producers, directors and department heads. Though David O. Selznick's memos were legendary, "composed during every waking hour, in his office, his projection room, his car, his bedroom—even the bathroom" and received "by the yard," many other executives and producers had reputations as prolific memo writers and

[220] "Interviewing Wynn Haslam," *RKO Studio Club News*, April 1941, 9.
[221] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 127-8.

conference holders.[222] Whether reputed for it or not, all executives produced paperwork through dictated letters, transcriptions of their meetings, or other communications with their fellow executives and producers. Studio messengers distributed interoffice memos and scripts along with outside mail in deliveries to various departments across the lot, multiple a day.[223]

At Fox, Daryl Zanuck's script development process took place "through long studio conferences" including a preliminary conference to discuss the type of picture being made, and a series of other conferences after the first draft, the second draft, etc., where Zanuck gave extensive notes. Attendance was mandatory for writers, and the ritual was reportedly presided over by his secretary, who "shushed" the assemblage Zanuck's arrival, then took notes on the story conferences.[224] In other accounts, this "secretary" was identified as Molly Mandeville and described as no mere shushing schoolmarm, but a member of the team "who had a facility for putting everybody's remarks into acceptable English, then typing them up."[225] Transcriptions of the meetings "were bound and sent around to everyone who had attended," along with additional clarifying memos from Zanuck, prompting one Fox director to say that "if everything said about a picture from the time it was begun until it was finished was put in book form it would be far longer than a full-length novel."[226]

[222] Ibid., 237.
[223] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 312.
[224]Ibid., 236.
[225] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 165.
[226] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 236.

Approved scripts were circulated more widely, and later in the planning phase of production, meetings were held and budgets set according to management of studio assets by executives and department heads, who determined:

> what the studio had available that could be used in this production and what must be created new […].Every man present—from Casting, Wardrobe, Art, Location, the superintendents of construction and electricity, the recording engineer and the cost accountant—had all studied the script and arrived at a rough estimate of what the preparation handled by their department would amount to, so that an over-all estimate of production cost could be reached. 'Controllable items' were discussed, and some eliminated, some added. […] Each man went back to his department to make a revised statement, which he then sent to the estimating department. These detailed estimates were turned over to the production department, which kept the day-to-day records as the production progressed and served as a conscience to all the creative folk to stay in line with the budget.[227]

Casting processes were carried out almost entirely through the circulation of lists, memos and other paper, through breakdowns in which contract actors (the "Controllable Items" for this part of the process) were listed and communicated about via memos.[228] Publicity departments, often run like newspaper offices, were similarly paper-based, not only in terms of the stories released to the press, but the communication about them that circulated between publicists and executives.[229] Fan mail departments were often located nearby, as well as still photography departments, where large staffs of women filed pictures once printed, or stuffed them into envelopes to return fans' correspondences. Publicity secretaries signed

[227] Ibid., 131-2.
[228] The Billy Gordon Papers at the Margaret Herrick Library contain hundreds of examples of these casting lists, suggestions and discussions as they were circulated in Memo Form. For a typical example see the cast lists and casting suggestions for *Kiss of Death* (1947, 20th Century-Fox). William "Billy" Gordon Papers, KISS OF DEATH Casting – Folder 4.f-158, Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA.
[229] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 138-9.

and autograph still photographs of stars for return to fans.[230] Along with the legal departments, publicity departments employed the largest number of clerical workers and secretaries. Paramount had "twenty publicists plus secretaries" in the 1930s, and the numbers of clerical workers in the departments seemed to equal or outnumber the non-clerical jobs.[231] Later still in the planning process, studio workers prepared to market and sell the film through advertisements and trailers based on the ever-circulating communication from executives, as well as market research in the form of "reaction cards" filled out by audiences at previews.[232]

In WBSOEG records, the ranks of secretarial and stenography workers in executive and planning offices, as elsewhere, were heavily female dominated, though men operated its mimeograph machines.[233] At Warners in 1949, though the 37 secretaries were assigned to producers and writers. [234] Publicity had the most clerical positions of any department at the studio, minus stenographic and mail departments.[235] Of the 28 clerical positions in the department in the late 1940s, 17 were filled by women, and 5 by men (6 were vacant at the time the roster was created, likely a result of initial downsizing). The male workers are clerks and machine operators, and one is the head of the mailing. They are matched by an equal number of female clerks in similar positions, mostly related to mailing, fan mail, and

[230] Robert Vogel, *Robert Vogel Oral History*, Interview by Barbara Hall, Margaret Herrick Library, 1990, 77. Ibid. Also, pictures of still and fan mail departments at MGM show a familiar breakdown of jobs by gender with more women than men typing and sorting photographs in the foreground, while in the portrait studio, a male worker is shown standing at the drying drum. Seven Bingen, Stephen X. Sylvester, and Michael Troyen, *M-G-M: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot* (Solana Beach, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2011), 55.
[231] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 143.
[232] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 196-7.
[233] Warner club news, also. Also job advertisements: even specifying that many secretarial positions under certain as for women only on many forms through the 1950s
[234] "Job Titles and Classifications," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380b, dated November 1949.
[235] Ibid.

stills. Eight female secretaries, two female telephone operators, and an office manager make up the rest of the staff. Ronald Davies reported that Warners publicity had roughly 25-30 publicists at the studio in the early 1940s, and if these numbers were similar in the late 40s, the clerical workers equaled or outnumbered actual publicists in that department. The practice of promoting female secretaries and typists in publicity departments into the role as publicists also evolved during the studio era. Before the process of feminization began in earnest, however, publicity and casting were, for the most part, male-dominated fields that were merely supported and facilitated by women.[236] It was these staffs of mostly female underlings who carried out much of that department's actual labor. By 1949 at Warner Bros., clerical work in casting was more evenly split between three men and three women on a more modest-sized staff.[237]

Production Departments and Clerical "Tracking"

Though physical production's craft, art, camera and technical departments had the lowest concentration of clerical workers, there was nonetheless a clerical presence in nearly every such department at studios, in large part because of the studio practice of tracking products via scripts, memos and other clerical output. In addition to timekeepers, messengers, and other workers who traveled to and from production departments, gathering information and delivering paper, most production sectors were assigned at least one clerk or secretary for their typing, record-keeping and other paper processes. Though fewer clerical workers were

[236] These male-domination of these studio-era professions and their later feminization are the subject of Chapter 5 and will be discussed in-depth there.
[237] "Job Titles and Classifications," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380b, November 1949.

typically assigned to these departments than to planning departments, as a group, production department paper workers functioned as an important part of the clerical structure that undergirded the studio system as a whole. Clerks, secretaries, stenographers, typists and messengers connected production departments to the rest of the studio through paperwork. "Script girls'" notes tracked the shooting of scripts on film sets, line by line and page by page, and connected directors to editors, as well as producers and executives following along through daily rushes. In this way, projects were tracked even after they had begun to take physical shape beyond the paper on which they had been written, sketched, storyboarded and critiqued.

Tracking also allowed all aspects of the studio's productions to be accounted for in terms of their cost. Clerical work in production's craft and technical sectors tended to be more gender-integrated because of the requirements of certain departments. In departments where heavy machinery or heavy lifting was required, the clerical workers tended to be men. Various job analysis forms from the Warner Bros. personnel files include noteworthy stipulations as to the gender of clerks. The studio's makeup and "special photographic effects & matte department," both stated that a male worker was required for their clerk positions. In both cases, heavy lifting and carrying are also listed among the job requirements (delivering make-up equipment/stocking store room and delivery and pickup of film canisters).[238] The perceived physicality of such jobs likely accounts for their gender stipulation. As has been stated elsewhere, male messengers and timekeepers were also the norm. Even

[238] "Department Clerk, Makeup – Job Analysis," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files, Box 380B, July, 1952. "Jr. Clerk, Special Photographic Effects & Matte – Job Description," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files, Box 380B, undated.

with these factors, enough women still occupied many of these clerk, typist and secretarial roles in production departments for the clerical work there to be identified with women, especially since the most visible clerical role in the production process, and the one that was closest to the actual shooting was the script clerk, which was so often identified with female workers that the role was more commonly referred to as the "script girl." Still, the fact that production departments typically had the lowest female-to-male ratio of clerical workers is significant given the (rather obvious) fact that said production departments were located closest to the spaces of film production, both hierarchically and geographically. Thus, women's greater exclusion there is not only in keeping with norms of the day around heavy machinery and lifting, but also with studios' typical segregation of female workers from production unless they were in front of the camera or corresponding with it via a typewriter.

At Warners in 1949, though a somewhat mixed-gender force of clerks could be found in production departments. In most, women still outnumbered men as clerks and secretaries. The cutting department's four stenographers and secretaries were female, while its messenger was male. Camera, music, sound, special effects, wardrobe, locations and laboratory departments all followed a similar gender breakdown, though the clerks in electrical and makeup were male. The only production department with heavy male domination was props, with four male clerks, perhaps again because of the lifting and carrying required to track its assets.[239]

[239] "Job Titles and Classifications," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380b, November 1949.

Taken together, the overhead, planning and tracking functions carried out by this clerical workforce was the common link between all parts of each studio and all aspects of its production. Clerical workers, and particularly female clerical workers, were assigned tasks considered too tedious, repetitive, uncreative or otherwise undesirable, for their peers up the food chain. The same clerical workers were under-represented or omitted completely from studio self-representation, probably because of the unremarkability and low status of their work.

Secretaries and typists may have been viewed by their peers as mere cogs in the machine, but where the studio system was concerned, without cogs, there was no machine. No other type of worker who could be found in every single part of the studio, from the commissary to the film laboratory. And while men did some clerical work, women carried out the majority of those strictly clerical jobs with no lifting, carrying, machinery or technology restrictions. This is clear from studio newsletters and other artifacts of studio culture at the time, as well as the Warner personnel documents discussed above. Of roughly 257 employees listed on Warner's roster, roughly 142 were women. The feminized state of low-status, clerical fields becomes clearer after subtracting from the total number of office employees those workers in masculinized clerical fields (with strong supervisory, heavy machinery, technology, lifting or carrying components) from the total. Then, the number of male workers in roles as clerks, typists, stenographers and secretaries, drops under 50. Not only secretaries and stenographers, but custodians, commissary waitresses, nurses, teachers, negative cutters and film inspectors were located furthest in the hierarchy from production, and furthest from the rolling camera in studio geography.

Conclusion:

Paper efficiency shifted clerical work in importance from the margins to the center of film production, where it was both the fuel that drove the process through paper, and the supposed means of protecting its creative aspects from management (while actually allowing them to be scientifically managed from above). At the same time, female workers, as the studios' primary paper workers, were moved and relocated from near the center of the creative process (at least in terms of their prior potential to achieve high levels of creative or managerial agency) to its margins, where for the next sixty years they were constrained by the same essentialist rationales that had defined their role elsewhere. Not only secretaries and stenographers, but also other female workers such as custodians, commissary waitresses, nurses, teachers, negative cutters and film inspectors were located furthest in the hierarchy from the physical sites of production, and furthest from the rolling camera in studio geography. The studios could not have grown at same rate or functioned on the same scale without such a cheap, exploitable workforce to subsidize their growth.

Women continued to carry out the bulk of the clerical labor at studios long after the classical Hollywood era, as indicated by a 1980 *Variety* article on Karen Neumeyer, a newly elected union leader who, because she was a woman, was described as "an unknown species" in the movie industry. Neumeyer would lead members of the Office and Professional Employees International Union that, by then, represented "clerks, data processors, programmers and secretaries at MGM,

Columbia, Universal, 20th Century-Fox and a number of film labs." The article's author found it necessary, even after the equal rights movements of the 70s had supposedly shone light on and addressed workplace inequities, to explain why a woman should make a good leader for this union, explaining that "More than 75% of its workers are women, so, *in a sense,* it's appropriate that its leader, the person responsible for negotiating contracts and handling grievances, be a woman" (italics mine).[240] Asked why a woman should lead a union, Neumeyer responded that her gender should not matter, explaining that "secretaries need a union for the same reason that other people need a union, because unions increase the economic benefits of their members," and adding, "Women in the U.S. today make 59 cents for every dollar that a man makes. The non-union woman makes almost a hundred dollars less per week than the unionized woman. We need unions in this industry for secretaries." This statement hints at Neumeyer's awareness of the role women had long played in the industry's healthy bottom line, and suggests they be more fairly compensated for it.

To recognize the importance of female clerical workers to the studio system is to recognize women's greater legacy in film history. Just as, for example, immigrant workers are rightly credited for playing an important role in building the railways and other parts of the infrastructure of the West, so should the female workers be credited for their important role in the building of the major studios and their descendents. Acknowledging the importance of feminized labor sectors in film history also problematizes the prevailing notion of women's *exclusion* from film

[240] Charles Schreger, "A Woman Leader of a Screen Union," *Los Angeles Times* (June 23, 1980), G4.

production during the studio era without diminishing the accomplishments of those rarer female movie workers and makers who succeeded beyond such sectors.

To understand the studio's logic around feminized labor is to understand the causes and timing of the emergence of women's fields in media production. Though the role of casting director today is neither low-status nor uncreative nor, in its current state, removed from production, its feminization in the late 1960s and early 1970s can nonetheless be traced back to the rise and proliferation of feminized clerical sectors at studios. In the sex-segregated industry, it was largely from these clerical positions, this clerical identity at studios, that women would enter film production fields that were not strictly clerical. Casting Director Jane Jenkins has said that women in the media industry have only been able to encroach in areas of limited power. Mapping feminized clerical sectors and their concentration onto a map of a fully developed major studio such as MGM in the 1930s predicts those areas of limited power where women would encroach, and indicates their tie to (and their presence's sanctioning under) this clerical identity.

This chapter mapped feminized labor at studios, locating it on lots and within industrial logic that organized the studio system. This methodology partly explains how that logic continued to impact women's prospects in the post-studio era as feminization was sustained and even expanded to additional production sectors. However, there was more to "women's work" than even a modified studio map can explain. Such maps are as flawed and fraught as the great man's history. Doing violence to studio maps, while satisfying, does not account for the other half of women's work identity at studios: the role they were expected to play on and off the

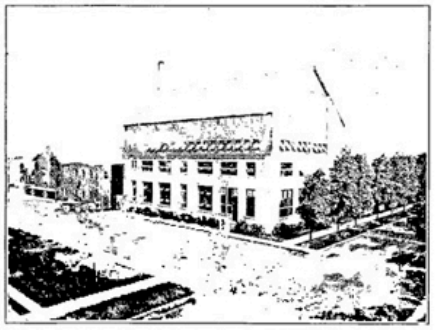
job on studio lots, where they were seen as woman first, worker second. Chapter 4 will account for this role from the perspective of the female movie worker herself.

3.1 "Scenes in Big Addition to Selig Studios" (*Motography*, October 2, 1915)

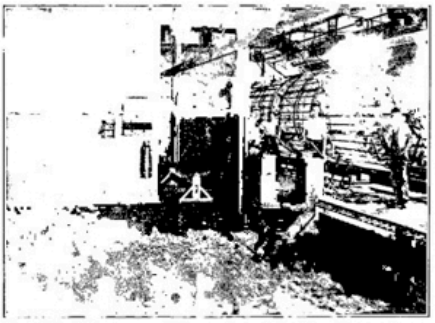
Scenes in Big Addition to Selig Studios

Part of the finishing room and identification department in the new addition

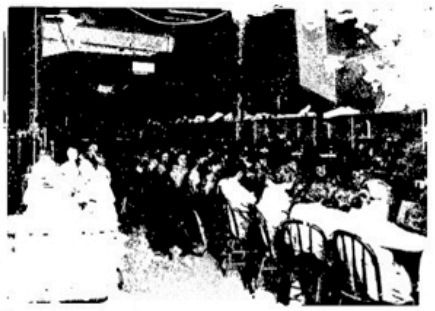
One end of the negative department, where room is provided for miles of films



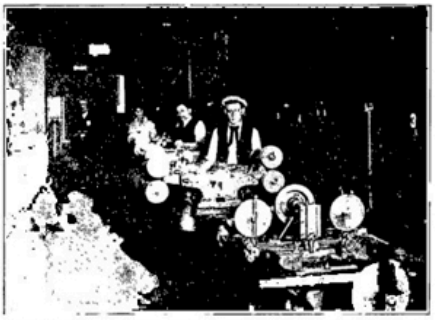
Exterior view of the Selig Chicago plant. The new addition cannot be seen in this picture



Part of the drying room, which gives but a faint idea of the total space devoted to drying



Portable and hand cameras in operation at the Selig studio in Los Angeles



A section of the perforating department showing a small battery of the perforator feet eating machines

IV. Paper Dolls:
The Studio Secretary's Creative Service

> I was no longer his assistant. I had moved to the writer's room to work as the writer's assistant there, which meant taking notes, typing drafts as they were written and publishing pages for the next day's shooting. His father-in-law passed away and his wife left town and he said to me "I need you to go home to my house every night after the nanny leaves and put my kids to bed." And there wasn't really. Like, I wasn't given an option. So I wasn't doing a full workday at work and wasn't getting to be a part of the writing process, and I was leaving the script coordinator to do all the work, like five six nights in a row.
>
> – Anonymous, TV Writer's Assistant, 2007[1]

Introduction

A 1915 Issue of *Moving Picture World* described the hiring of Mrs. Robert T. Haines as "social mentor" of the Equitable Motion picture studio to "sponsor for the social correctness" of films made by the studio, advise on costumes, settings, the latest social etiquette, and all of the other "little artistic niceties which are so often overlooked by men in their less careful regard for detail will not be neglected." According to the author, Mrs. Haines had no intention of joining the Equitable company, but had merely accompanied her actor husband there and "found herself giving suggestions for the settings" deemed so practical she was asked to join the staff. Haines herself was quoted at length in the article, saying that directors would save themselves anguish if only "they could have a woman with good taste, social experience, tact and breeding to assist them in their pictures," explaining:

> Pictures which offend good taste and which have difficulty in passing the censorship board would probably be made in far less quantity if

[1] Assistant One, personal interview by author, August 5, 2007.

> every director could rely on the judgment of a sane, well-balanced woman with artistic sense and clarity of mind to assist him. After all, the home and social life play the greater share of importance in pictures. The home, of course, is the realm of woman, and with that and with the social conventions she is more familiar than is man. I do not believe that many women would be capable to direct a picture, but on the other hand neither is a man able to feel the little things, nor does he possess the intuition that woman does.[2]

Whether or not she believed women could direct, in the above statement, Haines made a fairly strong argument for the female director, given the amount of supposedly feminine strengths she deemed necessary to keep a film on the right track (judgment, artistic sense and clarity, balance, intuition eye for "details" such as costumes, sets, acting) versus the implied male strength (the leadership skills invoked by the word "responsibility"). In fact, her role on set as she saw it, despite its purported concern with "detail" and "little things," was so broad in scope, taking in the whole process of production, that out of context it might be mistaken for a director's job description. Unfortunately for would-be female directors, Haines also unwittingly described another job, one that would come to represent the upper limit of many female movie workers' creative and managerial potential in the studio era: that of the studio secretary. Haines was not the first woman who steered the ship of production in this way under the legitimizing umbrella of womanly feeling, intuition, social sensibility and attention to detail, nor would she be the last. However, she was likely the first to be hired specifically for the job of on-set feminine advice and influence, and only for that job. During the studio era, as their prospects in production narrowed according to gender norms, most women would have to be content with using their skills to advance the aims of male movie makers

[2] "Enter 'Social Mentor,'" *MPW v25.8* (August 21, 1915), 1303.

instead of advancing their own creative projects. What's more, as studio secretaries serving movie makers, they were generally required to deploy these "feminine skills" without credit, additional pay or other acknowledgement, under the guise of purely clerical, non-creative work.

Women's work in the studio system was defined not only by the *feminized labor* the female worker was assigned, but the *feminine role* she was required to play under societal and studio gender norms. Women's role *as women* was reflected back at them by studio culture, and subtly incorporated into expectations and job requirements for female workers who had little choice but to absorb them. The female worker's visible labor in clerical and other feminized sectors was valuable to studios in terms of the lower wages required to pay for it. Female workers were further exploited as a source of invisible-yet-essential emotional and service-based labor, duties which they were expected to perform free of charge in exchange for male tolerance of their presence within production culture. Even beyond studio walls, the image of the female worker served symbolically in the film industry's self-promotion to exhibitioners and the general public as self-contained, glamorous, motion picture cities.

Women performed as women in order to succeed within the limits imposed by the studio system, and to increase their odds of breaking through them. Though many were able to achieve great things, by working through gender, rather than around it, in retrospect the cost of these achievements was high. Female studio workers didn't just symbolize wives, mothers, Madonnas and whores. Many were forced to perform emotionally and even sexually, on the job. At the isolated studios

with their long, unusual business hours, female employees took on a kind of emotional second shift,[3] acting as surrogates for the girlfriends and wives who played them at home. But unlike wives, who could at least expect spousal support in exchange for playing this feminine role in their husband's lives, studio secretaries received neither compensation for nor acknowledgement of this work. It was simply expected from them, on top their official duties as clerical and administrative workers. What is more, they were compelled by studio culture to carry out further acts of feminine performance (conspicuous girlish behavior, such as giggling or gossip) to disguise or erase the rest of their labor.

It was by these means that female workers eventually ascended to higher levels of creative and managerial importance in film production. Playing the role of woman at the studio allowed female workers a kind of invisible agency, often carried out under the authority of their male employers, which in turn allowed them, over time, to advance in certain fields and acquire additional creative capital. However, women's roles as women, required to sanction their presence in the studio workplace, also controlled their experience as workers as much as, if not more than the types of labor they were assigned based on their gender, and ensured continuation of the low pay and lack of other compensation women had come to expect as studio workers. So, while women's willingness to play these feminine roles did eventually result in the integration of previously male-dominated film

[3] The concept of the second shift is borrowed (and slightly adapted) here from sociologist Arlie Hochschild, who uses it to describe the phenomenon she observed in families where both parents of young children worked outside the home. When women entered the workforce to earn a share of the household's income, their husbands did not pick up the slack at home by taking on a proportionate share household and childcare responsibilities. Instead, women worked one shift at the office and a second (as wife, mother, and housekeeper) at home. In the case of female studio workers, and particularly secretaries and clerical workers in the offices of a male employer, one job essentially contained two different "shifts" (one as employee and one as wife/mother figure). Arlie Hochschild with Anne Machung, *The Second Shift* (New York: Penguin, 1989).

professions, the feminine role also determined fields in which women would advance, and the degree to which their success there would also depend on their willingness to succeed as women first, workers second.

Understanding women's role alongside their feminized labor is essential to accounting for the female worker's lived experience at studios, which, for all their attempts at mechanization and total efficiency, were essentially soft systems made up of humans with constantly shifting frames of reference.[4] It is also a crucial step on the way to understanding the legacy of feminization in media production, where certain jobs are still known as "women's work" today. Unfortunately, the characteristic erasure and self-effacement of/by women's roles at studios make it difficult to locate and describe. For this reason, while the last chapter discussed female studio workers as feminized groups to account for them in studios' logic, this chapter will focus on one stratum of these workers –secretaries to movie makers— as individuals in an attempt to account for women's roles. While earlier chapters located feminized labor largely through the "official" accounts of studio managers and other high-status movie makers, this chapter locates women's roles primarily through "unofficial," private accounts of the workers themselves, countering those chapters' basic unit –the map— with that of the anecdote. Examined in this way, the invisible labor required of the successful secretarial "work wife" may become as visible as the printed pages produced by keystrokes of a "girl operator."

[4] Brian Wilson, *Soft Systems Methodology: Conceptual Model Building and its Contribution*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), ix.

Female movie workers, as individuals and groups, played roles *as women* at studios and as a result were able to play a larger, more significant role in their industry's history than the power structure might otherwise have permitted. Just as film history must recognize women's contributions from feminized work sectors alongside the contributions of *individual* female movie makers of greater creative importance, women should be credited for their collective contributions *through* women's roles at studios, not just for succeeding in spite of them. The acknowledgment of these roles *as labor* is one way to ensure that women won't be obliged to go on playing them, as they continue to do even today in order to render their presence in male-dominated production sectors (e.g. cinematography, TV comedy writing) more acceptable. This chapter gives credit where due, to some of the studio system's "great women."[5] Through their accounts, these secretaries and executive assistants provide examples of the high level of creative and managerial agency achieved by some women by *playing through* their feminine roles, and preconfigure women's film professions in development, casting, publicity and elsewhere.

[5] Though I have called the great man's history flawed and fraught, I cannot deny its persistence or its power as a historical and narrative device. It is not surprising that, in popular culture at least, there is little to match the historical appeal of the biography of an exceptional historical figure, with its satisfyingly linear, personal storyline. Rather than rejecting the great man's history outright, in this chapter I complicate the notion of Hollywood as shaped by a series of moguls and auteurs by offsetting several well-known great men's histories (e.g. Selznick, Hitchcock) by accounting for the contributions of the female secretaries or assistants. These female workers, while obviously not *as great* in terms of their individual achievement, legacy, etc., were nonetheless of great significance to the men they served, and did assert agency and influence over their studios and films. Thus, these brief complimentary/counter-histories are not meant to supplant the great men in question, or to imply that their secretaries were the real authors or more important than other contributors to their films. It is simply to suggest that our esteem for great movie makers acts as a spotlight, not only plunging the contributions of the less exceptional folk around them into darkness, but also rendering the great men themselves less interesting by "blowing out" their most well-known features with such a harsh, flat light. This effectively simplifies the shadowy complexity on all sides of creative collaboration, but particularly those made from places of low creative or professional status. Taking the lighting metaphor a step further, the account of the studio secretary (among others) can act as a fill or backlight, balancing the spotlight and allowing softer details to be seen.

The Secretary's "Visible" Labor: Official Job Requirements and Duties

According to official studio accounts such as house organs and personnel files, secretaries made their way to the desks of the studio bosses through a number of channels. In addition to being hired directly by a movie maker or department, or through referrals or acts of nepotism, women also obtained employment as studio stenographers and secretaries by answering specific job ads, applying for work at the personnel department, or being submitted through temp agencies.[6] However they applied to studios, most would-be secretaries were expected to have at least four years of high school or the equivalent and to be able to operate the typewriter proficiently. Warner Bros. personnel documents from late in the studio period list additional requirements for higher-level jobs. For example, a secretary in H.M. Warner's office was required to have a year of a commercial course or six months training on a similar job, while a secretary to Executive Producer William Conrad was required to have graduated high school and attended business school. And when longtime studio secretary Betty Granat Cohen filled out an employee job analysis in 1957 in order to be considered for a raise as an executive secretary to Walter McEwan, she listed the requirements for that job as being "4 years High School or Equivalent" as well as "7 years in former duties with Executive. Speed and accuracy in transcribing dictation. Experience with Producers on the lot in former years," and finally, a shorthand speed of 110 words per minute, and a typing speed

[6]A job description of a Warner Bros. personnel clerk includes "accepts inquiries concerning employment," "maintains applications files" and "places calls for workers," among job duties. "Personnel Clerk Job Analysis," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380a, May, 1952, 1. Temp agency submissions: "Performance Personnel Resumes," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380a.

of 70 words per minute.[7] This range of requirements could be found at all studios. The notable studio secretaries profiled later in this chapter all exceeded the minimum requirements, and all but one had degrees from four-year colleges and in many cases special secretarial training. Many studio secretaries also received additional training and vetting in studio stenography departments and then through temporary assignments to various departments in order to hone their skills and school them in studio procedure before a more permanent assignment.

A final requirement was often that secretaries be female. Existing job analyses from the 1950s for the various executives, producers and department heads still working as full-time studio employees at the time, often stipulate "male" or "female" in the blank for "Sex" on the form's "Special Requirements," which also contains blanks for "Age Range," "Education" and "Special Experience and/or Training Required by the Job." As Chapter 3 explained, male employees were sometimes requested in departments where workers were expected to lift and carry materials as well as complete clerical tasks. However, these workers tended to be clerks. Male secretaries were far less common. None are mentioned in profiles of secretarial or steno pools, which typically refer to the departments as all-female. Only a handful of male secretaries are described by other studio documents or in accounts of workers, and these tended to work in the offices of moguls or other elite movie makers. Male secretaries worked in the office of Jack Warner in the 30s and 40s, according to the job description form for that position, which stipulated that the

[7] "Secretary, H.M. Warner Office – Job Analysis," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 382 B, June 11, 1947; "Secretary to Exec. Producer WM. Conrad – Job Description," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 382 B, Undated.
Betty Granat Cohen, "Executive Secretary – Employee's Job Analysis Statement," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 382, May 21, 1957, 4.

secretary be male.[8] This was likely a matter of personal preference. Warner also employed a male Executive Secretary –Bill Schaefer— for several decades.

With only a few exceptions, however, Warner executives who made stipulations as to gender did so to ensure they'd be assigned a woman. Since secretarial work for executives and producers varied only slightly from office to office, this was likely a matter of personal preference (or lack thereof) varied from executive to executive based on the employer's personal preferences or biases, rather than a requirement of the actual work performed, which according to job summaries is similar from office to office. For example, either male or female secretaries were acceptable according to the job description for secretary to Warner Executive Assistant Walter McEwan, while Executive Robert Solo required a female secretary who was "under 45."[9] The practice of a certain employer hiring only male or female assistants continues unofficially in many offices in the media industry in Southern California today. I say this based on my own experiences as an assistant to producers, executives and writers for 5 years, and the experiences of my interview subjects.[10]

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[8] "Secretary to J.L. Warner – Job Analysis," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 381A, May 22, 1947. "Secretary to J.L. Warner – Job Analysis," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 381A, January 20, 1950.

[9] "Secretary to Robert Solo – Job Description," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 382B, undated. "Secretary to Mr. T.C. Wright – Job Analysis," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380B, January 13, 1955. "Secretary to Executive Assistant – Job Description," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 382B, undated.

[10] The rationales offered for this practice were idiosyncratic and based on personal preference. Though some seemed harmless enough (the employer simply believed they worked better with one gender or other, or wanted a same-sex assistant so that they could pretend to be the boss when necessary), others were less innocent. Just one example of the latter situation was an assistant who told me that her employer's first assistant was always female because he thought he worked better with women as underlings in an office, but that the second assistant was always male because he was "in pocket" with the director, adding "you're going there to wake up your boss. You're going there to tuck him in […] you're helping him to pick up girls […] for a boss to ask his assistant to go you know approach another you know an extra on set" for a guy it's better. Assistant Sixteen, Personal Interview by Author, July 28, 2007.
This contemporary practice is discussed further in chapter 6.

Per studio newsletters,[11] the highest concentration of jobs on studio lots was in the offices of producers, directors, writers and executives. At Warner Bros., the Writer's building was cited as "the Stenographic Department's best customer" housing the private offices of important Warner writers and "wards" for other, less-established ones, with another large group of secretaries permanently assigned to the "Supervisors and Producers," and finally directors.[12] In the *RKO Studio Club News*, different groups of secretaries wrote columns from buildings where the largest numbers of them worked, indicating a similar distribution at that studio, with the lion's share assigned to buildings C, B and G, which housed a mixture of writers, producers, executives and directors.[13] Thus, a large proportion of secretaries were assigned to those on the lot with the most power and/or creative input: the producers, directors, writers and executives.

Secretaries to these movie makers had many visible, official duties in common. In addition to the basic shorthand and typing skills required for entry-level positions in stenography departments, as secretaries, workers were expected to manage the offices of their employers through a range of clerical and administrative duties, from answering phones and mail to scheduling appointments

[11] Studio newsletters were house organs published for and by studios' movie workers (male and female). They generally carried regular columns on every department (written by those departments' personnel). They did not contain news written by or, with few exceptions, primarily about above-the-line personnel such as actors, writers, directors, producers and executives. Secretaries often reported from the various buildings in which many of these workers had offices, but their columns were primarily concerned with themselves and the other secretaries with whom they worked. If studios were small cities, the newsletters concerned the daily lives of the average citizen. Like a city's mayor, the studio's most noteworthy citizens (e.g. the mogul) were often mentioned in front-page news items (e.g. the introduction of a studio's new health plan). However, the news itself was pitched at a below-the-line/movie worker audience and was more concerned with their gossip, leisure activities and workplace interests than with reporting on how the other half lived. For example, while longtime MGM secretaries such as Evelyn Feder and Edith Farrell report or were mentioned regularly in the *MGM Studio Club News*, the name of MGM star Jimmy Stewart only appeared with the same regularity when he was away from the studio, fighting in World War II, at which point he was listed each month alongside other studio employees serving overseas in a centerfold banner printed in each issue in recognition of their service.

[12] "All This and Sadie, Too," *Warner Club News* (November 1940), 12.

[13] "Secretaries," *RKO Studio Club News* (April 1941), 4.

to filing paperwork. Marion Snell, an RKO secretary, gives a colorful description of a typical day of such work in building C in the December 1940 issue of the *RKO Studio Club News*:

> Climb the stairs—fumble the key out of the purse and into the lock – throw open the windows and let in some fresh air….But duty calls, and I open the mail. "My day" has begun. And for every other secretary: "Don't forget to send that memo." No Sir. "Be sure to make that phone call." Yes, Sir. Phones ringing, rushes room 3: Where did I file that @@%!!? letter? "Mr. Whoozit is on the phone." "Tell him I've gone to China!" "Sorry Mr. Whoozit, he's busy right now—may I take a message?"[14]

A similar mixture of work was described in a *Harper's* story on Jerry Wald, whose "two competent secretaries," Mary Elliott and Lillian Berger, made sure that one of them was always in the office by 8:30 to begin taking his telephone dictation, sometimes before she had a chance to remove her hat. The profile continues, "This morning, with Mary and Lillian alternating seated facing him at his desk, Wald begins to dictate a barrage of notes, phone calls, and memos."[15] Descriptions like this square with official records of secretarial jobs at Warner Bros., where secretary duties on the desk of a producer were described as follows:

> Takes dictation in shorthand of business and personal correspondence, story outlines and treatments, script changes and continuity, conference notes and interviews, from the producer: transcribes dictated material on a typewriter, setting up in proper format: types copies of scripts, schedules, reports and various miscellaneous data; maintains office files, records and reports; acts as office receptionist and performs routine office and personnel duties for the Producer as requested.[16]

[14] Marion Snell, "Secretaries," *RKO Studio Club News* (December 1940), 15.
[15] Ezra Goodman, "How to be a Hollywood Producer," *Harper's Magazine* (May, 1948), 415-423.
[16] "Secretary to Producer – Job Analysis," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380 B, April 8, 1947.

Clearly, secretaries to movie makers were doing much the same basic clerical and office work as would have been done by secretaries in any other industry. However, different studio secretaries had different additional duties depending on the office in which they worked. As the Warner records show, work for an executive required maintenance of records and progress reports on scripts in development, while a producer's secretary kept more detailed records on current productions in which her employer was involved, in addition to tracking unproduced materials. Both of these jobs, then, required a familiarity with film development and production practices, as well as current Warner projects and players. And secretaries to writers and directors had their own requisite competencies and job specific-knowledge. The work of secretaries to directors was perhaps the most different from that of other secretaries, at least when the director was in production. These secretaries spent more time on the set than other office workers, to address challenges there as they arose. Though on record in these personnel files and occasional newsletter profiles, little of these, the actual skills and official duties for which secretaries were hired, are mentioned in the representations of secretaries in studio culture and the films it produced. Instead, secretaries were mainly represented in terms of their gender and sexuality.

The Secretary in Popular and Studio Culture

Secretaries of the 1930s and 40s were not beneficiaries of the, improvisational flexibility of the early years of film when, in true pioneering, Wild West fashion, anything was possible, even where norms of womanliness and

femininity were concerned. Women at studios were instructed on gender by studio culture, which reinforced traditional views of women's natural sphere as the home and her natural goals as marriage, children and femininity. Where they concerned secretaries, studio-produced films continued this pedagogy, teaching female workers that they were women first, workers second, and reminding them of the consequences of transgression.

Far from being unsexed by their interaction with office machines as predicted by early paranoid pop cultural depictions of female clerical workers, secretary characters were typically defined through their gender and sexual difference from male employers. "Secretary" often signified sex, a female body in service of male needs. Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell have proposed that, "if the secretary's mind is sometimes pictured as disposable, a machine for mechanical reproduction, her body is simultaneously accessible on-site."[17] In 1916's *The Social Secretary*, titular character 'Mayme' (Norma Talmadge) complains of lascivious employers to the other secretaries in her boarding house, disguises her beauty in order to find a situation free of sexual advances, and is hired by a society matron for the express reason that her plainness will not ensnare the men of the household. In the world of the film, secretaries are not only sexed, but sexualized, and even oversexed. Virtuous characters like Talmadge's were frequently offset in popular culture by highly sexual, seductive, home-wrecking secretary characters like Barbara Stanwyk's 'Lily' in *Baby Face* (1933), who the film represents quite literally sleeping her way to the top of a company, floor by floor, until she lands in the lap of

[17] Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell, "Introduction: Invisible Hands" in *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, eds. Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 5.

luxury. Though she could not be considered virtuous in the traditional sense of the word as it applied to women, the frank, pre-code Lily is at least making what might be considered a straightforward trade of goods for services. More frequently, the secretary characters who appear in films from the studio era reinforced the studio's own, "real life" norms of virtue via suffering or sexuality as pure lascivious sin.

Less sexual but no less feminine were the secretarial archetypes of the loyal, often long-suffering "girl Friday" or "office wife," as a nurturing, feminine, workplace companion for lawyers, private eyes and other businessmen. Such characters, paragons of womanly workplace support, can be found in an array of studio films across the 30s and 40s, from Warners' *The Office Wife* (1930) to RKO's *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dreamhouse* (1948). One of the most popular iterations of the "office wife" story casts the plucky, truehearted secretary as the primary female love interest of an unattached, male employer. This Office Cinderella trope appears frequently in "women's" films with narratives in which the secretary is the protagonist, and marriage to the boss –not success on the job—is the narrative's primary objective. Secretary-turned-author Lynn Peril observes that in novels featuring secretary protagonists, the vast majority used the office as mere backdrop, over which "the heroine took some shorthand, typed a letter or two, then a married the boss—after many trials and tribulations, of course."[18] Similar Cinderella stories can be found in many studio films, occasionally glossed over in montage, but always representing

[18] Lynn Peril, *Swimming in the Steno Pool: A Retro Guide to Making It in the Office*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2011), 44. Lisa Fine devotes a chapter of her history of female office workers to representations in pop culture, and states that after World War I, the majority of novels, short stories and movies about secretaries and typists end with the worker "marrying the man of her choice" in this kind of Cinderella scenario. Lisa Fine. *The Souls of the Skyscrapers: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 140-1.

the secretary as, to quote Susan Elizabeth Dalton, "the woman who did the most for a man," via a variety of roles: "She was a slave who did a man's work; a conscience who watched a man's soul; a mother who guarded a man's health; and, at the end of the last reel, a lover when she was 'discovered' by her boss."[19]

When David Selznick's secretary, Sylvia Schulman, left his employ to marry Ring Lardner Jr., she wrote a loosely disguised, fictional version of her real life Cinderella Story as a novel, *I Lost My Girlish Laughter,* which was published under a pseudonym. But even Schulman seemed aware that her happy ending with an affluent, Hollywood insider wasn't necessarily representative of the fate of the typical studio secretary. In fact, as its title betrays, much of *I Lost My Girlish Laughter* is an indictment of the thinly-veiled Selznick character, who oscillates between fits of rage and lasciviousness, and many of its pages are also devoted to the main character's actual work in the mogul's office.[20] Studio newsletters, which recorded much of movie workers' studio culture in the 30s and 40s, were seldom work-centered where female employees were concerned, and were almost never critical of the studio. And their descriptions of female studio workers –penned by the workers themselves or by their male co-workers— attest to an almost singular focus on their femininity, glossing over their work duties in favor of detailing their smiles, looks, pleasing manners, love interests, and propensities toward giggling, chatter and gossip.

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[19]Susan Elizabeth Dalton, "Women at Work: Warners in the 1930s," in Karen Kay and Gerald Peary, eds., *Women and the Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977) 276-7.
[20] Jane Allen (pseudo), *I Lost my Girlish Laughter*, (New York: Random House, 1938). For reports of marriage, see: "Studio Romance Disclosed: Ring Lardner, Jr., to Marry Secretary of Selznick," *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1937: A3.

Male workers who wrote in the various studios' newsletters also frequently glossed over their work duties and concentrated more on the personalities and off-studio lives of fellow workers. Even so, reports on and from secretaries are even less work-related, and are particularly focused on the areas of feminine appearance and behavior (e.g. clothing and hairstyle, which girl has the best smile or laughs the most), or secretaries' romantic prospects. Many issues of the club news at Warner or RKO resemble a marriage mart more than the internal newsletter of a large company. Nearly every "Stenographic" or "Secretarial" column in the *Warner Club News*, for example, contains pictures and reports of recent weddings, and gossip about predicted or desired ones. For example, the January 1946 "Stenographic Column" reads "Also to walk down the bridal path 'some time after the first of the year' will be Alice Prater, one of the Writers Building's girls, escorted by Ralph Osborn of our Property Department," while another column reads "Josephine Miller informs me that she bought a wedding ring—just in case. Of course, I don't believe her, perhaps she was just giving me a hint of a coming event."[21] Similar announcements, as well as speculation about which secretary had a beau and which was ripe for one, are made in seemingly every studio newsletter examined from RKO and MGM, with relationships between secretaries and the men to whom they are assigned framed with similar language.[22] While female studio employees were

[21] Rose Davidson, "Secretaries," *Warner Club News* (January, 1946), 8. Thelma Hanover, "Stenographic," *Warner Club News* (July 1946), 18.

[22] For example, in one issue at RKO, "Notes from Stenographic," consisted of stories of weddings, engagements and "happy recent assignments" of secretaries to new bosses, all listed together: "Notes from Stenographic," *RKO Studio Club News* v.2.6 (November 1939), 2-3; in another issue at MGM, secretaries are polled about their bosses ("who knows bosses like secretaries know bosses?"), and the results concern the sorts of physical or emotional characteristics that a wife might value in a husband (handsomest, wittiest, best-dressed, most glamorous, most cheerful), rather than those qualities an employee might most value in an employer. The closest thing to workplace qualities is invoked in the award for "The Busiest" boss, which is given to a female department head

not prohibited from working after marriage and, indeed, many did, wifedom and motherhood were still the most acceptable end goals for secretaries and other female studio workers. Finding a husband often seemed the real occupation of the women mentioned in reports from secretarial departments, as in this tidbit from the MGM newsletter:

> Virginia Elston and Joe Richardson, both former readers—plighted a troth and performed a marriage merger recently, just like in the story books. Joe is now a hard-working script clerk on the lot. Virginia is ready to answer the census taker with: Occupation, housewife.[23]

Women's looks and smiles were described more often than men's, even in stories of their workplace accomplishments, as in one dispatch on the sale of a script for production at another studio by "Jean Baker, attractive, elegant secretary to Art Director Johnny Hughes."[24] Frequently secretaries and other studio "girls" who worked in or around male-dominated departments (generally as clerical workers) were described in blind items. In other issues, wives were solicited for unmarried male workers, such as Vic Raven, a matrimonially inclined painter whose "specifications for a wife calls for a young, good-looking blonde, brunette or red hair, good cook and excellent housekeeper. Girls, the line forms on the right. Vic will receive applications daily at noon in the paint shop. Pls Apply in person."[25]

Studio secretaries and other female workers stood in for the gamut of women's roles, from mother to lust object, during World War II, when they posed as

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(Louise R. Pierson), and the award from most absent-minded (a negative quality in the workplace), which was a six-way, all-male tie that included prolific studio newsletter writer Fred Pappmeier and prolific director Howard Hawks. One secretary is reported to have voted for "'Everybody's boss." In: Marion Dix, "Secretaries," *Warner Club News* (January 1944), 4.

[23] "Reading Department," *MGM Studio Club News* (December 1941).

[24] "Writer," *Warner Club News* (March, 1937), 7.

[25] Fred Wagner, "What's What and Who's Who on the Backlot," *Warner Club News* (February, 1937), 10.

pinup girls in the newsletters,[26] helped entertain soldiers at the Hollywood canteen,[27] and adopted enlisted studio workers as pen pals ("now, girls of MGM, we can do our share. Surely every girl on the lot can adopt a pen pal. Yes let's each adopt one of our own draftees in training."), sending them care packages and updating the studio workers on how they were faring.[28] The same was true of secretaries at other studios, who worked and wrote letters at the canteen, and, at Paramount, entertained troops at the studio, serving as "hostesses."[29] In 1951 groups of secretaries organized to ensure G.I.s in the Korean War received mail.[30]

Though it was more overtly acknowledged during World War II, the female worker's role as pinup girl was not limited to wartime. As Chapter 3 detailed, female movie workers were frequently posted in or around male-dominated departments (generally as clerical support staff) or in nearby women's labor sectors (e.g. the film lab, the ink and paint department) and men and women socialized in shared studio spaces such as commissaries and cafes. As such, female movie workers were convenient subjects for their male colleagues' gazes Per studios' happy family/esprit de corps mythology and wider cultural norms of the day,[31] they were expected to be and often were willing recipients of these looks. The secretarial and other columns discussed women's looks and dress constantly, as in one dispatch from the timekeepers at Warner in which the department's male workers were all a dither

[26] For example, in the June 1944 pinup girl Jane Wardell, "secretary to Arthur field and one of the many charming lassies in New Administration." *MGM Studio Club News* (June 1944).
[27] "Our girls have the hat checking at the Hollywood Canteen and when asked how things were going answered firmly, "We've never lost a hat!" In: Ruth Ellen Moore, "Cartoons," *MGM Studio Club News* (October 1942), 14.
[28] Adopt a pen pal program discussed in *MGM Studio Club News* (June 1941), 20.
[29] Canteen: Hedda Hopper, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times* (November 17, 1942), 17. Paramount Secretaries: "Studios to Entertain Soldiers at Party," *Los Angeles Times* (November 11, 1941), 1A.
[30] "Film Secretaries Boost GI Morale With Letters," *Los Angeles Times* (June 5, 1951), 15.
[31] Reflecting the general cultural notion of the time that women existed/wanted to be looked at.

over the fact that one of its female clerical workers, Gertrude Archier, wore red slacks when called in to work on a weekend. The report ended by saying, "Gertrude is now the most popular girl in the time office and the boys hope they have to work every Sunday."[32] Another section of the very same newsletter issue reported on the new dress worn by Virna Shilvock of timekeeping.[33] These dispatches made no mention of what the male timekeepers had on. The interest in female movie workers' physical characteristics and attire, so keen it verged on surveillance, gives the impression that women were viewed by male colleagues not only as future wives and mothers, but also as current objects of sexual desire.

Of course, it was very often female studio workers who wrote about which secretary has an "attractive new hairdress," and place "WANTED" ads in the secretaries column for "handsome men, must own tuxedo, to escort girls" to the studios' formal affair.[34] Women's inherent interest in these topics is one explanation for their frequent discussion of them. Another is that gender and sexuality were so central to female workers' conception of both their work and their place in the studio's scheme of things that they served as packaging for everything else. The hundreds, perhaps thousands of references made to the physical beauty or other womanly qualities of this or that secretary in studio club newsletters, in that they far outnumber references to physical attractiveness or acts of masculine performance in male workers, attest to the fact that studio secretaries, along with other female workers, were viewed as women first, and workers second. In fact,

[32] "Untitled," *Warner Club News* (February 1937), 7.
[33] "What's What and Who's Who on the Backlot," *Warner Club News* v. 1.12 (February, 1937), 10.
[34] "hairdress" in Sylvia Rosenthal, "Secretaries," *Warner Club News* (August, 1939), 6; "WANTED" in Joan Dawson, "Secretaries," *Warner Club News* (February, 1940), 10.

female workers often performed or referred to feminine traits as a means of disguising the visible labor required for their jobs. Perhaps the best example of this is the original "Secretaries" column of the *Warner Club News*, which is the only regular feature from any department written by a fictional character –Hildegarde. Through this fictitious secretary, the same departmental doings are reported as by other columns, but the report is framed as a letter, full of jealousy and backtalk, and in a style that demonstrates 'Hildy' to be a terrible typist, speller, and worker. Hildegarde's lack of qualifications for her job is telegraphed in digressions like the following, where she interrupts a report on some lucky girls' vacations to say:

> My Boss just came out and asked me if I had a dictionary…I think it was a crack about my spelling again…You know, I can't understand why they make such a fuss about things like putting too many L's in battalion…they pronounce words two different ways, don't they? Well, why can't they be spelled two different ways?...I think it shows some inishitave, don't you? [35]

While humorously intended and undoubtedly received as such, this "performance" of a dumb secretary character effectively erases all "work" from the secretary's job by playing it off through to the gendered tropes of secretaries as catty, gossiping dingbats. Better, it seems, to display supposedly feminine characteristics, however negative, than to be perceived as so work minded, professional and successful on the job as to be unfeminine.

