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## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

An offer she can't refuse: scripting the anti-heroine pilot episode for an intended audience

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***An offer she can't refuse: scripting the anti-heroine pilot  
episode for an intended audience***

**A Practice-Based PhD in  
Screenwriting Studies**

**By**

**Levi Dean**

**Supervised by Dr Lyle Skains  
Bangor University**



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## **Declaration**

Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

## Acknowledgments

This PhD would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of a number of influential people and institutions. I would like to begin by acknowledging Bridgwater College. In 2005, I enrolled onto a GCSE programme at the college and successfully progressed onto A Levels. Here, my subject teachers ignited my love and passion for the creative industry and, more importantly, instilled a belief and confidence in me that had never existed before. It goes without saying that Bridgwater College provided me the foundation to flourish both educationally and as a person. For these reasons, I must specifically thank my former college teachers, Steve Bennison and Vanessa Hughes.

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## Summary

This thesis explores how to script an engaging and original television anti-heroine narrative that appeals to a mainstream audience. Specifically, it is centred on the screenwriter's process, and the storytelling principles and craft techniques at play for encouraging audience engagement. The research was originally inspired by Margrethe Bruun Vaage's text (2016) *Moral Psychology of Fiction*. Through textually analysing several commercially successful television anti-hero shows, Vaage (2016) describes a set of narrative techniques that can be advanced for achieving viewer engagement. The credibility of Vaage's narrative techniques is that they are grounded in moral psychology and point towards the fact that people's moral decision-making is intuitive. This understanding has loaned itself well to cognitive media theory, particularly for those scholars who have gone on to extrapolate the field of moral psychology for understanding the moral decision-making of television audiences. Theoretical research has surmised that specific narrative techniques can be utilised to deactivate viewers' moral evaluation, thus eliciting and sustaining their engagement.

A natural starting point for this research was to explore if Vaage's techniques would be directly applicable to the scripting of an engaging television anti-heroine show. However, it was important to shift away from only exploring Vaage's techniques theoretically, as well as the research questions more generally. Therefore, the scripting of an anti-heroine pilot episode was central to fulfilling the research aim and objectives.

First, however, as a means of appeasing industrial demands, textual analyses were conducted on successful anti-heroine television shows, resulting in the development of additional narrative techniques specific to the anti-heroine. Vaage's framework was subsequently combined with these newly discovered narrative techniques, giving rise to the *Wheel of Techniques*. At this point, practice commenced. After completing the first draft of my pilot episode *Angela*, it quickly became apparent that the *Wheel of Techniques* was inhibiting my ability to craft an engaging and original narrative. I discovered that morality is not the most essential pillar, and there are further layers at play that are far more significant for engaging audiences. Throughout the following chapters, these precise layers are explicated in a way that allows practising screenwriters to advance the development of their anti-heroine narratives.

We are at a time in which more nuanced female-based screenplays that subvert traditional representations of gender are demanded. This thesis contributes new knowledge that can aid screenwriters to craft nuanced and authentic female-based narratives.

## **Versions of Pilot Screenplay: *Angela***

In total, five drafts of the pilot script, *Angela*, were completed throughout my research study. When discussing a specific version of the pilot episode, its draft number will be detailed in parentheses. For example, the first draft would read as follows: *Angela* (1). If multiple versions are of specific discussion, such as the first and second draft for example, it will read as follows: *Angela* (1 & 2). It should also be noted that when I do not refer to the title of my pilot episode, *Angela*, I will instead refer to *draft* or *drafts*, and thus not specifically state *Angela*. In this instance, to inform the reader of the correct version or versions of the pilot episode, it will be noted in parentheses. For example, the first draft of the pilot episode could read as follows: draft (1). Again, if multiple versions are of specific discussion, such as the first and second draft for example, it will read as follows: drafts (1 & 2).

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## Introduction

This thesis is about the television anti-heroine, an archetype that has largely been located on the periphery, whilst her counterpart, the television anti-hero, has colonised television screens during the last twenty-something years. The principal aim of this research inquiry is to script an engaging anti-heroine pilot episode for an intended audience. In doing so, new knowledge is contributed concerning how to craft a uniquely engaging anti-heroine pilot episode that screenwriters can employ. Given that the research findings are primarily aimed at practising screenwriters, this thesis is located appropriately within the discipline of screenwriting studies.

In this introduction, before a discourse unfolds on what precisely constitutes research fitting congruently within the field of screenwriting studies, and before exploring the representation of the anti-heroine, there will be a discussion concerning television as a medium and, in particular, its transformation since the late 1990s. This discussion will organically provide an opportunity to contextualise key understandings about the field's development, which has been well monitored within the discipline of critical television studies.

## Background and context

In 1997, American broadcaster, Home Box Office (HBO), aired what many within the television industry believed to be a risk: this risk was the experimental, gritty and violent, male prison television drama *Oz* (1997–2003) (Nelson, 2006). *Oz* indeed proved itself a commercial success and played a significant role in shifting what was understood about the potential of television storytelling (Nelson, 2006; McCabe & Akass, 2007). This was because *Oz* follows the story of multiple morally ambiguous characters that were imprisoned for some of society's most heinous crimes. However, through clever and compelling storytelling, the show captures the complexity of the inmates' lives and, in turn, manages to elicit and sustain viewer engagement. In his text *State of Play*, Robin Nelson (2006, p.14), alongside McCabe and Akass in *Quality TV* (2007, p.xviii), points towards *Oz* changing the landscape of television storytelling, leading to innovative shows such as *The Sopranos* (1999–2008) and *Sex and the City* (1998–2004). As McCabe and Akass state, these shows, as well as other dramas such as “*The Wire*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Six Feet Under* and *Deadwood*, went beyond anything imaginable in the old network era in terms of content, narrative complexity, language and lots more” (2007, p.xviii).

Still, in briefly considering *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*, both shows are strikingly different. The former follows a New Jersey mob boss, suffering from panic attacks, whilst the latter is a comedy that centres on “four strongly contrasted [female] lead characters,” with each episode exploring issues such as “gender, lifestyle, materialism, and orgasms” (Simon, 2009, pp.193–194). Yet, what connects both shows is their bravery to break away from traditional forms of television storytelling. The narrative of *The Sopranos* follows anti-hero Tony Soprano—a ruthless and murderous mobster—as the viewers’ central point of allegiance. *Sex and the City* relinquishes the traditionally safe set-up of a comedy drama by “foregoing four video cameras and a live studio audience,” and thus, according to Ron Simon, “demonstrated conclusively that verbal comedies do not require artificial support” (2009, p.194). When taking into account both of these drama series, Christopher Anderson’s assertion that transformations within the television industry at this time saw dramas becoming increasingly synonymous with “work[s] of art” is now evidently accurate (2009, p.23). In connecting back to Nelson’s (2006) original observation concerning *Oz*, some fifteen years later it is clear he was correct in his belief that *Oz* did in fact change the landscape of television for good and contributed, to some extent, to what is now understood as the era of Complex TV (Mittell, 2015).

However, it should be noted that before Jason Mittell (2015) published his seminal text *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*, critical television studies, up until that point, had still done well to monitor and critically unpack the medium’s transformation since 1997—as evidenced by the discussion so far. Notable texts emerging from critical television studies during the 2000s include, Janet McCabe and Kim Akass’ (2007) *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, Gary R. Edgerton and Jeffrey P. Jones’ (2009) *The Essential HBO Reader*, and, more recently, Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock’s (2013) *Television Aesthetics and Style*. This critical body of work gave rise to the key terms used to describe the phenomena taking place within the medium such as “quality television”, “cinematic television” and “high end television” (Nelson, 2006; McCabe & Akass, 2007; Mills, 2013; Mittell, 2015). Mittell (2015) has since shifted away from these principal terms and provided a new critical understanding of the medium through what he categorises as Complex TV. Complex TV coincides with the changes in consumptive habits as a result of the developments in modern technology, such as streaming services and the rise of smart phones and tablets (Mittell, 2015). As Mittell states:

*Complex TV* is about this shift, exploring how television storytelling has changed and what cultural practices within television technology, industry, and viewership have

enabled and encouraged these transformations [...] leading to a new mode of television storytelling that I term *complex TV*. (2015, p.2).

Complex TV is an all-encompassing umbrella term that usefully captures the complexity of the current landscape of television, as well as all of its tenants, which include character archetypes and genre shows. Thus, for the remainder of this discussion, a spotlight will be fixed onto a specific character that has been instrumental in terms of the evolution of television storytelling. That character is the television anti-hero.

During the last twenty years, the anti-hero has dramatically risen in popularity amongst television viewers. Examples of critically acclaimed anti-hero figures include, among others, Tony Soprano (*The Sopranos*), Dexter Morgan (*Dexter*, 2006–2013), Walter White (*Breaking Bad*, 2008–2013), Jack Teller (*Sons of Anarchy*, 2008–2014), Nucky Thompson (*Boardwalk Empire*, 2010–2014), Thomas Shelby (*Peaky Blinders*, 2013–), Saul Goodman (*Better Call Saul*, 2015–2021), James St. Patrick (*Power*, 2014–2020) and Marty Byrde (*Ozark*, 2017–). The abundance of anti-hero narratives has naturally provided a plethora of material for academic scholars to unpack and draw credible correlations from. As a result, there has been an upsurge of academic texts that have predominantly emerged from the field of critical television studies that typically centre on why viewers have been so willing to engage with these, and many other, morally ambiguous male characters. Notable texts exploring this subject matter are *Difficult Men: From The Sopranos and The Wire to Mad Men and Breaking Bad* (2013) by Brett Martin, *Antihero* (2016) by Fiona Peters and Rebecca Stewart, *Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2014) by Amanda D. Lotz, *Exploring Why We Enjoy Antihero Narratives* (2012) by Daniel Shafter and Arthur Raney and Adam Kotsko's (2012) *Why We Love Sociopaths: A Guide To Late Capitalist Television*. Each authors' research is diverse and employs a distinct methodological approach to provide a deeper understanding as to why audiences engage with the television anti-hero.

Despite the proliferation of the television anti-hero on screen and across academic texts, the anti-heroine has been located on the periphery. In fact, arguably, until the success endured by television anti-heroine Nancy Botwin (*Weeds*, 2005–2012), she rarely appeared on television screens. *Weeds* has indeed been a contributing factor to the modest increase in the number of anti-heroine television shows that have been commissioned. This is evidenced by the morally complex lead characters seen on screen since 2011 such as Jessica Jones (*Jessica Jones*, 2015–2019), Piper Chapman (*Orange is the New Black*, 2013–2019), Carrie Mathison (*Homeland*, 2011–2020), Sarah Linden (*The Killing*, 2011–2014), Floyd Gerhardt

(*Fargo*, 2014–), Ruth Langmore (*Ozark*, 2017–), Eve Polastri (*Killing Eve*, 2018–), and Cassie Bowden (*The Flight Attendant*, 2020–). In light of this small number of anti-heroine narratives showcasing their commercial success, two key texts have been published and fall under the banner of critical television studies. Margaret Tally's text, *The Rise of the Anti-Heroine in TV's Third Golden Age* (2016), explores the possible characteristics that define the anti-heroine, as well as studying the wider context of why the anti-heroine has begun to rival its counterpart the anti-hero. Following Tally, Milly Buonanno published her text *Television Anti-heroines: Women Behaving Badly in Crime and Prison Drama* (2017). Buonanno compiles thirteen chapters exploring the immorality and success behind specific anti-heroine figures that emerge from a diverse range of countries, such as the Netherlands, Brazil, Australia, Italy, Colombia, the USA and the UK. By Buonanno selecting and examining a global assortment of successful anti-heroine figures, it further compounds the argument that there is a worldwide appetite amongst audiences for morally ambiguous female character-led narratives.

However, whilst Buonanno's text does indirectly provide insights about various ways of approaching the television anti-heroine, it is not written to inform the process of screenwriting. As a result, how her findings can be advanced when scripting an anti-heroine narrative is not entirely clear. Buonanno is not an outlier. This is true of almost all publications centred on both the anti-heroine and anti-hero, including the texts already mentioned. Traditionally, research and theoretical insights surrounding an immoral figure are concerned with providing a more profound understanding regarding what the narratives teach us about the morality of humanity (Vaage, 2016). There exists a gap between theory and practice. As a practising screenwriter with an interest in writing an anti-heroine television show, this void is problematic because it is unclear how to creatively approach an anti-heroine's immorality; indeed, this chasm needs to be bridged to help screenwriters satisfy audience appetites for more morally ambiguous complex female character-led narratives.

According to Margaret McVeigh, this dearth of literature is not only specific to morally ambiguous television characters but contemporary television shows more generally. In her article *Telling Big Little Lies: Writing the Female Gothic as extended metaphor in Complex Television*, McVeigh states that "only a handful of articles specifically focus on matters relating to writing for contemporary series TV" (2020, p.64). The following articles, which will be outlined, have all emerged from the *Journal of Screenwriting*. To start, Paolo Russo's text, *Storylining engagement with repulsive antiheroes: Toward a cognitive poetics of TV serial drama narrative: The case of Gomorrah-The Series*, explores how writing

techniques “have informed the development process” and, as a result, contribute to various levels of spectator “engagement with characters” (2017, p.5). Radha O’Meara’s article *Changing the way we think about character change in episodic television series*, examines “regular characters in episodic televisions series” and in turn challenges the notion that they “do not change, develop or transform” (2015, p.189). O’Meara’s argument is evidenced by her exploration of character change through “action and plot structure” (2015, p.189). Finally, there is Eva Novrup Redvall and Iben Albinus Sabroe’s (2016) piece *Production design as a storytelling tool in the writing of the Danish TV drama series The Legacy*. In addition to these articles, it is important to acknowledge, as McVeigh rightly does, “Redvall’s earlier and seminal book *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark: From The Kingdom to The Killing* (2013)” (*Telling Big Little Lies*, p.64). In this text, Redvall unveils and explores the central elements that influence the development process of creating and producing a television series in Denmark (2013, p.1). Redvall’s key argument is:

[T]hat while the quality and success of series like *The Killing* and *Borgen* stems from the work of gifted writers, directors, actors and producers with unique visions, there is much more to creating a successful series than a good idea and talented people to make it come alive. (2013, p.1).

Indeed, Redvall (2013) highlights the need for scholars to recognise the entire creative collaboration that goes into writing and producing a television series, especially the development process, which often occurs in the writers’ room.

Yet, whilst there exists a modest body of work to date pertaining to writing for television, it is ever evolving. This is evidenced in the *Journal of Screenwriting*’s special issue *Television Screenwriting: Continuity and Change* (Redvall & Cook, 2015). In particular, this special issue explores how the rapid and ongoing shifts in the “status, production and distribution of television” have reshaped the storytelling principles and process of screenwriting (Redvall & Cook, 2015, p.131).

Before concluding this discussion, it is important to explore the *Journal of Screenwriting* in relation to its involvement and evolution of screenwriting studies as an academic discipline. Since the inception of the *Journal of Screenwriting* in 2010, coupled with the work completed by the Screenwriting Research Network (SRN), there has been an emerging body of work centring on the theory and practice of screenwriting (Batty, *Screenwriting studies*, p.59). For Craig Batty this is “what we might call a ‘screenwriting turn’” which has resulted in greater contribution to the field of screenwriting studies (*Screenwriting studies*, p.59). This has paved the way for studies that move “beyond a

director-centric appraisal of screen works to an acknowledgement of the important roles played by creators, writers, showrunners, storyliners and script editors” (Batty, *Screenwriting studies*, p.59). Whilst research emerging from the field of screenwriting studies itself may involve a transdisciplinary approach by aligning one or more disciplines together, such as critical television studies and narrative theory (McVeigh, *Telling Big Little Lies*), the results are still achieved through the prism of screenwriting.

Ultimately, the purpose of acknowledging the *Journal of Screenwriting* and introducing the field of screenwriting studies so early on in this thesis is to clarify where this research locates itself. This is particularly important given that this thesis employs a transdisciplinary approach throughout, calling upon a variety of disciplines. Regardless, this thesis sits congruently under the banner of screenwriting studies. As discussed in the introduction, much of the research that has been published on television, and in particular, research surrounding morally ambiguous characters, has traditionally been completed through a holistic approach that considers all facets of the television industry. In part, this is arguably resultant of the bulk of research emerging from the field of critical television studies, and yet, whilst this research inquiry will build upon critical television studies and other pertinent disciplines, its central focus is to explore the television anti-heroine from a screenwriting lens. This will be explored in the methodology (Chapter 1). Finally, it should be pointed out that this thesis will not follow Mittell (2015) in trying to capture all aspects of the television industry, such as distribution, viewership and technology. Instead, it will explore, and subsequently unveil, findings that are specific to the process of screenwriting—specifically when writing an anti-heroine pilot episode. Exactly what comprises the screenwriting process (particularly in terms of television writing) and how it differentiates itself from other disciplines will be explored in detail next.

## **Screenwriting studies**

Throughout this thesis, there is reference to several academic disciplines, including critical television studies, cognitive media, moral psychology and screenwriting studies. While this thesis is transdisciplinary in nature, it contributes knowledge specifically to the field of screenwriting studies. Batty argues, “[s]creenwriting studies—or *screenwriting practice research*—could be thought of as being concerned with the act of writing and with creative process” (*Screenwriting studies*, p.64). Ultimately, this results “in not just an *understanding* of the topic, but also *practical insights* about the topic that the screenwriter (or industry professional) can apply” (Batty, *Screenwriting studies*, p.63). Following on from this,

Margaret Mehring defines the practice of a screenwriter as “[a] process of discovery and creation. A process that requires a knowledge of all [storytelling] elements and understanding of how these elements relate to each other and to dramatic structuring” (1990, p.4). This is supported by Batty who argues that, “[s]creenwriting is an activity, not an end product” (*Screenwriting studies*, p.59).

As noted, this thesis explores Vaage’s narrative techniques through the scripting of an anti-heroine pilot episode. However, Vaage’s techniques, which will be explored extensively in the following sections, do not exist within a vacuum. To give rise to a coherent and engaging screenplay there exists, as Mehring (1990) defines, key storytelling elements. It is generally understood that there are storytelling principles that screenwriters will need to have a grounded understanding of in order to craft a uniquely engaging story, particularly when writing for the commercial market (Macdonald, 2013; Redvall, 2013). These principles include, but are not limited to, formatting, characterisation, theme, structure, tone, style, voice, plot, genre and exposition; although, as Redvall points out, whilst there exist “particular understandings of best practice” (2013, p.27), it is down to the screenwriter how they blend and use such storytelling principles to craft their screenplay (Mehring, 1990). This is where, in one way, screenwriting studies differentiates itself from other academic disciplines, since screenwriting studies can involve the unique and serendipitous process of a creative practitioner, which informs conclusions drawn.

Moreover, the screenwriter does not exist within a vacuum, and researchers and practitioners should consider “the institutions (which structure the work to be done)” (Macdonald, 2013, p.4). Central to this research enquiry is the scripting of an anti-heroine pilot episode that is intended for the commercial market. Thus, it is reasonable to question how the commercial market will be incorporated, particularly within an academic setting. As Steven Price (2017) argues in his article *Script development and academic research*, screenwriters writing outside the commercial market miss out on instrumental feedback loops, such as what one can expect to experience throughout the script development process. According to Price, a consequence of this is that development implies “at most a process by which the individual writer progressively refines a script to the point at which it has reached a stage of completion that satisfies the individual writer” (2017, p.330). This can result in “a self-sustaining loop that fails to interact directly with the industry itself” and renders any findings “at best moot” (Price, 2017, p.320). Indeed, the writing of my anti-heroine pilot episode has not been undertaken within the commercial market. Nevertheless, the

methodology (Chapter 1) will seek to resolve this drawback, and the script development process within an academic setting will be validated.

In referring back to why this thesis sits congruently within the field of screenwriting studies, it is important to reaffirm that findings unveiled throughout emerged from the practice and process of screenwriting—specifically in relation to the writing of my anti-heroine pilot episode, *Angela*.

### ***Television anti-heroine***

As discussed, anti-heroine led television shows are still considerably less common than anti-hero narratives (Vaage, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). Coupled with this, the anti-heroines that have appeared on screen are far more conservative in terms of their moral descent when compared to the anti-hero (Vaage, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). For example, in the first episode of an anti-hero narrative he typically engages in murder, whereas the anti-heroine may not even carry out this act by the end of her series. As Margrethe Bruun Vaage notes, a “difference between female and male antiheroes is that of the gravity of their moral transgressions” (2016, p.173).

Take Walter White (*Breaking Bad*) who, at the end of the pilot episode, murders two drug dealers. Early in the narrative, the exposition discloses that Walter has cancer, is struggling monetarily and forced to work a second job to keep his family afloat. Walter is shown to be taking a moral course of action, working as a teacher and at a local car wash to provide financially for his family. Regrettably, his morality is slowly stripped away due to a unique set of unfortunate circumstances. By the end of the pilot episode, it is plausible to draw the conclusion that the violence and carnage that unfolds is entwined with a more profound message; that is, due to the devaluation of teachers as exemplified by Walter’s low pay and financial insecurity, he is seduced into the criminal underworld. Of course, when Walter learns he has terminal cancer this is the straw that breaks the camel’s back, and while some viewers may not have suffered from cancer, Walter’s predicament still resonates because many people are, or have been, trapped in low paid occupations. Therefore, to assume that stretching an anti-hero’s immorality has no correlation to a wider cultural critique that resonates with viewers would be naïve.

According to Buonanno (2017), the stretching of an anti-heroine’s immorality is also tied to a wider cultural critique, which is central to her resonating with viewers. Buonanno (2017) suggests that this wider cultural critique is typically achieved through the anti-heroine opposing traditional female cultural expectations, which happens to also be a cause for her



rarity on screen. Thus, by continuing to position the anti-heroine on the periphery, combined with her conservative immorality, the opportunity for a wide range of cultural critiques concerning female gender norms and representation is suppressed. Consequently, in further understanding the forces at play to script an engaging and immorally transgressive anti-heroine, a spotlight is fixed onto the inequalities that are specific to women and a door is opened for a more nuanced and diverse representation of gender.

The question that arises is where does one begin to tackle how writers can script an engaging and original anti-heroine pilot episode. Fortunately, there is one key text that is an anomaly amongst book publications concerning the topic of anti-heroes and anti-heroines. Vaage, in her text *The Antihero in American Television* (2016), textually analyses a range of successful television anti-hero shows and includes one chapter dedicated to the television anti-heroine. Whilst her study does not set out to specifically inform the creative process of the screenwriter, she does describe a set of narrative techniques<sup>1</sup> for how anti-hero characters have elicited and sustained audience engagement. The credibility of Vaage's set of narrative techniques is that they are grounded in the field of moral psychology.

Moral psychology builds on empirical research that is substantiated in the belief that societies share the same moral principles and, therefore, people generally respond in the same way (Vaage, 2016). Moreover, research has pointed towards people's moral decision-making as intuitive (Kahneman, 2011; Robertson, 2012; Greene, 2013; Haidt, 2013; Vaage, 2016). This understanding has loaned itself well to "cognitive media theory," particularly for those scholars, such as Margrethe Bruun Vaage and Alberto B. Garcia (2016), who have gone on to extrapolate the field of moral psychology for understanding the moral decision-making of television audiences. The significance of cognitive media theory is that it encompasses a transdisciplinary approach that tends to "allow science a greater role" than other academic disciplines orbiting film and television studies (Nannicelli & Taberham, 2014, p.3). This has led cognitive film and television theorists to follow "cognitive science's gradual move from a focus on 'cold' cognition (information-driven mental processes described in terms of inferential and computation models) to 'hot' cognition (affect-driven mental processes)" (Nannicelli & Taberham, 2014, p.5). The corollary of this has resulted in a general acceptance that audiences are not consciously aware of their own moral makeup. Ted Nannicelli and Paul Taberham are correct in reminding us that this shift occurred more than

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<sup>1</sup> Narrative techniques denote, in Vaage's view, a set of character traits, which the main character, secondary characters and antagonist embody. These traits are then eventually injected into the story to influence engagement between the anti-hero and audience. Equally, a narrative technique can refer to a specific narrative event or action that unfolds to elicit or maintain viewer engagement for an immoral figure.

two decades ago and “at least as early as Noel Carroll’s work on viewers’ emotional responses to horror films” (2014, p.5). The authors explain:

[A] cluster of work during the mid to late 1990s—including Murray Smith’s *Engaging Characters*, Ed Tan’s *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film*, Torben Grodal’s *Moving Viewers*, and Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith’s edited collection *Passionate Views*—which initiated the investigation of affect in film viewing as one of cognitive film theory’s most central and lively research projects. (Nannicelli & Taberham, 2014, p.5).

The works cited above are seminal texts that highlight the significant contributions that have emerged from cognitive media theory. In particular, the strength of several of these works, as well as more recent texts (such as those by Vaage and Garcia), is to some extent due to their grounding in moral psychology. Therefore, it can be argued that for the screenwriter, through immersion in moral psychology, a wider understanding of the moral makeup of audiences can be acquired and ultimately provide practitioners with knowledge that could enable them to shape spectator responses. In light of this, theoretical research has surmised that specific narrative techniques can be utilised to deactivate viewers’ moral evaluations (Plantinga, 2009; Garcia, 2016; Vaage, 2016). Vaage, whose work sits congruently within the field of cognitive media theory, states, “the fictional status of these [anti-hero] series deactivates rational, deliberate moral evaluation, making the spectator rely on moral emotions and intuitions that are relatively easy to manipulate with narrative strategies” (2016, pp.1–2).

At this juncture, it would be remiss to forgo mentioning Alberto N. Garcia’s article *Moral Emotions, Antiheroes and the Limits of Allegiance*, as like Vaage, Garcia posits a set of “dramatic strategies” to strengthen audience engagement for the television anti-hero (2016, p.53). This article highlights the general agreement within the field of critical television studies and, in particular, cognitive media theory, that narrative techniques are critical for helping to elicit engagement for a morally ambiguous character. While Garcia’s article will be further explored in Chapter 5, the reason for employing Vaage’s techniques instead of Garcia’s *dramatic strategies* is that Vaage’s critical analysis of her narrative techniques is a far more extensive monograph, unlike Garcia’s, which is a single article.

Still, while Vaage dedicates an entire chapter to the anti-heroine, her narrative techniques are specific to the television anti-hero with only a loose suggestion that they may be applicable to the television anti-heroine. Having said that, her work provided a much-needed starting point to aid the writing of my anti-heroine pilot episode. Vaage’s text, unlike much of the concurrent literature, unpacks how the structure of anti-hero narratives have achieved viewer engagement, thus helping to inform other writers’ creative decision-making

when crafting an anti-hero pilot episode. An additional reason for exploring Vaage's techniques as part of this thesis is that, as already mentioned, they are grounded in moral psychology. Due to this fact, it offers space to potentially understand if and why gender discrepancies exist between the anti-heroine and anti-hero. To be specific, would Vaage's narrative techniques be applicable for the writing of a television anti-heroine narrative that encourages viewer engagement?

### ***Moral psychology***

Since its origin over two hundred years ago, there have been two opposing spheres dominating the field of moral psychology that are helmed by two significant eighteenth-century philosophers: Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and David Hume (1711–1776). Kant and Hume argued from opposite ends of the spectrum in their attempts to explain morality. Kant regarded moral choices as a conscious decision through “calculating reason rather than interests or instincts” (Eden, Grizzard & Lewis, 2013, p.4). Conversely, Hume believed that morality did not exist without feeling and argued that emotion was the “fundamental motivator for moral behaviour” (Eden, Grizzard & Lewis, 2013, p.4). The difference of opinion between Kant and Hume sparked a debate that continued throughout the following two hundred years and remains a topic of contention today (Eden, Grizzard & Lewis, 2013).

Until the 1970s, moral psychology was dominated by rationalist models pinned by the belief that morality is a conscious process of reasoning as originally argued by Kant (Haidt, 2001). Today, researchers orbiting the field of moral psychology agree that “most of cognition occurs automatically and outside of consciousness” (Haidt, 2001, p.830), and people often cannot explain how they reach decisions (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Greene, 2013). Hauser further adds, “moral judgments are mediated by an unconscious process, a hidden moral grammar that evaluates the causes and consequences of our own and other's action” (2006, p.2). It is here that Vaage (2016) extrapolates the field of moral psychology to tease out conclusions concerning how one evaluates someone else's actions specifically for the television viewer.

With the emerging evidence that moral cognition is unconscious rather than calculated, the field of moral psychology has expanded from a philosophical to a scientific discipline (Hauser, 2006). This fusion between scientific and philosophical approaches has yielded new knowledge concerning the cognitive processes of the moral mind. For instance, Jonathan Haidt (2001), Daniel Kahneman (2011) and Joshua Greene (2013) have all produced excellent models for understanding moral action. Due to the myriad of terms used

for describing automatic and manual moral behaviour, this thesis will reference Greene's (2013) framework, given it is the most recent.

Automatic moral action is undertaken involuntarily and without any sense of volition; it is efficient but inflexible. Manual moral action "allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations" (Kahneman, 2011, p.21). This mode is flexible but inefficient because it demands a high level of cognition that can be time consuming. Greene (2013) further describes the process of automatic and manual action as parallel to a dual-mode camera. He states:

The moral brain is like a dual-mode camera with both automatic settings (such as "portrait" or "landscape") and a manual mode. Automatic settings are efficient but inflexible. Manual mode is flexible but inefficient. (Greene, 2013, p.15).

Similar to a dual-mode camera, the automatic mode of the brain is fast and cognitively less taxing, thus we typically rely on this mechanism. However, when the automatic setting is incapable of tackling a problem, the manual setting is engaged and it becomes more cognitively taxing for the brain. In regard to moral psychology and its relationship to fiction, Vaage (2016) posits that it is better that the manual mode of the audience is not triggered into action as this will lead to moral deliberation. When watching the anti-heroine and anti-hero, moral deliberation by the audience could threaten their engagement since they may evaluate the actions as morally unacceptable and withdraw from the narrative. Kahneman terms this as "cognitive strain" (2011, p.59) because it shifts "people's approach to problems from a casual intuitive mode to a more engaged and analytic mode" (2011, p.65). The audience would, therefore, be drawn into a moral dilemma that would be cognitively straining.

When extrapolating this understanding of moral psychology to the cognition of viewers, it is impractical to believe that audiences' manual mode would not at some stage be triggered. Therefore, some of Vaage's (2016) narrative techniques are centred on overriding audience disengagement when their manual mode is sanctioned. This situation resonates with the dichotomy of moral psychology being grounded in both science and philosophy. The automatic mode encompasses a scientific approach, but when the manual mode is activated, interpreting the cognitive process becomes philosophical. While this is a limitation, the methodological approach will describe a set of credible and valid methods for interpreting potential audience responses.

## Research aim and objectives

The aim of this research was indeed inspired by Margrethe Bruun Vaage's (2016) *Moral Psychology of Fiction*, which comprises a set of narrative techniques that can be advanced for eliciting and sustaining viewer engagement for the television anti-hero. I was particularly interested in determining if these narrative techniques, which will be outlined in the next section, could be employed to guide the successful writing of an anti-heroine pilot screenplay that would specifically appeal to a mainstream audience. The contribution to knowledge emerges from answering Vaage's question specifically for the anti-heroine; that is, "whom are we as spectators of fiction willing to engage, and where do we draw the limit" (Vaage, 2016, p.xii).

My practice-based PhD is subsequently organised around the following objectives:

- Write an anti-heroine pilot screenplay that examines Vaage's concept of *Moral Psychology of Fiction*.
- Compile a written analysis of any moral differences between the television anti-heroine and the television anti-hero.
- Develop Vaage's concept of moral fiction by creating a paradigm which comprises key storytelling principles for encouraging audience engagement that screenwriters can employ when conceiving and crafting an anti-heroine pilot screenplay.
- Theorise the creative process and, more specifically, describe key characteristics of an anti-heroine figure that would help encourage audience engagement as well as recommend where screenwriters should draw the limit on moral ambiguity concerning her transgressive behaviour.

## Defining Vaage's narrative techniques

Vaage's six narrative techniques—*fictional relief*, *loyalty*, *employment of rape*, *moral inversion*, *vicarious entertainment* and *moral disengagement*—are described in bullet form below. It should be pointed out that Vaage has not formulated her insights as six specific techniques; instead, she provides a general overview. Thus, for the purpose of this research I have teased out these specific techniques and explicated them:

- ❖ *Fictional relief* is “the relief from fully considering the moral and political consequences of one’s engagement with fiction,” which they may otherwise experience in a real-world setting (Vaage, 2013, p.235). This is, in part, because when viewers engage with a narrative they “want the story to be maximally engaging [as they] crave suspenseful sequences” (Vaage, 2016, p.34). A specific method for encouraging viewers to grant themselves fictional relief is the withholding of suspenseful action. When there is a period in which the narrative slows down, viewers’ desire for action increases in line with the amount of time it has been suppressed. If timed correctly, once the action does unfold and a character transgresses, audiences are more inclined to overlook their immorality for the sake of being entertained.
  
- ❖ *Loyalty* is a trait that signifies an immoral lead character is faithful to those dearest to them, individuating the lead as morally preferable. This explains to some extent why Tony Soprano strikes a chord with viewers when he cites to his therapist, Dr Melfi, “I’m a good guy, basically. I love my family” (Chase, 1999). The pilot episode of *Breaking Bad* also draws parallels when Walter White assures his wife, Skylar, that “no matter how it may look, I only had you in my heart” (Gilligan, 2008). Ultimately, loyalty displayed by a morally ambiguous figure towards his family and friends distinguishes them as morally preferable to any other character that violates this norm (Vaage, 2016).
  
- ❖ *Employment of rape* “has predominantly two narrative functions” (Vaage, 2016, p.127). First, rape definitively identifies the antagonist. Second, rape is used to justify revenge carried out by an immoral figure who the spectator will come to support and applaud (Vaage, 2016). More specifically, disgust permeates the audience when rape is present in the narrative. Since the audience cannot withdraw unless they disengage from the narrative entirely, it is typically left to the anti-hero to restore the equilibrium to ensure engagement is ultimately sustained (Vaage, 2016).
  
- ❖ *Moral inversion of suspense* is the cognition that occurs within the spectator as they empathise with a familiar but immoral character. This occurs at a specific moment when the character is unlikely to overcome a serious predicament. In turn, viewer engagement is elicited. An example is the long drawn out cleaning sequence in *Psycho* when the spectator continues to engage with Norman Bates even though he

has committed murder. At this point, because the audience has nobody else in the narrative to engage with, they begin to empathise with Norman's plight (Vaage, 2016). The audience positions themselves as if they are Norman, thus experiencing his predicament whilst simultaneously accessing their own separate thoughts. This technique is grounded in the belief that viewers can embody "a wide range of psychological experiences during engagement with a single narrative" (Coplan, 2004, p.149).

- ❖ *Vicarious entertainment* is built upon the belief that viewers want to empathise "with someone in power" (Vaage, 2016, p.90). This is particularly apparent when an immoral figure is pitted against a character that the viewer perceives to be morally inferior—characteristically an antagonist. Engagement can be achieved because viewers want to see the antagonist get what they deserve, which Vaage argues is inherently gratifying for viewers as pro-social punishers. Ian Robertson links this to the effect power has on people in what he terms the "brain's reward network" (2012 p.99). In short, he examines how the brain is fuelled by the hormone dopamine, which is released when one does something good for evolutionary survival, such as having sex or eating sugary food. He argues that the acquisition of power feeds the same positive experience since it elicits a flourish of dopamine in the brain, resulting in a pleasurable feeling. According to Vaage (2016), popular anti-hero narratives have successfully exploited this understanding as a means of achieving viewer engagement.
  
- ❖ *Moral disengagement* is underpinned by Albert Bandura's research on people who have committed monstrous acts, especially during wartime. Bandura (2002) argues that morally upstanding people, through their own justifications, can act hideously. Some examples, according to Bandura, of how one may justify their moral transgressions are:
 

[...] (e.g., reconstructing one's acts, such as killing others, as moral, heroic and necessary); advantageous comparisons (e.g., comparing one's own acts with some even more reprehensible acts); disregarding or distortion of consequences (e.g., not seeing the effects of mass-destruction, as when preventing those giving the order from being present when the orders are carried out); and dehumanisation (stripping the victims of human qualities). (Vaage, 2016, p.14).

Vaage extrapolates this concept to the television audience. For Vaage (2016), the viewer can justify a character's action if they are appropriately guided through the narrative. An example of this justification, specific to moral disengagement, is discernible when anti-hero, Ray Donovan (*Ray Donovan*, 2013–2020), murders kingpin, Cookie Brown, because Cookie ordered a hit on Ray's daughter, Bridget Donovan. Viewers can easily justify Ray's severe transgression since it ensured the safety of his daughter's life.

Each of the narrative techniques described above aided the writing of my anti-heroine pilot episode. Their value will be explored in the succeeding chapters. It is important to note that the categories are loose in nature, but Vaage does provide a number of case study examples throughout her book that helped to guide my own creative decision-making. As already noted, the weakness of Vaage's techniques is that they have not been conceived specifically for the television anti-heroine, as her text overwhelmingly examines anti-hero shows. This is, in part, why the methodological approach required textual analyses to be carried out on case study anti-heroine shows<sup>2</sup>. In addition, Vaage's findings are theoretical and do not account for the creative process, particularly concerning the screenwriter. As a writer, once in practice, applying theoretical frameworks is not a linear step-by-step process. There are additional elements beyond a narrative's surface that are harder to pin down and map out but still need to be accounted for because they could be instrumental for audience engagement. This is why it was indispensable to explore Vaage's framework in practice.

## **Methodology**

This is a practice-based research project and, admittedly, there were several methodological challenges that I encountered and needed to resolve before progressing this research inquiry. One of these challenges was the process of credibly defining an intended target audience. A second was how viewer engagement could be reliably examined when a screenplay has not been realised into a moving image. A further obstacle also arose due to the industrial forces entwined within this research inquiry, since the pilot screenplay would be developed for the commercial market. This is a challenge, particularly due to the scarcity of anti-heroine characters and publications, which has caused the market to tread carefully due to the perceived financial risk associated (Dean, 2020a). Unfortunately, no model existed to swiftly

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<sup>2</sup> The reasons why and how will be explored and justified in Chapter 1.



resolve these methodological issues. As a result, I developed my own methodological approach to cater for the complexity of this thesis and to ensure the credibility of the results and conclusions drawn. The methodological approach in its entirety will be critically explored and described throughout Chapter 1.

## **Findings**

This section outlines key findings that the reader should expect to have learned once they have read this entire thesis. The importance of the findings will also be briefly explored. However, it should be noted that a more comprehensive exploration of the findings presented throughout this thesis will unfold in the concluding pages.

### ***Misunderstanding morality and gender***

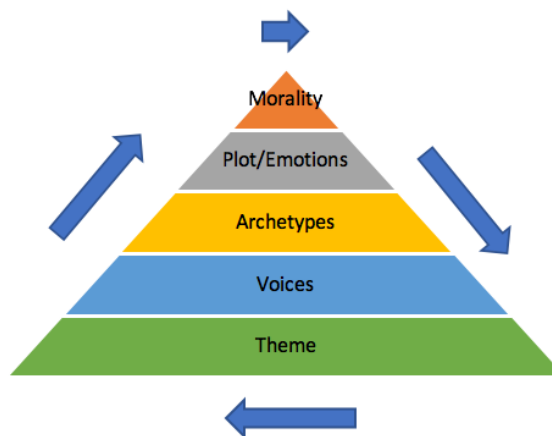
When considering an immoral lead figure, the literature has largely fixated on methods to override the morality of viewers to understand how their engagement can be achieved. It is worth noting that Vaage's (2016) narrative techniques are principally concerned with deactivating viewers' moral evaluation when engaging with a television anti-hero, or to be specific, for the purposes of eliciting and sustaining audience engagement. However, I conclude in the final pages of this thesis that this particular understanding is not the only, or most essential, principle for encouraging viewer engagement. Throughout the development of my anti-heroine pilot episode *Angela*, I carefully considered how the escalation of her transgressive acts could be contextualised to override the viewers' moral evaluation of her and encourage their continued engagement. Yet, despite the use of narrative techniques, the initial drafts (1 & 2) did not achieve this. I came to learn that the original drafts (1 & 2) of my anti-heroine pilot episode lacked meaning, purpose and originality that would likely culminate in viewer disengagement. Indeed, I discovered an anti-heroine's uniqueness and success with a commercial audience goes beyond the advancing of her immorality through narrative techniques. A writer first needs to develop a meaningful and coherent narrative that has them at the centre of it, and in turn, this should lead to an anti-heroine's immoral bankruptcy manifesting organically. Her imminent and deep immoral descent is, therefore, not essential. What is crucial is that a writer's storyworld is authentic. If an anti-heroine's transgressions are minimal early on then this should not make the narrative any less engaging, assuming the story speaks with accuracy and honesty.

In addition, audiences are less forgiving to an anti-heroine when compared to the anti-hero due to her gender (Mittell, 2015; Tally, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). This is partly because

society still expects women to preserve the domestic sphere as well as perform the role of moral equaliser within their wider community (Hays, 1996; Brabon & Genz, 2009). Yet, while current gender inequalities mean the anti-heroine may not be able to transgress as sharply and severely as the anti-hero, this is by no means fixed (Gentry & Sjoberg, 2015; Mittell, 2015). Mittell alludes to this himself by positing that, “clearly there is room within television’s narrative palette to expand the range of female antiheroes that might serve as the focus of serial narratives” (2015, p.150). Based on findings presented throughout this thesis, it will be argued in the concluding pages that as gender identities and norms (hopefully) continue to evolve and be renegotiated in Western society, this could produce a larger window for stretching an anti-heroine’s immorality. This ties in with Buonanno, who notes that gender norms have been “weakened over time” due to oppositional entities, such as the feminist movement (2017, p.11). Ultimately, I argue this weakening of traditional gender norms over time will provide space for an anti-heroine’s immorality to be stretched more steeply and readily. This, in turn, may further “expand the range of female antiheroes” (Mittell, 2015, p.150).

### ***An anti-heroine’s hierarchy of needs as the structure of this thesis***

Each succeeding chapter of this thesis is structured around key findings that have given rise to the model illustrated below in *Figure 1. An anti-heroine’s hierarchy of needs*. These findings were discovered during the scripting of my anti-heroine pilot episode *Angela*, and crystalised through the application of critical theory. Thus, given my pilot screenplay has been the driving force for discovering new knowledge, it will be presented first along with the television bible. This will then lead to the continuation of the presentation of the critical exegesis, which comprises five chapters. Apart from Chapter 1, which describes the methodological apparatus, each chapter centres on precise findings pertinent to a specific layer of the model (*Figure 1*), albeit morality. These exact findings centre on the advancement of *theme*, *voices*, *archetypes* and *plot/emotions*, whilst *morality* will be explored at length in the concluding pages. The model, in its entirety, will be argued as critical for encouraging viewer engagement for a television anti-heroine, particularly during the pilot episode. Ultimately, the framework provides a holistic approach as to how screenwriters can advance all of the storytelling principles revealed in this thesis to craft their anti-heroine pilot episode.



**Figure 1.** *An anti-heroine's hierarchy of needs.*

In Chapter 1, I explore and delineate the methodological approach, which is the core foundation of this entire research study and is itself the penultimate model (*Figure 1*). As already discussed, there were several methodological challenges that required resolving to ensure the validity of this research inquiry. The methodological approach accounts for an intended target audience, measuring viewer engagement and appeasing market demands as well as resolving the issue of writing a script for the commercial market within academia. Notably, in the attempt to satisfy market demands before practice commenced, textual analyses were required. Analyses were conducted on case study anti-heroine television shows and the results were merged with Vaage's narrative techniques to aid my own writing process. In addition, how textual analyses sits within this practice-based mode of inquiry will be elucidated. This chapter has been published in the journal *New Writing: The international Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*<sup>3</sup>.

In Chapter 2: *Framing narrative techniques through theme*, I argue that when employing the model (*Figure 1*) *An anti-heroine's hierarchy of needs*, a writer should start at the first layer of the pyramid and initially engage with theme. This idea is supported through the inclusion and exploration of key texts in relation to theme (Mehring, 1990; McKee, 1999; Porter et al., 2002; Egri, 2004; Batty, *Journey Into Theme*; Beker, 2013). During the first section of this chapter, I explicate findings that resulted from textual analyses carried out on case study anti-heroine shows. Three additional narrative techniques, specific to the

<sup>3</sup> This journal article, Dean, L. 2020a. "Altering screenwriting frameworks through practice-based research: a methodological approach." *New Writing*, 17 (3), pp.333–347, DOI: 10.1080/14790726.2019.1626440, can be accessed via: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14790726.2019.1626440>.

television anti-heroine, are presented. These techniques complement Vaage's original framework and together they render the paradigm titled *Wheel of Techniques*, which heavily aided the crafting of the first draft of *Angela*.

The second part of this chapter examines the process of employing the *Wheel of Techniques* during the initial scripting of *Angela* (1 & 2). I discuss how I came to learn that in early drafts (primarily the first) I was utilising the *Wheel of Techniques* on a surface level. Then in practice, when scripting subsequent drafts (1 & 2), I discovered there exists an invisible layer at play that provides the foundation for successfully exploiting the *Wheel of Techniques*. This newly discovered vital layer, which the chapter is centred on, is theme. I argue that teasing out the thematic question of a narrative provides a critical lens as to how each writer of the case study anti-heroine television shows has uniquely advanced specific narrative techniques. In turn, I argue that without a well drawn-out theme, a narrative can become purposeless and meaningless. A writer should consider crafting a theme, or more specifically a thematic question, that is close to home, which they could then explore throughout their narrative.

In Chapter 3: *Voice as a method for encouraging engagement*, the second layer of the model (*Figure 1*)—voices—builds on from theme. It encourages the writer to inject their voices (Elbow 1981; 1995; 2007; Yancey & Spooner, 1994; Bowden, 1995; Romano, 2003; 2004; Sperling & Appleman, 2011; Riyanti, 2015) and have them battle it out over utterance (Bakhtin 1981). This is one method for aiding the development of an original narrative because the writer is afforded space to inject their unique perspective. Thus, the principal aim of the chapter is to provide screenwriters with a creative tool to aid them in writing an original anti-heroine pilot script. I accomplish this by presenting a conceptual framework titled *Cracks of Culture* that screenwriters can employ for discovering and scripting their voice. In doing so, I explore the process of filtering in my unique voices to script an original anti-heroine pilot script. Before the framework is presented, however, I critically explore the concept of a writer's voice in terms of its history and the discourse centred on its precise definition. This chapter has been published in the *Journal of Media Practice and Education*.<sup>4</sup>

At this point, there is a transition, shifting a writer's perspective away from themselves towards that of the audience's perspective. In Chapter 4: *Comprehending the anti-heroine—scripting order amongst chaos through character archetypes*, I present archetypes as this

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<sup>4</sup> This journal article, Dean, L. 2020b. Scripting your voice as a method for achieving originality. *Media Practice and Education*, 21 (3), pp.171–184, DOI: 10.1080/25741136.2020.1760588, can be accessed via: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741136.2020.1760588>.

transitioning block (Jung, 1968; Murdock, 1990; Peterson, 1999; Campbell, 2004; Estés, 2004; Vogler, 2007; Pryor & Bright, 2008; Faber & Mayer, 2009; Frankel, 2010; Jacey, 2010; 2017). Archetypes advance a writer's individuality as well as their ability to exercise empathy for the audience. In practice, I learnt that initial attempts to inject my voices into the pilot episode had manifested into a chaotic and unfocused narrative. Theme on its own had not provided the structure to evade chaos. Through the application of archetypes, I was able to structure my writer's voices and provide entry points of comprehension for the audience. In short, advancing pertinent archetypes helped create transparency surrounding the characters that were narratively futile. As a result, those characters could be omitted from the story, leaving only the necessary characters that could succinctly express my writer's voices. This chapter has been published in *TEXT Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*<sup>5</sup>.

As a writer nears the peak of the pyramid, they engage with the plot/emotions layer. In Chapter 5: *Piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine*, I explore that writers should deliberate the intended emotional experience of the audience (Grodal, 1999; Tierno, 2002; Smith, 2003; Plantinga, 2009; 2018; Tan, 2011; Batty, *Movies That Move Us*; Gulino & Shears, 2018). The model of *piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine* is presented as a method for aiding screenwriters to guide the viewer to experience a set of desired emotions, progressing the narrative in a way that fulfils the distinct phases and levels of engagement. However, before teasing out the emotional responses, a definition concerning emotion is first resolved. Research in the field of social sciences guides the formation of this working definition. More specifically, cognitive media theory research from scholars, such as Murray Smith, Greg M. Smith, Carl R. Plantinga and Ed S. Tan, support a definition of emotion and how it relates to audience engagement.

The apex of the hierarchical pyramid, morality, is explored at points throughout this thesis and is afforded greater space in the conclusion. At this final stage, the writer should consider how specific narrative techniques could be advanced to override viewers' moral deliberation to encourage and sustain their engagement. This is what I term the crystallisation stage. I recommend that the narrative techniques explored in this thesis should be considered during this phase, assuming the fundamental storytelling principles have been successfully crafted. Ultimately, narrative techniques are better engaged during the final stages of development once theme, voices, archetypes and various other storytelling principles (which

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<sup>5</sup> The journal article, Dean, L. 2020c. Comprehending the anti-heroine: Scripting order amongst chaos through character archetypes. *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses* 24 (2), pp.1–21, can be accessed via: <http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct20/dean.pdf>.

exist beyond the surface of a narrative) have been advanced. Notably, whilst I have described this model linearly, the arrows circling the model illustrate that it is inherently cyclical.

### ***Importance of findings***

This thesis contributes new knowledge that is pertinent to aiding screenwriters to craft nuanced and authentic female-based narratives. Unlike the television anti-hero, there exists a dearth of knowledge specific to the television anti-heroine. Texts, articles and commercial television narratives continue to focus on the anti-hero with the anti-heroine (until recently) perpetually positioned on the periphery (Mittell, 2015; Tally, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). As a practising screenwriter, with an interest in writing an anti-heroine television show, I was unclear about how to craft her journey in a way that is both original and engaging. This has indeed been a motivating factor for the research and ultimately resulted in findings that can support screenwriters in successfully scripting a commercially viable anti-heroine narrative.

Moreover, the discoveries unveiled in this thesis offer greater clarity about what ingredients commissioners should look for when considering if an anti-heroine show could be popular amongst viewers. In turn, commercial stakeholders can have greater confidence in commissioning anti-heroine led shows that push the envelope surrounding the representation of women. Yet, whilst my intention is to contribute knowledge that will directly help screenwriters to craft more commercially nuanced and authentic female-based narratives, specifically concerning the anti-heroine, it is possible that this thesis will not have such a dramatic effect. Perhaps the only readers of this thesis will be academics, thus it is reasonable to question what they will precisely take away and therefore what the overall impact of this study will be.

To start, academics and screenwriting researchers alike can build upon this thesis by promoting, advancing and challenging conclusions drawn. This could help to foster a greater discussion about the storytelling principles and craft techniques pertinent to the successful development of an original and engaging anti-heroine narrative. Moreover, not only is this thesis a contribution to anti-heroine literature, it is potentially the first study to date that exposes how the television anti-heroine can challenge and subvert current female gender norms. Over time, as further research is conducted on the anti-heroine, there will be a more profound dialogue that will hopefully spill over into the commercial screenwriting industry, culminating in more diverse representations of the female gender.

Admittedly, however, the credibility of this thesis could be challenged because of my position as a man. I argue that for society to keep pushing for absolute gender equality, the

conversation needs to be inclusive regardless of whom you are and your background. Nevertheless, I have not disregarded my position as a man and this is reflective throughout this thesis. At points, I differentiate and offer guidance for male writers about how they can advance specific storytelling principles to aid them with the scripting of a nuanced and authentic anti-heroine narrative. If, however, it is claimed that a conclusion I have reached is undermined because of my status as a man then this only opens up a new conversation. This conversation can only help relevant stakeholders orientate closer to the truth concerning the storytelling principles and craft techniques required for crafting an original and engaging anti-heroine narrative.

Ultimately, the relevance of this should not be undervalued. Historically, we are at a time in which more nuanced and authentic female-based screenplays that subvert traditional representations of gender are demanded (Jacey, 2017; Lauzen, 2017). This claim is substantiated by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, with Martha Lauzen observing, specifically in relation to television, that:

As programs and platforms continue to multiply in this era of peak TV, the need for more perspectives and creativity intensifies. We know for sure that there's still plenty of room for women to grow in television, and that they have proven their ability to excel, commercially and artistically. The uncertainty lies in whether the broadcast networks, cable, and streaming services will recognize the potential of this underutilized group to tell stories that haven't been told, and expand the boundaries of what television can be. (Women's Media Center, 2017, para.14).

As Lauzen (2017) acknowledges, the representation of women on screen, as well as their artistic contribution behind the scenes, has progressed. It is reasonable to infer that this points towards a commercial appetite for more nuanced and authentic female-based narratives. Jacey corroborates this by noting that, "the focus on diversity on screen is increasing" (2017, p.xix). That said, Lauzen also acknowledges the uncertainty orbiting the television industry regarding its ability to sustain the growth of female-led stories, and thus "expand the boundaries" of gender representation (Women's Media Center, 2017, para.14). In 2021—almost four years on from when Lauzen's online post was published—the demands for expanded gender representation are very much alive. Notably, the *Journal of Screenwriting's* latest special issue centres on women in screenwriting and the editors, Rose Ferrell and Rosanne Welch (2020), remind us that this demand for change is a politically global one. They state:

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women has declared this a 'pivotal year for the accelerated realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, everywhere' (UN Women 2020a). It is also the 25th anniversary of

the adoption by 189 nations of the Beijing Declaration (1995), which set ambitious targets in key aspects of social, political and industrial life that could herald systemic change and see women brought closer to their male counterparts across indices of respect, equality and equity. (Ferrell & Welch, 2020, p.237).

Ferrell and Welch (2020) posit, at least implicitly, that the film and television industry does not exist in a vacuum. The desire to forge forward and bring about systematic change, which results in gender equality, is not unique to the film and television industry. In fact, it is plausible to surmise that the cultural forces orbiting the film and television industry do indeed influence and shape the stories that are told. Reverting back to Lauzen's concerns about the industry sustaining their appetite to continue investing in female-led narratives, it is sound to resolve that in 2021 a desire for more nuanced female-led screenplays still exists. The insights reached in this thesis play a small but important contribution in helping to "expand the boundaries" and demand for more diverse gender representation on screen (Women's Media Center, 2017, para.14) through unveiling ways in which the television anti-heroine can "serve as the focus of serial narratives" (Mittell, 2015, p.150).



**ANGELA**  
**Television Bible**  
  
**By**  
**Levi Dean**

## **Overview of television bible**

The succeeding pages of this bible are comprised of the following sections: *what Angela is really about, structure of episodes, setting of storyworld, character biographies and a synopsis of each episode during the first season.*

### **ANGELA**

#### **A one-hour drama for television**

*Angela* is a serial crime drama that follows ANGELA SPARKS' rise and fall from power as a criminal kingpin, and whilst *Angela* is set within the criminal underworld, the story is really about family.

That is to say, how a family have become so self-serving that it has eroded and, ultimately, destroyed their lives through their neglect of one another. Even in a wealthy country, such as the United Kingdom (UK), the breakdown of the family is a pervasive and relatable issue. Many of us grew up not being given time: time to read, time to learn, time to understand or time to evolve. Time that would better equip us for the complex world we exist within. Instead, we were bought things: things that would keep us quiet and things that would keep us out of the way; but, for many kids, some things were too expensive, so they went without. These children were then ostracised by their peers, perpetually positioned at the bottom of the playground hierarchy.

This story is about one of these kids who never grew up because she was never nurtured: an intelligent kid, from the bottom of the hierarchy who craved time and attention. This little girl learned from a young age that to be female and to be heard meant she needed to be successful. A good job equals money, which equals status, which equals success. However, with the economic crash of 2008 and David Cameron's Tory Government introducing harsh austerity measures, let's just say there's hardly any decent paying jobs in 2011 let alone for a thirty-something marketing graduate--and this is where sympathy for Angela is felt.

Many of us have, or know someone who has, experienced the brunt of an undercooked job market caused by a faceless elite. For Angela, the frustration cuts deeper given her position of raising her son, CLARENCE THOMPSON, alone since her on-and-off partner, MIKEY THOMPSON, is in prison. As a mother, father and breadwinner, life is hard. I mean really hard. So, when someone like Angela flips the board game over and says, "I ain't playing anymore because it's rigged" some secretly applaud it. Why? Because it feels so damn good to see someone at the bottom of the dominance hierarchy take power and wield respect. Maybe we wish in some form we could exercise

authority in our own lives but often we don't because of our responsibilities.

This idea of responsibility feeds into the overarching theme of accountability that is explored throughout Angela's descent into the criminal underworld. Being held accountable is becoming more and more diluted, particularly in terms of the family unit. The baby boomer generation have enjoyed the foundations carefully laid by their parents: foundations that were not afforded to many millennials. The millennials are happy to point this out instead of looking within, but the truth is, there is self-entitlement on both sides.

It is accountability that ties the story together right through to the final episode in which we come to admit, along with Angela, that she is self-entitled like so many of us. Whilst we like the idea of taking something that has been unfairly denied to us, it still doesn't make it okay to take it. What is important is doing the right thing. Doing the right thing is burdening your responsibility in a way that is moral and ensures the nurturing of your relationships and most importantly your children. That is, guiding children to learn how to live a fulfilling and meaningful life even when their existence may sometimes feel insufferable. Because ultimately, this is all we get and our relationships are what really matter, but like most people, Angela and her family don't appreciate this single truth. At least not until it's too late...

### **Structure**

Season one of *Angela* is a six-part narrative with each episode one hour in length. Each episode ends on a major turning point that propels Angela's descent further and further into the criminal underworld. Season one will ultimately conclude on a climax, cementing Angela's position within the criminal underworld and offering endless possibilities for succeeding seasons.

This show is not only about Angela--as much as she would love to believe it. It also follows the key characters orbiting Angela: her mother, stepfather, sister, partner and child. These characters follow a character arc that is interconnected to Angela's deadly decision to commit to a life of crime.

### **Setting**

Bristol is home to *Angela*: an up-and-coming city and voted in 2017 as the best city in the UK to live! Since Bristol is only an hour or so by train from the big smoke, more and more

Londoners are selling up, moving across to get more for their money and, in the process, hiking up the property prices. The latter fact really gets under the skin of born and bred Bristolians, particularly the younger generation who currently find themselves unable to get a foot on the property ladder. I mean, who has a deposit of fifty thousand pounds when monthly rent is typically eight hundred pounds? However, let's leave frustration to one side and focus on why Bristol is now such a hotspot ...

For a start, from Bristol, it is only a 10 to 15 minute escape to reach the luscious rolling hills of the British countryside. Within the city itself, there are a number of sprawling green areas to take a picnic or kick a football around with the kids. However, the real selling point for Londoners is that Bristol is located in the South West of England and offers a short drive to some of the UK's most beautiful coastal towns and beaches. This can make for a great summer, especially for those with families ... and of course, those that can afford such a lifestyle.

And yes, Bristol is like most UK cities with areas grouped and structured by the traditional British class system. We have the working class, middle class, upper class and areas that are undergoing gentrification. The specific areas in Bristol that will form the basis of the storyworld are: BRISLINGTON, GLOUCESTER ROAD, ST. ANDREWS, MONTPELLIER and CLIFTON.

**Brislington** is predominantly working-class, and you'll probably want to grab a bus to get into the city centre given the distance you will otherwise need to walk. Angela lives here on Hollywood Road, which is ironic because it's far from resembling anything Hollywood like. Like much of Brislington, Angela's rented home is located on a narrow road where every day you can count on coming head to head with another driver, resulting in a Mexican stand off, for who ever puts their engine into reverse? Perhaps, if you're like Angela on a bad day, you stick your two middle fingers up at the driver before shifting the car, or in Angela's case motorcycle, into reverse; but, don't let this cloud your judgment of Brislington because the people are mostly honest and hardworking. They're probably just overwhelmed at times by the increasing population which is making the roads feel even narrower. Oh, and did I even mention the terraced houses that are packed like sardines on both sides of the road? Honestly, the walls are paper-thin ... you can almost hear a pin drop from next door!

Then, on the other side of the river in Bristol, there is **Gloucester Road**: cramped with people and cars as well but with an irresistible energy--an energy that is contagious and infects all that inhabit it, whether one lives there or is simply visiting. This energy is a result of the area being populated by independent shops, cafes, restaurants and bars that perpetually attract people from many different walks of

life. This is where Angela's sister, CHARLIE SPARKS', piano rental shop is located.

While Gloucester Road's gentrification has made it the place to be, it has still managed to preserve its gritty urban presence. Admittedly, that's only on the surface because when you take a turn into one of the housing streets, you'll often see a one hundred thousand pound refurb when entering one of these Georgian homes. Therefore, you could say that, whilst this borough appears to be cosmopolitan, homeowners are typically white middle-class families who have a few quid in their back pocket.

Adjacent to Gloucester Road is **St. Andrews** and **Montpellier**. St. Andrews is renowned for its sprawling green park: populated by a children's play area, paddling pool and a cute little café. In the summer, its residents enjoy the open space and the children's facilities, but it's not only occupied by families. University students and new working grads will often fix up a barbeque and enjoy some drinks in the park.

Montpellier is a ten-minute walk from St. Andrews, but it is tucked further away from the main road. Montpellier isn't home to any shops, and its unique selling point is its large Georgian houses with sizeable gardens. You have to be earning some decent bank to be living in Montpellier. The kind of money that an established doctor would be on with some successful years under their belt--like Angela's stepfather Dr EAMON JONES.

Now, if we're talking about large houses and money, nothing in Bristol competes with **Clifton**. Clifton is Bristol's most expensive area. The houses are mansion-like, the roads could cater for American sized vehicles and then there's the famous suspension bridge watching over the River Avon. The unique thing about Clifton is that, even though it's home to the super wealthy, it's youthful and vibrant. This vibrancy is largely due to the location of the University of Bristol right next door. Students from all over the UK, and around the globe, infuse their youth, style and culture into Clifton, as well as helping to create a fun night out.

Even so, there is also a more sinister side to Clifton. It's home to drug and human-trafficking kingpin, DAISY PEACH, who spoilt herself with a six-bedroom house. Of course, a city is usually home to elite criminals, so Bristol is nothing unique. It's like most popular cities in the Western world when also taking into account its diversity, equality, liberalism and now its intention for a green future. But, in truth, its current success is also a product of some luck: luck in its revivification coinciding with the injection of cash emerging from its capital city. That is, Londoners moving in and boosting its economy; but, for those being pushed further away from the centre of the city, such luck, they argue, is bad luck.

That's because, with each passing day, more and more born and bred Bristolians are being pushed out onto the city's periphery and are taking parts of Bristol's history with them. Like all emerging cities and cultures, however, there's a new history waiting to be written, and Angela is ready to write Bristol's next chapter; in fact, she's hell bent on being at the centre of it.

## **Character biographies**

### **ANGELA AND HER FAMILY**

**Angela Sparks (1979–2011):** At the age of 32, for all of Angela's intelligence--and believe you me she's intelligent--as of 2011, she is a qualified shit show ... and she knows it! This, however, is part of her charm and part of what makes her such a curious case. If you were to delve deeper into the layers of Angela's psyche you'd begin to learn of the hidden pain and darkness that she keeps locked away. In many ways, Angela is a sad case--a person that could have achieved whatever they wanted if they had had the support and guidance they needed. Moreover, whilst she is ironically not the most confident person, the little confidence she does personify is grounded in the very fact that she knows this truth. To truly understand the complexity of Angela, why her life has turned out to date to be an anti-climax and why she will evolve into a criminal kingpin, we need go back in time.

There's only one time in Angela's life in which she remembers being truly happy. She was six years of age and her biological father was still alive. She looks back on this time with rose tinted glasses, and she remembers her father, ALLEN SPARKS, a practising barrister, all too fondly. Angela recalls him as an intelligent and hardworking man who fulfilled his ambition as a barrister whilst balancing it with quality family time. Unfortunately, this is somewhat stretching the truth. Yes, her father was a barrister but a mediocre one at best, and he would often spend his free time boozing. With her father rarely around, young Angela craved his attention more than anything and tried her best at every opportunity to be on the receiving end of it. This typically would consist of Angela demonstrating her innate academic ability, particularly in Mathematics and English. Regrettably, Allen didn't give a shit because in his mind his life was one big mistake. A major part of that mistake was marrying Angela's mother, Mia, and having her children--Angela and CHARLIE SPARKS. Even more tragically, when Angela turned seven, Allen unexpectedly died and little Angela suddenly lost the chance to ever experience what it felt like to make her father proud. She would never experience his love or attention. Even though Angela would

never admit it, at least not anytime soon, this loss has followed her into adulthood.

For all of Angela's intelligence and her charisma, she lacks confidence and belief; this lack of confidence and belief was not only catalysed by her father's neglect, but also the aftermath of his death. Angela's mother, Mia, who was left financially stricken after the death of Allen, eventually found a new partner. This new man was Dr Eamon Jones. He had a son from his previous marriage, HUGH JONES, who was the same age as Angela. Things moved fast with Mia and Eamon--and way too fast for Angela. Mia, Angela and Charlie moved in with Eamon two years after meeting him. At first, Angela tried to seek the attention from Eamon she had craved from her biological father, but Eamon was disinterested as his focus was on Hugh. Angela's initial neediness as an eight-year-old child only pushed Eamon further away, whereas her sister Charlie did nothing and quickly became a favourite of his. This made Angela unbearably sad and unable to understand why her stepfather was disinterested in her, particularly as she was way smarter than Charlie and Hugh. This sadness soon manifested into anger when, a year into the entire family living together, Angela quickly became labelled the black sheep. Hugh would incessantly tease Angela--perpetually lying to her stepfather, who would complain to Mia about her. While Mia would stand up for Angela, this is not what Angela remembers. Instead, to this day, she blames her mother for bringing Eamon into their family.

As time went on, the torment Angela endured from Hugh became more and more severe; Eamon ignored and encouraged it and sometimes joined in with his son. At ten years of age, Angela's home life became unbearable, but her school life gave her an outlet. She was still at the top of her class for every subject, while Hugh, who was attending a private school, was bang on average. Angela enjoyed indirectly reminding both Eamon and Hugh of this fact. This situation changed during the summer of 1989; Eamon and Mia took the family for a beach holiday in Braunton, Devon. During their drive from Bristol, they stopped off at Weston-Super-Mare for the morning. The kids--Angela, Charlie and Hugh--were given money to play at the pier, while Eamon and Mia went off shopping. Hugh, who wasn't a great swimmer, was baited by Angela to jump into the ocean water as evidence of his masculinity. Angela watched from the Pier above as Hugh braved it into the ocean, but the current soon took him further and further away from the shore. As Hugh splashed frantically in the water, trying to stay afloat, he pleaded for Angela to throw him a rubber dingy. However, Angela just stood there watching him, wanting to help but enjoying seeing him struggle. Hugh's struggles soon stopped when his lifeless body floated above the ocean. A young Charlie, who emerged during Hugh's final kicks, began to sob, pleading for her sister to do something. Angela, however,

didn't move. She enjoyed the pain, the anguish and most of all the power she had over Hugh during his final moments.

Over the days, months and succeeding years after Hugh's death, Angela has been haunted by the events of that day and fights hard to repress what really happened. Eamon has never forgiven her, and Charlie has never forgotten. What happened that day is a secret Angela has boxed away with no intention of opening; but, as deeply as the box is hidden away, sometimes its contents spill into her consciousness. She feels completely unworthy because of both her history with her father and Eamon, and because she allowed Hugh to die. Angela subconsciously doesn't believe she deserves to be happy. This is probably why she spent her teenage years skipping school and smoking too much weed. This was the same during her twenties, but weed was swapped for alcohol as she spent most her time working behind a bar. Even so, like most people in life, she got her shit together when she had her child, Clarence Thompson, in 2007. Clarence's father, Mikey Thompson, while a nice guy, is also troubled and a bit of a deadbeat--evidenced by his current status as a prisoner. Consequently, as a single mother, Angela has to take the bull by the horns and provide for her son. She has recently graduated with a marketing degree and is looking to improve her career and salary prospects outside of bartending.

Nevertheless, it's 2011 and the economic recession coupled with austerity has made things extremely hard: even when someone is as capable as Angela. It's fair to say, the job market is also much harder for women as Angela is currently discovering. Like most people, she has her limits, and her limitation is that despite her innate intelligence and her savvy way with words, she was never taught how to effectively operate in the world she was born into. This is true for most people who were never nurtured during their childhood. The world is an unpredictable place, and not knowing how to cope with that fact makes it a scary place too. Despite this, when Angela has a taste of the criminal underworld, she learns that this world is unlike the world she was born into. This new world has different rules, and once you understand those rules you can tailor them to work in your favour. Angela's thirst for power is largely motivated by a need for control, and the more entwined she is within the criminal underworld the more skewed her morality becomes. Money, pain, betrayal and murder are all on the cards for Angela.

**Mikey Thompson (1976–2011):** For a guy that's half way through his thirties, Mikey hasn't done anything significant with his life other than be sent to jail--if you can count that as significant. Always fancying himself as a bit of a wheeler-dealer, Mikey messed up when he sold a bunch of counterfeit iPhones and tried denying it when caught. As far as the Judge was concerned, Mikey carried out a crime and perverted the



course of justice, and in light of his rap sheet (consisting of numerous petty crimes), he was handed a six-month sentence. With him currently in the can, Angela's now burdened with raising their son alone, but she's forgiving of Mikey. Angela always knew Mikey was a troubled soul, and outside of his criminal activities he's a decent bloke. At six feet something tall, Mikey is initially perceived by most as an opposing figure, particularly when he opens his mouth ... he has a strong Bristolian accent; but believe it or not, Mikey's a sensitive soul. He's mostly sensitive about his intelligence, or lack of to put it better. He never did well at school, and this ebbed away at his confidence and followed him into adulthood. This is probably why he has an addiction to drugs, notably cocaine, which takes away his feelings of inadequacy. Thinking more deeply about Mikey, it's actually really sad. It's even sadder when you consider the fact that Mikey never had a father figure and was raised by a mother who couldn't cope with life. Mikey never really stood a chance, so when charming intelligent Angela came along, he couldn't believe his luck. What drew Angela to Mikey is his ability to have fun and make light out of a serious situation as well as his spontaneity. On a much deeper level, Mikey gets Angela more than anyone else. He encourages her and tells her that she deserves better than the life they're both leading, but, as likeable as Mikey is, he cannot be relied on. No matter what, he'll always let you down. At some point, Angela will have to cut her ties with Mikey for good, but it won't be easy because Mikey really does care about her ... Even though he is a lousy father and partner, he truly loves Angela and Clarence.

**Clarence Thompson (2003–2011):** Clarence is just a sweet eight-year-old kid. If you've ever watched *Freaks and Geeks* (1999), close your eyes and think of teenager Sam Weir and what he was like as a eight-year-old --that's Clarence. What separates Clarence from his peers is that he's inherited his mother's intelligence and some more! He's practically missed twenty-five per cent of his school attendance for the academic year and we're only in November, yet he's top of his class for everything. To be fair to Angela, Clarence has not only missed out because of oversleeping, but also because he's epileptic. He has good days and bad days. Of course, it's very convenient for Angela to point towards epilepsy when Clarence is absent from school, and while the school's hands are tied, it's really starting to annoy them--especially Clarence's teacher Mr. Dawson.

Although Clarence is oblivious to the situation and handles his epilepsy like a trooper, what he is struggling with most is the smarmy comments from a group of boys in his class. They smell Clarence's vulnerability and, since they recently found out his dad's in jail, they're going at him hard every day. Nevertheless, Clarence will be okay as most smart kids are who are unconditionally loved. Since Mikey has

gone to prison, Clarence has felt the love even more from his step-grandad, Eamon and his nan, Mia. They've made a real effort with childcare and for Eamon, as much as he loves and misses Hugh, Clarence is the *gifted* son he always wanted. However, Clarence's strongest bond, which is slowly placing a wedge between him and Angela, is his relationship with his Aunt Charlie. Charlie has always played a significant role in Clarence's life, but now Mikey is behind bars she is even more important to her nephew.

**Charlie Sparks (1981–2011):** Two years junior to Angela, Charlie has always felt like she's playing catch up to her big sister. As for most younger siblings, growing up can be tough when trying to compete with an older child who is faster and stronger, and in Charlie's case--smarter. This has always frustrated Charlie because no matter how hard she studied, or how hard she listened, she never could match up to Angela: not even close. This is one of the reasons Charlie sticks to a strict diet to maintain her petit body because, at least in her mind, she beats her sister in the looks department. What Charlie has yet to realise though, is that not many people can match up to her sister's intelligence. It goes without saying that the cornerstone of Charlie's backstory is her relationship with Angela. This is for good reason, as Charlie knows deep down what happened to Hugh and how Angela ignored his pleas for help. Charlie lied to the police, lied to Eamon and lied to her mother about what happened that day at the pier when she was five.

To some extent, this has been a motivating factor for why Charlie has carved out an impressive and promising life for herself. In fact, she's been far more successful than her sister in both business and relationships, and in particular, in her relationship with Eamon. However, this relationship is layered in guilt. Charlie has never been able to forgive herself for the pain that Eamon suffered during the loss of Hugh and has tried ever since to make his suffering more bearable. It's for this reason that Charlie doesn't really know who she is or what she truly wants. Her decisions are based on what other people want, with the hope of fulfilling their needs and making them happy. If Charlie were truly honest, she'd admit that she doesn't even want to own a damn piano rental store. This was Eamon's idea. She wanted, as always, to make him happy, so she went along with it as he loaned her large sums of money. However, for Charlie, the most real, positive and happy part of her life is her relationship with Clarence.

She has built a deep bond with Clarence and feels that she can be herself around him. She loves that he loves being around her for the simplest of things like watching *Scooby Doo*. It could be inferred that Charlie can't have children of her own, hence why she's engaging in a custody battle over Clarence, but it's simply not true. Her love is genuine and

her reasons for wanting sole custody of Clarence are genuine. Despite this, Charlie is no match for Angela even if she has Eamon in her corner. She doesn't know what Angela is truly capable of, so when she tries to take away Angela's child, she'll wish she never had.

**Mia Jones (1954–2011):** Contrary to Angela's belief, Mia was not a neglectful mother throughout her children's childhood. Her relationship with Eamon was also never grounded in merely a financial transaction. Mia, who is 57 years of age, carved out her own career long before Eamon was ever on the scene. Nurturing and caring always came naturally to Mia, so it's easy to understand how she has maintained a flourishing career as a nurse. She, like her daughters, is petit but has a far more delicate presence about her. Sensitivity and delicacy go a long way in nursing, especially when caring for a dying patient. However, if there is a flaw that holds Mia back, and is sometimes a catalyst for conflict (especially amongst her family and particularly Eamon and Angela), it is her agreeable nature. Mia always wants to keep the peace and for everyone to just be happy. This may be why her late husband, Allen, got away with his drunken antics. I suppose, in this sense, it can be understood why Angela does hold some resentment towards her mother. Mia's inability to deal with conflict often left both Angela and Charlie in volatile situations. For Angela, it was the prickly dynamic between herself, Hugh and Eamon. Admittedly, Charlie hasn't ever really cared about Mia's tendency to brush things under the carpet. For Charlie, Mia's quiet nature was welcomed, given the continuous head butting between Angela and Eamon. This is probably why Mia and Charlie have had a relatively good relationship. Yet, Mia's submissiveness has indirectly caused confrontation on a number of occasions that Charlie has been a casualty of.

To be fair to Mia, part of her inability to speak out was a consequence of how she was raised; this was the case for most Western women born in the 50s. Men always had the final say. When you're agreeable in nature, it's hard to break such learned behaviour. Angela, blinded by the deep wounds that she blames her mother for, is unable to accept this important fact. That being said, her mother was born and raised during difficult times for women and like Angela, she is to some extent, a product of her environment.

Mia should not be perceived as weak though. She is strong. In fact, she is a deeply resilient person as evidenced by her mantra to look forwards not back. She just wishes that Angela would do the same, as she senses her daughter's resentment about what unfolded during her childhood. What hurts Mia most is that she knows Angela blames her for almost everything.

Mia tries hard to keep reaching out to Angela on a personal level, trying to help her see that what really matters is right in front of her--her son, Clarence. However,

Angela doesn't want to listen to her mother; the woman she perceives as a failure, the woman who couldn't support her family alone so found a rich man instead. Although, the truth is that Mia's relationship with Eamon is a loving one. Eamon cares for and loves Mia as she does him. They both share a passion for their profession and, in particular, their patients. However, in Angela's mind, Eamon is the one with the status; he's the one with the serious money, he's the one that's a doctor and he's the one who has transformed her mother's life. It seems likely that Mia will always fail in reaching out to her daughter because Angela doesn't want to be like her mother. In fact, whilst Angela would never admit it, she'd much rather be Eamon.

**DR. Eamon Jones (1953–2011):** Eamon is orderly and measured, and being the son of an army captain, this was instilled in him from the word go. In every aspect of his life, he has actionable goals that are always intelligently planned out to ensure he achieves them. His 58 years of living are evidence of this, since it's a real rarity when something has not gone to plan--assuming you exclude his first marriage! However, like most people with this mindset, who typically tend to be successful in their domain, he doesn't know when to chill out. Because of this--and even though ironically, he's a great talker--people can sometimes feel on edge around him, particularly his family. Just ask Charlie who has spent her entire life trying to please him even though he always demands more. This is probably why Angela quickly gave up on ever trying to satisfy Eamon. In recent years, Eamon seems to have become worse, but he wasn't always this bad ...

Ever since his son drowned, Eamon has become obsessive about keeping busy. This is the only way he knows of to cope with his loss. It's a method to avoid falling into the mind trap of thinking about the tragedy every second of his day. The death of a child leaves its mark on a person. Just ask Eamon's wife, Mia, what he was like before Hugh died. She'll tell you that a big part of her initial attraction to Eamon was that he knew how to relax and have a good time. She'd also add that he was good with the kids. For instance, when Eamon first met Charlie and Angela he brought his medical kit with him and they all played doctors. To this day, Mia can still remember her daughters' infectious laughter.

