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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Character Change in the Screenplay Text
The Semiotics of Writing and Analyzing Character

Sifakis, Georgios-Pavlos

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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.

Character Change in the Screenplay Text:
The semiotics of writing and analyzing character

A Practice-based PhD thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

By

Georgios Pavlos Sifakis

School of Creative Studies and Media - Bangor University Wales

Supervised by Dr. Gregory Frame

September 2021

Abstract

This thesis explores the nature of character change in screenplays, from both a creative and a theoretical perspective. It critiques the screenwriting manuals' approach that usually sees character change either as a mere substitution of dominant personality traits or a spiritual rebirth, and proposes a detailed, holistic model both for analysing *and* composing character change in screenplays. Furthermore, through the writing of a feature screenplay, the thesis explores how written language constructs and develops character in the text. It addresses the main critical debates in regard to literary character, argues for a dual mimetic-textual approach and employs narrative theories, practice-based research and close textual analysis informed by semiotics to analyse character in the screenplay text. Thus, through a critical analysis and reevaluation of character in narrative theory, a close examination of the screenplay text, and the creative process of writing a screenplay, this thesis places character at the centre of screenplay narrative and approaches character change in a holistic way, as a constantly-shifting, complex network of various, intertwined mimetic attributes. Thus, it fills an important gap in screenplay and screenwriting studies where character change is often ignored or presented in narrow, vague or overly-simplistic ways. Moreover, by highlighting the centrality of character change and supporting a literary view of the screenplay text, this thesis can broaden the ways the screenwriter thinks and writes about character. If the screenwriter has a broader, holistic understanding of character change and acknowledges the literary nature of the screenplay, s/he can use all available linguistic tools for maximum effect when s/he describes and develops the character on the page. The creative work produced for this thesis is a detailed exploration of the multi-faceted nature of character as constructed in the screenplay text through various mimetic attributes that are assigned to it. It demonstrates how the process of writing words on the page informs the understanding of character development in a long, non-linear process where both analytical, conceptual considerations of character and the pragmatics of writing are of equal importance.

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This PhD has been a wonderful creative journey, as well as an intense theoretical riddle; one I would not be able to solve without the help from my two supervisors: Dr. Jamie Sherry, currently Reader in English at De Montfort University and Dr. Gregory Frame, Lecturer in Film Studies at Bangor University. I would like to offer both my thanks and enormous gratitude for guiding me and advising through this long process.

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Introduction

Every screenwriter – student or professional, established or novice – is, I posit, very familiar with the term *character change*. It is one of those terms that everyone in the film industry, from screenwriting teachers to executive producers, likes to talk about and yet, its overall meaning remains somewhat elusive. Screenwriting manuals, informed by Aristotle's *Poetics* (1902) and Joseph Campbell's (1991; 2008) treatises on mythical storytelling will argue that it has something to do with the acquisition of new knowledge, with a reversal of fortunes or with the radical change of a dominant personality trait (see Lawson 1960; Vogler 2007; Yorke 2014). However, a close reading of any screenplay text reveals something else, something bigger; it reveals an abundance of linguistic signs assigned as attributes to the textual characters; attributes that are constantly modified, altered or even replaced. In this view, rather than being restricted to the notion of a personality trait or a vague, spiritual rebirth, I suggest that character change can be found everywhere in the screenplay text.

Taking my preoccupation with screenplays both as a reader and a writer as a starting point, I problematized and challenged the topic of character change. Screenwriting manuals doxa seemed too restrictive. Oft repeated terms like “arc”, “transformation” and “journey” appeared to me too vague and general to result in a concrete understanding of character change. From the point of view of the practitioner, I felt that adhering to universalist approaches does not necessarily result in inventive screenplays that utilize all facets of character's complex textual nature. Using grand, abstract terms like “arc” and “transformation”, instead of focusing on the totality of what character is on the page risks diminishing the complexity of character and imprisoning the script in formulaic structures.

But what is that elusive character *complexity*, after all? The complexity and “roundness” of literary characters, are usually linked to terms like identity, individuality and selfhood. In my exploration of character in screenplays, I opted to avoid lengthy philosophical and psychological discussions about these vague, hard-to-define terms. Instead, I chose to focus on the pragmatics of the screenplay and to observe all textual signs that relate to character in order to understand what character change really is and proceed to redefine it. Thus, this creative thesis addresses the main critical debates in

regard to literary character. It argues for the prominence of character over plot and sees it as the organizing principle of the screenplay text. Furthermore, it argues for a dual mimetic-textual approach to character and employs narrative theories, practice-based research and close textual analysis informed by semiotics to analyse character in the screenplay text. Thus, through a critical analysis and reevaluation of character in narrative theory, a close examination of the screenplay text, and the creative process of writing a screenplay, this thesis places character at the centre of screenplay narrative and approaches character change in a holistic way, as a constantly-shifting, complex network of various, intertwined mimetic attributes. In this way it also fills an important gap in screenplay and screenwriting studies where character change is often ignored or presented in narrow, vague or overly-simplistic ways.

More specifically, there are two main research questions that drive this thesis: 1) *What is the nature of character change in film screenplays* and 2) *How is the notion of character change constructed in the screenplay text by the author through linguistic means*. Under these two questions lies a broader objective to *construct a holistic model for character change*, away from constricting screenwriting manual notions. In my attempt to provide credible answers to these two questions, I also tackle character's relation to plot, the debate between character's mimetic or textual nature, the linguistic tools a screenwriter can use in his or her screenplay to describe and develop character and the creative relationship between conceptual process of structuring the character's story and the actual process of composing that story on the page with words. My objective in regard to the first main question is to propose a new, holistic approach to character change, analysing it from a semiotic perspective. In regard to the second question, and through creative practice, my objective is to understand and propose how linguistic tools inherent in the screenplay form can be used by the screenwriter so she or he can convey the multi-dimensionality of the character. Thus, this thesis explores the nature of character change in screenplays, from both a creative and a theoretical perspective. It critiques the screenwriting manuals' approach that usually sees character change either as a mere substitution of dominant personality traits or a spiritual rebirth, and proposes a detailed, holistic model both for *analysing* and *composing* character change in screenplays. It achieves the second aim through the writing of a feature screenplay that explores through practice how written language constructs and develops character in the text.

A Creative-Critical Endeavour: Issues of Creative Research

Undertaking creative research can be a daunting experience in any field but it is particularly tricky in regard to creative writing. Merging strict academic requirements with more fluid, hard-to-pin-down artistic intentions is a messy affair, one that deserves serious consideration. As Webb and Brien (2008) suggest, the produced work of creative research must be autonomous and “made for art’s sake” (Webb and Brien 2008: n.pag.) while at the same time, it must be rigorous and produce new knowledge in its respective field. Before I proceed to discuss my own methodology, then, I wish to tackle the challenging topic of this creative-critical endeavour, in regard to five fundamental questions that keep arising: 1. What is it? 2. What does it entail? 3. What are its objectives? 4. How can its produced knowledge be defined? 5. How should it be conducted?

The first question - *what creative research actually is* - sounds simpler than it really is and different scholars define the various terms attached to it (practice-based, research-led, practice-led, research-informed, etc.) in slightly different terms. In their discussion of creative PhDs in American Universities, Bishop and Starkey (2006) observe that, “In many senses, until it is time to complete the creative dissertation, there is no difference between the course of study for completing a PhD in literature, composition, or creative writing in many programs” (Bishop and Starkey 2006: 56). However, they do go on to clarify that, upon completion, for the creative researcher the dissertation usually consists of a creative writing manuscript (ibid), even if, as they suggest, this view is seen with some suspicion in certain academic circles that doubt whether creative practice and its produced artefact meet the strict requirements of a scholarly work (2006: 58). Linda Candy (2006) offers more clear-cut definitions in regard to the distinction between practice-based and practice-led. For Candy, “If a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based” and, “If the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-led.” (2006: 1). For Baker et al. (2015), however, practice-led refers to the type of research that is used to “underpin the creation” of the creative work (in this case, a screenplay) (Baker et al. 2015 in Baker 2016: 4). Sarah Dobbs wonders whether creative writing itself can be even thought of as research or whether there is a need for more traditional research methods, such as “data gathering” so that the writing in question might be considered as “informed” (Dobbs 2011 in Batty 2013: 13). Graeme

Harper (2007) asserts that an important aspect of undertaking creative writing research is the “pragmatics of putting words on a page, the actual physical act of creative writing”, however, he also clarifies that it is even more important for the researcher to be able to link herself as an individual writer “with the holistic”, that is with a clear “understanding of genre, form, convention, the market, the audience” (Harper 2007 in Batty 2013: 14).

Answering his own rhetorical question about what constitutes creative research, Batty (2013) observes that “it is the practice of writing itself” (Batty 2013: 13). However, he also goes on to problematize exactly what that writing is. Is it, for instance, any writing or just informed writing, where, “the author has employed traditional research methods”? (ibid) At the end of the day, Batty asserts that a practice-based PhD is simply about the practice, “where students research and understand factors that are relevant to the act of writing” (Batty 2013: 14). Batty also distinguishes between a regular PhD in English literature where a researcher can only speculate on an author’s intentions (should she choose to) and a practice-based thesis on writing where the writer’s intentions for the creative work do matter and feature into the research (ibid). What would be seen as anathema in contemporary literary studies (focusing on the author’s intentions), becomes something of a prerequisite for creative writing research. Finally, according to Jerri Kroll, creative writers in academia are doing four things at once: “practising as artists; researching their creative process; researching their art form itself; and engaging in practice-led research (in order to discover new knowledge)” (Kroll 2008 in Baker 2016).

Although no absolute definition exists and different university departments may have different requirements, we can form, from all the above, a decent understanding of what a PhD in Creative Writing can be. That being said, there is not an agreement as to *what it must include* (in material form) and how the different components should interact with each other. For certain American Universities, for instance, the creative work alone justifies the award of a creative PhD. Therefore, “the writer (...) proposes a collection of poems, short stories or novellas, a collection of nonfiction, a novel, a screenplay, or a play”. (Bishop and Starkey 2006: 57). For Western Michigan University, “The dissertation will be a book length manuscript of scholarship, criticism, research, or creative writing comprised of either a single piece of work or a coherent collection of shorter pieces that are methodologically, structurally, or thematically related.” (cited in

Bishop and Starkey 2006). If the candidate wishes to conduct research by means of creative writing practice, they need not submit a critical component on top of the creative artefact. On the other hand, the University of Denver asks for a creative work but also requires a theoretical preface that, “situates the dissertation in its literary context” (cited in Bishop and Starkey 2006: 57). For Linda Candy, if someone is undertaking practice-led instead of practice-based research there is no need for a creative artefact, although one may still submit one if they find it appropriate. The creative work is, however, the fundamental component of the *practice-based* thesis (Candy 2006: 3, my emphasis). In regard to screenwriting specifically, Dethridge suggests that both a screenplay and an accompanying exegesis is needed so the creative work is positioned within a specific, larger context (Dethridge 2009 in Lee et al. 2016). Batty (2013) complicates things considerably when he suggests that, “The creative artefact of a practice-based PhD does not necessarily have to be a material artefact”, but “rather a creative artefact that embodies a set of research questions and presents the results in a non-traditional way” (Batty 2013: 15). Baker (2016) suggests that there is always some combination of the critical and the creative component. For Fletcher and Mann, the creative thesis consists simply of a creative artefact and an accompanying exegesis. (Fletcher and Mann 2004 in Batty et al. 2017). Batty et al. (2017) question this inclusion of an exegesis in creative research and cite Woodrow who posits that the creative work *alone* should carry the burden of demonstrating the research’s results. (Woodrow 2008 in Batty et al. 2017: 5, my emphasis).

All this leaves us with no clear idea about what the creative PhD should include in terms of material documents. Indeed, some researchers may choose to submit only a creative artefact and argue that it alone displays the research’s results and contributions to knowledge. Others offer an exegesis together with the creative work, in order to situate it in a larger context and discuss it meaningfully. Finally, the researcher may opt to submit both a creative work and a larger theoretical component, complementary to that work. As I will argue later on, that was my own approach.

The third question - *what are the objectives of the creative PhD* - is much simpler to answer since these are in many ways similar to a regular PhD. The overarching objective is a contribution to knowledge (see Candy 2006). In addition to that eventual goal, Kroll defines two more: 1. that the research “proceeds by and for practice” and that the practice results in a creative artefact (Kroll 2008 in Baker 2016: 5). In order to

achieve the overarching goal of contributing to knowledge, creative writing research can also “question[s], provoke[s] and clarify[s] assumptions about practice” (Kroll 2010 in Lee et al. 2016). Stephan Sculley in Lee et al. (2016) explains how screenwriting in an academic environment also allowed him to develop his skills and practice, away from the restrictions of the industry (2016: 91). Similarly, Batty (2011) was able to expand on Christopher Vogler’s rendition of the “hero’s journey”, “in order to foster a deeper embracing of theme through the character’s emotional arc” (Batty 2011 in Batty, Sawtell and Taylor 2017: 154). In any case, and whatever the means employed, the endgame for the practice-based PhD is to produce “new knowledge on every level” (Batty and Baker 2018: 5)

Defining exactly *what that new knowledge should be* is more challenging. Expanding on their notions above, Batty and Baker (2018) clarify that knowledge at every level in regard to screenwriting entails, “narrative techniques that adhere to or expand on existing paradigms (...) the industrial contexts that shape how a screenplay might be developed and pitched (...) the social, cultural and industrial relevance of the script as text (...) and the very practice of screenwriting itself (...)” (Batty and Baker 2018: 5). Webb and Brien position the topic of knowledge in a philosophical context and identify two opposing camps of epistemology: one claiming that knowledge exists a priori and can be revealed through reason, and one that argues knowledge “is derived from sense-experience” (Kant in Webb and Brien 2008). Heidegger’s phenomenological approach to knowledge, that posits knowledge derives from our experience of being in the world, is, they argue, more fitting to the creative PhD: “It provides a legitimate basis for considering alternative research paradigms, and thus for claiming the right to be called “researchers” along with our siblings in the other academic disciplines” (2008: n.pag.). For Batty and Berry, new knowledge in screenwriting research is also about improving and innovating the practice of screenwriting (Batty and Berry 2016 in Batty, Sawtell and Taylor 2016: 151). In discussing his own PhD in Screenwriting, Craig Batty states that he aimed specifically to advance “knowledge about a structural model of screenwriting” (Batty 2013: 22). Lisa Candy, finally, highlights the crucial difference between knowledge produced through everyday practice that affects only the individual writer, and knowledge “that is shared with a wider community” and “arises from a structured process that is defined in university examination regulations.” (Candy 2006: 2). Thus, summing everything up, knowledge must be made public; it is not just for the

benefit and professional advancement of the individual author. Moreover, it must relate to the specific practice being researched (in our case screenwriting) and must result - at least partly - from said actual practice and/or the creative artefact produced. The specifics of the knowledge contributed vary in different PhDs undertaken.

The question relating to the interaction between the critical part and the creative work, as well as the methodological approaches employed, is perhaps the most problematic. This is understandable since different PhDs require different methods of practice and analysis and no universal method can be applied. Creative writing as research is even more problematic in that regard because, “Unlike practitioners in forms such as dance or music (...) our mode of practice is (generally, and comparatively) static” (Webb and Brien 2008: n.pag). This naturally begs the question whether a practice-led model of research is applicable to creative writers or whether we must always resort to more traditional research methods such as a posteriori critical analysis of the produced text. (2008: n.pag) The short answer to that would be no. In a creative thesis, the researcher can combine primary and secondary research, critical analysis, close textual analysis and creative writing in order to produce creative artefacts that are informed by theoretical explorations as well as critical analyses that have been informed by creative practice. Batty in Batty, Sawtell and Taylor (2016), for instance, explains how his own research employed a “deep reading” of various screenwriting manuals, as well as narrative theory, in order to produce a model for structuring film narratives that was then “tested in practice with the writing of a mainstream comedy drama feature film,” (Batty, Sawtell and Taylor 2016: 154). Stephen Sculley, whose PhD Batty supervised, produced a screen novel which he decided “would operate as a method of research inquiry, reflected upon and contextualized within existing knowledge about similar practices in the dissertation” (Batty et al. 2017: 6). Kathryn Beaton, whom Batty also supervised, considered, among others, a reflexive approach to her creative work but then decided against it as she felt it was lacking cohesion and the appropriate academic rigour. (2016: 7)

Attempting to address the issues discussed above I suggest that, for me, creative research was predominantly about problematizing the screenplay narrative content (more specifically character change) and improving and expanding screenwriting practice in order to portray a more holistic view of character. By highlighting the centrality of character change and supporting a literary view of the screenplay text, this

thesis broadens the ways the screenwriter thinks and writes about character. If the screenwriter has a broader, holistic understanding of character change and acknowledges the literary nature of the screenplay, s/he can use all available linguistic tools for maximum effect when s/he describes and develops the character on the page.

My thesis includes both a creative and a critical component, however the critical part is not simply an exegesis of the creative but rather a theoretical exploration on its own that informed and, at the same time, was informed by the creative artefact. The creative work produced for this thesis, *Bloody Mary*, is a detailed exploration of the multifaceted nature of character as constructed in the screenplay text through various mimetic attributes that are assigned to it. It demonstrates how the process of writing words on the page informs the understanding of character development in a long, non-linear process where both analytical, conceptual considerations of character and the pragmatics of writing are of equal importance.

Methodology

More specifically, I start the thesis by closely reviewing three closely-related academic fields: screenwriting theory, screenwriting *craft* theory and narrative theory. I identify certain gaps within screenwriting theory that has not studied character change in film screenplays extensively. I use narrative theory, and more specifically Seymour Chatman's notions on narrative events, to show how character can be seen as the organising principle of the screenplay text. Then, I employ semiotic theory to show that character in the verbal text has a mimetic aspect. Semiotics allow me to perceive the screenplay both as a literary text *and* a communication document (the receivers being both the cast and crew and the casual reader). Thus, I approach the textual elements as signs and argue that most of these signs relate either directly or indirectly to the central narrative agent. After these two foundational assertions about character have been established, I use semiotics as a theoretical framework to construct an analytical model for character change. I approach character as a semiotic object [much like Eco (2009) does] to which the screenplay text assigns paradigmatic sets of mimetic attributes (e.g. emotional states, relationships, physiology, etc.). Then, I look into professional screenplays and employ close textual analysis informed by semiotics and narratology to examine how these sets of attributes are organised syntagmatically on the temporal

axis of the screenplay narrative to construct the notion of character change. At the same time, through practice-led research, I compose a feature screenplay titled *Bloody Mary*, to explore how the actual process of placing words on the page informs and influences character change. The thesis's final chapter functions as an exegesis to the screenplay, however, it employs largely the same close textual analysis I used for analysing other screenplays.

In this way, I use a combined methodology: the creative work produced is research-informed, while the theoretical component of the thesis is practice-led. The two exist in a symbiotic relationship where one bleeds into and informs the other. My theoretical considerations shaped my approach to the screenplay. Narrative theory and semiotics allowed me to see my protagonist, Marios, not just as a single trait, or the embodiment of a flaw to be overcome, but rather as a complex narratological entity to which I could attach several attributes. Respectively, writing the actual screenplay allowed me to understand in practice the myriad ways in which I could alter, modify, delete or replace the mimetic attributes I attached to Marios, and the importance written language and the screenplay document itself play in characterization and character development strategies. This screenplay, written in its current form, would not exist without my research into character change and the theoretical component would be much poorer without the contributions to the pragmatics of screenwriting made by *Bloody Mary*.

Character in Theory: Reviewing the Field and Identifying the Gaps

One of the realizations that fueled my PhD was that narrative theory has fascinating things to say about character but completely ignores the screenplay text while, on the other hand, screenwriting theory offers great insights into the art of screenwriting but rarely explores screenplay character with the appropriate detail and rigour. My goal, therefore, was to bring the two fields together and apply notions of characterization and character change, put forth by narrative theorists and semioticians like Phelan, Eco, Margolin and Barthes, to the screenplay text.

To gain a better understanding of how to fill the gap and broaden my conception of character change in the screenplay text, I first needed to review three different fields that explore literary character: Narrative theory, screenwriting theory and screenwriting craft theory (meaning here the screenwriting manuals). In narrative theory and literary

criticism, character is usually examined through the exploration of major debates that concern its ontology and its relation to other textual features. Thus, the field is filled with scholarly articles arguing either for or against character's primacy over plot and language and articles arguing for or against the character's perception as analogous to real people. (Schlobin 2003; Price 2010b; Eagleton 2013) More recently, with the advancement of cognitive narratology, character is also approached in relation to audience engagement. (Fludernik 2010)

In screenwriting craft theory (also known as the screenwriting manuals), character is approached predominantly from the practitioner's perspective. The central issue in these books is character's plausibility and verisimilitude, although its structural relation to plot and theme is also discussed. Debates around character's nature as mimetic or artificial are rarely touched explicitly. There is, it seems, an unspoken agreement that character must be constructed as analogous to real humans possessing emotional and psychological dimensions, therefore terms like "goal", "need" and "motivation" are the core ingredients of the manuals' proposed screenwriting formulas (Seger 1994; Dancyger 2001; Parker 2006; Hauge 2011; Dancyger and Rush 2013).

In screenwriting theory, a fairly new academic field born in the early 2010s, screenplay character is discussed usually in relation to screenwriting manuals. Similar to those books, the major debates prevalent in narrative theory are not addressed - with certain exceptions (Price 2010b). While screenwriting theorists occasionally critique the manual's universalist approaches to narrative construction (Brütsch 2015; Hambly 2021), when they discuss character they discuss it in similar terms (Koivumäki 2014; Cattrysse 2011; Deutelbaum 2015). Interestingly, the most pertinent discussions of character and character change in screenwriting studies are being explored in the field of television narrative (Canet 2019; Russo 2017; Bednarek 2011; 2015). While certainly a relevant field, the seriality of television narratives results in some fundamental differences between character for film and character for TV. To my knowledge, Craig Batty (2010; 2011) has offered the only detailed, comprehensive exploration of character change in film screenplays, expanding on the notions of external and internal journey (goal and need - terms established by the manuals) and examining how they form a symbiotic relationship throughout the course of the screenplay narrative.

Screenwriting theory is, as the name suggests, more preoccupied with the act and process of screenwriting, rather than with the narrative content of the finished products. Heavily focusing on important issues like authorship, script development, and the unstable, fluid nature of the text and its unique but theoretically challenging relationship to the finished film, screenwriting theory tends to ignore the fascinating characters populating the screenplays. When it does pay attention to narratological elements (Cattrysse 2011; Koivumäki 2014; Deutelbaum 2015), it usually does so in a terrain laid by the screenwriting manuals, repeating and focusing on terms established and favoured by these books, such as character arc, transformation, external goal and internal need (Cooper 1997; Vogler 2007; Yorke 2014).

This is, of course, understandable. Up until the early 2000s, the manuals dominated the field. This is where practitioners and academics alike had to turn if they were interested in any discussion about screenwriting theory. And yet, it is not exactly theory that screenwriting manuals are offering. They are prescriptive texts, rather than descriptive. They aim to advise the novel screenwriter how to compose his or her screenplays. Their observations stem not from strict, logical argumentation but mostly from intuition and subjective, personal taste. They are not underpinned by academic rigour nor do they undergo any peer-review process to be published. Their primary aim is not to analyse and problematize texts and the theory behind them but rather to sell books by professing to offer universal writing formulas that, if followed, will produce successful screenplays. The term successful is of course open to interpretation and is rarely clarified. Moreover, screenwriting manuals tend to be almost US-oriented, offering narrative analyses of mainstream American films. Despite the fact that they argue for the universality of their structuring models, they fail to apply them to a diverse body of film narratives (see Field 2005; Vogler 2007; McKee 1999). Finally, in most cases they concern themselves with the finished films rather than with the screenplay text. Although narrative structure is transferable from one medium to the other (Koivumäki 2010), there are issues pertaining to the study of the linguistics of the screenplay text that are rarely discussed (for an exception to the rule, see Bednarek 2015).

That is not to imply that screenwriting manuals do not offer useful and important insight into narrative content and screenwriting practice, nor that I, myself, am not influenced by these books. In fact, I draw on both manuals and scholarly articles in

order to suggest the main character mimetic attributes for my character change analysis model in Chapter 3. I simply maintain that, for the reasons offered above, both academics and screenwriting practitioners should approach the manuals with some caution since their theoretical observations are not adequately supported and their practical insights are not self-evident rules to be religiously followed but rather useful tools one might choose to use according to their script's particular needs.

In comparison to screenwriting theory, literary and narrative theory are paying closer attention to character (see Phelan 1987; 1989; Margolin 1983; 1986; 1990). They tend to focus on the large debates about its ontology but also explore issues of representation, identity and readers' engagement. Therefore, although my contribution is in the field of screenwriting theory and practice, narratology has informed much of my thinking of character and, subsequently, character change. If I seem to occasionally sideline screenwriting theory in this thesis is simply because, on the topic of character, narrative and literary theory have offered more detailed, comprehensive analyses.

However, there is still an obvious problem: narrative theory and literary criticism completely ignore the screenplay text. In this, they are not alone. As we saw, even screenwriting theory tends to sideline the screenplay text and instead focus either on the practice of writing or on film narrative as a structure extracted from the finished film. However, my thesis places the focus on the actual text so I assert it is crucial to define it as a document that can be thought autonomously from the subsequent film possessing artistic literary merits and being worthy of scholarly attention.

The Object of the Inquiry: Defending the Screenplay's Autonomous and Literary Status

Regardless of my acceptance of character's mimetic aspect, I acknowledge that character - however crucial - is still an abstraction. As structuralists would assert, what one studies in any close textual analysis is, first and foremost, the text. My analysis of how character is presented in the screenplay is an analysis of how the screenplay presents character. It is that realization, after all, that enabled me to solve the riddle of the practice-led PhD. If screenplay character is the subject of my inquiry, screenplay is its object. I am clarifying this point because this thesis analyses character change strictly

within the confinements of the screenplay text. It is not a comparative analysis, nor does it position the screenplay within a specific industrial context. It does not concern itself with subsequent films and issues like performance, editing or visual realization. Thus, the screenplay is examined in isolation from the filmmaking process and the industrial context. Still, I concede the fact that all the screenplays I analyse in Chapter 4 have been produced. A question immediately arises: why should one preoccupy themselves only with the screenplay text when a finished film exists both for our recreational and academic purposes? It seems strange but even in a thesis about creative writing one still feels the need to justify their examination of the screenplay text.

Baker (2016) identifies four reasons why screenplays and screenwriting practice have been ignored in the academy while other forms of narrative have found a home in creative writing studies. Interestingly, what he lists are the same reasons often used to disregard the autonomy and literariness of the screenplay in professional practice. Therefore, I posit that by making a strong argument that a screenplay is a worthy text of academic research, we are also making a case for the screenplay as an autonomous, literary text in professional practice.

The first reason screenwriting has been academically ignored, according to Baker, is because screenplays are seen as unstable texts in constant flux; “a working document rather than a fully-fledged and finished creative work” (Baker 2016: 1). The second reason concerns the issue of authorship and strict industrial control exercised by studios over individual writers. (2016: 2) The third reason is the common perception of screenplays as mere blueprints for the production of the subsequent film. (ibid) According to this view, scripts have no life of their own; they simply exist in order to serve the filmmaking process. The fourth and final reason is the apparent lack of published screenplays. (2016: 3) If there are no available texts for the scholar to study, how can screenwriting be considered an academic field of research? This final argument can be extended to apply to the context of everyday leisurely reading: if no published screenplays exist, how can the casual reader purchase them and have the opportunity to consider them and enjoy them as literature?

In regard to the first question, Nannicelli offers a simple, yet convincing solution: we simply accept as definitive, the draft that the screenwriter proposes as such. (Nannicelli 2013: 158). More to the point, it matters not, I argue, whether the screenplay I am

reading is a fourth draft and not the final draft, as long as it presents a complete, self-contained narrative in a code (written language) that I, as a casual reader and not a film professional, can understand. The similarity degree between the screenplay draft and the finished film would concern me only if I reviewed them in comparison. As I explained, this is not my objective. Finally, let us note that it is not screenwriting that is in constant flux but rather *the entire filmmaking process*. This acknowledgment also refutes the second argument Baker cites: that issues of multiple authorship and industrial control restrict the creative autonomy of the screenplay. Firstly, we must assert that not all industries operate within an all-mighty studio system. Screenwriters in Greece, for instance, where I practice screenwriting and filmmaking, are free to develop their screenplays however they please. The feedback they may receive from producers (and not studios) does not come from a position of strict, economic authority but rather from a place of creative partnership. That is not to deny that economic hierarchies inherent in capitalist systems will always influence all modes of creative production one way or another. But if one makes the argument that such constraints diminish the artistic value of the produced work, one must extend the argument to include the final film as well - not just the screenplay.

The third argument - the one that posits screenplays are ontologically linked to the future film and act as a mere blueprint to it - is perhaps the hardest to deconstruct. The natural initial response is to draw a parallel between film scripts and play scripts. If plays are considered autonomous, literary artefacts worthy of study, why cannot film scripts claim equal status? There is arguably one core difference: in a play production the script is the one stable, concrete text. I suggest that it is that fact that forces us to return to the play scripts, rather than their superior literary qualities compared to film scripts. I may not get to see the latest *Hamlet* production in London, starring that famous actor, but, at least, I can always return to Shakespeare's text if I want to experience its narrative. In cinema there exist two narrative texts (at least; one can also consider storyboards): the script and the film. The same question, then, keeps arising: why bother reading the screenplay when the final film exists? In an academic context, that question loses its relevance. Academic screenplays are written primarily as research texts and are not necessarily meant to be produced. Therefore, studying them in isolation is justified. In the cases where a film *has* been produced from a script, I argue that it is simply the verbal nature of the screenplay that we must consider. If narrative structure

is transferable from one medium to the other, then there is only one way to untangle the script from the final film: to point to its verbal nature and stress that the common message (narrative) is presented in radically different codes: film is audiovisual, screenplay is verbal. It is that verbal nature that invites the academic to study it in separation from the film and enables the casual reader to enjoy it in different ways than the film. The academic, of course, may not want to separate the script from the film and instead study the complicated relationship. This thesis, however, focuses solely on the screenplay text. I do not consider the filmmaking process or the industrial context. I am concerned with the narrative and the poetics of the script, therefore, I need a convincing argument to consider it autonomously from the film.

The counter-argument to the final question about the scarcity of published screenplays is twofold: 1. Screenplays are being physically published for decades now. Granted, the catalogue has not been extensive and the readership so far has been limited, yet from this it does not follow that the autonomy or inherent literariness scripts may possess as texts is threatened, in the same way that an overlooked classical symphony is no less a musical piece than a recent pop hit. 2. Online distribution has resolved the issue and rendered that argument obsolete. There are now dozens of websites hosting hundreds - if not thousands - of free, original, professional, verified screenplays (as well as treatments) for the reading pleasure of the general public and the research intentions of the interested scholar. Needless to say, these online databases are constantly updated, while one can easily now find even non-commissioned spec-scripts or fan-fiction screenplays written without aiming to ever be produced. (Nannicelli 2013: 148)

I believe that the above argues convincingly why screenplays are worthy of study and how they can be considered as autonomous from the hypothetical, imagined film they may point to. In regard to their literary nature, it is not my aim here to construct a complex, extensive argument. For the purposes of this thesis, I accept and agree with Nannicelli's simple argument that screenplays can be literary texts because of their verbal nature (Nannicelli 2013: 123) although I do believe an even more robust, elaborate argument can be constructed, built on the notion of literariness as a quality, instead of literature as strict definition (see Scholes 1997). To deny screenplays the literary qualities so evident in their verbal nature, means that one invokes a robust definition of literature that explicitly and convincingly excludes screenplays. To my knowledge, and as Nannicelli argues (2013: 140-148), no one has offered such a

definition. Therefore, insofar as screenplays present fictional narratives in ways different than the produced films, but also unique to their nature and different from other literary forms (prose, plays, etc.), I assert that their study as autonomous works of artistic merit is wholly justified.

Structure of Thesis

This thesis is divided in three parts, a structure that also functions as a playful homage to the established three-act structures that, ironically, I critique. Part I “sets the scene”. It comprises Chapters 1 and 2 that lay the theoretical foundation, upon which my character change analysis model is built. Part II comprises Chapters 3 and 4 and is dedicated to that analysis model. Finally, Part III comprises my creative work, the screenplay, *Bloody Mary*, and the accompanying exegesis, Chapter 5. I need to note here, that purely for technical formatting reasons concerning the correct page numbering of the thesis, the screenplay appears at the very end of the document. Otherwise, it would be positioned right after Chapter 4 and before Chapter 5.

More specifically, **Chapter 1** argues for the importance of character in fictional narratives. This is crucial to justify my preoccupation with character. It is also important because my proposed character change analysis model is one that understands the term broadly, by considering all character attributes found in the screenplay text - from dominant personality traits, to unstable emotional states, location changes, and personal relationships amongst others. For my model to be valid, I first need to argue convincingly that character is the fundamental organizing principle of the screenplay text; that everything results or, at least, relates to it. Therefore, I need to argue for its importance over plot. To this aim, I use theories developed in narratology. I reconstruct Seymour Chatman’s notions on character and narrative events and argue that, because events always relate and refer to character, character can be seen as the central and most important element of a fictional narrative. What becomes clear after this link between event and character has been adequately demonstrated is that the temporal properties of plot (as a temporally-organised series of causally-linked, ever-changing events) are transferred to character. Therefore, to speak of character is to speak of plot which, in turn, is to speak of character change. In this view, character change becomes the driving

force of literary narratives. Insofar as screenplays are literary texts this much is true for screenplay narratives as well.

In *Chapter 2*, I address the ontology of fictional character. As previously stated, the analytical model of character change that I propose in this thesis is based on the mimetic attributes that the screenplay text assigns to the central character. Therefore, not only do I need to argue that character has a mimetic aspect to begin with, but to also to propose exactly how that “illusion” of verisimilitude is made possible through linguistic means in the fictional text. To this end, I review the fiery debate concerning literary character’s nature as either mimetic or artificial. I explain why, in my view, the two positions are not mutually exclusive. I propose that screenplay character should be seen as both mimetic and textual. This is in accordance with James Phelan’s theory of character which argues that character has a mimetic, a synthetic and a thematic dimension. Besides theories put forward by Phelan (1987; 1989), I also draw on Eco’s theory (2009) that sees character as a semiotic object. While the textual/artificial aspect of character is rarely debated, arguing for a mimetic view is more challenging. Thus, I support my position with three different lines of argument: by referring to reader-response theories about character, by elaborating on Paul Ricoeur’s theory on narrative mimesis and, more importantly, by arguing for a referential view of language. If written language can refer and represent a physical reality, then, character too, can be seen as having a mimetic aspect.

Chapter 2 concludes the first part of the thesis. Having laid the theoretical foundations and established the character’s prominence as well as its textual and mimetic aspects, I proceed to Part II. In *Chapter 3* I present and elaborate upon my proposed character change analysis model, which is based exactly on both these views. More specifically, I review the existing literature in relation to character change in screenplays. Then, I move on to address the issue of the character’s mimetic attributes that in my view compose literary character when organised spatiotemporally around the fictional character’s proper name, as well as to the various pronouns that indicate the established proper name as indexical signifiers. Then, I move onto a qualitative examination of these attributes and the multiple ways that they can be altered by the author. I argue that it is the constant modification of mimetic attributes that creates the notion of character change. Character change is thus analysed as a holistic enterprise that concerns every single one of the main character’s established features.

In *Chapter 4* I concern myself directly with the written screenplay text. First, I offer a brief historical overview of the screenplay's development in the early days of cinema to demonstrate its importance and centrality in film production both as an organising and a narrative document. Then, I provide an outline of the formatting and literary elements of the screenplay text. I argue that few screenwriting manuals provide useful notions in regard to visual storytelling and I propose this neglect is due to the long-standing tradition of viewing the screenplay merely as a stepping stone in order to reach the main course: the final film. Subsequently, by drawing on Claudia Sternberg's seminal work (1997), I present my view on the screenplay's constitutive elements and how these tools can be used to denote and connote the character mimetic attributes and construct the idea of a character that is changing though the course of the narrative.

Chapter 4 concludes the second part of the thesis. Having presented my proposed model and used it to analyse character change in professional screenplays, I proceed to test it in my own creative work. Therefore, after Chapter 4, I move on to the final chapter, to analyse the narrative and its central character, Marios. Firstly, I argue about the ways my script contributes to new knowledge. Then, I demonstrate how the various paradigmatic sets of attributes assigned to the fictional proper name "Marios" are organised temporally on the syntagmatic axis in a way that they are revealed to constitute the plot of my script. I begin by drawing a general sketch of the overall, general changes Marios's mimetic attributes undergo. Then, I demonstrate this with concrete examples from specific scenes from the screenplay. Finally, I outline how I used various literary devices to construct and underline Marios's changes and will compare previous drafts with the third one - currently being written - in order to show how every seemingly minor change - even on a lexical level - can alter the meaning of character change and thus the meaning of the overall story. I also explore how screenplay language can refer and alter those mimetic attributes without explicitly referring to them or to the characters; for example, how can the writer use setting or costume or even lighting in a metaphoric way to convey an emotional state or a personal relationship. It is important to clarify that, although I will refer both to structure and concept, the focus is on literary language. This is not to imply that structural and conceptual thinking doesn't play a major role when a writer designs and composes a scene or a full screenplay but rather to point out that this structure materialises and is

communicated to readers by way of actual words and sentences whose specific significance is very often ignored or brushed over.

My intention while writing the screenplay, *Bloody Mary*, was that it incorporates both my critical considerations in regard to character change as well as my creative thinking about the protagonist's mimetic attributes. Hopefully it has achieved its aim as a research artefact and has demonstrated that original knowledge is possible through screenwriting, from both a theoretical and creative prism.

Chapter 1: The Centrality of Character in Literary Narratives: Plot as Character Change

Introduction

Since Aristotle composed his famous treatise on *Poetics* (1902), there has been a fiery debate regarding the importance of plot and character, and the hierarchical structure between these two narratological elements. I find it quite amusing that the debate owes partly to a translation misunderstanding. Theorists and screenwriting teachers often claim that Aristotle thought character subservient to plot and perceived plot as the most important part of tragedies. However, I align with critics who assert that Aristotle never claims that character is secondary to plot. What Aristotle claims is that the character's *character* is secondary to the character's *actions*.

In fact, there are two translation misunderstandings happening at once. *Character* with a capital C, that signifies the agent, is often conflated with *character* with a small c that signifies the *personality* of the agent (for that distinction, also see Gill 1986). In Greek language the same word is used to allude to both the agent and their personality. But there is a more important error that occurred in translations of *Poetics* and allowed for that second misunderstanding to occur. Aristotle does not use the word *character* (with small c); instead he uses the word *ethos*. *Ethos* stands for the moral aspect of an agent's personality. *Ethos* was translated as *character*; *character* was then conflated with *Character* and the rest is (misleading) academic history.

Even putting Aristotle aside and looking at the empirical facts, character as secondary to plot does seem peculiar. Let us recall, for instance, some Greek tragedies titles: *Elektra*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, *Iphigeneia*, *Agamemnon*, *Medea*, etc. How can tragedies named after people not be primarily about the people in their titles? Or to pose the question in reverse, why would the authors gave their heroes' names to their tragedies' titles, if these characters were not the most important thing of their plays?

Whether a screenplay describes the internal life of a character in excruciating detail or just describes her actions with only minimal or even no further elaboration on her inner states, the screenplay is still about character. I will elaborate on my arguments in regard to this later in the chapter but, for now, let me just point to the empirical evidence

submitted by the actual screenplay texts of narrative films. Even ignoring the character/dialogue column in the middle of the page, the majority of the descriptions is most of the times structured in a straightforward Subject-Verb-Object syntax that allows for no misunderstandings. “He/She/It Does This/That”. This fact is so obvious that one only needs to open any narrative screenplay to witness it.

And yet, despite empirical evidence found on screenplay texts, theorists still make the claim that character is secondary to plot. At this point one could raise the objection that I am replying to a straw man argument of my own construction; that no one is *really* saying that plot is more important and that everyone has understood Aristotle’s distinction between *actions* and *ethos* perfectly. This, however, leaves only one alternative: that theorists think that a character’s actions are somehow detached from a character’s inner states. This approach hinges upon a classical body/mind dualism. In this view, the character’s *body* (that carries the action) is more important to Aristotle, than the character’s *mind*. This should give us pause, however, for the science clearly tells us that it is the mind (brain) that gives rise to bodily functions. For me to raise my hand and angrily thump my fist on the table, the brain has to send the appropriate signals to my limbs first. A philosophical tradition stumbles upon modern scientific facts so this line of argument cannot be pursued any further in my view.

It is the objective of this chapter, then, to explore the debates of character versus plot and character versus text that rage among literary and theoretical circles. For many narratologists, *character* is indeed just a feature of the text, quite often subservient to plot as well, whereas *character change* is, in turn, a mere feature of character. In other words, character change is something that a character may or may not go through during the course of the narrative, depending on the author’s intentions or the specific genre.

Although this thesis will very often stray into narrative and literary studies, it is about character in the film screenplay. Therefore, I start by offering a very brief overview of character in different narrative genres, more specifically in theatre and novel, that have greatly influenced cinematic narratives. This brief overview does not pretend to be a comprehensive historical analysis in any way; it rather situates film and screenplay character in the larger context of some of the narrative forms that have preceded it. Before I examine the importance of character in cinematic and screenplay narrative, it is important to acknowledge the ways that these have been influenced by other narrative

forms. After these influences have been established, I move on to explore the pertinent debate of plot versus character by reviewing three different fields: screenwriting theory, screenwriting craft theory and narrative theory. My overarching aim is to reposition character at the centre of screenplay narrative by using Seymour Chatman's definitions of "event" and "actions" (Chatman 1980) and its conception as intricately linked to character. I suggest that the centrality of character in fictional narratives does not stem from the particular theoretical approach one takes but from the simple recognition that *event* is intrinsically linked to *character*. What becomes clear after this link has been adequately demonstrated and analysed is that the temporal properties of *plot* (as a temporally-organised series of ever-changing events) are transferred to the *character*. Therefore, to speak of character is to speak of plot which, in turn, is to speak of *character change*. In this view, character change becomes the driving force of literary narratives and, since screenplays are literature, of screenplay narratives as well. Character change is something that occurs in any narrative, if narrative is defined as a chain of causally-linked events. Moreover, the necessity of character change that some screenwriting manuals proclaim does not stem from some abstract, generalised notion on what constitutes "good writing" but rather from this transferring of the temporal nature and unfolding of events to character.

1.1 From Caves to Screenplays: A Brief Overview of Character in Fictional Narratives

From primitive cave paintings to theatre, modern cinema and screenplay texts, character as a narrative element has had a long history in various forms. Even Aristotle, who regarded plot as the most important aspect of tragedy, indirectly assigned prominence to character by asserting that drama is imitation of action. Who, we might ask, gives rise to said action, if not the human agent? Said, the Greek philosopher about poetry:

"Two causes, and natural ones too, seem generally responsible for the rise of the art of poetry: (1) the natural desire to imitate, which is present from childhood and differentiates man as the most imitative of all living creatures as well as enables him to gain his earliest knowledge through imitation, and (2) universal enjoyment in imitations"

(Letwin & Stockdale 2008: xi).

Therefore, Aristotle might have regarded plot as the most important element of drama, yet he acknowledged that the basic instinctive force that fuels dramatic stories is our enjoyment of witnessing other human beings imitating real life on the stage (or on the screen for that matter). While the character's *ethos* might not feature in every dramatic narrative, the centrality of the human agent, even if as a corporeal presence is difficult to be denied.

Still, it was up to the novel, the new literary genre born in the late 17th century, to turn the spotlight towards the interiority of character. The novel's focus on the everyday lives of middle-class people and their psychological aspect did not happen in a cultural vacuum. It was rather fostered by notions of individualism, initially developed during the early 17th century:

[...] there was a disposition towards and an interest in Charactery because of the by then well-established idea that man, as a 'little world' (microcosm), was an embodiment of the universe (macrocosm). In his *Advancement of Learning* (1605) Francis Bacon discusses the ancient opinion that 'man was microcosmus, an abstract or model of the world'. And in his *History of the World* (1614) Sir Walter Raleigh wrote: 'because in the little frame of man's body there is a representation of the Universal; and (by allusion) a kind of participation of all the parts there, therefore was man called Microcosmos, or the little World'

(Chuddon 2013: 117)

Moreover, according to DiBattista (2010), "the spread of democratic and economic doctrines (...) fostered the ideal of self-development" (DiBattista 2010: 33). Therefore, it can be argued that the concept of individuality and the idea of people being free to develop their characters and achieve their goals came into prominence as a result of the industrial revolution, 19th century capitalism and the expansion of democratic constitutions that fostered the idea of freedom. The novel was the first literary genre preoccupied with everyday lives; the mundane, someone could argue, incidents and accidents of life that carry the character through a storm of unpredictable adventures with a focus on the psychological aspect. That was in contrast to the theatrical stories that "appeared to be modelled on the classical tragedy, which (...) neglects every image that does not assist the action of the play and retains only those that may help us to make its purpose intelligible" (Kracauer 1960: 221)

Film narratives, especially those in mainstream American cinema, have been influenced by both Aristotle's well-established notions on the primacy of plot as well as ideas about freedom and the value of individuality advanced by the novel. As Geoff King (2005) argues when discussing character arcs in Hollywood films:

To impose the usually affirmative Hollywood arc onto such material – to portray characters as heroically lifting themselves out of their difficulties, triumphing through adversity, and so on – is to impose a typically American-capitalist ideological framework, rooted in the notion that America is a society in which even those from the lowest reaches can achieve the dream of prosperity

(King 2005: 67).

The influences make sense. On one level, film is a representation of action, just like theatre, and relies on imitators (actors) carrying out these dramatic actions outlined in the screenplay text. On the other hand, it is the narrative medium mostly concerned with reality, since this is exactly what it records and portrays: the real physical world. Film, I argue, is a dramatic art grounded in reality; therefore, it makes use of elements from both theatre and novel character structures. Tom Gunning (1991) suggests that it is the genre of melodrama specifically that influenced film narratives: “Melodrama plays a central role in the transition of early fiction film production from comedy to drama. With its audience-addressing gags or use of broad physical action, comedy was particularly suited to both the cinema of attractions and transitional genres such as the chase” At the same time, “the form’s use of villainy, heroism and threatened innocence demanded some access to character psychology” (Gunning 1991: 106). Geoff King echoes Gunning’s arguments when he asserts that in film narratives, “characters are goal-oriented, narrative emerging largely from their desires” and they constitute “an average between the fixed character types of the melodrama and the dense complexity of the realist novel” (King 2005: 61). Whether a mere carrier of action or a multifaceted individual with complex interiority, character is, I posit, central to cinematic narratives, the original depiction of which is found in the screenplay text.

1.2 The Importance of Character: Views in Screenwriting Theory

And yet, in screenwriting theory, character has not received its deserved attention. When examined by screenwriting scholars, it is usually in relation to ideas found in

screenwriting manuals, therefore, most scholars accept the general view of character offered by the manuals and then occasionally modify it or elaborate. Screenwriting manuals themselves are peculiar documents. Although they do stress the importance of character motivation and character arcs in film narrative, they dedicate most of their page-length to plot and story structuring (see for instance McKee 1997). In any case, philosophical, ontological or even narratological debates regarding character's status or relation to the plot are rarely dealt with.

Monika Bednarek (2011) redirects us to screenwriting manuals in order to demonstrate character's importance: "While they do not focus exclusively on characterization (...) these handbooks do seem to agree that character is what counts in storytelling" (Bednarek 2011: 4). Manuals are invoked again to stress the importance of character in film narratives, this time from the point of view of audience's engagement: "Character 'is the essence of drama, the primary mechanism from which compelling action arises to hold audiences in thrall.'" (Atchity in D'Vari, 2005 in Bednarek 2011: 5). Similarly, Paolo Braga (2017) immediately states that he will draw on screenwriting manuals' notions about plot, character and the importance of character arc, in his article about dramatic tone in the film *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (2007). Although not directly addressing the plot versus character debate, Margot Nash (2013) highlights the importance of the character's unspoken desires and asserts that "plot unfolds because of them" (Nash 2013: 158). Similar to many manuals, in another article, Nash (2014) stresses the importance of change and suggests that it is the main character's transformation that keeps audiences engaged in the film narrative. (Nash 2014: 349)

Koivumäki (2012) offers an interesting, detailed exploration of characters' goals and needs (terms established by screenwriting manuals and industry professionals). She asserts the primacy of character in screenplays by referring to the link between screenwriting practice and dramatic writing for the stage. (Koivumäki 2012: 40). In another article, Koivumäki (2014) also suggests that the motivation of the main character is at the basis of classical dramaturgy (Koivumäki 2014: 145) and indirectly highlights the link between character change and plot by arguing that "the character arc (inner goal) can also assume the function of the narrative spine". (Koivumäki 2014: 142) In discussing character change specifically, Craig Batty (2010) refers to Lajos Egri who advised writers to always start with character in mind and asserts that it is the

character that shapes the structure of the plot. “Egri”, writes Batty, “reinforces the importance of understanding how and why characters change internally, and how this relates to action. In other words, the fabric of character is intrinsically linked to the fabric of plot” (Batty 2010: n.pag.). Finally, in her article about character change in episodic television, O’Meara (2015) does not directly address the plot versus character debate but cautiously argues that, “Character change seems to be an essential ingredient of narrative, so television series require frequent character changes to sustain their stories” (O’Meara 2015: 198).