The same hierarchy of values was evident in studios promotions of high profile female workers such as Virginia Van Upp, who, when she ascended to the level of executive producer at Columbia, was re-photographed by its publicity department. The department withdrew from all photo libraries the photograph it

[35] 'Hildegarde, "Secretarial News," *Warner Club News* (November 1, 1936), 9.

had previously used in promotion, which showed a bespectacled Van Upp posed near a film camera. It was replaced with a newer photograph of Van Upp, sans glasses and posed with a flower tucked behind one ear as if to underline the fact that, though powerful, she could be, as Lizzie Francke puts it, "unthreateningly feminine."[36] Joan Harrison, another powerful woman at studios in the 1940, wrote in an essay for *The Hollywood Reporter* entitled "Why I Envy Male Producers" which could be boiled down to the fact that the men spent more of their time engaged in work and leisure pursuits because they didn't have to worry about their appearance while she, as a female producer, had to spend hours at the hairdresser, and was judged for shadows under her eyes, rather than congratulated on them as a sign of hard work.[37] Much like Harrison's essay, female workers' private reflections on studio culture relate a more complex negotiation between their individual identities and workplace expectations related to their gender. These accounts attest to the truth that newsletters often belie; the studios' practice of sex segregation and the culture that supported it was not a naturally occurring system. Rather, it was a one that served studio (and male) interests by design.

Gendered performance served a symbolic purpose in the large, self-styled mini-cities that studios had become by the late 1920s. Feminine assets –from the machine-like bodies of seamstresses to the sexualized bodies of chorus girls—were arrayed in the studios' promotional materials to substantiate the claim of studios as full-service, self-contained movie factories. Studio secretaries symbolized both the

[36] Lizzie Francke, *Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood* (London: BFI, 1994), 59, 62.
[37] Ibid., 59-60.

studios' power and that of the individual movie makers they served. Much like secretaries in popular advertising of the time, studio secretaries were framed as "both the object and the basis of men's power and control," and existing "to operate men's machines and to service men—in ways that are, by implication, rather intimate."[38] Secretaries were displayed front and center in offices, often as part of the executive's art of intimidation. In the recollections of major creative figures who were kept waiting by executives as a demonstration of status, a large part of the ritual's humiliation was the fact that it took place under the eyes of the executives' secretaries.[39] Once a secretary came to signify her employer –as so many did in service of men for whom prestige, authority and intimidation were often as important as actual talent—it was hard to reverse the process. Despite her success as a screenwriter and producer, colleagues invariably describe Joan Harrison as "Hitchcock's former secretary."[40]

By "owning" these sources of femininity, studios actually built in some of the favorable working conditions promised by the often-farfetched studio-as-city promotion. With female workers to complete the studio city's simulation of the

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[38]Quoted in: Ellen Lupton, *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to the Office* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 48.

[39] Descriptions of such tactics, with personnel kept waiting outside, on purpose or not, especially Thalberg's. Psychological machinations in the layout and ritual of the offices and their outer rooms, with Goldwyn, Mayer and Cohn. Selznick's was homey with cookies and couches. Christopher Finch and Linda Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood: The Movie Colony in the Golden Age* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 224-5.
Story of Frances Marion going to visit an executive who wanted to put her in her place and being told she would have to wait half an hour by uncomfortable secretary and questioning further to find he was alone in his office and merely had her waiting to demonstrate his status. Frances Marion, *Off with Their Heads: A Serio-Comic Tale of Hollywood* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 148. Samuel Marx described how Selznick listened in an outer room as Charlie Lederer complained to his secretary in *A Gaudy Spree Literary Hollywood When the West Was Fun,* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 97.

[40]Though the director himself took pains to elevate her from that status, it rankled men like Charles Bennett, who insisted that she was just "our secretary" who had never come up with a single idea on *Foreign Correspondent* despite being credited on it. Hitchcock remembered Harrison's work differently. She had worked on several prior scripts and recommended *Rebecca* as a project after reading the novel. Bennett Quoted in: Pat McGilligan, *Backstory: Interviews with Screenwriters of Hollywood's Golden Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 36. Further discussion by Lizzie Francke in *Script Girls* (London: BFI, 1994), 56.

outside world, studio lots were framed discursively as homes away from home, complete with mothers, wives and sex objects. The implication: studio workers (male) could stay on the lots for long days and nights of production without worrying about how they would be fed, nursed, nurtured, or where they would find a girlfriend or wife. Just like the array of guns in their armories, studios were stocked with a full range of women's roles, there to meet needs before they arose.

Though women's roles were performed differently depending on the individual and circumstances, all women were expected to comply in some fashion with the universal gender norms that compelled traditional femininity in appearance (e.g. dress and hairstyle) and behavior (e.g. subservience, outward repudiation of such "masculine" traits as ambition or competitiveness). Norms of feminine appearance were studio-wide. At Disney, female animation workers were required to wear skirts and dresses. In 1958, a painter who showed up in a Kate Hepburn-inspired pantsuit was fired.[41] Dress codes, whether official or not, were often directly communicated to secretaries early in their tenure, especially if they worked for high-status movie makers expected to dress in accordance with their station. When Samuel Goldwyn's general manager hired Valeria Beletti to work as the mogul's secretary, he told her that she "would have to look very smart and dress well" and loaned her money against later paychecks for the purchase of suitable wardrobe. Beletti wrote of the experience: "I feel as if I'm a different person entirely. For once in my life I bought real styling clothes and they do make a difference. Of course, I have to keep my hair marcelled, but in view of the salary I am being paid, I

[41] Tom Sito, *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 2006), 20.

can easily do it."[42] Beletti soon tired of this required attention to appearance, echoing Joan Harrison's envy of the male producer when she wrote, "that's one draw back about this job. I have to look nice, and that's so hard for me because I hate to shop and worry about clothes." Though she was told her salary would eventually increase to allow her to dress in style and still save for the future, Beletti confessed, "I've never been so extravagant in my life and do you know it just seems sinful to me to spend so much on myself. I just can't do it happily."[43] Before she became a publicist there, Emily Torchia wrote a fashion column on her fellow secretaries at MGM. Much like Beletti did at Goldwyn, a producer's secretary at MGM earned a high salary for that field ($65/week), in part because, as Torchia recalled, there was an expectation that they dress nicely, "gabardine suits mostly. We didn't wear slacks; if we had, we'd have been sent home."[44]

Feminine behavior was guided only slightly less directly. Harry Cohn attributed Virginia Van Upp's success in his organization not to her tendency to stand up to him, but her ability to do so without stepping outside her role as a woman. The studio boss openly admired his female writer-producer's "ability to survive in a man's world without losing her femininity."[45] Transgressors in the realm of feminine behavior seem to have received far less praise and more censure, whether professional (in the form of promotions not received) or social. Though Samuel Marx admired Kate Corbaley, he "had no doubt she was strongly feminist,"

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[42] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, February 19, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 17.
[43] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, February 27, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 29.
[44] Quoted in: Davis, *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood's Big Studio System*, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993), 312.
[45] Ibid, 60-61.

and observed in light of this fact that "few of the males on the writing staff were her friends."[46] Instead, she shared a close friendship with Frances Marion, which took place largely behind the closed door of her office, which would be "closed to the world so they might enjoy their 'private gossip,' as Kate described those sessions. Screams of laughter would issue through the locked portal."[47]

Unlike feminism, gossip was sanctioned and even encouraged as an acceptably feminine vice. It was also a means of punishing more transgressive female behavior. Secretaries at studios were reputed gossips, calling each other to "alleviate numbing boredom" by relating "fact, half-truth, and falsehood." [48] Meta Carpenter was on the receiving end of the studio secretaries' game of telephone after the departure from 20th Century-Fox of the well-known writer with whom she'd begun a romance, saying "At least twenty secretaries now in the commissary would know that William Faulkner had left for Mississippi the day before, ending his affair with the Southern girl who worked for Howard Hawks; by clock-out time, half a hundred would have heard it." She described the isolation she felt as a transgressor under the norm-enforcing studio rumor mill:

> Braving the crowded Café de Paris for lunch –Was anyone staring at me?—Those two writers with their heads together there, did they recognize me as the blonde who was always with William Faulkner at Musso & Frank's?—I found a seat at a table with three character actresses dressed in Western frontier garb. Good! I was saved from joining the all-knowing studio secretaries at a nearby table….I darted my eyes right and left and saw, or imagined it—a number of heads turned my way. [49]

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[46] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 28.
[47] Ibid., 29.
[48] Meta Carpenter Wilde and Orin Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman: The Love Story of William Faulkner and Meta Carpenter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 94-5.
[49] Ibid.

As Carpenter's account indicates, many male employees also enjoyed spreading studio gossip. However, they were largely free from judgment for it within studio culture. No fictionalized male 'Hildegarde' characters were introduced in studio newsletters or appeared in studio films, playing literal and figurative games of telephone on the job. Meanwhile female movie workers seemed to be simultaneously blamed for gossip and encouraged to indulge in the behavior, reinforcing cultural notions of feminine behavior in ways that conveniently undermined their ambitions beyond women's sectors. Women's tendency toward gossip, as represented in studio culture, was an inborn feminine weakness for which they could hardly be blamed. The implication followed that they were fundamentally unsuited for serious business since, to revert to an oft-used misogynist metaphor, hens were too busy clucking and pecking at each other to challenge the rooster's leadership. The notable exception to this rule was in the para-industry of professional gossip columnists and tabloid journalists.[50]

Whether it was due to an innate urge or a culturally constructed one, the spreading of rumors served studio interests, functioning as a loosely managed form of viral marketing. As Carpenter explained: "There was an incredible network of rumor and exaggeration from which professional radio gossipmongers mined most of the inside news that entranced the public."[51] Mae Whale Brown echoed this sentiment, saying that "when working on movie sets, gossip swirled around me in a

[50] Again, I am applying John Caldwell's concept of sub-contractors in the present age of post-fordist production outsourcing as "para-industries" to a field which, because of its symbiotic relationship with studios, can be viewed as a historical antecedent. John Caldwell, "Para-Industries: Researching Hollywood's Blackwaters" *Cinema Journal* v.52.3 (Spring 2013), 157.
[51] Ibid.

continuous flow," despising the fear and spite that so often fueled it and in turn fed the promotional machine, explaining:

> Jobs in the movie industry were never secure, even in the days when the major studios reigned supreme. …Everybody listened to rumors, and they would spread like wildfire. What happened yesterday, or today's decisions made in high quarters, could affect the future of the listener (that's why they listened so avidly). Rumors grow as they make the rounds, and increase in volume like avalanches as they roll from set to set, office to office, until they land in print.[52]

The association of women with gossip was so strong that it not only legitimized but elevated female columnists like Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper, representing an additional qualification for the work of peddling rumors. As actress Evelyn Keyes explained, Louella and Hedda were accepted in their roles because "women were supposed to be catty to each other….It was our programming, like pink for girls. Gossip Columnists were bitches—everybody knew that."[53] Through their catty, bitchy and otherwise feminine performance of gossip Parsons and Hopper ascended to levels of great power within the industry while also performing what studios viewed as an essential promotional function.

Women at studios were also compelled to acts of feminine performance in the area of sexuality. It was the female movie worker's job to respond to unwanted male attention without giving offense. This was the case outside of studios as well, as reflected by numerous secretarial manuals, which as early as 1916, gave advised that the average woman was "quite capable of freezing an undesired admirer into a state of respectful good sense, without even losing her job in the process," and that in "a case where she can not get rid of the attentions, she can, as a last resort get rid

[52] May Wale Brown, *Reel Life on Hollywood Movie Sets* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1995), 177.
[53] Richard Lemon, "Queens of Gossip," *People,* May 13, 1985, 133.

of the job…She need never be kissed twice against her will."[54]. Manuals from the 30s and 40s counseled secretaries to put off married men by bringing up subjects that would remind them of domesticity, to "pay no attention to personal remarks, pats or other approaches. Pass them off and keep quiet," or to accept a date but repel the suitor by dressing and acting frumpishly.[55] Even in the late 60s and early 70s, secretaries were advised to give a boss who groped them the brush off in a way that wouldn't embarrass him, or to administer a slap if demanded, but only in private. In her retro guide to secretarial manuals, Lynn Peril states that "Of the four hundred respondents to a questionnaire distributed at the annual meeting of the National Secretaries Association in 1970, not one said she would report a boss who made a pass at her. Instead, the majority reported that they would 'try to straighten him out and then forget it."[56]

Even more than in more traditional, 9 to 5 offices, at studios, the onus for neutralizing expressions of masculine desire –from harmless to downright harassing—belonged to its female object. This was no secret, as a blind item in *Variety* which reports women's responsibility for avoiding harassment and rebuffing it as humorous but not unusual:

> Script girl at one of the studios passed an exec in the hallway and was pinched by the latter. The girl let out a scream that reached the big boss's office. Boss sent for the girl and wanted to know all about it. "Did you slap him back?" he asked. When the girl admitted she hadn't the exec fired her, remarking that if she had struck back he would have fired the exec instead. "I won't have any girls around here who will stand for a pinch without hitting back!" he exclaimed.[57]

[54] Eleanor Gilbert, *The Ambitious Woman in Business* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1916), 141
[55] Peril, *Swimming in the Steno Pool*, 161-3.
[56] Ibid., 164.
[57] "Inside Stuff," *Variety* (June 30, 1931), 43.

Would the boss really have fired the executive in question if the "girl" hit him back? There is little (read: no) evidence that any such firing would ever have occurred. On the contrary, in studio secretaries' "unofficial" accounts, sexual advances were expected to come with the territory and to be endured to the best of one's ability with no recourse. Early in her stint at Goldwyn, Valeria Beletti reported cheerfully to a friend back home that, "No one but the art director, Mr. Anton Grot, has gotten too friendly as yet. Mr. Grot tried once to kiss me but my guess is that he won't try again."[58] Contrary to Beletti's prediction Grot continued to make advances, but she said she was able to make him "behave" by keeping her distance ("Every time I pass his studio he beckons for me to come in and have a chat, but I pass him by and tell him I'm too busy to talk.").[59] Within months, she had encountered a handbook-worthy situation in which a simple "no" was not accepted, even when pleasingly delivered:

> [Assistant director] Jimmy Dugan is awfully friendly towards me, but I don't want to encourage him because I know he's married and of course I don't want to be involved in any affair with a married man. He tried to tell me there wouldn't be any harm in his taking me out occasionally but I sternly refused to listen to him. I told him that with all the extra girls running after him ready to give themselves up to him for the sake of a little part in some picture, why should he want to take me out when he knew I wasn't a good sport. This is what he said: 'Listen here. I've had enough of them—the very sight of girls of that sort repulse me. If I take a girl out I want one that I know I can talk to and don't have to make love to. I couldn't do that with those girls, but I can with you, because I know you're good and haven't been out with a lot of men. That's why I want to take you.'[60]

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[58] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, April 8, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 34.
[59] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, October 25, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 156. An almost identical interaction was reported by Meta Carpenter, who described "Edwin Maxwell, a large, florid actor, who beseeched me to have dinner with him, and when reminded that he was a married man and that I had even met his wife, shrugged and said 'But what harm would it really do if you went out with me?"
[60] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, May 20, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 45-6.

The no-win nature of Beletti's situation is clear: her chasteness will be rewarded with more pursuit, and yet the consequences of giving into that pursuit and being a "good sport" are that she will eventually be found "repulsive."

Though most secretaries saw withstanding the attentions of male co-workers as part of the job, few relished it. Marcella Rabwin's memoir contains few criticisms for former employer, David O. Selznick but grants that "the sexual use of candidates for studio jobs was almost universally practiced in the industry, and David was no exception. I was tolerant of his misbehavior; my prior experience had prepared me," insisting that on the job, "David was always respectful of me and the women who worked closely with him."[61] Selznick's respect may have been measured relative to the other studio workers at whose hands Rabwin had met with her own share of male attention. Some of it was consensual –flirtations with Jimmy Cagney and Charles Bickford and dates with Earl Luick—but much was unwanted, non-consensual, and disturbing. When Darryl Zanuck spotted Rabwin working for writer Arthur Caesar, he asked her to move to his office "as assistant to his private, private secretary," whose primary function, Rabwin knew, was recording "information about the choicest girls on the lot." Attempts to beg off were fruitless, she recalled, saying that when she said she was happy where she was:

> "he fired Caesar and gave me two options: accepting or leaving. I should have left, but I hadn't yet found the courage to be out of work. Within two months, his chases around his desk, polo stick ever in hand, became so frightening that one night I ran out of his office into the hall screaming, and never returned."[62]

[61] Rabwin, Marcella. *Yes, Mr. Selznick: Recollections of Hollywood's Golden Era* (Pittsburg: Dorrance Publishing Co., 1999), 153.
[62] Ibid., 164.

Rabwin was hired by Myron Selznick's organization, but in the office of "the wrong member of his firm," V.P. George Volck, whom she described as "venomous, Teutonic, and cruel," with a voice "unnaturally soft yet cold and severe" that made him seem demonic. This was not her principle objection to Volck, however. That came from his behavior with his longtime secretary who sat in his outer room, "personal and proper" by day, but by night

> Thinking she was earning overtime, she found herself beguiled into unseemly situations with her employer….He and she enjoyed homoerotic entertainment and insisted that I join them. Although in a way it was funny, this was horrifying to me. Volck would cajole her into trying to seduce me while he hid behind the drapes in his office, telling us both, "I won't see a thing." It would be wrong to tar the entire industry with my telltale stories of several of its strange individuals, but where these erotic situations affected me, I will speak out. When, after several attempts on his part, I refused to participate, Volck became determined to get rid of me. He began berating me, constantly criticizing my work, and was, I'm sure, relieved when I resigned.[63]

Meta Carpenter enjoyed harmless, mutual flirtations with Maurice Chevalier while on location with employer Howard Hawks. It was Hawks himself who helped her politely spurn advances from a drunken William Faulkner before the latter convinced her his suit was not trivial or sordid. She looked less kindly upon the advances of writer Gene Fowler who appeared at her hotel room under the pretense of helping transcribe dictation he'd given her earlier, then "ordered a dozen martinis brought up, drank them all himself when I refused to join him, and at the end of the

[63] Ibid,. 164.

afternoon became abusive when I showed no interest in letting him lead me into the bedroom."[64]

Though most secretaries reported a similar mixture of consensual and nonconsensual, gentlemanly and ungentlemanly treatment from superiors, the unifying characteristic of all of their accounts was their own lack of control over their working conditions. Such accounts make plain the precariousness of women's position in workplaces with no oversight. If a co-worker interceded on the secretary's behalf, it was purely by his own choice and at her peril more than his, since she would take much of the responsibility for whatever resulted, whether through loss of her virtue or her job. Alma Young's story of serving as script clerk for Pathe Lehrman hits home the fact that, though many men on studio lots were kind, well-intentioned and even worked to counteract the rigged game of desk-chase, the female studio worker, perhaps especially working within the inner circle of power, was at the mercy of the other sort of male co-worker. She recalled her assignment, saying:

> They called him Suicide Lehrman; he ruined so many people, and so many people committed suicide. And anything that had a skirt had better be careful. They'd had three script girls with him….we had Bill Koenig as a production manager, and he assigned me to it, and he said, "Now this guy is murder. The property man will pick you up in the morning. He will have lunch with you. He will bring you back at night. And when you have to go to the restroom, he will go with you." I said "O.K." What else can you say?[65]

As Young's account makes plain, this sort of sexual exploitation of women was especially dangerous in the small, self-contained cities that studios had become.

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[64] Wilde and Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman*, 37.
[65]Alma Young, Interview by Anthony Slide and Robert Gitt, Margaret Herrick Library, 1977, 7.

Isolated from the outside world, with their own rules, police force, and authority (the very producers and moguls who exploited workers in this way), studios were small fiefdoms, where power and perks allowed cherished producers and executives to operate free from oversight. Unusual business hours and locations further blurred the line between secretary and wife, chorus girl and girlfriend, by simultaneously blurring the boundary between work and leisure time. Copious amounts of alcohol often added to the confusion. Valeria Beletti described her difficulties as a woman compelled to perform acts of workplace socialization simply to be able to have men's cooperation during regular hours, saying:

> What I'd like to know is how I'm expected to be able to work and drink at the same time….One night one of the men gave me a drink about five and since I thought I would be soon going home, it wouldn't interfere with my work (you know one must be a little sociable with their co-workers—if I didn't, I'd get a pretty bad reputation and I wouldn't be able to get anyone to do anything for me. In view of my position I have to give a lot of orders to everybody from Mr. Goldwyn and if I'm on good terms with everyone I can get better results).[66]

Samuel Marx witnessed "x-rated" behavior at MGM Christmas parties in the 30s, put on by Louie B. Mayer and stocked with booze to allow employees to "blow off steam."[67] Unfortunately, at MGM, blowing off steam was not a voluntary activity for all employees. Patricia Douglas, a 20 year-old dancer, was hired for what she thought was a movie, only to discover, after being costumed, made up, and transported with 119 other girls to the Roach Ranch, that she was to play hostess to the studio's regional salesman at their 1937 convention.[68] In the banquet hall sat

[66] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, June 10, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 52-3.
[67] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 85-6.
[68] "Man to Face Party Girl: Showdown Near in Film Convention Hayloft Revel," *Los Angeles Times* (June 6, 1937), 2.

copious amounts of scotch and 500 cases of champagne for the 300 men in attendance. Things quickly got out of hand as the ever drunker conventioneers began to take advantage of the stocked pond of women that had seemingly been provided for them by Mayer. This had been implied a few days earlier when Mayer, receiving the arriving conventioneers, flanked by starlets, stated: "These lovely girls—and you have the finest of them—greet you….And that's to show you how we feel about you, and the kind of a good time that's ahead of you… Anything you want."[69] Waiter Oscar Buddlin later testified to seeing girls at the Ranch party "get up and move from the tables because the men were attempting to molest them." Another waiter stated in his affidavit, that "The party was the worst, the wildest, and the rottenest I have ever seen," and that "The men's attitude was very rough. They were running their hands over the girls' bodies, and tried to force liquor on the girls."[70] Patricia Douglas had been pestered all night by conventioneer David Ross (in the bathroom, she remarked to an attendant "I've got a man and he's really sticking"). Ross took offense to her repeated protestations as a teetotaler and held her down with another man so that she could be made to drink. 65 years later, Douglas recounted her experiences that night to David Stenn, saying "One pinched my nose so I'd have to open my mouth to breathe. Then they poured a whole glassful of scotch *and* champagne down my throat. Oh, I fought! But they thought it was funny. I remember a lot of laughter." Douglas ran to the bathroom to vomit, but

[69] *MGM 1937 Convention*, MGM 1937, UCLA Film and Television Archive, catalog # M38478
[70] David Stenn, "It Happened One Night…At MGM," *Vanity Fair* (April 2003), http://www.vanityfair.com/fame/features/2003/04/mgm200304, last accessed July 11, 2013.

when she stepped outside for some air, Ross grabbed her, held her down, and raped her, saying "Make a sound and you'll never breath again."[71]

Though badly beaten and in shock, Douglas was sent home after seeing a doctor affiliated with the studio. She told an MGM cashier what had happened days later, wanting something to be done, but was offered only her day's pay: $7.50. When she brought suit against Ross, Hal Roach and MGM, the studio responded to by hiring Pinkerton detectives to track her movements, as well as canvassing her acquaintances to obtain proof that she wasn't a virgin as she'd claimed. According to Budd Schulberg, at that time, MGM "owned *everyone*—the D.A., the L.A.P.D. They *ran* this place."[72] Predictably, the lawsuit was eventually dismissed. Parking attendant Clayton Soth, who had identified David Ross as Douglas's attacker, changed his story on the stand and was given a lifetime job driving cars at the studio. In court, Mendel Silberberg, Mayer's personal attorney, had indicated the plaintiff has he offered as Ross and MGM's defense, "*Look* at her. Who would want *her*."[73] The studio went unnamed in the papers, which not only printed Douglas's picture, but her name and address.[74] Douglas, who claimed the party and the events that followed ruined her life, insisted that she had never wanted money from her suit, stating "I just wanted to make them stop having those parties…and besides, money can't cure a broken heart."[75]

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] For example: "Miss Douglas, who lives at 1160 Bronson Avenue, charges that she was induced to attend the party." "Girl Identifies Suspect in Film Barn Party Attack," *Los Angeles Times* (June 15, 1937), 3.
[75] Stenn, "It Happened One Night…At MGM."

Though many men and women who worked at the studios at this time expressed quiet disgust at incidents like the Wild Party, such behavior was hardly discouraged by management, which "kept a group of girls on hand for the pleasure of visiting dignitaries," not to mention executives whose behavior was often anything but model.[76] Eddie Mannix hospitalized his wife and at least one of his mistresses through repeated, brutal acts of physical abuse.[77] L.B. Mayer himself indulged in affairs with series of chorus girls and starlets, who Frances Marion referred to as "silver platter girls" (named for how they delivered themselves – metaphorically— to Mayer), and "moos," (because on delivery they became his "sacred cows," pet projects whose names he suggested in casting).[78] Given the lax position of the front office when it came to sex and the "girls" who were part of their studio family, it is not surprising that a similar tolerance for boys being boys pervaded stages, where, when word got around about cattle calls for musicals, "male workers found an excuse to be in that vicinity." Said Edward Dmytryk of this practice at Universal, "The chorus girls obviously had to dress in tight shorts to show their figure, and men from all over the studio would be standing there leering." For Peggy Montgomery, an MGM extra who began work there at the age of 16, this meant:

> A constant air of being pursued. All the men tended to try to break women down. These were very aggressive men. Twice, I was asked to go to be interviewed and the guy got up and said 'Well let's see your legs.' And you pull up your skirt and he said 'turn around, sweetie, pull 'em up higher.' And then he'd say, 'let's see how you feel.' And then he'd walk around the desk and grab you. You couldn't go to the citizen

[76] Davis, *The Glamour Factory,* 93.
[77] Stenn, "It Happened One Night…At MGM."
[78]Frances Marion, *Off with Their Heads*, 164.

> news and say 'You know, Mr. So-and-So did this to me at MGM. No way. I mean this is no exaggeration it was one of the laws I learned very early on. Even the adults were afraid. Everyone seemed to be afraid of something. Except the men that were pursuing girls, you know. That was the one thing that nobody seemed to have any compunction about." [79]

It wasn't that all men were bad or on the make. Dmytryk, though disgusted by the exploitative atmosphere of cattle calls, also stated that "Surprisingly little of that" went on in Hollywood, "or did in those days," and that Universal was the first place he encountered it.[80] Many women appealed to male co-workers for help in such situations, and it was often given. Still, as any woman who has walked alone after midnight in a large city can attest, constant danger is not needed to produce fear. These recollections cast the discursively framed "studio-as-city," in a more disturbing light. With not only their own nurses and teachers, but also their own doctors and policemen, enclosed studio cities didn't just keep outsiders away, but held employees captive inside.

In this climate, secretaries were expected to bring their "work wife" spirit to the office with them, and to be loyal to employers even against their own interests.[81] Many did, working at the same studios for years as their bosses' cheerleaders and staunchest supporters, their professional fates rising and falling with those of their employers.[82] All with little chance of promotion, especially as an executive or to

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[79] Peggy Montgomery, Interviewed in: *Girl 27*, Directed by David Stenn, 2007.
[80] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 55.
[81] In one example of siding with employers against their own interests, Secretaries at Warners in the 1940s, crossed picket lines, swayed by Ayn Rand's secretary, who swayed them with the very Randian argument "that the strikers were just a bunch of commies and that no decent person would support them." The other writers followed their secretaries inside, having decided to wait to see what they did before deciding whether to cross the line since as one said, he "could not dream of working without his secretary." Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood*, 256.
[82] In one issue of the RKO newsletter, five secretaries are heralded for having stayed at the studio for over 10 years, several of them for over 15. *RKO Studio Club News* (December 1940), 14.

produce or direct, and all while never being allowed to forget they were women first, workers second. This is not to say that women played no role in creating or perpetuating the workplace culture in which they lived and worked, only that their role was a formulaic one in that it was scripted for them in advance based on their gender, and an obligatory one since, far from protesting this state of things, secretaries were instead expected to be willing accomplices in their own confinement.

Feminized Labor as Creative Service to Movie Makers

Thus far, this chapter has concerned itself with the visible, official work duties of secretaries as feminized clerical workers (women's labor), and, in a very general sense, the visible, gender-normative femininity they were expected to display as women in production culture (women's roles). In attempting to pinpoint more specifically how these two aspects of women's experience at studios were integrated on the job, one difficulty is that so much of the work performed by female studio workers, while expected of them implicitly, was not formalized or discussed alongside more "visible" job duties. Many of the general descriptions above call to mind Hochschild's "emotional labor," a term which describes when in service professions are required to coordinate their feelings with their labor so that "the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself."[83] Hochschild describes emotional labor as any that requires the suppression of feeling in the worker "in order to sustain that outward countenance that produces the proper

[83] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 5-9.

state of mind in others."[84] However, she further states that "this transmutation of the private use of feelings affects the two sexes" in different ways since, traditionally, the management of emotion "has been better understood and more often used by women as one of the offerings they trade for economic support," often through "creating the emotional tone of social encounters."[85] And thus, while men may do emotional labor for wages, they are more likely to be seen as individuals who happen to possess certain skills, whereas female workers are more likely to be seen as members of a group (women) which specializes in "the 'womanly' art of living up to *private* emotional conventions."[86]

In many cases, gendered expectation affected women's labor by subtly reshaping their duties to include aspects of feminine performance (as in the expectation that a secretary not only answer the phone, but have a pleasant phone manner). Many of the entirely new tasks that women's role added to their job descriptions under studio culture (e.g. lending emotional support to an employer), were not recognized as emotional labor, but were instead viewed as the innate traits of women, who were "naturally" agreeable, nurturing, friendly, emotionally giving and who just happened to know, say, how many donuts to order for a meeting. This had the effect of blending of women's role into the background of women's jobs, making it difficult to account for in history. Adding to this difficulty is the fact that gendered expectations were universal, women's interpretations of their role varied by individual. This was doubly true of women's roles as secretaries, given the

[84] Ibid., 7.
[85] Ibid, 20.
[86] Ibid.

individualistic nature of any boss-secretary relationship, much less the particular brand of movie-maker individualism that emerged through the industry's cult of personality. The rest of this chapter will shape tools to aid in isolating and characterizing traits related to women's role through the example of secretaries, which can then be applied to the women's professions that were gendered and reconfigured under the same overriding logic.

When stated out loud, gender-based expectations become a liability to modern businesses, most of which overcompensate in the opposite direction by claiming such expectations no longer exist in the workplace. However, many of the traits expected of women at studios are essentially the same as those expected of workers in female-dominated professions today. The difference is that they now fall under the general heading of service. Whether in the service sector or private businesses, service is implicitly understood as central to these professions. And yet the specific skills and requirements for rendering this crucial service component are rarely formally established. In modern female-dominated professions, service competencies are difficult even to name, and are often characterized simply as "soft," "social," or "non-objectifiable," and thus excused from definition, resulting in a catch 22 with strong consequences to the worker:

> Interpersonal competencies are in general not identified or described and no effective method to evaluate them is actually available. They are not readily taught in formal training contexts and there is no accepted procedure for validating their acquisition or successful performance in a given professional situation or in situations outside work. Paradoxically, these skills are nonetheless considered central to certain occupations, especially those which are female-dominated.[87]

[87] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Future of Female-Dominated Occupations* (Paris: OECD, 1998).

The female-dominated secretarial profession is a prime example of the paradox described in this passage. Though technically their work consists largely of clerical and administrative tasks, few identify clerical skills as the means to secretarial success.

A Warner personnel form from the 1940s described the executive secretary's duties as follows:

> Takes dictation in shorthand of confidential and general correspondence, including data of a legal nature. Transcribes dictated material, types miscellaneous reports and other data. Maintains a weekly record of stories and scripts. Prepares and types a weekly script progress report. Maintains files. Answers telephone calls and gives requested information when feasible. Relieves the Executive of minor administrative duties by taking care of details that do not require his personal attention.[88]

While the form listed secretary's the visible, clerical and administrative tasks, based on the descriptions of many successful secretaries at the time it was written, it left many others unsaid. Vocational manuals gave more complete accountings of general secretarial requirements at the time. A 1926 manual cited largely clerical requirements in its description of stenographic work, then distinguished secretarial work from stenography by describing the former's largely extra-clerical requirements, all of which might be grouped under "soft" or "social" skills today. In the excerpt reprinted below, job duties with primary characteristics of service, emotion and performance duties have been denoted in italics:

> Throughout the secretarial plane, *the first requirement is tact. Outside of a man's wife, no other person in the world sees him in such unhappy,*

[88] "Secretary to Executive Assistant - Job Description," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 382B, Undated.

> *exacting moods as does this functionary. She stands as a buffer between him and as many troubles as she can. She shoos away the unwanted caller as politely as possible.* She finds the papers her employer has himself mislaid, *and presents them to him without an "I told you so."* She keeps all kinds of accounts, she watches over supplies so that he may not want for anything. She is wise if she knows how to arrange material for the printer, for executives decide that they want things printed at hours when no other member of the establishment would consider starting the job. *She is frequently called upon to step in where others fear to tread,* to straighten his desk without losing his precious papers*. She sometimes is forced to listen to discussions of his intimate affairs, but must be able to maintain an impersonal attitude. Because of the very many hours, the long periods of close consultation she must spend with her employer, she must be careful never to arouse resentments on the part of his wife or gossip by fellow workers, for nothing is more quickly a certain road to failure.*[89]

This description seems accurate given even the most basic cultural understanding of secretarial work. One columnist in the 1940s spoke to gender as requirement for success in the secretarial field, saying women made better secretaries than men because male bosses needed "steady respect, even admiration from those about him—and these things a woman, because she is a woman, can give him…women's success as a secretary was not due to masculine qualities in her, but the converse."[90] Other similar thinkers described women as natural secretaries because they could complement a man, not compete with him. Nurturing a male employer helped a woman express her femininity, using "'all the skills that most women naturally possess—language faculty, organizational ability, willingness to pay attention to fine detail, intuitiveness, tact, warmth in handling people."[91] This discussion barely mentioned the typing or stenography that secretaries were technically paid for. Based on the accounts of successful studio secretaries, a new hire would be unlikely

[89] Miriam Simons Leuck, *Fields of Work for Women* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926), 51.
[90] Rae Chatfield Ayer, "Are Men Better Secretaries? No!" *Rotarian* (November 1940), 58. Quoted in: Lynn Peril, *Swimming in the Steno Pool* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 32.
[91] Ibid, quoting: Ruth McKay, "White Collar Girl," Chicago Tribune, April 20, 1943, 18.

to reach the highest possible degree of success in her role by carrying out only those duties the Warner description. Without rendering the kinds of "non-objectifiable" services mentioned in the vocational manual, the new secretary would not meet the job's implicit requirement that she perform as a woman.

Film history contains its own version of this paradox. Not only is the figure of the studio secretary confined almost entirely to anecdote and footnote, but, often, important female figures in film history are described as having succeeded in spite of their gender. While such statements are accurate in spirit, in actual fact, many women succeeded in impacting film history *because* of their ability to perform at the level of gender as well as in all of the same areas as their male peers. To acknowledge this condition of women's participation in film history is not to say that it was right or natural that gendered performance and emotion work was exacted from so many women. Nor does it diminish the accomplishments of those who, like Frances Marion, played through their gender as much as they played around it. It is simply to give credit where credit is due for what playing the woman's role at studios really was: *work.* Until it was pointed out that Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, only "backwards and in high heels," the added skill her role in the dance duo required was overlooked by many for the very fact that Rogers played that role so well. Rogers's success was in fact defined by her ability to disguise the effort that went into her dancing. Such was the case with so many women in the studio era. The invisibility that characterized secretarial labor at studios also characterized much of the film-specific labor assigned to women at the same time. Though many technical and craft workers were expected to fly their agency under the radar at this time, women's jobs were more often defined by

their lack of visible product, rather than the subtlety of its effect. Indeed, success in women's crew jobs such as script continuity and, later, casting was measured by how little their work drew attention to itself (e.g. a lack of typos and continuity errors, lack of bad performances while good performances were credited to the actor/director). As Chapter 1 explained, invisibility also characterized women's clerical labor outside of the film industry, and was a common characteristic shared by other the traditional categories American women's labor outlined in Chapter 3.[92] However, in that it concerns not only economic values, but also creative and artistic ones, examining the invisibility of the female movie worker's labor adds a unique dimension to the larger issue of the historical devaluation/erasure of women's work. Unpacking the various ways in which women were obligated to make their contributions to the collective creative process of filmmaking allows for a more nuanced understanding of that process and, perhaps, added insight into the logic that guided feminization elsewhere.

Women's participation in the creative process was contingent on their willingness to not only accept these conditions, but to aid in reproducing them through self-erasure. However, their status in media history and contemporary prospects in the industry might be improved by reversing this erasure. To give actual credit where credit is due, the invisible labor of the female movie worker –the women's role they performed as effortless femininity—must be made visible, measurable, and objective. To that end, I classify feminized service to creative movie makers as a form of *Creative Service,* a term of my own construction that links the more straightforwardly feminized duties that characterize so many women's professions, particularly those I argue are

[92] Particularly domestic labor, which is often not recognized as having economic value at all.

connected to clerical labor, with the forms of feminine performance and emotional labor deployed to support the movie maker or creative collective, to facilitate their creative vision and, occasionally, to impact it. The concept of Creative Service will serve as a through line along which characteristics may be identified and organized, and various different feminized professions can be linked to "women's work" through their most essential shared characteristics.

At the heart of creative service is the same prime directive that guides secretarial work at its most basic. The creative service worker "takes on all routine and some non-routine tasks that belong to the manager's role, thus freeing him/her to concentrate on core activities."[93] This is the guiding principle of secretarial work and many other women's fields, bridging the rationalized, clerical labor that comprised the secretary's visible duties and the feminized service labor that was part of the job's invisible, unofficial requirements. Feminized service includes acts feminine performance, as when studio workers deployed their labor through one of a few acceptable feminine roles to render it less threatening. It also includes aspects emotional labor in which workers "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others."[94]

In the areas of creative service with which the rest of this dissertation will concern itself, "invisible" feminized service characteristics are typically fused to visible feminized labor characteristics, often packaged together and delivered via a feminine role, supporting the creative process by serving as a repository for all its

[93] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Future of Female-Dominated Occupations* (Paris: OECD, 1998), 51.
[94] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 5.

unwanted tasks, details and emotions. Many women's professions in film production required their practitioners to take on roles not as workplace wives or mothers to individual men, but as rule-minder or taskmistress, charged with minding and maintaining media production's space of creative play, without stepping into it themselves. The following case study major studio secretaries to movie makers tests creative service as framework to understand "women's work," connecting a seemingly disparate array of visible and invisible duties and characteristics, practiced across a group of widely varying secretarial roles, through this shared logic of service to creative work. This process will begin to reveal the link between secretarial work at studios and the women's film professions discussed in Chapter 5, which I contend are part of the same family and feminized under the same basic logic. It will be applied to some of the work of secretaries to group them and show how it organizes understanding.

Case Study: The Creative Service of Studio Secretaries

According to Leo Rosten, movie makers are defined in large part by of their control over "the content and the implications of films," and their ranks include an inner circle of *movie elite*, who Rosten describes as "the ones at the center of the power and prestige."[95] In the studio era, many movie makers were in fact so elite that they would have been unreachable by almost everyone outside of their class. This made the secretary the primary link between an elite boss and movie makers of lower status, and placed her closer to the creative process than nearly any other

[95] Leo Rosten, *The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 32.

movie worker. There were hundreds, if not thousands of secretaries to movie makers during the big studio era who, in the words of Marcella Rabwin, served the movie maker as "acolyte at the altar of cinema," and who likely created their own versions of creative service to meet the needs of their employers. Still, most secretaries' Creative Service consisted of skills that hybridized clerical/administrative with emotional/performance labor, through which the secretary freed the movie maker for creative work by acting as his filter, proxy, emotional manager, and solution shaper. Because of the emotional and psychological needs of movie makers, as well as the power with which secretaries were imbued through their connection to them, these services were typically delivered and rendered non-threatening through a relatively narrow range of feminine roles (i.e. office wife, den mother, gal pal/girl Friday, or good daughter).

The accounts of Valeria Beletti (employer: Samuel Goldwyn), Marcella Rabwin (David Selznick), Ida Koverman (Louie B. Mayer), Meta Carpenter Wilde (Howard Hawks), Peggy Robertson (Alfred Hitchcock) and Gladys Hall and Jeanie Sims (John Huston) are privileged in this study as a means to identify the common thread of creative service that runs through their different jobs, and their effect on the creative process. These particular women were chosen for a number of reasons. For one thing, they all left behind descriptions of their experiences in their own words in the form of their letters, memoirs, studio newsletter columns and articles in other publications.[96] For another, they were some of the most successful in their

[96]With the exception of Ida Koverman's writings in the studio newsletters, these are private accounts, written either to friends or other sympathetic parties, often long after their work in these particular jobs had ended. Additionally, there are many descriptions of the women in the biographies and histories related to

field, excelling in positions at the highest levels possible within the realm of the movie elite. They also represent a diverse range of work styles used in the creative service of a range of movie makers, from writers to studio bosses. Finally, they worked at such high levels and in such close proximity to the creative process that their experiences throw into more specific relief the level of agency reached and creative capital acquired from their positions of limited power. Not every secretary or assistant worked for employers of such stature, so not every boss offloaded tasks of the same magnitude as Mayer or Hitchcock did, and not every secretary's creative service can be linked so directly to specific films or studio practices. But however exceptional the level at which creative service was rendered in these examples, I argue (by offering these examples here) that the service itself was nonetheless typical, and illustrates a dynamic that existed between creative movie makers and their creative servants from A to D-list. Through their descriptions, it becomes possible to see not only what secretaries did but how they did it—in other words, the impact of gendered on labor in media production.

Valeria Beletti –Secretary to Samuel Goldwyn

Valeria Beletti's frequent letters to a friend in New York span her time on the desk of Sam Goldwyn and several subsequent employers, which ran from 1925 through 1929. Though perhaps less significant in terms of the time spent or the agency and impact achieved on the job, Beletti's account of her work provides a baseline of the traits and skills used in creative support of a movie maker.

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their employers, as well as other usual suspects for biographical material, such as newspapers and trade presses.

Furthermore, her account of her thoughts and feelings as a young, female newcomer to the film industry, complicate studio culture's representations of female workers as the happily subservient and feminine helpers of men.

Beletti, who left school at 16 for her first job as a secretary at a New York patent practice, came to Samuel Goldwyn's office by way of an introduction from Joseph P. Loeb, the entertainment lawyer for whom she worked for several months soon after her arrival in Los Angeles in October of 1924. Though she was new to the movie business and characterized herself as a "terrible typist" in 1925, Beletti had ten years secretarial experience from work done in New York to recommend her as well.[97] She worked as private and social secretary to Goldwyn for a year and a half before leaving Hollywood to go abroad, and in that time became a valuable employee, remarking near the end of her tenure on how even Goldwyn's wife, Frances, was distressed that Valeria might leave before the arrival of her baby.[98] A letter of recommendation from Goldwyn himself read, "I have always found her honest, industrious and very capable and I consider her the best secretary I've had in 15 years."[99] Whatever her level of typing proficiency, the fact that she distinguished herself so to Goldwyn's indicates proficiency beyond straight clerical work, in several important areas of creative service.

One such skill was the mixture of judgment and timing that allowed her master the juggling act that was Goldwyn's office. This skill seems to have been an

[97]Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, December 1, 1924, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 12-14.
[98]Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, May 18, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 136.
[99] Samuel Goldwyn, Letter of Recommendation for Valeria Beletti, July 22, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 147.

important part of the creative service offered by all of the secretaries in this case study. Following the creation of early 1960's computer systems that executed several parts of a program in parallel, this skill would come to be known as *multitasking***.** However, when Beletti wrote of her job for the first time on February 19, 1925 she simply listed the variety of ongoing processes she was required her to track concurrently, keeping each in mind as she moved between them:

> As Mr. Goldwyn's Secretary I come in contact with every phase of the movie industry; looking for new material; keeping in touch with producers in New York; reading new books; turning over possible material to the scenario writer who happens to be Frances Marion; hiring actors and actresses, directors, camera men; keeping in touch with the art director, publicity man, the projection and cutting room and ever so many other things.[100]

Beletti's multitasking also required her to juggle movie makers, taking on extra work from Director Henry King and others in Goldwyn's organization:

> Mr. Henry King hands me mail and says. Here, answer it –I don't care what you say so long as you're polite in declining everything. Most of the letters are from actresses looking for jobs—so I just write a lot of blarney and sign his name to them. I do this for his assistant director Mr. Dugan as well and of course for my own boss, Mr. Goldwyn. I don't mind doing this because I can say what I like and they don't want to see my letters.[101]

It is unclear whether Valeria was permitted to refuse this additional work because she never reported doing so. With three films in production, the strain was evident:

> I'm kept terribly busy because I have to keep track of practically everything in the office…I have to write nearly all of Mr. Goldwyn's letters because he certainly doesn't know anything about grammar. He signs all the letters I write for him and so far hasn't made any comments so I presume they suit him…. My work is really hard. I have to talk, talk, talk all day long. People are constantly wanting to see Mr.

[100] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, February 19, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary,* 16.
[101] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, May 20, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 45.

> Goldwyn about getting into pictures or they have "a marvelous story" that they can't mail to the office, but must see Mr. Goldwyn personally about it. I have to smooth things over and keep them away.[102]

Implicit in this description is the understanding that Beletti interacted with these different people and aspects of moviemaking as her employer's representative and the point of first contact in his office. And, as she would learn, a large part of representing Goldwyn was deciding which visitors, calls and correspondence truly required his attention, and, taking care of less important matters herself. When it came to human beings, this was a form of *gatekeeping*:

> Sometimes when some of the actresses call up and they are very persistent about seeing either Mr. Goldwyn or Mr. King, I tell them to call and see me and I take their photographs, experiences and all other data and enter on my records and then I tell them that just as soon as I can arrange an appointment with Mr. Goldwyn or Mr. King, I'll be glad to let them know. This invariably pleases them and they go away and leave me along for a while.[103]

This ability to weigh the importance of incoming tasks or concerns and determine which is beneath the movie maker's attention is another characteristic skill of creative service, often referred to as *filtering*. In her time with Goldwyn, Beletti filtered out the majority of paper that crossed her desk, and people who visited her office before they could reach his, leaving Goldwyn free to focus on the upper-level executive and creative decision-making that made up the majority of *his* job. Even when serving as interim secretary for King, or for Ronald Coleman while other secretaries were being hired, she was really doing so for the benefit of Goldwyn, so that his star and director would be free to engage with him on that higher plane.

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[102] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, May 6, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 43-44.
[103] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, May 20, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*,., 45.

Another major part Beletti's filtering in creative service of Goldwyn involved relieving him of errands and other tasks related to his personal life. Though on its surface, such work appears unskilled, something anyone might carry out. The personal and domestic nature of such tasks often required characteristics of emotional labor and service, such as tact, discretion, as well as managing of status. The reason errands for Goldwyn and his wife could not be carried out by just any employee was that not any employee could be counted on to keep the personal information revealed by such errands in confidence, and to maintain a neutral countenance during and after personal requests, so as not to make the employer feel uncomfortable or exposed. In addition to their perceived emotional and interpersonal aptitude, female employees were good candidates for the *keeping of confidences* because there was so little danger of their promotion beyond the level of secretary, and thus little chance that an employer might one day be required to engage as an equal with the former servant and their stored knowledge of his personal problems and proclivities. All such qualities were required in Valeria's dealings with Goldwyn's wife and home life, as well as the following incident, in which Goldwyn dispatched her to interfere in the personal business of one of his stars:

> Another thing, [Goldwyn star Theda Bara] is troubled by a little stomach trouble and consequently her breath is a little offensive. Therefore Mr. Goldwyn asked me to get some kind of salts and tell her I took them and suggest that she take them too; that they would help get her acclimated to this country and would make her feel good. It's rather funny my doing little things like this, but I really don't mind because after all, it's better than a job where you don't come in contact with anybody at all.[104]

[104] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, July 14, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 67.