Still, unsurprisingly, Angela would even argue on a good day that Eamon is anything but decent. When Mia and her children moved in with Eamon and his son, Hugh, Eamon quickly became frustrated: mostly by Angela. In truth, Angela was always the daughter he had always wished for, but he had ended up with Hugh, who was a gangly dyslexic boy, barely able to recall his timetables by the age of 10. Quite frankly, it was shameful and embarrassing for someone like Eamon, who had high expectations of his offspring. But, the meanness that Angela recalls did not evolve from an innate evilness. It was in fact

from a deep love and sadness for his son. Just because Hugh was not the son Eamon wished for didn't mean he loved him any less. He chose to put Angela down in a bid to protect and build his son's confidence. Incidentally, after Eamon's first wife --Hugh's mother-- divorced him, he became even more protective of Hugh. This was the result of the deep sense of guilt and regret that pervaded him because his son would never again live under the same roof with both his parents. This guilt still pervades Eamon today. He wonders, if his first marriage hadn't fallen apart would Hugh still be alive today? This unhealthy retrospection that surfaces in Eamon's consciousness has manifested into anger. Anger directed at Angela.

Eamon believes something untoward went down on the day his son drowned, and he believes Angela had something to do with it. He never bought her story and, whilst he doesn't believe Angela actually pushed Hugh into the ocean, he knows she had something to do with it. In Eamon's mind, even though Angela was always the smart one, she was a damaged young child who was and still is capable of anything--even capable of allowing his son to drown. But, he cannot prove anything and will probably never really know what happened that day. This eats him up inside. So much so that he's decided to encourage and, ultimately, financially back Charlie's custody battle for Clarence. It's not just out of spite however; Eamon truly believes that Angela and Mikey are bad news. To Eamon, Clarence is a sweet and intelligent kid, which is a miracle, given who his parents are. In the end, Eamon just wants Clarence to have a real chance at life: a chance that Hugh was tragically denied.

## **MENTORS**

**Callie Turner (1962–2011):** Callie doesn't take no for an answer. She didn't take no for answer when her boss tried to stop her from covering the Yugoslavian war back when she was a rookie reporter, and, at the age of 50, she didn't take no for an answer when her boss at *The Bristol Post* tried to refuse her request to take Angela on as an intern. Of course, Callie hasn't endured a flourishing career as a journalist by merely bashing heads. Callie has been successful because of a combination of standout traits. She's smart, hardworking, confident and, most impressively, knows how to read a room. This goes hand in hand with her incredible knack for knowing when to press someone and when it's time to be diplomatic. Angela can learn a lot from Callie, and she will. But, as with most people who are wise, their wisdom has evolved from years of experiences; experiences both good and bad, which are entangled with regrets about the past. A major regret of Callie's is her neglect of personal relationships. That is, her relationships with close friends and immediate family. Her

obsession with her career and with telling stories (that in fairness needed to be told) blinded her from the people that mattered most. People who genuinely love her and bring light into her life. When she looks at Angela, she sees so much of her young self. Someone who is hell bent on chasing something but keeps forgetting what's right in front of them. Callie wants to guide Angela and to bring balance to her life so she can flourish both personally and in her career. You could say that Angela is the daughter Callie never had.

Today, Callie is working to banish her regrets. She has moved back to Bristol, the city in which her sister, AGNES HENDERSON, remains. She's now working at a small news outlet in the role of Editing Manager--a role her younger self would have never settled for. However, Callie is not in Bristol for her career. Instead she hopes to rekindle the relationship with Agnes. For the time being, however, Callie is still Callie and is putting all her energy into a major story that the public needs to know about. She's hot on the trail of DAISY PEACH: a drug and human-trafficking kingpin. Callie's been working on this case for two years now and, if Angela proves to be trusting and resourceful, she plans to let her in on the case. Unbeknown to Callie, her mentorship of Angela will not see her prodigy evolve into a journalist who will help take Bristol's major crime syndicate down. Instead, Callie will come to learn her mentorship has helped guide Angela to take over Bristol's major crime syndicate. The two will come head to head at some point, forcing Angela to make a major decision.

**Jackie Spence (1943–2011):** At six foot one, 63 years young and with a thick Bristolian accent, Jackie is quite the presence, but what makes her such an imposing figure is her way with words--her ability to make a fool out of you in just a single sentence. Believe you me, having run her pub for thirty-something years, she doesn't suffer fools. In truth, what makes Jackie so unmoveable is that from a young age she knew exactly who she was and what she could be. She knew her place within the world. She never fell into the trap of lying to herself, particularly with fantastical dreams--those that she argues a lot of universities advertise nowadays. This doesn't mean Jackie is simple, in fact she's very sharp, especially when it comes to a *bit of banter*. Her punters, typically the working class, have always loved her infectious humour even if they happen to be at the brunt of it; it's easy to understand the success behind her running a profitable pub for decades. To her local punters, Jackie is a working-class hero. She's one of them ... She can take as much as she can give. Just ask Angela, who has been working as Jackie's right-hand woman for years now.

For Angela, whilst she loves Jackie for the same reasons as her punters do, it does go a little deeper than this. Angela has always respected Jackie for being her own boss and

sustaining a successful business, for being confident and for living life exactly how she wants to. Angela looks up to Jackie and, because of a bond they've developed over the years, she trusts her. Even though Jackie seemingly gives the impression she is emotionally unavailable, her relationship with Angela shows her to be otherwise. Jackie offers sound advice to those closest to her, including Angela, by bringing a sense of balance and clarity to a situation, often resulting in her advice being taken on board. When someone is down, she will help to pick them up, but as has already been noted, Jackie doesn't suffer fools, and when she ultimately learns of Angela's criminal activities she will be left to pick herself up.

### **THE CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD**

**Daisy Peach (1975–2011):** To the general public, Daisy is a selfless, caring and committed foster carer. She is a pillar of the community; but, to those orbiting the drug and trafficking underworld, Daisy is a force to be reckoned with. This is indeed one of the best-kept secrets in Bristol. In respect to Daisy's criminal career, at only 36, her rise to the top as a key figure is best described as meteoric. However, with an IQ of 139, which is borderline genius, it is really of no surprise. Daisy is a unique talent. Notably, her ability to compute and resolve complex situations has made her a real asset--an asset because in her world being one second ahead can mean the difference between life and death. Not only does she have the ability to think through a life-threatening predicament and come out on the other side, but she also sees the bigger picture. She has a unique ability for mapping out and overseeing a plan: a plan that takes into consideration the behaviour of any number of people looking to remove her syndicate from the equation. Yet, as Daisy will attest, war is expensive. In her world, it goes with the territory that there will be people who wish to take you out. It's nothing personal, it's just business, but one of Daisy's greatest strengths is her diplomacy. If it's possible, she'll always try to circumvent conflict through compromise. She has an innate ability for making her rivals feel empowered during discussions, but, in truth, she has them acting exactly as she planned. She is a master puppeteer.

Still, Daisy doesn't perform at such a high level in her current role simply as the consequence of her talent. She has been cultivated for this world. When Daisy was 14-years old, she was taken away from her parents by the social services because of their drug abuse. She was soon in the hands of foster carer, CHARMAINE PORTER. Charmaine had cared for a number of vulnerable children but never adopted before Daisy. Charmaine knew something was different about Daisy, something

that could be of benefit to her in the long run. Unbeknown to Daisy until late into her teenage years, Charmaine heads up the most powerful crime syndicate in Bristol. To this day, Daisy still works under Charmaine; yet, whilst Daisy is Charmaine's right hand woman and is trusted with the day-to-day operations, she is ultimately still her pawn. Daisy is in Charmaine's grip and wants to be released. She's done with having to run every key decision through Charmaine, but Daisy is smart enough to know that if she makes a move at the wrong time, she'll be at the bottom of the River Avon.

**Charmaine Porter (1951–2011):** Charmaine's a mystery. Nobody really knows Charmaine, which has led to a mythological hype surrounding her entire being. Is she 50 or is she 60? There is also dispute surrounding her country of origin. Apparently, she was born and raised in Jamaica before moving to the UK in the sixties, but another rumour has it that she was born and raised in Bristol (UK)?! Even Daisy, who's closest to Charmaine, cannot accurately answer any of these questions. Regardless, this is exactly how Charmaine likes it. She believes the more of a mystery you are the more deadly your enemies will perceive you. This sense of aura and mystery that Charmaine has cultivated is not motivated by an innate evilness or thirst for depravity. It exists because she's high up on the food chain, so she's motivated by the very truth that if she gives any of her rivals even an inch they'll come knocking. This is one way that she ensures her allies stay loyal. However, what is known about Charmaine--what is concrete knowledge--is that if you want to do any criminal business in Bristol, or in the South West for that matter, she must sign it off. In addition, if you're not game, then there'll be deadly consequences.

Yet, Charmaine has not always existed within the shadows. Until a decade ago (2001), before she was confident enough to fully trust her protégée (Daisy Peach) as her underboss, Charmaine was an established foster carer. She used this as a masquerade to hide her true business: the business of trafficking and narcotics. What is also known is that up until 1999, Charmaine was working as an underboss for the same crime syndicate that she now oversees. She fulfilled her ambition to become number one when she orchestrated the murder of her former boss and kingpin, CARL NOODLES BROWN. A brief war did transpire with a rival and naive gang bidding to take over Charmaine's operations, but Charmaine, being the wily fox she is, made sure that never happened. By 2001, Charmaine knew that life as a major criminal kingpin meant that she needed to lay low--to keep out of the spotlight because, as she learned with her former boss Carl Brown, the police don't like it when you're constantly rubbing shit in their face.

Most recently, whilst Charmaine's success has been well hidden from the public eye, it has not gone undetected in the



criminal underworld, particularly in London. The Italian and Russian Mafia, who are powerful organisations and who have a key stake in London, now see Bristol as a lucrative city: a city that should be added to their portfolios. This, for the first time since Charmaine's tenure as Bristol's most feared kingpin, will see her position weaken. Her vulnerability opens the door for Daisy, who has been waiting in the wings to make her move on Charmaine. In this unfolding power struggle, Angela will have a major decision to make: a decision that will mean the difference between life and death.

### **Episodes**

**ONE:** Angela finds herself in a compromising position when Mikey Thompson, father of her son and a serving convict, confesses to Angela that he owes drug money to a violent inmate. Angela promises Mikey she will help one last time but refuses to approach her mother, Mia Jones, as that would really mean asking her domineering step-father, Dr. Eamon Jones.

Meanwhile, in a bid to establish a career for herself and eventually provide a better life for her son, Angela takes an internship at *The Bristol Post* thanks to Managing Editor, Callie Turner, who sees something special in her during an interview. Callie invites Angela on a field trip while she digs into Bristol's underbelly of drugs and human trafficking for a story. With time running out to cover Mikey's debt, and Angela's new job exposing her to the excessive wealth hidden in this underworld, she devises her own illicit plan to cover what Mikey owes. Her plan: smuggle cocaine to Mikey in prison by use of a drone. Angela intends to go straight following this one-off job, but this changes when she learns that Charlie is taking her to court for full custody of Clarence.

Backed into a corner while also missing the buzz of her criminal antics of days gone by, Angela decides to stalk the criminal underboss, Daisy Peach, to a remote farmhouse. Here, she discovers trafficked women being held by Daisy against their will. Angela's cover is blown when her mobile phone rings, and she soon finds herself pleading for her life. In a bid to save herself, Angela quickly thinks up a proposition to solve Daisy's ongoing shipping problems. The proposition includes using Charlie's piano rental store to ship narcotics across the country. Daisy lets Angela live another day.

**TWO:** To Charlie's surprise, Angela arrives at Keys of Fury ready to begin work. While taken aback, Charlie accepts Angela's decision and gets her inducted right away. As Angela is given a tour of the entire complex, it provides her with an opportunity to scope out her intended operation. At the end of her shift, Angela reports back to Daisy Peach and maps out a plan of action to ensure the smooth delivery of the first drug

shipment. Meanwhile, Angela is somehow still managing to keep up her internship at *The Bristol Post*. She earns more of Callie's trust, as she reveals further information about Daisy Peach and her criminal enterprise. Callie informs Angela that Daisy is in fact an underboss and she reports to the deadly and cunning Charmaine Porter, who has been operating within the shadows for over a decade now.

Just as Angela is about to make her first shipment, she's stopped in her tracks by Eamon; he is not impressed that she's working for Charlie and makes this crystal clear. Eamon, who was expecting some fighting back from Angela, is caught off guard by her diplomacy, but the truth is, Angela's sweating because she needs to get out of the starting blocks quickly to make sure her shipment is on time and a success. Eamon finally lets Angela get along with her shipment but voices that he's watching her every move. Angela succeeds with her illicit activities but doesn't get to breathe for long as she must attend her first court custody hearing the very next day. The Judge is quick to remark that the custody battle seems unnecessary, particularly as Angela is currently working for Charlie. In the final moments of the episode, Angela picks up Clarence from school and is asked by his teacher, Mr. Dawson, if she could speak to him in private. Mr. Dawson explains to Angela that a complaint has been received from another mother, as Clarence told a boy that his "psycho dad" is being released from prison any day now. During this private discussion between Angela and Mr. Dawson, Mikey is simultaneously released from prison.

**THREE:** Mikey returns home after being released from prison. He quickly realises that Angela's mind is preoccupied by something that is causing her great concern. He senses Angela's worry, pressing her to open up. She finally discloses her current predicament; she is entangled in shipping narcotics through Charlie's piano rental store for a deadly crime syndicate. As shocked as Mikey is, he wants in. He makes the case to Angela for him to take over the lion's share of the delivery, enabling her to focus on the intricacies of the operation. Angela is unsure, particularly given Mikey's track record for screwing up, but she concedes that she needs all the help she can get. However, it is under one condition: Mikey's under strict guidance from Angela on what he can and, more importantly, cannot do. Mikey swears on his son's life as evidence that Angela can trust his every word.

Whilst Clarence is excited to see his father, Angela has a word in private with her son before allowing him to go off with Mikey. Angela talks to Clarence about what she had advised him to say to those bullies at the park a few days earlier. She explains that her advice needs to be their little secret, as it could get her into a lot of trouble. Clarence promises to keep it a secret.

The next day, Angela is back at *The Bristol Post* and enters Callie's office to find her uncharacteristically excited. Callie is unable to contain her elation, revealing to Angela that a credible source has informed her that the police are going to storm Daisy Peach's farmhouse any night now! Callie explains that as soon as she receives the call, Angela can join her to see the aftermath unfold in front of their eyes.

A concerned Angela is quick to act on the information that Callie has provided. Angela tips off Daisy, who is unmoved about the storming of the farmhouse, as the police won't find anything incriminating, but will still make sure the farmhouse is empty to mess with the heads of the lead detectives. A day later, Angela receives the call from Callie ... The pair make their way to the farmhouse and Angela does a good job in pretending that it's her first time being in the area. When Callie and Angela finally arrive, they learn that the police have found nothing. The farmhouse is empty. Not a scent of human existence. Callie is pissed off and quick to suggest that someone within the police must have tipped off Daisy or Charmaine. Angela encourages this hypothesis.

Angela's back at the piano store and maps out Mikey's next pickup. When Mikey arrives at his pickup point, he gets straight to work and begins stashing the drugs within a piano. At the end of the job, he's stopped in his tracks as an idea rushes through his head. The coke is calling Mikey's name ... just one sniff. After a few moments, he makes the sensible decision to finish off his task and walk away, or so we think; moments later Mikey backtracks his steps and unseals a package before wrapping up some cocaine for himself. Mikey, being the fool that he is, naively believes this will go unnoticed, but the recipient of this product will do due process and identify that it's *light*. Ultimately, this is going to position Angela in a precarious and dangerous position.

**FOUR:** Angela arrives home late at night to discover that Mikey is high as a kite. Angela's pissed that Mikey's using again, but she becomes even more incensed when she clocks that he's stolen some of the product. Mikey tries to play it down, adding that it won't be noticed, as it was just a few grams. Angela's face says it all ... *Mikey you dumb fuck!* Angela asserts to Mikey he'd better pray that they don't notice the product is light, but she's not too confident. For now, Angela has problems in the present, as the next court hearing takes place the following morning.

Just before the hearing begins, Angela's solicitor, FIONA MILLS, discloses that Charlie's custody bid is being front-loaded by her stepfather, Eamon. Naturally, Angela is fuming, but her solicitor explains that she needs to hold it together in court. She needs to be squeaky clean throughout the presentation of this case. During the hearing itself, Fiona argues that this is a family vendetta against Angela. This

vendetta started when she was a young girl, and it has never subsided, hence why Angela is in court today. Charlie's solicitor, RAYMOND ELLERY, battles back by listing quite the rap sheet as to why Angela is a neglectful and inadequate mother. Raymond motions for Clarence's teacher, Mr. Dawson, to be questioned. The Judge grants this motion and Angela is under no illusion that this is a major blow for her.

After the court hearing, Angela has it out with Mia, angrily questioning why she never told her that Eamon was behind Charlie's custody battle. In fact, Angela points out that Eamon's finances are Mia's finances, so she is also complicit in the bid for Charlie to take guardianship of Clarence. Mia promises that she wasn't privy to this information, but Angela's not having it. Shortly after, Mia makes a charge at Eamon and Charlie, as she is infuriated by their deception about the finances behind Charlie's custody battle. Eamon persuades Mia that this is the right thing to do ... In truth, at this point, Mia doesn't know what is right or wrong anymore. That same afternoon, Angela calls Daisy to discuss business but soon reveals her current predicament with Clarence's teacher testifying in court. Uncharacteristically, Daisy wants to help--mainly because Angela has become an asset to her business. Daisy reassures Angela she'll take care of the teacher ... Later that night, Mr. Dawson is disturbed while sleeping as a knife is held against his throat. He pleads for his life before the closing credits cut in.

**FIVE:** We open to Mr. Dawson who has been dragged half naked across to the other side of his bedroom and his body left visibly bruised and reddened. The perpetrators are long gone. Mr. Dawson looks shocked and upset but grateful to be alive. A few months pass by and a montage shows Angela in all aspects of her life during this period. She's effectively overseeing the smooth transportation of narcotics for Daisy, although Mikey still cannot help himself from skimming off the top. He's using and it's only increasing in amount and frequency. Meanwhile, Angela is impressing Callie at her internship and their relationship is seemingly going from strength to strength. That evening, Angela arrives at *The Kings Arms* where Clarence rushes to hug his mother as Jackie watches on while pouring a pint for a punter. Nothing has changed.

With three months gone by, we're back in court and this time Callie is delivering a character testimonial about Angela. Her comments about Angela are overwhelmingly positive. She expresses how Angela has proven herself a talented journalist in her position as an intern and has a bright future ahead. This is music to both Angela's and her solicitor's ears. Tension is aroused, however, when Clarence's teacher, Mr. Dawson, appears and steps up for questioning. The suspense soon transforms into silent elation for Angela when Mr. Dawson catches Charlie's legal team off guard by speaking glowingly about Angela and Clarence. He even goes on to say

that Clarence's outstanding academic work is likely a direct result from the environment Angela has cultivated at home. The morning closes with the Judge indicating that he'll make a final decision by midday tomorrow. Later that day, back at the piano store, you could cut the tension with a knife, as Charlie is far from happy about how the court hearing has unfolded. She knows Angela is up to something but can't quite figure out what yet.

Still, whilst this has been a victorious day for Angela, the mood changes when she is hijacked by Daisy and her crew. Daisy's not happy as she violently questions Angela about why some of her product has gone missing, believing that Angela may be stupid enough to be selling on the side. Daisy demands a justifiable explanation and Angela had better have one because, once again, her answer will mean the difference between life and death.

**SIX:** Angela manages to buy herself more time, as she points out to Daisy that half a kilo of cocaine would not be sufficient to pay her court fees (which Daisy has been covering). Angela argues that it doesn't make sense for her to go behind Daisy's back because it would mean risking everything for almost nothing. Angela is only temporarily off the hook. Daisy gives Angela exactly 24 hours to find out why some of the product is missing ... Angela rushes to find Mikey and when she does, she violently charges at him, enraged by his continuously idiotic behaviour. After slapping Mikey hard across the face, she soon calms down and attempts to piece everything together. She appeals to Mikey to be honest as this is the only way she can help him. She asks how much he has stolen? Mikey reveals the true extent of his thievery and admits that he has yet again fallen into bad habits. Angela knows it's really bad this time. She knows that she's going to have to make the hardest decision of her life: a decision that could be the difference between life and death for Mikey.

The next day arrives ... The Judge delivers his final verdict. Angela has been granted sole custody of Clarence, and Charlie, Eamon and Mia can only see him as long as Angela approves it. Charlie, along with Eamon, is visibly distraught. She can't believe it, but then again, she can because it's Angela.

Later that afternoon, Angela returns to Keys of Fury to find it closed but unlocked. She soon discovers an emotional Charlie and tries to act confused as to why Charlie has decided to shut the store for the afternoon. This only results in Charlie verbally assaulting Angela--telling her sister that she is a liar and a master manipulator. Angela, perceptive to her sister's distress, is straight to the punch: Clarence is her son, and Charlie had betrayed her. Charlie turns on the heat by reminding Angela that she knows what she did that day; the day that Hugh drowned. Charlie begins to sob as she explains to Angela that if she didn't take her to court, the

only person she would have betrayed is Clarence. Angela is having none of it and moves for the exit doors. As she does so, Charlie yells at Angela that she is sacked, and she is never to return to the store. Angela, knowing that the piano store is a key part of her operation and the reason she is still alive, is stopped in her tracks. She comes back fighting. She snarls at Charlie that if she does know the truth about what happened that day, why after all these years hasn't she shared it with Eamon?! If Charlie does wish to share everything with Eamon, has she really thought about the repercussions? She'd lose everything. Eamon would cut ties with her; he'd also likely divorce Mia and the piano store would go under. Charlie is speechless, and when Angela explains to Charlie that she will be continuing to work at the store or she'll blab to Eamon herself, Charlie becomes crippled by fear. Crippled because she sees in Angela's eyes what she saw all those years ago when Angela allowed Hugh to drown ... a ruthless and corrupted soul.

Angela, still buzzing from the confrontation with Charlie, makes a final decision about what to do with Mikey. She phones Daisy and discloses the truth. Angela pleads for Daisy to give Mikey a pass--just this once. Angela seemingly persuades Daisy, but she needs Angela to bring Mikey to her. That evening, Angela appears with Mikey at a secluded location in the countryside. Things quickly turn south when Mikey is forced to his knees while one of Daisy's goons holds a gun against his head. Angela, who is held back by Daisy's people, pleads for mercy as does a sobbing Mikey. Suddenly, out of the shadows, a mysterious figure emerges from a black car. This figure is Charmaine Porter, and, as she steps into the light, we come to realise that Callie is watching everything unfold in the distance. Callie is uncharacteristically shocked by the very fact that Angela is present, but when she sees Charmaine surface she's in absolute disbelief.

Back to the action and Angela is noticeably confused, but when Charmaine introduces herself, she soon understands the gravity of the situation. Charmaine nods at the goon with the gun and on cue two bullets are fired ... It's not entirely clear if Mikey is dead until we hear the weeping cries from Angela. Angela is quickly dragged away from Mikey's dead body and forced into Charmaine's car. Charmaine explains to Angela that Mikey is a liability. He needed to go. She did the right thing. Charmaine tries to appeal to Angela's ambitions, adding that she hears good things about the work she's been doing. Charmaine explains to Angela that there is an opportunity for her to progress and make life-changing sums of money but also clarifies to Angela that she needs to continue to do right by the organisation.

As Angela exits the car, she sees Mikey's body squeezed into the back of a truck before Charmaine and her crew, including Daisy, escape the area. Angela stands alone in the countryside. She tries to convince herself that it's all a bad

dream. Callie's eyes remain fixed on Angela--watching her every move in the distance before parting from the area herself. Angela is truly alone.

## Pilot screenplay: *Angela*

ANGELA

PILOT

Written By  
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EXT. PIER. 1986 - FLASHBACK.

OVER BLACK.

The piercing sound of SOMETHING violently battling against a pool of water is heard.

We're now --

Looking straight into a desperate pair of eyes who belong to a BOY no older than ELEVEN.

The boy frantically flaps his arms, desperately trying to keep his head afloat.

He pleads for help, but the muddy water keeps flooding over his head, flushing his words away.

He fights to swim to the pier, flapping, coughing and kicking for his life.

Reaches the surface. Devours a gulp of air. Finds the energy to reach out towards something or someone.

BOY

PLEASE!

His eyes charge with fear after his call goes unanswered. His head sinks below the surface.

Desperate for air, the boy battles against the water, stretching his hands for the surface. Sun rays scatter the water's surface. A shining light. *Hope.*

Still holding his breath, hands only touching distance from life. AND --

The shadow rises. Their silhouette acts as a cloud blocking the light. Overwhelming PANIC sets in. This could be it. The boy's little fingers stretch as far as they can towards the surface.

He *fails.*

His mouth opens and the ocean water drowns away his screams.

The boy's lifeless eyes fade with each passing second. The shadow still hawks over him.

Just as his eye lids close *forever*, we cut to --

INT. 31 HOLLYWOOD ROAD, BRISLINGTON, BRISTOL. MORNING.

A thirty-something year old WOMAN awakes from what seems like a nightmare. She glances at the clock, suddenly realises the time. Shit... Welcome to the glorious world of ANGELA SPARKS.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD ROAD, BRISLINGTON, BRISTOL. 10 MINUTES LATER.

Emerging out of his front door is CLARENCE SPARKS, no older than eight, wearing a tatty school uniform, hopping and skipping away.

His MOTHER, who we just met, Angela, rushes out behind him, sporting a black leather motorbike outfit. She doesn't really bother with make-up or locking front doors for that matter.

Angela rushes towards a shitty looking motorbike, pushing Clarence along the way, transforming his skip into a jog.

Clarence suddenly STOPS. He won't budge, causing Angela to almost trip over him.

Angela manages to balance herself, quickly gripping onto Clarence's wee arm... She doesn't have time for this.

ANGELA

No chance? We're pissin' late. AGAIN.

CLARENCE

You swore. AGAIN.

ANGELA

Pissin'. Pissin'. Pissin'. Pissin'.  
Pissin'. Is that what you wanted?

CLARENCE

I forgot somethin'. I 'll be quick.  
It's just by the door. Please.

Angela loosens her grip, Clarence escapes for the front door. Angela dashes to start her motorbike.

ANGELA

Little douche.

CLARENCE

(opening the front door)  
I heard that!

ANGELA

Love you!

Clarence's little hand reaches inside the front door, grabs a sheet of paper. Clarence shuts the door, runs towards his mother while cuddling the paper.

Angela unlocks the motorbike seat, pulls out a helmet, squeezes it on herself. She pulls out a second helmet and Clarence arrives on point ready to put it on. Angela suddenly pauses, inspects the piece of paper...

It's a poorly formed drawing resembling a superhero like figure, titled "my daddy." Angela's face softens before squeezing Clarence's little cheeks.

EXT. SEFTON PARK SCHOOL. 20 MINUTES LATER.

A school playground is occupied by INFANT and PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN running, playing or clinging onto to their PARENTS. This is what you call a nice school or in other words, very middle class. The building itself is small, but classically British and has been well looked after throughout the decades.

The bell sounds and in true British fashion, the children begin lining up outside their respective classrooms.

The TEACHERS instruct the children to enter. Some children glance back at their PARENTS, lovingly waving over to them. Some children, mostly year six's, ignore their parent's affectionate calls.

Amongst the chatter and waves goodbye, the sound of a vehicle, resembling something of a boy racer, cuts in, momentarily grabbing EVERYONES attention...

It's no boy racer, it's Angela on her motorbike with Clarence. And so the shit show continues...

Stressed, Angela parks her motorbike directly outside the school gate in front of the *No Parking* sign.

An embarrassed Clarence climbs off the motorbike, slowly removing his helmet, wishing he could wear it forever.

Clarence notices a GROUP of BOYS outside his classroom sniggering away at his expense. Angela's piercing eyes make contact with each of the boys, rendering them all silent. Simultaneously, Clarence's teacher, Mr. Dawson, clocks on to what's unfolding, signalling for the boys to enter the classroom.

Mr. Dawson, a man that is often taken advantage of because

of his big heart, watches on as Angela and Clarence worm their way through a dispersing crowd of MUMS and DADS...

And just as the final child of Mr. Dawson 's class is to enter, Clarence reaches the back of the line. He's on time!

ANGELA

Save the best 'till last, aye Mr.  
Dawson !

MR. DAWSON

We're always happy when Clarence is at  
school.

ANGELA

Try convincing epilepsy that.  
(to Clarence)  
Right kiddo.

Mr. Dawson has heard it all before. He gestures for Clarence to enter the classroom.

MR. DAWSON

Good morning young man.

CLARENCE

(entering the classroom)  
Morning Mr. Dawson .

Mr. Dawson checks that Clarence is in the classroom. Angela senses that Mr. Dawson wants to talk.

ANGELA

Am I in trouble Mr. Dawson ?

MR. DAWSON

With the greatest respect Angela,  
please don't park your bike outside  
the school gates. It's not permitted.

ANGELA

Oh. The gate. God. You had me worried  
there. Thought the little punk did  
something bad.

Mr. Dawson doesn't believe Angela should be downplaying this.

ANGELA

But sure. Of course. My bad. I'm  
sorry.

MR. DAWSON

Thank you.

ANGELA

(saluting)

I promise it won't happen again, Sir.

Mr. Dawson doesn't know how to respond so he checks over his shoulder, sees that the TEACHING ASSISTANT is struggling.

MR. DAWSON

I need to get back.

EXT. MOTORWAY, M5. 35-MINUTES LATER.

Angela, on her motorbike, takes the exit for Gloucester.

EXT. GLOUCESTER PRISON, CAR PARK. 10-MINUTES LATER.

Angela locks her helmet away. Poker face now in motion as she moves for the rusty entrance door.

Only metres away from the entrance, Angela can hear the inmates yelling in the recreation area. She can only hear because a tall brick wall, decorated by barb wire at the top, keeps the prisoners well hidden.

An unfazed Angela enters the building.

INT. GLOUCESTER PRISON, VISITORS ROOM. CONTINUOUS

Welcome to the visitors room. This is hardly the reception area of New York's Plaza hotel, but in fairness it's really not that bad. The solid grey walls could do with a lick of paint, but the visiting tables are well spaced out, giving everyone ample room. It also helps that the INMATES and VISITORS are smiling away, clearly happy to see each other. And for the GUARDS, they're firm but fair.

We find Angela at the back of the room, patiently sat alone, fixated on the gated door protected by a GUARD.

Her face lights up as the guard opens the door, revealing INMATE 293. This is 30-something, MIKEY THOMPSON, father of Angela's son, Clarence. Mikey's no hardened criminal, more a get rich quick type of guy who messed up.

Mikey clocks Angela, shifts his heavy body towards her.

The closer Mikey is to Angela, the more discernible the bruising around his left eye is. But Angela's uninterested in



Mikey's bruised eye, she's completely wrapped up in how much weight he's put on.

Mikey reaches the table, they give each other an air hug before sitting. Mikey speaks with a thick Bristolian accent.

MIKEY

Alreet mate?

ANGELA

I am now, but I wasn't for a moment there. I didn't think you were gonna fit through that door you fat bastard.

MIKEY

Savage.

ANGELA

Did you say savage or sausage?

MIKEY

Shit joke.

Angela's all laughs, it's infectious.

MIKEY

I don't even knows whys I'm laughing. You're not even funny.

ANGELA

Okay, I'll stop now. I've had my fun.  
(breaks into laughter)  
It's just your chubby little face and that orange jumpsuit. And now your looking really mad at me and its just all SO cute.

MIKEY

Only you would find this cute.  
Mentalist you are!  
(beat)  
So tell me, how's my little man doin'?

ANGELA

Oh, he's fine. His mother however...

Mikey gestures for Angela to explain.

ANGELA

I'm playin'. He's just a cheeky shit who's too smart for his own good.

MIKEY

Me being here has hardly made things easy for anyone.

ANGELA

You kiddin' me? You've done me a massive favour. If you weren't in here my hands would be wrapped around someone's throat right now.

MIKEY

You probs shouldn't say that here.

Agreed.

ANGELA

Sooo, how are you doin'? And hows your new roommate? Has he tried his luck yet? I wanna hear all the gory details!

MIKEY

(sarcastically)

He's alreet. He's got a massive cock so that's been a real benefit.

ANGELA

Oh, is that why you're walking aroun' like John Wayne?

Mikey doesn't fire back. It's not like him.

ANGELA

Why aren't you countering? You're making me feel bad! It's because I'm being homophobic isn't it? I'm really not meaning to be. No more jokey Angela. Serious Angela.

(Off Mikey's bruised eye)

So how are you actually doin'?

Mikey's demeanour changes. Struggles to find the words while caressing his bruised eye.

ANGELA

I did notice. Looks swore.

(beat)

So come on. Spill the beans.

Mikey takes a moment.

MIKEY

I gots into a bit of trouble. I fell back into things. I owes a little bit out now.

ANGELA

I wondered why you were being such a wet blanket! It all makes sense now.

(beat)

How much?

MIKEY

£1200.

Angela stares not at Mikey but through Mikey.

MIKEY

I'm so sorry, Ang'. I'm clean again now. Was a blip.

ANGELA

Don't apologise to me. I don't owe £1200.

Mikey delivers a look that says it all - I need your help.

ANGELA

When?

MIKEY

By the end of this week.

ANGELA

Buy more time.

Mikey tries to cut it in, but Angela's not having it.

ANGELA

No, no, no. Listen to me. You need to buy more time. I don't care if you have to rent out that sugar ass of yours. In return, I will find you that money. But this is the final, final, final and I mean final time. And I want you to know that I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing this for our son.

Mikey understands.



INT. KEYS OF FURY, SHOWROOM, BRISTOL. LATER THAT AFTERNOON.

A talkative CROWD are squeezed in amongst a feast of pianos, currently acting as tables for empty champagne glasses. There is a banner above the crowd reading "Keys of Fury One Year Anniversary."

We worm through the crowd, heading straight for centre stage to find a fifty-something year old white MAN dressed in a preppy Ralph Lauren shirt. This sharp talking man is Angela's step-father, DR. EAMON JONES, and he is stood next to the elegant CHARLIE SPARKS. This is Angela's well to do sister, notably donning a silky Karen Millen dress... One big happy family affair this afternoon.

Eamon taps a spoon against his champagne glass, simultaneously Angela appears, laying low at the back of the crowd. Angela scoops up a half empty glass and downs it.

EAMON

EXCUSE ME! Can I have your attention please.

The crowd circles Eamon and Charlie.

Charlie's blushing while glancing at happy faces around the room.

Charlie soon spots Angela hanging at the back of the crowd. Angela raises her glass to Charlie. Charlie nods back at Angela before directing her attention at Clarence, wiggling his way through the crowd. Charlie reaches her hand out to Clarence who rushes to meet it with his own.

Angela's response? Down another glass of champagne.

MIA JONES, late fifties, dressed in a flowing, bohemian summer dress, located on the periphery of Eamon and Charlie, registers Angela's unease.

EAMON

For those who don't know me, I am Charlie's father. Well, that's not strictly true because, legally speaking, I'm Charlie's step-father. But when Charlie originally proposed the idea of starting her own piano rental business and suggested that I invest half of my life's savings, she never used the word step. Only Dad.

The crowd laugh, except Angela. She takes a swig of her drink.

EAMON

I do wonder though... If further investment was requested, what title would Charlie ascribe to me. Sir? Prince? King?

Charlie lovingly throws her hands into the air - get over yourself Eamon.

Clarence pulls on Charlie's dress, pleading for her to pick him up. Charlie is happy to do so.

EAMON

Bad jokes aside.

(beat)

The truth is, in my humble opinion, if anyone should privilege an honourable title it's Charlie.

(beat)

When I first met a five-year old Charlie, something was uniquely different about her. Yes, while her intelligence and curiosity was remarkably clear, there was something deeper. Far greater. A strength I -  
(glances at Mia)

We never knew existed. Times have not always been easy on this - my family. Many of you here today, I'm sure will remember only too well. The tragedy surrounding my late son, Hugh. But Charlie being Charlie was always the one that fought to keep us glued together. To show us what it meant to be a family. So, am I surprised that in the first year of Charlie being in business she has exceeded all expectations? I think you know my answer.

(beat)

Before I find myself being booted off stage for rambling on, would everyone please raise a glass to the beautiful, intelligent, hardworking, amazing daughter and auntie, Charlie Sparks. We are so proud of you.

(beat)

To Charlie.

Just as everyone is about to toast, Clarence notices his mother, Angela.

CLARENCE

Mummy!

The entire room fix their attention towards Angela.

CLARENCE

Your turn mummy. Say something nice about Auntie Charlie.

Some "aws" echo around the room. Angela, a little tipsy, brushes away Clarence's request.

Eamon scruffs Clarence's hair, quick to raise a toast again. Clearly doesn't want Angela's input.

EAMON

To Charlie.

CROWD

To Charlie.

Angela half-heartedly raises her now empty glass. The crowd disperses, forming into smaller groups.

Clarence climbs down from Charlie.

Eamon and Charlie hug, begin whispering to each other... Probably along the lines of "you're amazing, couldn't have achieved any of this without you." Either way, it makes Angela want to vomit.

Meanwhile, iPhone in hand, Mia abruptly ends Eamon and Charlie's moment. Clarence hovers in-between Charlie's legs. Angela's still at the back of the room.

MIA

Selfie time.

(calls over)

Come on Angela. I want a photo of us. Together.

Charlie, Eamon and Angela share the same amount of enthusiasm, which is none.

Mia produces a selfie stick from her pocket. Attaches the phone, extends the stick.

Angela reluctantly snakes through groups of people, making

her way over to her family.

Angela arrives, hugs Charlie.

ANGELA  
Congratulations.

CHARLIE  
Thank you. So glad you could make it.

ANGELA  
Wouldn't miss it for the world.

Sarcasm from Angela? Who knows.

Angela teasingly points at Eamon but is careful not to edge too close to him.

ANGELA  
So what do I call you? Dad, step-dad  
or... wait for it... Big Daddy?

EAMON  
Eamon is fine.

Angela and Eamon hug. It's awkward.

Mia gestures for the family to huddle together, ready for the selfie snapshot.

MIA  
Come on, everyone get nice and close  
otherwise it won't work.

Charlie picks Clarence up. Angela snatches Clarence from her. An unimpressed Eamon bites his tongue, clearly wants to say something to Angela.

ANGELA  
(to Clarence)  
How's your day been?

CLARENCE  
Super great.

ANGELA  
Super great? Tell me more please.

CLARENCE  
Nanny picked me up.

ANGELA

That's strange. I arranged for Auntie  
Charlie to pick you up?

CHARLIE

Oh. Yeah. Sorry. Change of plan.

Mia, still trying to frame the photo, stops and faces Angela.

MIA

She had too much going on here.  
(squeezing Clarence's cheeks)  
Which was great for me because I got  
to spend time with this monkey.  
(back to taking a photo)  
Come on Eamon, you need to get lower.  
Half your head is missing.

Eamon bends his knees.

CLARENCE

Nanny took me to the park and got me a  
Doctor Who magazine.

ANGELA

(failing to hide her annoyance)  
Did she now.

EAMON

A thank you would be welcomed.

ANGELA

(to Clarence)  
Well what do we say? Thank you Mia.

MIA

Nanny.

CLARENCE

Thank you Nanny Mia.

EAMON

I wasn't referring to  
Clarence.

ANGELA

We know step-daddy.

MIA

Now everyone... 1, 2, 3. CHEESE.

FLASH. Eamon looks so pissed in the photo, Angela's comment  
clearly riled him.



Mia's beaming though, happy she finally has a family photo.

CHARLIE

Right, time to speak to some of my guests.

ANGELA

You not gonna give me a tour first sister?

CHARLIE

Well -

MIA

(cuts in)

Go give your sister a tour.

CHARLIE

Of course.

Charlie weaves through the crowd with Angela and Clarence in tow.

We're now left with Eamon and Mia. Mia is exploring the various photo filters on her iPhone. Eamon's eyes stalk Angela. Mia senses it.

MIA

Please. Just one day.

Like a petulant child, Eamon storms off and decides to mingle in with a small GROUP of people. He's all smiles now.

We meet Angela and Charlie again. Clarence sprints straight for the buffet table, leaving the sisters alone.

Angela notices a portrait canvas of a YOUNG BOY, hanging over a Grand Piano positioned in the corner of the room.

Angela moves towards it. Slowly. Charlie shadows her.

Angela reaches the canvas, examines it. Her demeanour changes. *This is the little boy in the teaser trailer.*

Angela stares at the boy's timeless smile. He's so happy. So innocent. Angela doesn't know how she should feel.

Charlie moves in closer, only yards away from Angela. The sisters are split in-between the canvas - Angela stands on the left side, Charlie on the right.

Angela glances momentarily over her shoulder, notices Eamon studying her.

ANGELA

Who is this guy. The fucking Gestapo?

Charlie doesn't respond.

ANGELA

(sarcastically)

Of course. Positivity Angela. So let me start by saying it's really nice that you invited me here. Finally.

CHARLIE

I'm not doing this.

ANGELA

Doing what? I just want you to know that I really appreciate it.

CHARLIE

You're always welcome.

ANGELA

You fibber.

Charlie stares at Angela - you're always welcome!

ANGELA

What about your financier? Does he feel the same.

Charlie's not taking the bait. Angela knows she's being a bit of a shit.

ANGELA

Just tell me where to shove it. You'll feel really good. I promise.

CHARLIE

Running a business. Making money. Being able to provide. Trust me. That feels good.

ANGELA

There you go. Not direct, but the subtext... Well executed. Love it. Good on you.

CHARLIE  
That's not what I meant.

Well that rendered the sisters silent...

The awkward silence still persists, but Angela detects something's on Charlie's mind.

ANGELA  
Come on. Spit it out.

CHARLIE  
I've been meaning to talk to you.  
About something.

ANGELA  
(facetiously)  
It's not a job offer is it? How  
exciting.

Off Charlie - yeah right! Angela responds in good humour.

ANGELA  
You cold hearted bitch. You're gonna  
make me cry.

CHARLIE  
If you really want a job, it's all  
yours...

The sisters share a moment, what a shit show that would be!

CHARLIE  
We need to talk soon though.

ANGELA  
Just let me know when you can fit me  
into your busy diary.

Charlie rolls her eyes. Angela's hard work and she knows it.

ANGELA  
Look, I'm being an asshole. But  
seriously. The store's perfect. You've  
done great. I'm happy for you. I am.  
Really.  
(beat)  
Just, in the future, let me know when  
you need to switch up childcare. He's  
my boy.



Charlie reluctantly agrees. This makes Angela a little suspicious, but she doesn't over analyse it.

Angela clinks her glass against Charlie's - congratulations!

EXT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB, HOLLYWOOD ROAD, BRISLINGTON. LATER THAT EVENING.

The King Arms Pub hangs at the end of a narrow street, lined by victorian terraced houses.

An OLDER MAN, dressed in blue overalls, hands covered in oil, lights a cigarette. Inhales it... Complete euphoria.

INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. CONTINUOUS.

A modest size pub, walls decorated in a faded red wallpaper, is heavily populated by a number of LOCALS congregating around the television... Bristol City FC are playing live, the pride and soul of this working-class community.

At the bar we find Angela pouring a pint for local punter BILL COX, a middle-aged man with white greasy hair.

Angela glances over at Clarence who is sat at a table in the corner of the pub with his Kindle Fire in hand. He scoops his other little hand into a bowl of peanuts.

Back to Angela who appears to be making a real mess of Bill's pint, too gripped by what's happening on TV. Bill's too hammered to notice. Also, slaving away behind the bar is the straight talking landlord, JACKIE SPENCE, who does notice.

JACKIE

For the first time in my life, I'm  
lost for words.

Before Angela can respond, her attention is fired back to the TV as a Bristol City PLAYER is fouled in the opposition's penalty area. The entire pub erupts, screaming for the REFEREE to give a penalty.

Both Angela and Bill divert their attention away from the pint, absorbed by what may unfold on screen. Jackie also stops serving, leans her heavy body over the bar.

ANGELA

Come on ref'.  
(to Jackie)  
If he didn't see that, he must be  
blind.

A SILENT VIDEO CUT

Jackie agrees. The referee refers to *Video Assistant Referees* (VAR).

Suddenly silence transcends the room. Everyone awaits anxiously for the verdict...

And it's a penalty!

High fives are shared across the pub. Angela high fives Jackie and Bill.

The punters and bar staff compose themselves... The penalty needs to be converted into a goal for there to be real celebrations. This is not said but understood.

The Bristol City STRIKER steps up, cushions the football onto the penalty spot. He steps back, composes himself.

The opposition GOALKEEPER dances on the spot, stretching his arms into the air, trying to intimidate the striker.

The striker steps towards the ball and...

GOAL. The punters celebrate. Angela joins in, high fives Bill and Jackie again.

#### PUNTERS

We love you city, we do. We love you  
city, we do, oh city we love you.

Angela's attention is back to Bill's pint. Fills it to the top. Bill digs into his pockets. Pulls out loose change. Barely counts it. Throws it across the bar. Angela counts it.

#### ANGELA

Bill, you're 57p short.

Bill muffles something under his breath, turns his back and stumbles away from the bar. A PUNTER gives him a massive kiss on the cheek, everyone's still in good spirits. Life's good when Bristol City are winning.

Jackie gestures for Angela to let it slide.

Nobody's queuing for a pint. A break at last. Angela, desperate for the toilet, moves to exit the bar area.