Considering many theorists draw on the screenwriting manuals, we should turn our attention to them and examine their own contribution to the topic of character. While, similarly to academic articles, the plot versus character debate is not always explicitly addressed, some manuals focus heavily on plot and see character as complimentary, others stress how the two elements are interconnected and a few argue for the prominence of character. It should be noted, however, that even manuals that focus on plot and action, still acknowledge the importance of character. In any case, screenwriting manuals should be approached with caution. Although their observations may be interesting, useful and often valid, they lack academic and methodological rigour, therefore their conclusions are more often based on intuition and subjective opinion about good writing, rather than strict and tight logical argumentation. Moreover, because they very often lack a clear goal and a strong argumentation, manuals often contradict themselves even in the course of a single page. Therefore, it is often difficult to decipher a clear, conclusive stance on issues about character, change and plot.

Syd Field (2005), writer of one of the most influential screenwriting manuals, assigns importance on both narratological elements by invoking Henry James famous aphorism, “What is character but the determination of incident? And what is incident but the illumination of character?” (James in Field 2005: 43). At the same time, Field also argues that writers should first ask themselves what type of screenplay they are writing. The nature of the action, Field suggests, will determine the creation of the protagonist (Field 2005: 47) That line of reasoning seems to be going against the initial assertion and points to the storyline as the fundamental element of the screenplay, with the character resulting from it.

Dona Cooper (1997) echoes that view. She begins her own book on screenwriting with a chapter on story, then argues that, after the pillars of the story have been established, characters are now needed to make the enterprise more compelling. In Cooper's view, too, writers start with their story and then characters' function is to lure in the audience through the expression of emotions. (Cooper 1997: 91). Michael Hauge (2011) also seems to separate character firmly from plot. For Hauge, in order for the writer to decide who his or her main character is going to be, they need to consider the limitations posed to said character by the plot (Hauge 2011: 48-49). Once again, plot comes first, character is added later.

Linda Seger (1994) highlights the importance of character but holds back from arguing its primacy over story and plot. For Seger, character is what makes stories complex but not, apparently, what *generates* the story. Instead, it "impinges on the story" and "dimensionalizes it" (Seger 1994: 149). In apparent agreement with Cooper, Seger argues that "character makes the story compelling" (ibid). She draws a firm line between the two narratological elements by arguing for both a story spine and a character spine. However, she does not seem to consider how there might be only one spine.

Ken Dancyger (2001) also views character predominantly as the element whose point of view the audience will share while watching the story: "Who is the character I need to tell my story?" (Dancyger 2001: 26), he asks, implying that writers start with the story. Under this prism, the writer must consider, "Who is the character that will help an audience enter the story" (ibid). Similar to Cooper, Dancyger opens his chapter on character as if the story has already been created and now the writer just needs to find an appropriate character for it. Dancyger makes a distinction very often found in manuals, between character-driven and plot-driven films. While not dismissing the usefulness or entertainment value of characters in action films, he argues that, "character tends to be stereotypical in the plot-driven film" (2001: 38). He brings *Titanic* (1997), *Armageddon* (1998) and *Die Hard* (1988) as examples of films illustrating that limitation and then advises us to look at older, classic films made by Howard Hawkes, John Ford and Billy Wilder, in order to learn how to use character in plot-driven films.

I suggest this is a good demonstration of certain manual shortcomings. Firstly, there is a contradiction within two consecutive sentences. Dancyger points out that character in the plot-driven film tends to be stereotypical. Then he names three films where that is the case and then states that if one wants to learn about using character in plot-driven films they have to look away from these three plot-driven films he just named. Another problem with manuals visible in Dancyger's observations is the vagueness in their discussion of those issues. Who does Dancyger have in mind when he states that the characters in *Armageddon*, *Titanic* and *Die Hard* are stereotypical? Is he thinking of Jack, for example, or Rose in *Titanic*? In what sense is Rose stereotypical and why is she unworthy of our attention, considering no less that she exemplifies many of the issues that Dancyger discusses in his book that make for an interesting character? She has passion, she has charisma, she has a goal, she has flaws, and she has a big emotional arc. Why is Dancyger ignoring her?

Andrew Horton (1994) prizes character over plot but does not opt for a universal approach. Instead, and similarly to Dancyger, he distinguishes between the plot-driven and the character-driven film. He invokes Lajos Egri's (2008) teachings arguing that character is vital in the construction of drama, however, he does not seem to think that this is the case for every film narrative. Thus, he argues that certain "inner anxieties and dilemmas are clearly not the stuff of action/adventure/plot-driven films" (Horton 1994: 3). As is the case with Dancyger, for Horton, there are film narratives focusing on plot, that are rich in action but rather poor on characterization and film narratives focusing on characters who are more complex, compelling, "made up of many "voices" (...) each with its own history, needs, flavor, limitations, joys, and rhythms." (1994: 4).

Linda Aronson (2010) casts doubt on the notion of the character-driven film and draws our attention to the possible pitfalls of developing such a screenplay, emphasizing the importance of plot and structure. She observes that, "As successful multiple protagonist stories are often described as character-driven it's easy for filmmakers to feel that an interesting group of characters will per se make a film". (Aronson 2010: 208) Although Aronson indirectly critiques Dancyger and Rush's simplistic distinction between plot-driven and character-driven films, she fails to see the obvious and immediate link between character and plot.

My own view of and approach to character is much closer to Robert McKee's (1997) position, who claims that the plot versus argument debate is obsolete since character is structure and structure is character. In essence they are one and the same. The real distinction for McKee is character versus characterization and this is, according to him, what most people confuse. He goes on to argue that:

The event structure of a story is created out of the choices that characters make under pressure and the actions they choose to take, while characters are the creatures who are revealed and changed by how they choose to act under pressure. If you change one, you change the other. If you change event design, you have also changed character.

(McKee 1997: 106)

Similar to my view, McKee finds the character-driven phrase redundant as all stories are character-driven. Like Dancyger and Rush (2013) he places importance on genre instead. Action/adventure films, for instance, “demand simplicity of character because complexity would distract us from the derring-do or pitfalls indispensable to those genres” (McKee 1997: 107). Although ignoring the plot-driven/character-driven distinction, McKee still suggests that in certain genres, character complexity is an unnecessary distraction. I will argue in chapters 3 and 4 that this is hardly the case. By perceiving character change through the various features the protagonist is attributed throughout the screenplay text, we can observe that characters in such genres traditionally thought as simplistic are far more complex than we think. A closer analysis of Rose in James Cameron's *Titanic* in Chapter 4, will hopefully demonstrate this point. In any case, it is crucial that we not only reevaluate character's importance in the screenplay, but that we also challenge and clarify vague terms like “character complexity” and “character three-dimensionality”. These are mostly abstract, evaluative terms that do not provide sufficient insight in a rigorous, textual analysis.

1.3 Plot Versus Character: The Debate in Narrative Theory

The debate regarding character's importance in relation to plot is much more prominent and explicitly addressed in narrative and literary theory and stems, as we saw, from Aristotle's *Poetics*. Citing the Greek philosopher's analysis of tragedy, many narrative theorists, screenwriting scholars and screenwriting gurus claim that character is

secondary to plot. Before we accept this notion at face value, we should examine carefully and in greater detail what Aristotle said. Aristotle asserts that “Artists imitate men involved in action” (Aristotle in Chatman 1980: 108). O. B. Hardison is quick to clarify that Aristotle in this instance emphasizes action since this constitutes the object of imitation. “The agents who perform the action come second” (Hardison in Chatman 1980: 108). Hardison acknowledges the important distinction Aristotle makes between character as agent, and the personality of character, however, I suggest that he does not give it the appropriate attention. This is what allows him to state that “character in the technical Aristotelian sense is something that is added later and, in fact, is not even essential to a successful tragedy” (Golden and Hardison in Chatman 1980: 109). Chatman quickly rebuts the argument by highlighting the obvious point that, “every agent or pratton should have at least one trait, namely that deriving from the action he performs” (Chatman 1980: 109).

Kevin Alexander Boon (2008) and Guy Gallo (2012) are two of the few screenwriting theorists that have explicitly addressed the debate. Boon suggests that, “it is through the Oedipus’s actions that his character is revealed. Thus, action precedes character” (Boon 2008: 59). Following that thought to its apparent logical conclusion, he points out that, “character does not determine what happens, *what happens* determines character” (Boon 2008: 63, original emphasis). The debate – the way Boon presents it – becomes more about which aspect of character comes first (his actions or his personality) and even more, which aspect is more important in a character’s characterization. From this position, however, it does not necessarily follow that plot is more important than character in a literary work. In fact, why would it? It sounds peculiar that a man’s actions are somehow considered separate from his character. Such an approach harkens back to a body/mind dualism. Apparently, for theorists who claim that plot is more important than character because actions are more important than inner states, the body in itself does not suffice to indicate that character (agent) is central to a literary work.

Gallo, on the other hand, has interpreted Aristotle’s notions about character and plot by focusing on the important distinction between *character as agent* and *character as aspect*. (Gallo 2012). Character as agent refers to the character as carrier of action, while character as aspect refers to the psychological dimensions of character. Similarly, literary theorist Christopher Gill (1986) distinguishes between *character* (with a small

c) and *Character* (with a capital C). *Character* refers to the notion of *personality* while *character* refers to mere agency. More specifically, Gill distinguishes between two ways of viewing character in literature a drama: a character-agent viewpoint and a character personality viewpoint. Descriptions, character speech and character actions as well as the organisation of events, are indications of one of these approaches. According to Gill, the character approach is more evaluative in nature and presupposes a moral agent with a cohesive personality making conscious decisions and acting accordingly. By contrast, the personality approach focuses on psychological fluctuations and allows for unpredictability and indeterminacy. With this approach, Gill also contrasts the more fixed and rigid nature of the trait, apparent in the character-agent approach, with the more flexible and fluid nature of emotions and psychological states.

Formalist literary critics resembled Aristotle in that they viewed character simply as a functional narratological entity; on the other hand, they also reduced character to a mere element of style and subordinated it to prose. For instance, Rickword observes that, “‘character’ is merely the term by which the reader alludes to the pseudo-objective image he [sic] composes of his responses to an author's arrangement” (Rickword in Schlobin 2003: 258). The text becomes far more important in this view than the “naïve” view of character as real person. For Paul Valery, assigning to literary characters a real-person value and thus assigning to it prominence within the artwork has the unfortunate consequence of ignoring “the verbal condition of literature” (Petruso in Schlobin 2003: 258). Nuttall draws a clear distinction between the common people who discuss character as though it was a real entity and the more educated, intellectual critics who recognise that, “this kind of talk makes no sense” (Nuttall in Schlobin 2003: 258). In a similar way, Federman argues that characters are nothing more than word entities; “as unstable, changeable, illusionary, unnameable, fraudulent and unpredictable as the discourse that makes them” (Federman in Schlobin 2003: 262). He seems to be contrasting such an approach with a more classical view of novelistic character influenced by notions of individualism, humanism and the notion of a stable, coherent identity.

In a more formalistic approach, Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) studied about a hundred Russian fairy-tales and composed a list of finite functions (31) that the main characters in these stories fulfill. Propp's conclusion was

that the functions repeat themselves from folktale to folktale, regardless of the specific character who fulfills them. In that view, “differences in appearance, age, sex, life concerns, status” are mainly inconsequential (Chatman 1980: 111). What mattered to Propp himself as well as to other Formalists (and to a certain extent to structuralists as well, later on) was the similarity between the functions. Similarly, for French narratologists, characters were “means rather than ends of the story” (1980: 112). More to the point, according to this view, characters are just “products of plots”; they are “actants, rather than personages” (1980: 111). I will return to these notions later on. For now, however, suffice to say once again that the notion of actant does not preclude the notion of personage. Action is a product of a human agent; therefore, character is still very much present and central to narrative even if it is not attributed a “personage”.

Claude Bremond (1973) focuses on “event-sequences, disregarding characters completely” although he also recognises that Propp’s fairytales were often able to “demonstrate the psychological or moral evolution of a character” (Bremond in Chatman 1980: 112). For one of the more prominent narratologists of the 1960s, A. J. Greimas, characters are mere “actants”. (Schlobin 2003: 259). They have no internal life. They exist only as carriers of physical acts. More specifically, Greimas proposes a typology of actants and recognises four different types: the subject (agent), the adjuvant (a character who is assisting the main agent), obstruant (any character that antagonises the agent or provides obstacles) and the distinateur, which, according to Schlobin can be described as “the element [in regard to which] the agent is activated” (Schlobin 2003: 263).

Tzvetan Todorov first made the important distinction between “plot-centred” and “psychological narratives” (Chatman 1980: 113) that screenwriting gurus are also making nowadays. In regard to psychological narratives (or those narratives that would today be called character-centred), actions constitute “expressions or even “symptoms” of personality” (1980: 114). In a sense, they “exist in their own right, as independent sources of pleasure” (ibid). Chatman himself, finally, perceives character as, “a paradigm of traits”. According to Chatman, traits are all the “relatively persistent personality features” (Chatman 1980: 136). I will expand on this notion later on, and I will argue that we need to consider several more attributes in addition to personality traits, in order to construct a holistic model of character.

Jonathan Culler explains character's expulsion from structuralist concerns by arguing that the structuralist ethos, "runs counter to the notion of individuality and the rich psychological coherence which are often applied to the novel" (Culler in Schlobin 2003: 260). Schlobin points out that many other critics also agree that maybe the notions of individualism and personality are no longer of great interest in theoretical circles and what concerns critics is the examination of linguistic structures in literary texts. (Schlobin 2003: 260). However, Culler concedes the point that although structuralism, as a method of textual analysis, simply does not possess the tools to deal with character, this does not mean that character is not an important aspect of the novel. In his own words:

"Character is the major aspect of the novel to which structuralism has paid least attention and has been least successful in treating. Although for many readers characters serve as the major totalizing force in fiction - everything in the novel exists in order to illustrate character and its development - a structuralist approach has tended to explain this as an ideological prejudice rather than to study it as a fact of reading"

(Culler in Schlobin 2003: 261)

It seems that Culler identifies a major tension, then, between the novel's apparent aims and the structuralist approach which ignores those very aims. Prominent French critic Roland Barthes initially sided with Aristotle and the Formalists arguing that "the notion of character is secondary, entirely subordinated to the notion of plot" (Barthes 1966 in Chatman 1980: 114). For Barthes, the belief in a psychological essence "was only the product of aberrant bourgeois influences." (1980: 114) However, even if he saw character only as a small part of a larger narratological machine, Barthes still offered some very important insights stating the importance of the proper name as the magnet towards which all *semes* pertaining to character go. Moreover, he drastically modified his position regarding the character's subordination to plot and later asserted that both character and setting "are narrative properties revealed by their own "code" - the so-called "semic" code" (Chatman 1980: 115).

Finally, Uri Margolin, in his extensive exploration of character across many essays (1983; 1986; 1990), suggests that its nature and relation to other textual elements depends on the point of view of each theorist. Thus, one can choose to examine character purely as a textual construct, and therefore subordinate it to textual

mechanisms and the plot, while somebody else may choose to view character as analogous to real people and analyse it accordingly.

1.4 Arguing for the Centrality of Character in Fictional Narratives

There are a few issues that become quickly apparent from a literature review on literary character. Firstly, one can see that few comprehensive works have been produced on the topic. James Phelan's *Reading People, Reading Lives* (1989) is one of those works. Uri Margolin is another theorist that has extensively studied narrative character. Margolin, influenced by possible worlds theory, perceives characters as non-actual individuals. In an analysis similar to Phelan's, Margolin attempts to formulate a theory of character as a representation of actual persons; one that relies on textual information authors provide about the characters' physiological and mental states but also focuses on reader's employment of their mental schemata and own personality theories not only in interpreting but actually in reconstructing those literary figures. Margolin also resorts to some traditional critic's views to further support his argument that readers are instrumental to character construction: "C. H. Rickwood [...] claims that character "is merely the term which the reader alludes to the pseudo-objective image he composes of his responses to an author's verbal arrangements" and Q. D. Leavis declares that "character is the creation of the reader, not the writer" (Margolin 1983: 4).

Secondly, there is an insistence on debating plot versus character. Extreme views on the matter, as we have seen, posit plot on a higher level but recently, more conciliatory voices have acknowledged the interrelation of the two elements and the futility of the debate. Few have allowed, however, character to emerge victorious from this lengthy battle, in a way that its centrality in the fictional narrative is clearly asserted. It is one of the aims of this thesis to do so.

Thirdly, no matter which side one takes on character-related debates, the scope remains rather limited. Thus, while some will see character as a mere function or "actant" in a narrative, others will construct a polemic against traditional concepts of character in older literary works usually defined by one or at best a few traits and support character as read in modernist and postmodernist novels: characters whose inner multiplicity is allowed to flourish and focus is placed on the psychological aspect.

My approach is different. At this stage I wish not to evaluate works in regard to their characters. My analysis model, which is based on various mimetic attributes, ranging from the physiological to the social and the psychological, allows for a holistic view of character.

Character's importance in fictional narratives on the level of readers' reception has been asserted by Brian Boyd in his book *On the Origin of Stories* (2009). There, Boyd argues that character is how readers comprehend narrative (Boyd 2009). In a similar vein, but from an emotive, rather than a cognitive view, Murray Smith positions character at the centre of audiences' identification process (Smith 1995: 18). As we have seen, even a semiotician like Culler concedes that, although structuralism has failed to offer a detailed and comprehensive account of character, its significance is demonstrated by the fact that "*for many readers* characters serve as the major totalizing force in fiction - everything in the novel exists to illustrate character and its development" (Culler in Schlobin 2003: 261, my emphasis). Similarly, Bal confidently states that "Characters resemble people" and acknowledges the truism that "Literature is written by, for and about people" and argues that this assertion is "so banal that we often tend to forget it, and so problematic that we as often repress it with the same ease" (Bal in Schlobin 2003: 263)

However, my own support for the importance of character in fictional narratives is formulated on the level of narrative itself, rather than readers' perception. Intuitive notions are useful as a starting point but their lack of academic rigour and theoretical validity restrict their usefulness. Instead, I suggest that it is a repositioning of the nature of "events" that allow us to see character as central in narratives. We are reminded of Chatman's view of narrative as a series of events that display at least some sense of coherence. Fludernik takes that notion of coherence a bit further and argues that, "narratives are based on *cause-and-effect* relationships that are applied to sequences of events" (Fludernik 2009: 2, my emphasis). "Events" being the element that a story consists of, must be seen either as *character-instigated* or *character-affecting*. Unfortunately, more theories of narrative treat events - even if only implicitly - as separated from character; this is what subsequently allows plot and story to be seen the same way too. Chatman distinguishes between *Story* (and, thus events) and *Existents* (Characters and settings). Intuitively, of course, this is not an illogical distinction;

however, we need to look closely at the notion of events, in order to understand what they are and how they relate to character.

In reality, to view events as either character-instigated or character-affecting could be seen as a rephrasing of Chatman's distinction between *Actions* and *Happenings*, in regard to *Events*. Although Chatman focuses more on the discursive aspect of *events* (how they are presented in the narrative) he still elaborates on his initial distinction and, by offering a narratological definition of events, positions character firmly at the centre of narrative:

Events are either actions or happenings. Both are changes of state. An action is a change of state brought about by an agent or one that affects a patient. If the action is plot-significant, the agent or patient is called a character.

(Chatman 1980: 44)

There are quite a few interesting things to note here. Firstly, we see that Chatman, 1) clearly defines events in relation to character and 2) he defines events as *changes of states*. By doing so, Chatman lays the foundation for the importance not just for studying *character* in more detail but also for studying *character change*. If events are brought about by character or affect characters, and if events are changes of states, then changes of character states should be at the centre of narrative analysis.

A similar view of events and actions can also be found in the writings of French narratologist Gerard Genette who states that, "as soon as there is an action or an event, even a single one, there is a story because there is a transformation, a transition from an earlier state to a later and resultant state. "I walk" implies (and is contrasted to) a state of departure and a state of arrival" (Genette 1988: 19). In the same vein, George Varotsis (2015) also argues that "Story events bring about a meaning of change, either positive or negative, to the fictional characters to which other characters must react." (Varotsis 2015: 4) We observe a pretty consistent theme: the link between events, characters and change (or transformation). Varotsis's observations are particularly interesting. On one hand he not only confidently states that, "The coherence of the narrative events and of the story itself exist because of the character and the influence the character exerts on the other narrative components" (Varotsis 2015: 6); he also asserts that "Characters are the vehicles the audiences connect to emotionally that allows it to follow a story" (ibid). On the other hand, he suggests that certain narratives

- deemed simplistic - can omit characters and still maintain their story patterns, virtually unchanged. In his own words:

Despite the fact that scenes can be omitted, characters removed, reworked, even replaced, and motives and goals altered, the story line retains its consistency and coherence for the duration of the fictional setup. This emergent narrative complexity, the story, can be generated from simple base rules that can produce complex patterns of behavior. The story in an entirely homogeneous work of narrative that utilizes only a few and very similar characters with no dramatic needs, motivations or goals, in familiar set ups, can become stagnant and derivative, therefore, unattractive to a sophisticated audience.

(Varotsis 2015: 49)

Such a distinction is not helpful and hints at a subjective, evaluative rationale. A character may be either more complex or less complex. But its status as the creator of the story is never threatened by this evaluation. A complex character, in my view, is one to which the text assigns many different attributes, perhaps even contradictory in nature. In contrast, a simplistic character may be one who is attributed less mimetic traits which are more homogenous in nature. In both cases, it will be the character's actions that will generate the story. And it will be this character's changing attributes that will constitute the backbone of the plot.

I must clarify here that I do not agree with Chatman's hierarchical evaluation of character and the distinction he makes between *character* and *patient* in regard to plot-significance. Even more importantly, I do not agree with him in drawing such a clear line between plot and character to begin with. If events constitute the plot, and if events relate closely to character, then, separating plot and character is counter-intuitive, even if, as we have seen, it is a very popular view in academic circles.

1.5 Demonstrating the Prominence of Character: A Case Study

I wish to demonstrate my line of thinking with a more concrete example. But first, I want to discuss Julian Murphet's notions on the relation between event and character in order to provide the appropriate context for my case study. In his article, *Character and Event*, Murphet (2007) describes *Hamlet* as a play that opened up "a negative space

of indeterminacy around the central protagonist” and allowed him (Hamlet) to position himself “as both aware of and apart from the coercive determinations of the accepted plot mechanisms” (Murphet 2007: 109). Therefore, although Murphet suggests character’s importance, he fails to notice, in this instance, that Hamlet’s indeterminacy is not breaking away from plot mechanisms; on the contrary, it *defines* the plot mechanisms. Remove that indeterminacy and we end up with a different story and not Shakespeare’s seminal play that we now admire. Maybe a better way for Murphet to phrase that particular argument would be to state that Hamlet breaks away *from the established tradition of the revenge tragedies that preceded him*. By this account, yes, the protagonist’s indeterminacy stands in stark contrast with a usual determination of previous protagonists in plays of the same genre. But insofar as *Hamlet*, the play, is concerned, the protagonist’s indeterminacy determines the plot (or at least the story).

To talk about character action and plot in the same sentence, becomes something of a tautology. There is no plot on the *content level* of the narrative¹. There is only character action(s), igniting reaction(s) which in turn gives birth to further reactions and so on. This (usually) causal chain of character interaction is what critics, theorists, readers and audiences call *plot*. If that view seems somewhat radical, let me use an example from one of the most popular fantasy stories of our time, *Harry Potter*. Before I proceed, I must note the obvious fact that this story was originally conceived for a novel and that it is the first part of a long series of books, scripts and films. However, I posit that this acknowledgment does not invalidate my analysis in any way. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (2001) may be the first part of what developed to a huge cinematic franchise, but is in itself a complete, self-contained narrative that stands on its own, without considering subsequent books and films. Moreover, I wish to clarify that, in this short case study, I concern myself only with the abstract structure of the story’s events, not the specifics of the original novel. Considering that this abstract structure is transferable across different media (novel → screenplay → film), there is no reason this example is not appropriate to my analysis. More importantly, I want to set the scene because in Chapter 3 I will examine the *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer’s Stone* screenplay in a more detailed exploration of my proposed character change

¹ I am borrowing the term content plane from the theory of linguist Louis Hjelmslev. In Hjelmslev’s view, the *content-plane* is distinguished from the *expression-plane*. Most narrative theories discussing story and discourse are informed by that linguistic distinction that separates what is being said from how it is being expressed. (Taverniers 2007)

analysis model, while in Chapter 4, I will refer to it again to point to all the interesting ways the screenwriter develops character. There are two important reasons that make this story a perfect example for my purposes: firstly, its massive popularity indicates that even people who haven't read all books will be somewhat familiar with some basic tenets of its mythos. But more importantly, I wish to demonstrate that a story that belongs to the "children fantasy" genre and is considered as plot-oriented is really very much character-centred if examined through a different prism. Moreover, in Chapter 3 I argue that a screenplay that is usually seen as a perfect embodiment of Campbellian mythical storytelling (boy wizard retrieves magical object by facing obstacles and defeating evil wizard) when studied closely reveals a much more complicated character structure.

But that last point is revisited in a subsequent chapter. To make my point about character's prominence clearer, I want to first consider the events that initiate the story; by that, I don't mean the opening scene or the first chapter of the first book, but rather the evil Lord Voldemort's actions that in effect created his worst enemy:

Having been informed of (half) a prophecy, Voldemort unwittingly proceeds to eliminate an infant that, according to said prophecy, is destined to defeat him in the future. When Voldemort eventually discovers the Potter family in their hiding place (due to another character's cruel betrayal), he first kills the father and then orders the mother to stand aside so he can kill Harry Potter. Lily, the mother, does not obey; she stands in front of her child, shielding him, and sacrifices herself. Voldemort then turns to kill the infant but due to the mother's sacrifice, his deadly curse merely scars Harry Potter and then rebounds and robs Voldemort of his physical body. Voldemort's spirit escapes and spends eleven years in hiding before it starts plotting its return in the events of the first book.

These are the events that give rise to the Harry Potter saga. This is the beginning of the "plot". And yet, what we encounter is simply a series of character actions inspired by particular motivations. As a consequence, what we encounter is a series of changing character attributes. It is perfectly fine to insist using the term *plot* as a substitute for character action, if only for convenience, but there is no reason why we should pretend it refers to anything else than character action and character changing attributes. Voldemort craves power and fears death. The ambiguous Severus Snape informs

Voldemort of the prophecy about Harry Potter. Voldemort kills Harry's mother. Harry's mother dies protecting Harry, therefore her sacrifice creates a magical shield. Voldemort's curse scars Harry Potter but kills Voldemort himself because of that magical shield Lily's death created. Motivation, action and consequence is not what *informs* the plot or moves the plot; it is the plot itself. Thus, the term simply dissipates in an ocean of character interactions. I have used a *Harry Potter* example specifically because fantasy stories tend to be thought of as "plot-heavy" and not "character-centred". In my view, there are no "no character-centred" stories. There are only stories with different delineations of character attributes.

However, we need to note here that Chatman's discussion about plot, allows us to see it from a different prism; not one that sees plot as the collection of events but one that sees plot as the *temporal organization* of these events. In other words, plot is not the events of the narrative (which as we saw always relate to character) simply the temporal alignment of various character actions. In our *Harry Potter* example above, the story is comprised of the various character actions and changes; plot is how these actions and changes have been rearranged in the actual books and how they are gradually revealed to the reader in a specific fashion. Story is character and character is content and the plot is simply form. To the extent that we study form, plot is definitely of importance. To the extent, however, that we study narrative content, it is character that we need to focus on. It is a character's actions, reactions and changes that constitute the narrative content.

From this perspective, to place character in such a central position in fictional narratives, in relation to plot, is also to adopt a phenomenological approach to literature. Namely, an approach that holds that narrative is primarily concerned with a mimesis of the lived human experience or at least one that mediates (a) meaning through that experience. I believe it is important to make that distinction between a single interpretation of a fictional text and the accommodation of the possibility of many different interpretations that can be mediated not only through character but through other narratological elements, such as *plot* (plot here understood not as the content of events constituting the story, but simply as their formal, temporal organisation).

The film *Irreversible* (2002) is a good example to briefly demonstrate this. The unusual backwards unfolding of the story requires interpretation inasmuch as it breaks

the normativity of our linear lived experience which we expect to find reproduced in the film. If literary character actions imitate human actions and characterization imitates real mimetic attributes, then the function of the plot is to imitate the temporality of our existence which is arguably linear (or at least, perceived by us as such). This does not mean that emplotment cannot alter this linearity and rearrange the actions and events to create various effects to the reader. However, our interpretive process of such rearrangement will still begin by putting the scattered plot pieces back together in a way that our perception of our existence in regard to time, causality and meaning will eventually be satisfied. I will return to this point in Chapter 3, where I will outline the methodological approach for my character change analysis model in detail. Returning to *Irreversible*, I suggest that we comprehend the film through a reconstruction of causal links between the different incidents and events that have been disrupted by the plot arrangement. At the same time, we recognize that such an arrangement has disrupted the expected linearity of the characters' existence and we proceed to account for this rearrangement by assigning to it separate meaning.

I want to now return to the character versus plot debate. Henry James has famously posed the rhetorical question, "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" (James in Chatman 1980: 112-113). He also asserted that the novel exists only so that it can attempt to represent life on page. (Dolaykaya 2017: 1002). Chatman continues James's line of argument stating that "both character and event are logically necessary to narrative" (Chatman 1980: 111) and he also points out that a text with a character but no events (say, a portrait) could not be described as narrative. In my opinion, it is not enough to simply state that character and plot are "equal". If our aim is to look at character with fresh eyes and propose a method of analysis that is based on character's "changing states", its relationship with plot must be reevaluated. By accepting that 1) plot is constituted by a series of causally-linked *events* and that 2) events are changes of states constituted either by actions (brought about by an agent) and happenings (affecting patients) then it follows, I argue, that plot is constituted by *characters' changing states*. As a result, a textual analysis of fictional narratives should focus exactly on those character changing states.

I must note that I do not, at this point, distinguish between *character* and *Character* (namely between agency and personality, or between moral characters and

psychological characters). I treat as *character*, simply put, any anthropomorphic agent in a fictional narrative. This is actually in line with Greimas's notion of character as well who also proceeds to clarify that, "If one says "anthropomorphic" one means interpreting the notion of operation in terms of "doing." In other words, "doing is an operation that is made specific by the addition of a human classeme"" (Greimas in Ricoeur, Collins and Peron 1989: 588). However, I also need to clarify that in my analysis, I will be focusing on protagonists and, more specifically, on single-protagonist screenplays. With this decision I do not wish to suggest that my analysis model (which I will outline in Chapter 3) is only applicable to single-protagonist films. However, considering the scope of my thesis it is more reasonable to get my analysis model off the ground by initially focusing on single-protagonist scripts where said model is more easily applicable. Since, my model is based on mimetic attributes, it is, I maintain, applicable to any narrative featuring anthropomorphic agents. Applying it to a multi-protagonist film, however, would require a much more extensive and exhausting application as any attempts at hermeneutics would have to take into consideration the intertwined changing attitudes of all main agents.

Conclusion

Only a few theorists have studied character consistently and even fewer have produced comprehensive works and analyses on the subject from the point of view of character change. The major debates in academic circles in regard to character concern its relation and assumed subordinate position to the plot and its ontological nature in relation to representation (mimesis) or artificiality. In this chapter I concerned myself only with the first debate. Screenwriting theory rarely addresses it in explicit terms. The manuals mention the importance of character but focus on story structure and often assert that a writer should start with story and add the character afterwards. When screenwriting scholars approach the topic, they do mostly from the perspective of audience engagement. Character's relation to plot is more prominently featured in narrative and literary theory. Narrative theory has tended to view character either as a mere textual element, usually inferior to plot or style. Literary theory has studied character more extensively, but the various analyses tend to isolate one of the character attributes and declaring it more important in relation to others. What is needed, I argue, is a

comprehensive and holistic view of character. In this chapter, I reevaluated the character's relation to plot. Using Chatman's definitions of *events* and identifying their dependence on *character*, I have argued that to speak of plot, as a chain of causally linked events, is to speak of character's changing attributes.

Having demonstrated the centrality of character in fictional narrative, in the next chapter I proceed to address the debate concerning character's status as a mimetic or purely semiotic element. I will propose that, in fact, character can be seen as both a mimetic and semiotic object and I will argue for the referentiality of literary language in order to support my thesis. Then I will move on to illustrate more specifically how fictional character, that has no concrete referent in the real world acquires its mimetic status. This exploration will prove to be valuable for Chapter 4, where I will employ that semiotic framework to analyse character change in specific screenplays.

Chapter 2: Towards a Mimetic-Semiotic Approach to Screenplay Character

Introduction

As I suggested in the previous chapter, the discussion in regard to literary character pertains mostly to two major issues: 1) ontological concerns about the nature of character; whether it is mimetic and analogous to real people or a purely textual, artificial construct, 2) character's position within the literary text, especially its hierarchical relation to other narratological features, namely plot and language.

I explored the debate about character in relation to plot in the previous chapter. I argued that, in my view, character is indeed more important. If narrative is defined as a chain of causally-linked *events*, and *events* pertain to *character* (in that character is either the instigator or the affected part), then *character* assumes a prominent position in fictional narratives by default. This acknowledgment allowed me to reformulate *character change*, not as a mere optional feature of *character*, but as the necessary result of the temporal unfolding of these causally-linked events. In other words, *plot* became *character change*.

In this chapter, I review the debate concerning literary character's nature as either mimetic or artificial. I offer an overview of the topic as examined in screenwriting studies, that accept the mimetic status of character and ignore the larger debate between realism and artificiality. This overview is important to contextualize my own perception of screenplay character. However, the literature review from narrative theory and literary criticism that follows offers better insight into the debate, since character's status as mimetic or textual rages mostly in literary circles. After the literature in the field has been established, I explain why, in my view, the two positions (mimetic and textual) are not mutually exclusive. In fact, I propose that literary character should be seen both as mimetic and semiotic. This is in accordance with James Phelan's theory of character which argues that character has a *mimetic*, a *synthetic* and a *thematic* dimension (Phelan 1989). Arguing for character's textual aspect is far less controversial. Besides theories put forward by Phelan, I also draw on Culler's notions that characters are "sets of predicates grouped under a proper name" (Culler in Phelan

1987: 284), and Umberto Eco's theory that sees character as a semiotic object (Eco 2009). In any case, the point that character is words on pages - therefore a textual construct - is not debated. But is character only *just* that?

My view on character is that we ought to see it from both a mimetic and a semiotic perspective. The character change analysis model that I present in detail in Chapter 3 is based on the existence of mimetic attributes; that is, character features that can be said fictional characters share with real people. Thus, in order for me to support this analysis, I first have to argue that character can be seen as having a mimetic aspect as well as a textual. Such an endeavour may seem strange. Can we really adopt a method of analysis that marries two antagonistic views on character? If we approach literary works with an open mind we see that it is not that hard. After all, Weinsheimer acknowledges that "characters are both people and words" (Weinsheimer 1979: 210). This position allows us to proceed with such an analysis, provided that we clarify our methodological tools. More to the point, even after I assert character's mimetic dimension, I still need to demonstrate how that dimension is manifested in the text; in other words, exactly how language in the screenplay text gives rise to the notion of character as a possible person.

Arguing in favour of a mimetic dimension of character is seen as somewhat controversial in certain literary circles. However, I propose that critiques of the mimetic dimension of character can be attacked on three different fronts: firstly, in terms of readers' response, an argument can be put forward that character is, in fact, mimetic because audiences perceive it as such. Secondly, the rejection of mimetic character can be refuted on the level of narrative and emplotment by acknowledging the Aristotelian notion of mimesis, specifically as reformulated by Paul Ricoeur in his famous treatise on *Time and Narrative* (1984). Finally, I propose the best way to argue for character's mimetic status is to point to the referential function of language itself. I suggest that in most narratological studies, the unfolding of events is often given prominence but the actual text and its linguistic features, especially in regard to characterisation, is ignored. However, even if we abstract events from the actual text, the text is where we first encounter them, and language is how we first perceive them. Therefore, arguing for the mimetic aspect of character can be achieved by arguing that language refers in a physical reality outside the artificial textual world. In order to make this last case, I will have to first delve into the field of semiotics and structural linguistics where the debate regarding the referentiality of language rages. Although it may seem as a diversion,

such an exploration of semiotics is crucial, because this practice-based thesis on screenwriting is examining the screenplay from a semiotic point of view; therefore, a familiarisation with basic tenets of semiotics and linguistics is important, especially for the last two chapters of my thesis which focuses entirely on the actual screenplay texts.

2.1 Character's Mimetic Status in Screenwriting Theory

Similar to the debate concerning character's importance in relation to plot, the issue of character as either mimetic or purely textual construct is not often explicitly addressed in screenwriting theory. Regardless, scholars do offer scattered comments, although there is an apparent but unspoken agreement amongst most (with the notable exception of Steven Price, whose views we will see later on in more detail), that the obvious way to perceive and analyse character is as an imitation of real humans. In that way, they are in agreement with both screenwriting teachers and practitioners who rarely debate the nature of screenplay characters. While I am in agreement with the implication that character is mimetic, failing to consider its textual aspect has the unfortunate result that the linguistic and dramaturgical elements of the screenplay that give rise to this mimetism are sidelined and rarely discussed in detail.

In the same way that she addressed the issue of plot versus character, Bednarek (2011) refers to screenwriting manuals that often recommend that writers do extensive background research for their characters and write comprehensive biographies in an attempt to get to know them better. As I will argue later in the chapter, if the script in question is not a biopic, nor based on true events, it remains an open question what kind of "research" that will be. In any case, according to many manuals, writers need to consider, "their characters' cultural and historical environment, the location they find themselves in, their biography and personal/private life, what they do as a job, what their attitudes are, and the kind of language they speak" (Bednarek 2011: 5). In other words, screenwriters need to consider elements of personality that one observes in real people.

In her keynote speech at the Screenwriting Research Network Conference of 2016, screenwriter Soni Jorgenssen (2017) explored the relationship between plot, character and "the human condition". In order to demonstrate the link between the three, she

outlined a method of creative writing influenced by psychoanalysis. She argued that, “being a screenwriter is similar to being a therapist” (Jorgensen 2017: 119). In the case of the screenwriter, the protagonist is the patient. For Jorgensen, what matters in screenplay narrative is the exploration of human beings and the meaning of being human

Screenwriting theorist Sanchez-Escalonilla (2013) approaches the topic from the point of view of dramaturgical perfection in general. He asserts that, “Verisimilitude is an essential quality to the perfection of fictions, from the tragedy competitions in Pericles’s Athens to current Hollywood screenplays”. (Sanchez-Escalonilla 2013: 79). Although he recognizes the need for artifices (we are talking after all about fictional narratives) he still stresses that mimesis lies at the basis of drama and that it requires, “the dramatization of reality in order to the truth of the characters (sic)” (Sanchez-Escalonilla 2013: 81). In order for this artistic imitation of life to be successful and for the fictional text to reach perfection, it is crucial that “events and characters taken from real life” (ibid) are depicted faithfully in the artificial construction of the narrative.

Radha O’Meara (2015) references Abbott who argued that audiences interpret character actions by judging them against the actions of real people. In other words, there is a clear mimetic analogy between the fictional world and its inhabitants and the real one. In the same vein, and once again examined from the perspective of the audience, Jennifer O’Meara (2018) invokes Per Persson’s cognitive approach to character, that argues that, “the understanding of both fictional characters and real characters [individuals in real life] makes use of a similar set of dispositions and processes” (Persson in O’ Meara 2018: 76-77). In her analysis of the biopic film *Jackie* (2016), Carmen Sofia Brenes (2018) draws on Paul Ricoeur’s notions on narrative and mimesis to explore the clear link between the fictional Jackie Kennedy in the film and the real one. She discusses the issue in psychological terms, focusing on the character’s interior life and motivations, thus implicitly perceiving the fictional Jackie as analogous to a real human being.

Also addressing the topic indirectly, Nash (2013) demonstrates the screenplay’s character’s mimetic status by alluding to the questions actors crave to ask when reading a script:

Actors want to know what is happening under the surface in order to discover how to enter a character's body and bring them to life on the screen. This is why actors can be so stimulating in script development workshops: they ask questions screenwriters often forget to ask. What does this character want? And what do they do to get what they want?

(Nash 2013: 157)

Goal, motivation and action is crucial information for actors to be able to portray the character on screen (or on stage). We observe that the analogy between fictional character and real person is a given; something apparently so obvious that it is not questioned, challenged or at least problematized in the slightest.

Even when those elements (goals and motivations) remain obscure in certain film narratives (in contrast to more mainstream narratives), characters are still analyzed in psychological terms; in other words, they are still perceived as analogous to real people. Therefore, while in *The Hurt Locker* (2008), the screenwriter denies us clear insight into the protagonist's psychology and motivation, as Deutelbaum (2015) observes, there is a moment of "psychological self-questioning" where the main character, "wonder(s) what has motivated him to risk his life" (Deutelbaum 2015: 58). According to Deutelbaum's analysis of *The Hurt Locker*, goals and deeper motivations may remain a mystery, yet, the mimetic status of the character is still not challenged. This narrative strategy merely prompts us to become more active viewers. We are not given easy answers for the protagonist's motivations, therefore we are invited to speculate. The fictional character's psychology - whether explicit or implicit - is always at the centre of the film narrative.

The importance of character's mimetic status from the point of view of audience engagement is also discussed by Mittell, who uses Murray Smith's structure of sympathy to explore, "how one forms parasocial relationships with characters resulting from the stability of core characters in serial television" (Wabeke 2015). For Murray Smith who analysed how audiences engage with fictional characters, the concept of a character who acts is the "closest analog, within the fictional world, of the viewer" (Smith in Canet 2019: 100).

As we shall see in Chapter 3, Mittell's observations are particularly interesting in regard to character development (or "elaboration") and how this development helps

build our parasocial relationships, even with negative anti-heroes. Mittell implicitly acknowledges the relationship between the mimetic and the synthetic nature of character and, while taking our appreciation of the character as mimetic for granted, also recognizes that, “‘operational allegiance’ may contribute to our liking of the antihero, as our fascination with the construction and presentation of a character makes us root for his ‘triumph in storytelling, if not his actual triumph within the story’” (Mittell in Wabeke 2015).

Even if we move away from the mainstream screenwriting doxa, where verisimilitude is prized over everything else, the link between fictional character and real humans remains intact. Even in modernist, non-Hollywood or non-American films, where aesthetic exploration and narrative experimentation is more common, character is still discussed in mimetic terms. Koivumäki (2012) explores poetic dramaturgy in Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Ivan’s Childhood* (1962) and stresses the importance of the character’s interiority over his external goal. Still, the mimetic status of the character is not challenged; he is still discussed in psychological terms. While *Ivan’s Childhood* may be lacking a clear, external conflict, the film narrative deals with the protagonist’s internal feelings.

In his exploration of Cassavettes’s complex characters, Raymond Carney (1989) argues that the characters populating the American director’s narratives were more true precisely because of their enormous complexity. Defying the contained, strict narrative structures of mainstream American cinema, Cassavettes constructed characters who did not limit themselves to a particular “game plan” (Carney 1989: 31). As Carney argues, “No American filmmaker trusted his audience more to fathom the seemingly bottomless obliquities of the unanalyzed, uneditorialized performances of his characters” (ibid).

In an article documenting Fellini’s collaboration with Pasolini in the film *Nights of Cabiria* (1957), Claudia Romanelli (2019) implicitly acknowledges the mimetic aspect of characters in Pasolini’s screenwriting work for other directors. In fact, in validation of Ricoeur’s notions about the role of mimesis in the construction of a fictional narrative, Romanelli observes that, “Pasolini aims to relieve his characters’ discourse, merging his voice with theirs and adopting their psychology” (Romanelli 2019: 326). Although Fellini’s films are not usually examined from the prism of verisimilitude, the

director approached Pasolini because, “he wanted the pimps, prostitutes and petty thieves in the new film he was writing (...) to speak with the same vibrant dialect seen in Pasolini’s novel” (2019: 328). Appropriately, Pasolini reviewed Fellini’s early draft of the script, revised the dialogue to make it more believable and also argued “for a more realistic representation of the characters, as well as the inclusion of more plausible motivations to explain their actions” (2019: 330).

Even in Luis Bunuel’s surrealist narratives, the link between fictional characters and real life is not entirely broken. In fact, as Julie Jones (2010) argues, several of the director’s films are, if not autobiographical in the strict sense, at least heavily influenced by his own fears, fantasies and preoccupations (Jones 2010: 32). In her analysis of *The Obscure Object of Desire*, (1977) Jones approaches the main character from a psychological perspective, thus viewing him as analogous to a real person. Don Jaime is a character that Bunuel felt sympathy for. A character who was “blinded by obsession”; a character who is shown as “manipulative”; a character who is timid with women; a character, in short, who possesses attributes (emotions, personality traits, etc.) like real humans do. (2010: 34)

Milla Cozart Riggio (2021) analyses Christina Kallas’s multi-protagonist, non-linear, fragmented narrative of her film *The Rainbow Experiment* (2018). In a film that radically experiments with narrative, Riggio still discusses the characters in relation to their psychological aspect. According to Riggio, what Kallas ultimately explores even if foregrounding the artificiality of her filmic text, is the “human condition”, while her characters live lives that are “nuanced and meaningful” (Riggio 2021: 18). That said, it is still important to keep in mind that certain texts opt to foreground the artificial aspect inherent to them. Thus, in addition to her experimental narrative, Kallas, for instance, assigns to three female characters names that are obvious anagrams (Sila, Lisa and Alis). According to Riggio, this suggests that these characters are different sides of the same woman. (2021: 12) Artificiality and mimesis work together to convey the narrative’s various themes.

It becomes clear that both screenwriting theory and practice regard fictional characters primarily as mimetic. They both create and analyse character in relation mostly to their goals, needs, desires and emotions. Screenwriting theory on the subject has certain limitations. Firstly, many of the mentioned studies and articles analyse

character as it appears in the finished product (film or TV series), thus very often ignoring the screenplay text that constitutes the foundation of the dramatic narrative. Secondly, the reasoning behind the assertion that the screenplay character is (or *must be written as*) analogous to a real person is never elaborated upon. This leaves a considerable gap in theory. While intuitively logical, the argument that character is mimetic is never challenged or at least problematized and the artificiality of the actual screenplay text and the ways through which it creates the illusion of mimetic character is not discussed. Thirdly, there is no detailed comprehensive analysis of the various mimetic attributes. Most often, screenwriting scholars rely on terms that manuals and practitioners have already established (goals, needs, desires, motivations) and fail to consider the variety of features that are attributed to the character by the text.

It is the aim of this chapter to confront the textual/mimetic debate and argue as convincingly as possible for a view of screenplay character that is both mimetic and semiotic; a view that considers how the obvious artificiality of the text constructs characters that are perceived as relative to real humans. Respectively, it is one of the aims of the next chapter to broaden the discussion in regard to the various mimetic features that a character is attributed in a screenplay text. The object of my enquiry is always the screenplay text. Unless explicitly otherwise stated, I do not concern myself with the finished films, the shots, the editing and the performances. I regard the screenplay as a literary artwork on its own, that contains all fundamental elements of the dramatic narrative. The literature review offered above is useful in contextualizing my own notions on character and to identify certain gaps in the field. But in order to gain further insight into the debate about literary character's nature and find the tools that will allow me to argue convincingly that character in verbal texts can be perceived as both textual and mimetic, it is important to first delve into narrative theory and literary criticism.