In this instance, as Beletti serves as go-between, her most important directive was keeping Goldwyn's involvement a secret. Serving as confidante in these smaller, personal matters, also qualified her for other levels of trust, such as purchasing bootlegged liquor for a company party.[105]

In addition to being filtered in terms of importance, Beletti's creative service to Goldwyn required her to filter tasks and information away from her employer based on her perception of his emotional state. This process also included judging when and how to bring up potentially upsetting concerns which could not be dealt with by Beletti alone, and gauging Goldwyn's moods to know when not to approach him with more routine tasks requiring his attention. This worked both ways, as Beletti was frequently called upon to manage her own emotions in response to Goldwyn's, or to neutralize the emotional content of his messages to other employees. This set of skills, which can be grouped under the heading of *emotion management*, was crucial to success of secretaries to movie makers. For Beletti, emotional mitigation was especially important and especially difficult. Goldwyn's temper was well-known. Early in her time with the producer, she reported being "bawled out" a number of times while still learning the ropes at her job.[106] As Cari Beauchamp explains, this was especially hard given that Valeria's previous employer was "always polite and communicative," which made "Goldwyn's literally ignoring her difficult to comprehend, let alone adjust to. She would soon learn that he talked to her only when something was wrong and grew to interpret his silence

[105] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, June 26, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 57.
[106] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, April 8, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 32.

as good news" not taking personally his obliviousness to those around him.[107] Even so, as she got better at understanding Goldwyn's personality and adjusting to it, Beletti couldn't help feeling some frustration at his refusal to make the similar adjustments toward her. While she had to become a student in his mannerisms, he still seemed unaware of her existence, much less her personality or of how to better communicate with her. She managed this frustration cheerfully at first. Though she privately confessed to hoping Goldwyn's marriage to Frances Howard might make him "just a little more gentle and considerate of his secretary," she expressed no such desire aloud when, at their first meeting, Howard exclaimed "I think it's terrible the way he comes in in the morning and doesn't even say 'Good Morning' to you." Instead, Valeria replied only that she didn't mind "because I was quiet used to eccentric people and understood them quiet a bit."[108] Seven months into her employment in his office, however, Valeria complained that Goldwyn was "getting awful—I was on the verge of quitting a few days ago. He expects just a little too much of me. I'm supposed to know what he's thinking about without his telling me. However, as my clairvoyant powers are nil, I just can't do it."[109]

Beletti, like other successful secretaries, dealt with Goldwyn's temperament and idiosyncrasies not by discussing her concerns with him or negotiating a compromise, but by fitting herself to his needs and absorbing into herself any emotional backlash they produced, just as she did the flaring tempers of others in

[107] Ibid., 42-3.
[108] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, April 23, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 35.
[109] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, July 14, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 72.

the office. She acknowledged the toll that this part of her job is taking on her near the end of her tenure for Goldwyn:

> Perhaps you know what it means to work for people who are very temperamental. The work is not heavy, but it is just the strain of not knowing where you are most of the time.[110]

Of course, in handling these challenges cheerfully and without complaint, Beletti made herself indispensible, which, true to the nature of creative service, only let her in for more work in service of Goldwyn's interests and at the expense of her own. Late in her first year with Goldwyn, she writes:

> I haven't taken my vacation as yet, because we are in production and Mr. Lehr is so busy that I hate to ask him for time off. There isn't much for me to do, but the little I do do is so confidential that Mr. Lehr feels I must do it and no one else. Furthermore, Mrs. Goldwyn left me in charge of their home and servants and I have to attend to paying them and the household bills and anything else that comes up.[111]

This ever-increasing expectation of sacrifice from Beletti may have been one of the reasons that, when she looked for her next job, she declared, "I don't want to go into the executive end of the work—I've had enough of that."[112]

Though Beletti's job took its toll on her, she was rewarded by her successful, intelligent managing of Goldwyn's life with Goldwyn's confidence in her and respect for her judgment. He signaled as much while reviewing a cut of *Stella Dallas* with Beletti and Frances Marion:

> When the picture was over, Mr. Goldwyn and Miss Marion asked *my* opinion regarding it. I told him what I though, so Mr. Goldwyn wants

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[110] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, May 1, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 133.
[111] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, November 3, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 95.
[112] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, December 14, 1927, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 169.

> me to come in with him tomorrow and we are going through the picture again and see what can be done about it.[113]

When Valeria left Goldwyn's employ to travel abroad, Frances Marion offered, on her return, to take her on as a secretary, help her develop as a screenwriter and possibly publish her diaries from her travels.[114] This was not surprising given Marion's characteristic mentorship of female underlings. More surprising was the normally terse Goldwyn's pledge of support for Beletti in offering to buy any story material that she might come across in Italy that was suitable for stars Ronald Colman and Vilma Banky. Would pay well for stories from Italy.[115]

Perhaps most significantly, Beletti was able, through her standing with Goldwyn, to influence him in way that would prove important, both for Goldwyn and for Gary Cooper, who first came to the attention of many who claim credit discovering him as "the boyfriend" of Goldwyn's secretary.[116] Beletti describes her role in Cooper's early career in July of 1926, saying:

> Do you know that boy I raved to you about, Gary Cooper? Well I raved so much about him to Mr. Goldwyn, Mrs. Goldwyn and Frances Marion and our casting agent—and in fact anyone who would listen to me—that Mr. Goldwyn finally wired to camp and asked our manager to sign him under a five year contract.[117]

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[113] This vote of confidence was not enough to make her forget her role as emotional manager, however, as evidenced by her encounter with Director Henry King immediately afterward. She later wrote that the director had looked at her "so tragically" when he asked her what she thought, that "I really didn't have the courage to tell him the truth—he must know without me telling him—so I said that it really touched me and that with good titling he had made a marvelous picture." Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, September 5, 1925, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 73.
[114] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, July 20, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 146-7.
[115] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, June 4, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 138.
[116] Cari Beauchamp, *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 145.
[117] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, July 15, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 144.

Marion, Cooper's other biggest champion, only became interested in Cooper as a star only after Valeria urged her to give the gaunt young man a second look .[118] Thus, it seems some of the credit for his later stardom belongs to Beletti. This story of the secretary behind the star or project discovery is often echoed by accounts of other the secretaries and their work.

Marcella Rabwin, Secretary/Executive Assistant to David Selznick

If Valeria Beletti represented the baseline of creative service, the example of Marcella Rabwin (nee Marcella Bennett) in her work as Executive Assistant to David Selznick, demonstrates the creative impact that was possible from such a role. In her particular iteration of creative service, Rabwin worked from the same toolkit, multitasking, filtering, serving as confidante, and managing emotions. However, over years with Selznick, she came to serve not only as a secretarial "work wife," supporting the producer administratively and emotionally, but as a kind of creative "work wife" as well, helping him stay the course in production, and "sharing his dream" creatively, to the point where she became his surrogate.

Beautiful enough to have been screen tested at MGM, Marcella Bennett graduated UCLA in 1928, was placed by its Dean of Women at Bullock's department store. She found her way into the film industry after the head of the dressmaking department in which she worked was invited to take over a similar department at Warner Bros.[119] Marcella joined her there, doing odd jobs until she caught the attention of a producer, who asked "what are you doing buried back here?...You

[118] Cari Beauchamp, *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary,* 145.
[119] Marcella Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 163.

belong up in front in the secretarial department." To prepare for her new position, she recalled, "I rented a $5 a month typewriter and borrowed a Gregg shorthand manual from the library and planted myself at my kitchen table for the weekend."[120] This led to the stints for Arthur Caesar, Darryl Zanuck, George Volck, and as an agent for Myron Selznick, whom Marcella talked into hiring her by telling him of her plan to take revenge on the lecherous Zanuck ("I would sign every writer and director at Warner Brothers, where they had been forbidden to unionize"). She became Selznick's top earner, at which point male agents complained "their pride was adversely affected."[121] When faced with a salary cut to appease the male agents she was outperforming, Rabwin elected to "continue my education in film production" by moving on.[122] She next worked at RKO as secretary to studio head Abe Schnitzer, but after three months the studio was bought out and its executives fired. "That meant me, too," wrote Rabwin, reflecting the typical tying of secretaries fates to those of their bosses, "except that I refused to leave." A friend of hers who worked security continued to let her into the studio, where, for three weeks, "I took refuge in the closet-like teletype office…I sat in my cracker box office, back pressed up against the door, my chair squeezed into the small space between the teletype machine and the exit."[123] These unpaid efforts were finally rewarded when, one day, David Selznick saw her in the hallway. "What's your name? Where do you work?" he asked, before hiring her on the spot.[124] In 15 years with Selznick,[125] Rabwin worked her

[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 165.
[122] Ibid., 165.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

way up through the secretarial ranks to the position of executive assistant with several secretaries working underneath her and "the rarest of lofty feminine salaries."[126] In many senses Marcella was a pseudo-executive. Yet in her recollections, her duties and role are closer to secretarial work, as are descriptions of her. Though studio bosses had male executive assistants (witness Walter McEwan at Warners or), they did not seem to function as Rabwin or Koverman, sitting sentinel outside of Warner or Mayer's offices (they had their own), or provide secretarial creative service. Female executive assistants were almost always different from male ones, perhaps because of their femaleness or perhaps because they so often ascended from positions as secretaries. Male executive assistants were understood differently, as actual apprentices with executive prospects.[127]

This was no surprise to anyone who knew Marcella. In 1937, Variety reported that Charles Boyer had the year before named her "one of 10 most interesting and beautiful women in Hollywood."[128] In the forward to Rabwin's memoir, her longtime friend Lucy Arnaz wrote "This was the first woman I ever knew who really read books! Voraciously! Who could hold court on any subject with anyone on the planet, king or Culligan Man."[129] Though she had left her career as a lit agent behind, Rabwin nonetheless succeeded in launching Ayn Rand's screenwriting career, recognizing the talents of the young writer, who at the time worked in the costume department, and asked Nick Carter, an agent, to approach

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[125] Interrupted by Rabwin's retirement for several years in 1939 to spend more time being a wife to Dr. Mark Rabwin, who she'd married in 1934. Resignation: "Selznick Aid Quits," *Daily Variety* (September 16, 1939), 1. Marriage: "Couple in Surprise Wedding Aboard Liner," *Los Angeles Times* (September 20, 1934), 2.
[126] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 165.
[127] This distinction explained further later in this chapter in discussion of Peggy Robertson.
[128] "Gals and Gab," *Daily Variety* (March 3, 1937), 3.
[129] Lucy Arnaz, "Forward," in Marcella Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick: Recollections of a Golden Age* (Dorrance Publishing Co.: Pittsburg, 1999), xi.

one of the studios and offer bargain price she had put on two stories: $5000. Carter agreed "because I was David Selznick's secretary and might one day do him the favor of setting up an appointment with my boss," but it took Rabwin's constant follow-up calls over the next few weeks before the agent finally got an offer ($3000) from Universal. Rand quit her costuming job the next morning and began work on a novel. In typical Randian selfishness, she never thanked Marcella.[130]

To be sure, especially in her early days with Selznick, Rabwin did the clerical work expected of any secretary such as taking dictation and answering mail and phones. In his book *Selznick*, Bob Thomas gives a substantial description of Rabwin's "uncommon faculties," saying:

> She could distribute and file the memos he broadsided to all important workers in the studio. Her sense of order brought organization to his work day, which otherwise might have fallen into chaos. She shielded him from time-wasting appointments and relieved him of routine functions.[131]

As Rabwin rose in the ranks of Selznick's office staff, she was able to hand off clerical work to members of her staff. In her book, she dispels the myth that David's voluminous memos[132] were produced by "two secretaries taking non-stop dictation, one scribbling furiously until her arm wouldn't function any more, then the other taking over," explaining "I had two secretaries in his office because when one was

[130] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick,* 114.
[131] Bob Thomas, *Selznick*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 66.
[132] Bob Thomas on Selznick memo volume: "He composed them during every waking hour, in his office, his projection room, his car, his bedroom—even the bathroom. One sleepless night he pondered ways to improve the studio operation. He fumbled for writing paper, found none. The next day he brought the studio long memos to department heads, written on a roll of toilet paper." Ibid., 67.

busy with dictation and typing, the other was always available to handle the insistent telephone.[133]

With basic office work in hand, Rabwin's attentions were increasingly focused on various forms of filtering. As she herself said in her keynote address of the Gone With the Wind Fan conference, her job as an executive assistant, was "Everything that Selznick did not have the time or the inclination for."[134] For Rabwin, this meant filtering in a very local sense, as she "anticipated his every need"[135] on a moment-to-moment basis, and in a more global sense in her running of his office, which in later years was not simply one office within a studio, but Selznick's own company, Selznick International Pictures. She describes the wide-ranging tasks involved in this level of filtering in a passage so useful that it deserves to be quoted at length:

> I not only served as confidante to [Selznick's] horse, I also ran David Selznick's office, bought his underwear, executed his business orders, ran films for him all night long when he was nervously awaiting the birth of his son. I have rushed to an emergency sneak preview at the 11th hour to take notes when someone else couldn't, leaving guests at my dinner table. I chauffeured him served his ambitions, loved his family, kept him in cigarettes, assuaged his disgruntled appointments, and placated his bookie. I wrote most of his business letters and many of those famous memos, and signed his DOS as authentically as he could. I sat through Hattie Carnegie fashion shows when he and Irene were shopping. I kept some people from seeing him, arranged for others to do so, and relieved him of some myself. I forced food on him, like a Jewish mother, and then "forgot" to send suspect flowers to his girl "friends" at strategic times. I arranged meetings. I cancelled meetings. I held meetings. And, as he wrote on that dedication copy of the script of little lord Fauntleroy, I shared his dream.[136]

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[133] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 158.
[134] Marcella Rabwin, *Gone With the Wind Newsletter* (November 1988).
[135] Thomas, *Selznick*, 66.
[136] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 162.

This passage demonstrates perfectly the range of tasks demanded of Rabwin even as an executive assistant, from very small, personal worries like buying underwear to large, to important company business such as holding meetings and drafting memos. It also gives a sense of the level intimacy that existed between Selznick and Rabwin. She interacted with Selznick's wife, Irene Mayer Selznick, with whom Marcella was so closely acquainted she once returned Irene's Christmas lingerie gifts from David.[137] Rabwin also interacted with the mistresses whose flowers she "forgot" to send, and whom she kept at bay. She later said of this part of her job:

> I had very subtle ways of handling his personal life. I was involved in it and I had to accept some responsibility. So after an evening out, I would forget to send the flowers. I would forget to send any kind of gift. So I stopped a great many of the affairs midstream. Because I loved Irene. I wanted to protect her. And after I left I couldn't protect her anymore. And she was cast aside for Jennifer [Jones].[138]

Rabwin's filtering role in this area seemingly benefitted Selznick as much as his wife. After his split from Irene Mayer, Selznick's career unraveled apace with his personal life, and David Thompson has stated that the loss of Irene, the producer's forward-thinking, creative compass could be felt in his subsequent work. Irene Mayer went on to produce Tennessee Williams' groundbreaking *A Streetcar Named Desire* on Broadway after their split. Meanwhile Selznick's *Duel in the Sun*, an ode to Jones' sexuality, was a disaster, financially and artistically.[139]

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[137] Ibid., 18.
[138] Marcella Rabwin, Interview in "Hitchcock, Selznick, and the End of Hollywood," *PBS American Masters,* Episode 1.14, Michael Epstein, dir., 1999.
[139] David Thomson, Interview in "Hitchcock, Selznick, and the End of Hollywood," *PBS American Masters,* Episode 1.14, Michael Epstein, dir., 1999.

Marcella was deeply involved in the lives of other members of the Selznick family, from his "brain-damaged brother, Howard,"[140] whom she kept out of the papers, to his father-in-law and sometime boss, L.B. Mayer, with whom she served as intermediary, "often patching things up between employee and employer."[141] She attended the funeral of Myron Selznick both as a friend of the deceased and an emotional support to her employer. As she later said:

> David's grief was so tangible that it scared me. I was walking with him at Myron's Funeral and tears were steaming from his eyes, mucus running from his nose and he was held up by 2 people. he couldn't walk. [142]

Like Valeria Beletti's job, Rabwin's work often seemed to require clairvoyance. But unlike Beletti, Marcella was fully in tune with Selznick on a number of levels, including a physiological one. Bob Thomas observed of Rabwin:

> When she noticed him drowsing in a conference, she brought him orange juice, a chocolate bar, or a Coca-Cola. His associates believed David dozed out of boredom, but Marcella knew that he had hypoglycemia, low blood sugar. After he consumed something sweet, his alertness returned.[143]

Rabwin was also in tune with Selznick's business. She not only oversaw the area where "that purgatory known as 'the outer office,'" where employees waited for Selznick for hours,[144] but also stood in as his representative, running meetings and making decisions in his stead. Rabwin was careful to make clear in later recollections that she was not giving her own orders, but "following up and carrying

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[140]David Thomson, *Showman: The Life of David O. Selznick*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1992), 168.
[141] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick* (Dorrance Publishing Co.: Pittsburg, 1999), 167.
[142] Rabwin, "Hitchcock, Selznick, and the End of Hollywood."
[143] Thomas, *Selznick*, 66.
[144] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 167. Also discussed in Thomson, *Showman,* 168: "Waiting for an appointment with the boss could be a nerve-wracking ordeal. The employee was told by Marcella Rabwin, 'stand by, Mr. Selznick wants to see you'" and then made to wait.

out" Selznick's when serving in this capacity.[145] Still, it is also clear both from Rabwin's writings and from accounts of her, that after so long together, she knew what those orders were without their having to be given, and could thus be seen as the producer's *proxy*. Proxying, the kind of next-level filtering Rabwin practiced when she stepped into Selznick's shoes, is another skill frequently discussed with creative service at high levels, when workers stand in for employers not just as a symbolic representatives, but as decision-makers by proxy. Rabwin's daily work put her "in frequent contact with every department head and every director" and in "dealings with cast and crew."[146] A profile of major secretaries described how Rabwin kept Selznick's day:

> As free as possible from detailed distractions, since they ___ [sic] know with acute exactitude what he wants done, and how and when he wants it. A situation like that, however, can put an awful kibosh on a caller's proposed program, since he's got to make a 'practice' sale of himself and his idea at the outer defenses before ever going to the mat with the producer inside.[147]

Marcella was not the only woman in whom Selznick vested this sort of authority. Robert Parish described how one of Marcella's predecessors, Jane Loring, who had been "a script girl, then a film editor, and was now the assistant to the head of the studio" was sent on location "as his representative. She was the front-office boss, and a very capable one."[148] There was also Kay Brown, who served as Selznick's East Coast story editor and sometime proxy, working closely with Rabwin in phone calls nearly every day. Marcella described her as "a brilliant woman" responsible for

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[145] Marcella Rabwin, *Gone With the Wind Newsletter*.
[146] Except Victor Fleming, whom she did not like for, among other things, his racism and hypermasculine behavior as observed in production on Gone with the Wind. Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick,* 167.
[147] "The Women Who Run the Men: Secretaries to Hollywood's Film Chiefs are Key Links in the Industry," *Variety* (October 7, 1942), 15.
[148] Robert Parrish, *Growing Up in Hollywood* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 97.

Selznick's purchase of the book *Gone with the Wind*, and "much more important to the operation than her title would indicate." Also "very important to David" was Bobby Keon, S.I.P. script secretary to whom "he'd entrust an occasional story conference."[149]

Where Rabwin is perhaps unique among this chapter's secretaries and assistants was where her roles as proxy and emotional manager combined in a part of her creative service where she actually served as his an emotional surrogate for Selznick. She explained the significance of such work in creative production, saying that "Perhaps my most important role was that of arbiter and mother-confessor when morale-destroying misunderstandings or clashes of temperaments threatened the quality of the film." When she wasn't managing emotions around the brash producer while accompanying him to set,[150] she was reshaping his words in a kind of emotional risk management under which "she learned to edit his angry memos so the message didn't make an enemy of the recipient."[151] Rabwin felt compelled to step in for an employer whose bedside manner was frequently lacking. She characterized Selznick as "a very kind man, basically," but explained it's just that in the stress of production he became a different human being."[152] In production, Rabwin recalled, Selznick "was a very cruel boss because he didn't hesitate to speak his piece."[153] This was why, Rabwin said, "it became part of my responsibilities to cajole, encourage, instruct, pamper and listen to our stars."[154]

[149] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 166-7.
[150] Thomson, *Showman*, 168.
[151] Thomas, *Selznick*, 66.
[152] Rabwin, "Hitchcock, Selznick, and the End of Hollywood."
[153] Ibid.
[154] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, xiii.

Beyond the usual secretarial faire of sending "gifts to Stars and directors who were in need of attention,"[155] Rabwin managed emotions back and forth between Selznick and workers. She sat with Greta Garbo at the star's request, watching rushes away from the large crowd of people they normally screened for. "When she wanted a message sent to her director" or to Selznick, Garbo would whisper it to Rabwin. Marcella was Vivian Leigh's emissary to Selznick when, Leigh raged that David must stop writing so many kissing scenes into *Gone with the Wind* because, "I can't bear to kiss Clark—he smells so terrible," a statement referring to costar Clark Gable's "odiferous" false teeth. "I delivered the angry message," Rabwin recalled, "and if you remember the film, you will realize how few the intimacies between Scarlett and Rhett."[156] Selznick's executive assistant also acted as hostess and go-between for Selznick and his contract director Alfred Hitchcock after the latter's arrival Los Angeles,[157] and played "the mother" to Lucille Ball's "quivering child" during Ball's Gone with the Wind screen test.[158] Another part of gatekeeping was absorbing the anger of employees, as when Rabwin blocked the way of too-solicitous Marlene Dietrich and drew the star's ire,[159] or served as the self-described "repository" for Selznick's horse trainer's woes.[160] But the higher-level emotional proxying could be seen in the way Marcella managed, for example, the general tension around production of *Gone with the Wind,* when Selznick's antics and angry memos had not yet been vindicated by the success or completion of the film. At

[155] Thomas, *Selznick*, 66.
[156] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 87.
[157] Ibid., 99.
[158] Ibid., 81.
[159] Ibid., 61.
[160] Ibid., 161.

MGM where it was being shot, Rabwin recalled that "Everyone was upset. It was an upset studio."[161] Rabwin also managed the fallout from Selznick's firing of George Cukor (Selznick's best friend), from the same film. She attempted throughout production and the rest of her time with Selznick to patch up Selznick and Cukor's relationship, with which her own relationship with Cukor was bound up.[162] Not only that, but Rabwin managed the emotional fallout of Selznick's director and other personnel changes during which her office "was laboring under a barrage of David O. Selznick memos of explanation and apology as well as constant incoming calls from the media all over the country."[163]

Rabwin also managed emotions around herself and Selznick, acting as his psychotherapist and superego to his id. Their emotional connection was such that Marcella claimed she was accused of being in love with David. For Rabwin, the relationship more closely resembled that of a father and daughter than two lovers. She recalled that "in general, he treated me like a little girl," citing both Selznick's fatherly concern and Irene Mayer Selznick's motherly gestures. It was Selznick who found Marcella's future husband, telling her, "I've discovered the perfect guy for you." When Marcella later met Marc Rabwin on her own, her employer's instincts were proved correct. Marcella and Marc were married within six weeks in a ceremony attended by just David, Irene, and Rabwin's own secretary. But, by her own admission, there was also some truth to accusations that Rabwin was in love with Selznick. She sounded a bit like a woman in love when she excused David's

[161] Rabwin, "Hitchcock, Selznick, and the End of Hollywood."
[162] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick,* 85.
[163] Ibid.

inconsiderateness, believing it "was compensated by his geniality and brilliance" adding that "I adored him but I cannot apotheosize him for he was too flawed. Still, I never lost my conviction that he had made an art of the cinema and was, himself, its greatest artist."[164] Directly responding to accusations that the she was in love with Selznick in her memoir, she stated:

> It is not possible to work side by side for so many hours of the day, for so many years, with someone you don't admire—and admiration is akin to love. Yes, I loved Mr. Selznick –adored him. There was something worshipful in my attitude otherwise I could not have spent so many overtime hours serving as his acolyte on the altar of cinema. I loved my work. I loved my indispensability to the most brilliant and talented film producer the industry has ever known.[165]

The fact that Rabwin was such a believer in Selznick the artist seems to have had much to do with her success in Selznick's operation, since it allowed her to make the same sacrifices Valeria Beletti did, and indeed far more, but to rationalized them through belief in the cause for which she was making them. It should also be noted that the rapport which Rabwin enjoyed with Selznick and the level of creative support she was able to give him was not shared by every Selznick secretary. Indeed, Lois Hamby, secretary to Selznick in the 1950s, reported a somewhat different experience in Selznick's office. Though she stayed all night taking memos, she didn't claim to relish the duty, except when she asked to take some of Selznick's Benzedrine, which gave her the energy to type all night. Unlike Rabwin, she also recalled fending off advances from the boss, saying "He made passes at me. But the first pass he made at me I said 'What's this? Knock it off!' And he says 'What are you doing, you saving it up for college?' I said 'No. If I want it I can get it but just forget it.

[164] Ibid., 149-50, 161.
[165] Ibid., 149.

Forget it. He looked at me, laughed and said 'Take a memo.' and that was it."[166] Sylvia Schulman, who worked under Rabwin and took her place briefly after Rabwin left Selznick for a while to start married life, disliked Selznick because, after first making a pass at her, he, along with Irene Mayer Selznick, tried to stop her marriage to Ring Lardner, Jr. on the grounds that she was Jewish and Lardner was not.[167] Schulman left Selznick's employ without reaching the same level of support that Rabwin had risen to, but did exercise her own agency by writing a fictionalized account of her time with Selznick entitled *I Lost My Girlish Laughter*, in which a smart young woman escapes an life of insincerity working for a brash and lecherous producer by marrying a studio co-worker. While Rabwin herself strongly disapproved of the book, regarding it as a betrayal, 'Maggie' the fictional version of Schulman, seems to serve the fictionalized Selznick in similar capacities to Rabwin and the real Selznick, from the late hours and the nutritional vigilance over the boss, to the importance of her role at the studio.[168] But unlike Rabwin, Schulman's 'Maggie' is not shy about taking credit for her part in the creative process, telling of how she makes a power play by telling an actor that he's being axed from a huge project, which leads to his getting his agent involved, keeping the part, and becoming a huge star in a hit movie, the success of which is credited to his being cast.[169]

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[166] Lois Hamby, Interview in "Hitchcock, Selznick, and the End of Hollywood," *PBS American Masters,* Episode 1.14, Michael Epstein, dir., 1999.
[167] Thomson, *Showman*, 239.
[168] In one scene, Jim, the Maggie eventually marries, tells her "I hate to be the one to tear down your illusions, but in your modest way you are an important guy in this studio; you have access to the great man and can do a lot of people favors." Schulman, Sylvia (Jane Allen pseudo), *I Lost My Girlish Laughter* (H. Wolf: New York, 1938), 140.
[169] Ibid., 174.

In exchange for her own, real life sacrifice, Marcella Rabwin was rewarded with a kind of agency, both on behalf of Selznick, administering his offices and serving as his proxy, and as a creative partner for the producer, who experienced most of his triumphs and defeats at his side. Here, the creative service she offered in the form of filter, gatekeeper, proxy and emotional manager and surrogate seemed to converge, allowing Rabwin to serve as a kind of creative work wife to Selznick, complete with a wife's adoration as exemplified by her descriptions of strange and wonderful experiences ("he once took a story conference on the SS President Wilson going through the panama canal with writers Donald Ogden Stewart and Jane Murfin and their spouses, director George Cukor, me, and two secretaries"),[170] or great moments such as his (their) discovery of Vivian Leigh for Scarlett, the moment when they watched the first cut of Gone with the Wind, delighting in his triumph with Mayer ("when I ran it for Mr. Mayer in a five hour version, he took only one bathroom break—a very good sign) and of their workplace companionship, which seems like a romance (with its rush of emotion and attraction) and a marriage (with its kvetching about old habits) all at once:

> I loved running films for him all night long. The mornings after a late night, I wouldn't come to work until around 10:00. I knew Mr. Selznick had stayed at the studio after I had left, still dictating to his secretary, and would not be in much before noon, which made it difficult for me to answer the 'when?' questions of others in the studio. He had absolutely no sense of time. I seldom left before 7 or 8, except when he wasn't there.[171]

However essential these accounts portray Rabwin as being to Selznick's operations, in her memoir, she refused to officially take credit for any real creative

[170] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 87.
[171] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 160.

agency in the films he made. She took credit for discovering Ayn Rand, yet when it came to taking credit for any of Selznick's decisions, she confessed merely to idolizing him and serving his artistic vision. Like many successful female workers in the studio system, Rabwin achieved her form of agency and her level of participation in production in part through her willingness to confine the signs of her own authorship to such places as the reference initials at the bottom of Selznick's memos. In this sense, by standing in as her employer's proxy, his second brain, Rabwin was not extending her own agency, but expanding Selznick's. Later in her life, when she became a popular speaker at Gone with the Wind conferences,[172] Rabwin did seem to want more credit for her work. In the 1970s, when she wrote a recommendation of the Selznick-produced *David Copperfield* (1935) in the LA Time Calendar section, she qualified it by saying "I was executive assistant to Mr. Selznick for many, many years—so I should know." As time went on, she seemed to state her qualifications more strenuously.[173]

In truth, there is little record of Rabwin making creative decisions that impacted films like *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1936) or *Gone With the Wind* (1939), and Rabwin did little to claim credit beyond sharing Selznick's dream and serving a torchbearer to his high priest. However, Rabwin should be credited with part of the creative work that Selznick did in that she acted for and as Selznick on a daily basis and in a variety of situations, to the point that Selznick and Rabwin were often treated as a unit, with stars sometimes Rabwin as a more successful strategy for getting results than approaching Selznick directly. She also contributed to Selznick's creative work through filtering non-creative business away from him. One extreme example of the latter was when Rabwin,

[172] "Marcella Bennett Rabwin—Obituaries" *Daily Variety* (December 31, 1998), 9.
[173] Marcella Rabwin, "Getting Dickens Straight," *LA Times Calendar* (September 12, 1976), 2.

as secretary,[174] supervised the installation of Selznick International Pictures in the former Ince Studios so that David was free to work on the script for *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, which would be his first film there.[175] It was in Rabwin's copy of that script that Selznick thanked her for sharing his dream. These sorts of incidents give an indication of Rabwin's power and influence in Selznick's organization, and the impact she made on his creative life.

This impact was not without its costs. Rabwin's sacrifices added up, and absent the ability to take her influence and power-by-proxy out on the open market to obtain a job more befitting her experience and skills (say, as a producer), Rabwin seems to have been trapped with the ever-inconsiderate Selznick, who loved her, but only at those times when he stopped thinking about his own concerns long enough to do so. Rabwin, like Beletti, was an emotional Svengali, and yet, hunkered over his latest project, he often forgot her existence. This came to a head one night in 1944, when Selznick delayed Rabwin's leaving the office in the evening for a dinner party she'd discussed with him in advance. As the appointed hour rolled by with Selznick locked in his office responding to her prompting with the occasional "another five minutes and I'll let you go." As the hours rolled by (at 8:00 they sent regrets for lateness to their guests, at 10:00 they cancelled), Rabwin was forced to confront her untenable situation:

> My husband was fuming and I was twiddling my pen and cringing on the inside from the humiliation I was heaping on him. He knew always that my having attained the position of indispensible assistant to the film industry's most prestigious producer was a source of satisfaction almost equal to my happiness in my marriage. But there had to be a limit. This was the breaking point. He issued me an ultimatum: "Make

[174] "Entire Selznick staff will move from Metro with him. It will include William Wright, his assistant, and Marcella Bennett, his personal secretary." "Selznick's 10 for UA," *Daily Variety* (June 19, 1935), 8.
[175] Thomson, *Showman*, 199.

> your choice." I made my final call on the intercom. "I just want you to know that I'm leaving now." "Wait just another five minutes and I'll get to you." "I can't wait, Mr. Selznick. I'm leaving." "What do you mean you're leaving?" "I'm leaving for good." There was a little nervous laugh. "Are you serious?" Then, for the last time, as I had said thousands of times in the past decade, and almost sobbing, I replied, "Yes, Mr. Selznick."[176]

Rabwin's account offers a final comment on her creative prospects and lack of personal control over them. Her much-loved career ended in a choice between her roles as a work wife and an actual one. Selznick had credited Rabwin with sharing his dream, but that credit was given privately and only by his choice. Her work wasn't her own without his say so, and her power wasn't power outside of his sphere. Like the early women in film whom Anthony Slide claims "virtually controlled Hollywood," Rabwin virtually controlled Selznick…until she could no longer make the intense personal sacrifices required for her to retain agency and control, at which point, outside of her own accounts and those of the people who would vouch for what she did, her work and its impact virtually never existed at all. Rabwin is a credit to film history and women's history. Her relationship with Selznick was, by her account, far more positive than negative. This discussion of her experience during and after her time with Selznick is not meant to detract from Selznick, so much as to highlight the nature of creative power and how typically tenuous was women's connection to it at this time, because it so often came through feminized creative service. What might Rabwin have done as a producer, executive or studio boss? How many others like her did not write memoirs, or serve for such notable and thus well-documented employers? Women's creative service was a

[176] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 166.

service to film history, even though we know almost nothing about it beyond the triangulation from data and circumstances that I have provided here.

Ida Koverman, Executive Secretary to Louie B. Mayer

There is no memoir or biography devoted to Ida Koverman who, in her work for L.B. Mayer from 1928-51, was by all accounts among the most well-known and powerful of studio secretaries and one of the few to break through the glass ceiling and be made an executive in the 1950s. However, Koverman did write columns for MGM house organ and was described and quoted in detail in the memoirs of those with whom she worked closely, such as Robert Vogel and Frances Marion, as well as the usual anecdotes from the biographies of movie makers. She is also discussed in Los Angeles and California newspapers. If Rabwin was an example of the creative partnership (without equal benefits) possible through creative service to a producer, Koverman illustrates the level of managerial and administrative power and influence that was possible through creative service. She is also notable for the maternal role she played for an entire studio, as mother figure in what L.B. Mayer liked to call his MGM "family." Koverman represented a mother for studio employees (and thus carried out Mayer's interests in keeping workers loyal and on the lot) as well as for Mayer himself. And though it was acknowledged by many who worked with her that she "damn near ran the studio," Koverman's case also shows the limits of even her power from her position as an extension of Mayer.[177]

[177] Robert Vogel, *Robert Vogel Oral History*, Interviewed by Barbara Hall, Margaret Herrick Library, 1990, 101.

Ida Koverman (Born Ida Brockway) met Louie B. Mayer in 1928, while working as executive secretary for Herbert Hoover's presidential campaign (she had held the same position during Calvin Coolidge's presidential campaign in 1924).[178] They were deemed a good match because of their respective needs at the time. Koverman wanted to move west because she "had stars in her eyes and wanted to work in Hollywood,"[179] by some accounts, while by others, "was anxious to leave the East Coast," for personal reasons.[180] And because she was heavily active in Republican politics in California (she'd been made first woman secretary of the Republican Central Committee), [181] it was thought that Koverman could help Mayer advance in the party through her "close friendship with Mr. Hoover and others."[182] Mayer hired her as his executive secretary, and she worked in that capacity (sometimes referred to as his "assistant") until he left the studio, after which she was made MGM's director of public relations in 1951. [183] In Mayer's employ, she was considered both secretary and pseudo executive, and a rare female one, much in the manner of Rabwin (who called Koverman "Mayer's very important assistant").[184] She was a well-known figure on the lot, synonymous with Mayer in the minds of

[178] "Mrs. Ida Koverman, Film Leader, Dies," *Daily Variety* (November 25, 1954), B1.
[179] According to Vogel, who said Mayer was Hoover's best friend and Hoover "let her go" because she had stars in her eyes. Vogel, *Robert Vogel Oral History*, 101.
[180] Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 254.
[181] Cari Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down: Frances Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 248.
[182]"close friendship" in Bosley Crowther, *Hollywood Rajah: The Life and Times of Louis B. Mayer* (New York: Holt, 1960), 127-8. Meetings with Hearst/Hoover discussed on 136-7, 146.
[183] Reported in July of 1951 that "Dore Schary tore up the old contract and gave a new one to Ida Koverman, L.B. Mayer's exec secretary for many years." Mike Connolly, "Just for Variety," *Daily Variety* (July 31, 1951), 2. On Mayer's Departure: "When he left Metro she was appointed to the public relations post. "Ida Koverman – Obituary," *Variety* (December 1, 1954), 79.
[184] Rabwin, *Yes, Mr. Selznick*, 109.

many of the executives who passed through the offices needing decisions, and symbolic of Mayer's studio brand to many workers.[185]

1942's *Variety* feature entitled "The Women Who Run the Men" profiled what the trade paper considered to be the six most important secretaries in Hollywood, invoking filtering and gatekeeping through comparison of the secretaries to a football team's offence, an "all-American, six-woman line, operating up ahead of the ball while clearing away debris, the trivia, the unnecessary and the unwelcome—the buffers before whom Fate itself might recoil."[186] Koverman was at the top of the list in a section called "It's This Way, Mr. Mayer," which described Ida as a "Confidential advisor and buffetteer in chief," who "Knows what L.B. Mayer is going to do with his day before he does."[187] Koverman was well-known to anyone who wanted to see Mayer. With the help of two other secretaries, she served as his gatekeeper and made it "very difficult to see [Mayer]" according to Lillian Gish, who described Koverman as "one of the most formidable women I've ever seen in my life. She virtually ran Hollywood."[188] In a larger sense, Koverman was also one of only two women in Hollywood (the other, Mary Pickford), who carried a police department buzzer.[189] Some disliked Koverman for her formidable an imposing presence as Mayer's body woman. Said Evie Johnson (wife of Van Johnson), "We called her

[185] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 20.
[186] "The Women Who Run the Men," *Variety*, 15.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Steven Bingen, Stephen X. Sylvester, and Michael Troyen, *M-G-M: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot* (Solana Beach, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2011), 27.
[189] "Hollywood Inside," *Daily Variety* (June 25, 1935), 2.

Mount Ida….She was Margaret Thatcher, but much worse. She was dictatorial, unbending, and unyielding…not a nice old grandmother."[190]

Most other accounts of Koverman are warm and admiring. While far more formidable than the biddable secretaries so frequently displayed in studio films, Koverman's colleagues respected her as an extension of Mayer and most seemed not to expect otherwise from the woman who was not only the gatekeeper for Mayer's office, but, in the way she managed the inquiries and problems that came through his office, the architect of many of those problems' solutions. MGM Executive Robert Vogel, who called Koverman "brilliant," explained her work routine, saying:

> In the morning at nine o'clock, there'd be a hundred people there to see Louis Mayer and she would talk to each one of them, very briefly, and say, "That's for Mr. Mannix. Go and see Mr. Mannix." "That's for Mr. Shearer. Go and see Mr. Shearer." "Mr. Mayer will be able to see you on Friday." And so on and so on, the whole damn thing. I found out that everybody said they had to see Mr. Mayer right away, and she determined which one would, so I sent her a note. "I'd like to see Mr. Mayer and would do any time in the next ten days." "I'd like to see Mr. Mayer and it ought to be in the next three or four days." When I sent her a note saying it was urgent, I got in just like that. She knew I wasn't cheating."[191]

Vogel, incidentally, credited other secretaries as important administrative figures, including his own assistant, Peggy O'Day, who did "Everything. Everything. Anything that I didn't handle personally she handled. When I was away she ran the place." He cited Marjorie Haddock and others who became executive secretaries and, in some cases, executives, as being in the mold of Koverman, "helping run the show, as a

[190] Bingen et al., *M-G-M*, 27.
[191] Vogel, *Robert Vogel Oral History*, 102.

secretary. Telling people, suggesting [to] people, what to do and how to do it and whom to see and so on and so on."[192]

Politically, Koverman outranked even Mayer. Her credentials were significant, for not only had she served as secretary for two presidential campaigns prior to her employment with Mayer, but she also continued to work in political organizations and serve at high levels on committees for the party and its conventions.[193] Separately and in service of Mayer, she was "an adroit politician, public speaker, lobbyist and expediter."[194] And with her "ready access to the innermost GOP circles," Mayer's fortunes in the party rose considerably. During republican presidencies, "no Hollywood figure was a more frequent visitor to the White House than Ida Koverman."[195] When asked to run for Congress, however, Koverman refused. The executive secretary was also formidable as an accountant. Her background in finance gave her the acumen to reorganize the studio's accounting system.[196]

Despite having power in her own right, not to mention as Mayer's proxy, Koverman nonetheless relied on emotional labor and feminine performance to package her authority. Just like other secretaries and assistants, she managed emotions, both up to Mayer, and down to his underlings. Because of her experience in the political world, Koverman was "less than overwhelmed by the ego trips of

[192] Ibid., 115.
[193] "Mrs. Ida Koverman, Film Leader, Dies," *Daily Variety* (November 25, 1954), B1.
[194] Beth Day, *This Was Hollywood*, (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 70.
[195] Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 254.
[196] Ibid.

stars" and was often called upon "to keep temperamental employees in line."[197] One such temperamental employee was Mayer himself, as recalled Frances Marion:

> For Frances, Ida's presence meant a friend at the door; someone to gauge the boss's mood and a fount of information on the latest comings and goings. She liked and respected Ida but she never understood her unending patience with the man Frances had decided was 'a pompous ass.[198]

Koverman played a feminine role for others in Mayer's office, and was in many ways the leading feminine figure –the matriarch—on the MGM lot, where the employee-written newsletter described her as:

> Interested in you and me, a constructive critic and therefore always helpful…always, too, sincere, zealous, unselfish…long the able executive secretary to our own Louis Burt Mayer…and one of our Club's staunchest personalities…such is Ida R. Koverman.[199]

Koverman was frequently characterized in this way, as an exacting-yet-maternal studio authority figure. In her 40s, when she first came to MGM with gray hair and matronly appearance, she "brought a dignity and class to the studio," and was "treated like the 'queen mother.'"[200] She shared Mayer's tastes and values, and in her mother figure role, was often the one who disseminated and enforced them to the rest of the studio. Said Marion "A kindly, white-haired woman, Ida had become a mother image to all the fledglings away from home, while the disobedient young were afraid of her because of her affiliation with Mayer."[201] Actor George Murphy called her "a unique woman among women and in her wonderful way she went through life sharing an unbounded motherly devotion, a sort of patron sainthood,

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[197] Ibid., 254.
[198] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 248.
[199] "Inspiration in Her Life Story," *MGM Studio Club News*, (November 14, 1938), 3,10.
[200] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 248.
[201] Marion, *Off With Their Heads*, 199-200.

while she watched over our careers, shared in our problems and rejoiced with us over happiness, always ready to help with her great wisdom and understanding," indulgent but stern, ruling her big family with a mother's pride.[202] Koverman called stars to task "if they started believing their publicity," and helped evolve dress and behavior codes for the studio's actors (telling them to stay away from the public eye, be "remote as a dream," but look glamorous when they did make appearances), and was also responsible for the studio's talent school,[203] as well as the Little Green Room, the recreational area created for the studio's child actors, staffed by a "studio mother."[204]

Ida was a mother figure to Mayer himself as "official studio hostess" of the many sumptuous MGM parties, not to mention the homey "surprise" birthday party held each 4th of July for all employees in the studio commissary.[205] It was to Koverman that Mayer turned "if there was a question about which glass to raise or how to address a visiting ambassador,"[206] advising him in matters of etiquette "both at his home and at the studio, where she became mistress of protocol, supervising elaborate luncheons."[207] This is not surprising, given the specific skills Ida brought from earlier work for Herbert Hoover, which she used to give Mayer "much of the polish he acquired with the years."[208] Koverman also "first gave Mayer the high sign

[202] "Hundreds at Rites for Ida Koverman," *Los Angeles Times* (November 27, 1954), 7.
[203] Koverman's "remote as a dream" and "if they started believing their publicity" quotes and talent department detailed in: Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 71. See also: Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood*, 254.
[204] Discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Koverman description of the Green Room in: Ida R. Koverman, "The Little Green Room," *MGM Studio News* (July, 1937).
[205] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 74.
[206] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 248.
[207] Norman Zierold, *The Moguls: Hollywood's Merchants of Myth* (Los Angeles: Silman-James, 1991), 309-310
[208] Ibid.

to quit" his habit of digressing during his speeches."[209] While she represented the mother to his father in the studio "family" he forged ("which to a great extent emanated from Mayer's emotional Paternalism"), Koverman also embodied a mother or wife in more private dealings with Mayer. L.B. "depended upon her," and she in turn "guided him with a firm, matriarchal hand."[210] She was able to do all of this by managing her own status relative to Mayer's; advising him in politics, offering constructive criticism of his mode of address "without ever challenging Mayer's eminence as a public spokesman" and exercising her power "with no apparent interest in its outward trappings."[211]

Koverman's motherly guidance made her, arguably, "the single most powerful influence" [212] in Mayer's professional sphere, which made her "one of the most influential women on the West Coast."[213] Off the lot, she helped to launch Hedda Hopper's career as a gossip columnist. Hopper had drawn only amusement from Hollywood in her first two weeks, until Koverman reportedly remarked "They've laughed long enough. It's time they laugh out of the other sides of their mouths"[214] and threw a party which Hopper herself recounted as a "female 'who's who.' Judges, lawyers, doctors…and writers."[215] Sixteen papers soon picked up Hopper's column.[216] Koverman was able to make use of her power with Mayer and the authority it gave her, especially in the area of talent acquisition and development, where she acted as a scout for new stars while keeping an eye on

[209] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 71.
[210] Ibid., 310.
[211] Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 254.
[212] Zierold, *The Moguls*, 320.
[213] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 71.
[214] Quotes from Koverman cited in Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 84.
[215] Hedda Hopper, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times* (March 19, 1938), A17.
[216] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 84.

those under contract. Unable to sign actors herself, she nonetheless had the bosses' ears, especially Mayer's. One of her most notable discoveries was Judy Garland, whom she saw in a vaudeville show and convinced Mayer to sign, as recounted below by Robert Vogel:

> She one day invited all the executive department heads to see something, a test in projection room one. So we all headed there, and there was a little [girl], she looked almost humpbacked, very short neck, ugly little thing. Fourteen, twelve, I don't know. And then she sat down at a desk in this test and looking at a picture of Clark Gable sang "Dear Mr. Gable." So Ida Koverman discovered Judy Garland. [217]

The story of how Koverman convinced Mayer to cast Garland once under contract – when he had doubts about her— demonstrates not only her influence over Mayer, but also the subtle means through which she obtained it. Frances Marion recalled:

> Ida came to me in despair. "The Boss has lost interest in Judy. Whenever I suggest her name for a small part in a musical, all he says is, "stop bleating! I'm running this studio, not you!" Her lips were tight-pressed for a moment. "But I'm not giving up! I'll never give up! Somehow I'll manage to get his interest back to Judy again….When a clever woman plots against a clever man, her only hope is to attack through his weakness. L.B. Mayer was a sentimentalist. Sentimental love stories, mother-love stories, and sentimental songs moved him to tears. But nothing touched him more deeply than the hauntingly melodic "Eli, Eli," which he had heard for the first time when it was sung by Bele Baker at the Hammerstein Music Hall. And this is what Ida Koverman had Judy Garland learn. And which she sang one afternoon when he was alone and depressed. "You'll never leave our studio," said Mayer when she finished, the sob in his voice matching Judy's.[218]

Rather than addressing the matter of Garland's future head on with Mayer, as one executive might approach another, in this instance, Ida was limited to subtly influencing Mayer through her creative support. Sadly, as a result of the same

[217] Vogel, *Robert Vogel Oral History*, 102.
[218] Marion, *Off With Their Heads,* 198.

meeting, Mayer took such interest in Garland that he decided to put her sleeping pills to train her out of her Vaudeville schedule, dictating his order ("Have her mother get a doctor's prescription for sleeping pills. While she's at it, she can also lay in a supply of that stuff they use to pep you up in the morning") as Koverman's "face turned pale with anxiety."[219]

Koverman also played champion in the case of Clark Gable, whose initial screen test for MGM was deemed disastrous by Irving Thalberg.[220] Like Frances Marion, Ida saw Gable's potential and "animal grace" and refused to accept defeat when the male decision-makers could not, exclaiming "That's the trouble with this business. It's the men who pick the stars and the women who react to them."[221] She ran the same test for female employees, who thought Gable had sex appeal, and reported the results to Mayer: "It was a landslide vote in favor of the man with the big ears."[222] Koverman also brought Nelson Eddy to the studio in 1933.[223]

Perhaps the greatest sign of Koverman's influence and authority was the fact that so many executives took her advice, as Mayer did, and that her role was so expanded by her success as their consiglieri. She became "known as 'the woman to see' to influence picture assignments," helped many in their climb to stardom,[224] often acting "as a counselor to many of the young players."[225] The profile of Koverman in "Women Who Run the Men" sums up this effect, saying:

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[219] Ibid.
[220] Zierold, *The Moguls*, 300.
[221] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 84.
[222] Sex appeal discussed in Zierold, *The Moguls*, 300. "Landslide vote" in Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 84.
[223] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 339.
[224] ""Mrs. Ida Koverman, Film Leader, Dies," *Daily Variety* (November 25, 1954), B1.
[225] Ibid.

> There's very little taking place on the lot that she hasn't exerted some influence upon. For hers is the unseen hand that pulls the strings that make the puppets dance and her name is spoken softly and with some degree of veneration. There's a great deal that goes on in this town that Miss Koverman knows about and, with the carte blanche she enjoys in the matter of executive decisions, she has a lot of pretty important gents tiptoeing around her with devout respect."[226]

Indeed, incidents like the one with Gable's screen test led to Koverman's steadily gaining her own authority as more than an extension of Mayer. Frances Marion called her "the only woman executive whose advice was respected by the male stars."[227] George Murphy, who delivered Koverman's Eulogy to a crowd of hundreds that included many of what he called Ida's "boys and girls," saying "There are many in our wonderful industry who would not have had their chance had it not been for the perception and appreciation of Ida," who "recognized talent as few other people did" and "knew and understood creative people."[228] At her funeral Dore Shary called Ida "One of America's great women," while general manager and noted wife-beater Eddie Mannix said, "her sage professional advice will be treasured by scores of persons in the motion-picture industry. She probably was counselor and confidante to more young stars than any other individual in Hollywood."[229] Murphy's claim that Koverman was "the greatest woman in the industry"[230] was echoed by Robert Vogel, who said simply, "She was everything. That's the point."[231]

And yet, Koverman's name is largely absent from film history, outside of these few accounts. Even though she was promoted to her own executive role after

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[226] "The Women Who Run the Men," *Variety*, 15.
[227] Marion, *Off With Their Heads,* 228.
[228] Murphy also said many more would have frittered away their success if not for Koverman's watchfulness. "Hundreds at Rites for Ida Koverman," *Los Angeles Times* (November 27, 1954), 7.
[229] "Mrs. Ida Koverman, Film Leader, Dies," *Daily Variety* (November 25, 1954), B1.
[230] "Hundreds at Rites for Ida Koverman," *Los Angeles Times* (November 27, 1954), 7.
[231] Vogel, *Robert Vogel Oral History*, 102.