#### JACKIE

For the love of Jesus, tell me you're  
not taking a shit?

~~~~~

ANGELA  
Jackie, please. I'm a lady.

JACKIE  
You're like the River Thames, wide in  
the mouth and full of shit.

Good one Jackie!

ANGELA  
Just keep an eye on my boy.

INT. TOILET, CORRIDOR. CONTINUOUS

Door opens. MASON SMITH, twenty-something, dressed in a retro Adidas outfit, looks to be handing a small "package" to CLARA CURTIS, who some decades ago was a gifted gymnast, but a short career plagued by injuries saw her fall prey to substance abuse.

Angela emerges. Mason quickly stashes the package back into his jacket. Angela immediately closes her eyes, hands cover her face, pretends she hasn't seen anything.

She slowly walks down the short narrow corridor.

ANGELA  
I didn't see anythin'. I can't see  
anythin'. I just wanna use the loo.  
I'm gonna open my eyes in three so  
whatever you're doin', maybe don't do  
it. Not accusing you of anythin' by  
the way but just sayin'.

Mason stares at Angela. Clara's on edge...

ANGELA  
1... 2... 3...

Now stood in-between Mason and Clara, Angela opens her eyes. She is greeted by Mason's dogged stare as he attempts to intimidate Angela.

ANGELA  
You little rat bag, Mason.

MASON  
Who are you callin' a rat bag?! What's  
your problem?

ANGELA

My problem?

CLARA

Ang', he wasn't doin' anythin'.  
Promise.

ANGELA

You can pipe down too.

(to Mason)

You ruined it, didn't you! Lets be  
honest, you were about to deal drugs.  
And little ol' me, per usual, played  
all nice by giving you a pass, but oh  
no. You had to try and be the big man.

Angela knocks on Mason's head as if it's a front door,  
checking if he has a brain. Mason's not quite the tough guy  
now.

ANGELA

You dumb ass.

Mason looks like a little school boy about to cry after being  
told off by his teacher. Angela feels a little bad now.

ANGELA

I take back the dumb bit. You're not  
dumb. You just acted dumb.

MASON

I'm sorry Ang'. Please. Don't tell  
Jackie.

ANGELA

Don't you deal here again. EVER.

Understood.

ANGELA

(to Clara)

I got my eye on you too.

(beat)

I'm gonna use the ladies. When I'm  
done, I don't expect to see you both.

Mason nods for Clara to follow his lead. Angela turns and  
swings the toilet door open before bolting it.

She walks over to the toilet, strips her jeans and underwear  
down. Sits on the toilet seat. Stares up at the tacky

ceiling... Angela's pee meets the toilet water.

INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. LATER THAT EVENING.

It's almost midnight, there's only a handful of punters, all finishing off their drinks.

Angela's making use of the quietness, eyes scanning a sheet of beer stained paper, riddled with notes about *THE BRISTOL POST*. Apparently it was established in 1932.

Jackie, scrubbing the bar clean, takes a swipe at Angela.

JACKIE

I pay you to pour beer, clean tables,  
not to do crosswords?

ANGELA

It's not a crossword. It's prep' for  
tomorrow.

Jackie's confused, stops scrubbing...

ANGELA

Interview... *The Bristol Post*?

Ahh, Jackie remembers now. Angela, clearly frustrated, scribbles all over her notes.

JACKIE

Why'd you do that for you donut.

Angela scribbles some more.

JACKIE

Cut it out.

ANGELA

I don't even know why I bother.

Jackie grabs Angela by her shoulders. Shakes her.

ANGELA

Nobody ever listens. And I can't  
pissin' remember anythin' anyway.

JACKIE

Cry me a fuckin' river. Stop feeling  
sorry for yourself. You're just tired.  
(endearingly)  
You got this. And if you don't get the



job, their loss. You're intelligent,  
brave -

ANGELA  
(cuts in)  
Mouthy.

JACKIE  
That too. You also do me head in half  
the time, but we wouldn't change you.  
Not a thing.

Jackie darts her head towards a COUPLE of local PUNTERS still  
hanging out by the bar.

JACKIE  
Would we?

The punters raise their beer glasses in the air - they agree!  
Jackie hugs Angela, squeezes tightly. Angela can barely  
breathe.

ANGELA  
Love you.

JACKIE  
You too, kid.

Jackie stops hugging, Angela can breathe again.

JACKIE  
Go on, go home. And grab your boy  
before he pisses my bed again.

INT. 31 HOLLYWOOD ROAD, KITCHEN. SHORTLY AFTER.

Angela sits reading through her notes in preparation for her  
interview.

She loses steam so grabs her laptop, opens google search and  
punches in "Drugs in prison." Google generates a number of  
news articles and Youtube videos.

She clicks on the first article titled "Seven Jailed Over  
Plot to Fly Drugs into UK Prisons with Drones." Begins  
reading...

INT. BRISTOL POST HEADQUARTERS, CONFERENCE ROOM. NEXT DAY.

Angela, dressed in black suit trousers and a silky white

shirt, sits on the opposite side of a table occupied by THREE INTERVIEWERS.

In the middle wearing a chequered shirt, top button undone, showing off his shaven chest, is HANS MORGAN, fifty-something, Editor-in-Chief.

To his right is thirty-year old rising star and Digital Editor SIAN SMITH.

On Hans's left, sporting a scar under her left eye, is fifty-year old veteran journalist and Managing Editor CALLIE TURNER.

HANS

Angela, why don't you start. Ball's in your court. Tell us why we should employ you?

Caught off guard, Angela takes a moment...

ANGELA

Well, I suppose, while I don't always articulate myself properly, verbally that is, I still have a great grasp of the English language. I achieved a first-class for my undergrad' dissertation. I'm also hard working and great with all kinds of people. I'm very much a Bristolian, hence people in the community warm to me easily. So, yeah, I think that's a real advantage. Because I'm one of them. And, of course, I'm older, wiser.

(beat)

God. This is not coming out how I want it to. Sorry. I'm usually good. I mean at these kinds of things.

Callie smiles at Angela - you're doing fine, which puts her at ease a little. Hans mulls over Angela's CV.

HANS

I can see that your journey has hardly been conventional.

Angela doesn't quite know how to take that one.

HANS

Can I cut to the chase.

Angela gestures to Hans - of course.

HANS

You have no specific copy-editing experience.

(checking CV again)

In fact, you have no experience in journalism -

ANGELA

(cuts in)

Well, let me -

HANS

Please.

(beat)

No experience in journalism at this stage.

ANGELA

Correct.

HANS

You have a business degree. Not entirely sure how it's pertinent to this position...

Hans glances at Callie and Sian, confused as to why Angela made it as a candidate. Angela's anger is visibly building.

HANS

Look. I'm unclear about why you have been put forward as a candidate. There's obviously a reason so maybe you can enlighten me?

ANGELA

Wow!

Angela snatches for her glass of water, takes a swig before placing it back onto the table. She's got fire in her belly.

ANGELA

Let me tell you somethin'. When *The Bristol Post* got together in 1932, it did because local journalists were peed off with mainstream news outlets. Working people, the soul of our community, were left hung out to dry. So guess what, *The Bristol Post* was born. And here you are. The irony.



(beat)

So there's no surprise that some ninety-years on, the working people of Bristol need a voice and a big one at that. Take the housing market, it's just crippling. And the living wage, don't even get me started. It's not even enough to keep a hamster alive. Trust me, I have a son so I know how much those little fur-balls cost to keep alive. Then to top everythin' off we have Gloucester Road and Southville completely gentrified. Brislington and Totterdown are next. St Paul's and Fishponds close behind. Where do the families go? Not sure yet, still waitin' to find out. Hopefully the Hilton! But then again, if Grenfell Tower is anythin' to go by, I'll sort myself out thanks.

(beat)

So you get my drift. I know what it's like to live hand to mouth. Raising a child alone. Working behind a bar. Falling short at the end of each month. And yeah, yeah, yeah, I deserve it because I had a child with, who is now, a criminal.

(beat)

But, you don't know Mikey. You don't know me. You don't know his story or my story. But you should know this. We're the tip of the iceberg. So many of my mates, good Bristolians, find themselves in a bottomless pit. And worse still, we're scathed by the media. Blamed for Brexit. Apparently, we don't wanna work either. So yeah, I'm comin' across pretty peeved off right now because I am. Just like local journalists were ninety-years ago.

(To Hans)

This is why I'm here. And I'm more credible than any Red Brick, journalism graduate who's never stepped foot in Bristol.

(beat)

I want to help resurrect the heartbeat of this place on behalf of my city. This is why you should give me the

opportunity.

Hans glances over to Callie and Sian - he's speechless.  
Callie cannot conceal her smile. It's not often she witnesses  
Hans and Sian both lost for words. She already likes Angela.

EXT. SEFTON PARK SCHOOL. A FEW DAYS LATEERS.

Just before Angela reaches the school gate her phone rings.  
Registers that it's an unknown number. Probably a cold call,  
but she answers anyway.

ANGELA

Yes.

CALLIE V.O

Hi Angela. It's Callie Turner. From  
*The Bristol Post*.

The school bell rings.

ANGELA

Oh. Hi. You called. I'm surprised.

SCHOOLCHILDREN flood out of their classrooms. Angela spots  
Clarence in-between the gated bars looking for his mum.

CALLIE V.O

Admittedly, your performance was, lets  
just say unconventional. But  
personally, I loved it.

ANGELA

(humorously)

So I got the job?

CALLIE V.O

Not exactly, but I like your way with  
words.

Angela's still focused on Clarence.

ANGELA

That's something I guess. But I gotta  
ask, what did I fall short on?

CALLIE

Honestly, it simply came down to  
experience. However, we would like to  
offer you an internship.

ANGELA  
Paid?

CALLIE V.O  
No.

ANGELA  
So I wasn't impressive enough to get paid work, but I can work for free?

CALLIE V.O  
Angela. I've personally called you. So listen. Carefully.  
(beat)  
I sympathise with your predicament. But this isn't a full-time internship. Two days a week for 3-months. It's a great opportunity for you to position yourself to obtain a real journalism job with a real salary at the end of it.

Angela thinks long and hard.

ANGELA  
Can I sit on it. Just for a few days?

CALLIE V.O  
Let me know by the end of the week.

ANGELA  
Okay. And Callie... Thank you.

CALLIE V.O  
Good luck, Angela.

Callie hangs up. Clarence clocks Angela and runs towards her.

EXT. 12 RICHMOND AVENUE, MONTPELLIER. NEXT DAY, EVENING.

Angela parks her motorbike directly outside 12 Richmond Avenue. Arriving at the front garden she is dwarfed by the majestic range of plants that create an enchanting scenery.

EXT. 12 RICHMOND AVENUE, BACK GARDEN. CONTINUOUS.

Eamon, kneeling down, stands behind a spellbound Clarence helping him control his drone hovering in the air.

Angela stands in front of the doorway, eyes glued on the drone in the sky.

Eamon clocks Angela. Doesn't acknowledge her. Clarence spots his mum.

CLARENCE  
Mummy look at me.

ANGELA  
My boy's a pilot.

Eamon and Angela still don't acknowledge each other.

CLARENCE  
Do you wanna have a go mummy?

ANGELA  
I'm good. You just enjoy yourself.

CLARENCE  
(to Eamon)  
Show Mummy, Grandad. Please!

Eamon reluctantly turns to Angela. Still helping Clarence.

EAMON  
Come on.

Angela walks over. Eamon stands up, slides the controller from Clarence's grip into his own.

EAMON  
Just watch my hands for a minute.

Eamon sends the drone high into the sky.

ANGELA  
What's that on top of it?

EAMON  
The camera.

Angela's mesmerised by the drone gliding high in the sky.

INT. GLOUCESTER PRISON, VISITORS ROOM. NEXT DAY.

Mikey's head is lowered, refusing to look up. Angela gently reaches to tilt his chin up. Mikey's face slowly motions into frame. Eyes a little swollen. Lip a little fat. Still manages to produce a smile though.

MIKEY  
I got more time.

ANGELA

If it's any consolation, you look really manly... And SEXY. Fuck me already baby.

Mikey laughs, causing pain to shoot to his ribcage. Angela motions to come around the table, but Mikey gestures for her not to bother. Angela stays put.

MIKEY

I got 'till the end of next week.  
Midnight Sunday.

ANGELA

Feels like were in some old-school gangster film.

(putting on a deep voice)

"Fredo -- you're my older brother, and I love you."

ANGELA

"But don't ever take sides with anyone against the Family again."

MIKEY

"But don't ever take sides with anyone against the Family again."

That perked Mikey up but only for a moment, clearly anxious about his predicament.

ANGELA

Bitch please... When have I ever not come good for you?!

(beat)

I'm only hopeless when it comes to myself.

Mikey begins rubbing his thumb and index finger together, pretending to play the world's smallest violin.

ANGELA

World's smallest violin. How original. Who's the one tellin' shit jokes now!

BEAT.

MIKEY

Tell me somethin'. Somethin' good. Don't let me go back to my cage with me tail between me legs.

Angela can't think of anything.

MIKEY

Come on.

ANGELA

There is one thing that's kinda good.

AND....

ANGELA

I got an internship offer. At *The Bristol Post*. It's unpaid though.

MIKEY

But you accepted it, right?

ANGELA

Not made up my mind yet. Too busy tryin' to clean up your shit.

MIKEY

Come on. You got your family.

Angela gives the middle finger before blowing Mikey a kiss.

MIKEY

I swear, you're the smartest and dumbest person I knows.

INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. AFTERNOON

Angela's back to her routine pouring of Bill's pint of Guinness. Stops pouring at the half-way mark. Lets it settle.

Angela clocks Mason arrogantly waltzing pass the bar. He's sporting a new tracksuit.

Angela stalks him as he shakes hands with a local PUNTER.

BILL

My pint?

Angela still focused on Mason, hands Bill his pint. She forgets to fill it to the top.

BILL

That's not a full pint.

EXT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB, BACK GARDEN. SHORTLY AFTER.

The garden is decorated with rusty old chairs sitting in an overgrown lawn infested with weeds and cigarette butts.



Angela emerges, reaches for her phone, dials a number.

ANGELA  
 Hi. It's Angela. Angela Sparks.  
 (beat)  
 I would like to accept your offer. For  
 the internship.  
 (beat)  
 Of course. When shall I come in?  
 (beat)  
 Thursday works for me.  
 (beat)  
 Thank you.

Angela hangs up. Clinches her fist, there's hope.

EXT. 12 RICHMOND AVENUE, BACK GARDEN. LATER THAT EVENING.

Mia, knelt down on both knees, sporting a large white jersey splattered in patches of mud, attends to her flowerbed.

Meanwhile, Clarence is running loose around the garden. Angela emerges. Clarence runs for Angela who anticipates his jump, catches him and hugs tightly.

CLARENCE  
 Mummy!

ANGELA  
 How's my little man.

ANGELA  
 (to Mia)  
 Has he behaved?

CLARENCE  
 Don't I always.

ANGELA  
 Yes. But you can also be a little wise  
 guy.

Mia stands. Takes off her gardening gloves.

MIA  
 He's been a gem.  
 (at Clarence)  
 Although. You've been asking lots of  
 questions. Questions I said only Mummy  
 can answer.

Mia reveals a folded sheet of paper from her pocket. Passes it to Angela, who unfolds it, revealing a drawing of a man wearing a superhero cape. Angela now understands Mia's hesitation. Angela decides to ignore it.

Angela delivers Clarence a whopping big kiss on the lips before securing him onto his feet.

ANGELA  
Go grab your coat.

Clarence ignores his mum, instead decides to run around the garden again.

ANGELA  
Someone doesn't want ice-cream.

Clarence darts towards the house.

MIA  
No running!

Clarence begins to walk before disappearing into the house.

MIA  
You have an intelligent boy there.  
Gets it from his mother.

ANGELA  
His cute looks, definitely. But his  
intelligence is all dad.

Mia doesn't respond. Angela surveys Mia's flowerbed.

MIA  
You wanna see?

ANGELA  
I gotta go. Another time.

MIA  
Two minutes of your time. That's it.

ANGELA  
I should really go check on Clarence.

MIA  
Come on. Please.

ANGELA  
It really doesn't suit you.



Mia's confused.

ANGELA

That whole guilt thing you got goin' on there. Pathetic.

Mia defensively raises her hands. Angela turns her back, heads for inside the house. Mia goes back to her flowerbed. Suddenly stops.

MIA

Angela.

Angela turns. What now?

MIA

I know I've made mistakes. I get it.

ANGELA

You're a good nan. I appreciate what you've done since Mikey. You know.

MIA

That's not what I'm after.

Angela shrugs her shoulders - then what?

MIA

I just... I just want you to be happy.

Angela stares at her mum, wanting to tell her that it has never really felt that way. Mia's eyes water, but Angela can't be dealing with this right now so she disappears.

Mia returns to her flowerbed. Wipes away a tear.

INT. BRISTOL POST HEADQUARTERS, CALLIE'S OFFICE. NEXT MORNING.

Angela sits across the table from Callie who's giving her the lowdown of what duties she'll be expected to perform. Callie's holding a pocket-size mirror in the air as she dresses her scar with make-up.

CALLIE

When you start your working day, check your emails first. You'll receive one from me at 7AM every morning, listing your tasks. This will typically consist of proofreading, transcribing interviews and anything else I decide

you need to do. You'll also need to  
pick up my morning coffee from Baker's  
& Co.

Callie finishes with her mirror. Shoves it in her desk  
drawer.

CALLIE

The coffee here is atrocious. Hans is  
the only one who drinks it.

Callie mischievously places her index finger on her lips to  
suggest that Angela keeps this a secret.

Callie pushes across some articles towards Angela.

CALLIE

Now. This morning. Some copy for you  
to work through there. I've also  
forwarded on an email to you  
comprising potential stories. The  
stories have been submitted by the  
general public. If there's anything,  
and I mean anything, you believe is  
worthy of further investigation, then  
come straight to me. Truth is 99.9% of  
stories submitted by the public are  
fake news. So don't sweat it if you  
don't find anything.

ANGELA

Anythin' specific I should look out  
for? Crime, sport, dad catches shit  
bag son sleeping with step mum?

CALLIE

A story that people need to know.  
That's what we do here. You're smart.  
Figure it out.

Angela picks up the files, straight to work it is.

INT. BRISTOL POST, OPEN OFFICE. LATER THAT AFTERNOON.

We open to a spacious office which is populated by rows of  
computers. The computers are mostly engaged by JOURNALISTS  
typing away, but there are still a number that are available.  
PEOPLE appear to come and go...

We home in on a bored Angela scrolling through the emails  
sent by the general public. Nothing of interest yet...

Angela soon spots an interesting email titled "My mum was abducted by aliens." Opens the email, begins reading... Angela suddenly laughs out loud. JOURNALISTS working nearby at their desks are not impressed.

ANGELA

Sorry.

Angela clicks off the email. Scrolls some more. An email peaks her interest, titled "Human Trafficking." Opens it...

The anonymous email goes on to describe that there exists a human trafficking gang, led by a WOMAN, concealing herself as a FOSTER MOTHER. Angela's absorbed... Now this is a story!

INT. BRISTOL POST, CALLIE'S OFFICE. END OF THE DAY.

Callie's sat typing away on her computer. Angela barges in.

ANGELA

I have a great -

CALLIE

(cuts in)

STOP. Back outside. Knock on my door.  
Wait until I say otherwise.

Tail between her legs, Angela exits the room. Waits before knocking on the door.

CALLIE

Yes.

Angela enters. Composes herself.

ANGELA

There's this story. It's about a  
foster mother linked to an  
international human trafficking gang.

Angela waits for Callie's response, but all she's getting is a look of so what?!

ANGELA

Gotta be worth lookin' into, right?

Callie directs her attention back to her computer screen.

CALLIE  
 (pointing towards the edge of her desk)  
 Notes there, thank you. Close the door on your way out.

ANGELA  
 That's it?

Callie stops typing, turns her head towards Angela.

CALLIE  
 Yes. That's it.

ANGELA  
 Well, shouldn't I start investigating or somethin'. Gathering names of foster mothers based in Bristol?

CALLIE  
 You've been here one day. Show some respect, Angela. And plus, you don't know if there is any validity to this story.

Angela acknowledges what Callie's saying - duly noted.

CALLIE  
 (pointing to a bunch of files)  
 Tomorrow, I want you to shred all of those files. One by one. Have a nice evening.

Angela fakes a smile - sure.

Callie's back to her computer. This is her giving Angela tough love, she knows exactly what she's doing.

INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. LATER THAT EVENING.

Angela's ranting to Jackie, while the duo are pulling pints for a couple of PUNTERS.

ANGELA  
 Way over the top if you ask me.

JACKIE  
 Hang on a min'.

Jackie passes the pint over to the PUNTER before grabbing the electronic card machine. The punter taps it with her

contactless bank card. Payment successful.

Angela grabs the card machine off Jackie. Moves to take a payment from the PUNTER that she just poured a pint for.

JACKIE

Let me get this straight. It's your first day. You burst through the door. No knock. No 'ello.

ANGELA

Burst sounds so dramatic. I entered... Without knockin'.

Jackie chuckles to herself. Meanwhile, the punter uses his contactless bank card. Payment declined.

ANGELA

(whispering to punter)  
Declined.

JACKIE

Kid. Listen.

Angela ignores Jackie, instead focuses on the punter, visibly a little stressed, as he tries to pay again. Payment declined. Angela smiles, pretends it went through.

ANGELA

Payment successful.

The punter's confused, but he's not going to argue. He grabs his beer, rushes away from the bar.

Jackie looks at Angela, what the fuck are you doing?! Angela dips her hand into the tips jar, pulls out the right amount of change, guides it into the till.

JACKIE

Listen to me. First. Don't do that. I know how much you make because I pay your wages. Second. That fancy news lady -

ANGELA

Callie.

JACKIE

Well, CALLIE actually sounds alreet for a poshy. You can't go 'round acting howevers you wants. Gotta be a



little respectful. Otherwise they or she or whoever will 'ave you out. And then I'll be stuck with you. Forever. So please, do it for me.

Jackie's right and Angela knows it.

INT. BRISTOL POST HEADQUARTERS, OPEN OFFICE. NEXT DAY, MORNING.

Angela stacks the files on her desk that Callie asked her to shred. This is going to be tedious.

INT. BRISTOL POST HEADQUARTERS, OPEN OFFICE. LATER THAT DAY.

Angela still shredding away looks like she's had enough. She pauses, leans back on her chair.

Angela grabs another file, accidentally drops it onto the floor, papers pour out. It's a bit of a mess.

Angela gathers the papers into a pile. Suddenly stops. Notices a piece of paper with a scribbled sentence reading "Foster mother behind drug and human trafficking gang?"

Angela continues to read but soon stops. Glances over at Callie's office...

INT. BRISTOL POST HEADQUARTERS, OPEN OFFICE. AFTERNOON.

Callie's typing away on her computer... There's a knock at the door.

CALLIE

Yes.

Angela appears holding a piece of paper. Waits for Callie... Callie turns to Angela, yes?

ANGELA

I've almost finished with all of the files now.  
(raising piece of paper in the air)  
But I wanted to hand you over this incase you need it.

Callie nods for Angela to hand the piece of paper over. Callie reads it, clocks on to what it's about.

ANGELA

It seemed like it may be important. So

didn't wanna just get rid of it.

Callie appreciates Angela doing that. Angela turns, looks to exit but turns around.

ANGELA

Also, I just wanna apologise for yesterday. I was out of order. Sorry.

Callie appreciates that. Angela exits the room.

INT. BRISTOL POST HEADQUARTERS, OPEN OFFICE. LATER THAT DAY.

Angela's shredding the last few files. She notices Callie walking towards her, wearing a coat, clearly ready to leave.

Callie reaches Angela.

CALLIE

What are you doing tonight?

Angela's confused... Is this a trick question?

ANGELA

I have a son who needs lookin' after.

CALLIE

Can you organise for a babysitter?

ANGELA

Yeah. Probably. Why?

CALLIE

Good. I'll pick you up at 8PM.

ANGELA

Do I get to know where we're goin'?

CALLIE

You'll know soon enough.

Callie walks off. Angela's perplexed but also excited.

EXT. 29 HOLLYWOOD ROAD. 8PM THAT EVENING.

A car horn beeps. Angela emerges from her front door, walks towards a blue BMW 3 Series. Callie's driving.

EXT. CLIFTON, ALMA ROAD, BRISTOL. LATER THAT EVENING.

Welcome to Clifton, Bristol's most expensive area.

Callie parks her car along a wide road, populated by expensive cars. Callie and Angela certainly don't appear out of place in Callie's BMW 3 Series.

Callie puts the hand break on before pointing towards a four story house, roughly 10-metres across the road from the duo. The curtains are visibly wide open and two GIRLS, aged between fourteen-sixteen, sit watching television.

CALLIE

That's where Daisy Peach lives.

Who is?!

CALLIE

The foster mother.

Angela focuses on the young girls.

ANGELA

They're trafficked?

Callie shakes her head - incorrect.

ANGELA

So where are they??

CALLIE

One step at a time, Angela.

ANGELA

So what you're really sayin' is that nothin's known for certain?

CALLIE

No, I'm saying I need to know that I can trust you first.

Angela's suspicious.

CALLIE

I'll say this much. Since Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, women from these states only need a job to legally reside here. They're desperate and people like Daisy know it. They help them get over here then make them work off their debt. The cost of getting here, all the relevant paper work etc. is calculated together.



ANGELA

And it's paid off when?

CALLIE

Once you're in, there's no way out.  
Sadly, this important detail is not  
disclosed to the women.

ANGELA

What a bitch. Surely the girls -

CALLIE

Women.

ANGELA

Surely these women try to escape?

CALLIE

At first, yes. But organised groups  
like this quickly have the women  
hooked on heroin. They have a hand in  
narcotics too so it's straight  
forward.

ANGELA

Why isn't anyone doin' anythin'?

CALLIE

There are intelligence operations  
underway. But they're under funded.  
Comparatively, sex trafficking and  
narcotics is a multi-billion pound  
industry.

BEAT.

ANGELA

So is this typical for an intern of  
yours?

CALLIE

I've never had one. You're my first.

Angela pauses, thinks for a moment before glancing over at  
Daisy's house.

ANGELA

Why don't I get a little closer.

CALLIE

We're good here.

ANGELA  
Just a little.

CALLIE  
Like I said. Day by day for now.

Angela understands.

A WOMAN, fifty-something, grey hair with blond streaks, draws the living room curtains closed. Callie turns on the ignition - lets get out of here.

CALLIE  
Time for a cocktail?

EXT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. MIDNIGHT.

The pub is empty. The lights are still on. Jackie can be seen wiping the floor.

Angela emerges carrying a tearful Clarence, clearly upset about being disturbed from his sleep.

INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. NEXT MORNING

The arrows on the clock point to 11:00AM.

The bags under Angela's eyes suggest the previous night has caught up with her.

Suddenly, Angela's mobile phone rings. She whips it out. See's it's Charlie trying to call. Turns off her phone. Too tired for Charlie right now.

Then the pub's phone rings, Angela looks around. The pub's empty. She ignores it.

Still ringing...

Phone finally stops ringing. Angela lays her head onto the table. Desperate for a rest.

The phone starts ringing again.

Pissed off, she gets up, goes over to the phone but doesn't answer. Rips out the phone cord. Relief.

INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. LATER THAT AFTERNOON.

It's now the afternoon and Thursday afternoons are always busy. Angela and Jackie are working tirelessly at the bar.

Angela has noticeably perked up.

She takes an order, begins pulling a pint but is perplexed when Charlie marches through the door.

CHARLIE

Why haven't you answered your phone?  
I've been trying to ring you -

ANGELA

What's wrong?

CHARLIE

It's Clarence. He had a fit.

ANGELA

Jesus? Is he okay?

CHARLIE

The school called an ambulance. Took  
him to hospital. He's okay. He's  
sleeping at mum's now.

A distressed Angela glances at Jackie who gives her a look to say "go."

Charlie directs Angela to follow her lead.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR. SHORTLY AFTER.

Charlie violently pivots the steering wheel with every turn.

She abruptly overtakes a car, speeding at 40-mph in a 20-mph zone.

ANGELA

Slow down.

Charlie shakes her head.

ANGELA

What's wrong with you?

CHARLIE

Clarence told me. Told the nurses.

ANGELA

What shit are you spewin' now.

CHARLIE

Clarence. The pub. Last night.

ANGELA

AND...

Charlie swerves onto the pavement, slams on the brakes. Both sisters' heads whip back and forth.

ANGELA

You're mental!

CHARLIE

He's epileptic. He needs sleep. Why doesn't that register with you.

ANGELA

Jackie's my friend. He likes it there. What business is it of yours anyway?!

CHARLIE

What business? Jackie's an alcoholic. Jackie also runs a fucking loud pub.

Angela smirks. Charlie slaps her sister across the face.

CHARLIE

I've made a decision. I'm going to court. For custody. Over Clarence.

Angela laughs but soon realises Charlie's not joking.

CHARLIE

I have nightmares, Angela. You're oblivious. You don't even know what you are capable of. I've lied to myself for years. I don't want Clarence to go through the same shit I go through. I'm not allowing it.

Angela, visibly shaken, exits the car, slams the door shut.

Charlie begins to sob, causing her mascara to stream down her face.

INT. 29 HOLLYWOOD ROAD, BEDROOM. LATER THAT EVENING.

Angela admires Clarence's peaceful sleep, while whispering on the phone to Mikey.

MIKEY V.O

We've only got 'till the end of the week Ang'. You know you can ask your fam'. Eamon's good for it.

ANGELA

I'm handling it. Look, I can't talk right now. The baby sitter's about to arrive. We'll catch up in a couple of days. Promise.

Angela hangs up, visibly stressed.

She studies Clarence's room. Can't help but feel ashamed by the tatty walls occupied by mould on each ceiling corner.

EXT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. MIDNIGHT.

Angela emerges from the front door, allowing the sound of drunken PUNTERS to escape through the door.

The door slams shut, drowning out the sound. Angela enjoys the silence. Peace at last.

She begins walking. Notices a DRUNKEN MAN stumbling around, struggling to stay on his feet.

Taking the same path, she soon clocks who it is - it's Mason.

Angela checks her shoulder. Nobody's around. Hangs back - doesn't want to provoke suspicion.

Mason takes a corner. Disappears. Angela follows.

EXT. 19 VINCENT CLOSE, STUDIO FLAT. MINUTES LATER.

Mason stumbles through his gate. Takes the steps to his basement flat.

Searches for his flat keys.

Still searching...

Finally pulls out a set of keys. Tries a key. Doesn't work. Tries another. Doesn't work. Third time lucky... Opens the door. He stumbles on in through the front door.

Angela, taking cover behind a bush, stalks him. Watches the living room light flick on.

She steps forward but stops. Can't do this. Turns around. Walks a few yards. Thinks otherwise. Pauses. Thinks hard.

She turns around. Carefully walks towards the basement flat. Checks her shoulder. It's all clear. Tip-toes down the steps.



Angela carefully checks the front window, doesn't want to be seen. It doesn't matter, Mason is crashed out on the couch.

She checks the door, see it's ajar. Glances over her shoulder again. All clear. She enters.

INT. STUDIO FLAT. CONTINUOUS.

Angela, tip-toeing on in, scans this shitty little studio flat decorated by clothes and empty cans. The wardrobe stands out as various tracksuits have been neatly put away.

If we hadn't followed Mason, he could be assumed unconscious. He's not waking up anytime soon.

Angela takes advantage, rummages through the draws. Finds nothing. Darts her eyes around the room. Where can it be. She's after something.

Dives under the bed. Pulls out a small box. Opens it. BINGO.

Reveals a number of sealed plastic packets.

She jumps onto her feet. Scans the room again. Notices an empty Sainsbury's plastic bag on the floor. Snatches for it. Rushes to shove the little packets of narcotics into the bag.

Mason's still sleeping.

Angela slides the box back under the bed in it's original place.

Surveys the room again. Checks she hasn't left any evidence.

She notices vomit coming from Mason's mouth. It will be fine she tells herself.

She sneaks for the exit but stops. Looks at Mason. She can't do it. What if...

Creeps over to him. Carefully begins moving him onto his belly. With his body half turned Mason lashes his arm out. No force behind it. Angela freezes.

Tries again. Gently turns Mason onto his belly. Now lets get out of here. Angela whisks out of the front door.

INT. 31 HOLLYWOOD ROAD, KITCHEN. SHORTLY AFTER.

Angela sits with her laptop in front of her. She opens google search, types "Drugs in prison." Once again, a number of news

articles and Youtube videos are generated.

One particular video grabs Angela's attention, titled "The Battle Against Drones Smuggling Drugs into Prisons." Angela clicks on the video, begins watching...

INT. GLOUCESTER PRISON, VISITORS ROOM. NEXT DAY, MORNING.

Mikey, while less black and blue than when we last saw him is noticeably just as anxious.

MIKEY

Any news.

ANGELA

There is.

MIKEY

It's sorted?

ANGELA

Not quite. But I have a plan. You just need to trust me.

Mikey nods - go on then. Angela inspects the room. Checks the guards are not listening in.

She moves in closer, motions Mikey to do so. Angela talks quietly, we can't hear her. All we know is that Mikey is looking at Angela as if she's mad.

The more she talks the more convinced Mikey seems...

EXT. 12 RICHMOND AVENUE. MIDDAY.

Angela gently opens the gate, moves through it before carefully sealing it.

Angela cautiously makes her way to the front door. Knocks. Listens, but doesn't hear anything. Knocks again - harder this time... Still no answer.

Angela peaks into the living room. Nobody's inside. TV is off. Surely nobody's home.

Angela checks her shoulder before bending down and snaking her hand in-between the garden pots positioned in front of the living room window.

She pulls out a key. Quickly moves back to the door. Checks her shoulder. She's momentarily spooked when a man appears

with facial features similar to Eamon... PHEW. It's just a MAN walking his DOG.

Angela fits in the key. Unlocks the door. Checks her shoulder one last time. All clear. Enters. Door closes.

INT. HALLWAY/LANDING/BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Angela pauses. Listens. Complete silence.

ANGELA

Hello.

Waits. Still no response.

Angela rushes to the cupboard beneath the staircase. Opens the door. Searches for something. Doesn't find anything.

Shuts the door. Thinks for a moment. She races upstairs.

Checks the landing cupboard. Rummages through it but doesn't find what she wants.

Makes it to the bedroom. Checks the wardrobe. Disappointed again.

Takes a moment to think.

Suddenly dives under the bed. Her eyes light up. Pulls out a box. Opens it, revealing Eamon's drone. BINGO! She rushes out of the room.

EXT. WOOTON-UNDER-EDGE FIELDS, GLOUCESTER. AFTERNOON.

Angela scouts Gloucester Prison from her current spot. Can't be more than 1/2 mile away.

EXT. PURDOWN FIELDS, BRISTOL. EVENING.

Playing with the controls, Angela's eyes do not leave the drone as it glides amongst the birds in the sky.

Angela's got the hang of this.

EXT. WOOTON-UNDER-EDGE FIELDS/INT. EXERCISE YARD, GLOUCESTER PRISON. NEXT DAY, NIGHT.

Angela, standing in front of her motorbike, dressed in black, has sweat pouring down her face as she navigates the drone hovering above the prison, drifting towards the exercise yard.



As we inspect the drone, a small package, camouflaged in shrubbery rests precariously on a plastic slab bridged between the legs of it.

Angela safely navigates the package resting on the slab attached to the drone into the exercise yard. She spots a small green area and a weed infested flowerbed.

Angela edges the drone carefully towards the flowerbed. Her hands pour with sweat, causing her fingers to slip across the controls.

The drone tilts slightly forward. The package begins to roll off the slab, heading straight for the concrete ground. Quickly, Angela rescues the package by tilting the drone upright.

Angela composes herself. Eases the drone over to the flowerbed. It's touching distance now. She tilts the drone forward, the package slides off, lost into the flowerbed.

Angela's relief is clear to see. The drone quickly lifts off into the sky.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN GLOUCESTER, BACK COUNTRY LANE. SOMETIME LATER.

There is the safest we've seen Angela ride her motorbike - clearly doesn't want to draw attention to herself.

She takes a sharp corner, opens up to a country road, rapidly increasing her speed.

She hears a police siren. Checks her wing mirror and SHIT. Blue and red lights are heading straight towards her. She takes a moment. Contemplates speeding but fuck it.

Angela parks up on the side of the road. Her heart's racing.

Just as she takes her helmet off, in hope the OFFICERS will see that she is just an innocent face, the police car doesn't stop. It keeps going...

Angela's visibly shaken. Can't believe her luck. She starts sobbing, floods of tears stream from her face. She suddenly produces a beaming smile. She can't control herself and screams while slapping the dashboard.

ANGELA  
WHOHOOOOOOOO.

EXT. GLOUCESTER PRISON, EXERCISE YARD. NEXT DAY, MORNING.

The yard is populated by individuals and groups either pumping weights, playing football or chatting.

Mikey eyes the flowerbed. Checking his shoulder before walking towards it.

He's at the flowerbed and kneels down, tying his shoelace. He scans the flowerbed but can't see anything.

He takes another look. Bingo. He sees the package nestled amongst the weeds.

Still kneeling, he checks his shoulder, makes sure nobody's watching. It's safe. He snatches for it, grabs the package and stuffs it down his pants.

He gets up, too afraid to make eye contact with anybody.

A PRISONER shouts at him. Mikey ignores him, walks faster.

But the prisoner catches up with him. Mikey thinks the worst, but the prisoner brushes past him as he moves to pick up the football.

Mikey's visibly relieved.

INT. PRISON CELL. LATER THAT MORNING.

Mikey glances around his cell before tearing into the package coated in shrubbery. There is at least 50 grams. He's in shock.

He snaps out of his trance, seals the package and hides it in a hole in his mattress.

Mikey lays in bed. Smiles. Can't stop smiling.

INT. BRISTOL POST HEADQUARTERS, OPEN OFFICE. NEXT DAY, MIDDAY.

Angela scrolls through her emails, filtering through stories submitted by the general public... One particular email grabs her attention, titled "Drone Seen Hovering Near Gloucester Prison." Angela opens it, begins reading, face reddens.

Angela checks her shoulder before deleting the email. Out of nowhere, Callie appears.

CALLIE  
You found anything?

Angela almost jumps out of her skin or at least it felt like that for her.

CALLIE  
You okay there.

ANGELA  
My bad. I was day dreamin'.

CALLIE  
So. Anything interesting?

ANGELA  
Oh no. Nothin' at all yet.

Callie heads for her office. Close call, but will Angela live to regret that?!

EXT. ST. ANDREWS PARK. LATER THAT AFTERNOON.

Clarence's miniature hands grip the monkey bar. His little arms are working so hard to make it to the end.

ANGELA  
Come on, you got this.

Clarence presses forward. Doesn't only manage to grab one or two frames but three. He's pushing forward fast. He's got one more frame to grab, he trying so hard... And -

ANGELA  
You did it!

Clarence allows his body to fall to the ground. Angela high fives him. His red face is beaming.

EXT. ST ANDREWS PARK, MR.WHIPPY VAN. SHORTLY AFTER.

The ice-cream man hands Angela an ice-cream, who passes it over to Clarence.

ANGELA  
(to ice-cream man)  
Thank you.

Angela and Clarence make their way to exit the park. A quiet Clarence is clearly enjoying his ice-cream...

Clarence's attention is captured by a GROUP of CHILDREN laughing. *It's the same kids who were smirking at Clarence during the first school scene.*

Clarence smiles at the children. They ignore him. The children whisper amongst each other. Begin to giggle. Clarence's demeanour changes. Sad faced. Angela notices.

EXT. ST. ANDREWS ROAD. MINUTES LATER.

Clarence devours the last bit of his ice-cream. Angela senses that Clarence is subdued.

ANGELA

You OK?

Clarence nods but doesn't give Angela any eye contact.

Angela stops and so does Clarence. Angela kneels down, now at Clarence's height.

ANGELA

Talk to me.

Clarence can only look at the ground. Angela gently raises his head by lifting his chin.

CLARENCE

It's... It's just those kids. They always laugh at me.

ANGELA

Do you know why?

CLARENCE

They say Dad's a criminal. A bad person. I hear 'em whisperin' sometimes. They think I can't hear, but I can.

Angela grabs Clarence's hand. Lovingly squeezes it.

ANGELA

Your dad made a mistake. Now he's paying for it. People make mistakes. But he's not a bad person.

(beat)

You have to stand up for yourself. Otherwise, people, bullies, will continue to be mean.

CLARENCE  
Like fight 'em?

ANGELA  
Not quite. Don't hit anyone, only if  
you need to defend yourself. You gotta  
be smarter than that in life.

CLARENCE  
But what do I do so they won't keep  
bein' mean to me?

Angela thinks hard, feels sorry for her little man.

ANGELA  
Right. I have a clever idea. You tell  
those little punks that your crazy,  
imprisoned Dad is comin' out any day  
now and he's coming straight for 'em  
unless they leave you alone. That will  
get them scared. They won't mess with  
you anymore after that. Trust me.

Clarence is clearly reflecting upon what his mum has just  
said. Seems like a good idea.

INT. 29 HOLLYWOOD, HALLWAY. SHORTLY AFTER.

Angela emerges through the front door, spots an official  
looking brown envelope stamped in red saying "Urgent."

She opens the envelope, begins reading it...

ANGELA  
... Our client Miss Charlie Sparks has  
motioned a court request to gain full-  
custody of Clarence Thompson... Miss  
Spark's request is predicated on the  
sole carers, Miss Angela Sparks and  
Mr. Mikey Thompson's, perpetual  
neglect of Clarence Thompson...

(beat)  
A preliminary court date with the  
nominated Judge will be detailed to  
you by post within the coming days.  
You are advised to seek legal counsel

-

Angela stops reading. Rips the letter in half.



INT. GLOUCESTER PRISON, TELEPHONE AREA. NEXT DAY, MORNING.

Phone to ear, Mikey punches in a number... We hear Angela's voice on the other end.

ANGELA V.O

Hello.

MIKEY

It worked Ang'. I'm free.

INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. LATER THAT MORNING.

Angela hangs up the phone. Scans the room, there's barely any punters.

**Montage**

-- Angela sits at the bar while reading a newspaper. Checks the clock, it's 12:30PM. --

-- Angela sweeps the kitchen floor. --

-- Pours a pint. Finally a customer. --

-- She checks the clock again. It's only 12:50PM. --

-- Angela pours herself a coffee.--

-- Finishes her coffee. She's wired. Grabs the newspaper. Reads it for the second time. --

-- Glances at the clock, it's only 1:15PM. --

-- Angela pours a pint. It's now a little busier. She checks the clock again, it's 6:30PM. --

-- An uninspired Angela's pours another pint. Checks the clock, it's 10:45PM. There's hardly any punters. Jackie nods at Angela to leave. --

-- Angela grabs her coat and handbag. Escapes through the entrance doors. Can't get out fast enough. --

**END OF MONTAGE.**

INT. 29 HOLLYWOOD, HALLWAY/LANDING. SHORTLY AFTER.

A TEENAGE GIRL, SAMANTHA MORGAN, no older than sixteen, greets Angela. Samantha's clearly eager to leave.

SAMANTHA

Hey.

ANGELA

Has he behaved?

SAMANTHA

Great. Although, bedtime was a little challenging.

Angela laughs - yep, welcome to the world of young children.

Samantha pauses, too polite to ask. Angela finally figures. Reaches for her wallet, pulls out cash.

ANGELA

Sorry. Thanks again.

Angela hands over what looks like £15. Samantha takes it.

SAMANTHA

Thank you.

Angela opens the front door. Samantha dashes out, dying to get home.

Angela closes the door. Turns around, notices the motorbike keys resting on the hallway railing. Angela pauses. Thinks some. Wants to snatch for the keys but stops herself.

Angela wanders upstairs.

Clarence's bedroom door is slightly ajar. Angela watches him. He's fast asleep. Not a worry in the world.

She turns, heads back down the stairs.

Angela examines the keys again. Pauses. Fuck it. She grabs the keys and exits the front door.

EXT. 29 HOLLYWOOD. CONTINUOUS.

Angela paces towards her motorcycle. Grabs the helmet from under her seat. Slips it on. Climbs onto the bike. Turns the ignition. Drives off into the distance.

EXT. CLIFTON, ALMA ROAD, BRISTOL. LATER THAT EVENING.

We're back outside Daisy Peach's house and Angela is parked in almost the exact spot when last here with Callie.

Angela, helmet in hand, eyes stalk the house but there's nothing to see... Curtains are drawn, lights are off.

Just as Angela fixes her helmet back on, she notices the patio lights flick on, illuminating the face of a WOMAN emerging from the front gate. This woman is a casually dressed DAISY PEACH. She walks with a unique aura, someone who is not short in confidence.

Daisy opens the door of her Peugeot 205. She enters, turns on the ignition.

Angela quickly switches on her ignition. Lets Daisy get ahead before following.

Daisy turns a corner, Angela hangs back before taking the turning herself...

EXT. M4 MOTORWAY. SHORTLY AFTER.

Daisy takes the exit for *The Forest of Dean*...

Shortly after, Angela emerges. She takes the same exit too.

EXT. DERELICT FARMHOUSE, SOMEWHERE IN THE FOREST OF DEAN. EVENING.

Sheltered by large, luscious, trees covered in summer leaves, Angela stalks a farmhouse some 30-metres away. It's guarded by MARCUS DE SANTOS, stereotypically tough looking, clearly wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of him.

Daisy Peach appears, parks directly outside the farmhouse. She exits her car. Marcus opens the sliding door, Daisy enters. Marcus follows.

Angela scans the area. There's nobody else guarding the farmhouse. It's safe. She crouches low, jogs towards the building, continuously checking over her shoulders.

She reaches the large sliding doors. Fights hard to control her breathing. She peaks through the gap in-between. She can't see anyone. She slips her body through the narrow gap.

INT. DERELICT FARMHOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

Angela, laying low, body against the wooden walls, navigates a number of hay stacks piled in varying heights.

She hears talking and follows the sound.



She learns that the sound is escaping from a stable on the other side of the farmhouse. She cautiously makes her way over.

SQUEAK. Damn. Angela presses too hard on the wall, causing it to whimper. Nobody heard. Phew.

Angela moves forward.

She makes it outside the stable where the noise is coming from. Monitors her breathing. Leans her head in and peaks through the gap...

It's Daisy and she's nursing a YOUNG WOMAN. The young woman is bed ridden, clearly very sick. There are also other WOMEN, FOURTEEN in total to be precise, looking on worryingly.

Daisy strokes the sick girl's hair.

DAISY

A doctor's going to come. You don't need to worry.

Daisy directs her attention to Marcus, delivers him a dirty look. She gestures for him to follow her outside of where the women are sleeping.

Angela sneaks to take cover behind a large wooden storage box a few metres in front of her.

Daisy and Marcus appear.

DAISY

Why didn't you contact me earlier?

MARCUS

I thought it was a bad cold.

DAISY

Her temperature is 39.7°C. The girls said she's been like this all week?

MARCUS

I made the wrong call. I'm sorry Daisy.

DAISY

Don't let this happen again. Understood?

Understood.

MARCUS

So what about the next package?

DAISY

We currently have no safe houses.

MARCUS

And the plan?

DAISY

We wait. I'm resolving it.

MARCUS

There'll be shit to pay if we delay this delivery. Not to mention our competitors -

DAISY

(cuts in)

I'm fully aware of the consequences.

Marcus pauses, doesn't want to aggravate a visibly stressed Daisy. He chooses his next words carefully.

MARCUS

Why don't we get it delivered here. Just once?

DAISY

The girls and the product. Here together? It's too risky.

Daisy takes a moment. Thinks...

Then a phone rings... Daisy and Marcus check their pockets. It's not any of their phones....

Angela soon realises it's hers. Fuck.

Daisy finds Angela crouched down, back against a large wooden storage box. Angela smiles - hey! Marcus whips out a gun, points it straight at Angela who throws her hands into the air.

EXT. NEAR DERELICT FARMHOUSE. SHORTLY AFTER.

OVER BLACK --

We open up to a distressed Angela on her knees, hands tied, tears streaming down her face, as Marcus holds a gun against her head.

Daisy stands over Angela, pressing her for information.

DAISY

I'll ask you one more time. What do you know?

ANGELA

That you're a trafficker and drug dealer. I told you, that's all I know. I wanted a story to impress my colleagues. I'm just a stupid fucking intern'. Nobody tells me shit. So I visited your house this evening. And then I saw you and I followed you. Alone. Nobody else knows.

(beat)

Please. I made a mistake. Let me go. You won't ever hear from me again. Ever. I promise. I have a son.

Marcus looks at Daisy - what should I do? Angela senses her life is slipping away. She knows she needs to think of something and fast.

ANGELA

I do know one more thing. I know that you have a problem. A problem that I can help you with.

Daisy's all ears.

ANGELA

You have nowhere safe to store your drugs. But I have a solution. A great solution. My sister's piano rental business, she's got a fleet of vans driving in and around the country. I can arrange for your product to be hidden in the pianos. Wherever the drugs needs to be sent, a "rented" piano can be on its way. This can be your mobile safe-house. I admit, I haven't got this all figured out logistically, but we can 100% make this work. I know it will work. Trust me. I can help you. Just give me a chance.

Daisy kneels, now at Angela's head height.

DAISY

And why would I trust someone that  
would betray their own family.

ANGELA

She, my sister, is taking me to court  
for custody over my own child. I don't  
have any money. This can be beneficial  
to both of us.

Daisy takes a moment... She directs Marcus to lower his gun  
and loosens Angela's hands.

INT. KEYS OF FURY, GROUND FLOOR. NEXT MORNING.

Charlie tends to her till. The door swings open. Angela  
emerges.

Charlie doesn't look up - still focused on the till.

CHARLIE

Sorry, were not open yet.

ANGELA

Oh. I'm not here to buy anything.

Charlie looks up.

ANGELA

I'm here to start my first day of  
work. Assuming your offer still  
stands?

**END OF PILOT.**

## Chapter 1: Methodology<sup>6</sup>

### Introduction

The screenplay has historically been viewed as a short-lived document that ultimately vanishes into a moving image. Recent publications by several distinguished screenwriting authors have, however, challenged this industry stance (Boon, 2008; Maras, 2009; Conor, 2010; Millard, 2010; Nelmes, 2010; Price, 2010; Macdonald, 2013; Batty, *Putting Practice Into Context*; Sternberg, 2014; Baker, 2016). Scholars have successfully argued that the screenplay is a literary document within its own right, regardless of if it is mediated into a moving image. This has led to an increasing number of academic research papers exploring questions concerning the history and practices of screenwriting. However, even with the ever-growing body of work orbiting the screenplay, challenges still exist when studying questions that have an industrial connection (Macdonald, 2013; Harper, 2014; Sternberg, 2014; Baker, 2016). More specifically, screenwriting for the commercial industry within an academic arena presents methodological challenges, which I experienced throughout my research inquiry. These barriers and the methods I used to overcome them will be explored. This is to ensure that the credibility and legitimacy of insights revealed, and conclusions drawn, throughout this thesis are not left in dispute.

As described, the principal aim of my research was to revise Vaage's (2016) existing character framework, which she conceived for the television anti-hero, into one for a commercially viable television anti-heroine. In this chapter, I will articulate the methodological steps I undertook which resulted in me identifying that Vaage's narrative techniques were not entirely applicable to the television anti-heroine. I will then explain and validate each method I employed and synthesised together to explicate her paradigm so it is specific to the television anti-heroine that screenwriters can employ.<sup>7</sup>

Since the objective of the final framework, which will be produced as a result of this methodology, is to provide screenwriters a creative paradigm in aiding them to script a commercially viable anti-heroine pilot episode, I needed to explore two distinct topics: methodology and the anti-heroine. To develop a commercially viable pilot script, the anti-

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<sup>6</sup> A version of this chapter has been published. It is titled, Dean, L. 2020a. Altering screenwriting frameworks through practice-based research: a methodological approach. *New Writing*, 17 (3), pp.333–347, DOI: 10.1080/14790726.2019.1626440, and can be accessed via: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14790726.2019.1626440>.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, I discovered prior to practice commencing that Vaage's original framework was not directly applicable to the television anti-heroine for encouraging audience engagement. This was crystalised during practice, which resulted in new knowledge pertinent to the development of a revised framework, bespoke to the television anti-heroine. This will be specifically explored at great length in Chapter 2.

heroine needed to be explored in order to understand why and how the framework for scripting her journey is possibly different from her male counterpart.

Before the writing of the pilot episode could commence, traditional research methods were employed, as I needed to examine popular anti-heroine narratives through the critical lens of feminist and gender theories. This is for two key reasons. First, examining existing popular anti-heroine television shows (as case studies) provided a baseline for how far the anti-heroine has been previously pushed morally. This helped to elucidate how forgiving or unforgiving an audience may be towards her. It also afforded me space to explore whether there existed significant discrepancies surrounding the morality of the anti-heroine compared to the anti-hero.<sup>8</sup> More broadly, it enabled me to unpack why particular anti-heroine narratives have been commercially successful. In turn, this naturally meant specific attention needed to be paid to the intended audience and their cultural position on gender. Why? The television industry's innate interest when considering whether to produce a pilot episode (or not) is grounded in if they believe an audience would consume it once its transformed into a television show.

The traditional research methods used before practice commenced raised several methodological issues. A key issue was the legitimacy of my research methodology being accredited as practice-based. However, as per the definition of practice-based, the following pages and subsequent chapters of this thesis will evidence how I generated new knowledge in practice, leading to Vaage's paradigm being completely overhauled.

### **Conundrums of the practice-based screenwriter**

Gentry and Sjoberg remind us that globally a female moral “spectrum still exists and it is narrower than the spectrum used to comprehend men's capacities” (2015, p.7). Inherently, television shows tend to mirror this spectrum, thus reinforcing cultural ideals. As explained, Vaage's framework is aimed specifically for the development of a television anti-hero. Therefore, it was vital to conduct textual analysis on a number of existing revered television anti-heroines to begin to explicate how forgiving a television audience may be for an anti-heroine (Mittell, 2015; Peters & Stewart, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). If I had only referred to Vaage's original paradigm, gender discrepancies between anti-hero and anti-heroine may

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<sup>8</sup> This was extremely important because it enabled me to initially revise Vaage's model prior to practice commencing. As subsequently discovered, which will be explored extensively in Chapter 2, there did exist considerable discrepancies concerning the morality of the television anti-heroine in comparison to the anti-hero. It is plausible to assume that if I had simply decided to use Vaage's original model, audience disengagement would have likely occurred.

have been overlooked. This could have resulted in audience disengagement for the anti-heroine due to her narrower moral spectrum. It was, therefore, vital to conduct textual analyses on case study anti-heroines prior to practice commencing. However, the inclusion of textual analyses could leave the methodology vulnerable to losing its accreditation as practice-based. Before I validate the basis for why my research fits appropriately under the banner of practice-based research, it is necessary to define this mode of inquiry.

Leading scholars in the field of practice as research, Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds, simply define practice-based research as “an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge, partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice” (2018, p.63). For Candy, “if a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based” (2006, p.3), which is reflective of findings articulated in this thesis. Candy (2006) and Skains (2018) further add that contribution to knowledge is required partly by means of practice so long as the creative artefact informs critical explorations. By conducting textual analyses on successful anti-heroine shows, I acquired a richer understanding of how audience engagement can be encouraged. These insights aided me throughout the writing of my pilot episode. Then, and most importantly, through the narrative functions used in practice, new knowledge was generated: that is, key elements were found absent in Vaage's framework and a completely new paradigm was required. In this respect, I successfully generated new knowledge because my creative artefact, my pilot script, is accompanied by a critical discussion,<sup>9</sup> since “a full understanding can only be achieved through the cohesive presentation of the creative artefact and the critical exegesis” (Skains, 2018, p.86). Even though this methodology has integrated traditional methods, this is to ensure the pilot episode is appropriately positioned within the wider industry. This enabled new and contrasting knowledge to be generated (Williams & Fentiman, 2019). While practice comprised only part of the research process, it was here where new knowledge was discovered and ultimately crystallised through critical exploration, resulting in a new paradigm. Therefore, the methodology fits appropriately under the banner of practice-based research.

An additional term, which has already been noted several times, and which it is vital to certify the importance of before moving on, is audience engagement. To start, screenwriting is dissimilar to other creative practices because of its industrial relationship (Boon, 2008; Maras, 2009; Nelmes, 2010; Price, 2010; Macdonald, 2013; Batty, *Putting*

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<sup>9</sup> This critical discussion is presented throughout the following chapters of this PhD thesis.

*Practice Into Context*). Practice-based screenwriters exploring research questions that are commercially entwined are inextricably compelled to consider the market. For the screenwriter, it means one must consider an intended target audience. This links in with what Ian W. Macdonald maintains about writing for film, which I argue is also true of television scripting. He observes, “screenwriting is about considering a future film-text which will include what writers believe is effective,” otherwise, they run “the risk of losing the viewer” (2013, pp.2–3). Prior to and during the development of my pilot script, creative decisions were considered against the backdrop of an intended audience since eventually readers would be invited to play it in their head (Macdonald, 2013). Some might still, given the perception of the screenplay as a document that will vanish into a moving image, question the usefulness of considering a potential audience.

Macdonald refutes this by stating, “there is much in the screenplay that is intended to be fixed, even non-negotiable, in pursuit of its purpose as an industrial planning tool” (2013, pp.20–21). He does, however, concede, “it is not possible to know everything” (Macdonald, 2013, p.7). Here, Macdonald reminds us that the screenwriter is motivated to craft a screenplay that can be fully realised without mediation whilst also acknowledging that there are limitations. In this instance, tracking the journey and mediation of a screenplay throughout its production is impractical. Therefore, a focus of this methodology was to cultivate a credible framework to script an anti-heroine pilot episode that would be accepted as a *fixed* industrial document. Admittedly, this is a limitation of my methodology.

It is also important to clarify the anti-heroine and her relationship to audience engagement. Typically, she is the binary opposite of a traditional heroine. The traditional heroine is noble, honest and pursues her goal(s) without straining far away, if at all, from her moral compass. Contrastingly, the anti-heroine is at times an unscrupulous figure that may engage in adultery, torture and murder in pursuit of her goal(s) (Peters & Stewart, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). However, as Mittell (2015) notes of the anti-hero (and which is also true of the anti-heroine) we, the viewer, still subject ourselves to lengthy interactions with her. Arguably, due to the anti-heroine's moral ambiguity, achieving audience engagement is a harder creative endeavour for screenwriters when comparing her against a traditional heroine.<sup>10</sup>

For this PhD thesis, the term audience engagement should not be misunderstood as an umbrella term for how screenwriters elicit and sustain viewer interaction. Instead, audience

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<sup>10</sup> This became strikingly evident during the scripting of *Angela*, which will be explored in the succeeding chapters of this thesis.



engagement denotes specific creative decisions that I took to avoid viewer disengagement surrounding the morality of an anti-heroine.<sup>11</sup>

### **Intended audience and the nuances of audience engagement**

When initially exploring Vaage's anti-hero framework, it became apparent that she made broad assumptions about her intended audience. She defines her audience as Western and assumes they all share key characteristics surrounding morality. Using a framework that fails to identify key characteristics of an intended audience could have misled me because of the incorrect assumptions I reached about how an audience would interpret my pilot script. Consequently, there would have been a higher risk of losing the reader when they played my pilot script in their head (Macdonald, 2013). To avoid this, the natural next step was to explore the field of reception studies to aid me in unpacking how readers may interpret my pilot script. Livingstone and Das define reception studies as contextualising the “active role of readers and viewers within the wider circuit of culture” (2013, p.1). Critical lenses are afforded for understanding the impact of cultural influences (Livingstone & Das, 2013). I applied Iser's (1978; 1980) pioneering aesthetic response theory; specifically, the implied reader. Whilst Iser's framework was originally composed for the novel reader, it is also generally accepted as an audience reception model. Notably, when I use the term reader I am using this synonymously with audience.

The implied reader is a textual structure that anticipates the response of a reader. The reader's role is presubscribed and ultimately they are compelled “to grasp the text” (Iser, 1980, p.34). This does not mean the reader is dormant in interpreting the text but that there is a symbiotic process at work. As the world of the text will at times be unfamiliar to readers, they will actively participate to generate meaning. How they do this is through what Iser refers to as a “network of response-inviting structures” (1980, p.34). Relating this to the anti-heroine, often the spectator will have pre-conceptions about women transgressing which are stimulated by societal gender beliefs. Therefore, I needed to map response-inviting structures so I could guide the spectator to suspend their dispositions in exchange for a new discovery. In this sense, the new discovery would be the viewer maintaining engagement with my anti-heroine who transgresses outside of what is culturally acceptable for women. An observable example of this can be found in the pilot episode of *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013), which follows anti-hero, Walter White. The viewer generates their own meaning for

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<sup>11</sup> This also relates more generally to specific creative decisions made by screenwriters.

Walter's abhorrent actions based on response-inviting structures in the narrative. They are encouraged to infer that his actions are morally acceptable because he needs to secure his family's financial future after being diagnosed with terminal cancer. It is through the representation of Walter White's illness, his family's financial uncertainty and the arrival of his newborn baby that the screenwriter is enabled to guide the audience to respond sympathetically.

For me to effectively map response-inviting structures for an anti-heroine, strict attention needed to be paid to the attitudes and experiences that I, the screenwriter, and, more importantly, the reader bring concerning female gender roles. As Irigaray (1985) observes, there is a need for separating fact from fiction. It was imperative for me to discover the truth about the audience's attitudes towards female gender to understand how they might interpret the text. This richer knowledge of gender and feminist theory enabled a deeper understanding of conclusions I had drawn from textual analyses before the initial creative paradigm was formed.<sup>12</sup> This knowledge also helped me to craft response-inviting structures before and during the development of my pilot script as I aimed to encourage audience engagement.

Notably, the phrase *encouraging* audience engagement is used here instead of *achieving* audience engagement, since for this methodology the method for inferring audience engagement is an “interpretive activity” (Plantinga, 2009, p.7). To test a pilot script on a mass audience would be unrealistic. Instead, the word *encouraging* is used to stress that engagement is an intention and conclusions drawn throughout this thesis are hypothetical. It is important to state that, even if the pilot script was tested on an audience to identify if engagement had been achieved this would have most likely been a redundant activity. This is because there are unconscious responses that would probably not be understood even by an audience themselves (Plantinga, 2009). Therefore, Iser's implied reader was key to affording insights into the relationship between viewer and anti-heroine, helping to verify why audiences would engage with my pilot episode.

### **Grounded theory to guide textual analyses**

Before conducting textual analyses, it was important to ensure an appropriate method was employed to avoid the methodological concern of *I* becoming a subject of my research since this could have resulted in unreliable textual analyses. To circumvent this, I employed qualitative analysis in the form of *grounded theory*.

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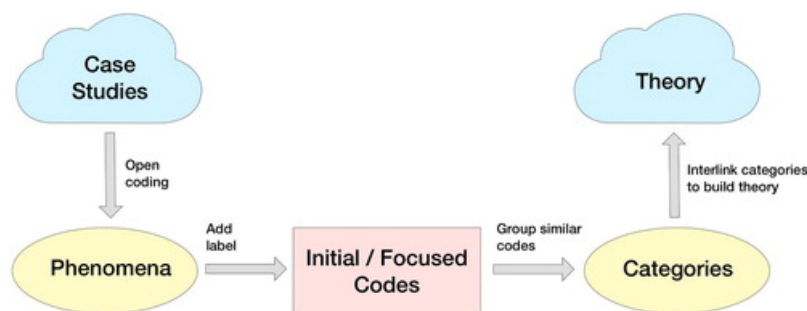
<sup>12</sup> This will be evidenced in the next chapter.

Analysis began with coding the data to prevent myself from attaching any preconceived ideas. Coding was conducted by interpreting specific meaning for each line of data recorded. Once coding was completed, extended notes (memos) were made so I could discuss and analyse the emerging codes. Then I determined whether “certain codes account for the data better than others” and if so, specific codes were then raised to provisional categories, elaborated on and checked (Charmaz, 2011, p.165). Descriptive coding was subsequently transformed into conceptualised patterns. The overall strength of grounded theory exists because of this rigorous procedure in generating and affirming conceptual theory (Glaser, 2002; Charmaz, 2011). It should also be noted that I identify as a constructionist grounded theorist because I am mindful that my beliefs and experiences influence how I decode texts (Charmaz, 2011).

Three critically acclaimed anti-heroine television shows were selected and their pilot episodes were examined as case studies for my research. The case studies were Nancy Botwin (*Weeds*, 2005–2012), Sarah Linden (*The Killing*, 2011–2014) and Floyd Gerhardt (*Fargo*, 2014–). The choice of shows provided compelling comparisons for textual analysis. While each main character had a unique role, they all still shared a common denominator—an inevitable bankruptcy of a woman’s moral capital. The following pages describe the step-by-step methods used to analyse these case studies.

## Summary of process

*Figure 2* outlines the specific steps I performed during textual analyses on the case study anti-heroines. Open coding was initially performed upon viewing the pilot episode of each case study. Open coding enlists the process of writing precisely what appears in the narrative as it unfolds. This prevented me from inserting preconceptions into the emerging data illustrated in *Figure 2*.



**Figure 2.** Methodological approach—Grounded theory (after Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Once open coding was completed, line-by-line coding (focused codes) was applied to each case study. Line-by-line coding was performed after a time interval to provide adequate distance from the data to ensure a fresh and unbiased perspective (*Table 1*).

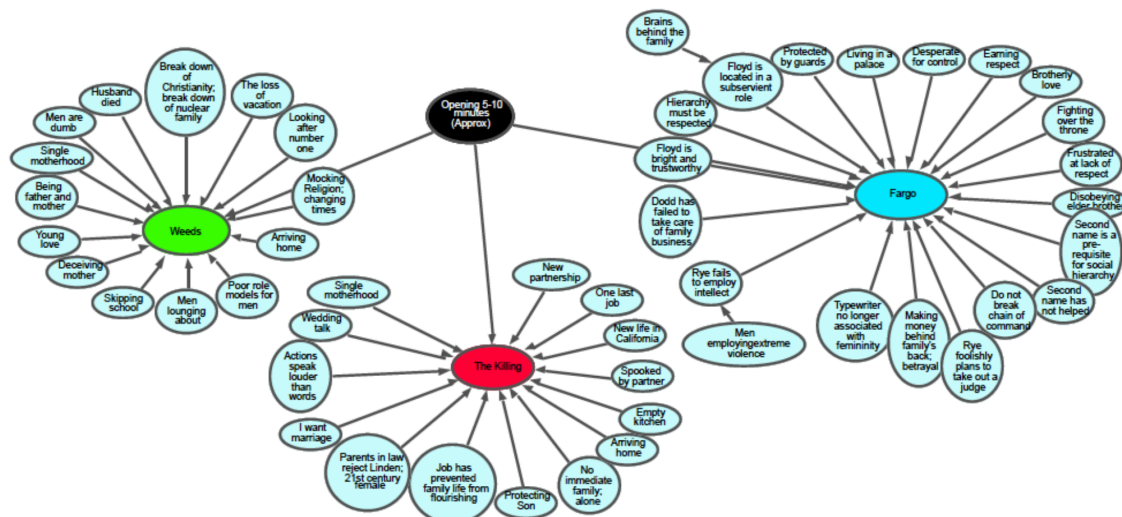
**Table 1.** Excerpt of open coding on *Weeds*.

| Coding | Open Coding - Scene & Running Time                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|        | <p><b>Scene 1 (1:14-2:39)- Introduction of Nancy Botwin:</b> Nancy is stood up speaking at a meeting dominated by only mothers of school children. Most noticeably she is wearing a low cut black top, revealing her cleavage. However, the mothers that she is addressing are represented stereotypically, as they are dressed in feminine colors such as pink, along with their salient makeup. What clearly distinguishes Nancy from the mums is that she is addressing is that they disagree with her viewpoint that there should no longer be soda drinks available at school, to which they agree. Still, the mothers disagree with Nancy when she argues for diet sodas to be banned. The mothers make it clear that a ban on diet sodas is not negotiable, which their reason is drawn because of the girls putting on weight. Nancy makes the point that they are only 11 years old and they should not be under such pressures.</p> <p><b>Scene 2 (2:40-5:52)- Nancy and the Weed Making:</b> Nancy is showing off her handbag and the mothers at the meeting comment on it. She is amongst ethnic minorities, who are packing the narcotics (weed) into plastic bags. Nancy is at the center of a joke because it becomes apparent by the older black woman that her "expensive bag" is a counterfeit. Nancy does humorously/sarcastically defend herself by making racial innuendos through building on societal stereotypes about how black people are thieves to which the group see the funny side.</p> |

As *Table 2* illustrates, line-by-line coding forces a detailed examination into what was occurring in the data. Charmaz states, the logic of “line-by-line coding forces you to look at the data anew [...] entire narratives may net several major themes [...] Therefore, you ‘discover’ ideas on which you can build” (2006, p.51). Once coding was completed, all emerging codes were extracted and mapped into a comparative mind map to enable clear comparisons between case studies. This is illustrated below in *Figure 3* as a suggestive layout, showing line-by-line coding that appeared in the opening five minutes for each anti-heroine pilot episode.

**Table 2.** Excerpt of line-by-line coding on *Weeds*.

| Coding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Open Coding - Scene & Running Time                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Well-being determined by mothers.<br/>21st Century Western Female.<br/>Stereotypical housewives; traditional gender roles.<br/>Breaking away from traditional female gender roles.</p> <p>Women adhere to traditional gender roles.<br/>Failing to renegotiate gender.<br/>Women gender roles are non-negotiable.<br/>A woman's body is significant to ones identity.<br/>Gender is manufactured from a young age.</p> <p>Wealth leads to respect.<br/>Minorities doing the criminal work.<br/>Failing as a criminal.<br/>Females and minorities are marginalised.<br/>Black people are represented as criminals.<br/>Questioning black criminals.<br/>Do not question experience.<br/>Natural aptitude for drug dealing.</p> | <p><b>Scene 1 (1:14-2:39)- Introduction of Nancy Botwin:</b> Nancy is stood up speaking at a meeting dominated by only mothers of school children. Most noticeably she is wearing a low cut black top, revealing her cleavage. However, the mothers that she is addressing are represented stereotypical, as they are dressed in feminine colors such as pink, along with their salient makeup. What clearly distinguishes Nancy from the mums is that she is addressing is that they disagree with her viewpoint that there should no longer be soda drinks available at school, to which they agree. Still, the mothers disagree with Nancy when she argues for diet sodas to be banned. The mothers make it clear that a ban on diet sodas is not negotiable, which their reason is drawn because of the girls putting on weight. Nancy makes the point that they are only 11 years old and they should not be under such pressures.</p> <p><b>Scene 2 (2:40-5:52)- Nancy and the Weed Making:</b> Nancy is showing off her handbag and the mothers at the meeting comment on it. She is amongst ethnic minorities, who are packing the narcotics (weed) into plastic bags. Nancy is at the center of a joke because it becomes apparent by the older black woman that her "expensive bag" is a counterfeit. Nancy does humorously/sarcastically defend herself by making racial innuendos through building on societal stereotypes about how black people are thieves to which the group see the funny side.</p> |



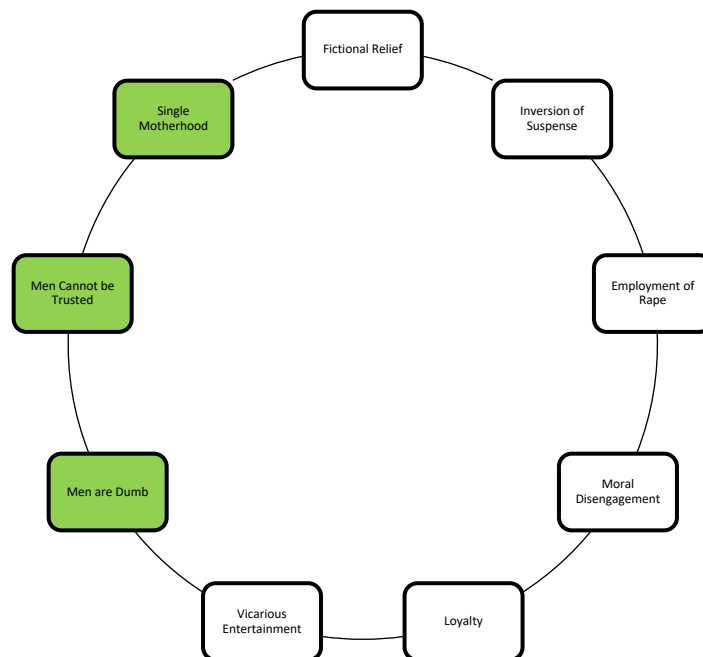
**Figure 3.** Excerpt of anti-heroine code comparison.

To render identifiable patterns, emerging codes were compared across narratives into a timeline. Once common patterns had been identified, provisional categories began to emerge. Categories were developed through the writing of memos. This provided a space to capture my thoughts, process comparisons and make connections, thus crystallising any questions or directions I needed to pursue (Charmaz, 2006). The completion of memos also enabled me to determine whether additional data was required to satisfy a specific category.

Finally, with each category exhausted through data collection and additional properties no longer visible, theoretical categories were cemented. As Charmaz states, the

question of when tentative categories should mature into solid categories is to “stop when your categories are saturated” (2006, p.113). Once my categories were saturated, it was at this stage that it was necessary to examine these categories against the existing narrative techniques described by Vaage. This was accomplished through the application of Iser's implied reader theory in conjunction with the critical lenses of feminist and gender theories. In turn, I was able to account for any gender discrepancies that might exist.

Previously, the textual analyses performed through grounded theory had only provided reasons on *how* the screenwriter might encourage audience engagement for the anti-heroine. However, through applying Iser's implied reader, new conclusions could be formed on *why* the audience may engage with the anti-heroine. This helped generate additional narrative techniques to merge with Vaage's paradigm, which will be explored in the next chapter.



**Figure 4.** *Wheel of Techniques* to encourage audience engagement for an anti-heroine.

As illustrated in *Figure 4*, textual analyses led to additional categories (highlighted in green) that were added to Vaage's original narrative techniques. With the remodelled paradigm in place, which was specifically developed for the television anti-heroine, the writing (practice) of my own pilot episode could commence.<sup>13</sup> The pilot screenplay was the only episode to be

<sup>13</sup> Again, additional categories that I discovered through textual analyses, specific to the television anti-heroine, will be explored in the following chapter.

conceived and crafted, since there was not enough time to complete an entire series (which could total up to twelve sixty-minute episodes). The research only addressed the pilot screenplay because it is, arguably, the most important episode of a television series. The pilot episode is the first opportunity in which the audience comes face to face with the storyworld (Mittell, 2015) and the anti-heroine. When a production company considers whether to commission a television show, they need to be confident that the pilot episode will immediately hook viewers (Taub, 2014; Mittell, 2015).

It should, however, go without saying that the pilot episode does not exist in a vacuum. To accompany the pilot script, a television bible was completed for *Angela*. This is because, as Mittell points out, a “writer develops [both] a pilot script and ‘bible’ for an ongoing series” (2015, p.89). A television series bible typically lays out the core elements of the storyworld (Redvall, 2013; Mittell, 2015), which includes story arcs that may unfold for one or more seasons (*Studio Binder*). Typically, “[TV] bibles are used to present to TV and digital executives in order to get a show commissioned or picked up for distribution” (*Studio Binder*, para.1). In addition, it is important to note that when writing a pilot script, the narrative is largely shaped by story arcs and characterisation that will evolve over numerous episodes and possibly seasons, and a series bible, whilst helping with commissioning, is also important for defining a show’s “premise” and developing “the core [elements] of the series” (Redvall, 2013, p.121). This, of course, modifies the writing process when compared to scripting a feature screenplay. Notably, this differing process of writing for television will be acknowledged and explored in Chapter 2.

Admittedly, whilst this methodology has alluded to the commercial market being reflected against the backdrop of a hypothetical audience, this does not encapsulate the multitude and complexities composing the operations of the television industry. It needs to be acknowledged that the commercial market is in fact an umbrella term which refers to a number of stakeholders and stages that ultimately determine and guide a film or television show to its potential screening (Redvall, 2013; Taylor & Batty, 2016). Thus, for a pilot episode to be commissioned, produced and distributed for consumption, there are several stages that typically occur (Macdonald, 2013; Redvall, 2013).

The discussion concerning the commercial market in this thesis will be unpacked and resolved through the application of Ian W. Macdonald’s pioneering “screen idea” (2013, p.4). As Christine Becker maintains, it is beneficial to employ Macdonald’s concept since it helps practitioners “better understand screenwriting as a practice and as a craft [through]

considering how those working on a project collectively conceive of it as a creative and industrial endeavour” (2015, p.177).

### **The screen idea**

The screen idea is a description of the creative endeavours people are working towards during “the practice of screenwriting, whether mainstream or not” (Macdonald, 2013, p.4). Macdonald further adds that whilst a screen idea is typically conceived by a number of people, it can, however, “be developed entirely by one person on their own” (2013, p.4). For Macdonald, the screen idea is particularly advantageous when studying the practice of screenwriting because it “re-focus[es] attention away from the screenwork alone, [and] towards an understanding of what informs the construction of that screenwork” (2013, p.111). This is a significant point given one of the key findings of this research, which resulted from the practice of writing a pilot episode, centres on an alternative framework specifically for scripting a pilot anti-heroine screenplay.

Before moving on, it is important to first concede that findings presented in the succeeding chapters have emerged outside the conventional practices that typically take place within the television industry. This could leave in question the credibility of conclusions drawn. Often when scripting a television pilot episode, a screenwriter, who typically already boasts extensive professional writing credits (Price, 2017), is commissioned before starting the development of their screenplay (Mittell, 2015). Then, during the development process, the commissioned screenwriter generally works closely with other writers. It is a highly collaborative endeavour (Redvall, 2013; Mittell, 2015; Taylor & Batty, 2016; Price, 2017). Notably, more often than not, the creative process of scripting a television show is overseen and pinned together by the showrunner (Redvall, 2013; Mittell, 2015).

It could be argued that this is where the weakness of my methodology exists: in the same fact that Steven Price (2017) alludes to as being problematic—I scripted a screenplay without feedback from relevant gatekeepers and stakeholders (producers and studio executives, as well as other commissioned screenwriters). According to Price, a consequence of writing a script intended for the commercial market, but not written within it, is that development implies “at most a process by which the individual writer progressively refines a script to the point at which it has reached a stage of completion that satisfies the individual writer” (2017, p.330). This can result in “a self-sustaining loop that fails to interact directly with the industry itself,” thus rendering any findings “at best moot” (Price, 2017, p.320). Unfortunately, this is a pervasive issue within academia. As Peter Bloore states, “none of the



books available about the film [and television] industry and scriptwriting really covered the reality of development” (2013, p.xv). More recently, Stayci Taylor and Craig Batty (2016), in their article *Script development and the hidden practices of screenwriting*, also raise and explore this issue. They posit that, “although the term ‘script development’ is used widely in the screen industry, with many personnel and departments dedicated to ‘development’ scripts and many writers with scripts ‘in development,’ in the academy little attention has been paid to this phenomenon” (2016, p.204). In this sense, there is a clear lack of common understanding and cohesion regarding the process of script development and, more specifically, how to imitate this within an academic setting. This chapter is not striving to answer or resolve this conundrum but instead offers an alternative approach to help deepen our understanding about research questions with an industrial intent. As Macdonald argues:

The practice of screenwriting includes not just identifying paradigms of practice, modes and norms within the output of a particularly industry, but also considering what it means for the individual’s dispositions and habitus, in the form of a ‘personal poetics’. How does an individual respond, working with a specific cultural environment, to the doxa. (2013, p.111).

It is this notion of a “personal poetics” (Macdonald, 2013, p.111) that I would like to draw attention to. My own personal poetics, which contribute a new method to the field in terms of writing an anti-heroine pilot script, should resonate with many screenwriters bidding to secure their own commercial television show. This will now, in part, be substantiated through the description and unpacking of my screen idea.

### **Commercial market in context: my screen idea**

My screen idea is to script an original, engaging and commercially viable anti-heroine pilot episode that encourages audience engagement. My concept is only concerned with the pilot episode, as it is a vehicle to have the entire television show commissioned. Therefore, the only stakeholders of notable attention within the television industry are potential producers, studio executives and script readers. This is a sole project, so it does not include the conventional development stages and process that take place within the television industry. The commercial market only reflects an intended audience. This hypothetical audience includes the television viewers (defined already in this chapter), but it also comprises relevant stakeholders such as script readers, producers and studio executives. The validity of an all-encompassing hypothetical audience, which includes industry gatekeepers, is that they share a common desire for the script and television pilot episode to emotionally move them

(Hauge, 2011, pp.3–4). Michael Hauge argues that “the effect of a screenplay on a reader must be the same as the effect of the [television episode] on the audience: a positive emotional experience” (2011, p.4). Notably, emotion will be explored extensively in Chapter 5, but, in connecting Hauge’s (2011) point, if an industry gatekeeper is moved by the pilot script, then it is more probable that it will be passed higher up the commissioning chain. Of course, this approach is limiting and is by no means perfect, but the television industry itself is ever changing (Redvall & Cook, 2015). As Eva N. Redvall and John R. Cook note in their article *Television screenwriting – Continuity and Change*, “there is no doubt that much is changing, calling for research into these changes and their implications for television writers and the television screenplay (or teleplay)” (2015, p.132). The authors further add that, as a result, “[t]here are new ways of commissioning, of understanding the nature of storytelling for television” (Redvall & Cook, 2015, p.132). Arguably, part of this change is that the vast majority of screenwriters who boast modest writing credits will not necessarily see their own television show commissioned from only pitching their idea. In all likelihood, they, too, will write their script for free and outside of the development structures of the commercial market (Hay, 2014, pp.23–24).

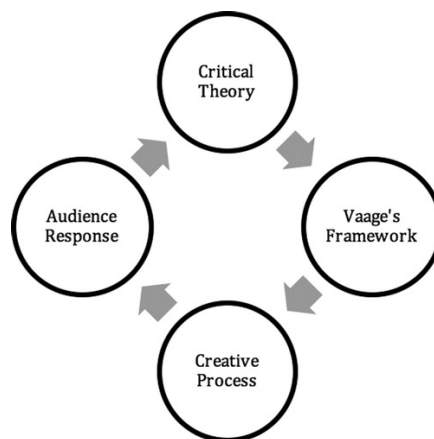
Therefore, whilst the central purpose of my screen idea is to afford insights about how to script a commercially viable and engaging anti-heroine pilot episode, it also offers a new approach to commercial television writing. In this sense, my intention was to craft an anti-heroine pilot episode for a hypothetical audience, whereby development was enhanced through feedback from my colleagues but also from discoveries I made along this creative endeavour. This specific methodological framework, that my screen idea situates itself in during practice, will be presented shortly.

In concluding this section, the final point to make is that just because a script is written outside the development structures of the television industry, it does not translate to the final version determined as inconsequential. Price (2017) himself speaks primarily in regard of the novice writer who advances so called screenwriting paradigms as they bid to gain “access to the industry” (Price, 2017, p.320). Many screenwriters, like myself, have professional writing credits but may not yet boast an extensive body of noteworthy work such as, for example, that of Vince Gilligan or Jenji Kohan. It does not mean that we should be brushed under the same carpet as the novice writer. Equally, this does not mean that findings within this thesis cannot be advanced by the novice screenwriter: insights throughout can be advanced by screenwriters of differing ability. Finally, it should be reminded that the central purpose of this thesis is not to commission my anti-heroine pilot script. Instead, the primary

aim is to offer insights about how to approach the development of a commercially viable anti-heroine pilot script. By taking this into account, it is now appropriate to present the methodological approach that I employed during the practice of writing my pilot anti-heroine script.

### Model for practice-based research

The methodological approach for writing the television anti-heroine pilot episode for this thesis was inspired by Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean's *The Iterative Cyclic Web* to form the approach for the practical component of my research (2009, p.20). According to Smith and Dean, practice as research requires a reflexive synergy between components that impact the creative process. As illustrated in *Figure 5*, I used and further added to Smith and Dean's (2009) iterative model by adding focus to two significant elements that would influence my own creative process—*Vaage's framework* and *audience response*. This iterative cyclic model is shown below in *Figure 5*.



**Figure 5.** Four-point cyclic model for the approach to my practice-based thesis.

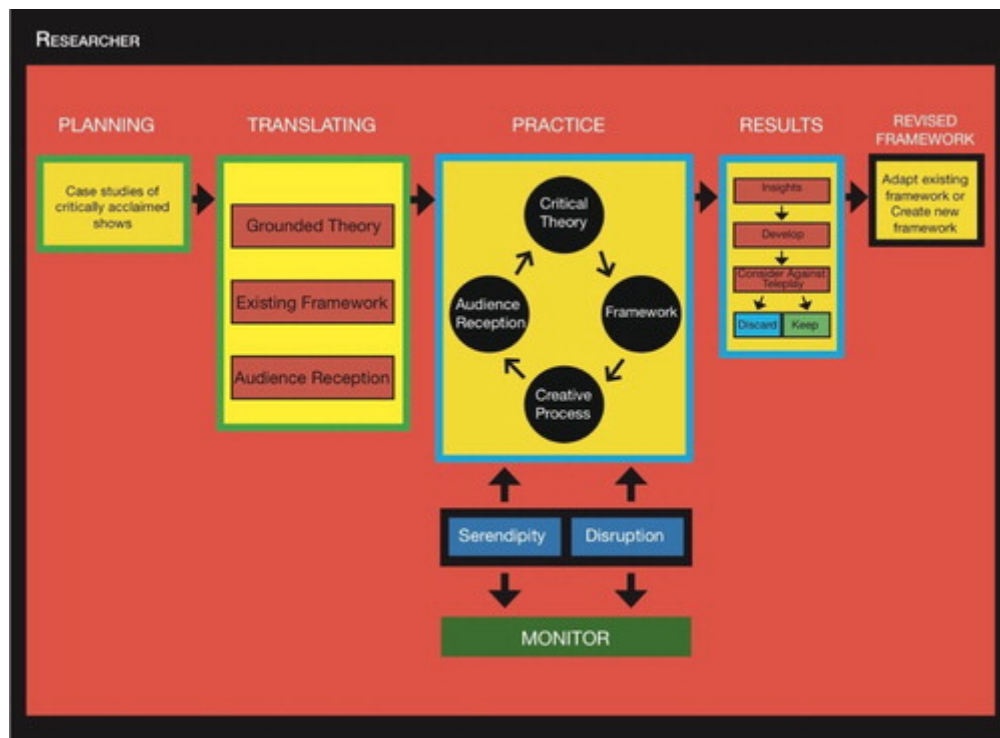
The model provided flexibility within the practice of my own creative process, but I also required a method to record activities that may have influenced the development of my pilot script. Therefore, before and during development, an appropriate method was used to effectively record and contextualise my creative process. An ethnomethodological approach was employed; specifically, Karl Mannheim's documentary method. This was an appropriate tactic because it required creative activity to be recorded as it occurred (Garfinkel, 1967). A research log was used to record the motives behind my creative decision-making and note any ongoing influences that may have contributed to final decisions. This provided many

opportunities to analyse the data throughout my research and helped ensure any patterns or insights that occurred during practice were not missed.

For most creative practitioners, contextualising creativity is an untrustworthy discipline of study due to the abstract nature of tacit knowledge. The loose nature of serendipity means most researchers tend to ignore it. However, Stephann Makri and Ann Blandford argue that it should be embraced and that there are “three common elements [present] [...] an amount of unexpectedness [...] an amount of insight [...] and a valuable unanticipated outcome” (2012, p.686). If the unexpectedness, insightfulness and value of the connection were to be answered as *not at all*, I could not value the outcome as serendipitous. However, if each answer to unexpectedness, insightfulness and value of the connection were to be *very likely*, I needed to categorise it as serendipitous. I then discerned the true value of the serendipitous finding in practice. I accomplished this by exploring and reflecting on each serendipitous discovery during the scripting of my own screenplay. In turn, once I completed my pilot episode, both the screenplay and reflective journals that I completed during practice were examined, resulting in the true value of the serendipitous findings being ascertained (Makri & Blandford, 2012; Skains, 2018).

The journey throughout this research was not always easy to navigate. The relationship between my own creative process in writing an anti-heroine pilot script combined with the application of *Vaage's framework, intended audience and critical theory* was complex. However, by comparing and contrasting feedback *in practice* and *after*, the final artifact was created and clear and plausible conclusions were made intelligible for the reader. This analysis of my creative process *in practice* and *after* meant I was able to explicate Vaage's findings and ultimately create an entirely new paradigm that will be crystallised in the final pages of this thesis. Indeed, this enriched my own (and hopefully other screenwriters) understanding of how to approach the morality of a commercially viable anti-heroine television show.

## Final model for revising Vaage's anti-hero character framework for an anti-heroine



**Figure 6.** Four-point reflexive basis and methodological instruments employed for my practice-based thesis.

Figure 6 illustrates the step-by-step process of my methodological approach. The model is an adaptation of Skains's (2018) *Practitioner Model of Creative Cognition*, which details five key steps: *planning*, *translation*, *practice*, *results* and *revised framework*. As there was a necessity to explore discrepancies between anti-heroes and anti-heroines, case study anti-heroine texts needed to be selected to conduct textual analyses. Once practice commenced, the process of writing my anti-heroine pilot episode flowed from the cyclic model (Figure 5) inspired by Smith and Dean (2009). The model pays specific attention to *critical theory*, an *intended target audience* as well as interlinking the creative process. I further identify each step of the research process whilst illustrating the specific methods that I employed. After results were examined, I revised the original framework.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> In truth, insights revealed during practice resulted in the original framework being completely overhauled.

## Conclusion

Before presenting the methodological framework that I employed, in order to explicate Vaage's (2016) original anti-hero framework into one for an anti-heroine, I needed to first resolve a number of concerns: mainly the legitimacy of my methodology being accredited as practice-based because of the inclusion of traditional research methods prior to practice commencing. When exploring screenwriting practices that are entwined with an industrial component, practice cannot always immediately ensue because the screenwriter does not exist in a vacuum. This resonated since an objective of my research was to develop an anti-heroine pilot script that would be professionally commissioned.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, before practice commenced, I needed to perform several steps to understand the industrial influences that could determine if my pilot script were to be produced. This first step was case study textual analyses. While this step is not commonly found in practice-based research, it was required to develop an understanding of what is currently successful in the market. This helped to elucidate how and why particular shows have encouraged audience engagement with immoral female characters. Ultimately, textual analyses compelled me to pay attention to the market and consider the intended audience throughout my own creative development (Macdonald, 2013).