2.2 The Case Against a Mimetic View of Character in Narrative and Literary Theory

Most of the structuralist approaches about character covered in the previous chapter (Greimas, Todorov, Barthes, etc.) also posit that *because* character is subservient to plot and/or a mere element of the textual construct alongside many other elements, character

should also be seen purely as a textual construct. Thus, any attempts to analyse character through, say, a psychological perspective, are deeply flawed. Literary or fictional character is an artificial construction, therefore it should not be perceived and examined in the same way a real person might be analysed.

It is peculiar that although such critics draw on Aristotle when arguing about the prominence of plot over character, apparently forget the Greek philosopher when they take that assertion and lead it to the unreasonable conclusion that, because plot is more important, the idea of character as mimetic is false. It should be reminded that Aristotle in his *Poetics* (1902) perceived drama as an imitation of an action. His entire treatise on Greek tragedy is an exploration of the concept of mimesis. What Aristotle simply argued was that drama does not imitate the “ethos” of an agent but rather his or her actions. This is a very different point from arguing that any idea of mimetic character is inherently flawed.

This discussion is more often undertaken by narrative theorists or literary critics as covered in the previous chapter of this thesis. However, Steven Price (2010b) has weighed in on the debate from the perspective of screenwriting theory. In his examination of screenplay character, he seems to argue for a more structural approach to character in film narratives, regarding it mostly as a textual construct. In his critique of screenwriting manuals that advise writers to construct character biographies and backstories that will never find their way in the final draft, Price reminds us the danger of regarding manuals as “critical studies” (Price 2010b: 202). He also reminds us that, “Literary criticism has long insisted that characters are textual constructs, and that no more can be known about them than what the text provides” (ibid). Price goes on to weigh in on the debate asserting that, “all we can know about the character is what is present on the page, and from a critical (as opposed to a ‘creative’) perspective, such exercises as those endorsed by Hunter and Hauge [screenwriting manual authors] are pointless” (ibid).

This assertion leads Price to echo Richard Dyer in distinguishing between novelistic conceptions of character and structural. The novelistic conception is apparently informed by late 18th-century individualism, the emergence of capitalism and the belief in free will and liberal humanism (Price 2010b: 203). In contrast to this approach, the structural conception of character posits that it is not endowed with any positive

attributes; that character belongs within a fixed and closed textual system and in no way does it transcend the text. While Price acknowledges that screenplays can take either one approach with their characters, he also draws a clear distinction between screenplay characters and novel characters. This is because, according to Price, the screenwriter simply does not have at his or her disposal the literary tools necessary to describe the complex interiority of a fictional character the same way a novelist does (Price 2010b: 204). For Price, a script like that for the film *The Third Man* (1949) is “an open text, acknowledging some of the many ways in which character can appear to exceed this structure to produce something akin to, but distinct from, the reality effect of the novel.” (Price 2010b: 214).

Terry Eagleton also points to the fact that character cannot be said to extend beyond the confinements of the page. He asserts that if one treats character as though they were actual people, she is overlooking the literary nature of a novel or a play (Eagleton 2013: 45). Interestingly, Eagleton himself cannot seem to avoid the tendency to analyse character as though they were real people. For one, he brings together the two different definitions of character: one that indicates “an individual’s mental and moral qualities” and the one that “refers to figures in novels, plays, movies and the like” (Eagleton 2013: 49). In the course of a single paragraph, Eagleton has linked real people with fictional characters. Later in his book, Eagleton himself describes a literary character as “pious, high-minded and mildly self-deluded” (2013: 53), therefore directly ascribing to her personality traits and psychological dimensions.

2.3 The Case for a Mimetic View of Character

In a broader interpretation of character, Gerald Mead identifies several perspectives one can take towards character and he certainly does not invalidate the perspective he calls, “referential”: “We understand fictional characters [...] by measuring them against [...] outside reality” (Mead 1990: 441). Although not perfect, this approach to character has certainly “managed to make the most convincing contributions to the study of character in literature and film” (ibid). What is interesting is that Mead draws a distinction between what he calls the referential approach and what he calls the realist model of character. As we saw, according to the first, we evaluate “to what extent [characters] reflect [outside reality], illuminate it or distort it. The task [...] is to explain the presence

and the meaning of fictional characters through recourse to a non-fictional, to a real” (ibid). On the other hand, the realist model suggests that, “we recognize, understand and appreciate fictional characters insofar as their appearances, actions and speech reflect or refer to those of persons in real life” (Mead 1990: 442).

We must acknowledge that referring to readers’ response without any scientific data to back that up is not a very sound academic enterprise. Moreover, Price is, to a certain extent, right: as far as textual analysis is concerned character obviously does not extend beyond the text. Structuralists enjoy stressing this point, but in a way that constitutes a straw-man’s argument. Consider Richard Dyer, for example, who asserts that critics have demonstrated that “characters are not real people [...] they are an effect of the text constructions”. (Dyer 1998 in Price 2010b: 202). No scholar is actually arguing that fictional, literary characters *are* real people. But this does not mean that the text cannot refer to *qualities* that real life people possess. Price asserts that our knowledge of a given character ends with the given text and this apparently indicates that character is purely textual and should not be *perceived as* a real person. Once again, the second assertion does not follow from the first. I can read a news article about the (real) leader of a (real) far-away country for whom I know nothing more than what the article in question indicates. My ignorance and limited knowledge of that person’s qualities has no effect in their existing status or in my perception of them as human-like.

In fact, what we know about all people, other than ourselves, stems from our perception and interpretation of signs. Our knowledge about other real people is by default limited. We might not know much about a colleague, other than how he looks and behaves in our common working environment. His personal life outside the office may be a mystery to us; this does not mean that we do not perceive him as real. Limited knowledge has no effect on someone’s reality status. Whether readers of fictional narratives think of characters outside the text, or assign additional attributes to characters that are not offered by the text, does not affect their perception of character as a possible person within the text. As Price himself points out, an “open” film may indeed indicate attributes and lives outside the filmic time, while a closed film may confine attributes within the strict limits of filmic time. In both cases, it is the attributes that we judge as mimetic (Price 2010b: 203).

Rosenberg consents that “Character is a product of language, an element in a text” which cannot be entirely “free” or “autonomous” (Rosenberg 1989: 53); however, he also asserts that character is distinguishable from other textual elements in its ability to ““initiate speculation and inference”” (Harvey in Rosenberg 1989: 53) that other textual elements like symbols, objects and images cannot. This speculation is not extra-textual. It is invited by the textual cues, however, character, being at the same time ““a representation, which refers to, evokes, or draws import from the world outside the frame”” (Price in Rosenberg 1989: 43), it has the potentiality to “reverberate in the outside world in ways unrelated to the internal design of the text” (Rosenberg: 1989: 43).

2.3.1 The Readers’ Response Perspective

James Phelan (1987; 1989) approaches the debate from the readers’ perspective. He refers to the neo-Aristotelian critique of thematic readings of literary works. According to Phelan, neo-Aristotelians pointed out a sharp distinction between mimetic works and didactic works. Mimetic works aim to represent characters in action in order to convey emotions, while didactic works use character actions to some ulterior thematic purpose. Phelan attempts to bridge the two attitudes by referring to readers’ perception of character. As he suggests, “most readers [...] experience characters as possible persons and carriers of ideas” (Phelan 1987: 284). At the same time, Phelan agrees that character is also a product of the text. In addition to the mimetic and the thematic aspect, Phelan identifies one more component of character: the *synthetic*. Then, he argues that, instead of traits, it is more appropriate to talk about character *attributes* (Phelan 1987: 285). According to Phelan, these attributes assigned to a character by the text can be viewed as mimetic or thematic or synthetic, depending on the theorist’s approach or the guiding features of the literary text.

More specifically, the mimetic aspect of character refers to its nature to refer to and represent real human beings; the synthetic aspect refers to its artificial nature; that is, the nature of character as a construct of the author’s mind. For example, a secondary character may be the protagonist’s *father* (mimetic aspect) but he can also be the *antagonist* (synthetic aspect). This aspect can be seen as “the traditional, self-disclosing, aesthetic or poetic function which focuses attention on the mode of

construction of any textual unit” (Margolin 1990: 456). The thematic aspect of character refers to its ability to represent abstract ideas, notions and meanings. In Margolin’s understanding of the term, the thematic function “is the traditional cognitive or ideational one” (1990: 456). An example of a thematized character would be the evil Banker who simply becomes a vessel for the theme “greed”.

James Phelan believes that these aspects can coexist in a single character, however, very often one of these aspects is more prominent than the others. In this view, had we provided the evil Banker with more mimetic attributes such as conflicting and contradictory personality traits and changing emotional states, the thematic nature would subside. The addition of more attributes would reduce the importance of his two initial traits (his profession as a banker and his evilness as the predominant personality trait). I suggest that all three aspects that Phelan proposes co-exist. It is true that, depending on the nature of the literary work (e.g. realist or postmodernist) character will be presented in different terms but both the mimetic and the synthetic will always, by necessity, be present; and it is going to be their interaction that gives rise to the thematic aspect.

Murray Smith (2011) suggests a theory of character that uses Richard Wollheim’s notion of *twofoldness* that Wollheim developed for the visual arts. According to Smith, “Twofoldness describes (...) our apprehension at once, of both the depicted object and the marked surface” (Smith 2011: 279). Contrary to other similar theories of perception (e.g. Gombrich’s), Wollheim maintains that, what he calls “the recognitional and configurational aspects of seeing-in” (Smith 2011: 279) happen simultaneously for the spectator; they are in Wollheim’s words, “two aspects [that are] distinguishable but also inseparable” (Wollheim in Smith 2011: 279).

Smith applies Wollheim’s notion to our perception of both cinematic and literary characters and stresses that similarly, “we exhibit awareness of the configurational aspect of character whenever we note or notice something bearing upon the designed status of a character, when we see a character as an element in a representation” (Smith 2011: 280). To further support this view, Smith brings examples from our apprehension of characters on screen and our ability to see at the same time, both the recognisable star (e.g. Cary Grant in *North by Northwest*) and the character that star is portraying (Roger Thornhill). Smith also stresses that this ability we have to perceive both aspects

of character at the same time, prohibits us from asking “silly questions” (Walton in Smith 2011: 289), that otherwise would seem legitimate. He brings the example of a shy character on stage, in a play unfolding by means of an extensive monologue from that shy character. Had we not the capacity to perceive the representational aspect of that shy character but also its artificial nature we would find the spectacle of a shy person speaking endlessly to a huge audience baffling to say the least (Smith 2011: 289).

Both Smith and Phelan base their representational view of character on the audience's perception of characters as real human simulations. Margolin suggests that this mimetic aspect of character “is closer to our initial, intuitive conception” (Margolin 1990: 457). Culpeper agrees that it may be hard to deny that our interpretation of fictional characters is based on the structures and schemata we employ when attempt to interpret the actions and behaviour of real people (Culpeper 2002: 4). This all may be true; however, unless supported by actual cognitive research on how readers perceive texts, it is a hard case to prove. I posit that mimesis happens on the textual level as well. From the moment the writer writes down a proper name (e.g. Peter), s/he has referred to our (cultural) act of naming people. *Peter* may have no concrete referent but the word does denote a proper name and considering that proper names are culturally the words we assign to ourselves and other people as one way to distinguish between them, literary Peter has already started imitating an abstract human. But why is that?

2.3.2 Narrative Mimesis: The Theory of Paul Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur developed his theory of three-fold mimesis in his seminal work *Time and Narrative* (1984). According to William C. Dowling (2011), Ricoeur sought to develop a theory of mimesis that diverted from the Aristotelian understanding of the term, while at the same time rejecting the structuralist limited scope on the text. That is not to say Ricoeur did not believe in the autonomous status of the literary work. As Dowling confirms, he fully endorsed the idea that “literary works are self-contained worlds with their own laws and their own logic, subject to distortion when made to answer to ideologies or doctrines external to themselves” (Dowling 2011: 2). However, I take Ricoeur's distinction to mean that literature is very much free to distort, augment or

alter notions of reality; not that it bears no relationship to it. In a slight departure from Aristotle, though, Ricoeur's model suggested a mimetic course:

“from a prenarrative structure of experience that exists in every human community to the alteration brought about in individual consciousness by narrative experience [...] to suggest that what poesis imitates is not action itself but a certain abstract structure present in a multiplicity of meaningful actions, and given lasting visibility in a thousand narratives composed in numerous languages and a great variety of cultures”.

(Dowling 2011: 16)

Ricoeur distinguished between three modes of mimesis. *Mimesis 1* refers to that part “Before there is emplotment”, where “there is human action with its symbolic constructs, communication of meaning, and interpretation within the temporal situation” (Dornisch 1989: 309). Ricoeur explicitly recognises the influence of real experience for the narrative construction. He defines *Mimesis 1* as “pre-figuration” that essentially relies on our ability to understand “the sign systems” of a given society (Dowling 2011: 3). Imitation itself is a rather complex process. Human action, as occurring in a temporal dimension, is based on symbolic structures, therefore “To imitate is to extract the symbolic structures and then construct the signifying action which includes the temporal elements” (Dornisch 1989: 309)

The next step in the complex process of narrativity is termed *Mimesis 2* (also called configuration and emplotment) and is intrinsically connected to the practical world of action. *Mimesis 2* refers to “the activity which organizes the events” (Dornisch 1989: 311). Whereas structuralist theorists like Greimas and Todorov isolated the literary text and dissociated it from the real world, Ricoeur brings the two together (Nankov 2014: 229). The difference between the unfolding of various events in real life and the way they are organized in a narrative has long been suggested to be the causal links between the carefully-selected events. Dowling refers to E. M. Forester's famous example: The King died and then the Queen Died is a chronicle because it simply recounts the random succession of two separate events. But to say “The King died and then the Queen died of grief” is a narrative. A causal link has been provided (“of grief”), therefore the two events have been connected (Dowling 2011: 5). Seen from this prism, *Mimesis 2* is the process that enforces “the logic of narrative causality”. (Dowling 2011: 8).

Finally, *Mimesis 3* refers to the act of reading by the consumer of the literary text. Ricoeur also defined it as “refiguration” (Ricoeur in Dowling 2011: 14) and it is the process “through which a story comes to life in the consciousness of those outside its imaginary world” (Dowling 2011: 14). We see that both in *mimetic mode 1* and *mimetic mode 3*, Ricoeur’s theory presupposes an external reality. Dowling suggests that Ricoeur draws on Emile Benveniste’s theory about discourse, “for which, even a simple utterance like “Shut the door!” is intelligible only as it is understood to refer to an immediate and separate physical environment that includes, at a minimum, a room or building or other enclosed space” (ibid).

Summing everything up, there are three stages in the mimetic process: that of practical experience, that of the mediating role of emplotment, and that of the process of reading. Out of these three types of mimesis, I focus predominantly on the first two, and especially on the second one, *Mimesis 2*, which refers to the act of emplotment. However, that first state of “practical experience” is of great importance for my thesis and is in agreement with a phenomenological approach to literature. Plot needs the (human) practical experience to mediate. This experience can be quite broad and it can be taken to mean everything from perception and self-awareness, to cognition, emotion and human action. It is this practical experience that functions as the basis for the imitation task that the author subsequently undertakes in her writing process. This experience is the basis of mimesis.

Ricoeur’s attempt to bridge the narratological nature of our everyday experience with the actual process of creating fictional narratives is apparently supported by recent cognitive research that suggests that “the human brain is constructed in such a way that it captures many complex relationships in the form of narrative structures” (Fludernik 2010: 1). As Paul Ricoeur himself put it, “We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated” (Ricoeur in Dornisch 1989: 314).

2.3.3 Mimesis in Language: Debating the Referential Nature of Language

The final and most important reason why I propose a mimetic view of character has to do with the nature of literary language, which I argue, is referential. Regardless of the status one attributes to character in relation to narrative (central or peripheral), if

language functions as a sign-system that represents concrete objects of the physical world (in addition to abstract concepts), then it follows that it can represent human agents too. If we want to be honest, the debate regarding the referential nature of language is being resolved by cognitive approaches to language and narrative which state that, “Language arises from our conceptualizations of the world, and analysis of language and language use is therefore crucially linked to our minds and how they interact with our nonmental environment” (Fludernik 2010: 925). Despite the strict structuralist doctrines about the autonomous nature of language and literature as closed, self-contained and self-regulating systems, the advance of cognitive science has showed a definite link between language and the real world. However, since screenplays are verbal, literary texts and language is the “sign-system *par excellence*” (Levi-Strauss 1972 in Chandler 2007: 6, original emphasis), I suggest that semiotic theory is the most useful approach to analyse the screenplay text and, consequently, character.

Language of course, can refer to abstract notions as well as concrete objects. In this event, it does not mean that it imitates these abstract notions. However, as Seymour Chatman argues, fictional narratives are composed of a series of events (Chatman 1980: 21) and Fludernik asserts that these are causally linked (Fludernik 2009). And, as I already demonstrated in Chapter 1, these events are tied to characters in the sense that they are either produced by them or they affect them directly. Fictional narratives then position characters firmly at the centre of their attention. This, we could say, is even more true for screenplays that, as a literary form, anticipate a series of photographed moving pictures of a physical world and its existents. It is that connection that drives screenplays less towards the verbal descriptions of abstract thoughts and internal workings of characters’ minds and more towards the descriptions of concrete images and physical actions that are intended to be performed, recorded and eventually projected on screens. Even putting that condition aside, to the extent that a literary work describes things and living beings “similar” to the ones we find in our real world, it is representational.

That being said, an important clarification is in order before we go any further: I am not arguing that an accurate mimesis of a human being is the ultimate goal for dramaturgy. In fact, there is a tendency among theorists to conflate the mimetic with the realistic. Character is mimetic insofar as the text assigns attributes that we observe

in real people as well (I will offer my comprehensive analysis model of character attributes in more detail in the next chapter). The perceived realism stems from the spatiotemporal organisation of these attributes and the causal links between them. Realism, on the other hand, concerns the plausibility of character. And plausibility concerns the ways the various mimetic attributes are linked with one another and organised temporally in the narrative.

Consider for example the popular Wolfman myth: Wolfmen are humans who due to bites by wolves are cursed to transform into wolves every full moon. One attribute (human physiology) is replaced by another attribute (wolf physiology). Both are mimetic in that they are observable in objective physical reality (there exist in our world both humans and wolves). The link between them, however, is not realistic. We empirically know that men do not assume wolf form, therefore the change is not realistic and we accept it only within the confinements of fictional narrative and especially within specific genres.

The authors' intention is not necessarily to portray a painfully-detailed simulacrum of a real person. The intention may very well be to convey an idea or an emotion. But even when the goal is to posit an argument, in fictional narratives this argument is filtered by and conveyed through characters and objects whether these are anthropomorphic or not (e.g. Disney animations with painted animals). Therefore, I argue that a mimetic analysis is the most appropriate method if one wishes to conduct a comprehensive textual grammar and even if one wishes to go further in their interpretive activities. My focus is on the first task. Although when using linguistics and semiotics it is difficult to avoid some inferences altogether (considering that certain rules on semiotic inferences are determined by cultural conventions), my main aim is to construct a sort of character syntax for screenplay texts. My view is that this syntax can lead to interpretive activities as well.

Returning to the linguistic debate at hand, in her critique of Robert Scholes's "Semiotics and Interpretation", Teresa Ebert (1983) identifies two main camps of contemporary semiotics: on one side there are those who conceive semiotics "as an essentially positivistic enterprise in which the signifier [...] in a rather unproblematic manner refers to and rests upon the signified" (Ebert 1983: 1). Ebert includes semioticians like Eco and Todorov in this camp. On the other side, there are those

thinkers who take it upon them to problematize more rigorously the relation between the signifier and the signified. Such an approach, apparently more appropriate in Ebert's view, "unbinds the signifier, enabling a "free play" that places under erasure the whole process of semiosis as conceived by positivistic semiotics." (ibid).

According to Ebert, Scholes falls firmly in the first camp due to his apparent allegiance to humanist and positivist approaches. In simpler terms, in Ebert's view Scholes ignores the challenges deconstruction theories pose to semiotics and retains his faith in "the primacy of man as a mode of intelligibility and the privileging of a referential language" (Ebert 1983: 2). It will come as no surprise to those who have read the previous chapter of this thesis to find that, with respect to Ebert's valid objections, I am inclined to include myself in this "humanist" and "positivist" camp as well.

But before I justify my alignment with this particular approach to semiotics, it is important that I first take a step back, define my terms more clearly and outline some of the basic semiotic and structuralist concepts that will provide the basis of my character analysis model. Arguably, this might be a tad problematic since "semiotics involves no widely agreed theoretical assumptions, models or empirical methodologies" (Chandler 2007: 4). However, there are certain concepts that we must elucidate before we move on.

2.3.3.1 Saussure and Peirce: Semiology and Semiotics

Semiotics can be seen as the science that "investigates and explores the production and function of signs and sign systems as well as the methods of their signification" (Aghaei 2015: 43). This relatively new science, whose rise Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure both predicted and enabled by his structuralist linguistics, developed almost simultaneously but separately on both sides of the Atlantic. Saussure himself developed a theory of the sign from a linguistic point of view whereas Charles Sanders Peirce, in the United States, explored the process of signification in logic. My own approach to the semiotics of the literary text is closer to Peirce's, at least in regard to his more elaborate classification of various sign modalities. After all, it can be argued that Saussure concerned himself more with the linguistic branch of the semiotic enterprise, while Peirce all but stated from the outset that his thesis concerns general semiotics.

With that in mind, as Honders and Honders observe, language is “a special branch of semiotics” (Honders and Honders 1982: 3). That been said, much of my methodological tools of analysis stem from Saussure’s assertions, especially his distinctions between *langue* and *parole* and *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic* analysis. But I will return to methodological issues in the next chapter where I analyse my semiotic approach to screenplay character in greater detail.

At a basic level, Saussure’s model of the sign is dyadic. It consists of a signifier and a signified. The signifier is the material form which the sign takes, or as Saussure put it, the sound-image of the sign, while the signified is the immaterial, mental concept to which the signifier refers to. In Saussure’s own words, “A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept [signified] and a sound pattern [signifier].” (Saussure 1983 in Chandler 2007). In this sense, the linguistic sign is perceived as a “two-sided psychological entity” (Anon. 1959: 66).

Perhaps Saussure’s most famous assertion concerning the linguistic sign is the fact that it is arbitrary (Anon. 1959: 131). This means that there is no natural connection between the sound-image and the concept to which it refers. Although many aspects of this assertion have been challenged, the doctrine still holds in many respects. For instance, we can easily observe its veracity from the fact that different languages employ radically different words to denote the same object. In short, there is no apparent, natural reason why the concept “tree” should be denoted by the English word “tree” and not, say, by the word “monkey”. The relationship between signifier and signified is of a symbolic nature; one established by cultural convention rather than observable properties. The important question is whether the concept *tree* can be said to refer to real, actual trees and, if so, under which conditions does it do so.

Modern linguistics has indeed challenged a dogmatic manifestation of the notion of the arbitrariness of the sign. *Onomatopoeia* has often been offered as a counter-example. However, Honders and Honders argue that the number of such cases is limited and does not suffice to challenge the dominance of the arbitrariness doctrine (Honders and Honders 1982: 3). However, before we move to Peirce’s conception of the sign we should highlight an acknowledgement by Saussure that is often sidestepped by linguistics, narratologists and semioticians committed to a strict, structuralist approach to linguistics and literature. In fact, Saussure himself admits that “the sign may be

relatively motivated” (Anon. 1959: 131). This motivation refers, “to the structure that is inherent in language in consequence of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations” (Honders and Honders 1982: 8) The example that Saussure himself gives is that of the word “dix-neuf” (nineteen) being more motivated than the word “vingt” (twenty). Saussure is also quick to stress that “the component elements of dix-neuf [...] are as unmotivated as vingt is”. (ibid) Thus, he makes a distinction between elementary components of language, that acquire their meaning arbitrarily and in relation and opposition to other elements within a word, and more elaborate ones that may be more motivated. This distinction is very important and I will unpack it later on in this chapter.

Peirce’s theory of the sign was larger in scope and much more complicated. Not every aspect of his theory is equally useful and applicable to literary analysis so I will offer a brief, condensed overview and then focus my attention on the categorisations that have proved to be more fruitful in literary discourse. Aghaei points out that Peirce’s semiotics was “a phenomenological enterprise” (Aghaei 2015: 14). His basic formulation of the concept of sign is the following:

A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody on some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of representamen. “Idea is here to be understood in a sort of Platonic sense, very familiar in everyday talk; I mean in that sense in which we say that one man catches another man’s idea”

(Peirce and Buchler 1986: 99)

More specifically, Peirce classified signs in three different groups. “The first group includes “qualisign, sinsign and legisign”, the second group includes “icon, index and symbol” and the third group includes “rheme, dicent and delome or argument”. (Aghaei 2015: 24). Briefly, a “qualisign” is defined as a mere quality which exists independently of anything else. It has to be embodied to be considered a sign. (Peirce and Buchler 1986: 101). “Sinsign [...] is an actual existent thing or even which is a sign”. And finally, the “legisign is a law that is a Sign. This law is usually established by men”. (ibid). I will not concern myself at the moment with the third trichotomy, rheme, dicent and argument. Arguably it is the one that is most often

overlooked by literary theorists. But for the purposes of this chapter and for economic brevity, I wish to jump directly to the second trichotomy which will also inform my subsequent textual analysis: *icon*, *index* and *symbol*.

An *iconic sign*, is a sign that resembles its object. In other words, it refers to that object “merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not”. (Peirce and Buchler 1986: 102). As Winfried Nöth notes, “Pictures, portraits, and realistic paintings are the prototype of iconic signs” (Nöth 2011: 2). An *indexical sign* “refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object”. (Peirce and Buchler 1986: 102). An indexical sign, like an iconic, is not arbitrary but is “directly connected in some way (physically or causally) to the signified” (Chandler 2007: 37). For example, smoke is an indexical sign of fire. Finally, a *symbolic sign* “refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas” (Peirce and Buchler 1986: 102). Symbols are arbitrary in nature. They do not resemble their signified object in any nor are they causally or otherwise connected to them. Although Peirce was not aware of Saussure’s work as far as we know, we can observe that he agreed with his thesis on the (relative) arbitrariness of the linguistic sign since he included, words, sentences and books in this category.

Language is comprised of words and words are, according to Peirce, *symbols*. However, I also posit that these symbols can also have both an iconic and an indexical value. The iconic value is determined by the concrete nature of the symbolised object. “Sun”, in this view, is more concrete than “death” which is a more abstract concept. Language is also able to construct indexical meaning through its syntactical organisation. If, in a screenplay, I write the sentence “He notices a bullet hole in the wall”, this is an index that apparently a gun shooting has occurred in this room. Moreover, the sentence functions as an index for the character’s cognitive functions. In addition to that, I argue that the sentence also possesses iconic value because of its description of concrete objects (he, wall, hole, bullet). In this view, although language is a symbolic communication system, we see that it also has both iconic and indexical value and, in fact, this is how it can create mental images in the minds of its readers and also unfold its narrative as a series of causally-linked events.

Now that the two strands of semiotic thinking have been outlined, I wish to proceed to provide an answer to the question whether language refers to out material, physical reality.

2.3.3.2 Signs, Text, and Reality: The Referentiality Problem

As I already noted, the general view is - in regard to Saussure's conception of the sign - that Saussure did not allow any space for a material reality to invade the signification system which he maintained was a closed one. However, as previously observed, that is not entirely the case. Saussure did allow some space for larger semantic units to be considered as "more motivated". Although he maintains that separate phonemes have no intrinsic value, he does not outright reject the idea that completed words, when inserted in larger syntactic and semantic units can carry their meaning. Thomas G. Pavel argues that the anti-referential stance in structural linguistics is at odds with more contemporary linguistic practices (Pavel 1988: 599). The structuralist thesis that claims that phonemes, for instance, have no intrinsic value and acquire their meaning only due to their relation and opposition to other phonemes within the same word does make perfect sense. The phoneme "i" has not intrinsic meaning and neither does the phoneme "n". Combined together in a specific order, however, they create the meaningful word "in". However, where lexical meaning is concerned, this claim about binary oppositions makes things "unnecessarily difficult" since, "next to discriminatory oppositions, vocabulary displays numerous instances of gradual or continuous relations, idiosyncratic configurations, and sheer absence of structure" (ibid).

Thus, we should be careful to make a distinction between the more general, referential (anaphoric) function of language as it was also defined by Roman Jakobson (Tribus 2017) and the Saussurean view on the arbitrariness of the symbol. These are not mutually exclusive. If they were, language as a communication system would be redundant. That the word, as a symbolic sign, abstracts and does not directly refer to a material reality, and that it needs to invoke a mental image on the mind of the reader, does not mean that it does not refer to the physical world. In his theory on the six functions of language, Roman Jakobson (1960) included a referential function; that is, then language refers to any contextual information. In fact, this function is dominant in ordinary discourse because we "designate objects and bestow them with meaning" (Holenstein 1974 in Tribus 2017).

If Robert Scholes' "common-sense", empirical arguments in favour of referentiality of language seem trivial to Ebert, we can also remind ourselves of structuralist anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, who has noted that, "language is the semiotic system *par excellence*; it cannot but signify, and exists only through signification" (Levi-Strauss 1972 in Chandler 2007: 6). To that assertion, Chandler adds that "Language is invariably regarded as the most powerful communication system by far". (Chandler 2007: 6). Even Greimas noted that 'signification is . . . nothing but . . . transposition from one level of language to another, from one language to a different language, and meaning is nothing but the possibility of such transcoding' (Greimas 1970 in Chandler 2007: 72). Scholes himself draws a sharp contrast between two different arts, music and literature (the tool of which is of course, language), to support his arguments. According to Scholes, although music is a perfect art because it "refers to nothing", literature "is always referring, arguing, advocating" (Scholes 1977: 108). It is one thing to problematise the connection between the signifier and the concept to which it refers and another thing altogether to toss away their relationship entirely.

In his exploration of a semiotics of literature, Scholes informs us that, in his pursuit of semiotics of literature, he has to "break with a powerful tradition in semiotic studies" (Scholes 1977: 110). This tradition turns out to be the notion put forward by Saussure that the signifier is not an observable object in the phenomenal reality but rather a concept. As we saw, according to this strand of thought, "Signs do not refer to things, they signify concepts, and concepts are aspects of thought, not aspects of reality" (Scholes 1977: 110-111). This is the position with which Scholes disagrees. Although he clarifies that he does not seek to solve any great philosophical questions about the essence of things and signs, in his view, in order to accept the model of literature he is proposing, all we need to do is to simply accept that, "some correspondence between our thought and the world around us is at least theoretically possible" and that "the act of communication may indeed point to the phenomenal world" (Scholes 1977: 111). While I agree with Scholes that language can and does refer to physical reality, there is also value in the argument that the signification process is far from simple and that, in fact, no one can argue that there is a one-to-one correspondence between words and physical, concrete objects. The question then becomes exactly how this process of signification might work.

2.3.3.3. The Objective Reality versus Our Mediated Reality

Peirce's notions may provide a possible solution. There is apparently some confusion and even disagreement as to whether Peirce considers the material reality in his conception of the sign. Chandler, however, seems to think that he definitely does and states so in strong terms:

Although Peirce's object is not confined to physical things and (like Saussure's signified) it can include abstract concepts and fictional entities, the Peircean model explicitly allocates a place for materiality and for reality outside the sign system which Saussure's model did not directly featured (although Peirce was not a naïve realist, and he argued that all experience is mediated by signs).

(Chandler 2007: 33)

I think the relative confusion and disagreement regarding Peirce's stance on the matter, stems from Peirce's distinction between the phenomenal world and the cognized world. Chandler recognises this distinction briefly in his parenthetical in the above quotation. In a sense, I would argue that Saussure and Peirce take a similar approach but each theorist focuses on different parts of the equation. Saussure stresses the arbitrariness of the sign and states that the signification system is a closed one, but accepts that larger semantic units can have intrinsic meaning (therefore leaving an open window to the referentiality of larger structures). Peirce, on the other hand, recognises a material reality more explicitly but also stresses that this reality we can access only through our own cognition.

Winfried Nöth (1999) reminds us that "Peirce says nothing about the actual "reality" of the object at all and describes it as something "perceptible, or only imaginable, or even unimaginable in one sense"" (Peirce in Nöth 1999: 615)." However, Nöth also stresses that "the object precedes the interpretant, since it is that with which the sign interpreter must be acquainted if the sign is to convey some further information concerning the object" (Nöth 2011: 35). In other words, we can say that the signified refers to the *mediated* reality that has become possible only through human perception. It may seem like a technical detail, yet it is one of great theoretical importance.

We should also point out that the stamp of the structuralist doctrine on semiotics has faded since the 1950s. As Mohammad B. Aghaei (2015) testifies, contemporary semiotics emphasize three main points: The first point is that "the literary text is a complex micro-system of signs built of iconic, indexical and symbolic signs" (Aghaei

2015: 24). Secondly, modern semiotics recognises the literary text as “a mental activity” (ibid). Whereas structuralists focused exclusively on the text and proclaimed the “death of the author” in dramatic fashion, the text is now acknowledged as the “product of its author’s mind” as well as a product that has “its life in the minds of viewers or readers” (ibid). Such a view presupposes psychological, phenomenological and cognitive approaches to literature “as a specific form or representation” (Johansen 2007b in Aghaei 2015: 24). The third point is that literature is in constant interaction with other public, cultural discourses; it is, in short, “culturally contextualized” (Aghaei 2015: 24).

I suggest that the view that supports the referential nature of language is not entirely incompatible with the Saussurean assertion about the arbitrariness of the symbolic sign. Words do refer to abstract concepts and not actual physical entities. If words had a one-to-one correspondence with material objects, language’s utility as an abstracted system of communication would collapse. At the same time, we must also recognise that, although abstracted, language is still a means of communication. But, if no link exists between the word “tree” and trees in our phenomenal world, language as a communication system has collapsed once again.

It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to solve any grand philosophical debates concerning the existence and perception of physical reality. I do wish to align myself, however, with a mimetic tradition of literary theory and hopefully I have supported my view adequately. By recognising Peirce’s distinction between an unmediated reality and our cognized version of it and by exploiting the often unacknowledged notion by Saussure that semantic units larger than phonemes may acquire their meaning in a more motivated than arbitrary way, we can accept that language, and therefore literary (screenplay) language is referential; that is to say, it ultimately refers to some physical reality even if it is only by way of the mental concepts of such a reality that the senders and receivers of literary messages keep in their minds. Eco himself suggested that the signified is something between “a mental image, a concept and (..) a psychological reality” (Chandler 2007: 16). A mental image, of course, presupposes a physical reality and a perception of that reality. Language allows communication by way of abstractions and conceptualisations, but it does point to a phenomenal context.

2.4 The Problem of Signifying Character in Literary Texts

We are not out of the woods yet. After arguing for the referentiality of language, what we need to clarify is the delicate process of abstraction; in other words, the cognitive mechanisms that allow us to use an abstract communication in system as a shortcut in order to refer easily to our perceived physical reality. Trosdal (1995) outlines such a process. In her own words:

Because concepts are the result of abstractions of essential features from perceived realities (and, reciprocally, perception of realities is influenced by linguistic concepts), they merely imply their direct or indirect applicability to concrete realities

(Trosdal 1995: 363)

Trosdal expands on the actual cognitive process of this abstraction in her discussion about language acquisition during infancy:

At the same time that sensory knowledge of an object is gained, the mind makes a concept of it (cf. Langer 1951:36). This it does by choosing certain qualities or characteristic features applicable not to the object alone but also in relation to the object's environmental entities.

(Trosdal 1995: 361)

Trosdal also draws our attention to the crucial distinction between the denotation and the connotations of a word. More specifically, she states that:

connotation relates the abstract general concept to a class of items the symbol represents (ex. shape, trunk, leaves, etc. characterizing the object: tree); denotation is the particular concrete item the language user applies the connotation to (ex. The concrete tree he sees).

(ibid)

But what is the process of signification as far as literary character is concerned? I believe that Trosdal's notions can provide an analogy in the ways that we abstract the notion of character, conceptualize it and then apply certain features or qualities to it. According to Barthes, the literary text is, "a galaxy of signifiers" (Barthes 1974: 5). In order to understand what is being represented in literary narratives we need to define the object of representation in greater detail. In his seminal article, *On the Ontology of Fictional Characters: A Semiotic Approach*, Umberto Eco illuminates a possible

pathway. Informed by the same possible-worlds theory that also influenced Uri Margolin, Eco is concerned with the question of our emotional involvement with characters, even though we are aware they are not real entities in the physical world. As he notes, he considers characters like Anna Karenina “as a mind depended object, or the object of cognition” (Eco 2009: 84). Eco clarifies that his approach “is not an ontological but a semiotic one”. Later on, Eco proposes that character is a semiotic object by way of its “being a set of properties” (Eco 2009: 89). For Eco, as is the case for semioticians in general, “the expression dog conveys as its content the properties of being an animal, a mammal, a canid, a barking creature, the man’s best friend and many others registered by a comprehensive encyclopaedia” (ibid). Thus, he also proposes that, “A fluctuating character exhibits a *core* of properties that seem to be identified by everybody: for instance, Little Red Riding Hood is a girl, she wears a red cap, she met a wolf who later devoured her and her grandmother...” (Eco 2009: 87).

Arguably, there is a difference between the character “dog” and the character “Red Riding Hood”. Moreover, there is an even more crucial difference between the character “dog” and the hypothetical fictional character “Peter Jones” [cite a script?]. While “dog” refers directly to the animate object, the possible fictional human Peter Jones is mediated through a proper name. We, the readers, infer a possible human insofar we are familiar with the socio-cultural custom of naming individuals. We also must note that the abstract notion of *character* does not appear in a concrete screenplay as such. Play-scripts may often begin with a page dedicated to the “cast of characters” but this is not the case with screenplays. No screenplay names its characters on the page as “characters”. In fact, in both novels and screenplays, the term character is a convenient abstraction. So what exactly are we abstracting? And how are fictional characters mimetic if no real-life referent exists for them?

In regard to the first question, I suggest that what we encounter in the literary text is mainly proper names and pronouns denoting human beings via our well-established cultural norm of naming ourselves and others. The notion of *character*, we could say, is metonymically transferred to either a proper name or a personal pronoun standing-in for that name. What the literary text does is to assign various attributes to that proper name, through grammatical and syntactic means.

The second question is more problematic. In the case that a literary work names and describes an historical person, say Napoleon Bonaparte, it is easier to talk about representation. This is a real human being that has existed in our real world. Our task becomes theoretically more challenging if we want to describe the process of mimesis of a non-existent character. Even if we employ possible worlds theory, it is still hard to comprehend how we can talk about representation when the fictional character has no real-life correspondent.

Alfred Korzybski outlines a very interesting analytical operation of abstracting features from a proper noun or a proper name. In fact, his analysis mirrors Trosdal's elaborations on language acquisition during infancy. I am citing directly from Chandler's book on semiotics:

Here is a homely example of levels of verbal abstraction in relation to a cow called 'Bessie':

1. The cow known to science ultimately consists of atoms, electrons etc. according to present-day scientific inference

...

2. The cow we perceive is not the word but the object of experience, that which our nervous system abstracts (selects)

...

3. The word 'Bessie' (cow) is the name we give to the object of perception of level 2. The name is not the object; it merely stands for the object and omits reference to many characteristics of the object.

4. The word 'cow' stands for the characteristics we have abstracted as common to cow, cow, cow . . . cow. Characteristics peculiar to particular cows are left out.

(McKim in Chandler 2007: 70-71)

Drawing on Eco and Phelan, but also on this example of Bessie, I argue that it is the constitutive elements of human beings that are being represented and become unique by way of the character's proper name. By constitutive elements I mean of course what James Phelan calls mimetic attributes. Similarly to the cow Bessie, in our abstraction process, the particular characteristics are left out. In this view, a character will have

emotional states, because emotions are common to humans, but exactly which emotional states she will have, is up to the text to assign.

These attributes can be either described directly, or they can be implied but usually it is a combination of both. For example, even if it has not been explicitly stated that Peter Jones has hands, the fact that “he holds his cigarette” clearly implies that he does. Similarly, that “he runs to catch the bus”, implies that he has legs. Or, that he “feels the anger rising” indicates that he has an internal life and possesses emotional states. On the other hand, if the author wrote that “Peter Jones meows loudly and scratches his nails on the sofa”, by way of these actions that, in turn, imply a feline physiology, we will infer that we are being described a cat, rather than a human. Finally, if the text states that Peter Jones “smokes his cigar” and then “licks his paw and cleans his ear with it”, we might infer that Peter Jones is a kind of hybrid creature, half-cat, half-human, and that we are being described a fantasy world. In this case we will need more contextual information to make better sense of this existent. In any case, it is not the proper name that leads us to either conclusion, but the mimetic attributes that are either stated explicitly in the text (e.g. Peter Jones licks his *fur* to clean it”) or are inferred through the actions by the reader (e.g. “smokes”, “meows”, “gets angry”, etc.).

Eco’s notion of a “comprehensive encyclopaedia” is as interesting as it is problematic, in regard to fictional characters. And although Eco provides some examples as to which properties may characterise a reference to historical figures such as *Napoleon* or *Adolf Hitler*, he does not do the same in regard to fictional characters in original literary works. We have no prior semiotic knowledge of such fictional characters whatsoever. As we have already established, a fictional character has no historical, concrete, existing referent so the only thing that the fictional name can signify when first encountered is a) the probability of a human body and b) the name’s gender. Both, should be noted, however, may be later contradicted by the text’s further data on the subject. For instance, our hypothetical Peter Jones may be a ghost with no physical body, or he may be a robot, devoid of human emotions.

In any case, this is as far as a proper name can get us. And considering the polysemic and multi-faceted nature of humans, it is not nearly far enough. Even in Eco’s simple “dog” example, there are many properties that cannot be deciphered by the mere noun “dog”. Animals have personalities too. Is that a friendly dog or a hostile dog? Is it

playful or does it spend all day sleeping? Or - an even more primary question - is it a male or a female dog? These attributes are not conveyed by the signifier “dog”. More textual data have to be offered in order for such expectations (if they exist) to be fulfilled. This is even more the case with the signification of human persons, where a more prominent focus is placed on interiority, an aspect that cannot be illuminated by the proper name alone. But these are considerations for the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I tackled the debate regarding character’s nature as mimetic or textual. I reviewed the field by examining the stance that screenwriting and narrative theory adopts on the topic. Although, as I have demonstrated, my approach to character is mimetic, my methodological approach to the literary text is semiotic and structural. I am in agreement with theorists like Barthes and Todorov who see the character as a collection of semes organized around a proper name that attracts these semes like a magnet. At the same time, I countered the arguments against the mimetic aspect of character. I referred to reader response, narrative and linguistic theories and ultimately suggested that because narrative in literature is verbally constructed and because language has a referential/representational function, therefore, character can be said to have a mimetic aspect as well.

This argument that character has a mimetic as well as a semiotic side, allows me to proceed to the next chapter where I present an elaborate and detailed semiotic analysis model of character change as the spatiotemporal organisation of mimetic attributes within the screenplay text.

Chapter 3: A Holistic Approach to Character Change - A Proposed Analysis Model

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I outlined in detail my views on literary - and as an extension, on screenplay - character. I argued that character is central in fictional narratives. By reconstructing Seymour Chatman's views on *story events*, I asserted that *events* can be seen as always relating to *character*: they are either instigated by them or they are affecting them. By using Chatman's notions (1980), I was able to argue that plot is nothing more than a temporal organisation of a series of characters' changing states. Therefore, I suggested that the old debate character versus plot should be put to rest.

Furthermore, I proposed that a combined semiotic and mimetic approach to character is more appropriate for textual analysis and argued that these views are not incompatible with each other. To that aim, I reviewed the assertions of structuralist theorists and argued that the case against the mimetic view of character can be rebutted from three different perspectives: that of reader response theory, that of narrativity and that of linguistics. Ultimately, I suggested that literary, and therefore screenplay character is mimetic as well as semiotic because language has a referential function and thus is able to represent physical reality in verbal means.

Moreover, I also noted that structuralist theorists often confuse the terms *mimetic* and *realistic*. I proposed that, because character is mimetic, it does not follow that it is also realistic. The perceived realism, I argued, is mostly the result of the spatiotemporal organisation of the characters' mimetic attributes on a syntagmatic axis. If the fictional rules of this spatiotemporal organisation do not coincide with the rules underlying the physical reality and real-life people as readers perceive them, then the literary work may be perceived as non-realistic.

Considering my reconstruction of Chatman's notions on events, the study of character becomes, in essence, the study of *character change*. Chatman defined events as changing states, therefore, insofar as events always relate to character, they refer to character changing states (Chatman 1980: 44). While screenwriting and dramatic writing teachers often argue that characters should change during the course of the

narrative because change is a natural phenomenon (Lajos Egri 2008), I examine the topic of character change from a purely narratological and textual perspective and argue that character change results simply from a reevaluation of plot and events. In this view, the notion of character change is a theoretical pre-given.

While the aim of the two previous chapters was to “set the scene”, in this chapter, my main objective is to outline my proposed character change analysis model in detail. First, I begin with a brief overview of screenwriting theory’s and screenwriting manual’s view on character change. I posit that manuals offer a limited and generalised notion on character change by treating it as a mere feature of character that a text may or may not possess; thus, I suggest there is a need of a new, holistic evaluation of character change from both an analytical and a creative perspective. Then, I proceed to address the issue of the mimetic attributes that in my view compose literary character when organised around the proper name, as well as to the various pronouns that indicate the established proper name as indexical signifiers. Then, I move onto a qualitative examination of these attributes and the multiple ways that they can be altered by the author. It is the constant alteration of mimetic attributes that creates the notion of character change. Finally, following my short analysis of the Harry Potter mythos in Chapter 1, I use the script *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (2001) as a case study to demonstrate in more detail why a holistic approach to character change that focuses on various attributes, rather than on simplified *goals* or *personality traits*, gives us a clearer idea of the story’s protagonist and broadens our interpretive field.

3.1 Character Change in Screenwriting Theory

I agree with Steven Price’s assertion that screenwriting manuals are not critical studies and I propose we should approach them with some caution (Price 2010b: 202). However, in the field of screenwriting theory and practice, until recently, manuals were the only texts that carefully examined and discussed screenplays. Thus, although they lack in academic rigour and their main aim is simply to sell books, they do deserve attention, especially in a practice-based thesis which is concerned with the creative aspect of writing.

Syd Field (2005) is one of the few screenwriting gurus to begin his manual with an ontological exploration of character. He is in agreement with Aristotle and asserts with

confidence that, “Action is character; a person is what he does, not what he says. Film is behaviour. Because we’re telling a story in pictures, we must show how the character acts and reacts to the incidents and events that he/she confronts and overcomes (or doesn’t overcome) during the story line” (Field 2005: 47). In regard to the issue of character change, Field claims that it is an important element of screenplays since “change seems to be an essential aspect of humanity, especially at this time in our culture” (Field 2005: 68). However, being less strict in his rules than his colleague, Robert McKee, Field notes that “Having a character change during the course of the screenplay is not a requirement if it doesn’t fit your character” (Field 2005:68). Syd Field, then, does not think character arcs as a necessity in storytelling for the screen, but underlines their importance nonetheless, basing this opinion on the importance of the broad (philosophical) concept of change and its presumed dominance in humanity and its culture.

Guy Gallo, on the other hand, although focusing on the importance of character, he complains that: “Phrases like inciting incident and rising action and reversal and character arc are tossed about like confetti” (Gallo 2012: 15). Although Gallo argues that character is the most important element in cinematic narrative, he does not seem to support that a character’s actions should necessarily lead towards a personality change. Following his distinction between *Character as Agent* and *Character as Aspect* (Gallo 2012: 20, my emphasis), Gallo also makes a distinction between a Character as Agency who is active, “where a character’s decisions and choices create or alter the course of events” and a Character as Agency who is passive, “where the events of the plot are external (a war for instance). In that case the agency may only be that of a witness, or even a victim” (Gallo 2012: 27). And while Galo believes that when the plot’s events are altered by character’s choices and decisions the film is more dramatic, he also argues there is dramatic interest in watching a passive character’s responses to an external event.

Christopher Vogler (2007) based his influential manual on Joseph Campbell’s *The Power of Myth* (1991) and *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). Joseph Campbell’s work and research as a mythologist and anthropologist was a major influence for screenwriters in general as he made a distinction between the character’s old self that must be destroyed during the course of the character’s outer and inner journey, and the character’s new self that must emerge, signaling the hero’s complete transformation.