Mayer's retirement and continued there until her death in 1954, she straddled the line between a secretarial role and an executive one. Like other major secretaries, Koverman's impact on the industry and its films, though considerable, was attributed to the name L.B. Mayer, rather than her own. And like Kate Corbaley and Frances Marion, who felt compelled to close the door to speak freely to one another, and to hide other writers' scripts under blank covers, Ida "fed the machine" that the studio system had become with far more contributions than she was credited for.[232] Though she blazed a trail out of a secretarial role and into an executive one, she did so not only through her obvious qualifications in the same areas required of male executives, but through her willingness to serve in the role of mother, grandmother, and nurturer to a mogul, his pals, and their studio.

Much like Rabwin, Koverman herself downplayed her own role when she wrote about it in a Studio newsletter feature on the work of executives in the front office, saying that the men she served didn't get to enjoy entertainment "as we do, sitting back in our seats completely relaxed," but were always on the job, looking for personalities in the films. She reminded the newsletter's readership (made up of predominantly below-the-line studio workers) of the "the tremendous weight of responsibility which rests on the shoulders of what we call the 'front office'—the heavy task of keeping the wheels of this great studio constantly rolling so that the rest of us, numbering five or six thousand workers, may have good jobs."[233] Koverman, by the admission of many of the front office executives described in this passage, bore much of that responsibility herself.

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[232] Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down*, 355
[233] Ida Koverman, "Nothing to Do 'Til Tomorrow," *MGM Studio Club News* (May, 1941), 11.

Meta Carpenter, Secretary to Howard Hawks

Meta Carpenter served as secretary and script girl to Howard Hawks on-and-off throughout the 1930s and 40s. Her memoir, *A Loving Gentleman,* co-written with Orin Borsten, details her work for Hawks and others, as well as her decades-long love affair with William Faulkner, who Carpenter assisted during his screenwriting collaborations with Hawks and in the periods where she and the writer lived together during his later stints in L.A. Carpenter's words paint a general picture of secretarial work in the service of a director—a lower-status figure than the producer or executive within the studio system, but a more creative one. Her account also illustrates how individualistic such relationships were, and how similar to romantic relationships in some of their emotional conditions. Her role differed in many respects from that of Koverman, Rabwin or Beletti for Producer-Executives, because of the nature of the creative work Hawks did as a director, and the director's place in studio hierarchy at this time. The level of tasks and ratio of clerical to managerial work often differed, as well as the style with which Carpenter performed them with Hawks and to a lesser extent Faulkner, due to their personalities and the creative processes. Yet still, the guiding principle (removing all non-creative work from a director's shoulders and otherwise facilitating his creative process) remains, and the job duties still fall under the categories of multitasking, filtering, proxying, emotional work, etc. Aspects of feminine performance (of the role of wife) remains as well.

Meta Carpenter (later known as Meta Carpenter Rebney and Meta Carpenter Wilde) is remembered in history first as William Faulkner's mistress, second as Hawks' "script girl," and for her own later work as a script supervisor third, if at all, though she worked in film for over four decades. Born Meta Doherty in 1907,[234] she trained as a pianist, realizing she wasn't "good enough to be a concert pianist," but loving music too much to fully give up the dream of working in music.[235] She came to Los Angeles in the early 1930s with then-husband Billy Carpenter. They lived apart (he in Santa Maria studying aeronautics, she in Los Angeles working a "meager-paying job at the Platt Music Company in Los Angeles,") and divorced after realizing they were happier that way.[236] She had found work as a secretary in casting at Columbia with the help of Katherine Strueby, Preston Sturges' secretary, with whom she resided at the Hollywood Studio Club. She worked briefly in the production office of cowboy star Buck Jones, and it was there that she was hired by Howard Hawks to replace a secretary who left to have a baby. When Hawks moved to Samuel Goldwyn Studios to work on *Barbary Coast* (1935) Carpenter accompanied him.[237]

As Hawks' only secretary, Carpenter's daily work included more typing and clerical labor than Marcella Rabwin or Ida Koverman. And at the time she came to Hawks' office, Carpenter recalled, she was light on just such skills[238] Hawks was patient with her because, Carpenter explains, she had other qualities he valued. She explained:

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[234] "Meta Wilde – Obituary," *The Times* (November 3, 1994).
[235] Wilde and Orin Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman*, 36.
[236] Ibid., 18.
[237] Ibid., 34.
[238] Ibid., 26.

> Hawks valued me for my crisp efficiency and a willingness that compensated my meager skills. My shorthand, a mix of incomplete night school Gregg and arcane symbols, sufficed only because my employer dictated slowly, weighing each word to achieve the conclusion of thought on which he prided himself. I had only recently attained a degree of proficiency as a typist. When I wasn't being the magnolia-voiced, competent Miss Carpenter at my desk, I was major-domo to Hawks, superintending the moving of his office furniture and files (he was one of the first freelance directors) from studio to studio; seeing to it that his race horses were stabled, fed, and shipped to the proper tracks; helping [Hawks' wife] Athol Hawks with sundry matters at their home; paying household and office and grocery bills (Hawks did not always remember the latter); uncomplainingly driving Hawks' two children on a Saturday morning, when I longed to sleep late or practice on the Studio Club piano, to Pasadena for a weekend with their grandparents; and generally relieving him of tiresome tasks that he delegated to me""[239]

This work, as always a mixture of clerical and non-clerical, physical and emotional labor, is perhaps more personal than professional, reflecting the fact that directors under contract or, in this case, at work on a project, did less correspondence, meetings as their managerial work took place on the set in production. Still, Carpenter functioned in the same capacity as other secretaries discussed above, freeing Hawks to think of nothing but his project and then go home to a home where his wife, with the help of Carpenter and other servants, would continue to facilitate this freedom. Meta felt uncomfortable with some of her duties for Hawks. Once, when walking down Hollywood boulevard on business for Hawks and hearing "Hi Meta" from at least five men, she remembered, "I clenched my teeth and reflected on the turn of events in my life that made me instantly known to every racetrack bookie and tout who did business with my employer.[240]" Other duties were so deeply personal that they seem closer to those of an actual wife than a work one.

[239] Ibid., 34
[240] Ibid., 29.

After Irving Thalberg's death, Athol asked Carpenter to tell Hawks of the tragedy so that he could return home, and although it meant sacrificing rare time with Bill Faulkner –then in town—

> I made myself useful to Athol, who was with Norma [Shearer] day and night, and at her bedside during the actress's serious illness following Thalberg's burial. I had to find and hire a new washerwoman for the Hawks household. I picked her up on a street corner every Saturday morning at 6:30 to take her to the Benedict Canyon home where she tackled the accumulation of soiled clothes and linen. In my tiny car, I drove [Hawks'] two boys….I telephoned long lists of relatives and friends, ordered groceries and meats, answered letters of condolence, and made endless family arrangements. It was a wearying time, but I liked Athol and whatever I undertook was actually within accepted duties of the personal secretary of that time.[241]

Though perhaps an extreme example, this incident nonetheless demonstrates the type the emotional service and womanly roles secretaries were often counted on to provide movie makers–both at work and at home—for them to stay on schedule and produce creative results. This was often even more true for directors in production, when large dollar amounts were attached to even the smallest of lags in time that might be created by turmoil in a director's home, continuing professional affairs in his office, etc., if left unattended.

However, juggling a director's affairs during production came with benefits. For Meta, there was the opportunity to travel with Hawks ("in style and with movie companies paying my expenses") and meet interesting people such as Amelia Earhart, with whom she flew over Los Angeles in a Stimson), Fanny Brice, Tallulah Bankhead Maurice Chevalier and others.[242] Despite her inclination toward music, Carpenter also enjoyed participating in the creative process from her position as

[241] Ibid., 177.
[242] Ibid., 43.

Hawks' secretary. While preparing *Barbary Coast* she and Hawks stayed at the St. Moritz Hotel in New York. She lived in what, by day, was the workroom for Hawks, Charles McArthur and Ben Hecht.[243] For five months the two writers dictated dialog and plotting to Meta " in rapid-fire fashion, MacArthur lying on the floor, feet on the couch, as he topped Hecht or was eclipsed by his collaborator with brilliant speeches, sight gags, and dramatic invention In the last weeks, they took off the jester's bells and gave us a tight, well-constructed script."[244] It was then that she discovered "that I was far more effective recording their bursts of invention on the typewriter than in shorthand," (much like the writer's assistant does in television production today) so that "the pages would be there for them to go over as soon as they had finished their work."[245]

Though any secretary to a director would likely have spent some time on set during the production phase of one of his projects, Meta became a part of production crew as script clerk on *Barbary Coast* when "Mr. Hawks asked if I could do both and I said yes" for a salary increase from $35 to $42.50 per week." When William Faulkner pointed out that "Howard saved money" on her "doing double duty," Meta insisted she benefitted from arrangement as well in that "he made allowances for my mistakes and he had his own cutter, Eddie Curtis, work six weeks training me."[246] Script "girls" were considered "slightly less-than-lowly" and as such a step up from the position of secretary.[247] Still, after the rush of excitement on the first film with Hawks, the arrangement wore on Meta. In performing the roles of

[243] Ibid., 36.
[244] Ibid., 37-8.
[245] Ibid., 84.
[246] Ibid., 38.
[247] Ibid., 43.

both script girl and secretary, she often stayed late at the studio, typing her liner notes for the film editor,[248] or taking dictation from Hawks, who, though he generally wrapped early, often had other matters to attend with her after shooting finished.[249] Carpenter soon realized how exertions—in a field where she had some prospects but was unsatisfied by the work she herself did—cost her creative ambitions, saying "I couldn't be Howard Hawks' secretary/script girl and still have the time, the boundless energy, the discipline, the purity of spirit –the last above all my girl—to devote to music."[250] And the salary she received in exchange for her efforts, she soon realized, was barely enough pay to live on, even at the Studio Club, much less foster her musical ambitions, ("Where would I find the money to pay a top teacher? I thought of my purse on the last day of the week, with never more than a crumpled dollar bill or two, smelling of face powder, and a few coins."[251]

Creative service to a director in production was often as psychologically draining as well. Meta's work for Hawks on *Come and Get It* (1936) was more stressful than the already "nerve-battering processes of moviemaking," due to tensions between Hawks and producer Samuel Goldwyn.[252] The result was that "From the moment my employer strode onto the set each morning, tensions began to build and layer until, by late afternoon, the air on the sound stage was thick with strain, indecision and malevolence" as the pressured Hawks, "who did not like to work at a fast pace, was putting scenes in front of the camera before he was

[248] Ibid, 106.
[249] Ibid., 112.
[250] Ibid., 92.
[251] Ibid., 92.
[252] The pressure, which "bore in from all sides" arose from a combination of Goldwyn's having been ill, which kept him from acting on various complaints and demands from Hawks, and the discomfort of Hawks, who was already in a contentious suit over work that he had not been paid for by Universal, with scripted and source material, as well as the tight timeline Goldwyn insisted on because of promises to exhibitors. Ibid., 155.

completely satisfied that his players were ready."[253] As Hawks' secretary, Meta was a party to this tension, and partook in its results. Though technically a member of the crew, even as script girl she was closely aligned with Hawks in the contentious space of production. In both roles, she owed her loyalty to Hawks, even when it conflicted with her own further ambitions in script continuity. "Wanting in solid experience as a script girl," she made the best of things, squeezing "everything from my mind but the mimeographed pages of the screenplay by Jane Murfin and Jules Furthman in order to achieve a degree of competency."[254] But the time came when her own interests were trumped by her employer's. With one week left in production, after a meeting in which Hawks catalogued his complaints and Goldwyn implacable in his response, the director quit the film. Carpenter's description of what happened next conveys how closely her fate was bound up with his, and how little choice she had in the matter of her own professional future:

> Hawks returned to the sound stage for long enough to pick up a few personal possessions from his trailer office, then walked off the set without explanation. Gathering up my marked script and papers, I followed, leaving actors and other company members mystified.[255]

Like a stereotypical wife, in this moment she perceived no choice other than to follow her employer away from the workplace they shared, and she was largely correct in this perception since, as Hawks' secretary and his hire as script girl, she was viewed by production as an extension of the director. Her work identity as script girl, the skills she learned during production, and her personal qualifications and competencies seemingly meant nothing, ceasing to exist once Hawks left the set.

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[253] Ibid., 155.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Ibid., 175.

This was born out in Carpenter's account of her feelings as production resumed under William Wyler for its last week:

> Since I was not a recognized exponent of the craft, another script girl, one who had worked with Wyler before, was hired to finish the picture. Dehyphenated and crushed, a mere secretary once more, first obligations to Howard Hawks, I tried but could not muster the unbothered, relieved air that my employer affected. For weeks, I had been a member of a movie company, gaining authority in my work each day, and now, depressingly, it was all over for me but not the others. Hawks vanished, leaving me to finish the exhausting task of packing his effects and calling in burly men to move his furniture.[256]

Meta's loyalty, which resulted in the "abrupt separation from the canvas chair on which my name had been imprinted and which had always been placed next to Hawks' leather chair on the set," did not entitle her to the same loyalty in return. She left Hawks' employ as he was preparing *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), and married German concert pianist Wolfgang Rebner, but though wealthy, the Rebner family was also Jewish, and like other German Jews, they lost their fortune in the late 1930s. The family fled Europe and by 1940 Meta and Wolfgang had returned to Hollywood to attempt to find film work. Lacking experience in the industry, Wolfgang struggled to find work as a composer, and, despite her previous success (for a woman), Meta fared little better. Struggling for work, she resorted to sneaking onto lots and knocking on doors of anyone who might someday need to hire a secretary or script girl. One door she didn't knock on was that of her former employer:

> I thought of Howard Hawks, who always had a number of film projects going, but I could not force myself to call him. My voice would quaver.

[256] Ibid., 176.

> I would stemmer. I might weep. Howard was uncomfortable with desperate people. Better not.[257]

Like the good secretary she was to Hawks, Meta absorbed into herself the emotional and interpersonal discomfort she perceives in the situation, which rightly belonged to Hawks, who cost once her a job and who she served well enough to merit assistance. Instead, Carpenter re-established her career on her own. When she was later assigned as a script supervisor to Hawks' *To Have and Have Not* (1944) she gasped, "Did he ask for me?" and was told by the production manager that it was a routine assignment. Returning to Hawks' side, the interpersonal adjustments again fell to Meta, not Hawks:

> I reported to my former employer with mixed feelings—gratitude because he had given me my first chance to become a professional in Hollywood and uneasiness because of how much he knew about me. 'Hello, Howard,' I said, as breezy as the archetypal Hawks girl. 'I'm going to be with you on To Have and Have Not.' I had always called him Mr. Hawks before. 'Hello, Meta,' the director said. 'I'm glad we'll be working together again.' The princely reserve was the same as Faulkner's, as much a part of him as his erect carriage and clipped speech. Hawks remained a master of the art of detachment. For a quick moment, he flicked his eyes over me—what did his good friend William Faulkner see in me that he himself had missed?—then the mask adjusted itself and he was as I remembered him, deliberate, unsmiling. 'How are Athol and the children?' I dared ask. 'Well, thank you.' 'I would like to be remembered to Athol.' 'Of course.'[258]

A large part of the dynamic between Hawks and Carpenter in this passage might be observed in any awkward moment between a former employer and their former employee. And Hawks can hardly be blamed for Carpenter's mixed feelings arising from this incident, since they were her feelings and she neither voiced them and nor asked for help when she might have done so. It is noted here simply because of

[257] Ibid., 247-8.
[258] Ibid., 297.

Meta's reaction, so like other descriptions of similar encounters by secretaries and assistants, past and present, in which the employee still feels obligated to take on the "work" of negotiating status and emotions even after the work relationship was ended.

However distant, Hawks is hardly made out to be a villain or even a bad boss anywhere in Carpenter's memoir. While still in Hawks' employ, Meta told Faulkner that she was "reasonably happy working with Howard Hawks," adding "He always treats me with respect."[259] In fact, as she described him, the director was a more conscientious employer than any mentioned thus far. It was Hawks to whom Meta appealed when an inebriated William Faulkner first asked her to dinner. Faulkner's drunkenness startled her so much that she entered Hawks' inner office for the first time in their work together without knocking or having been summoned. In a reversal of the usual employer-secretary role, Hawks had gone to the outer office to speak to Faulkner, rejecting him for Carpenter (Meta: "please don't hurt his feelings, Mr. Hawks." Hawks: "The situation will be taken care of.").[260] Later, when Faulkner had sobered up and won Carpenter over, Hawks gave no indication of knowing about their affair.

Carpenter saw similarities between Hawks, to whom she acted as work wife, and "Bill," for whom she served both as a secretary (while in Hawks' office), and, after office hours, as real wife of romantic partner. Meta believed Hawks saw similarities, too:

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[259] Ibid., 36
[260] Ibid., 18-20.

> He genuinely liked Bill and the image that Bill presented, almost a reflection of himself. They were both more British than American in their reserve and in the carful distance they placed between themselves and everyone except a few people with whom they were intimately joined. One did not give Bill Faulkner or Howard Hawks a Rotarian slap on the back. Nobody told them ribald jokes. Each presented an almost interchangeable passive face, eyebrows slightly raised in warning, nostrils flaring, to vulgarians and loudmouths. They were moated men, closed off unto themselves.[261]

In many ways, Carpenter's creative service of Hawks was mirrored in her role in the relationship with Faulkner. They fell in love after Hawks assigned Meta to transcribe Faulkner's handwritten pages of the screenplay for *Road to Glory*, and she was forced to consult the writer frequently to decipher his handwriting.[262] In later writing sessions, Meta functioned mostly as a conduit, saying "I made more than my usual percentage of typing errors in the letters and reports, but not in Faulkner's pages for *The Road to Glory*; they were the Talmud, the Bible, the Koran to me, and I rarely had to erase."[263] As their romance became physical, the work relationship did as well, and Faulkner, when out of ideas, would read over Carpenter's shoulder "brushing my hair with his lips."[264]

The blurred workplace boundaries didn't extend to their roles the creative process, however. Meta once questioned Faulkner about a line of dialog "since as script girl, I would have to deal with screenplay inconsistencies," beginning "Now Bill, in this scene you say—" before Faulkner interrupted that he didn't say anything: "the character said it." "Bill was telling me that his characters had a life-force of their own," she wrote of the exchange, "What they did, what they said, came

[261] Ibid., 49.
[262] Ibid., 25.
[263] Ibid., 29.
[264] Ibid., 84.

from them."[265] Here, true to the role of the secretary and script girl, Meta was concerned with ensuring continuity, clarity and legibility, both in production and on the screen. Faulkner, true to his role as creative, was unconcerned with such lower-level "details" as dialog inconsistencies. He disavowed their existence altogether, and insisted the characters were real (and therefore consistent). Carpenter was not without creative sensibilities and intuitions of her own. For example, she was so carried away by intricate pieces of classical music that Faulkner became jealous over her relationship to them. She played the role rule-minder in this instance because that was her job, the kind of creative service she was there to provide so that Faulkner could bring his characters to life undisturbed by details. Her reward for this work was to feel elevated from her station by the fact that she was "valued by a writer whose books both pleased and enraged book reviewers."[266] As with descriptions of Hawks, this part of Carpenter's memoir is not cited to make Faulkner look anything less than what he was –a writer and the sole author of his work. It is merely another example of female movie workers jumping into certain roles "naturally."

As their relationship progressed and Faulkner burrowed more deeply into his next novel, Meta's love for the romantic, impractical, anti-social, binge-drinking author took on greater dimensions of caretaking and required increased sacrifice on her part as Bill's needs (and the needs of his great work) trumped her own. One note from a stressed out and sex-starved Faulkner as he was returning from time spent at home in Oxford, Mississippi to Los Angeles and Meta, read "I weigh 129 pounds and

[265] Ibid., 84-5.
[266] Ibid., 43

I want to put it all on you." Intended and received as funny and romantic, it nonetheless describes the dynamic of their relationship in the periods where they were romantic partners, with Meta taking all the weight of Bill's love, his creative frustration, his familial squabbles and his drinking onto herself. This dynamic continued intermittently throughout the years and Meta's two marriages to Rebney, during which Faulkner nearly (and seemingly accidentally) killed himself at least once in fits drunken despair, convincing Meta that he literally could not live without her. Neither Faulkner the romantic fool nor Faulkner the creative force, it seemed, could take care of Faulkner the man. That was something only a woman could manage. And so, near the end of his last stint in Los Angeles, she resolved, "not to let more than a few days go by without seeing him for at least an hour, to read his moods, to look for the danger signs. I could at least put a hand over the edge of a glass as a reminder of my concern." Her own needs—to be supported, to have Bill play the role of mate for her—seemed to disappear in his presence. The taciturn Faulkner disliked most people, strangers especially. So, Carpenter wrote, though he needed her at his side when he did begin to socialize again, it was on his terms: "I had made many new friends as a script clerk, but I was careful not to thrust them at him."[267]

Bill and Meta were lovers, not an employer and employee. Her behavior toward him was that of a "good wife" at the time, minus the wedding band. Her decision to accept Bill for all his faults was personal, as were the results of that position. Bill's and Meta's relationship is only significant to a discussion of her work

[267] Ibid., 288.

as a secretary in that comparing Hawks-Carpenter alongside the Bill-Meta relationship illustrates just how similar the workplace dynamic between secretaries and movie makers was to a romantic relationship, and to demonstrate as much as is possible the lived experience of that dynamic, and point at what the ramifications might be for a creative workplace in which so many of the women present were interacting with the creative process as a function of this sort of relationship.

When Carpenter finally wrote about her connection with Faulkner, it was 20 years after his death, and near the end of her own long career, during which she'd endured innuendo from her peers and speculation by literary historians. Faulkner biographer Joel Williamson writes of her memoir, "There had long been a rumor of a Hollywood 'scriptgirl' with suggestions akin to those that go with travelling salesmen and working women," before concluding that Meta likely "felt that she had been pushed unfairly into obscurity," and set out to correct the record.[268] Carpenter herself explained the timing by saying that she had deluded herself into thinking that her affair with Faulkner was still the sort of small-scale gossip it had been in the 30s, when the writer was less known, but that these illusions were shattered, she recalled, when she learned their story:

> Was becoming a genuine Hollywood folk myth as interest in Faulkner mounted and I continued to work on movie sets. Unknown to me, the legendry that William Faulkner was my lover had spread throughout Hollywood: actors and production crew members whispered about it from the darkened areas of sound stage on which I worked….Some time later, I was given evidence that a number of film-studio writers, one or two from the group who knew us forty years ago, were only waiting until I died to turn out books about William Faulkner and his Hollywood script girl. When I recovered from the numbing shock, I made the decision that there was no option left to me but to write in

[268] Joel Williamson, *William Faulkner and Southern History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 248-9.

> collaboration with a close friend my own account of my years with Bill.[269]

In one sense, Carpenter wrote herself into Faulkner's life story, taking credit for the role she played as, most historians agree, the love of his life, and for sustaining him emotionally, physically and intellectually during the creation of some of his great works. It might be more accurate to say that Meta wrote Bill into her own history, in that the memoir focuses on her own version of their story, exposing Faulkner as deeply flawed and unromantically mortal at the same time that it expresses her love for him and corrects the "prevalent notion that he was a chill, arrogant man."[270] Meta also speculates, rather boldly, as to her impact on Hawks' creative life, saying

> Jean Arthur in all her variations, incapable of guile or artifice where her man was concerned, straight-shooting, accommodating, undemanding, sweetheart and pal all in one. Clearly, Howard Hawks knew far more about his blonde secretary and her relationship with William Faulkner than I had deduced from his uninquisitive manner and masklike face. I make no pretense to having served as the model for the classic Hawks heroine, comfort and joy of the noble, stalwart Hawks Hero. The coincidence of timing and likeness, however, cannot be entirely ignored. If any part of me as I was then went into her creation, Hawks and the directors who borrowed from him are welcome to the bits and pieces.[271]

There is no evidence, other than this passage in Carpenter's book, of the Hawks heroines having been based on her, or her relationship with Faulkner. In truth, her description of Hawks' accommodating sweetheart sounds like so many of the other Girls Friday who were present on the lots throughout the 30s and 40s, but absent from film history.

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[269] Wilde and Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman*, 9-10.
[270] Ibid., 10.
[271] Ibid., 108.

In any case, Carpenter is fairly unique among the secretaries to movie makers discussed here in that, as much insight as it provides into Bill Faulkner, *A Loving Gentleman* is very much Meta's story. This is emphasized in those long stretches of the book when her life continues to interest her (and the reader), even though neither William Faulkner nor Howard Hawks is in the picture. Unlike her job on *Come and Get It*, in these sections, Meta's career –which was long and significant in the field of script supervision—goes on without Hawks.[272] Faulkner seemed as though he might die without her, and when Carpenter received news that he actually had died while on a location shoot, she seemed to consider doing the same, but only briefly. She recalled:

> Faulkner was not my husband, but as I sank under the giant trees, I felt that I was his widow, bereft, cut off, struck down, I who had believed for almost thirty years that with Faulkner in the world, nothing would hurt or harm me, and that I would have the courage to face anything and that he would always be proud of me. I will never know how, an hour later, I was able to make my appearance at the set.[273]

Carpenter finished the day's work.

Peggy Robertson, Assistant to Alfred Hitchcock

Peggy Robertson's account of her work for Alfred Hitchcock comes in the form of an oral history collected Barbara Hall.[274] Robertson first worked as

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[272] Carpenter helped to organize the script supervisor's union, discussed in Chapter 5. Other evidence of her importance can be found in an ad in Variety which recognizes Meta Carpenter "whose excellent reputation as a script supervisor spans 43 years in the industry," along with Frank Westmore as honorees in the inaugural awards of the Society of Operating Cameramen: Script Supervisors, Local 871, "A Thank You to Mr. Frank Westmore," *Daily Variety* (November 20, 1981), 16.
[273] Wilde and Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman,* 331.
[274] Hall's thoughtful, thorough and impeccably researched questions and follow-ups are part of what makes Robertson's history such a valuable resource not only for Hitchcock scholarship, but for production studies as well. Peggy Robertson, *Peggy Robertson Oral History*, Interview by Barbara Hall, Margaret Herrick Library, 1995.

Hitchcock's script supervisor at the end of the 1940s, and was shortly promoted to be his assistant, in which capacity she served throughout the rest of his career. Her importance to his work, like that of the director's other unofficial collaborator, Alma Hitchcock, has begun to receive more widespread recognition.[275] Robertson's description of their work together includes some of the creative service characteristic highlighted in accounts of the other major secretaries discussed here. However, in that she functioned as his assistant more in the traditional sense of the term. As has been mentioned with regard to Rabwin and Koverman, male executive assistants were viewed as executives in their own right, often with their own offices, overseeing different aspects of an operation, rather than managing all lower-level details and office work.[276] Additionally, most of Robertson's work for Hitchcock happened after the end of the studio era. Nonetheless, Robertson's account of her work is relevant to the discussion in terms of how the director viewed her (especially in contrast to his treatment of his female stars), and as the best example of another form of creative service to movie makers so often took, and which is commonly used by assistants today. Her account makes clear her impact on his films, which came through her creative service role, demonstrating both the extent and the limitations of the secretary or assistant's agency.

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[275] For example, their working relationship is highlighted in two recent films about the director. One of them *Hitchcock* (directed by Sacha Gervasi, Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2012) is fairly accurate in its depiction of Robertson and her role, based on Robertson's own account of her work, as well as her personal relationship to Hitchcock.

[276] Male secretaries functioned in this way prior to the field's feminization. Lynn Peril discusses a manual written for such workers in 1916 called *The Private Secretary: His Duties and Opportunities.* In it, business educator Edward Jones Kilduff "used a fictional man Friday, Frank Campbell, as an exemplar of proper secretarial behavior" and throughout cast this male secretary (as opposed to his female co-workers) as the one employment meant for bigger. Peril continues, "the '*higher type*' of office hired 'wide-awake' men to act as secretaries/junior executives, while female typists and stenos, possessed of little more ambition than to marry and leave the workforce as quickly as possible, pounded out the drudge work. Male assistants were also similarly distinguished from female assistants in the hierarchy and particularly the amount of routine and service work they did for their employers. Peril, *Swimming in the Steno Pool*, 23.

Born Peggy Singer in London in 1917, Robertson met Hitchcock in 1949 when he came to England to make *Under Capricorn* (1949).[277] "It's the only time I've ever asked for a job," she recalled, "I'd always been a terrific admirer of his, I thought he was a wonderful moviemaker. So I went to the office at Granada Films, saw the production manger, and said I wanted to work with Hitch and gave him all the details."[278] Once hired, she demonstrated her value to 'Hitch,' and he soon made her his assistant with a touch of Hitchcockian suspense, by asking if she knew of any good script supervisors and thus making her think she'd been fired. She recalled: "I died. My idol doesn't want me anymore….And I'm really sort of bursting into tears, nearly, and I was turning away and he said, 'Oh, by the way, Peggy, did I tell you? I've promoted you to being my assistant.' It was all a hoax." Robertson later followed him to the states with husband Douglas Robertson (editor), and continued work as his assistant after the departure of Joan Harrison as his secretary. Like Harrison, Robertson was initially accused of being Hitchcock's mistress and told that sexual duties came with the job. According to Hitchcock biographer John Russell Taylor, Peggy, "being the forthright, jolly-hockeysticks English lady she was," asked Hitchcock directly if "being his mistress like Joan was one of her duties." Hitch reportedly replied, "I can safely tell you that I was never between the sheets with Joan." John Houseman later told the author, "I would put my hand in the fire to swear [Harrison] was never his mistress. I ought to know, because for some time

[277] Myrna Oliver, "Peggy Robertson: Personal Assistant to Alfred Hitchcock – Obituary," *Los Angeles Times* (February 12, 1998), < http://articles.latimes.com/1998/feb/12/news/mn-18394>, accessed July 10, 2013.
[278] Robertson, *Peggy Robertson Oral History*, 86.

she was mine."[279] Whatever Hitchcock's behavior to other female employees, the relationship between he and Robertson remained one of collegial platonic friendship. This also seems to have been the case with Harrison based on all available evidence other than but the tone of innuendo that sometimes accompanies discussions of her work. Robertson claimed that Hitchcock was a mentor, who gave Joan similar responsibility and supported her in her later career as a producer, saying "I wasn't the exception to the rule."[280]

Some of Robertson's regular duties were secretarial in nature. Hitchcock disliked disagreements and also used public perception of him as enigmatic to his advantage in his professional life. So Robertson often delivered messages for the director, especially on set, and smoothed out difficulties between Hitchcock and other associates when the director himself walked away from them. It was often Robertson who consoled and bolstered leading ladies, among them Ingrid Bergman on *Under Capricorn*, Jane Wyman in *Stage Fright* (1950) and Tippi Hedren on *The Birds* (1963).[281] She also took "copious" notes throughout production, even when not working as script supervisor, and is credited with correcting the record in the case of his exaggerations and memory lapses.[282] She also contributed to daily production reports.[283] Hitchcock secretaries such as Suzanne Gaultier supported Robertson, taking on the truly routine tasks and maintaineding Hitchcock's office

[279] All quotes from: John Russell Taylor, "The Truth About Hitch and Those Cool Blondes," *The Times* (April 5, 2005), 2, 4.
[280] Robertson, *Peggy Robertson Oral History*, 303.
[281] Ronald Bergan, "Obituary: Peggy Robertson: Smoothing Out the Hitch," *The Guardian*, February 16, 1998, 13.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Robertson, *Peggy Robertson Oral History*, 271.

while he and Peggy were in production.[284] Both Robertson and Gaultier corresponded on Hitchcock's behalf, but Robertson's letters are more frequently about business she's conducting alongside Hitchcock, rather than missives typed for Hitchcock.[285] On the set, Robertson acted as both filter and proxy for Hitchcock, where she would typically arrive at the crew's call time to "fuss around and make sure everything was ready that Hitch wanted and he'd turned [over] to me and I would have checked everything out for him."[286] As the day went on, she would dispense with routine matters, lower level tasks that she deemed beneath the director's notice as they came up in the course of production:

> They would be lining up so many things to do. They came from all sides. Suddenly you're in the middle of something and then you get a call from the labs. "Sorry, there's been a mishap at the labs. Yesterday's dailies are no good, you have to retake…" You have to do something like that. Then the next minute the cameraman hasn't got his lens, you've got to send for the missing lens. Actors don't know their lines. We've got some cut film to run for Hitch. There was never time a time when you'd sit back in your chair and say, "Oh, well, that's done for the day." There was always something you felt had to be done.[287]

She often rehearsed actors for the director, deferring to Hitch on any matters that required special attention, such as a particular line reading. In this instance, it was Hitchcock who took on sensitive issues of managing emotion and status on set.:

> Sometimes I'd go and say to Hitch, you know, "Joe Doakes is saying 'andkerchief' instead of 'handkerchief.' Would you like to talk to him about it?" And he would say either, "I'll just go and see him," and he'd go off privately and put his arm around him. I suppose he said, "say

[284] Carrying messages in Robertson, *Peggy Robertson Oral History*, 129. Note-taking discussed in: Oliver, "Peggy Robertson."
[285] Examples of such correspondence can be found in the production files for Hitchcock's films at the Margaret Herrick Library, as in: *The Birds*, Folder 6f. 64 "Corr. re: Tipi Hedren Trip to Europe," Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, 1963.
[286] Robertson, *Peggy Robertson Oral History*, 265.
[287] Ibid., 266.

> 'handkerchief' and not 'andkerchief," but I wasn't there. They just did it alone, so that it wouldn't humiliate the actor. And otherwise he'd say to me, "You go ahead and do it, and run the lines."[288]

Other parts of Robertson's description of her role in production paint her less as a secretarial or assistant figure, managing emotions, filtering detail and routine work away from an employer. Instead, she functioned as one arm of the team responsible for managing the work there, each with a specialty. She explained "We all had things that we knew had to be done and who would do it, and we never trod on each other's tails."[289] She filtered out "small problems [Hitchcock] wouldn't deal with," but did so as one member of this small group, among which work was distributed according to their specialty ("You had calls for the production manager, for the location manager, for the assistant director. Everyone did their part, however small.").[290] In addition to Hitchcock's lower level decisions and tasks, this territory generally included issues related to casting, actors, scripted material, and other areas she would have participated in as part of the film's planning process. When Robertson took on a problem on behalf of Hitchcock, she tended to take on all duties associated with it herself, whether clerical or managerial. This autonomous working style was first laid out by Hitchcock, who early in their work together. When, for tax reasons, he was required to leave England after production wrapped there on *Stage Fright* (1950), Hitchcock left Peggy in charge of supervising post-production on the film. The decision, and the actions he took to enforce it, demonstrated both his faith in her ability to manage in his stead, as well as his understanding that this was not

[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid., 210.
[290] Ibid., 256.

typical treatment by male employers of female employees. Robertson recounted the episode as an example of how Hitchcock used his persona, which was well-known by 1950, and fascinated his employees, to subtly convey a message that he wanted carried throughout production, saying:

> He left me in charge of post-production, up to a certain point, at which time the film would be sent over to him for okay. So the studio was furious, the sound man and… "A woman in charge? What's the matter with the old boy?" I mean they hated it and loathed me. Hitch used to send cablegrams—he was back in Hollywood now—which were very famous, because they were always very long, and he sent me a ten-page cablegram. "Dear Peggy. Alma and I…" This is in a cable, mind you. In those days, one just sent "Happy Birthday." "Should I put 'love' or not?" That sort of attitude. So, "Dear Peggy, Alma and I were having dinner last night, Tuesday January the fifteenth," or whatever it was, "and Alma said to me,"—and this is all very long, making it like forty pages long—"who is going to finish STAGE FRIGHT for you if you're going to be over here? So I thought for a minute…" and it goes on like this in the cablegram, and I'm reading this, and the end of the cable was, of course "I said to her, 'I think Peggy would be a good person to finish the picture.' Alma said, 'That's a wonderful idea, Hitch,'" And then finished up with some sort of message to me, "Hitch." Well, I went around the studio showing everyone this cablegram, and everyone burst into laughter. We thought this was the funniest thing. Forty pages when we've only had three letters usually, and it was hysterical. I dined off that story for many days. Well, I realized much later on, that he'd done it on purpose. He knew that this was funny telegram, cablegram, he knew I would show it around, because there was nothing secret or private about it, just different instructions. "In the church have the choir signing…" those sort of instructions. I thought that's what the cable was about. He knew that it wasn't a popular move putting me in charge. This way, it would be a bond. I said to him once, "You really did that cablegram on purpose, didn't you?" He just smiled. He knew. He knew I was onto it."[291]

In this instance, Robertson had great managerial agency in her work on Hitchcock's behalf. And indeed, much of her on set work seemed be more managerial than creative. Where the assistant showed real creative agency was

[291] Ibid., 100-101

between productions, during the development process, when she drove the process of finding the director's next project. Though, as Robertson said, "that was one of my jobs, looking for the next project," it was still Hitchcock's job to decide which of the properties she brought to his attention he wanted to make. For this reason, Robertson's creative impact came in the form of *offering choices* to the director. This is another aspect of creative service practiced by many successful secretaries, and one that continues to be a large part of assistant work of all sorts today. The offering of choices is, in a sense, a more active, higher level of filtering, in which the creative service worker facilitates the solution to a problem by delimiting of its outcome. It is usually a matter of assembling a list or surveying a field of many possible solutions to a problem, creative or otherwise, and then of weeding out the less suitable ones and presenting the decision-maker, in this case Hitchcock, with best few options from which to make a selection. This sort of creative service, always practiced to solve problems outside of production for an employer (e.g. assembling swatches in 5 shades of blue for a movie maker to be able to choose new carpeting for his home) has become more important in the planning process since the end of the contract system, under which directors were more often paired with projects by producers and executives. As performed by Robertson and others, it often verged on straightforwardly creative work, requiring both creative sensibilities and good taste. However it also qualifies as creative service in the filtering away of bad or unsuitable options, and in the fact that the work is done on behalf of a movie maker, with his sensibilities in line and requires the worker to

hand off to the movie maker for a decision rather than make a creative decision themselves.

Hitchcock, who had more leeway in his choice of projects even in the studio days, relied on Robertson for much of the planning process. Peggy read incoming material from agents and studios. "He expected me to read, and I used to read all the coverage that came in from agents," as well as "Maybe ten a week from Paramount," or at MGM during Hitchcock's time there. All sorts of materials were sent to the office, not just those that the studio or agents thought might be right for Hitch, but everything else, including westerns and musicals. Even when on set with a production she would do coverage of books and scripts herself, sometimes saving work for the weekend, but covering right away anything that came from a good agent or might need to be moved on quickly.[292] In reading incoming books, scripts, and/or coverage of projects on Hitchcock's behalf, Robertson said that what she was looking for was, "A feeling" that the material could lend itself to Hitchcock's style and tone.[293] With the exception of books and scripts that Hitchcock heard of or discovered on his own, Robertson, effectively delimited the solution of his problem (which movie to make next) through eliminating undesirable candidates and only putting those scripts in front of Hitchcock that she thought should be made. And because Hitchcock trusted Peggy, she would also have impacted his choices through influence as a collaborator on the project. The same was true of the casting process, when she made lists of casting suggestions for Hitchcock, just as the casting director might. She also participated in casting, offering opinions.

[292] Ibid., 271.
[293] Ibid., 199.

Another area in which Robertson impacted the creative process was in her choice of films to screen for Hitchcock as he was preparing to go back into production.[294] Again, this part of her job involved weeding out of those possibilities unworthy of being put before Hitchcock, so that he'd only have a few "good" options to choose from. In terms of Robertson's movie selection, this involved following her own tastes: "I'd just make out a list myself of all the films I wanted to see, and send it to the woman who ordered them in the cutting rooms, and we'd always have something for him to see."[295] When asked what films Hitchcock would be watching if he were still alive in 1995 at the time Robertson was giving her oral history, she names *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, "and *Muriel's Wedding*, and all the new Australian ones which are out. He'd have seen all those because I'd want to see them."[296] If it is assumed that Hitchcock's visual style and vocabulary were enhanced by the films he watched, then it becomes clear that Robertson, in her capacity of movie selector, shaped the creative process through the select few movies that she had on hand for Hitchcock to choose from.

The true impact of Robertson's work is made clearer in examples of specific films. Robertson actually acknowledged her own creative contribution when discussing *Marnie* (1964), saying "I worked on…I found *Marnie*…I found it," and recounting how she read the book on a Friday night and called Hitchcock the next morning, insisting that he read it.[297] Peggy also suggested Sean Connery for the

[294] Ibid., 225.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid., 225-6.
[297] Ibid., 231.

male lead in the film.[298] These anecdotes about how *Marnie* was acquired and cast, taken together with Robertson's description of her job, demonstrate how, for a single film, she might have found the source material, chosen the lead actor and even, through the movies she showed Hitchcock before he planned the film, influenced his decisions regarding the look of the film or the new techniques he might use in making it. None of this is to say that Hitchcock, well known for meticulous storyboarding and a unique visual style, was not the chief author of his films, but rather, that if filmmaking is process involving multiple participants, that an assistant or secretary's participation should be given weight alongside that of supporting crew and technicians, such as cameraman and the electricians. By offering choices and thus saving Hitchcock from reviewing each option and weighing its strengths and weaknesses himself, Robertson was not only freeing him for higher level creative work, but was setting the parameters for the solution of Hitchcock's development dilemma through her own taste and judgment. In this sense, she functioned much as a contemporary assistant or creative executive to a producer during the development process. And indeed, she was later credited with having been Hitchcock's producer, and worked in that capacity for Peter Bogdanovich.[299] And yet she is still remembered as Hitchcock's personal assistant if at all.[300] Said Toni Collette on researching her role as Peggy in recent biopic *Hitchcock* (2012), "There was very little. There were a few photos and one interview

[298] Ibid., 276.
[299] "Bogdanovich Planning Six Features, Four in Texas," *Daily Variety* (July 9, 1982), 21.
[300] Oliver, "Peggy Robertson."

with her when she was probably in her 50s."[301] Outside of her oral history, which is accessible on site at the Margaret Herrick library, there are few resources with information on Robertson, and fewer still where more than an anecdote at a time are gathered in one place.

As with the other notable secretaries and assistants discussed in this chapter, Peggy Robertson's employer made her creative agency possible. Though she received fair treatment from Hitchcock, he would have been within his rights to treat her otherwise and give her less credit and creative responsibility. This was clearly the case long after the end of the studio era, as evidenced even by accounts of Hitchcock's own behavior toward other female employees. The most notable instance of this was Tippi Hedren's experience on *The Birds* (1963). Though accounts vary as to the severity of the director's harassing, sexually assaultive behavior, most agree that at some level, this behavior did occur. Hedren recalled that the same code of silence was in place in 1963 as was described earlier in this chapter in the 1930s:

> I had not talked about this issue with Alfred Hitchcock to anyone. Because all those years ago, it was still the studio kind of situation. Studios were the power. And I was at the end of that, and there was absolutely nothing I could do legally whatsoever. There were no laws about this kind of a situation.[302]

Hedren claimed that when she asked to be let out of her contract after finishing *Marnie*, Hitchcock essentially ruined her career. She no longer had to work with him,

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[301] Kristy Puchko, "Toni Collette On Hitchcock And The Shocking Moment With Anthony Hopkins On Set," *Cinemablend.com* (November 19, 2012), <http://www.cinemablend.com/new/Toni-Collette-Hitchcock-Shocking-Moment-With-Anthony-Hopkins-Set-34179.html>, accessed July 19, 2013.
[302] Kristyn Burtt, "The Obsession with His Film Muse," *Sheknows.com* (October 19, 2012), <http://www.sheknows.com/entertainment/articles/974433/tippi-hedren-reveals-the-real-hitchcock>, accessed July 19, 2013.

but under the terms of the contract, he was able to accept or reject offers for her, and he rejected nearly all proffered roles until the contract period ended several years later. Though she and Robertson remained friends long after Hedren's association with Hitchcock ended, the actress later said that when she appealed to Peggy, she "did nothing, beyond trying to placate me and help get the movies finished"[303] Robertson's creative and professional fate was in Hitchcock's hands as much as Hedren's. After his death, despite 22 years of service to the director, Robertson was surprised to discover that he had made no provision for her in his will.[304]

Jeanie Sims and Gladys Hill, Secretaries/Assistants to John Huston

I conclude this case study of major secretaries with a brief discussion of women whose experiences in the service of John Huston are evidence that there were male movie makers who elected to treat female secretaries and assistants as true members of their teams, with the same expectation of respect, inclusion and potential advancement as male workers, and whose work benefitted from the relationship. Though their work included the same basic creative service characteristics as that of the other secretaries described in this chapter, in their collegial relationships with Huston, attest to the existence of more balanced, mutually beneficial working relationships between female secretaries and male movie makers.

[303] Tim Oglethorpe, "Hitchcock? Was He a Psycho?" *London Daily Mail* (December 21, 2012).
[304] Ronald Bergan, "Obituary: Peggy Robertson: Smoothing Out the Hitch," 13.

Jeanie Sims assisted John Huston at his various homes and on set of his films in the 1940's and 50's.[305] A series of letters and cablegrams to, from and about Sims, exchanged after the production of *The Caine Mutiny* (1954) hint at her chummy relationship with Huston, and with frequent Huston collaborator Humphrey Bogart. The letters are hardly models of strict professionalism or gender-blindness. Issues of sex and gender are by no means absent from them but rather presented front-and-center throughout the letters, often as their primary subject. Yet they read as a conversation between friendly equals, in which the "fun" is derived from Sims' participation, rather than at her expense. The first, from July of 1953 and from Bogart to Sims includes a passage in which Bogart requests rather than commands Jeanie's secretarial services, and Bogart, rather than Sims, packages the request with his own emotional labor:

> Enclosed is a bill from Les Ambassadeurs which I don't understand at all. As you were with me all that fateful day and probably less drunk than I was, you probably know a little more about it than I do. Go in there, raise hell, check and double check, hava couple of drinks on me, sit for a moment with head bowed while you listen to strains of September Song and "It was just one of those things" but don't give them a god damned cent or agree to pay them anything until the whole bill is broken down, itemized, and see if you can find any check that I singed. Why I should have to pay for the entire clientele of Les Ambassadeurs is more than I can understand.
>
> Would appreciate any news you have about the picture and when we may expect delivery. How is John and regards to Ken Smith. You might also have a drink on the steps of the Maisonette-alone. Incidentally, haven't seen a moose in a week. Have you? Bogie.[306]

[305] Huston corrected those who had referred to her as a secretary on call lists in 1913, writing: "Dear John, I believe I have already mentioned this to you, but just to let you know officially that Miss Sims has for some time been working for me in the capacity of **Personal Assistant** rather than secretary. In view of this, I would very much appreciate it if such unit lists, etc., as may be issued including her name were amended accordingly. Yours, jh" John Huston, Letter to John Wolf, J.P. Graham, Mr. Jack Clayton, January, 1953, John Huston Papers, Correspondence Files, Jeanie Simms Folder, Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA.
[306]Humphrey Bogart, Letter to Jeanie Sims, July 15, 1973, John Huston Papers, Correspondence Files, Jeanie Simms Folder, Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA.

Huston continues Bogart's tone of friendliness and inclusion in an exchange later that year, during which he kids Bogart (as the letter's recipient) and Jeanie (as its typist and subject) equally. This is, in fact, the only purpose of the letter, which recounts a conversation between Huston and Sims concerning Bogart and his *Caine Mutiny* costar Jose Ferrer. Huston explains:

> Jeanie, who is taking this down, has just got through telling me that yes, she thinks Ferrer is a better actor than you are, and that you yourself would be the first to agree with her.
>
> The talk started with her saying how you expressed yourself in a letter as rather well satisfied with your performance as Queeg, but that you didn't think too highly of Van Johnson and [Fred] MacMurray. So I said "what does he think about Ferrer?" and she said, "He didn't mention Ferrer". And I said, after a thoughtful pause, "which do you think is the better actor – Bogart or Ferrer?" Jeannie, after an even more thoughtful pause, said "Ferrer". I said, "what?" and she said, "he is the better actor, and Bogie would agree with me"….She said "Bogie couldn't play 'the strike,' for example, nor could he play Lautrec". I said, "Could Ferrer play Queeg?" Jeanie said, "yes, Ferrer could". She added that she was not saying he would be better. On the other hand, she didn't say that he wouldn't.
>
> She said that you have more of a screen personality than Ferrer. "More sex on the screen". She said. She now claims to having used the words "charm" and "magnetism" as well, and she accuses me of remembering it but willfully twisting what she said. However, so far as she is concerned, Ferrer is the actor and you have "more sex on the screen".
>
> I hope all this doesn't make you feel too badly; but, in any case, I think you should know exactly where you stand when you're 6000 or so miles away. One never knows, does one?
>
> I just put a last question to Jeanie. She says doesn't think you have sex solely on the screen. I gather that some of it leaps over, like water from a tub onto the bathroom floor. On the other hand, she doesn't think Joe Ferrer is the least bit attractive. He has no sex appeal. But

> none whatsoever. Not for her. Not for Jeanie. She knows some people have found him attractive. But not her. (Hedda Huston) [307]

Much like Bogart in his letter, here Huston humorously subverts the model of secretary as creative servant who facilitates creative play but is isolated from it. As Hedda Huston, the director plays the gossip, the one who is concerned about Bogart's feelings, the one who passes messages back and forth. Though teasing in both directions, Bogart is the butt of the letter's joke and Sims is its author. Bogart continues the game in a subsequent cablegram, which reads:

> at a loss to understand sims attitude discussed in your letter with ferrer / his opinion sims has two heads and he said something about a ten foot pole / also dared me to play charlie's aunt however I yield to no man in the animal magnetism field / regards bogie[308]

The game is finally brought to a close by Sims herself, who does not pull punches or disguise through feminine performance, dealing blows to the egos of Ferrer and Bogart, and striving overtly to win the battle of words, with little regard to her place as woman or her role in smoothing the way of the men involved.