In addition, I unpacked my intended audience before scripting the pilot episode and considered them throughout practice. The method for defining my target audience was Wolfgang Iser's implied reader, which stems from the belief that a spectator synthesises their own experiences with a text to generate meaning. Accounting for every experience for every reader would have been unrealistic, thus I established the audience as plural rather than singular. In assuming the spectator as plural, shared experiences were accounted for that are culturally and politically pervasive. As evidenced in this methodology, this is accomplished by fusing Wolfgang Iser's response theory with critical theory—specifically gender and feminist theory. Indeed, it will be evidenced in the next chapter that these critical lenses helped provide an explanation as to why the audience may form engagement when particular narrative moments occur. Of course, an audience's engagement is not empirically tested, and, therefore, the term *achieving* audience engagement was rephrased to *encouraging* audience engagement. This avoids the deception that I am suggesting audience engagement is concrete.

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<sup>15</sup> Or at least be considered for commissioning.

At this stage, I could begin scripting the pilot episode, and it was here that new insights were revealed in practice. This methodological approach offered me a robust procedure to explicate Vaage's (2016) existing anti-hero framework into one specifically for a commercial anti-heroine. Of course, as Skains (2018) admits with her own model, my methodology is not perfect and there are limitations. Most notably, there are mediations that occur once the screenplay has been passed into production that are not accounted for, but as Laurel Richardson encapsulates, regardless of how much we uncover, "we know there is always more to know" (2000, p.934).

## Chapter 2: Framing narrative techniques through theme

### Introduction

This chapter builds upon the methodology by presenting findings achieved through textual analyses on selected case study anti-heroine shows. Through this process, I discovered that gender discrepancies exist between the television anti-hero and anti-heroine. To circumvent these discrepancies and appease market demands, I teased out and explicated three additional narrative techniques that screenwriters can employ to engage an audience with an anti-heroine. These categories—*single motherhood*, *men are dumb* and *men cannot be trusted*—are unpacked and combined with Vaage's (2016) original narrative techniques, which are *fictional relief*, *loyalty*, *employment of rape*, *moral inversion of suspense*, *vicarious entertainment* and *moral disengagement*.<sup>16</sup> The combining of these techniques gives rise to what I define as the *Wheel of Techniques*.

Subsequently, the chapter's principal aim, which is to examine the insights revealed in practice when adhering to the *Wheel of Techniques*, begins to unfold. I explore why, when initially utilising this framework to write the first and second draft of *Angela*, my script lacked meaning and purpose. The emphasis I placed on these narrative techniques during initial drafts (1 & 2) was born out of market trepidations over the commissioning of an immoral female figure (Martin, 2013; Mittell, 2015). It also evolved from Vaage (2016), who implies that the originality, and thus engagement for a leading immoral figure is grounded in how far they can be pushed. In practice, I had overemphasised these beliefs for my anti-heroine during the scripting of *Angela* (1 & 2), resulting in a plot-driven pilot script. To reference Craig Batty and Zara Waldeback, my first draft in particular manifested into “a series of hollow and meaningless actions” (2012, p.18).

Despite this, I argue that the *Wheel of Techniques* is still a useful tool for encouraging engagement for a television anti-heroine but it requires an additional element that first needs to be engaged by the screenwriter ahead of employing particular narrative techniques. More specifically, I discovered in practice there exists an invisible layer at play which provides the foundation for how to successfully exploit the *Wheel of Techniques*. This vital layer, which this chapter is centred on, is theme. I argue that teasing out the thematic question of a narrative provides a critical lens as to how a writer has uniquely utilised specific narrative techniques. I then explore how the thematic question aided my creative development in

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<sup>16</sup> For a full description of each narrative technique, please see introduction, pp.22–25.



crafting a meaningful and purposeful anti-heroine pilot script and, as a result, strengthened the likelihood of viewer engagement.

Ahead of exploring the value of theme in more detail, a discussion concerning the controversy surrounding its definition is explored and makes notable references to scholars such as Robert McKee (1999), Lajos Egri (2004), Margaret Mehring (1990), Craig Batty (*Journey Into Theme*) and Marilyn Beker (2013). In turn, the *theme function framework*, which centres on key functions comprising Porter et al.'s (2002) *Scene Function Model*, is presented as a tool to tease out a narrative's thematic question. Moreover, whilst I used this framework for teasing out the thematic question from my anti-heroine case study shows, I suggest that this approach could also be fruitful concerning a wide range of data stemming from post-textual analysis. I argue that knowledge generated from post-textual analysis, primarily concerning plot and including screenwriting manuals, should be remediated for practice. This is because essential craft techniques, pertinent to practice, are overlooked. Ultimately, insights revealed during my creative development of *Angela*, through this thesis's understanding of theme, are presented as a method for aiding screenwriters to exploit narrative techniques and to encourage viewer engagement for a television anti-heroine.

Finally, before concluding this chapter, a discussion centres on the differing processes of film and television writing. I point out that, retrospectively, I was initially employing paradigms of practice that have been specifically fashioned out for film writing. In calling upon research contributed by the *Journal of Screenwriting*, particularly the special issue *Television Screenwriting: Continuity and Change* (Redvall & Cook, 2015), I explore this emerging field of writing for television (McVeigh, *Telling Big Little Lies*, p.64). Fundamentally, I argue that storytelling principles, which have emerged directly from the doxa of writing for film, should be explored and remodelled for television where appropriate.

### **Summary of findings: Textual Analyses**

As described in the previous chapter, the method employed for conducting textual analyses was grounded theory. The three case study anti-heroines were Nancy Botwin (*Weeds*, 2005–2012), Sarah Linden (*The Killing*, 2011–2014) and Floyd Gerhardt (*Fargo*, 2014–). *Weeds* follows suburban mother, Nancy Botwin, who, after her husband dies, becomes a drug dealer to maintain her upper-middle-class lifestyle. In *The Killing*, the narrative centres on the lead detective, Sarah Linden, as she attempts to solve the murder of 17-year-old Rosie Larsen. Meanwhile, *Fargo* (season 2), set in 1979, follows an ensemble cast—consisting of a police officer, a married couple and a crime family—who are interconnected through a deadly

shooting at a diner. The case study focuses on Floyd Gerhardt, who, after her kingpin husband suffers a major stroke and eventually dies, assumes the role as head of the crime family. Floyd's position is seemingly provisional while her two sons, Dodd and Bear, battle it out over who will take over the position as head of the family. The justification for selecting each of the anti-heroines is grounded in their popularity amongst audiences. They have each successfully elicited and sustained audience engagement. Equally, this suggests that viewers are open to engaging with an immoral female figure. It was also important to learn which, if any, narrative techniques were specific to the television anti-heroine for achieving audience engagement in contrast to the anti-hero. To bolster conclusions drawn, the case study anti-heroines were diverse in age and criminal transgressions. This ensured insights were not necessarily specific to an anti-heroine performing a certain criminal undertaking but consistent across a range of roles.

Ultimately, gender discrepancies against the anti-heroine were exposed that the anti-hero is not subjected to, and in light of this, new narrative techniques were teased out to support screenwriters in engaging an audience with an immoral female lead. These narrative categories are *single motherhood*, *men are dumb* and *men cannot be trusted*. As alluded to in the previous chapter, each category comprises a number of key properties. The properties for each category will be deconstructed and the categories then merged with Vaage's original narrative techniques, giving rise to the remodelled framework, the *Wheel of Techniques*. This model aided my initial creative development of *Angela* by acting as a tool to help balance market expectations of how to possibly engage a mainstream Western audience with a television anti-heroine.

### **Category: *Single Motherhood***

*Single motherhood* is grounded in the anti-heroine's spouse being non-existent in her life. Both Nancy Botwin's and Floyd Gerhardt's husbands die of heart-related complications, whereas Sarah Linden is abandoned. Each case study anti-heroine finds she is required to perform the impossible task of being mother, father and breadwinner—impossible because, as Sharon Hays (1996) argues, women are defined as natural caregivers and are judged far more harshly than single fathers when things fall through the cracks. Hays states in her book, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*:

There is an underlying assumption that [a] child absolutely requires consistent nurture by a single primary caretaker and that the mother is the best person for the job. When the mother is unavailable, it is other women who should serve temporary substitute. (1996, p.8).

Single motherhood places a spotlight on the modern and harsh realities that many women face. This is supported by DeJean, McGeorge and Carlson's study which found "single parents were viewed differently based on the gender of the parent" (2012, p.131). They concluded that single mothers are perceived "as less secure, less fortunate, less responsible, less satisfied with life, less moral, less reputable, less of a good parent, and less economically advantaged when compared to the ratings of the single father" (2012, p.131).

Judith Butler (1990) expands on these harsh realities by positing that women are forced to wear specific masquerades and act out behaviours that adhere to gender norms perpetuated by patriarchal structures. Butler (1990) argues that the consequence of this is that women repress their true identities, which can cause them to spiral into utter despair. Katie Snyder (2014) maintains that this is still true today in a postfeminist era even though gender sexism and discrimination is believed to have been largely resolved. Snyder points out that, "[w]omen are still given away in marriage, men are still leaders of most governments and corporations, women's bodies are still heavily trafficked and exploited in flesh and in print" (2014, pp.26–27). Indeed, the anti-heroine is exploited because she is made to take on the responsibilities of performing as mother, father and breadwinner, and she must perform each of these roles to a high standard: a standard that is not expected of an anti-hero. This position and the unique challenges a single mother must face helps to initially endorse audience sympathy.

In response to such challenges, the anti-heroine finds herself isolated on the periphery of society and struggling to resolve her despairing situation because of her status as a woman. As the severity of her predicament intensifies, she experiences a sense of despair and vulnerability. Therefore, two properties are central to *single motherhood*: *isolation* and *vulnerability*. With no apparent end in sight to her isolation and vulnerability, the anti-heroine's morality ultimately erodes and her depraved actions increase as she attempts to provide for herself and her family. These properties are central to fostering audience sympathy as the anti-heroine transgresses.

### ***1. Isolation***

Isolation is a key property that is consistent across all of the anti-heroine case studies. In each pilot episode, she occupies an impossible and lonely position assuming the role of mother, father and breadwinner. This is specifically supported in an excerpt from the memos:

[Single Motherhood] is largely shaped by each of the case study anti-heroines' husbands' deaths. Indeed, the anti-heroines' husbands are no longer present in their lives, leaving them in an isolated position, as they need to provide financially and emotionally for their children. Ultimately, they are unprepared for performing the role of breadwinner, mother and father.<sup>17</sup>

From the outset, it is revealed that Sarah Linden (*The Killing*) is isolated because the biological father of her son is not present in her life. It is clear that Linden is failing to maintain a healthy relationship with her son, Jack, because of the demands of her job as a lead detective. Not working or decreasing her hours is unrealistic because of her additional responsibility as main breadwinner. This is paralleled in *Weeds* with Nancy Botwin, whose husband died from a heart attack and, unbeknown to Nancy, had accrued significant financial debt. Nancy is left isolated in a wealthy suburb of America, with two children and a troubling financial predicament that she is unprepared to resolve. As a typical suburban housewife, Nancy had sacrificed her own career to raise their children: hence she does not possess the skillset to secure the salary her family needs to maintain their high standard of living. No longer able to *keep up with the Joneses*, Nancy is slowly isolated from the life she once led.

Floyd Gerhardt (*Fargo*) also suffers from isolation but it is not framed in precisely the same manner as Sarah Linden and Nancy Botwin. Floyd is isolated when her husband Otto Gerhardt dies after enduring a major stroke. Otto was head of the Gerhardt crime family syndicate and after his death a power vacuum ensues. Floyd's sons, Dodd and Bear Gerhardt, engage in a battle to reign as head of the family, yet, it transpires that Floyd is the brains of the family and it is hinted that her sons would be inadequate leaders. It is here where isolation is exploited to encourage viewer sympathy for Floyd. As a woman, her sons expect Floyd to focus her attention on the responsibilities akin to a traditional housewife. Dodd makes calculated moves to uphold these gender expectations by positioning Floyd on the periphery. Gender imprisonment is evidenced in this excerpt from the memos:

[A]udiences are more likely to become aligned with Peggy Blumquist and Floyd Gerhardt since they have, or are trying to, break away from this gender imprisonment albeit even if they have evolved into criminals. Surely, if crime is the only way these female characters can break free then harsh judgment cannot be expected from the audience?<sup>18</sup>

In this sense, Floyd's isolation is a result of her gender and the inability for her to be accepted as head of her family due to the unwritten patriarchal rule that says only a man can lead.

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<sup>17</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.330.

<sup>18</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.332.

An additional principal, which is consistent across each anti-heroine, is that they are alone. This is not in reference to their marital status but in regard to their lack of relationships with women they can relate to. *Fargo*, which is set in the 1970s,<sup>19</sup> characterises women akin to traditional gender norms with the only real exception being Floyd Gerhardt who is an anomaly. This is also true of Sarah Linden. Despite being set in 2011, there are no influential female characters within her department and certainly none performing the dual role of single mother and lead detective. In *Weeds*, as already mentioned, Nancy Botwin can no longer adhere to the role of suburban housewife, which orientates her in a unique situation when compared to a number of the female characters orbiting her. This lack of relatable women or any wider support network leaves these anti-heroines even more isolated, thus engendering viewer sympathy.

## 2. *Vulnerability*

Vulnerability builds upon isolation to advance viewer sympathy as a method for encouraging engagement once the anti-heroine begins to transgress.<sup>20</sup> It refers to a narrative scene or sequencing that shows the anti-heroine in danger as a consequence of her isolation. Narratively, it is characterised that unless she does something drastic she is unlikely to overcome her plight. This will not only have consequences for her own physical or mental well-being but also her children and others that she cares for. In *Fargo*, Dodd Gerhardt is extremely vicious. He is both verbally and physically abusive to his twenty-something-year-old daughter, Simone Gerhardt, and he repeatedly attempts to intimidate Floyd. While Floyd manages to hold her nerve with Dodd, she and her granddaughter, Simone, are clearly vulnerable to his aggressive behaviour; even more so if he assumes the position as head of the family. It is plausible that a sense of dread and pity is experienced by the viewer on behalf of Floyd and her granddaughter that results in their desire for Floyd to take action against Dodd's path to leadership. In effect, this would also encourage their continued engagement once Floyd begins to transgress because if she did not act and assume the position as head of the family the violence and suffering endured by the Gerhardt women would persist. In addition, the Gerhardt family are in a precarious position since a rival crime syndicate are bidding to take over their criminal operations. Floyd is characterised as the only member of

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<sup>19</sup>It should be noted that season two of *Fargo* is the only season of relevance in regard to this thesis.

<sup>20</sup> If the anti-heroine is transgressing from the outset of the narrative, as in the case in *Weeds*, then there will be an increase of severity concerning her transgressive behaviour.

the family who has the intelligence and temperament to outfox this sophisticated crime syndicate. Evidence to support this is stated in the memos:

[G]iven the lack of leadership and intelligence her sons display, it becomes clear that Floyd and her family are in a vulnerable situation. Viewers sympathise with Floyd and understand that she is the only one capable of taking over the family's throne [...] This is because, to some extent, she has no choice other than to assume head of the family, as she is the only family member with the innate intelligence to outfox the deadly crime syndicate who want them all dead.<sup>21</sup>

It should also be noted that sympathy for Floyd is layered by her vulnerability, resulting from “the oppressive obstacles that she faces in bidding to assume the role as head of the family due to its patriarchal structure.”<sup>22</sup>

Nancy Botwin's vulnerability stems not from physical violence but because, as a woman,<sup>23</sup> she is unable to garner respect from several male characters that could help ensure the success of her drug dealing business. As the narrative progresses, with each unfolding scene, Nancy's vulnerability becomes more visible as she fails to establish herself as a respected *professional*. Without learning how to harness respect for her operations within this male dominated drug market, she cannot secure the finances she requires to maintain her family's way of life. Thus, to garner respect, Nancy's transgressions increase in severity and the audience continues to engage because her actions are seemingly justified. It is reasonable to surmise that if Nancy's husband had not died and her financial circumstances were stable “she would have most likely occupied a very different path.”<sup>24</sup>

It is important to note that in *The Killing* vulnerability is much less apparent. As the episode proceeds, it is evident that what separates Linden from vulnerable women, and from becoming vulnerable herself, is that she is a detective and therefore can wield power against those who would otherwise prey on her. This is explored in the memos, as cited below:

In relation to our anti-heroine, Detective Linden, this [vulnerability] helps to secure audience engagement. That is because the viewer is able to appreciate the complex world she lives in and that, as a woman, she is vulnerable. This issues concern for audiences about her welfare. Notably, moral psychology unveiled people have a tendency to care for those who are vulnerable. Anyhow, most significantly, the audience lives vicariously through Linden since she is in a position of power unlike the other [case study] female characters.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.331.

<sup>22</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.331.

<sup>23</sup> It is important to acknowledge that Nancy is unfairly judged for her promiscuous nature, and in turn this deepens her struggle to gain respect. Notably, male characters, and more specifically the anti-hero, are rarely judged for their promiscuity, and in fact, it is sometimes celebrated.

<sup>24</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.331.

<sup>25</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.335.

Linden has crafted a life for herself that ensures equal power amongst her male colleagues and this subverts her vulnerability. Incidentally, this equal power may be lost and be hard to find again if she relocates to California with her new romantic partner. During the closing sequence, when it transpires that Linden is not boarding a flight to California to start her new life, the audience can make some sense of her decision. This encourages continued engagement by humanising Linden's choice to stay that could otherwise be viewed as selfish. The irony of this is that Linden's job ebbs away at her and is arguably a key factor for her eventual moral decline.

### **Category: *Men are Dumb***

*Men are dumb* denotes the characterisation of certain male characters who do not possess the intellectual competence or capability to regulate their emotions and flourish in their roles, generally, in the criminal underworld. The anti-heroine is contrasted against these less adept males to cue the viewer to infer that she may be more capable of successfully navigating the world of crime compared to her male counterparts. This locates the anti-heroine outside the cultural expectation that women should preserve the moral order, acting as the moral equaliser as well as shouldering the responsibility for the well-being of their children (Hays, 1996; Silva, 2005; Brabon & Genz, 2009; DeJean, McGeorge & Carlson, 2012; Millar & Ridge, 2013). The challenge for the screenwriter is crafting an anti-heroine so that such unconscious gender biases amongst viewers do not result in their disengagement. Some sixty years on, Simone de Beauvoir's proclamation in her text *The Second Sex*, originally published in 1949, is still relevant in concurrent times. In other words, a man is an autonomous being whose "existence is justified by the work he provides for the group," which is fictitious for a woman (Beauvoir, 2010, p.452). Men are judged on their employment; therefore, the anti-hero is more readily forgiven when he engages in work that is illegal, as he has to provide for his family and is not expected to be the moral equaliser. Thus, to encourage continued viewer engagement with the anti-heroine, the properties comprising *men are dumb*, *intellectually inept* and *impulsive behaviour* are essential for overriding such preconceived gender notions.

#### **1. *Intellectually Inept***

Intellectually inept is the characterisation of significant male characters orbiting the storyworld of the anti-heroine that lack professional competence. The anti-heroine is

contrasted as the binary opposite of such characters and is identified early on as intelligent with innate ability that could flourish in the criminal underworld. This property is a key narrative strand for encouraging audience engagement for the anti-heroine who adopts a role typically associated with an anti-hero. The reality is that the audience more readily accepts the immorality and sentiments of an anti-hero because conventionally, in anti-hero narratives, the spouse takes care of and preserves the harmony of the domestic space (Vaage 2016). The anti-hero is then free to acquire resources for his family through means of criminal activities. Examples range from anti-heroes such as Walter White (*Breaking Bad*), Tony Soprano (*The Sopranos*), Jax Tellar (*Sons of Anarchy*) and Ray Donovan (*Ray Donovan*). The reasons for this are congruent with Benjamin A. Brabon and Stephanie Genz's (2009) notion that women, particularly mothers, are left to preserve the moral order of society. According to Snyder, this is because "we understand mothers to be 'pure' and 'nurturing'" (2014, p.22). There are indeed gender discrepancies since men are not bound by this cultural ideal. There exists a cultural expectation that mothers are responsible for the nurturing of their children (Hays, 1996; Silva, 2005; Brabon & Genz, 2009; DeJean, McGeorge & Carlson, 2012; Millar & Ridge, 2013; Snyder, 2014; Power, 2020). Kate Power (2020), who unveils the burdening of domestic duties on women in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, reveals that, according to The International Labour Organisation (ILO), "on average women around the world perform 4 hours and 25 minutes of unpaid care work every day compared with 1 hour and 23 minutes for men" (2020, p.67). These duties typically include, but are not limited to, "raising children, cooking, cleaning, fetching water and firewood, caring for elderly relatives, shopping, [and] household management" (Power, 2020, p.67). Thus, for the anti-heroine, if the screenwriter were to plot her immediately entering the criminal underworld (seemingly placing the lives of her children and loved ones in danger) viewers may disengage. The property intellectually inept is an important strand for overriding the cultural expectation of a woman as the moral equaliser. When the anti-heroine contradicts this ideal, audience engagement may still be preserved since the anti-heroine is presented as the best person for the job. For example, unless she takes control of a given situation, her family's well-being, or even that of the wider community, may be in grave danger. In respect to Nancy Botwin, this is evidenced in the following excerpt from the memos:

Nancy enters her car and is ambushed by a young teenager, Josh, who persuades her to provide drugs for him to sell. Nancy is at first reluctant since it becomes apparent that Josh sold drugs to a young child. However, Nancy soon gives in to Josh's persuasion as he promises to not sell drugs to children [...] Thus, subconsciously, the audience identifies Nancy as someone who is more morally preferable since she exhibits a



greater moral compass and considers the impact of her actions, unlike many of the characters orbiting the storyworld.<sup>26</sup>

It should also be pointed out that Josh's father, Doug, is admonished by Nancy in the pilot episode when she catches him smoking weed in his car during a children's football tournament. In essence, for the anti-heroine to ensure her own offspring are safe, and possibly her community too, she needs to take control of the situation: even if it means criminal action.

Moreover, throughout the pilot episode of *The Killing*, Sarah Linden is contrasted against her replacement and eventual partner, Detective Holder. Dressed like a scruffy teenager, Holder interrupts Linden while she is clearing out her office. After the two characters spend the best part of a day together trying to solve the disappearance of Rosie Larson, it is a fair summary to conclude that Holder's capability as a detective pales in comparison to Linden's. Although Linden does not pursue a career within the criminal underworld, in a literal sense, she does eventually take justice into her own hands during the series. One example is when she "fires a fatal shot at [an] unarmed" serial killer (Walderzak, 2016, p.124). As Joseph Walderzak notes, male cops who have done the same during the past decade "have been broadly identified as antiheroes" (2016, p.124). As discussed, women are expected to preserve the moral order—something that is not expected of an anti-hero. When Linden murders an unarmed suspect, it is plausible to surmise that the audience are forgiving of the action because they trust her innate ability to solve cases above all other characters. Yet, there is a caveat; unlike anti-hero cops, such as Vince Mackay (*The Shield*, 2002–2008), Linden's path of taking justice into her own hands, without fostering viewer disengagement, is much lengthier.

In *Fargo*, Floyd Gerhardt's son, Rye Gerhardt, is the intellectually inept son who does not possess the innate qualities to lead the family crime syndicate. This is discernible when the Gerhardts engage in a meeting during which Floyd exposes that money has been stolen from the family business. The audience is aware that the Gerhardt brothers (Rye and Dodd) are responsible, suggesting that they have an inferior intellect to their mother. As explored in the memos:

The idea that men are outsmarted is further evident when, during a family dinner, Floyd Gerhardt reveals to the family that money has been stolen. It is evident that both Rye and Dodd have been failing to take care of business. More interestingly, it becomes

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<sup>26</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.336.

clear by the end of this scene that Floyd is, to some extent, the brains behind the family's current fortune.<sup>27</sup>

Notably, this characterisation of Floyd's intellectual superiority over her sons becomes more apparent throughout the rest of the pilot episode.

*Weeds* is much less subtle in the characterisation and contrast of Nancy Botwin against significant intellectually inept male characters. Generally, the majority of male characters in the show are conveyed as possessing little insight in their decision-making. For instance, throughout the pilot episode Nancy locks horns with male figures that show no understanding or insight about the consequences of selling narcotics to schoolchildren and smoking weed in their presence. On Nancy's watch this will be forbidden, making her a far more desirable criminal than any of the male buffoons. This characterisation of men as intellectually inept helps encourage engagement for Nancy when her immorality increases in severity. It also cues the audience that if Nancy delves deeper into the criminal underworld, she would cultivate a more just moral order than the one existing.

## **2. *Impulsive Behaviour***

It is necessary to point out that it would be inauthentic and contrived to characterise too many of the male characters as intellectually inept. As stated in the memos, "[a]dmiration and alignment is achieved in the pilot episode of each case study text through comparing and contrasting the approach between central male and female characters."<sup>28</sup> It would not provide for a complex and engaging narrative, particularly in a scenario where the anti-heroine is pitted against a male character. She would come out on top with ease. An additional correlative property, impulsive behaviour is therefore imperative to denote certain male characters that are unable to regulate their emotions. While it transpires that these characters may possess similar aptitudes matching the skill set of the anti-heroine, their impetuous and aggressive behaviour is more often than not engaged. In light of this, it becomes apparent that their ability to navigate the underbelly of the criminal world is regularly compromised. In contrast, the astute anti-heroine has the capacity to regulate her emotions to devise and execute a plan even when under pressure. Similar to intellectually inept, engagement is encouraged for the anti-heroine since she is presented as far superior to her male counterparts, taking the rational approach during delicate situations. Her pragmatic attitude,

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<sup>27</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.337.

<sup>28</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.337.

in contrast to an impulsive male, orientates her as a moral equaliser to some extent; and, this is a trait expected of her as discussed in the category *single motherhood*.

Across all three case studies, impulsive behaviour is woven into the pilot episodes through the representation of specific male characters. In *Fargo*, Floyd Gerhardt's son, Dodd, is characterised as possessing a criminal aptitude that could support the Gerhardt family in winning the war against an enemy that is far more resourceful. However, Dodd is frequently shown to be unreliable, as concluded in an excerpt from the memos:

Although, Dodd Gerhardt displays a physical presence, as well as intellectual ability, he lacks emotional control. His approach is to employ violence instead of orchestrating situations as if he were a puppeteer - someone akin to Don or Michael Corleone. Again, this primitive approach makes it clear to the audience that it will not work within the criminal world.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, on numerous occasions Dodd fails to placate his violent impulses, which sometimes sabotages his business dealings and the harmony within his inner circle. Contrary to his mother (Floyd), Dodd does not have the emotional temperament to succeed in securing his family's welfare.

In examining *The Killing*, there are parallels with how impulsive behaviour is utilised. Linden, like Floyd, is shown to be far more emotionally composed than several key male characters. An example is during the final sequence of the pilot episode when Stan Larsen, former criminal and now successful business owner, promises his wife that he will find their daughter, Rosie. As the sequence unfolds, Stan intrusively hunts down key figures that may know his daughter's whereabouts. The climax reaches its tipping point when Stan breaks into Rosie's ex-boyfriend's home, believing Rosie is there. This sequence is cleverly interspersed with scenes following Linden's pragmatic search for the body despite being informed that Rosie has been found alive at her ex-boyfriend's home. Linden's measured approach in comparison to Stan is evidenced in the memos:

Detective Linden is not convinced and is reluctant to stop the search which is taking place in an isolated field. Holder tries to convince Linden that they have found Rosie, and Linden's boss also echoes this. He tells Linden that it is over. Meanwhile, Stan is driving furiously to the ex-boyfriend's house, whilst comforting his wife on the phone that she is going to be found. He then proceeds to barge into the house and forces Rosie's ex-boyfriend out of the way and heads immediately for the bedroom upstairs. As he tells Rosie "to get out of bed, you're coming home," he quickly learns that this girl is, in fact, not his daughter. This is then juxtaposed with Linden informing Holder that she has figured out where Rosie may be...<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, pp.336–337.

<sup>30</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.338.

In turn, the episode culminates with Linden discovering Rosie Larson's body, demonstrating her innate ability to follow her instincts while also remaining business like—unlike Stan. In addition, the sequence motions the audience to forgo moral deliberation when Linden performs acts that are morally nebulous later on. This is because, to an extent, the audience has given Linden a pass to do what needs to be done to solve the case.

Finally, in *Weeds* this property is notably at work when Nancy initially confronts Josh Wilson about selling drugs to schoolchildren. Josh promises to stop selling drugs to children, so Nancy is infuriated when she learns that he broke his agreement. Nancy does not confront Josh but instead deliberates before discovering that he is having a sexual relationship with a middle-aged man. Josh, not wanting Nancy to pass this information on to his father, pleads for mercy. Nancy cuts a deal in which Josh must stay true to his original promise. This time Josh is good to his word. While *Weeds* does not play on the notion of impulsive behaviour to the heights of *The Killing* and *Fargo*, Nancy is clearly able to effectively regulate her emotions, even under extreme pressure, which is consistent with both Floyd Gerhardt and Sarah Linden.

### **Category: *Men Cannot be Trusted***

*Men cannot be trusted* denotes the inclusion of characters who repeatedly advance their own needs first: even ahead of those dearest to them. Their inherent selfish nature results in their individuation as untrustworthy. Sympathy for the anti-heroine is extended as she suffers from her interactions with characters fitting this mould; typically, it is through their *infidelity*, *sexual misconduct* and *betrayal*. The feeling of unfairness experienced by the audience on behalf of the anti-heroine is increased because, as many researchers have pointed out more generally, women are not held to the same set of standards relative to their male counterparts (Bogle, 2008; Armstrong, England & Fogarty, 2012; Allison & Risman, 2013; Reid, Elliot & Webber, 2011; Sakaluk & Milhausen, 2012). Butler (1990) argues that this unfair bias imposed on women is a result of masculinity dominating social structures. Feminist theorist Catharine MacKinnon relays this statement by positing, “that sexuality is ‘a social construct of male power: defined by men, forced on women, and constitutive in the meaning of gender’” (MacKinnon, 1989, quoted in Snyder, 2014, p.21). In this sense, the structures in place have privileged men to freely explore their sexuality without severe social repercussions. Conversely, this is not true for women and their sexuality can symbolise negative meaning. It will be revealed how male characters not being held accountable for their unscrupulous actions increases sympathy for the anti-heroine. Indeed, this is an

additional property to contrast the anti-heroine against and identifies her as a more desirable character. Lastly, as will be explored, every property comprising this specific category does not necessarily need to be woven into the narrative for the category itself to be fully exploited.

### **1. Infidelity**

Infidelity is defined “as a violation according to the subjective feeling that one’s partner has violated a set of rules or relationship norms” (Kumar et al., 2018, p.519). In *Weeds* there are multiple occasions in which it becomes evident that a male character has been engaging in adultery or exposing intimate details about a sexual partner. The men of the storyworld show no remorse and instead brag about their sexual activities to elevate their status amongst their peers. The pervasive infidelity in *Weeds* cues the audience to infer that most men are liable for the breakdown of the domestic space and cannot be trusted. This helps to individuate Nancy as a far more desirable character than any of the male characters.

In conjunction with this, the women of the storyworld are held to an unfair and much higher set of standards than their male counterparts. For example, when Nancy learns that Doug Wilson has been gossiping about their sexual relationship, she is concerned with how the local community will judge her. This predicament is detailed in the following excerpt from the memos:

Furthermore, during the conversation Doug speaks of his poker games with other fathers and how they discuss the ins and outs of their sexual relationships with other women [...] we further sympathise with Nancy because we learn that she was having, or had, sex with [Doug]. A worried Nancy asks if Doug has spoken about their sexual relationship to which he denies, but clearly, he is lying and Nancy knows it or, at least, that’s my inference. The sexual imbalance amongst men and women is clear to see and the audience feels for Nancy’s situation because she is on the wrong end of this imbalance of power.<sup>31</sup>

It is indeed likely that Nancy will be labelled as a slut or other synonymous terms, whereas Doug is bestowed with the much more favourable title of ladies’ man. A male character’s esteem is often increased at the expense of a woman’s sexuality. The unfairness of this helps to guide the audience to experience sympathy for Nancy.

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<sup>31</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.341.

## 2. *Sexual Misconduct*

Throughout *The Killing*, the property infidelity is not utilised for advancing the notion that men cannot be trusted. Instead, sexual misconduct is woven in to characterise significant male characters as untrustworthy. Sexual misconduct is defined whereby sexual advances are made towards a person without their permission or when there exists a power dynamic between the consenting parties (Laucius, 2018). The pilot episode of *The Killing* exploits this power imbalance between male and female characters to help perpetuate the notion that men cannot be trusted. This is hinted at when Sarah Linden approaches Rosie Larsen's teacher, Bennet Ahmed:

The scene is cut short when Holder suggests that the teacher is sexually attracted to Rosie Larsen, which points towards *infidelity* since the teacher is married, as well as possible *sexual misconduct* given the power dynamic between teacher and student. Prior to this, it is shown that the teacher pulls Rosie Larsen's best friend [Sterling] aside because he didn't believe what information she was detailing to the Principal.<sup>32</sup>

The scene leaves the viewer inferring that Bennet may be sexually attracted to Rosie or at least withholding information pertinent to her whereabouts. An uncomfortable Bennet refutes this assertion before escaping any further questioning. This scene helps to cue that men cannot be entirely trusted and guides the viewer to further individuate Linden as a far more trustworthy and desirable character.

## 3. *Betrayal*

Betrayal is consistent across each of the case study anti-heroine narratives. Simply put, betrayal is understood as a person deceiving a group or individual. In the case of the anti-heroine, she can be betrayed in a myriad of ways, including by a family member, friend or trusted colleague. Of course, the act of betrayal is typically carried out by a male character. For each case study examples of this are found in properties already discussed. Therefore, it is worth pointing them out again because in doing so it also highlights that one or more categories may be present at any given time. For instance, Nancy Botwin is betrayed by Josh because he continues to sell drugs to schoolchildren as well as by Floyd Gerhardt's sons who steal money from the family business. In *The Killing* several male characters withhold or misrepresent information concerning the whereabouts of Rosie Larson. This sidetracks Linden. Thus, the property betrayal pushes the envelope that the anti-heroine is morally

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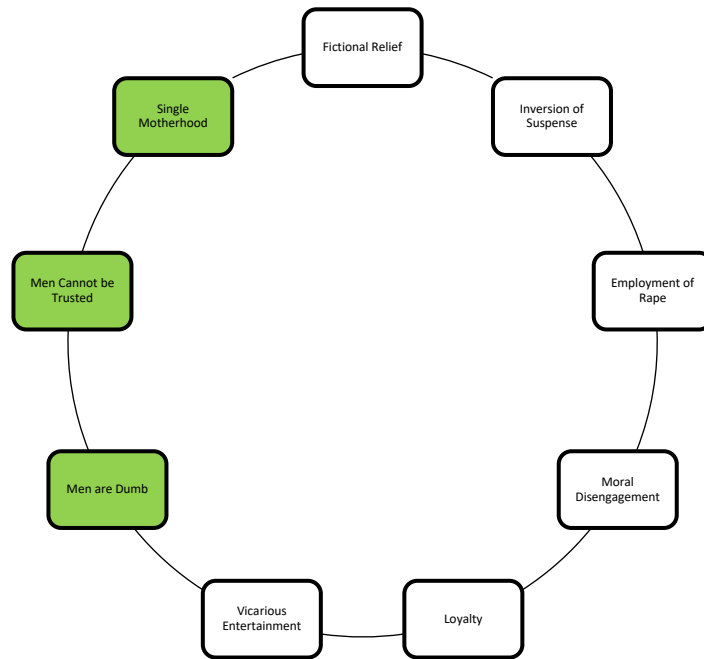
<sup>32</sup> For the full memo please see appendix, p.341.

preferable than other male characters that would otherwise assume the morally ambiguous role she occupies. This is an additional layer to achieving audience engagement.

### **Remodelled Paradigm: *Wheel of Techniques***

Figure 7 illustrates the model *Wheel of Techniques*, which comprises the additional narrative techniques teased out through textual analysis. These additional categories are highlighted in green. With the remodelled paradigm (developed specifically for the television anti-heroine) in place, the scripting of my pilot episode commenced. It should be noted that Vaage's (2016) original techniques were still important in providing guidance to develop specific scenes that would help subvert audience disengagement, particularly when my anti-heroine transgressed. However, as Vaage's (2016) techniques were developed specifically for the anti-hero, the new techniques teased out through textual analyses were imperative for aiding my creative development. The additional techniques were employed to support the crafting of an anti-heroine pilot script to embody qualities that had already been proven to be effective amongst viewers. This was important because there exists little understanding of how to approach the morality of an anti-heroine in circumventing viewer disengagement (Mittell, 2015). Due to the gender discrepancies between the television anti-heroine and anti-hero, the additional techniques provided a set of tools to override biases that may otherwise compromise viewer engagement for an anti-heroine pilot episode. This is because, as Mittell argues, there is "a distinct lack of female [antiheroes]" and "[f]emale characters who approach antiheroic status tend to be either sympathetic but prickly [...] or more comedic" (2015, pp.149–150).

I should also note that when completing the final draft of *Angela*, I did not advance the narrative technique *employment of rape*. This is not necessarily because the technique is futile but because the feedback I had received that the narrative's exploration of abuse was stereotypical and slightly outdated. This was further cemented when I attended a conference panel in New Zealand in 2017 that focused on writing memorable female characters. One of the key points made was for writers to be careful in not defining a female character as merely a victim of sexual abuse. In light of this, coupled with the natural direction my pilot script was taking, I did not utilise the technique *employment of rape*. Nevertheless, I do not claim that the technique cannot be effectively advanced by screenwriters, hence its inclusion below. This will be discussed further in Chapter 3.



**Figure 7.** *Wheel of Techniques* to encourage audience engagement for an anti-heroine.

### **Market tensions: *Wheel of Techniques* in practice**

As Bridget Conor reminds us, screenwriting “is industrial and market driven” (2014, p.3). In light of this, I undertook textual analyses to provide insights as to how previous anti-heroine pilot episodes had fulfilled industrial expectations. This is particularly important in relation to the television anti-heroine due to her scarcity on screen and moral ambiguity. Financers are more reluctant to invest in novel immoral female character-driven shows due to fears that audiences could be repelled (Martin, 2013; Mittell, 2015). For this reason, I argue that it is even more important to examine the few anti-heroine narratives that have been commissioned. Given the market’s anxiety, it is important to develop a pilot script that does not stray too far from shows that have been well received by viewers until her representation on screen is no longer scarce and richer critical understandings are unveiled.

The original development of *Angela*, which includes character biographies, step outlines and the first draft of the pilot script itself, paid strict attention to the *Wheel of Techniques*. The feedback received on the first draft from practising screenwriters and my



PhD supervisor was consistent; the story felt plot-driven.<sup>33</sup> It was also communicated that Angela was not particularly likeable and several supporting characters were underdeveloped. At this stage, it is not uncommon that a script requires significant development (Batty, *Journey Into Theme*, pp.115–116). After all, there is a reason behind the proverb that says writing is rewriting. In truth, however, the first draft required far more work than I anticipated. After further development and deliberation, I came to understand that how I was utilising the *Wheel of Techniques* was in fact inhibiting my ability to craft a nuanced, character-driven and engaging anti-heroine narrative. It was not that the *Wheel of Techniques* was ineffective but that I was not fully exploiting it during practice.

The *Wheel of Techniques* focuses on action (moving the plot from *a* to *b*) with the intention of encouraging engagement for an immoral female figure. As a consequence, during initial drafting (1 & 2), which includes step outlines, because I fixated on these techniques, the narrative I developed focused primarily on plot points to advance the immorality of the anti-heroine. The categories specific to the anti-heroine—*single motherhood*, *men are dumb* and *men cannot be trusted*—were referenced attentively. In employing these categories, I assumed engagement would be encouraged through familiar methods that had successfully served the case study anti-heroines. However, as alluded to, feedback stated that several characters were characterised as underdeveloped and uninventive *assholes*. For example, the character Jerry Rideout was born out of the category *men cannot be trusted*. Jerry was quickly characterised as a master manipulator and sexual predator. Comparably, it was also scripted during the development of the first draft that Angela had a brother, Joey Sparks, who evolved from the category *men are dumb*. Joey was unable to tame his appetite for a fight, which was hinted at from the outset. Both characters lacked depth or any real purpose other than to serve the plot so Angela's immorality could be stretched. Evidently, this was not subtle. Even Angela herself was characterised as unlikeable, since I had incorrectly assumed that the originality and successful engagement for her was grounded in how fast I could push her immorality. The *Wheel of Techniques*, particularly with how Vaage (2016) presents her original categories, had helped perpetuate this belief. According to Batty (*Journey Into Theme*, p.115), this emphasis on plot may have taken me out of my pilot episode rather than into it.

Batty explains that whilst a focus on plot is helpful during particular development stages of a screenplay it can, however, “take the writer out of a [script] rather than into it.

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<sup>33</sup> This concept of plot as a function for encouraging audience engagement will be explored extensively in Chapter 5.

This can result in a screenplay that loses its way throughout development because it is not ‘about’ anything” (*Journey Into Theme*, p.115). Here, Batty is pointing towards the idea that a writer can bring a screenplay to life through the deeper meaning embedded beneath the surface of a story’s structure (*Journey Into Theme*). When a writer loses sight of what they are exploring or trying to say in their screenplay, the unfolding events (plot) can feel meaningless. This assertion ties in with Margaret Mehring’s (1990) definition of the screenwriter. Mehring maintains that the screenwriter is “an artist who has something important to say. An artist who portrays the values of his or her culture, illuminates its issues, presents its problems, and dramatizes its struggles” (1990, p.2). This dovetails with Marilyn Beker’s statement that “at its core, every screenplay is ‘about something’ and [t]his ‘about’ is deeper than the surface story”<sup>34</sup> (2013, p.1). In this sense, Batty’s (*Journey Into Theme*) claim that over emphasis on plot can take a screenwriter out of their project translates to the idea that an over emphasis on plot can suppress a writer’s ability to craft or explore an important message. Thereby, there is action for the sake of action, resulting in a meaningless plot. As noted, my own experiences during the initial development of *Angela* (1 & 2) demonstrated this notion of plot taking a writer out of their screenplay. Indeed, a shift needed to take place, as development should centre on the meaning behind the action and how this meaning can organically inform the plot. Ultimately, how I was utilising the *Wheel of Techniques* detached me from my pilot script *Angela* (1 & 2) because of this fixation on plot. Admittedly, my story was not about anything. It became apparent that it was essential to understand how to exploit the *Wheel of Techniques* in a way that positioned me back into the pilot script.

It should be pointed out first, however, that this oversight is not unique to me. Screenwriters are often advised to pay particular attention to how television shows characterise their leading and secondary characters, and how to advance particular formulas when scripting their screenplays. This is a pervasive issue within the screenwriting industry according to Margot Nash (2013), who maintains that there is a lack of conversation and instead a push to refer to established formulas. She states:

Correcting screenplay format is something screenwriting teachers and script editors often resort to, but this is a diversion from the real work of encouraging ‘ideas of value’ to be explored. Like trying to fix a script, it focuses on mistakes. Instead of opening up a conversation, these strategies run the risk of sending enquiring minds off in search of formulas, rather than actively encouraging them to take risks and enter the unknown spaces of their own creativity. (Nash, 2013, p.152).

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<sup>34</sup> It is reasonable to define Beker’s *surface story* synonymously with plot.

Nash's quote resonates with me, as feedback consistently centred on how I should fix my script. I was directed to read supplementary anti-heroine pilot scripts to identify how others had advanced their narrative or crafted secondary characters to achieve engagement, detaching myself further from my own pilot script. As Nash suggests, a new conversation was required which could guide me to pursue "unknown spaces of [my] own creativity" (2013, p.152). These unknown spaces would be central to crafting an engaging narrative. The emphasis naturally lay on placing me back into my story, moving away from framing a story through the *Wheel of Techniques* and instead on how to frame these narrative techniques through my own story. This meant delving deeper into what my story was about. Subsequently, it will be explored how this *about*, this deeper meaning, would be cultivated through a fluid understanding of theme.

Clearly, theme and the notion of what the story is *about* is not a new phenomenon. What I discovered is that teasing out the thematic question of the case study anti-heroine narratives enabled me to better understand how each writer had utilised the *Wheel of Techniques*. This helped me bridge the gap between insights revealed through post-textual analyses and their applicability to me in practice. This was a creative process that I failed to comprehend throughout the initial development of *Angela* (1 & 2) and is congruent with Batty's statement that "[s]creenwriting is an activity, not an end product" (*Screenwriting studies*, p.59). Indeed, I understood the *Wheel of Techniques* as an end product. Consequently, during the scripting of the first draft, and to some extent the second, I overlooked a phenomenon concerning the model which was pertinent to its direct applicability in practice. Donald Schön, in his text *The Reflective Practitioner*, originally published in 1983, eloquently captures my early oversight:

Further, as a practice becomes more repetitive and routine, and as knowing-in-practice becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, the practitioner may miss important opportunities to think about what he is doing [...] And if he learns, as often happens, to be selectively inattentive to phenomena that do not fit the categories of his knowing-in-action, then he may suffer from boredom or 'burn-out' and afflict his [audience] with the consequences of his narrowness and rigidity. When this happens, the practitioner has 'over-learned' what he knows. (2016, p.61).

Schön's anecdote about a practitioner overlearning was congruent with my initial state of mind during the scripting of the first and second draft of *Angela*. I considered the *Wheel of Techniques* as absolute instead of exploring whether it needed to be explicated for practice. Feedback I received also pointed me towards further textual analysis: a practice that continued the cycle of overlearning. Consequently, I was inattentive to a phenomenon that

existed in practice because it did not sit comfortably within the *Wheel of Techniques*. I was ignorant of the importance of locating myself at the centre of my narrative. Prior to utilising each narrative technique, I should have questioned whether it sat comfortably within my story.

At this point, a number of questions need to be resolved to tease out the true value of this phenomenon. For instance, what precisely does it mean for a writer to locate themselves within their screenplay? In addition, how can an understanding and application of theme help position screenwriters into their story to aid their exploitation of narrative techniques that both satisfy market demands and offer space to craft a meaningful story? The following sections will explore these questions, revealing their importance for encouraging engagement for an anti-heroine. The discussion will ultimately lead to the unveiling of a fluid understanding of theme that was advanced during the scripting of *Angela* (3–5) and enabled me to locate myself back into my screenplay. In order to credibly answer the aforementioned questions, however, the importance of theme should be articulated and a working definition presented.

## **Discourse and definitions surrounding theme**

### ***The importance and contention of theme***

The significance of theme, argues Batty (*Journey Into Theme*), is that it can bring a screenplay to life. He adds, “[t]heme can bring freshness and cultural authenticity to a screenplay, helping to negate against what plot-driven stories might breed: staleness and artificiality” (Batty, *Journey Into Theme*, p.116). According to Batty, “theme pervades everything in a screenplay. Aspects of craft, including plot, visual storytelling and dialogue, do not exist in a vacuum—they are shaped by theme” (*Journey Into Theme*, p.118). Batty further adds, “[w]hat the characters say and how they say it (character voice) will always be driven by the themes of the story” (*Journey Into Theme*, p.118). In this sense, the screenplay is better considered as “a vessel in which universal themes can be explored and disseminated” (Batty, *Journey Into Theme*, p.116). Patrick Spence, former Head of Drama at BBC Northern Ireland, cements Batty’s assertion, arguing, “[t]hat is what most writers do: they ask a lot of questions and they suck out of you the stuff of life, which they then put down on the page” (Batty, *Journey Into Theme*, p.116). In part, it was through this understanding of the significance of theme, as well as the idea that theme is a tool to explore life’s questions, that stimulated the transformation of my anti-heroine pilot script from being stale and artificial to one that is uniquely engaging.

Still, it should be conceded that theme is a contentious topic. Invariably, screenwriters, gurus and teachers each hold their own definition and approaches concerning theme. As Margaret Mehring states, “discussions about theme will almost inevitably arouse controversy” because “there are many different and opposing approaches to this topic” (1990, p.221). Even some thirty years on Mehring’s statement is still true, particularly with the emergence of contemporary television shows that typically centre on a character arc that explores a theme or themes over one or many seasons.

### ***Theme as a closed statement***

To begin, theme can be understood as a closed statement and Robert McKee (1999) builds upon this by further arguing that theme should be expressed in a single sentence. For example, McKee describes the theme, through his concept the controlling idea, of *Dirty Harry* (1971) as “Justice triumphs because the protagonist is more violent than the criminals” (1999, p.116). Naturally, a reasonable question emerges: how did McKee tease out and describe this theme? In short, McKee maintains that the writer can discover their theme by defining the “last act’s climax” and tease out what is being expressed through that specific action (1999, p.115). Unfortunately, advancing McKee’s notion of theme in my pilot script was not a fruitful activity. In fact, in practice I found it extremely restrictive. For example, I pondered if I should define the theme of my pilot episode or, in fact, the final act of the entire television series? Ultimately, I concluded that this notion of advancing theme was limiting and did not enable me to explore what I was trying to say with my story. I felt that my thematic expression would organically evolve as the narrative progressed, and therefore I required a more open method for teasing out theme. While there does exist a sizeable minority of practitioners who indeed concur with McKee’s understanding of theme (Batty, *Journey Into Theme*, p.116), this thesis maintains that there are a number of different notions that can support a writer in advancing theme (Mehring, 1990) and the one which I found productive will be explored next.

### ***The open road: theme and premise***

In a bid to discover a less restrictive method for teasing out theme and develop my pilot script into one that is meaningful and purposeful, I initially turned to Lajos Egri. Egri (2004), in his text *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, originally published in 1942, defines the theme of a story as the premise. Egri states:

Every second of our life has its own premise, whether or not we are conscious of it at the time [...] Others, especially men of the theatre, have had different words for the same thing: theme, thesis, root idea, central idea, goal, aim, driving force, subject, purpose, plan, plot[...] For our own use we choose the word ‘premise’ because it contains all the elements the other words try to express and because it is less subject to misinterpretation[...] Professor Brander Matthews: ‘A play needs to have a theme.’ He means premise. Professor George Pierce Baker, quoting Dumas the younger: ‘How can you tell what road to take unless you know where you are going?’ The premise will show you the road. They all mean one thing: you must have a premise for your play. (2004, pp.1–2).

Admittedly, Egri’s discussion (concerning premise as theme) is not entirely clear and only adds to the evidence that this is a nebulous topic. However, it is reasonable to deduce from his discussion that expressing theme is far more encompassing than the single underlining meaning of a story’s final climactic action that McKee (1999) maintains. In teasing out and explicating Egri’s concept, I found the clue to expressing theme in his inclusion of Dumas the younger’s quote: “[h]ow can you tell what road to take unless you know where you are going?” The premise will show you the road” (Egri, 2004, p.2). I believe it is plausible to posit that Egri has identified something concerning theme that is more layered than concurrent belief has led writers to believe, but I do not subscribe to the idea that theme should be thought upon as premise. In referring to the road analogy, I believe it is more useful to consider theme as an open question. Therefore, for this thesis, theme is understood as a thematic question that provides narrative direction and a clear road ahead for the writer to navigate and ultimately answer. It is on this long road, of the journey of the characters, that the thematic question is answered through narrative choices that have been specifically crafted into the story.

To effectively tease out the thematic question of my case study anti-heroine shows, and to craft the thematic question for my pilot script *Angela*, inspiration was taken from McKee’s open statement of “what would happen if” (1999, p.112). As I will explore, I found this principal, coupled with my belief that theme is better considered as an open question, useful for negating my pilot script “from being a series of hollow and meaningless actions” (Batty & Waldeback, 2012, p.18). This is because it encouraged me to “enter the unknown spaces of [my] own creativity” (Nash, 2013, p.152). Before advancing this concept of the thematic question to aid the development of *Angela*, I needed to first re-examine the case study anti-heroine shows to better understand their use of theme. This was so I could attempt to tease out how each writer of the case study anti-heroine shows expressed some of the narrative techniques in response to what I determined to be their thematic question.

## Model for teasing out the thematic question

In endeavouring to elicit the thematic question of each case study narrative, I immediately encountered an obstacle: there exists no standard model. Therefore, the first step was to cultivate a model that could draw out the thematic question of a narrative to deepen a screenwriter's understanding of craft techniques pertinent to their practice. In developing a credible framework, elements of Porter et al.'s (2002) *Scene Function Model* were advanced. This framework was purposely fashioned for unpacking one-hour television episodes. Porter et al. (2002) argue that understanding the intention of a scene affords the reader greater knowledge of the narrative itself. The "[m]odel identifies specific, discrete narrative functions within a scene that show *how* those scenes advance or enhance the narrative" (Porter et al., 2002, p.25). It is helpful to point out that Margaret McVeigh used this model "to examine the narrative function and structure of *Big Little Lies*" (*Theme and Complex Narrative Structure*, para. 17). In reflection, after using it, McVeigh concluded that it is a, "very able and under-recognised analytical tool" (*Theme and Complex Narrative Structure*, para. 17).

Moreover, Porter et al.'s (2002) framework is built upon Seymour Chatman's (1994) distinguishing of kernel and satellite scenes, which underpins that a television scene will do at least one of two things. A kernel scene refers to "a major event in the progression of the story," whereas a satellite scene presents "interesting but not necessarily vital information for the story to move forward" (Porter et al., 2002, p.25). A kernel scene is analogous to scenes that are concerned with action to advance the story, which is synonymous with plot. It is worth pointing out that Jason Mittell, in his groundbreaking book *Complex TV*, explores the value of kernel and satellite scenes, thus validating the application of this concept. More specifically, Jason Mittell concludes that, "[o]ne of the pleasures of consuming serialised narrative is trying to figure out whether a given event might be a kernel or a satellite in the larger arc of a plotline or series as a whole" (2015, p.24). In this sense, the concept should inherently encourage audience engagement when properly advanced within a narrative.

Nonetheless, for me, an overemphasis on scripting kernel scenes is what led to the development issues concerning the initial drafting of *Angela* (1 & 2). The concept of the satellite scene, however, was pertinent to my developmental concerns and objectives. Porter et al. (2002) explain that satellite scenes reveal information that does not necessarily advance the story. The authors resolve that "[t]he satellites make the story richer and fuller" (Porter et al., 2002, p.26). Indeed, my initial drafts of *Angela* (1 & 2), particularly the first draft, lacked

depth and richness. In borrowing key principles from Porter et al.'s (2002) framework, the objective was to develop a new framework to support the redraft of *Angela* in a way that would progress its depth and richness. Shortly, this new model, the *theme function framework*, will be unveiled. This will then lead to a discussion about how the framework enabled me to locate myself back into my story through a fluid understanding of theme.

### **Re-working the *Scene Function Model***

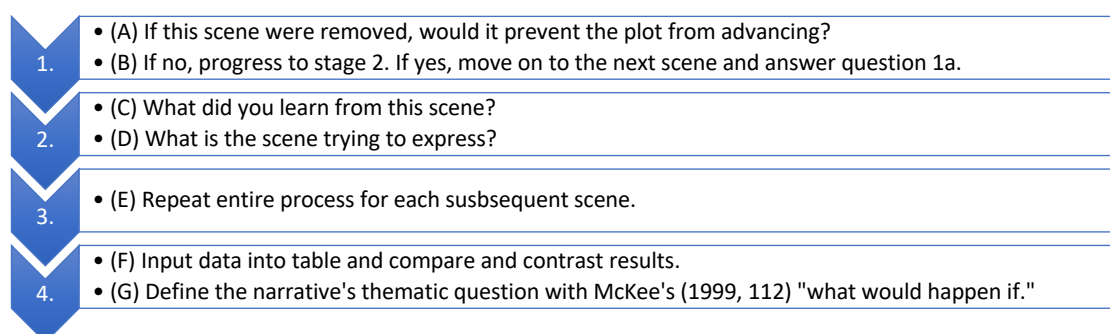
Porter et al.'s (2002) original model requires the researcher to split the narrative into five story strands: A, B, C, D and E. The stories are then closely structured around the “classic narrative model that Sarah Kozloff outlines” (Porter et al., 2002, p.25). The classic narrative model is centred on six stages—*disturbance, obstacle, complication, confrontation, crisis* and *resolution*—which progress the story linearly to a climax and resolution. If a scene is congruent with any of these specific narrative stages, they would be classified as kernel. Comparatively, if a scene does not advance the story it is classified as satellite.

In short, simply applying Porter et al.'s (2002) original model in practice would have been a redundant activity. The classical narrative approach assumes that this is how a story successfully progresses to its climax and resolution. It refers to what Nash (2013) describes as pushing writers to search for rigorous formulas as a method for fixing their scripts. Joanne Yoo indirectly expands on Nash's (2013) point by citing Arthur P. Bochner, who argues that this fixation on rigor “leaves us [creatives] neglectful of imagination” and can “limit our choice and our capacity for human expression” (2017, p.448). I did not want to limit the opportunity to express my imagination by employing a rigid and formulaic structure. Therefore, to ensure the emphasis remained on theme, yet without a rigorous formula, only two key principles from the Porter et al.'s (2002) framework were extracted.

The first was the concept of satellite scenes. Second, were the questions that the authors posit to aid the researcher in understanding more deeply the key narrative functions at play. It is important to note that none of the questions devised by Porter et al. (2002) were used verbatim. This is because the authors classified the satellite scenes into eleven categories and stated that particular scenes serve different purposes. Thus, these categories are not always central to understanding theme. Inherently, the only category of interest was theme itself and the questions were revised to serve the central aim of the new model. That is, to tease out the thematic question, grounded in McKee's “what would happen if,” concerning each of the case study anti-heroine narratives (1999, p.112).



## The theme function framework



**Figure 8.** The *theme function framework*.

The *theme function framework* illustrated in *Figure 8* describes the stages that a screenwriter can engage with to tease out the thematic question for a given narrative. As illustrated, during *stage 1* the writer examines whether a scene advances the story forward or not. If the answer is no, they progress on to *stage 2*. This phase is comprised of two simple narrative function questions. First, what do we learn from this scene? This should be responded to with a short, simple statement. For example, in *Weeds* during the first scene the answer is that Nancy is trying to convince fellow mothers at a school meeting to ban the sale of fizzy drinks. The second question is concerned with who is at the centre of the scene and what the scene expresses about them. For Nancy, it is expressed that she is strong-willed, but she still struggles to lead change and is visibly under pressure as she fails to convince other mothers to support her. In completing steps one and two, it becomes evident that this scene is a satellite scene. It should be noted that this entire process is repeated for each subsequent scene. A table should be created, akin to the one below, to input and organise the data from each scene.

**Table 3.** Scene-by-scene breakdown for teasing out the theme of *Weeds*.

| Scenes | What is learned?                                                                            | What is expressed?                                                                                                      |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | Nancy is working to convince fellow mothers that fizzy drinks should not be sold at school. | Nancy is a strong-willed mother but doesn't have the power to lead change or convince other mothers. She is struggling. |
| 2      | Is engaging in criminal activity.                                                           | Needs money because her husband has died.                                                                               |
| 3      | Nancy is alone.                                                                             | Needs emotional support but doesn't want it.                                                                            |
| 4      | Has two children, Shane and Milus.                                                          | Struggling to raise them alone.                                                                                         |
| 5      | --                                                                                          | --                                                                                                                      |
| 6      | Nancy's son is struggling with the death of his father.                                     | Nancy is apparently not doing enough to support her son.                                                                |
| 7      | --                                                                                          | --                                                                                                                      |
| 8      | Doug reveals that he has been exposing his sexual relationship with Nancy.                  | Nancy is being disrespected.                                                                                            |
| 9      | --                                                                                          | --                                                                                                                      |
| 10     | A local neighbour is caught cheating on his wife.                                           | Men are seemingly untrustworthy.                                                                                        |

|    |                                                         |                                                   |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 11 | --                                                      | --                                                |
| 12 | --                                                      | --                                                |
| 13 | Catches her son, Shane, having sex.                     | Nancy's son does not listen to her.               |
| 14 | Nancy meets her weed distributor.                       | She breaks down in tears— she is not coping well. |
| 15 | Cecelia finds out her husband has been cheating on her. | Extends the belief men are untrustworthy.         |

While completing this table, when a scene is solely concerned with advancing the plot (a kernel scene) simply input a dash into the table column. This is how I tracked where kernel scenes sit within the narrative. Once all scenes have been examined concerning both questions at *stage 2*, the data can be analysed to identify if there are any thematic correlations. Once any top line thematic correlations are made, they are merged with *what would happen if* to render the narrative's thematic question.

In examining *Table 3* for *Weeds*, scene two highlighted early on the thematic question of the narrative. This is supported and extrapolated when reviewing additional satellite scenes as Nancy struggles to raise her two boys whilst also trying to navigate the criminal world. Due to her husband's death, it is clear that Nancy is engaging in criminal activities because she is in dire need of money. In fusing these insights with *what would happen if...*, I defined the thematic question for *Weeds* as:

- What would happen if a wealthy middle-aged housewife's husband died leaving her penniless with children?

Each of the expressions inputted into the table, to some degree, feed into this thematic question. After unveiling the thematic question I was then able to unpack the narrative techniques found in *Weeds* in relation to it. Notably, this was an activity that I undertook for each case study, providing a deeper understanding of how these narrative techniques had been advanced by each screenwriter. For example, in *Weeds* the category *men cannot be trusted* emerges organically from the thematic question when considering Nancy's interaction with Doug. It is common knowledge in Nancy's tightknit community that her husband recently died, resulting in her emotionally desperate and tragic situation. Nancy trusts Doug but is betrayed as he reveals explicit details of their sexual relationship to his peers. Nancy is marked as used goods. This portrayal of Nancy is one answer to the thematic question. A widowed, middle-aged, penniless housewife is vulnerable and often perceived by men as merely a sexual object that they can use to elevate their own status amongst their peers. Plausibly, this is one example of how a narrative technique has emerged from the writer's

thematic question and offered an answer. Before exploring the connection of how the *theme function framework* specifically aided me to locate myself into my story in subsequent drafts of *Angela* (3–5), it is first important to further validate the model’s credibility. This will be achieved through a brief examination of theme in the case study anti-heroine shows *The Killing* and *Fargo*.

### **Examining theme in *The Killing* and *Fargo***

Using the *theme function framework* to tease out the thematic question of each case study narrative was a productive experience. For *The Killing* and *Fargo* I defined their thematic question as:

- *The Killing*: What would happen if someone loves their job more than they love themselves?
- *Fargo*: What would happen if a traditional housewife’s criminal kingpin husband dies and her sons are not worthy to take over the family business?

Teasing out both thematic questions provided a robust critical lens to unpack how particular narrative techniques had been utilised by each writer. In *The Killing*, for example, *single motherhood* is undeniably present throughout. This is symbolised at the end of the pilot episode when Linden opts not to move to California with her new partner, thus adding incredible strain on their relationship. Unable to leave the job she loves, Linden cements her position as a single mother. Arguably, a specific response to the thematic question at this stage of *The Killing* is that Sarah Linden’s job will likely erode her relationship with the people that she loves most. Notably, *Fargo* exploits the categories *men are dumb* and *men cannot be trusted* through its thematic question. This is symbolised by Floyd Gerhardt’s son, Rye, who epitomises *men are dumb*, whereas her other son, Dodd, who is unable to placate his impulsive behaviour, typifies the category *men cannot be trusted*. These categories evolve from *Fargo*’s thematic question, providing the answer that Floyd, the traditional housewife, has no choice but to assume the role of her late husband, otherwise, her family face almost certain ruin.

It is important to note that establishing a thematic question is, of course, an interpretive activity. As Ryan and Bernard state (2003), teasing out theme is left to the

judgment of the researcher. Still, the *theme function framework* does offer a procedure for credibly teasing out a narrative's thematic question and expressions with some accuracy.

### ***Wheel of Techniques: Using the thematic question to locate myself back into the story***

The *theme function framework* aided me in teasing out the thematic question of each narrative. This subsequently enabled me to unpack how each writer utilised specific narrative techniques in order to answer their thematic question. More specifically, it helped me to understand the narrative techniques from a distinct perspective. Instead of considering the narrative techniques as sweeping concepts with no real specificity, I began to recognise them as features that have been consciously or subconsciously employed by the writers to help answer the thematic question. This ultimately results in fresh and purposeful narratives with the authors at the centre of their stories.

In adhering to the principals of theme, as detailed in this chapter, I devised the thematic question for *Angela*:

- What would happen if a mother is both financially stricken and faces the possibility of losing her child?

In establishing this thematic question, I realised that often my scenes were exploring a lack of power and the implications when one is stuck at the bottom of a dominance hierarchy. Uncovering this enabled me to locate myself into the story. As Lee (2015) suggests, it is a worthwhile practice for the screenwriter to transform their unconscious secrets and drives into their consciousness. This is because, in Lee's own words, "the unconscious mind is always one step ahead of the conscious mind" (2015, p.39). I discovered that in unlocking my unconsciousness, my drive centres on the threat of being trapped at the bottom of a dominance hierarchy, financially stricken and with no reasonable way out. The thematic question then manifested organically and this is how I located myself into the story.

By this point, in the subsequent drafts of *Angela* (3–5), I was able to utilise the narrative techniques in a way that complimented my sense of self. Initially, as discussed, the character Jerry Rideout emerged from the category *men cannot be trusted*. However, Jerry lacked both depth and purpose and simply existed to serve the plot. In light of my new critical understanding, I removed Jerry and instead developed the character Eamon Jones. Eamon is Angela's authoritarian stepfather who tries to negatively manipulate Angela's life. Admittedly, it is in a subsequent episode that the narrative technique *men cannot be trusted* is

best symbolised—specifically through Eamon when it is revealed that he is financing Charlie’s custody battle for Clarence. This category, articulated through Eamon, evolved from the thematic question, helping to eventually provide further meaning as to why Angela enters the criminal underworld.

Moreover, this thematic lens also provided space to conclude which properties of a category would complement my thematic question. For instance, during initial development of *Angela* (1 & 2), it was unclear which of the three properties within *men cannot be trusted* (*sexual misconduct*, *infidelity* and *betrayal*) should be utilised. As a result, I explored all three properties in the narrative, thus pushing the envelope of Angela as a victim. For example, *sexual misconduct* is evidenced in the excerpt below (*Figure 9*), which belongs to the first draft of *Angela*. In this scene, Jerry dictates to Angela that she will be doing more than bar work at his club until she pays back the money she owes him.

Feeling the hostility, Jerry jumps up from the piano stall.  
He's not playing anymore.

JERRY

This is what's gonna happen. You're gonna grab your bag and then I'm gonna take you to the club. All the girlie fucking bullshit stuff will be there for you. So you don't look like some tramp straight off the street. Then three important associates of mine will arrive. And they're not just gonna want a young girl. They're gonna want a younger and older girl. Together. So you, and your new dancing partner, will do what ever they want you to do. And if you don't do this then you'll have no choice but to leave town. Because if you don't: I'll make sure heroine flows into your blood stream. Then you can kiss goodbye to any normal life you dreamed of with your daughter. CUNT.

Angela's shellshocked. Unsure what to do.

Jerry breaks Angela out of her trance.

JERRY

FUCKING MOVE IT!

**Figure 9.** Excerpt from the first draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

It is implied in the excerpt above that Angela is expected to perform duties of a sexual nature. My intention in this scene was to further signify Angela as a victim, naively believing this could engender a great sense of sympathy on behalf of the audience and enable Angela’s morality to be even further stretched. In addition, as noted already, I attempted to push the

envelope of audience sympathy for Angela through infidelity. This can also be identified in the excerpt below (*Figure 10*). The context of the scene is that on Angela's release from prison she shortly arrives at her partner Chris's house<sup>35</sup> to discover that he has a new romantic partner, Carly.

Angela approaches the front door and before she can knock, the door creaks open revealing CHRIS JENNINGS, 36, sporting a 1970s Adidas Tracksuit, whilst peppering a cigarette.

Chris is quick to snake through the door before sealing it.

CHRIS  
You can't just randomly turn up.

ANGELA  
Answer my calls and I won't have too!

CHRIS  
Some of us haven't had the luxury of time. I'm a single father.

ANGELA  
Well, somehow you've managed to leave me a list of voicemails. And you knew I didn't have access to my phone until my release?

CHRIS  
(sheepishly)  
Keep it down. The neighbours.

ANGELA  
The majority you were rambling on how much you miss me. Well, now I'm here. Or were you just drunk?

Chris's anxious.

He glances up towards the bedroom window and meets the eyes of a rough looking FEMALE, no older than 30, hawking over him. This is Chris's new girlfriend: CARLY WEST.

**Figure 10.** Excerpt from the second draft screenplay, *Angela*.

In considering both excerpts (*Figures 9 and 10*), and combined with the discussion on betrayal, it can be inferred that the need to advance all properties—*sexual misconduct*, *infidelity* and *betrayal*—served to render a plot-driven story. Ultimately, how I overcame this predicament was by focusing on which specific property or properties organically emerged from my thematic question instead of trying to craft each one into the pilot script. It was the

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<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that in later versions of *Angela*, Chris's name changed to Mikey.

property *betrayal* that best answered my thematic question. This is evidenced when considering the narrative set-up of Angela's on-again, off-again partner and father of her child, Mikey Thompson, who was previously known as Chris in earlier drafts (1–2). Mikey betrays Angela by falling prey to substance abuse once again and running up a debt to a hardened criminal: a debt that Mikey pleads with Angela to resolve. This is illustrated below (*Figure 11*) when Angela visits Mikey in prison during the opening sequence.

MIKEY  
I gots into a bit of trouble. I fell  
back into things. I owes a little bit  
out now.

ANGELA  
I wondered why you were being such a  
wet blanket! It all makes sense now.  
(beat)  
How much?

MIKEY  
£1200.

Angela stares not at Mikey but through Mikey.

MIKEY  
I'm so sorry, Ang'. I'm clean again  
now. Was a blip.

ANGELA  
Don't apologise to me. I don't owe  
£1200.

Mikey delivers a look that says it all - I need your help.

ANGELA  
When?

MIKEY  
By the end of this week.

ANGELA  
Buy more time.

Mikey tries to cut it in, but Angela's not having it.

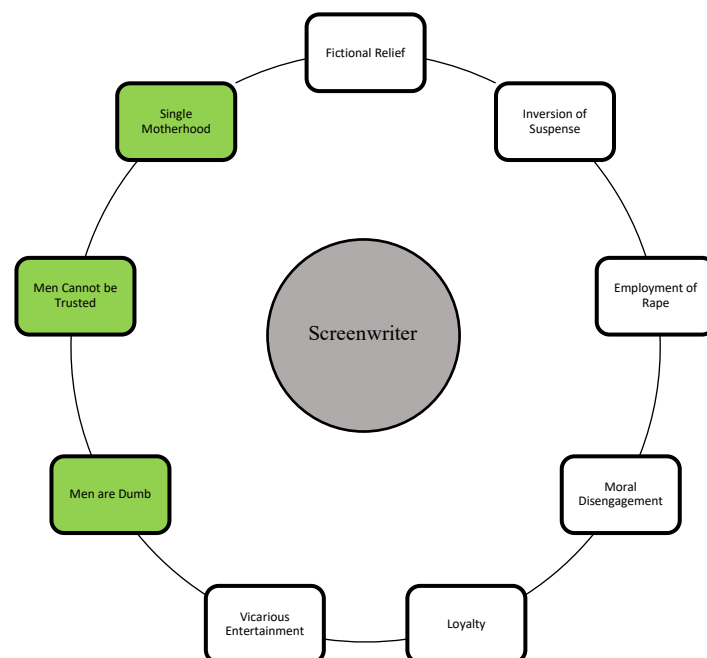
ANGELA  
No, no, no. Listen to me. You need to  
buy more time. I don't care if you  
have to rent out that sugar ass of  
yours. In return, I will find you that  
money. But this is the final, final,  
final and I mean final time. And I  
want you to know that I'm not doing  
this for you. I'm doing this for our  
son.

Mikey understands.

**Figure 11.** Excerpt from the fifth draft screenplay, *Angela*.

At the end of this scene, it is palpable that Angela’s predicament as a penniless single mother is only worsened due to Mikey’s betrayal in rekindling his drug habit. More significantly, in delving deeper into my response to my thematic question, this narrative choice points to my belief that it takes a collective effort to cultivate a loving and flourishing family environment. To explicate, when a woman, such as Angela, finds herself in a situation in which the partner of her child is not burdening their responsibility, it can erode the entire domestic space. This is, in part, why Angela eventually finds herself being taken to court by her sister, Charlie, for custody of Clarence.

In summary, I discovered that the *Wheel of Techniques* was missing a fundamental component in helping my anti-heroine narrative encourage audience engagement. That component was myself. As illustrated below in *Figure 12*, the *Wheel of Techniques* now has an additional component shaded in grey: the *screenwriter*. Screenwriters may find it beneficial to locate themselves at the centre of their story by using this chapter’s concept of the thematic question. This can help screenwriters to craft an anti-heroine narrative that adheres to techniques pertinent to market demands but also ensuring there is space to script a narrative that is meaningful, fresh and has the writer at the centre of it.



**Figure 12.** *Wheel of Techniques* with the screenwriter located at the centre.



## Something different: writing for television

Throughout this chapter, I have explored and presented a fresh approach for utilising theme as a method for locating the screenwriter at the centre of their pilot episode. At this juncture, it is important to acknowledge that throughout the development of my anti-heroine pilot script I have employed paradigms and storytelling principles that were fashioned specifically for film writing. No more apparent is this than with my attempt to advance McKee's understanding of theme, "the controlling idea" (1999, p.112). If I had been scripting a feature film McKee's concept may have been more fruitful because I would have been (more easily) able to identify my "story's ultimate meaning [as] expressed through the action and aesthetic emotion of [my] last act's climax" (McKee, 1999, p.112). In turn, I could have worked my way backwards to ensure each preceding scene fed into my "story's ultimate meaning" (McKee, 1999, p.112) in order to render a purposeful and meaningful script. However, as explored, this approach did not sit congruently with the writing of a sixty-minute pilot script, which is, fundamentally, only the embryonic stages of a story: a story that could exist for multiple episodes and seasons (Mittell, 2015). Thus, creatively speaking, I found the task of locating the final climax of my entire series too limiting.

It should be of no surprise that screenwriters, like myself, are borrowing and remodelling paradigms of practice that were conceived for film writing. As McVeigh argues, "the literature around screenwriting for a contemporary television series like *Big Little Lies* is an emerging field" (*Telling Big Little Lies*, p.64). McVeigh further reminds us that "only a handful of articles specifically focus on matters relating to writing for contemporary series TV" (*Telling Big Little Lies*, p.64). For Mittell, one of the reasons why contemporary television writing has been ignored "is the assumption that television storytelling is simplistic" (2015, p.4). Robin Nelson, in his monograph *State of Play*, suggests this perception of television storytelling as simplistic is due to the accusation that television storytelling was dumbing down culture prior to the emergence of "high-end" television in the late 1990s (2007, p.14). Mittell partly accounts this historical perception of television to the medium's "focus on the centrality of genre formulas, repetitive situations, redundant expositions suited for surfing viewers, and structural constraints based around commercial breaks and rigid schedules" (2015, p.4).

To some extent, it is reasonable to deduce that this early misconception of television storytelling resulted in a lack of critical analysis on "the Creation perspective" (Bednarek, 2015, p.22). After all, why study the practice of television writing if the medium is seemingly

rudimentary and unsophisticated? Fortunately, as McVeigh (*Telling Big Little Lies*) points out, a shift has begun to take place with scholars studying the practice of television writing. This is supported by Redvall and Cook who posit that, “it is an interesting time for studying television,” given it is “changing so fast, with screenwriters and the process of screenwriting being important elements of this change” (2015, p.131). It is worth digressing momentarily to acknowledge that, as discussed in the introduction, Redvall and Cook’s (2015) article emerged from the special issue of the *Journal of Screenwriting* on Television Screenwriting: Continuity and Change, and further evidences this emerging field of study.

Returning to the initial question of why theme may differ from television to film, and why it might be better understood as an open expression, an article by Radha O’Meara (2015), *Changing the way we think about character change in episodic television series*, is useful. I argue this is because theme is inexplicitly linked to character change. O’Meara states that, “[c]haracter change seems to be an essential ingredient of narrative, so television series require frequent character changes to sustain their stories” (2015, p.198). She further adds that, “[c]hanges are the lifeblood of television characters, and therefore the life force of television series” and ultimately “a television series would simply fail to continue without them” (O’Meara, 2015, p.198). It goes without saying that character change exists in film too. However, as O’Meara points out, character change in television can possibly persist “indefinitely” (O’Meara, 2015, p.198). As we have learnt in this chapter, character change through the development of plot alone can result in a meaningless narrative. It is through theme that the plot can organically unfold, thus cultivating emotionally engaging and meaningful character change (Batty, *Journey Into Theme*; Mehring, 1990; Marks, 2007). In a film, a character’s final moment of change is far easier to map out during early development. The same is not true for television, as it may not be clear when a show will end and express this final moment of character change. Therefore, it is possible we will not know, as the writer, the full trajectory of our character’s change and growth during development of a pilot screenplay. This is partly why our understanding of theme for television should be thought upon differently to film.