According to Glenda Hambly (2021), Campbell proposed a universal pattern of mythic structure that he believed, “had dominated from the beginning of time to the present because it is intrinsic to the human psyche” (Hambly 2021: 136). Specifically, in *The Power of Myth*, Campbell states that “The hero moves not into outer space but into inward space, to the place from which all being comes, into the consciousness that is the source of all things, the kingdom of heaven within. The images are outward, but their reflection is inward” (Campbell, Moyers and Flowers 1991: 77). These terms, “old self” and “new self”, hint towards a moralistic view of character change and some theorists, influenced by Campbell, capitalized on those notions. However, Vogler’s views on character change are influenced by Aristotle as well. The key to character change for Vogler is the existence and the overcoming of a *flaw*. In his own words, “Flaws [...] give a character somewhere to go - the so called “character arc” in which a character develops from condition A to condition Z through a series of steps. Flaws are a starting point of imperfection of incompleteness from which a character can grow” (Vogler 2007: 33). The screenwriter however must be careful. This change must be gradual and not abrupt in order to be plausible and convincing. An adherence to realism is desirable even for a theory of character that sees the hero in metaphorical terms as the “symbol(s) of the soul in transformation, and of the journey each person takes through life” (Vogler 2007: 37)

Linda Seger (1994) recognises the importance of character in film narratives and asserts that it is, in fact, character that pushes the story forward. She also points out that it is specifically the goal or want of the protagonist that gives momentum to the story. However, similarly to Syd Field, Seger does not believe that character change is necessary to every story. Although she notes that the question of character change is one that many producers often like to ask, in fact, it is only the best of films that include a character arc. In her own words, “Not every film needs a transformational arc, although many of the best films will show at least one of the characters becoming transformed in the process of living out the story” (Seger 1994: 186)

Although Robert McKee’s book is heavily focused on structure and story, and only dedicates one chapter on character, he recognises that, “When a character steps into your imagination, he brings an abundance of story possibilities” (McKee 1997: 31). In this view, he implicitly links character and plot and asserts the centrality of character. He makes that notion even clearer later on when he argues that, “Structure is a selection

of events from the characters' life stories" (1997: 33). Thus, although McKee is mostly concerned with the ways a writer must compose her narrative in a successful way, in order to "arouse specific emotions and to express a specific view of life" (ibid), at the same time he acknowledges that it is character that determines the structure of the screenplay text. Robert McKee identifies two stages of character change. He outlines the first stage of character change by making a distinction between characterization (what the character seems to be) and character (what the character really is) and by talking about character revelation instead of character change at this point (McKee 1997). For McKee, then, change is about the character finally revealing his true, inner self at the end of the movie. But then, McKee argues for a second kind of change as well. After the writer has revealed to the reader who the character really is, he must also change the character's inner self too during the remainder of the narrative (1997: 100-105).

Playwright theorist, Lajos Egri, adopted a far stricter view on character change in his celebrated book *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, (2008). In Egri's view, "we want to know why man is who he is, why his character is constantly changing and why it must change whether he wishes it or not" (Egri 2008: 60). Egri's statement hints at a more deterministic approach that echoes Heraclitus's famous quote that "everything changes". "Everything in nature changes – human beings along with the rest. A man who was brave ten years ago may, he may be a coward now for any number of reasons: age, physical deterioration, changed financial status to name a few" (ibid). Egri suggests that, since change is mandatory and found in nature everywhere, character change is mandatory in fictional narratives; therefore, a character in a fictional narrative that does not change is not "natural". Moreover, Egri seems to be in agreement with screenwriting teachers in that character change should be primarily focused on a dominant personality trait. However, he also suggests that a dominant personality trait may change as a result of other attribute changes (physiology, financial status, etc.). This is an important notion for our endeavour to identify the character's main mimetic attributes and how they interact with one another.

Dramatist and playwright theorist John Howard Lawson discusses Aristotle and observes that the Greek philosopher "associated action with a reversal of fortune" (Lawson 1960: 4). Although neither Aristotle nor Lawson make any specific reference to character, Lawson's referencing of Aristotle that "the sequence of events, according

to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good or from good fortune to bad” (ibid) forms a direct link with the notion of character change, not in terms of morality or psychology but of fortune (fate).

For Linda Aronson (2010) on the other hand, character arcs are defined in relation to the character’s emotions. In other words, they constitute the emotional and psychological journey of the character and they occur “in response to the action line (the adventure) and the relationship line (close relationships formed or tested or both during the adventure)” (Aronson 2010: 95). Aronson also offers a brief outline on how to create a character arc where she advocates a “step-by-step map of progression” (2010: 97).

Screenwriter Soni Jorgensen (2017) approaches the issue of character change from a psychoanalytic perspective. She views character transformation as a form of dying. This is of course a metaphorical death. The protagonist has to let go parts of her ego and as well as any fears or limiting belief systems that hinder her eventual change. Jorgensen believes in the primacy of character and asserts that change cannot be forced. It is character transformation that gives birth to the structure of the story. This transformation is closely linked towards problem-solving and self-realization (Jorgensen 2017: 120).

Approaching the topic from the perspective of audience response and engagement, Mittell suggests that most characters (at least in certain TV series) do not change but rather it is our perception of them that changes throughout the course of the serial narrative (Wabeke 2016: 278). In a more confident tone, Canet (2019) posits that “The transformational arc of the main character is one of the central elements in the construction of any screenplay narrative” (2019: 99). Nash (2014) also highlights the importance of character transformation, stating that it is “what keeps the audience engaged” in a fictional narrative (2014: 349)

My view of character change, as a complicated network of textual signs, is closer to Radha O’Meara’s approach. In her discussion of character change in episodic television (2015), O’Meara associates character change with the actions by which we infer it. O’Meara identifies three dominant types of character actions and argues that each of these actions implies an internal, psychological change. The actions that O’Meara identifies are:

the *experience of significant life events*, such as births, deaths, marriages, moving house and getting or losing a job; the *experience of intense emotions* and especially their physical manifestations, such as screaming with terror, raging in anger or kissing passionately; and *observable contrasts in behaviour*, as when a former miser squanders money or a former killjoy throws a party.

(O'Meara 2015: 190, my emphases)

O'Meara goes on to define character arcs as “several changes interconnected causally or thematically. The chain of development relies on several changes, and the links between them.” (2015: 190-191). O'Meara's definition of character arc is very close to my understanding of character change. However, in her article, O'Meara often conflates screenplay characterisation with film characterisation. Moreover, the discussion remains focused on the internal aspects of character. In my analysis, I identify more types of mimetic attributes. My proposed character change analysis model is not confined to emotional or behavioural modifications but also includes external aspects, such as environment and personal relationships.

Drawing on Noel Carroll, Paolo Braga (2017) associates character change with what he calls “moral emotion” that constitutes the theme of the film's narrative. He follows the character arc models found in screenwriting textbooks, where the character eventually changes values as a result of a long, “three-act journey towards his true self” (2017: 68). This change of values, argues Braga, results produces a concern of justice, “and a subsequent moral emotion” (ibid). So, for Braga, the character's journey is predominantly a moral one; the inner maturation that the protagonist is forced to go through is a moral one as he realizes the external goal of restoring justice in the fictional world and defeating the villains while reaping the rewards. Thus, Braga states his agreement with the screenwriting manuals that suggest, “the theme of a story is intimately connected to the protagonist's change in relation to the values at stake”. (ibid)

Craig Batty (2010) approaches character change by focusing on the complicated relationship between plot and character. His objective is to specify the plot's structure employed by the screenplay narrative in order to reveal the universal human story lurking underneath. While what we watch on the screen is mostly physical action, Batty argues that what stays with us after the credits roll is the character's transformation

substance which constitutes the narrative's emotional core. (Batty 2010: n.pag). For his analysis, Batty also invokes Linda Aronson who also perceives screenplay narrative as consisting of two different threads: the external nature of plot and the internal nature of character (Batty 2010: n.pag.). Reformulating Vogler's mapping of the hero's journey, Batty proposes a more detailed, example-based exploration of how the physical and emotional journeys are structured along each other. This leads him to review Vogler's 12-steps of the hero's journey and to redefine it by showing how the arc is manifested differently on the physical level as well as the emotional.

For example, in regard to Vogler's second step (Call to Adventure), Batty (2011) distinguishes between the physical action, where a series of events prompt the character to embark on an actual journey, and the emotional thread, where an event "draws upon the protagonist's need to transform into someone more than he currently is." (Batty 2011: 84) Similarly, in regard to the sixth step where the character is forced to face her first tests, the physical overcoming of these obstacles advances the plot and allows the hero to physically move on, while at the same time, informs her gradual emotional transformation. (2011: 86). Considering Vogler's steps are largely metaphorical, Batty's elaborations should also be considered as such in order for the analysis model to be applicable to different narratives. Thus, I take the "physical rebirth" mentioned in the seventh step ("Approach to the Inmost Cave") (2011: 87) to refer to any significant alteration in regard to the protagonist's physiological aspect that moves the plot in a different direction.

Batty's model is detailed and thorough and he demonstrates its applicability across several films (see Batty 2011: 99-195). At the same time, it is still positioned as a universalist model and focuses on analysis of narratives in films, rather than narratives as depicted in the screenplay text. More importantly it remains focused on a twofold distinction between physicality and emotionality. While both aspects are crucial to characterization and character development, my aim is to broaden the conception of character even more and to explore all attributes assigned to it by the screenplay text.

3.2 The Textual Analysis of Character Change

Although the idea that screenplay characters should demonstrate change because change is a natural phenomenon holds intuitive value, it is not solid enough, in academic terms, to support a theoretical approach to character change. For the purposes of this thesis, that is concerned predominantly with textual analysis, I propose that a narratological explanation of character change is more appropriate. I have already argued that events relate to character, therefore the story is comprised of character changing states. Now, I turn my attention to what exactly we mean by “character”; in other words, how is character signified in the text.

Considering both the mimetic attributes as well as the temporal unfolding of the narrative, textual analysis in regard to character has to be conducted from both a paradigmatic and syntagmatic point of view. These terms were first described by Saussure. The paradigmatic axis concerns the act of substitution, while the syntagmatic axis that of positioning and as Daniel Chandler states, “The structure of any text or cultural practice has both syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes” (Chandler 2007: 86). Chandler brings film shots analysis as an example of both paradigmatic and syntagmatic analyses. A film’s shots can be analysed paradigmatically by considering, for example, which alternative shots the filmmaker could have used; they can also be analysed syntagmatically by considering the shot’s position within the temporal axis of the narrative (ibid).

I suggest that a similar analysis can be applied to character, and therefore, to character change. A character’s mimetic attributes can be analysed both paradigmatically, by comparing the different sets of attributes and syntagmatically by examining the temporal organisation of each attribute. Thus, it is equally crucial, for instance to observe whether a script narrative is concerned with particular sets of attributes (e.g. emotional states or physiological states), as well as examine how these attributes relate and unfold chronologically. For instance, in a horror film, a physiological change may be followed (in a causal link) by an emotional change or a personality trait change. I argue that this is how a writer constructs her screenplay narrative. By employing an analytical method that considers both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis we are able to analyse both which attributes the screenwriter has selected to involve more heavily in her narrative and how she combines them chronologically in cause-and-effect links.

More specifically, I propose there is a certain number of analytic operations that a critical reader has to do in order to offer a comprehensive evaluation of the textual process of character change. Semiotics allow us to perceive the screenplay both as a literary text *and* a communication document (the receivers being both the cast and crew and the casual reader). Thus, I approach the textual elements as signs and argue that most of these signs relate either directly or indirectly to the central narrative agent. Everything in the text, I posit, signifies the character or the character's situation. In regard to the screenplay analyses, then, the first operation is to identify the central narrative agent in the screenplay (=protagonist). Then, I examine closely the screenplay text to locate any instances that attributes (or features) are assigned to that main character. These traits will be attributed to character either by verbal, physical, mental acts the character itself undertakes, or by direct authorial description. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a complimentary operation is to reconstruct the linearity of the plot, in the cases where the normal chronological order to the narrative's events has been altered. Once a linear unfolding of the events has been established, and the mimetic attributes have been identified, the next process is to group them into categories (paradigmatic sets) and evaluate their veracity. In screenplays, where authorial comments rarely stray from the third-person omniscient narrator and are usually taken as alethic facts of the possible fictional world. But if a character verbally describes another character, this may or may not constitute accurate characterization. After establishing the veracity of the character attributes, the theorist can finally proceed with a syntagmatic analysis, and examine how these attributes interact with each other and change throughout the course of the narrative. The distinction between paradigmatic sets and syntagmatic organization allows to observe what type of attributes different texts assign to their protagonists as well as how they proceed to change these assigned attributes to produce the effect of character change. Such an analysis can lead to subsequent interpretative considerations; however, this is not the main focus of my thesis. My approach is partly informed by Barthes' operations who argued that,

‘an important part of the semiological undertaking’ was to divide texts ‘into minimal significant units . . . then to group these units into paradigmatic classes, and finally to classify the syntagmatic relations which link these units’

(Barthes in Chandler 2007: 87)

In the next Chapter, I elaborate further on my methodological approach and how I apply this model to specific scripts. Utilizing the notion of the indexical and iconic aspect of language, as well as drawing on the screenplay's objects and modes of description, I employ a more surgical, textual analysis that looks closely at the complex linguistic mechanisms by which screenplay language conveys and alters these attributes.

For my analysis model to be applicable to a fictional narrative there is only one necessary condition: that the narrative in question involves anthropomorphic agents. These agents will share certain attributes with real humans, and will function mimetically at least on some level, even if the narrative work belongs in the surrealist genre. Therefore, in a film like Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997), the physiological mimetic attribute of the protagonist is violated (different actors play the main character after the midpoint) but the identity of the character (name, psychology, etc.) is maintained. Our first instinct is to say that such an analysis, based on mimetic attributes should only be applicable to realist fiction but the above example demonstrates that this is not the case. Mimesis can be found on many levels: physiology, relationships, emotions, cognitive functions, geographical location etc. Even if one of these attributes is present (and physiology will always be present in a narrative film), I propose that my analysis model is applicable. Instead of thinking about this in opposing terms, I suggest that we can think of changing mimetic attributes as a spectrum. Whereas, for example, is a realistic horror script, the character may undergo certain physiological changes in accordance to the laws of our physical reality (e.g. she may lose a leg in an accident, become pregnant, or undergo plastic surgery), in a surrealist work, like *Lost Highway* (1997) or Bunuel's *The Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), the physical laws may be crudely violated with different actors playing the same character, which in terms of the fictional narrative, means that the character has undergone a radical physiological transformation. We could even say that in a surrealist narrative, certain attributes may be violated in a way that in a realist work they would not be. But these mimetic attributes are still very much present in surrealist fiction and I maintain that we, as readers or audiences, perceive the surrealist narrative by way of making sense of these violations. This, of course, may require a transference of our meaning-making process from the realm of realistic inference and interpretation to a more symbolic one. When, in Bunuel's *The Phantom of Liberty* (1974), the parents maintain that their daughter is missing, even though she is sitting right next to them and they talk to her, the violation

of their own cognitive functions invites an interpretation that goes beyond the more straightforward signification of motivation-to-action. Why do parents insist their daughter is missing even as they see her and talk to her? The absurdity of the situation can be interpreted in many ways and depends on the context and perhaps the characters' other mimetic attributes but, in order for the interpretive process to begin, the violation of the mimetic attribute has to be recognized first.

3.3 The Character's Paradigmatic Sets of Mimetic Attributes

Breaking character down into mimetic attributes is a distinctly semiotic enterprise; however, it also draws on views from literary theory that find the idea of a unified, stable character that can be defined in terms like self-hood and personality a folly endeavour. Cixous and Cohen (1974), for instance, offer their disapproval of traditional notions of character as a fixed entity which denies the "unpredictable, piercing part of the subject, this infinite potential to rise up" (Cixous and Cohen 1974: 384). From this perspective, they seem to be referring to character as a quality rather than to character as a narratological element. Cixous and Cohen also object to interpretive endeavors of character typologies that reduce the apparent multiplicity of character to a finite number of character sets. For them, character is not reducible to a single trait as some theorists try to make him appear. What is more, character does not even consist of a single "I" but of multiple identities revolting against a single, unifying subjectivity. Character, and especially character in modern fiction, is a manifestation of the unconscious which produces myriad different identities clashing with each other and resisting a static, hegemonic nature. This is the character that Cixous and Cohen prefer, especially from an ideological perspective.

In a similar vein, Frederic Will (1961) studies Sartre's plays to find an implicit literary realization of his overall conception of character. What emerges is not so much a comprehensive theory of character but rather a viewpoint on the nature of character. According to Sartre, what we would call "personality" or "self-hood" exists only in the past. It is accessible through reflection and recollection but in no way does it determine one's character. Character, for Sartre, could be defined as one's "projection of himself toward the goal of being a great banker, a great cook, or a great philosopher" (Will 1961: 455). It is goals and actions that define character and these are ever-changing,

therefore a stable nature of character is impossible to pin down. This focus on goals, actions and the present tense allows Sartre's conception of character to sit comfortably with screenplay narrative and screenplay language that foregrounds action and is almost exclusively written in the present tense, alluding to the temporal nature of narrative and cinema as medium designed to portray moving images.

As Daniel Chandler observes, "writing is a 'digital technology'. Signifying systems impose digital order on what we often experience as a dynamic and seamless flux. The very definition of something as a sign involves reducing the continuous to the discrete". (Chandler 2007: 48). Thus, instead of arguing for an instant representation by the mere use of a character's proper name (or pronoun), I propose that it is the main sets of features that characterise human persons and that are being primarily represented on the page. This rationale leads to the notion that such features are common to all; or, at least - to be more precise - such feature *categories* are common to all, even if the specific features differ from person to person, from character to character.

The next problem that arises is how to define what these features are. Chandler rightly warns that:

"There can be no comprehensive catalogue of such dynamic analogue signs as smiles or laughs. Analogue signs can of course be digitally reproduced (as is demonstrated by the digital recording of sounds and of both still and moving images) but they cannot be directly related to a standard 'dictionary' and syntax in the way that linguistic signs can."

(Chandler 2007: 48)

In order to even attempt to delineate a paradigm of character attributes, we need to settle in some general categories. This is where things get particularly challenging. As seen in the previous chapter, Umberto Eco discusses the properties of dogs and assigns certain features to them, such as "man's best friend" and "mammal" (Eco 2009: 89). He concludes his examination by alluding to "many other [properties] registered by a comprehensive encyclopaedia" (ibid). I take such an encyclopaedia to be imaginary and even utopian in nature. In regard to humans, can the properties of which they consist of be said they are of finite number? The answer is most probably not. Moreover, I am not going to pretend that my proposed mimetic attributes are absolute. However, as already

argued, we do need at least some general categories - some sets of *semes* - that we can use in our organising character syntax in the screenplay text.

The screenwriting manuals examined, gave us some indication of mimetic attributes that are often discussed. My objective is not to argue for a universal and absolute approach to character traits, but rather as identifying what is already being suggested and grouping them into useful, broad and easily-applied categories. We saw, for instance, that Aronson speaks of emotions and psychology. Egri, in discussing character change, points out changes in physiology or financial status. Vogler refers to the notion of flaw, which can be perceived as a negative personality trait, while Lawson refers broadly to a reversal in fortune which can have various interpretations.

Aristotle, in his theory of character in tragedy, proposed two main contrasting traits, both of moral nature: noble and base (Chatman 1980: 109). This approach seems rather limiting. As Chatman counters, “If one trait is assigned to an action, why isn’t the floodgate thereby opened?” (ibid). Roland Barthes, although in his early writings subordinated character to plot, in his influential study *S/Z* admitted the importance of elements such as trait and personality: “‘character is a product of combinations: the combination is relatively stable (denoted by the recurrence of the “seme”) and more or less complex (involving more or less congruent, more or less contradictory figures [traits])’” (Barthes 1974 in Chatman 1980: 115).

From a more general perspective, Eagleton (2013) considers the definition of the word character that can mean “sign, letter or symbol as well as a literary figure” (Eagleton 2013: 48). He reminds us of the ancient Greek meaning of the word, which meant “a stamping tool which makes a distinctive mark” (ibid). Therefore, from a definitional perspective, character would refer to what makes an individual unique; a dominant personality trait that distinguishes them, if not from the entire population, at least from the other agents within the same literary work. Eagleton in fact suggests that, after the rise of individualism, “individuals are now defined by what is peculiar to them” (Eagleton 2013: 49).

But what are these peculiar and unique features? Uri Margolin, in his detailed analysis of character, proposes features such as, “inner states, mental properties, personality traits and general or specific complexes of such properties” (Margolin 1983: 2). In another article, Margolin speaks of data that the narrator can indirectly convey

and distinguishes “a narrative agent’s verbal, physical and mental actions [...] physical attributes [...] his formal relations to other narrative agents [...] and intratextual patterns such as parallel plots” (Margolin 1990: 459). James Phelan (1989), whilst discussing a poem by Browning, outlines some of that poem’s character’s attributes: “e.g. the Duke’s maleness, his position of power, his imperiousness, his boldness, and so on” (Phelan 1989: 11). Phelan does not proceed to suggest a more systematic categorization of traits but we can discern in his examples physiology, financial status and personality traits.

Screenwriting theorists often explore the character’s features and their function within the screenplay narrative. Patrick Cattrysse (2010) examines the standard screenwriting terms *want* and *need*. In screenwriting practice, *want* is usually associated with the term *goal*, while *need* implies a deeper, internal *desire* that compliments or contrasts the protagonist’s goal. Cattrysse identifies two main distinctions between the two terms: the external and internal distinction and the conscious / unconscious distinction. Regarding the external versus internal distinction, it is often argued that the protagonist’s goal represents an external desire while his deeper need is something internal. As Margaret Mehring puts it, ““a character can be driven to achieve one goal while being simultaneously compelled to seek a very different and conflicting goal. It is this warring between the external and internal goals that is the essence of great drama”” (Mehring 1990 in Cattrysse 2010: 85). In a similar vein, Batty links the goal with a character’s external journey and the need with her emotional, internal one (Batty 2013). In regard to the second distinction, *want* is usually associated with a conscious decision by a character, while the *need* is the unconscious drive that lurks underneath. Robert McKee associates such an approach with more competent writing when he states that, ““the most memorable, fascinating characters tend to have not only a conscious but an unconscious desire. Although these complex protagonists are unaware of their subconscious need, the audience senses it, perceiving in them an inner contradiction”” (McKee 1997: 138).

Cattrysse finds both approaches inadequate. Instead, he proposes it is more accurate to redefine *want* and *need* in relation to audience expectation and moral attitudes. He finds some initial support in Robert McKee’s comments that state, ““while the protagonist may be unaware of his subconscious need, the audience sense it”” (1997: 138). According to Cattrysse:

If we consider the want-need dilemma as a conflict between the character and the audience rather than between the character and herself/himself, this shifts the central focus of the conflict from the story level to the level of interaction between the plot (as a narrated story) and the audience.

(Cattrysse 2010: 92)

Goals and needs are the topic of Marja-Riitta Koivumäki's article on Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia* (1983). As previously noted, in her essay, Koivumäki (2014) distinguishes between classical and poetic dramaturgy. In classical dramaturgy, "the goal of the character – what does the character want and what actions may he or she take in order to achieve this goal – is considered to be of the utmost importance." (Koivumäki 2014: 141). In contrast, in poetic dramaturgy, it is the internal need that propels the narrative forward. Koivumäki argues that the main character in *Nostalgia* does not have a clear, external goal, until late into the film. It is instead left to his internal need to carry the burden of narrative progression.

Deutelbaum (2015) draws a similar distinction between a more mainstream, Hollywood-influenced approach to character and a more subverting one but, in his case, the attribute that he focuses on is a character's *motivation*. Deutelbaum analyses the screenplay for *The Hurt Locker* (2008) and argues that "it deviates decidedly from the format of classical Hollywood narrative; because he lacks a clearly defined goal, the psychology and motivations of the central character remain obscure" (Deutelbaum 2015: 55). The difference between giving your audience a detailed, clear explanation about the protagonist's motives and being vague about them, retaining an air of mystery around it is that the latter "asks considerably more imaginative and intellectual engagement from its viewers than most commercial cinema." (2015: 69). Apart from motivation, we observe that Deutelbaum also refers to goals and character psychology. While these approaches are a good starting point, what most of them have in common is their focus on internal attributes. Moreover, few of these scholars proceed with a more systematic detailed analysis of the proposed attributes; they merely mention them in passing as a parenthetical afterthought rather than a subject worth further studying.

Television scholar Robert Pearson proposes an even broader categorisation and, to a certain extent, I follow her suggested attributes that have also been informed by David Bordwell. Pearson identifies, "six elements of character identity: psychological

traits/habitual behaviours, physical characteristics/appearance, speech patterns, interactions with other characters, environment and biography” (Pearson in Bednarek 2015: 228).

Pearson’s taxonomy is more comprehensive than other scholars’ in that it includes not only the element of physiology, but also the crucial relational aspects of character (interactions with other characters and location). In that, her approach is similar to Egri’s who made a crucial distinction between the character’s Physiology, Sociology and Psychology. (Egri 1942: 36-37) as well as to Philip Parker’s categorisation of “Outer presence, Inner presence, context” (Parker 2006: 81). This view of dramatic character seems to be in alignment with more scientific views on human persons. As Dario Maestripieri (2012) notes in an online article, human universals are “traits that are shared by all members of our species, Homo Sapiens”. More specifically:

“These traits can be genetic (all human beings have many of the same genes), anatomical (all human bodies share some basic characteristics), physiological (all human lungs, hearts, and digestive systems work the same way), or psychological and behavioral.”

(Maestripieri 2012)

Interestingly, Maestripieri proposes that anatomical and physiological universals are of little interest; I assume that is because their visible, objective nature makes them so easily observable and therefore, according to Maestripieri, unquestionable by most. What scientists are mostly interested in are the behavioural and psychological universals. However, for the purposes of my thesis, specifying which behavioural or emotional patterns we all share is of no importance. This may sound contradictory, since I have suggested that the mimetic attributes that story-worlds represent are at the centre of my thesis. However, my interest is limited strictly to the *broad categories* of those presumed universals, rather than the individual traits. To phrase it another way, it is irrelevant to my thesis whether all humans share the trait of *aggressiveness* or they can all feel the emotion of *sadness*. What suffices for my analysis model is that we all share *personality traits* and the ability to feel *emotions* in general.

Pearson’s categorisation is an excellent starting point for the construction of a more taxonomic categorisation of character attributes, however there are two points that I would like to critique. Firstly, the biography element proposed by Pearson seems to me

less of an element in itself and more of an accumulation of all the other elements. Moreover, I am hesitant to accept the grouping of psychological traits along with habitual behaviours especially considering that Pearson's categorisation seemingly excludes emotional states. I refrain from referring to the attributes as elements of character *identity*, since there are various connotations to the word identity which posit it as a fixed nature resistant to change. Considering my character analysis model is all about change, the term identity appears incompatible with my model.

Relying on Pearson's categories, drawing on character features outlined by other screenwriting theorists above and considering what close readings of screenplay texts present to the reader, I have synthesized my findings and grouped the most commonly observed attributes in comprehensive paradigmatic sets. The list proposed here strives to be at once general and specific enough to provide luminous analyses but I do not posit that it is in any way exhaustive. Objections, revisions and additions are inevitable and welcome.

Firstly, I divide these sets of mimetic attributes into two broad categories: The *Interpersonal* (or relational) and the *Intrapersonal*. The *Interpersonal* categories include these aspects of character that refer to how the character relates to 1) her environment and 2) her fellow characters or inhabitants of this world. This distinction between interpersonal and intrapersonal allows us to perceive not just the interiority of screenplay character, which is usually highlighted in screenplay studies, but also the ways that characters relate to other features of the fictional world: other narrative agents, social, political and economic structures and, in very basic terms, setting and geographical location. Taking these relational aspects of character into consideration broadens our understanding of it and enriches the screenwriter's arsenal when constructing and developing character in the screenplay narrative. Therefore, three sets of such aspects emerge:

1. Environment (or setting or location)
2. Personal relationships
3. Socio-economic status (e.g. financial status, social status, professional status)

The attributes belonging in the *Intrapersonal* category are more difficult to define because they refer to the character's interiority about which no concrete conclusion has

been reached by psychology or anthropology. However, these sciences do provide us with some useful terms and notions that we can use - after all semiosis depends on a broad, cultural understanding of signs and a deep scientific understanding of complicated clinical terms is not demanded in order to enjoy a fictional character. What is more, I stress once again, that these sets of attributes that I'm proposing are open to additions, revisions and alterations, especially if a more definite theory of human universals develops. In regard to the *Intrapersonal* category, therefore, we identify the following sets of attributes:

1. Physiological/Appearance States
2. Emotional States
3. Cognitive States (e.g. skills, knowledge, information, reflection, memory, etc.)
4. Behaviour/Attitude/Traits (includes moral and ideological stances as well as personality traits)
5. Motivational States (includes desires, needs and goals)

I believe this is a comprehensive enough categorisation of character attributes, drawing both on the many suggestions from the literature review above, as well as on screenplay texts, in an attempt to organise them in a few basic paradigmatic sets for useful textual analysis. Although the list is not exhaustive and is obviously open to additions, I suggest other proposed attributes that I have not considered would fit into any one of these categories.

3.4 The Syntagmatic Organisation of Mimetic Attributes

All these aspects/attributes are capable of undergoing change which, in pragmatic terms, means that they can be modified or substituted in many ways. This change occurs due to the temporal ordering of the attributes within the syntagmatic axis of narrative. Attributes are constantly added, modified or replaced by other attributes through linguistic means. The change from one attribute/state to another is what we call "event". And this change is brought upon by 1) the protagonist's actions, 2) another character's actions 3) Natural forces. In this view, action, although highly mimetic is not treated here as a mimetic attribute but rather as the means by which attributes change and give

way to other attributes in order to form the plot of the story. This is why plot is redefined as character change which is redefined as the constant change of mimetic attributes.

These changes do not refer only to the beginning and the ending of filmic narratives. In fact, this is a common omission by manuals: they emphasize beginnings and endings and neglect the middle of the narrative. A character may be established as egotistical and become altruistic for a few scenes but then he may reclaim his established trait of egotism by the end of the story. At least two changes have occurred and to understand character and theme we should take note of both. Moreover, some of these attribute changes may be more radical in certain films (like horror or sci-fi movies) or subtler, like in intimate dramas. And it is the aim of the theorist to conduct a syntagmatic analysis of these attribute paradigms by exploring how they interact with each other.

Keeping all that in mind, if a character gets injured in a car accident or is infected by an alien virus, these events constitute *physiological changes* because their established physiological state has been modified. When a character accumulates new knowledge or information or when she loses or regains her memory, etc. this means she undergoes a *cognitive change*. Similarly, a character undergoes numerous *emotional changes* throughout the course of the narrative; when she gets sad, happy, anxious, nervous, or relieved. Whenever the character changes her observed and established pattern of behaviour, she undergoes a *behavioural change*. With every new goal or ever new desire, a character undergoes a *motivation change*.

In regard to the relational aspects: when a character meets a new acquaintance, this constitutes a *personal relationship change*. This is also the case when an already established relationship is somehow modified (e.g. a break-up, a marriage, birth of child, even a fight, etc.) *Socio-economic status* can have global connotations, but it can refer to a character's status within the very particular setting of the text. For example, for a screenplay set entirely in a high-school, what may interest us can be, not only a student's financial status, but his status within the microcosm of high school. Is he popular or unpopular? Is he a good student or failing with his grades? Whenever such attributes are altered there is a *socio-economic status change*. Finally, every time a character changes environments, there is an *environmental or location change*. Of course, in narratives characters move from space to space all the time. Such frequent mobility threatens to make this attribute inconsequential. Arguably, this is an attribute

whose importance is clearer in certain genres, such as the road movie. A radical change of environments can be seen in the *Chronicles of Narnia* saga, where a magical closet transports the protagonists to a fantastical land, radically different from their established environment. However, even in micro-dramatic terms, change of environment can be important if the writer perceives it as such and knows how to use it. The various settings and the “journey” a character makes through them can be used as valuable tools for character development, combined with changes in other attributes. Can, for example, a particular space affect a character’s emotional states in specific ways? What if a particular environment could also result in surprising physiological changes for another character? These are all issues a careful writer can consider so as to enhance her writing and will explore them in greater detail when I discuss my own screenplay, *Bloody Mary*, in the final chapter.

One can reasonably ask where character actions, reactions and speech acts fit into that model. I propose that all the acts (speech acts included, as well as minor physical acts), as delineated in the screenplay text by way of *report*, *description* and *literary comment* (Sternberg in Price 2010), can be considered as the great iconic and indexical signs by which we infer the various attributes. We can borrow, once again, from structural linguistics and say that, whereas the physical, verbal and mental acts of the character can be seen as the character’s *parole*, her mimetic attributes can be seen as the *langue* – the deep structure that gives rise to all these actions. “Langue refers to the abstract system of rules and conventions of a signifying system – it is independent of, and pre-exists, individual users. Parole refers to concrete instances of its use” (Chandler 2007: 252).

This perception stands in contrast to some theorists’ views. Both Margolin and Boon, for instance, believe that, in the process of characterisation, action always comes first, character second (Margolin 1986; Boon 2008). Empirical analysis of texts contradicts that claim because an emotion may very well be described prior to the physical act. Still, the physical act of a slap may be the signifier of an angry emotional state that is never directly described; however, one needs to get angry first, in order to proceed to the angry physical act. In that view, the emotional state precedes the action, even if on a textual level, the action is described first. Of course, if one defines even emotional states as mental acts like Margolin does (Margolin 1990: 459), then, yes, one can say

that all acts precede character. Moreover, a particular action or speech act could at once denote or connote several attributes.

The proposed categorisations of attributes rely partly on intuition and common sense and although these are not the most appropriate terms for a thesis, a certain amount of intuition about semiotic inferences is unavoidable. I anticipate objections to the arbitrary nature of the suggested attributes. Thus, I want to stress once again that my methodological approach in regard to the attributes was to synthesize and categorise more systematically what screenwriting theory has already proposed and what close readings of screenplays reveal. The alternative route would be to construct a new, comprehensive theory of personality, synthesizing existing, fragmented and inconclusive psychological theories about personality and self-hood. Such an endeavour is not only outside the scope of my thesis, it would also constitute a pseudo-scientific diversion. It is one thing to rely on scientific fields outside one's own for cross-checking and validation and it's another thing entirely to propose new theories in that field while lacking any relevant theoretical training.

3.5 A Qualitative Analysis of Character Changing Attributes

Simply listing a series of character attributes that we have empirically located in screenplay texts is not in itself very enlightening. In order for our analysis to have insight and validity, a more rigorous and comprehensive methodology has to be developed. An obvious starting point is to define the nature of the attributes' changes. To simply state that an emotion changes is not in itself as insightful. I propose that we also consider the modes of alteration. Thus, in regard to the *emotional states* I propose four possible kinds of alteration:

- a) Intensification
- b) Reduction
- c) Addition
- d) Substitution

I suggest that the same modes of alteration are applicable to *personality traits, behaviour, desires, goals and needs*. Let us elaborate on this with more concrete

examples. By *intensification* I mean that the character's emotion stays the same, but the author amplifies it, e.g.: James grows angrier by the minute. Similarly, an emotional *reduction* means that the stated emotion is reduced, e.g.: James calms down. By *Addition*, I mean that a second emotion is added on top of the already established one, without cancelling it. And by *Substitution* I refer to the change where an emotion is substituted with a different one, e.g.: "Her sorrow gives way to relief" More specifically, in regard to the behavioural, motivational, cognitive and socio-economic attributes, I want to propose the following modes of alteration:

Personal Traits/Attitudes/Behaviour

- 1) Intensification (e.g. become more and more insecure)
- 2) Reduction (e.g. becoming less insecure, gradually)
- 3) Addition (e.g. becoming nervous, on top of insecure)
- 4) Substitution (e.g. erasing insecurity, becoming confident)

Goals/Desires/Needs

- 1) Intensification (e.g. wanting revenge more intensely)
- 2) Reduction (e.g. wanting revenge less intensely gradually)
- 3) Addition (e.g. wanting justice on top of revenge)
- 4) Substitution (e.g. wanting justice instead of revenge)

Cognition, Skills, Knowledge and Information

- 1) Addition (remembering something, learning something new, etc.)
- 2) Reduction (e.g. loss of memory)
- 3) Substitution (e.g. in sci-fi films, a character's cognitive state can be replaced by a new one)
- 4) Intensification (this refers mostly to the improvement of one's set of skills)

In regard to socio-economic status, I propose that there are two fundamental ways that this can altered:

Socio-economic Status

- 1) Improved
- 2) Worsened

Concerning **physiological states**, I suggest that we can observe the following main types of alterations:

- a) Reduction of bodily attributes
- b) Addition of bodily attributes
- c) Replacement of physiological features (metamorphosis)
- c) Alteration (negative or positive)

Reduction and *Addition* refer, quite gruesomely to losing or gaining limbs. Losing limbs belongs firmly in the realm of dramas and horrors, while gaining additional limbs is far rarer, usually happening in fantasy, sci-fi or certain horror films with supernatural elements. By the broader term *alteration*, I wish to refer to all other changes that cannot be as easily boxed.

With **environment and location** being an extensional (or relational) attribute, the change refers mostly to the relationship the character has with the space, rather than an intrinsic alteration of the location itself (although, once again, in certain genres like horror films, there may be cases like that). If we consider environment and locations in similar terms to personal relationships, we can suggest that a location is either 1) added to or 2) reduced from a character's network of locations. Road movies feature characters that constantly add new environments to the network. Chamber dramas, on the other hand, feature only a limited number of locations.

Personal relationships changes concern the overall network of contacts a character has, how this network can be enlarged or diminished and how specific relationships can be modified in various ways. Therefore, I propose the four following modes of alteration.

- 1) Addition (the protagonist is introduced to/meets a person they did not previously know)
- 2) Reduction (the protagonist loses a person they know from their network of contacts)

- 3) Positive value alteration (a relationship is improved – this requires further evaluative inference)
- 4) Negative value alteration (a relationship is worsened – this again requires further evaluative inference)

Such a detailed analysis has an obvious benefit. Instead of simply stating that an emotional change may lead to a location change, we can clarify in detail that an emotional substitution leads to a location change.

3.6 The Signification of Mimetic Attributes in the Text

As I argued in Chapter 2, literary language is symbolic in nature but it also signifies by way of its iconic and indexical functions. Moreover, I suggested that character is not directly signified by way of a mere proper name. Instead, I took a Barthesian approach that posits that character is the totality of attributes assigned to his or her proper name (Barthes 1974). It is these attributes that are signified by language within the screenplay text. Most sentences in screenplays display both iconic and indexical functions, although, depending on the case, one function may be more highlighted than the other. Consider for example the first description of Andrew, the protagonist in the script *Chronicle*, written by Max Landis.

For the first time we see ANDREW Detmer, 17, pale, awkward and gangly, with long, stringy hair and thin, scraggly beard. He looks anxious, if not afraid.

(Landis n.d.: 5)

In the first sentence, the iconic value is more prominent, especially due to the words “pale”, “gangly”, “long, stringy hair”, “thin, scraggly beard”. We are being given a series of physical characteristics that establish the protagonist’s physiological/appearance state. In the second sentence, the iconic value subsides, despite the use of the verb “looks”. This happens because the words “anxious” and “afraid” are not as concrete in their imagery potential as the words “pale”, “thin”, “beard”, etc. Thus, in this second sentence, it is the symbolic and in lesser degree the indexical functions that are more prominent. Because we are being told *directly* what Andrew’s emotional state is (“anxious”, “afraid”), rather than invited to infer it by an

action that may have carried a higher indexical value, this sentence has higher symbolic value. However, the sentence does carry a secondary indexical value as well because the description also indicates a reason or motivation for this symbolically-stated attribute. Being afraid indicates *something* (albeit, at this point in the story still unrevealed or unclear) that is making you scared - in short, something *scary*.

Let us consider an example. The hypothetical, fictional character named *Peter Jones* can be initially described as “tall, muscular and bearded”. Some physiological attributes have been immediately added to the appropriate set. In subsequent scenes, we might learn that “Peter Jones has always been amiable to a fault”, or that Peter Jones “weeps standing next to the grave of his beloved girlfriend”. We are directly described a trait (amiability), an action from which we infer an emotion (weeping → sadness), and a personal relationship change (girlfriend has died). We see how we gradually receive more and more attributes that constantly update our view of a specific character. What is more, these attributes can, and most of them almost certainly change throughout the course of the narrative. Some, like personality traits, are arguably more stable while others, like emotions, fluctuate more rapidly. However, this is not to say that a more changeable attribute like an emotion cannot constitute the main thread of a filmic narrative. For example, I argue that at the centre of the narrative of the screenplay *Gravity* (2013), is the protagonist’s struggle to overcome the sadness and depression caused by her daughter’s death. That this eventually successful struggle takes place in the course of less than two hours (which is also the duration of the film) betrays the link between change of mimetic attributes to narratological elements such as duration in regard to plausibility. In the same way that we may regard an abrupt and hasty change of a personality trait as implausible, we may think the laborious change of a single emotion as over-dramatic and inconsequential.

3.7 Demonstrating the Benefits of a Holistic Model: A Case Study

One screenplay that I believe offers a great example on why a holistic view of character change is appropriate, is the script for *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (2001), written by Steve Kloves, and adapted by J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* novel (1997). I already used the abstract structure of the story’s events to demonstrate how, even in a traditionally-considered, plot-centred narrative,

all events relate to character. I am using this story again because I believe Steve Kloves's screenplay demonstrates how a character arc that can easily be seen in simplistic terms as the perfect embodiment of the Hero's Journey, is in fact much more complicated. I want to stress again that the fact that this is an adaptation does not invalidate my analysis since I am not referring to the novel by J.K. Rowling at all, but rather to the published screenplay. Furthermore, I deliberately focus on the first screenplay in the series that stands alone as a complete, self-contained narrative. In Chapter 4 I move on to examine other screenplays in even more detail, especially in regard to the linguistic means they employ to denote and connote character. With this particular case study, I want to focus primarily on the benefits of a holistic analysis model. By holistic approach, I mean of course my suggestion that character change should not be seen merely as a personality trait change, but as a change of *many different mimetic attributes* that the text assigns to the main character of the story. As previously explained, my methodological approach to the screenplay text is also informed by semiotic theory. Therefore, I proceed by identifying the mimetic attributes within the text, assigning these to the relevant character, organising them in the broad paradigmatic sets I presented above, and then looking at the syntagmatic axis of the text to examine how these attributes are modified within the text.

In an article in *The Spectator*, Patrick West (2020) argues that Harry Potter's plot is derivative: "orphan raised by aunt and uncle encounters a bearded old man, goes on an epic journey with his buddies, undergoes tasks and magic training, and defeats ogres before encountering the dark lord in his lair. [...] In fairness, all three sagas [Harry Potter, Star Wars and Lord of the Rings] are manifestations of a monomyth found in most cultures, as outlined by anthropologist Joseph Campbell in his 1949 work *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*" (West 2020). Although seeing the work through such an abstraction makes some sense, in closer examination of the events relating to the protagonist, Harry Potter, do not support this monolithic and simplistic approach.

Steve Kloves's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* script (2001) does not culminate in a predominant personality trait change. Nor does Harry Potter undergo a clear spiritual rebirth, in accordance with Joseph Campbell's notions that have gained momentum in screenwriting circles thanks to Christopher Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* (2007). And yet, the film's narrative is often analysed online in such terms. Due to its fairy-tale quality, the link to a mythological narrative structure seems obvious

and natural. Yet, a closer examination of a script reveals a more nuanced and complex structure. Despite the story culminating with the protagonist saving the precious Philosopher's Stone from the hands of the evil wizard Voldemort, Harry Potter is not the Campbellian (or Voglerian) hero - as the *Spectator* writer argues - who reluctantly leaves his comfort zone in order to overpower an antagonist to retrieve a particular object - symbol of new knowledge - before returning with that new knowledge back to his community. In fact, Harry Potter only learns that it is the evil Voldemort who wants to steal the valuable stone on page 103 of the 134-page screenplay.

What is more, Harry Potter does not undergo a predominant personality trait change in accordance with the screenwriting manuals' doxa. While, for example, in *Whiplash*, the protagonist, Andrew Neiman overcomes his trademark insecurity and becomes confident by the end of the script, Harry Potter does not *become* brave. Rather, as the wise Sorting Hat informs us, he *is* brave from the very beginning:

Harry sits, takes the hat, and...slowly...lowers it. He waits, then the hat begins to SPEAK.

SORTING HAT

Hmmmm. Difficult. Very Difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either. There's talent, oh yes, and a thirst to prove yourself. But where to put you...?

Harry grips the edge of the stool, closes his eyes. His lips move ever so slightly: Not Slytherin. Not Slytherin.

SORTING HAT (CONT'D)

Not Slytherin, eh? Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that...No? Well, if you're sure...better be GRYFFINDOR!

Figure 1: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone script, p.41

In Kloves's austere script, descriptions of characters are rather scarce so, in this case, we have to rely on the Sorting Hat dialogue to provide us with some insight into Harry's personality. Its established authority within the wizarding world allows us to take its words as true. The attributes Harry is assigned by the Sorting Hat are *courage*, *talent*, *brains* and a desire to prove himself to the world. He displays these qualities throughout the narrative and at the end does prove himself by defeating Lord Voldemort. But Harry does not have to struggle to *become* brave in the same way that *Whiplash*'s Andrew Neimann has to struggle to become confident (Chazzelle n.d.). The personality trait is

in him from the beginning and there is nothing in his actions to make us doubt it. Harry, along with Ron, for instance, has no hesitation rushing to Hermione's help when a mountain troll invades Hogwarts castle. Nor does he hesitate to stand up to the bully Draco Malfoy when the latter torments Neville Longbottom.

MALFOY
Did you see his face? Perhaps if the great lump had given this a squeeze, he would've remembered to fall on his fat arse.

HARRY
Give it here, Malfoy.

MALFOY
No, I think I'll leave it somewhere for Longbottom to find. How about up a tree?

Malfoy slings a leg over his broom, KICKS into the air.

MALFOY (CONT'D)
What's the matter, Potter? A bit beyond your reach?

Harry glowers up at Malfoy, then GRABS his broom.

HERMIONE
Harry! No! You heard what Madame Hooch said. Besides you don't even know how to...fly.

Harry shoots into the sky, so angry that it's a moment before he realizes what the others see clearly: he's a natural. Turning his broomstick sharply, he hovers, glaring at Malfoy.

HARRY
Give it here. Or I'll knock you off that ruddy broom.

Figure 2: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone *script*, p.51

According to mainstream screenwriting doxa, then, Harry Potter does not undergo an important “journey” or “arc”; worse even, he might appear to be “flat”, or “one-dimensional”. True: from a narrow, personality-trait prism, Harry Potter does not show dramatic change. But as I have argued, literary and cinematic character is much more than a predominant personality trait. Characters possess many attributes that may change during the course of the narrative and this *Harry Potter* screenplay helps us identify most of these and understand how the script (and the novel before it) seems to be so dramatically about change despite the fact that Harry's *personality* does not change much.

On page 14 of the screenplay we are introduced to the first major change that kicks off the entire saga:

HAGRID (CONT'D)
 Harry, yer a wizard.

For a moment, the hut is utterly silent.

HARRY
 I'm a what?

HAGRID
 A Wizard. And a thumpin' good 'un, I'd wager, once yeh've been trained up a bit.

HARRY
 No. You've made a mistake. I...I can't be a...wizard. I mean...I'm just...Harry. Just Harry.

HAGRID
 Tha' right. Tell me, Harry. Ever make somethin' strange 'appen? When yeh was scared maybe. Or angry?

As Harry looks up in recognition, Hagrid slaps a soggy ENVELOPE into Harry's hand. Harry opens it, reads.

HARRY
 'Dear Mr. Potter, We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry...'

As Harry looks up, Hagrid winks, and takes a bite of sausage.

UNCLE VERNON
 He'll not be going, I tell you! We swore when we took him in we'd put a stop to that rubbish!

HARRY
 You knew? You knew I'm a...a wizard?

Aunt Petunia--looking furious--emerges from the shadows.

AUNT PETUNIA
 Of course we knew! How could you not be, my dratted sister being what she was? Oh, mother and father were so proud when the letter came. A witch in the family. Isn't it wonderful. I was the only one who saw her for what she was...a freak!