> dear bogie
> both heads bloody but unbowed / am sure you would make wonderful charlies aunt but could ferrer play lassie / query inform ferrer he flatters himself surely it cant be ten feet if so I take it all back stop / Kinsey interrogation moose confirms your claim animal magnetism congratulations –sims. [309]

In light of other secretaries' experiences, where success requires sacrifice and participation compels performance, this bit of silliness (along with other

[307] John Huston, Letter to Humphrey Bogart, September 16, 1953, John Huston Papers, Correspondence Files, Jeanie Simms Folder, Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA.
[308] Humphrey Bogart Cablegram to John Huston, October 10, 1953, John Huston Papers, Correspondence Files, Jeanie Simms Folder, Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA.
[309] Jeanie Sims, Cablegram to Humphrey Bogart, John Huston Papers, Correspondence Files, Jeanie Simms Folder, Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA.

correspondence between Huston and Sims, which when it isn't joking around, is collegial and respectful) offers hope that some movie makers did not willingly participate in the exploitation of the women who provided creative service in their creative process. The sense of friendship and respect between boss and secretary is stronger still with Huston's later assistant, Gladys Hill (and a former secretary to Sam Spiegel in the 1940s), of whom he wrote in his biography, "she knows more about me than I do about myself—legally, medically and financially. She's weathered two of my marriages and various liaisons without being on the outs with anybody."[310] With this passage, Huston acknowledged Hill's creative service by making it visible at his own expense. And it seemed she did know where all the bodies was buried in their work together, often responding to queries to John, but responding "we" instead of "John," speaking for both of them rather than erasing herself.[311] Huston also described the role she played in his films through her labor from the position of secretary and later assistant, saying that she first came to him through Sam Spiegel, who "said she had no equal," and that "after a few days of having quiet, reserved Gladys around I had to agree that Sam was absolutely right about her. She was a secretary nonpareil." Having thus dispensed with her secretarial work, Huston then acknowledged Hill's creative contributions more fully and straightforwardly than any other secretary or assistant in this study:

> "I recognized early on that Gladys had a fine literary sense, and I learned to respect her judgment concerning my scripts. Her criticisms, suggestions and contributions to the many screenplays I worked on had to be, in all fairness, recognized. Today she's my collaborator. She

[310] John Huston, *An Open Book* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 226.
[311] For example in: Gladys Hill, "Letter to Ernie Anderson," February 20, 1965, John Huston Papers, Correspondence File, Gladys Hill, Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA.

> could now go on her own as a screenwriter. As a matter of fact, she's had an Academy Award nomination for one of her scripts.

Huston is referring the screenplay for *The Man Who Would Be King*, for which they both received academy award nominations. As Huston described it, this was a natural progression, in which he recognized talent and rewarded it with actual, real career capital with trade value on the open market, were Hill to part from Huston professionally. And indeed, what he is describing is simple fairness. It only seems unusual because it was so rare for it to happen in this way.

Though atypical for the studio period and largely taking place outside of it, these employer-employee relationships give hope that, while movie makers were entitled to set (and break) all the rules for their relationships to their secretaries, with no oversight or recourse for the employee, some of them chose not to. This also rebuffs the excuse so frequently made about oppressive cultures of the past, which is that it was "just the way society was back then," and that "people didn't know any better." The secretaries described above seemed aware of the role they were forced to play in service to movie makers, expressing resentment over certain aspects of that role. Though by no means offered as a model of personal or professional conduct (by his own admission he was "on the outs" with many people who might have had different experiences with him),the example of John Huston and his treatment of Hill and Sims, offers evidence that it was possible for men to be aware of this as well.

Conclusion

Each of the secretaries described above was unique in terms of the form her creative service took. In fact, the actual work in which each secretary spent a typical day engaged was different enough from the next that it might be possible to dismiss their work as the product of their employers' individualism, resulting naturally from the combination the individualistic preferences and practices of a movie maker (who happened to be male) and the particular skills and personality of a secretary who only happened to be female. As such, it might be easy for the anecdotes offered above, from Valeria Beletti's participation in recutting *Stella Dallas* to Peggy Robertson's supervision of post-production on *Under Capricorn*, to remain anecdotes only—isolated incidents which only reaffirm existing mythology by testifying to the quirks of these movie makers as exceptional, fascinating, individuals than to the characteristic and significant role played by secretaries as their "acolytes at the altar of cinema."

However, when treated as examples of different styles of the same creative service, the slippery anecdotes begin to adhere, assembling a bigger picture of what secretaries at studios were really doing, beyond typing, giggling and gossiping, and how their activities benefitted the larger industrial project of the Hollywood studio system. Viewed as creative service, these different iterations of secretarial work are revealed as products of the same logic around women's labor; organized by the studios practice of sex segregation and further shaped and enforced through their gender-normative culture. In this way, the whole of the secretary's labor becomes more visible, as all of the tiny unimportant "details" dismissed as irrelevant to creative production (the tactfully delivered message, the confidential personal

errand, the pleasant voice at the end of the line) begin to add up as contributions to (or more accurately subtractions around) the creative process. In this sense, though further removed from the highest levels of creative decision-making, much of women's labor at studios might be viewed as a more general form of creative service or support for all creative labor, in that these sectors were dedicated to removing all obstacles from movie makers' and creative workers' paths so that they could engage unfettered in the production process. Of course, this work system did not evolve to serve great art or provide authors with their truest means of creative expression, but to harvest the most labor from the cheapest workers. Women, cheap to begin with, only added value to their labor through their gender as time went on and they expanded to meet subtle but insistent expectations related to their gender. And because they had no other way in to more satisfying work, they often did so without being asked directly, and without asking for recognition in return.

The concept of Creative Service also aids recognition of the secretaries' individual accomplishments and the forms of creative agency they achieved in the only way many women could: by working within the studio system from their low status, below-the-line women's sectors. Along with characteristics of creative support, incidents of creative intervention into film and television texts (i.e. Koverman with Garland, Robertson with *Marnie*, etc.) can be found in the accounts of every secretary whose career was examined here. Unfortunately, such detailed accounts of specific individuals are rare, and must stand as a large portion of the evidence that this impact was made in other offices, by other women. More general accounts of the creative service nature of secretarial workers, and of their impact,

exist. Samuel Marx, one of the few men to devote more than a line of his biography's real estate to the importance of female workers and their role in his own success, said as much of MGM secretaries Edith Farrell oversaw under his authority as story editor:

> Her girls were tested note-takers and speedy typists. Young, personable and ambitious, some of them became writers. Many attached themselves permanently to the men they were temporarily assigned to—as collaborators, housekeepers, mistresses and other things. During the years I held the reigns over them, director King Vidor married two of them.[312]

A 1936 New York Times article what it was to be a screenwriter also seemed to recognize the impact of the secretary's labor:

> Almost anyone can write, but few can be studio secretaries. The one you have has worked for three or four hundred dramatists, knows all about screen technique, camera angles, exits, suspense, climax, the clinch and fade out to full orchestra music. But since she isn't known as a writer she remains forever a secretary—to your good luck.[313]

Like Huston and to some extent Hitchcock in their treatment of their assistants, both of these accounts also recognize the unevenness of the trade that many secretaries made in order to participate in creative work, relinquishing claim to appropriate credit and compensation for creative contributions in exchange for simply being allowed to make them.

Secretaries' wages reflected the unevenness of the trade. Because she was writing to a peer, Valeria Beletti was unusually frank in her opinions about her own monetary compensation relative to others. Though claiming hers was a good wage relative to other secretaries, especially those off the studio lot, she points out that in

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[312] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 10.
[313] Idwal Jones, "The Muse in Hollywood," *The New York Times*. December 27, 1936: X4.

relation to the other, non-clerical staff assigned to the production of *The Winning of Barbara Worth*, it doesn't hold up:

> Frances Marion will get $10,000 for adapting the story, [Henry] King will get $75,000 for directing it, assistant director gets $500 weekly, art director $400 weekly, technical director $300 weekly, Ronald Coleman $1750 weekly, [Vilma] Banky $1000 weekly….Of course you mustn't forget my $40 [$464] per—it makes me sick when I look at our payroll and then look at my salary.[314]

A few years after her stint for the demanding Goldwyn, when she was forced to choose between a larger salary on an executive desk at MGM verses a smaller salary working in the script department, taking dictation from various writers, she did not hesitate to chose the latter, explaining:

> I think if I get in with MGM and with Frances Marion on the lot, I will have a fine opportunity for working myself up. You see I will come in contact with all the writers and will have a chance of studying their technique when working for them. MGM start their girls at $25 per week and in six months increase their salary to $27.50 and at the end of the year, a girl (if ambitious and intelligent) is usually assigned to some writer as secretary and the salary ranges from $35.00 to $50.00. While this is not as much as I would get as a secretary to an executive, I think it will be better because I won't have to devote all my time to one man and be so exhausted at the end of the day that I don't want to do anything but rest"[315]

For Beletti, the very real work of clearing creative and executive space for Samuel Goldwyn was not worth the few dollars extra it paid over a post with more creative rewards. Better to hope for some creative involvement in service of a writer and in the vicinity of Frances Marion, whose offer of mentorship was still the best guarantee a woman had of training and opportunity in the 1920s. It is hard to view these realities of secretarial work in either a wholly positive or negative light. On the

[314] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, February, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 116.
[315] Letter to Irma Prina, November, 1927, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary,* 166-7.

one hand, studio secretaries were able to participate in otherwise masculinized creative sectors through creative service rooted in feminized labor and disguised through feminine performance. On the other hand, the limits placed on their impact and the lack of credit they received attests to how much more of their potential contribution was suppressed because it didn't fit the studio's interests in cheap labor, or its image of them as men's little helpers. Female secretaries' gender pre-determined the limits of their destinies and creative impact, to say nothing of their working conditions.

More important than deciding whether the studio secretary's role in film history is evidence of women's triumph over the studio system, or their confinement within it, is recognizing that their history isn't just history. For better or worse, later female production workers inherited the fate of the studio secretary, and to some extent that of all women in feminized sectors. Production specialties that emerged as "women's work" during and after the studio era followed many of the same unwritten rules of feminized creative service as the secretarial profession. On film sets and in production, female workers were channeled into fields in which they functioned as the timekeepers, rule-minders and emotional managers of the creative process. This is perhaps clearest in the case of the script supervisor (aka script girl), who tracked continuity during production, setting limits for the creative work that took place all around her without participating in it herself. Like the studio secretary, the script supervisor's success was typically measured by how little her work drew attention to itself in the form of typos and continuity errors. The same was true of many of the production specialties that became fully feminized after the

studio era, such as casting and publicity. In those fields, women advanced by fitting themselves to the needs of the system and according to the gender norms maintained through production culture. Playing the feminine role allowed them to acquire creative real capital, but at the same time that capital was devalued under the logic of gendered production labor. As female workers broke into masculinized fields, instead of being viewed as production workers first and women second, the fields themselves became identified with gender, and the work took on many of the service characteristics that had been attached to other feminized work. This kept intact the line between men's work (at the creative/managerial center) and women's work (at the non-creative/feminized margins), so that a woman might ascend to the level of a casting executive and still be nowhere near that of director. Chapter 5 will attempt to unpack this process of feminization in women's production specialties as it happened in the studio and post-studio era. Tracing women's professions to the root of their feminization in this way will at last link them back to their counterparts in the present, many of which remain female dominated and all of which retain feminized characteristics.

V. : Studio Girls: Women's Professions in Media Production

> The continuity IS the photodrama, the very soul of it—preconceived and fully worked out on paper by the photodramatist. The creation of a motion picture drama must be likened to the building of some beautiful modern palace. First the idea is created and translated into words. This is the screen story, and it corresponds to the water color sketch of the finished pace as some artist imagines it. Then comes the continuity writer, the architect, who must know and apply all the laws of screen drama in translating this dream into visual action just as the building architect must be the master of a host of physical laws in order to translate the painted picture into wood and steel and marble. ….Why do it if it is so hard? Because it is so hard!
>
> --Jeanie MacPherson, Continuity Writer and Screenwriter, 1922[1]

Introduction

The last three chapters defined "women's work" at studios as the combined product of the labor women were assigned based on notions of their "natural" feminine skills and the value they were expected to add to that labor by extending their "natural" feminine roles from the domestic sphere to the workplace through gendered performance and emotion work. When female workers were assigned jobs, even those that were previously viewed as gender neutral, they underwent subtle shifts as duties and expectations were conformed to fit with notions of what female workers were or were not. In order to meet such gender-based expectations, women often took on more routine tasks and more service labor than were listed in their job descriptions, and/or packaged standard job duties in one of a few womanly roles (e.g. the receptionist who is expected not simply to direct her employer's

[1] Jeanie MacPherson, "Functions of the Continuity Writer," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Business* v. 2 (Los Angeles: Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 25, 31.

guests to and from his office, but to play the pleasing, agreeable hostess while they wait). In the offices of creative movie makers, the female clerical worker's primary function became one of creative service, a combination of feminized labor and gendered role aimed at relieving the movie maker of all concerns but those most directly related to their creative process.

I have argued that, whether in support of an individual movie maker or the creative collective, some form of creative service and the logic that guided it could be seen in all traditional women's labor sectors at studios (e.g. domestic service, women's manufacturing), as well as in the film-specific professions which arose from them (e.g. inking and painting). However, this was especially true of the feminized clerical sectors that employed so many female workers in the studio era, and of the many film-specific women's professions that I contend are descended from it. Certain women's production sectors feminized because of their similarity to secretarial work. Others became accessible to women because their processes took place on paper and required a nearby staff of predominantly female clerical underlings to carry them out. In some cases, gender-neutral or masculinized jobs contained latent aspects of creative service, which contributed to an impression that they were good jobs for women. Still other jobs shifted to include more women's work and creative service characteristics after the end of the contract system, when formerly executive roles became freelance crew positions.

The studio logic that defined "women's work" sanctioned women's entry into production-specific fields along the same lines. Even when female workers began to dominate fields that had previously been masculinized, the professions themselves

shifted to include greater components of emotional performance and detail work. In the process, these transforming professions began to compel their own unique forms of creative service from female professionals. However, women also reshaped the jobs from their end by playing to their strengths (perceived and actual) in order to succeed and prove themselves as assets to production. In many cases, this led to greater responsibility, agency, and an increased role in the creative process. On the other hand, even when women added value and increased the creative capital of their professions, their work remained underpaid, undervalued and undercredited in relation to men's. This process of feminization has, in turn, greatly impacted the media industry's own process of evolution, not only in terms of gender integration, but also worker identity, creative practices and the products that result from them.

This chapter further explains the feminization process and its downstream effects on media production history by tracing the origins of the various contemporary women's professions invoked at the start of this dissertation. Evidence of both processes and effects comes from first-hand accounts of workers, here analyzed to reveal the practices embedded within.[2] Those production specialties that feminized earliest and are most closely linked to feminized clerical labor will be located and explained through their women's work components and the forms of creative service they elicited. These specialties include the various "intellectual" production sectors that today are more commonly referred to under the heading of development, as well as script supervision and publicity. Once

[2] This approach is modeled after John Caldwell's use of trade stories as deep texts to be mined for evidence of industrial practices. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

established, I will elucidate this logic of feminization in media by exmaining those female dominated professions whose origins and gendered aspects are less apparent. One such profession–editing— involved little clerical labor or paper planning, nor could it be said to have been truly female-dominated or feminized at any time in film history. However, I include it in this discussion because it is understood (by industry and the academy) as historically female friendly or female-associated, and represents a kind of boundary case because of characteristics it shares with other women's jobs. Considering editing alongside more straightforwardly clerical studio work will also help explain the feminization of a second boundary case: casting.[3] Casting's feminization is unusual both because of when it became female dominated (in the late 60s and early 70s), and the fact that it is today a production job of relatively high creative and managerial status. An in-depth examination of the process by which this field shifted from being heavily masculinized to heavily female dominated will reveal the same gendered studio logic that guided feminization decades earlier. Linking both of these boundary cases to other feminized fields helps to explain why some production sectors continue to be associated with women today.

[3] Both cases represent possible boundaries or outer limits for this dissertation's provisional definition of "women's work." I have characterized studio-era production as a soft system that operated on certain principles, one of which was a somewhat binary understanding of men's versus women's work. The way the system designated work along these lines might be thought of as the logic of feminization. To test this logic and understand how it operated once in place, it is useful to examine types of work that were at or just beyond the borders of women's work. Editing, while more open to women then other jobs, could never truly have been considered women's work, while the role of casting director only became known such after the studio era. And neither job fits directly in traditional categories of feminized labor. Still, both jobs share characteristics, qualities and an ethos of creative support with other jobs more directly linkable to these early categories. These boundary cases will help to shape and define the limits of what was considered "women's work" within the studio system, and show how this logic of feminization continues to impact subsequent production systems.

Once unraveled, the story of women's media professions and their feminization highlights the industrial logic that gendered labor served in the classical Hollywood studio system, and continued to serve long after it ceased to exist.[4] Like genetic traits passed from parent to child, notions of women's work, written into production culture and job descriptions during the studio era, were carried forward through time by industrial mythology, repeated and circulated endlessly as the only real order or continuity in otherwise chaotic, post-studio, post-Fordist production cultures. Recognizing how female workers fit themselves to the roles available to them in the studio era, rendering their work non-threatening to male co-workers while increasing their reach and career capital, is a crucial step on the way to understanding overall the logic of feminization in film/TV work, some of which was supplied by the workers themselves.

Readers, Weeders and D-Girls: Feminized Labor and Creative Service in Media Development

The multi-department "intellectual"[5] sector that Samuel Marx oversaw as MGM's story editor in the 1930s (the rise of this sector and the origins of its various departments are detailed in Chapter 2), still exists in various forms at film studios, networks, production companies, major talent and literary agencies and anywhere else where film and television development processes take place. There are no in-

[4] Again, as discussed in the introduction, the terms "media" or "film/TV" are used here in describing industry practices and personnel starting after the 1950s, when television production was relocated to the west coast and its practices and personnel increasingly overlapped with that of film production.
[5] Departments related to script and story that today might be grouped under the headings of acquisition or development were described variously as scenario (in early studios), story, intellectual, or literary departments or sectors. Today, the word 'literary' is still used with regard to development, but generally only in reference to literary management (agents or managers representing screenwriters or authors and their work).

house writers in these development departments, which look for existing scripts, treatments and pitches, or other materials to adapt.[6] However, the process of searching for material, developing it (once purchased) into a fully realized screenplay, and securing financing for that screenplay, is carried out by a mixture of senior-level executives or producers, junior-level creative executives, and their underlings. These underlings, including story editors (who sometimes double as assistants), producer and executive assistants, development assistants, story analysts (a.k.a. readers) and interns, perform the weeding process of sorting good material from bad. Between them, these workers accept submitted material, assign them for coverage (which still includes a plot synopsis and comments in roughly four pages), type and organize records of the mass of submitted material and the communication around it, and circulate that information, along with various drafts of purchased scripts in development to the executives.[7]

Though some networks, studios and agencies employ a staff of readers housed onsite, for the most part, story analysis is carried out off the lot, by freelance readers. For those small companies willing to cut corners, the work is done for free by the untrained interns who cycle through them. Research libraries have been downsized or dismantled and sold off by most studios, and development-stage research is either conducted by the script's writer (who may pay a researcher out of their salary or ask for additional funding for this) or farmed out to assistants and

[6]Instead of being hired to work at companies for a certain fee per week, screenwriters sell pitches, treatments, and scripts or are hired for a specific fee on a specific project. Writers may sign a contract for a number of pictures or ink an overall agreement to work for a period of time for a specific network or studio. This is a common practice in television, and once TV shows are in production, rooms of writers are hired for a weekly rate plus fees for the scripts they author, but these writers are employed in production on shows that have moved beyond the development stage. Thus, there is no writer's department during the development stage.
[7] Incoming scripts, books and other written material are covered by readers (oftentimes interns provide extra coverage or, if a company is cheap, exploitative and willing to cut corners, interns are used instead of readers).

interns when possible. Despite the freelance nature of some of the work, it is still possible to see these development workers as the descendants of the studio era's stenographers (script department), studio secretaries to creative personnel (writer and story departments), research librarians (research department), readers (reading department) and story editors (story department). The gender breakdown of development workers is impossible to calculate given the ad hoc arrangements that spring up and dissolve under the current flexibility of the post-Fordist, post-digital industry. However, the derogatory slang term "d-girl" or "development girl,"[8] which only fell out of use in the last 10-15 years, hints at the feminized origins of the various lower-level development jobs that until recently were carried out by a predominantly female group of workers, under a predominantly male group of manager-creatives, just as they had been in the studio period.

As Chapters 2 and 3 outlined, the early association of women with "intellectual" fields such as reading, research, story and script (a.k.a. copying or stenography) came by the same reasoning as their association with screenwriting: feminine intuition, morality, and flair for sentimentalism and drama were assets in the invention of stories, particularly those geared toward female audiences. It was often women themselves who made this argument in the early years of film. Alice Blaché declared woman "an authority on emotions" due to centuries of indulging them under the protection of men.[9] June Mathis claimed female screenwriters complemented male directors as wives complemented husbands, delivering "the sleeping soul of drama" in a pile of typed scenes for the director to render into

[8] Hadley Davis, *Development Girl* (New York: Random House, 1999), 11.
[9] Alice Guy-Blaché "Woman's Place in Photoplay Production," *Moving Picture World* v.21.2 (July 11, 1914), 195.

physical form, ensuring that the "human quality that makes a motion picture commercial" would not be lost in all of his technical prowess.[10] She also insisted that they were more suited to the "careful, fine detail work of scenario construction."[11] Florence Osbourne cited scientific studies of children and storytelling which concluded that, though "girl children were not so logical in their plots," their stories showed "more interesting detail and more sentiment and more emotion."[12] Such claims were often supported by invocations of women's success as fiction writers.[13] However, as Susan Coultrap-McQuinn explains, women often succeeded through the guidance of male publishers, who began to see them as "unprofessional" as their businesses grew and reorganized along efficient lines.[14]

In this context, studio perceptions of women's suitability for screenwriting and intellectual fields at studios speaks more to the observance of existing gender roles than their subversion. This much seems clear in Frances Marion's claim that women were able to succeed in writing because they could do it from behind the scenes, drawing little attention to themselves.[15] Traditional gender roles also seem to be at the core of Jane Murfin's statement that while "the feminine slant" was believed by studio managers to be necessary in writing, women's sex was her chief handicap in accessing more visible financial or managerial leadership roles such as

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[10] "sleeping soul" in: June Mathis, "Harmony in Picture-Making, *Film Daily* (May 6, 1923), 5; "human quality" in: "The Feminine Mind in Picture Making," *Film Daily* (June 7, 1925), 115.
[11] June Mathis, "The Feminine Mind in Picture Making," *Film Daily* (June 7, 1925), 115.
[12] Forence M. Osbourne (The Editor), "Why Are There No Women Directors?" *Motion Picture Magazine* (November 1925), 5.
[13] Interview with Clara Berenger, "Feminine Sphere in the Field of Movies is Large Indeed," *The Moving Picture World* (August 2, 1919), 662.
[14] Susan Coultrap-McQuinn, *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Ninteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1990, 48.
[15] Cari Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down: Frances Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 41.

producing and directing and thus in the industry as a whole since "the more jobs she has filled, the more she knows of the business as a whole, the better chance she has of making a real place for herself."[16]

Implicit in discussions of women's aptitude for storytelling was the notion that the woman writer's value issued primarily from her gender, rather than her individual talent for plot or story. And since, as Murfin pointed out, gender-based value typically did not travel at studios, many of the claims about women's great success in screenwriting could actually double as rationalizations for why women should not succeed beyond that field. In this sense, female screenwriters at studios, though members of the top tier of the scripting phase of production, have at least as much in common with the women in the departments below them than with male colleagues in upper-level creative positions of directing and producing. For, like screenwriting, work in script, research, reading and story departments all centered around typing, took place on paper, behind-the-scenes and away from set, and made use of women's "natural" talent for detail, judging emotions, etc. Woman succeeded in screenwriting, as framed above, because she was so close to lady typists, not because she had come so far as to travel out of their feminized realm.

In fact, as studios grew, more and more women came to screenwriting jobs not from writing careers outside the studios (though many had them), but through the lower ranks of intellectual workers.[17] Like Dorothy Arzner, Joan Harrison and many of the other female writers previously mentioned, Charlotte Miller was

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[16] Jane Murfin, "Sex and the Screen," *The Truth About Movies by the Stars,* ed. Laurence A. Hughes (Hollywood: Hollywood Publishers, 1924), p. 459-60.
[17] Said Robert Vogel of MGM: "Quite a number of secretaries who became top writers. Really top." *Robert Vogel Oral History*, Interviewed by Barbara Hall, Margaret Herrick Library, 1990, 102.

promoted to screenwriting from a secretarial position. Though Marguerite Roberts had been a reporter before she came to Fox in 1926, she, too, did secretarial service on the desks of various studio executives, then worked as a reader before finally ascending to the level of writer.[18] Isobel Lennart's followed a similar progression from stenographer to script girl to reader, and through MGM's junior writer program, before eventually becoming a writer.[19] These women's promotions, on their surface, evince studio management's gender-blind, even feminist attitude toward screenwriting (i.e. management accepts that women are just good at writing as men). However, placing accounts of women's screenwriting alongside those of women workers in related departments reveals that whatever these female writers wrote or did after it took place, their ascension was granted by the same inductive reasoning that contrived to keep women out of most jobs by confining them to a few. These accounts also reveal the limited-yet-impactful creative agency of low-level intellectual or development workers as a form of creative support.

Like the stenography in script departments, or secretarial labor in the service of writers (discussed as creative service in chapter 4), *film research* was characterized as clerical labor by studios and labor unions.[20] And because of the educational focus, clerical and service characteristics and feminized state of library work in general,[21] departments at studios tended toward female domination as well.

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[18] Marcia McCreadie, *The Women Who Write the Movies: From Frances Marion to Nora Ephron* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1994), 149.
[19] Ibid., 152.
[20] Researchers at Warner Bros., for example, were included in the studio's office employees guild. "Job Titles and Classifications," USC Warner Bros. Archive, Personnel Files Box 380b, dated November 1949.
[21] Unlike the academic or scholar, the film researcher or librarian, much like the librarian in general, was perceived as looking up existing data, rather than creating original work. Like teaching, nursing, cooking, typing and domestic service, library work is discussed in its own chapter in: Mary A. Laselle and Katherine E. Wiley, *Vocations for Girls* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 66; *Fields of Work for Women* (New York: D. Appleton

Articles on women's film jobs characterize research departments as largely or even exclusively in the hands of women and, as Chapter 3 discussed, only female researchers are visible in Fox and MGM promotional tour films.[22] At many studios, research departments were also led by women. Elizabeth McGaffey founded the department at Paramount (then Lasky) in the late teens and oversaw it for many years thereafter.[23] Research at MGM was managed by Natalie Bucknall. Described by Samuel Marx as "a solidly built Russian woman reliably reported to have ridden with the Cossacks in World War I," who "cracked the whip over two male assistants." Bucknall managed the research department at MGM until the 1950s, and can be seen in a photograph of the department from 1938, presiding over four female and three male workers.[24] In the 1940s, the Warner research department was headed by Carl Milliken, but staffed predominantly by women (8 out of a total 12 workers described in the department).

A 1940 *Warner Club News* cover story on the studio's research department spoke to the work's clerical and organizational aspects, stating that the department's business was not in knowing everything, but "merely in knowing where to look for the desired information" in a library of 7000 books and hundreds

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and Company, 1926),110; Catherine Filene, ed., *Careers for Women: New Ideas, New Methods and New Opportunities—To Fit a New World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 389.

[22]Per Antonia Lant's *The Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writing on the First Fifty Years of Cinema* (London: Verso, 2006), 548-9, Reina Wiles Dunn, "wrote that women were in almost exclusive charge of reference departments in Hollywood in: "Off-stage Heroines of the movies," *Independent Woman* 13, 1934, 202. "Largely in the hands of women" in: Filene, Catherine, ed., Careers *for Women*, 432.

[23] "Such a department was founded in the Lasky studio some years ago by Mrs. Elizabeth McGaffey, who in previous years had travelled widely and had a goodly store of knowledge concerning architecture, customs, costumes and other facts about various countries. Being often called upon by the architectural and other departments to solve certain problems of this nature, she realized the necessity of a duly organized research unit, where records and files could be made and literature on such subjects stored. She made the suggestion, it was approved, and the new department was created, with Mrs. McGaffey as its head." -Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet II – Architecture, decoration, research," *The Photodramatist* v.3.8 (January, 1922), 37.

[24] Samuel Marx, *A Gaudy Spree: Literary Hollywood When the West Was Fun* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 9-10. Tenure through 50s in: Steven Bingen, Stephen X. Sylvester, and Michael Troyen, *M-G-M: Hollywood's Greatest Backlot* (Solana Beach, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2011), 59.

of volumes of magazines.[25] Descriptions of work at other studios cited multiple clerical and service characteristics as well, including the gathering of materials in the first place, working ahead "storing up data and preparing against possible emergencies, in addition to this work of supplying facts for current pictures,"[26] working "hand-in-hand with costume and art departments,"[27] as well as" writers, wardrobe and make-up personnel on every picture which involved historical detail,"[28] answering "non-stop telephone inquiries,"[29] poring "through voluminous masses of matter, keyed by the files and indexes, to obtain various facts.[30]

Taken together, these job duties, performed in service of a film's design team, begin to resemble the creative service of the secretary to a movie maker. Like the secretary, the researcher's job was one of filtering out all information but that which was most directly connected to the creative process, such as in narrowing a field of photographs or drawings down to a few choice examples, which could then be offered to an art director or costume designer. And from their positions of creative service, researchers impacted the creative process subtly, often through subtraction, shaping a production's aesthetic through the range of plates, photographs and drawings offered (and the larger number discarded as unsuitable), as well as their answers to queries. Research also shaped the direction of projects in the scripting phase, as in the case of Howard Koch's script for *The Sea Hawk*, which changed directions based on historical background information assembled by Warner

[25] Carl Milliken, "Information Please," *Warner Club News* (June, 1940), p. 3
[26] Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet II, 37.
[27] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 9-10.
[28] Beth Day, *This Was Hollywood: An Affectionate History of Filmland's Golden Years*, (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 128-9.
[29] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 9-10. Steven Bingen et al, *M-G-M*, 59.
[30] Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet II – Architecture, decoration, research," 37.

researchers.[31] Occasionally a researcher made a more specific impact on a picture that could be pointed to as hers. Natalie Bucknall was credited with persuading Ronald Coleman to "shave off his famed trademark mustache—or run the risk of its being an anachronism" for his role in *A Tale of Two Cities*.[32] However, in most cases, researchers supported creative work at a distance from their libraries, and shaped the parameters of the artists and writers (e.g. in delineating which types of architecture could or could not be used to represent a specific period) while themselves having no direct participation in creative production.

Readers also shaped the solution to a creative problem (that of which literary properties to make into films) through weeding out the majority of materials from a field of candidates, and recommending those that remained. Kate Corbaley described dramatic sensibilities as foremost among the many competencies necessary for success as a reader, since "Well knit drama does not happen; it is evolved from adherence to certain laws of building." In addition to an innate sense of whether a story worked which could not be learned but was "inborn as is an eye for color and line, or an ear for music," there were practical business concerns to be factored in when considering material. To be successful, she continued, a reader "must be capable of deciding whether or not a story will fit the needs of the individual studio in which that reader is employed," by weighing its suitability for the company's actors, its cost, the studio's other recent films, the public demand, etc. To this considerable list of the reader's qualifications, she added awareness of other

[31] Howard Koch, *As Time Goes By: Memoirs of a Writer* (New York: Harcourt, 1979), 43.
[32] The department's trained researcher and librarians worked hand in hand. It was a researcher, Natalie Bucknall, who persuaded Ronald Coleman that he must Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 128-9.

material on the market to guard against plagiarism, as well as continuity knowledge of continuity to prevent the reader's judgment from being swayed by "the beautiful phrases, by the colorful and sympathetic language in which a story is often clothed" in order to correctly estimate its screen value.[33]

Given Corbaley's description of the reader's skills, as well as the importance of synopses and comments in the acquisition process as materials made their way up the chain of command to decision makers, one might expect the position of reader to have been imbued with at least some status within the hierarchy. And initially studios did seem to value the reader. In 1922, Corbaley reported that reader salaries were increasing as studios sought "men and women with the qualifications a reader should have, for present day producers realize the paramount importance of the story."[34] Yet this was hardly the case in the studio era, nor is it today.[35] Practically since its inception, the job of reader—variously referred to as "screen analyst" or "story analyst"[36]— was seen as scut-work, even though it was also a stepping-stone to that of screenwriter or story editor. [37] Many screenwriters – including Budd Schulberg, Philip Dunne, Lillian Hellman and Lester Cole— began their film careers as readers.[38] Hellman and Cole worked together in "a large office with a dozen or more other readers," tasked with covering one story per day, though

[33] Kate Corbaley, "Duties and Qualifications of the Scenario Reader," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Business* v.2 (Los Angeles: Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 61-2.
[34] Ibid., 62.
[35] Nor is it the case today. With few exceptions the reader has no place at all in the hierarchy, usually working freelance from home, with contact only via email. It was only this year that my physical presence was requested at a company where I had recently begun to freelance, to meet the president and discuss my taste. Though highly sensible in my opinion, this is an unusual practice in contemporary Hollywood.
[36] "Screen Analyst" title discussed in Ronald L. Davis, *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood's Big Studio System* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993), 162. "Story Analyst" is the official job title of contemporary readers, based on my experience in that profession.
[37] Discussed as such in Capt. Leslie T. Peacocke, "Enter—the Free Lance Writer," *Photoplay,* v.11.4 (March 1917), 97.
[38] Davis, *The Glamour Factory,* 162.

Hellman quickly lost her job by inciting her fellow readers to demand higher wages.[39] And at its most basic, the work of story editors like Kay Brown, who first brought the manuscript for *Gone With the Wind* to David Selznick's attention,[40] was similar to that of readers, but on a higher level.[41]

However, until the transition to writer or editor occurred, readers were closer in status to the anonymous movie workers Leo Rosten characterized as swarming over "the offices wherever pictures are fabricated,"[42] than movie makers doing the truly creative work. Samuel Marx dispelled misconceptions of the MGM's reading department (which from the outside resembled a library reading room) as "a hideaway for those who wanted to nurture their own writing efforts," instead characterizing it as "a hotbed of frustration" due both to readers' "cerebral indigestion caused by a diet of materials they knew they could cook up better," and the "absurdly low" pay of the work, which studios could offer because it was nonetheless sought after.[43] While the readers' frustration at low compensation and status at studios is partly explained by frustrated writing ambitions, another likely cause for that frustration was that, despite the heavy concentration of highly educated, middle-class literary figures like Hellman and Cole in its ranks, the studio reading department was bordered on nearly all sides by feminized labor sectors and in many studios was itself feminized.

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[39] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 151-3
[40] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 163.
[41] Rudy Behlmer, ed., *A Memo from David O. Selznick* (New York: Viking, 1972), 138.
[42] Leo Rosten, *The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 32.
[43] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 10.

Though Marx and others referred to readers as intellectual staff,[44] a characterization in keeping with their supposed writing and editorial ambitions, the work was also linked to clerical sectors in its heavy typing and organizational duties (e.g. logging submissions, summarizing contents via typed coverage, corresponding with writers, maintaining files of material), as well as the fact that so much of the reader's time was spent engaged in the filtering out of unsuitable material (95% of submissions) in much the manner of a clerk or secretary filtering routine tasks away from an employer.[45] Marx wrote of the importance of just such filtering in the process of finding material that he could pass upward to Irving Thalberg and his supervisor-producers:

> Our coverage averaged four hundred possibilities a week—books, plays, news items, magazines, original ideas—all flooding in from God's huge writing staff, slaving away twenty-four hours a day from all around the world. The story department checked twenty thousand submissions a year and all of them crossed my desk….We were trying, in a sense, to keep up with God, whose output was obviously more than humans could handle. [46]

Despite readers' pivotal role in finding the material that would ultimately become MGM films, those films would be credited to their writers, producers, directors, and to Thalberg. This is true to some extent of Marx and his assistants as well, but the ratio of weeds to flowers was much greater for the readers, the studio's primary filters of material, and their participation in higher level decision-making or creative processes, unlike Marx's, was nil. In this sense, their work might also be characterized as creative service, in that it supported the creative process and

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[44] Ibid., 30.
[45] Duties discussed in Chapter 3 in further depth. "95%" from: H.O. Davis, "A Kitchener Among Cameras," *Photoplay* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 130.
[46] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 10-11.

cleared the way for its creative solution by taking on routine and some non-routine, low-level creative tasks to

In addition to nearby clerical sectors, many other sectors closest to the reading department –literary, library and educational fields—were feminized or at least female-friendly in the early 20th century. The same was true of reading. Long before Marx oversaw MGM's reading department (which was itself supervised by Dorothy Pratt, "a lady with an incredible memory for every story in its huge files, handled the reading department"),[47] the field was considered one of a few that was wide open to women. When an anonymous scenario editor singled out readers for scorn in 1919, he described reading departments (along with the clerical staffs that supported editorial departments in general) as characteristically feminized and female-led:

> When manuscripts come in they are handed over to the reading department. This is a room where half a dozen women at an average salary of ten dollars a week, without the competence of a stenographer or salesgirl, sit all day making first choice of the material the editor is to see….Whether there is some vague notion on the company's part that these young ladies represent the typical motion-picture going public mind or not, I cannot say; but I believe not. It is simply that they seem to form a necessary machine for weeding. When one of these girls finds a story which she considers would make a good picture, all she has to do is fill out a form.[48]

Commendably, the author doesn't let his hatred of women distract him from making an astute observation about how important feminized labor had already become to a growing industry. Their low cost and high availability in the late teens made it easy for men up the chain to view readers as yet another feminine, paper-processing

[47] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 10.
[48] A Scenario Editor, "The Movies: A Colossus That Totters," *Bookman* v.48.6, February 1919, 655.

system…a machine in which ever-multiplying submissions could be dumped on one end so that stories might emerge out the other. Vocational manuals characterized reading departments as "often filled by women."[49] Similarly, departmental columns in studio newsletters[50] indicate that reading staffs, though not made up entirely of women during the classical Hollywood era, were similarly feminized and/or female led.

Given the many characteristics in common with "women's work" sectors, the frustration of readers at MGM and elsewhere isn't surprising .[51] Their work was often tedious and dull, and they were poorly compensated for it—just like stenographers and secretaries. In fact, the starting salary of a secretary to a writer at MGM in 1927, just two years before Marx's tenure began, was reported to be between $35 and $50/week,[52] almost identical to the readers' "absurdly low" $50/week. However, Beletti characterizes this pay as fairly good for secretarial work. In truth, the reader's pay was only low in comparison with non-feminized work. For female workers providing creative service, $50 was the going rate. As for

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[49], Catherine, ed., *Careers for Women*, 432-33.

[50] Women often wrote columns for the reading department in studio newsletters, e.g. Lillian Bergquist, "Readings from The Reading Department," *RKO Studio Club News*, v.3.5 (November 1940), 9. They are also mentioned more frequently than men. MGM readers Jeannie Melton and Marge Thorson report on covering materials (*MGM Studio Club News,* May 1941) Peg LeVino, Rosina Knowles Mildred Haig and Elizabeth Dickson (mentioned for wearing slacks), along with Dorothy Pratt, who "gave her readers a synopsis on the joys of ranching" in June ("The Reading Department," *MGM Studio Club News* June, 1941, 9). By October of 1942, the Reading column reports increase in population: "with all the men folks tooling off to war, the file department is beginning to be feminized. Elaine Speed, Crolyn Asher and Helly Koretz are the latest glamour acquisitions to the department. It is reported that Earl Booth Enjoys his job of explaining the file system to them and that Dan MacNeill has a constant glint in his eye." (Ab Jackson Jr., "Reading," *MGM Studio Club News,* October 1942, 9); Marge Thorson veteran reader leaves reading dept. to do "heavy work" with the MPD OWI returned to take over Ed Hogan's desk ("The Reading Department," *MGM Studio Club News,* June 1948, 8).

[51] The frustrated reader/development worker trope has long been a part of industrial mythology around writing and development, and fictional films about filmmaking, as reflected by the character of Betty Schaefer in *Sunset Boulevard* (directed by Billy Wilder, Paramount, 1950), and assistant characters as well as a number of more recent films and books about development.

[52] Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, November 1927, in Cari Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary: Her Private Letters from Inside the Studios of the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 166-7.

non-monetary compensation (e.g. credit for creative contributions), the reader's was almost as low as the secretary's, as was their status in the hierarchy. That the lack respect afforded the reader had at least something to do with gender seems most obvious in discussions of "girl readers." The anonymous scenario editor quoted above was not content to let feminized reading departments off as merely incompetent, adding:

> Before we leave them to their gum-chewing, let us observe one last fact about them….Each young lady in her sub-editorial chair has a scenario or two of her own up her georgette sleeve; a scenario stolen, compiled, consciously or unconsciously, or "original", which she is determined shall have preferment over outside material. And there is no form of personal politics to which she will not resort to get that preferment, even to the point of suppressing valuable story material from any and every other source.[53]

This blanket indictment seemed to imply that the readers' femaleness was the only evidence needed to prove that they were conniving, striving, and incapable of writing producible scripts on their own. Whether or not they might someday become screenwriters, it is clear from this statement that the readers, with their feminine gum-chewing, frilly sleeves, and manipulation, were unwelcome members of the editor's creative club.

Despite requiring writerly sensibilities, tastes and analytical skills, readers were –and still are—held as insignificant within the studio hierarchy to the point of their being invisible beyond the intellectual sector, just like stenographers in script departments, secretaries to writers, researchers or any related women's clerical job. Though she seemingly remained behind the scenes and out of visible leadership her own choice, Kate Corbaley, who all but ran the MGM story department in the 20s

[53] A Scenario Editor, "The Movies: A Colossus That Totters,"656.

and 30s, embodied the contradiction between the importance of women's labor in intellectual departments, and the way studios acknowledged that labor. Discovered by Hunt Stromberg while working as a librarian, Corbaley accompanied the producer first to Ince Studio and then to MGM, where she was still working when Samuel Marx "inherited" her as his assistant.[54] Though technically in authority over Corbaley, Marx's descriptions imply that she stayed in her position by choice, but might have had his. He also recognized that she was his superior in the esteem of nearly every producer and executive in the story meetings they conducted when, as Frances Marion remembered, "supervisors and minor officials gathered in Kate Corbaley's office to hear her weekly analyses of all the published material submitted to the studio."[55] Marx had no doubts about who, between the two of them, was running the meetings:

> Corbaley was the star. She sat at the head of the table. Thalberg was a supporting player, down at the other end, a rapt listener. Story telling is surely one of the world's oldest arts and many Scheherazades are noted through history, but there was a special finesse to Kate Corbaley. She never forgot a detail, never needed to retrace her steps, failings common to less talented yarn spinners. She injected color, clarity, and characterization that might well have won the envy of the original author. Because she literally thought in pictures, she could embroider a plot into a movie with elements its creator might have overlooked. Our listeners knew this. They were absorbed by the plot turns she offered them….Bernie Hyman, who had accepted a book Kate told, lamented that after reading the material, he found it far from what he had heard. Thalberg shrugged and said, 'shoot the story Kate told!'[56]

In the meetings described above, Corbaley, as Thalberg's Scheherazade, *performed* script coverage, guiding studio executives, most of whom according to Marion,

[54] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 27.
[55] Marion, *Off with Their Heads*, 204-5.
[56] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 26.

"were too busy with their own problems to concentrate on the written word"[57] around to which stories they should buy, influencing them through her offered judgments what she added to and omitted from the stories. While never forgetting a detail herself, she served as filter for the executives above her, even guiding their attention to those details she left in through her delivery. Corbaley's storytelling, complete with emotion work and performance, added value to the labor for which she was actually responsible. Proof of that value is evidenced by the fact that Louie B. Mayer refused be read plot summaries by anyone but Corbaley. Her great sense of story, which she literally acted out so that her less sensible superiors could get the picture, were what "plumped the lifeblood of the story department." This fact was not lost on any of her employers, least of all Mayer, who, at Corbaley's funeral in 1938, leaned in to Marx and said "I would rather have lost any star than this woman."[58] And yet, her creative contribution to the finished product is invisible to us now. She is largely unknown in film history, much like many of the women whose labor, clerical and creative, supported her departments.

Perhaps more than the screenwriter, the modern-day producer's assistant or executive assistant in development is descended from the other workers in intellectual departments: the studio secretary, the reader, the researcher, and story department workers like Corbaley. As such, whether male or female, assistants still carry out the bulk of the labor required for development, and do so for low pay, little credit and the faint promise of promotion.[59] Women's attempts to continue in these

[57] Marion, *Off with Their Heads*, 204-5.
[58] Marx, *A Gaudy Spree*, 27.
[59] Compensation discussed further in chapter 6.

lower level intellectual descendants have been far more successful than their continuing efforts to be hired in equal numbers to men as screenwriters. This is hardly surprising, since, for women at studios, one of the main paths to screenwriting was through feminized intellectual departments. The modern development process does not involve in-house screenwriters who might be promoted from within. In the wake of the contract era, with the separation of screenwriting from its low-level sister fields, aspiring female writers would have more difficulty selling their talents on spec, but no trouble being hired to assist, read or research on the basis of gender. Whether or not she would be fairly compensated for that work is another question, since increasingly that large, bottom tier of script-related labor is delegated to interns who do it for free, or freelancers who are underpaid for it based on the fact that it is relatively creative labor and therefore mythologized as a reward unto itself.[60]

I will revisit these development workers in next chapter's discussion of assistant work and its inherited feminized associations and creative service characteristics, including its trope of suffering. In fact, the female assistant's "development hell" is celebrated in various chic-lit series set in the media industries.[61] The stories often modernize the office Cinderella trope by launching the heroine into a successful career, but only while simultaneously launching her into a romantic relationship, usually with the boss or some other authority figure from the office. The price of these books' happy endings is a particular kind of

[60] Based on my experience of reading 2000+ scripts and books at what is considered decent pay for the field, I can attest to the fact that this mythology is false.
[61] For example: Clare Naylor and Mimi Hare, *The Second Assistant: A Tale from the Bottom of the Hollywood Ladder*, (New York: Plume, 2005); Chris Dyer, *The Loves of a D-Girl: A novel of Sex, Lies and Script Development*, (New York: Plume, 2005).

suffering of the female assistant or secretary delivered over the course of the narrative at the hands of a high-status media maker. A comparison of 1938's *I Lost My Girlish Laughter*, discussed in Chapter 3 and 2004's *The Second Assistant,* reveals that the books' plots are almost identical. It seems that, rather than being healed by the intervening decades of progress toward gender equality, the culture of abuse and mythology of suffering remain around women's work in service of the creative process.