In conclusion, whilst scholars and screenwriters are aware of the differences of film and television storytelling this has, largely at least, only been explored on a surface level. Much of the literature focuses on the differences in content and consumption instead of production analysis (Redvall, 2013; Bednarek, 2015). Production analysis, in Monika Bednarek’s own words, emphasises “the Creation perspective” (2015, p.222). Whilst Eva Novrup Redvall (2013), in her seminal text *Writing and Producing Television Drama in*

*Denmark*, focuses on the creation perspective, it is mainly concerned with the processes and stages for screenwriters who work on commissioned television shows. As outlined in this methodology, this thesis is centred on the personal poetics employed by the individual screenwriter who operates outside of the television industry but still *for* the television industry. This, as argued, will likely resonate with many screenwriters, both with or without extensive writing credits (Hay, 2014, p.4).

Finally, even though this chapter principally presents how audience engagement can be encouraged for the television anti-heroine through the advancement of theme, the chapter inherently makes a secondary contribution: a contribution to the practice of screenwriting theory specifically for television writing. I argue (as evidenced by my explication of theme) that storytelling principles, which have emerged directly from the doxa of writing for film, should be explored and remodelled for television where appropriate. While, as part of development, a screenwriter may advance principles that have been specifically fashioned out for film writing (Macdonald, 2013; Price, 2017), it is valid to assert that such frameworks may not be fit for purpose. It would, therefore, be beneficial to further explore principles within the contextual practice of television writing.

## **Conclusion**

During the initial development of *Angela* (1 & 2), I adhered to the *Wheel of Techniques* and fixated on the additional categories teased out through textual analyses to aid me in appeasing market demands and stretching the morality of my anti-heroine. Despite this, the initial drafts (1 & 2) of *Angela*, arguably, did not appease market demands or successfully circumvent potential audience disengagement. This was largely because the initial drafts (1 & 2) lacked depth and purpose with an overemphasis on plot. For Beker, I had overlooked the deeper layers of my story, which she terms “aboutness” (2013, p.1). Here, I realised that I was utilising the *Wheel of Techniques* only on a surface level. The categories needed to be understood with more specificity, for example, how a writer could exploit particular techniques to answer their thematic question. To achieve this, the thematic question of each case study show was teased out. In turn, space was provided to explore how each narrative technique had been advanced through the thematic question.

Exploring this connection between narrative techniques and theme enabled me to further understand how engagement had been encouraged. It was pointed out that for engagement to be encouraged, by means of utilising narrative techniques, the writer should consider locating themselves at the centre of their story through theme because this is how

“[a] screenplay can come alive” (Batty, *Journey Into Theme*, p.116). My screenplay came alive by cultivating and crafting a thematic question for *Angela* that underpinned the development of scenes to specifically afford answers to this question. By positioning my thematic question at the centre of the *Wheel of Techniques*, I was able to craft a more meaningful narrative.

Vaage’s (2016) original model is fixated on overriding the viewers’ moral introspection concerning the actions of an immoral figure. Each anti-hero show that she examines is unpacked through this critical lens. However, as experienced during the scripting of *Angela* (1 & 2), the fixation of Vaage’s (2016) principals on engagement led to the neglect of a pivotal and deeper layer of my story—that of myself. It was only through the advancement of the thematic question that I was able to build the foundation for particular narrative techniques to flourish. In fact, I argue that advancing a thematic question, or theme more generally for that matter, is even more important than the narrative techniques themselves for encouraging audience engagement, as it is a key element that gives rise to meaningful action.

It is, however, important to acknowledge that the validity of the model for teasing out thematic questions for each case study show (the *theme function framework*) could be challenged. This is not due to the procedural tenets of the framework but the very fact the results of the framework are down to the interpretation of the researcher. Unfortunately, there is no other way of getting around the fact that teasing out a thematic question is an interpretive activity (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The framework I have posited for achieving this should not be understood as concrete; it is one solution to aid creative development. This interpretation of the framework fits congruently with the understanding that “[s]creenwriting is an activity, not an end product” (Batty, *Screenwriting studies*, p.59). Ultimately, it is down to the individual writer to explore and identify valuable methods for advancing the development of their own screenplay. The *theme function framework* is one tool that can be helpful to aid screenwriters attempting to achieve viewer engagement for a television anti-heroine. After all, Stephen Zafirau reminds us that “commercial cultural production is plagued by deep uncertainties about what will ‘work’ with audiences” (2008, p.101). Incidentally, for this reason, I endorse Nash’s belief that the film writer should consider themselves a detective, which I also argue is true for the television writer. She explains:

Entering the world of a film and searching for the key that might unlock its mysteries is part of the uncertain and often solitary detective work of the screenwriter. It involves intuition and experimentation as well as the difficult job of becoming the internal critic, or analyst, of the work when things go wrong. (Nash 2013, p.151).

The screenwriter, parallel to a detective, will need to experiment and critically engage with a wide range of activities in developing an original anti-heroine narrative that encourages viewer engagement. This is why Eugen Bacon posits that “[w]here writing is both a practice and a discovery, method does not threaten creativity” (2017, p.236). The proposed model—*theme function framework*—does not threaten creativity or discovery: it only enriches it by providing an additional tool to aid screenwriters in encouraging viewer engagement for a television anti-heroine.

## Chapter 3: Voice as a method for encouraging engagement<sup>36</sup>

### Introduction

In Chapter 2, I explored how the initial drafts of *Angela* (1 & 2) lacked both purpose and meaning as a consequence of how I had employed the *Wheel of Techniques*. To resolve this, I first extracted the theme of each case study anti-heroine show. In turn, I framed the *Wheel of Techniques* through a narrative's theme, which enabled me to tease out how each writer had uniquely utilised some of the narrative techniques. Taking this insight from textual analysis, in practice I transformed the *Wheel of Techniques* into a more applicable creative tool. I accomplished this by defining the thematic question of *Angela* and framing particular narrative techniques through it. This process located me at the centre of my pilot script and aided me in crafting a subsequent draft (3) that achieved a sense of purpose and meaning.

While this new understanding of framing narrative techniques through theme aided the crafting of a more coherent and purposeful story, I realised that this alone did not suffice for encouraging engagement. Originality, a key component of a script, could not be achieved solely through theme. After practice, I came to understand that theme had helped provide the foundation for developing an original story; however, subconsciously, an additional layer had also begun to filter into the narrative of my pilot script. This additional layer was my individuality revealing itself during the creative process and providing the screenplay a sense of originality. Further research concerning this additional layer revealed I was, in fact, referring to my writer's voice. Teasing out and crafting my voice led to the development of an original anti-heroine pilot screenplay.

Thus, the aim of this chapter is to provide screenwriters with a method for achieving originality for a television anti-heroine narrative. I will accomplish this by presenting a conceptual framework—*Cracks of Culture*—that screenwriters can employ to aid them in discovering and scripting their voice. The concept is underpinned by leading philosopher and neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio, whose notion is that culture expresses all categories and this gives rise to the social order and structure of a society (2018). However, before the *Cracks of Culture* can be explored in detail, the concept of writer's voice must first be critically explored in terms of its history and, specifically, the discourse centred on its precise definition. This is critical to the concept's legitimacy because voice is a disputed area of study

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<sup>36</sup> A version of this chapter has been published. It is titled, Dean, L. 2020b. Scripting your voice as a method for achieving originality. *Media Practice and Education*, 21 (3), pp.171–184, DOI: 10.1080/25741136.2020.1760588, and can be accessed via: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741136.2020.1760588>.

as it is labelled “fuzzy, slippery, hard to define, and nearly impossible to teach” (Sperling & Appleman, 2011, p.71).

From screenwriting studies to creative writing and composition studies, there has been, and still is, an ongoing debate among theorists on the definition and tangibility of writer’s voice (Elbow, 2007). These disputes are rooted in the origins of writer’s voice that shaped, and continue to shape, its discourse. Therefore, in this chapter it becomes necessary to examine the original work published on writer’s voice by scholars such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault in an attempt to bring clarity to this nebulous field of study. A central dispute on writer’s voice is whether voice is a result of an author’s individuality as reflected by their unique self or if it is culturally manufactured and therefore the self cannot truly exist in a narrative (Riyanti, 2015). Theorists debate whether writer’s voice is singular or plural, such as Bakhtin who states, “our mouths are full of other people’s tongues and voices” (Elbow, 1995, p.5).

After resolving these theoretical contentions, the concept *Cracks of Culture* will be examined. Conclusions reached will be supported by the scripting of *Angela* (3-5). Given my position as a male writer scripting an anti-heroine pilot script, the chapter will also explore how screenwriters can authentically voice a character of the opposite gender.

Due to the principal aim of this chapter, it is first necessary to define originality in connection to the commercial screenwriting market as well as introduce the concept *Cracks of Culture*. It should also be pointed out that to demonstrate the fluidity and flexibility of the *Cracks of Culture*, and the fact it has evolved through my own practice and personal experiences, intimate anecdotes will be found throughout this chapter.

## **Background**

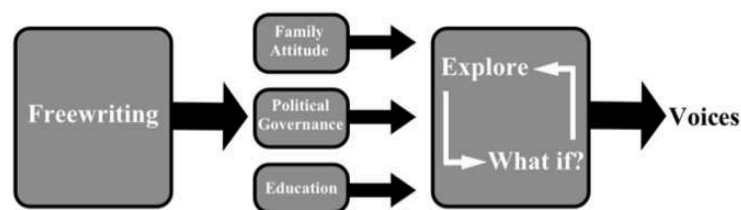
### ***Originality and the commercial market***

The term originality is referenced throughout this chapter specifically as a key component of a screenplay. The Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries denote originality as something “new and interesting,” which is distinct “from anything that has existed before” (Oxford University Press, 2020). However, this is a broad definition and the nuances of originality are typically specific to a discipline (Guetzkow, Lamont & Mallard, 2004). As this chapter is interested in the development of an original screenplay for the commercial market, simply scripting something that is completely new would not suffice. There are fundamental storytelling principles that must be crafted into a screenplay to appease gatekeepers when deciding what is selected for production (Macdonald, 2013). For the market to consider a screenplay, it must

also personify originality. Macdonald points to the general consensus that originality is achieved when “an individual writer brings a unique story and perspective to bear on a set of components” (2013, p.47). This unique story and perspective will be presented as the result of a screenwriter successfully injecting their voice into their screenplay.

In addition, Jule Selbo’s (2015) definition of creativity is used to support the formation of a practical link as to how originality fits within the creative practice of screenwriting. Selbo states that, “creativity is essentially the synthesis and adjustment of existing elements in ways that bring about a *sense of newness*” (2015, p.XII). To achieve an original, commercially viable screenplay, the screenwriter must take existing storytelling principles and synthesise these with their own voice. As noted, originality is not only achieved through voice, but this chapter focuses on this specific method.

### ***Discovering originality through the Cracks of Culture***



**Figure 13.** *Cracks of Culture.*

Figure 13 illustrates the conceptual framework the *Cracks of Culture*. The concept is underpinned by leading philosopher and neuroscientist Antonio Damasio’s (2018) notion that culture expresses all categories and this gives rise to the social order and structure of a society. Damasio extrapolates by describing culture as “the ideas, attitudes, customs, manners, practices, and institutions that distinguish one social group from another” (2018, p.14). He further adds that the key components for shaping a culture are “[t]he arts, philosophical inquiry, religious beliefs, moral faculties, justice, political governance, economic institutions—markets, banks—technology, and science [...]” (Damasio, 2018, p.14). In this sense, culture refers to a complex system of collective intellectual achievements and institutions that foster diverse social groups. The position of a particular social group within a culture significantly shapes the attitudes, beliefs, and ultimately, everyday experiences of those individuals within it.

Thus, the inclusion of *cracks* as part of the title refers to a screenwriter exploring injustices and sufferings that they have experienced because of elements within their own



culture. The categories orbiting *Figure 13*—*educational institutions, family attitudes and political governance*—resulted from reflecting on the hard truths from my own experiences as a child. In exploring these particular categories, cracks within the culture I was raised in appeared. Examining these cracks resulted in the discovery of unique voices that could be filtered into the pilot script to help achieve originality. What these unique voices are will be explored in this chapter alongside how screenwriters can employ the *Cracks of Culture*.

### ***Theme and its relationship to voice***

It should be noted that while theme had subliminally provided a foundation to craft my voice, the process was not linear. This is important because the course of discovering my voice was experimentation. To use Nash's (2013) metaphor again, the findings presented in this chapter were achieved through my role as a screenwriting detective. One who is trying to unlock the mysteries of crafting an original anti-heroine pilot script. I discovered that theme could aid the development of crafting a purposeful and meaningful narrative, but it should not be mistaken as the sole method for achieving originality. Originality requires an additional layer, which I unveiled as a writer's voice. While theme provided space for my writer's voice to flourish, the true relationship between theme and voice was not crystallised until after practice.

This is because, in truth, there are no drafts of *Angela* in which I can point to where theme exists without writer's voice or vice versa. After practice, my theoretical inference is that the two concepts work symbiotically. Therefore, how they interact will be explored in the concluding pages of this chapter through an analogy developed on reflection of what occurred in practice. For this reason, throughout this chapter, the *Cracks of Culture* should be distinguished as an applicable model without reference to theme.

### **Writer's Voice**

#### ***Context and history of the theory of writer's voice***

Before exploring the *Cracks of Culture* in further detail, the concept of writer's voice must first be critically explored in terms of its history and, specifically, the discourse centred on its precise definition. In turn, this will help validate the conclusions reached which resulted in the conception of the *Cracks of Culture*. Exactly what comprises writers voice is nebulous, as no concrete definition has yet been agreed (Yancey & Spooner, 1994; Sperling & Appleman, 2011; Riyanti, 2015). Sperling and Appleman suggest that because there has been different theoretical understandings surrounding voice it has led to it being

associated with a myriad of elements such as “writing style, authorship, language register, rhetorical stance, written and spoken prosody, the self in the text and in discourse, and scores of others” (2011, p.70). This has led to confusion because theorists, practitioners and teachers alike have taken it upon themselves to foster their own definition, culminating in a disjointed understanding of its importance and use (Yancey & Spooner, 1994; Bowden, 1995; Elbow, 2007; Riyanti, 2015). This is best articulated by Elbow who states:

It [voice] means so many things to so many people that it leads to confusion and undermines clear thinking about texts. In any given usage, it's seldom clear what the term is actually pointing to. For example, 'voice' is commonly used to point to a feature that's found only in some writing—yet it's also commonly used to point to a feature found in all writing. (2007, p.182).

Therefore, many educators refuse to teach voice, labelling it as harmful (Elbow, 2007; Romano, 2003). Those that do teach voice, generally, characterise it as Riyanti initially did. He states, “when I first heard the term ‘voice’ used to describe writing, I immediately assumed it to mean the message that writers want to convey through their written pieces” (Riyanti, 2015, p.28). To resolve the confusion surrounding writer’s voice, it is necessary to explore its history. Writer’s voice is not a contemporary concept, since it materialised during the end of the Middle Ages when the author first started to be revered for their individuality (Barthes, 1967). A shift, however, took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the author function began to wane away. Foucault explains in his text *What is an Author*, originally published in 1969, that:

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a totally new conception was developed when scientific texts were accepted on their own merits and positioned within an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification. Authentication no longer required reference to the individual who had produced them; the role of the author disappeared as an index of truthfulness and, where it remained as an inventor's name, it was merely to denote a specific theorem or proposition, a strange effect, a property, a body, a group of elements, or pathological syndrome. (1979, pp.20–21).

Foucault acknowledges that scientific discourses were rooted in researchers building upon one another which, in turn, saw literature attributed as collective not individualistic. It is reasonable to infer that writer’s voice was to be avoided in the scientific community.

Of course, creative literature was (and still is) not typically conceived and crafted through a rigid methodology that requires the exclusion of the writer. In fact, by the 1900s literary discourses were only accepted so long as the author’s name was stated. Foucault adds:

[...] ‘literary’ discourse was acceptable only if it carried an author's name; every text of poetry or fiction was obliged to state its author and the date, place and circumstance of its writing. The meaning and value attributed to the text depended on this information. If by accident or design a text was presented anonymously, every effort was made to locate its author. Literary anonymity was of interest only as a puzzle to be solved as, in our day, literary works are totally dominated by the sovereignty of the author. (1979, p.21).

Indeed Barthes concurs, stating a piece of literature hailed because of the author’s aptitude in successfully injecting their individuality was, in part, a cultural and economic shift of “capitalist ideology” (1967, p.2). Since this shift, the author has played an important role in how contemporary literary work is viewed. This is equally as true of television storytelling as it is of the novel. With the importance of writer’s voice largely agreed upon, the next step is to edge further towards what precisely encompasses voice and to render a succinct definition.

A widely discussed aspect concerning the definition of writer’s voice is whether voice is a true reflection of a writer’s unique self or simply a construction of culture and the self does not exist (Prior, 2001; Elbow, 2007; Sperling & Appleman, 2011; Riyanti, 2015). With that said, Sperling and Appleman (2011) point towards voice being defined as symbiotic. The unique self and an individual’s culture blend together to create a writer’s voice. In examining my pilot script, it became clear that my upbringing, and the culture and resulting social group I was raised in, was always entwining itself in my writing. The culture of my childhood created the unique individual self that exists today. Arguably, this supports both sides of the conversation on writer’s voice. Instead of splitting voice into two theoretically divided categories, which are as an “individual accomplishment” or “social/cultural accomplishment” (Riyanti, 2015, p.39), this research takes the stance that voice is simultaneously social and personal (Prior, 2001).

### **Discovering voice**

The symbiotic relationship between the unique self and how it is shaped by culture is clearly visible in the pilot episode of *Angela* (3–5). My voice penetrates through the situation of lead character, Angela Sparks, and conveys the message that when childhood neglect and abuse (family attitudes) are overlooked by the government, and citizens are left unsupported (political governance), it can be a catalyst for an immoral life and further dysfunctionality. This conclusion is reinforced by Roz Ivanic and David Camps who state that, “[s]ocial forces structure the possibilities available to the individual” (2001, p.6).

This notion formed the foundation for the development of the *Cracks of Culture*. Key components of the culture I was raised in, family attitudes and political governance were examined and reflected upon. This led to finding cracks within that culture: how family attitudes and political governance were largely accountable for the hardships I endured as a child and shaped who I am today. An exploration of these outcomes and resulting voices discovered through the concept *Cracks of Culture* will be explored shortly. However, as I have just alluded to voice as plural not singular, this first needs to be resolved.

Historically, the writer has been attributed to having one voice, but Bakhtin (1981) disputed this through his concept of heteroglossia. For Bakhtin, heteroglossia denotes the process of the author expressing “two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions” (1981, p.324). These polemic voices are that of the speaking character and the refracted intent of the writer. When this is accomplished the two engage in a conversation (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin further adds that this conversation:

[...] represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth, all given a bodily form. (1981, p.291).

Within these conversations, each differing viewpoint is juxtaposed (Bakhtin, 1981; Vice, 1997). This juxtaposition is important as it highlights two differing perspectives about a particular cultural category, resulting in a more complex and nuanced voice. Often in fact, these two voices “fight it out on the territory of the utterance” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.360). A person’s history moulds their beliefs, values and perception of the world they inhabit. One’s outlook as a child is often very different to one’s adult perception, but both are pertinent during the act of writing. Ultimately, these perspectives will battle it out throughout the pilot script.

The battle between voices found in *Angela* (3-5) resulted from employing the concept *Cracks of Culture*, which aided me in specifying and exploring several cultural categories. In reflecting further on the family attitudes surrounding my childhood, it is expressed that neglectful parenting is the source of severe psychological damage to a child, and this is explored through central characters. Most notably, in subsequent drafts (4 & 5) this began to be embodied not only by Angela but also through Clarence, thus filtering in a new voice within the pilot script. That new voice was my child self: a boy desperate for love and security. This is illustrated in the excerpt below (*Figure 14*) taken from the fifth draft of

*Angela* when Clarence finally opens up to his mother about being tormented at school because his Dad is in prison.

Clarence is clearly enjoying his ice-cream...

Clarence's attention is captured by a GROUP of CHILDREN laughing. It's the same kids who were smirking at Clarence during the first school scene.

Clarence smiles at the children. They ignore him. The children whisper amongst each other. Begin to giggle. Clarence's demeanour changes. Sad faced. Angela notices.

EXT. ST. ANDREWS ROAD. MINUTES LATER.

Clarence devours the last bit of his ice-cream. Angela senses that Clarence is subdued.

ANGELA  
You OK?

Clarence nods but doesn't give Angela any eye contact.

Angela stops and so does Clarence. Angela kneels down, now at Clarence's height.

ANGELA  
Talk to me.

Clarence can only look at the ground. Angela gently raises his head by lifting his chin.

CLARENCE  
It's... It's just those kids. They always laugh at me.

ANGELA  
Do you know why?

CLARENCE  
They say Dad's a criminal. A bad person. I hear 'em whisperin' sometimes. They think I can't hear, but I can.

Angela grabs Clarence's hand. Lovingly squeezes it.

**Figure 14.** The fifth draft of the screenplay, *Angela*.

In this scene, I filter in my child self's voice by capturing the complexities of how parental decision-making can have a direct impact on their offspring. Clarence's insecurities and worries are not only a finger pointed at his father but also towards Angela. This is because Angela (still) continues to help Mikey—a man who invariably makes choices that have negative consequences on their son. It is therefore reasonable to question Angela's own judgment when considering if helping Mikey is really in the best interest of her son. While there is no easy answer here, the child self voice adds an additional layer to the conversation and helps to further capture the complexities of parenthood.

Further use of the *Cracks of Culture* guided the examination into an additional cultural category: political governance. This influenced the cultivation of a contrasting voice that could be filtered into the pilot script. This opposing voice is that of my adult self, resulting from government austerity experienced throughout my twenties; it is woven in through Angela's predicament that without a job which pays a living wage, she cannot afford to provide the basic needs for her child. Consequently, this voice expresses the pain and frustration that Angela endures as she is forced to continue to depend on her dysfunctional family.

Returning to Bakhtin's notion—that voices fight it out over utterance—it can be inferred that my child voice places blame on Angela, subtly revealing that she is a neglectful mother and is at fault for Clarence's needs not being met. Conversely, my adult voice whispers that Angela is not to blame and there is wider cultural accountability. It is here that Bakhtin would argue that these two voices, child and adult, are engaged in rhetoric to persuade the spectator to form an alliance. Thus, the two cultural cracks explored, family attitudes and political governance are juxtaposed, affording two points of view. Most importantly, as these two voices are pitted against one another, a complex utterance is rendered. In turn, this supports the development of scripting an original pilot episode.

Bakhtin's heteroglossia, however, only references two voices, and from examining *Angela* (3-5), there exists a third voice battling for utterance. This voice does not resemble any of my own life experiences, but as Elbow (1981) argues, voice can still be authentic when a writer merges their mind with another personality. I came to realise that during the third draft of *Angela*, Angela is an exploration of a life that could have occurred for me. Having had the occasional problem with the law as a teenager, my life had the potential to turn out vastly different. Fortunately, I found support, embraced the opportunity to educate myself and worked hard to achieve a life of morality. Yet, the propensity to ponder a negative future remains a constant. The vines of depression cause me to worry: sometimes convincing myself that I will never complete my PhD, improve my income and have a loving family of my own. This imagined darkness of despair, only looking at the past and future with a negative lens, is an additional voice that bleeds into the pilot script. This third voice is, therefore, termed the imaginary self.

In discovering this voice, writers need to come to terms with their own fears about the *what ifs* concerning the culture in which they exist or have existed. Notably, this *what if* is distinctive to the *what would happen if* outlined in the previous chapter concerning theme. In relation to theme, *what would happen if* is an open question and no answers are necessarily

afforded, whereas, the imaginary self is the writer's response to *what if*.<sup>37</sup> For example, if several circumstances were not as favourable to me, my life could have turned out vastly different. Fortunately, the culture of my childhood did offer me the chance to educate myself (educational institution), which in reflection was my saviour. The higher educational institution in the United Kingdom enabled me to elevate myself and helped steer my life towards a more responsible and fulfilling one. The propensity to ponder a negative future remains a constant, however, and the voice of the imaginary self provides space to explore this.

In summary, the child self and the adult self centre on family attitudes and political governance, and they battle it out in defence of liability as expressed through Clarence and Angela. Comparatively, the imaginary self is a voice that focuses on what might have been. For me, I voice the challenges of depending solely on educational institutions to overcome the cracks, and consequential hardships, experienced within a culture. For instance, while Angela may have a degree and full-time employment, she is still unable to provide for her family: a scenario that festers deep within my subconscious as a possible outcome.

Thus, when Samuel Beckett raised the question, "what matter who's speaking," it can now be argued that it does not only matter, but is critical (Foucault, 1979, p.14). My unique voices, which arose from my lived experiences, cannot be replicated. This avoids me parroting what has already been said and provides originality to my pilot script. A fitting example of this exploitation of voice, as a means for achieving originality, is discernible when considering *The Sopranos* (1999-2007). Writer and showrunner, David Chase, achieved originality by including the volatile relationship he endured with his mother, Norma. After she died, Chase began therapy to address the impact it had on him (Martin, 2013). This influenced Chase's unique premise for *The Sopranos*:

Mafia Mother and Son—The father dies. Junior is in charge. His only rival is his mom. The old victim becomes the ballbuster/killer she always was. She must kill him or vice versa. (Or maybe he should put her in a nursing home.) (Martin, 2013, p.62).

Chase was never a mafia kingpin, nor dreamed of being one, but by including his experience of having a narcissistic mother to the fictional criminal world he had created, he gave the audience a unique perspective and a reason for what may cause psychopathy. In turn, acts of

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<sup>37</sup> Of course, responses were afforded to my theme through my advancement of narrative techniques. This aided me in affording responses that were meaningful and purposeful, particularly when crafting the narrative journey of Angela. However, when offering responses that are grounded in my "voices," it is here that originality is being rendered through my unique perspective as a result of my lived experiences.

violence are not necessarily perceived as senseless to the viewer thanks to Chase's writer's voice.

Considering *Angela* (3-5), this is how I, too, achieved originality. The screenplay explores how a dysfunctional childhood can ebb away at a person in adulthood and endorse a thirst for power, control and, consequently, immorality. Having a grasp over voice provides the opportunity to maximise the possibility of writing an original pilot script. Even when a writer is setting a premise in a storyworld that they may not have experienced, such as myself with setting *Angela* in a criminal world, an authentic voice can still be reflected. Elbow (1981) confirms this by stating a writer is able to merge their voice with someone else's personality. Still, precisely how I discovered these voices and how other screenwriters can discover their own voices needs to be explicated.

### **Identifying voice and strategies for discovery**

The journey writers can take to discover their voice has, according to Bowden (1995), always been inconsistent in terms of methodologies. Gail Summerskill Cummins argues that this is mainly because most definitions fail to "explain how writers come to know their identities" (1994, p.49). For example, Elbow (1981; 1995) suggests that a writer can come to know their inner voice(s) through presence on the page, but what encompasses presence on a page is unclear, thus supporting Cummins's claim. Romano (2003) argues that presence is the viewpoint of the writer, which supports Foucault's notion that "a text always bears a number of signs that refer to the author" (1979, p.22). When retrospectively examining *Angela*'s journey, I discovered my own authorial signs. That is how a neglected and abusive childhood can cause a cancerous wound, consequently, leading to tragic penalties for the individual, their family and, possibly, for the entire community.

Such signs are also persistent when examining screenwriter Vince Gilligan's television shows, *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013) and *Better Call Saul* (2015–). Walter White is presented from the outset of the pilot episode as an intelligent man whose gift for chemistry has only been greeted with an underappreciated and underpaid career in teaching. Due to an array of unfortunate circumstances, Walter White's character arc takes him on a journey of evolving into an abhorrent criminal kingpin. Similarly, Saul Goodman in *Better Call Saul* is displayed as an underachiever; he's a lawyer with undeniable charm and ability, but his brilliance is masked because of his brother's own excellence as a revered attorney. We can deduce that Gilligan's inner voice for both Walter and Saul explores the impact of being second best, specifically, of not fulfilling your talent and the psychological impact this has on a man's



journey in life. This is Gilligan's presence. When diving deeper and exploring Gilligan's stance on the effects of failing to achieve your potential, he utters that this eats away at a man, slowly stripping away his sense of morality. Consequently, as he loses his grip on morality there is unprecedented carnage for all those around him; and, arguably, if we rummaged into Gilligan's subconscious thoughts, it could be said that his own ability to achieve his true potential profoundly troubled him. Gilligan is an immensely talented screenwriter, yet he had to spend a long time on the fringes bidding to secure support for his work (Martin, 2013). With the examples discussed, voice becomes tangible for the screenwriter, but exactly how a screenwriter comes to know that their presence is taking place on the page remains nebulous.

Further reflection on the practice of writing *Angela* helped elucidate this. When scripting emotional scenes between Clarence and his mother, I remembered I had often felt frustrated and anxious. I realised these emotions were not random. In retrospect, they were in fact my unique voices guiding and shaping the screenplay. Arguably, then, when a writer feels they are writing something painfully uncomfortable, it is probable that their presence is emerging on the page. How to further tease out this presence needs explicating.

Tom Romano presents a simple, but essential, method for writers discovering their presence, which is to always speak the "rude truth" and not censor their impulses (2003, p.51). Confidence is a necessity. Writers should question, debate and reorient their stance to evolve their beliefs and share ideas to help create an open and honest dialogue with society. In discovering my own voice in *Angela* (3–5), exploring and admitting the trauma experienced after a childhood of abuse and neglect was vital. Of course, it is easy to understand why writers may not have the confidence to speak the rude truth, since unwanted feelings and memories can be overwhelming and painful (Elbow, 1981). As already discussed, for a writer to pinpoint their presence they need to experience an uncomfortable pain that may result in them believing in things they do not wish to believe (Elbow, 1981). Elbow adds, "you need to write for no audience and to write for an audience that's safe. And you need faith in yourself that you will gradually sort things out and that it doesn't matter if it takes time" (1981, p.309). For me, identifying my unique voices meant opening buried wounds, which helped script my presence onto the page. Throughout this thesis, I have wanted to erase anecdotes and personal conclusions reached. The sense of betrayal, disgust and pain I feel for coming to such conclusions and sharing them with the world is an overwhelming thought, but I find comfort in knowing that I am being honest. This is a journey in and of itself for any writer and does not need to be rushed (Elbow, 1981).

At this point, it is important to remember that discovering voice does not denote a linear process. Having said that, as part of this research, the *Cracks of Culture* (Figure 13) has been developed to provide a more structured method to assist screenwriters in discovering their voice. This new concept is supported by Elbow who states that writers need to listen to the “cracks between the self and the culture” (1995, p.13). He explains how voice comes about through the *cracks of culture*: “the body and its drives, instincts, and impulses on the one side, and on the other the realm of the law, convention, and power” (Elbow, 1995, p.13). Screenwriters need to ask themselves what impact their cultural orientation has had on them since they inhabited the earth. My frustrations existed as a child, and in my teenage years, from the societal pressures of achieving in school, behaving in an acceptable moral way and exhibiting humility to the wider community. Yet, nowhere in my insular family were these pressures supported or ways of living demonstrated or rewarded. Instead, I sometimes went to school hungry and rarely felt comfortable in my own home. To be asked to achieve in society as a young child when your basic needs are not met is unreasonable and exceedingly frustrating. When examining my childhood and identifying the cracks in my culture, it is unsurprising that I have created an anti-heroine who pushes the moral boundaries in acquiring resources, power and respect.

The initial step in the search for voice, when employing the *Cracks of Culture*, is a vital activity that originates from Romano and his exploration of freewriting as originally pioneered by Peter Elbow and Ken Macrorie. This requires a writer to write nonstop “for a set amount of time about anything that enters their mind” (Romano, 2004, p.2). According to Elbow (1981), this pushes a writer to respect the words that appear. Through the practice element of this thesis, freewriting was a key activity in liberating my own subconscious thoughts and feelings. At the beginning of freewriting, it soon became apparent that the scars from the culture I was raised in were still having an impact on me today. I had something unique to voice.

As part of the *Cracks of Culture* concept, screenwriters should subsequently allow time and space to reflect on what they unveil through freewriting. This should help expose cultural categories that they can explore further and to contemplate the *what ifs*. During this stage, screenwriters will need to investigate all the comfortable and uncomfortable aspects of each cultural category in an effort to unearth the cracks of their culture. Writing these thoughts down may help them script their blessings and frustrations within each category in an attempt to identify their unique voices. The entire procedure can be repeated over time,

even when scripting new drafts, as this is a process that requires an individual to commit to ongoing reflection.

### **Voicing for a different gender**

At this point, it is necessary to deliberate the validity of authentically voicing for an incongruent gender, as, in my case, I am a male screenwriter scripting a lead female character. This is important to discuss because a lack of authenticity would surely diminish the chances of scripting an authentic and original screenplay. Therefore, I argue a male screenwriter must acquire an accurate understanding of what it is to be a woman before developing a significant female character. Not only will he have the opportunity to create an authentic representation of his female character, but he will also gain a fresh perspective on the world around him with his newly found knowledge (Kamler, 2001). Writing is a journey of self-development with constant questioning and reorientation of the world around us. Male screenwriters scripting a female character need to explore, question and take on what is generally a new perspective on femaleness to generate an authentic voice. This is essential because, long ago, it was revealed in the field of psychology, sociology and education that childhood perceptions of female and male roles “grow and develop in interaction with environmental factors” (Romatowski & Trepanier-Street, 1987, p.17). It is plausible, therefore, to infer that gender beliefs are deeply ingrained in children by their culture and consequently persist well into adulthood.

An example of male writers misrepresenting women’s experiences is deconstructed by Frances Foster (2017), who explores slavery, unveiling how male writers typically stereotyped female slaves as merely victims of rape and physical abuse. Male writers, moulded by the patriarchy, learn that this is typically a woman’s experience and subconsciously adhere to such conventions when writing. Comparatively, the female writers could authentically express the efforts female slaves played in fighting against the system. Foster notes that female writers “[...] wrote to celebrate their hard-won escape from that system and their fitness for freedom’s potential blessing” (2017, p.621). Naturally, it is plausible to conclude, as Foster agrees, that these writers have been more successful in representing women as “more complex portraiture of their sex” (2017, p.624). Ultimately, a man’s voice can be grounded in mistaken knowledge, influenced by their society (culture) and rendering their female voice inauthentic.

This ignorance was also exercised by myself during the early stages of developing *Angela* (1–3). Originally, Angela’s backstory was centred on the horrific wound of her experiencing sexual abuse as a child, and this became the corner stone of her character. During early drafts of the step outlines, I received feedback that the story’s exploration of abuse was stereotypical. This was further cemented when I attended a conference panel in New Zealand in 2017 that focused on writing memorable female characters. One of the key points made was not to define a female character as a victim of sexual abuse. Of course, sexual abuse does exist for women, but it has been exhausted according to the panel. For that reason, I began considering the experiences of one of my closest female childhood friends who was raised in a highly dysfunctional family. In exploring how she felt throughout her childhood and afterwards, I was able to craft the backstory of *Angela* (4 & 5). Angela’s backstory took shape, presenting a child who had endured psychological torment from her stepbrother, Hugh, and stepfather, Eamon. All of which amalgamated into her allowing Hugh to drown as a child. The avoidance of sexual abuse, and focus on acquiring a deeper understanding of a woman who was close to me, helped to evolve Angela into a more nuanced character.

Critics may still dispute the legitimacy of male writers being able to represent authentic femaleness by means of deconstructing their societal knowledge. However, using Donna J. Haraway’s (2006) concept of a male writer evolving into a cyborg, combined with critical readings as part of this development process, helps reason why a male writer can indeed write an authentic female character. It was not just my observations and reflections of my childhood friendship with a woman, but also the books and journals I studied on gender and feminist theory that helped me deconstruct my overarching societal knowledge about what it means to be a woman. Haraway, in her renowned *Cyborg Manifesto*, originally published in 1985, states, “feminist practice is the construction of this form of consciousness; that is, the self-knowledge of a self-who-is-not” (2006, p.126). In other words, when a male writer deconstructs his cultural understanding of womanhood, he becomes conscious of misconceptions learned. Then, since he has not lived as a woman, he searches for facts, such as critical readings, to obtain a wholesome and authentic experience.

### **Writer’s voice: answering the thematic question**

So far, this chapter has not paid significant attention to the correlation between theme and a writer’s voices. This is because, as mentioned, creative writing is not a linear process, and I was not cognisant of how my thematic question aided the exploitation of my voices until after

practice. There are no drafts of *Angela* existing completely free from elements of either theme or my voices. Therefore, it was only after practice that I was able to discern the true value of the relationship between theme and voice.

The analogy I developed to explain this relationship is that theme is a field that hosts a battle between a writer's voices. Like a battlefield restricted to a particular space and time, once uncovered, theme limits the scope of tools that can be utilised by a screenwriter and aids the development of a purposeful narrative. In this sense, certain characters are pitted against each other on a battlefield armed with specific tools. These tools are the writer's voices. Voice brings the characters to life as they battle it out in a particular time and space on behalf of their individual perspective, giving rise to a complex and layered debate that is unique to the writer. It is through this battle that originality can be rendered and engagement is encouraged.

To give an example of this in practice, it is worth unpacking the thematic question and writer's voices that exist in *Angela* (5). As discussed, theme existed subliminally as I referred to the *Cracks of Culture* to tease out my voices. However, after reflecting on practice, it became clear that these voices had organically evolved as an answer to my thematic question:

- What would happen if a mother is both financially stricken and faces the possibility of losing her child?

Through reflecting on my own childhood experiences as well as my viewpoint as an adult, my child and adult voice engage in an exhaustive battle of who is accountable for Angela's current predicament as structured by my thematic question. This complex and layered battle for rhetoric provides space for me to inject my unique perspective concerning the cultural categories of education, family and politics. It is my imaginary voice, however, which evolves and articulates my answer to the thematic question. During this battle of accountability, between my child and adult voice, my imaginary self voices how the aforementioned institutions' neglect of an individual can push one to engage in an immoral path. Through the teasing out and battle of my voices, expressed through specific characters, my pilot script develops a unique response to the thematic question, helping to render it as an original artefact.

In examining this understanding of theme and writer's voices, screenwriters may wish to advance their story by following more closely the set-up I have just described. Still, as

previously discussed, a writer should consider themselves a screenwriting detective with a focus on experimentation. Therefore, the tools and process outlined should be carefully considered.

## Conclusion

This chapter has not only defined voice, but has also developed a set of considerations for the screenwriter that assist them in discovering their voices so they can filter their individuality into the screenplay. This has not been achieved without resolving several disputes surrounding voice. Notably, Bakhtin (1981) was correct in asserting that we have multiple voices; however, he was inaccurate in maintaining that only two voices are present. Three voices were discovered during the writing of *Angela* (3 & 4): my child self, adult self, and imaginary self, and it was the fusion of these three voices that played a significant role in rendering an original pilot script.

This resonance stems from the fact that while discovering my voices, I endured an emotional pain as I reflected on my childhood and explored its long-term impact. This honest pain was discovered by employing the concept *Cracks of Culture*, alongside employing one of its key elements, as taught by Romano, to speak “the rude truth” (2003, p.51). This helped elucidate the pain inside of me which had resulted from the cracks that existed within the culture I was raised in. It was through these chasms that my own voices evolved and over time were crafted into the pilot screenplay.

Yet, it is important to note that the concept *Cracks of Culture* is inherently flexible. This flexibility enables screenwriters to identify those aspects of culture that are specific to their own injustices and sufferings. This is a liminal space that is exclusive to each writer, since they stand in a position that is unique to them. While it would be convenient to present a framework that provided specific and prescriptive steps for discovering voice, it has been evidenced that voice is too complex. There is a myriad of cultural elements that may shape one’s experiences and perspective; thus, discovering one’s voice is not a perfectly linear process. This, in part, is also why I have been cautious about its direct relationship to theme.

Admittedly, there could be inadequacies in relation to the *Cracks of Culture*, since there exists a dispute concerning the definition of culture. There are also dogmas that state culture is a result of the means of production and therefore culture is only an element of social ordering. Simply put, this discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter. With that said, further research into the foundations that give rise to writer’s voice, and a deeper investigation into the complexities and intricacies of culture and its impact on one’s experiences, may offer fresh insights into what shapes voice.

It is also important to remember that the concept *Cracks of Culture* is not sufficient when a male writer is voicing an anti-heroine character. A male screenwriter should consider deconstructing patriarchal teachings of womanhood and reorientate his belief on what it is to be a woman. A new voice may emerge as he finds his new position through the lens of the opposite gender. This new voice, fused with other emerging voices, is vital in providing the viewer with truth, authenticity and, ultimately, an original engaging experience. This is an essential element that is not present in Vaage's original framework. As discussed, Vaage is fixated on originality in terms of how morality can be stretched through the utilisation of specific narrative techniques. Evidently, while purpose and meaning can be achieved through theme, the originality of an anti-heroine pilot script is accomplished through a writer's unique perspective. It is becoming evidently clear that the successful scripting of an original anti-heroine narrative is far more complex than the simple application of specific narrative techniques.

## Chapter 4: Comprehending the anti-heroine—scripting order amongst chaos through character archetypes

### Introduction<sup>38</sup>

The previous chapter revealed how my writer's voices played a crucial role in crafting an original anti-heroine pilot script. I maintained that originality is entwined with encouraging audience engagement, and a set of considerations were presented for screenwriters to use to inject their voices into their pilot episode to aid them in scripting a unique anti-heroine narrative. When these considerations were referenced during practice, however, I soon learnt from feedback received on my pilot script that I had developed too many characters and plotlines. Angela's character arc was disrupted with a lack of cohesion and focus as I worked to interweave my voices throughout the screenplay. Even with my thematic question clearly defined as I crafted the additional layers of my voices, this did not suffice for articulating the characters pertinent to the storyworld. Here is where my next challenge existed. I needed to maintain my writer's voices, yet remove several characters and plotlines to ensure the audience could easily make sense of Angela's character arc as she enters the criminal underworld.

In need of guidance to aid the development of my anti-heroine along her journey, it soon became apparent that there is little research surrounding characterisation outside the universal concept of the hero's journey. While Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2004) and Christopher Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* (2007) were of some use, their established archetypal paradigms are gender specific to that of the hero (Murdock, 1990; Jacey, 2010). Therefore, the vast majority of archetypes are not entirely compatible with the heroine (Murdock, 1990; Jacey, 2010), let alone an anti-heroine (Rosenburg, 2013). Jacey further establishes the importance of crafting a "number of supporting female characters" when developing a female lead character for television (2017, p.206). Her advice is evident in contemporary television shows such as *Game of Thrones* (2010–2019), *Orange is the New Black* (2013–2019), *Ozark* (2017–) and *Killing Eve* (2018–), to name a few. These shows involve nuanced anti-heroines who are supported by an ensemble of complex secondary female characters.

Despite the selection of shows appearing with more complex and transgressive female characters, there is still an absence of research on appropriate archetypes to support

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the anti-heroine on her journey. The majority of archetypes that exist are inappropriate because they have been conceived for a leading male character (Murdock, 1990; Frankel, 2010; Jacey, 2010). Yet, archetypes are vital because they invite “the psyche to enter the story” (Estés 2004, p.xxxvi). In essence, archetypes offer “systems of meaning” and give audiences a needed entry point for comprehension (Pryor & Bright, 2008, p.74). Without appropriate archetypes to provide structure to a journey, a pilot script is easily vulnerable to becoming unfocused and fragmented. This links in with Peterson’s assertion that “if the structure of culture is disrupted, unwittingly, chaos returns” (1999, p.xi). Chaos indeed captures my own predicament once I had completed the third draft of the pilot script. Chaos existed in my pilot script because there was no applicable archetypal theory available to help structure Angela’s journey.

This should be of no surprise, since Western societies are in the embryonic stages of anti-heroine led television and film screenplays. The aim of this chapter is to contribute knowledge so this void can begin to be filled. More specifically, the objective is to first understand what precisely encapsulates the anti-heroine archetype and then unveil secondary character archetypes that could orbit her to help encourage audience engagement. The proposed archetypes will then be available to guide screenwriters as they work to circumvent chaos and fragmentation while crafting the journey of their anti-heroine. Findings will be strengthened by research that audiences have an innate need for order amongst chaos and, as mentioned previously, archetypes are pivotal in supporting a screenwriter to achieve this required narrative order. During the closing pages, space will be provided to unpack the relationship between theme, voice and archetypes. A differentiation of the purpose of theme and archetypes, as writing tools, will also unfold to avoid any conflation. Before engaging in the crux of this chapter, however, a number of definitions are required. The first of these are chaos and order. The term archetype will subsequently need to be defined and unpacked, as, even today, scholars continue to debate its precise definition.

## **Chaos and order**

The Oxford Dictionary (2019) defines *chaos* as “complete disorder and confusion.” This chapter focuses on the confusion aspect of the dictionary definition, particularly in relation to fictitious narratives. Conversely, *order* is defined as “the arrangement or disposition of people or things in relation to each other according to a particular sequence, pattern, or method” (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). For this chapter, which is specific to screenwriting, order entails a definition beyond the typical understanding of assimilating story events into a

cohesive and climactic order. Notably, order will also denote the development and intrinsic motivations of specific character archetypes that generate narrative events which resonate with viewers. In short, it will be revealed that the successful structuring of narrative events is not enough on its own to circumvent audience confusion. Events must be entwined with archetypal imagery as points of comprehension to offer audiences relatable stimulus to grip onto (Faber & Mayer, 2009; Vogler, 2007). It is typically the pilot episode in which the initial make or break moments occur, determining whether the audience will persist to engage with the entire show (Taub, 2014; Mittell, 2015). At this early stage of consuming the pilot episode audiences are not fully invested. They have entered the unknown; the settings, characters, motives and narrative journey are typically nebulous (Indick, 2004; Taub, 2014). This can be an overwhelmingly chaotic experience and, therefore, the location where forming structure through archetypal theory is most important. Peterson makes a striking statement in the preface of his text *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief*, which supports the unwavering importance of order to aid audience engagement during a pilot episode. He states:

Something we cannot see protects us from something we do not understand. The thing we cannot see is culture [...] The thing we do not understand is the chaos that gave rise to culture. If the structure of culture is disrupted, unwittingly, chaos returns. We will do anything-*anything*-to defend ourselves against that return. (Peterson, 1999, p.xi).

This, I believe, is also true for audiences in relation to television storytelling. The audience cannot see the principles of storytelling guiding them through the narrative. Yet, these structural functions are vital cues to how the storyworld unfolds and help to circumvent audience confusion (Tan, 2011). Audiences consume the narrative frame by frame, episode by episode and season by season in a recognised structure to avoid chaos and meet their subconscious expectations. However, whether these expectations are met can only be concluded after the fact (Tan, 2011).

If successful, it is the result of crafting a range of key functions beneath the surface which protects viewers from enduring chaos (McKee, 1999; Truby, 2007; Vogler, 2007). The aim of this chapter is to hone in on one specific function, namely, character archetypes. For instance, thirty characters could be well illustrated with a clear connection to the main character, and the theme and a narrative framework may provide guidance on how to organise events, however, too many characters can result in a lack of familiarity and a chaotic narrative. In turn, this could result in audience confusion and lead to disengagement. As Peterson (1999) argues, people will do anything to avoid returning to chaos. It will,

therefore, be explored that archetypes are a significant function for rendering a sense of understanding and order for audiences (Indick, 2004). More specifically, it will be revealed that this can be achieved through archetypal theory pertinent to the development of a protagonist, or in my case anti-heroine, and secondary characters, thus enabling viewers to render sense and meaning.

### **Archetypes as a key pillar for narrative order**

As discussed in the previous chapter, a conscious effort was made to allow my writer's voices to filter in after the first draft. For example, Mikey Thompson, the father of Angela's child, Clarence, is shaped by my child voice. Whilst Angela is in prison, Mikey is shown as an inadequate father, unable to provide stability and unconditional love for his son Clarence and setting his priorities elsewhere. Two inadequate parents result in a neglected child who is predisposed to negative judgements by society; a fate I often felt when growing up. At this point, without further development Angela is simply a tragic character. In order to battle this, and demonstrate the complexity of life, my adult voice was essential.

As discussed, my adult voice whispers that there is wider social accountability when citizens are overlooked by their government and left unsupported. This can result in their vulnerability to lead an immoral life—a situation explored as a contributing factor for Angela's own predicament. A number of characters were conceived and woven into the narrative to advance my adult voice. For example, this voice influenced the development of antagonist Johnny Hendrick, who had a history with Angela prior to imprisonment and was instrumental in pushing her into the criminal world. Alongside Johnny's negative influence, Angela's soon to be brother-in-law, Eamon McDonnell,<sup>39</sup> was included to starkly remind the audience that a person's morality and public image are not always aligned. Eamon might be the ideal member of society from the outside looking in, however, it soon became clear through his interactions with Angela that this was not the case. Both of these characters are shaped, to some extent, by my adult voice, which further layers the complexity of her situation. While the characters and voices embodied contribute to the originality of the pilot episode, it became clear after a live reading that Angela was orbited by too many characters. Consequently, chaos materialised early on in the narrative, which is problematic given this is when order is of paramount importance for viewers since their engagement for the anti-

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<sup>39</sup> Eamon McDonnell should not be mistaken for Angela's step-father, Eamon Jones, who was developed in the latter drafts (3–5).

heroine is at its most delicate. In other words, they are less inclined to ride out the storm of chaos this early on in the narrative.

To subvert chaos and render narrative order, I began to conduct research into characterisation, hoping to uncover some useful writing tools. However, as Berry and Brown point out, Aristotle's prioritisation of plot has led to it dominating "much literary theory during the last two millennia" (2017, p.288). Consequently, there is a dearth of research on creative insights specifically concerning characterisation and especially regarding female characters. Carl Jung's text *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*, was the starting point to help cultivate order among the characters orbiting Angela. Jung (1968) believed that people have a set of universal collective ideas and memories. This concept, which he termed *archetypes*, is unconscious to individuals and permeates through characters and themes in our dreams. He supported his claims by referring to how similar characters and themes emerge across cultures through myths, books and films. He maintained that people suffer from repressed inner conflicts that can be resolved when the individual looks within themselves (Jung 1968). In going inwards, they are presented with archetypal characters, spirits or objects that they either face in conflict or are there to support them along their journey.

Jung's theory influenced Joseph Campbell's (2004) archetypal framework the *Monomyth*, which has been specifically adapted for filmic storytelling by Christopher Vogler (2007) in his book *The Writer's Journey*. Since then, there has been a selection of alternative archetypal frameworks published (Macdonald, 2013). Helen Jacey, screenwriter and author of *The Woman in the Story*, promotes the importance of archetypes in stating, "archetypal systems, including Campbell's work, are potentially very useful for character development in that they can stimulate decisions about character functions" (2010, p.321). For this research, archetypal theory was vital in shaping the structure of my anti-heroine's journey.

Archetypes typically sit within a specific category such as mentor, healer, mother, antagonist and shape-shifter, etc. These general categories denote specific characteristics that an archetype encompasses (Faber & Mayer, 2009; Frankel, 2010; Jacey, 2010). While Jung (1968) claimed that archetypes are generally biologically fixed, today this notion is debated. It should, therefore, be argued that archetypes are concrete in the cultural epoch in which they exist; however, they are not biologically fixed, therefore the gender bias that exists must be acknowledged (Murdock, 1990; Estés, 2008). Jung's stance that archetypes are biological ignores the overwhelming evidence that societal structures have long been biased in favour of men (Murdock, 1990). The influence of Jung's theory is observable by the fact that the

majority of archetypal frameworks have been, to some degree, built on his literature, and thus are biased for men. It is plausible that Jung, in his time, miscalculated man's influence on shaping societal values and beliefs on gender. This is why Jacey (2010) and Frankel (2010) argue that many archetypal frameworks are incompatible with women's stories. Jacey specifically states, "women's motherhood role [...] does not fit easily into a pattern in which the human need for intimacy, affiliation and collectivity is relegated to the individual quest" (2010, p.313). Without a clear, female centric archetypal system available to aid the writing of *Angela*, the question arose: can new archetypes for the journey of a female lead character, or specifically the anti-heroine, be developed? If yes, what are these archetypes and what gives rise to their formation? To answer these questions, a specific definition first needs to be reached concerning the archetype.

### **Defining the archetype**

Michael Faber and John Mayer (2009) promote an updated definition of the archetype termed *neo-archetype*. This definition denotes that archetypes are centred on five key characteristics:

1. They are story characters.
2. They embody psychological mental models akin to other schemas—in essence, they have been learned.
3. They "elicit intense emotional responses when encountered" (Faber & Mayer, 2009, p.308).
4. They work at an unconscious and automatic level.
5. They are culturally recognisable.

Faber and Mayer further expand on the neo-archetype definition as "learned conceptualizations as opposed to being predisposed through evolutionary history" (2009, p.309). Notably, this learned cultural recognition of an archetype explains how cultural influences have led to women being associated with "weakness" and "emotionality" (Murdock, 1990; Frankel, 2010), which Margaret Tally argues has limited "the range of understanding by which we might usefully begin to identify female anti-heroines" (2016, p.7). This is why Alyssa Rosenberg (2013) and Jacey (2010) recommend, at least implicitly, that we build our own archetypal systems. Furthermore, Robin Mathews (2002) and Faber and Mayer (2009) note that it is generally understood that archetypes evolve, and as our current culture continues to expose gender inequalities, female archetypes are also evolving within this cultural shift. Thus, there is a space to generate female-specific archetypes, particularly to aid screenwriters to develop nuanced television anti-heroine shows.

The importance of developing relevant character archetypes is articulated by Estés who states that archetypes invite “the psyche to enter the story” (2004, p.xxxvi) as they offer “systems of meaning” (Pryor & Bright, 2008, p.74). As our culture shifts and evolves, I argue that these systems of meaning become even more important to ensure narrative order with the upshot that audience engagement is encouraged. Pryor and Bright discuss how it is innate for humans to try and “comprehend their world and themselves” (2008, p.72). Amundson (2003) further adds that people will always look for patterns and narratives to disclose fundamental structures for interpreting human experience. Tan emphasises the importance of these patterns that act as narrative stimulus and, in turn, aid audience understanding of the storyworld, assuring them of further comprehension “at a later stage” (2011, p.86).

It should be noted that stimulus denotes a point, or points, of understanding and a familiarity within a narrative to prevent confusion or disorientation. In essence, for an audience to comprehend and engage with a narrative there needs to be a lucid point of entry to generate meaning and understanding. It is here that the true significance of archetypes can be discerned because they function as recognisable narrative stimulus, providing a layer of meaning for viewers. As Peterson states, “we need to know what things are [...] to keep track of what they mean—to understand what they signify” (1999, p.3). Peterson is alluding to people having an innate need to make sense of the world they inhabit, which I believe is also true of television viewers concerning a particular storyworld. In the case of a pilot episode, there is much the audience does not know, but archetypes are loaded with subtle and recognisable information that encourages viewers to engage with the narrative (Jung, 1968; Estés, 2004; Berry & Brown, 2017). The audience identifies with particular characters who embody traits that personally resonate. In turn, the audience can grasp a deeper level of comprehension regarding the narrative direction and interplay between characters. Of course, as Tan (2011) reminds us, it is only at the end of a narrative that the audience will know if the goods have been delivered.

Archetypes should not only be discussed in terms of the audience since they also provide guidance for the screenwriter (Jacey, 2010). Particular archetypes organically fuse together, for example, the hero and sidekick, and this supports screenwriters to ensure each character they develop adds value to the narrative journey of the protagonist. The result is a cohesive character-driven pilot episode that avoids chaos and audience disorientation.

Having now established the definition and importance of archetypes, I will explore the encompassing structure of the anti-heroine archetype and the secondary character archetypes orbiting her journey.

### **Anti-heroine as an archetype**

The anti-heroine embarks on a path of savagery and rejection of culturally constructed morals and femininity as she progresses into the criminal world. As suspected, research discussed so far has revealed that she is distinctively different to the anti-hero who does not entirely reject the cultural construct of masculinity, but instead, in some sense, embraces it (Vaage, 2016). The anti-hero's journey mirrors elements of the hero's journey; however, he ultimately rejects this path due to his moral bankruptcy. Despite his flawed judgment to follow this dissolute path, the audience is still able to make sense of why he made this decision. In contrast, the anti-heroine opposes female cultural expectations that, to some extent, could be a reason for her rarity on screen (Peters & Stewart, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). As a consequence, it is a harder endeavour for the audience to make sense of her journey than that of the anti-hero who still embraces masculinity (Rosenberg, 2013; Tally, 2016). Without appropriate cues emerging from an anti-heroine's actions, grounded in this cultural web, a storm of chaos can develop that the audience will find themselves lost within. Immediate and recognisable entry points are, therefore, required throughout the narrative for the viewer to make sense of her journey (Plantinga, 2009; Tan, 2011).

In the writing of *Angela* (1 & 2) this lesson was learnt, as employing key narrative techniques teased out from the journey of an anti-hero failed to encourage audience engagement. This, however, should not be a surprise. Murdock stated long ago that "so many women having taken the hero's journey, only to find it personally empty" and have followed this model because no alternative paradigms exist to emulate (1990, p.10). Murdock continues to posit that "the path of the heroine is not easy; it has no well-defined guideposts or recognizable tour guides" (1990, p.3). The heroine will typically define herself in terms of what she does not have or has not accomplished. This is the result of a patriarchal structure that upholds values centred on individual recognition and achievement (Murdock, 1990).

An outcome of this is the manifestation of women repressing their femininity and instead masquerading characteristics associated more so with masculinity as a means of achieving societal status and recognition (Irigaray, 1985; Butler, 1990; Jacey, 2010). In the past, although some would argue this is still true today, femininity in Western culture has often been considered inferior to masculinity. Often, women who embrace male behavioural

traits and clothes give signals of clout and authority. However, when men embrace femininity they are often perceived as weak and inferior (Murdock, 1990; Frankel, 2010; Jacey, 2010). Murdock believes this is highly problematic because, fundamentally, “women will never be men, and many women who are trying to be as good as men are injuring their feminine nature” (1990, p.14).

Western society is now at a time where, as discussed, culture is evolving and femininity is steadily becoming more positively associated. The lead character, Piper Chapman, in *Orange is the New Black* is one of many notable representations of this progression. Recognising this shift and developing an anti-heroine who grapples with this identity crisis, instead of simply embracing masculine traits, is vital to encouraging audience engagement (Frankel, 2010). Understanding and exploring what precisely encompasses an anti-heroine’s identity crisis was a challenge during the third and fourth draft of *Angela*. To resolve this challenge, and ultimately craft Angela into a more nuanced character, Estés’s principles surrounding an identity crisis were advanced. Estés teaches that one must look inwards to “find the resources of a richer interior life—one that can also inform outer life” (Estés, 2004, p.lxi). This understanding was then explicated through the application of Jung’s shadow. Jung (1968) describes the shadow as either an internal or external archetype who embodies both light and dark aspects. Jung’s internal archetype can be extended through John Truby’s (2007) classification, ghosts of the past. This is, in part, the hero’s or heroine’s inner psychological wound that is the source of their weakness (Truby, 2007). In the typical hero or heroine’s journey, viewers are presented with an external shadow which attacks their internal shadow.

During the scripting of *Angela* (1–3), initial drafts failed to explore the internal shadow. Instead, a number of external antagonists were developed with the hope of guiding the viewer to excuse the immoral character arc that Angela was journeying on. It soon became apparent that the narrative had become bloated and chaotic with too many external antagonists physically and psychologically attacking Angela, thus inhibiting her character arc. In reflection, it was discovered that the focus needed to be on Angela’s internal shadow as the main antagonist for a sense of order to be rendered. While there may be an external antagonist or two, above all else, Angela is her own worst enemy. Her internal shadow is herself, attacking her own inner wound. Again, this is congruent with Estés (2004) who states that one must look inwards. Jung eloquently captures the essence of this journey inwards by describing how one’s internal shadow may begin to appear:



[...] whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the persona, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face. (1968, p.20).

Angela's mask to the world signifies independence, ambition, resilience and intelligence.

The masquerading of these characteristics has been, to a large extent, the influence of culture—the need to be more than oneself in order to be revered (Murdock, 1990). For Angela to remove the mask and confront her true self (her inner demons) would go against everything that she has been taught. This would be chaos for her. Though ironically, this masquerade is an important point of comprehension for the audience that initial drafts of *Angela* (1–3) failed to effectively capture.

In subsequent drafts (4 & 5), to set up a believable dichotomy between Angela and her internal wound, Angela's ghost of the past was scripted to centre on her allowing her stepbrother, Hugh Jones, to drown. As a young girl, Angela allowed Hugh to drown because of the torment she endured on a daily basis from him and her stepfather. Whilst this is not revealed in all of its entirety within the pilot episode, the dream sequence that unfolds in the first scene alludes to Angela's culpability in Hugh's drowning. This is illustrated in the excerpt (*Figure 15*) below.

EXT. PIER. 1986 - FLASHBACK.

OVER BLACK.

The piercing sound of SOMETHING violently battling against a pool of water is heard.

We're now --

Looking straight into a desperate pair of eyes who belong to a BOY no older than ELEVEN.

The boy frantically flaps his arms, desperately trying to keep his head afloat.

He pleads for help, but the muddy water keeps flooding over his head, flushing his words away.

He fights to swim to the pier, flapping, coughing and kicking for his life.

Reaches the surface. Devours a gulp of air. Finds the energy to reach out towards something or someone.

BOY  
PLEASE!

His eyes charge with fear after his call goes unanswered. His head sinks below the surface.

Desperate for air, the boy battles against the water, stretching his hands for the surface. Sun rays scatter the water's surface. A shining light. Hope.

Still holding his breath, hands only touching distance from life. AND --

The shadow rises. Their silhouette acts as a cloud blocking the light. Overwhelming PANIC sets in. This could be it. The boy's little fingers stretch as far as they can towards the surface.

He fails.

His mouth opens and the ocean water drowns away his screams.

The boy's lifeless eyes fade with each passing second. The shadow still hawks over him.

Just as his eye lids close forever, we cut to --

**Figure 15.** Excerpt from the first draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

Ultimately, it is revealed in the subsequent episodes of *Angela* (as outlined in the television bible) that a young Angela allowed Hugh to drown because she was always second best to him, having never received the love and respect from her stepfather that she craved. In young Angela's eyes, she saw the only advantage that Hugh had over her was that he was a

boy. This, combined with cultural cues portraying femininity as second to masculinity, confused and infuriated her. Consequently, this amalgamation of cultural teachings and Angela's ghost of the past casts her to become her own worst enemy. In particular, her wilfulness to repress her childhood memory of Hugh drowning often spills into her life, perpetually haunting her. Equally, the culture Angela was moulded in, Western society, failed to acknowledge individual and external achievements that celebrate the feminine (Jacey 2010). Incidentally, Angela's innate desire for respect and recognition, and failure to obtain it, tragically leads her child self to allow Hugh to drown.

Now, as an adult, Angela refuses to look at her reflection in the mirror, being too fearful to peel away her mask and see her true self. As Jung explained, "the meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well" (1968, p.21). Jung further adds that the meeting with oneself subconsciously emerges in a person's dream. According to Jung, the dreamer "descends into his own depths, and the way leads him to the mysterious water" and whomever reaches the depths of the water they are shuddered (1968, p.17). This is, however, not because of what Jung attributed to biological and universal reasons but instead because of what they had been led to believe due to cultural teachings (Murdock, 1990; Jacey, 2010). It is important to understand that this is not a discussion on one specific dream but abstract signs that permeate one's dreams over time. If a person acknowledges these signs, and meets with their true self, it is a gradual and repetitive journey.

Jung's concept influenced the development of the dream scene in *Angela* (3–5), as illustrated in *Figure 15*, when Angela's eyes scan the ocean ignoring Hugh's calls for help as he desperately reaches his arms out.<sup>40</sup> Angela frantically awakes. Indeed, as Jung describes, Angela is tormented. She allowed Hugh to drown to satisfy her intrinsic desire for individual recognition. Yet, the adult Angela cannot admit that her path and actions are heavily influenced not by her innate personality but as a direct result of the cultural teachings that surrounded her as a child. This entire set-up acts as an additional point of comprehension for the audience. We are taught to strive for personal success and consequently, at times, act out immorally to achieve what society deems successful. For the anti-heroine, this is important, as it fosters an audience understanding that her journey towards moral bankruptcy is heavily entangled with cultural teachings. Audiences can resonate with the anti-heroine because they

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<sup>40</sup> At this stage of the narrative, the audience do not know for certain who is watching Hugh drown. However, it will be revealed in a later episode that the shadow hovering over Hugh belongs to Angela.

recognise in themselves, or people that they know, the suffering that exists when one strives for personal recognition, naively believing it will lead to a sense of wholeness. Roseler relays the value of recognition by outlining how numerous psychologists reference archetypal stories when engaging with their clients:

Analysts can help their clients by showing them that for their particular experience of life and also for their suffering there are archetypal stories that can give meaning and a sense of coherence to all of their experiences. These stories enable them to move towards wholeness in the midst of their experience and their suffering, by including them into their life narrative. Their experience is mirrored in these archetypal stories that have been part of humanity for a long time. (2006, p.583).

The anti-heroine, as an archetypal figure, is characteristically personified by suffering at the hands of her culture. This acts as a point of comprehension for the audience, thus providing order for them as they grasp that, in part, the anti-heroine is like them, searching for wholeness and meaning. Although, the anti-heroine refuses to listen to her instincts and tends to solely rely on cultural teachings, committing to a journey of self-destruction.

### ***Defining the anti-heroine archetype***

To summarise, the anti-heroine embodies four characteristics that are key to defining her as an archetype:

1. She grapples with an identity crisis, repressing her femininity.
2. She wrestles with her intrinsic motivation for personal success.
3. Her main shadow is her internal shadow.
4. She ignores her moral compass and relies solely on cultural teachings.

The anti-heroine grapples with an identity crisis, as she represses her femininity in order to fully embrace and be associated with masculine norms. This is because, in her own mind, by embracing masculine characteristics she can achieve status and recognition. However, this dichotomy results in her not fitting into any traditional masculine or feminine roles, thus resulting in her pursuing an unknown path. The anti-heroine wrestles with her intrinsic motivation for personal success as encouraged by society, whilst also fulfilling the cultural expectation that a woman is mainly responsible for the raising of her offspring. Her main shadow is her internal shadow, resulting in her continuously attacking her own inner wound. The anti-heroine, unlike the heroine, refuses to acknowledge and face her true self. Therefore, she does not experience a revelation about her past or regarding her misplaced cultural beliefs. It is this refusal to look inwards and experience a revelation that tragically results in the anti-heroine journeying into a morally ambiguous path. The heroine, unlike the anti-

heroin, does look inwards and experience a revelation, thus enabling her to heal her wound and take a moral path. As a direct upshot of the previous criteria, the anti-heroine, while searching for wholeness and meaning, refuses to follow her moral compass and solely relies on cultural teachings, consequently journeying herself into self-destruction.

It is important to note, that upon reflection, these criterions described were also found to varying degrees in each of the case study anti-heroine shows. Nancy Botwin, Sarah Linden and Floyd Gerhardt are all single mothers, and in examining each character further it is plausible to infer that they wrestle with, what Murdock (1990) describes as, the male model of success. Arguably, in contrast to the supporting female characters orbiting their storyworld, Nancy Botwin, Sarah Linden and Floyd Gerhardt exist in a liminal space: unable to identify with purely masculine or feminine roles as they are left to burden the role of both breadwinner and the raising of their children alone. Ultimately, these anti-heroines fail to come to terms with their deep wounds and remain blind to their misguided cultural beliefs. Tragically, their stories arrive at a point of no return. I argue that as a viewer, we can make sense of their chaotic journeys, to some extent, through these specific elements that comprise the anti-heroine archetype.

### **Secondary character archetypes**

Throughout each stage of my research, the literature I discovered unequivocally focused on the anti-heroine, omitting any exploration of secondary characters orbiting her journey. Naturally, when drafting earlier versions of *Angela* (1 & 2) such literature influenced creative decision-making and, in part, guided me to neglect the crafting of appropriate secondary characters. Applying archetypal theory only to the anti-heroine is not adequate for truly rendering a sense of narrative order. Pertinent archetypal secondary characters are necessary to support the anti-heroine on her journey. As Jacey states, a female protagonist endorses audience engagement alongside “a number of supporting female characters” (2017, p.206). The anti-heroine works collectively with particular secondary character archetypes to afford further points of comprehension that enable the audience to make sense of the chaos that she is experiencing. What characteristically encompasses these supporting characters was initially nebulous. It was only after reflection on my own creative development, combined with gender and archetypal theory, that three secondary archetypes were generated. These archetypal figures work symbiotically with the anti-heroine, providing additional points of comprehension for the audience. The result: order is rendered amongst

the chaos, which, in turn, encourages continued viewer engagement with the anti-heroine. These three supporting archetypes are the *mother*, *father* and *mentor*.

I should note that crossovers could be identified concerning the secondary character archetypes presented since certain elements are also specific to the heroine's journey. This is indeed correct, however, what differentiates the anti-heroine from the heroine is her interaction with these archetypal categories. It could also be said that the plethora of secondary characters could be credited as an issue centred on plot. It is therefore important that I differentiate characterisation and plot, whilst also defining the relationship between the two components.

### ***Characterisation versus plot***

Generally speaking, characterisation denotes the traits and backstory of a given character (McKee, 1999; Truby, 2007). Indeed, the definition of characterisation is broad and fluid, but it is reasonable to conclude that it is centred around the human qualities of a character that will, in some form, be explored throughout a story. In light of this understanding, if the characterisation of a character has been well represented, the character should organically drive the events of the story, rendering the action meaningful and purposeful (Batty, *Screenwriting studies*, pp.116–118), and thus resonating with viewers.

Plot, however, is specifically concerned with the sequencing of events or, in other words, the action that unfolds. It could be deduced that my own issues concerning *Angela* (the development of too many characters) were centred on the deficiency of my sequencing of events (*plot*). I argue this inference would be inaccurate, since it was the characterisation of my characters that informed the plot of *Angela*, and therefore influenced the sequencing of events.

Notably, during my initial attempt to develop an anti-heroine that was relatable, memorable and uniquely engaging, I drew inspiration from my lived experiences. Human beings are indeed shaped by an unfathomable number of people. Therefore, when aiming to craft an authentic representation of a character—in my case Angela—drawing from lived experience can result in the development of a plethora of secondary characters. However, there is simply not the space to explore countless characters in a two-hour film or one-hour television episode. This is why archetypes, particularly secondary archetypes, are significant. They afford guidance concerning decisions about which characters should be present within a storyworld through criteria specific to their characterisation. The upshot of this is that

archetypes can help render narrative order, grounded in characterisation, which then informs the organic development of plot.

### *The mother archetype*

My original character biographies and step outlines characterised Angela's mother, Mia Jones, as weak and submissive: deficient of a nurturing and maternal instinct. Her backstory revealed that her first husband died while their two children, Angela and Charlie, were young. Mia did not want to cope with the burden of raising and providing for their two children, so she quickly found a new wealthy partner, Dr Eamon Jones. Eamon, however, treated Angela poorly, ostracising her and constantly favouring his own child, Hugh Jones. Mia was submissive to this behaviour so she could selfishly experience financial security, and this eventually led to Angela, as an adult, resenting her mother and, in particular, her mother's inability to nurture her. My original intention was to slowly reveal that Angela had suffered during her childhood at the hands of a selfish narcissistic mother to subtly encourage audience sympathy for her. However, the feedback I received was that this interplay between mother and daughter was underdeveloped. In essence, it lacked complexity. It became clear that Mia, as a mother figure, needed to be more than a simple narrative function for eliciting sympathy. Mia's backstory and character traits required further development. In need of creative guidance, I referred to Murdock (1990) and Jacey (2010) who suggest that the successful character arc of a heroine's journey should be entwined with the rejection of the mother archetype.

To expand upon this concept, Jacey states that the heroine symbolises "a metaphoric journey that articulates the difficult process of psychological separation from the mother that the girl attempts but never quite succeeds" (2010, p.315). Jung himself hinted at this too, stating, "that in the daughter a mother-complex either unduly stimulates or else inhibits the feminine instinct" (1968, p.86). Murdock explores this further when she attributes the daughter's rejection of her mother after she learns from her mother that to be a woman can equate to being powerless. Murdock states:

A young girl looks to her mother for clues as to what it means to be a woman, and if the mother is powerless the daughter feels humiliated about being female. In her desire not to be anything like her mother, she may strive for power at the expense of others needs. (1990, p.19).