Figure 3: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone script, p.14

Even in a detailed categorisation such as the one I have proposed in this chapter, it is hard to define this change entirely; it involves almost every aspect of Harry Potter's being. Nearly everything he knew about himself and his family was wrong. In strict terms, this would fall under the *cognitive state change* category (by way of addition) since Harry receives *new information* that changes his *self-perception* entirely (e.g. "Harry looks up in recognition"). What is more, being a wizard means that he can cultivate and develop his magical skills that he did not know he possessed, so the

acquisition of new skills constitutes yet another massive cognitive state change. In regard to his parents, it does not, yet, constitute a definite personal relationship change since the relationships themselves have not been altered; it is Harry's perception of these relationships that has been modified radically. However, a clear *Environment change* occurs shortly after, when Harry leaves his aunt and uncle and departs towards the magical world along with his new acquaintance, the giant Hagrid (another relationship change). It is shortly after that yet another attribute changes when Harry learns that he is a) very rich (due to inheritance) and b) very famous. His *socio-economic status* has thus drastically changed. From being a poor, neglected and bullied kid living in a cupboard under the stairs, he suddenly becomes a rich, famous and admired wizard, off to live and study in a great castle where food materializes out of thin air. The *personality* itself has not changed, yet I argue that, such a radical change like the one Harry Potter experiences in the first twenty pages of the screenplay is extremely rare. Moreover, I hypothesize that this radical wish-fulfillment fantasy played a crucial role in the story's popularity. Of course, there are many *personal relationship* changes as well, as Harry Potter is gradually introduced to a vast cast of characters: friends, mentors and foes amongst them. His network of relations expands enormously. These changes also result in certain emotional changes for Harry. As he leaves his miserable old life behind and learns he is a wizard, misery gives way to happiness. Arguably, this much has to be inferred because, as previously noted, Steve Kloves's script is frugal with its descriptions. Here is how he describes the crucial moment when Harry decides to leave the Dursleys and follow Hagrid after he learns that he is a wizard:

```

                                HAGRID (CONT'D)
                                Er, be grateful if yeh didn't mention
                                that to anyone at Hogwarts. Strictly
                                speakin', I'm not allowed ter do magic.
                                (checks pocket watch)
                                Bit behind schedule, aren't we? Best be
                                off.

                                Hagrid exits, leaving Harry to consider his sorry
                                surroundings. He looks momentarily at a loss, then...Hagrid
                                pokes his head back in.

                                HAGRID (CONT'D)
                                "Less, o' course, yeh'd rather stay.

48A  EXT. STREET - LONDON - DAWN                                48A
                                Harry, reads ALOUD from his LIST as he trails Hagrid, who
                                draws an eye or two--as a giant in Central London will.

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Figure 4: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone script, p.18

Kloves lets Harry's actions and reactions speak for themselves and thus increases the room for inference. We understand that being a wizard is a much preferred situation for Harry, not because the author describes his internal thoughts or emotions but rather because he uses the character's actions, as well as editing, in order to demonstrate this. We do not even "see" Harry making the choice while in the hut with Hagrid. We infer his decision in the next scene when we see him in London, far away from the Dursleys, with Hagrid, and only then we understand that he chose a life as a wizard.

Another interesting feature of Steve Kloves's script, which runs counter to the rules established by screenwriting manuals, is the loose application of the notion of *goals* for its main character. According to screenwriting rules, cinematic narrative is driven by the protagonist's main goal which has to be clear and coherent from the beginning of the story. Yet, Harry Potter, although in many ways a cultural product of Hollywood, spends most of the narrative receiving new information about the new world he has discovered, and making new acquaintances (Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Severus Snape, Albus Dumbledore, Minerva McGonagall, etc.). While he sets some minor goals in different scenes (i.e. to learn how to fly, to win a Quidditch game, to save Hermione from the mountain troll, to see his parents in the mirror of Erised etc.), these goals are not organised around one singular issue. While it could be said that the story revolves around the precious Philosopher's Stone (it is after all part of the title), I argue that the story is rather about Harry Potter *learning* about the wizarding world and *positioning* himself in that world; the actions regarding the philosopher's stone specifically are merely a part - or rather a culmination - of that familiarisation with the world of magic. And it is exactly a careful study of *all* of Harry's mimetic attributes, throughout the *entire* narrative that helps us come to that conclusion.

There is one thing that apparently Harry has to "overcome" in order to defeat Lord Voldemort and save the stone but it is not so much a personality trait as a *desire* to be reunited with his parents. This desire however, surfaces quite late in the script, on page 74, when Harry discovers the magical mirror of Erised that shows one his heart's biggest desire - in Harry's case, him reuniting with his parents. The wise Albus Dumbledore advises Harry against visiting the mirror every night and removes the artifact to remove the temptation.

HARRY
 So, then, it shows us what we want...
 Whatever we want...

DUMBLEDORE
 Yes and no. It shows us nothing more or
 less than the deepest, most desperate
 desire of our hearts. You, who have never
 known your family, see them gathered
 around you. Ronald Weasley, who has
 always been overshadowed by his family,
 sees himself standing alone. Remember
 this, though, Harry. This mirror gives us
 neither knowledge or truth. Men have
 wasted away before it. Even gone mad.
 (rising)
 That's why it will be moved to a new home
 tomorrow. I ask that you do not go
 looking for it again, Harry. It does not
 do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.

Figure 5: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone script, p.76

Harry comes to eventually follow that advice when he decides to fight Voldemort and not give in to the temptation of "resurrecting" his parents on page 123:

Harry stops, looks up. Quirrell steps aside, Voldemort's
 face sliding from the glass and revealing...Harry's
 parents.

VOLDEMORT (CONT'D)
 Together, we can bring them back. All
 I ask...is for something in return.

Slowly, almost involuntarily, Harry removes the Stone from
 his pocket.

VOLDEMORT (CONT'D)
 That's it, Harry. There is no good and
 evil, there is only power, and those
 too weak to seek it. Together, we'll
 do extraordinary things. Just...give
 me the Stone.

Harry studies his parents' faces, drifting to his mother's,
 when...we RACK FOCUS...and Voldemort's hideous face
 surfaces through her's...and she is gone.

HARRY
 Liar!

Figure 6: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone script, p.123

But as we saw, this need to be reunited with the parents he never met only surfaces on page 74, therefore it does not constitute a dominant and overarching trait for Harry. His desire to see his parents, rather than being an overarching "flaw" (yet another favourite screenwriting manual term), is used as a brief moment of doubt that is quickly

overcome. What is more, it is not a personality trait but a desire, thus more intimately connected to an emotional state of grief and melancholy.

Conclusion

Summing all this up, to talk about representation of humans in fictional narratives, is to talk about the representation of human attributes organised together under the connective tissue that the proper name provides. Therefore, in this chapter, I outlined my character change analysis model based on mimetic attributes as assigned to a proper name and organised temporally within the syntagma of the literary text.

I began by offering an outline of screenwriting teachers and theorists notions on character change. I observed that the issue is examined in generalised notions and argued that a more detailed, holistic approach is needed. After suggesting certain analytical operations that are important in the critical examination of screenplay character, I ventured to present a comprehensive list of the main paradigmatic sets of mimetic attributes. The more prominent are: physiology/appearance, personal relationships, socio-economic status, emotional states, motivational states, behavioural states and cognitive states. Subsequently, I proposed a qualitative analysis of these attributes that would allow us a wider and more detailed syntagmatic and interpretative analysis of the screenplay text. Finally, I used the screenplay *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* as a case study to demonstrate how a holistic and detailed semiotic approach to character change offers us more pervasive analytical tools, while I also suggested that my analysis model can help us rethink issues of narrative.

The next chapter aims to bring screenplay, character and my method of analysis together more firmly. Thus, in Chapter 4, I will look into specific screenplays in greater detail and provide a comprehensive account of how they convey the character mimetic attributes and their changing states through linguistic means. Then, finally discuss my own approach in Chapter 5, in regard to my conceptual and compositional considerations of character change. The screenplay can be found at the end of thesis.

Chapter 4: Reading and Writing the Character Change in the Screenplay Text

Introduction

In the thesis Introduction I countered the arguments against the autonomous status of the screenplay and its literary merit. I aligned myself with Nannicelli's (2013) assertions in regard to the ontology of screenplay to suggest that screenplay texts should be seen as autonomous literary artworks in addition to being planning documents relating to the making of a film (which may not always be the case, as in fan-fiction scripts, or many spec-scripts). Moreover, in the previous chapter I presented my proposed character change analysis model for screenplay texts, which is based on the character's mimetic attributes. In this chapter, my objective is to bring character change and screenplay language together to explore how the screenplay text depicts character and how the theorist can analyse it. To that aim I also wish to provide an outline of the specific formatting, linguistic and literary elements of the screenplay text.

More specifically, I start by providing a brief historical overview of how screenplay developed to become a fundamental document for film production and a text that originally presents the subsequent film's narrative. I posit that this overview is important in order to assert the centrality of the screenplay in filmmaking practices and establish the link between the development of cinema as a narrative art and screenplay as a document tasked with conceiving and presenting the narrative on the page. Then, I move on to review the screenwriting manuals that focus mostly on the structural elements of screenplay narrative and ignore the literary, stylistic ones. However, I argue that some of these manuals do provide, even in passing, some useful notions in regard to visual storytelling by way of words, which is the main tool the screenwriter has at her disposal. Subsequently, I return to Nannicelli, who proposes a historical-intentional definition of the screenplay. Nannicelli's definition is important in that it recognises the dual nature of the screenplay - as an autonomous verbal document and as the text where the constitutive elements of film can be (verbally) encountered. This is important in order to understand how screenplay language is influenced by a hypothetical, imagined film and uses action and imagery to point to it. Finally, I use Claudia Sternberg's notions on the linguistic aspects of screenplay (Price 2010; Screenplayology 2010) and

refer to specific scripts in order to examine how writers use the literary and narrative tools at their disposal to denote and connote character.

4.1 Early Film Narratives and the Development of the Screenplay

As established in the Introduction, the screenplay is a neglected document in film and literary studies. Considered as an intermediate stage to the finished film and a document of no literary merit, screenplay has been placed on the periphery of academic studies for years. Even scholars who study screenplays, such as Steven Maras and Steve Price, usually hesitate to assign to it any autonomous or literary status. I discussed the screenplay's autonomy and literariness in the Introduction and asserted that it can be considered as a literary artefact untangled from the film. I now want to argue for its importance and centrality within the film production process over the years and posit that its development was both influenced by and also influenced the development of film narrative in general. At the same time, I argue that this overview demonstrates how important to film narratives character was from the very beginning. I concede that it may appear strange that, while in the Introduction I separated the script from the film, here I focus on their connection. However, there is a difference. I do not use that connection to deny screenplay its autonomy or literariness but rather to understand how this complicated relationship between two different mediums influenced screenplay language and narrative. I have already asserted that screenplays can be thought of as autonomous artworks. This, in turn, does not invalidate the established point that films appeared first and screenplays developed later. With that clarification in mind, let us discuss why and how that development occurred.

When cinema was born and the first films appeared on various screens around the globe, the new technological innovation was perceived more as a spectacle and less than an art form (Gomery 2011: 31). The development of the screenplay text and the status it acquired gradually during the early years of cinema was a direct result of the new art's decisive shift towards narrative and away from mere spectacle, or what was termed *cinema of attractions* (Gunning 1990). Screenplays became prominent both as textual objects for planning the production process as well as narrative documents where story, plot, characters and settings were delineated. They had, from the very

beginning, both a utilitarian and a narratological function and both were very important for planning a feature-length film.

The development of the screenplay document as a narrative text is closely linked to the development of film narratives and, consequently, the development of character in these narratives. Kevin Alexander Boon (2008) suggests that, “The formation of the screenplay and its increasing significance during the silent era is the result of film’s early transformation from an arcade novelty into a narrative medium” (Boon 2008: 3). According to Boon, the first screenplays appeared somewhere between 1910 and 1916 - in fact just when feature-length films started becoming the new norm. According to Lewis Jacobs, “stories ended the production of trifling “report” or “incident films” and reformed the motion picture as a complex narrative construction” (Jacobs cited in Boon 2008: 4). John Howard Lawson notes that, “the first films were snatches and fragments designed to convince the wary spectator that life and nature had actually been captured in motion” (Lawson 2012: 272). David A. Cook confirms that early audiences “experienced these films [...] as a kind of performative spectacle, or “attraction”, whose function was to *present*, rather than to *represent*, to *show*, rather than to *narrate*” (Cook 2004: 16, original emphasis). And, while according to Lawson 1898 was the year “in which the short strip of celluloid began to find a primitive sort of structure, telling a story and making a point in its own way” (Lawson 2012: 272), Cook recalls Gunning’s argument that this period of cinema of the attractions lasted for more than a decade, from 1895 to 1906 (Cook 2004: 16)

These early, “incident films” should not be disregarded. Even in Lumiere’s early short, *The Sprinkler Sprinkled* (1895), we can identify an – admittedly minimal and elementary – narrative that would fit Tzvetan Todorov’s notions about *equilibrium*, *disruption of equilibrium* and *establishment of a new equilibrium* quite well (Todorov and Weinstein 1969). The film’s plot is elementary: a gardener waters his flowers; a boy steps on the hose and stops the water’s flow; the gardener points the hose to his face to see what the problem is; the boy steps back, and the gardener gets sprinkled in the face. The boy tries to run away, but the gardener catches him and spansks him. This film unfolds like a short joke, but it has a clear narrative with a *routine*, an *inciting incident*, a *climax* (the joke’s pay-off) and a *resolution* (that even carries a moral justification). All these terms (routine, inciting incident, climax, and resolution) can be heard today by practitioners of screenwriting and found on countless screenwriting manuals targeted at aspiring screenwriters. (Kallas 2010; Field 2005)

Despite the fact that many of the first films did have an elementary narrative structure, David Cook recognizes French pioneer Georges Melies as the new art's first important storyteller (Cook 2004). Melies's major contribution came from the realisation that film "need not obey the laws of empirical reality [...] because film was in some sense a separate reality with structural laws of its own" (Cook 2004: 13). The "screenplay" for the most famous George Melies film, *A Trip to the Moon*, produced in 1902 illustrates this point. This short, loose adaptation of the Jules Verne story consists of thirty different scenes, listed as such:

1. *The scientific congress at the Astronomic Club.*
2. *The planning of the trip itself.*
3. *The construction of the projectile in the factory.*

...

(Cook 2004: 16)

For the screenplay to further develop from a list of scenes to a complete narrative text, film narrative had to be developed first. And cinema quickly turned to theatre and literature for inspiration. The new art had to be at once popular and respectable, therefore, it drew heavily on literary classics (Merritt 1985: 97). As cinema became more popular and "urbanized", producers realized that they had to lure in the movie theatre middle-class audiences and thus turned to more respectable forms of art for inspiration. A commentator in 1911 wrote that, "No feature [...] film, of which we have any knowledge, has been produced from an original scenario" (Balio 1985: 3). As Russell Merritt points out "The climax came in June 1914, when a ten-reel version of Giovanni Pastore's *Cabiria* (1913) was shown at the White House to President Wilson, his family, and members of the Cabinet. The president of the United States had gone to see a movie. Who could hope to hold out after that?" (Merritt 1985: 97-98).

Producers were making longer films in order to satisfy the audience's need for elaborate narratives and better develop the stories of the novels and stage plays they were adapting. These longer productions resulted in two changes: greater specialisation and the upgrade of the screenplay and, subsequently, of the screenwriter's part in the making of the movie. (Gomery 2011: 95) Although in the early days of cinema the first scripts - if written down at all - were merely sketches on the backside of business

envelopes, “sixty-one courses in film writing were offered as early as 1915 [...] and by 1920 no less than ninety books on the subject were written” (ibid). Of course, as Geuens clarifies, what was being taught at these courses is not clear at all, nor is the influence these courses had on new film writers. However, as he claims, “in the early twenties, the studios were receiving between two hundred and four hundred unsolicited scripts a day” (Geuens 2000: 96). If nothing else, these numbers reveal an active and energetic film writing community eager to learn by theory and practice how to master this new genre. The requirements for aspiring writers who wished to submit stories to companies were already of high-standard and clear narrative restrictions as early as 1904. Consider for instance the esthetic standards set by Kleine Optical Company:

“There should be no lagging in the story which it [the continuous action] tells; every foot must be an essential part, whose loss would deprive the story of some merit; there should be sequence, each part leading to the next with increasing interest in reaching its most interesting point at the climax, which should end the film”

(cited in Staiger 1985: 175)

Gradually, studios abandoned the practice of unsolicited submissions and started hiring more experienced, established writers from relevant fields (playwrights, novelists, news reporters, etc.) in order to man their screenwriting divisions. Writing for the screen, even when it was not considered an art practice in strict terms, was very important to the production process and studios needed people who could understand the complex nature of film production, as well as the rules of dramatic composition. Thus, the writing of the continuity became very important. “Continuity” corresponds roughly to the screenplay in its contemporary form as we know it today; the reason it was initially named continuity was precisely because it was conceived to resolve continuity issues. To solve the issue of objects appearing and disappearing across scenes, “writers and studios refined screenplay format to accommodate the increased function a screenplay was expected to perform.” (Boon 2008: 11). The coming of sound and, therefore, of dialogue too, had important narratological and formatting consequences and made screenplays even more indispensable than before.

Early silent film scenarios were still pretty elaborate documents essential to pre-production: “A silent film scenario consists of four main parts: a synopsis, a cast of characters, a scene plot and the continuity (or the plot of the action).” (Boon 2008: 7). All the narratological elements we consider important today were elaborated upon on early film scenarios as well. Boon states that, “We may with some confidence parallel the beginning of the screenplay to the introduction elements into film” (2008: 37). Considering that film narratives have grown more complex over the years and that films have grown considerably larger in scale and production needs, we can safely assume that the screenplay’s importance has only grown since. Thomas Harper Ince was probably the figure who “successfully managed to codify and standardize the entire practice of filmmaking” (Geuens in Boon 2008: 3). It was under his guidance that “writing for film became truly efficient for the first time ... and developed into the indispensable core” of the filmmaking system” (Geuens in Boon 2008: 2).

Naturally, longer narratives allowed for greater character development (Gomery 2011: 92). Where one-reel shorts could only depict simple actions produced by one-dimensional characters, multiple-reel films had the time to develop more elaborate narratives and, therefore, depict more complex, better-developed characters. Moreover, as Boon argues, “The more cohesive and complete the scenario became, the less it was marked as a preliminary document by its inclusion of other pro-production-related documents” (sic) (Boon 2008: 8). Thus, the screenplay gradually morphed into a complete narrative text on its own. The need for technical information has only diminished since (contemporary scripts avoid offering extensive technical info such as camera angles, although some writers-directors still do) and screenplays became free to use their code (written language) in order to fulfill their primary and most important function: present the characters’ story.

4.2 What Screenplays Are and How They Work: Reviewing the Field

A historical overview of the screenplay’s development helps us understand how the document and its form evolved in the early days of cinema. However, although such overview illustrates the reciprocal relationship between film and screenplay narrative, it does not in itself provide clear insight as to how this narrative is presented in the screenplay text by means of its own code (written language). In this section, I want to

explore the nature of the screenplay in pragmatic terms and, crucially, from the creative writer's perspective. More to the point, I am interested in how discussions about the nature of the screenplay document and its constitutive elements can lead to direct observations about the craft of screenwriting.

A general consensus among the screenwriting manuals is that, in Syd Field's words, "a screenplay is a story told in images" (Field 2005: 20). Contrary to popular notions Field did not discover the wheel in the late 70s. He merely echoed notions of screenplay manuals published in the early days of cinema. Here is Epes W. Sargent's definition of screenplay from 1913 as: "a story told in pictured action instead of being described in words" (Sargent in Curran 2015: 111). When Syd Field asks the rhetorical question "What is a screenplay" he also makes sure to clarify that it is not a novel. In a novel, according to Syd Field, the action "takes place inside the head of the main character" (Field 2005: 19). Film, however, is a visual medium, therefore a screenplay is "a story told with pictures, in dialogue and description, and placed within the context of dramatic structure" (Field 2005: 20).

Whilst discussing the creation of scenes, Field clarifies that the way a scene is presented on the page is important and argues the obvious point that, "A screenplay is a reading experience" (Field 2005: 162). For the remainder of his chapter on scenes, however, he focuses on the structural elements and ignores the poetics or literary aspect of scene creation. He does revisit the issue in a later chapter, where he discusses screenplay form. Although Field instructs the novice writer how to write "in shots" without resorting to technical language (e.g. "CAMERA"), the aim of that chapter is to introduce the formatting elements of scripts and to outline some basic rules (new character names always capitalized, etc.). The main formatting elements Field identifies are *Slug-lines* (headings being a more academically-appropriate name), *Description*, *Dialogue* and *Transitions* (e.g. CUT TO, FADE OUT, etc.) (Field 2005: 215-237)

Linda Seger makes it clear her point of view is more structural than literary. A part of her chapter is titled, "Which scenes to use, where do you put them" (Seger 1994: 113). She concedes the point that a screenplay "implies working with words", but also notes that "the screenwriter is actually creating dialogue *and* images" (Seger 1994: 109, original emphasis). This does not necessarily say much. A novelist may aim to create dialogue and images; this does not reduce the verbal nature of her book. Seger's anticipation of the subsequent film is in full display when she declares that a writer needs to "find [...] those events that create the most cinematic story, and put them on

screen” (Seger 1994: 113-114, my emphasis). I would argue that, unless the writer is also the director of the potential film, she does not put anything on screen; the page is where she places those events. And, save for the rare case of an experimental, audiovisual screenplay (for more see Kathryn Millard 2014), the screenplay page is currently only hospitable to words. This hastiness to reach the final film has two major ramifications: a) it robs screenplay of its autonomous status and b) brushes aside the screenplay text and all the literary elements that go with it.

Waldeback’s and Batty’s, *The Creative Screenwriter* (2012), although still very much structural in its point of view, dedicates a chapter in the art of the actual *screenplay writing*. The authors agree with Field that screenwriting is about telling a story in images (Waldeback and Batty 2012: 137). Thus, their objective is similar to Seger’s: they want to ensure the screenwriter is equipped with the tools of creating images for her scripts. But, whereas Seger focuses mostly on abstract, thematic ideas which could help a writer conceive a scene in a visual manner, Waldeback and Batty get more specific and outline “four essential tools to help screenwriters to work visually in scenes” These tools are: “*active verbs* in scene description; *working with environments* to provide metaphorical backdrops and dramatic possibilities; *body movement, physical reaction and relationship to space*; and *employing objects* to express power dynamics and inner motivation” (Waldeback and Batty 2012: 137-138, my emphasis). Waldeback and Batty expand the ways by which a writer can visualize their narrative. Their reference to environments in particular is important. In the previous chapter, I suggested how environment and setting constitutes one of many character’s mimetic attributes. Perceiving environment as a tool the screenwriter can utilize to visualize their *narrative* is also to expand the ways a *character* can be developed on page.

4.3 The Screenplay’s Formatting Elements and the Objects of Description

In the Introduction, I argued that screenplays are autonomous artworks due to their linguistic nature. At the same time, it must be clarified that, as demonstrated in this chapter, screenplay is historically and intentionally linked to films on screen. Their tools may be literary, but they always keep an eye towards the screen. Following a similar but much more detailed train of thought, Ted Nannicelli arrives at a comprehensive definition of the screenplay:

“x is a screenplay if and only if x is a verbal object intended to repeat, modify, or repudiate the ways in which plot, characters, dialogue, shots, edits, sound effects, and/or other features have historically been suggested as constitutive elements of a film by prior screenplay(s) or screenwriting practice (in accordance with recognizable and live purposes of that practice).”

(Nannicelli 2013: 31)

To reach that conclusion, Nannicelli has rejected both essentialist and functionalist definitions and has employed an intentional-historical formalist in order to find a definition that is as inclusive as possible and does not exclude screenwriting practices such as, for example, fan-fiction scripts that are not intended as blueprint documents for actual film production.

From Nannicelli’s definition we can keep two important notions: 1) that the screenplay, although a verbal text (written in words), is directly linked to either a specific film or, at least, in the constitutive elements of *a* film and, 2) that the script is indeed a verbal object, and it is this very quality that, according to Nannicelli, is enough to grant the screenplay its literary status. Both these notions have direct implications for the literary devices of the screenplay.

Screenplays are also industrial documents. Although I have argued that this quality does not rob them of their literary qualities, most scripts are similar, if not often identical in their formatting. The screenwriting software that I am using, *Writerduet*, indicates the following formatting elements: *Scene*, *Action*, *Character*, *Dialogue*, *Parenthesis*, and *Transition*. In a brief analysis of the Final Draft screenwriting software, Screenplayology (2010) distinguish between *Scene Text* and *Dialogue Text* and outline the following formatting element. In regard to the scene text, there are: *Scene headings* (e.g. INT. HOUSE – DAY), *action* and *transitions* (e.g. Cut to, Fade out, etc.). In regard to the Dialogue Text, there are: *Character headings* (e.g. JOHN), *parenthetical directions* (how the dialogue line is uttered, e.g.: (confused) and actual *dialogue* (Screenplayology 2010, my emphasis).

The *scene headings* are not directly relevant to character. Although they provide information on location and, we could argue, lighting cues (day, night), they only involve character in the sense that they place him in a specific location (if a character is present in the scene, that is). In contrast, *character headings* (e.g. JOHN) are very important and function as signifiers of the speaker. The most important formatting element to consider in terms of characterisation are the *description paragraphs* which, along with *dialogue*, form the basis of the screenplay text. But what kind of information does the writer put across for the reader in those paragraphs? We should consider that, according to Nannicelli's definition, screenplays aim to suggest the constitutive elements of a film. Drawing on that definition, my suggestion is that the writer conveys six different elements in her descriptions. These are presented mostly by means of *description*; however, *dialogue* can also convey all these elements by way of a character commenting on any one of them. These elements can be considered as the described *objects* of the screenplay text:

1. Character action (includes speech acts, which are conveyed by dialogue)
2. Character external and internal states
3. Environment/Setting/Location
4. Costume and make-up
5. Lighting
6. Sound

Of these six objects, the first two - *character action* and *character external and internal states* - are the ones that relate directly to the mimetic attributes that I outlined in the previous chapter. However, despite Steven Price's arguments about the limited tools screenwriters have at their disposal (Price 2010b) it is clear that screenwriters can also employ costume, setting, lighting and sound descriptions. These can relate to character either in a direct or a metaphorical way. For instance, a writer can use different lighting descriptions to indicate a character's changing emotional states. I elaborate on that aspect more specifically, when I discuss my own script, *Bloody Mary*.

In addition to the described objects, we can distinguish between *modes* of description. Sternberg's pioneering work on the literary elements of screenplays informs us that we can identify four main modes of description:

- 1) Report
- 2) Description
- 3) Literary Comment
- 4) Technical Comment
- 5) Speech

Steven Price highlights and elaborates on the first three modes:

‘[T]he mode of description is composed of detailed sections about production design in addition to economical slug-line reductions’ (Sternberg 1997: 71). The report mode is the temporal sequence of actions, usually human. Of greatest interest here is the third, comment mode, whereby the text offers a commentary on events

(Price 2010b: 204)

Screenplayology (2010) present all five of Sternberg’s modes of description and provide some useful examples:

“*Report* constitutes the active mode of the screenplay, what is happening on the screen (e.g. “A man walks his dog.” Report in italics.) *Description* illustrates the filmable appearance of a scene or character (e.g. “A tall man walks his long-haired dog down a dark street.” Description in italics.) *Literary Comment* illustrates the non-filmable imagery or emotional truth of a scene or character (e.g. “A tall scarecrow-of-a-man walks his long-haired dog down a dark street, the way a guard might walk his prisoner down the green mile.” Literary Comment in italics.) *Technical Comment* offers instructions for the film crew and is usually capitalized (e.g. “CRANE UP to reveal a tall scarecrow-of-a-man walking his long-haired dog down a dark street. CLOSE on the dog. Somewhere a train blows its WHISTLE.” Technical Comment in italics.) *Speech* consists of dialogue cues within the scene text (e.g. “A man walks his dog. Somewhere a train blows its WHISTLE, startling the animal, and the man tells his dog to heel.” Speech in italics.)”

(Screenplayology 2010)

Of these five modes, *report*, *description* and *literary comment*, are the most frequently encountered ones and also those that can refer directly to character. *Technical comment* involves only directions for the subsequent shooting of the film, while speech, the way Sternberg defines it occurs rarely in contemporary scripts since every character utterance, unless intentionally indistinct, must be included in the dialogue text. In my analysis I will focus mostly on the scene text and not on dialogue text. Insofar as characterisation is concerned, dialogue text is a second-order signification system. It requires further verification in its perceived validity whereas authorial comment in screenplays due to an almost always third-person, omniscient narrator is never questioned. If the writer describes John as “short and nervous” then John is short and nervous. If another character describes John as short and nervous, further verification is needed before we accept that evaluation.

Now that I have established, not just the characters’ mimetic attributes but also the formatting elements of screenplays, the described objects of the screenplay text as well as the various modes of description, I can proceed with the screenplays’ analyses combining these notions with the semiotic methodology previously outlined that posits language is a symbolic signification system with indexical and iconic functions. Screenplay character, I argue, is conveyed mainly through action that carries high iconic value as it describes concrete objects and aims to create mental images in the mind of the readers. Moreover, the indexical function of screenplay language is what allows character attributes to be inferred by the described actions. More to the point, the indexical signs provide the necessary cause-and-effect links between the changing mimetic attributes, therefore creating the notion of character change. In any case it is important to keep in mind that the screenwriter has a wide range of linguistic tools at her disposal in order to establish character attributes and subsequently change them. Let us consider this passage from the screenplay *Ted*:

John, for his part, looks far too comfortable in the too-worn Red Sox T-shirt he wears. He eats directly from a box of Fruity Pebbles. Reaching in for a last handful, he finds the box almost empty. He raises it to empty the remainder into his mouth, and accidentally pours Fruity Pebbles all over his face. It doesn't faze him much, though, as he brushes them off. It's quite obvious that this is a guy who has never really given up his childhood... and has never given up his teddy bear.

(MacFarlane, Sulkin, Wild n.d.)

Even working in the less-respected genre of crude, adult comedy, that is not usually considered to possess high artistic value, the writers use setting, costume, props and actions in order to describe the protagonist, John. They also resort to authorial comment contrary to the advice of manuals and to Price's observation. I would actually argue that in this case they did not have to. Their ironic description of John's t-shirt succeeds on its own to convey a character that has not given up his childhood. As Boon puts it, "Screenplay form varies from other literary forms, but no more so than a sonnet varies in form from a stage play, or a novel varies from an epic poem" (Boon 2008b: 270). Screenplays are different from novels in many respects and their relation to film may pose certain challenges. It is up to the screenwriters themselves to use the challenges to their advantage and use them in a creative way.

4.4 Describing Character Mimetic Attributes in Screenplays

For the purposes of this thesis I read and studied a vast amount of screenplays, old and contemporary, from many different genres and countries. I can confidently assert that these texts not only cemented my belief that screenplays are literature, they also demonstrated how character remains central to narrative across all genres and countries of production. I have selected to focus mostly on contemporary scripts because they are more easily verified as original screenplays and not film transcripts. However, my research and close study of various scripts has revealed to me how different screenwriters can use similar tools, despite differences in genre or industrial context.

Consider for example the ways the cognitive and emotive attributes are described in this scene from Deyer's script *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (n.d.). One can also observe its literary language (e.g. strong imagery, free-indirect discourse by way of rhetorical questions, description of unfilmable mental states).

5 THE PRISON

Joan in front of her little cross. Suddenly the two straws spin round in a mysterious gust of wind. What is it? Joan sits for a moment, overcome with astonishment, then puts the straws back in the form of a cross. Again a hostile power attacks this cross and scatters it over the flagstones. Joan doesn't know what to believe. Can it be one of her voices? A divine intervention? Once again she replaces the cross. Then there is a roar of laughter from the door behind her. Joan turns and sees three soldiers, who have been standing in the half-open door, blowing at her straw cross through a long tube.

(Dreyer n.d.).

Vastly different from *Ted* in any sense of the term, this script employs similar means (environment, props, authorial comment) to portray the turbulent emotional and cognitive state of its protagonist.

As explained above, despite studying many scripts, I decided to focus on a limited sample for the purposes of a coherent analysis. More specifically, from a practical perspective, I selected scripts in the English language that are easily and legally available and recoverable online – at least at the time of the thesis submission. Moreover, to make my point about character change clearer, I favoured screenplays that display changes in attributes that are more radical and obvious. I decided to stick to a limited amount of screenplays (e.g. *In the Deep*, *Titanic*, *Whiplash*), so I could proceed with a more comprehensive analysis of their narrative operations and examine them in terms of narrative progression. In an attempt to link my own screenplay, *Bloody Mary*, to other works, I aimed to also include screenplays that have some connection to my script - either from the point of view of genre (action/revenge scripts), or that of the protagonist (queer scripts). A final consideration was to select screenplays, whose protagonist displayed a great variability of mimetic attributes. Such scripts, I suggest, are more appropriate for a study of character change.

I must clarify that these scripts have been recovered by verifiable, established online databases that host exclusively screenplay drafts (as stated previously, that was the most important consideration). To the best of my knowledge – according to my research and critical examination - these are actual screenplay drafts and not transcripts of films. Finally, I should clarify that, with few notable exceptions, I refer to the scripts of films, never on the films themselves. This also means that most films that resulted from these scripts do not appear on the thesis filmography. This decision, although admittedly somewhat political in nature (a desire to highlight screenwriters and the screenplay text) is academically justified. My analyses are not comparative. I am not looking at films (shots, performances, editing, etc.), but only on narrative as it is presented in and abstracted from the actual screenplay.

Let us return now to the matter at hand, which is the analysis of mimetic attributes in professional, published screenplays. In Chapter 3, I identified eight predominant character attributes or aspects. These are: *Physiology/Appearance*, *Personal*

Relationships, Environment/Location, Emotional States, Behaviour/Attitude/Traits, Cognitive States and Motivational States. For an attribute to change in any way, it first needs to be established in the text. The attribute may be altered within the same text or the change may be inferred by how it has altered, modified or replaced between two different scenes.

For the purposes of a detailed analysis of the *Titanic* screenplay (Cameron n.d.), I have broken down the passage on the next page in different *lexias*, in a similar analysis method Barthes employed for his seminal examination of Balzac's short story *Sarrassine* (see Barthes 2002). Moreover, I colour-coded them accordingly, in order to indicate the three different modes of description: red text indicates *report* of character action, blue text indicates *description* and green text indicates unfilmable *literary comment*. It must be clearly stated that in the cited screenplays below, both colour-coding and the bracketed comments written in all-caps are mine and do not appear in the original screenplay texts. In my analysis of the following *Titanic* scenes, I also offer my comments in brackets, elaborating on: the *mode* of description (report, description, and comment), the *object* of description (action, appearance, lighting, costume, setting, sound), the *iconic value* of the sentence which is directly linked to its descriptive concreteness, and finally - and most importantly - its *mimetic indexical function*. By *mimetic indexical function* I mean the character attribute that each *lexia* indicates. Finally, I comment on whether this attribute state constitutes a *change* from a previously established state of the same attribute.

The boundaries between Sternberg's three modes of description are not air-tight. For instance, the word "explodes" in the *Titanic* passage below is used figuratively, therefore it is not in itself filmable. However, it still constitutes a description. Moreover, I take some action verbs to be more descriptive and therefore to increase the iconic value of an action report. For instance, while a word like "walk" may be seen as more neutral in regard to the act it denotes, words like "strut" or "stagger" denote a more *specific* type of walking, therefore they increase the descriptive value of the action report. Consequently, such careful choice of words affects characterisation too. A character who *struts* towards this opponent has a different attitude and emotional state from a character who *stumbles* towards his opponent. I used such word differences in my creative work and I will elaborate on these in the next chapter.

Will all that in mind, let us now consider in detail a change of *behaviour* the character Rose experiences in the *Titanic* screenplay.

62 INT. CORRIDOR / B DECK - NIGHT 62

Rose walks along the corridor. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION / HIGH ICONIC VALUE (CONCRETE OBJECTS AND ACTIONS DESCRIBED) / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: MOTIVATION INFERRED (ROSE IS GOING SOMEWHERE)]

A steward coming the other way greets her, and she nods with a slight smile.

[REPORT OF CHARACTER(S) ACTIONS / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: BEHAVIOURAL ATTRIBUTE (NOTE: IN THIS INSTANCE, CONTEXT HELPS US INFER ROSE'S EMOTIONAL STATE. ALTHOUGH SHE SMILES AT THE STEWARD, THIS IS UNLIKELY TO BE PERCEIVED AS A POSITIVE EMOTIONAL STATE, CONSIDERING WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ROSE'S EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE STATES SO FAR)]

She is perfectly composed. [DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER APPEARANCE / LOW ICONIC VALUE DUE TO SOMEWHAT ABSTRACT DESCRIPTION / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: ATTITUDE ATTRIBUTE INFERRED]

CUT TO:

63 INT. ROSE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 63

She enters the room. Stands in the middle, staring at her reflection in the large vanity mirror. Just stands there, then-- [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTIONS / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: ENVIRONMENT AND LOCATION / COGNITIVE STATES (REFLECTION) / CHANGED ATTRIBUTE: ENVIRONMENT/LOCATION /TYPE OF CHANGE: SUBSTITUTION]

With a primal, anguished cry she claws at her throat, ripping off her pearl necklace, which explodes across the room. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION COMBINED WITH DESCRIPTION AND BRIEF LITERARY COMMENT / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL STATES / CHANGED ATTRIBUTES: EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL STATES (IN COMPARISON TO THE PREVIOUS SCENE)/ TYPE OF CHANGE: SUBSTITUTION]

In a frenzy she tears at herself, her clothes, her hair... then attacks the room. She flings everything off the dresser and it flies clattering against the wall. She hurls a handmirror against the vanity, cracking it. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION WITH BRIEF DESCRIPTION / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: BEHAVIOURAL AND EMOTIONAL STATES INFERRED]

(Cameron, n.d.: 38-39)

Such detailed analysis may appear excruciating but it does provide great insights in regard to the literariness of screenplays and the character attributes inferred. I will return to it in the next chapter when I analyse various scenes from my own screenplay. Most of the character description elements that we identified previously (save for

lighting) appear in this scene. There are multiple character *actions* (“Rose walks along the corridor”, “She enters the room” etc.). There are character *internal and external descriptions* (“perfectly composed”, “anguished”, etc.). There is *setting description* and how character interacts with that setting (“staring at her reflection in the large vanity mirror”, “she hurls a handmirror against the vanity, cracking it”, etc.) and even *costume and make-up descriptions* (“she tears at herself, her clothes, her hair”). While there are no direct sound descriptions, Rose’s cry, the stuff “clattering against the wall”, and the vanity mirror “cracking”, all indicate sound effects as well.

All these description elements convey information in regard to the character’s mimetic attributes [e.g. motivation (Rose wants to isolate herself in the room), appearance (her composure, her costumes) emotional states (frenzy, sadness, anger), etc.]. Moreover, we observe from the way these attributes are syntagmatically organised in the scene, how they construct the idea of character change.

More specifically in regard to the *emotional states* changes that dominate these two scenes, the “slight smile” and the perfect composure of scene 62 are very soon replaced by “primal, anguished” cries and a state of “frenzy” in scene 63. This is not only an *emotional state*, but also a *behavioural one*. Note also how James Cameron uses both report and description to indicate these attributes. The cry is primal and anguished; the smile is slight. There are also hints of literary comment and use of figurative language such as when the pearl necklace “*explodes* across the room” (my emphasis). Emotional states are the most frequently occurring ones. They constitute a quite unstable mimetic attribute that is often altered within the same scene as well.

Consider another example, this time from *Whiplash* (Chazzelle n.d.), where the protagonist, Andrew Neimann is trying to impress a teacher with his drumming:

Fletcher begins clapping his hand in time. Fast. Andrew plays.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)
No. Double-time. Double it.

Bop-bop-bopbop-bop-bop-bop-bop-bop-bop. Andrew tries doubling the tempo. But he can't. Fletcher STOPS CLAPPING. The sign of death. Andrew keeps playing, eyes shut... Then -- he hears the door CLOSE. He stops, and looks up. Fletcher has left the room.

A moment later -- the door OPENS. It's Fletcher. Andrew's eyes widen. Maybe it's not over...

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Woopsy-daisy. Forgot my coat.

Fletcher grabs it, steps back out, CLOSES the door. Andrew stares ahead, alone again at the drums -- and totally deflated.

It's over.

(Chazzelle, n.d.: 2-3)

Andrew has travelled from hope to disappointment, then back to hope and then back to disappointment in the course of four paragraphs. At first, he is trying, then, when Fletcher stops clapping, he experiences “The sign of death”. When Fletcher enters the room again, “Andrew’s eyes widen” and by use of free indirect discourse, Chazzelle hints that “Maybe it’s not over”. Fletcher is merely tormenting Andrew, though, so in the end Andrew stays alone in the room, “totally deflated”. Once again, *report* of actions is combined with *literary comment* (“the sign of death”) and *description* (“totally deflated”) to outline the character’s changing states.

Consider now a *change of cognitive state* that occurs in the screenplay *In the Deep* [Jaswinski 2014; the screenplay went on to become the film *The Shallows* (2016)] as the protagonist’s physical wounds by a shark attack (→ *altered physiological state*) cause her severe emotional distress (→ *altered emotional state* through emotional substitution; *fear* substitutes *calmness* rather than being added to it) which, in turn, gives way to hallucinations of her own dismembered body floating in the water (→ *altered cognitive state*).

Controlling the panic, Nancy begins to fasten the yellow inflatable straps around the ends of the ladder.

Tying into knots.

Gets one finished. Goes to the other.

Reacts to a strange moment of silence.

Ignores the horrific image of HERSELF, convulsing beside her. Body torn in two.

Turns away from it, catching a reflection HERSELF in the water. Still alive, drowning, decapitated from the rest of her body.

She turns away again, SCREAMING out the hallucinations.

The water has quieted.

(Jaswinski 2014: 68)

Once again, the writer uses different description elements for the scene. There are *sound descriptions* (“a moment of silence”, “SCREAMING out the hallucinations”), *character internal and external descriptions* (“controls the panicking”, “Body torn in two”) and *location descriptions* (“The water has quieted”) as well as numerous *character actions* that dominate all screenplay texts (“Tying the knots”, “She turns away again”, etc.).

Another type of *cognitive change* can be observed whenever a character comes up with an idea. This, in broad terms, constitutes an alteration by way of *addition*, since the protagonist realises something new but she retains all the old information as well. This is another example from *In the Deep*:

Nancy looks up to the sky. In the dark storm, she sees a crack of daylight. A hint of light shining down on deep water.

Shining near the buoy.

CLOSE ON HER EYES

Something small and significant forming.

FLASH TO:

THE SURFER IN THE WATER

Shouting something to her moments before his death. Can't hear him in the heavy surge.

BACK ON NANCY

Absorbing the memory. Trying to put any clue together.

FLASH TO: THE SURFER

Shouting again. Pointing to the buoy.

BACK ON NANCY

Thinks about it. Painstakingly turns around, trying to put a fix on:

THE BUOY. Tossing around in the heavy surge. The light fades as new clouds roll in.

But Nancy's quietly struck with some semblance of Revelation.

Was he trying to communicate something more than just a place to go?

NANCY (CONT'D)
(a whisper)
Something there? On the buoy?

(Jaswinski 2014: 54-55)

The screenwriter, Anthony Jaswinski, uses literary tools, but also alludes to filmic techniques, such as *editing*, to highlight the internal mechanisms of Nancy's mind, as she tries to piece her memories together and understand what that surfer was trying to communicate to her. Note the limited amount of *action reports* and the overwhelming amount of *descriptions* and *literary comments*. The various internal (presumably non-filmable) thoughts taking place inside Nancy's head, are eventually externalized when she mutters to herself (and, indirectly, to the reader), thus culminating her rationale. Her realisation constitutes a clear change of cognitive state, by way of addition.

Personal relationship changes are, along with emotional and environmental/location changes, the ones most frequently occurring. Every time the story's protagonist is introduced to another character there is a relationship change. Of course, not all relationships are of equal importance. What is more, the addition of a new relationship to a character's "network of relationships" is not the only change in regard to this attribute. A personal relationship can be modified in many ways. I suggest that the most frequent alteration occurs within the spectrum extending between the opposites *friendliness* and *hostility*. A married couple's relationship getting worse constitutes a modification of their relationship towards the hostile end of the spectrum. A cute-meet between the protagonists of a rom-com constitutes a modification towards the friendly end of the spectrum (positive value alteration).

Let us consider two examples that demonstrate these different types of relationship changes; the first one from the *Titanic*, when Rose first lays eyes upon Jack, and the other one from *Scorn* (Kolstad n.d.) when John Wick is forced to say goodbye to his beloved wife forever.

Fabrizio taps Tommy and they both look at Jack gazin at Rose. Fabrizio and Tommy grin at each other.

Rose turns suddenly and looks right at Jack. He is caught staring, but he doesn't look away. She does, but then looks back. Their eyes meet across the space of the well deck, across the gulf between worlds.

(Cameron, n.d: 37)

Notice how the writer, James Cameron, links the physical distance between the two characters to their vast socio-economic differences. Rose is introduced to Jack properly in a latter scene, when he convinces her not to commit suicide by jumping off the ship:

She leans out, her arms straightening... looking down hypnotized, into the vortex below her. Her dress and hair are lifted by the wind of the ship's movement.

The only sound, above the rush of water below, is the flutter and snap of the big Union Jack right above her.

[...]

JACK

Don't do it.

She whips her head around at the sound of his voice. It takes a second for her eyes to focus.

ROSE

Stay back! Don't come any closer!

Jack sees the tear tracks on her cheeks in the faint glow from the stern running lights.

JACK

Take my hand. I'll pull you back in.

(Cameron n.d: 37-40)

So far, Rose's relationship with Jack has been modified in the following ways (I am assuming Rose's perspective because she is the story's protagonist): At first, Jack was *added* in her relationship network when she acknowledged him on the deck. Subsequently, their relationship was *modified* by becoming *friendlier* (*positive value alteration*). As their romantic relationship evolves, it keeps on moving towards the friendly end of the spectrum. Later on in the story, Rose reverses that change when she decides to break up with him. At that stage, the relationship gravitates towards the hostile end (I use the term hostile quite liberally here; in essence we observe a *negative value alteration*). But then, when she decides to embrace their relationship once and for all, her behavioural change greatly affects her relationship with Jack, pushing it all the way towards the friendly end of the spectrum (positive value alteration). Sadly, at the

end of the screenplay, Jack dies, therefore he is finally removed from her network (reduction).

We also observe such a relationship change in the opening pages of *Scorn* screenplay [which went on to become the film *John Wick* (2014)], when the protagonist is forced to unplug his comatose wife:

Behind him, the DOCTOR -of a similar age to John- enters, placing a hand on John's shoulder. John lowers his head, and nods. With a bit of effort, he stands, staring down at her for a long moment, never once releasing his grip, and leans over to kiss her on the forehead.

JOHN
...it had to be you...