Script Girls and Cutter Girls: Women in the Space of Creative Play

Beaulah Marie Dix described the role of script clerk in its earliest form when explaining the improvised production systems of the early film industry where anyone did whatever needed doing, and "anybody not doing anything else wrote down the director's notes on the script."[62] In some cases it fell to the cinematographer to watch actor entrances and exits and keep "accurate account of every motion made," but the practice was informal and idiosyncratic.[63] Generally, Janet Staiger explains, continuity and verisimilitude were the responsibility of the director, cameraman and staff, in much the same catch-as-catch-can arrangement Dix observed. This continued until the mid- to late-1910s when "demand for accuracy increased the need for paper"[64] as productions developed more complex lighting techniques for more intricate scenes shot from multiple angles. Tracking continuity between setups and matching elements of mise-en-scene in shots taken

[62] Lizzie Francke, *Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood* (London: BFI, 1994), 6.
[63] John H. Rathbun, "Motion Picture Making and Exhibiting," *Motography* v.9.8 (April 19, 1913), 278.
[64] Janet Staiger, in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, eds., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 152.

out-of-sequence became increasingly time-consuming, intricate work for which casual approaches would no longer suffice. Between roughly 1917 and 1920, the specific production role of 'script clerk' or 'script girl' emerged as companies added devoted workers to their staffs to track continuity on paper during shooting.[65] Sometimes referred to as an 'assistant,' 'script assistant,' or 'continuity clerk,' this member of the production team took notes during each shot for reference in later filming and during the editing process, and were responsible for minding properties, costumes and noting any deviation from the script as written.[66] In 1918, *Photoplay* reported the employment of continuity minders as common practice, stating, "Nowadays in the big companies the director has an assistant, usually a stenographer, who keeps track of all the details of every scene so that mistakes are almost impossible."[67] Though the job may have fallen to male crew members prior to its separation from other production tasks in the 1910s process of specialization and standardization, once clerical tasks were consolidated into one devoted position, the record-keeping role would have had little appeal to men in camera or other technical departments. On the other hand, women were natural candidates for work involving note-taking, details and stenography. Even in the early days, Staiger reports, the script clerk was "usually a woman." June Mathis wrote that the woman script clerk emerged shortly after the woman scenario writer and for much the same reason. Just as women succeeded "in the careful, fine detail work of scenario writing," on set, they could also "watch the small details better than men."[68] But

[65] Ibid., 206.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Helen Starr, "Putting it Together," *Photoplay* v. 14.2 (July 1918), 54.
[68] June Mathis, "The Feminine Mind in Picture Making," *Film Daily* (June 7, 1925), 115.

even as it evolved and became more clearly coded as clerical (involving typewriters and stopwatches), some male script clerks were present in certain productions. In her interview with early script clerk Peggy Robertson, Barbara Hall cited accounts of male script clerks at MGM "in the early days," offering the rationale that they could serve double-duty as 3rd AD on sets, or as PAs who would "get sent running off to find things or track things down."[69] Morris Abrams described the system at MGM in which men did this hybrid of on-set support roles, saying:

> When I started as a script girl, script bitch, script clerk, "Hey Script," or whatever they called me, I did essentially everything a script supervisor does today except I didn't have to worry about dialog….It may interest you to know that there was no such thing as a second assistant director at M.G.M. then. The script clerk had to make call sheets, help her the extras, make production reports, and sometimes, on night calls, pay the extras in cash. I'll never forget working on the first Viva Villa in 1933 down in Mexico. Our accountant got drunk, and who do you think ended up handling all the money as well as keeping script? Morris. Since then, I've seen an evolution where jobs have become more specialized, and new departments with additional jobs have developed as the industry became more complex. [70]

Peggy Robertson herself did not encounter male clerks in her early work in the UK, but pointed to location shooting as one reason male clerks "came into it," in productions when the company was "mostly men, or climbing up mountains or that sort of thing, then they started to use men."[71] However, under the process of unionization, as divisions between crew positions were more clearly demarcated, and job duties more rigidly defined, the purview of any such hybrid script clerk/camera assistant became limited to clerical work from a chair near the

[69] "Robertson, "Peggy Robertson Oral History," 55.
[70] Abrams, "Interview with Morris Abrams," 20-21.
[71] Robertson, "Peggy Robertson Oral History," 55.

director since, as Robertson explained, after unionization, "you wouldn't have an assistant director doing script supervisor and vice versa."[72]

By 1921, when Alma Young first stepped into the role of script clerk at Robertson-Cole (which would become FBO, then RKO), continuity workers were typically female, so much so that they were commonly referred to as 'script girls.' Young's account gives a sense of how, as the title 'script girl' implies, the work was already implicitly understood as women's work. She recalled:

> The thing that was really amusing there was they decided I should keep script for them. I had turned down that sort of job because I didn't pay much attention to what was going on. I had a really lousy memory. But they thought I should keep script. Anyway, the girl that was working for them on that was ill, so I got stuck on it. And this I think is one of the funniest of all things, because I got on this set, and I hadn't read the script they handed to me. And they started shooting. I had done some publicity work and written some publicity stuff, but I saw nothing to write about on this damn set. What they were doing was flat. So three days went by, and the cutter comes by and he wants cutting notes. I say, 'What are cutting notes?' They explained to me what cutting notes were. Very impressive! Well, to make a long story short, I didn't get fired. The assistant cameraman's girl-friend was script girl. He decided to break me in. So at night he would take the various things I had written about what had happened, bring them back the next morning, and explain to me how I should put that. But you see this is the way it was in those days. I remember.[73]

As described above, Young's employers unwillingness to take her 'no' for an answer script girl seems to have been based on the fact that she is a woman and therefore possessed of the necessary qualities for the work. If she hadn't already been aware of it, the young movie worker would likely have grasped script continuity's feminized status in the course of her unsuccessful attempts to refuse it. Despite her

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Alma Young, "Interview with Alma Young." Interview by Anthony Slide and Robert Gitt, Margaret Herrick Library, 1977, 2.

total failure in her first attempt at the role, in the eyes of the crew, she was the only real candidate for the job because she was the only 'girl' on hand. Young's early work at Warner Bros., where she remained from 1923-1960, often reflected her gender rather than her specific skills. "They had one [script] girl only there," she recalled, and she was added as a second, but also called upon to double-in-brass in other "girl" roles:

> In the old silent days you had an hour for lunch. Well, you'd go over to the drugstore, an I used to eat very fast and I would only take an half-hour and then go to relieve the switchboard operator, because there was no-one else to do it. Another time, between pictures, I met Jack Warner one morning, and he said 'What are you doing now?' And I said 'Well, I have nothing to do. I'm through.' He said, 'Don't be silly, find something to do.' So it didn't matter what they wanted to do, I was in on it. I answered fan mail. I read Stories. I was in the property department. I was all over. It was really fantastic.[74]

As she tells it, Young played back up in whatever department needed her help. However, with the possible exception of work in the property department, she seems to have generally been filling in for other women's roles, first and foremost at the feminized switchboard.

By the time Valeria Beletti set her cap at a script clerk job in 1926 it was very clearly linked with secretarial roles, and was seen by many women as a step up from them due to its place in production.[75] Though Beletti was unsuccessful in her bid, many later script supervisors, including Meta Carpenter and Catalina Lawrence, came to the field through secretarial roles. Carpenter was able to learn the trade by doubling as Hawks' secretary and script supervisor while the director was in

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[74] Ibid., 3.

[75] "When King gets back from New York, I'm going to ask him if he'll take me on as his secretary and script girl. Of course, I don't know that he'll have me, but I may as well try for the job." Valeria Beletti, Letter to Irma Prina, February 2, 1926, in Beauchamp, ed., *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary*, 112.

production.[76] Lawrence worked at Hal Roach studios as a secretary until she was finally able to land on set with the help of Robert Benchley and a script supervisor he knew.[77]

For Peggy Robertson script supervision seemed destined to be a women's role even before it included heavy typing requirements, simply because it was thankless, detail work. She explained:

> Women are supposed to be, or were, I don't know if they are today, better at detail than men. And whereas the cameraman has a large canvas and the production designer and all these people have the whole set and the glamorous, the script supervisor is glued to the telephone or microphone. The only time that you notice it, and then it's a negative thing…"when you go and see dailies or rushes, everyone sits down and they look and they say, "what a beautiful job of photography! What a wonderful job of set decoration!" No one ever says to the continuity girl, "what a wonderful job of matching you did!" They only notice "Why is his cigarette halfway down?" They only notice when you make a mistake."[78]

Indeed, unlike other members of production whose work left visible evidence on the screen in some form or other, the script supervisor's success was measured by what she kept off of it. Through her work's only physical product, clerical output in the form of notes, markings and typed pages, she ensured against others' mistakes, by holding back those contributions (e.g. costume, adlibbed dialog) of other personnel which might not match. By this definition, no script supervisor could proudly point to an onscreen detail as their work, since it only became hers (and not the designer's or the actor's) when it was a mistake. Even in pre-production,

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[76] "Mr. Hawks asked if I could do both and I said yes. Besides, my salary jumped from thirty-five dollars a week to forty-two fifty." Meta Carpenter Wilde and Orin Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman: The Love Affair of William Faulkner and Meta Carpenter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 38.
[77] Catalina Lawrence, Interview by Mike Steen in Mike Steen, *Hollywood Speaks! An Oral History* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1974), 345-6.
[78] Robertson, "Peggy Robertson Oral History," 54-55.

Robertson, like others in her profession, was engaged in risk management. If a set was built with a door that opened in a different direction than the exterior it was to match, for example, while not technically the script supervisor's fault, the error "would be if you hadn't noticed it."[79] A profile of the role aptly titled "Script Supervisor Has No Margin for Error" stated that workers' "specific product" was continuity, which allowed scenes to "seem to flow, as if the shooting had gone on from the beginning of the scene to the end without interruption."[80] Alma Young summed up the job description more succinctly, saying script supervisors were "fault finders. Professional fault finders. Because that's about what it is."[81]

Though successful script supervisors left little onscreen evidence of their work, a more through accounting of what the job consisted of reveals just how much *work* it really was to make scenes magically "flow" together, and how closely much of it resembled more traditional feminized labor. This was increasingly the case as production practices and hierarchies developed and all routine and clerical tasks on set eventually trickled down to the script supervisor. In the 1934 edition of *Careers for Women*, the job is marked as women's work not only through its inclusion as one of the motion picture fields most open to women ("the script girl is a figure constantly on tap at studios"), but through the description of its duties. Assuming a male director and a female script clerk, the writer is quick to distinguish "his" creative work from "her" clerical record of it:

> Her job is to care for the director's copy of the picture which he is making, to check off each scene as it is photographed and to number

[79] Ibid., 148.
[80] "Script Supervisor Has No Margin for Error," *Daily Variety* (October 25, 1977), 112.
[81] Young, "Interview with Alma Young," 3

> and describe the scenes. She must be extremely careful to make notations of the kinds of garments worn by stars, the physical appearance of the actor, the entrances and exits and of the details of scenery and finishing. Since pictures are not 'shot' in the order in which scenes are shown when completed, it is manifest that any inaccuracy in these details will show up if such records as these are not kept."[82]

The care cited above might more accurately be described as worry. And indeed, script supervisors use words like "worry," "anxiety" and "concern" often when describing their workplace responsibilities, which have changed little in the last 100 years. Peggy Robertson, who "kept script" in the 1940s to 1950s, described her process as a series of steps, starting with reading the script and making notes of continuity concerns within the text, which she might address to the director ("how did he get from Iceland to Denmark? If there was something strange about that, I'd write a memo to the director and put it down, or else tell him quietly") or of particular props, costumes, and action to be concerned about later.[83] She explained, "And you would be worrying…worry? I don't know about worry, but you'd be making a note of such things as is he carrying a walking cane, is he wearing glasses?"[84] These were notes to herself or her director, but the real notes, "really, the main notes…are in the script itself" during shooting. In production, Robertson's role was to keep track of every important detail of action, dialog and mise-en-scene, such as where a character's hands were during a particular moment. "That you put in your script, as much as you can get in, by the dialog, *or* by the action. Anything else, like wardrobe that has to be matched, and long notes, go on the opposite

[82] Filene, ed,. *Careers for Women* ,433.
[83] Robertson. "Peggy Robertson Oral History," 148.
[84] Ibid.

[blank] page."[85] Additionally, it was her responsibility to make numbered records of each setup and shot, describing each take (angle, quality of performance, etc), when it cut and, when applicable "why we went again," along with the time at which it was taken, the number of minutes of screen time in each take, and any notes from the director. Timing, done with a stopwatch, was of the essence, since studios might have an idea of what the actual screen time of a film might be, but "unless you're right there on the spot, it's guesswork" since it all depended on the writer, director, performances, etc. She might type these notes between takes and after the day's shooting was ended and the dailies from the previous day had been watched, and was also responsible for marking up scripts for the editor. Along with her stopwatch, typewriter, scripts, colored pencils and pens, Robertson carried art books to set when she worked for Hitchcock, for the cameraman's reference.[86] Catalina Lawrence's detailed account of her work from the 1940s through the 1970s is almost identical to Robertson's, not only in its standard duties, but in the overall function of tracking, concern and risk management:

> As soon as I get a script, I read it through to see if I can catch any holes in the story. Usually, I catch a lot of them because from the time the writer wrote the first version of the script it has had so many drafts made of it that a story point can get lost. The writer usually isn't around, so I go to the producer, director, or story editor and report what loopholes I've found. During this phase I also time the script. I take it page by page and act it out using a stopwatch. Then I start my breakdown of the script by making a list of all the important props, when and where they are used, and by what actor…. I have to see to it that everything matches what has already been filmed in that sequence. I do this by writing notes on my script when I do the first breakdown before filming. I make more notes as the scene is actually being shot in order to record exactly what is going on. These notes are

[85] Ibid., 148-9.
[86] Ibid,. 159.

> part of what we call continuity notes. Then I break the script down for wardrobe changes. The wardrobe department also makes its own wardrobe plot. But I take each sequence from beginning to end.... Some script supervisors leave all this to the wardrobe people, but I always check every actor out. If my name is going to be on a picture, I want it to be good. I get held responsible if something doesn't match.[87]

Later descriptions of the script supervisor's work reflect an even greater level of complexity. A film production manual held the script supervisor responsible not only for wardrobe, dialog and action, but also for recording camera positions and angels, as well as "lenses used, timing, f-stops and focus changes, such as zooms."[88] Over 30 years later, script supervisor Kerry Lyn McKissick, whose credits span the 1980s through the present, picked up where Lawrence left off in her discussion of matching:

> Matching action is about remembering the moves the actors make throughout the scene—when they cross their legs, or toss their hair behind their shoulders. I make sure they repeat that action exactly the same way from take to take; if there are differences, I inform the director of them. Ultimately it's the director's decision whether it has to match or not. But it's my job to keep track, so that in editing they're aware of it when they cut from an actor's close-up to their medium shot to their master. Sometimes the rehearsal has taken place months before, so I share my staging and temperament notes with the actors to help them remember the ideas they began with....You have to love organization because the details and the paperwork are the basics of the job. But once you've mastered those things—and it takes a while before you do—it becomes second nature.[89]

In this description, the script supervisor, not unlike the typist or telephone operator, functions as the conduit through which messages pass from one member of a production team to another or even back to themselves.

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[87] Lawrence, *Hollywood Speaks*, 350-2.
[88] Fred and Jan Yager, *Career Opportunities in the Film Industry* (New York: Ferguson, 2009), kindle location1726 of 4360.
[89] Kerry Lyn McKissick, Interviewed in Helena Lumme and Mika Manninen, *Great Women of Film* (New York: Billboard, 2002), 79.

Like McKissick earlier script supervisors primary concerns took this form of keeping track, remembering and making sure on behalf of others. Many found the work stressful, since, as the *Variety* article explained, "Unless everything matches perfectly, the result is not good enough for a real script supervisor."[90] Peggy Robertson actively "hated" the work and recalled the anxiety of sleepwalking to the studio.[91] But even those who enjoyed script supervision often described it in terms of worry. Jane Morgan, recalling an incident when she noticed an extra's missing shoe too late to keep it out of a shot, said, "those are the things we worry about."[92] And for good reason. "If a line is blown, it's the script supervisor's problem," Morris Abrams, an early script supervisor explained. Even when other departments might be responsible for the elements that did match, he added, "Basically, the script supervisor is the back-up. The script supervisor must be observant enough to catch the mistake and prevent it from causing trouble.[93] When Lily LaCava supervised continuity on *Gilligan's Island* (1964-67), reshoots were ordered after an actor performed half of a scene with his hat on his knee and then, after a break, performed the rest with the hat on his head. Despite the responsibility of the actor, the wardrobe assistant for the incorrect costuming, LaCava said that the next day, when the scene had to be reshot, "there was only one person who got the blame — me."[94] Peggy Robertson referred frequently to a similar incident in her oral history, calling it her biggest mistake as a script supervisor. It occurred at the end of a day of shooting on *North By Northwest*, when she noticed actor Leo G. Carroll wearing his

[90] "Script Supervisor Has No Margin for Error," *Daily Variety* (October 25, 1977), 112.
[91] Robertson. "Peggy Robertson Oral History," Discussion of "anxiety," on 63, "hated" on 87.
[92] "Script Supervisor Has No Margin for Error," *Daily Variety* (October 25, 1977), 112.
[93] Abrams, *The Role of the Script Supervisor*, 21.
[94] Ibid.

own reading glasses in a last take, rather than the tortoise-shell frames he'd been assigned as part of his costume:

> So I rushed up to him like an idiot, you know, you should never check with actors, and I said, "Leo, you've got the wrong glasses on." "Oh Have I darling? I'm so sorry." I said "What about the last shot, did you have them on then? I don't know what happened to me." He said, "Oh, I'm sure I didn't. I'm sure I didn't." So I went up to Hitch and he's saying, "I want to change the setup, what's the matter?" So I told him, I said, "I don't know what I was doing and I'm terrible sorry. He said, "well was he wearing them in the previous shot when we started on him? I said "I think he was wearing the right glasses." "Well, don't you know?" I mean, he was justifiably mad. And I said, "I'm not a hundred percent sure." "Well, that's terrible." ….I rushed down to see [the dailies] at 7:30 in the morning in the projection room and there's a shot of Leo wearing the wrong glasses. So [the editor] said, "Well, you've got to tell Hitch." I said, "I know, you tell him." He said, "No you're going to tell him. I'm busy." So he walks off and I go back and I say, "Hitch, I'm terribly sorry." And he was mad and he was quite right, you know, it was entirely my own fault. I don't know what I was doing, dreaming or something.[95]

The incident reveals both the stakes of the script supervisor's professional fault finding, and one of the characteristics of the work that mark it as creative service: the delivery of bad news and the acceptance of blame for production errors. The group of script supervisors interviewed in "No Margin for Error" (on the premise is that they were gathered in Meta Carpenter's apartment reminiscing), agreed that no matter the mistake, "It was really the script supervisor's responsibility," and that even if every detail in every department wasn't entirely the script supervisor's responsibility ("no one person can see everything, no matter how observant,") that it fell to them to absorb it.[96] This was reflected in the observation of the article's author that "With an outsider in their midst, not one would tell anything that might

[95] Robertson. "Peggy Robertson Oral History,", 53.
[96] "Script Supervisor Has No Margin for Error," *Daily Variety* (October 25, 1977), 112.

reflect even the faintest discredit on those who had worked on any set with them." One interviewee even insisted her name be redacted after telling a story of a minor wardrobe error that she corrected before anyone but herself and the costumer ever found out about it. The anonymity was not for her own protection, she explained, but for that of the worker who actually made the mistake, since "somebody might be able to put the pieces together and figure out from [my name] who the wardrobe man was," leading the reporter to opine that "tact is also part of a script supervisor's professional equipment."[97]

Though it has much in common with the secretary's emotional management and confidence keeping, the script supervisor's emotion work occasionally takes on a sharper edge in their self-statements, which were sometimes far blunter than their colleagues in executive and producer's offices. This may have been due to the fact that, in addition to protecting and absorbing blame for the rest of her crew, so much of the script supervisor's work involved telling members of that crew they were doing something wrong, often times as the only person on set other than the director who was empowered to do so. "Everyone used to make fun of me when I carefully checked all wrists whenever we got ready to shoot," said May Wale Brown, who ensured wristwatches made it on camera during the run of the 1800's-set *Bonanza*, a job that "wasn't always easy because at times we had over a hundred extras."[98] Though the cast and crew of the long-running show accepted this as standard practice, on movies with less familiar personnel, the busybody nature of script supervision wasn't always welcome. Brown, who worked steadily in film and

[97] Ibid.
[98] May Wale Brown, *Reel Life on Hollywood Movie Sets* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne, 1995), 111.

television from the 1950s-80s, described racing to the Los Angeles set of *One-Two-Three* after her flight back from a picture in Italy was delayed. Arriving late, she went straight to work:

> I immediately caught two items that didn't match. One bit player had his sleeves down, that had to be rolled to his elbows, and there were hats in the car that…should not be seen….When Billy [Wilder] heard my voice asking the prop man to take the hats out of the car, he called to me, "I'm glad you got here."[99]

Though Wilder appreciated her efforts, it was not easy to be the bearer of bad news, pointing out others' mistakes or being blamed for them herself. Brown didn't relish having to interrupt the flow of a large crowd scene to have the actors put their hats back on to match an exterior shot that followed it chronologically, or catching on to a choreographer's ignorance of the 180 degree rule, only to draw the anger of director Michael Curtiz, who "jumped down my throat wanting to know why changes were being made when we were ready to shoot."[100]

The script supervisor risked offending her director if she didn't properly package the bad news she was duty bound to deliver. Alma Young did not shy from this duty, which may have been why she was sought out for it in an incident not directly in her purview but involving D. Ross Lederman, the director she was working with at the time. He was a "tough, rough guy" known to be difficult sometimes as when he wanted a big explosion in one of the film's scenes. As young recalled:

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[99] Though Brown had been told not to worry about the film's musical numbers "because they were carefully rehearsed and staged, and each shot was planned in advance so it would flow smoothly into the next one." When shooting of the sequences began, however, "something just didn't feel right" to the script supervisor and she quickly realized that the choreographer in charge had changed dancers positions based on how they looked in the frame, with no eye toward matching action. Brown, *Reel Life*, 66-8.
[100] Ibid., 12, 20.

> The powder boys arranged the thing so that the next morning they could shoot it. Well, those men know pretty well what they are doing. And late that night they came to my room, and said, "We are very worried. We have just been told that Ross went out there and added dynamite, and if he did, we're in real trouble." So, the next morning, I remember I told the business manager and the assistant director to hold everything, not to shoot until they went with the powder boys to inspect everything. Ross hated my guts from then on, and I had to work on all the pictures that he was directing.[101]

This story is unusual in that Young was delivering bad news about a director rather than to one, but it is also revealing of the script supervisor's role as perceived by those around her. Young was the chosen point of contact for crew members concerned about risk on set and possibly intimidated by the responsible party, the director who was also their supervisor. As the repository for bad production news, responsible for confessing to any slips that might interrupt the creative flow of production, she was the go-to woman in this situation.

Far more often than bringing directors' behavior to the attention of management, script supervisors were counted on to know to bring production problems to her director's attention. Perhaps as important as the content of such messages was *how* she delivered them through her role as his low-status, female helper. The designated worrier in production, script supervisors were also responsible for voicing these worries to the most creatively and managerially important person on the set in a way that neither upset him nor challenged his authority, either of which might also affect productivity. In an advertisement for AGFA film, entitled "I win a bet from Billie—the script girl," a director's script supervisor performs this balancing act when questioning the lighting of a scene.

[101] Young, "Interview with Alma Young," 13.

Billie is quick to manage her status by agreeing to bet him "one steak dinner" on the matter.[102] Though a playful advertisement about fictitious characters, what rings true is the way the script supervisor wisely offsets her difference of opinion with what, it seems, will be a date with the director regardless of the outcome. Bob Gary, a male script supervisor, who was interviewed with the various female script supervisors in *Variety's* profile of the profession, was no more willing to put himself in overt conflict with a director than any of his colleagues of the opposite sex. "Never tell a director he's wrong," he stated, explaining that "Nobody wants to be made to look like a fool, and we all know how easy it would be with a director, who has so much responsibility and might easily be distracted." Instead of telling a director straightforwardly that the camera should have been rooted in one place on a take, Gary might instead ask, "did you know…that the camera was moving at that time?" This more passive strategy was cited as a means of bringing attention to a director's mistake while leaving open the possibility that it was really the fault of the cameraman or some other member of production.[103] Peggy Robertson took almost this exact tack with first-time director Gordon Wellesley:

> Every shot that he did was a traveling shot. Panning, zooming, dollying. So the cameraman and I sort of got together and said "This is going to look horrible, this picture, with the camera zooming right and left." So he said "You tell him." I said, "You tell him." At any rate, I was elected to go and tell Gordon." I said, "There's an awful lot of movements in this picture, we're panning and tracking and dollying. Do you think that's good?"[104]

[102] "I win a bet from Billie—the script girl," Agfa Ad, Daily Variety (October 2, 1941), 5.
[103] "Script Supervisor Has No Margin for Error," *Daily Variety* (October 25, 1977), 112.
[104] Robertson. "Peggy Robertson Oral History," 49.

The delicate phrasing of Robertson's criticism in this story seems necessary in order to maintain their respective statuses. May Wale Brown recalled one rare occasion when this unwritten rule was broken on the set of what was then an equally rare a film with a female director: *The Rabbit Test* (1978), Joan Rivers' directorial debut. On meeting Brown, Rivers exclaimed "You and I are attached at the hip. Don't ever leave my side during the shooting of this picture!" then insisted that Brown remind her of everything she didn't know, "and I think there is a lot of that."[105]

Even with confident, balanced directors, who welcomed feedback, such issues required delicacy, as well as the sense to know whether to broach them at all. Comedies, for example, involved more adlibs and directors required greater leeway in making them. In those cases, Robertson recalled, "you'd use a little judgment. You know, if he says "and" instead of "or" then you'd say no. But then you've got to realize that you could dub it in afterwards… So you've got to know cutting, what they're going to do, and what they're going to use. You <u>hope</u>.[106] Judgment was also required with directors making experimental artistic choices. May Wale Brown felt it her duty as script supervisor on *Chinatown* (1974) to broach the subject of the bandage director Roman Polanski planned to have protagonist Jake Gittes' wear for large portion of the film. Jack Nicholson, who played Gittes, seemed unsure about having so much of his face covered for so long, but was unwilling to disagree creatively with the director. Brown, as script supervisor, was barred from creative opinion and instead required to address the bandage from a practical standpoint and point out that however long it was to be worn, they should decide in advance

[105] Brown, *Reel Life,* 168.
[106] Robertson. "Peggy Robertson Oral History," 48.

when it would come off or be reduced since such a thing would impact continuity. In response, she said, "all I got was a 'We'll discuss this later on' from both of them"[107] The bandage famously stayed on Nicholson's nose for much of the movie. Though Brown described feeling admiration for Polanski's work throughout production, as this story reveals, her position as script supervisor stranded her outside of his creative process. As the film's rule-minder, it was her responsibility to maintain Polanski's space of creative play without stepping inside it. Whatever a film's level of experimentation, script supervisors facilitated the creative process in this way. By keeping track of such "details" as a method actor's tone of voice from take to take or the shot distance in a choreographer's ambitious musical number, they allowed other personnel to engage creatively, while managing their risk from the margins.

Script supervisors also served as buffer between a film's director and its cast and crew. Director Busby Berkeley, who was "rough to work with" and who pushed dancers to their limits, insisted on having Alma Young as his script supervisor for this purpose, because "she tells me what a damned ass I am, and so I behave myself."[108] Peggy Robertson tried to maintain good relationships with assistant directors since "sometimes he relies on you. 'What's the next shot going to be? You've talked to the director, where's he going to cut here? How many extras do you need?"[109] Her employer, Alfred Hitchcock, "hated fighting" according to Robertson, and yet often found himself in the midst of controversy.[110]

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[107] Brown, *Reel Life*, 81.
[108] Young, "Interview with Alma Young," 11.
[109] Robertson. "Peggy Robertson Oral History," 52.
[110] Robertson. "Peggy Robertson Oral History," 99.

In addition to this job-specific emotion work, many script supervisors also did the more standard feminine labor required of any woman working at studio, and was frequently relied upon for it as the only woman on the crew. Occasionally this meant performing in the role of hostess, sister or friend to other women on the set, as when May Wale Brown attempted to support an emotional Judy Holliday without appearing to side with her against the crew,[111] or when Meta Carpenter chatted companionably to actor Frederic March's wife whenever she visited set or socialized with Bette Davis on location where there were no other women, only to get the cold shoulder back in L.A.[112] Far more often, though, the female script supervisor served as foil for her all-male crew. Meta Carpenter recalled "raw displays of vulgarity by crew members, often calculated to shock me as the only female on the set most of the time."[113] Though she reflected fondly on the teasing she received from John Huston and Humphrey Bogart, which she saw as affectionate and inclusive, she more commonly experienced a cruder, more hostile brand of humor on set, which effectively marked her as separate from the rest of her co-workers. Early on, bolstered by her love affair with William Faulkner, she determined that "Even the narrowness and bigotry of the typical Hollywood union crew –Jew-haters, Roosevelt-cursers, Communist-fearers, denigrators of Catholics and blacks and Mexicans, espousers of the Silver Shirts, opponents of liberal legislation –would not bring down the sky kite that was my heart"[114] However, as time went on, the unwelcoming space began to have a corrosive effect on her workplace identity.

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[111] Brown, *Reel Life,* 56-7.
[112]Wilde and Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman*, 282, 276.
[113] Ibid., 121.
[114] Ibid., 121.

Despite the fact that she was expected to give an appropriately feminine reaction to crude behavior on set, on location her gender difference was her own problem, meriting no special consideration. On her first location shoot in the days before motorized honey-wagons, she asked the assistant director if there was a toilet and was told, "There are some bushes out there…You'll have to manage that way, just like the rest of us."[115] Carpenter described herself, especially when she was younger, as having "a kind of prim, wide-eyed lady-librarian quality that made certain men want to shock me."[116] But rather than playing this feminine role in reaction to her colleagues, she felt herself shifting in a different direction to cope with the performances of masculinity that came at her expense. She described this reaction as typical of women in her position, explaining:

> A woman who works behind the camera, even today, must have a strong personal life to counteract the mutative process that occurs when she is thrown in with a company of men who are, with few exceptions, from the producer and director to the man who sweeps the horse dung away on a Western, power-directed, paranoid, insecure, often sadistic, mulish, and coarse. It is not that these lonely women take on the masculine grain but their womanliness is chipped away in the daily give-and-take with male co-workers whose hostility pours from them like sweat. Her voice unconsciously deepens. Her stride bespeaks efficiency and resolution. Outwardly, she becomes androgynous. The men with whom she works call her by her surname—Jones, Purcell, Lattimer. They tell dirty jokes, ignoring her presence. She has become invisible to them"[117]

Catalina Lawrence did not describe early location shoots as hostile, but she also didn't feel the same camaraderie as male crewmembers seemed to experience as members of the team. She recalled that, "At night the guys would always play cards around the hotel. I would stack the cards, stack the chips, and go out and get drinks

[115] Ibid., 250
[116] Ibid., 262-3.
[117] Ibid., 313.

for the fellows. They treated me just like I was a kid sister running around for them."[118]

The female script supervisor's isolation did not insulate her from being propositioned. Even when she played down her femininity, Carpenter stated:

> "No passably attractive woman attached to a movie company on a distant location need ever lack for dinner invitations from men or for male bed partners. There was always the actor with the flawless profile and teeth capped by an expensive Beverly Hills dentist, who would suggest that it would be helpful were I to come up to his hotel suite when the nightly production meeting was over to help him run the next day's lines. More often, it was the quiet member of the technical crew—one knew instantly that he was the father of school-age children….I had no interest in assistant directors, production managers, cinematographers, camera operators, and sound mixers who slipped off their wedding rings on charter planes after takeoff.[119]

As always, it was the woman's responsibility to manage this unwanted attention and, whether it was merely awkward or downright threatening. Alma Young, whose account of being assigned a full-time escort during one production to prevent her being assaulted by director Pathe Lehrman was discussed in full in Chapter 4, insisted that she had never refused to work with a director. Willingness to do so was likely key to long-term employment, since even after the formation of their guild, script supervisors were not under contract at studios.[120] Before union days, many were also expected to work nearly impossible hours (Young reported being 24 hours on, 8 hours off, 7 days a week for months in the 20s) often doing two jobs at once when the work necessitated a second girl.[121] After a period away from Los Angeles, Meta Carpenter experienced such difficulty finding work that she was

[118] Lawrence, *Hollywood Speaks*, 349.
[119] Wilde and Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman,* 271.
[120] Ibid., 304
[121] Young, "Interview with Alma Young," 3.

reduced to sneaking onto lots and going office-to-office to advertise her services.[122] This hiring climate likely added to pressure to "make nice" with superiors on set. May Brown described what happened to her when she disobeyed the unspoken rule of neutralizing male attention in ways that preserved male egos. She was assigned to director Michael Curtiz on *The Vagabond Kings* and became concerned when, at their first meeting, he kissed her hand, looked deeply in her eyes and asked if all her director's fell in love with her. "Dear God," Brown remembered thinking, "that's all I need—to have to fight off this lecher for six months." She attempted to put an end to it before it began:

> "With all the sincerity I could muster, I replied, 'Never, Mr. Curtiz.' His eyes filled with anger. Dropping my hand, he curtly dismissed me….I should have kept my mouth shut. During the shooting of the picture Mr. Curtiz never missed a chance to challenge my ability, and he enjoyed trying to ridicule and harass me."[123]

Eventually, Carpenter joined with other script supervisors "sick of second-class status in the motion-picture industry, to organize the Script Supervisors Guild and to win belated recognition from the Producer's association."[124]

But even as the field professionalized, respect from peers was not forthcoming for script supervisors, who struggled even to have co-workers and colleagues call them by their actual job title. In 1947, Jack Hellman reported in his column for *Variety* that the trade paper had been taken to task by a script supervisor using the term 'script girl.' She explained that the script supervisor was more than someone's 'girl.' As the director's right hand, she had "the full responsibility of timing, of making all the

[122] Wilde and Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman*, 246-7
[123] Brown, *Reel Life*, 18.
[124] Wilde and Borsten, *A Loving Gentleman*, 304.

script changes in fact, about everything except the directing…I can't see a man in this same position being called a script boy." Hellman seemed to agree, concluding "Now if some director will only come out big and say the kid's right"[125] Many directors did, yet two decades later, Catalina Lawrence had to interrupt Mike Steen during their interview for *Hollywood Speaks: An Oral History* to make the same request, saying "You know, Mike, I use the term 'script girl' and 'script clerk,' but nowadays they prefer to be called script supervisors." To Steen's credit, he included her admonishment in the published interview. Less to his credit, he agreed with her that the gender-neutral "script supervisor" was "more fitting, since it is a profession for men also!"[126] This seemed to miss the point that the word 'girl' wasn't just used to distinguish a female from male clerk, but to distinguish the 'girl' and her work as less than that of her peers in production, whose titles referred to their jobs, not their gender.

In game theory, the concept of the "magic circle" is used to define the space of a game's play. The inside of the circle is distinguished form the outside through such questions as "What does it mean to enter the system of a game? How is it that play begins and ends? What makes up the boundary of the game?"[127] Though film production was and is not a game, a similar magic circle might be said to enclose the space of creative, its process and its players. Based on descriptions above, script supervisors stood outside this magic circle and, through their labor, created its boundaries. Though they worked on set, as near geographically as they could be to

[125] Jack Hellman, "Light and Airy," *Daily Variety* (October 30, 1947), 6.
[126] Mike Steen, *Hollywood Speaks* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1974), 350
[127] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, (London: MIT Press, 2004), 94).

the process of production, whether they wanted it or not, they were set apart from it by the creative service functioned that they performed for peers in production. Much like female clerical workers elsewhere on the lot, script supervisors supported and facilitated the creativity of their superiors and co-workers through their feminized labor and the womanly role through which they delivered it. And much like the referee of a soccer match or the designated driver during a night on the town, they were there to ensure the "fun" of creative play specifically through their own abstention from it. Through minding the filmmaking's details and managing the emotional impact of its difficulties, they took the collective worry of production onto their shoulders, freeing its participants to "play" in the creative space. In a Q&A session with production students, script supervisor-turned-production manager Morris Abrams explained how this work benefited the process at length, saying:

> As a support person, I find that, whether you agree with the creative people or not, if you understand their concepts, you will help the picture. Even the indirect benefit of anticipating and meeting creative people's needs will make a difference.…The more in tune you are with the effort of the creative people and the director, the actors, the producer, the editors—the more you can anticipate, have things ready, and above all, help to make a better film. I don't know whether most of you recognize this: 85 percent of the time is used up by the support troops. The remaining 15 percent of the time is rehearsal and takes. I'm not arguing as an efficiency man. I'm arguing from the standpoint of making a better film. Filmmaking is a business and an art of details. It is a synthesis of many efforts and impressions, many of them subliminal. That is what makes it possible to say that a script supervisor who feels a responsibility to know everything possible about every aspect of production can help make a better film. If the little things are handled so that you can work smoothly and have a little sense of momentum on the set, then you get a better film.[128]

[128] Abrams, *The Role of the Script Supervisor,* 22.

Even in the tightly controlled production process of the studio era, the cinematographer, the actor, etc., were all aided in their creative process by script supervisors, who in the "art of details," served as the designated timekeepers, taskmistresses and rule-minders.

Most of all, script supervisors performed this function for directors, who offloaded onto them responsibility for practical concerns about the continuity of what went into the frame, thus freeing themselves for more artistic ones. This is clear from frequent references to script supervisors as the director's assistant, right hand, or even his second memory who, as one Kodak ad put it "made sure that smooth continuity would be faithfully preserved" through "unflagging watchfulness" that began before the camera was rolling, extended down to the smallest prop and saved production many a costly retake.[129] When asked if it was accurate to call the script supervisor a director's "right hand man," Catalina Lawrence echoed the ad's copy, saying "That's right. Our main job is to keep him straight and not let him forget anything."[130]

Common to nearly all descriptions of the work of script supervisor, characterizations of the work as serving as the director's right hand, extra memory, etc., indicate the field's relationship to others that performed similar functions in pre- and post-production, and which were female-dominated or female friendly in the studio era. Editing, while never fully feminized, has been identified with women throughout film history. Karen Ward Mahar invokes the link when she states that role of editor emerged "With the rise of the continuity script and the central-

[129] "Kodak Ad" in *Daily Variety* (June 9, 1948), 9.
[130] Lawrence, *Hollywood Speaks*, 323.

producer system," and implies that, early on, the editor was more closely affiliated with the continuity writer and script supervisor than the director, since, by "using the continuity script and the slate numbers as a guide, the cutter could assemble a rough cut, and even a final cut, often without the director's personal instruction."[131] At the Ince studio, as a film editor detailed in 1922, this practice was later assigned to "the girl assemblers" who, before the editor (described with male pronouns) began his work, were given "a layout which they follow, cementing the various strips in their proper order with the titles represented merely by numbers corresponding with numbers thrown on the screen." This intermediate step in the post-production process allowed "the director an opportunity to view his own work …making whatever changes he deems necessary and adding any suggestions calculated to improve the titles before they are set up and photograph." Only later did the editor complete the cut, after which it fell again to "many girl assistants" to finish the master.[132]

Though the director and camera crew may have been responsible for tracking continuity in production prior to the advent of the script supervisor, editors also frequently performed as the director's "added memory" in terms of continuity and style.[133] According to Edward Dmytryk in the early years of Paramount, editors were often kept on set to get a feel for films prior to the edit.[134]

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131 Karen Ward Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 200-201
132 "The Film Editor, His Training and Qualifications," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Business* v. 3 (Los Angeles: Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 75-6.
133 Helena Lume, *Great Women of Film* (New York, Billboard, 2002).
134 Edward Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life But Not a Good Living* (New York: Times Books, 1978), 35. Also discussed as a practice at Paramount in: Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 289.

Some directors found cutters a threat to their authority, but oftentimes they welcomed them because they had no real assistant in production. He explained:

> The A.D. (Assistant Director) is an invaluable man, of course, but he is the foreman, the whip hand who, with the help of the production manager, keeps the company operating smoothly….But, in a large percentage of cases, the assistant is really the production department's watchdog, helping but not really working with the director at all….So if a director needs a 'bouncing board,' he looks to someone else….The cutter, on the other hand, drops into that slot nicely. To the production department, he is always a "director's man." His filmic concerns are close to the director, he has plenty of time on his hands, and he is usually a good listener. He can certainly help solve some simple problems like, 'Do we need a close-up here?' with some authority. [135]

As described here, early cutters on the set served much the same function as the script supervisor, sitting as right hand, loyal to the director above all, and functioning as his bouncing board and second memory. Viewed in this way, the line of continuity can be seen to extend through the filmmaking process to the script supervisor who maintains that continuity in production and passes it on to the editor in post. In fact, most script supervisors said that they had to know a lot about editing to succeed in the role since, as Catalina Lawrence said, "we are the link between the director on his set and the film editor in his lab."[136] Not only did the script supervisor ensure that editors would be able to cut films together to make sense through maintaining continuity during shooting, they also handed off notes to the editor explaining which takes the director liked and any special notes about a

[135] Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life*, 36.
[136] Lawrence, *Hollywood Speaks*, 353.

given scene. Director, script supervisor and editor often viewed dailies together,[137] helping both editor and continuity worker to further grasp the director's approach.

The connection between these two roles, as partners in "minding details" through production, along with the pre-production role of continuity writer, provides further insight their status as female-friendly or female-associated jobs at studios. Many female workers found their way to roles as "cutters" at early studios from lower-level, feminized sectors in the lab in much the same way as secretaries, readers and other lower-level female workers in scenario departments advanced to roles as continuity writers and screenwriters. Initially, they were able to advance to higher level editing roles because much of the work surrounding it was considered tedious and routine and thus deemed less desirable by male counterparts. In the 1910s and early 20s, studios recruited women from the polishing and joining rooms to become 'cutter girls.'[138] This was how a number of successful female editors entered the field. Margaret Booth recalled that "Irene Morra was the negative cutter and she took me to help her and showed me how to cut."[139] Edward Dmytryk recalled learning about editing's more mechanical, routine, but not unskilled labor from the predominantly female staff of the early cutting department at Paramount:

> Hand splicing was a skill, though a minor one. Splicers had to learn just how much of a frame to cut, how to lick the overlapping bit of film with just enough spit to soften the emulsion that had to be removed, how to scrape it off with an Eveready razor blade without weakening the celluloid base underneath, how to apply the right amount of cement and then fit the pieces together so precisely that the doubled film would ride smoothly through the sprockets of the projection

[137] Davis, *The Glamour Factory,* 292.
[138] Mahar, *Women Filmmakers,* 201.
[139] Margaret Booth, Interview by Rudy Behlmer, in *An Oral History with Margaret Booth*, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA, quoted in Karen Ward Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 201.

> machine. Hollywood unions were still some years in the future, so none of the girls complained that I was muscling in on her job. On the contrary, the splicer's seemed to enjoy a bit of extra time for a smoke, and I felt useful.[140]

These "light" manufacturing duties were not the only aspect of editing that set it on an early course toward feminization. In discussions of women's filmmaking specialties from the late teens and early twenties, female editors were mentioned alongside "woman script clerks" and scenario writers, as a natural extension of women's aptitude for managing detail from positions that didn't require her to exercise physical strength or play a visible leadership role.[141] Like other jobs in which women were able to make a place for themselves, early editing suffered from a lack of respect and acknowledgment in production. Just as some directors felt an editor's presence on set as a challenge to their authority, during the editing process, the editor's role overlapped with the director's. As editor Ralph Rosenblum and Robert Karen explain in *When the Shooting Stops…The Cutting Begins*, the editor's level of contribution "came to rest chiefly on how much the director respected and encouraged it," which meant that "outside these two men, almost no one had any idea exactly what that contribution was."[142] Like script supervision, costuming and casting, all of which eventually feminized, good editing was largely defined by how little it drew attention to itself. When editors attempted to take in more creative territory, they risked offending their directors, and so had to do so "gently, without

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[140] Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life*, 5.
[141] Described as "Robust physique and nerve force." In Osbourne, "Why Are There No Women Directors?" *Motion Picture Magazine* (November 1925), 5."When a woman takes a megaphone in hand, the eyes of the entire industry are focused upon her," discussed in: June Mathis, "The Feminine Mind in Picture Making," *Film Daily* (June 7, 1925), 115. "unless you are hardy and determined, the director's role is not for you,' in Ida May Park, "Motion Picture Work: The Motion Picture Director," *Careers for Women*, Catherine Filene, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 337.
[142] Ralph Rosenblum and Robert Karen, *When the Shooting Stops…the Cutting Begins* (New York: Viking, 1979, this edition New York: Da Capo, 1986). 68.

causing offense, perhaps even hinting that his innovations had been the director's unspoken wish all along," so that they might be hired for subsequent projects. But with such limited room to move, many other editors "learned to play the mechanic's role, sometimes to the extent of a maddening refusal to take any initiative at all."[143]

The ambiguity around editing (and what was and wasn't the editor's work) was furthered by shorthand that grew up around it, "'Fill in the holes!' became the great command that editors were left with. An order that had the ring of 'Patch up my grammar when you type the letter."[144] In this last, Rosenblum and Karen hit on why women's association with editing has as much to do with the work's similarity to the secretary's clerical/emotional creative service as it does with either women's innate qualities or their presence in nearby light manufacturing sectors of the film laboratory. Robert Wise commented that the editor-director relationship resembled a marriage and was the director's longest marriage in the course of making a film. Just as the secretary in the office functioned as the executive or producer's proxy, often making important creative and managerial decisions, the early editor's success came through willingness to minimize their own achievements. By these unwritten rules, an editor could accept credit for the more rational, mechanical aspects of putting the film together without taking credit for any of the artistry that made a story flow seamlessly or underscored its thematic or stylistic elements. And because of the ambiguity around their work, editors, like script supervisors, could easily be blamed for others' mistakes, simply through their inability to catch, disguise or erase them. For this reason, it comes as little surprise that women were channeled

[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 68-9.

toward editing from existing feminized labor sectors in the 1920s when, as Ronald Davis notes, "several women graduated into film editing from jobs as negative cutters, script girls, or secretaries."[145] As Rosenblum and Karen explain, the role of helper was one women knew how to play:

> Trained from childhood to think of themselves as assistants rather than originators, they found in editing a safe outlet for their genius—and directors found in them the ideal combination of aptitude and submission.[146]

Barbara McLean cited women's traditional roles as nurturers and caretakers for helping them to use the scissors "like a mother would, with affection and understanding and tolerance."[147] Women's other "natural" feminine qualities also came in handy since, as editor and director Elmo Williams stated, "they are sensitive and as a rule have more patience than men do," and, of course, "women don't mind all the fiddly little details that you have to deal with; they're very thorough."[148] These descriptions of editing further highlight its similarities with script supervision and continuity writing. Jeanie MacPherson's treatise on continuity writing for *Photoplay* in 1922 is full of references to screenwriters or originators of film stories as artists, and to continuity writers as architects, builders and technicians who know the rules around continuity writing. Looking at a continuity script, MacPherson wrote, "the amateur might think that 'it certainly LOOKS easy enough.' So he writes his 'continuity' and behold! It LOOKS just like the work of an

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[145] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 284
[146] Rosenblum and Karen, *When the Shooting Stops,* 69.
[147] Barbara McLean, Interviewed by Thomas R. Stempel, American Film Institute, Los Angeles, December 22, 1971. Quoted in: "Ronald Davis, *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood's Big Studio System*, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993), 292.
[148] Quoted in: Ronald Davis, *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood's Big Studio System*, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993), 284.

expert! It contains the required ingredients." But this amateur would soon discover that his work would not "pass the strict 'building laws' of dramatic construction."[149]

While each director was responsible for creating his artistic vision, the coherence of that vision was maintained by these three roles, which were unified by the common job creed of safeguarding a picture's structural soundness. From the continuity writer who ensured the story make sense on the page to the script supervisor who minded its pesky details in production and, finally, the editor who put it all together into a cohesive whole, this tripartite *continuity process* built rationality into the DNA of production. Much as Jeanie McPherson observed of continuity writing, these cohesion experts served collectively as architect to the director's artist. Each of these jobs also involved a form of creative service to production in general, and to the director in specific, with success often determined by the extent to which they could perform as the director's "extra memory" or "right hand" without causing him to lose any authority, real or imagined, as the film's creative center. Rather than the director's second memory, these professions might more accurately be characterized as his second brain, responsible for much of the complex, practical thinking needed for an artistic vision to come together as a comprehensible story with a chance for commercial success. Where movies were concerned, God was in the details. And so were women.

The continuity worker as second brain was also a resource for the director, offering him a second creative perspective under the non-threatening guise of assistance or service to his vision. This was especially true for editors, who were

[149] McPherson, "Functions of the Continuity Writer," 30.

responsible for a large portion of the artistry with little credit. Editing resembles the creative service of the secretary or assistant to movie makers in this respect, as well as its significant organizational responsibilities which worked in tandem to support the director's process. With notes from the script supervisor as a guide, editors were responsible for assembling films and allowing directors to make key decisions by offering them options and influencing them in certain directions. In this sense, the editor's assembling of options and providing assistance to a creative decision maker recalls the secretary's necessarily passive form of creative problem solving through narrowing a field of possibilities to a choice few. Editors, obligated to fly their agency under the director's radar, also delimited the solution to creative problems by offering options and influencing the movie maker in the right direction rather than telling him directly what he should do. Depending on the director, both the secretary and the editor's agency was disguised by their role as the director's little organizational helper.