In this sense, the heroine learns as a child that being a woman might mean one will struggle to acquire individual agency. The ability to evolve intellectually and pursue a rewarding

career, offering financial independence, is perceptively an uphill battle for a woman in comparison to a man (Butler, 1990; Murdock, 1990). The daughter realises this and in her own mind becomes intent on not becoming powerless like her mother. As Murdock adds, “the heroine’s reaction to a mother’s total dependence on her husband” is to be “more self-sufficient than any man” (1990, p.66). The heroine feels she needs to overcompensate. She will do her utmost to dissociate herself from traditional roles attributed to women, such as caregiving (Murdock, 1990). As Murdock points out, which is still true today, “[m]ale norms have become the social standard for leadership, personal autonomy, and success in this culture” (1990, p.29). This is why the heroine “may go through a period of rejection of all feminine qualities distorted by the cultural lens as inferior, passive, dependent, seductive, manipulative, and powerless” (Murdock, 1990, p.14).

At this point it could be argued that Murdock’s work is outdated and Western civilisation today is more progressive, though Jacey (2010) maintains that, whilst she does not subscribe to everything Murdock posits, Murdock’s work is still relevant and useful for contemporary writers, even influencing her own work. She states, Murdock’s work “allows more recognition of the reciprocal nature of relationships and affective bonds” (Jacey, 2010, p.315). In addition, Frankel argues that the essence of the heroine’s journey is “[a]chieving adulthood through love and intuition, understanding that the craft of weaving and the passivity of silence can be mightier and more stalwart than the hero’s sword” (2010, p.18).

Of course, Murdock and Jacey’s critical and creative work is specifically for the heroine’s journey who is on the path to recognise and engage in reciprocal relationships outside of personal gain. The heroine is able to evolve along this path with the help of her mother who, despite her own weaknesses, helps her daughter to see that rejecting all things feminine is not the answer to achieving a sense of wholeness (Murdock, 1990; Jacey, 2010). Conversely, the anti-heroine has a much harder time accepting her mother as a mentor. She lacks empathy for her mother’s situation and continues to embark on a selfish path of criminality. The heroine learns to embrace her femininity, fusing it with masculinity and therefore leading a wholesome life. She becomes a stronger person, and far better equipped to navigate the world and maintain meaningful relationships because she is secure in herself. Contrastingly, for the anti-heroine, as she tries to individuate herself as strong, capable and competent in navigating the world she inhabits, she fails because she refuses, in part, to learn from her mother and embrace her femininity.

These new insights influenced the development of Mia, who became a more complex character in subsequent drafts (4 & 5). After the sudden passing of her first husband, instead



of jumping at the next man who could take care of her, she secures a position as a nurse. This naturally led to further development of Eamon since Mia was no longer drawn to him solely for his financial security. Eamon became more likable. While he still put his son Hugh ahead of Mia's children, this was not motivated by an inherent evilness but instead a deep love for his biological child. In light of this, Eamon's actions as a father figure were not that abhorrent, which only burdens the responsibility more heavily onto Angela for allowing Hugh to drown. Yet, Angela cannot accept this. Despite her mother showing strength of character, she despises her for allowing Eamon and Hugh into their life, subconsciously blaming her mother for her own actions against Hugh. Ultimately, Angela's pursuit for individual success has led her not only to reject her femininity but also her own mother. This can be discerned in the pilot episode, which is evidenced in the excerpt below (*Figure 16*).

Clarence begins to walk before disappearing into the house.

MIA  
You have an intelligent boy there.  
Gets it from his mother.

ANGELA  
His cute looks, definitely. But his  
intelligence is all dad.

Mia doesn't respond. Angela surveys Mia's flowerbed.

MIA  
You wanna see?

ANGELA  
I gotta go. Another time.

MIA  
Two minutes of your time. That's it.

ANGELA  
I should really go check on Clarence.

MIA  
Come on. Please.

ANGELA  
It really doesn't suit you.

Mia's confused.

ANGELA

That whole guilt thing you got goin'  
on there. Pathetic.

Mia defensively raises her hands. Angela turns her back,  
heads for inside the house. Mia goes back to her flowerbed.  
Suddenly stops.

MIA

Angela.

Angela turns. What now?

MIA

I know I've made mistakes. I get it.

ANGELA

You're a good nan. I appreciate what  
you've done since Mikey. You know.

MIA

That's not what I'm after.

Angela shrugs her shoulders - then what?

MIA

I just... I just want you to be happy.

Angela stares at her mum, wanting to tell her that it has  
never really felt that way. Mia's eyes water, but Angela  
can't be dealing with this right now so she disappears.

Mia returns to her flowerbed. Wipes away a tear.

**Figure 16.** Excerpt from the fifth draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

The underlying tension between mother and daughter is alluded to here as Angela rejects Mia's olive branch to mend their relationship. Ultimately, Angela wants the power and independence that is typically associated with men. She aspires for this so she seeks the approval of the patriarchy by following their "model" of success (Murdock, 1990, p.29). This blinds her from building flourishing relationships that are also necessary for a balanced life (Murdock, 1990), such as the one with her mother.

In reference to the case studies, the mother archetype can be discerned in *The Killing*. Sarah Linden is warned by her foster mother, Regi Darnell, that her obsession with detective work is sabotaging her relationship with her fiancé. The pilot episode pays attention to Sarah's personal relationships as it builds towards Sarah and her family starting a new life in California. However, Sarah decides not to leave her job and stays in Seattle. The viewer grasps the torment Sarah endures in attempting to leave her job. Sarah cannot bring herself to give up her personal autonomy and financial independence, which she fought hard to earn,

particularly as a woman working in the police force. When examining *Fargo* and *Weeds*, Floyd Gerhardt and Nancy Botwin's mothers are not present in their lives. These characters embrace a male model of success and struggle to develop loving relationships with those close to them, rebuffing the mother-like characters trying to guide them.

In summary, the mother archetype nurtures the anti-heroine as she would the heroine, but the anti-heroine rejects her mother's mentorship of how to navigate the muddy waters of masculinity versus femininity. The anti-heroine, who largely identifies with her male compatriots, cannot respect her mother's guidance. As a result, the anti-heroine fails to develop compassionate caring relationships with the people who are most important to her. The anti-heroine's engagement with the mother archetype acts as a point of comprehension for the audience. This is because the audience understands, through lived experience, how easy it is to fall into the myths perpetuated by cultural gender norms—particularly when women are intrinsically motivated to overcompensate, having been denied equality throughout history and even today (Butler, 1990; Murdock, 1990).

### ***The father archetype***

The mother archetype cannot be fully exploited without the inclusion of the father archetype. According to Murdock (1990), in combating cultural biases towards the female gender, the heroine can avoid viewing herself as powerless and inferior by receiving her father's approval and encouragement from a young age. In turn, this results in "positive ego development" (Murdock, 1990, p.31) because the father has the power to "define the feminine" (Murdock, 1990, p.29). In this sense, a young girl is more likely to accept herself since she has confidence in the world accepting her. The relationship she has with her father, or a significant male figure, has a critical influence on whether she develops a positive relationship with her masculine nature (Murdock 1990; Frankel 2010). Murdock further adds that a positive relationship with the father leads to the development of "an inner masculine figure who likes them just as they are" (1990, p.31).

Originally, I developed Angela's backstory in which her biological father was a loving family man and successful lawyer. Angela endured a positive relationship with him throughout her early years and missed him dearly after his death. The intention was to infer to the viewer that because Angela lost her father she began to fall off the rails. However, in adhering to Murdock's concept, a healthy relationship with her father would have encouraged Angela to value femininity and have more confidence in the world accepting her. Thus, I revised the role her father played in her life, making him the binary opposite to

his original characterisation. Instead, subsequent development saw Angela as a child failing to gain her father's approval and support. He would often mock Angela, would make her feel ashamed of herself and failed to pay any attention to her interests or, ultimately, to form a bond with her. Unhappy in his relationship with Mia, Angela's father would often avoid being at home and instead spent his free time drinking alcohol. Both Angela's biological father and stepfather fail to support Angela in nurturing a positive ego. As Murdock states, the implication of a girl having a negative father figure is that "[w]omen whose fathers did not support their ideas and dreams for the future or who gave them the impression that they lacked the ability to carry them out meander through life and may back into success" (1990, p.32).

For the heroine who faces rejection and a lack of support from her father, she will need to learn that the root of her unhappiness is her desire to please her internalised father figure (Murdock, 1990). She is burdened by this inner father figure who provides negative guidance. Yet, in her journey, she will come to realise her mother is the one from whom to seek direction. In this case, the father figure is a wedge between mother and daughter, relentlessly breaking them apart every time they reach touching distance. The difference for the anti-heroine here is that she consistently fails to recognise that her inner father figure does not have her best interests at heart. Despite the damage it causes her, she continues down the path of striving for her inner father's approval and is unable to seek guidance from her mother.

Unlike the mother archetype, the father figure does not need to be a physical presence. It is his treatment, in part, towards the anti-heroine during her childhood that steers her journey into the criminal underworld. In revising Angela's backstory, and specifically the relationship with her fathers, it became more plausible as to why she allowed Hugh to drown. As a child, with both her stepfather and his son belittling her at times, in addition to her insecurity of wanting to seek approval from her biological father (who is a key negative figure internally), this fuelled her confused, rejected and angry mind. As Faber and Mayer (2009) allude to, archetypes help one make sense of narrative ambiguity, which I argue is also true for the film and television viewer. For Angela, the father archetype promotes a further point of comprehension for viewers to understand why she allowed Hugh to drown.

The father archetype was pivotal in helping me develop a cohesive and multilayered anti-heroine that audiences could make sense of. However, it is important to note that with regards to the anti-heroine case studies, neither Nancy Botwin's, Sarah Linden's or Floyd Gerhardt's fathers are present in the narrative. One might then dispute how significant the

father archetype is for the anti-heroine's journey. What is important to point out is that no archetype is concrete. As Murdock (1990) states, the father archetype compliments the mother archetype. For the anti-heroine, I argue he is an invisible tormenting shadow that is an internal ghost throughout her adulthood. As a consequence, she rejects her mother and continues to strive for her father's approval. This interplay between father and mother adds a layer of complexity and authenticity that resonates with audiences. They are able to further comprehend why the anti-heroine intrinsically rejects her mother, as they too have been exposed to a society that values the masculine over the feminine (Murdock, 1990; Jacey, 2010).

Still, it could be questioned as to why I have drawn the conclusion that a father figure does not necessarily need to be a physical being, since Angela's stepfather is in fact present throughout the pilot episode. As already pointed out, when examining the case study anti-heroine narratives, neither Nancy Botwin, Sarah Linden or Floyd Gerhardt's fathers are physically present in each respective story. Simply put, there exists creative freedom to explore the anti-heroine's relationship with her father figure without him physically present in any screen time. That is, narratively speaking. When considering Angela, it is her stepfather that orbits her storyworld directly and not her biological father. It is her biological father, however, who is at the centre of her wound and he is not physically present, which indeed mirrors the narrative set-up of the aforementioned case study anti-heroines.

### ***Mentor archetype***

In the original step outlines and drafts (1–3) of *Angela*, Angela was aiming to become an outstanding Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) coach, an accountant and a loving mother, while simultaneously overcoming a serious drug addiction. Authentically exploring Angela in each of these domains led to the development of a number of characters and, more specifically, a copious number of mentors. Notably, during a live reading, I realised that there were too many secondary characters impeding Angela's character arc. Each mentor was fighting for Angela's attention to endorse her evolution. Naturally, this led to a chaotic narrative that lacked both direction and believability, leaving no space to explore Angela's involvement in each domain. This is evidenced by the excerpt below (*Figure 17*) from the first draft of *Angela*. Here, Angela has just been released from prison and has arrived at her former MMA club. The scene is the start of what will become Angela's return to MMA, and Davis Moore, her old coach and mentor, has kindly allowed her to sleep at the gym for the time being.

INT. TITANS MMA GYM - SPARE ROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT.

A single bed exists in the far hand side of the dingy, but charming room.

The sparse lighting reveals posters of legendary fighters, such as Connor McGregor, John Jones, Muhammed Ali, Mike Tyson and Ronda Rousey.

Angela finishes fixing her bed. She looks up - her eyes are drawn to the Ronda Rousey picture... What if? Could it have been me? Did I waste my talent?

Davis snaps Angela out of her trance.

DAVIS  
She changed the game.

Angela agrees.

DAVIS  
Do you need anything?

ANGELA  
I'm good thanks. And Davis, I really appreciate this. I can't thank you enough.

Davis smiles - I know.

He moves for the door, but before exiting the room, he turns back...

DAVIS  
You're earning your way by helping out with the gym.

Just before Davis shuts the door, he's stopped in his tracks.

ANGELA  
I have changed.

DAVIS  
Night.

Davis exits.

Angela sits on the bed. Takes a moment before glimpsing at the file Mikey handed to her.

She grabs it. Begins examining the inside pages.

**Figure 17.** Excerpt from the first draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

As discussed, at this stage of development, I realised there were too many mentors and domains that Angela was engaging with, but the decision as to what Angela's expertise

should be was put on hold until I had a better understanding of the anti-heroine archetype. Logically, a defined anti-heroine archetype would provide clues as to how I could craft Angela's character arc and journey, and therefore the appropriate secondary characters. In practice, this logic successfully played out. After defining the anti-heroine archetype, this organically led to the definition and development of the mother and father archetype, subsequently resulting in the discovery of the mentor archetype.

Murdock (1990) states that for the heroine to contemplate healing the split with her mother she requires an appropriate mentor. Murdock adds, the heroine will search for a woman "with whom she can identify" (1990, p.26) which may perhaps be "an older childless woman who has played by team rules and successfully made her way to the top" (1990, p.37). Jacey further adds that this is because supporting female characters "can open up perspectives that can still feel fresh and original and push the boundaries of the genre" (2017, p.206). When considering contemporary television shows this is true with examples including *Ozark* (2017–), *Game of Thrones* (2010–2019), *Orange is the New Black* and *Killing Eve* (2018–). These shows evidence what Jacey states about the need of "a number of supporting female characters" (2017, p.206). The mentor archetype acts as yet another point of comprehension for the audience because they can relate to the positive influence a strong woman can have on a particular individual. For me, exploring the mentor archetype led to the development of Callie Turner.

Callie is an experienced journalist with deep and personal knowledge of the drug world. Callie sees potential in Angela and aims to encourage her to be on the right side of the law. Moreover, Callie, once like Angela, overcame her identity crisis and is comfortable with the blend of masculine and feminine characteristics that she embodies. She does not reject her femininity to make room for the embodiment of pure masculinity. Callie also, as one of Murdock's recommendations, does not have children, which is a personal regret for her. This is a motivating factor for why Callie wants to try and help Angela value her relationship with Clarence. Angela distinguishes Callie as somebody who signifies strength and success, unlike her own mother, and is therefore receptive to Callie's mentorship. Callie, as the mentor archetype, becomes a bridge that is built over the father archetype, offering Angela a path to reconnect with her mother if she chooses. Unfortunately for Angela, her lust for power, succumbing to cultural expectations and refusal to meet with her true self, results in her not walking across this bridge.

Just before the midpoint of the pilot episode, Angela meets Callie Turner for the first time when she interviews for a role as a journalist at Callie's newspaper. The interview starts poorly with the lead interviewer, Hans Morgan, dismissing Angela as a serious candidate. This is evidenced in the excerpt below (*Figure 18*).

Hans glances at Callie and Sian, confused as to why Angela made it as a candidate. Angela's anger is visibly building.

HANS

Look. I'm unclear about why you have been put forward as a candidate. There's obviously a reason so maybe you can enlighten me?

ANGELA

Wow!

Angela snatches for her glass of water, takes a swig before placing it back onto the table. She's got fire in her belly.

ANGELA

Let me tell you somethin'. When *The Bristol Post* got together in 1932, it did because local journalists were peed off with mainstream news outlets. Working people, the soul of our community, were left hung out to dry. So guess what, *The Bristol Post* was born. And here you are. The irony.



(beat)

So there's no surprise that some ninety-years on, the working people of Bristol need a voice and a big one at that. Take the housing market, it's just crippling. And the living wage, don't even get me started. It's not even enough to keep a hamster alive. Trust me, I have a son so I know how much those little fur-balls cost to keep alive. Then to top everythin' off we have Gloucester Road and Southville completely gentrified. Brislington and Totterdown are next. St Paul's and Fishponds close behind. Where do the families go? Not sure yet, still waitin' to find out. Hopefully the Hilton! But then again, if Grenfell Tower is anythin' to go by, I'll sort myself out thanks.

(beat)

So you get my drift. I know what it's like to live hand to mouth. Raising a child alone. Working behind a bar. Falling short at the end of each month. And yeah, yeah, yeah, I deserve it because I had a child with, who is now, a criminal.

(beat)

But, you don't know Mikey. You don't know me. You don't know his story or my story. But you should know this. We're the tip of the iceberg. So many of my mates, good Bristolians, find themselves in a bottomless pit. And worse still, we're scathed by the media. Blamed for Brexit. Apparently, we don't wanna work either. So yeah, I'm comin' across pretty peed off right now because I am. Just like local journalists were ninety-years ago.

(To Hans)

This is why I'm here. And I'm more credible than any Red Brick, journalism graduate who's never stepped foot in Bristol.

(beat)

I want to help resurrect the heartbeat of this place on behalf of my city. This is why you should give me the

opportunity.

Hans glances over to Callie and Sian - he's speechless.  
Callie cannot conceal her smile. It's not often she witnesses  
Hans and Sian both lost for words. She already likes Angela.

**Figure 18.** Excerpt from the fifth draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

While Angela does not acquire the advertised role, Callie is impressed by Angela's excellent communicative skills and intelligence, and eventually offers her an internship. As Callie mentors Angela about crime reporting in Bristol, Angela begins to learn of the intricacies of this criminal underworld. Then, due to a set of unjust circumstances, coupled with financial pressures, Angela evolves into a criminal. This is the beginning of Angela's path of immorality, which Callie, in future episodes, will continue to try and steer her away from. Sadly, Angela will refuse and continue to use the knowledge passed on from Callie to evolve her status within the criminal underworld. This acts as a further point of comprehension for the audience, since the mentor unwittingly provides the guidance Angela needs to navigate the criminal underworld.

Fundamentally, the key characteristics that encompass the mentor archetype are that she is typically an older woman who has been successful in her chosen career and who may be childless (Murdock, 1990). She also has transferable skills that the anti-heroine can learn and apply to the criminal underworld. Unlike the mother archetype, the anti-heroine will listen to the mentor. The mentor acts as a bridge to help the anti-heroine heal the split with her mother, but the anti-heroine will ultimately reject walking across it.

Admittedly, there are a number of correlations concerning the mentor archetype's relationship between anti-heroine and heroine. That said, a key distinction when specifically unpacking an anti-heroine narrative is that the mentor archetype is orientated in a position directly connected to the criminal underworld that the anti-heroine will ultimately enter. The mentor will sometimes unknowingly guide the anti-heroine to acquire knowledge and skills pertinent to her succeeding in her criminal field. Notably, this is a fresh and original approach to crafting the interplay between mentor and anti-heroine. However, the credibility of this specific characterisation of the archetype could be in question, given that I have not provided any textual reference centred on the relationship between mentor and anti-heroine. In short, archetypal theory is fluid, which I will explore in the next section and, in turn,

implicitly validate my discussion of the characterisation and relationship between mentor and anti-heroine.

### **The fluidity of archetypes**

I have presented an understanding of why current archetypal models for the anti-hero are incompatible for an anti-heroine. More specifically, appropriate anti-heroine archetypes have been described to help screenwriters craft an anti-heroine narrative that encourages viewer engagement. Here, it should be pointed out that the archetypes I have unveiled are not set in stone. Raya A. Jones eloquently puts forth the analogy that archetypes are similar to a “painter’s set of primary colours, which can be used to create an infinite number of different pictures” (2003, p.623). The characteristics I have put forth concerning each archetypal category are, in this sense, red, yellow and blue. How a writer decides to source, blend and filter these colours into the narrative will be at their own discretion.

It could be argued that by the time I have submitted this thesis, due to shifts in culture, some of these archetypes may be slightly outdated. Indeed, this is not to be denied. Archetypes are culturally entwined and creative practitioners need to pay attention to cultural shifts in terms of values and beliefs (Roesler, 2006). That said, I suspect that the archetypal categories that I have presented will still be relevant for some time, as a sudden upsurge concerning new female archetypal figures, specific to the development of nuanced anti-heroine narratives, would be unprecedented.

However, if this is inaccurate, screenwriters will need to identify and reflect upon their own culture to reveal how archetypes, orbiting the anti-heroine, will be characterised to act as points of comprehension based on concurrent cultural values. This is because “a successful synthesis between the universal and the cultural in a mediated text would result in high levels of popularity” (Stroud, 2001, p.421). Ultimately, regardless of the epoch, archetypes play a critical role in acting as points of comprehension for the audience to render sense and meaning, surrounding an anti-heroine’s pursuit of an immoral criminal path.

### **The relationship between theme, voice and archetypes**

Throughout this chapter, there has been an exploration of how character archetypes can help screenwriters render a sense of narrative cohesion and afford space for points of audience comprehension. It is important to differentiate theme and archetypes. Theme aids screenwriters with the development of a meaningful and purposeful narrative, offering a sense of direction. In the previous chapter, I described the analogy where theme is the

battlefield, denoting the time, space and tools specific to each character. It is then through voices that these characters come alive to help writers generate originality. In drawing archetypes into this analogy, I discovered that on the battlefield there is a plethora of soldiers, yet not all of them can be at the centre of attention when telling the story of a particular battle. Narratively speaking, if all characters (the soldiers) were given time in the story, chaos would manifest. There needs to be a clear focus on which soldiers should be homed in on. In this sense, archetypes help writers with the selection and development of characters that are best placed to orbit the storyworld (the battlefield). This aids screenwriters with the removal of redundant characters and, in turn, helps subvert chaos and render order. Theme, or in my case the thematic question, indeed provides purpose and direction, but this alone is not enough for narrative cohesion. The narrative, as I experienced myself, can become fragmented through the crafting of too many characters and plot points. Character archetypes can be utilised to prevent such fragmentation.

## **Conclusion**

As Peterson (1999) argues, people have an innate need to make sense of the world around them. This has also been shown to hold true for audiences engaging with television storytelling as I found when writing *Angela* and applying archetypal theory. It is clear that developing a storyworld centred on an anti-heroine that audiences can make sense of is an emerging area of research. The anti-heroine has long been ostracised from film and television screens, and on those rare moments in which she has appeared, she defies the gender expectations that have been perpetuated by the patriarchal structure (Buonanno, 2017). Hence, the belief that the archetypes and storytelling functions assigned to the television anti-hero can be utilised for the anti-heroine would be misguided, and new insights and frameworks are therefore required.

Due to the fact that the anti-heroine largely opposes gender and cultural expectations, character archetypes are particularly important for achieving narrative cohesion and assisting the audience to elicit meaning throughout her journey. With few archetypal models existing for the heroine's journey (Murdock, 1990; Frankel, 2010; Jacey, 2010), let alone the anti-heroine's journey (Rosenberg, 2013; Tally, 2016; Buonanno, 2017), the aim of this chapter was to define and present an anti-heroine archetype and a number of secondary character archetypes that could help guide her journey and achieve order in what could otherwise be a chaotic narrative.

Indeed, secondary characters in the form of archetypes fused with my anti-heroine to provide further narrative cohesion. Secondary archetypes are vital in guiding the audience to comprehend why the anti-heroine has committed to an immoral path and evolves into a masterful criminal. Thus, the anti-heroine and secondary character archetypes are not separate entities. They are an interlinking set of archetypes that work symbiotically to inject points of comprehension for the audience. They guide the screenwriter to identify which characters and plotlines are potentially most appropriate. For me, this was instrumental because earlier drafts of *Angela* (2 & 3) only paid attention to my writer's voices, which aided me in achieving originality but consequently resulted in the development of a chaotic narrative with too many characters. Even with my theme clearly defined, once I began filtering in my voices it did not suffice for rendering a cohesive narrative. I learned that generating appropriate archetypes for the anti-heroine was as important as weaving in my voices into the pilot script.

In summary, character archetypes presented in this chapter can aid screenwriters to avoid a chaotic narrative when scripting their own anti-heroine pilot episode. It should also be pointed out that the character archetypes presented are for consideration only and are by no means concrete. As cultural movements and shifts occur, it is highly probable that there will be further archetypes that are applicable to the anti-heroine's journey and will assist in rendering a cohesive narrative.

## Chapter 5: Piloting Audience Emotion for the Television Anti-Heroine Introduction

Chapter 3 explored a writer's voices<sup>41</sup> as an essential element for encouraging audience engagement for the television anti-heroine. A screenwriter's voices are their unique self, which, if successfully crafted into their screenplay, can aid them in achieving originality. While this theory was used to tease out and filter in my voices to subsequent revisions of *Angela* (3 & 4), it culminated into narrative chaos and audience disorientation due to too many characters and plotlines. Therefore, Chapter 4 provided a resolution to this predicament by rendering order through use of character archetypes.<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately, the principal aim of both chapters was to afford a deeper understanding of how to encourage audience engagement for the television anti-heroine, which is also the central aim of this thesis<sup>43</sup>. Audience engagement, however, is an umbrella term (Smith, 1995). Successful engagement depends on the ability of a screenwriter to elicit particular responses amongst the audience. This same objective existed throughout the development of *Angela*. Yet, determining which specific audience responses would result in engagement is ambiguous. By the fourth draft of *Angela*, such uncertainty fixed a spotlight onto the premise of this chapter: the exploration of audience engagement through emotion.

I argue that a screenwriter is required to guide viewers to experience a particular range of emotions to foster their engagement with an anti-heroine. Batty supports this by maintaining "if the audience does not connect with a character and feel his or her emotion, the narrative is merely a series of hollow actions" (*Movies That Move Us*, p.7). As a screenwriter, knowing the specific emotions to generate within the viewer will deepen their knowledge of how audience engagement can be encouraged. This knowledge is important in driving the screenwriter's creative decision-making when crafting particular scenes (Gulino & Shears, 2018).

Prior to teasing out the desired emotional responses, a definition will first need to be reached concerning emotion. As expressed by pioneering theorist Nico Frijda, "to date, there is no satisfactory definition of 'emotion'" (2016, p.610). For the purpose of this chapter, research in the field of social sciences will guide the formation of a working definition. More

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<sup>41</sup> The three voices are the child self, adult self and imaginary self.

<sup>42</sup> The *anti-heroine* as an archetype was presented in the previous chapter, as well as specific secondary character archetypes, which are the *mother*, *father* and *mentor*.

<sup>43</sup> The principal aim of this research is to apply Margrethe Bruun Vaage's narrative techniques to the writing of an anti-heroine pilot screenplay that appeals to a mainstream audience.

specifically, cognitive film theory research from scholars such as Murray Smith, Greg. M Smith, Carl Plantinga and Ed. S. Tan will support a definition of emotion and how it relates to audience engagement.

Subsequently, I will examine audience emotion and its historical relationship to storytelling principles. A discourse will centre on how (typically) scholarly work and manuals often overlook the correlation between effective storytelling principles that elicit audience emotion and encourage engagement. This is ironic, as it is revealed that most screenwriting manuals or critical understandings, whether directly or indirectly, are grounded in the work of Aristotle (Brenes, 2014), who argued that the entire point of storytelling is for the audience to experience a catharsis, “which literally translates to ‘emotional purging’” (Tierno, 2002, p.4).

Building upon Aristotle, I will then attempt to resolve the ambiguity surrounding which specific emotional responses should be elicited amongst viewers to secure their engagement for an anti-heroine. The chapter explores how my own discoveries during practice were used to synthesise Aristotle’s understanding of the emotions pity, fear and catharsis with Murray Smith’s *structure of sympathy*. Smith’s concept comprises three stages for achieving long-term engagement, and the purposes of including his framework will be justified. Ultimately, the model *piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine* will be presented as a tool for screenwriters to employ to encourage audience engagement through evoking specific emotional responses during particular stages of a narrative. It is here where this chapter differentiates itself from recent scholarly work since the model is grounded in the practice of screenwriting. Traditionally, research on audience emotion has primarily been theoretical with broad references to the entire production process of filmmaking (Russo, 2017; Gulino & Shears, 2018).

### **Discourse on emotion**

It is widely accepted amongst psychological scientists that the vast majority of meaningful decisions are governed by emotions (Frijda, 1987; Gilbert, 2006; Ekman, 2007; Keltner & Lerner, 2010; Lerner et al., 2015). In respect to film and television viewing, it is maintained by a number of scholars that emotions are the driving force behind whether an audience engages or disengages (Plantinga, 2009; 2018; Tan, 2011; Smith, 1995; Smith, 2003). As Tan states, “[i]n short, to narrate is to produce emotion” (2011, p.4). Notably, Tan further adds that the moving image is a narrative system that “manipulates fictional situations and aspects of those situations in such a way that they fulfil the requirements for the creation,

maintenance, and modulation of emotions” (2011, p.4). I argue, however, that the screenplay itself is a narrative system that gives rise to emotions to be ultimately experienced by the viewer when consuming a moving image. Thus, the success of the pilot script largely depends on the screenwriter knowing what specific emotion, or emotions, to craft into a particular scene to engage their intended audience (Gulino & Shears, 2018). Yet, before an examination into the emotions that should be crafted into an anti-heroine pilot script begins, a definition of emotion first needs to be reached.

Greg M. Smith discusses the misconception that because emotions are central to most audience experiences “scholars must have placed the topic of emotion at the top of their research agenda” (2003, p.3). In truth, there exists only a modest body of academic literature. Film and television are not unique in their neglect of emotion, as numerous academic disciplines have also failed to engage with the subject (Smith, 2003). Only recently did leading scholar Nico H. Frijda comment that, “there is no satisfactory definition of ‘emotion’” (2016, p.610). As a result, the term emotion, according to Frijda, “refers to a loose collection of phenomena” (2016, p.610). Moreover, while Lerner et al. (2015) referred to emotions synonymously with feelings, Frijda (1987) maintains that whilst feelings and emotions are entwined they are different in meaning. Due to contrasting understandings surrounding emotion, it is necessary to formulate a working definition against the backdrop of social sciences, particularly psychology, to ensure the credibility of conclusions drawn in this chapter.

To start, Frijda states that emotions are elicited by key events, adding “[e]vents are significant when they touch upon one or more of the concerns of the subject” (1987, p.6). In this sense, emotions are only experienced when an event has “actual or anticipated consequences [on] the subject’s concerns” (Frijda, 1987, p.6). Plantinga (2009) explicates Frijda’s assertion. He describes the emotional experience of grieving for a loved one. He points to the fact that if this was not somebody’s loved one, grief would not exist. Equally, Plantinga (2009) outlines a situation in which an uncle is happy because his niece does well at a spelling competition. Plantinga points out that the uncle would not have experienced happiness if he had not known the child, and instead he would have not cared. From this Plantinga initially posits, “[w]e have emotions only if we have concerns” (2009, p.57). Plantinga (2018) then expands on this stating that for a subject to experience an emotional response an event must move them to *act*. To illustrate, Plantinga (2018) describes a situation where a subject may be infuriated by a bus driver driving dangerously, resulting in the subject taking action and noting down the bus’s registration number to inform the authorities.



In relation to film and television, it is reasonable to question the validity of how Plantinga's real-life scenario relates to an audience since one cannot physically act during a viewing (Tan, 2011). For Plantinga (2009) and Grodal (1999), this process of acting can be a mental state of mind. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that the viewer adopts the main character's goals and imagines they are experiencing their situation in real time. The audience projects themselves onto the character and responds congruently in their imagination with how the character reacts. The emotional responses experienced by the character are, in effect, simulated by the viewer (Grodal, 1999). Plantinga explicates Grodal's concept describing the following analogy:

Grodal's model is a 'flow' model in that it compares the temporal experience of the viewer to flowing down a narrative river. It is a compelling metaphor. The protagonist becomes the viewer's mental raft, so to speak. The viewer assesses the protagonist's goals, progress, blockages, and obstacles, just as the passenger might assess the progress of a raft on which he or she rides. The viewer responds accordingly as the viewer and protagonist float down the narrative river together. The viewer projects him or herself into the protagonist, responding much as the protagonist would. (2009, p.104).

It could be argued this concept may only be applicable to a conventional film and television protagonist, not for a morally ambiguous character such as the anti-heroine. After all, the anti-heroine acts in unscrupulous ways with actions that most viewers would not dare simulate in real life. Consequently, it is credible to question why viewers would want to float down a narrative river with an anti-heroine. Tan believes, at least indirectly, that the audience will in fact float down a river alongside a morally ambiguous character because they are able to experience "emotion[s] from a safe distance" (2011, p.76). Smith explains that the audience "may try on" emotions (1995, p.97). For the anti-heroine, this notion of encouraging the audience to try on her emotions is how the screenwriter will, in part, encourage audience engagement. If successful, the screenwriter will move the audience to want the anti-heroine to act even if the act is morally compromising. That said, the challenge exists in effectively moving the audience to climb onto the raft in the first instance. The audience needs to be invested and committed to the main character, the anti-heroine, before they will float down the narrative river with her. Arguably, this is a chasm in Grodal and Plantinga's notion because it is not entirely clear how the viewer develops the initial positive connection for the main character.

Revisiting the example from Plantinga, where the uncle is elated by his niece's success in a spelling competition, it should be acknowledged that the uncle's elation manifests because of his love for her. There is a deep familial bond at play. Unfortunately, for

the main character of a new television show there is no history or familial ties with the viewer. To help resolve this Plantinga (2009; 2018) and Tan (2011) point to Frijda's assertion that it is interest that is fundamental to emotion. Frijda (1987) states that interest pivots the subject's attention to a stimulus with the objective to learn about it. Tan (2011) explicates the significance of interest specifically for the television and film viewer. He states that interest is the viewer's natural tendency to refer to a limited selection of resources with the promise that the present situation will ultimately result in heightened emotional fulfilment (Tan 2011). The screenwriter must hook the viewer early on with an event that elicits interest and sparks their curiosity to learn what will eventuate. This enables the screenwriter to overcome the challenge that the viewer begins with no connection to the main character. In this sense, interest is the initial step in eliciting and sustaining audience engagement. In *Angela* (4 & 5), interest is engendered in the initial scene of a young boy drowning, desperately pleading for help as he reaches his hands skyward to someone on the pier. Fundamentally, interest positions the first building blocks that hook the audience with an expectation that an emotional experience will be actualised when the screenwriter advances the narrative. This actualisation of emotions will not solely unfold at the apex of the narrative. Rather the audience will oscillate between emotional responses that are instantaneous or realised at a particular climax of the narrative.

In reference again to Plantinga's example of the uncle and his niece, an additional layer to understanding emotion arises. That is, emotions are innate or biologically fixed and culturally conditioned (Frijda, 1987; Plantinga, 2009). For Plantinga, the uncle's emotions experienced for his niece are biological. Most psychologists maintain that potent emotions such as "love and affection" felt to one's family members are "essential for human adaptation" (Plantinga, 2009, p.82). Across the human population, a number of emotions experienced are innate and have evolved to ensure the safety and nurturing of one's offspring or family member (Haidt, 2013). Culturally conditioned emotions, of course, are not explained through evolutionary biology (Frijda, 2016). As Plantinga states:

Emotional experience is heavily influenced by cultural context and social convention, so we must not neglect the sense in which emotions, though experienced by individuals, are often shared and in part influenced by cultural and historical conditions. (2009, p.55).

Culture and experience, not just biology, heavily influence what one's concerns might be. Frijda (2016) describes Western cultural influences such as social status and self-esteem as concerns. These concerns "give rise to actions" (Frijda, 2016, p.613) that for some encourage

the acquisition of material possessions. As cultures differ dramatically across the world, so do people's concerns (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Frijda, 2016). As defined in the methodology, the intended target audience for *Angela* is Western. While it is not practical to examine and define each individual viewer's relationship with their cultural emotional priming, it can be argued that within this shared Western culture numerous specific emotions are primed. Therefore, the Western audience should experience a range of shared emotional responses for the anti-heroine. Frijda supports this by stating that emotionally "we are each other's next of kin: we share the emotions of fear, anger, dejection, and attachment as well as sexual desire and curiosity. We are, to quite some extent, cousins in emotion" (1987, p.5). To support this assertion is the sheer number of television shows that have been immensely popular amongst viewers. Thus, it is plausible to assume audiences do share emotional responses grounded in cultural connections. Otherwise, why else would so many people tune in and invest their time engaging with the same television series? While it is impractical to maintain that all Western audiences will experience the same set of emotions at the same time, I adhere to Plantinga's statement that "I am content to make use of the basic assumption that some emotions are more universal than others" (2009, p.83). It is universal emotions that the intended target audience is culturally primed for and which this chapter is centred on.

As it is now understood that, at times, emotions manifest culturally, this dovetails into the understanding that they are also adaptive (Moors et al., 2013). Moors et al. concur with the notion that emotions are "adaptive responses to the environment" (2013, p.119). Plantinga (2009) also supports this theory by arguing that the adaptation of emotional responses is achieved through priming. He describes a situation in which *Jack*, who does not have a gun has been warned of dangerous bears whilst camping with no way to protect himself. Whereas *Jane*, also camping, has been informed that her gun will easily protect her. She indeed "has been primed in such a way that she will less easily experience fear when confronted with a bear" (Plantinga, 2009, p.61). This process of priming is also used in engaging a television audience. For example, in scenes that the anti-heroine behaves immorally, the viewer can be primed before an unscrupulous act to ensure they experience the relevant emotions to encourage their continued engagement.

### ***Feelings***

The final layer of emotion that has yet to be resolved is the synonymous reference made between emotions and feelings, or feelings and emotions, by Lerner et al. (2015). According to Frijda, feelings colour emotions (1987). Feelings are sparked by emotions in which one

attaches their own personal meaning (Frijda, 1987). This naturally relates to the impracticality of unveiling individual feelings when exploring audience engagement. There is not the space to examine the feelings of each individual viewer here or further discuss the dispute about what precisely encapsulates emotions and its relationship to feelings or vice versa (Frijda, 2016). For this reason, the term emotion will only be explored and referenced throughout the remainder of this chapter because oscillating between feelings and emotions would likely render confusion.

### ***In summary: defining emotion***

Emotion mediates “the interaction between the individual and the environment in that it is directed toward the realization of what is of importance to the individual” (Tan, 2011, p.44). This importance relates specifically to a subject’s concern(s). Ultimately, if there is no concern, there is no emotion (Frijda, 1987; Plantinga, 2009; Tan, 2011). It should be noted that concerns can be stimulated either culturally or biologically (Moors et al., 2013). In addition, for a subject’s response to be defined as emotional, they physically act or react. There is, however, a distinction between emotions experienced by a subject in real life compared to emotions experienced through viewing a film or television show (Smith, 1995; Grodal, 1999; Smith, 2003; Plantinga, 2009; Tan, 2011). The distinction being that emotions experienced by an audience are a state of mind—they imagine the physical act (Grodal, 1999; Plantinga, 2009). The viewer projects themselves onto a character and, in doing so, tries on emotions to simulate what the character may be experiencing. Emotions are also adaptive and this is particularly important for encouraging audience engagement for the television anti-heroine.

### **Scripting emotions**

When considering audience emotion and its relationship to storytelling principles, it has largely been positioned on the periphery. Typically, scholarly work and manuals often overlook the correlation between effective storytelling principles and how they elicit audience emotion and, in turn, encourage engagement. The irony of this is that most manuals or critical understandings, whether directly or indirectly, are grounded in the work of Aristotle (Brenes, 2014), who argued that the entire point of storytelling is for the audience to experience a catharsis, “which literally translates to ‘emotional purging’” (Tierno, 2002, p.4). Aristotle’s principles were formulated to elicit a desired emotional experience within the

viewer. That is, he believed an audience achieves a catharsis through two particular emotions: *pity* and *fear*. Given the prominence of Aristotle's principles, it became clear that I needed to explore how pity and fear could be woven into my pilot episode to potentially guide the audience to experience a catharsis.

### *Aristotle's pity and fear*

Aristotle defines pity as an emotion caused by pain "caused by the sight of some evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it" (2012, p.103). In other words, pity is experienced when we believe someone is undeservingly a victim of psychological or physical pain. Such agony can materialise from one specific event or be unrelenting, such as someone enduring sustained psychologically or physically debilitating attacks (Aristotle, 2012). The importance of pity, as Aristotle argues, is that it is essential for guiding the audience to experience sympathy for the main character, which results in their initial engagement. In addition, the degree of pity experienced, according to Aristotle, is "greater when it is a talented person who" is subjected to failure, and he further adds, "it is the lack of success which we pity" (1996, p.290). In examining my anti-heroine, Angela Sparks, Aristotle's ideas resonated. An essential characteristic of Angela, as a means of encouraging the audience to engage with her and as explored in Chapter 4, is that she is a gifted individual. This seemingly evidences, in one way, how Aristotle's work still subconsciously influences many writers' approaches to storytelling today.

Equally, in exploring fear, Aristotle also believed this to be a form of pain. However, in contrast to pity, he described fear "as a pain or disturbance due to a mental picture of some destructive or painful evil in the future" (Aristotle, 2012, p.93). In essence, fear denotes the unease or apprehension one experiences over a dangerous and probable outcome. Similar to pity, there are specific norms that writers are encouraged to embrace to fully exploit the use of fear. To truly influence this emotion, Aristotle posits that events which foster audience fear, on behalf of a character, must be imminent. He points to the very fact that people know that they will eventually die, but, typically, this does not elicit fear (Aristotle, 2012; 1996). He also proposes that the writer must make the audience believe that they (the character):

[...] really are in danger of something, pointing out that this has happened to others who were stronger than they are, and is happening, or has happened, to people like themselves, at the hands of unexpected people, in an unexpected form, and at an unexpected time. (Aristotle, 2012, p.95).

Unpacking this quote, it is plausible to deduce that there are two key layers in fostering and exploiting audience fear. First, there is the context of the events and situations surrounding the character. These factors must resonate with the audience so they understand and believe in the danger ahead as though it has been endured by “people like themselves” (Aristotle, 2012, p.95). In *Angela*, her situation as a penny strapped, single parent, without any substantial social support is a relatable scenario for many Western audiences. Especially, many of whom reside in the United Kingdom and experienced the government-imposed austerity and social welfare transformations after the 2008 financial crash. This fear of being financially stricken and the complications surrounding single parenthood are outcomes that could, or may already, be experienced by viewers in their own life.

The second layer is regarding novelty. As quoted, Aristotle argues that fear is experienced most when action is centred around “unexpected people, in an unexpected form, and at an unexpected time” (2012, p.95). Plausibly, Aristotle is implying that there is a need to include characters and plotlines that are outside the viewers’ everyday lives and expectations. In *Angela* (4 & 5), this can be identified when the audience affiliates Angela as a law-abiding gifted character. Then, through a set of unique circumstances, she unexpectedly finds herself stealing drugs from small-time dealer, Mason Smith. During this unforeseen act, angst is fostered amongst the audience as to whether Mason will awaken and punish Angela. It is here that a balance should be struck as “some faint expectation of escape” is experienced by the viewer, which Aristotle demands (Aristotle, 2012, p.95). Successfully balancing this dichotomy between anxiety and hope is an additional and essential element of encouraging audience engagement through the experience of fear.

After discussing pity and fear as separate entities, it is natural to question what the interplay between pity and fear is. One might want to surmise that maximising pity for the main character will result in greater viewer sympathy and, ultimately, a heightened level of fear after specific unexpected narrative events. Regrettably, it is not that simple. Pity and fear do not exist in a vacuum. As Charles B. Daniels and Sam Scully contend, the elements or events that foster audience pity, fear and a catharsis are “almost never crystal clear” (1992, p.204). Coupled with this, Aristotle (2012) argues that a significant component of the audience experiencing the necessary emotions is that there exists a liminal space in which the main character is not too immoral or too virtuous. Of course, this is not entirely applicable to the anti-heroine who, by definition, evolves into a morally unscrupulous figure. That said, we do know that audiences have already engaged with television anti-heroines and, more readily, anti-heroes. This suggests that some of Aristotle’s theories on storytelling, specifically in

reference to the desired emotional experiences of the audience, require further exploration concerning particular character archetypes.

Before exploring any shortcomings concerning Aristotle's notion of pity, fear and catharsis, it is important to reiterate that his work does provide the foundation for much of our understanding surrounding storytelling principles which have been extrapolated to the field of screenwriting studies (Brenes, 2014). This is evidenced by Brenes (2014) who found that out of the ninety-five screenwriting manuals she studied fifty-nine were grounded in Aristotle's poetics. Moreover, Syd Field's *The Foundations of Screenwriting*, originally published in 1979, is still regarded as one of the most popular and instrumental books about how to successfully write screenplays. At the end of his book, Field states:

I didn't really discover anything new; this concept of storytelling has been around since Aristotle's time. I simply uncovered what was already there, gave it a name, and illustrated how it worked in contemporary movies. (Field, 1979, quoted in Brenes, 2014, p.59).

Aristotle's principles surrounding the development of an emotionally engaging story are still relevant today. Nonetheless, it cannot be overlooked that some of his concepts may require further development for specific genres or character archetypes. For me, it was how his notion of pity, fear and catharsis could be explicated as a tool for encouraging audience engagement throughout the emotional journey of an anti-heroine, as, according to Aristotle, pity and fear may not be fully exploited if the main character is too unscrupulous. Hence, the question arises: what is required, narratively speaking, to encourage the audience to experience the anti-heroine's emotions despite her continuous immoral transgressions?

To begin, audience emotions are generally the result of a character's actions. To avoid chaos and support continued audience engagement, these actions depend upon their position in a certain order or structure—a structure which engenders the desired emotions of the audience at the relevant time to encourage their engagement. During the fourth draft of *Angela*, it became clear that confusion existed on how to plot her journey. This was due to the theoretical and practical negligence of the overarching structure that was required. As a result, the following question emerged: how do I formulate an anti-heroine narrative framework that guides myself, and other screenwriters, in successfully crafting the desired audience emotions to encourage their engagement? This is critical as Aristotle maintained, “the ability to plot, or to create a powerful structure, is the most important aspect of writing” (Tierno, 2002, p.1).

While this is not the space to explore the relative importance of plot, this thesis maintains it is a key component. As Donald Maass points out, plot “can be understood as a sequence of emotional milestones” (2016, p.3). This flow of emotional milestones within an anti-heroine narrative, centred on pity, fear, catharsis and possibly additional emotions, will be explored through the adoption of Murray Smith’s three stages of character engagement: the *structure of sympathy*. Smith’s concept will be fused with Aristotle’s principles of pity, fear and catharsis and, ultimately, synthesised through the scripting of *Angela* (4 & 5). Smith’s (1995) concept was selected as the foundation for this new model due to its unwavering influence on the field of audience engagement, particularly in cinema. Whilst Smith’s concept was specifically fashioned for the film viewer, more recently it has been extrapolated for unpacking how engagement has been achieved for the television spectator (Garcia, 2016; Vaage, 2016; Russo, 2017). This is evident through Vaage (2016) and Paolo Russo’s (2017) application of Smith’s concept as well as Alberto N. Garcia’s (2016) extrapolation of it. In Garcia’s article *Moral Emotions, Antiheroes and the Limits of Allegiance*, he argues, “that TV fiction, given its serialized nature, is better equipped to develop a ‘structure of sympathy’ [...] that allows us to identify with morally defective characters who—beyond some obvious virtues—commit crimes, abuse and deceive” (2016, pp.52–53). Robert Blanchet and Margrethe Bruun Vaage (2012), who Garcia (2016) cites, argue that this is because:

[T]elevision series are better equipped to allow spectators to develop a bond with fictional characters than feature films. This is because television series more effectively invoke the impression that we share a history with their character: first, because of the series’ longer screen duration, and second because our own lives progress as the series goes on. (Blanchet & Vaage, 2012, quoted in Garcia, 2016, p.58).

In other words, television serial narratives are not inhibited by the same constraints found in a typical 120-minute feature film. There exists greater freedom and space to form engagement in serial dramas, which is particularly advantageous when contextualising the transgressive acts of a morally ambiguous character (Garcia, 2016). Still, it is important to remind that both Vaage’s (2016) and Garcia’s (2016) application of Smith’s *structure of sympathy* are situated within the field of critical TV studies. Thus, the authors’ discoveries have been achieved through the application of post-textual analysis and critical theory. This is an important acknowledgement because this chapter, which is true of the entire thesis, sits within the field of screenwriting studies. Therefore, the unfolding discussion of this chapter is mainly fuelled by insights discovered through the act of writing. That is, the scripting of my anti-heroine



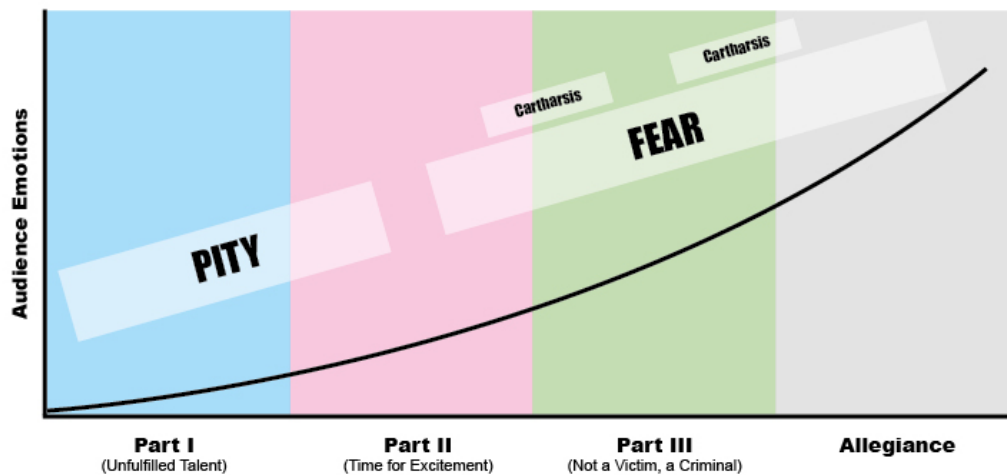
pilot episode *Angela* (4 & 5). I argue that there has been a tendency to overlook the role of the screenwriter and their contribution in securing viewer engagement for a morally ambiguous television character. An example of this can be identified when Garcia (2016) only briefly discusses how the specific work of the writers helps achieve engagement for anti-hero Vince Mackay (*The Shield*), along with his cronies. Garcia acknowledges the writer's contribution to the show when he notes, "in a dramatic balancing act well planned by the writers" before proceeding to further cement his main point (2016, p.60). After this point, Garcia does not divulge what exactly the well-planned act is that the writers scripted. This chapter seeks to explore what exactly the "dramatic balancing act," which Garcia (2016, p.60) attributes to the work of the writer, is. As Russo notes, "serial TV drama narrative and writing for TV drama remain relatively unexplored territory" (2017, p.7). Thus, alongside Smith's framework, the scripting and revisions of *Angela* (4 & 5) will ultimately cement the final synthesised model of emotional milestones. In turn, this model can be considered by screenwriters for plotting the required emotions for their own television anti-heroine narrative to encourage audience engagement.

### ***Murray Smith's structure of sympathy***

Smith maintains that there are three stages for achieving long-term engagement, which he categorises as *recognition*, *alignment* and *allegiance*. Smith's concept will be teased out extensively further on, but for now, it will suffice to provide a short summary of each category. For Smith (1995) *recognition* denotes the first phase of engagement in which the audience distinguishes the main protagonist(s) from secondary characters. At the end of this phase, when successful, the viewer should have adopted the goals of the main character. *Alignment* is outlined as the audience's exclusive access to a character. This, as Smith explains, is fashioned by two interconnecting yet distinctive layers described as *subjective* and *spatial-temporal attachment*. Subjective attachment refers to the audience's inner knowledge pertaining to the narrative that may not be known by the character(s) they are engaging with. *Spatio-temporal attachment* relates to the narrative methods that engage the audience through *visual* spectacles or periods of action. This thesis posits that alignment is not a succession of recognition. Instead, alignment fuses symbiotically with recognition to shape the experience of the narrative world for the audience, helping them to individuate the main character. Once the main character has been successfully individuated, the final category materialises. That is *allegiance*, which denotes long-term audience engagement.

Smith likens this phase to the audience thinking of the main character(s) as they may think of a friend or a loved one.

### Piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine



**Figure 19.** *Piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine.*

Figure 19 illustrates the model *piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine*. Screenwriters should consider this model as a supportive tool and not as an absolute approach. The model was initially inspired through insights revealed during the writing of the fourth and fifth drafts of *Angela*. These insights were then synthesised with Aristotle's principles of pity, fear and catharsis as well as Smith's *structure of sympathy*. The model delineates the desired emotional journey of the audience throughout a pilot screenplay, culminating in viewer allegiance for the television anti-heroine during the closing sequence. When each part of the recognition phase is scripted successfully, audience emotion will rise exponentially. The assumption can then be made that with this increased emotional engagement narrative events can be more daring.

Undoubtedly, the model is mostly centred on Smith's (1995) recognition phase. I discovered that this phase is fundamental for assimilating and fostering specific emotions crafted by screenwriters to pave the way for encouraging long-term engagement (allegiance). During the scripting of *Angela* (4 & 5), I discovered that there exist three subsections to recognition:

- *Part I: Unfulfilled Talent.*
- *Part II: Time for Excitement.*
- *Part III: Not a Victim, a Criminal.*

In practice, when fusing Aristotle's concept with Smith's framework it became clear that *Part I: Unfulfilled Talent* should provoke audience pity, whilst *Part II: Time for Excitement* engenders fear and *Part III: Not a Victim, a Criminal* provides moments of relief as well as inciting a catharsis during the final sequence. That said, to focus exclusively on three emotions would not suffice because an audience engages with a story to experience a palette of emotions (Smith, 2003). During the scripting of *Angela* (4 & 5), even though pity, fear and catharsis are at the centre of encouraging engagement, it became apparent that there also exists an assortment of additional emotions appropriate to the narrative. Screenwriters should not discount these secondary emotions while crafting pity and fear into their pilot screenplay. This will be discussed further in the following sections.

At this juncture, it could be questioned as to why I have not specifically centred my model, illustrated in *Figure 19*, on Garcia's (2016) interpretation of Smith's *structure of sympathy*, given that Garcia teased it out for television. Garcia's critical exploration of Smith's *structure of sympathy* is primarily centred on Smith's allegiance phase and, as a result, he suggests that sympathetic allegiance "could be more accurately labelled as a 'cyclical re-allegiance'; that is, the story has to constantly make a dramatic effort to relocate our sympathetic allegiance" (2016, p.64). Here, it can be inferred that Garcia is positing that anti-hero narratives repeat parallel cycles, through various narrative strategies, in a bid to re-establish allegiance (long-term engagement). Garcia argues that this is because "the '*structure of sympathy*' is not indestructible once established" (Garcia, 2016, p.64). Coupled with this, Garcia examines anti-hero episodes that reach far beyond season one, let alone the pilot episode. As it has been made clear throughout, this PhD is principally concerned with the pilot episode, which is to some extent why this chapter centres on Smith's first stage—recognition. Comparably, Garcia's (2016) text is underpinned by alignment and allegiance, thus it is credible to ground my model, *piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine*, on Smith's (1995) original conception of the *structure of sympathy* instead of Garcia's interpretation of it.

Finally, before moving on, it is important to momentarily discuss the process in which the model, *piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine*, emerged. Throughout the subsequent sections, one might infer that several insights were the amalgamation of post-textual analysis rather than in practice. This could leave the credibility of the model (*Figure 19*) in dispute. Yet, while elements of the model are presented by means of post-textual analysis, after the fact, the model was driven by insights that I discovered in practice.

Understandings were then crystalised once the final draft of the pilot script had been completed. Given the cyclical nature of the methodological procedure, presenting findings in a linear fashion would likely cause reader confusion. This should not compromise the relevance of the conclusions drawn because, as validated in the methodology, “while practice comprised only part of the process, it was here where new knowledge was discovered and ultimately crystallised through critical exploration” (Dean, 2020a, p.3).

### ***Recognition for audience engagement***

Smith (1995) argues that recognition is the first stage of audience engagement. Recognition denotes the phase in which the audience comes to understand who the main characters are and “the relationships that exist between them” (Batty, *Movies That Move Us*, p.7). Most importantly, during recognition the audience individuate the main characters, distinguishing them from other persons (Smith, 1995). By individuating a main character, the audience may initially identify them with traits that “correspond to analogical ones we find in persons in the real world” (Smith, 1994, p.40). Equally, an audience may identify the character with traits that correspond to analogical ones found in other film and television narratives. Regardless, at the end of the recognition stage, I argue that the spectator identifies with the main character as a unique subject, adopts their goal(s) and thus flows down the narrative river with them (Grodal, 1999; Plantinga 2009). As Smith focuses on the moving image, he also states that at the recognition stage, to some degree, “iconic renderings of the physical features of the body, face, and voice typically play an important role, though language may contribute and interact with them” (1995, p.116). Of course, screenwriting precedes the filmmaking stage in which such physical rendering occurs. Ordinarily, physical rendering is pertinent to the casting and directing of actors. For this research, as validated in the methodology, the rendering of a character’s features occurs in the audience’s mind, not on screen, as they play the screenplay in their head (Macdonald, 2013). When the viewer plays the screenplay in their head, they *see* the characters, imagining their physical features and voices. It would be a stretch to argue that viewers envision the characters identically. This is a limitation. It is reasonable, however, to surmise that there will be consistencies amongst viewers when playing the pilot script in their head. This is based upon the fact that those few screenplays which are commissioned must have resonated with several readers.<sup>44</sup> In light of this, it is plausible to infer that there

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<sup>44</sup> Here, the readers I am referring to are relevant stakeholders such as script readers, producers, directors and executives. After all, each stakeholder is mainly concerned with whether the narrative would be popular amongst viewers.

are consistencies shared amongst readers pertaining to their imagination concerning specific characters.

In summary, if the recognition phase has been successful, the audience will perceive the main character as unique, thus distinguishing her from other characters. The importance of this relationship between the screenplay and recognition is implicitly supported by Dara Marks (2007) in her book *Inside Story: The Power of the Transformation Arc*. She alludes to the screenplay being central to activating the audience's imagination and curiosity for individuating a character. "Story is not the passive experience we perceive it to be. Instead, it is as essential an activator of our internal development as any experience we have in real life" (Marks, 2007, p.18). This chapter concurs that activators that resonate with the viewer are, to some considerable degree, crafted during the scripting phase (Marks, 2007). The screenwriter should successfully elicit audience curiosity and guide them to individuate the main character. This is typically achieved for a television show during the closing sequence of the pilot episode.

### ***Stage 1: The three parts of recognition***

The intention for the initial twenty-six pages of *Angela* was to guide the viewer to believe that they may be able to resolve, or at least better understand, their own problems through engaging with Angela (Marks, 2007; Granelli & Zenor, 2016). To cultivate the desired emotional experience, for the purposes of encouraging audience engagement, Aristotle's notions of pity and fear were woven into the pilot script. It also became apparent in practice, however, that pity and fear do not exist in a vacuum. This culminated in crafting additional emotions early on in the pilot script that were negatively attuned to ensure the narrative did not stray too far away from the more important sentiment of pity and fear. Exactly how all these emotions collaborate to guide an audience to eventually individuate Angela will be explored through the three subsections of the recognition stage: *unfulfilled talent*, *time for excitement* and *criminal*. Each part of the recognition stage is vital in guiding the audience to individuate Angela and ultimately encourage their long-term engagement.

#### ***Part I: Unfulfilled Talent***

Part I was largely shaped by Aristotle's notion of pity, as the intention is to elicit sympathy for Angela. From the opening sequence it is revealed that Angela is under an enormous amount of pressure raising her son alone, which is cemented when she visits Clarence's father, Mikey Thompson, in prison. Pressure which is immediately worsened when Angela

learns that Mikey is in debt after using drugs again. This scene elicits pity for Angela, as her predicament with Mikey pressuring her for money is seemingly unfair and out of her control.<sup>45</sup>

This notion of pity was further layered into the pilot script early on when Angela attends a party for her sister, Charlie, who is celebrating one year of running her piano rental business. During this scene, it becomes clear that Angela is the black sheep of her family. Angela's stepdad, Eamon, blatantly places Charlie on a pedestal whilst treating Angela with disdain. This can be discerned in the excerpt below of Eamon's monologue given during Charlie's one-year celebration party (*Figure 20*).

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<sup>45</sup> Angela's unjust circumstances also lay the groundwork for the tipping point that her character will experience during the final sequence of the pilot episode, which will be explored and threaded through in Part III.

EAMON

Bad jokes aside.

(beat)

The truth is, in my humble opinion, if anyone should privilege an honourable title it's Charlie.

(beat)

When I first met a five-year old Charlie, something was uniquely different about her. Yes, while her intelligence and curiosity was remarkably clear, there was something deeper. Far greater. A strength I -  
(glances at Mia)

We never knew existed. Times have not always been easy on this - my family. Many of you here today, I'm sure will remember only too well. The tragedy surrounding my late son, Hugh. But Charlie being Charlie was always the one that fought to keep us glued together. To show us what it meant to be a family. So, am I surprised that in the first year of Charlie being in business she has exceeded all expectations? I think you know my answer.

(beat)

Before I find myself being booted off stage for rambling on, would everyone please raise a glass to the beautiful, intelligent, hardworking, amazing daughter and auntie, Charlie Sparks. We are so proud of you.

(beat)

To Charlie.

Just as everyone is about to toast, Clarence notices his mother, Angela.

CLARENCE

Mummy!

The entire room fix their attention towards Angela.

CLARENCE

Your turn mummy. Say something nice about Auntie Charlie.

Some "aws" echo around the room. Angela, a little tipsy, brushes away Clarence's request.

Eamon scruffs Clarence's hair, quick to raise a toast again. Clearly doesn't want Angela's input.

EAMON

To Charlie.

CROWD

To Charlie.

Angela half-heartedly raises her now empty glass. The crowd disperses, forming into smaller groups.

**Figure 20.** Excerpt from the fifth draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

During the remainder of this scene, further friction is hinted at as the viewer discerns Angela's unwanted dependence on her dysfunctional and toxic family because of her predicament as a single mother without a substantial steady income. Her circumstance helps encourage additional audience sympathy through pity. An emotion, as Tan (2011) maintains, which plants the seed of curiosity in the audience as they wait to learn how Angela might resolve her ongoing problems.

Admittedly, during early development of *Angela*, I had focused too intently on the emotion of pity and this caused me to fall short in capturing the complexities of Angela's situation. For example, to maximise pity, initially, Angela was outright rejected from obtaining a job at *The Bristol Post*. This narrative decision failed to allow space to exhibit Angela's talents. To resolve this, I reflected on Aristotle's (2012) teaching that an audience is more inclined to experience pity for a character who is talented. Whilst pity is at the centre of this scene, I realised that I needed to consider and craft auxiliary emotions that would be pertinent to displaying Angela's innate talent. I made a conscious choice to rewrite this scene so she could exhibit her inherent intelligence, which influenced the crafting of her monologue at the end of the job interview. Angela impresses the interview panel enough to secure the internship at *The Bristol Post*. Given her financial hardships, an aim of this scene is to add a



layer of complexity concerning Angela's journey. The scene, which is included below (*Figure 21*), attempts to foster, on behalf of Angela, audience frustration, bitterness and uncertainty as she is conflicted with whether she should accept the unpaid opportunity. This complexity exists because, whilst Angela would not benefit in the short term, she may profit in the long term if she advances her journalistic knowledge and skills, opening the door for future paid work.

EXT. SEFTON PARK SCHOOL. A FEW DAYS LATER.

Just before Angela reaches the school gate her phone rings. Registers that it's an unknown number. Probably a cold call, but she answers anyway.

ANGELA

Yes.

CALLIE V.O

Hi Angela. It's Callie Turner. From  
The Bristol Post.

The school bell rings.

ANGELA

Oh. Hi. You called. I'm surprised.

SCHOOLCHILDREN flood out of their classrooms. Angela spots Clarence in-between the gated bars looking for his mum.

CALLIE V.O

Admittedly, your performance was, lets  
just say unconventional. But  
personally, I loved it.

ANGELA

(humorously)  
So I got the job?

CALLIE V.O

Not exactly, but I like your way with  
words.

Angela's still focused on Clarence.

ANGELA

That's something I guess. But I gotta  
ask, what did I fall short on?

CALLIE

Honestly, it simply came down to  
experience. However, we would like to  
offer you an internship.

ANGELA  
Paid?

CALLIE V.O  
No.

ANGELA  
So I wasn't impressive enough to get paid work, but I can work for free?

CALLIE V.O  
Angela. I've personally called you. So listen. Carefully.  
(beat)  
I sympathise with your predicament. But this isn't a full-time internship. Two days a week for 3-months. It's a great opportunity for you to position yourself to obtain a real journalism job with a real salary at the end of it.

Angela thinks long and hard.

ANGELA  
Can I sit on it. Just for a few days?

CALLIE V.O  
Let me know by the end of the week.

ANGELA  
Okay. And Callie... Thank you.

CALLIE V.O  
Good luck, Angela.

Callie hangs up. Clarence clocks Angela and runs towards her.

**Figure 21.** Excerpt from the fifth draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

Still, at this point of the narrative, it is valid to question why an audience might engage with so many negatively charged emotions. The answer is partly because the emotions described are, to a certain extent, rooted in our current culture and therefore resonate with the audience. After the economic crash in 2008 there has, and continues to exist, an insecure job market, hitting those hardest with lower-paying jobs (Shukla, 2019). Steven Granelli and Jason Zenor argue that visual media offers a “place for self-enhancement and entertainment” and a world of play that “allows for viewers to confront difficult real-world issues in the refuge of a safe, virtual environment” (2016, p.5060). The authors add that this enables viewers to gain a deeper understanding of who they are. During and prior to Angela accepting Callie’s

internship offer, the intended audience response is that, directly or indirectly, they would relate to Angela's predicament of the aspiration to secure a fulfilling job versus the need to afford a certain quality of life. Providing the anti-heroine a real-life, relatable issue is vital early on during the recognition stage to support the audience in exploring their own problems through their engagement with the anti-heroine (Granelli & Zenor, 2016).

Yet, as alluded to previously, *Part I* should not merely characterise the anti-heroine as a purely hopeless cause—a mistake I made during the initial development of *Angela* (1–3) when I extrapolated Aristotle's notion of pity in a literal sense and crafted her as only a victim of social inequality. It became evident that Angela's innate talents as an individual had been overlooked. To establish Angela's uniqueness and ensure the audience could continue to individuate her, it was necessary to position alongside the negative scenes clues for the audience to recognise her as a gifted individual. Crafting in key character traits, such as intelligence and resilience, helps the audience experience relief in knowing that Angela might be able to overcome her problems. The first scene to illustrate this point, as evidenced below (Figure 22), is when she takes her son, Clarence, to school.

EXT. SEFTON PARK SCHOOL. 20 MINUTES LATER.

A school playground is occupied by INFANT and PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN running, playing or clinging onto to their PARENTS. This is what you call a nice school or in other words, very middle class. The building itself is small, but classically British and has been well looked after throughout the decades.

The bell sounds and in true British fashion, the children begin lining up outside their respective classrooms.

The TEACHERS instruct the children to enter. Some children glance back at their PARENTS, lovingly waving over to them. Some children, mostly year six's, ignore their parent's affectionate calls.

Amongst the chatter and waves goodbye, the sound of a vehicle, resembling something of a boy racer, cuts in, momentarily grabbing EVERYONES attention...

It's no boy racer, it's Angela on her motorbike with Clarence. And so the shit show continues...

Stressed, Angela parks her motorbike directly outside the school gate in front of the No Parking sign.

An embarrassed Clarence climbs off the motorbike, slowly removing his helmet, wishing he could wear it forever.

Clarence notices a GROUP of BOYS outside his classroom sniggering away at his expense. Angela's piercing eyes make contact with each of the boys, rendering them all silent. Simultaneously, Clarence's teacher, MR. MOODY, clocks on to what's unfolding, signalling for the boys to enter the classroom.

**Figure 22.** Excerpt from the fifth draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

As can be discerned in this scene, Clarence is quickly characterised as a misfit when a group of boys in his class at school begin laughing at him. In response, Angela quickly curtails the laughter with one hard stare. This is the first moment of the narrative that gingerly clues to the audience that Angela is not just a fragile victim who they should pity. There is a strength within Angela which may help her overcome her ongoing problems.

The interview scene, as noted before, is also significant for further individuating Angela as gifted. At the end of the scene, she is individuated as a talented character when she responds to the lead interviewer, Hans Morgan, who dresses her down, rudely judging her as a typical graduate with no experience and no journalistic skills. In the form of a monologue, Angela eloquently argues why she would in fact succeed in the role. This monologue fosters a moment of audience vindication and pleasure, characterising Angela as a skilful and smart entity. These positive characteristics play a key role in hinting to the audience that the anti-heroine has the capability to embark on an enthralling journey to overcome her predicament and, in turn, encourage their engagement.

## ***Part II: Time for Excitement***

As the pilot script transitions from Part I into Part II, I learnt, during practice, that Aristotle's notion of fear should take precedence. Throughout the initial drafts of *Angela* (1–3), I was not overtly aware of the importance of fear or how to appropriately foster it, especially in an Aristotelian sense. In fact, any fear that might have been engendered was through locating Angela in painfully woeful situations. The belief was that these scenes would position the audience as fearful of Angela's situation and encourage them to be more forgiving to her when she performed an unscrupulous act. For example, in earlier drafts (1–3) Angela could only lawfully see her daughter, Harley, during supervisory visits, which can be identified in the following excerpt (*Figure 23*).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> In earlier drafts (1–3), Angela's child was a girl named Harley. This was revised in subsequent drafts (4 & 5), as Angela's child is now a boy named Clarence.

INT. HOLLYWOOD ROAD - CHRIS'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM. NEXT DAY - MORNING.

The laughter of Harley watching Angela fail miserably on the Dance Star game is a heartwarming moment.

Angela soon stumbles onto the floor. This leads to both mother and daughter breaking down into hysterics.

For a moment, Angela loses herself, but when she notices the SOCIAL WORKER, JENNY CUNNING, 56, observing it suddenly feels tainted.

Angela jumps up on her feet, falls back on the couch.

Harley follows her mother like a little duckling. She climbs onto Angela's lap. Angela appears uncomfortable, as if she finds the intimacy difficult.

Jenny jots down a note. Angela's paranoid.

ANGELA  
What are you writing down.

Jenny jots down a note again.

ANGELA  
Excuse me.

JENNY  
I can't disclose my notes with you.  
Please...

Jenny gestures for Angela to focus on her daughter.

**Figure 23.** Excerpt from the first draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

In addition to Angela having supervisory visits, she was a washed-up MMA fighter, financially stricken, a recovering drug addict and on parole. However, feedback issued during a live reading was that Angela was experiencing too much hardship. This was emotionally draining for viewers “playing *Angela* in their heads.” I had inaccurately understood fear, incorrectly employing it as a means of advancing viewer sympathy. Notably, this is how I began to understand that the recognition stage required an additional subpart.

By extending pity for too long, it became evident that the likelihood of audience disengagement would increase. This is because, according to Gulino and Shears (2018), there is scientific evidence for why the viewer requires moments of rest from highly charged emotions. When a narrative is comprised of scenes that only elicit a specific emotion, which I persisted to do prior to the fourth draft, audiences will most likely become exhausted. Gulino

and Shears state that “[t]his is where contrast in tension comes into play” (2018, p.45). Lerner et al. further add that “[d]ecisions can be viewed as a conduit through which emotions guide everyday attempts at avoiding negative feelings (e.g., guilt and regret) and increasing positive feelings (e.g., pride and happiness), even when they do so without awareness” (2015, p.801). It is appropriate to then infer that people will avoid negative feelings to experience positive ones. This is true but only in part. During the recognition stage, particularly in Part I, a key factor is the audience experiencing these negatively tuned emotions because as the audience reaches Part II they crave positively charged emotions. The negative emotions experienced early in the narrative, through contrast, heighten the viewers’ sensations when they experience positive emotions. It is a yin and yang effect that is, arguably, for the screenwriter, synonymous with pity and fear with fear being understood as not strictly negative.

In exploring Aristotle’s notion of fear, it became evident that there are two layers to eliciting audience fear. First, there should be an imminently dangerous situation with enough expectation of escape. Second, Aristotle states there is a need for a certain level of unexpectedness (Aristotle, 2012). These two principles, imminent and unexpected danger, are important in realising both a fearful and exciting scene, helping to contrast the negative emotions experienced during Part I. This can be identified in the final draft of *Angela* (5), as Aristotle’s notion of fear shaped Angela’s transition into the criminal underworld, which begins when she accepts the internship at *The Bristol Post*. This new opportunity for Angela results in the beginning of her education about Bristol’s underbelly when Callie takes Angela to criminal kingpin, Daisy Peach’s house.<sup>47</sup> During the outing, the audience learns of Angela’s brazen nature, as she wants to press closer to the house. It is the first occasion in which the viewer momentarily tastes some sense of excitement as they engage with Angela. The audience begin to further individuate Angela, not only as someone who is intelligent and spirited, but also someone inclined to exist on the edge of danger.

At this point, the intention is the audience will infer that Angela may pursue a dangerous but enthralling journey, increasing their curiosity and, in turn, their engagement. Thus, in the final draft (5), from the moment Angela accepts the internship offer, the screenplay builds towards the climax of her fully committing to this perilous yet exciting world. By referring to Aristotle’s interpretation of pity and fear, and fused with Smith’s theory of individuation, I crafted scenes that were nuanced and emotionally engaging. I was

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<sup>47</sup> To remind, Callie and Angela only view the house from the outside in the comfort of Callie’s car, which is parked some distance away.

able to overcome my initial misconception that the more sympathy I endorsed the faster I could push Angela's immorality without the audience disengaging.

In summary, to exploit Aristotle's notion of fear, the subsequent principles should be considered. First, the screenwriter should contemplate hinting in Part I that the anti-heroine is gifted. Second, fear should not be understood as merely orientating the anti-heroine in a terrifying predicament. The crafting of fear should engender and signpost the audience to the idea that the anti-heroine is likely to pursue an imminently dangerous yet exciting path. Finally, novelty is required in the form of something unexpected that occurs at an unexpected moment of the narrative (Aristotle, 2012). These unforeseen events are vital for adding to the sense of suspense: the nexus between fear and excitement. If successfully crafted, *Part II: Time for Excitement* should contrast the hardships that the anti-heroine faces in *Part I: Unfulfilled Talent*. Part II centres on embracing the anti-heroine's positive characteristics that are exploited in scenarios that foster both fear and excitement. It is also important to note that as the anti-heroine begins her moral descent in Part II, this decline is not necessarily motivated directly by personal gain. Instead, her increasing immorality is inexplicably connected to the tragic external forces that she faces in Part I.

### ***Part III: Not a Victim, a Criminal***

A fundamental question persisted throughout the development and scripting of *Angela*: when should she cross the red line and commit to the criminal underworld? This is significant because when the anti-heroine's morality is genuinely bent, the audience's commitment is truly tested. To provide guidance in navigating this transition, it was only natural to continue explicating Aristotle's notion of fear. In particular, his concept of catharsis was found to be the key in helping manage this transition for the audience. By fusing Aristotle's notion of catharsis with Smith's *structure of sympathy*, I came to the understanding that when the screenwriter begins to stretch an anti-heroine's morality with more intense and fearful situations, these unscrupulous acts need to be intertwined with instants of reprieve for the viewer to circumvent disengagement. Prior to the final draft (5), without this knowledge to hand, as the narrative moved closer to the peak of the climax I had crafted scenes that increasingly pressed the morality of Angela. I had left no breathing room for the audience and no moments of reprieve. Each scene transitioned into a more intense scenario than the one before it, constantly exacerbating anxiety over the well-being of Angela. When I received feedback, it was commented that the pilot script was emotionally draining, particularly during

the closing sequence. I was slightly confused, as the closing sequence had appeared to be the most appropriate time to advance the anti-heroine's morality to engender excitement and suspense.