(a long beat, then)
...be seein' ya'...

A beat... and John nods.

The doctor turns off the machine; lights dim, the room settles into silence, and Norma's body grows still. The Doctor leaves John to be alone with his wife.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Be seein' you.

(Kolstad n.d.: 4)

One woman's ultimate physiological change (death) is another man's radical personal relationship change (losing a partner). It is also interesting to note both the *iconic* and *indexical* functions of all these sentences. John's wife's death is never *directly* stated. Instead, the author uses the *location* in order to construct images (*iconic value of language*) which also have an *indexical function* as they point to changing mimetic attributes. The wife's death is indicated by the lights that dim, the machine that is turned off and her body growing still. Therefore, we see how character actions, internal and external descriptions as well as setting, lighting and sound descriptions all converge to convey character attributes and the ways in which they are modified within the scene.

In the screenplay *A Fantastic Woman* (Lelio and Maza n.d.) the death of Marina's partner is signified, before we are told explicitly, by Marina's emotional reaction to it. Marina has had a discussion with the doctor before this scene but we do not know what was said. We surmise it easily by reading her anguished reaction and the various descriptions in Scene 19:

19 INT. BATHROOM - HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM -- NIGHT 19

Marina enters the bathroom, she is alone. She breathes heavily and enters a bathroom cubicle. She fall off her knees, her head leans on the floor. The breathing gets loud and powerful.

She washes her face and looks in the mirror. She can't believe what happened.

(Lelio and Maza, n.d.: 12)

A personal relationship may also be gradually modified in subtler ways during the screenplay's narrative. A good example of this is the screenplay *Moonlight*, written by Barry Jenkins (n.d.). I wish to refer to three specific scenes to illustrate how the young boy's relationship to his "protector", Juan, is developed in the first thirty pages of the script. In this way I am also alluding to the interplay between conceptualization and writing, an issue I will explore in Chapter 5 when I discuss my own screenplay:

Little huddles in on himself, looks on terrified as...

...a light, a hand as the edge of the plywood gives, a fullsize of it giving way to reveal a tall figure, calm. Adjusting for the light, we see him fully: it's Juan.

Juan reaching a leg over the threshold, stands just inside without encroaching on Little's space.

A beat as the two take each other in, then:

JUAN

What you doin' in here, lil' man?

Little says nothing, just watches him.

JUAN

You don't talk to strangers, huh?

Juan takes a step forward... and Little takes a step back.

JUAN

(raising his hands)

Alright.

It's cool.

We cool.

(Jenkins, n.d: 4)

Setting description and its relation to the two characters is fundamental in this scene, as are the protagonist's actions. *Lighting description* also plays an important role in the scene when Juan metaphorically sheds some light on Little when he enters the room. For his part, Little remains silent, hesitant and intimidated even when Juan takes him

to a diner and buys him lunch. Later on, Juan takes him to his place and introduces him to his girlfriend, Teresa. They offer him yet another meal, and Little finally starts to open up a bit:

JUAN
You don't talk much but you damn
sure can eat.

Teresa smiling.

TERESA
That's alright, baby. You talk when
you ready.

Little looking up from his plate at that, something about
Teresa's voice, her presence, clicking with him.

LITTLE
My name Chiron.
(and)
But people call me Little.

(Jenkins n.d.: 7)

As Chiron's relationship with his mother worsens, he gets closer to Juan and Teresa. In a subsequent scene, where Juan teaches Chiron how to swim on Miami beach (a *cognitive change* cementing a *relationship change* and inspiring an *emotional change*), the young boy finds the parental figure that he so much craves:

JUAN
Alright, you saw me swimming,
Right?

Nod from Little.

JUAN
Okay, do like I did, don't put your
head under water. And your arms,
try and do 'em like I did mine.

Little mimicking Juan's swimming as Juan holds him aloft,
Juan holding him fully in place for this practice.

JUAN
Smoother, more easy'like.

Little settling noticeably, gradually. It's a stretch but...
looks passable, like maybe he could.

Juan turning him back upright, Little going back to his
awkward treading.

JUAN

Alright lil' man.
I think you ready.

Little considering that, bobbing in the ocean as he treads.
His eyes on the water stretching out before him, endless.
Even in this dying light, stretching on forever.

Meets Juan's gaze now. Finds compassion, hope there.

(Jenkins n.d.: 18)

Finally, Chiron is ready to speak out loud some of his biggest fears to Juan and Teresa by the end of the first act. What we have observed overall is a gradual *reduction* of Chiron's trademark behaviour and of the trait inferred by this behavioural pattern (shyness):

LITTLE
What's a faggot?

Juan... blindsided by that one, unprepared and unequipped to answer that.

Takes a sip of his juice, a deep breath and...

JUAN
A faggot is... a word used to make
gay people feel bad.

Little nodding, processing that.

LITTLE
Am I a faggot?

JUAN
No.
You're not a faggot.
(and)
You can be gay, but... you don't
have to let nobody call you a
faggot.
(and after a beat)
Not unless...

Juan looking to Teresa; Teresa motioning him to quit while he's ahead.

He takes another sip of that juice.

LITTLE
How do I know?

Again a look to Teresa, a shrug of the shoulders from her:

JUAN
You... you just do.
(and)
I think.

Little with both hands around his juice, all his senses
focused there as his mind goes somewhere altogether
different, clearly thinking deeply, forthrightly about this.

Juan reaching his cup back to Teresa:

JUAN
(sotto)
Gin.
(and to Little)
You don't have to know right now,
you feel me?
(and)
Not yet.

Little nodding, from his demeanor comforted by this. In this
state, so wounded and curious, invites the empathy.

(Jenkins n.d.: 30-32)

Like in *Titanic*, we observe a similar pattern in this relationship change for young Chiron. First, Juan is *added* to the boy's relations network. However, Chiron is extremely cautious. The relationship lingers on the more hostile end of the spectrum. During the course of the narrative, however, the relationship is modified towards friendliness. Overall, there is an alteration of a positive value. This relationship change does not occur in a vacuum. It is entangled with many other attribute changes, including emotional states changes for Chiron, as well as behavioural and other personal relationship changes that are important in this first act (his mother, Paula, the bullies at school tormenting him, and his only friend from school, Kevin). All these changing attributes connect to one another in the way that are organised temporally on the syntagmatic axis of the narrative.

Moving on to ***physiological changes***, we should note that this is an attribute more radically altered in certain genre films such as horror, and sci-fi movies. The screenplay *Chronicle* (Landis n.d.), in which three friends acquire telekinetic powers when they discover a huge hole in the ground in the woods, provides a good example of this:

Andrew is now very near to the crystalline structure; viewed
up close, it's almost arachnid, organic somehow. The light
clouds have turned yellow. Matt is practically inside the
structure, pressing it with his palms.

MATT
-changes color, see? It must be
reacting to the heat, some kind of

exothermic reaction-

ANDREW (O.S.)

WHAT? I can't hear you over the you
Know-

STEVE

Make it change again! This is
awesome!

Matt presses with his palms. There's a low sustained hiss as
the light clouds turn an angry shade of red. A stream of
them is released from beneath the structure. The camera
jerks suddenly, revealing Steve, who's clutching his ears.

STEVE (CONT'D)

AGHHHHH!

Blood has begun to rapidly pour out of his eyes, ears, mouth
and nose, and he buckles forwards; the camera spins wildly
and we see Matt seemingly FLUNG out of the crystalline
structure.

(Landis n.d.: 18-19)

The scene ends on an ambiguous note, letting us think that the three teenagers may have died. The following two scenes put those fears to rest and reveal that the friends have now acquired telekinetic powers (*physiological change* and *cognitive change*). Not only that but, as it becomes clear in the scene cited above, these powers come at the expense of certain physiological drawbacks (mostly bleeding from the eyes and ears). Thus, the main characters' overall physiology has been modified in more ways than one. This becomes even clearer in the climax of the script, where the protagonist, Andrew, has turned into an antagonist and his cousin, Matt, is forced to face him. The higher the effort Matt has to put in order to fight Andrew the higher the physical toll that he has to pay gets:

We get a good look at the toll this is taking on him; Matt's face is
a crimson mask of blood from his nose, eyes, mouth and ears. He's
limping badly, his clothes torn, visibly covered with injuries. He
looks like he's been in a car wreck.

(Landis n.d.: 86)

Physiological changes may, of course, be rooted very much in grim reality as well. In the *In the Deep* screenplay, the protagonist, Nancy, sacrifices her leg (reduction of bodily parts) during a shark attack, in order to release herself from a buoys and try and make it to the shore:

NANCY'S JUST MADE A SURFABLE RAFT.

Chucks it into the water, grabbing the sinking buoy with both hands. Stares at her own reflection in the glowing Bulb.

A reflection.

A moment of peace.

AS THE SHARK BURSTS OUT OF THE WATER

TEARS INTO NANCY'S LEG

She SCREAMS as skin and blood fill the water.

FRAMING IT ALL FROM THE BULB'S MYRIAD REFLECTION

Shark doesn't get the full bite at first. Tears more into her, using its 400lbs-per-muscle body to wrestle her Down.

Nancy's nearly pulled out of her body as it finally TEARS OFF HER MANGLED LEG, but freeing her from the buoy.

Shark SLAMS back into the water as a big wave takes the whole buoy.

Nancy SCREAMS, falling into water, CRASHING onto the RAFT as the wave roars over.

Big surge propels her and the raft into the blooddrenched white foam.

With two good arms, she beats the crash and gets the raft into an ugly body-boarding ride.

Nearly goes under and crashes.

Steers it hard, screaming from the fresh amputation.

(Jaswinski n.d.: 70-71)

Damien Chazzelle uses more minor physiological changes in *Whiplash* to demonstrate how determined Andrew Neimann is to become the greatest drummer. Consider the following passage, where we see him practicing until he bleeds:

INT. ANDREW'S PRACTICE ROOM - MORNING

Andrew rises from the same mattress and slides onto his drum seat. Starts playing, hands dotted with blisters, eyes crusty with sand. The METRONOME still on...

...because it was never turned off.

CUT TO: Rides furiously, trying to beat his double-time swing... The METRONOME reading 380... His muscles exhausted...

CUT TO: The METRONOME adjusted up to 390... Blisters tearing...

CUT TO: 400.. Hands bleeding now, blood smearing the sticks...

CUT TO: 405... The METRONOME going crazy now... The DRUMMING so fast it's a wash, a wall of sound, blood on the cymbal--

(Chazzelle n.d.: 39)

Andrew is more than willing to bleed in front of the entire class when his teacher, Fletcher, makes him compete with two other drummers in his class in order to get the part:

Andrew -- whole body shaking, had been playing for half an hour straight -- gets off the kit, struggling for breath, hands coated with torn blisters and blood.

(Chazzelle n.d.: 63)

This disregard for his own physical health reaches a shocking and almost tragicomic level, when he is involved in a brutal car accident, yet stands up and keeps walking towards the performance that he absolutely thinks he must attend.

Andrew takes a moment to understand what has just happened. Gasping for breath, he yanks himself up - but finds his LEFT HAND is caught under the steering wheel. He yanks, pulls at it. It won't budge. Smoke and exhaust fumes billow up... He tugs and tugs and pulls and - finally - CRAAAACK - the bone of his index finger SNAPS. The most painful sound you can imagine. He SCREAMS in agony. YANKS back, staggering...

(Chazzelle n.d.: 72)

Still, Andrew makes it to the performance, utterly determined to prove his worth to Fletcher. The result is as grotesque as it is painful to read. Andrew tries to perform but his physical condition clearly makes this impossible:

Fletcher raises his hand, ready to cue... Andrew tries to get his breathing under control... Ryan and Carl lean forward...

Ryan catches a glimpse of Andrew's left hand, just as...
...Fletcher's finger MOVES.

THE BAND IS OFF. It explodes into CARAVAN DUNELLEN at lightning speed.

But Andrew is already in trouble... Blood getting on the snare... Ears starting to RING... Left hand barely keeping up... The whole thing slowly slipping away from him...

He closes his eyes. Mouths: "Come on come on come on..."

(Chazzelle n.d.: 74)

It is a great demonstration of how Andrew's *behavioural* pattern perseveres even in face of great physical injury. One attribute is altered radically (physiology) and another stays seemingly static (behaviour and attitude) in order to demonstrate the dominance of yet another attribute (personality trait).

Socio-economic status refers in the power status the protagonist enjoys within the fictional world of the narrative, as well as his or her professional and financial position. This may not be only about her financial situation strictly speaking but also about how much power, prestige and popularity he or she holds within that world. From this perspective, Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Kloves 2001) experiences a mind-blowing reversal of socio-economic status when he learns that he is not a "muggle" nobody but rather the most famous wizard of all time. The ramifications of that information are conveyed to him (and to us) gradually in the script. Thus, his overall status is vastly improved. Let us consider a few instances where this happens. The first one occurs as we have already seen when the giant Hagrid tells Harry that he is in fact a wizard. Shortly after, he cements Harry's status within the wizarding community:

HAGRID
CAR CRASH! A car crash kill Lily and
James Potter? It's an outrage! A
scandal!

UNCLE VERNON
HE'LL NOT BE GOING, I TELL YOU!

HAGRID
An' I s'ppose a great Muggle like
yerself is goin' ter stop him.

HARRY
Muggle?

HAGRID
Non-magic folk.
(turning to Uncle Vernon)
This boy's name's been down ever since
he was born. He's off to the finest
school of witchcraft and wizardry in
the world and he'll be under the
greatest headmaster Hogwart's has ever
known, Albus Dumbledore--

UNCLE VERNON
I will not pay for some crackpot old
fool to teach him magic tricks!

Figure 7: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone script, p. 17

Soon after, Harry comes to realise himself exactly how popular he is to people in a world he did not even know existed.

50 INT. LEAKY CAULDRON - DAY

A dark, shabby pub. In a corner, some OLD WOMEN sit drinking, one smoking a pipe as long as her arm. Up front, a TINY MAN in a TOP HAT talks to the BARTENDER, who resembles a gummy walnut. Harry and Hagrid enter.

BARTENDER

Hagrid! The usual, I presume--

(spying Harry)

Good Lord. Is this? Can this be him?

Bless my soul. It's Harry Potter.

The pub goes quiet. Then...everyone is up and around Harry, holding out their hands and gabbling, while Hagrid looks on, beaming. Slowly, a NERVOUS YOUNG MAN makes his way forward.

QUIRRELL

Harry P-P-Potter. C-Can't tell you how pleased I am to meet you.

HAGRID

Professor! Didn't see yeh there. Harry, this 'ere's Professor Quirrell. He'll be yer Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts.

QUIRRELL

F-F-Fearfully f-fascinating subject. N-Not that you n-need it, eh, P-P-Potter?

Quirrell's eyes flutter nervously over Harry's scar.

HAGRID

Yes, well, must get on. Lots ter buy.

(as he pulls Harry along)

See? Tol' yeh you was famous.

Figure 8: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone script, p. 19

Later on, this popularity is matched by a revelation that he is actually quite wealthy as well. When he goes to buy his school stuff, Harry asks Hagrid how he is going to pay for it considering he hasn't got any money. The answer lies in his parents' Gringotts Bank vault. "Pyramids of coins" indicate great fortune (change of status) and render Harry speechless (cognitive change → emotional reaction).

57 EXT. VAULT - STONE PASSAGEWAY - DAY

...whistling to a halt before a SMALL DOOR. Griphook steps out, takes Harry's key and UNLOCKS the vault, revealing great glittering pyramids of coin. Harry is speechless.

HAGRID

Din' think yer parents would leave yeh with nothin', did yeh?

Figure 9: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone script, p. 22

Cameron in *Titanic* demonstrates how *socio-economic status* and its alteration can be linked to *physiology/appearance* states. Rose is always described by way of the fancy

and elegant clothes she is wearing and James Cameron continues this pattern even when Rose has decided to abandon her own class. Let us examine how her appearance descriptions change, thus signifying a change in her *socio-economic status* as well. This is the first time we meet young Rose in 1912:

The Renault stops and the LIVERIED DRIVER scurries to open the door for a YOUNG WOMAN dressed in a stunning white and purple outfit, with an enormous feathered hat. She is 17 years old and beautiful, regal of bearing, with piercing eyes.

It is the girl in the drawing. ROSE. She looks up at the ship, taking it in with cool appraisal.

(Cameron n.d.: 20)

Cameron keeps referring to her various costumes although this tactic is rather unusual especially considering that the dresses do not have a specific narrative function. This is Rose when Jack meets her for dinner in first class after he has saved her life:

Cal comes down the stairs, with Ruth on his arm, covered in jewelry. They both walk right past Jack, neither one gecognizeing him (sic). Cal nods at him, one gent to another. But Jack barely has time to be amused. Because just behind Cal and Ruth on the stairs is Rose, a vision in red and black, her low-cut dress showing off her neck and shoulders, her arms seathed (sic) in white gloves that come well above above the elbow. Jack is hypnotized by her beauty.

(Cameron n.d.: 64)

Meeting Jack and the tragedy of the shipwreck changes Rose's fortunes forever. However, it is her decision to alter her own socio-economic status and she makes that absolutely clear numerous times within the screenplay:

Jack and Rose stand in each others arms. Their breath clouds around them in the now freezing air, but they don't even feel the cold.

ROSE
When this ship docks, I'm getting off
with you.

JACK
This is crazy.

ROSE

I know. It doesn't make any sense.
That's why I trust it.

(Cameron n.d.: 97)

Rose makes her decision to break-off her engagement to wealthy Cal and follow Jack very clear to her aggrieved fiancée later in the story:

ROSE
Goodbye, mother.

Ruth, standing in the tippy lifeboat, can do nothing. Cal grabs Rose's arm but she pulls free and walks away through the crowd. Cal catches up to Rose and grabs her again, Roughly.

CAL
Where are you going? To him? Is that it? To be a whore to that gutter rat?

ROSE
I'd rather be his whore than your Wife.

He clenches his jaw and squeezes her arm viciously, pulling her back toward the lifeboat. Rose pulls out a hairpin and jabs him with it. He lets go with a curse and she runs into the crowd.

(Cameron n.d.: 121)

At the end of the story, James Cameron uses Rose's dramatically changed appearance to visualise her changed social status in even more concrete, iconic terms:

CARPATHIA STEWARD
You won't find any of your people back here, sir. It's all steerage.

Cal ignores him and goes amongst this wrecked group, looking under shawls and blankets at one bleak face after another. Rose is sipping hot tea.

Her eyes focus on him as he approaches her. He barely recognizes her. She looks like a refugee, her matted hair hanging in her eyes.

(Cameron n.d.: 175)

Rose in this scene has fully replaced her wealthy appearance features with poor ones.

As I have already suggested, the importance of *environmental change* is challenging to pin down exactly because characters change locations constantly. However, *Titanic* provides a good case study to examine the various ways location changes can be used to denote or connote overall character change. Cameron is able to do that quite successfully in two ways: on a more “local” scale, he makes extensive use of the ship’s firm distinction between classes. He spends the initial scenes on the ship attempting to demonstrate these differences. On a more “global” scale, Cameron uses Rose’s ultimate journey from elitist, aristocratic England back to the land of freedom and opportunity to further illustrate her change. Let us consider the following passages:

Cal leads, weaving between vehicles and handcarts, hurrying passengers (mostly second class and steerage) and wellwishers. Most of the first class passengers are avoiding the smelly press of the dockside crowd by using an elevated boarding bridge, twenty feet above.

45 INT. THIRD CLASS BERTHING / G-DECK FORWARD - DAY 45

Jack and Fabrizio walk down a narrow corridor with doors lining both sides like a college dorm. Total confusion as people argue over luggage in several languages, or wander in confusion in the labyrinth. They pass emigrants studying the signs over the doors, and looking up the words in phrase books.

They find their berth. It is a modest cubicle, painted enamel white, with four bunks. Exposed pipes overhead. The other two guys are already there. OLAUS and BJORN GUNDERSEN.

Jack throws his kit on one open bunk, while Fabrizio takes the other.

46 INT. SUITE B-52-56 - DAY

By contrast, the so-called "Millionaire Suite" is in the Empire style, and comprises two bedrooms, a bath, WC, wardrobe room, and a large sitting room. In addition there is a private 50 foot promenade deck outside.

A room service waiter pours champagne into a tulip glass of orange juice and hands the Bucks Fizz to Rose. She is looking through her new paintings. There is a Monet of water lilies, a Degas of dancers, and a few abstract works. They are all unknown paintings... lost works.

(Cameron n.d.: 29-30)

The barriers for Rose and Jack begin to break down gradually. Jack is invited to dinner in first class after he saves Rose’s life and then, Rose sneaks out and joins Jack in third

class deck where she is able to finally have fun. Note how the narrative assumes each character's focalisation when they find themselves inside a "world" they are not at all familiar with:

79 INT. UPPER LANDING / GRAND STAIRCASE AND A-DECK 79

Jack steps in and his breath is taken away by the splendor spread out before him. Overhead is the enormous glass dome, with a crystal chandelier at its center. Sweeping down six stories is the First Class Grand Staircase, the epitome of the opulent naval architecture of the time.

And the people: the women in their floor length dresses, elaborate hairstyles and abundant jewelry... the gentlemen in evening dress, standing with one hand at the small of the back, talking quietly.

72 INT. THIRD CLASS GENERAL ROOM 72

The social center of steerage life. It is stark by comparison to the opulence of first class, but is a loud, boisterous place. There are mothers with babies, kids running between the benches yelling in several languages and being scolded in several more. There are old women yelling, men playing chess, girls doing needlepoint and reading dime novels. There is even an upright piano and Tommy Ryan is noodling around it.

[...]

Rose, coming toward them. The activity in the room stops... a hush falls. Rose feels suddenly self-conscious as the steerage passengers stare openly at this princess, some with resentment, others with awe. She spots Jack and gives a little smile, walking straight to him. He rises to meet her, smiling.

(Cameron n.d.: 51)

85 INT. THIRD CLASS GENERAL ROOM 85

Crowd led and alive with music, laughter and raucous carrying on. An ad hoc band is gathered near the upright piano, honking out lively stomping music on fiddle, accoridon and tambourine. People of all ages are dancing, drinking beer and wine, smoking, laughing, even brawling.

Tommy hands Rose a pint of stout and she hoists it. Jack meanwhile dances with 5 year old Cora Cartmell, or tries to, with her standing on his feet. As the tune ends, Rose leans down to the little girl.

(Cameron n.d.: 71)

THE DOOR to the well deck is open a few inches as Lovejoy watches through the gap. He sees Jack holding Rose, both of them laughing.

LOVEJOY closes the door.

(Cameron n.d.: 73)

Titanic tells Rose's story and the more she spends time in third class environments with Jack, the more her overall change is underlined. Specifically, in the party scene, Rose's change of location from first-class dining rooms to third-class basements is what prompts a behavioural change (wild dancing, etc.) and thus results in an *emotional change* (she is happy, as well as in love, finally having fun free from upper-class restraints).

Change of environment occurs in linear fashion in road movies. In Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1969) for example, the protagonist Isak Borg goes on a trip by car along with his daughter-in-law, in order to arrive at the University that will award him "Jubilee Doctor" status. During this trip, Isak reminisces about his childhood, meets new people and revisits the places of his childhood. Consider this scene, for example, in which Isak decides to make a detour in order to see his family's old summer house. On a side-note, we must highlight Bergman's decision to use first-person narration (a rarity in screenplay narratives), in order to underline the subjective point of view of the main character as the relationship between memory, fantasy and reality becomes blurry.

We drove for a while in silence. The sun stood high in the sky and the road was brilliantly white. Suddenly I had an impulse. I slowed down and swung the car into a small side road on the left, leading down to the sea. It was a twisting, forest road, bordered by piles of newly cut timber which smelled strongly in the heat of the sun. Marianne looked up, a bit surprised, but remained silent. I parked the car in a curve of the road.

ISAK: Come, I'll show you something.

She sighed quietly and followed me down the little hill to the gate. Now we could see the large yellow house set among the birch trees, with its terrace facing the bay. The house slept behind closed doors and drawn blinds.

ISAK: Every summer for the first twenty years of my life we lived out here. There were ten of us children. Yes, you probably know that.

MARIANNE: What a ridiculous old house.

ISAK: It is an antique.

MARIANNE: Do people live here now?

ISAK: Not this summer.

MARIANNE: I'll go down to the water and take a dip if you don't mind. We have lots of time.

ISAK: I'll go over to the wild-strawberry patch for a moment.

(Bergman 1969: 227)

As previously noted, change of location is perhaps the most inconsequential of changes, however, when observed macro-dramatically, it can be used to maximize effects of character change.

One of the greatest misconceptions that screenwriting gurus and theorists alike have is the monolithic attitude they take towards a character's *goals and needs*. These two elements are the pillars of screenwriting doxa, when it comes to character development and, yet, they are treated as if they (should) remain unchanged. A character's goal I said to drive the entire story and, while, in some ways that may be true, a character usually goes through many, different goals during the course of the narrative. In *Whiplash*, for example, we can observe an overall desire for Andrew in that he wishes to become the greatest drummer alive. However, one should not ignore the many, different, more elementary goals he also sets for himself: from practicing for a particular audition, to making it to a performance while injured from a car crash and from testifying against his old teacher in order to hurt him, to giving up drumming because of his traumatic experiences. These are all goals, scattered along the screenplay that should not go unacknowledged in a comprehensive study of its narrative. The first goal for Andrew occurs very early in the story:

FLETCHER
So you know I'm looking for players.

ANDREW
Yes...

FLETCHER
Then why did you stop playing?

Beat. Andrew nods, smiles. He gets it. Summons up all his remaining energy and resumes playing, trying to really show off this time. Rolls, fills, speedy stick-work. He finishes.

(Chazzelle n.d.: 2)

Moreover, a clear, singular goal that overrides all others may not be found in every script. Rose, in *Titanic*, sets various goals: committing suicide, embracing her romantic relationship with Jack, surviving after the ship hits the iceberg, saving Jack while the ship has started to sink, dropping the precious jewel in the ocean at the end of the script, etc. The same applies to Harry Potter. The young wizard has various goals and saving the Philosopher's Stone from the hands of evil Lord Voldemort is not formed as a goal in his mind until the third act of the script. Andrew's newly-acquired telekinetic powers

in *Chronicle* do not provide him with a clear goal for a good chunk of the narrative. It is towards the end that he uses them for a very specific reason (to steal medication for his sick mother) and then in order to wreak havoc during his vengeful outburst at the climax of the script. Isak Borg in *Wild Strawberries* (1969) has the clear goal of travelling to the University; however, he also forms other, minor goals during this journey - like visiting his childhood summer-house - that are more important for his emotional and behavioural development. At the beginning of *In the Deep*, all Nancy wants to do is surf. It is at the break of the first act that she encounters the shark and it is only then that she acquires a new goal: to stay alive. *Scorn* is perhaps the most consistent script in terms of the protagonist's goal. Although still introduced towards the end of the first act, John's goal to take revenge is the singular action that carries him all the way to the screenplay's climax.

4.5 Narrativity Through the Lens of Character Attributes: Some Initial Observations

To see events as changing states of character attributes has important consequences for narratological studies overall. As we saw in the first chapter, events can be external (character-affecting) to the central character (e.g. a secondary character's actions, a natural phenomenon such as earthquakes, etc.) or internal (character-instigated), meaning that it is the protagonist that instigates the event (e.g. killing one's partner, breaking out from prison, embarking on a quest for an object, etc.). It is the relation and ratio between internal and external events that decide the activeness or passivity of a character. Thus, a passive character is not defined in simplistic terms as a character who, for instance, spends his days on the couch, but rather as a character whose overall situation is changed by actions and events external to him. If our protagonist tells her husband "I'm breaking up with you", she is the instigator of an event and changes some of her own attributes. If our protagonist is the one being told by her husband that he is breaking up with her, she is, in that instance passive; the event is character-affecting in regard to her, rather than character-instigated.

Moreover, a close study of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic organisation of characters' mimetic attributes, in addition to offering us valuable information in regard to the organisation of the text and its thematic components, also provides us with useful

insights in regard to the text's narrative organisation overall. Once we have identified the main character's attributes and carried a detailed examination of their alterations and the relations between them, we can reach certain conclusions in regard to the nature and quality of the narrative. Depending on how many mimetic attributes the character displays, or how radically those attributes change, I propose that we consider narrative in terms of *Cohesiveness*, *Directionality*, *Focalisation*, *Multiplicity*, *Homogeneity* and *Variability*. Let us discuss those terms in relation to character in more detail:

Cohesiveness of narrative refers to how tight or loose the cause-and-effect links are between the various events, and, as of consequence between the various, changing mimetic attributes. Largely, we could argue that detective films are usually of a high cohesiveness, while art-house films, exploring the internal lives of their protagonist's display a relatively low cohesiveness. That been said, narrative is largely defined as a series of events linked between them by cause-and-effect relations. Therefore, it is extremely rare for scripts and films to display no cohesiveness at all. That would exclude them by default from the narrative genre.

I use the term *directionality of narrative* to refer to whether the plot runs on a single, central axis of action or on several. For instance, *In the Deep* is a script of single directionality: it revolves entirely around a shark attack. Similarly, *Scorn* revolves around the singular action of revenge. Scripts like *Titanic*, or *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, on the other hand, are of multiple directionality. As we have seen, despite being in the title, the sorcerer's stone in no way dominates the plot of the script.

Density of Narrative refers to the number of different events that constitute the plot. A screenplay like *In the Deep*, for instance, displays relatively low plot density, because it is comprised largely by one overall event (the attack of the shark).

Focalisation of narrative refers to the number of characters who move the story forward. To phrase it another way, it refers to the number of characters the narrative focuses on. A script like *Scorn* displays narrow focalisation; it is largely the main character's actions (John Wick) that move the story forward. This quality also helps us define whether the main character in the story is more active or passive. It depends on whether she, or a secondary character, is the one instigating the events that constitute the story.

Multiplicity of character and narrative is linked to density and refers to the quantity of attributes the main character comprises. The text, for example, may indicate or highlight only certain attributes (physiology and emotional states) while ignoring or

obscuring others (e.g. socio-economic status or moral stances). Rose, in *Titanic*, displays a high level of multiplicity. The text offers numerous cues about her behaviour, her emotional state, her socio-economic status, her ideas and morals and so on. *Scorn* is more frugal in its character's descriptions, therefore displays a lower level of multiplicity.

Homogeneity of character is also linked to the multiplicity of character. It refers to whether traits assigned to a particular paradigmatic set of attributes, (say personality traits) are similar to each other or in any way contrasting. Andrew in *Chronicle* displays a high level of homogeneity in relation to his behavioural state as he is very often described as being angry. Similarly, Andrew Neimann's overarching obsession and commitment to drumming in *Whiplash* makes him a rather homogenous character. Generally speaking, characters are more often homogenous than not. Despite manuals arguing that adding contrasting attributes increases character complexity, there always lurks the danger of making a character implausible by adding contrasting traits within the same paradigmatic set. *Whiplash*, in fact, does offer us a couple of interesting instances of character heterogeneity (albeit brief). While Andrew's teacher, Fletcher, is presented as extremely tough, angry and erratic, he also has moments where he displays tenderness and friendliness to certain characters. These contrasting behaviours make him more complex and indicate that his extreme teaching style does not in fact reveal his entire personality.

Finally, *variability of narrative and character* refers to the degree of change that mimetic attributes undergo through the course of the narrative. This quality is admittedly more challenging to define since a character may possess one attribute that changes radically while his other attributes remain static. *Scorn*, for example, is a script of relatively low variability in regard to its main character. *Titanic*, in contrast, displays extremely high variability for almost all of its main character's attributes (emotional state, behaviour, environment, relationships, socio-economic status, etc.).

4.6 Interpretations of Character Change

Although my approach to character change is semiotic and structuralist I posit that it is almost impossible to escape certain interpretive assumptions about the thematic elements of the literary text. My aim is mainly to outline the syntagmatic organisation

of the screenplay text; however, I do believe that my analysis model based on the interchanging mimetic attributes can offer valuable insight to the themes of the work if the analyst is comfortable in proceeding with that project.

One of the most important insights that my proposed analysis model offers lies exactly in the way that it highlights all mimetic attributes and not just a few, that theorists and screenwriting gurus focus on (namely personality traits and goals). Thus, seen holistically, the *Titanic* script does not bring upon a personality trait change for Rose. Her overarching change regards mostly her decision to abandon her class and lead a new life, starting from scratch. Instead of a clear trait change, we observe a motivation change, a behavioural change, and, most crucially, a socio-economic status change. My analysis model also allows us to understand exactly how these changes came to be: her emotional involvement with Jack was the catalyst for the subsequent changes to take place.

Similarly, through close examination, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is more about one's familiarisation with a new environment and the desire to prove one's self, rather than with an overarching goal or a changed personality trait. *Chronicle* is not about overcoming a flaw, as simplified views on character change would have it; it is about the destructive intensification of a negative emotion and the subsequent intensification of a destructive behavioural pattern. Despite a temporary improvement in his personal relationships and his emotional state, the protagonist, Andrew, proves unable to alter his established emotional and behavioural pattern of anger which intensifies as the narrative progresses and culminates in him becoming an antagonistic force for his cousin, Matt, who assumes the role of the heroic protagonist and saves the world. *Whiplash*, on the other hand, is shown to be more conventional in its character change. Andrew Neimann manages to replace his insecurity trait by the confidence trait. In *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (n.d.) Carl Dreyer focuses on the numerous emotional changes that Joan undergoes. Her convictions, as well as her behaviour remain the same despite the various emotional changes that she goes through due to a soul-sucking trial. It is that solidity of her personality that ultimately leads to her physical destruction. *Scorn* is not about a personality trait change either; it is about the obsessive attainment of a single goal. John Wick is perhaps the least dynamic of the characters that we have examined in this chapter. For the majority of the story, his emotional, behavioural and motivational states remain unchanged. Every meaningful change in his life occurs within the first act. The loss of his wife, the loss of his dog and the physical attack he

endures all inspire a clear-set goal and a singular emotional state that carries him to the end of the narrative, until he achieved his goal.

Conclusion

In this chapter, my objective was to provide an outline of the specific formatting, linguistic and literary elements of the screenplay text and to employ my character change analysis model, within the semiotic framework discussed in Chapter 2, in order to examine character in professional screenplays. To that aim, I started by offering a brief overview of screenplay's development in the early days of cinema, to stress its centrality within film production and explore how the relationship to the imagined film informs its language. Then, I presented the views of screenwriting manuals that tend to focus mostly on the structural elements of screenplay storytelling and ignore the literary and stylistic ones. Subsequently I referred to Nannicelli, who proposes an historical-intentional definition of the screenplay and recognises the dual nature of the screenplay - as an autonomous verbal document and as the text where the constitutive elements of film can be (verbally) encountered. Then, I outlined the main formatting and literary elements of the screenplay and how they can be used to refer to character. Furthermore, I used Claudia Sternberg's notions on the linguistic aspects of screenplay and analysed specific scripts in order to examine how writers use these literary and narrative tools at their disposal to denote and connote character and its overall change throughout the course of the story.

Finally, I offered some initial conclusions on how we can review narrative through the prism of character change and I attempted a few interpretive considerations to demonstrate how my character change analysis model can provide useful and novel observations in regard to screenplay narrative in general. I now move on to the final part of my thesis, where I discuss my screenplay, *Bloody Mary*. Writing the critical work and the screenplay was not a linear operation. Thus, the theoretical considerations informed the creative work and, as the screenplay hopefully demonstrates, writing the creative work allowed me to understand more clearly the tools that I possessed as a writer to portray and develop character. It was that realization through the process of writing that informed, not just the construction of my analytical model, but also many of the observations found in this current chapter.

Chapter 5: Screenwriting as Creative Research - The *Bloody Mary* Screenplay

Introduction

In the thesis Introduction, I explored the pertinent issues of creative research, especially in terms of the complicated relationship between the critical component and the creative. I employed a combined practice-led and research-informed methodology. The operation was not a linear one, from theory to practice or vice-versa, but rather a complicate process where one component constantly informed the other. *Bloody Mary* was born out of my theoretical exploration of character change and, the writing of the screenplay tested and further advanced the ideas examined in the critical work. Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis aimed to establish the scene; support the two foundational arguments of my approach to character change: that character's centrality in narrative allows us to reformulate plot as character change and 2. That textual character has mimetic aspects due to language's referential function. I was then able to proceed to part 2 of my thesis. In chapter 3, I elaborated on the character's mimetic attributes and proposed a model of paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis, informed by semiotics, while in Chapter 4, I examined professional screenplays to analyse the character changing attributes on the page with concrete examples. Now that the reader has familiarized themselves with my own screenplay, *Bloody Mary*, I want to proceed with the final chapter, an exegesis that clarifies my intentions for that work and considers them side by side with the actual text that I composed. What I wish to illustrate is the complex dual operation where more abstract conceptualizations of character find their material manifestation through written words on the page, while the very act of writing breeds novel considerations about character and how that might be further developed.

Doing a PhD is hard enough on its own, but figuring out a practice-based PhD in creative writing can be a daunting experience. What is more, screenwriting theory is a fairly new academic field and a practice-based thesis that combines screenplay theory with the actual process of creative writing is a novel area to explore. My interest with this practice-based thesis lies in constructing character on a textual level but, from a more general view, is also concerned with assigning to the writer the status of an autonomous, literary artist. It is, in fact, that latter argument that makes the former

possible: only insofar as the screenwriter considers himself a literary artist, will he be able to fully use all literary tools at his disposal necessary to create a verbal text which may be linked to a possible film, but also is - due to its verbal, linguistic nature - an autonomous text as well.

With all that in mind, in this chapter, I illustrate again how my own screenplay, *Bloody Mary* connects to the critical part of my thesis, acts as creative research and suggest how it is contributing to new knowledge. Subsequently, I proceed to show how I constructed character change both on a structural, conceptual level as well as on the level of writing the actual screenplay. In that respect, this chapter is more informative than Chapter 4, where access to the writers' aims and intentions were not provided. I argue that this process is not linear but that one operation constantly informs the other. Conceptual considerations inform the writing, while writing specific scenes, descriptions and dialogue opens new pathways of thinking conceptually about the narrative. I also stress it is important to concentrate on the pragmatics of writing and stylistics, since it is an area most often ignored by theorists. I analyse specific scenes from my screenplay in order to demonstrate how I establish and develop change character. Finally, I also examine how the writer can use narratological elements such as setting, costume and lighting in order to further describe and connote character.

5.1 *Bloody Mary*'s Contribution to Knowledge: Context, Text and Process

As explored in the thesis Introduction, Graeme Harper highlights the overall creative process of writing by arguing that the published work is just an aspect of it but does not tell the whole story on its own. In his own words, "creative writing does not begin with these works: creative writing does not begin where it ends" (Harper 2012 in Baker 2013: 1). In regard to what constitutes creative research, Harper asserts that an important aspect of doing creative writing research is the "pragmatics of putting words on a page, the actual physical act of creative writing". (Harper in Batty 2013: 14) However, he also clarifies that it is even more important for the researcher to be able to link herself as an individual writer "with the holistic", that is with a clear "understanding of genre, form, convention, the market, the audience" (ibid).

Moreover, Batty and Baker clarify that, although the creative work may be accompanied by a reflective piece, the screenplay itself is the research artefact and this should be “visible” in its fabric:

The screenplay as research artefact uses its inherent devices – such as form and format, structure, character, theme, setting and dialogue – to tell research. Screenplays as research artefacts thus contribute knowledge in their very fabric, and although accompanying dissertations, exegeses or research statements explicate this research, they do so in conversation with the screenplay itself. To write a screenplay and reflect on its making only – that is, not for the screenplay to have research ‘in it’ – does not make the screenplay a research artefact. Here the practice of screenwriting becomes data collection, with the contribution to knowledge found only in the accompanying explanatory work.

(Batty and Baker 2017: 8)

I posit that this is how *Bloody Mary* gains originality in relation to the “holistic” (Harper in Batty 2013: 14); its genre and its country of production. It is too introspective in comparison to American revenge thrillers from which it draws influence but also too action-based to be easily categorized within Greek production that does not favour genre films. The story’s queer protagonist and themes further distinguish *Bloody Mary* from films of the same genre made mostly in the US. However, as I have already clarified, my PhD is not so much focusing on genre theory or modes of production. Instead, it is mostly focused on the screenplay text and the textual mechanisms by which character is established on the page and has its mimetic attributes changed through the course of the narrative. The main question then becomes: How is the screenplay original as a text in on its own? This is a question that has troubled me throughout the entire course of my PhD. I believe the conundrum is clear: My critical work posits that *character change* is endemic in all screenplays. I am redefining character change as a much more holistic textual mechanism taking into consideration not only personality trait changes but also emotional changes, location changes, relationships changes and so on. Therefore, *character change* becomes a default characteristic of every narrative, even if it is only an external change. How, then, can I claim that my own script is doing

something new and original in regard to *character change* when, at the same time, I am arguing that *character change* is found on all screenplay texts?

The answer to this paradox lies, I believe, in the writer's *acknowledgment* of the theoretical model *while* writing *Bloody Mary*. My screenplay is written differently because while composing the narrative and writing the actual text, I was actively considering and at the same time reflecting on my character change theoretical model. Even more importantly, I combined my holistic *character change model* with my view that screenplay is a literary genre and, thus, the screenwriter is an intentional author. Finally, the actual writing of the screenplay partly informed my critical considerations; both on the conceptual, narrative level as well as on the linguistic, literary one. In other words, by viewing screenplay as a literary form of writing and by providing a detailed account not only of narrative events but also of character attributes, I was able to explore how my form of writing informed my theoretical notions of character and character change. I realised I can use setting, clothing, lighting, character location and even minimal character actions in order to further convey a character's attributes and their changes. Moreover, I was able to discover how everything – from the careful choice of a simple word to the arrangement of sentences within a single scene or paragraph – can have great importance in the delineation of character. Whereas the protagonist initially “stumbles”, in the end he may be “confidently strutting” towards his opponents. I also suggest that such micro-dramatic and linguistic exploration of character would not be possible for me if I hadn't accepted the screenplay as an autonomous literary work that – still – is also linked to a potential, realised film.

In other words, my theoretical and critical exploration of character and character change in narratives allowed to conceive and construct a holistic model of character change and also a model of writing about character, taking in mind all of its external and internal attributes. In return, the actual process of screenwriting (and I mean here the actual writing of a screenplay draft, not the conceptualization of the events or the story) revealed to me how the most basic, minor choice can further inform screenplay character and the ways it can change.

To say that character dominates the screenplay text also means that screenplay's focus is placed on character. Thus, the literary elements of the screenplay, I posit, revolve around character and can all be used (although this is obviously not necessary) to

describe character and its changes. In the previous chapter I proposed Nannicelli's definition of the screenplay as a verbal text that looks towards a possible film, and I used Sternberg's comments on the linguistic elements of the screenplay text to demonstrate how these are used in screenplays to connote character.

The originality of *Bloody Mary* as a screenplay *text*, lies in the way that it acknowledges the multiplicity of character attributes and character change and then composes on paper said character change by using all screenplay linguistic elements described in the previous chapter. Finally, I need to clarify that it is not only these three linguistic modes that a screenwriter uses to refer to character but also the *objects* of description that can be manipulated accordingly so that they either denote or – more plausibly – connote character states. In other words, how can the screenwriter describe sound, setting, costume and lighting in order to further outline character and its various changing states? *Bloody Mary* ultimately becomes an original screenplay in this regard, by being a text where all these conceptions and textual strategies are evidenced in its text.

5.2 The Story

Bloody Mary tells the story of Marios, a 28-year-old gay man, who finds out his boyfriend's murder was carried out by a group of neo-Nazi thugs, linked to major political party, and embarks on a bloody quest for revenge. The screenplay can be found on the appendix of this thesis.

I have already argued that mimetic attributes are organized in paradigmatic sets and presented horizontally, in a syntagma, within the screenplay text. An established mimetic attribute changes if it is explicitly substituted by another attribute belonging in the same paradigmatic set; a change has also occurred if an attribute of the same set has been added to the initial attribute, without necessarily replacing it; or, finally, if the established mimetic attribute has been altered or modified in any way (for instance, an emotional state may be enhanced or diminished; one's social status may be improved or worsened).

Mimetic attribute changes need to be considered both micro-dramatically and macro-dramatically. *Micro-dramatically* refers to attribute changes occurring within the same scene, while the *macro-dramatic* changes are the ones happening over longer passages

of narrative. Screenwriting manuals focus only on macro-dramatic changes of dominant traits and goals: namely how the character is overall different at the end of story in comparison to the beginning. However, writers have to be wary about which attribute changes are short-term and which ones are of greater importance to the overall development of their main character. The micro-dramatic changes are also crucial in establishing a sense of plausibility in the main character.

In this chapter, I wish to demonstrate how the various paradigmatic sets of attributes assigned to the fictional proper name “Marios” are organised temporally on the syntagmatic axis in a way that they are revealed to constitute the plot of my script. I will begin by drawing a general sketch of the overall, general changes Marios’s mimetic attributes undergo. Then, I will proceed to demonstrate this with concrete examples from specific scenes from the screenplay. Finally, I will outline how I used various literary devices to construct and underline Marios’s changes and will compare previous drafts with the third one - currently being written - in order to show how every seemingly minor change - even on a lexical level - can alter the meaning of character change and thus the meaning of the overall story.

Through the employment of a semiotic - structuralist point of view, I will focus on the literary tools I used in order to convey the changes the main character undergoes during the narrative. I have already identified several mimetic attributes pertaining to screenplay characters and I will be focusing on the changes in these specific mimetic attributes. However, I will also explore how screenplay language can refer and alter those mimetic attributes without explicitly referring to them or to the characters; for example, how can the writer use setting or costume or even lighting in a metaphoric way to convey an emotional state or a personal relationship. It is important to clarify that, although I will refer both to structure and concept, the focus of this essay will be on literary language. Very often, when analysing screenplays, critics and manuals alike ignore the specific words and sentences and proceed to the analysis of an abstract concept rather than concrete language as it appears on the page. This is not to imply that structural and conceptual thinking doesn’t play a major role when a writer designs and composes a scene or a full screenplay but rather to point out that this structure materializes and is communicated to readers by way of actual words and sentences whose specific significance is very often ignored or brushed over.

5.3: A Conceptual Overview of Change in *Bloody Mary*

The screenplay begins after Marios has lost his partner, Petros to a brutal attack by fascist thugs. Therefore, a *personal relationship change* is being implied. This change is followed by an initial *emotional change* but also by a subsequent *motivational change*: Marios calls the police repeatedly trying to find who the killers of his boyfriend were. The police however drop the case very soon without apprehending any suspects (*cognitive-information change* for Marios). The case is filed and Marios is crushed. This information change is followed by an emotional change: Marios, who up to that point had remained composed, breaks down.

Two months later, we find him seemingly having given up on life; isolated, shut inside his flat, absent from his job. His dominant father orders him to go back to work, thus, forcing upon him a change of financial situation, *behaviour* and *personal relationships*. Obedient to his father, and with his financial situation dire, he has no option than to leave his flat and face the world. His emotional state, however, remains depressed. Moreover, Marios maintains his isolation from his acquaintances, keeping his distance.

A minor change occurs when he decides at least to throw away some of Petros's stuff from the flat. While doing that, he discovers an old-flip phone inside one of Petros's jackets. He searches the various folders and he discovers a message sent by Petros to an unknown receiver, hours before he was attacked, indicating that he was expecting an attack of this sort. This *information change* inspires both an *emotional change* for Marios which results in a *behavioural change* as well as a *motivational* one. Finally "energised" and no longer depressed and self-destructive, Marios holds on tight to this clue and embarks on an investigation regarding his partner's death. This happens on page 15; this discovery constitutes what is often called hook or inciting incident in screenwriting manuals and is what kicks off the main story. So far, then, we have a ***personal relationship change*** (death of a partner) and an ***information change*** (police dropped the case, perpetrators at large) resulting in an ***emotional change*** (sadness, depression) and a resulting ***behavioural change*** (isolation, passivity, self-destructing attitudes). When Marios finds the phone, this results in a further informational change which in turn results in an emotional change (hope for justice) and a ***behavioural***

change (Marios becomes more energised). In the following scenes a *motivational change* (the goal of finding Petros's killers) will be explicitly stated through dialogue.