Naturally, given these characteristics, women in the developing industry made inroads in editing. In the early days, Adrienne Fazan remembered, "every studio had a few women editors… [A] woman could get started then."[150] According to Karen Mahar, "At least a dozen other women were counted among the first editors in Hollywood, among them Anne Bauchens, Blanche Sewell, Anne McKnight, Barbara McLean, Alma MacCrory, Nan Heron, and Anna Spiegel."[151] However, despite the early association of women with editing, the field's subtle form of creativity was not hidden for long. Unlike other feminized fields, the actual work of

[150] Fazan quoted in: Mahar, *Women Filmmakers*, 201.
[151] Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*, 201.

the editor was done on film, not paper. And as such, unlike secretaries, script supervisors or continuity writers, editors interacted more directly with the creative product. By the early 20s, editing's visibility had been raised by artistic successes like the films of D.W. Griffith, which owed much of their impact to parallel montage and other new, editorial storytelling techniques.[152] As "cutting" rose in desirability and prestige, male workers staked their claim in editing departments. As usual, male aspirants were aided by the processes of standardization and specialization. Female editors encountered more and more by male underlings as the loose systems under which they had been hired gave way to a more rigid hierarchy of apprentices and masters, into which studios funneled male workers. Edward Dmytryk said that early in his time at Paramount, he was not regarded as a threat by the female splicers he often relieved for extra smoke breaks. However, things had changed a few years later, and with the advent of sound, the change was accelerated as cutting rooms underwent "a qualitative and quantitative change." Female workers not intimidated by the technological complexities of sound were often replaced anyway, by "department heads who felt that the ladies couldn't cope; the fact that at least some of these ladies remained top editors right through the transition had little effect on their prejudices." Editing departments also expanded due to the intricacies of sound which, as Dmytryk explained:

> necessitated the establishment of a new working classification—the assistant cutter. There had always been apprentices, but the assistant cutter was a rarity before sound. Now there was a stream of personnel flowing into the cutting department, and because of the real and

[152] Ibid.

> imagined difficulties involved in cutting sound, that stream was almost exclusively male. Fortunately, I was a man."[153]

Dmytryk received his own promotion to cutting when a slot opened and "there was only one man ahead of me on the waiting list," [154] who had second thoughts about leaving his projectionist job. Some female editors like Violet Lawrence and Anne Bauchens, who had entered the profession in earlier years remained and had long careers.[155] Margaret Booth served as MGM's supervising editor and reportedly reviewed dailies and first cuts for every film there, and gave notes and suggestions to the editors under her.[156] However, the willingness to allow new women in had ebbed. Unions made it increasingly difficult to break into the business as studios promoted from within, which meant they mostly promoted men.[157] As Karen Mahar explains, those women already in the field were also affected by the shift toward masculinization:

> Even female editors who began their careers in the 1910s and early 1920s ran into hostility from male editors. Viola Lawrence's husband, Frank, who taught her to cut film in 1915 was 'mean' to the female assistant editors he supervised at Paramount in the 1920s. 'He just hated them,' she claimed. 'If any of the girls were cutting—if they did get the chance to cut—he'd put them right back as assistants,' but he 'broke in a lot of the boys.' In the early 1930s, editor Adrienne Fazan recalled, 'MGM didn't want me to become a feature cutter.' Production head Edie Mannix told her that film editing was 'just too tough work for women,' who 'should go home and cook for their husbands and have babies.' (It was Dorothy Arzner, the only woman to survive the purge of female directors in the 1920s, who took Fazan out of the short film department by asking specifically for a female editor.)[158]

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153 Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life*,18.
154 Ibid., 19
155 Mahar, *Women Filmmakers*, 201-2.
156 Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 297.
157 Ibid., 288.
158 Mahar, *Women Filmmakers*, 201.

When Dede Allen "wormed her way into the cutting room" at Columbia Pictures in the 1940s, she saw the job as a more realistic goal than her true aim of directing, where the obstacles were even fierce. But that did not mean she experienced editing as a particularly a sector where women were welcome. Allen did not leave work when her children were sick because she knew her male peers would judge her for it. She tried not to feel irritated "at being a woman, because sometimes you have a lot of gaffe that goes with it," and attributed her success to being told "you can't" so frequently that, according to Allen "you had to make it."[159]

Though editing was not feminized during the studio era, its trajectory toward and away from feminization demonstrates how notions of "women's work" shaped studio practices and production cultures and vice versa. When jobs in the film industry were deemed unsuitable by men for the same reasons as they had been elsewhere –due to service characteristics and clerical/organizational or rationalized duties, women were allowed in –on the condition that they took less pay, and, often offered more of the service work that came "naturally" to them. Women not only fit themselves to these roles but excelled in them. This had nothing to do with inborn, essential feminine characteristics and everything to do with women's individual talents and collective determination to succeed in any job that brought them closer to the same creative, managerial or financial gains any film worker desired. They would have done the same in fields such as directing, producing and cinematography if given *genuine* opportunity there, which, beyond the motivation to hire them, would have had to include the willingness to train them and accept their

[159] Dede Allen, Interviewed by Patrick McGilligan in Karen Kay and Gerald Peary, eds., *Women and the Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977), 201-3.

presence in the field. Because they were deemed "natural" editors early on, women's work in editing was legitimized and their successes tolerated, where in other, more contested areas, they were either denied the chance to work altogether, or had their efforts dismissed, sabotaged or judged on a harsher scale than men.

However, tolerance did not equal support or respect. Even the feminized role of script supervision was ostracized in production, the boundaries between its supporting role and the more creative or technical areas of production policed through work culture. Joan Rivers' request that female co-worker May Wale Brown never leave her side as she directed her first film was likely not gender blind. Women could not get into the pipeline that trained them for technical crafts like cinematography or directing. If by some other means they obtained a directing position, they could expect to fend for themselves and be blamed for the knowledge they didn't have and weren't given by peers. And so they frequently took the only paths available to them, those like editing, script supervision and continuity writing, where their presences was sanctioned by gendered logic, not equanimity or recognition of their individual talents. This meant that when a job's creative capital was raised, women in the field could be marginalized in much the same way, whether through rationalizations that feminine brains couldn't grasp the complexities of new technologies, or through simple reorganization that cut off their access to promotion. In the case of editing, outcomes were mixed. Some women stayed in the field after the 20s, but others were pushed out and many would-be female editors never broke in. Today, the field retains some of its association with women despite its much-elevated creative status, yet women have never regained

their early toehold there, and the field remains mixed-gender at best, male-dominated at worst. How different might the field be today if it had continued on its path toward feminization? Would women dominate? Would the creative status or compensation be reduced? Would latent creative service characteristics be more pronounced? Or would the gendered past have little impact on the post-studio present? As shall be seen in the final pair of women's film professions, the past is never truly the past. Even in fields that had previously been masculinized and of relatively high status and which followed a course to feminization that was the inverse of editing, when women stepped onto new territory, the ground shifted under their feet.

Publicists and Casting Directors: The Rule and the Exception in Late Feminization

While other sectors that are today viewed as women's fields feminized (or began to and reversed course) prior to the 1930s, the feminization of paper-based processes of casting and publicity began late in the studio era, as male departmental managers promoted women out of purely clerical positions to those planning positions above them, and was completed after the big studio period was over. Unlike the script supervisor, who could not advance from her position across gender lines to work in the camera department, proximity was an advantage to women in planning departments, where processes took place on paper. Publicity and casting had been female-friendly occupations in the early industry and were identified as

such by Myrtle Gebhart when she listed it among the professions open to women in 1923.[160]

> Around the same time, Lasky publicity director Adam Hull Shirk wrote:
>
> > Women as well as men work in the publicity departments of some companies, though the latter are in the majority. Sometimes, especially in the matter of fashion articles and the more intimate details of feminine life, a woman is better qualified than a man, but many feminine readers of stories concerning the sartorial characteristics of the stars, would be surprised to learn how often those articles are written by mere men who have caught the knack of description and learned how to intrigue the interest of women readers.[161]

As this account indicates, as the industry grew, masculinization affected even publicity and casting, where women were excluded from leadership positions, as well as much of the work underneath them as men "caught the knack" for doing their jobs. As with other professions on the lot, it was easier for men to move into publicity jobs if they wanted them, because it was easier for them to get in close proximity through some other role at studios. Shirk advised that if he had no other "in" to publicity, he would simply get a job on the lot and hope to learn the business as put himself into position to ask for an opportunity when it arose. There were simply more jobs from which men might accomplish such maneuvering.[162] Ronald Davis writes that most unit publicists were male prior to World War II, which was "considered appropriate at the time since the job required traveling with the

[160] Mertyl Gebhart, "Business Women in Film Studios" *Business Women* (December, 1923).
[161] Adam Hull Shirk, "Breaking in to the Publicity End of Pictures," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Business* v. 2 (Los Angeles: Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 57.
[162] Ibid., 57.

company while the production was being shot," and publicity departments in general was male dominated and headed by men through the 1930s.[163]

However, women did have one important "in" as secretarial workers in the department, which allowed them to eventually regain ground there. MGM publicist Howard Strickling was one of the first to hire women, but the field integrated relatively steadily once the practice began. The leap from strictly clerical duties in publicity to actual publicity work there was fairly short. Robert Vogel, oversaw foreign publicity at MGM starting in the 1930s through the 1970s, described the role of his assistant Peggy O'Day, as very close to his own, saying she was really more of a "Deputy Mayor" than a standard assistant, in that she did "Everything. Anything that I didn't handle personally she handled. When I was away, she ran the place."[164]

It was also a shorter leap to accept women in publicity roles than other masculinized fields, not only because of the paper-based nature of the work, but also the job's requirements and perceptions thereof. Women's supposed skill set could more readily be framed as an asset to publicity because the work involved behind-the-scenes writing –reporting about films and stars in departments which functioned a bit like newspapers— as well as elements of storytelling, service characteristics such as caretaking (of studios' stars) and sales (of stories to executives and the press), and, most womanly of all, gossip. For all these reasons publicity was not the end goal for many of its male workers. As Christopher Finch and Linda Rosenkrantz wrote in *Gone Hollywood*, "it was not unusual for publicity

[163] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 138-9.
[164]Vogel, "Robert Vogel Oral History" Interviewed by Barbara Hall, Margaret Herrick Library, 1990, 101.

men to move into other branches of the movie industry.[165] This could only have helped female aspirants, leaving more spots open for them to enter, with less competition from men for whom publicist was not such a sought-after role. Eventually, female publicists integrated even the upper-level positions at studios as well, and by the 1950s and 60s they were branching out on their own and the job was well on the way to its contemporary feminized and female dominated state.

Given the logic of women's work at studios as defined by previous chapters, publicity's path to feminization seems almost a matter of course, and it might reasonably be assumed that other paper planning professions would have followed a similar one. That's why it's surprising that casting, which took place on paper and was located nearby publicity in studio geography and hierarchy, did not feminize until the post-studio era of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As such, that role represents the outer ring of the ripple effect of the notions of "women's work" in film that emerged in the late teens and early 1920s and reorganized women's role there.

Though any post-Fordist commercial industry's mass-produced merchandise finds its ways to shelves in complex ways, this is especially true of the contemporary American media industry, which has developed complex work systems to manage a production a process that is simultaneously factory-like and individuated in order to produce goods that are simultaneously commercial and artistic. Texts are created through an interlocking series of soft systems, developed over a century of massive technological and social change, and are held together by multiple, contradictory

[165]Christopher Finch and Linda Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 279.

industrial mythologies, resulting in production processes that are often as messy, disconnected and chaotic as its most successful products are clean, harmonious and balanced.[166]

The production-sub-sector of film and television casting, and in particular its feminized status and characteristics, exemplifies this messiness. Press and trade profiles of casting directors and their work tend to focus on casting's female domination, in part because it provides a sense of historical symmetry, evincing shifts away from the old Hollywood values symbolized by "the casting couch," a euphemism for the exploitative practices for which casting was known in the past. However, the profession's gendered state goes beyond a simple female majority in a way that is perhaps more indicative of regressive than of progressive socio-cultural values. In interviews, casting directors often make mention the of their job's gender-neutral requirements—the kinds of things that might be listed in a casting instruction manual. But far more often, they attribute their success in the field to their ability to perform regular acts of gendered performance, and their aptitude for playing the feminine roles of wife, mother, hostess, and girl Friday. These descriptions bear striking resemblance to studio-era characterizations of women's sectors in earlier chapters, and the innate feminine skills they purportedly harnessed. Today, for both female and male casting directors, such gender binaries remain an important means by which to understand their field and their place

[166]This messiness is the subject of John Caldwell's forthcoming book *Para-Industries*. He provides an extended abstract and a summary of some of the work's essential tenets in "Para-Industry: Researching Hollywood's Blackwaters," *Cinema Journal* v.52.3 (Spring 2013), 157-165.

within it, especially since many believe, per professional lore, that the job has been gendered in this way since the early days of film production.

For these reasons, casting initially seems like a perfect example of the feminized fields whose work processes, conditions, and continued existence, I have argued, are products of historical practices of sex segregation and the feminization of certain types of low-status, creative service work in film history. However, closer examination of casting's history reveals significant complications to this theory as well. Unlike other, related feminized sectors, casting carries relatively high creative and managerial status in contemporary below-the-line production hierarchies. And unlike those other feminized fields, the role of casting director was filled almost exclusively by men until the 1950s and continued to be male-dominated until the 1970s. This male-dominated version of casting was an executive role, more closely linked with masculinized forms of management that emerged under Taylorism, and that called for a largely different set of skills and than those cited by contemporary casting directors. Moreover, the kinds of creativity and leadership that are cited as modern casting's "best practices" defy simple categorization as originating in either historically feminized labor sectors or of 1900s Taylorist management traditions that studio-era casting directors were in line with as executives. Indeed, rather than fitting neatly into one historical explanation or the other, casting is a mixture of the two, with some feminized aspects, some managerial aspects that descend from the scientific management tradition, and many others which are unlikely hybrids of the two. Tracing casting's opposing aspects through history reveals the reverberations of the logic of feminization that was set in place decades before the profession's

feminization. Casting's feminization is explored here as the exception that proves the gender-based rules outlined above through the examples of other women's film fields. In this way, the line from studio era women's work is at last connected through the post-studio period to today's woman's film professions. Through the curious case of casting, the legacy of "women's work" at studios is revealed in the in the persistence of creative service as a condition for women's success as well as the multiple, oftentimes fractured identities embodied and merged by media practitioners through their roles in creative industries' complex work systems.

Modern Casting

The work of the casting director today has clear enough ties to feminized labor in the studio era that its practitioners are typically aware of them. Contemporary casting directors frequently attribute their field's female domination to its considerable clerical/organizational components. Daily work in casting offices includes heavy helpings of such clerical-secretarial basics as "opening envelopes and answering telephone calls and Xeroxing sides and calling and setting up appointments….scheduling the call-back sessions,"[167] as well as those organizational tasks involved in narrowing the field of actors for various roles, such as filing materials on different performers, checking their availability to work, typing lists of top candidates, etc. In the oral history passed from casting director to casting director, the profession has "always been a women's field,"[168] or "a field that women

[167] Marcia Ross, C.S.A., Interview by Author, Los Angeles, CA, December 8, 2004.
[168] Meg Liberman, C.S.A., quoted in Anne Berman, "Shattering the Casting Couch Myth: Contrary to Popular Notions, Women Dominate the Field," *Variety: Women in Showbiz Issue,* November 18, 2002, A8.

did well in," precisely because so much of the work is clerical "drone work" of the type traditionally associated with women.[169] By this logic, it is held either that "it used to be the secretaries who took care of [casting] in the old studio system,"[170] or else that women were assistants to early casting directors, and "were cheaper replacements when the men went on to more lucrative things like producing," because "we can type up our own lists and make a deal at the same time."[171] Though this narrative isn't completely accurate, the link it makes between casting's present female domination and feminized clerical labor in history is an important one, which demonstrates the oppositional relationship between conceptions of women's labor and new management traditions that emerged alongside one another in American industries at the turn of the twentieth century.

In addition to the field's clerical elements, contemporary casting directors also attribute female domination to emotional aspects of the work that, as with early female clerical and film workers, were tied to notions of womanliness and required acts of gendered performance.[172] Instinct and intuition are frequently cited as key to female casting directors' success in the field, since "women frequently have good instincts for casting,[173]"for which actors had "the right chemistry" and for which was

[169] Wallis Nicita, C.S.A., quoted in Vernon Scott, "Everyone, at Times, Loves a Casting Director" UPI Hollywood Reporter, August 15, 1987, Friday, BC cycle.
[170] Deb Manwiller, C.S.A., quoted in Catherine Seipp, "Casting Directors Can Make You A Star," *UPI Press International via COMTEX*, June 18, 2003, 1008169w7095.
[171] Jane Jenkins, C.S.A., quoted in "Casting Directors: Under their Expert Eyes, Aspirants Go from Glossies to Glory," *People Weekly*, Spring, 1991, v35, 71.
[172] As outlined by Judith Butler, under which gender is constructed by the individual in a tacit agreement with society to "sustain discrete and polar genders" by means of "a stylized repetition of acts, product of continuous reiterated acts of performance." Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routlege, 1999), 179.
[173] Juliet Taylor, C.S.A., quoted in Don Shewey, "They Comb New York To Give Its Movies a Special look," *The New York Times*, April 11, 1982, Sunday, Late City Final, 19.

"the most interesting story to tell." [174] This was often held to come more naturally to women because "for some reason women are honed in on those instincts …about relationships, about people,"[175] reflecting traditional notions of women's intuition, which has historically tied women to nature, held them to be more connected to their emotions than to logic, and characterized their decision-making process as more intuitive and instinctual as a result.

Communication skills are also cited as important to success in the contemporary field of casting, with its multiple sessions involving hundreds of potential hires and creative players, requiring much back-and-forth relay of information. Though communication could easily be classified as a gender neutral skill depending on the tasks involved and how they were framed, here it was used to refer to the same emotional labor and service characteristics (pleasant phone manners, "people" skills, detail-oriented multi-tasking, forging personal connections) women were expected to bring to the professional sphere from their earliest forays there. Gendered expectations take center stage in statements to the effect that women excelled at casting because "we tend to be a little more natural communicators" and that "that evolved into having a place for women," who "were better able to do more than one thing at the same time,"[176] in a job that "requires great care for details,"[177] and work in groups because "women like company." There is also a conception of women as better suited to the social aspects of what is "a more people-oriented profession," in which "You deal more with people in a very

[174] Cathy Sandrich, C.S.A., interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, December 7, 2004.
[175] Sharon Bialy, C.S.A., interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, December 3, 2004.
[176] Janet Gilmore, C.S.A., quoted in Seipp, "Casting Directors Can Make You A Star."
[177] Juliet Taylor, C.S.A., quoted in Shewey, 19.

direct way.[178]" It is seen as an additional edge that women are "more natural communicator[s]"[179] than men because to be a good casting director "you have to be enormously interested in people, to the extent that you put your own ego aside. Women are trained to do that, to listen and to be very interested in all kinds of people."[180]

These descriptions highlight some of casting's emotional labor and creative service characteristics. Such characteristics are especially apparent in casting directors' descriptions of casting sessions, where the expectations and emotions of dozens of actors come into play, along with those of a project's directors, producers and executives. In these sessions, casting directors carefully manage tension and set the emotional tone. Casting directors agree that it is crucial in these session "that actors feel very comfortable, that directors feel very comfortable, that you tear down as many barriers between them as possible,''[181] while also making sure "that everybody feels they are part of it."[182] Indeed, "keeping everybody happy at the same time,"[183] is regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of the work, requiring the nuance to "figure out how to please all of those people," when, in addition to pleasing the director, "you might have one, five, seven, twelve people who will all participate in the choice about who this actor is going to be."[184] Casting directors make frequent comparisons between their roles in these meetings and women's traditional roles in the domestic sphere. The work is likened to home entertaining

[178] Ibid.
[179] Sherry Thomas, C.S.A., interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, December 3, 2004.
[180] Juliet Taylor, C.S.A., quoted in Shewey, 19.
[181] Juliet Taylor, C.S.A., quoted in Shewey, 19.
[182] Justine Baddeley, C.S.A., quoted in "Roundtable: Casting Directors," *The Hollywood Reporter,* <hollywoodreporter.com>, December 7, 2006.
[183] Kim Davis-Wagner, C.S.A., quoted in "Roundtable…"
[184] Marcia Ross, C.S.A., interview.

("it's almost like women have a genetic hostess gene"), skill for which aided them in sessions, where, ''Sometimes you do feel like a hostess at a great party,''[185] "introducing the directors…making the actor comfortable in your home,"[186] "keeping the room alive, getting everyone excited about the next actor, lifting the spirits of the director if 20 people pass on the part. You're like a good wife in that respect. You make sure everyone gets what they want for dinner."[187] Casting directors cited other ways in which the job was "like being a wife" [188] or a mother, especially in terms of the caretaking involved, saying "the better casting directors will nurture actors so that they're comfortable in the room,"[189] while, "casting directors who do not make people feel that they're well taken care of don't tend to work with those people ever again."[190] Male casting directors seem to agree that this aspect of the job was key, one of them saying "There are many aggressive people who make it more about their own needs than caretaking, and that limits their success."[191]

As important as it was in casting sessions, ("we're very emotional in the casting. We cry in the room")[192] emotional labor was equally important afterward, when delivering good and bad news was also a matter of emotional management, both internal and external, in that "you have to tell people they did or didn't get parts,"[193] and while "it can get you down having to say 'no' to so many people so

[185] Juliet Taylor, C.S.A., quoted in Shewey, 19.
[186] Sharon Bialy C.S.A., interview.
[187] Debi Manwiller C.S.A., interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, December 8, 2004.
[188] Marcia Ross C.S.A., interview.
[189] Sherry Thomas, C.S.A., interview.
[190] Marcia Ross, C.S.A., Interview.
[191] John Papsidera, C.S.A., interview by author. Los Angeles, CA, December 13, 2004.
[192] Sandrich, C.S.A., interview by author.
[193] Ross, C.S.A., interview by author.

often,''[194] that good casting directors were those who could limit the emotional impact on others through understanding that "there's a politic way to deliver news without offending sensitive people. You have to learn who has a thin skin. People turn things down for all types of reasons and you have to be prepared for all types of reactions."[195] These self-statements by casting directors, taken alone, paint the job as largely dependent on reflecting traditional gender norms. Vicki Mayer has observed a tendency among reality "casters"[196] to "internalize a binary logic around gender and sexuality, emphasizing organic or natural bases for their talent," rather than training or job skills that were more associated with commerce, which has the effect of devaluing their labor, "undermining its skill set in comparison with jobs that required certification or the registration of formal education on a resume."[197]

Though casting directors similarly cite these "natural" talents, unlike Mayer's subjects, they made much of those casting skills more in line with the masculinized business tradition, such as dealmaking, negotiation, budgeting pitching their services to new clients. This perhaps reflects the longer history of the film and TV casting director, and its practitioners efforts in recent years to correct the perceived lack of understanding of casting and the professionalism of casting directors outside the field. So while discourse around their work often begins with the headline of female domination and women's skills, many casting directors are quick to point out the buried lede: that their work requires many more "hard" skills in terms of the

[194] Wallis Nicita, C.S.A. quoted in Scott, "Everyone, at times."
[195] Debi Manwiller C.S.A., interview.
[196] Reality casters look not for performance skills in actors, but for the actual real "personalities" or "types" around which shows' reality narratives will be built. Workers are thus part casting director, but also producer, salesperson, and psychologist.
[197] Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 134-5.

economic and political juggling act required to "make the budget work by delivering actors who satisfy the requirements of the roles while bringing a certain panache to the project."[198] Indeed, casting directors frequently emphasize the complexity of the dealmaking process, which starts with budgeting. Even when this task falls to a line producer, casting directors are often involved because, "they want our input (i.e. how much do you think it'll cost to get a good actor in this part)."[199] For this and other reasons related to the casting process, casting directors must have a nuanced understanding of production that extends well beyond their part in it, and know "a tremendous amount about deals….How do I work it out with an actor who I want but has got another movie to figure out how they can do both jobs? How do I not have enough money for everybody I want and manipulate my budget so I can get this actor?"[200] Casting directors must also be on familiar terms with the legalities of "putting together a deal memo, sending it out to all the people that are involved,"[201] which is "a whole other ballgame based on if it's out of town, if it's in town. There is just a lot of little things that go into it, and you need to be political on both sides."[202] Other "hard" requirements cited for casting success were pitching casting services to prospective clients,[203] and of course, managing casting workers by dictating workflow and assignments to associates, assistants and interns, and of newly hired

[198] Mike Fenton, C.S.A., quoted in Vernon Scott, "Casting directors give movies their 'personality,' UPI Hollywood Reporter, June 3, 1988, Friday, BC cycle.
[199] Marci Liroff, C.S.A., "Inside the World of Casting, Part 1," *Facebook Note,*
<http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=10150158264996721>
April 4, 2011.
[200] Marcia Ross, C.S.A., interview.
[201] This negotiation is sometimes carried out by lawyers depending on the salary being negotiated. Ibid.
[202] Sharon Bialy, C.S.A., interview.
[203]See Sharon Bialy, C.S.A., interview; Scott, "Casting Directors give…"

actors before their first work calls, relaying scheduling and wardrobe instructions.[204]

These managerial duties (financial and organizational planning, instrumental leadership), fall in line with more traditional notions of management than the emotional management required in casting sessions and represent a characteristic in common with the work of studio-era casting directors. However, the similarities end there, since contemporary casting, even in these duties, diverges from studio-era casting in its process, feminization and female leadership, while studio-era casting was strictly scientific management, and could be called masculinized because of its male domination and masculine-associated skills. For, even though the basic, one-line job description (matching actors with roles) is the same, earlier casting directors were far closer to executives than production crew, where contemporary casting directors closely identify.

Early Casting: Asset Management

As chapter 1 explained, In the late 1800s, American businesses in which previously "the boundary between clerical and managerial workers was not clearly drawn,"[205] began to devise more formalized hierarchies to allow functioning across multiple offices and factories. Efficiency sought increased managerial control over employee work practice by re-appropriating special knowledge, supervisory responsibilities and planning duties from previously self-governed production

[204]Described in Liroff, C.S.A., "Inside...Part 1." Marcia Ross, C.S.A., interview.
[205] Gregory Anderson, ed. *The White-Blouse Revolution: Women Office Workers since 1870.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 3.

workers, and relocating it with managers in physically separate planning departments.[206] The implementation of efficiency practices resulted in vast increases in the number of non-verbal messages circulated at companies between increasingly deskilled and disempowered workers on factory floors and the increasingly powerful managers from whom they were now isolated both spatially and hierarchically. Clerical workers linked productions brain to its hands through written marching orders without which "efficient" production could not function. At developing film studios as elsewhere, female clerical workers absorbed the costs created by scientific management, and thus made possible its near-apotheosis of the figure of manager in industrial production as he was endowed with the very power, knowledge and agency that had previously belonged to clerical and production workers. This was true in casting departments, where the process of connecting actors with roles was carried out through paperwork created and maintained by members of the studio's feminized, clerical workforce in the service of male managers and executives.

Early casting practice was largely a modified version of theatrical casting, in which actors were known and hired for "lines of business" or character types they'd that they mastered (the "heavy," for example) and became through costumes and performance. Film's realism and the advent of the close-up made it obvious that actors in costume were just that, and so, fairly early on, film casting was adapted to define stars and categorized actors by physical rather than character type.[207] Said

[206] Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-30* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992). 41-60.
[207] Charles Graham describes this process in 1912: "We joined a crowed of people….We had not said a word to a soul and no one had questioned us, when a man in shirt sleeves and with a green shade over his eyes came into

one studio manager, the casting director "must be able to pick types who look and act the part naturally. If the story calls for a weakling, he must pick a man with a weak face."[208] "Typage" dovetailed nicely with developing efficiency practices, under which casting quickly moved from something done by a cameraman or director, selecting "the leads from his stock company and the extras from anyone who appeared at studio 'bull pens,'" to a standardized system.[209] One description of such changes at Premier promised to eliminate the difficulty of actors in securing "an interview with the man whose final judgment would be the deciding one for the applicant" because of minor employee errors, "while a less efficient but persistent applicant gains the coveted part." To that end, the company hired theatrical agent John W. Mitchell whose job it would be:

> To meet and interview all applicants for parts and to tabulate the result of such interviews according to type, dramatic ability and physical qualifications. In selecting the cast for any forthcoming productions a careful list of available people is prepared by Mr. Mitchell and arrangements are made for the final selection with the director of the company producing that particular feature.[210]

Other firms hired talent scouts from vaudeville and created positions of casting directors with such directives as, in the case of Equitable's casting director, engaging "no less than two thousand people a week for the seven companies now

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the room and scrutinized first one and then the other. He picked out one or two, then came to Arundel and myself. 'I can use you,' said he, and handed each of us a card. My card bore a number and the mystic words 'Walking Gent Card Scene.' Arundel's card bore the same number and words. We learned that the film would be known by this number til its name was revealed to a waiting public, that we were the "walking gents" in a card playing scene which was to be shot that morning and that we were to take the card to the wardrobe room." Pamela Robertson Wojcik, "Typecasting," *Criticism*, Vol. 45, No. 2, (Spring 2003), 227-237.

[208] "We always try to combine type with the ability to act." Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet VI – Casting the Characters," *The Photodramatist* v.3.12 (May, 1922), 25-6.

[209] Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema,* 149.

[210] "Premier Simplifies Casting" *Motography* v. 14.25 (December 11, 1915), 1284.

actively engaged at the various Equitable studios."[211] Under such "Casting efficiency,"[212] actors became simply another asset to be tracked as theatrical agents and, later, casting directors, "divided humanity in sections."[213] Classifications were assigned, recorded and cross-indexed by early casting workers, essentially locking each actor into a specific type that was noted in their records for ease in distributing them to various productions.[214] Goldwyn casting director Robert B. McIntyre stated that his casting office file contained "thousands of faces, and records even more detailed than the criminologists'—so that when visualized face appears on the mind-screen of the casting director, he can at once secure this data by naming the person or the type, and consulting his files."[215] Melvin Riddle described the process and its extensive systematization as it had developed at Paramount by 1922:

> The average casting office has a very complete set of files which are cross indexed to save time and make them more practicable. For every principal, free-lance and extra player there is a big card with figures giving his or her height, weight and other physical data. These are cross-indexed into files of types, segregating heavies, juveniles, character people, leading women, leading men, etc.[216]

When the planning of a project began, Riddle continued, the casting director went through his files and chose "a leading man and if the latter is available, puts him down for the part, and so on with the other players." As drafts of scripts came out,

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[211] "Equitable's Casting Director," *Motography* v.14.21 (November 20, 1915), 1075.
[212] A definition of casting is given in a footnote "Casting the First Stone, in Celluloidese means as follows: each production that a star does in a year is numbered thus: First stone—Sixth Pickford—Third Ferguson—etc. "Casting" is selecting the players who are to appear in a certain production. Therefore putting this all together brings out the deftly concealed fact that the title means selecting the people for Fred Stones first photodramatic production." Kenneth McGaffey, "Casting the First Stone," *Photoplay* (October, 1918), 32.
[213] Mary Pickford, quoted in *Cinema: A Practical Course in Cinema Acting* (London: Standard Art Book Co., 1919), 29.
[214] Janet Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 149.
[215] Robert B. McIntyre, "How the Casting Director Selects Faces, Forms and Types," *Opportunities in the Motion Picture Business* v. 1 (Los Angeles: Photoplay Research Society, 1922), 65.
[216] Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet VI – Casting the Characters," *The Photodramatist* v.3.12 (May, 1922), 25-6.

the casting director repeated the same process with lesser characters, so that by the time the picture was ready to shoot, "a complete cast of characters has been assembled."[217]

Through typage and efficiency, studios developed a system by which they acquired and retained actors as studio properties as they did scripts and equipment, developing the contract system to lock them into place and assure their availability. H.O. Davis, in describing Universal's system, seemed to register actors more as assets than people, saying "The director then, in conference with the head of the casting department and the manager of production, casts his picture from our stock. (we carry about 300 actors and actresses of various types on the payroll and in stock at all times)."[218] Lasky casting director L.M. Goodwin described his "stock" in similar terms, claiming "we maintain at all times, a sort of reserve of about a hundred extra people—boys, girls, men and women, who have tried and proved, who we know can work, who have satisfied the directors and who can be depended upon." The practice of each director casting his films from his own stock company also gave way.[219]

By the 1930s, the casting director was fully established as the lead or primary manager of studios' actor assets, "stockpiling stars"[220] and distributing them to production. Typecasting had been taken to such an extreme that, as Danae Clark points out, actors were categorized according to social types, based on race, age, sexual stereotype, and so on. Such typecasting not only fragmented actors' labor

[217] Ibid.
[218]H.O. Davis, "A Kitchener Among Cameras," *Photoplay* v.11.6 (May, 1917), 129-131, 147, 168-9.
[219] Quoted in: Melvin M. Riddle, "From Pen to Silversheet VI – Casting the Characters," *The Photodramatist* v.3.12 (May, 1922), 25-6.
[220] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 84.

power (by limiting their range of performance and preventing the full potential of their skills), it fragmented actors bodies as well."[221] At most studios, CEOs, studio bosses, presidents of production, various executives, producers and directors might all participate in the process. As Beth Day explained: "Once a story had been agreed upon, the producer, director, an executive from the front office, and the studio casting director met to discuss the cast."[222] Ideally, principal and supporting roles would be filled with the studio's contract players since, as Ruth Burch explained, " Every studio had a substantial list of good talent," and "they were organized and operated similar to any large factory with a more or less permanent staff of employees."[223] However, casting directors guided that process of allocation and decision-making.[224] At Warner Bros., casting directors notified producers of "tests on new actors signed by the studio, and Friedman and Wald have a cast conference on each picture to see who is available, in or out of the studio, and at what price."[225] At MGM in the 30s and 40s, Bill Grady, or "'Carnation Billy' as he was known, cast many MGM pictures in conjunction with Benny Thau, who in turn consulted Louis B. Mayer."[226] Lew Schreiber served the same function at 20th Century-Fox, while at Warners it was Max Arnow in conjunction with executive Steve Trilling, and Rufus Le Maire headed casting at Fox.[227] Often a well-known actor was cast without reading or testing at all. Newer players "were tested for parts through interviews

[221] Danae Clark, *Negotating Hollywood: The Cultural Politics of Actors' Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
[222] Ibid., 112.
[223] Ruth Burch, Interviewed by Mike Steen in Steen, *Hollywood Speaks*, 358.
[224] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 41.
[225] Ezra Goodman, "How to be a Hollywood Producer," *Harper's Magazine* (May, 1948), 418-9
[226] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 91.
[227] Ibid.

with the casting director, then by a screen test."[228] In this sense, in line with scientific manager figures, they were much closer to mid-upper level decisional managers of operations or production than their contemporary counterparts, working on a much larger scale as acquirers and allocators of resources. The casting director's studio-era managerial/executive distinction was reflected by casting's typical separation from production, both geographically, and in terms of studio workflow and hierarchy, where it is typically grouped with the studio's legal and executive branches, the center of studio planning and management.[229] Casting offices were often housed in offices near those of other planning departments such as publicity and advertising,[230] all of which were headed up by male executives, and supported by a largely female clerical staff. For example, during his years as head of casting, MGM's Bill Grady "had a five-room bungalow as his headquarters. His own office was protected by two secretaries, double sets of doors, a private switchboard, and a window of one-way glass."[231] In keeping with sex segregation practices, the female workforce typed and maintained the kind of clerical output –casting lists, meeting notes, memos, etc— that was casting's physical product. As was the case in other scientifically managed firms, men occupied the managerial role of casting director almost exclusively, and heavily dominated the related positions of casting associate and assistant.

James S. Ettema advanced the concept of "players-in-position" to describe media workers whose roles place them in position "to participate in the decision-

[228] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 112.
[229] For example, see: RKO Studio Organization Chart from 1934," reproduced in: Richard B. Jewell, *The Golden Age of Cinema: Hollywood 1929-1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 67.
[230] Davis, *The Glamour Factory*, 42.
[231] Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 224-5.

making of the organization," based on hierarchy, expertise, control of information, and access to channels of agency such as negotiation.[232] By this definition, the players-in-position for the studio casting process would have been casting executives and casting directors (who often functioned as executives) along with moguls, other executives, producers, and important directors. However, though contemporary casting directors do negotiate on behalf of the players-in-position in their productions, they do not themselves identify as powerful enough to be considered players themselves. Instead, they frequently mention their position's lack of direct, decision-making power with statements such as "Actors think we have that power….But we aren't the ones who make the decisions on who gets hired,"[233] and, "it's all really the director's choice…In the end, we're invisible.''[234] They characterize their power as limited to the indirect agency of persuading decision makers toward a decision without telling them what to do. One casting described the role of influence in the process, "There is a LOT of psychology involved in handling the large groups of the creative team (producers/writer/director/executives at the studio). You want them to hire "your guy" and you have to get them to feel that it was their idea in the first place!"[235] Others described delimiting the solution to the casting equation, rather than devising it themselves in statements such as "I'll try to read 30 or 40 people for any

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[232] James S. Ettema, "The Organizational Contexts of Creativity," *Individuals in Mass Media Organizations: Creativity and Constraint* (London: Sage, 1983), 91.
[233]Mike Fenton, C.S.A., quoted in Janet Maslin with Martin Kasindorf, "Finders Keepers," *Newsweek*, March 14, 1977, 92
[234]Billy Hopkins, C.S.A. interviewed in Glenn Collins, "For Casting, Countless Auditions And One Couch, Never Used," *The New York Times,* January 30, 1990, Section C; Page 15, Column 4.
[235] Marci Liroff, "Inside the World of Casting, Part 1," *Facebook Note,*
<http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=10150158264996721>
April 4, 2011, Last Accessed, March 20, 2012

decent sized role and whittle it down to 5 to 10 for the director,"[236] and "The only power we have…is to tell an actor, 'No, you can't go in to see the director'."[237] One summed up the delicate process of "imprinting your own taste on the project by who you bring in," through subversion of her own opinions and management of her own status, saying, " You've got to subvert your own-- you've got to find a way to-- you see what you think is right in fact, but you can't go in and tell people…I have to make you feel good about a decision….I think it's easier for women to kind of throw back their own vision and sort of nurture people into [a decision]," rather than "be heavy-handed about my ego needing to say 'This is it.'"[238]

The exception to this rule exists in the form of the casting executives at studios and networks. These executives, who oversee all casting for an organization and manage other executives and the various freelance casting directors hired to cast individual productions, are much more closely aligned with studio-era casting directors, overseeing decision-making at the level of a "player-in-position."[239] Such positions as Executive Vice President of Casting began to appear at studios and networks around the same time in the 1950s and 60s that the position of casting director began to diverge from its previous, executive identity. Casting executives, like studio-era casting directors, do not work on individual projects under the aegis of the studio or network as casting directors do, and function similarly to the other executives that contemporary casting directors describe needing to please through performing emotional labor.

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[236]Ellen Lewis, C.S.A., interviewed in Michael Kane, "Role Player: With Credits from 'Goodfellas' to 'Gump,' Casting Director Ellen Lewis is a Great Judge of Characters," The New York Post, September 20, 2010, 37.
[237] Mike Fenton, C.S.A., quoted in Maslin and Kasindorf, "Finders Keepers," 92.
[238] Marcia Ross, C.S.A., interview.
[239] Ibid.

There is evidence that female clerical workers did begin to receive limited promotion and make some inroads in casting, as well as other planning departments whose main products were paper based, especially in publicity.[240] However, with few notable exceptions, these workers never rose to the level of manager or head of their departments. Other than Ruth Burch, who said she was promoted to casting director by Hal Roach in the 30s or 40s,[241] there is little evidence to suggest that any women ascended to the level of casting director until the 1950s, when Marion Dougherty and others report promotion to casting director, often in new TV divisions.[242] And this lineage does little to explain how, between the 1950s and the late 1970s, casting became not only gender-integrated but heavily female-dominated, or how feminized duties became not just an added value provided by female casting directors, but their primary value and a means through which they operated creatively.

In truth, the emotional labor components of casting did exist in the studio-era, just not in casting departments. Before casting directors could place actors in the roles in which the public would come to know them, an army of other workers was necessary, not only to find actor assets and lock them into contracts, but also to develop these assets once secured so that they would be ready to distribute to

[240]For one example of a woman receiving promotion from secretary to assistant in casting, see "Film Secretary Promoted," *Los Angeles Times,* October 4, 1936, 4.
[241] Ruth Burch was first employed in 1932 "as a secretary at the Hal Roach Studios. In a short while I became the personal secretary and assistant to Mr. Roach. He later made me the studio casting director." Burch, *Hollywood Speaks*, 354.
[242]Dan Georgakas and Kevin Rabalais "Fifty Years of Casting: An Interview with Marion Dougherty," *Cineaste,* Spring 2000 v25 i2 p26.

productions. These workers largely resided in the studios' talent departments.[243] While the scouts who brought undiscovered actors from all over the country to the attention of studios tended to be male, most of the other jobs under the banner of "talent" went to women, presumably because of the "feminine" skills associated with them.[244] Lillian Burns supervised talent training as drama coach at MGM in the 1930s and "could end careers, but nurtured those she thought had star potential." Sophie Rosenstein was "talent coordinator, teacher, and mother confessor to young contract players first at Warner Bros., then at Universal."[245] At Paramount, Phyllis Loughton served as drama coach, while Helena Sorrell led talent at 20th Century-Fox and RKO had Ginger Rogers' mother Lela Rogers. After the executive decision was made to acquire an actor asset, it again fell to these drama coaches and other female studio caretakers to nurture and develop talent, both personally and professionally.[246] Young contract players underwent an extensive apprenticeship program to prepare for stardom. Ronald Davis described Lillian Burns' process, saying:

> Most of her studio contact was with Benny Thau and the producers and directors of specific pictures, although she regularly conferred with talent scouts and the casting director, Billy Grady….She worked with her contract players for weeks on specific roles, preparing them more thoroughly if she knew they would face a weak director on the set. He would take a young person through an entire script, working as she would in a rehearsal. But a major part of her task was developing the players as people.[247]

[243] Davis, *The Glamour*, 80.
[244] Ibid, 85.
[245] Ibid., 85.
[246] Finch and Rosenkrantz, *Gone Hollywood,* 45-52.
[247] Ibid., 85-6.

MGM and other studios invested in elaborate training and grooming to make them a total, marketable package, from acting, dance, movement, diction, riding, fencing lessons, right down to the selection of their clothes and, if they were successful enough, setting up households in keeping with their image.[248] Drama coaches read studio projects with new hires in mind and brought them to the attention of producers and executives who could place them once they were ready.[249] Unlike casting directors, talent workers made daily use of the female-associated skills that today's casting directors describe, such as intuiting actor "rightness" or "readiness," nurturing actors in and out of auditions, performing emotionally as acting teachers, participating in the decision-making process through influence and solution delimitation, rather than direct commands, and mitigating the emotional content of messages during the casting and talent grooming process. Here again, the studio made use of women's labor in specific, targeted ways. Here again, women added value to their labor through feminized duties.

One contributor to the shift from the executive casting/feminized talent model to that of feminized casting was the new, directorial power that emerged during the studio downturn. Producers and executives controlled the studio process, and while "prominent directors might also play a role in casting, but again," they were nonetheless restricted to those actors who were under contract or who could easily be traded from another studio.[250] Today's casting directors emphasize the director as the leader of the process, and the person whose vision they follow,

[248] Ibid,132.
[249] Day, *This Was Hollywood*, 115-6.
[250] Dougherty, C.S.A., "Fifty Years of Casting," 26.

since, though "our job might be to keep everybody happy, it really is to direct the casting process for the director."[251] The ideal relationship between a casting director and a director is often described in ways that invoke casting's feminized traits of providing service and matching emotions, since "the connection with your director is really important,"[252] and the work is most satisfying "when you really are in sync with the director. It is almost like you are trying to crawl into their brain, and it is about fulfilling their vision."[253] This connection, melding or mindreading-as-service is a hybrid trait that also seems linked to the new creativity identity of contemporary casting directors, who identify as artists and craftspeople rather than executives. Even early female casting directors "were much tougher, much more about dealmaking, much less about artistry than they are today."[254]

However, these female casting trailblazers did eventually distinguish between the New Hollywood casting director the old, studio-era casting director, one of whom was described by Marion Dougherty as "a grocery-list maker [who] believed casting meant that if you make a list of everybody from Shirley Temple to Tallulah Bankhead, somewhere in between you had to have somebody who was right for the part."[255] Joyce Selznick, who was appointed by Harry Cohn to run his east coast talent and story departments in 1941 and rose to prominence by the 1960s, when she was worldwide head of talent for paramount, similarly said:

> There are casting directors who submit lists of people whom they are familiar with and leave casting decisions pretty much to the producer or director. They take a rather passive course. On the other hand, I'll

[251] Debra Zane, C.S.A., quoted in "Roundtable."
[252] Mary Vernieu, C.S.A., ibid.
[253] Ellen Lewis, C.S.A., ibid.
[254] Sam Christensen, interview with author, Studio City, CA, February 17, 2012.
[255] Dougherty, C.S.A., "Fifty Years of Casting," 26.

> give you a case in point, but I will not tell you the name of the picture because that would not be fair. I cast a picture a few years ago, and in reading the screenplay I saw that the leading character wasn't finely etched. I thought we should not cast it in the way it was written, because if we did we were going to end up with exactly what we had on paper: an uninteresting character. I'm not arguing whether I was right or wrong about that, but unless they have enormous confidence in you, it is hard to change the minds of most directors and producers. If you do, then you become a really creative casting director. It almost becomes a producer's job. For the most part, a casting director is the victim—or the hero, as the case may be—of the selections made by the producer and the director. [256]

This negative assessment of "grocery list" casting hints at a shift away from scientific management practices such as typage, previously adopted in pursuit of factory-like speed and mass production. Where previously it had been standard practice at Warner Bros. "for the producer and director to sit down with the casting director and cast a film in 20 minutes,"[257] all studios' economies of scale were changing.

In economic downturn that followed the Paramount consent decree and forced divestiture of 1948, downsizing studios turned to newly independent producers to assemble film packages ad hoc, gradually ended the contract system for most talent and craft workers and outsourced much production labor, hiring most movie workers from pre-to-post production on a per-project basis. [258] The new freelance system removed the guarantee of constant employment that had existed for formerly contracted workers at studios. Smaller firms sprang up around various aspects of production (from craft service to sound mixing) and ensured their

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[256] Joyce Selznick, Interviewed by Joseph McBride, *Filmmakers on Filmmaking, Volume 2* (Los Angeles; Houghton Mifflin, 1983, 179.
[257] Shewey, "They Comb…," 19.
[258] David A. Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 21-22.

survival through the strategy of "flexible specialization," under which work processes were customized to fit the individual needs of various clients on a project-by-project basis.[259] Though there were casting directors on staff and talent departments in operation at most or all of the studios throughout the 50's and 60's, the need for them declined as the number of players on contract at studios dwindled, and by the mid-1970's, casting had become largely outsourced to independent casting directors such as Lynn Stahlmaster and Mike Fenton, who had begun to form their own firms for the purpose.[260]

In its freelance incarnation, casting struggled to reconcile studio era practices with a new economic model. No longer able to rely on talent scouts to find, test develop and hold the availability of a stable of supporting players and stars, freelance casting directors instead worked a pool of actors that reached into the tens of thousands, and that included freelance stars who now had to be courted and hired rather than simply assigned as they were in studio days.[261] Ruth Burch described the change to Mike Steen in 1969, saying:

> There are now over one hundred and fifty agents in this area. As you deal with them, you learn which type of talent they handle and which of them will cooperate with you in negotiating a price or which will hold fast and adamant to a set price….The agent took advantage of the demand for his major talent as a bargaining wedging in placing lesser talent in the same production. However, a great change has occurred in the last few years. Agencies have become absorbed by agencies. Smaller ones have melded with larger ones, larger ones have absorbed larger ones, so now it is really a conglomerate of agencies as we know them. The few small agents who still exist claim they are

[259] Allen J. Scott, *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 39.
[260] Transition detailed in: Michael J. Bandler, "Casting is His Lot," *American Way* (November 1982): 22. "CSA Searches for Respect, Identity in 'New' Hollywood," Daily Variety, June 26, 1989, I-32.
[261] Ibid., 26.

> being pushed out of the picture because the large agents attract the more important personalities and therefore have more power. [262]

This more anonymous process initially veered toward tried and true efficiency techniques to narrow the field and cast dependable, understood "types" in roles quickly as was often required by TV.[263] However, the economic shift coincided with and was influenced by a creative shift at the same time. New Hollywood was newly empowered (after loss of revenue from old tactics) and looking for less generic, more organic casting along the lines of that described by Dougherty and Selznick.[264] A new generation of film directors came to the fore, emphasizing location shooting and grittier, more "authentic" stories, aesthetics and actors.