Nevertheless, after exploring Aristotle's notion of catharsis and engaging with Bence Nanay's understanding of it, I came to understand that a grand-scale emotional purging, akin to the one experienced at the end of *The Lion King* (1994) when the kingdom is restored, was not fundamental. Nanay "endorse[s] a version of the 'relief' interpretation of catharsis" explaining that "[w]hen experiencing catharsis, one experiences something very similar to the relief felt after self-centered fear, but without having to undergo self-centered fear" (2018, p.1378). Employing Nanay's (2018) version of relief, which is directly connected to fear, offers an emotional respite for the anti-heroine that the audience simulates. A catharsis should also not only be understood as an emotional purging that occurs at the end of a given narrative. Instead, it refers to any momentary relief from intense emotions of fear sustained during a particular scene or sequence. This is extremely important when scripting Part III, as viewer disengagement can be an upshot of the anti-heroine's morality being pushed too far, too fast.

Viewer disengagement was pervasive when considering early drafts of *Angela*(1–3) since it did not utilise Aristotle's notion of pity, fear and catharsis and, therefore, failed to strike a harmonious balance for the viewer. These drafts (1–3) positioned Angela solely as a victim until the final scene when she undertook one incredibly unscrupulous and murderous act. This act of murder is illustrated below (*Figure 24*) in an excerpt from the first draft of *Angela* in which she takes lethal action against small-time criminal, Jerry Rideout, who does not take too kindly to Angela when she refuses his request to work for him at the end of the pilot episode. This is when Angela takes matters into her own hands:



Jerry frog-marches Angela out of the storeroom. Angela double takes at Jerry. She's thinking hard. How can I get out of this? What should I do?

Just as the pair are about to walk down the stairs, Angela glances back again. Suddenly everything feels as if it's in slow motion...

Angela darts her head back at Jerry, but this time she drops her handbag. She launches a stinging elbow into his eye-socket. Catches him off guard.

Angela dives for his legs, takes Jerry to the ground.

The hammer spills out of his hand.

Angela tries to snake in an arm lock, but Jerry's too strong. He breaks away - shoving Angela.

Angela snatches for the hammer, but Jerry pulls her leg - jolting her back.

She whips in a back kick, clipping Jerry's chin. Just enough power is generated to push him back.

Angela snatches for the hammer. Grabs it.

Jerry's on his knees and pushes his body forward.

He rolls over a panicked Angela, who's gripping the hammer tight...

THWACK.

Angela dents Jerry's forehead. Blood gushes out. Somehow he's still cognisant.

Angela sledges the hammer into Jerry's forehead again. Jerry falls back onto the floor. Eyes rolled into the back of his head.

Angela's lost it. She thrusts the hammer into Jerry's head 1... 2... 3... 4... 5... 6... 7... Until she's out of breath.

Jerry's face is disfigured. Angela's soaked in blood.

She pauses for a moment. Catches her breath. Scans the room. Looks back at Jerry. She can't believe it. Surely this is just a nightmare.

She falls back onto her backside. Drops the bloody hammer.

**Figure 24.** Excerpt from the first draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

Prior to this scene (*Figure 24*), there was no exciting build-up of criminal activity interspersed with moments of relief for the viewer. This was rectified in the fourth draft with a number of revised scenes: each an acceleration of Angela's criminal behaviour. This starts when Angela stalks a drunken Mason Smith to his home, as evidenced in the following excerpt (*Figure 25*).

INT. STUDIO FLAT. CONTINUOUS.

Angela, tip-toeing on in, scans this shitty little studio flat decorated by clothes and empty cans. The wardrobe stands out as various tracksuits have been neatly put away.

If we hadn't followed Mason, he could be assumed unconscious. He's not waking up anytime soon.

Angela takes advantage, rummages through the draws. Finds nothing. Darts her eyes around the room. Where can it be. She's after something.

Dives under the bed. Pulls out a small box. Opens it. BINGO.

Reveals a number of sealed plastic packets.

She jumps onto her feet. Scans the room again. Notices an empty Sainsbury's plastic bag on the floor. Snatches for it. Rushes to shove the little packets of narcotics into the bag.

Mason's still sleeping.

Angela slides the box back under the bed in it's original place.

Surveys the room again. Checks she hasn't left any evidence.

She notices vomit coming from Mason's mouth. It will be fine she tells herself.

She sneaks for the exit but stops. Looks at Mason. She can't do it. What if...

Creeps over to him. Carefully begins moving him onto his belly. With his body half turned Mason lashes his arm out. No force behind it. Angela freezes.

Tries again. Gently turns Mason onto his belly. Now lets get out of here. Angela whisks out of the front door.

**Figure 25.** Excerpt from the fifth draft of the pilot screenplay, *Angela*.

Here, when Angela finds the stash of drugs, it is not entirely clear what she intends on doing with them, but what is important is that the audience experiences a sense of relief as she

escapes the flat unseen with the drugs. Thus, for now, Angela is safe, but she has taken her first step down a perilous path.

Angela then spirals further into the illicit world when she devises a master plan to steal Eamon's drone and smuggle Mason's drugs to an incarcerated Mikey to cover his debt. The subsequent scenes further test the audience's commitment to Angela through the interplay between escalating fear that is interspersed with moments of relief. When Angela eventually navigates the drug-laden drone over the prison walls, the most challenging and consequential part of her plan, the audience's intense fear shifts to utter relief as she succeeds. This interplay between fear and relief intends to support audience engagement with Angela as her morality continues to decay. At this stage, the viewer also individuates Angela as a gifted criminal: no longer a tragic victim, thanks to her intelligence and courage, which enabled her to successfully execute her master plan.

Ultimately in the final draft (5), the pilot episode reaches a climax, with fear located at the centre. During the final sequence, Angela follows Daisy Peach to an unknown farmhouse and witnesses a group of young women held against their will. Not only does the scene help to hint that Angela is a gifted criminal, but it also guides the viewer to individuate Angela as a criminal that is a morally preferable character relative to the other characters. Angela is contrasted to Daisy Peach, who traffics defenceless young women. The disparity of Angela against the backdrop of a criminal such as Daisy Peach, who exploits vulnerable young women, helps encourage audience engagement. The viewer is willed to want Angela to act as a possible saviour to these women and escape the farmhouse unharmed.

However, this scenario does not unfold because when Angela's phone rings she is found hiding by Daisy. Angela is suddenly the sole focus of attention. Indeed, this is the life and death scene that I scripted with the objective of transitioning the audience from recognition to allegiance. Angela is compelled to cut a deal with Daisy to circumvent death. Under extreme pressure, Angela thinks fast and articulates a sophisticated, financially beneficial proposition that will save her life. A sense of admiration and catharsis is experienced by the audience as Angela escapes a near death situation and may even profit from her ingenuous plan. At this point, there is a shift from short-term audience engagement to the start of long-term audience engagement (allegiance). The recognition stage meets its conclusion. Angela is now individuated as a brazen, intelligent and, seemingly, compassionate criminal whom the audience wants to adopt the goals of. The viewers are encouraged and, it is hoped, committed to engaging with the anti-heroine to learn how events will unfold for her.

In short, Part III describes the turn of events in which the anti-heroine enters the criminal underworld. At the end of Part III, the audience individuates the anti-heroine as a criminal but a preferable one. After each scene, it is important for screenwriters to consider carefully whether they have offered space for the audience to experience relief.

Now, when uncovering and explicating these insights, an important question emerged: how can audiences simulate emotions that may be far reaching from their own reality? The vast majority of viewers would have never engaged in criminal activities such as the ones Angela becomes entrenched in. However, as Smith maintains, one of the desires for audiences engaging with fiction is to “experience new and unfamiliar situations and values” (1995, p.80). It is then reasonable to link this assertion with the understanding that audiences engage with particular characters to work through real life issues from a safe distance. For *Angela*, one could surmise that the audience engage with Angela to use her as an outlet for the experimentation of their own dark and immoral emotions that have never, and probably will never, come to light. By engaging with the anti-heroine, they hope to understand what it means and why one might embark on such an immoral path.

### ***Stage 2: Alignment***

Smith defines alignment, in part, as the narration of story events through one or several characters’ perspectives, thus offering the viewer “access to what the character knows, thinks, feels, and perceives” (1995, p.144). This, according to narrative theorists Mieke Bal and Seymour Chatman, renders a basic sympathy for that character or set of characters (Smith, 1995). To some, it might seem that alignment occurs as a result of the successful recognition of a character. This is not the case. Alignment is at work from the very beginning of a pilot screenplay. Alignment operates harmoniously with recognition as it guides the viewer to experience particular emotions for a specific character. In short, alignment is what defines the who of the recognition phase.

To illustrate, during the scene in which the viewer meets Angela’s family for the first time at Charlie’s celebration party, it would have resulted in an indifferent response if this party was not experienced from Angela’s point of view. Of course, this may be obvious, but there are other complexities. It is not just the perspective of the main character that aids alignment but also the exposition crafted prior to certain scenes. Alignment operates in tandem with the three parts of recognition. For example, in earlier drafts of *Angela* (1–3) the narrative begins by revealing it is the day of Angela’s release from prison. There existed little

exposition concerning Angela's backstory: only that of her beating up a prison tyrant and drug dealer. This failed to encourage engagement for Angela because, despite the scene oriented from Angela's point of view, the audience did not have enough information concerning her backstory to encourage emotions, such as sympathy, for her situation. At this point, the viewer only knows Angela as a violent prisoner. How her family then treats her in the subsequent scenes fails to encourage their sympathy. As a result, it is plausible to surmise that without sufficient backstory, the audience may have believed Angela warranted such ill responses from her family.

In turn, to increase the likelihood of audience engagement, the next draft (4) of the screenplay focused on applying Part I; that is, Angela as an unfulfilled yet gifted character to elicit audience sympathy. According to Plantinga, this relates to Alfred Hitchcock's assertion that sympathy is a strong viewer response "because it is a means by which the audience becomes emotionally invested in the narrative situation" (2009, p.99). By beginning the narrative through Angela's point of view, fused with exposition revealing her in a vulnerable position that is not of her own making, audience sympathy is encouraged. This sympathy is built upon when the viewer follows Angela throughout her time at the family party. In the initial drafts (1–3), the viewer most likely concluded that Angela deserved the negative response from her family. However, with the revision of the exposition the audience is instead primed to experience sympathy for Angela during the party.

Alignment is critical to engendering audience pity and fear on behalf of the anti-heroine. However, it is the recognition stage that does much of the heavy lifting for guiding the viewer to experience the emotions required for them to individuate a character. Alignment is an additional layer that fuses with recognition. If successfully fused together, recognition and alignment guide the viewer to individuate the anti-heroine, adopt her goals and continuously engage with her. As the pilot progresses, sympathy is increased for the anti-heroine, and, simultaneously, the viewer's emotional responses are heightened, which strengthens engagement. During the development of the fourth and fifth draft of *Angela*, recognition was far more instrumental for helping shape and exploit Aristotle's concept.

### ***Stage 3: Allegiance***

According to Smith (1995), recognition and alignment guide the audience to understand the mental state of the character. For allegiance, Smith states, "we go beyond understanding, by evaluating and responding emotionally to the traits and emotions of the character, in the

context of the narrative situation” (1995, p.85). During the recognition and alignment phases, the anti-heroine’s transgressions are minor while she is slowly individuated and her situation is contextualised by the viewer. If these initial stages are successful, then as the series continues, the audience will enter the allegiance stage. The anti-heroine will be accepted by the audience; akin to a loved one or close friend. Her transgressions can increase in severity. Despite her immorality, the emotional response of the viewer will not be that of disgust or outrage because of their allegiance to her.

To extrapolate, consider this situation in the real world. If we randomly witness a stranger kill another stranger, we are most likely to evaluate the killer as villainous. Conversely, if we witnessed a loved one killing someone who was harming their child, our evaluation of the killer would be contrary to the first example. In terms of the anti-heroine, the screenwriter must ensure that before she commits any major transgressions, they have developed a well-crafted narrative that has successfully rendered viewer recognition together with alignment. In doing so, the viewer can contextualise the anti-heroine’s immoral actions and will likely continue to engage with her. In other words, allegiance will have been achieved. As Plantinga states, “[a]llegiance results from the spectator’s moral evaluation of characters” (2009, p.107). With allegiance, the anti-heroine is analogous to a family member or close friend of the viewer (Smith, 1995; Vaage, 2016).

It is also important to point out that allegiance does not depend on a viewer’s moral approval of a character in “absolute terms” (Plantinga, 2009, p.107). Instead, it is with regard to the audience’s moral evaluation in comparison to other characters. “[S]pectators sometimes grant allegiance not to the character who is deemed morally spotless, but to the one who is the least morally objectionable” (Plantinga, 2009, p.107). Whilst there is truth in this, it is far more complex than the audience simply engaging with the anti-heroine because she is preferable. As discussed already, engagement with Angela is built through an emotional journey in which the viewer explores their issues through her. As a show progresses, it is plausible to infer that as an anti-heroine’s actions become more severe, her immorality can be pushed even further through the comparisons of her to other characters.

Unfortunately, there cannot be a thorough examination of how far the anti-heroine’s immorality can be pushed and how Aristotle’s notion of pity, fear and catharsis may be used during the allegiance stage, since this research only comprises the scripting of the pilot episode. Scripting an entire television series would have been unrealistic. Still, while allegiance denotes long-term audience engagement, this thesis argues that allegiance is initiated at the end of the pilot episode. Here, allegiance is in its embryonic stages. This lays

the foundation for subsequent episodes where her moral transgressions can be accelerated. As allegiance continues throughout a television show, it is plausible to speculate that allegiance is likely an umbrella term. Similar to recognition, there may be various subsections of allegiance and, within each subsection, specific emotions that would be engendered amongst the viewer to encourage and sustain their engagement despite the extent of an anti-heroine's transgressions. I welcome researchers to explore and determine if this hypothesis is accurate.

### **The relationship between theme, voice, archetypes and emotions**

Preceding chapters discussed an analogy concerned with each of the storytelling principles explored—*theme*, *voice* and *archetypes*—describing a symbiotic relationship between them that encourages viewer engagement. The principle is that theme provides the initial foundation, analogous to a battlefield, as it articulates the time, space and tools specific to each character, supporting the development of a purposeful and meaningful narrative. Voice is then woven in to advance the originality of the pilot script by bringing the characters alive. Subsequently, archetypes are utilised to subvert the narrative from becoming unfocused and fragmented. In other words, archetypes provide guidance to which characters are the point of focus on the battlefield. A natural question surfaces as to what is the relationship between emotions and this analogy? Simply put, emotions, and more specifically the model *piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine*, should be understood as the action that unfolds on the battlefield. The model helps guide screenwriters in crafting and sequencing a flow of events that promotes an enthralling and climactic narrative as the anti-heroine transitions into the criminal underworld.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to explore how screenwriters can shape audience emotions for an anti-heroine to encourage long-term engagement. As Gulino and Shears state, a screenwriter who knows how to manipulate the emotions of an audience “has a tremendous advantage in keeping the viewer’s attention—and interest—for the entire screenplay” (2018, p.13). There first, however, needed to be an exploration and resolution concerning disputes centred on the definition of emotion which exist across several key disciplines (Frijda, 2016). Once a definition was reached, results from practice-based and qualitative research gave rise to the model *piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine*. This model, initially inspired through insights revealed during the writing of the fourth and fifth draft of *Angela*, identifies

and unpacks specific emotional stages that can be evoked to encourage viewer engagement for a television anti-heroine.

The structuring of this model was achieved through the synthesis of Aristotle's theory of pity, fear and catharsis with Smith's *structure of sympathy*. Notably, Smith's recognition stage was found to be central to the interplay between pity, fear and catharsis to aid screenwriters in successfully individuating the anti-heroine during the pilot episode. Insights revealed during the writing of *Angela* (4 & 5) necessitated the recognition stage to be divided into three parts. Each part centred on one or more of the emotions, pity, fear and catharsis, as a method for encouraging engagement. The blending of Smith's recognition stage with each of Aristotle's emotions supports the screenwriter to effectively guide the audience to individuate the anti-heroine. That is, to individuate the anti-heroine as she progresses from a tragic unfulfilled talent to a gifted criminal.

In short, capturing the complexities of a scene or sequence requires viewers to experience emotions that extend beyond Aristotle's teachings. Supplementary emotions should not be abandoned by a screenwriter. Typically, one or more of Aristotle's emotions guide the screenwriter's aim but additional emotions are required. To provide an analogy to explicate this notion of aim, one could imagine that Aristotle's emotions are specific points on a dartboard with a range of other emotions existing on the periphery of the board. The peripheral emotions resonate the least with the audience, whereas the ones nearer to the centre are closest to Aristotle's desired emotional response. What precisely are the emotions populating the periphery of pity, fear and catharsis?

Each story is unique, therefore, during the practice of scripting it is not easy for a screenwriter to pinpoint specifically which secondary emotions should prevail. Arguably, this is why in screenwriting manuals, it is often only in post-textual analysis that an answer is provided as to when a screenwriter has crafted a comprehensive set of desired audience emotions and, in turn, achieved engagement. In light of this, the model does not afford a prescribed set of perfect emotions for screenwriters to craft. The model, instead, provides screenwriters with a board of pity, fear and catharsis to aim at to aid their creative development. If successful, the screenwriter will guide the audience to individuate the anti-heroine as a talented yet troubled character who is akin to a family member or close friend of theirs.

It is evident that the emotional journey the audience experiences when engaging with an anti-heroine is synonymous with audience engagement. However, the limitation of scripting just the pilot episode, revealed that further research needs to be undertaken to tease



out the emotional journey of the audience, concerning succeeding episodes. I do, however, believe it is likely that audience allegiance is an umbrella term and may need to be divided into subsections, similar to the recognition stage.

## Conclusion

### Background

There has been a myriad of anti-hero shows during the past twenty years that have successfully engaged television audiences, demonstrating the commercial appetite to locate the anti-hero at the centre of television narratives (Martin, 2013; Buonanno, 2017). As explored in the introduction, this has led to scholarly attention with authors exploring the morality behind why audiences are inclined to engage with morally abhorrent male characters. Vaage (2016) textually analysed several popular anti-hero figures against the backdrop of moral psychology and subsequently developed what she terms narrative techniques to encourage audience engagement with an anti-hero. She asserts that the creators of most anti-heroes have utilised specific narrative techniques to override a viewer's moral deliberation and, in turn, elicit their engagement; a stance many theorists support (Vaage, 2016). An additional aim of Vaage's study was to afford answers to the following question: "whom are we as spectators of fiction willing to engage, and where do we draw the limit?" (2016, p.xiii). The *whom* specifically concerns the television anti-hero.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the breadth of research on the anti-hero, it became apparent throughout my research that there has been a dearth of knowledge pertinent to the television anti-heroine. Texts, articles and commercial television narratives continue to focus on the anti-hero, with the anti-heroine perpetually positioned on the periphery (Tally, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). As a practising screenwriter, with an interest in writing an anti-heroine television show, it was unclear how to approach her immorality and what narrative techniques might be helpful to override a viewer's moral deliberation. In need of clarity, the question defined by Vaage for conducting her own study guided the structure and formation of my own research. That is, for the anti-heroine, "whom are we as spectators of fiction willing to engage, and where do we draw the limit" (Vaage, 2016, p.xiii).

A natural starting point to begin answering this question was to explore if Vaage's narrative techniques were directly applicable to the television anti-heroine. The purpose of initially centring my research on Vaage's theoretical framework was largely because of its grounding in moral psychology. However, it was important that I shifted away from exploring Vaage's techniques, and the research question more generally, through a purely theoretical approach. Thus, the scripting of an anti-heroine pilot episode was central to fulfilling this thesis's aim and objectives. This practice-based approach enabled me to unveil

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<sup>48</sup> A principle aim of Vaage's study was to describe a set of narrative techniques that can be utilised by filmmakers and writers to elicit and sustain viewer engagement for a television anti-hero.

essential storytelling principles at play that are vital to encouraging audience engagement for the anti-heroine.

The value of this thesis should not be underestimated. The purpose of conducting this study was to contribute new knowledge to support practising screenwriters in developing nuanced and engaging morally ambiguous female characters. It was therefore imperative to ensure that the research aim and objectives remained commercially entwined. Moreover, by exploring and examining the television anti-heroine, in place of the anti-hero, space was afforded to unveil any gender discrepancies between the two. The research found that the writing of a commercial anti-heroine narrative is considerably different to writing a commercial anti-hero narrative. My original assumption, that the only difference is how far the anti-heroine's immorality could be stretched, was a misconception. At this juncture, the meaning and value of discovering this fallacy should be unpacked.

### **Misunderstanding the significance of morality**

When considering an immoral lead figure, literature has fixated on their morality for understanding audience engagement. In fact, this focus led me to initially fixate on morality, as it poses an investigation into where we draw the limit. I believed that a greater understanding of morality would provide the answers to my research inquiry. After all, on the surface what distinguishes the anti-heroine from the traditional heroine is her moral bankruptcy. This belief is supported by research that has evolved from the field of moral psychology. Notably, during the past thirty years, research emerging from this field has pointed towards people's moral decision making as intuitive (Kahneman, 2011; Robertson, 2012; Greene, 2013; Haidt, 2013; Vaage, 2016). This understanding has loaned itself well to cognitive media theory, particularly those scholars, such as Margrethe Bruun Vaage and Alberto B. Garcia (2016), who have gone on to extrapolate the field of moral psychology for understanding the moral decision making of television audiences. Notably, theoretical research has surmised that specific narrative techniques can be utilised to deactivate viewers' moral evaluation (Plantinga, 2009; Garcia, 2016; Vaage, 2016). This supported by Vaage who states, "[t]he fictional status of these [anti-hero] series deactivates rational, deliberate moral evaluation, making the spectator rely on moral emotions and intuitions that are relatively easy to manipulate with narrative strategies" (2016, pp.1–2). These narrative strategies are imperative for eliciting and maintaining audience engagement for a lead character who is morally ambiguous (Vaage, 2016). However, a major revelation of my

research is that an understanding of how to override the moral intuitions of viewers, as a method for stretching an anti-heroine's immorality, is not the only, or most essential, principle for encouraging viewer engagement.

To explain, during the initial drafting of *Angela* (1 & 2), I fixated on implementing the *Wheel of Techniques* to craft an engaging and original anti-heroine narrative that would successfully reverse viewers' moral deliberation. These techniques were employed with the objective of stretching the immorality of my anti-heroine as far as possible without disengaging viewers. In adhering to the *Wheel of Techniques*, the initial drafts (1–3) of my pilot script had Angela murdering a small-time crook. I carefully considered how the escalation of her transgressive acts could be contextualised to override the viewers' moral evaluation of her and encourage their continued engagement. Yet, despite the use of these techniques, the initial drafts (1 & 2) did not achieve this. I came to learn that my pilot script lacked meaning, purpose and originality and this would likely culminate in viewer disengagement. An anti-heroine's uniqueness, and success with a commercial audience, goes beyond the advancing of her immorality through narrative techniques. There are deeper layers at play within the narrative: layers that are far more significant for engaging audiences than the stretching of her immorality.

### **Locating the self at the centre of the narrative**

Throughout Chapters 2 and 3, I explored how writers should first locate themselves at the centre of their story. Theme and voice were presented as critical to achieving this. When theme and voice are successfully crafted, a writer will have possibly scripted a narrative that offers something new which the audience can learn from, helping viewers to work through their own issues. In turn, viewers can use this new knowledge to better make sense of their own lives (Granelli & Zenor, 2016). How writers utilise theme and voice as a method to locate themselves at the centre of their story starts with their honesty regarding what attracts them to the storyworld of an anti-heroine. This can aid them to craft a theme that is close to home as well as support them to filter in voices that are germane. Why? Because to speak about something with authority, one needs to have experience and knowledge concerning it. For instance, the appeal to script an immoral figure for me was grounded in the violence that was a central theme in my childhood.

Growing up, if I was not the subject of ridicule by other children, I would go home and be confronted by senseless violence, whether as an observer or victim. The decisions I have made, the path I have taken, the relationships I have lost, the relationships I have gained

and the intrinsic need to search for the meaning of right and wrong have been the corollary of my childhood. As a young boy, the laws of my own environment demanded full compliance to avoid the trauma of violence. Circumventing the violence was not always possible; consequently, I sometimes felt my only option in defending myself was to also turn to aggression. Throughout my teenage years, the internal conflict of violence versus passivity became overwhelming. I remember my first term at secondary school where I met a boy who mocked me relentlessly over my personal appearance and my family's financial status. It came to a point where I had enough and attacked my bully. The boy broke down in tears, whilst the class grew quiet and looked at me as if I was some fearless dictator.

Ironically, the boy and I became good friends throughout the rest of our secondary school years, and I did feel terrible after our encounter, which were sentiments I expressed directly to him. But, the image of me that the other schoolchildren had acquired was astonishing. Suddenly, I was perceived as someone to be reckoned with: someone who could reveal his inner monster at any given moment—an unstable boy. And, I played on it. If anyone dared to assert dominance, I stared directly back at them, threatening violence. Though, this was a masquerade and not a true reflection of myself. The pretence grew from the desire for power, control and, most importantly, the safety that this act of strength afforded me.

As a result of this continued behaviour, I became conflicted as a teenager and young adult while I quested to become a better person. I wanted to be the real me that existed beneath all the chaos. The caring, sensitive, kind and curious human being who could offer something to the world. The film *Good Will Hunting* (1997) resonated with me, as the main character, Will Hunting, often feels misunderstood. The darkness surrounding his childhood prevents him from becoming a moral person who can love and offer the world something back through his unique gifts. Equally, *The Godfather* (1972) also strongly resonated with me. Anti-hero Michael Corleone, a second-generation Italian immigrant living in America, echoed the darkness I sometimes exhibited. As a child, I often felt alienated like the Corleone family and unintentionally understood why one might ignore the laws of society to gain control, power and status.

By delving into, and critically exploring, my subconscious, I was able to describe more accurately the reasons why I was attracted to writing an anti-heroine narrative. This assisted me in firmly locating myself into my story and supported me to craft my voices into the narrative as discussed in Chapter 3. That is, in *Angela*, my child, adult and imaginary selves who battle it out over responsibility for Angela's immorality. Figuratively speaking,

these voices reflect the conflict concerning the responsibility of my own suffering experienced as a child.

The additional benefit I discovered through the importance of locating myself at the centre of my story was that it helped to pinpoint more precisely where to draw the limit concerning my anti-heroine's immorality.

### **Drawing the limit on immorality**

During early drafts of *Angela* (1–3), I was intent on her carrying out the act of murder in the pilot episode. However, after completing these initial drafts (1–3), I quickly came to realise this was not necessary. Murder did not naturally evolve from my theme, voices or any of the archetypal figures I had developed through locating myself at the centre of the story. In the context of my narrative, this led me to draw a line concerning the limit of Angela's moral ambiguity in the pilot episode, thus it was not necessary for her to murder.

That said, this might not be the case for all anti-heroine narratives. For example, a writer may devise their theme around the anti-heroine as a character who is a victim of sex trafficking. Their theme may be close to home and they could possibly have a unique perspective to craft into their narrative. Thus, it might be organic for their anti-heroine to murder in the first episode, as there would be purpose and meaning behind such a severe transgression. The relationship between plot and an anti-heroine's immorality, as well as where writers should draw the limit on her moral transgressions, is a simple one. If a writer works to develop a meaningful and coherent narrative, which has them at the centre of it, an anti-heroine's immoral bankruptcy should manifest organically. Her imminent and deep immoral descent is not essential (Tally, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). As Buonanno asserts, believing that a female version of Tony Soprano or Walter White should exist is "the wrong way to raise the issue" (2017, p.8). Buonanno argues that this is because we are presuming "masculine templates should mould female characters, and implied inattention and dismissal for worthy antiheroines that [do] not measure up to the antiheroic standard of Tony Soprano" (2017, p.8). Indeed, moulding an anti-heroine figure within the framework of a masculine template so she can measure up to the steep and morally repugnant anti-hero does not offer a meaningful reflection of the experiences of womanhood. Admittedly, this is a trap I initially fell into when crafting a scene that had Angela murder at the end of the pilot episode. So, what is crucial is that a writer's storyworld is authentic (McKee, 1999, p.185). If an anti-heroine's transgressions are minimal early on, this should not make it any less engaging: assuming the story speaks with accuracy and honesty. The notion of a tangible limit,

concerning the immorality of all anti-heroine narratives, is futile. Instead, this limit is unique to each narrative and only the writer can truly measure it based on their own honest experiences.

Arguably, if the level of immorality concerning an anti-heroine is based on the authenticity of the narrative, then in response to whether gender discrepancies exist between anti-heroine and anti-hero, the answer could be no. Yet, we have learnt that this is not entirely accurate.

### **Gender discrepancies**

The original hypothesis, as discussed, was that the main gender discrepancy between anti-hero and anti-heroine was how far an anti-heroine's immorality could be pushed before the audience disengaged. The understanding was that audiences would be less forgiving to the anti-heroine, when compared to the anti-hero, because of her gender (Mittell, 2015; Buonanno, 2017). This is true, but not to the extent I originally assumed. To explicate, we know that an anti-heroine's immorality cannot be stretched for the simple sake of suspense and entertainment (Tally, 2016; Buonanno, 2017). Viewers crave something more: a narrative that is culturally rich in its exploration with the writer speaking truthfully and honestly. This statement is loosely supported by Margaret Mehring (1990), in her text *The Screenplay*, when she unpacks the purpose of an artist, which she maintains the screenwriter is. As an artist, Mehring's notion of the screenwriter is to "provide insight into reality," adding that their "creative process is primarily the discovery of the truths—the human values—that lie within [themselves] and [their] experiences" (1990, pp.263–264). And, in this process, a screenwriter "discovers the links between [themselves] and other human beings—the links that make universal statements" (1990, p.264). Whilst Mehring does not directly reference the audience, it is reasonable to infer that what she is implying is that the purpose of a screenwriter is to "make universal statements" which will ultimately resonate with the viewer (1990, p.264). Through such universal statements, meaningful human truths can be taken away by the spectator. This ties in with Luke Hockley's belief that when a story effectively "shape[s] the ways we understand our personal relationships, our society and our culture," it is what provokes an emotional response amongst viewers (2014, p.264). In this sense, regardless of whether it is an anti-hero or anti-heroine narrative, viewers desire authenticity.

Returning to the original point that an anti-heroine's immorality cannot be stretched for the simple sake of suspense and entertainment, Milly Buonanno (2017) suggests an authentic cultural exploration within anti-heroine shows exist through the representation of human truths surrounding female gender norms. Buonanno posits that the television anti-heroine, in part, centres on "turning constructed notions of femininity upside down by eluding or defying gender norms about how women should behave" (2017, p.11). Thus, for the writer, the gender discrepancy between anti-hero and anti-heroine exists in the challenge of authentically characterising an immoral female character and her predicament surrounding gender biases. That is, to guide viewers to understand the complexity of her situation, and thus overlook her transgressions.

Having a culturally genuine female character is of utmost importance to ensure continued viewer engagement. For example, if directly before the release of *Breaking Bad* Vince Gilligan had switched the character Walter White to a female character, the narrative would have lost its authenticity. This is because Gilligan partly explores the cultural manifestation of modern-day masculinity through Walter, and in particular, the cultural norm that men are expected to perform the role of family breadwinner, which their success is largely judged against. This cultural expectation weighs heavily on Walter, principally after he is diagnosed with terminal cancer. In turn, his desire to secure his family's financial future is intensified. The upshot of this (during the pilot episode) is that when Walter participates in thievery, lying, drug dealing and murder, viewer engagement is sustained. The audience, to some extent, can forgive Walter, since he is fulfilling the role expected of him, and the events surrounding his moral transgressions are contextualised.

In comparison, society expects women to preserve the domestic sphere as well as perform the role of moral equaliser within their wider community (Hays, 1996; Silva, 2005; Brabon & Genz, 2009; DeJean, McGeorge & Carlson, 2012; Millar & Ridge, 2013). Therefore, when crafting an anti-heroine's immorality, these expectations should be accounted for throughout her moral descent. Locating an anti-heroine in a situation akin to Walter White's would be the result of a writer who has naively overlooked such gender inequalities. As a consequence, the narrative would fail to achieve an authentic representation of women, possibly resulting in viewer disengagement.

While these current gender inequalities mean the anti-heroine may not be able to transgress as sharply and severely as the anti-hero (Mittell, 2015), this is by no means fixed. Gender identities and norms will hopefully continue to evolve and be renegotiated in our society. This would likely produce a larger window for stretching an anti-heroine's



immorality. Presently, however, writers need to explore and navigate this cultural web of gender expectations. If they do not, their narrative may fail to achieve authenticity and encourage viewer engagement.

### **Engagement and the intended audience**

Throughout this thesis, insights have been grounded in the objective of audience engagement. That is, encouraging continued viewer engagement with the anti-heroine. The method for exploring engagement first required a definition of the intended target audience. Equipped with this definition, how engagement could be encouraged was explored. Admittedly, this has been an interpretive activity, but the critical lens of an intended audience and how engagement could be encouraged has been a fruitful activity, generating new insights. When a writer knows their audience, they are offered space to contextualise the anti-heroine's journey, and in turn, the audience can make sense of her moral decline into the criminal world.

To know their audience more deeply, writers should grasp the complexity of the audience's cultural experiences and what has shaped them. Similar to theme, I argue that culture pervades everything. More specifically, when scripting an anti-heroine pilot episode, if a writer has an appreciation of their audience's cultural experiences they are better able to offer the viewer points of comprehension. Subsequently, this supports the viewer to infer why the anti-heroine is transitioning into the criminal underworld. This understanding can prevent the writer from exploring cultural aspects merely from their own perspective. The writer should be cognisant of not crafting an anti-heroine narrative that is too ego driven and assume viewers will make sense of their own cultural perspective: an easy trap to fall into, particularly as the writer needs to locate themselves at the centre of their story. Eventually, a balance should be struck between the writer's perspective and the audience's perspective. This balance will be explored at the end of the conclusion through the model *An anti-heroine's hierarchy of needs*, which was described in the introduction.

During the initial drafts of *Angela* (1–3), I mistakenly focused on Angela as merely a tragic character, positioning her at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. In truth, Angela's predicament, and the effects of the culture surrounding her, was far more complex than my original representation. To remind, Damasio (2018) states that culture encompasses a myriad of social institutions that structure a given society. Having a grounded understanding of these institutions can help a writer explore how cultural elements can be best exploited and crafted when scripting an anti-heroine's moral plight. Whilst there is an

emphasis on the negative aspects of culture in this thesis, particularly in Chapter 3, it is important for writers to identify and explore the positive aspects too, as this helps to craft a layered and relatable narrative. Defining an intended target audience, and eventually considering the storyworld from the audience's viewpoint, helps writers exploit their own unique cultural perspective in a way that viewers can grasp.

This is of course a complex and delicate process when crafting an anti-heroine's character arc, and there are various levels of viewer engagement. Notably, audience engagement early on for the anti-heroine is tentative. How writers explore their cultural concerns, coupled with the various other storytelling principles in a way that results in engaging action, is challenging. This section will offer an antidote to this problem.

### **Varying stages and levels of audience engagement**

Vaage posits that there are specific levels of engagement, differentiating between short term (sympathy) and long term (allegiance). What I discovered in practice is that this is too general. To truly understand engagement, more specificity is required concerning what manifests during these varying stages. These stages of engagement can then inform a writer's creative practice when crafting their pilot episode. Ultimately, this was achieved by unveiling the desired emotional experience of the audience within each stage.

Knowledge regarding emotions and their relationship to fiction guided me to successfully plot the overarching narrative structure of my anti-heroine pilot script. I found that for audiences' expectations to be met and, in some cases, exceeded there exists a structural journey to ensure that their emotional desires are realised. The beauty of emotions, as explored in Chapter 5, is that viewers can be primed. Therefore, action early on in a narrative can guide the audience to experience subsequent emotions later on, helping to sustain their engagement. Considering this, I argue that it is not the morality of audiences that is primarily influenced but their emotions instead.

I found that, in the pilot episode, short-term engagement is better considered as the recognition stage and should be comprised into three subsections. Each subsection is centred on core emotions that play a role in encouraging audience engagement but also on intensifying the emotional punch of subsequent scenes later on in an anti-heroine narrative. Each subsection shifts the audience to experience a set of different, but particular, emotions centred on Aristotle's notion of pity, fear and catharsis. While it is important to note that the emotional journey is still grounded in the writer's cultural exploration, by providing the

writer with specific emotions to aim at, creative decisions concerning particular scenes are more congruent with the emotional desires of the viewer.

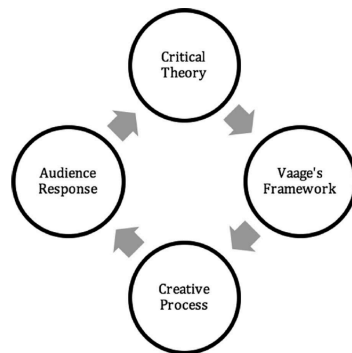
With that said, as made clear in Chapter 5, there are secondary emotions also at play during each stage of an anti-heroine narrative. Selecting and crafting in the appropriate emotions desired by the audience is down to the experimentation of a writer. This is a further layer of mystery that the writer needs to resolve for maximising the audience's desired experience.

### **The true value of narrative techniques**

Throughout, it has been implied that the *Wheel of Techniques* was found to be redundant; this is not entirely accurate. Simply put, this framework is still purposeful; however, writers should not be fixated on utilising it, particularly during the beginning of their creative development. They are, instead, better situated to employ this framework during the final stages of development when theme, voice, archetypes and other various storytelling principles that exist beyond the surface of a narrative have been advanced.

Analogously speaking, narrative techniques are comparable to the interior design of a house. They are similar to the wallpaper, flooring, artwork and furniture clearly seen inside a house. Parallel to interior design elements, narrative techniques are typically found through observation. However, through practice, akin to a builder using certain materials to frame a house, I observed and unpacked several key storytelling principles required to build a successful anti-heroine pilot script. Ultimately, in practice, I discovered an overemphasis on immorality and plot points (i.e. wallpaper, flooring, artwork, etc.) could result in a fragile anti-heroine narrative that is vulnerable to audience disengagement. Theme, voice and archetypes were found to be the key storytelling principles analogous to the framing materials of a house that ensure it remains standing. These are only three components out of a plethora of storytelling principles that exist within the layers of a narrative. Identifying each of these principles and how one advances them during the crafting of their anti-heroine pilot script is out of the scope of this research. Those principles that have been unveiled and explicated for practice are specific to the research inquiry: specifically, how to script an original, engaging and commercially viable television anti-heroine narrative.

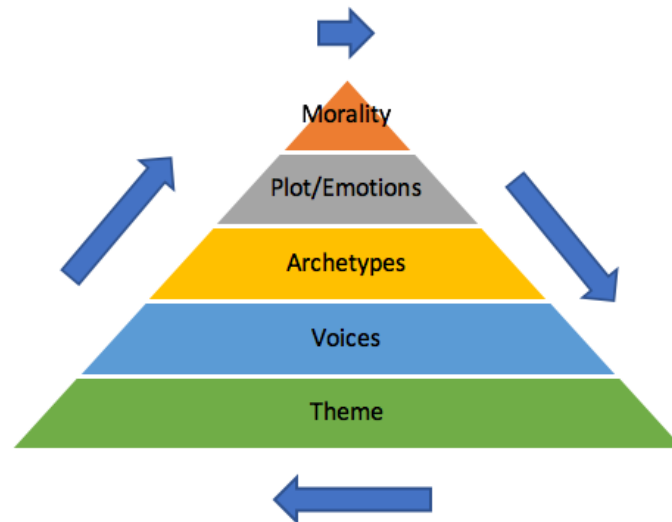
## The anti-heroine's hierarchy of needs to encourage viewer engagement



**Figure 26.** Four-point reflexive model for the approach to my practice-based thesis.

The methodological approach of this research centred on Smith and Dean's (2009) cyclical and reflexive model as illustrated in *Figure 26*. The key components of this model were amended to provide space for me to reflect and ultimately synergise the specific forces at play for developing an original and engaging commercial anti-heroine pilot script. These forces are *audience response*, *critical theory*, *Vaage's framework* and the *creative process*. Employing this model, as explored in Chapter 1, has been a fruitful experience. A number of insights were brought to light and extrapolated, promoting a greater understanding of how a writer can script an engaging anti-heroine pilot episode.

Each principle explored in this thesis is critical for encouraging viewer engagement. It goes without saying, however, that the advancing of a singular principle alone would not encourage viewer engagement. In concluding this thesis, it was essential to transform all of my findings into a holistic approach for screenwriters to employ. This led to the model in *Figure 27, An anti-heroine's hierarchy of needs*, which was presented in the introduction and supports writers to script an engaging and original anti-heroine narrative. The model provides a holistic approach of how screenwriters can utilise all of the storytelling principles revealed in this thesis to craft their anti-heroine pilot script. Needless to say, this is seldom a straightforward process and requires the writer to continually revise their pilot script, as I did, until the fundamental storytelling principles are working harmoniously together.



**Figure 27.** *An anti-heroine's hierarchy of needs.*

As displayed in *Figure 27*, the first layer a writer should approach is theme. Without a well drawn-out theme, in the form of an open question (i.e., what would happen if?), a narrative can become purposeless and meaningless. As discussed, a writer should consider crafting a thematic question that is close to home: one which they can explore throughout their narrative. The second layer, voices, builds upon the thematic question, encouraging the writer to inject their voices into their pilot script and have them battle it out over utterance. This is one method for aiding the development of an original narrative because the writer is afforded space to inject their unique perspective. Moreover, I have concluded that a significant feature of an engaging anti-heroine narrative is the writer locating themselves at the heart of their story. Through the evolution and crafting of both theme and voice, the model is reflective of this recommendation.

However, there needs to be a transition that shifts a writer's perspective away from themselves towards that of the audience's position. Archetypes is this transitioning block, since it is centred around both the advancing of a writer's individuality as well as their ability to exercise empathy for the audience's perspective. As I discovered when initially injecting my voices into the pilot script, it manifested into a chaotic and unfocused narrative. Theme, or more specifically my thematic question, on its own did not provide the structure to evade chaos. The application of archetypes, specific to the storyworld of my anti-heroine, were employed to craft characters that were pertinent for advancing my voices, while also providing entry points of comprehension for the audience. In this sense, archetypes offer guidance for the development of key characters that are culturally rich and relatable to the

audience. It is through the advancing of archetypes that transparency surrounding which characters are narratively futile is created. In turn, those characters can be omitted from the story, leaving only the necessary characters that can succinctly express a writer's voice.

As a writer moves towards the peak of the pyramid, they should focus on the plot (emotions) layer. Here is where they should deliberate the intended emotional experience of the audience. In Chapter 5, the model presented, *piloting audience emotion for the television anti-heroine*, is one method for guiding the viewer to experience a set of desired emotions to progress the narrative in a way that fulfils the distinct phases and levels of their engagement.

The apex of the hierarchical pyramid is morality. At this point, the writer should consider how specific narrative techniques can be advanced to override viewers' moral deliberation to encourage and sustain their engagement. This is what I term the *crystallisation stage* and recommend that the narrative techniques are considered, assuming the fundamental storytelling principles have been successfully crafted.

Whilst I have described this model linearly, the arrows circling the model illustrate that it is inherently cyclical. After the first draft, the screenwriter can move up or down the layers of the pyramid to help pinpoint what precisely is missing from their pilot script, carefully examining their narrative against each layer. In this sense, the writer is a detective, and the model should be thought of as their torch to help them with navigating the shadowy and unlit journey of scripting an original and commercially engaging anti-heroine pilot screenplay.

### **Limitations and further research**

The fundamental purpose of this research inquiry was to develop an anti-heroine pilot script for the commercial market. The methodological approach presented reflects the foundation used to explore elements of what the market believes is viable. That is, the acceptable severity of an anti-heroine's moral transgressions. Morally speaking, it became imperative to consider commercially successful television anti-heroines. This was accomplished through textual analyses and led to the birth of several narrative techniques, as presented in Chapter 2. While I discovered that employing these narrative techniques was not the only substantial component for engaging audiences, the initial process of textual analyses should not be considered redundant. Textual analyses, as discussed, contributed to the fifth layer of the pyramid, *an anti-heroine's hierarchy of needs*.

The major challenge, instead, is encouraging the commercial industry to consider these findings. As many before me have argued, and still do, a gap needs to be bridged

between academia and the commercial industry. This practice-based mode of inquiry supports the construction of this bridge. Practice unveiled specific knowledge, pertinent to engaging viewers, that challenges Vaage's understanding as well as my own initial conceptions concerning the anti-heroine and her immorality. In the end, an ultimate objective of this research is to support an outpouring of more nuanced representations of anti-heroine figures parallel to the surge of television anti-heroes during the last twenty years.

It should be pointed out again that, whilst this mode of inquiry has been practice-based, the process of discerning the response from an audience has been an interpretive activity. This is a limitation, and until researchers can shift away from a theoretical methodological approach, at least concerning audience engagement, it will remain a challenge to engage the industry with these findings. An idea, however, for overcoming this obstacle to enable a flow of collaboration between academia and the commercial industry, could be the employment of more rigorous and technologically advanced research methods concerning audience engagement. For instance, advancements and understandings in the field of neuroscience can teach us much about the human brain response system when engaging with fiction (Gulino & Shears, 2018). As Macdonald (2013) argues, the reader can be invited to play the screenplay in their head, thus technology could be developed to scan and identify patterns of reader responses when engaging with an anti-heroine pilot script. This, of course, is applicable to a wide range of fiction. It would likely be costly, and there would be various other difficulties, but the costs should be recuperated by the new knowledge generated, supporting production companies to take more informed and profitable decisions.

An additional point to consider is that my research findings are primarily concerned with linear single-character-led anti-heroine pilot scripts. It would be fruitful to explore how audience engagement could be achieved for anti-heroine pilot scripts that are not linear or led by a single anti-heroine character. For example, recent television series have centred around a range of morally ambiguous female characters as part of much wider storyworlds, such as Daenerys Targaryen (*Game of Thrones*), Piper Chapman (*Orange is the New Black*), Ruth Langmore (*Ozark*) and Villanelle (*Killing Eve*). None of these anti-heroines are sole leads within their respective narratives. While it is plausible to deduce that some of the findings presented in this thesis are congruent with how these anti-heroine figures have achieved engagement, there are most likely narrative differences at play as well. Exploring these additional forms of anti-heroine pilot scripts would provide further opportunity for screenwriters to craft originally nuanced and engaging anti-heroine narratives that subvert gender representations.

Finally, as Patrice Leavy (2015) states, creative artifacts produced in academic settings are often protected from scrutiny when compared to artifacts created in a professional setting, thus highlighting a major weakness of practice-based research. Admittedly, there are limitations, given the fact I have only received feedback on my pilot screenplay from one institution and a small number of readers. That said, as Eugen Bacon (2015) posits, one role must dominate, be that artist or scholar, and this means there is a loss and always a cost that needs to be widely accepted. Given the time and space of writing the pilot episode as well as collating feedback, it was simply unfeasible to engage with a variety of industry stakeholders and therefore the academic sphere dominated. Nevertheless, this does not distract from the quality and significance of the research findings explicated throughout this thesis: findings that only advance the professional development of more diverse, engaging and original television anti-heroine narratives.

In conclusion, the insights discovered through my inquiry have erected a foundation that researchers can build upon. My findings centre on the pilot episode, and whilst I have offered some ideas concerning engagement during subsequent episodes, it has been merely speculation. As stated in Chapter 5, how engagement is maintained after the pilot episode and the ingredients for crafting a continuously engaging television series are both unknown. Thus, there is a void that needs resolving to aid the crafting of an anti-heroine story that moves beyond the pilot episode. Furthermore, my thesis focuses on a white Western female anti-heroine who is a mother. Motherhood has been utilised as an important element to encourage viewer engagement. This could well be a blind spot of my inquiry and I encourage further research that is contrary to focusing on an anti-heroine who is a mother.

Finally, to truly offer a diverse and nuanced representation of the female gender, there needs to be further research on ethnic minorities and those with physical impairments. For an anti-heroine in one of these protected groups, it would be naive to assume that engagement could be achieved in the same manner as described throughout this thesis. Thus, I encourage practitioners to conduct research within this specific area.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Textual Analyses Closed and Open Coding of *Weeds*

| (Closed Coding)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | (Open Coding) Scene Running Time                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <p>Wellbeing determined by mothers.<br/>21<sup>st</sup> Century Western female.<br/>Stereotypical housewives; traditional gender roles.<br/>Breaking away from traditional female gender roles.</p> <p>Women adhere to traditional gender roles;<br/>Failing to renegotiate gender.<br/>Women gender roles are non-negotiable;<br/>A woman's body is significant to one's identity.<br/>Gender is manufactured from a young age.</p> <p>Wealth leads to respect.<br/>Minorities stereotypically doing criminal work.<br/>Failing as a criminal.<br/>Females and minorities are marginalised.<br/>African Americans are characterised as criminals.<br/>Questioning black criminals.<br/>Do not question experience.<br/>Natural aptitude for drug dealing.<br/>Nancy is new to the criminal underworld.</p> | <p><b>Scene 1: (1:14-2:39)— Introduction of Nancy Botwin:</b> Nancy is stood up speaking at a meeting dominated only by mothers of school children. Most noticeably, she is wearing a low-cut black top, revealing her cleavage. However, the mothers that she is addressing are characterised stereotypically, as they are dressed in feminine colors such as pink, along with their salient makeup. What clearly distinguishes Nancy from the mothers she is addressing is that they disagree with her viewpoint that there should no longer be soda drinks, including diet, available at school. The mothers agree with Nancy about sugary soda drinks, but this should not include a ban on diet soda. Thus, the mothers make absolutely clear that a ban on diet soda is none negotiable, which their reason for, is because their daughters will put on weight. Nancy makes the point that they are only 11 years old and they should not be under such pressures.</p> <p><b>Scene 2: (2:40-5:52) – Nancy and the weed making:</b> Nancy is showing off her handbag since the mothers at the meeting commented on it. She is amongst ethnic minorities, who are packing the narcotics (weed) into plastic bags. Nancy is center of a joke because it becomes apparent by the older African American woman that her “expensive bag” is a counterfeit. Nancy does humorously/sarcastically defend herself by making racial innuendos through building on societal stereotypes about how black people are thieves to which the group see the funny side. Finally, Nancy oversteps the mark when she makes a comment that one of the packed bags of narcotics looks a little “light” to which the group are in disbelief (humorously). Haig (older African American woman, who appears to be the leader) puts Nancy in her place by weighing the bag, which weighs in at a perfect weight. Nancy, pulls back and defends her comment by</p> |

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| <p>Son is grieving over father.</p> <p>Mother suddenly loses husband.<br/>Life is sometimes cruel.</p> <p>Talking intimately.<br/>Traditional gender roles; Female as a victim.<br/>Rejecting traditional gender roles.</p> <p>Single motherhood.</p> <p>Jumping to conclusions; being mother and father.<br/>Acting sexual.<br/>Young love.<br/>Deceiving mother.<br/>Truanting from school.<br/>21<sup>st</sup> Century single mother.<br/>Men lounging about.<br/>Poor role models for men.<br/>Men are dumb.</p> <p>Surprised by young teenager.<br/>Male domination.<br/>Husband died.<br/>Manipulation.<br/>Break down of Christianity/the nuclear family.</p> | <p>stating that she is still new to this industry. Nancy has to suddenly leave and when queried she states that Shane (son, although this is not made clear within this scene) has his appointment with the grief counsellor. When Nancy leaves the house the rest of the group discuss how the boy's (Shane) dad died suddenly when going out on a run and how that is "fucked up."</p> <p><b>Scene 3: (5:53-6:25) – Nancy with Conrad outside drug house:</b> Conrad tries to talk with Nancy on a personal level about how she is doing to which she tells him that they do business not personal problems. Conrad is persistent in trying to support Nancy, whereas Nancy is persistent in rejecting his such emotional support.</p> <p><b>Scene 4: (6:26-8:28) – Nancy interrogating her sons with what happened in the guest room:</b> Nancy interrogates her son Shane with what happened in the guest room since there is a hole in the ceiling. She retreats back when her son appears to have done something innocently. Throughout the entire dialogue Nancy gives her older son dagger eyes whenever he appears to engage with sexual innuendos about a dead neighbor. The older son's girlfriend then appears in the living room and curls up next to him. Nancy picks up that her son's girlfriend was around when Shane fell down (exactly what off is not clear) to which she was supposed to be at school. Shane states that they were making out, but "nothing naked." Nancy's pager then vibrates, whilst munching on crisps, and soon explains that she must go out. Shane then sits watching a wildlife show of "hill-billy" men trying to kill a bear to which they fail miserably. It thus gives the impression that the men are somewhat a little dumb.</p> <p><b>Scene 5: (8:29-10:28) – Nancy in car:</b> As Nancy begins to rev the ignition she is spooked by a young teenager, Josh (high school student), in the back of her car. As Josh maneuvers into the front passenger seat he tells Nancy to relax, to which she reminds him that her husband died of a heart attack. Josh explains his lack of employment at the moment and asks Nancy for help. Josh further explains that the guy he was working for, in the meditation industry, went off to an event to "get high for the passion of Christ."</p> |
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| <p>Laughing at God.<br/> The loss of vacation.<br/> Mocking religion; change of times.<br/> Buying drugs.<br/> Looking after number one.</p> <p>Moral code.<br/> Rejecting moral code.</p> <p>Lacking moral code.<br/> Loss of masculinity.<br/> How to act like a man.<br/> Can't help her son.<br/> Adhering to traditional gender roles.<br/> Not fitting in.<br/> Inheriting bad genes.<br/> Weight defines many women.<br/> Burning fat.<br/> Conforming to gender roles.<br/> Protecting children.<br/> Mocked for acting sensitive.<br/> Cleaning the wound.<br/> Wanting to go home.<br/> Acting like a man.<br/> Responding sympathetically.</p> <p>Learning how to think and act like a man.<br/> Dysfunctional.<br/> Mocking 21<sup>st</sup> century femaleness.</p> | <p>Nancy finds that funny and unbelievable that people are getting stoned for the passion of Christ. Nancy proceeds to tell Josh to take the week off, but he rejects this by sarcastically saying it's against his "Christian work ethic." Josh then offers Nancy money for her drugs, with the plan to sell it on himself. Nancy is reluctant until he explains that the "green" she has bought to sell must have cost her some serious cash. Nancy replies by asking him if he is going to play by the rules – no selling to children and stay away from her customer base. Josh agrees by stating that "if they are too young to bleed; they are too young to smoke weed."</p> <p><b>Scene 6: (10:29-16:32) – Soccer Match:</b> From the offset it is clear that Nancy is dealing drugs, whilst attending her son's, Silas, football match. Her son, Silas, is clearly not interested in the soccer match as he is playing with his nails before being barged to the ground by an opposite football player. But, a mother (Celia), explains to Nancy technically the referee can't help Silas because he was taken down by a player on the same team. Nancy brushes this off then asks the mother about how her daughter's diet is coming along... She has lost 3 pounds. Nancy meaningfully states, "good for her." The mother responds by noting that her daughter suffers with a slow metabolism and blames it on the fact that she doesn't take after "her side" of the family. The daughter then runs over and says to her mum, "did you see my kick" to which she responds, "yeah, but I wanna see more running out there. She further explains to her daughter "that's what burns the fat." Her daughter, deflated, runs back over to the football pitch. It soon becomes apparent that Silas is bleeding and Nancy darts her eyes over to him. Silas is licking the blood off his knee to which one of his team players mocks him for and all the children shout "ewe." Nancy then helps him with clearing the blood off of his knee. Silas then asks his mum if they can go home to which the other mother tells him that he must "tough it out little man that's what your father would have said." Nancy immediately cuts in and tells Silas to relax, take a break, have a drink and play in the second quarter. Celia then explains to Nancy that she needs to read some books to help her sons deal with the loss of their father otherwise they will become dysfunctional in relationships when they grow up. Nancy sarcastically states to Celia</p> |
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| <p>Lack of control over family.<br/>Relying on a man.</p> <p>Dealing drugs; dumb middle-aged man.</p> <p>Dealing drugs to children.<br/>Ringing the police.<br/>Kicking men out of society.<br/>Children and drug use.<br/>Angered by lack of morality.</p> <p>Mocking team player.<br/>Intelligence loses to stupidity.<br/>Acting out primitively; trying to physically fight.<br/>Protecting a member of one's tribe.</p> <p>Young love.</p> <p>Breakdown of the family; mother a control freak.</p> <p>Spying on daughter.<br/>Hiding from boys.<br/>Fear for wellbeing.<br/>Wearing lipstick.<br/>Using physical force is stupid.</p> <p>TV role models shaping behavior.<br/>Hitting the optimum killing point.</p> | <p>that she "never knew she read books." Celia replies by asking Nancy if she knows where her son Shane is and what he is doing right now? Suddenly, a middle aged, white male appears and states (pointing towards the park), "yeah, he is over there somewhere." Nancy passes a magazine over to the male, which clearly has some drugs inside. He tries to pay Nancy in broad daylight by moving for his pocket. Nancy, sternly, tells him that she'll "catch you later. See you later Doug." It becomes evident that Josh, Doug's son, is selling drugs on the playground. Celia wants to ring the police, but Nancy casually plays it down. Still, Celia gets up and tells Nancy she is gonna chase the "little fucker" out of the area. She further states that a ten-year-old found marijuana in his lunch box the previous day. This grabs the attention of Nancy as she fits on her sunglasses. It then cuts to Nancy's son asking to replace the injured player to his coach to which he is told, "there is only a few minutes." The injured player mocks Silas Botwin when he tries to offer him advice (Silas is clearly smart). Silas is pushed over the edge, emotionally, when the injured player smugly labels him an "orphan boy." In turn, Silas launches a soda can at him, followed by a ribena. The injured player (Kevin) tries to chase after Silas, but Nancy leaves her foot out for Kevin to trip over.</p> <p><b>Scene 7: (16:32-18.00) – Teenagers lying down:</b> Two teenage lovers, Shane and Quinn, are lying down, with the camera positioned from a bird's eye view angle. There are bars in front of them as they are situated in a rundown sheltered area. Quinn talks about how her mum probably has spy cameras within their family home. Shane is skeptical about this accusation, but Quinn reveals how her mother planted a camera in her teddy bear so she could catch her younger sister stealing food from the kitchen. Silas Botwin, running, appears and hides underneath the bench, frantically panting, "I am so dead. I am so dead." Shane tells him that nobody is coming and then asks if he is wearing lipstick, to which Silas explains it is fruit punch. Silas explains what he did... Threw a can of ribena! Shane tells his brother it was stupid, but Silas explains that the boy called him "orphan boy" to which his older brother says he is a "fuckwad." Quinn asks Silas if he hit him? Then his older brother talks to Silas about the bear programme and if he hit him in the optimum killing point? Silas makes it clear that he didn't and</p> |
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| <p>Quinn unaware of show.<br/>Old guys; old values.<br/>Horrible way to behave.</p> <p>Episode leaves you with words of wisdom.</p> <p>Smoking weed.</p> <p>Excited about the weed.<br/>Moral police officer.<br/>No smoking weed in public;<br/>Abuse of power.<br/>Celia has great tits.<br/>Husband is cheating.<br/>Traditional female; traditional values.<br/>Not a traditional female.<br/>Sexually deviant behavior.<br/>Fear of being labeled gay.</p> <p>Betraying sexual partners.<br/>Fear of sex life being outed.</p> <p>No respect for women; women are sexual objects.</p> <p>Losing a good man.<br/>Missing husband.</p> | <p>then Shane questions why Quinn hasn't seen it or is at least aware of it?! They then describe, excitingly, the television show and how the premise of it centres around a bunch of old guys who go out each week to kill a bear. The girl explains that it is horrible, but Silas is having none of it, mimicking some of the scenes of the show. The brothers go onto to explain how, at the end of the episode, the "bear hunters" leave you with some words of wisdom.</p> <p><b>Scene 8: (18:01-20:09) – Doug Smoking weed in his car:</b> The scene opens up to a montage of someone lighting up and then smoking weed. We learn it is Doug smoking weed in his car, whilst singing along to a song. Nancy interrupts him, as she taps her fingers across his window. Doug is excited to tell Nancy how good her "stuff" is. Nancy, sternly, explains to Doug that unless he wants to go back to smoking bad weed then he better hide the drugs and stop smoking it in public and, finally, "stop hiding your head in your ass." Doug then questions Nancy's advice to which she explains he is on the city council. Nancy further questions what would he do if Celia passed by now, but Doug simply responds stating that she has "great tits" but is also "such a bitch." Doug explains that Celia's husband is having sex with the tennis coach, an Asian girl. Doug jokes that she is "loving him long time." Nancy explains to Doug that she is from Annahigh not Vietnam. Doug responds that she put a tennis racket up Dean's ass the previous week, adding that anyone that lets anything up their ass is at least part gay. Nancy questions how Doug knows all of this to which he explains it was learned over a game of poker. Nancy is surprised that Dean shared this information with Doug and questions why? Doug explains that he was losing and drunk. Nancy asks if Doug ever said anything about their sex life during these poker games. Doug, rather inconspicuously, says no, and his reason being that guys who are still having sex with their wives don't want to say something out loud by jinxing it. Doug immediately switches and tells Nancy that her husband was a great guy and he misses him a lot. Nancy replies that she does too, while looking rather annoyed and concerned with Doug. Nancy jokes, if only her husband lived long enough to stick objects up his ass before explaining she never even got a finger up there. Doug laughs before adding that</p> |
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| <p>Men are idiots.<br/>Not thinking.<br/>Paying money over.</p> <p>Packing to leave.<br/>Ambushed by “Jesus.”<br/>Pinning Josh against the car; keeping a promise.<br/>Showing more respect.<br/>Ten-year-old caught with drugs.<br/>Men are fucking liars.<br/>Not taking the situation serious.<br/>Showing no morals.<br/>Women taking the market.<br/>Dog eat dog world; selling to whoever buys.<br/>Acting like a man.<br/>Fathers are even worse.<br/>Stupid fucking kid.<br/>Nancy is a hypocrite.<br/>Whatever helps you sleep at night.<br/>Family appear.<br/>Being called an orphan boy.<br/>Nancy’s breast are perked.<br/>Complete loss of control; no respect.<br/>Horrificed.</p> <p>Ready to have sex?<br/>Torturing men.<br/>Only three months. Can trust him.</p> | <p>Nancy is amazing to which she replies, “well, you’re an idiot. Air out the fan and keep your smoke private.” Doug apologises, stating he “wasn’t thinking.” Doug then pays Nancy since he owes her money. Nancy tells Doug, “now we are cool.”</p> <p><b>Scene 9: (20:09-21:50) – Nancy packing her car and along comes Josh:</b> Whilst packing her belongings into the back of her car, Nancy is suddenly ambushed by Josh who asks, “excuse me mam, have you heard the good news about Jesus?” Nancy then flips and pins Josh to the car and says, “you made me a promise you little shit.” Josh instructs Nancy to take it easy and that he won’t sneak up on her anymore. Nancy explains that he just heard a ten-year-old was caught with drugs in their lunchbox. Nancy labels Josh a “fucking liar” and he arrogantly replies that the kid told him he was “37.” Nancy tells Josh to promise no kids, but he says they all want it and they cry if you say no. Nancy firmly tells Josh “he’s ten.” Josh explains to Nancy that when she opened up shop she took a lot of business away, but he let it go. Josh tries to walk away saying he is selling to whoever is buying then Nancy grabs his face and slams him against the car. He looks shocked. Josh explains that she can’t stop him before pointing to his Dad drugged up in his car. Nancy pauses and speaks out loud and clear saying that he is just a stupid little kid. And Josh tells Nancy that she is a hypocrite – keep kids off drugs, but in the night pot dealer mum... He adds, “if that helps you sleep through the night, Nancy.” Josh leaves and Nancy’s children, Shane and Silas, along with Quinn appear. Silas explains that he wants to go home because he hates soccer and he is being called orphan boy. Nancy’s breast are noticeable as she enters the car and shimmies the two lovebirds along. Once in the front seat, Quinn asks if they can have sex in the house. Nancy looks horrified.</p> <p><b>Scene 10: (21:50-24:12) – Looking over small-town on the roof:</b> Nancy and Quinn’s backs are faced towards the camera as they watch over the town and its scenery. Nancy asks Quinn, “so you guys think you are ready?” Quinn replies, “yes - I have tortured him enough... We’ve been going out for three months already.” A skeptical Nancy replies, “a whole three months?!” Quinn responds that she trusts Shane and believes he</p> |
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| <p>Only 15.<br/>Phone interrupts moment.</p> <p>Warn brother of future mother-in-law.<br/>Spying on neighbors.<br/>Made to promise.<br/>Knows dad has been cheating.<br/>Wrecked the family.<br/>Ready to have sexual intercourse.<br/>Already had sex.<br/>Did you think we were virgins?<br/>Mr. Wells with new toy boy.<br/>Toy boy is Josh.<br/>Nancy schemes a plan.</p> <p>Hiding a secret<br/>Stripping away innocence.<br/>Nancy is smug.<br/>Taking control of the situation.<br/>Walking with swagger; Breaking and entering.<br/>A secret.<br/>Father learning of son's sexuality.<br/>Sexual relationship with middle-aged man.<br/>No drug dealing to kids ever again.<br/>Keeping a secret.<br/>Slapping buttocks.<br/>The Church is the biggest hypocrite.</p> | <p>loves her to which Nancy says she thinks she's right about that, but they are only 15. In the distance, we hear the phone ringing, followed by Silas shouting, "Mum." Nancy yells to her son that they are on the roof and queries who was on the phone? Silas states it's Quinn's Mum and Nancy tells him to go warn his brother, Shane. Nancy then begins using her binoculars before Quinn explains that her Mother is going to have Nancy swear they don't stay in the same room together alone. Quinn then adds that she understands why her Dad is "screwing" another woman to which Nancy replies, "you know about that?" This, for Quinn, confirms that the rumor is true. Quinn reverts back to arguing that she and Shane are ready and Nancy responds that you don't know that. Quinn replies you never truly know. Quinn then reveals that she had sex with her previous partner and questions if Nancy thought they were both virgins? Quinn then climbs down and notices Mr. Wells with his new toy boy. It becomes apparent that his younger man is Josh, thus Nancy grabs for her binoculars to see for herself. A cunning plan is being plotted in Nancy's mind.</p> <p><b>Scene 11: (24:12-25:04) – Josh's sexuality:</b> Establishing shot of Nancy ringing the doorbell, notably the house is sheltered by bushes and trees. Josh, dressed only in a pair of white pants, is jumping up and down on a bed. A middle-aged man, dressed only in a robe, makes his way to the door. Nancy, looking very happy with herself, bursts through the door and the man looks speechless. He then chases after Nancy as she walks with power and swagger. The middle-aged man queries who she is and Nancy explains she'll only be a second. Nancy then enters the bedroom as Josh is sat texting. Nancy locks the door. She then explains to Josh his dad might not care about him dealing drugs, but he will care if he learns of his relationship with an older man. Josh tells Nancy, as she pins him onto the bed with his body faced down, "no kids ever again." Josh begs for Nancy to keep his secret and she tells him, "I'll think about." Josh asks Nancy what that means before she slaps him across the buttocks and responds, "see you around Josh." Nancy unlocks the door and tells him she'll see him at church.</p> |
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| <p>Teenagers are going to have sex.<br/> Diary as evidence.<br/> Teddy with hidden camera.<br/> Nancy laughs off spying on their children.<br/> Mocking the teddy bear.<br/> Becoming more direct.<br/> Will not spy on children.<br/> Mothers role is to stop children from making mistakes.<br/> Nancy is naïve.<br/> Old traditions outdated, who's really naïve?<br/> Nancy says no; rejecting gender role.<br/> No sex under Nancy's roof; giving her word; loyalty.<br/> Children keeping their innocence.<br/> Quinn mocks her Mother.</p> <p>Teasing Mother; Quinn rejects traditional values.<br/> Mother fighting for control/respect.</p> <p>Failing to fool her daughter.</p> <p>Silas devises an intelligent plan.<br/> Silas ambushes bully.</p> <p>Innocence and sensitivity stripped away.</p> <p>Deceived by son.</p> | <p><b>Scene 12: (25:05-26:58) – They are going to have sex, I read her diary:</b> Nancy is sat talking to Quinn's mum, Celia, who tells her that Shane and Quinn are going to have sex and offers Nancy her daughter's diary as evidence. Subsequently, Celia pulls out a pink teddy bear and holds it whilst staring at Nancy, explaining there is a camera hidden within it. Celia then asks a laughing and shocked Nancy to just slip it into her son's bedroom. Nancy, sarcastically, makes it clear that her son would notice if a large, pink teddy bear suddenly appeared in his bedroom. Nancy becomes more direct and tells Celia that she will not spy on her kids. Celia explains that they, children, are all liars and sneaks and it is up to their mothers to discourage and stop it. Celia also tells Nancy that she is really naïve. Nancy replies, whilst holding the teddy bear, that she is starting to believe she really is naïve. Celia encourages Nancy to take the bear, but Nancy says no. Celia finally concedes, but asks Nancy to promise that the two teenagers will not have sex under her roof. Nancy gives Celia her word, "as a mother." All the children turn up with pizza and Quinn points out, sarcastically, that there is a cute pink bear on the table. Quinn asks her mother, Celia, where their teddy bear, identical to the one on the table, disappeared to? Celia responds that it is the bear. It becomes tense since Quinn teases her mother about taking the teddy back and insists she would love it to be in her room. Celia, in turn, snatches the bear off of Shane, notably reading between the lines spouted by her daughter, Quinn. Celia then hands over the bear to Quinn, whilst noticeably switching on the battery.</p> <p><b>Scene 13: (26:59-27:24) – Agrestic Elementary School:</b> We open up to a player from the soccer team who has been bullying Silas. It becomes apparent that Silas is lurking up above in the trees, holding a water gun, dressed in combat clothes. Silas then jumps out of the tree and targets the main perpetrator and soaks him with pink powder. The soaked boy lies helplessly on the ground telling Silas to "quit it." But Silas continues, shouting at the boy that "I think pink is your colour... You fuckwot."</p> <p><b>Scene 14: (27:25- 27:44) – Sexual activity:</b> Nancy catches her oldest son having sex with his girlfriend. Looking like she could cry, Nancy expresses her sorrow that her son</p> |
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| <p>Sons have let her down.<br/> Hopelessly lost.<br/> Losing control.<br/> Technically not been deceived.<br/> <br/> Nancy hasn't lied. Still in control.</p> <p>Nancy breaks down; comforted by male.<br/> Looking after Nancy and making pie.</p> <p>Nothing better to do; lonely.<br/> Husband having sex.<br/> Daughter spites mother.<br/> Fuck traditional values.</p> <p>Born in the wrong era.<br/> Drinking like a man.</p> | <p>deceived her, along with Silas getting suspended from school. Nancy then sits at the end of the bed and stares into thin air, noting that, "you fucked in my guest room... I've got everything under control." Quinn lies back and says, "don't you see; technically were not even under your roof." A bird-eye-view shot shows that the double bed is framed directly beneath a large ceiling window, thus there exists no roof. Nancy stares into the sky, clearly contemplating.</p> <p><b>Scene 15: (27:55-28.30)– A shoulder to cry on:</b> Nancy paces towards the drug house and enters through the gate before knocking on the door. A young African American, who tried to charm Nancy during the beginning of the episode, opens the door. He looks shocked yet happy. A pause takes place between them. Nancy, unable to speak, suddenly breaks down in tears, sobbing away. He comforts Nancy and allows her to enter into the house and asks the older lady to put some pie on.</p> <p><b>Scene 16: (28.31-29:30) – Spying on the teenagers:</b> Celia takes the footage out of the teddy bear and watches it on the television, whilst sipping rum. When the footage comes into play, Celia is disgusted to see that her husband is having sex with another woman. Clearly orchestrated by her daughter since at the end of the footage Quinn stares directly into the camera and says "fuck you," before signing off with a middle finger. Celia can only shake her head before mumming to herself, "that little cunt... I should have had an abortion." She continues to deliberate while sipping rum.</p> |
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## Closed and Open Coding of *The Killing*

| (Closed Coding)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | (Open Coding) Scene: & Running Time                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <p>Keeping in good physical shape.<br/> Women are more vulnerable compared to men.<br/> Predatory and dangerous male.<br/> Obsessed with death.<br/> Dark past; death is a part of life.<br/> Sounding fine.</p> <p>Always on call.<br/> Last day of work.<br/> No fear of crime scenes.<br/> Finding potential dead body.<br/> Pranked by work colleagues.<br/> Most comfortable at a crime scene.</p> <p>Arriving home.<br/> Job has prevented family life from flourishing.<br/> Kissing fiancé.<br/> Protecting son.<br/> Wedding talk.<br/> No immediate family; alone.<br/> Parents disapprove of Linden as a woman; not traditional. Change of male attitude towards women.</p> | <p><b>Scene 1 (0.00-1.51): Introduction of Sarah Linden running in the wood:</b> Sarah Linden emerges as she is running through the woods. This is then intercut with another woman running through the woods screaming, as a man holding a torch chases after her. It then cuts back to Linden scanning a dead animal. Linden takes a moment. She clearly has a dark past. Her phone then rings, while still standing over the dead animal. She answers, “yes, Linden here.”</p> <p><b>Scene 2 (2.29-5.12): Crime scene:</b> Detective Linden arrives, still sporting the same running outfit. A police officer remarks that it’s her last week of work to which Linden replies, “nope, today.” Linden shines a torch when entering the unlit building as she scans the area. Just as she thinks she has found a dead body hanging from a noose, her fellow teammates emerge, singing, “oh, she’s a jolly good fellow...” Linden has been pranked as part of her farewell on her final day at work. Linden laughs.</p> <p><b>Scene 3 (5.16-7.40): Linden arrives home:</b> Linden arrives home and yells to see if anyone is home, whilst holding a blow-up doll of a woman. Linden’s fiancé, Rick, sneaks up on her. They begin to flirt and kiss. She instructs him to pop the blow-up doll before her son, Jack, arrives home. They then begin discussing their wedding plans and Linden amusingly talks about her old social worker giving her away at the wedding. Cheekily, Linden asks her fiancée what would his parents think about that?! Rick shrugs his shoulders as he clearly doesn’t care.</p> |

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| <p>I want marriage.<br/>Actions speak louder than words.</p> <p>Empty kitchen.<br/>Son is what's most important (single motherhood).</p> <p>Disturbed by replacement.<br/>No respect shown at first.<br/>New life in California.</p> <p>One last job.<br/>Reluctantly agrees.<br/>Still employed by the city.<br/>New partnership.</p> <p>Exposition.<br/>Clear bad guys.</p> <p>Where's the body?<br/>Taking control.<br/>Acting like a clown.</p> <p>Thinking deeply.<br/>Informing police what to do.<br/>Sex crimes; Holder wants the case.</p> <p>There's no body.</p> | <p>Linden calls back Rick and says to him, "I do." The connotation is that she wants to marry him. Rick replies to her that, "the tickets are on the fridge, the flight is at 9.30."</p> <p>Rick exits. Linden enters the kitchen and looks at a picture of her and, what appears to be, her son. She kisses the magnetic photo before positioning it back onto the fridge.</p> <p><b>Scene 4 (7.42-9.46): Packing up:</b> Linden is disturbed by her replacement Detective Holder, as he turns up ready to take over her office. Holder small talks about her new home in California.</p> <p>Linden is issued one last assignment by her boss and is told to take Holder with her and show him around. Linden reluctantly agrees because of the tight flight schedule, but her boss reminds her that she is still on "the city's books." Linden grabs a box and asks Holder to grab another one.</p> <p><b>Scene 5 (9.50-12.39): Linden's and Holder's first crime scene together:</b> Holder reveals some of his history... Notably, he spent a long time in narcotics. Holder explains that homicide will be better because at least there is a "bad guy."</p> <p>Linden arrives at the scene and asks for the location of the body, but the officers explain that they are still searching. Linden takes control of the situation, while Holder makes poorly timed jokes as well as drawing bold conclusions.</p> <p>Linden steps away and begins thinking deeply... It is as if you can hear her thinking. Linden tells the police officers that if they find anything mark it, but don't touch it! And call-in sex crimes, this is theirs for now! Holder is annoyed and cannot understand why Linden has made this decision since they "were out here first." Linden points out they do not have a body, but Holder's quick to respond, "not yet."</p> |
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| <p>Holder can do it without Linden.<br/>Must finish packing.<br/>Linden is not done.</p> | <p>Linden suggests that Holder follow it up himself and offers him a lift to the train station since he does not have a car. Linden explains that she has got to finish packing and Holder adds that, "I thought you were done?!" He then further adds that her flight isn't until 9PM and he won't let her miss it...</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Traditional values nearly extinct.<br/>Unsure on what to believe in.</p>              | <p>As Holder walks on, Linden notices a tattoo on his back, which is a sign of Christ. She's captivated by it for a moment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Immigration.<br/>Racial discrimination.</p>                                           | <p><b>Scene 6 (12.40-13.36): Introducing Stan Larsson:</b> Stan Larsson, along with his work partner, enter a shop, run by minorities, to pick up a delivery. His colleague embarrasses Stan as he makes a racial slur. The gentleman shows Stan and his partner where the goods are and explains that they can "take." Before the gentleman brushes past, he tells Stan's partner that his name is "Frazier, not Osama." Stan laughs at his colleague, he clearly enjoyed that especially since his partner looks lost for words.</p> |
| <p>Sweeping everyone under the same rug.<br/>Unable to respond to a new world.</p>       | <p>Stan's phone rings and his wife, Mitch, is on the other side... She tells Stan that he needs to get home right away!</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p>Housewife calls husband.</p>                                                          | <p><b>Scene 7 (13.40-15:50): Stan Larsson's home Life:</b> Stan is at home fixing his washing machine. He fools around with his wife, Mitch, after she laughs at him getting soaked from fixing it.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Traditional relationship.<br/>Still very much in love.<br/>Having fun.</p>            | <p>Shortly afterwards, we cut to Stan leaving the house, whilst Mitch is kissing him and saying her goodbyes to him for the day. They appear happy and very much in love.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>In love like a couple of teenagers.<br/>Very happy.</p>                               | <p>Before Stan leaves, Mitch tells him that she needs to ask him a question and he needs to promise that he "won't blow." Mitch explains that their daughter, Rosie, has applied to college, but she wants to go out of state. Stan is unhappy at this news and doesn't know how to take it. Mitch explains that it's great she finally wants to go to college. Stan replies saying, "well as long as it's what she wants?" Clearly hinting that</p>                                                                                   |