Marios first approaches Petros's best friend, Maya, who dislikes him and sends him away. Marios then proceeds to go to the police station and submit the Petros's phone and message as evidence. Unwittingly this brings upon a *personal relationship change* as Marios "brings" into his life, police officer Takis who was one of the thugs who killed Petros. Marios leaves the station but Takis breaks into his house and attempts to kill him; in the process inflicting great physical damage on him. This constitutes a *physiological change* on Marios which, I have to admit, at this point remains somewhat undeveloped in this draft. Marios's psychology is still in a state of depression and welcomes Takis's blows, thus, returning in a self-destructive attitude. Getting empowered by a picture of him and Petros, Marios finally decides to fight back and then accidentally kills Takis. This is a further relationship change. It also has important consequences on his emotional state and subsequent behaviour. Marios calls Maya for help. When she hears what has occurred rushes to help him. Together they carry Takis's lifeless body in a landfill site and Maya attempts to bury him. But Marios stops her. His distressed state coupled with the extreme violence he endured at the hands of Takis force Marios to undergo yet another change of *emotional and behavioural* states. At the end of this scene, Marios declares his newly-acquired *goal*: to kill Petros's killers. This occurs on page 36 and culminates the first act of the story.

The second act begins with Marios asking Maya's help in tracking down Petros's attackers and killing them. Maya initially declines but he manages to persuade her. This constitutes a personal relationship change for Marios. Maya, being a great martial arts fighter herself trains Marios. This constitutes both a *physiological* and *cognitive* state change, as Marios acquires new *skills* in martial arts and becomes a better fighter. What is more, Maya persuades Marios to disguise himself in Petros's drag costume so as to empower himself emotionally as well as hide himself from his enemies. This disguise of the male form under the female constitutes an important *appearance change* for Marios and is also one of the thematic pillars of the overall story.

Marios's behavioural and emotional states remain more or less concise for the remainder of the second act, although, that is not to say that there are no micro-dramatic changes occurring within scenes or between certain scenes. While they are attacking Niki, one of Petros's killers, Marios, still wildly insecure, is overpowered by her; hesitates to kill her and needs Maya's intervention to stay alive. Later, however, he

wears his drag costume with more confidence and when he attacks Menios, another of Petros's killers, he manages to confidently overpower him and kill him. These modifications in his behaviour are organised and presented in the text in a more structural way. Because they are occurring with greater distance from one another, it is the mirroring of the scenes that makes the changes observable and intelligible. The four killings Marios has to make until the end of the narrative provide the backbone of the story. These scenes are similar in the sense that they involve similar *actions* between similar *agents* in a similar *pattern*. Therefore, any change in any of Marios's attributes in relation to any of the previous similar scenes is, I suggest, easily identified and serves to indicate his overall change. It goes without saying, of course, that all of Marios's attacks constitute minor or major alterations of personal relationships as well.

The fact that Marios does not manage to kill Niki but then does manage to kill Menios indicates a behavioural and, perhaps, a personality trait change. Subsequently, the fact that Marios does not manage to kill the leader of the group, Andreas, after he has succeeded in killing Menios, also indicates a step backwards in regard to his emotional and behavioural states. The death of his father constitutes a radical relationship change which also brings upon tough emotional, behavioural and motivational changes as well. Marios gives up his goal, isolates himself once again and sinks into feelings of guilt and depression. It is a crucial cognitive change, in the guise of new information that leads him to overcome this guilt. The voicemail his father, Thomas, has left him states clearly that he loves him unconditionally and thus, this validation of love overpowers the self-hatred.

Finally, the fact that Marios ultimately *succeeds* in overpowering Andreas at their final fight, yet decides not to kill him but hand him to the authorities, also signifies a *motivational* and *behavioural change*, as well as an emotional one (he has somewhat reconciled himself with loss and does not carry inside him the amount of anger that resulted in Menios's cruel murder). As we will see in the analysis of specific scenes, Marios at the end of the story is at the same place he was at the beginning.

5.4: Bloody Mary Scenes Analyses: Using Literary Language to Construct Character Change

I want to analyse five scenes from my script *Bloody Mary*, in order to further demonstrate in greater detail how I construct and manipulate character change through the careful use of mimetic attributes in the text. Thus, my objective is to bring together the conceptual, structural view of the protagonist's change with the actual changing mimetic attributes in the text. I suggest this is not a linear process (e.g. from structuration to writing) and that the actual process of writing down the attributes on page, constantly alters and informs my structural conception of Marios's overall change.

Such a detailed analysis of an entire 126-pages screenplay is not feasible here, therefore I selected to focus on five scenes: the first one, that serves as the basis for the protagonist's characterisation and the four scenes that constitute the main "plot-points" that carry us to the first, the second and then, the third act. Finally, I also analyse the closing scene of the screenplay to discuss how I sketch Marios's overall change from beginning to end.

Nannicelli's definition of the screenplay showed us how screenplays point to the constitutive elements of film. Film, as an artistic medium, has the ability to magnify details. Through the power of a close up, or even a slow-motion, a seemingly insignificant detail can dominate a scene and acquire new meaning. In this first scene of my screenplay *Bloody Mary*, there is no major action taking place; no fight, no murder, no nothing. This first scene is made out mostly from a series of glances, touches and subtle facial expressions. In Claudia Sternberg's terms, the scene is mostly *description* and *literary comment* with little in the way of *report*. Is it possible to establish character through such minor "static" actions? I propose that it is, indeed; especially when this is combined with the metaphorical use of elements such as costume and lighting to denote character. What is more, I want to examine how the character's mimetic attributes undergo micro-dramatic changes within the same scene.

5.4.1: *Face pale, lips tightly-sealed and body locked*: Establishing the Protagonist

The first image that the script conveys is that of a "blood-red drop curtain" concealing a night club's stage. The described object is a setting element. The mode of discourse is description and, in semiotic terms, one of high iconic value as it describes a concrete

image. This particular image does not pertain to any character description but it hopefully conveys, in a metaphorical way, the main themes of the script. Colour red is an obvious choice to start the story. It refers to blood, murder, love and passion. Moreover, this first scene will be mirrored by the last scene of the screenplay where Marios will perform on stage and the curtain will close in front of him before the credits role. While in the first scene, Marios stands far away from the stage (and consequently from all the exposure), by the end of the film he has accepted his role in life's drama.

Petros's characterisation begins in paragraphs five and six. In that passage, I tried to explore how one can build characterisation not only through physical appearance but also through costume and even make-up. In contrast to Steven Price who asserts that these literary means of description belong to the realm of directors and costume designers (Price 2010), I argue that screenwriters are absolutely at liberty to use all modes of characterisation available to them. Whether these descriptions halt the constant unfolding of narrative a screenplay supposedly must always project, is a matter of literary criticism, therefore, in the eye of the beholder. Petra's fancy, shiny dress betrays a need for attention (something that Marios detests as we will see later in the scene), the make-up description ("bold" and "a warrior's call to arms") implies a fiery nature, while her dancing ("wild") indicates a free-spirited person not caring about others' opinions. This *wildness* extends to most of the audience as well "Everyone, naturally, goes wild" - except Marios ("Nearly everyone that is"). This passage explicitly brings Marios in opposition, not only to Petros, but to the club crowd as well. Thus, I am using here a combination of an action (singing and dancing) and other visual elements to convey Petros's personality. Similarly, in the next paragraph I use Marios's *inaction* (not singing and dancing like the rest of the club) to convey *his* personality.

Once again, I have broken down paragraph 5 from the screenplay that introduces Petros, in its different "lexias" (Barthes 1974). Just to clarify, the cited screenplay text has been modified for the purposes of this chapter. For instance, similarly to Chapter 5, I colour-coded the passages to indicate the modes of description. The original script as it appears on the Appendix of this thesis is written in standard black text. In this chapter, blue text stands for the description mode. Red stands for the report mode (action), while green stands for literary comment. Moreover I offer additional comments in brackets, in black text. Again, as it was the case in Chapter 5, the bracketed notes are analytical observations purely for the purposes of this chapter – they do not appear in the screenplay text.

Triumphant music blasts from the speakers [SOUND DESCRIPTION OF HIGH ICONIC VALUE / NO MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION YET]

as Petra grabs the mic and starts lip-syncing a powerful pop anthem. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION WITH DESCRIPTION ELEMENTS ("POWERFUL") / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDE AS WELL AS SOCIAL STATUS WITHIN THE LOCATION OF THE DRUG CLUB]

Her shiny blue dress [DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER COSTUME / HIGH ICONIC VALUE MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: APPEARANCE ATTRIBUTE]

is a star's demand for attention [LITERARY COMMENT / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: MOTIVATIONAL ATTRIBUTE AND BEHAVIOURAL ATTRIBUTE]

her bold make-up [DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER MAKE-UP → MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION OF HIGH ICONIC VALUE: APPEARANCE ATTRIBUTE / SYNECDOCHAL DESCRIPTION OF PERSONALITY TRAIT ("bold")]

a warrior's call to arms [LITERARY COMMENT / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION THROUGH METAPHOR: PETROS'S ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR]

and her wild dance [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION WITH DESCRIPTION ELEMENTS ("WILD") / ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: PETROS'S BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONAL STATE]

a fierce ode to freedom. [LITERARY COMMENT/ MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: PETROS'S BEHAVIOUR AND INFERRED PERSONALITY TRAITS ("fierce")]

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 1)

I do not officially introduce Marios until paragraph eight. To describe him I try to take advantage of as many narrative and literary elements as I can. To begin with, it is important that Marios is *located* as far from Petros as possible. This indicates both a literal and a metaphorical distance. It is also important that he stands in darkness as opposed to Petros who stands on centre stage where "a thousand watts burn". His pale face is contrasted to Petros's "bold makeup", his "locked body" is contrasted to Petros's "wild and silly dancing" and his tightly-sealed lips are contrasted to Petros's dramatic lip-syncing on stage. His inability to meet strangers' eyes is contrasted to Petros's attitude who "is starring the audience with the confidence of a superstar". After describing setting, lighting, physical appearance and behaviour I shift the focus to costume. While Petros is dressed in a shiny, blue dress that signifies "a demand for attention", Marios is dressed in a "washed-out blue top". The colour similarity is important as it signifies a connection, however, the quality difference is equally important. Petros demands our attention, while Marios's washed-out top makes him almost blend with the background and hides him behind a sea of flamboyantly dressed men.

Uri Margolin argues that action is the basis of characterisation (Margolin 1986); however I disagree. As we can see from that script passage, Marios does not take any action. He simply stands there, *not dancing*. It is his relationship and opposition to other characters that forms our first impression of him, rather than a significant action that he personally takes. Furthermore, it is his various mimetic attributes and the metaphorical and metonymic use of other narrative elements that also augment his characterisation. Marios's tightly-sealed lips and locked body, for example, can be perceived metonymically to connote a tightly-sealed personality (and the same can be said about the use of costumes).

All the way across the club, in a dark corner next to the bar,
[DESCRIPTION OF SETTING / HIGH ICONIC VALUE (CONCRETE OBJECTS DESCRIBED) / MIMETIC INDEXICAL VALUE: LOCATING MARIOS; ENVIRONMENT ASPECT]

MARIOS, 28, fidgets with his drink. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION AND DESCRIPTION OF APPEARANCE (AGE) / HIGH ICONIC VALUE (ACTION AND CONCRETE OBJECTS DESCRIBED) / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: ESTABLISHING PHYSIOLOGY (AGE) ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR ATTRIBUTES]

His face is pale, his body locked, his lips tightly-sealed [DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER EXTERNAL APPEARANCE / HIGH ICONIC VALUE (CONCRETE OBJECTS DESCRIBED) / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: PHYSIOLOGY ATTRIBUTE AND SYNECDOCHAL DESCRIPTION OF PERSONALITY TRAITS BY WAY OF PHYSIOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION]

and he makes sure to avoid direct eye contact with strangers. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR ATTRIBUTE]

Dressed in worn-out jeans and a washed-out blue top, [DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER COSTUME / HIGH ICONIC VALUE (CONCRETE OBJECTS DESCRIBED) / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: APPEARANCE ATTRIBUTE; POSSIBLE CONNOTATIONS: SYNECDOCHAL DESCRIPTION OF BEHAVIOUR AND PERSONALITY TRAITS]

he almost blends with the dull walls [LITERARY COMMENT / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: POSSIBLE CONNOTATIONS ABOUT PERSONALITY TRAITS BY WAY OF SYNECDOCHAL DESCRIPTION OF THE WALLS AS "dull"]

while sexy, meticulously-dressed men dance their hearts out, and a few drunk women squeal the song's lyrics on the top of their lungs. [REPORT OF ACTION, DESCRIPTION OF SECONDARY CHARACTERS, BRIEF LITERARY COMMENT / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: MARIOS IS FURTHER DESCRIBED BEHAVIOURALLY AND IN TERMS OF PERSONALITY TRAITS, BY WAY OF CONTRASTING HIS ESTABLISHED BEHAVIOUR WITH THE OTHER REVELLERS]

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 1)

Now that all the bold differences between Marios and Petros have been established, the next goal is to establish their similarities; or, in better terms, to explain how they are connected. I, as a writer, know of course that they are lovers but the difficult part is to gradually reveal that relationship to the audience. That connection contrasted with the established differences constitute in essence the conflict of the drama. It is that tortured connection Marios feels with Petros that plagues him.

The purpose of paragraph nine is to outline that connection. And this is done by focusing on Marios's gaze which dares not seek strangers' attention but has no problem fixating on Petros and seeking *his* gaze. The connection is further developed when Marios starts dancing, influenced by Petros's passionate performance. This minimal dancing constitutes a *change* from his uptight behaviour and numb emotional state of previous passages. Finally, their relationship is more or less made clear in the next paragraph when Petros notices Marios and sends him a tender kiss. Paragraph ten is especially important. It essentially describes a dream-like state, where "the earth stops spinning" and "they're suddenly alone inside the club". This is Marios imposing his wishful thinking on the scene. He can only be happy to enjoy his love for Petros if it's concealed from everyone else.

The way that the screaming crowd "wakes Marios back to reality" is yet another indication of the fight between Marios and the social world that surrounds him. What follows is the smallest of actions, as "his embarrassed gaze darts to the floor". One could argue that this is more a description of mimetic attributes interacting, rather than a solid action. I use the word "embarrassed" to denote an emotional state and describe the subsequent action of looking downwards. However, I contrast this reaction to another minor action, a "satisfied smile" that "colours his pale cheeks red". The satisfied smile is contrasted with the embarrassed gaze while *red* is contrasted with *pale*. That these opposing descriptions seemingly happen at the same time indicate that the two emotional states somehow coexist within the protagonist. Through this prism, this paragraph does not pertain to character change but it rather paints the portrait of a character "split" in two. Furthermore, to have "He cannot suppress" before the words "a satisfied smile" is to imply, by way of the absence of its opposite, that Marios *would actually like to suppress that smile*. Let us consider these two paragraphs in more detail:

The passion of her performance is infectious. [LITERARY COMMENT ABOUT A CHARACTER ACTION / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP, FORESHADOWING POTENTIAL BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE FOR MARIOS ("INFECTIOUS")]

Soon enough, Marios finds himself unconsciously moving to the music [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION WITH BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONAL STATE / CHANGE OF ATTRIBUTES: DIFFERENT BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONAL STATE IN COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS PASSAGES]

and his involuntary dance is as awkward as it is adorable. [DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER ACTION / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: BEHAVIOURAL TRAITS ESTABLISHED SYNECDOCHALLY (THE "AWKWARD" AND "ADORABLE" DANCE CHARACTERISE MARIOS BY EXTENSION)]

[...]

It's not long until Marios's gaze captures the eyes of Petros. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION WITH BRIEF DESCRIPTION / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP ASPECT; ESTABLISHING THE TWO CHARACTERS' CONNECTION]

Petros stops and smiles at him [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL VALUE: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP / CHANGED ATTRIBUTE: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP FURTHER DEVELOPED]

and it is as if they both freeze; the earth stops spinning and they're suddenly alone inside the club and their breathing muffles every other sound. [LITERARY COMMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF SETTING AND SOUND / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL VALUE: FURTHER ESTABLISHING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP / CHANGED ATTRIBUTE: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP FURTHER INTENSIFIED]

Petros brings his palm to his lips; he blows Marios a tender kiss and Marios can almost hear its gentle hissing as it flies across the club to meet him. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION COMBINED WITH DESCRIPTIONS AND LITERARY COMMENT / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP / CHANGED ATTRIBUTE: THE RELATIONSHIP FURTHER INTENSIFIED]

The crowd's ecstatic screams wake Marios back to reality [DESCRIPTION OF SOUND COMBINED WITH LITERARY COMMENT / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: COGNITIVE STATE / CHANGED ATTRIBUTE: COGNITIVE STATE; MARIOS EXITS HIS DREAM-LIKE STATE OF MIND]

but he knows he's the kiss's sole recipient. [LITERARY COMMENT / VERY LOW ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: COGNITIVE STATE (UNDERSTANDING)]

His embarrassed gaze darts to the floor [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION WITH BRIEF DESCRIPTION / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL STATE / CHANGED ATTRIBUTES: EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL STATES]

but he's not able to suppress a satisfied smile that colours his pale cheeks red. [REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION COMBINED WITH DESCRIPTION / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: EMOTIONAL STATE AND PHYSIOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES: CHANGED ATTRIBUTES: EMOTIONAL STATE (HAPPINESS, LOVE) AND PHYSIOLOGY (CHEEKS TURNING RED)]

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 1-2)

The scene proceeds with the most elaborate action taken by a character yet. Petros/Petra climbs off the stage, dedicates the song to Marios and starts walking towards him, turning everyone's attention towards him. By succeeding Marios's established characterisation, these actions help create tension and force the main conflict to rise to the surface. Once again, I use a *changing emotional state* ("panic") to sketch Marios's portrait. Petros brings the actual spotlight with him and I use the bright light illuminating Marios's face as a contrasting feature to him being unnoticed in a dark corner of the bar. Moreover, I use his simple action of just looking around in a way that brings it in contrast to his action of avoiding strangers' gazes:

His gaze races all around the club desperately searching for an emergency exit but stumbles upon countless gleeful faces.

[REPORT OF CHARACTER ACTION USING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE. THE AGENT IS CONNOTED SYNECDOCHICALLY BY WAY OF HIS GAZE / HIGH ICONIC VALUE / MIMETIC INDEXICAL FUNCTION: MOTIVATION ("SEARCHING"), EMOTIONAL STATE ("DESPERATELY"), ENVIRONMENT ASPECT ("ALL AROUND THE CLUB", "EMERGENCY EXIT", ETC.)]

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 2)

Marios's efforts to remain anonymous and unnoticed have seemingly been shattered. Petros keeps "attacking" Marios with tenderness as he "wraps his hand around him and demands his partner's gaze". I use the word *demand* in relation to Petros once again as I used it when I first described his dress. That was not intentional; rather it was something I noticed while I was reading the scene. However, I intend to use this more often as one more tool in building character and denoting differences and similarities. Marios obeys Petros and it is made clear that Petros's face soothes Marios, even so momentarily. In essence, this is yet another passage to show how love and shame coexist in Marios's head.

When Petros attempts to kiss Marios in front of everyone, Marios takes his most significant action yet, which is merely jerking his head to the right to avoid the kiss as he "offers his cold cheek instead of his warm lips". This action is a blow for Petros who loses his aggressive demeanor for the very first time: "His smile remains but it is now

tainted by disappointment for the kiss that never was”. Although he keeps the appearances, Petros cannot hide his disappointment.

The last three paragraphs bring Marios back to square one. It is like watching the scene in reverse. Petra is walking backwards towards the stage, the spotlight follows her and leaves Marios in darkness as he becomes pale-faced and still once again. The crowd's attention is indeed shifted away from him, like he wanted, but always at the cost of Petros slipping away from him as well. Finally, the music in the club fades out and gives way to “deathly” silence.

Summing everything up, it is indeed difficult to keep constant track of all literary features that a writer has at his disposal when creating and changing a character. As a result, analyses such as the above can appear somewhat chaotic. What I tried to do, was to point out the main ways by which I introduced the two main characters and established the main features of their personalities by painting their main differences and similarities.

From a macro-dramatic point of view, no significant character change takes place during this first scene; no major *relationship* is either broken or created and no major *physiological change* occurs for either of the two characters. However, there are many minor *emotional* and *behavioural* changes taking place. Marios's emotional state changes numerous times; from numbness to attraction; from attraction to embarrassment and then to panic and then to embarrassment (but for a different reason) once again. Similarly, Petros's emotional state changes from unconditional love to disappointment. And, although their relationship does not seemingly undergo a major change, an alteration is implied as a result of Marios's refusal to express his emotions in public and Petros's expressed disappointment.

It has been written in screenwriting manuals that first scenes ideally constitute a miniature and simplified version of the whole script. In all fairness, this is something that I tried to achieve as well with this *Bloody Mary* scene. The whole script concerns Marios's inability to truly accept himself and the ways this inability impacts his life, most prominently by costing him his boyfriend. Therefore, in this scene, Marios's inability to express himself in public, also costs him Petros who distances himself from him and retreats back on stage until “Petros is an unrecognisable figure in the distance and the deafening music has given way to a deathly silence”.

From a micro-dramatic point of view it would be implausible if a major personality trait change occurred in a single initial scene. Marios's major personality trait change does not take place until the very end of the screenplay and it will be the result, as it is the case for most screenplays, of a series of other smaller or bigger mimetic attributes changes including personal relationships, emotional states, physiological appearances and other. I hope that this scene analysis has been useful as an example of how a screenwriter can use a vast array of literary tools in order to denote and connote these attributes, their interactions and the ways they change.

5.4.2: *They Were Following Me Again Today*: The Clue to the First Act

Several attributes of Marios undergo abrupt change when he discovers Petros's flip-phone on a forgotten jacket and reads the message he had sent to an unknown receiver. First, there is a clear cognitive change since he receives new information by finding the phone and reading the text message. There are also clear behavioural changes, observable by how Marios's physical acts are described differently. For instance, while throwing Petros's stuff away, Marios is "a sad, lonely figure" and merely "slouches between his living room and bedroom, carrying Petros's clothes and belongings in the empty box" (Bloody Mary: 14-15). After he finds the mysterious phone, his demeanor changes: "He sits back on the bed and presses the power button but all he gets is the empty battery icon. He tosses the phone aside and runs out of the room, suddenly energised" (Bloody Mary: 15). I have argued that the choice of words, contrary to structuralist doctrines, is of great importance even on a mere lexical level. Marios was *slouching* but he now "*runs*". He was *carrying* stuff but now he *tosses* the phone aside. He was a *sad figure* and now he's *energised*.

Marios then goes to the living room to get a charger. He finds one, plugs the phone and then opens the message:

Marios hesitates just for a moment but then his finger presses the OK button and reveals the message. His mouth hangs open.

"They were following me again today. Bit worried now. The hyenas are getting hungry" MESSAGE DATE AND TIME: DECEMBER 10, 21:00

Marios' heart races. A faint smile forms. He drags his finger on the receiver's number; hesitates for a moment but then presses the dial button. He brings the phone to his ear and waits.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 15)

Surprise (“mouth hangs open”) is coupled with nervousness (“hesitates just for a moment”) and excitement (“Marios’s heart races. A faint smile forms”) as Marios finally finds a clue that may lead him to his boyfriend’s killers. Therefore, a new goal is also formed as the following scenes make perfectly clear. This is the moment that Marios’s perceived passivity comes to an end.

Before I proceed to the analysis of the next scene, I wish to note the changes I intend to make in the next draft of the screenplay. This combination of creative work and critical analysis based on mimetic attributes is extremely useful exactly because it works both ways. The creative informs the critical and then, in turn, the critical informs the creative. With that in mind, I intend to make better use of the different rooms in Marios’s flat, thus enhancing the environmental aspect during the first act. Specifically, I will attempt to draw a distinction between Marios’s living room and the bedroom. The intent is to paint the bedroom as a more intimate, positive space where the good things happen, while the other rooms of the house will be described as more uninviting. For example, Marios learns that the police investigation has been dropped while in the living room. In contrast, he discovers Petros’s phone in the bedroom. I believe that careful manipulation of spaces can enhance the dramatic impact of the character changes.

5.4.3: *So I Can Kill Them*: Forming a Goal for the Second Act

That becomes even clearer in the next scenes I want to focus on. Scene 33 and then Scene 54 in particular are of almost equal importance when it comes to the forming of Marios’s new *goal*: to kill Petros’s attackers. In Scene 33, Marios is attacked by one of the killers. Although he initially retreats to a self-destructive attitude and accepts his fate, he finally decides to fight back:

Takis grabs Marios by the shirt and bashes him with repeated punches, determined to kill him. Marios does not fight back. Every blow brings him closer to sweet oblivion.

Maybe this should be the end. Maybe he deserves it.

A punch forces his bloodied face sideways; his glance rests on the fallen picture of him and Petros. Petros is smiling at him.

With the little strength he still has, Marios reaches his hand, grabs a piece of broken glass and scratches Takis's face. Takis stands up screaming, taken by surprise.

Not today, bitch.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 27)

A *relationship change* (Takis becomes an attacker) is followed by *physical changes* (severe injuries). Then, a *cognitive change* (seeing Petros's picture) results in an *emotional and behavioural change* and Marios decides to resist. This is the beginning of his comeback which culminates in scenes 52-54. This becomes even clearer in scene 53 by the use of free indirect discourse which allows access into Marios's thoughts and emotions:

INT. CAR

What is that thing that Marios feels? What is that thought buzzing inside his head?

Is it fear...?

Or is it sadness...?

It certainly isn't remorse.

Fuck. Shouldn't it be remorse? He just killed a man.

And yet, no. It's something else. Something worse.

Something much, much worse.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 36)

Marios finally exits the safety and warmth of Maya's car and storms towards Maya and Takis's dead body:

Marios cannot even feel himself walking. It is as if somebody else has taken host of his body; his stride so confident, so effortless; a dark power pulling him towards his boyfriend's killer with immense force.

Maya notices Marios approaching and stops. Marios grabs Takis by the legs and drags him out of the grave.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 37)

Mostly by way of description (“his stride so confident”) and literary comment (“a dark power pulling him towards his boyfriend’s killer”), I aim to highlight Marios’s *change of attitude*, as well as his *personality traits*. At the same time, by alluding to an invisible “dark power” I also intend to imply that Marios is also a prisoner of *passion*. After his violent outburst and his apologetic short monologue, Marios finally clearly states his *new goal* in his own words:

Marios takes a step towards Maya, and she instinctively stumbles back.

MARIOS

I want them to find me. I want them out
of their nest. His family, his
friends... I want them out in the open.

MAYA

Why?

MARIOS

So I can find *them*. So I can kill them.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 38)

And thus, we have a *motivational change* in terms of a new goal that will carry most of the script’s events.

5.4.4: Take This Fucking Thing Off Me; A Low Point for the Third Act

Marios manages to take out, Menios, the third man that killed Petros. However, when he goes to finish things off and murder Andreas, the fascist party leader who ordered the attack on Petros, Marios does not succeed and is overpowered by Andreas.

There are numerous changes occurring in that crucial scene, the most important being the way that Andreas physically overpowers Marios, thus crushing him emotionally as well. Due to Andreas’s actions, their *relationship* changes but in somewhat surprising ways. After beating Marios, Andreas assumes a paternal attitude towards Marios. He lets him leave and tells him that he can help him overcome his homosexuality that causes Marios such a distress. Thus, Andreas alters their relationship and projects himself as a friend. The hostile relationship seemingly becomes friendly and this turn of behaviour on Andreas’s part, leaves Marios in a confused cognitive and emotional state, thus also crushing his goal. The way Andreas manages this change in Marios is

by exercising psychological violence on him. He speaks out loudly Marios's internal thoughts, therefore externalising Marios's guilt. This attitude alters Marios's *emotional state* and thus also affects Marios's fighting *skills*. Finally, Andreas casts the finishing blow:

ANDREAS

No. You're not a coward, Marios. You never were. People don't change like that in mere months. You didn't let Petros die because you weren't brave enough to save him. You let Petros die... *because a part of yourself wanted him dead.*

Andreas's words hurt more than any of Marios's blows. Marios's face turns red - *but is it from anger or from shame?* He storms at Andreas but Andreas is done fooling around. He rebuts Marios's attack with a spinning kick on the chest and Marios flies back and out of the kitchen, smashing the window and landing on the ground with a thud.

Marios moans and clutches his chest, *defeated*, gasping for air. Andreas steps out of the kitchen and struts towards him in the garden.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 91)

As the text makes clear, it is not the spinning kick that has defeated Marios. It is Andreas's astute acknowledgement of Marios's guilt. Marios's deepest secret has been uncovered and this has taken all the confidence out of him. Marios starts in this scene by being confident and powerful and then finishes it laying on the ground "defeated, gasping for air". In contrast, Andreas "struts" towards him, thus highlighting the difference in power and emotional stability at this stage. And in order to inspire further doubt and confusion, Andreas goes on to play the father figure to Marios and offers to take him under his protective wing. In that sense the relationship fluctuates violently from a negative value to a positive one:

Marios stares at Andreas as though hypnotised by a master manipulator.

ANDREAS

I don't wish to hurt you. You're free to walk away. But I want you to know that whenever you're ready... I'll be waiting for you. I can help you. I know there's only hatred in your heart for me right now but ask yourself: why is that shame still there? After all of Petros's inspirational talk about how normal you are... *Why is it still burning in your heart?*

Marios stares at Andreas with teary eyes. Andreas's lips break into a smile.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 92)

Marios finds himself where he started. Emotionally confused and without a goal. He leaves Andreas's house and makes his way to the squat where he lives with Maya. But on his way, his attitude and personality traits have gone back from confident to embarrassed and insecure.

EXT. ATHENS / STREET - NIGHT

Marios, still dressed in drag, waddles down a street in Athens. His head is bowed and his gaze glued to the ground; he makes sure to avoid eye-contact with all the nosy people who pass by him and throw him judgmental looks.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 93)

On his way home, Marios also reminisces about a time when he pushed Petros away because the latter wanted to kiss him publicly. Moreover, when Marios reaches the squat, his father is waiting there for him. Marios is dressed in drag, bruised and beaten (physiological state). Emotionally he is at his lowest point and to see his father there is yet another emotional blow:

Just as he crosses the street, he notices a lonely figure exiting the squat, looking miserable and disappointed. The lonely figure looks up and notices Marios as well. And as their eyes meet, Marios finally recognises the man and stops dead.

Thomas climbs down the stairs and walks towards the man dressed as a woman. He stares at Marios, squinting, trying to make sure his eyes don't play tricks on him.

THOMAS

Marios?

MARIOS

No.

Marios goes white as he steps back. Thomas is pretty close to him now, and there can be no mistake; underneath the dress, the wig and the make-up, the person who stands there staring back at him, horrified, is his only son. Thomas stumbles on his words.

THOMAS

Why on earth are you dressed like that?

MARIOS

No, no, no, no, no.

Marios turns his back at his father and runs away from him.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 95-96)

This constitutes a clear relationship change that Marios does not want to face because he perceives it as having a negative value. Marios then finds refuge in Angela's flat, in the scene that completes this short sequence as well as the entire second act of the script:

INT. ANGELA'S FLAT

Angela opens the door and Marios storms into the flat without any explanation.

ANGELA
What-

MARIOS
Help me take this off!

Marios strives to remove Petros's blue dress but it's stuck on him, refusing to leave his body.

MARIOS
TAKE THIS FUCKING THING OFF ME!

Angela runs to him and, with her calm, experienced hands, helps him out of the tight dress. Marios grabs it and tosses it across the room as if it was poisonous. He stands there, shaking in his tights and underwear looking miserably at Angela.

MARIOS
Can I stay here, please?

ANGELA
Of course, sweetie.

Angela holds him in her arms, as he begins to sob.

ANGELA
Of course...

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 97)

This scene contains both an environmental change (Marios has a new house) and a relationship change of positive value (Angela takes him in and offers him shelter). Moreover, it includes a minor emotional and behavioural change as Marios finally breaks down and starts to sob (intensification of an already established emotion). Once again, I use *report* ("Marios storms into the flat"), *description* ("with her calm,

experienced hands”) and *literary comment* (“as if it was poisonous”) in order to convey Marios’s behavioural changes in comparison the previous scenes where he displayed more confidence in his actions. The second act closes with Marios defeated and the third act faces the problem of how to make him stand on his feet again.

5.4.5: *I Love You. Always Did, Always Will: The Path to Victory*

At the beginning of the third act, Marios finds himself attracted by Andreas’s offer and rhetoric. However there is an event that proves instrumental in Marios’s decision to see his mission through. This event is his father’s death. This radical personal change on its own is not enough. The main reason Marios gave up the fight was because he couldn’t confront his guilt and his own self-hatred. Therefore, I decided to use Thomas’s voice mail in order to provide a cognitive change for Marios. By hearing that his father has always loved him and has not cared about his sexuality, Marios is able to shake off the feeling of self-hatred and guilt he has carried with him all his life (and has originated with the death of his mother during childbirth). A father’s approval goes a long way and Marios is thus able to overcome these negative emotions.

The casket sinks into the grave. All the other relatives follow the employee's instructions and throw the dirt on the coffin straight from the plastic box.

Marios opens the plastic box and empties the dirt in his hands. He feels the rough substance in his palm and then tosses the plastic box in the bin and scatters the dirt on the coffin with his bare hands.

THOMAS

(v.o.)

*I guess what I'm really trying to say
is... I love you. Always did. Always
will. Please call me back when you hear
this.*

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 110)

Marios tossing away the silly plastic box and feeling the dirt in his hand contrasts with the earlier scene in Petros’s funeral, where Marios emptied the box on the casket. With that, I wanted to signify that Marios, quite literally, is getting his hands dirty, therefore acknowledging the “darker” parts of himself. In the next scene which is going to be redrafted dramatically, Marios comes out to his relatives during the wake and then, we

see him sewing a new drag costume for himself, ready to throw himself into battle once again:

5.4.6: *There's a New Queen in Town: An End and a New Beginning*

The closing scenes of *Bloody Mary* aim to sketch Marios's complete change. In many ways, this final scene mirrors the initial one, where Petros performs and Marios watches him from afar. In this scene, however, Marios gets up on that stage and is the one who performs. In comparison to that first scene, we observe several differences. Marios is no longer dressed in clothes that make him blend with the environment. He is in drag, wearing an impressive shiny dress. Instead of standing in a corner, he walks proudly among the crowd with his head held high. Instead of avoiding attention, this time he looks people in the eye. Finally, and more importantly, he assumes Petros's role on stage and performs for the audience. Not only do we have a clear appearance change, we also have an implied environment change (he gets on the stage), as well as a behavioural and, to cap everything, an overall personality trait.

ANGELA
(off - voice from speakers)
Ladies and gentlemen! There's a new queen in town and she's not joking around. You mess with her and she'll eat you for dinner. You hurt her loved ones and she'll make yourself a living hell. It's her first time on the stage but she was born to own it so without any further ado, let's hear it for BLOODY MARY!

A bright spotlight follows Marios from above as he enters through the back door. Heads turn towards him. He cruises among the crowd, his head held high, then gets on the stage and takes his place in front of the microphone. The spotlight blinds him; makes him sweat. He stares around the packed club at all the eager faces. His eyes rest on Maya and Luisa, who sit at the first table, and then on Angela giving him the thumbs up from the bar. Marios smiles and opens his mouth.

This is not lip-syncing. This is his own voice and it's as sweet and comforting as honey. Tender, soft and mellow, his melancholic performance of a sad love song has everyone tearing up in seconds. (Bloody Mary, p.126)

[...]

The mournful love song reaches its emotional climax. Marios belts the final note like a true queen and, as the tearful audience rise to their feet for a standing ovation, he opens his arms, takes a deep bow and

the blood-red curtain closes with a swish, concealing the stage behind it, and swaying ever so slowly to the air's gentle touch.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 127)

Marios is, in many ways, a new person. This is in part thanks to an overall personality change but this change is far from being the only one. To get to that stage where Marios's behavioural pattern is reversed in such a radical way, many attribute changes had to occur. He lost two loved ones (partner and father), he was brutally beaten (physiological change), he formed a radical goal (to avenge his boyfriend), he changed his appearance (yet another physiology/appearance change), he endured many emotional changes (depression, hope, excitement, anger, hatred, guilt) and many behavioural ones. In fact, looking back at my analysis model, it is only his socio-economic status that was largely unchanged and that was, perhaps, because it is not an attribute assigned to him by the text. This could be a note for a subsequent draft but in this current one, the socio-economic status attribute is not of great importance.

5.5: Writing the Character Change is Rewriting the Character Change: Looking Forward to the Next Drafts

In this part of the chapter I wish to compare previous drafts of the screenplay with the one currently revising (third draft) and preparing for my thesis submission. With this comparison I aim to outline some of my thoughts in regard to specific conceptual and structural character changes in the story as well as to demonstrate how these structural and conceptual changes of character change are shown in the screenplay by literary means.

Highlighting a particular changing state is not always desirable. Different scenes in different parts of the narrative require different strategies from the part of the writer. Take for example Scene 14 (INT. GYM HALL – DAY), pages 9-12 from the *Bloody Mary* screenplay. Contrary to the scene we previously examined, the aim of my redrafting of this scene was to actually remove the emotional change occurring in Marios, during his karate demonstration with his colleague, Giotis. Consider these paragraphs from the second draft of the screenplay:

Thomas is too preoccupied entertaining the children so he doesn't notice Marios's eyes sending flying daggers on his back.

[...]

Face red from this cocktail of shame and anger, Marios leans on his hands and stands up. As Giotis gets into position once again, Marios glares at him and charges towards him. He jumps and attempts an impressive spinning kick in the air. Giotis blocks him and sends him flying back on the mattress.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 11)

Compare now these two paragraphs with the ones that may replace them in the third draft:

Thomas casts Marios a worried look but Marios ignores it. He stands up mechanically to face his opponent, his face as impassive as ever.

[...]

Every encouraging word coming out of Thomas's mouth backfires and sends Marios deeper into passivity. Marios stands up. Giotis gets in position once again, energized, inviting Marios to attack; yet Marios doesn't move. Giotis frowns. He runs towards Marios and demolishes him on the mattress with a spinning kick.

What I want to achieve with those changes is to maintain Marios's *passivity* and *depression* in this scene and the ones that follow, until Marios discovers Petros's flip-phone in Scene? While in the previous draft, Marios went through more emotional changes during the scene (passivity → shame → anger), I decided that I wanted to highlight his subsequent *overall* change, therefore, I had to maintain his current depressed emotional change in this scene. Consider the ending of the scene as it was written in the previous draft:

The children cheer for Giotis. Thomas wishes to end this fight as soon as possible.

THOMAS
Looks like we have a winner!

Before Thomas can pull Giotis's hand in the air to declare him a winner, Marios explodes and pounces on them forcing Giotis down on the mattress. Giotis reacts immediately. He forces Marios on his back, climbs on top of him and starts punching him. Marios accepts the blows, either unable or unwilling to fight back.

And now, consider the revised, third-draft version of this last paragraph:

Giotis turns his back on Marios, so Thomas can declare him a winner.
Marios stands on his feet.

MARIOS

Is that all you've got, faggot?

A calculated slur that serves a predictable reaction. Giotis immediately turns and attacks Marios. He throws him on the mattress, climbs up on top of him and starts punching him. Marios accepts the blows, either unable or unwilling to fight back.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 12)

In a sense, this revised version of the scene serves to intensify the self-destructive attitude of Marios after the death of his partner. He does not attack Giotis in order to beat him in that last instance; he verbally abuses him so he can provoke the reaction. In an ironic turn, he uses a homophobic slur; I incorporated this to create a sense of ambiguity: Is Marios really referring to Giotis or to himself in that instance? This sentiment of self-hatred and self-destruction can be observed in a subsequent scene, when Angela takes drunk Marios back to his flat from the bar.

Angela lays Marios on the bed. Under the influence of alcohol, he starts laughing. Angela sits by his side and waits patiently for it to end. Seconds later Marios stops abruptly and exhales.

MARIOS

I really hate the taste of alcohol.

ANGELA

But it makes you feel better?

MARIOS

No. No. It makes me feel worse. That's the whole point.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 14)

In contrast, and as a consequence of my approach to that scene, I wanted to further highlight Marios's eventual *emotional* and *motivational* change after he is attacked by Takis in his flat (Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 26-27). Consider a paragraph from this scene, taken from the second draft:

Takis grabs Marios by the shirt and bashes him with repeated punches, determined to kill him. Face covered in blood, Marios searches blindly with his right hand for anything that can be used as a weapon. He stretches his fingers... he touches the photograph behind him... he

grabs it and smashes the glass frame on Takis's face. Takis stands up screaming.

This is how I rewrote the scene in the third draft:

Takis grabs Marios by the shirt and bashes him with repeated punches, determined to kill him. Marios does not fight back. Every blow brings him closer to sweet oblivion.

Maybe this should be the end. Maybe he deserves it.

A punch forces his bloodied face sideways; his teary gaze rests on the picture of him and Petros on the floor. Petros is smiling at him.

With the little strength he still has, Marios grabs a piece of broken glass and scratches Takis's face. Takis stands up screaming, blood running from his cheek.

Not today, bitch.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 26-27)

The main difference between the two versions, of course, is that, while in version #1 Marios tries to fight back from the beginning, in version #2, he needs something to push him. In the second version he is still prisoner of his depressed state of mind, therefore he secretly welcomes the attack, in a similar way he welcomed Giotis's attack in the previous scene. Such an approach allows for a transition of emotional states and attitudes of greater impact. At the same time, it creates the problem of how to signify the change. One obvious approach is by way of stating it in the text. Damien Chazzele uses this technique quite often in *Whiplash* (n.d.). In the passage above, I decided to use an object that was already used in the scene: the photograph of Petros and Marios. However, while in version #1 the framed photograph functions only as a weapon, in version #2 it functions both as a weapon and as a source of motivation and emotional encouragement for Marios. What his father could not achieve with his tough-coach routine in the previous scene, his dead boyfriend manages through a mere smiling picture of his. Moreover, while the previous draft focused more on the suspense of whether Marios will be able to reach the fallen photograph ("He stretches his fingers... he touches the photograph behind him... he grabs it and smashes the glass frame on Takis's face") and stretches time in that instance, the revised draft is focused on the photograph less as a weapon that has to be grabbed and more as a source of inspiration

that has to be embraced. Once Marios has changed his attitude and has decided to fight back in this scene the rest comes easy, therefore is less foregrounded in the text.

In addition to that, I used free indirect discourse to allow further access into Marios's head, while at the same time refraining from having him "speak out" the actual change that occurs inside him. Therefore, the deterministic, depressed sentiment inherent in the statement: "Maybe this should be the end. Maybe he deserves it", is followed by a rejection of that very sentiment at the end of the action: "Not today, bitch." It is once again deliberately ambiguous whether that "bitch" refers to Takis or to Marios himself.

Scenes 4 and 5 were also changed in order for me to maintain Marios's agitated emotional state at this stage, until this gives way to depression. This is Scene 4 as it was written in the second draft:

A DRAG QUEEN performs a sorrowful song on stage. A huge banner hangs from the ceiling; it reads: REST IN POWER.

Marios sits at the far end of the bar alone, isolated from the gathered crowd. He downs his drink in one gulp and then slides his glass towards ANGELA, 52 - the transgender club owner - demanding more. Angela hesitates for a second. She casts Marios a concerned look, but then concedes and pours him another glass. Marios grabs it and drinks.

Consider below the most current version of the same scene:

INT. DRAG CLUB - NIGHT

Marios enters the familiar drag club. He stops short of joining the gathered crowd near the bar. He stands and observes the unconventional decoration while a DRAG QUEEN performs a sorrowful song on stage.

Flowers... A huge banner that reads REST IN POWER... Framed pictures of Petros in black-and-white...

This doesn't feel right. This was a place of joy and celebration. When did it become a fucking mausoleum?

ANGELA

(off)

...That's his boyfriend, Marios.

ANGELA (52), the transgender club owner, introduces Marios to a weeping YOUNG WOMAN.

MARIOS

What?

YOUNG WOMAN

(in tears)
I miss him so much!

A face full of snot. Ugh. Marios averts his eyes, disgusted. People at the bar catch his eye; nod at him, tears streaming down their faces.

No. Fuck this.

He turns his back to Angela and the young woman, not even bothering to excuse himself, and rushes out of the club.

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 4)

This particular scene has been extensively rewritten in order for me to alter Marios's *emotional state*. While in the earlier version, Marios is already depressed in that scene, drowning his sorrows in alcohol, in the current version he is in a sort of denial; he refuses to join the sorrow-chorus. The full display of mourning disgusts him. This is not just about his current emotional state; it speaks about his *attitude* as well as his overall *personality*. We have already established him as uptight in the first scene. He does not display his sadness (or any emotion for that matter) and is repulsed by people who do. The additional use of free indirect discourse in this scene as well serves to underline this.

I also want to underline how the iconic and indexical functions of the language are used in the first paragraph of that scene. Every *report* (in Claudia Sternberg's terms) serves as an iconic function comprised of symbolic elements. Therefore, the sentence "Marios enters the familiar drag club" aims to create a mental image of that action, therefore it has an iconic function. Similarly, the next sentence, "He stops short of joining the gathered crowd near the bar" on top of having an iconic function, also has an indexical one. That Marios stops and stands away from the grieving crowd indicates something about his emotional state or his personality. Let us consider the end of the scene as well, where I have employed report, description and free indirect discourse that allows access to Marios's thoughts. The sentence "A face full of snot" is purely iconic in that it aims to evoke a mental image. The absence of a verb, therefore of action, removes any hidden motivation, therefore erases any indexical functions. Marios's reaction by way of free indirect discourse, however, ("Ugh") has an indexical function despite the lack of a verb; it indicates his disgust. I make that entirely unambiguous when in the next sentence I state that, "Marios averts his eyes, disgusted". At first glance, had I just written, "Marios averts his eyes", the sentence would be more indexical in its function. It would indicate an emotion or motivation behind Marios's

action of averting his eyes without clearly stating it. By adding the word “disgusted” I erased the sentence’s indexical function in regard to Marios’s action of averting his eyes. Instead, I substituted one signified for another. Without “disgusted” the signified would be Marios’s reason for averting his eyes. With the addition of “disgusted”, the sentence keeps its indexical function but the signified becomes Marios’s reason for being disgusted.

This entire scene works together with the one the follows it:

MARIOS
(O.S.)
Have you found any evidence, though?

INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / LIVING ROOM - DAY

POLICE OFFICER
(v.o. - from the phone)
Sir, I've told you, we don't discuss ongoing investigations with civilians.

It's the wee morning hours. Marios paces up and down the flat nervously speaking on the phone in an excited voice. Newspapers lay on the table. A corkboard with pictures and article extracts on the wall, red thread and all. The flat of a conspiracy theorist.

MARIOS
What about CCTV footage? I read an article, there's a shop across the-

POLICE OFFICER
(v.o. - from the phone)
Are you a fucking journalist?

MARIOS
What? No. Listen-

POLICE OFFICER
(v.o. - from the phone)
Yeah, well, here's a scoop for you. The investigation is closing soon so don't bother calling here again.

The Police Officer ends the call. Marios stands there with the phone glued to his ear and all colour drained from his face. Is it really over?

(Appendix; *Bloody Mary Screenplay*: 4-5)

The main difference in this scene is a slightly subtler one. Marios, instead of being “curled up on the couch”, as he was described in the previous draft, now “paces up and

down the flat nervously”. This was rewritten to energise Marios in this scene and therefore, make the emotional change after he hears the news about the closed investigation more radical.

Conclusion

My aim for this chapter was to explore character change in the script from a writer’s perspective. I used my own creative work, the screenplay *Bloody Mary*, to demonstrate how I constructed and outlined character change using literary means; not only mere report and dialogue, but also elaborate description as well as literary comment (Sternberg 1997). Discussing and elaborating on my intentions and conceptual considerations of character and narrative further distinguishes this exegesis from the screenplay analyses found in Chapter 4, where access to the authors’ intentions was not possible.