Freelance casting directors, in line with the trend toward flexible specialization, let individual TV and filmmaker preferences dictate their work environment, style and pace on a project-by-project basis, adjusting their process to fit different directors and producers, under which the current practices began to emerge. They were expected to be "able to read a script with the insight required to understand how it would translate to the screen and with the knowledge of acting talent needed to cast every role."[265] It was no longer useful "to bring in 20 people who are similar, but rather, to consider different ways roles could be played and bring the producer or director "five different but very good actors for consideration

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[262] Burch, *Hollywood Speaks*, 355.
[263] "Although casters who were interviewed use different personal filing systems, all those systems are aimed at association actors with parts for which they were chosen and suggested in the past. This procedure ensures the caster's ability to choose quickly and credibly; it also results in patterned looks for certain parts." Described in: Joseph Turow, "Casting for TV Parts: The Anatomy of Social Typing," *Journal of Communication,* Issue 4, December 1978, 21.
[264] This newer, more organic form of casting did not extend much further than the old form had to minorities, however, who, in most mainstream films and especially in TV, were at this time supposed to be limited to reflect studio and networks' conceptions of the racial makeup of the "real world." Detailed further in: Ibid., 22-23.
[265] Georgakas and Rabalais "Fifty Years…," 26.

for a single role, not 100 clones,"[266] so that they could cast one of them or at least "learn about the parts."[267] Under this new aegis, the process of reading actors for roles became more intense, and multi-staged, which in turn generated even more paperwork, more phone calls, more names to check, etc. With stars, now representing a key part of the "package" that could greenlight a film, and demanding budget-breaking salaries and perks, freelance casting involved more negotiation between more players on all sides, and was more fraught, dramatic and emotional as a result.

Women entered the profession in increasing numbers, as it swapped its executive identity for one more in line with that of production crew positions, absorbed many of the feminized duties previously carried out by female talent workers, and saw an increase in its clerical and administrative workload. So many women were casting directors by the late 70s when studios and networks began gender integration of their executive ranks in order to head off public pressure for equal rights, they awarded them vice presidencies in casting, rather than production, since "casting was one area of the industry where companies thought it was safe to put women, and where they thrived."[268] By 1980, women already dominated the field[269] and by 2001 it had reached new levels, "of the 24 casting

[266] Wallis Nicita, C.S.A. quoted in Scott, "Everyone, at Times..."
[267] Juliet Taylor, C.S.A., in Shewey, "They Comb,"19.
[268] Mollie Gregory, *Women Who Run the Show: How a Brilliant and Creative New Generation of Women Stormed Hollywood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 11.
[269] When 56 of the "top" casting directors took out an ad in *Variety,* 42 of them were women, "Untitled Full-Page Anti-Union Ad," *Daily Variety*, March 25, 1980, 32.

directors nominated for feature film work in [that] year, 23 were female; and of the 54 nominated for primetime TV, 43 were women."[270]

Some of the traits of contemporary casting do not fit neatly with traditional notions of management or feminization may be viewed as a hybrid of the two, and in their efficacy represent innovation. One of these is the aspect of collaborative leadership that characterizes most freelance casting companies. Most casting directors works in partnerships of two to four. The arrangement allows for more work to be taken in by the collective since, "if you have two partners, you can have eight jobs, whereas, if you just work alone, it's very hard to split yourself up, and you only can do one, maybe two jobs."[271] Because of these partnerships, leadership tends to be more collaborative as well. In order to keep up with the complexity of multiple projects at multiple phases, each requiring a heavy volume of clerical, informational and communication duties are shared out amongst staffers in a more lateral network, rather than a single, linear chain of command running from casting director to intern. In casting offices in the midst of casting several roles, it is as common to see several casting directors working closely together with the help of a small support staff.[272] When time is of the essence these staffers can be seen relaying bits of information to casting directors –some of whom even share offices with partners— from their desks, pooling knowledge in a form of collective

[270] Bergman, "Shattering," A8.
[271]Sharon Bialy, C.S.A. interview.
[272] I have both heard this described and seen it myself during my years as a TV producer's assistant, where I participated in castings.

intelligence that sidesteps formalities often imposed in more traditional, top-down businesses through rank and hierarchy.

Though partnerships have long been the organizational model of small businesses trafficking in elite client services (e.g. law firms or ad agencies), this level of cooperativity is nonetheless unusual. It resembles the organizational model of the democratic workplace, in which management is shared more evenly among workers. This model both predates the 20th century, de facto system of command-and-control, and has also begun to be put back into use by organizational in line with the new focuses of that field, which are on group cohesion rather than corporate strategy.[273]It is also an organizational model identified with female leaders due to the fact that, as psychologists and linguists have argued, women are socialized from childhood in same-sex peer groups to form and maintain lateral interpersonal networks by seeking consensus, connection and rapport with others, while men, driven toward contest by socialization, seek status in a hierarchy among opponents and even peers.[274] It seems possible that a more democratic, collaborative organizational mode has found functionality in the world of casting because it is now largely a female world where such leadership strategies have had space to take shape.

Casting directors' adaptability, forged through their unusual infiltration of the field from feminized supporting roles, may also be seen as a useful innovation

[273] Mike Duffy explains that though much development has been seen in top-down, executive-mandated corporate strategies, far less has been done to engineer consensus among the workers to whom those strategies trickle down, or to weigh those "best practices" often lauded by gurus from other businesses against a particular organization's "unique history and culture." In: Mike Duffy, "Forward" to Brian Wilson, *Soft Systems Methodology: Conceptual Model Building and its Contribution*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), ix.
[274] See: Deborah Tannen, "The Sex-Linked Framing of Talk at Work, *Gender and Discourse*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 195-212.

for the contemporary industry in general, helping them adjust to the constant change on managerial, creative, informational and emotional levels that characterizes modern production. Flexibility on multiple levels was an oft-named characteristic of a skilled casting director, who "helps from the moment that you do the list or pre-read that actor, pick that actor and navigate the whole process with them," in a process that's constantly evolving, "Because you're always dealing with new people and new situations. So you have to become adaptable. And it's psychological in some ways in terms of how to manage different people and different situations to get the best possible cast."[275]In a global economy in which technological and economic complexities demand increasingly additionally flexible, specialized, responsive workers, casting directors, as adaptive feminized-managarial hybrids, may represent the ultimate service professional.

However, this modern, feminine incarnation of casting can't be seen in an entirely positive progressive light, since, women, in fitting themselves to the needs of the client, the marketplace, the industry, and their society have, as female workers always have, engaged in an act of contortion. Like the traditional wife to whom several interviewees compared themselves, the casting director's ability to impact a film or television text rests on her ability to perceive and respond to the thoughts and feelings of others, rather than her own. Conversely, the producer or director of a project is able to directly control the experience of his casting director. Said one subject, "when you feel like you're just waitress serving up actors where they don't care about your opinion, you oftentimes don't have a connection to it.

[275] Marcia Ross, C.S.A., interview.

….There are those who hire casting directors as purely secretarial, you know, 'Bring in the actors and we'll pick who we like and we don't care about your opinion.' And then there are others who hire you to shape the show. They like [your] aesthetic or they want to be challenged."[276] The imbalance of power between casting directors and the ultimate decision-makers is exemplified by the fact casting directors generally refuse to tell an employer directly which decision to make but only to "help the people making the final decision to find the best people and [avoid] mistakes that they might make out of emotional reasons or getting frustrated. But if a casting director were to just come out and tell those people what to do, chances are that they wouldn't do it.[277]

For the reason, this creatively important, high-status version of casting as reshaped and expanded by female casting directors still resembles the creative service of other, earlier feminized production roles. Though casting directors are creative and do demonstrate artistry in their work, they nonetheless exercise it under the guise of facilitating and supporting the creative vision of a superior. One casting director's statement that casting was "more support art, it's more of a craft in some ways…and it's a craft that supports the art of other people,"[278] makes the link to creative service quite directly, while others indicated it indirectly in statements about getting inside the heads of directors to help with their creative vision. Still others compared casting to another kind of creative facilitation that, while not feminized, has traditionally been more open to women: editing. Again,

[276] Sharon Bialy C.S.A., interview.
[277] Marcia Ross C.S.A., interview.
[278] Ibid.

creativity comes through delimitation as "you're not bringing in the whole world, you're editing the process" [279] by cutting out "90% of what is sent to you and showing the 10% that they need to see."

The indirectness of casting directors' agency, added to the loss of the studio-era role's decisional/managerial status translates to a loss in creative status amongst their peers. Many feel a lack of respect toward their profession in "an industry that sees us as technicians rather than artists,"[280] and where "casting isn't seen as an autonomous creative process.''[281] And like other feminized fields which, because of their feminization, were often undermined as less rational and not on "hard," technical and professional skills, casting directors are erased from the workplace in terms of credit. Casting directors believe in their own creative input to the process as "the person who helps to assemble those actors"[282] cast in an ultimately successful creative venture by believing in them "enough to present them to our director for a final choice."[283] But however essential they are to movies and series' success, casting directors only recently became eligible for the Emmy, and are not eligible for Academy Awards. When all is said and done, their work often only credited in the case of negative credit in the blaming of poor performances on poor casting, rather than positive credit for stellar casts bestowed by directors, producers and actors from awards podiums.

This lack of professional respect and creative credit is reflected in casting directors' pay, which is considered little for the 12-14 weeks that a staff of two to

[279] Ibid.
[280] Risa Bramon-Garcia, C.S.A., quoted in Collins, "For Casting Directors.." 15.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Jane Jenkins, quoted in "And the Oscar Doesn't Go To," *Backstage,* December 8, 2010.
[283] Ibid.

upwards of ten people spends to cast a film. Casting directors believe this pay to be a reflection of their gender. Marion Dougherty reportedly used to say that only women could afford to do casting,[284] which makes sense in light of the fact that, until 2005, the field had no union to collectively bargain for the salary guarantees, health benefits and pensions enjoyed by nearly every member of film production crews above the level of PA.[285] In 2001, Tracy Lillienfield explained the lack of unionization as a result of casting becoming freelance, saying that at that time "we were fighting for jobs and struggling to get people to recognize that there was even a job called 'casting director.' We just worked so hard to do what we do that we forgot to take care of ourselves. I've worked for 23 years and I have no pension."[286]

In truth, casting directors did not simply forget to take care of themselves, but actively chose it as a strategy to make creative inroads. In the late 70s and early 80s, a group led by Mike Fenton attempted to unionize under IATSE as the Casting Director's Guild Local 726.[287] But though it sought a higher minimum weekly rate, as well as benefits, [288] this union was quickly scuttled by other casting directors who took out an ad in *Daily Variety* stating that its signatories believed that such a union would have a detrimental effect on their casting functions, as well as "the producers, directors and writers with whom we work."[289] The anti-union casting directors were motivated by the fear that if they submitted to collective bargaining, they would be viewed as enemies of the creative elite, whose recognition and acceptance

[284] Juliet Taylor, C.S.A., quoted in Shewey, "They Comb.."19.
[285] Steve Dyan, "Casting directors cast their fate with Teamsters," *Daily Variety,* June 24, 2005, 55.
[286] Tracy Lillienfield, C.S.A., quoted in Berman, "Shattering," A8.
[287] "C.S.A. Searches," I-118-9.
[288] Will Tusher, "More American Actors Sought in O'Seas Pix," *Daily Variety,* September 21, 1983.
[289] "Untitled Ad," *Daily Variety*, 32.

they had been courting since they became independents. The gender breakdown of the ad's signatories –50 women out of 64—may be a clue that the feelings about freelance casting's illegitimacy Lillienfield recounted may have been magnified by its feminization. Though unionization was eventually achieved, the fact that casting directors' pay lagged for so long behind professions below them in the production hierarchy is believed to have had an effect on their overall earning potential.[290] For, despite their decision not to unionize in the early 1980s it seems casting directors haven't been accepted into the ranks of the creative elite, but also haven't achieved the same standards of pay and work regulations as nearby, unionized, male-dominated fields.[291]

Conclusion

As the last to feminize of the women's media professions described in this, casting represents an example of both the reach of the sex segregation practices begun in the 1910s, and their affects, both positive and negative, on the contemporary media industry, its products and practices. Like development workers and continuity workers, casting directors are evidence of how, to quote Miranda Banks, "gender plays into the collaborative nature of film and media production –not just in what is produced but in how." Banks continues, "In subtle ways, much of the work women do in Hollywood is—both through language and through economics—treated as 'women's work.'"[292] Despite their efforts to keep

[290] See: "C.S.A. Searches," I-119. Berman, "Shattering," A8."
[291] "C.S.A. Searches," I-119.
[292] Miranda Banks, "Gender Below the Line," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries,* Miranda Banks, John Caldwell, Vicki Mayer, eds., (London: Routledge, 2009,) 95.

their heads down, focus on increasing their field's prestige, and wait for their creative importance to be recognized by the creative elite and production crew with whom they work so closely, it has been difficult for female casting directors to lay down the gendered baggage that has followed them through history. For, though casting didn't truly emerge as a woman's profession until the 1970s, the conditions for the shift were put in place half a century earlier with the demarcation of certain kinds of film labor as "women's work," and the expectations and work culture that developed around feminized labor at studios.

The logic that has underwritten gendered labor since the turn of the century, sustained by industrial mythology passed from worker to worker, has determined that, whether in 1910 or 1970, when film work aligned with a feminized labor sector and shed managerial/executive identity, it fell to women who, in times of change, could be counted on to do more for less, and to absorb post-studio costs through their freelance labor. Like other film-specific "women's" fields, casting directors were able to acquire additional creative capital, and to innovate in terms of leadership, management and organizational style. The price for these gains has been invisibility in terms of creative agency, credit and status, and a work experience that depends on the desires of others, and that requires management of status, emotion, and gender as much as it allows management of other workers.

It remains to be seen whether the logic that has for so long underwritten gendered labor lingers in a way that will shift other labor sectors toward feminization in the future, or whether female domination, feminization or female leadership will ever result in entirely positive effects for female workers as well as

the people who pay them. The value of women is obvious from the ways casting has evolved in the hands of a predominantly female workforce who have pushed the field forward in terms of artistry. However, a gendered binary is still present, since when women are attributed skill in some area, the implication follows that either they are worse in others, or that that area is somehow of lesser skill or importance in the first place. Still, consolation can be found in the fact that, despite prevailing media history narratives about their total exclusion from film production after the 1910s, women have found ways to participate in creative media production at high levels and to make their mark on media history through the very non-threatening, "feminine" skills that have been used to disqualify them and relegate them to typewriters and sewing machines.

VI. Epilogue: The Legacy of "Women's Work" in Hollywood

It's hard to understand what the problem is. It's a creative position that also involves good communication skills and time management. None of these are considered particularly "masculine" qualities. Maybe it is the "take charge" aspect of directing that seems particularly male. Some people think of the director as the Captain of the Ship and we all know that it is rare to see women in commanding positions. A film crew is predominantly male. There is a sprinkling of women behind the camera, mostly in the hair and make-up departments and as script supervisors—that's the person that makes sure the script is followed and records everything that is actually shot and printed. It's intimidating for anyone to walk on a set and take command of a small army of about 60 people, not including actors and extras. It might be a lot harder for a soft-spoken woman (or man) to take the reins….Hopefully people in the entertainment industry will take a look at [Kathryn] Bigelow and realize that their assumptions are all wrong and it is a really bad idea to generalize about people

-Mel Damski, Film and TV Director, 2013[1]

One thing I know for sure, women are increasingly taking over the scripted and unscripted development jobs in town. And I don't know if that is a good thing for the business. As we all know, this business was DOMINATED by males since inception. It started back in the nineties when you have some male slime ball running a production company (think Cruise's character in Tropic Thunder), and then he hires young female assistants, or "interns", because he wants girls around. Not that the women were never talented or deserved to be there, but they didn't usually get there just because they were good (again, there are exceptions of course, but I'm speaking in general here). Now we have an industry that is full of female executives (which is great…to a point)….The problem is, now there are TOO many female development execs, because now it is the norm. Now, heads of companies want females because they have good "sensibilities" (which is code for since women are making major decisions at networks, we need a woman that can sense what that network exec wants)...I must mention that for every evil Male Executive…there are just as many evil female ones.

--Deadline.com Comment on a story about the rise of women's 2012-13 employment in TV[2]

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[1] Mel Damski, "Caution: Men Working Above," www.ifmelranthezoo.com (July 17, 2013), http://www.ifmelranthezoo.com/2013/07/17/caution-men-working/ , retrieved August 10, 2013.

[2] "More Women Were Working in TV During the 2012-13 Season than Ever Before: Study," *Deadline Hollywood*, www.deadline.com (September 5, 2013), http://www.deadline.com/2013/09/more-women-were-working-in-tv-during-2012-13-season-than-ever-before-study/#more-579322, retrieved October 5, 2013.

Secretarial Labor Revisited

Blogger Nikki Finke's 2009 report on the pay cut planned for assistants at the newly merged William Morris Endeavor Entertainment (WME) talent agency was met with a surprisingly vicious response from her readers.[3] The responses, which appeared on the comment thread of her Deadline Hollywood Daily (DHD) blog, were not surprising simply because they were angry –indeed, some venting was to be expected by and on behalf of the assistants in question, given that what was at stake was a nearly 20% drop in salary (from $13.50/hour to $11.00/hour). Rather, the anger of the commenters was surprising because it was expressed most frequently and most vehemently in *support* of management. Commenters applauded the architects of the pay cut while admonishing assistants that they were "not coal miners," and telling them to "sack the fuck up and deal with it," to "grow up!!" because "This is the business, always has been and always will be–it's called paying your dues by working long hours, taking it up the ass and not getting paid."[4] These respondents further insisted that the assistants would be foolish to strike, since "in this town, walkout equals lock out," and they'd quickly be replaced by others "chomping at the bit to take their place."[5]

Finke's blog, though de rigueur reading for many Hollywood insiders, is unaffiliated with a studio, agency or network. Therefore, it is easy to dismiss the comment dustup as a random Internet flamewar, separate from the entertainment

[3] Nikki Finke, "New Pay Schedule for WME Assistants," *Nikki Finke's Deadline Hollywood Daily*: http://www.deadlinehollywooddaily.com (July 29, 2009), < http://www.deadline.com/2009/07/more-news-about-wme-assistant-pay/ >, retrieved August 11, 2013.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

industry proper and its system of production. In reality, the blog and its comments are very much part of the industry. In fact, they represent a perfect example its most important sustaining function: the development of industrial mythology that, over time, is codified and dispersed as fact through its creative products, and by and to its members. It is this mythology that surrounds and supports otherwise chaotic post-fordist system of media production, helping to contain and control the contributions of low-status workers –like the assistants in question— to the work of writers, producers, directors, agents and executives. Such mythology (evidenced in claims to the contrary by the industrial boundary police on Finke's blog and elsewhere) disguises the fact that assistants are absolutely essential to the industry, and do impact it creatively, just as they did fifty, even 100 years ago when they were more commonly referred to as secretaries, and their role was understood as women's work.

Through production culture, and the texts it produces, industry workers and aspirants see the Hollywood entertainment industry as ordered and making sense, when as John Caldwell points out, in reality, "production cultures are far too messy, vast and contested to provide a unified code…for breaching its walls."[6] Caldwell argues that the industrial mythology helps to keep an increasingly divergent mixture of industrial modes from diverging completely.[7] This mythology is especially useful in keeping the work of the assistant low-status, and cheaply compensated through advice, stories and "industrial wisdom" surrounding the concept of "dues-paying" which forms the sector's overarching mythology. On the Finke blog, the necessity of assistants and other entry-

[6] John Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industiral Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 36.
[7] Ibid., 34.

level workers paying their dues is the only thing that all commenters agree on. Many times throughout the blog's 172 comments, assistants and their defenders qualify remarks by insisting that they know they must pay dues, while the pro-pay-cut faction accuse assistants of not being willing to go far enough, insisting they accept their fates, because, as one commenter admonished, "This is the business, always has been and always will be."[8] Statements like these show just how effectively the dues-paying mythology contains worker dissent since, contrary to the industrial wisdom they purport to impart, the dues-paying model of suffering-for-entrée is by no means the way it "always has been." In fact, for the first sixty-plus years of the entertainment industry, this model didn't exist at all. What did exist was a sector of the workforce that was allotted low pay and status because, as preceding chapters have shown, it was feminized.

Like the studio secretary's labor, assistant work is usually some combination of clerical and administrative work, personal errands, and creative/executive-level work on an employer's projects. Much like it was at MGM or Warner Bros. in the 1930s, today, some assistants report having supportive, mentoring employers and others wind up on the desks of bosses who are abusive, and who assign them only unrewarding tasks.[9] Despite this range of experiences, the mythology that has evolved around dues-paying – the process of "paying dues" at low-status job in order to prove worthy of a higher-status position— tends to elevate and celebrate the harshest, most embarrassing

[8] Ibid.

[9] I base these claims primarily on interviews conducted with 40 assistants in 2007, as well as my own experiences working as an assistant to TV and film producers for four years. Among assistants interviewed, salaries and work conditions ran the gamut from safe and respectful environments, with decent pay and regular hours to downright hostile, sexually inappropriate or harassing workplaces, and work weeks of 80-100 hours without overtime. Detailed in: Erin Hill, *Secretaries, Stenographers and Assistants: A report funded by the California Women's Law Center,* (Los Angeles, CA, 2007), 71-111.

extremes of assistanthood, and the most abusive, "screamer" bosses. These sorts of grotesque, hero's journey narratives, explain these industries as a world that can be navigated and mastered by those willing to accept that its rules. Instead of improving upon the studio secretary's lot, under this mythology, today's assistant is just as helpless to avoid abuse because for an assistant, doing anything and everything requested by an employer, no matter how strange or difficult, is framed as the only way to really "make it." From TV shows to chick-lit novels to networking websites, stories of assistants completing unsavory tasks and taking vile abuse circulate endlessly. The stories might be mistakable for simple venting if they didn't so often carry the moral that these sorts of experiences should be not shunned, but rather desired as the trial-by-fire necessary for advancement. Just one example of that moral at work can be found in the how-to manual *It's All Your Fault! (How to Make it as an Assistant in Hollywood)* which describes assistanting as "a purgatory" and "a rite of passage which, if suffered and surmounted, can land you in those heavenly regions beyond the pearly gates of Brentwood or Los Feliz."[10]

Though the ranks of assistants include far more men than the secretarial pools at studios, assistanthood is still associated with women over men, and assistants still do women's work. However, female workers are expected to do more of it. Episodes of HBO's behind-the-scenes comedy, *Entourage* are peppered with examples of assistants who find themselves in strange, oftentimes uncomfortable positions and succeed through "working" those positions (i.e. doing whatever it takes to ensure the success of their boss or his movie, and by extension,

[10]Bill Robinson and Ceridwen Morris, *It's All Your Fault: How to Make it as a Hollywood Assistant* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 14.

themselves). For *Entourage's* female assistants, working it in service of an employer often involves having sex for or with them. In an episode entitled "Sorry, Ari," an agent attempting to woo actor Vincent Chase to his agency tells members of his entourage that they won't have to worry about being rejected by the girls who work in his office because "all my assistants love to fuck."[11] Throughout the show, sexual willingness on the part of female underlings is portrayed as a good thing, the kind of team spirit that will lead to a bright future. When a male assistant is similarly propositioned in exchange for benefits to his employer, power agent Ari Gold, Gold intercedes at the last minute to save him from the same sort of sexual exploitation that Gold engages in with female workers on a regular basis. The message that female assistants should be good sports to prove their worthiness of membership in elite media circles, is reinforced repeatedly via the character of Dana Gordon, a female studio executive who, according to power Gold, served as his assistant and sex partner before her big break, a fact that he still uses to extract favors and confidences from her years later. This isn't to say that non-fiction assistants really do consider sex as a part of their job descriptions. In fact, most do not. Instead, almost more disturbingly, these kinds of portrayals seem to imply that, according to the media makers who created them, every female assistant *should*, hinting at the ways in which women's work is valued differently than men's, and how gendered expectations still shape women's experience of media production.

In studio days secretaries and female executive assistants were compensated unfairly and victimized by male employers because they were women. Today, the

[11]"Sorry Ari," *Entourage* Julian Farino, dir., HBO (season 3, episode 12, 2006).

same conditions have been allowed to continue because of the benefits they offer management,[12] and have been grandmothered in under the cover of paying dues and proving worthy of promotion. Boundaries between reasonable and unreasonable work, hours, pay, etc., blur, as unpleasant and unjust aspects of assistant work are framed as merit badges that might qualify the assistant for inclusion the ranks of media elite, rather than as what they really are: the same old exploitation of labor that originated under rules of gender-based exclusion.

Though the ranks of assistants in the contemporary Hollywood are far more gender-integrated than secretarial staffs in the studio era, the actual work they do is not. Official job duties of assistants have changed very little since the studio era, including the unofficial expectation that assistants offer employers self-eliding creative service. Additionally, despite great social change since the studio era, many socially constructed, essentialist notions of men's skills versus women's skills remain in the minds of both workers and employers, even though language in job ads and corporate documents is coded to appear gender neutral.[13] Therefore, though there is no such thing as a typical-boss relationship in today's freelance, ad hoc entertainment industry, assistant work remains feminized across gender. This continued feminization helps

[12] In salary comparisons between contemporary assistants' and studio secretaries, the assistants' wages were equivalent to or lower than the secretaries when adjusted for inflation. Hill, *Secretaries, Stenographers and Assistants*, 120.

[13] Many interview subjects stated that when they heard of a plum job opportunity, they would try to discover if the employer was looking for a man or a woman before applying, as many employers simply believed that only women could be good assistants because they were more naturally detail-oriented and had pleasanter phone manners. It's true that there were also instances of employers (usually men), who only hired men, but the explanation given for the preference was usually related to a belief that only men could absorb the kind of abuse the employer planned to hurl at them, which seems to indicate submission –a quality usually attributed to women by essentialists- as an important part of the job. Indeed, the men I spoke to rarely if ever connected acts of masculine performance with their success on a given employer's desk, but instead named self-effacement, submissiveness and endurance of detail-oriented scutwork as job prerequisites. Hill, *Secretaries, Stenographers and Assistants, 71-111.*

explain the continued low status and compensation of assistants. The shift of assistant identity from one of feminized ghetto to stepping stone explains the rest.

At the same time that secretarial labor for movie makers began to be gender-integrated in the late 1970's and early 80's, it was reframed discursively, shifting it in workers' minds from a feminized sector that was compensated as such (set apart from men's fields in terms of pay, credit, and promotion), to one a dues-paying, quasi-apprenticeship, in which the pay was low because the true compensation was not money, but training for their future profession under one of its masters. Though it goes by various other names (trainee programs, internships, assistant hyphenates), apprenticeship is common practice in unionized, below-the-line, film professions, so it makes sense that it has been adopted by above-the-line professionals and agents. However, the difference between an assistant location manager and a producer's assistant is that, as with any real apprenticeship, the assistant location manager's union –the 399 teamsters— regulates the length, pay and conditions of their apprenticeship and determines when they are eligible for promotion and pay raise. By contrast, there are no rules governing an assistant's pay, how they earn it, and what kind of training or promotions they may receive.

Really, assistantship hasn't changed from the days of secretarial work so much as it has been rhetorically rebranded to have the appeal of an apprenticeship without any of its guarantees. Hence, the widely varying pay and work experiences of contemporary assistants. The mythology of dues-paying retrofits the parts of the apprentice system that are most favorable to management onto formerly gendered aspects of the job that are equally favorable, then spins the new combination as not only

attractive but a key to success in the business. The sanctioning of work conditions through dues-paying might be more defensible if the promises of the dues-paying mythology were more consistently delivered. My research has shown however, that, far from assistants finding themselves on track to creative or executive positions after a few years on the job, there is an extremely large dropout rate due to the financial, mental and emotional strain endured by workers for up to ten years without promotion.[14]

Much like the discussion of secretaries within studio-era production cultures detailed in chapter 4, dues-paying mythology makes little mention of the contributions assistants make to the creative process. However, like the studio secretaries, assistants in my study found themselves participating in creative projects through a contemporary form of creative service, which included a similar range of responsibilities, from proxying for and filtering non-creative work away from employers, to delimiting creative solutions to problems (e.g, generating writer lists or narrowing a field of 100 scripts to the best five), to actively generating content (such as by creating transmedia texts). Assistant work's impact on creative texts was not as clearly delineated as that of those higher in the creative food chain, who like their movie maker fore-runners typically characterized assistanting as ancillary or parallel to the creative process. Yet as members of the network that creates screen content, assistants were clearly essential to the process, responsible for a large portion of the distributed

[14] Of the 40 assistants I interviewed just 6 a few ago, only 3 have been promoted to a junior executive position, and in the same time, 10 have left the industry completely. The rest have either moved to parallel sectors, or are still working as assistants. Ibid.

knowledge that went into collaborative efforts, and quietly carrying out a large share of the development and production labor, especially that which took place on paper.

Far from being ignorant of the discrepancy between their value to the system and their compensation, most assistants recognize and accept it. Though California labor laws for overtime are broken every day in Los Angeles, offenses are seldom reported and attempts at unionization are rare and fruitless, since under the rules of dues-paying, complainers "never work in this town again." The assistants accept their fate because most of them believe that if they pay their dues, they will be rewarded.[15] And when they aren't, the mythology is in place to shift the blame from management to the assistants for being unwilling to pay their dues. Of course, the only definite beneficiary of this policy is the industry that continues to sustain itself on these workers' backs. This helps to explain DHD blog commenters with seemingly little stake in the WME wage dispute angrily championing management over labor. Whether they have transcended assistanthood, are themselves assistants, or are outsiders looking in, the commenters actually do have a stake in the argument –a belief in the system as rational and in their own ability to succeed if they can only master it. And so, as they've been mentored by television or job gossip to do, they defend the system, policing its boundaries and its mythology.[16] This rationalization sanctions the system, helping it

[15] This mythology has been the focus of greater scrutiny only recently, with a judge ruling in favor of plaintiffs in a lawsuit brought by Fox Searchlight interns, for unpaid labor in the production of *Black Swan*, prompting speculation about further legal action by unpaid workers, and unionization or other measures by their underpaid assistant brethren. Steven Greenhouse, "Judge Rules that Movie Studio Should Have Been Paying Interns," *The New York Times* (June 11, 2013), http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/12/business/judge-rules-for-interns-who-sued-fox-searchlight.html?_r=0 accessed August 10, 2013.

[16] A similar mythology can often be found at work in some populations of recent immigrants to the United States who, feeling they have worked hard to attain their version of the American dream, do not support social programs to further level the playing field for new arrivals to the country, since "nobody helped me." This logic of "I had to do suffer through it and so you should, too," also ensures the continued practice of hazing in schools, fraternal organizations, the military, etc.

contain exactly the kind of dissent that, ironically, might ultimately make it fairer and more masterable.

The example of assistants and dues-paying, as well as that of current-day casting directors in Chapter 5, are offered to give a sense of how the gendered past continues to affect present-day media workers and the products the industry produces. Today, gender-related expectations still exist, but they're difficult to pinpoint because they have been forced under the radar in order to give the appearance of political correctness. My own experiences in media production reflect the ripple affect of historical feminization in similarly murky ways. Early on, in my internships at various production companies, I felt myself being encouraged toward work as an assistant or in development, and offered the rationale that women excelled there, which seemed to imply that they were less suited for upper-level production roles. I was hired for my first "reader" job by a story editor who told me he "needed more girls" to fill out his staff, but it was never clear if this meant he only hired girls, or simply had too many "boys," and needed to include other perspectives. Either scenario is possible, though in my experience, reading still leans toward female domination. A frequent source of annoyance among the female assistants at my first full-time job was the fact that it was always one of us (rather than the male assistants) who were assigned the task of placing large orders for catered lunches, and setting them up in the company's conference room. At another office, my female employer –whose work in television had marked her as a notable feminist—told me I should only hire a male production assistant because the P.A. job occasionally included some lifting and carrying.

These were all such minor complaints that at the time they hardly seemed worthy of discussion during after-work drinks with friends, and I certainly would not have objected to any of them in the workplace, since most of these attitudes were expressed by superiors. However, I've kept in contact with the female assistants I "came up" with, and many of the other female movie workers I've come to know through my interviews and in my work and social life in Los Angeles. For these women, the little anecdotes relating to their gender seem to accumulate as they rise up the ladder. The female 2nd A.D. feels compelled to tell "dick jokes" on the set in order to prove she "gets it" and can hang with the guys. The writer's assistant is teasingly blamed by co-workers for a mistake, prompting the office's male Executive Producer to joke that it's ok because "when she makes enough mistakes, we get to rape her." Though everyone around him knows the comment is shockingly inappropriate, no one reports it for fear of "never working in this town again," and for years, every time one of her former boss's high profile projects is announced the trades, the former assistant feels like she belongs in her industry a little less. The TV writer notices that the producers who hire her invariably assume that she is most interested in writing stories around female characters and themes, simply because she's a "lady writer." A female network hears Tina Fey's leadership of the SNL writing staff characterized negatively an E.P., who doesn't notice that he's automatically sorted her behavior into a few prescribed, "feminine" roles without realizing how seldom such roles are a matter of choice for women, who still package their labor through performance to avoid being called a "bitch" when they lead, only to be pegged with some other gender stereotype, sometimes unconsciously, by co-workers.

I recount these select few anecdotes not because I believe there is an active desire on the part of most media professionals to oppress or discriminate against women. With the exception of the occasional raging sexist (who might be found in any workplace) most production workers—male and female alike—know not what they do when they generalize about what women's "natural" skills. In most cases, they believe they're making factual observations based on "the way things are" or always have been between men and women. And still, discussion of women in media production, whether by media workers, media scholars, or in media texts, centers around phrases like "breaking in," "infiltrating," "storming the castle," etc. Discursively, women continue to be attributed less ownership over their industry and its history than men, as if they really were absent from production prior to the 1980s. The truth is that, unlike older industries that were exclusive to men for decades or centuries before women snuck in as clerical workers, women have been present in and around media production all along, often subsidizing growth through their labor's cheaper cost. And that women weren't born better at script supervision or publicity any more than they were born with an innate sense for how much food to order for lunch or for noticing details. They've excelled in those areas because they were the areas in which they were allowed and encouraged to excel, and so they did.

I don't make these observations because I think they have shock value, only to draw attention to the ways in which media scholarship and pedagogy might play a larger role in shifting the thinking around to women's right and provenance in the media industry. Teaching students who plan to pursue careers in media that notions of gender are constructed and continue to impact media labor, as many media studies

programs do— is a partial corrective. However, more may be done to draw the connection between gender (and race, class, etc.), the workplace identity that often comes with it, and its impact on how creative labor is shared out and compensated. This might help production workers—male and female—to question gender-based assumptions as they arise in the workplace, and to recognize industrial mythology for what it is. This sort of training and preparation, if undertaken prior to joining the industry, might help the next Mike Damski (quoted at the top of this chapter) to better "understand what the problem is" when, despite what he sees as a total lack of obstacles, women aren't streaming into the DGA as they should. Proper, critical, unpacking of these issues and their origins in film history by media studios teachers might help the next generation of workers discard outdated mythology and ask, for example, whether a joke is inherently funny to men and non-buzz kill women alike, or whether it's funny because men have been the only ones with any say in what's funny for too long. It might ensure that female writers' "good female characters" are recognized as the result of their individual talents, not their ownership of a set of female sex organs. This sort of training in the classroom might guide future employers toward hiring workers based on their difference from everyone else at the table, rather than their sameness…not because it's The Right Thing to Do, but because it makes good business sense.

Finally, equipping future female media workers with a sense of legacy might help them seek out the sector that's best for them, based on their own desires, not their understanding of what's best, given their gender. And for those of us who are already in them, a better understanding of women's sectors might engender a new sense of

ownership over “women’s work.” Instead of agreeing with negative characterizations of this work as unimportant “bitch” work, we might feel an owner’s pride, demanding appropriate credit and compensation, or leaving it behind more readily. I disliked assistant work intensely. I still enjoy my work as a “reader.” I feel proud of my work in both sectors, in part because I have connected it to the work of Marcella Rabwin or Kate Corbaley and recognized the positive and negative sides of its legacy. I think that if more women could do the same, they might be more ready to stand up and demand that both industry and academy recognize how important their work, behind-the-scenes and at typewriters, really is, and feel entitled to advance into those fields that have been dominated by men, not as an act of heroism, but as their rightful inheritance.

APPENDIX 1: Labor By Gender in Studio Tours Films

Behind the Screen (Universal, 1915)

Men's Labor	Women's Labor
Producer/Production Head (1)	Actor (5-10)
Director (2-4) [1]	Scenario Department (1)
Actor (15-20)[2]	Seamstress (7)
Scenario Department [3] (4)	Note Taker/Possible Script Girl (1)
Scenery Supervisor (1)	
Scenery Department (3)	
Set Dressers/Grips (15-20)	
Costume Supervisor (1)	
Property Department (20-30)	
Lighting Department (1)	
Camera Department (10-12)	
Waiter (4-5)	

A Trip to Paramountown (Paramount, 1922)

Men's Labor	Women's Labor
Director (4)	Actress(8-10)
Actor (15-20)	Writer (1)
Set painter (1)	Maid/servant (1)
Camera (10-12)	

[1] When possible, the exact number of workers visible is listed alongside specific types of labor. With larger groups or shots in which it is not possible to determine exact numbers, rough estimates have been given.
[2] Stars and actors have been grouped together because it is difficult to distinguish between the two.
[3] When specific workers are identified with specific jobs (e.g. screenwriter) the specific job is listed. When it is not possible to determine which workers are doing which job in which department, the department is listed.

***A Tour of the Thomas H. Ince Studio, 1920-22* (Ince, 1924)**

Men's Labor	**Women's Labor**
Studio Manager (1, Ince)	Actors (10-15)
Producer (2-3, including Ince)	"Manikins"/Models (4)
Director (4-6)	Wardrobe Department (3)
Actors (25+)	Wardrobe Maid (1)
"Production Staff" (7)	Seamstress (2)
Production Designer (3)	Pianist (1)
Set Designers (5)	Negative Inspector (9)
Scenic Artist (3)	Patcher (9)
Set Decorator (5)	Note-taker (1)
Carpenter (12+)	
Plaster Molder (3)	
Powder/Explosives (1)	
Cameraman (6+)	
Camera Department (10+)	
Grip (3)	
Violinist (2)	
Negative Timing Technician (2)	
Negative Developing (4)	
Negative Drying Room (6-8)	
Editor (1)	
Titling Artist (9)	
Still Photography Department (3)	
Projectionist (1)	
Power Plant (3)	
Firefighters (3-4 plus several volunteers)	
Professional Fitness Trainer (1)	
Chauffer (1)	
Waiter (1)	
Butler (1)	
Messenger/Porter (1)	

1925 Studio Tour (M-G-M, 1925)

Men's Labor – M-G-M

Actors (10-15)
Director (18-20)
Screenwriter (5)
Scenario Writer (10)
Reader (3)
Casting Director (1)
Casting Department (3)
Publicity Department (10)
Costume Designer (1)
Cameraman (30-40)
Still Cameraman (15-20)
Production Manager (1)
Production Manager's Staff (17-18)
Art Director (1)
Art Director's Aide (10-12)
Draftsmen (5)
Construction Manager (1)
Carpenter Shop (20-30)
Set Builder (50-60)
Head Plasterer (1)
Plastic Shop (10-15)
Boss Painter and Decorator (1)
Painter (30-40)
Art Studio (4-5)
Props (15-30)
Fashion Designer (1)
Wardrobe Department ??
Barber Shop (5)
Transportation Department (1)
Camera Repair Shop (3-4)
Lighting Supervisor (1)
Electricians (20-30)
Generator Operators (1)
Orchestra Units (18-20)
Pianists (5-6)
Laboratory Head (1)
Laboratory (25-30)
Assembly Supervisor (1)
Cutter (18)
Film Vault (1)
Projectionist (12+)
Reception Clerk (5)
Wire Operator (1)
Busboy (3)

Women's Labor

Actor (10-15)
Screenwriter (4)
Scenario Writer (8)
Research Department (2)
Reader (5)
Publicity (1-2)
Stenographer/Typist (15-17)
Art Director's Aide (1)
Wardrobe Mistress/Matron (1)
Wardrobe Staff (?)
Seamstress (??)
Barber Shop (1)
Danseuse (1)
Dancer (15)
Violinist (1)
Pianist (1)
Laboratory (10-15)
Assembler (7-8)
Cutter (2)
Nurse (1)
Matron (1)
Waitress (2)

Unidentified Short (Universal, 1925)

Men's Labor	Women's Labor
Director (5-10)	Actor (15-20)
Actor (30-40)	
Scenario Editor (1)	
Scenario Writer (1)	
Advertising Manager (1)	
Reception Clerk (1)	
Camera Department (5-10)	
Ranch Rider (10-20)	

Life in Hollywood (Goodwill, 1927, showing labor at Vitagraph)

Men's Labor	Women's Labor
Director (8-10)	Actor (8-10)
Actor (10-12)	Fan Mail Clerk (1)
Cameraman (3)	
Clapper Loader (1)	
Violinist (1)	

A Trip Thru a Hollywood Studio (Vitagraph, 1935)

Men's Labor	Women's Labor
Executives (4)	Actor (15-20)
Director (2)	Dancer (25-30)
Actor (4)	Continuity/Script Supervision (1)
Casting Director (1)	Note Taker/Secretary (1)
Casting Assistant (1)	Negative Cutter (7)
Dance Director (1)	
Pianist (1)	
Trainer (1)	
Lighting Department (3)	
Cameraman(2)	
Camera Department (5)	
Boom Operator (1)	
Sound Mixer (1)	
Sound Recorder (1)	
Sound Amplifier Operator (2)	
Power Plant Operator (1)	
Still Photographer (1)	
Laboratory Drying/Transfer Rooms (1)	
Laboratory Printing/Matching Room (5)	
Projectionist (1)	
Cutter (1)	

20th Century Fox Studio Tour (1936)

Men's Labor

Vice President - Production (1)
Studio Manager (1)
Exec Assistant to Production V.P. (1)
Executive Producer (2)
Associate Producer (9)
Director (11-12)
Actor (15-20)
Scenario Department Head (1)
Screenwriter (12)
Story Editor (1)
Eastern Scenario and Play Editor (2)
Casting Director (2)
Public Relations Head (1)
Production Manager (1)
Studio Treasurer (1)
Personnel Manager (1)
Dance Director (1)
Art Director (1)
Set Designers (3)
Draftsmen (15-20)
Chief Engineer (2)
Construction Department Head (1)
Lumber Mill (5-6)
Carpenter (2)
Scenic Art Department Head (1)
Scenic Art Crew (5)
Property Department Head (1)
Arsenal (2)
Costume Design/Dept. Head (3)
Makeup Department Head (1)
Asst. to Makeup Department Head(1)
Camera Operators (3-4)
Sound Department Head (1)
Sound Technician(1)
Sound Assistant (2)
Miniature Processing Dept Head (1)
Music Department Directors (3)
Music Associates (5)
Composer (1)
Film Laboratory(4)

Women's Labor

Actor (15-20)
Screenwriter (4)
Research Department Head (1)
Research (5)
Costume Design/Dept. Head (1)
Wardrobe Department (15)
Dancers (15-20)
Film Editorial Department (1)

Film Editorial Department Head (1)
Cutter (1)
Film Editorial Assistant(1)
Power Generator Operator (1)
Maintenance Department Head (1)
Maintenance Department (3-4)
Camera Repair Head (1)
Camera Repair (7-8)
Transportation (3-4)
Police Chief (1)
Fire Chief (1)
Police/Armed Guards/Firemen (50+)
Payroll Clerk (1)

APPENDIX 2: Studio Jobs By Department

Front Office:

- Chairman of the Board
- President, General Manager
- Assistant Secretary
- General Council
- Executives
- Executive Assistants
- Secretaries

Overheads:

- Accountants
- Accounts Payable Clerks
- Bookkeeping Machine Operators
- Bookkeepers
- Cashiers
- Estimators
- Auditors
- Statistical Clerks
- Tax clerks
- IBM Machine Operators
- Typists/Stenographers/Secretaries/Clerks/Messengers

Tabulating/Timekeeping

- Tabulation Machine Operators
- Bond and Insurance Clerks
- Key Punch Operators
- Timekeepers

Personnel and Payroll

- Job Analysts
- Personnel Clerks
- Personnel Records Clerks
- Payroll and Cost Clerk
- Typists/Stenographers/Secretaries/Clerks/Messengers

Inventory and Insurance

- Insurance Underwriters
- Bookkeepers
- Insurance Clerks
- Inventory Clerks
- Typewriter Mechanics

Stores

- Storekeepers
- Store Clerks
- Lumber Checkers

Purchasing

- Purchasing Agents
- Assistants
- Typists, Clerks, Stenographers and Secretaries

Cost

- Department Head
- Assistants
- Clerks and secretaries

Legal

- Lawyers
- Legal Assistants
- Secretaries

Mail and Receiving

- Mail Clerks
- Receiving Clerks
- Assistants to Receiving Clerks
- Messengers (within department and assigned to other depts.)
- Typists, Clerks, Stenographers and Secretaries

Telephone and Telegraph

- Telephone Operators
- Switchboard Clerks
- Teletype Operators
- Receptionists/Operators (in Various Departments or Buildings)

Maintenance/Custodial

- Handymen
- Gardeners
- Custodians and Janitors
- Secretaries, Clerks, etc.

Ranch

Watchmen and Information

Stenographic and/or Secretarial Pool

- Department Head and Assistant
- Continuity Secretaries
- Continuity Writers
- Mimeograph Operators
- Departmental and Floating Secretaries, Stenographers, Typists and Clerks

Food and Services

Hospital

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Secretaries/Clerks

Police and Fire

- Policemen
- Firemen
- Dispatchers

Craft Service

- Restaurant/catering manager
- Cashiers
- Servers
- Kitchen manager
- Chefs
- Pastry Chefs

Planning

Story/Reading/Research/Script
- Scenario Editors
- Story Editors
- Assistant Story Editor
- Readers
- Adapters
- Screenwriters
- Continuity and Dialog Writers
- Salvage Unit Writers
- Researchers and Librarians
- Catalog and File Supervisors
- Typists, Stenographers, Secretaries and Clerks

Talent /Casting
- Drama Teachers and Coaches
- Contracts
- Casting Directors
- Casting Associates
- Casting Assistants
- Stars
- Supporting Players/Stock Company
- Dancers
- Extras/Background
- Typists, Stenographers, Secretaries

Publicity
- Department Head
- Unit Publicists
- Studio Publicists
- Advertisers
- Fan Mail Clerks, Typists and Stenographers
- Typists, Stenographers, Secretaries

Creative
- Producers
- Directors
- Writers
- Secretaries

Production (Under Production Manager and Assistant Production Manager):

- Art Department and Special Effects
- Department Head
- Art Directors
- Sketch Artists
- Model makers
- Draftsmen
- Effects Workers
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Camera Department
- Department Head
- Directors of Photography/Cinematographers
- Cameramen
- Assistants
- Script Supervisors
- Splicers
- Mechanics
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Camera Machine Shop
- Department Head
- Toolmakers
- Draftsmen
- Precision Machinists
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Technical Department
- Department Head
- Mechanics
- Laborers (eg riggers, movers, steeple jacks, handymen)
- Builders (eg sandblasters, glass cutters, hand polishers, bricklayers, stone masons, roofers)
- Millers and Carpenters (eg strikers, shapers, whood turners, ladder builders, tool and saw sharpeners)
- Staff Shop Wokers (eg sculpters, model makers, mold makers, casters)
- Painters and Decorators (eg plasterers, paper hangers, grainers, agers, paint mixers, sign writers)
- Grips (eg swing gang, light hangers, canvasmen, sailmakers, sailriggers, equipment builders, reflector painters, wire men, camera crane ops)
- Gardeners
    - Ranchmen
    - Powder Gang (smoke and demolitions workers)
    - Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Production (cont.

Electrical Department
- Head Electrician
- Electricians
- Lighting assistants
- Lighting crew members
- Gaffers
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Wardrobe Department
- Head of Wardrobe
- Assistant to Wardrobe head
- Designers
- Seamstresses/Sewing (eg fitters, cutters, drapers, finishers, milliners, tailors, bushelmen)
- Shoppers
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Makeup
- Department Head
- Make-up Artists
- Hair Dressers
- Wigmakers
- Sketch Artists
- Wax Figure Molders
- Cosmetic Chemists
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Property Department
- Department Head
- Set Dressers
- Upholsters and Drape Makers
- Hangers
- Electrical Fixtures "Gang" (Light fixture makers, neon light
- Cabinet makers
- Finishers
- Prop Men
- Gunmen
- Saddlemen
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Mechanical and Transportation Department
- Department Head
- Machine Workers (eg machinists, blacksmiths, welders, design engineers)
- Metal Workers (eg smelters, tin and coppersmiths)
- Plumbers
- Heat and Vent Engineers
- Moulders and Core Makers
- Prop Shop Workers (eg prop makers, woodcutters, leather workers, hardware makers spindle carvers)
- Transportation Workers (eg expert drivers, chauffers, repair mechanics, welders, electricians, painters)
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Portrait Department
- Portrait photographers
- Still Photographers
- News Photographers
- Retouchers
- Enlargers
- Printers
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Sound Department
- Department Head
- Sound Engineers (eg acoustical engineers, optical engineers, transmission engineers, electrical engineers, sound effects, radio engineers,
- Photographic Chemists
- Precision Machinists
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Editorial Department
- Supervising Editor
- Cutters/Editors
- Assistant Editors
- Projectionists
- Negative Cutters
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Lab
- Department Head
- Sensitometer Experts
- Timing Engineers
- Sound Film Engineers
- Synchronizing Experts
- Chemists
- Mechanical Engineers
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

Music Department
- Department Head
- Composers
- Arrangers
- Copyists
- Musicians
- Department Clerks and/or Secretaries

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