| <p>Asking man for permission.<br/>Daughter to go college.<br/>Father not happy.</p>      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Wife living vicariously; born in wrong era.</p>                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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| <p>Wife or daughter's dream?<br/>Failing to hide her true agenda.</p> <p>Daughter is still young.<br/>Girls grow up faster now.<br/>Considering a renegotiation of values.</p> <p>Playing politics.</p> <p>Interrogating Mitch (mother); weak link<br/>Presuming husband may be dangerous.<br/>Stan is given an alibi.</p> <p>Linden wants to speak to Stan.</p> <p>Holder struggles to keep his cool.<br/>Mocking traditional religious values.</p> <p>A woman's motherly instinct.<br/>Mother to mother.<br/>Daughter is in danger.<br/>Linden's been here before.</p> <p>Searching for Rosie.</p> | <p>this may be Mitch's own dream, but living vicariously through their daughter. Mitch brushes it off.</p> <p>Stan asks why Rosie needs to go out of state, "she's only young?!" Mitch points out that she is nearly 18 and he's got to let her grow up at some point. Stan agrees to think about it. Mitch is happy and gives him a hug before he leaves.</p> <p><b>Scene 8 (15.56-18:10): Mayor nominee introduction:</b> Candidate Richmond arrives at work and is updated by his team about the latest polls. They sit around a table and discuss ideas for plotting a win at the election.</p> <p><b>Scene 9 (18.12-19.48): Rosie's missing:</b> Detective Linden and Holder question Mitch regarding Stan. Linden queries, "does your husband usually go out late at night. Mitch is perplexed, but makes it clear that Stan was with them on the camping trip last night.</p> <p>Linden hands over a card and asks Mitch to have her husband call them when he arrives home.</p> <p>Holder questions what they both do now... Holder further adds, "just wait for this prick to call?" Linden, wittingly, replies, "in situations like this, I ask myself what Jesus would do?"</p> <p>As Holder walks on, Linden notices a pink bike in the garage. Linden suddenly turns and asks Mitch (Mrs. Larsson) if she has a daughter? Mitch's reply is yes and then Linden asks when she last spoke to her... Mitch informs Linden that it was on Friday, a while ago. Enough is said. Screen cuts to black.</p> <p><b>Scene 10 (19.50-21.02): High school:</b> Sterling, Rosie's friend, sharks through the crowded hallway at school, searching for Rosie. Once in class, the principal appears asking if anyone has seen Rosie Larsson?!</p> |
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| Questioning Sterling.<br>Failing to deceive.                                                                                       | We jump cut to Sterling speaking outside the classroom to the principal and her teacher, Bennett Ahmad. Sterling unconvincingly explains that Rosie spent the entire weekend with her.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Teacher taking matters into their own hands.<br>What is the truth?                                                                 | When the principal leaves, Sterling's teacher, Bennett, adds, "nice try... How's about telling me the truth..."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Step by step.<br>More intense.<br>Mitch becomes unsettled; Linden scans bedroom.                                                   | <b>Scene 11 (21.09-22.48): Larsson household:</b> Mitch explains to Linden and Holder the intricate steps of Rosie's whereabouts during the weekend. The detectives become more intense with their questioning, which, in turn, unsettles Mitch. Linden begins to scan the walls of Rosie's bedroom.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Rosie's gone missing; vulnerable at the dance.                                                                                     | Mitch is on the phone and when she hangs up, she informs the detectives that the last time anyone saw Rosie was at the dance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Political speech.<br>Locating Gwen into a traditional female role.<br>Women are not desperate for a man.<br>Being open and honest. | <b>Scene 12 (22.48-26.48): Richmond's campaign at Rosie's high school:</b> Darren Richmond is behind a set of curtains, preparing to deliver a speech as part of the school's assembly. He is with Gwen Eaton, his colleague and lover, and asks her to move in with him. Gwen tells Darren that she knew where he was this morning... At the grave of his dead wife! There is a moment of pause before Gwen admits that she wished he would talk to her about his wife. |
| Police have arrived.<br>School is an abduction site.<br>Male opponent shows no empathy.<br>Selfish.                                | The silence is interrupted when the councilman is informed that the police have arrived. Soon after, the police inform the councilman that the school is currently a potential abduction site. Richmond's opponent is aggressive in stating to the police, "can't it wait?" That is, their planned search.                                                                                                                                                               |
| Respecting women.<br>Cutting through the patriarchy.                                                                               | Richmond diverts his attention to Linden and asks, "can it wait?" Linden replies, "missing kids are usually murdered in the first 72 hours... So no, it can't wait."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

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| Respecting Linden's evaluation.<br>Scanning the room.                                                                                                     | The students are subsequently informed that the assembly is cancelled and they must return to class. Linden is at the back scanning the area. Sterling notices Linden before rushing for the exit, trying to avoid her detection.                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Trying to find Sterling.<br>Unable to determine Sterling's whereabouts.                                                                                   | Linden speaks to Bennett who explains that Sterling is not in class. He doesn't know where she is.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Interrogating teacher.<br>What was Rosie wearing?<br>Expressing concern.<br>Alluding to teacher finding Rosie attractive.<br>Explaining Rosie is a child. | The detectives begin interrogating Bennett, pointing out that he was there at the school dance. They ask him what Rosie was wearing to which he adds that she was dressed up as a witch, which strikes a chord with Linden. Holder goes one step further, insinuating that Rosie is attractive, right? Adding, no wonder she stood out at the party?! Bennett replies, "I wouldn't know, she's just 17." |
| Men cannot be trusted.<br>Teacher wanting to escape.                                                                                                      | Bennett looks highly uncomfortable at Holder's remark. He then asks if he is done before taking Linden's card and heading back in the direction of his classroom.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Linden likes Holder's dirty tactics.                                                                                                                      | As he walks away, Linden gives Holder a look as if to say well done... Good work!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Back to single motherhood.                                                                                                                                | Linden is then phoned by her son's school... They need her to come in ASAP.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Hunting down Chris.<br>Cops are onto Chris and co.'s tail.<br>Using drugs.<br>Used as a mere sex object.                                                  | <b>Scene 13 (26.48-28:20): Sterling riding her bike:</b> Sterling rides her bike through, what looks like, a rough part of town. She locates a teenager called Chris and explains to him that the cops are looking for Rosie, thus their "friend" could be in trouble! Sterling asks Chris if Rosie was with him and he says that they were doing drugs and they were "looking to bone, so yeah."        |
| Running away from Chris.                                                                                                                                  | Sterling then hurries away.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Female used as a mere sex object.                                                                                                                         | We cut to a scene depicting Chris playing a computer game, whilst a female looks like                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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| Naked female tied up.                                                                                            | she is struggling naked, possibly because she is tied up, on his bed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Son smoking at school.<br>Poor Mother-Son relationship.<br>Can't create a nuclear family; too late for a father. | <b>Scene 14 (28:20-30:09): Linden and Jack:</b> Linden arrives home with her son, Jack, as she had to pick him up from school because he was caught smoking. They clearly have a poor relationship. Jack doesn't want to leave for California and reminds his Mum that Rick's not his dad! |
| Work always comes first.                                                                                         | Linden receives a call from Holder and her son looks at her as if to say, "work always comes first!"                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Life will be better.<br>Performing the impossible role as mother and father.                                     | Linden then explains to her son that they are all going to be really happy in California. She then tells him she has to go... A displeased Jack walks off.                                                                                                                                 |
| Failing to contact Stan.<br>Terry (female) looking after children.                                               | <b>Scene 15 (30:10-31:20): Contacting Stan:</b> Mitch is trying to get through to Stan, but no luck. Suddenly, Mitch's sister, Terry, turns up with Mitch's two younger sons.                                                                                                              |
| Any news on Rosie?                                                                                               | Terry asks if there is any news and if the police have provided any information?                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Frustrated at children; frustrated at domestic life.<br>Protecting the children.<br>Terry acting as mother.      | Mitch becomes annoyed at her two sons as they bombard into the kitchen because Rosie told them she would take them out. Terry tells the boys that she is still at school and she will take them out herself so they need to go get ready. The boys listen.                                 |
| Rosie will be in trouble.<br>She will be home.                                                                   | Mitch apologises to Terry and explains that Rosie will be getting her "butt kicked when she gets home." Mitch promises that she'll turn up.                                                                                                                                                |
| Searching for body.                                                                                              | <b>Scene 16 (31:21-31:37): Finding the body:</b> Police search the fields in unison.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Stan is informed on Rosie's disappearance.                                                                       | <b>Scene 17 (31:38-32:39): Larsson's house:</b> Stan arrives home and is informed by Mitch with the latest news on Rosie. He questions if she has been with Jasper again, "that rich jackoff", but Mitch explains they broke up last summer. Stan instructs                                |
| Rich kids are a bad influence; Mitch doesn't know.                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |



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| <p>Rosie's personal life.</p> <p>Rosie may be in serious trouble.<br/>Stan calms wife down.<br/>Rosie is 17 and selfish.</p> <p>Stan promises to find daughter.</p> <p>Scanning the area.<br/>Instinctive sweep of the area again.<br/>Holder doesn't get it.<br/>Needs to learn.</p> <p>Female vs. male approach.</p> <p>Male approach signifies no mercy/empathy.<br/>Female approach is more empathetic.<br/>Won't use a family's personal loss.</p> <p>Don't know who your friends are.<br/>Opponent taking advantage.</p> <p>Primitive in approach.<br/>Honest response.<br/>Rosie's at Jasper's house.</p> <p>Stan has everything under control.<br/>There's no need to worry now.</p> | <p>Mitch to stay put in case Rosie turns up whilst he goes off to find her.</p> <p>Mitch then raises the stakes by telling Stan that the police were asking about scars or jewelry that could potentially identify Rosie with. Stan comforts Mitch as she becomes frantic when considering the worst. Stan explains that Rosie is just 17, so "she's not thinking about anybody but herself." Mitch agrees and, in turn, calms down. Stan promises his wife that he'll find their daughter.</p> <p><b>Scene 18 (32:39-33.48): Searching for Rosie in field:</b> Linden appears and is clearly in deep thought. She soon asks Holder for the map. Linden demands another sweep of the area. Holder makes it clear the area has been searched twice already, but Linden responds rather sub-textually, questioning if Holder "wanted to learn?"</p> <p><b>Scene 19 (33.49-34.39): Richmond's campaign:</b> Jamie Wright and Gwen Eaton are sat on opposite sides of Adam, as they try to advise him on the next move. Jamie wants Richmond to take advantage of the family tragedy of the young girl, as a method to come back against his opponent. Gwen doesn't agree and neither does Richmond who makes it clear that he will not use "a family tragedy for some sound bite."</p> <p>Richmond suggests that there may be other staff members on their team that they need to worry about as their plans are being revealed to their opponents.</p> <p><b>Scene 20 (34.39:36.07): Sterling and Stan:</b> Stan aggressively asks where Rosie is and she directs him to Jasper's house. Sterling honestly tells Stan that she did not know Rosie was at Jaspers, but what she wore on Friday night was what she usually wears when she goes to see Jasper.</p> <p>Stan phones Mitch and explains that Rosie is at Jasper's house, there's no more worrying because he is off to pick her up now.</p> |
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| <p>Rosie Larson has been found.<br/>Linden instinctively doesn't believe this.</p> <p>Linden questions her boss.<br/>Boss plays it down.<br/>Bosses wants rid of Linden; time to move away.</p> <p>Linden can't leave.<br/>She doesn't believe Rosie is alive.</p> <p>Holder finds something.<br/>Holder finds nothing important.<br/>Holder won't be able to solve this case; he's not ready.</p> <p>Life is like a game.<br/>Bloodstains foreshadow what is about to happen.</p> <p>Angry and desperate thumps.<br/>Stan bursts through the door.<br/>Not a care for the police.<br/>Using physicality (men don't use intelligence?).</p> <p>Linden is reluctant to leave.<br/>Offering a new way of life.<br/>Losing interest in new life.<br/>Dealing with men.</p> | <p><b>Scene 21 (36.08:36:51): Linden back in the field:</b> On the phone, Linden is informed that Rosie Larsson has been found at her boyfriend's house. Her friend, Sterling, gave her whereabouts up. Linden is quick to add that Holder placed a car on Sterling to which her boss says, "no, he didn't."</p> <p>Linden is unconvinced and questions if her boss spoke directly to the Larsson girl?! He plays it down by stating that, "some teeny popper got laid, end of story... And don't you have a plane to catch?!"</p> <p>Linden hangs up and holds a hard stare as she thinks deeply about something... It's clear, she not convinced.</p> <p>Moments later Holder snaps Linden out of her trance since he has discovered something... It's just a doll. Holder picks up the doll and jokingly looks at Linden and cries, "mamma." Unimpressed, Linden tells everyone to "wrap it up, we're done."</p> <p><b>Scene 22 (36:55-37:50): Stan invasion:</b> Jasper is engrossed playing a first-person shooter game. Blood within the game splatters his television screen.</p> <p>Jasper is disturbed by a sudden loud thump emanating from his front door. Dressed in only a pair of briefs, he investigates and, as he opens the door, Stan bursts through it. Jasper tries to stop Stan in his tracks and threatens to call the cops, but Stan grabs him by the throat and slings him to one side.</p> <p><b>Scene 23 (37:50-39:30): Back to the field, one last search:</b> Just as the police pack to leave the site, Linden is noticeably reluctant to leave. Her phone rings... Rick is on the other end, "hey babe, I'm thinking Pizza..." Linden, not really in the moment with Rick, tells him it sounds like a nice idea whilst scanning her map.</p> |
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| Multi-tasking.                                                                                      | Multitasking, Holder shouts over to Linden, “what’s the hold up?!” Linden slides her phone down from her face, takes a deep breath and replies, “give me a minute.” Holder replies, “you said that twenty-minutes ago!”                                                                       |
| Lost in a train of thought.<br>Putting it altogether.<br>Rejecting new way of life with Rick.       | Lost in a train of thought, Linden blanks out both Holder and Rick and begins scanning the area again. She notices a group of young teens walking and suddenly has an epiphany. She hangs up on Rick explaining, “I’ve gotta go.”                                                             |
| They have found Rosie.<br>Linden expresses her denial in Rosie being alive.                         | Holder reminds Linden that they have found Rosie and she was seen in the opposite direction of the teens. Linden is fast to point out, “but where are they going with those fishing poles?” Holder is now silent. A moment later, Linden moves for the map. There’s a lake on the other side. |
| Linden’s figured something out.                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Linden has figured it out.                                                                          | <b>Scene 24 (39:31): The lake:</b> Divers are searching the lake and suddenly a car is pulled out by a crane.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Rosie wasn’t found.<br>Fearing the worse.                                                           | We cut to Stan ringing Mitch, anxiously explaining to his wife that Rosie was not at the Jaspers. He explains that he is now off to the park because that’s where she said they found Rosie’s sweater, right?!                                                                                |
| Becoming frightened at the inevitable.                                                              | Mitch becomes increasingly frighten as she explains that she doesn’t even know if that was her sweater?                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Becoming increasingly concerned.<br>Batting away child.<br>Lack of control; can’t control emotions. | Mitch’s eldest son, Tommy, asks his mother what’s going on and she insists both her sons go off and play their computer game. Her youngest son complains because Tommy always gets to play his game, but Mitch aggressively points her finger at him and tells him to “go, now!”              |
| Powerless and confused.<br>Lack of control makes one nervous.                                       | Mitch then questions why Rosie would be at that park and Stan replies he doesn’t know where else to look or go... This makes Mitch nervous as she questions why he                                                                                                                            |



## Closed and Open Coding of *Fargo*

| (Closed Coding)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | (Open Coding) Scene and Running Time                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p>Dead bodies.</p> <p>Masses of dead bodies.</p> <p>Mirroring pre-industrialisation.</p> <p>.</p> <p>Time period.</p> <p>Director informing what will unfold.</p> <p>Script girl adheres to traditional gender role; director disrespectful.</p> <p>Script girl treated different to male actor.</p> <p>Script girl told to hurry.</p> <p>Ronald Regan reference indicates that the show is set in the 70s/80s.</p> <p>Metaphor for citizens being easily manipulated by leaders.</p> <p>Racial remark.</p> <p>Race divide in America.</p> | <p><b>Scene 1 (00.09–3.06): Introduction:</b> Bodies are scattered across the screen and the title “Massacre at Sioux Falls” cuts in. The camera continues to pan across the masses of dead bodies. The period of time looks as if it could be set during pre-industrialisation. The camera stops on, what appears to be, a Native American, who stands tall as he watches over a pool of dead bodies.</p> <p>It becomes apparent that this is a film set when the “Native American” turns and speaks with the director. The director and actor discuss the filming that will take place. There is a comical tone to the set-up. The director calls over the script girl to ask about when the arrows are being placed into the bodies? The director is a lot less diplomatic when speaking to the script girl compared to the male actor. The director rudely asks the script girl to hurry.</p> <p>We cut to a shot of the director and actor talking to which the actor asks, “what’s he like (Ronald Regan)?” The director describes Regan as a Prince, which is alarming because, when this comment is made, it is noticeable that there are masses of dead bodies in the background.</p> <p>The director continues to discuss how the location is, in fact, the actual place of where the “Massacre at Sioux Falls” occurred. He remarks that a 100 of the actor’s “people” lost their lives. The actor turns to the</p> |

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| <p>Actor expresses his identity.<br/> Director fails to respect actor's identity.<br/> Concerned about discriminatory slur.</p> <p>Who is in control?</p> <p>Political divide.<br/> Race divide is not apparent.</p> <p>True story adds emotional depth.<br/> Hard economic times.<br/> Taking place in small town America; Normal folk.</p> <p>Acting like a spoilt brat.<br/> Murderous real-life killers foreshadow what will possibly unfold.</p> <p>Mystery man.</p> <p>Respecting survivors.</p> <p>Several characters introduced.</p> <p>Social and political context of the times.<br/> African Americans and the atomic bomb allude to oppression; Again,</p> | <p>director and explains that he is from New Jersey to which the director cautiously points out that he is still "Indian" in terms of race. The actor takes offence to this and the director finds himself on the back foot, clearly worried about how he is being perceived.</p> <p>The actor and director awkwardly wait. The director then reassures that in "any minute, he'll be out."</p> <p><b>Scene 2 (3.06-4.14): Montage:</b> Various shots of Ronald Regan addressing the public are depicted. His voice narrates the succeeding imagery of two tough looking men; a minority and a stereotypical Caucasian standing firmly. The image then freezes, with the following text superseding it: "This is a True Story." The narration continues as images depict gas stations over-crowded because of the hike in prices. An image of a car cuts in before freezing. The following titles supersede it: "The events depicted took place in Minnesota in 1979."</p> <p>We cut back to the white male and ethnic minority still firmly standing. Although, the white male looks distressed as he swings his body back and forth. Real life footage of Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy being arrested emerge...</p> <p>A shot of the face belonging to the man driving the mystery car we saw earlier. Titles supersede this image, as well as the image before: "At the request of the survivors, the names have been changed."</p> <p>Several characters are briefly introduced. Conflict amongst them appears to be at the heart of the narrative. Subsequent imagery is intercut with various political movements, such as protests as well as a bomb exploding.</p> |
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| <p>mass murder foreshadowing what will unfold.</p> <p>Brotherly love; using physicality.</p> <p>Demanding payment of money.</p> <p>A fighting over the throne; traditional gender roles.</p> <p>Disobeying elder brother.</p> <p>Frustrated at lack of respect and opportunity.</p> <p>Earning respect.</p> <p>Second name determines social hierarchy; second name has not helped.</p> <p>Given final warning.</p> <p>Do not break the chain of command.</p> <p>Desperate for control.</p> <p>Living in a palace.</p> <p>Protected by guards.</p> <p>Not acting likes a potential King.</p> <p>Floyd in subservient role; having everything under control.</p> <p>The brains behind the family.</p> <p>Hierarchy must be respected.</p> | <p><b>Scene 3 (4.14-6.00): Brothers in arms:</b> Dodd Gerhardt places his younger brother, Rye, in a headlock because he arrived late. Rye was supposed to arrive at 11AM not noon! Dodd then frees Rye before asking, “where’s the goddamn money?” Rye responds that he gave him all of the money the day before. Dodd presses Rye to which he admits that he is getting all the money “sorted by tomorrow.” Rye adds that he wanted the money for himself, explaining that he has two older brothers; meaning he’ll never assume the throne. He’ll only be the brother who goes out to collect/deliver milk. Dodd tries to explain that his brother needs to earn his badges and that he is a “Gerhardt.” Rye challenges this by questioning how such royalty has helped him?! Notably, throughout the majority of the set-up the Native American, Hanzee Dent, is stood in the background.</p> <p>Dodd’s had enough and makes it clear to Rye that he has until the next day to produce all the money.</p> <p><b>Scene 4 (6.00-6.15): Driving:</b> Dodd is driving with his hands firmly on the steering wheel.</p> <p>We cut to an establishing shot of a beautiful, old wooden house painted in snow. There are armed guards protecting the house. Dodd emerges, and he thrusts his car onto the driveway</p> <p><b>Scene 5 (6.15-8.08): Introducing Floyd Gerhardt:</b> Floyd Gerhardt passes to her husband, Otto, their accounts book, detailing the entire months earnings. Floyd points out that the “money is light” this month. Dodd Gerhardt appears and whistles for his other younger brother, Bear Gerhardt, to move off “his” seat. Hierarchy is clearly important</p> |
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| <p>Cat and mouse over the throne.</p> <p>Floyd is bright and trustworthy.<br/>Brothers are defensive; usually they at fault.</p> <p>Gang not paying money.<br/>Dodd has failed to take care of family business.<br/>Not fit to take over the throne.<br/>Dodd expresses rage.</p> <p>Demanding that perpetrators are dealt with.<br/>Leading by example.</p> <p>Taking care of business.</p> <p>Confrontation with worker.<br/>Not paid for labour.<br/>Using violence.<br/>Not being respected.</p> <p>Diffusing the situation.<br/>Running away from the mayhem.<br/>Using extreme violence.</p> <p>Failing to use/lacking intellect.<br/>Acting above the law.</p> | <p>here. Bear obliges, but stands his ground first by squaring up to Dodd.</p> <p>Floyd is clever in pointing out that they are short of money to which the brothers are defensive, and believable, about not being responsible.</p> <p>It becomes clear that there is gang in a southern state that are not paying their money to the Gerhardt family. It is evident that Dodd has not taken care of this predicament and his father is quick to insinuate that he is not made from the same stock as him. Dodd is angered.</p> <p>The father, Otto, demands that those who owe him money need to be brought directly to him. Suddenly, however, he suffers a heart attack.</p> <p><b>Scene 6 (8.08-08.32): Rye Gerhardt:</b> Rye is driving through a rundown area. He stops off at “Watson’s Typewriters.”</p> <p><b>Scene 7 (8.32-10.41): Rye Gerhardt confrontation:</b> Rye enters the shop and the manager is confronting a construction worker who is complaining about not being paid for work that he’s completed. Rye tells him to move along, but then decides to pull out a gun on the unknown construction worker because he was not taking Rye seriously. Notably, he told Rye “to wait his turn, short round.”</p> <p>Rye is holding the gun at the construction worker and the shop owner ushers the man away, telling him he will receive his check in the post. The worker does not think twice about running straight out of the shop door. Rye continues to hold the gun at the worker until he is no longer visible. As Rye puts his gun back into his pants, the shop owner says, “come on now, he could call a cop.” Rye replies, saying that he, the worker, isn’t calling anybody... “Guys like that are just big on the</p> |
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| <p>Falling for the salesman's pitch.<br/>Revealing typewriter.</p> <p>No longer associated with women/femininity.</p> <p>Foolishly wiping off family debt.</p> <p>Taking out a judge.<br/>Making money behind the family's back (betrayal).</p> <p>Stalking the judge.</p> <p>Following the Judge's footsteps.</p> <p>Tailing the Judge.</p> <p>The fight for the throne begins.<br/>Fear of what will transpire.<br/>Comforting her husband.</p> | <p>outside.”</p> <p>Rye then changes the subject and questions where the “miracle contraption” is located? We then cut to a brand-new blue typewriter that beams in front of the camera, as the shop owner reveals it. The shop owner proceeds to sell the typewriter, explaining how it is electric, as well as including new updates, but makes a point of saying, “there not just for women anymore.”</p> <p>The shopkeeper offers the typewriter to Rye so long as he is willing to forget about the debt he owes to his family. The shopkeeper adds, whilst Rye stares at him contemplatively, “if you can speak to the judge (she) and have the account unfrozen” then money can start being made!</p> <p>Rye questions who exactly is this judge? We then cut to the next shot.</p> <p><b>Scene 8 (10.42-11.41): Introducing Judge:</b> The judge emerges out of, what appears to be, a court. It becomes apparent that Rye Gerhardt is secretly watching her, whilst sat down smoking a cigarette.</p> <p>The scene begins to fade and it is evident that Rye is stalking the judge, who is dressed mostly in black clothing.</p> <p><b>Scene 9 (11.41-20.06): Talking to the Judge:</b> Rye stalks the Judge as she navigates her car in dangerous weather conditions.</p> <p>During this scene, images are intercut of Rye's family. Notably, his brothers are in deep thought, while his Mother, Floyd, rests her head on his father's chest, clearly wide awake.</p> |
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| <p>Failing to adequately prepare.<br/>Using drugs on the job.</p> <p>Building himself up for the task ahead.<br/>Waitress spooks Rye.<br/>Traditional gender roles.</p> <p>.</p> <p>Failing to blend into the environment.</p> <p>Seizing the chance; demonstrating a moral code.</p> <p>Failing to acquire respect.</p> <p>Scrambling to gain respect.</p> <p>Employing the aggressive tactic.<br/>Forcing an outcome.<br/>Aggressive approach failing.<br/>Psychological battle lost.</p> <p>Persisting with aggressive approach.<br/>Intimidation tactic still failing.<br/>Religious metaphor.<br/>Those who have a soul vs. the devil.<br/>Devil speaks.<br/>Trying to force God's hand.</p> | <p>Soon after, Rye stops outside a café as the Judge positions herself in a seat. Rye snorts some cocaine while still stalking the judge.</p> <p>Rye enters the café and he's clearly building himself up to kill or at least threaten the Judge. He then jumps when a waitress addresses him. Rye moves for the bar and takes a seat. The waitress serves him a coffee. He's still stalking the judge. The waitress asks Rye if he wants sugar, he responds, "you're freaking me out a little." Rye pours sugar into his coffee like its water going into a pint glass.</p> <p>The table in front of the Judge – notably, a family with young children - move for the exit and, in turn, Rye seizes his chance... He sits directly opposite of the Judge and as he says "hi," the Judge is quick to tell him, "no!" Rye's perplexed and questions what the judge means? She responds, "whatever you're selling, I ain't buying." She issues Rye almost zero respect, as he explains that he is not selling anything. The Judge continues to order her food as Rye fails miserably in commanding her respect...</p> <p>Rye finally loses it when he informs the Judge, "your majesty, you're gonna change your mind about something... A case." The Judge responds, "or what?" At this point Rye concedes to losing the psychological battle since he's unable to squeeze the Judge.</p> <p>Rye's insistent though and explains to the Judge that "he's going to make her change her mind." The Judge calmly sips her milkshake before replying, "One day, the Devil came to God and said, "Let's make a bet between you and me for the soul of a man." And from on high they looked down on Job, a devout man, religious. And the Devil said, "I can change his mind and make him curse your name." And</p> |
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| <p>The man with no soul always fails.<br/>The man with no soul fails to listen.</p> <p>The devil failed, so will you.<br/>Lacking intelligence.</p> <p>Becoming more desperate; failing to accept defeat.<br/>Employing an ambush style attack.<br/>This is how you take control of a situation.<br/>Failing to respond to the situation appropriately.<br/>Humiliated in front of general public.</p> <p>Using violence to gain control.<br/>Judge appears to be dead.</p> <p>Man frantically charges with a knife.<br/>No intelligence is employed.<br/>Waitress is murdered.</p> <p>Contemplating the carnage.<br/>Judge ambushes Rye.<br/>Firing bullets at the Judge.</p> <p>Stabbed in the back.<br/>Successfully removes knife.<br/>Unbearable pain.</p> <p>Greed takes over.<br/>Failing to learn from mistakes.</p> | <p>God said, "Try and you will only fail." So the Devil begins. He kills Job's herds and takes his fields. He plagues him with boils and throws him on the ash heap. But Job's mind remains unchanged. So I ask you, son, if the Devil couldn't change Job's mind, how the hell are you gonna change mine?" Rye replies, "What?." The Judge responds, "you're a little dim, aren't you?"... Rye becomes even more desperate and the Judge only becomes even more frustrated and positions bug killer spray onto the table, instructing Rye that he has three seconds to leave or he'll be "squashed like a bug." Rye laughs before calling the Judge a bitch, which results in her spraying him in the face and shouting at him to scram!</p> <p>Rye pulls out a gun and point-blank shoots the Judge, resulting in a bullet penetrating straight into her brain.</p> <p>A man, who appears to be the chef, races out of the kitchen and charges towards Rye with a knife. Rye fires a shot at him before turning his head towards the helpless waitress and killing her too.</p> <p>Rye pauses, takes in what he has just done, but in doing so the Judge emerges, holding a knife and charges at him before stabbing Rye in the back. Rye spins around and fires an array of bullets at her. She dies.</p> <p>Rye processes the carnage, as a consequence of his actions. He fights to rip the knife out of his back. He is in terrible pain and struggles to remove it. When he finally removes the knife, he takes a knee and bites... The pain is unbearable.</p> <p>Rye is apparently not in a hurry to as he decides to raid the till first. He's stopped in his tracks when he hears the café door ring...</p> |
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| <p>Not going down without a fight.</p> <p>Strong willed.<br/>Following like sheep.</p> <p>Murdered.</p> <p>Mesmerised by an unknown force.<br/>A new way of life must be formed.<br/>No explanation for the unexpected.</p> <p>Hit and run.<br/>Smashes front window.<br/>Car drives on.<br/>Lack of morality.</p> <p>Spending time with daughter.<br/>Carrying out traditional housewife chores.<br/>Gossip.<br/>Detailing tactical steps.</p> <p>Work trumping family time.<br/>Wife taking care of domestic duties.<br/>Understanding of work commitment.</p> | <p>Someone has left. He hurries over to look for who it could be... It's the Judge and she's left a trail that is signposted by her own blood.</p> <p>The Judge is strong willed as she marches through the cold snow, fighting for her life. Rye is quick to emerge from the café door and points his gun and fires but it fails ... He scrambles to reload his gun and, ultimately, a bullet sinks into the Judge's brain. She's dead.</p> <p>As Rye mulls over the seriousness of his predicament, blinding lights appear in the distance... As Rye presses forward to investigate the light it becomes more prominent and it appears to be a UFO. Rye looks perplexed as the lights from the UFO shine directly on him before vanishing.</p> <p>Just as the UFO vanishes, Rye is run over by a car and his body lies on top of the driver's window. The car is motionless for a moment and Rye looks lifeless. The car proceeds to drive away with Rye's body positioned on top of the bonnet.</p> <p><b>Scene 10 (20.06-22.22): Introducing the Solverson's:</b> Detective Lou Solverson is reading to his daughter, whilst his wife, Betsy, tends to the washing. The phone rings and Betsy informs Lou that someone is on the line... Apparently it's a murder; three of them dead. Lou explains to a team member on the phone that no one is to go inside yet and he'll be right on his way.</p> <p>Lou hangs up before explaining to Betsy that he has got to go and subsequently asks if she can see to their daughter to which she, understandingly, says yes.</p> |
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| <p>Investigating the crime scene.<br/>Instinctive hunch.<br/>Following the trail of blood.</p> <p>Taking notes.<br/>Body splattered.<br/>Father-in-law and partner enters.<br/>Looking over lifeless body.</p> <p>Checking up on home life.<br/>Already knowing the answer.<br/>Expressing one's emotions.</p> <p>Doing well.<br/>Betsy made a casserole.</p> <p>Investigating the crime scene.<br/>Collecting evidence.<br/>Calling it a night.<br/>See you at dinner.<br/>Wife is not right in the head at the moment.</p> <p>Leaving work.<br/>Boring job; boring colleagues.<br/>Nothing to say.</p> | <p><b>Scene 11 (22.22-28.24): Police investigation:</b> Lou arrives and begins scanning the area. The man who reported this gruesome crime scene talks Lou through it, but Lou's not too interested in what he has to say. Lou's only interested in following the trail of blood.</p> <p>Lou enters the café and scribbles a note after seeing a body splattered across the table. Soon after, his partner and father-in-law, Hank Larsson, emerges. Lou provides Hank top line information before Hank moves over to a lifeless body... Hank knew this person.</p> <p>Hank switches subject and asks how "Betsy" is doing to which Lou replies, "why, did you not phone her before you came here". It's clear that Hank is trying to give Lou the opportunity to express his feelings about something or another... Lou, rather unconvincingly, explains that Betsy is doing well. Lou further adds how Betsy cooked a perfect casserole the night before, but then unfortunately lit it on fire. Hank looks perplexed.</p> <p>A jump cut takes the viewer to Hank and Lou now investigating the exterior of the café. They begin collecting evidence and consider how everything could have unfolded. Finally, the two officers decide to call it a night and inform each other that they will meet again at dinner... Lou's final comment is, "be ready for anything."</p> <p><b>Scene 12 (28.24-29.04): Introducing Butcher's store:</b> Ed Blumquist sets off for home after a day of work at the Butcher's. Everything is seemingly dull and uninspiring. Noticeably, Ed and his work colleagues barely say a word to one another.</p> <p><b>Scene 13 (29.04-32.03): Lawyer talking during bingo:</b> Lawyer, Karl</p> |
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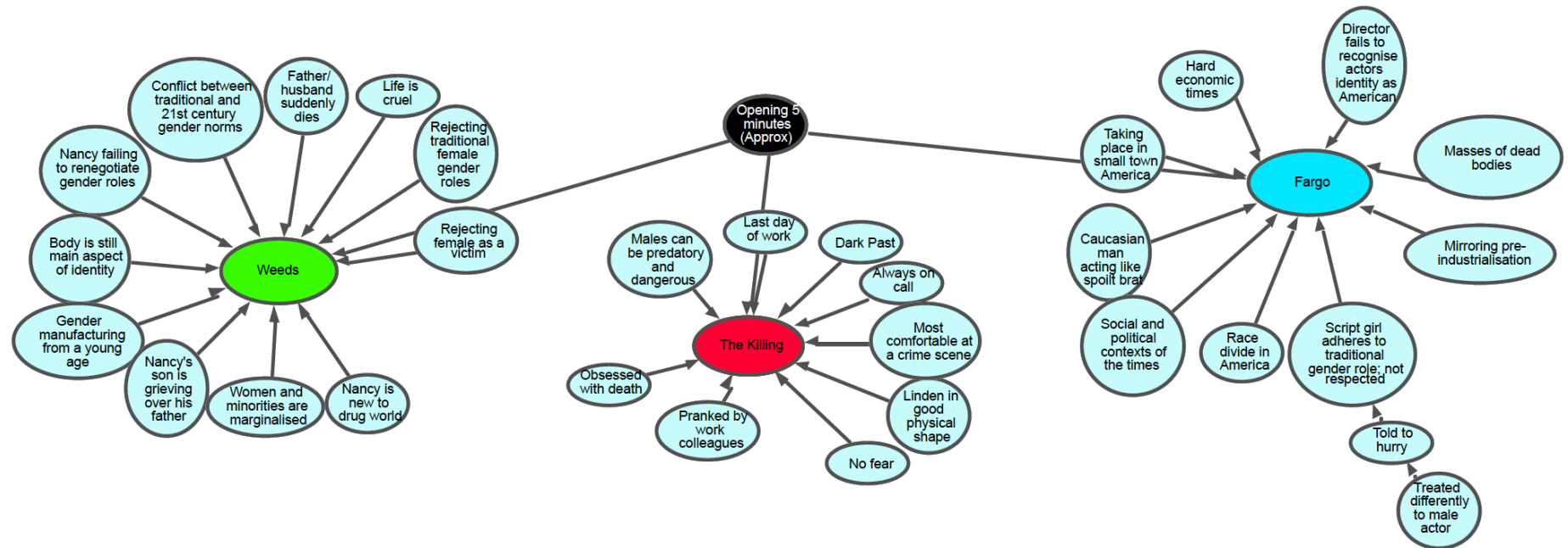
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| <p>Informing the ignorant.<br/>Narcissistic behavior.<br/>Mixing in with common folk.<br/>Always on the job.<br/>Three dead people.</p> <p>Wife is dying of cancer;<br/>Wanting time to yourself.</p> <p>Arriving home.<br/>Wife cooking dinner.<br/>Wife rejecting traditional role.<br/>Wife snaps.<br/>Acting obedient.<br/>Dinner is served.<br/>Clinging onto old values.</p> <p>Wife wanting to help.<br/>Wife putting the pieces together.<br/>Already working on the case.</p> <p>Receiving gift.<br/>Daughter makes an ashtray.<br/>Gender roles already ingrained in child.</p> <p>Interrupting dinner.<br/>Excited about attending seminar; unexcited husband.</p> | <p>Weathers, is sat lecturing his friend. It appears that Karl is in love with, what he believes is, his intelligence and clearly enjoys patronizing those around him. Detective Lou emerges, grabs a beer and sits with Karl and his friend. Lou is questioned as to why he is still wearing his uniform to which he responds, “three dead; woman, too.”</p> <p>Lou explains that he has got to go home because “Betsy had her chemo today.”</p> <p><b>Scene 14 (32.04-33.16): Dinner at Ed and Peggy’s:</b> Ed enter his home and finds his wife, Peggy, cooking dinner. Ed tries to give her a kiss while Peggy is cooking but she bats him away because, according to Peggy, he is wet from the rain. Ed takes a seat, but Peggy snaps at him a little, as she wants him to sit on the “other” chair. Ed is obedient and does so without much questioning. Dinner is served and the married couple then pray.</p> <p><b>Scene 15 (33.17-34.56): Lou returns home:</b> Lou returns home and Betsy immediately begins questioning him about whether there was an accomplice during the murder?! Betsy appears excited from trying to figure out the case and even admits to speaking to her dad about it.</p> <p>Betsy then remembers to hand over a gift to Lou that their younger daughter made for him at school... It’s an ashtray. Lou, jokingly, remarks, “she does know I don’t smoke, right?”</p> <p><b>Scene 16 (34.57-42-21): Going against traditional gender norms:</b> Midway through her dinner, Peggy explains how she is excited about a seminar she’ll be attending. Ed, unexcitingly, queries which one? Peggy replies, “you remember hun’, it’s next weekend... Life springs.”</p> |
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| <p>Discovering greater meaning from life.<br/>Individuality.</p> <p>What it means to me.<br/>Husband is insecure; re-establishing new gender roles.<br/>Failing to lie; unhappy.<br/>Becoming more than someone's husband; individuality.</p> <p>Buying the Butcher's shop.<br/>Boss will retire; circle of life.</p> <p>Failing to conceal lack of excitement.<br/>Rejecting traditional norms.</p> <p>Wanting children; rejecting motherhood.<br/>Wanting more from life.</p> <p>Not being honest.</p> <p>Not having sex.<br/>Not knowing how to break free.<br/>Not wanting to adhere to gender roles.</p> <p>No longer hiding the inevitable.</p> <p>Trying to manipulate husband.<br/>Loud bang continues.<br/>Performing the archetype of sweet innocent girl.</p> | <p>Peggy adds, "I really think this course is going to help me self-actualise, fully."</p> <p>As Peggy explains the course in detail and what it means to her, Ed becomes increasingly insecure and asks, "we're doing great, right?" Peggy downplays Ed's insecurities by explaining that the course is just about her own individuality.</p> <p>Soon after, Ed discusses the prospect of him taking over the Butcher's shop, as his boss wants to retire at the end of the year. Ed's excited about the prospect of him owning the shop and notes, "wouldn't that be great?" Peggy is unable to conceal her lack of excitement about the prospect of Ed owning the shop.</p> <p>The conversation soon shifts as Ed puts it out there that, one day, they may have a "litter of kids." Peggy, again, is unable to conceal her lack of excitement. In fact, she looks rather disgusted at the thought. She clearly wants more from life.</p> <p>Peggy brushes off Ed's comment, adding that they are trying. Ed makes the point that, as far as he knows, there's only one method for procreating, thus hinting that they are not having sex. Peggy responds that they had sexual intercourse "last weekend" to which Ed reminds her that, in fact, they didn't because she "didn't want to."</p> <p>The conversation comes to a sudden end when a large bang is heard from the garage. Both Ed and Peggy are taken back. Peggy is quick to drop her glass of wine on the ground as a way to distract Ed. Clearly, Peggy is acting suspiciously. A bang can be heard again, but this time Peggy grabs Ed and tries to hug him, whilst telling him that</p> |
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| Using sex; need to protect family home.<br>Blood bath in the garage.                                                                                               | they should have sex “right now!” Ed’s up for it, but a bang is heard again, forcing him to check the garage. He opens the garage door and discovers that the car window has been smashed and there’s blood all over the bonnet. He’s shocked.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Not taking responsibility.<br>Falling for wife’s manipulation.                                                                                                     | Ed questions Peggy who, manipulatively, responds, “didn’t I tell you, I kind of hit a deer.” Ed tries to comfort his wife before moving into the heart of the garage. As he discusses insurance, he is caught off guard by further noise and thus asks Peggy if she brought the deer home?! Peggy is begging for Ed not to step any further, as he investigates where the noise is emanating from.                                                                               |
| Bringing the deer home; foreshadowing what will unfold.<br>Investigating the deer.                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Seeing a bloody man.<br>Fighting off knife attack.<br>Stabbing because of wife’s actions.<br>Consoling husband.<br>Playing the victim card.                        | Ed is taken back when he clocks a bloody man – it’s Rye - who then, in turn, charges at him, clenching a knife. Ed fights him off before grabbing the knife and stabbing him in the abdominal area. Rye subsequently falls to the ground. Ed takes in what’s just unfolded while Peggy tries to console him, but Ed’s spooked by Peggy and accidentally elbows her in the face. She now has a large mark on her face.                                                            |
| Begging for forgiveness.<br>Playing the victim card.                                                                                                               | Peggy is immediately on the back foot, begging Ed to forgive her because she thought he was dead. Ed then processes that Peggy hit him with their car and struggles to understand why she said she hit a deer to begin with?! Ed then asks why she didn’t go to the police or hospital. Peggy responds by saying that he ran out into the road... What was she supposed to have done!? Ed is confused as to why she brought him home and made dinner like nothing ever happened. |
| Why lie in the first place; why not go to the police.<br>Ran out onto the road.<br>What was I suppose to do?<br>Acting like a psychopath; not caring about others. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Need to ring the police.<br>Running over Rye; playing the victim card.<br>Murder by household weapon; home no longer safe.                                         | Ed tries to convince Peggy that they need to ring the police, but she changes his mind by pointing out that she ran over him; it’s hit and run and Ed killed him! Ed explains that people are going to be looking for                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

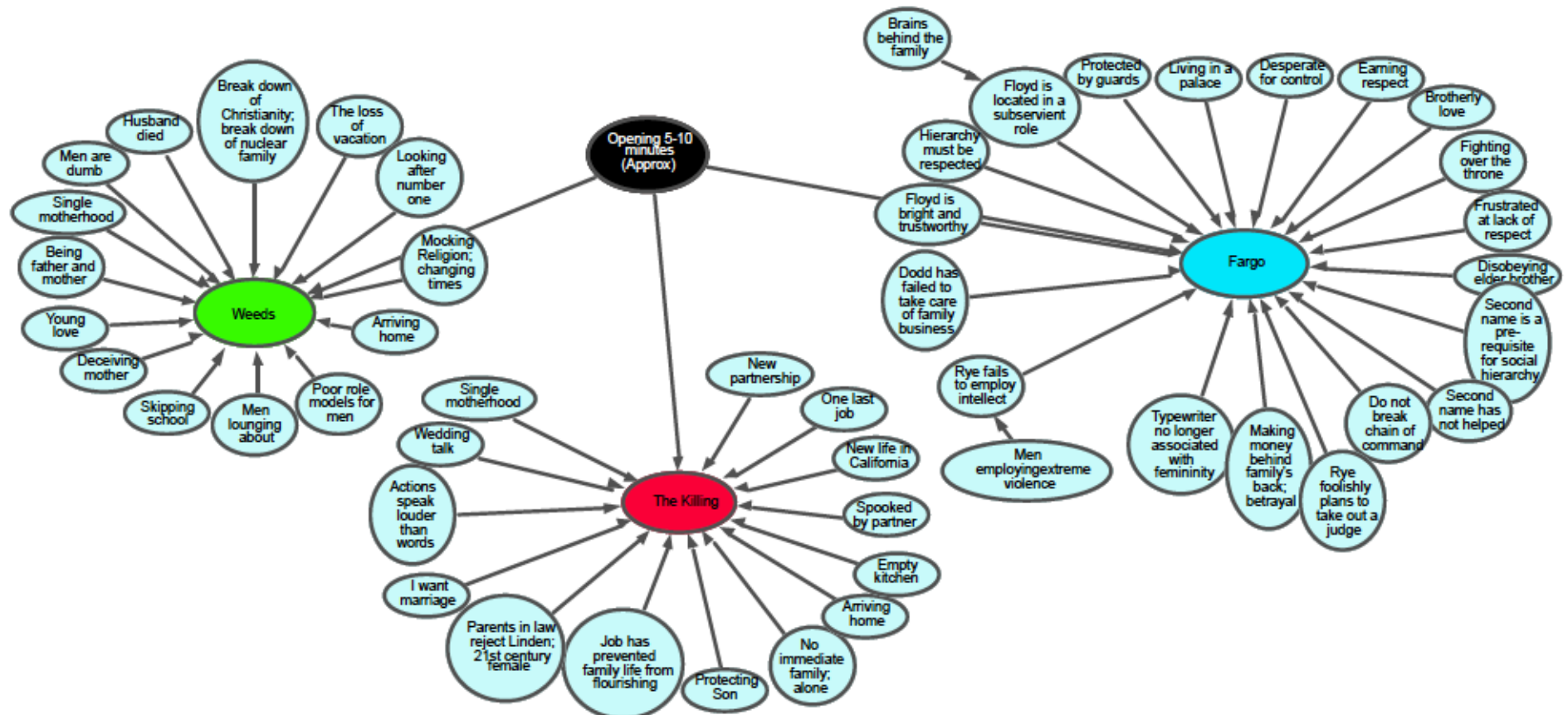
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| <p>Acted carefully;<br/>Driving the back way home.</p> <p>Living the American dream.<br/>Wanting a family life.<br/>Buying the shop.<br/>Need to clear up mess.<br/>No family life; need to clean up.</p> <p>Saying goodbye.</p> <p>Protected and loved by family.<br/>Fighting for life.</p> <p>Disposing body.<br/>Home life contaminated.</p> <p>American dream; greed.<br/>Taking over family life.<br/>Taking advantage of a family's loss.<br/>The intelligent one.<br/>Only a woman.<br/>Fighting over the throne.<br/>Tactical opening.</p> | <p>him, but Peggy reassures Ed that she was careful by stating that "I drove the back way home!"</p> <p>Peggy puts it out there that they could travel to California and move away together. Ed explains that they have a life here; a family to have; he is going to buy the shop. Peggy accepts this, but makes it clear that if they are staying then they need to clean up! She adds that unless they do, there will be no shop and kids. Ed agrees.</p> <p><b>Scene 17 (43.20-44.28): Lou looking through the window:</b> Lou and his wife say goodnight to one another.</p> <p><b>Scene 18 (44.29-45-23): Montage of Gerhardt's fast asleep:</b> Floyd Gerhardt and her family are next to Otto as he lies on his bed fighting for his life.</p> <p>This is intercut with Peggy and Ed disposing Rye's body into, what looks like, a fridge.</p> <p><b>Scene 19 (45.24): Introducing the mafia:</b> The mafia discuss the takeover of the Gerhardt's criminal enterprise in a bid to expand their own operations. They speculate about who will be taking over as head of the Gerhardt operations given Otto suffered a stroke. A picture of Floyd Gerhardt emerges on screen followed by the narration that "she's tough, but you know, she is a girl." The mafia men then talk about Otto's three sons who want to be the kingpin. The mafia men see this as a tactical opportunity to acquire and takeover the Gerhardt's criminal operations.</p> |
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**Mind maps: timeline of codes**  
**Opening 5-minutes of case studies**

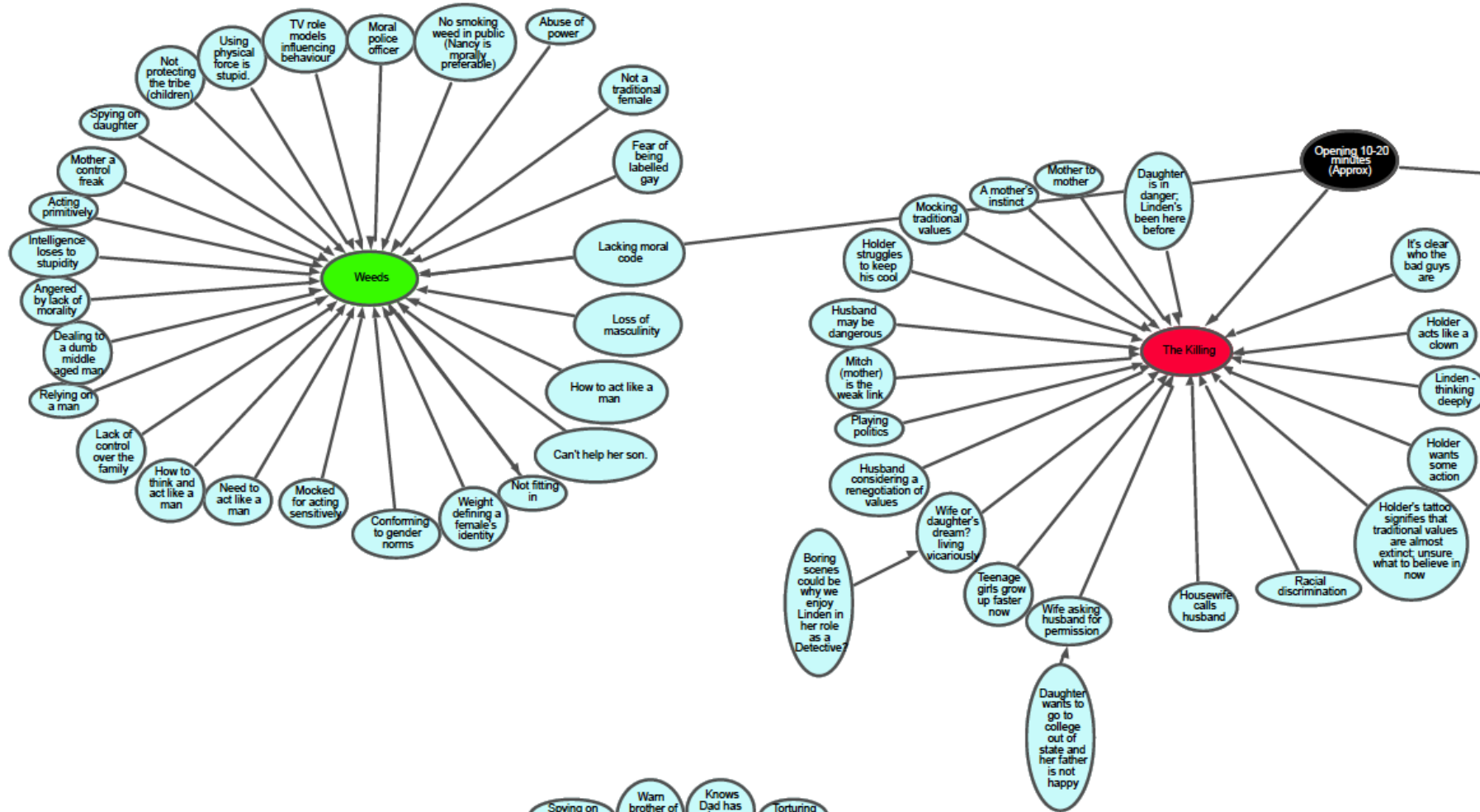




## Opening 5-10 minutes of case studies

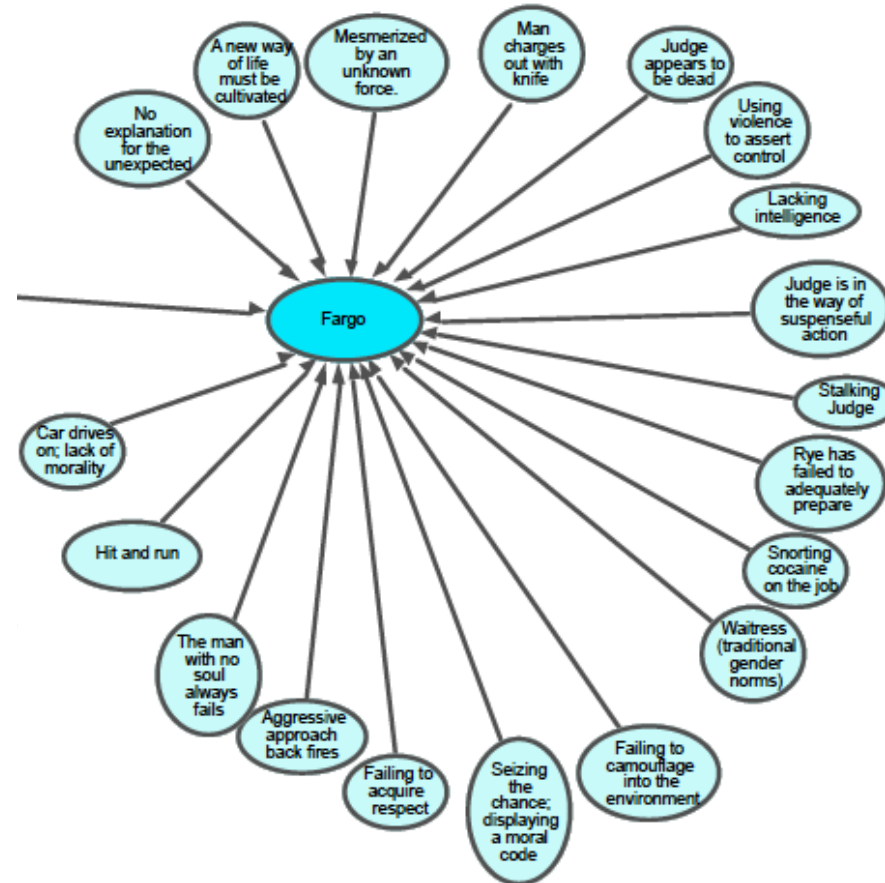


10-20 minutes into the pilot episodes of *Weeds* and *The Killing*

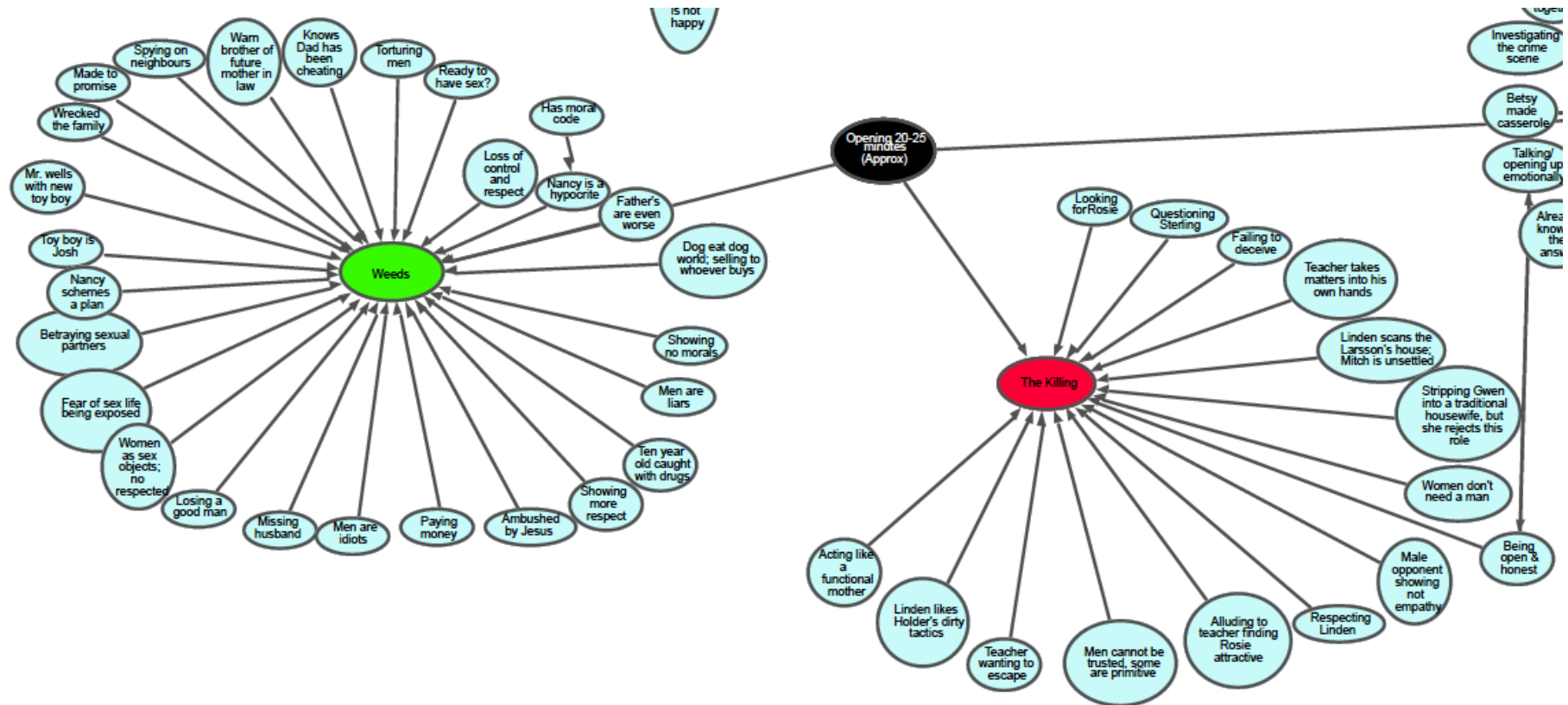




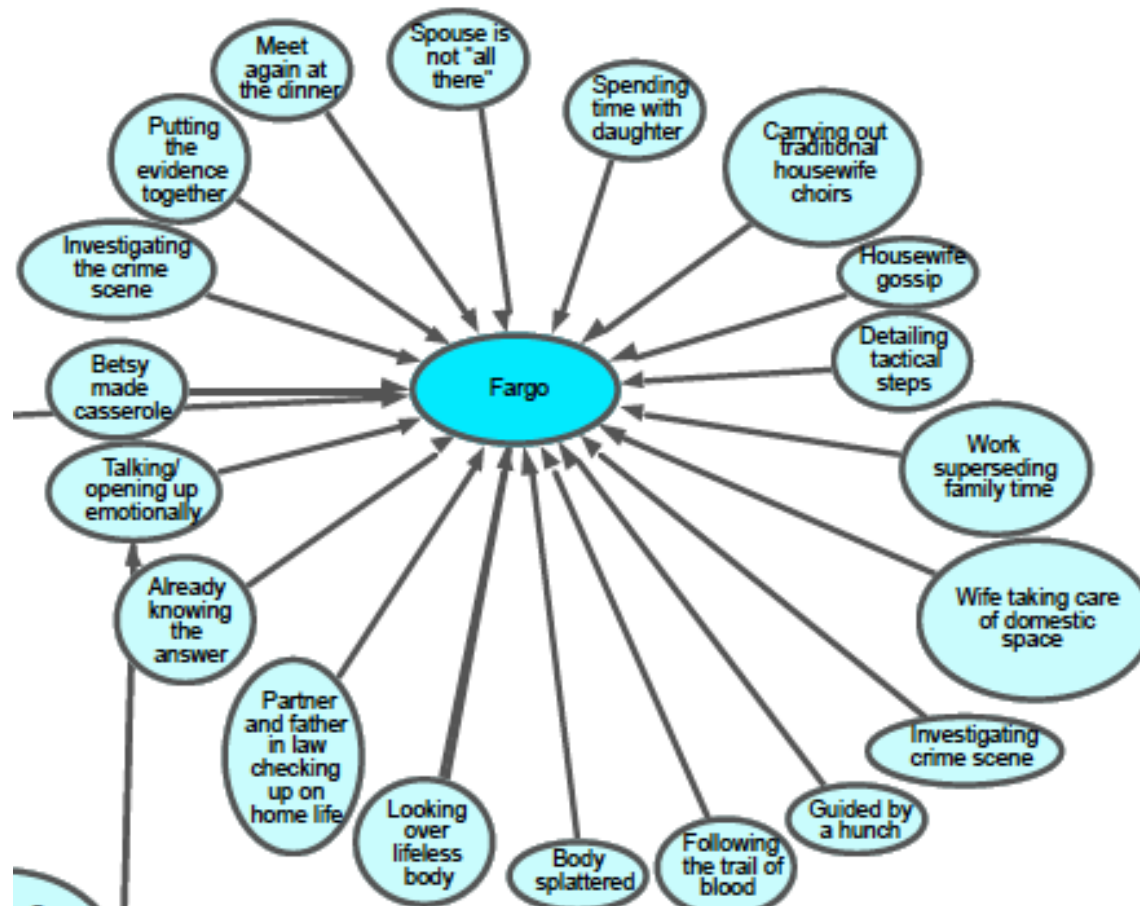
10-20 minutes into the pilot episode of *Fargo*



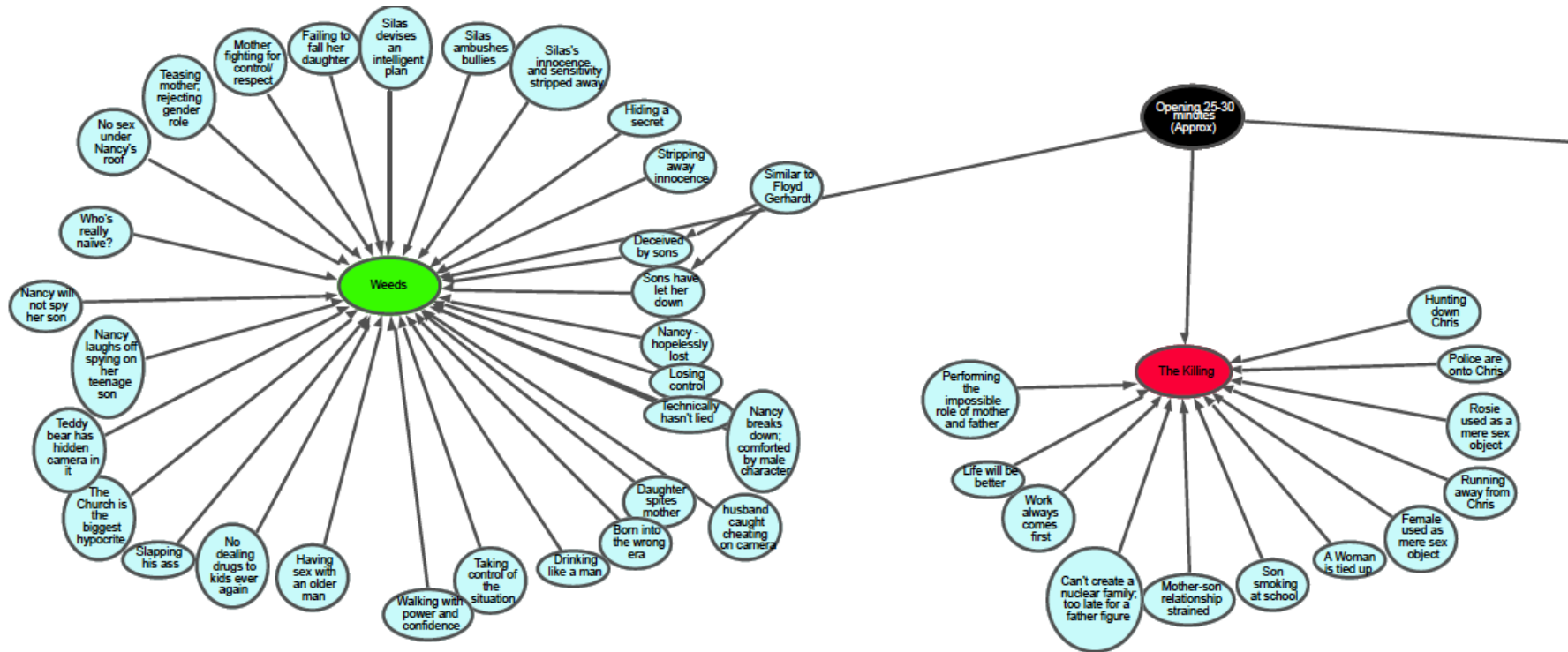
## 20-25 minutes into the pilot episodes of *Weeds* and *The Killing*



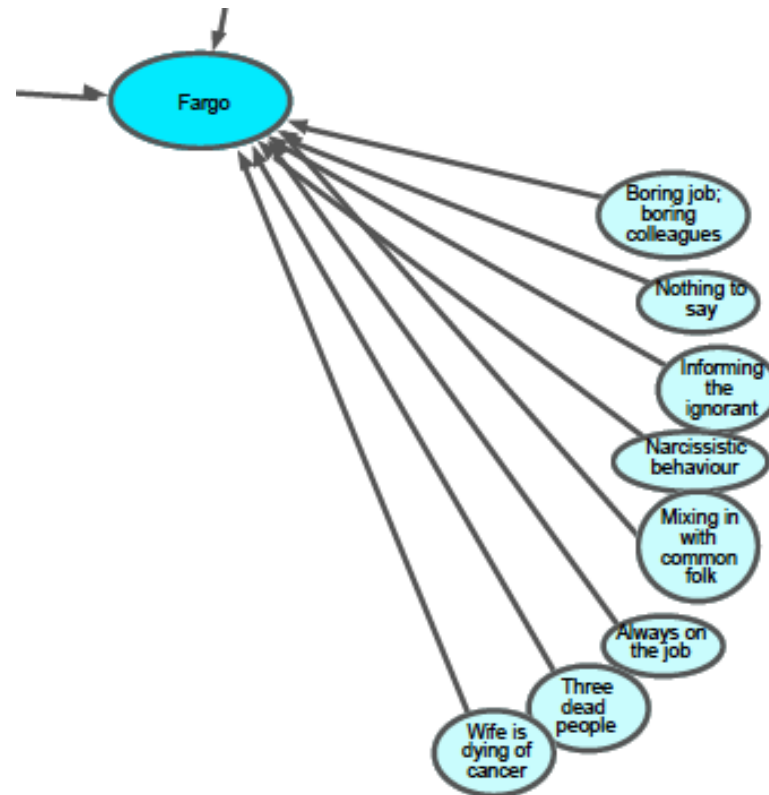
20-25 minutes into the pilot episode of *Fargo*



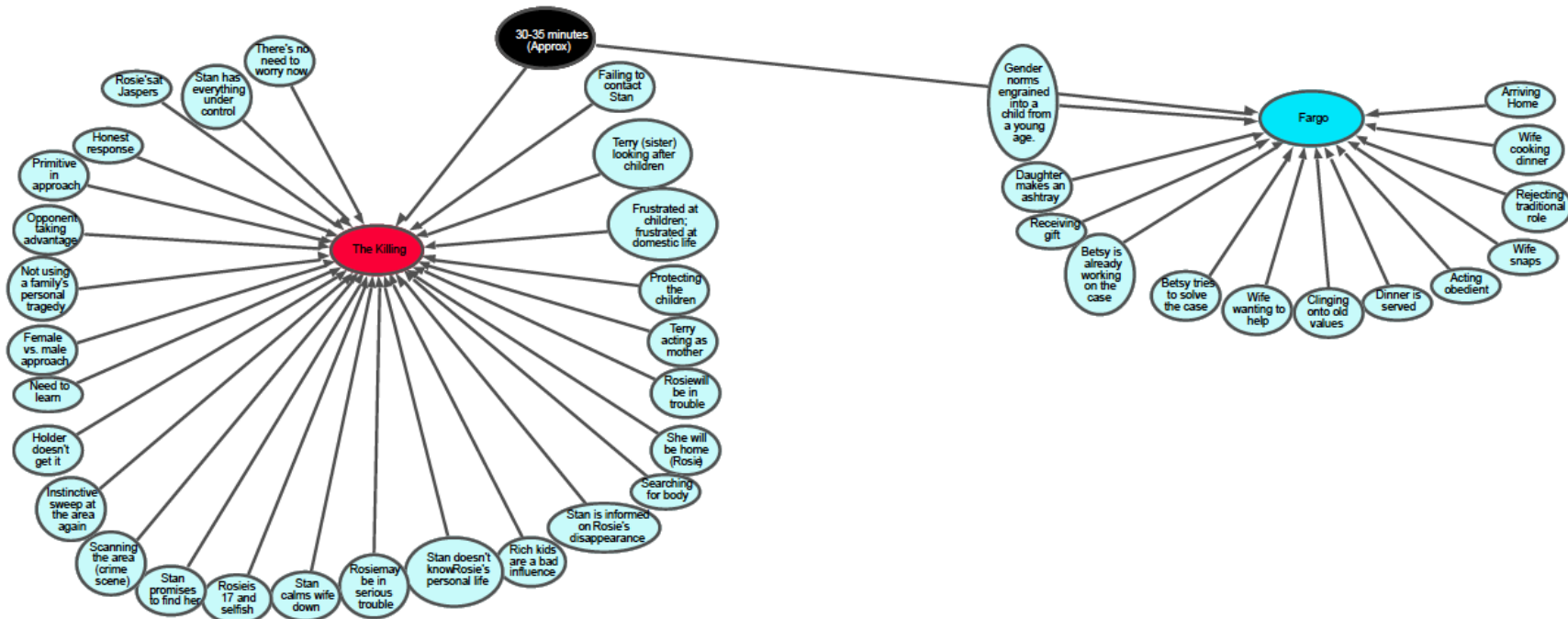
25-30 minutes into the pilot episodes of *Weeds* and *The Killing*



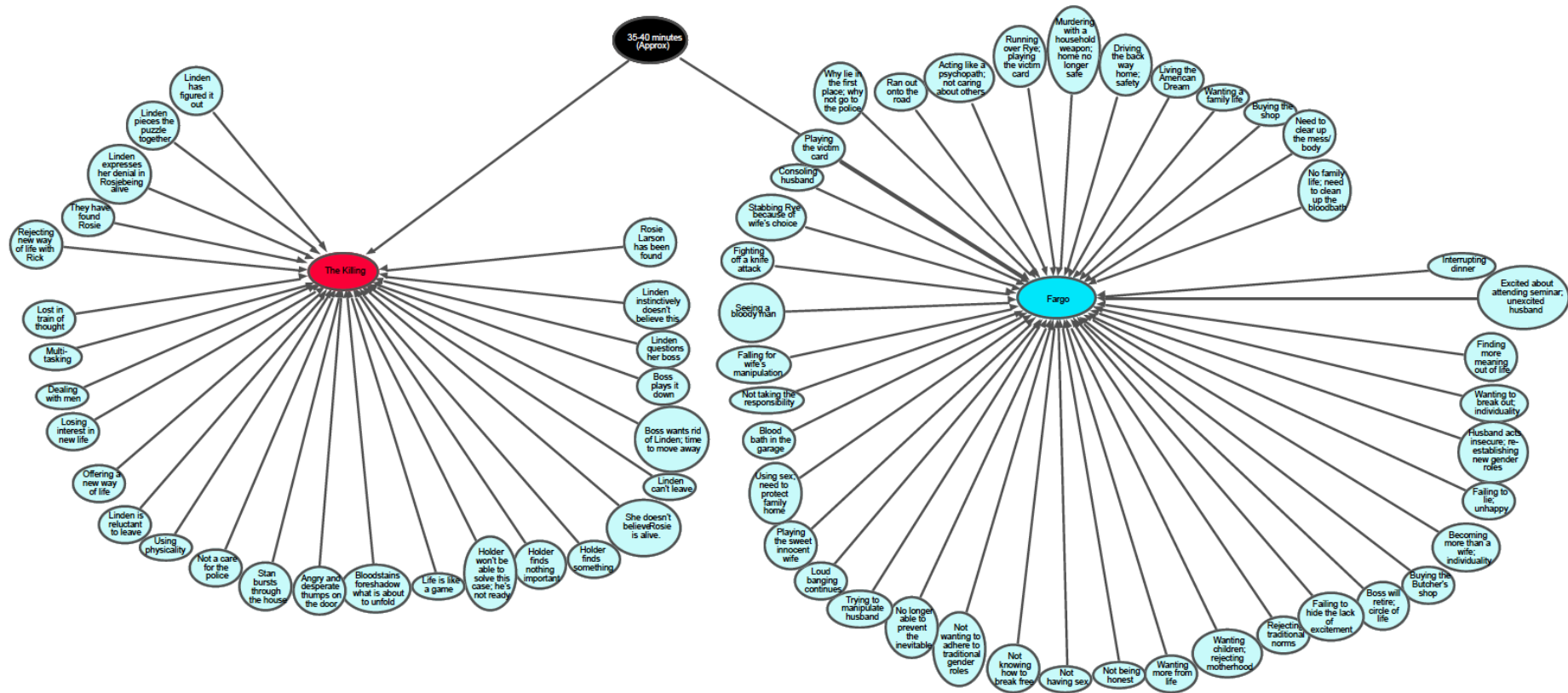
20-25 minutes into the pilot episode of *Fargo*



### 30-35 minutes into the pilot episodes of *The Killing* and *Fargo*

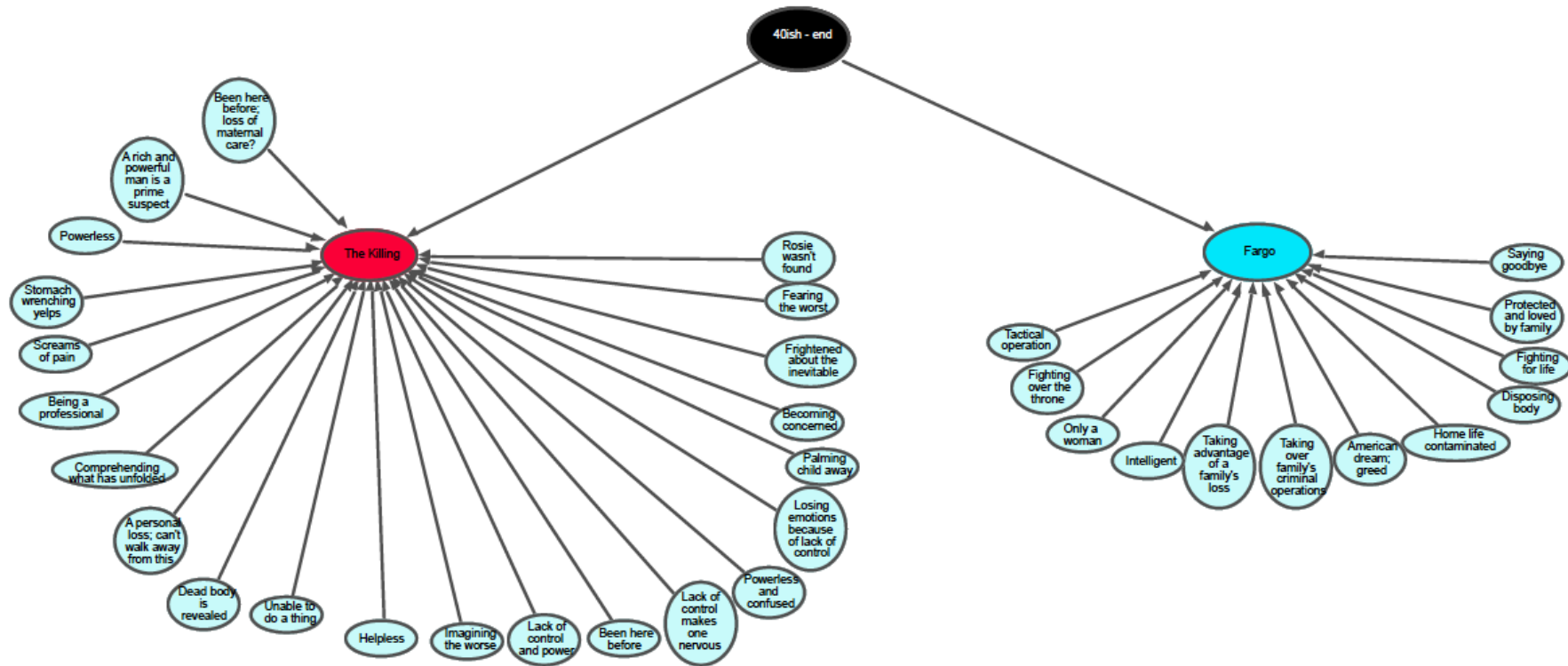


### 30-40 minutes into the pilot episodes of *The Killing* and *Fargo*





## 40-minutes and beyond into the pilot episodes of *The Killing* and *Fargo*





## **Memos of Categories**

The additional categories presented in this section resulted from numerous memos taken while conducting textual analyses on the three case study pilot episodes. Presented here first is the final memo of the key categories which formed part of the *wheel of techniques*, that is: *single motherhood*, *men are dumb* and *men cannot be trusted*. The additional memos concerning initial development of the categories, which ultimately were not crystalised, will subsequently be outlined. The purpose of including memos that were not crystalised, is for two reasons. First, to evidence academic rigour through the inclusion of extensive data drawn throughout textual analyses. Second, whilst these categories were not teased out into specific narrative techniques, they still influenced the evolution of the final narrative techniques presented in chapter 2.

### ***Single motherhood***

#### **Final memo: *Single motherhood***

This category is largely shaped by each of the case study anti-heroines' husbands' deaths. Indeed, the anti-heroines' husbands are no longer present in their lives, leaving them in an isolated position, as they need to provide financially and emotionally for their children. Ultimately, they are unprepared for performing the role of breadwinner, mother and father.

Notably, Floyd Gerhardt's (*Fargo* 2015-) husband suffers a stroke which occurs near the end of the pilot episode. Whereas, Nancy Botwin (*Weeds* 2005-2012) and Sarah Linden's (*The Killing* 2011-2014) husbands are not present from the outset of the pilot episodes. As stated, each anti-heroine character finds themselves in a isolated position, which encourages a sense of sympathy on behalf of the audience through this tragic circumstance. An additional principal, which is consistent across each anti-heroine, is that they are alone. This is not in reference to their marital status, but in regard to their lack of relationships with women they can relate to. I suggest that this lack of relatable women or any wider support network leaves these anti-heroines even more isolated, engendering viewer sympathy.

Isolation, however, is built on by each anti-heroines vulnerability. Vulnerability refers to a narrative scene or sequencing that shows the anti-heroine in danger as a consequence of her isolation. Narratively, it is characterised that unless she does something drastic she is unlikely to overcome her plight. Vulnerability in respect to Nancy Botwin can be identified because it is hinted at that her husband unexpectedly died of a heart attack which has left her unprepared to take on the role of the breadwinner, particularly since she seemingly has no

formal skills and qualifications. In a desperate bid to provide for her two young children, it can be inferred by the audience that Nancy has entered the world out of narcotics out of desperation rather than an innate desire for criminality. Again, this vulnerability manufactures a sense of audience sympathy for Nancy because we understand that she would have most likely occupied a very different path given the circumstances were different.

This same technique strikes parallels with Sarah Linden in the opening five-minutes, as it becomes apparent that her former partner is no longer present. Although, the difference with Linden's predicament is that her husband abandoned her, leaving Linden, like Botwin, with the dual role of husband (breadwinner) and mother (carer). It becomes evident that Linden is taking on an impossible task, as she tries to successfully maintain a relationship with her son and carryout detective work. Sympathy towards Linden is also experienced because she has lost time for herself. The impression the story frames is that Linden only exists in the world to fulfil the needs of others. It goes without saying, it is clear from the outset of the pilot episode that Linden is struggling with her current predicament and it is, in truth, because she is trying to fulfil this impossible role. Or better put "roles." Ultimately, the viewer is only left to feel sympathy for Linden's situation and thus cannot attach too much judgment on the choices she makes in her work and family life.

Admittedly, as mentioned, Floyd Gerhardt's situation does differ, too, since her husband's stroke emerges at the latter stage of the pilot episode. However, given the lack of leadership and intelligence her sons display, it becomes clear that Floyd and her family are in a vulnerable situation. Viewers sympathise with Floyd and understand that she is the only one capable of taking over the family's throne. My belief is that, in part, sympathy is yielded for Floyd because of the oppressive obstacles that she faces in bidding to assume the role as head of the family due to its patriarchal structure. This is because, to some extent, she has no choice other than to assume head of the family, as she is only family member with the innate intelligence to outfox the deadly crime syndicate who want them all dead.

### **Single motherhood: earlier memos on potential categories**

The following memos for categories were explored but, ultimately, were not finalised as categories in and of themselves.

- A) Gender manufacturing
- B) Death of religion
- C) Traditional housewife

D) Women are vulnerable

### **A) Gender Manufacturing**

This category is present in all case study anti-heroine narratives. In particular, in *Fargo* it signified to the audience as Detective Lou's daughter made him an ashtray. He turns to his wife and says, "I don't even smoke." The underlining message is that this is the gender role expected of women in society, which is ingrained in children from a young age. Whilst Lou is an excellent detective, his wife also displays an aptitude for solving crimes. Regardless if she truly does have ability she, as well as the audience, will never know because of her gender. Thus, this moment in *Fargo* reveals that Lou and his wife, to a large extent, never had a choice with what they would pursue career wise due traditional gender norms. This helps elicits sympathy towards the female characters more so because men can at least be privileged with positions of power in society. This also foreshadows the life that Lou's daughter may potentially live, one that is parallel to her mother. Therefore, audiences are more likely to become aligned with Peggy Blumquist and Floyd Gerhardt since they have, or are trying to, break away from this gender imprisonment albeit even if they have evolved into criminals. Surely, if crime is the only way these female characters can break free then harsh judgment cannot be expected from the audience?

### **B) Death of religion**

Death of Religion is subtly crafted in both *Weeds* and *The Killing*, which helps form audience alignment with the anti-heroine. For instance, when young drug dealer Josh ambushes Nancy, he explains how his "employment opportunities" has soured because the guy he worked for, in the meditation industry, went off to an event to "get high for the passion of Christ." Here, the underlining message is that Nancy now resides in a complicated world due to the lack of moral order that exists in society because of secularism. This is hinted to the audience, in this particular scene, as Nancy fails to make Josh understand that it is immoral to deal drugs to children. The lack of moral code suggests to the audience that, whilst Nancy may delve in criminality, she is far more preferable to any other characters. It is also highlights the lack of order in the storyworld and one must do what needs to be done in order to survive. After all, the previous scene depicts Nancy in her family home and it is clear that her children are dependent on her financially.

Likewise, this becomes an important element in *The Killing* with Detective Linden playing close attention on Detective Holder's religious tattoo on his neck. She spends time analysing the tattoo before moving onto detective work. The audience doesn't exactly know why this has become a point of interest, but as the narrative progresses it becomes easier to draw inferences. My inference is that this is motivated by Rosie Larsen's case becoming more puzzling, hence religion is explored against the backdrop of this to reflect the meaning of Linden's world. Linden, parallel to Botwin, elicits audience alignment due to the complexity of modern times. There is no rulebook (bible) that one could follow to make sense of the way to live life. Instead, people are left to navigate this secular world which is sadly orbited by predators aiming to capitalize on the lack of "common" law. Arguably, the audience can only feel sympathy for Sarah Linden since the viewer understands her plight because how can anyone be trusted in such an unscrupulous world. Therefore, audiences may turn a blind eye to any immoral tactics that Linden employs to solve the Rosie Larsen case.

### **C) Traditional housewife**

This category seems to be an essential element to achieving audience engagement for an anti-heroine show. It is present throughout in each of the case study texts. However, it is not the anti-heroine who is at the heart of this set up, instead the employment of secondary characters. For instance, in *Weeds* the mothers from her children's school are given space within the narrative to implicitly project their boring and mundane lifestyle. Often these women are financially kept by their husbands and seemingly have no real outside goals or meaningful fulfilments that they wish to pursue. Their lack of opportunity often slows down the narrative in *Weeds* and when Nancy emerges, an anomaly amongst the mothers, this creates a sense of fictional relief, as well alignment. Why? Because the audience is able to see just how boring and unfulfilling Nancy's life could be if she abided to traditional gender norms.

This same technique is present in *The Killing*, as Mitch Larsen plays the subservient housewife. This entire set up with her husband, Stan Larsen, in the initial scene demonstrates how she must ask Stan for permission, on behalf of their daughter, about going to a university out of state. Stan is indeed the one in control of the financial status of the house and makes key decisions. Mitch is questioned by her husband, who presses her, implying that she wants to live vicariously through their daughter, Rosie. That is, the lifestyle she always desired, freedom and independency. The audience feels sympathy for Mitch because it is clear that

she wants much more from life than to be a housewife that serves her husband. The audiences experiences, to some extent, Mitch's feeling of being trapped and when Linden appears it is pleasurable to view a woman who is not isolated in such a way. That is, a woman who is financially independent through her role as a detective. A role, may I add, that is usually occupied by a man.

Finally, *Fargo* mirrors both *Weeds* and *The Killing* for advancing the traditional housewife as a way of engendering audience engagement. Lou Solverson's wife, Betsy Solverson, also lives a mundane and restrictive existence. In the narrative, Lou comments to his father-in-law that his wife has been acting a bit strange as of late. Prior to this scene, it is evident for the audience to identify that Lou's wife has taken an interest in the case. She is excited to engage with the murder case and hints that she would like to put forward some ideas. Soon after, Lou leaves and his wife is left to look after their daughter at home. It is clearly an unfulfilling life for Betsy and, parallel to *Weeds* and *The Killing*, elicits a claustrophobic feeling amongst viewers concerning Betsy's situation. Therefore, when viewers engage with the subsequent anti-heroine they are happy to forgo any harsh judgments.

#### **D) Women are vulnerable**

Sympathy is yielded in *Weeds* at the end of the narrative when Nancy breaks down in tears on her co-worker and friend. After everything that has occurred prior to this point of the narrative we finally see Nancy break down and go to the comfort of a man, which she was so seemingly against at the start of the pilot episode. This emotional break down of Nancy helps elicits audience sympathy through humanising her. Thus, the audience is able to fully appreciate Nancy's complex position and recognise her struggles as legitimate because she is unable to cope emotionally. Furthermore, if Nancy were to be portrayed in a way that she is coping emotionally then, at this point, it could have been inferred by the viewer that she is inhuman and, in turn, unrelatable. It is at this point that the audiences interest is drawn back to Nancy because they can see she is trying to do the best out of a bad situation.

Notably, the word vulnerable is used, here, because Nancy can no longer cope and could easily be taking advantage of which puts her at risks, as well as her family's stability. Given she has been portrayed as a more morally preferable character, the audience is inclined to support her potential rise in the drug world. This pattern is also crafted in *The Killing*, but with secondary characters being portrayed as vulnerable.

For instance, a female character is tied up and depicted as merely a sexual object. At one point of the narrative, power rests upon the male character since a naked woman is tied up on a bed, whilst the male character is playing a violent video game. From this scene we learn how vulnerable women are within the context of the storyworld, which, arguably, reflects concurrent times. In relation to our anti-heroine, Detective Linden, this helps to secure audience engagement. That is because the viewer is able to appreciate the complex world she lives in and that, as a woman, she is vulnerable. This issues concern for audiences about her welfare. Notably, moral psychology unveiled people have a tendency to care for those who are vulnerable. Anyhow, most significantly, the audience lives vicariously through Linden since she is in a position of power unlike the other female characters. As Ian Robertson (2012) argues this leads to a flourish of dopamine for viewers since it feels good given the vulnerable and powerless position women have historically be constrained too.

This category is also present in *Fargo* and pervades the entirety of season 2. At this stage of the narrative, the audience is made aware of Detective Lou's wife, Betsy, of having cancer. Again, a female character is placed in a vulnerable situation and it is down to Lou (a male) to support his wife and provide a stable home. Conversely, later on in the season this is contrasted with the way Dodd Gerhardt treats his eighteen-year-old daughter, Simone. Dodd physically and emotionally abuses Simone and creates a prison-like environment for her. This technique subconsciously hints to the audience that women are only as safe as the environment that males create. This yields sympathy for female characters because of their vulnerability and lack of power. In particular, the audience comes to realize how important Floyd Gerhardt is for ensuring the safety of herself and the females in her family. If she were to be overtaken by Floyd or any other male she could be subjugated to such trauma.

### ***Men are dumb***

#### **Final memo: *Men are dumb***

The wording of the this category could be argued as aggravating, however, for each case study text there is an underlining subtext that men are intellectually incompetent. This is, I believe, significant for helping to encourage audience engagement for the television anti-heroine. The word "dumb" has been purposefully used because it signposts what writers should do in order to encourage viewer engagement. That is, the inclusion of intellectually incompetent male characters. Still, the writer must be subtle in crafting intellectually incompetent male characters to circumvent viewers from feeling manipulated and, in turn, that such characterisation is rudimentary, thus resulting in their disengagement.

For instance, Nancy Botwin enters her family home and finds her two sons lounging around watching television. More specifically, her sons are watching what appears to be “cave men” acting primitively by hunting animals and drinking beer. It is clear that this show lacks any intellectual depth. Furthermore, moments later Nancy enters her car and is ambushed by a young teenager, Josh, who persuades her to provide drugs for him to sell. Nancy is at first reluctant since it becomes apparent that Josh sold drugs to a young child. However, Nancy soon gives in to Josh’s persuasion as he promises to not sell drugs to children. It is, however, very much apparent that he has no intention of fulfilling his promise. This lack of morality, combined with the poor male role models, hints to the audience that the men of the storyworld are incapable of providing a safe and flourishing environment. Thus, subconsciously, the audience identifies Nancy as someone who is more morally preferable since she exhibits a greater moral compass and considers the impact of her actions, unlike many of the characters orbiting the storyworld. Most notably, for example, Nancy points out the tragic implications to Josh of selling drugs to young children.

This category is also pervasive in *The Killing*, particularly during the early stages of the pilot episode. As Sarah Linden is clearing her office she is abruptly disturbed by her replacement, Detective Holder. It is clear from this scene that Holder is not able to successfully take over Linden’s role as lead detective. The audience understands this and when it becomes clear that Rosie Larsen is unlikely to be found alive, viewers are cognisant that for the case to be resolved, Linden must stay on it and not move to Los Angeles. Again, this is built on the underlining message that the men of this storyworld are intellectually inadequate.

I also argue that *Fargo* strongly advances this narrative exploration of *men are dumb* in order to encourage audience engagement for the television anti-heroine. For instance, immediately from the outset of the pilot episode, three brothers – Dodd, Bear and Rye Gerhardt – are in combat with one another. Their desperation and frustration at the lack of power suggest to the audience that this has possibly played a role in the family’s criminal demise. Dodd Gerhardt confronts his younger brother Rye when it becomes apparent he has been wasting family money on a poor investment. Rye’s lack of reasoning and insight into his own behaviour is clear for viewers to note. He obviously does not exhibit the intellect to take over as head of the family anytime soon... if ever! Although, Dodd Gerhardt displays a physical presence, as well as intellectual ability, he lacks emotional control. His approach is to employ violence instead of orchestrating situations as if he were a puppeteer – someone

akin to Don or Michael Corleone. Again, this primitive approach makes it clear to the audience that it will not work within the criminal world.

The idea that men are outsmarted is further evident when, during a family dinner, Floyd Gerhardt reveals to the family that money has been stolen. It is evident that both Rye and Dodd have been failing to take care of business. More interestingly, it becomes clear by the end of this scene that Floyd is, to some extent, the brains behind the family's current fortune. Due to her gender, however, Floyd has not been assigned any specific title and wields no power or authority within her crime family. This is apparent when Dodd enters the room and orders Rye to move out of his chair. Here, the underlining meaning is that this crime family is centred on an outdated patriarchal structure, one that is indeed overly masculinised, which as a consequence will lead to the demise of the family. In turn, the audience perceives that the Gerhardt brothers are unworthy leaders since they do not exhibit the intellectual and emotional competence to ensure the family's long term survival. That is, in light of a powerful crime syndicate who will not stop until they have in possession all of the Gerhardts criminal operations. This provides the space for audiences to align themselves with Floyd Gerhardt because they understand that she is the only leader capable of assuming head of the family and ensuring their survival.

### ***Men are dumb: earlier memos on potential categories***

The following memos for categories were explored but, ultimately, were not finalised as categories in and of themselves.

- A) Intellect over brutality
- B) Only a woman

#### **A) Intellect over brutality**

Admiration and alignment is achieved in the pilot episode of each case study text through comparing and contrasting the approach between central male and female characters. For instance, in *The Killing* Detective Linden's approach to finding the whereabouts of Rosie Larsen is compared against Stan Larsen's heavy handed method. This is achieved, in part, through cross cutting between scenes that centre around Linden and Stan. Although, it should be noted that Stan is Rosie's father so there is an emotional investment, thus, to some extent at least, it makes sense why he is unable to placate his aggressive approach. Still, this



category is not only centred on a comparison between Stan and Linden, but also Linden's junior, Detective Holder, as well as other secondary male characters.

Moreover, at one stage of the narrative Stan is led to believe that Rosie is staying at her ex-boyfriend's house. The police are informed and subsequently Detective Holder and Linden can now stop their search and head over to the house of the ex-boyfriend. However, Detective Linden is not convinced and is reluctant to stop the search which is taking place in an isolated field. Holder tries to convince Linden that they have found Rosie, and Linden's boss also echoes this. He tells Linden that it is over. Meanwhile, Stan is driving furiously to the ex-boyfriend's house, whilst comforting his wife on the phone that she is going to be found. He then proceeds to barge into the house and forces Rosie's ex-boyfriend out of the way and heads immediately for the bedroom upstairs. As he tells Rosie "to get out of bed, you're coming home," he quickly learns that this girl is, in fact, not his daughter. This is then juxtaposed with Linden informing Holder that she has figured out where Rosie may be... Soon after a car is being lifted out of the water and Rosie's body is subsequently found.

In a world of modern technology, which effects how much control parents can have over what their children access and do, brutality is no longer enough to keep the family under control. Thus, this entire set-up works to nudge the audience into understanding that this new world requires intellect over brutal aggression. In the final moments when Stan is screaming that his daughter is murdered we realise that only Linden is able to solve this case. We, the audience, are now rooting for her because seeing a teenage Rosie Larsen's lifeless body, coupled with the pain endured by her loved ones, makes us want retribution. Therefore, Linden needs to do what needs to be done to solve this case. What is needed is a cool and clear mind when further investigating this case.

This category is also present in *Fargo*, particularly in the scene in which Ed Blumquist arrives home from work to his wife Peggy Blumquist. Notably, Peggy is clearly unhappy with her current life as a traditional housewife, as she noticeably bats away her husband when he moves to kiss her. Soon after the married couple are sat at the table and Ed discusses the possibility of buying the butchers shop. Ed is clearly excited as he raises the prospect of buying their own shop, having children and raising them together. Peggy is unmoved by this proposal and is more eager to talk about a course she is planning to enrol on. Ed, rather cautiously, tells Peggy that there will not be enough money for her to enrol onto this course. That is, if they are going to buy the shop. At this stage the audience sympathises with Peggy in light of her current situation. She is trapped in a domesticated life that affords no self-fulfilment, independence and ultimately, the opportunity for Peggy to grow. She is,

clearly, more intellectual than Ed and, if gender roles between men and women were fluid, Peggy would have most likely been more than a traditional housewife. As a result, the audience is frustrated on behalf of Peggy since she is unable to cultivate her own identity... One which is not centred around her husband's identity.

Moreover, this entire set-up is important for ensuring viewers do not disengage from Peggy later on. Soon after Ed hears banging from inside the garage and after the third time he inspects and discovers the car window has been smashed. Peggy then reluctantly admits that she ran over a man and, because she thought he was dead, decided to go straight home. Ed is extremely confused, and questions why Peggy didn't tell him? Why did she not ring the police? How did she just cook dinner, knowing what she has just done? Peggy, however, is smart enough to play on Ed's emotional needs and has an answer already in hand... Peggy explains that she could go to jail and they would not be able to start a family.

What is most perplexing is Peggy's irrationality at explaining to Ed that they should see this as an opportunity to move out to California. This provides audience an insight into Peggy's desperation to experience a life without such traditional gender restrictions. Arguably, this highlights the complex and pitiful mental state of Peggy, which is a result of gender inequalities that women, particularly at this moment of time, are subjugated to. The audience, therefore, experiences sorrow for Peggy and, at a consequence, overlooks her transgressive action.

## **B) Only a woman**

The tagline only a woman denotes that women are typically unable to perform roles of authority, outside their domestic sphere, simply because of their gender. This indeed has been teased out because it resonates with the pilot episodes for each of the case study texts. In both *Fargo* and *The Killing* the screenwriters have carefully crafted key components to elicit audience alignment for the anti-heroine. As concluded, male characters have been characterised as inadequate and primitive and, in turn, unable to utilise intellect when mapping out a strategic plan. The final moment in *The Killing*, when Rosie Larsen is found dead, is traumatic for the audience. Thus, anger and disgust is experienced by viewers and, in turn, the audience demands retribution. In order for this to be fulfilled, only Detective Linden can solve the case. The way Linden remains calm in the situation and is business-like when Stan Larsen appears, signifies that she has what it takes. Therefore, it is reasonable to surmise that the audience is willing to embark on the journey with Linden to achieve closure and, in

doing so, will be more open to award themselves fictional relief when engaging with the narrative.

Parallel, the same narrative technique is present when examining the craftsmanship of Floyd Gerhardt. At the end of the pilot, we are depicted a scene of the Nebraska mafia plotting to overtake the Gerhardt's criminal empire, particularly as there is no better time since the head of the family has suffered a stroke. The audience becomes cognisant that the Gerhardt sons are incapable of taking on such sophisticated and delicate criminal operations. They lack the intellectual capability. However, Floyd Gerhardt personifies a skill-set that is strikingly different to her sons. She is smart, calm and perceptive and can see the bigger picture within the world that her family exists in. In order for her family empire to survive, the audience acknowledges that Floyd is the only viable leader. Both Linden and Floyd are able to make informed and rational decisions, which enables them to appropriately locate their egos to one side, thus enabling sound judgments to be.

Conversely, in respect to this category, the crafting of Nancy Botwin in *Weeds* differs compared to Floyd Gerhardt and Sarah Linden. Instead, she emotionally breaks down at the end of the pilot episode. The audience does not believe that Nancy must act to secure the safety of those closest to her and perform serious transgressive actions, at least for the time being. This is primarily influenced by my understanding of the story schema concept since *Weeds* was one of the first anti-heroine shows, thus sympathy needs to first be built towards Nancy before she begins engaging in serious transgressive behaviour. Though, this is also because *Weeds* is only 30-minutes in length, and within this space, there is no real development of a central antagonist that would encourage the viewer to want Nancy to perform actions that are morally unscrupulous. Therefore, it becomes important to unveil that conflict, driven by a strong antagonist, is required to encourage audience engagement when acts of serious transgressive behaviour are performed. Further, the narrative focuses on Nancy's plight and portrays her emotionally vulnerable. This is, plausibly, because an anti-heroine has not been explored in television so the writer needed to spend more time eliciting viewer sympathy for Nancy.

### ***Men cannot be trusted***

#### **Final memo: *men cannot be trusted***

Evidently, the category *men cannot be trusted* is grounded in all three case study narratives. In *Weeds*, there are two explicit scenes that portray men as untrustworthy and unsavoury. For instance, Josh's Dad, Doug, obtains drugs from Nancy in his car since she abruptly refused to

“deal” directly in view of children during a soccer match. During this interaction, it becomes apparent that Doug is smoking weed in the car. This horrifies Nancy because it puts her at risk, coupled with the lack of morality given that families are watching their young children play football. Furthermore, during the conversation Doug speaks of his poker games with other fathers and how they discuss the ins and outs of their sexual relationships with other women. It also becomes clear that Doug is having an affair. The viewer is somewhat disgusted at Doug’s behaviour and nudges the audience to align with Nancy since, in part, she displays a greater moral compass. Still, we further sympathise with Nancy because we learn that she was having, or had, sex with Josh’s Dad. A worried Nancy asks if Doug has spoken about their sexual relationship to which he denies, but clearly, he is lying and Nancy knows it or, at least, that’s my inference. The sexual imbalance amongst men and women is clear to see and the audience feels for Nancy’s situation because she is on the wrong end of this imbalance of power. More specifically, a man is empowered when having multiple sexual partners, whereas a woman, such as Nancy, is labelled, somewhat, immoral and disingenuous when exploring her sexuality.

This category is further layered in subsequent scenes when Nancy clocks in the distance that Josh is selling drugs to children in the children’s play area. Instead of this yielding a sense of sympathy on behalf of the audience for Nancy, emotions are centred on anger towards Josh, particularly as he did not keep to his original promise of not dealing to children, and as a result, betrays Nancy. This resonates with Jonathon Haidt’s belief that an innate emotional response is experienced amongst most people in all societies to care for the wellbeing of children. Arguably, this plays on such emotions of the audience, thus resulting in Nancy being individuated as a lesser evil relative to the criminal world of characters orbiting the storyworld. Therefore, audience alignment becomes further cemented for Nancy because she has the ability to restore the equilibrium of this fractured storyworld.

This, too, is hinted at in the narrative of *The Killing*. Most notably, during the loose interrogation of the schoolteacher, Bennet Ahmed, carried out by Detective Linden and Holder. The scene is cut short when Holder suggests that the teacher is sexually attracted to Rosie Larsen, which points towards *infidelity* since the teacher is married, as well as possible *sexual misconduct* given the power dynamic between teacher and student. Prior to this, it is shown that the teacher pulls Rosie Larsen’s best friend aside because he didn’t believe what information she was detailing to the Principal. This, I argue, is a form of betrayal through the teacher not being honest when communicating to the detectives and there is clearly something of concern on his mind. Later in the episode, the audience is depicted Rosie

Larsen's ex-boyfriend engaging in sexually deviant behaviour at the expense of, what appears to be, a vulnerable woman. This set-up, in part, creates a sense of confusion and disgust about the nature of men. In the context of the storyworld, we do not necessarily know how to feel about men and the general notion is that they cannot be trusted. This helps to encourage audience engagement for Linden since we learn that she is navigating a disingenuous world. And men are at the heart of it so we cannot side with any of the male characters, too quickly at least. In regard to the scene of Rosie's ex-boyfriend, this also engenders a sense of disgust from the audience and further cements our trust and, in turn, engagement for Detective Linden, who is far more moral and trustworthy.

In *Fargo* this category is also present throughout. We are constantly depicted men who are acting not in good faith. For example, the Gerhardt brothers are constantly scheming plans without their family's knowledge, which, as a consequence, leads to the family's demise. We also learn that betrayal is a trait that can cripple a family. This foreshadows to the audience that unless the anti-heroine takes charge and learns that she cannot trust such characters, she and her loved ones could be in imminent danger. This helps encourage the audience to accept the role of a female character embarking on a morally ambiguous path. Thus, by Floyd Gerhardt taking over the family she can ensure their safety.

### ***Men cannot be trusted: earlier memos on potential categories***

The following memos for categories were explored but, ultimately, were not finalised as categories in and of themselves.

- A) No entry to women
- B) Death of the nuclear family

#### **A) No entry to women**

The category *no entry to women* resonates with each of the three case study texts. For instance, at the start of *Weeds*, Nancy Botwin is delivering a talk to fellow mothers regarding their children's education. At one particular moment Nancy discusses how there should be no fizzy drinks to which the mothers, who are stereotypically characterised, support, but under one condition that "diet" soda drinks are still approved. The focus, here, from the fellow mothers, who agree in unison, is ensuring their daughters are mindful concerning their weight. Hence, it becomes clear that gender is manufactured from an early age and, because of such values, this prohibits women from becoming more than mere sex objects. Thus, the mothers meeting only exemplify the extent of women's true influence, which is typically

confined to the domestic space. Although, Nancy rejects such gender norms but fails to persuade the fellow mothers in terms of her point of view. Viewers, then, both admire Nancy as well as experience sympathy for her given the frustrating cultural gender norms at play that inhibit progress.

Audience sympathy is further cultivated towards Nancy since she is unable to break away from traditional gender roles that are clearly unhealthy. Children, as evidence in moral psychology, yield an innate repulsive response when mistreated by adults. In this scene, the fellow mothers attitude, regarding dietary requirements, is clearly a form of emotional abuse and, because Nancy is fighting the children's corner, this hints to the viewer that Nancy is a good person at heart. In conclusion, if females could acquire a position of power, Nancy could have positively changed society for the better with regards to gender equality. Instead, as Nancy stands and addresses the mothers the rejection she faces is a clear indication that women are confined to traditional gender beliefs. Therefore, there is no obvious entry for meaningful roles women can seek that are closely associated with men.

This, too, resonates with *The Killing*, as fellow colleagues prank Sarah Linden since it is her last day on the job before moving to California. Linden makes her way to a crime scene, set in a dark warehouse, and bravely moves inside before coming across what appears to be a dead body hanging on a rope. As she approaches the body she soon realises that it is a blow up doll and suddenly her colleagues appear out of the shadows singing, "oh she's a jolly good fellow."

First, her colleagues are only male and there is not another female in sight. Given Linden's meek physical stature, and the bravery she displayed entering the warehouse, a sense of admiration and sympathy is yielded from the audience. Admiration and sympathy resonates from the fact that Linden must have had a tough time to make it as a successful detective in such a male dominated world. Also, sympathy yielded is multifaceted because viewers can infer from this scene that Linden has never been accepted as one of "them." Her male colleagues stand in unison laughing at Linden, as she is marginalised on the outside of the group. This moment hints that she has never really been in on the joke, which is down to her gender. The audience can only feel a sense of sympathy given a predicament she never had any control over.

The division and hierarchy of men and women is no more apparent than in the opening of *Fargo*. *Fargo*, season 2, opens to a scene full of dead bodies and it becomes apparent that a combat war has taken place. Given the time and context, the dead bodies are only of men, as well as the Indian soldiers standing tall after victory, who also happen to be

male. It becomes clear that this is a film reconstruction since the director calls for cut and then begins talking to his lead actor. During their conversation there is not a female insight until the script girl appears. The director talks to the female very rudely, which is recognizable more so since, up until this point, he was talking pleasantly with the male actor. This sets up the idea that there has not necessarily been any real change for women in modern times in comparison to early 18<sup>th</sup> century. They are still on the periphery of society, that is, second to men. This elicits audience sympathy towards subsequent female characters, as it becomes evident that the storyworld they exist within is extremely restrictive.

Moreover, with this scene, it is set against the backdrop of a brutal war, in which countless bodies lay lifeless, this connoting, once again, the barbaric behaviour of men. Subconsciously, at least, viewers are nudged to feel a sense of sympathy for the script girl as well as other female characters due to the lack of say and power they have on the world they live in.

In considering each of the three case studies, a clear link that I've been able to draw is that there clearly is an imbalance of power between male and female characters. This imbalance is specific to opportunities and how women are unable to wield any real authority or power and, ultimately, assume roles of any significance outside the domestic space. Of course, however, this knowledge is nothing new.

## **B) Death of nuclear family**

Arguably, whilst this category could be composed with *traditional housewife* and *single motherhood*, it becomes necessary to distinguish it since the principles slightly differ. Death of the nuclear family is explored in each of the case study anti-heroine texts as a way of signifying how complicated this new world for women is to navigate. For instance, in *Weeds* Nancy's broken down family is not only explored but also Josh's and Celia's. Importantly, the finger is pointed at men for the breakdown of the family since they are, generally speaking, unable to be faithful. This elicits sympathy for Nancy because she is unable to provide a stable and loving home due to poor decisions taken by men and, in particular, her late husband. This is further hinted at during the end of pilot episode when her friend Celia unsuccessfully catches her daughter having sex, but instead discovers a video of her husband cheating. We are left with a final moment in which her friend Celia is sat sipping whiskey as she mutters, "you little cunt." Here, this hints to the audience that, arguably, the breakdown of the family is beyond repair and has been left for women to try and pick up the pieces.

Sympathy and alignment for the anti-heroine is thus engendered because viewers understand that women have been issued a raw deal.

Again, this echoed in *The Killing* when Detective Linden picks her son up from school because he was caught smoking. Their relationship is visibly poor and Linden, knowing that her son is struggling with the potential move, tries to encourage him about their future. He is unimpressed by their move to LA and in a bid of encouragement, Linden tells her son, “we will be happy” once they’ve moved. Here, deep down Linden knows that by moving to LA with her fiancé she is not going to cultivate a nuclear family, which will result in everyone’s happiness. It’s too late. This is a sad moment and it really hits home with what Linden has lost regarding a loving family life. Sympathy is also yielded because by this point viewers are privy to how hard she has tried in performing the role of breadwinner, mother and father. In this moment the viewer feels sympathy for Linden since her son can only focus on the life that he could have lived given his father was present. Linden has been given an impossible task and the audience subconsciously agrees, therefore, experiencing further sympathy for her situation.

However, in *Fargo* the *death of the nuclear family* is not consistent throughout the pilot episode. Instead, the nuclear family is founded to be fallacious. It is a structure that works only for a patriarchy. Men are given the status, power and liberty to do as they please, whereas women are marginalised. This creates a suffocating environment in which women are permitted from any form growth and self-fulfilment. This becomes evident later on in the narrative with Peggy Blumquist, who is avoiding starting a family with her husband, Ed Blumquist. There is clearly tension between the married couple, but the audience understands that a baby with Ed could lead to Peggy living a mundane life as a housewife. Again, this strikes parallels with Floyd Gerhardt who is on the periphery in her own family because of her gender. Ultimately, the nuclear family has limited her talents since she clearly would have been destined for great things given the current patriarchal structure were not in place. Finally, this category is present with Detective Lou’s wife, Betsy, who is dying of cancer. Subconsciously the audience feels sympathy for her, as it seems she wanted to live a life beyond that of a traditional housewife. This is signified in scenes in which she engages with her husband about the killing spree of three people in their hometown café. The feeling of “what if” and frustration experienced on behalf of the female characters’ intellectual imprisonment helps encourage viewer engagement, particularly Floyd Gerhardt and Peggy Blumquist when they fight back against such gender norms. Thus, in the case of *Fargo*, it is Floyd Gerhardt and Peggy Blumquist. Both characters engage in transgressive behaviour, but



it is, primarily at least, a result of cultural gender norms which, ultimately, go against women's freedom and liberty.