I started by offering a general overview of the plot by way of alluding to the numerous attribute changes that the protagonist of the story, Marios, goes through. Subsequently, I proceeded with detailed analysis of certain scenes that constitute the main “turning points” of the story. This close examination of a few specific scenes allowed me to demonstrate in more detail how uses of literary language, from figurative language to the meaning the words themselves carry, in effect build character’s attributes and then his subsequent attribute changes. My main argument is that we should not only focus on macro-dramatic conceptual notions of change, but rather we should - both as writers and scholars - examine the entire text in detail to observe how the attributes are signified on the page. Thus, I proceeded with a more surgical, comparative analysis between scenes of different drafts in order to highlight the importance that language plays in the construction and alteration of character’s mimetic attributes.

However, the relationship between the conceptual process and the act of writing is a very important one as one informs the other in a creative way. For instance, as I was writing dialogue for the script, I had the protagonist utter witty one-liners while in drag costume – pieces of dialogue this particular character would not utter in his every-day life. This prompted me to look at character change once again from a conceptual

perspective. Are these speech acts consistent with Marios's established personality traits? How do they fit with his emotional states at the time that he is uttering them? Finally, what role does the costume play in this change of behaviour? Is this appearance change enough to justify the behavioural change? All these questions point to creative choices I have to make as I move to the writing of the final draft. But they also demonstrate the usefulness of thinking character in specific mimetic attributes and how their connection implies change, and also how the conceptual and writing operations can go hand-by-hand in an interconnected non-linear process.

Conclusion

This creative thesis has been a challenging, yet somehow cathartic experience. Though I entered my PhD as a screenwriter, the theory came to me more easily than the creative work that took some time to assume some form. That form has not been consistent. What started as a short script meant to be produced in order to explore character change from the prism of authorship, industrial context and audience engagement, then morphed into a self-reflexive screenplay where a screenwriter dealing with character change was writing about a screenwriter dealing with character change. Deemed too post-modernist to my taste, that idea was abandoned and new attempts were made to write a feature screenplay that could be produced.

Eventually the strange assumption that the research screenplay should be produced was abandoned and the text was liberated from the chains of a hypothetical, subsequent film. That is not to say that I do not intend to turn *Bloody Mary* into a film but rather to assert that this aspect did not feature into my academic intentions at that point. Once notions about visualization, audience engagement and industrial film context became irrelevant to this PhD, the true protagonists of the narrative emerged: words. Words as tools that construct character on the page. Words powerful enough on their own, not in desperate need of a future film to validate their artistic value. With the film thrown out of the equation, I was able to consider the screenplay text as a practitioner as well as a theorist, in the excruciating detail it deserved.

Merging the creative with the critical might have been a challenging enterprise but it also allowed me to see character from a different prism. While I started my PhD on character change with eyes set on ethics and psychoanalysis, the creative process enabled me to recognise screenwriting as a semiotic process where words communicate complex information about the characters populating the screenplay page. The semiotic approach opened interpretive doors. No longer restricted by rigid analytical models based purely on the character's psychological aspects, I was able to examine the text closely, not in order to extract some abstract universal character structure applicable to every film narrative, but to observe the way words signify character attributes in the script.

This is important to clarify. I am not proposing a universal structure of character change. That was never my intention. In fact, I align myself with theorists such as

Brütsch (2015) and Hambly (2021) who view such formulas with suspicion as restrictive to creative writing. My objective was to address the nature of character change in the screenplay, demonstrate its complex multiplicity and explore how the practice of screenwriting further informs and enriches the notion of character change. Therefore, I posit that there is fertile soil for future research and for the application of such analysis of character in specific screenplays and/or genres. What types of attributes, for instance, can we observe in horror scripts? Can it be said that screenplays for commercially successful films depict characters with particular sets of attributes? Do individual writers assign similar attributes to their characters across many scripts and alter them in a particular way? My aim was to propose a renewed vocabulary of character change and to apply it in practice, in my own screenplay. I posit that this vocabulary filled an important gap in screenwriting theory and practice. It expanded the view of character. It offered a comprehensive, systematic analysis of character change, straying from the usual notions of emotional and transformational arcs and did that by focusing exclusively on the screenplay page, both from a critical and creative perspective.

To that aim, I first had to contextualize screenplay character and examine how it is presented in verbal fictional texts. Thus, in the first part of my thesis, I addressed the main debates regarding literary character, highlighted its centrality within fictional narratives and argued for a combined mimetic-textual approach, one that justifies the idea of characters as possible individuals but also considers the importance of the textual construct in conveying that illusion. In the second part of my thesis, I outlined my proposed character analysis model and looked into professional, published scripts to demonstrate how the writers presented and developed character on the page. In the final Chapter, I reflected on my own screenplay, *Bloody Mary*, and demonstrated how I structured the protagonist and presented him in the screenplay.

In the introduction I outlined the main research questions that fueled my thesis as well as sub-questions that I will have to tackle in the process. My main objectives were to 1) address the nature of character change 2) Provide a more holistic analytical model of character change and 3) explore through the practice of creative writing how the screenwriter constructs and develops character on the page. Moreover, in the thesis Introduction, I positioned my PhD within the larger framework of contemporary creative research and argued for the screenplay's autonomous and literary status.

In order to provide useful insights to my thesis's main objectives, I also had to address character's relation to the plot and the debate concerning its mimetic and textual dimensions. In regard to the first issue, I argued that character, contrary to the views of many structuralist theorists and literary critics, is more important than plot. By reevaluating Seymour Chatman's views on event and character and by arguing that an event is either brought about by a character or is intelligible in the narrative insofar as it affects character, I argued that character is narrative's central element. Following that assertion, I was able to provide an answer to the first main question regarding the nature of character change: I posited that, since event is defined as a change of state (Chatman 1980) and event always relates to character, therefore, plot can be redefined as character change. Thus, character change becomes the organising principle of the fictional, literary text. Moreover, in the same way that character is a multi-faceted entity comprised of many different attributes, one needs to look at character change holistically and not in a simplistic view where character change is defined merely as a reversal in fortunes or as the replacement of a dominant personality trait by another

In Chapter 2, I addressed the fiery debate concerning character's ontology and I defended my mimetic-semiotic view on character. I suggested that this should not be considered a contradictory stance. While the semiotic aspect of character (its textual status) is rarely contested, the mimetic aspect has been the subject of an intense debate over the last century. I argued for a mimetic aspect of character based on three different arguments: the reader-response argument that posits character is mimetic insofar as readers perceive it as such. Although recent research in cognitive sciences (e.g. Fludernik 2009) provide some support for this thesis, I argued this is the weakest line of defense because it relies on such concepts as intuition and common-sense. The second argument referred to Paul Ricoeur's theory of three-fold mimesis which suggests the narrative process displays an explicit link with our everyday reality, therefore, narratives are mimetic enterprises. Finally, I turned to linguistics. I addressed a similar debate regarding the referentiality of language – whether language represents a material reality or not. I argued that language has indeed a referential function. Thus, insofar as literature is comprised of verbal texts, the elements of these texts have a potentially mimetic/representational aspect as well. Therefore, character has a mimetic aspect.

In Chapter 3, I presented my character change analysis mode. I argued that the notion of character is created by assigning various mimetic attributes to a proper name. I

outlined my proposed paradigmatic sets of mimetic attributes and then ventured to demonstrate how these are organised on the syntagmatic axis in the screenplay text and how their constant alteration by the writer creates the “illusion” of character change. Subsequently, in Chapter 4, I outlined the main elements of the screenplay, both the more technical, formatting ones (Slug-lines, Dialogue headings, etc.) as well as the literary ones as identified by theorists like Claudia Sternberg (report, description, comment). Subsequently, I looked into specific screenplays and demonstrated the complicated ways that the specific art of screenwriting denotes and connotes character in the screenplay text. I employed close textual analysis to examine the ways screenwriters use to depict and develop character on the page. I highlighted the complexity and multiplicity of both the screenplay text and character and offered some initial thematic interpretations of these texts, relying on my analytical model. In the third and final part of my thesis, I tested my analytical model in practice during the composition of my screenplay, *Bloody Mary*. Born out of a premise that centred around a radical relationship change (death of a partner) followed by a radical appearance change (the drag queen transformation), this screenplay allowed me to delve deeper into the nature of literary character and appreciate its multiplicity.

Chapter 5 functioned as an exegesis and allowed me to reflect on my own creative practice. I was able to delve into issues concerning authorial intention and self-reflection of the creative process. I suggested that the creative process of composing character change on the page is a dynamic one. It involves both structural, conceptual operations when one is seeing their narrative holistically, as well as considerations pertaining to the written language specifically. I argued that writing down words on page in the screenplay draft is as important as the macro-dramatic conception of narrative. Writers write. It is through this act that their narrative is presented, specified, informed and altered.

Reflecting back on the difficulties solving the riddle of the creative thesis, starting a practice-based PhD with a focus on theory was not irrational. Strange though it may seem to other writers, to me it made perfect sense since my creative approach is analytical as well. While many screenwriters adopt a more instinctive and intuitive approach, I over-think, over-analyse and over-criticize. I write synopses, outlines and treatments (although not necessarily in that order) and only then, do I venture to compose a full screenplay draft.

I suggest that this is not very different from composing a critical work. Shortly after I began writing my thesis, I realised the same analytical process that informed the critical part of the PhD from a theoretical perspective, was, in fact, also informing the creative one. I was still thinking, analysing, criticizing, with the ultimate goal of composing a screenplay. What the thesis allowed me to do was to go deeper, further. Identifying a considerable gap in screenwriting theory in regard to character as a textual, narratological element, character's ontology and its position within a fictional narrative was rigorously problematized and analyzed from both a critical and a creative perspective. Character change was detached from the generalised formulations of screenwriting manuals and attached to semiotic theories. I stopped thinking about it from the narrow perspective of the personality trait and started looking at it as something holistic that is based on all of the character's attributes. This approach opened both creative and analytical doors. Physiology, personal relationships and emotions became as important character features as personality traits, goals and needs. The conceptual process of narrative structuring was linked with the pragmatic process of writing down character traits in the screenplay text. And character change became the holistic driving force of the entire narrative and the vehicle for my thematic purposes as a creative writer.

I suggest that my research had one more positive research outcome – in my mind at least. To argue that screenplay character is a complex narratological entity is to also argue that the screenplay is a text capable of depicting that complexity. And to prize the screenplay as a rich text of such artistic merit, capable of presenting the semiotic complexity of character is to prize its creator too. This acknowledgment is very important to me as a screenwriting practitioner. Traditionally sidelined and ignored, the screenwriters are the people who compose the complex, entertaining, engaging film narratives people enjoy in movie theaters or at home. Much like the characters in their scripts, writers undertake long, complicated journeys, with many emotional fluctuations. I hope this thesis has contributed, even a little bit, to the appreciation of the screenwriter whose creative work is as complex, as messy and as important, as the characters he creates.

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BLOODY MARY

First draft

written by

Pavlos Sifakis

A blood-red drop curtain conceals the stage and sways ever so slowly to the air's gentle touch. The dramatic drum roll echoes the audience's anticipation and builds to a thundering crescendo as the drumsticks crash on the cymbal.

ANGELA

(off - from the speakers
Ladies and gentlemen, get ready for
the fierce, the wild, the
scandalous, the one and only...
PETRA SCANDALOU!

The applause falls like hail and the whistles blow like the wind as the red curtain parts with a swish to reveal a tall, thin, backlit silhouette standing at the centre of the stage.

Silence and darkness fill the room. And then... a bright spotlight switches on.

A thousand watts burn the stage and illuminate the 30-year-old drag queen PETRA SCANDALOU (real name: PETROS ADAMOU) who stares at the audience with the confidence of a superstar.

Triumphant music blasts from the speakers as Petra grabs the mic and starts lip-syncing a powerful pop anthem. Her shiny blue dress is a star's demand for attention, her bold make-up a warrior's call to arms and her wild dance a fierce ode to freedom.

Everyone, naturally, goes wild. Nearly everyone that is.

All the way across the club, in a dark corner next to the bar, MARIOS, 28, fidgets with his drink. His face is pale, his body locked, his lips tightly-sealed and he makes sure to avoid direct eye contact with strangers. Dressed in worn-out jeans and a washed-out blue top, he looks out of place surrounded by sexy, meticulously-dressed men dancing their hearts out, and a few drunk women squealing the song's lyrics on the top of their lungs.

Despite all the commotion, Marios's attention is not distracted from the stage. His gaze remains fixed on Petra and follows her every move, from a safe distance, with an almost religious devotion.

The passion of her performance is infectious. Soon enough, Marios finds himself unconsciously moving to the music and his involuntary dance is as awkward as it is adorable.

It's not long until Marios's gaze captures the eyes of Petros. Petros stops and smiles at him and it is as if they both freeze; the earth stops spinning and they're suddenly

alone inside the club and their breathing muffles every other sound. Petros brings his palm to his lips; he blows Marios a tender kiss and Marios can almost hear its gentle hissing as it flies across the club to meet him.

*
*
*

The crowd's ecstatic screams wake Marios back to reality but he knows he's the kiss's sole recipient. His embarrassed gaze darts to the floor but he's not able to suppress a satisfied smile that colours his pale cheeks red.

*

Petros is encouraged by Marios's reaction. He climbs the steps off the stage, much to the audience's delight. He swaggers among the crowd, and towards the bar, where Marios fidgets with his drink.

*
*
*
*

PETRA

Ladies and gentlemen!

*
*

A single spotlight follows him faithfully from above, as he takes advantage of the song's instrumental part to declare his dedication.

*
*

PETRA (CONT'D)

I want to dedicate this song to the sweetest...

*
*

Panic dawns on Marios's face as he realises what is coming. His gaze turns to the door but he's like a sardine in a tin box and Petros is just a few feet away.

*
*

PETRA (CONT'D)

The most handsome...

*

Petros reaches the bar and the bright, yellow spotlight touches Marios's face, pulling him away from the darkness and pushing him on centre stage.

*
*

PETRA (CONT'D)

The bravest person I know.

*

The whistles, cheers and laughs pierce Marios's ears. His gaze races all around the club, desperately searching for an emergency exit, but stumbles upon countless gleeful faces.

Petros wraps his arm around Marios in a tender embrace and demands his partner's gaze. Marios's obliges and it's as if Petros's face soothes him and brings his heart-rate back to normal for a moment.

*

Petros brings his full, red-painted lips next to Marios's ear and his whispering words are as soft as a tender caress.

PETROS

Can I have a kiss, please?

Marios hesitates. Petros smiles. As he proceeds to realise his wish and seek his partner's mouth, Marios **tilts** his head to the right and offers his cold cheek instead of his warm lips.

*

Petros **freezes**. His smile remains, but it is now tainted by the shade of disappointment for the kiss that never was. He releases Marios from his **embrace** and, without ever turning his back at him, or breaking eye contact, he walks backwards, making his way to the stage.

*

*

*

The spotlight from above follows Petros back and so does the audience's attention, leaving Marios alone and ignored and hidden in darkness once again.

*

Face pale, body locked and lips tightly-sealed, Marios dares only glance at Petros in shame until Petros is an unrecognisable figure in the distance, and the deafening music has given way to a deathly silence.

*

2 INT. BUS - DAY

2

*

Marios rests asleep on the back seat, his head leaning against the window. The bus comes to an abrupt halt and Marios wakes up from troubled sleep with a startle. His gaze travels from the noisy passengers jumping off the bus to the peaceful cemetery spreading in the distance.

*

*

*

*

*

3 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

3

Marios is the **only person** dressed in black, as he **trudges among** the tombstones. He follows a group of mostly young, colourfully-dressed people **who, while** in tears, smile at him and wave a **half-hearted** greeting hand when they **catch his eye**.

*

*

*

*

*

The congregation reaches **a grave** and stops. **Marios keeps his distance from the grieving crowd**. A mahogany casket rests in front of **the** pit. TWO CEMETERY WORKERS grab **it** from each side, as the EMPLOYEE from the FUNERAL HOME **distributes** tiny plastic boxes with dirt inside.

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FUNERAL HOME EMPLOYEE
Please, throw the plastic **box** in
the dustbin next to you. It's so
you don't get your hands dirty.

*

Marios **examines** this peculiar **innovation**. The coffin **sinks** into the **open** grave and Marios **lowers his gaze** to meet it, **as the cloudy sky above him tears up**. **But he remains composed**. **Cold eyes and a clenched jaw force all emotion back, like a dam stopping rushing waters**. He waits until most people have

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left; then approaches the grave. "PETROS ADAMOU: 1983 - 2013". He empties the dirt from the plastic box on the coffin and everything's covered in blackness.

4

INT. DRAG CLUB - NIGHT

4

Marios enters the familiar drag club. He stops short of joining the gathered crowd near the bar. He stands and observes the unconventional decoration while a DRAG QUEEN performs a sorrowful song on stage.

Flowers... A huge banner that reads REST IN POWER... Framed pictures of Petros in black-and-white...

This doesn't feel right. This was a place of joy and celebration. When did it become a fucking mausoleum?

ANGELA

(off)

...That's his boyfriend, Marios.

ANGELA (52), the transgender club owner, introduces Marios to a weeping YOUNG WOMAN.

MARIOS

What?

YOUNG WOMAN

(in tears)

I miss him so much!

A face full of snot. Ugh. Marios averts his eyes, disgusted. People at the bar catch his eye; nod at him, tears streaming down their eyes.

No. Fuck this.

He turns his back to Angela and the young woman, not even bothering to excuse himself, and rushes out of the club.

MARIOS

(O.S.)

Have you found any evidence, though?

5

INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / LIVING ROOM - DAY

5

POLICE OFFICER

(v.o. - from the phone)

Sir, I've told you, we don't discuss ongoing investigations with civilians.

It's the wee morning hours. Marios paces up and down the flat nervously speaking on the phone in an excited voice. Newspapers lay on the table. A corkborad with pictures and article extracts on the wall, red thread and all. The flat of a conspiracy theorist.

MARIOS

What about CCTV footage? I read an article, there's a shop across the-

POLICE OFFICER

(v.o. - from the phone)

Are you a fucking journalist?

MARIOS

What? No. Listen-

POLICE OFFICER

(v.o. - from the phone)

Yeah, well, here's a scoop for you. The investigation is closing soon so don't bother calling here again.

The Police Officer ends the call. Marios stands there with the phone glued to his ear and all colour drained from his face. Is it really over?

6

INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BEDROOM - NIGHT

6

Marios lies on the bed and goes through old pictures of Petros on his phone. A faint smile.

A small TV on the bedside table is playing the news by the public boradcaster. The newscaster's words catch Marios's ear:

NEWS CASTER

(from laptop)

...Petros Adamou's death was officially decalerd a mugging.

Marios sits up on the bed and looks up at the TV.

NEWS CASTER (CONT'D)

(from laptop)

Unfortunately police were not able to identify and perpatrators and they admitted that the investigation is now closed and filed.

Marios picks up the remote and switches off the TV.

It is over. He bows his head and the damm finally cracks.
Emotion pours out and Marios breaks into sobs as we:

FADE TO BLACK.

7 **EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT**

7

...The night is cold and still. Marios sits on the pavement with his back leaning against a parked car, holding his breath. A man's muffled screams and the sound of kicks and punches invade his ears. Marios turns around, trembling, and glimpses for a split second at the horrifying scene taking place across the street.

Under the light of a flickering streetlamp, THREE HOODED THUGS assault a YOUNG MAN curled in a foetus position on the ground. They ignore his pleas and pound him relentlessly; going for the kill.

Marios winces and hides behind the car again, unable to move. The young man's screams still reach his ears, so he covers them with his hands, and then closes his eyes for good measure, as if his own senses is what enables the attack to take place.

MALE VOICE
(v.o.)
Marios. Marios.

8 **INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / LIVING ROOM - DAY**

8

MALE VOICE
(off)
Marios!

TWO MONTHS LATER

Marios wakes up with a startle. He looks up and faces THOMAS, 55. He groans and rubs his puffy eyes.

MARIOS
How did you get in?

THOMAS
I asked Roula to make me a key.
About fair since I'm currently
paying rent.

The previously spotless living room is now messy and dusty - the marks of hysteric outfits of rage laid all over: clothes scattered on the floor, a plate with a half-eaten kebab on the bedside table, an empty beer cans under the table bed...

Thomas throws a bunch of old newspapers on the couch, next to Marios.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
What is all that crap?

Articles circled with pink markers, from JANUARY 2, 2014:
"POLICE SAY NO CCTV CAMERAS IN THE AREA"... Another marked
"PETROS ADAMOU'S DEATH A MUGGING, POLICE DECLARE"... "FAMILY
MAKES A PLEA FOR ANY WITNESSES TO COME FORWARD"...

Marios sits up on the couch and tosses the old newspapers aside. Doesn't bother to answer.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Bloody house's a mess. It'd help of
you threw your flatmate's stuff
out. It's been two months since
he...

Marios grimaces and rubs his belly. He stands up and rushes to the bathroom. The sound of uncontrollable retching. Thomas sighs. He bends over and picks up the empty beer cans from the floor.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I also think it's time you came
back to work.

Thomas gets no reply. He throws the cans in the bin and then exits the living room and follows his son to the bathroom.

9 INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BATHROOM

9

Marios is kneeling in front of the toilet, emptying his guts inside the bowl. Thomas steps into the bathroom and towers over him.

MARIOS
I'm sorry. I don't feel very well.

THOMAS
That wasn't a request. You're
coming back to work with me today
or you're not coming back to work
at all.

Marios stiffens. Thomas forges ahead towards the shower. He turns on the tap and cold water runs from the nozzle.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I'll wait.

Thomas walks out. Marios turns his gaze to the cold water running from the shower head.

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10 **INT/EXT. NEWS REPORTING MONTAGE - DAY**

10

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Dramatic music accompanies the news footage: a 48-year-old politician, ANDREAS ALEXANDROU, thumping his fist in parliament... Greek flags waving at political rallies... Rioters colliding with cops... polls, statistics and graphics. And over the images, the animated voice of a female journalist:

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FEMALE JOURNALIST

(v.o.)

It is now clear that, during the recession years, "Greek Power" party's rise in the polls has been the only real success story. Jumping from low single digits to a whooping 19% in the course of three years, the far right-wing party is now eyeing the government and although its feisty rhetoric remains, it also seems desperate to dissociate itself from extremists.

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11 **INT. TV STUDIO - DAY**

11

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ANDREAS, 48, the tall, slim and alarmingly charming leader of the far-right party, "Greek Power", explains his policies to the FEMALE JOURNALIST, in a calm but assertive tone.

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ANDREAS

Let me be clear. Our party never had any association with extremists.

FEMALE JOURNALIST

Your rhetoric has been quite divisive and inflammatory.

*

ANDREAS

We are nationalists, we've never denied this. Nation is not a dirty word for us. We love our country to the death and we'll fight for our country's prosperity and independence.

FEMALE JOURNALIST

What about the rumours surrounding Adamou's death?

ANDREAS

I've answered this question a thousand times! There's absolutely no evidence linking us to this young man's tragic death. As a matter of fact, police concluded it was most probably illegal aliens that were responsible for the murder which only strengthens our argument!

FEMALE JOURNALIST

You're describing it as "a tragic death" and yet, just a month ago, you called homosexuality a "sickness".

ANDREAS

I'm not fighting the patients, I'm fighting the disease. I want young people to be cured. To be healthy. And our party welcomes everyone willing to rid themselves of that disease with open arms.

12 INT. GYM LOCKERS - DAY

12

FEMALE JOURNALIST

(continued - from the TV)

There you go again, you resort to homophobic language.

Marios's gaze is captured by the television on the wall showing Andreas's interview. He sits on the wooden bench, dressed in his karate uniform.

ANDREAS

(from the TV)

What does that even mean? We stand for a strong Greece and a healthy body of citizens. If wanting Greeks to be Greeks, women to be women and men to be men is "fascist" you will soon find out the country is populated by them.

GIOTIS

Here, here!

Marios turns his attention to GIOTIS, 24, who walks out of a dressing booth, **completely** naked, with his karate uniform in hand. Giotis notices Marios's gaze.

GIOTIS (CONT'D)
Anything wrong, mate?

*

MARIOS
Sorry.

*

GIOTIS
Seeing anything you like?

*

The door opens and Thomas's face appears just as Giotis is taking a threatening step towards Marios.

*

*

THOMAS
Demonstration starts in ten. Get ready.

Thomas turns to leave, then realises he forgot something and reappears through the door.

*

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Oh, yes. Marios, this is Giotis.
Hired him last month when you disappeared. Giotis, this is my son, Marios. You'll be doing the demonstration together.

*

*

Thomas closes the door behind him and Giotis's mouth breaks into a sardonic smile.

*

GIOTIS
Oh, that'll be fun.

13 INT. GYM MAIN HALL - DAY

13 *

THOMAS
You gathered all here today to learn the hidden secrets of the art of karate. But I'm not here to teach you how to kick and punch. We're here to teach you devotion, dedication and the spiritual clarity that this ancient Japanese art demands.

A group of 8-year-old KIDS stand across the room next to their bored PARENTS who are glued to their mobile phones, untouched by Thomas's riling speech.

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THOMAS (CONT'D)
You may think that it's easy. You may think that a kick or two will miraculously turn you into a champion. You may have even seen
(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 silly cartoons on television, with
 ridiculous moves that try to pass
 as "karate".

Thomas **throws** a **rehearsed, pompous chuckle** and then presents
Giotis and Marios, standing next to him, with a dramatic
 gesture, like a circus impresario.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 I will **let** **these** two champions show
 you what karate really means!

Thomas moves aside and the children's eager eyes turn to
 Giotis and Marios who bow to each other and take their
 positions. Giotis is the first to **strike**. Marios blocks his
 kick but feels **the intensity of the blow** on his arm. Giotis
grins.

Marios makes the second move **and attacks** Giotis **with a punch**.
 Giotis blocks **the** hit - **perhaps** a bit more forcefully than
 necessary - and **his** punch meets Marios's face. Some kids yell
 in awe, others simply laugh at Marios.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 See what happens when the fighter
 loses his concentration?
 Consequences can be severe!

Thomas is too preoccupied entertaining the children so he
 doesn't notice Marios's eyes **sending flying** daggers on his
 back.

Giotis and Marios **resume their fighting positions**. Giotis
attacks, Marios **defends**, Giotis bends over and **strikes** Marios
 on the legs with an **low side** kick. Marios yelps and **tumbles**
down on the mattress. More laughter from the kids. Thomas
 loses some of his excitement, **his stare now scrutinising**
Marios.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 The important thing is to be able
 to stand up after you've fallen.

Face red from this **cocktail of** shame and anger, Marios leans
 on his hands and stands up. As Giotis **gets into** position once
 again, Marios **glares at him** and **charges towards** him. **He jumps**
 and attempts an impressive **spinning** kick **in the air**. Giotis
blocks him and sends him flying back on the mattress.

The children cheer **for** Giotis. Thomas **wishes** to **end** this
 fight as soon as possible.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Looks like we have a winner!

CHILDREN
YAYYYY!!!!

Giotis turns his back on Marios, so Thomas can declare him a winner. Marios stands on his feet.

MARIOS
Is that all you've got, faggot?

A calculated slur that serves a predictable reaction. Giotis immediately turns and attacks Marios. He throws him on the mattress, climbs up on top of him and starts punching him. Marios accepts the blows, either unable or unwilling to fight back.

Thomas gets in the middle of the fight and suffers a couple of unintended blow from Giotis. He separates the two young men and stands between them, with his hands stretched out on both sides, keeping them apart. He catches his breath, then turns his exasperated gaze to the children watching and forces a smile.

THOMAS
Who wants to sign up?

Total silence. Parents gape back at the gruesome sight with judgmental gazes. Some children are crying. Others stare with open mouths. A girl hides behind her mother. A boy wipes his tears and snot on his father's scarf.

14 INT. GYM LOCKERS - DAY

14

Thomas storms into the gym lockers where Marios and Giotis are getting dressed.

THOMAS
Are you out of your fucking mind?

MARIOS
Sorry.

THOMAS
You know how many people signed up?
None. Nil. Zero. One of the mothers threatened to sue us!

MARIOS
Said I'm sorry.

THOMAS
Stop apologising to me! What gives you the right to collapse like that? You lost a friend? I'd lost a
(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 wife! *A partner*. Did I collapse?
 No! I raised a son on my own. And I
 raised him to be strong-

MARIOS THOMAS (CONT'D)
 -"not a bloody wimp". -not a bloody wimp!

Thomas is taken aback by his son's interruption but regains his posture immediately. Marios keeps his eyes to the floor.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 I'll see you tomorrow.

Thomas storms out and slams the door behind him. Giotis picks up his clothes and walks to the dressing booth to continue dressing up in private.

GIOTIS
 (off)
 Fucking faggot...

15 INT. DRAG CLUB - NIGHT

15

ALICIA, 39, a short, plump drag queen finishes her song on stage, belting an impressive high note. Marios sits at the end of the bar, drowning his sorrows in whiskey. He glances to his left and notices a TALL, BEARDED MAN, around 45, staring back. The man winks at him but Marios averts his gaze.

ALICIA
 This next song, I want to dedicate to the fiercest bitch the stage has ever seen and who is no longer with us! And to help me with this little performance, I would like to invite Marios on stage.

A spotlight darts to Marios and showers him with light. Marios squints his eyes and turns the other way.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 Aw, he's a bit shy. Give him a round of applause, you cunts!

The crowd bursts into laughter and thunderous applause. Marios grunts. He stands up, grabs his jacket from the stool next to him and makes to leave the bar. He takes a step but stumbles and falls down - completely drunk. The applause stops. Some people chuckle. Others avert their eyes.

Angela rushes to Marios's aid from behind the bar. She kneels next to him and helps him stand on his feet.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Oh dear. I haven't seen anyone this drunk since the night I lost my virginity.

The audience laugh. Their attention returns back to Alicia on stage. Angela carries a semi-unconscious Marios out of the bar.

ANGELA

Come on, babes. Let's take you home.

16 **INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BEDROOM - NIGHT**

16

Angela lays Marios on the bed. Under the influence of alcohol, he starts laughing. Angela sits by his side and waits patiently for the *it* to end. Seconds later Marios stops abruptly and exhales. *

MARIOS

I really hate the taste of alcohol.

ANGELA

But it makes you feel better?

MARIOS

No. No. It makes me feel worse.
That's the whole point.

Marios turns on his side. Angela sighs; she covers Marios with the duvet, stands up and walks out of the room.

Marios stares at the framed picture of him and Petros on his bedside table and then shuts his eyes and falls in deep sleep.

FADE OUT.

17 **INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BEDROOM - NIGHT -- LATER**

17

Marios opens his eyes. He looks at the alarm clock next to the framed picture. The time is now 4am in the morning but he's suddenly wide awake. He sits up on his bed. He frowns and rubs his stomach.

18 **INT. MARIOS'S FLAT - NIGHT**

18

The closet in Marios's bedroom is wide open. An open *carton* box lays on the floor next to the couch in the living room. *Marios, a sad, lonely figure, slouches between his living* *

room and bedroom carrying Petros' clothes and belongings to the empty box.

19 INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BEDROOM

19

The box now lies on the bedroom floor - packed, taped and ready to be tossed away.

Marios turns to shut the closet door. He notices one more of Petros's jackets resting on the bottom of the closet. He picks it up and holds it in his arms but, as he does, an old flip-phone drops from one of the pockets. Marios picks it up and frowns as he fails to recognise it.

MARIOS

That's not your phone...

He sits back on the bed and presses the power button but all he gets is the empty battery icon. He tosses the phone aside and runs out of the room, suddenly energised.

20 INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / LIVING ROOM

20

Marios opens a drawer and his hand searches between various types of chargers. He snatches the one he was looking for and hurries back to the room.

21 INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BEDROOM

21

Marios puts the flip-phone on charge. He waits nervously for a few seconds until the battery-charging icon appears. He switches on the phone and sits back on the bed.

He opens the picture folder but it's empty - no photos, no videos, nothing... He clicks on the contact list: no names - only two contacts listed as numbers: 1 and 2. He opens the messaging folder. Nothing on the inbox folder. Nothing on the sent folder either. But then: OUT-COMING MESSAGES (1)

Marios hesitates just for a moment but then his finger presses the OK button and opens the message. His mouth hangs open.

"They were following me again today. Bit worried now. The hyenas are getting hungry" MESSAGE DATE AND TIME: DECEMBER 10, 21:00

Marios' heart races. He drags his finger on the receiver's number; hesitates for a moment but then presses the dial button. He brings the phone to his ear and waits.

FEMALE VOICE

(v.o.)

The person you are calling is not
available. Please try again later.

Marios grunts and tosses the phone away. He jumps off the bed and grabs his own mobile from the bedside table. He finds the name MAYA on his contact list and calls it.

MAYA

(v.o.)

Hello?

MARIOS

It's me. Marios.

MAYA

(v.o.)

Do you have any idea what time it
is?

MARIOS

It's very important.

MAYA

(v.o.)

Don't call me again.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

It's about Pe-

But Maya hangs up and Marios' sentence is cut short.

22

EXT. ATHENS / INDUSTRIAL AREA - DAY

22

A car invades a quiet industrial area in the outskirts of Athens, lifting a cloud of dust behind it. The car halts, the doors swing open and two men storm out:

ALEXIS, 25, dressed in jeans and tight blue t-shirt, grabs MINAS, 33, by the neck and drags him along with him. With his left hand, he's holding a gun aimed squarely at Minas's back.

MINAS

Get your fucking hands off me!

Andreas Alexnadrou gets out of the car and strolls behind them. He lights a cigarette and inhales the smoke with visible pleasure. His right-hand man, STRATOS, 38, stands guard by his side.

Alexis pushes Minas down on the ground and aims the gun at his head.

ELENI, 47, is the last person to exit the car. She's dressed in black and her blonde hair dance in front of her sad, blue eyes as she watches the scene.

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MINAS (CONT'D)
(to Andreas)
The fuck do you think you're doing?

STRATOS
Word gets around, Minas. People talk.

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*

MINAS
What people?

ANDREAS
You were in touch with Petros Adamou for a month.

The momentary hesitation betrays Minas but he is quick to brush the accusation away with a forced chuckle.

*
*

MINAS
Why would I do that?

ELENI
Because you disagree that the party's going mainstream.

Heads turn towards Eleni - everyone surprised that she intervened. Andreas even allows himself a smile. On Minas's face, though, there is only contempt.

*

MINAS
(chuckles)
I "disagree".
(pauses)
It makes my fucking stomach turn.
You make my fucking stomach turn.
All three of you. The "royal family" ruining the party!

*

ALEXIS
Watch your mouth!

MINAS
When did you become a mommy's boy, Alex?
(lowers his voice)
You were singing different tunes in private.

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*

Alexis blushes; he raises his gun and presses the barrel against Minas' face.

*
*

MINAS (CONT'D)

OK, I **might've** called his paper
once! *Once!* I revealed nothing,
just gave him an **anonymous** quote,
that's all! Had to say something!
You're destroying the party we
built on the streets, already
talking about "coalitions" and
shit!

*
*

ANDREAS

You need to stop talking now.

MINAS

You fucking idiot, can't you see
I've been framed? Somebody's
messing with you and you're sucking
it up like a bitch. You're spitting
on your son's gra-

Andreas slaps Minas hard on the face. Blood spurts **out of** his
mouth and a **broken tooth falls on the ground**. Andreas turns
to Alexis.

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*

ANDREAS

Do it.

*

Eleni **flinches; her gaze darts to Alexis. Stratos looks**
baffled by Andreas' order but knows better than to question
it. Alexis takes a breath. His finger fondles the trigger but
hesitates to pull it.

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Minas **exploits** the momentary hesitation. **He stands up and**
scuffles away, clutching his bloodied jaw. Alexis raises his
arm; his finger enfolds the trigger. Eleni snatches the gun
right out of his hand and shoots Minas in the head. Minas
drops dead.

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All **eyes dash towards** Eleni once again. She turns to Andreas
but there's no smile gracing his lips this time.

*
*

23

INT. CAR

23

Andreas **takes s puff and exhales a cloud of smoke. Eleni**
brings her hand to her mouth and coughs.

*
*

ANDREAS

Where the hell did you learn to
shoot like that?

ELENI

(changes the subject)

He's not cut out for this and you
know it. His heart's not in it.

ANDREAS

You used to say the same for
Filippos.

Eleni averts her eyes. Andreas takes her hand and locks it
inside his own.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

I know he's weak and clumsy but he
can get better. Deep down, he's a
fighter.

ELENI

He's your son.

Eleni stares at him intently and pulls her hand away. Andreas
glares back at her.

ANDREAS

Never disobey me in public again.

Andreas starts the engine and signals to Alexis and Stratos,
who wait outside, to enter the vehicle. Regains his cool,
even if in pretense.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

Great shot, though. And with your
left no less.

24 EXT. SQUAT - DAY

24

Marios knocks on the door of the building insistently. The
door finally opens to reveal Luisa. She regards him for a
moment, then:

LUISA

She doesn't want to see you, dude.
Sorry.

Luisa makes to close the door, Marios pushes back.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Hey.

MARIOS

Please. I need to see her!

Luisa's expression hardens. She pushes back and shuts the door forcefully. He does not give up; keeps knocking and knocking and kno--

MAYA

(off)

The fuck do you want?

The door has swung open, this time revealing MAYA, 28, second generation immigrant from Nigeria. Marios does not waste a second.

MARIOS

I found a message on his phone.

MAYA

What?

MARIOS

Petros. He had another phone!

MAYA

(exasperated, turns to leave)

Oh, go to hell...

MARIOS

Are you even listening? It says-

Maya turns to face him, the anger burning in her eyes.

MAYA

(in a low voice)

What's the fucking point now,
Marios? You already let him die!

All the excitement evaporates. He suddenly feels so small. He struggles to respond, the words refusing to leave his mouth.

MARIOS

I told you that in confidence...

MAYA

Yeah, well... Don't worry. I'm
hating you in confidence.

Maya slams the door to his face and Marios can hear her footsteps as she climbs up the stairs. He stands alone in the cold, staring miserably at the closed door in front of him.

27

INT. POLICE STATION / OFFICE

27

Chrysa indicates the chair in front of her desk. Marios complies. The room is cold and uninviting.

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*

CHRYSA
Can we help you?

Marios hesitates.

*

CHRYSA (CONT'D)
HELLO!

*

MARIOS
It's about that murder... couple of months ago.

*

Chrysa turns to Takis who sits on his desk at the other end of the room. They lock eyes and then burst into nervous laughter. Marios raises his voice just slightly:

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*

MARIOS (CONT'D)
Petros Adamou.

*

Chrysa and Takis go silent. Chrysa examines Marios her smile still lingering. Marios holds her gaze.

*
*

CHRYSA
Are you the prick who's been calling here every day for the past two months?

Marios hesitates.

*

TAKIS
That case was closed about a month ago. It was a mugging.

*

MARIOS
I have a-

*

Marios turns and looks up at Takis but stops dead. He notices a hyena tattoo on Takis's right arm. His face falls.

*
*

28

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

28

Marios glances at the three thugs bashing the young man on the ground. A glimpse of the same hyena tattoo visible on the arm of one of the thugs.

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29 INT. POLICE STATION / OFFICE - DAY

29

CHRYSA

Oi!

Chrysa snaps her fingers and Marios is forced back to reality. Takis is staring right back at him.

*

TAKIS

You "have a"...?

*

Marios averts his gaze and bows his head.

*

MARIOS

I, uh.. have a... a feeling it wasn't a mugging.

*

CHRYSA

Are you having a laugh, mate?

*

Marios keeps his eyes on the floor.

*

MARIOS

Sorry, I was... I just wanted to ask how the investigation was going. I knew the victim.

*

CHRYSA

Are you deaf? The investigation is finished. The case is closed!

TAKIS

Jeez, Chrysa, relax. Kid's just interested to know, that's all.

*

*

*

(turns to Marios)

*

It was probably illegals. Believe me, they are very good at getting away with shit like that.

*

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*

Head still bowed, Marios dares only cast a side glance at Takis; observes his smug smile.

*

*

CHRYSA

Now get the hell out of here before I arrest you for waisting my time.

*

*

*

Marios needs not be told twice. He jumps up, opens the door and hurtles out of the office.

*

*

30 EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

30

Marios storms out of the police station. He waits until he's tunrned around the corner, then leans against the wall and

*

*

slides down on the pavement. Feeling the panic attack creeping up on him, he shuts his eyes and tries to control his breathing until he eventually calms down.

*
*
*

31 INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BEDROOM -NIGHT

31

*

Marios lies on his bed; his eyes wide open, staring at the ceiling.

LATER...

*

Marios kneels next to the bed and **peeks** under it. He sees a plastic container box and drags it towards him.

*

He **places** the box on the bed and **lifts** the cover. At least three beautiful hand-made dresses are **folded** inside, including the **vibrant**, blue one that Petros was wearing in the first scene. Marios puts the dresses aside for a moment and empties the box, searching inside for anything that would provide some answers. He finds nothing useful and curses under his breath.

*
*
*

His sits on the bed **with his head bowed** and sighs. He **stares** at a couple of wigs on the bed next to him. He **picks up** the blonde **one and holds** it in his hands. **His lips finally break to a smile; he** wears the wig on his head.

*
*
*
*

He stands up and walks to the mirror. **At first, he chuckles and shakes his head. But then he looks at the mirror again.** He looks almost enamoured with himself as he examines his reflection in the stained glass. He **peers** down at the framed photograph of himself and Petros **and holds** it in his hands.

*
*
*
*
*

PETROS

(off)

You look beautiful.

*

Marios jumps and **swings** around...

*

32 INT. DRAG CLUB / DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

32

*

...All the way back to April, 2013.

*

Marios takes off the wig and throws it on the chair **as Petros walks into the dressing room.** Loud pop music **shrieks** from the laptop speakers.

*
*
*

PETROS

Don't stop on my account.

MARIOS

I was just being silly.

PETROS

Wanna help me perform my dance routine?

*

MARIOS

What routine?

PETROS

Thought you'd never ask.

Petros faces the mirror with inimitable swag and puts his hands on his waist.

*

*

PETROS (CONT'D)

And one... And two... And-three-and-four-and-five-and-six.

*

*

MARIOS

I'm not doing that, *it's* ridiculous.

*

PETROS

No one's watching. Come on.

Marios scoffs but *gives in and* puts his hands on his waist.

*

PETROS (CONT'D)

And one... and two...

*

Marios and Petros *dance* side by side.

*

PETROS (CONT'D)

...and-three-and-four-and-five-and-six and one... and two... and-three-and-four-and-five-and-six.

*

*

*

Look at you, a fucking pro. Almost ready for the show.

Marios stumbles.

*

MARIOS

What show?

PETROS

And one... And two... and-three-and-four-

*

*

MARIOS

What fucking show?

*

PETROS

The one we're doing together next *month.*

*

MARIOS
I'm not doing any shows.

PETROS
Well, that's not what the poster says.

MARIOS
You printed a poster?

PETROS
We need to make you a *dress*,
though. And find you a name as
well. What about Maria of Silence?

*

MARIOS
Are you joking?

PETROS
You're right, it's terrible, we can
do better.

MARIOS
Are you even listening to me?!

Marios presses stop on the laptop and the music ceases.

MARIOS (CONT'D)
I'm not doing a fucking drag show!

If Petros is disappointed, he does his best to hide it. He
keeps smiling and takes Marios's hands.

*

PETROS
OK, no need to stress about it.

MARIOS
I'm serious!

PETROS
I know. I'll cancel the interview
too.

MARIOS
You arranged an-

PETROS
I'm joking!

Marios *is* fuming. Petros pulls him close to him.

*

PETROS (CONT'D)
You know I love you, right?

Marios *scoffs but eventually* nods. He looks up at Petros and breaks a sly smile. *That man he cannot resist.* Petros smiles back and leans forward.

PETROS (CONT'D)

Can I have a kiss, please?

Marios glimpses sideways and notices people passing out of the room, peeking through the semi-open door curiously. He pushes Petros *back*.

33

INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BEDROOM - NIGHT

33

A loud, *clunking* noise from the living room. Marios drops the photograph on the floor *and turns around*. *The glass frame smashes on his feet.*

MARIOS

Dad?

No reply. Marios *traipses* towards the living room. As he crosses the doorstep, Takis's punch lands on his face. Marios *cries* in pain and stumbles back *into the bedroom*.

TAKIS

You really shouldn't fuck with the police!

Takis grabs Marios by the shirt and *bashes him with repeated punches, determined to kill him*. Marios does not fight back. *Every blow brings him closer to sweet oblivion.*

Maybe this should be the end. Maybe he deserves it.

A punch forces his bloodied face sideways; his glance rests on the fallen picture of him and Petros. Petros is smiling at him.

With the little strength he still has, Marios reaches his hand, grabs a piece of broken glass and scratches Takis's face. Takis stands up screaming, taken by surprise.

Not today, bitch.

TAKIS (CONT'D)

Fucking faggot!

That's his chance. Marios stands up - his face a hot, bloody mess - and *scurries* to the bathroom. He shuts himself inside and locks the door behind him.

Takis *wipes the blood off his face with his sleeve* and *hurtles* behind Marios.

34	INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BATHROOM	34
	Marios stumbles back as Takis's loud bangs on the door echo through the whole building.	*
35	INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / CORRIDOR	35
	Takis pounces at the door furiously again and again trying to burst it open.	*
36	INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BATHROOM	36
	The door finally breaks and Takis storms into the bathroom. Marios whacks him in the face with the shower head. Takis screams. He grabs a bar of soap from the sink behind him and hurls it at Marios's head. Marios startles and drops the shower head. Takis picks it up and wraps the silver cable around Marios's neck.	*
	Marios gasps for breath. Tears flood his eyes. He struggles to release himself from Takis's grip but Takis tightens the noose around his neck. Marios leans forward towards the shower. He stretches his fingers and turns on the hot tap.	*
	Steaming hot water spurts from the shower head. Takis screams in pain and drops the shower; he hides his face in his palms. Marios takes a long, deep breath. Takis stumbles back; one leg entangled in the shower cable, the other one slipping on the soap bar.	*
	TAKIS	*
	Shit.	*
	As though in slow motion, Takis flies up in the air and then lands on the floor with the back of his neck breaking on the toilet bowl with a loud crack.	*
	Marios turns. He stands up and limps towards the toilet bowl. His face goes white as his gaze meets Takis's dead eyes and the blood dripping from the back of his skull.	*
37	INT. SQUAT / MAYA'S ROOM - NIGHT	37
	MAYA	*
	"And then the dragon huffed and puffed and yelled: How dare you doubt my powers? Never in my life have I been spoken to like that! And as he opened his mouth, great flames poured from inside."	*

Maya reads from the opened children's book on her lap in an animated voice. To her left, lies her 10-year-old sister, VIOLET, and to her right, sits Luisa. Violet takes her asthma inhaler out of her pocket and brings it to her mouth. Maya smirks.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Story's getting tense, huh?

Maya opens her mouth to resume reading but her phone rings and vibrates inside her pocket. Violet yells in protest.

VIOLET
Not now!

Maya shushes Violet, takes her phone out and glances at the screen. It reads "LITTLE FUCKER". Luisa casts Maya an amused look. Maya scoffs and rejects the call. She smiles at Violet, then clears her throat and resumes reading.

MAYA
"Great flames poured from inside
his mouth and burned the stone
walls-"

Phone in her pocket lights up and vibrates once again. "Little Fuck" is insistent.

LUISA
Just answer it, it'll be quicker.

Maya scoffs, then jumps off the bed and exits the room to answer the phone - to some extent enjoying the prospect of bullying "little fucker" one more time.

38 INT. SQUAT / CORRIDOR

38 *

MAYA
How many times do I-

She stops as Marios interrupts her from the other end of the line. Her face drops.

MAYA (CONT'D)
What are you talking about?

39 INT. SQUAT / MAYA'S ROOM

39 *

Maya bolts back into the room and grabs her jacket from the hanger.

MAYA
I have to go.

LUISA
(alarmed)
Everything OK?

MAYA
(casually)
Yeah. Yeah.

VIOLET
But we haven't finished the story!

MAYA
You can finish it with Luisa.

VIOLET
But you're reading it better.

LUISA
Excuse me? How dare you?

Luisa turns her back to Violet and places a palm on her forehead as though a great tragedy has befallen upon her.

LUISA (CONT'D)
*Never in my life have I been spoken
to like that!*

She even fakes a weep and that finally makes Violet crack as she recognises the lines from the book. She starts laughing, indicating she's ready to accept Luisa's take-over.

Maya mutters a silent "thank you" to Luisa who replies with a wink. Maya wears her jacket and hurries out of the room.

40 INT. OUTSIDE MARIOS'S FLAT - NIGHT

40

Maya knocks on Marios's door and waits. Few seconds later Marios opens the door and reveals his wounded face through the door. Maya covers her mouth with her hands.

MAYA
Oh my God, what happened to you?

She rushes towards him and starts wiping the blood off his face with her jacket. Marios stops her. He steps back and stifles a cry.

MARIOS
He's in the bathroom...

41

INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / BATHROOM

41

Maya **pushes the door open** and **steps** into the bathroom. She gasps as she sees Takis's body. Marios stays on the door step.

*
*

MARIOS

I just pushed him back. He slipped.
I didn't mean to.

*

MAYA

What **did you do**?

*

MARIOS

He tried to kill me.

*

MAYA

Why would he-

MARIOS

I recognised him. I recognised the
hyena.

MAYA

The hyena? What are you talking
abo-

*

Marios points a trembling finger at Takis's tattoo on his arm.

MARIOS

He was one of the **m**. He killed
Petros.

*

Maya **regards the dead man on the floor**.

*

MAYA

We have to call the police.

Marios is on the verge of tears; his whole body now
shivering.

*

MARIOS

He was the police.

Maya **falls silent for a few moments - her mind racing. Marios leans against the wall, lets his body slither down on the floor. He hides his face in his hands and breaks into tears. Maya kneels next to him.**

*
*
*
*

MAYA

You cannot collapse right now. I
need you to stay with me. I need

*
*
*

(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

you to help me. It's going to be
alright.

*
*

42 INT. OUTSIDE MARIOS'S FLAT - NIGHT

42

*

The door to the flat opens with a creak and Marios and Maya exit carrying a rolled carpet. They scan the place to make sure no one's around and then close the door behind them. Marios calls the lift. The chamber is heard coming up but then there's a loud clanking noise and it stops. Maya presses the call button repeatedly.

*
*
*
*
*
*

MAYA

You're having a laugh...

*

43 INT. MARIOS'S FLAT / STAIRCASE

43

*

With the lift apparently broken, Marios and Maya hurry down the stairs with the carpet in hand. As they go past the second floor, one of the flat doors opens and Marios's nosy land-lady, ROULA, 65, steps out.

*
*
*
*

ROULA

Marios!

*

Marios and Maya freeze.

ROULA (CONT'D)

Everything OK upstairs? I heard noises.

*
*

Marios turns to face the old lady. He opens his mouth to explain but no coherent sound escapes his lips.

ROULA (CONT'D)

Are you still upset about your flatmate?

*
*

Marios nods politely, eager to keep moving with the carpet. He smiles and makes to leave.

*

ROULA (CONT'D)

About those rents...

*

MARIOS

I thought my dad was paying those.

ROULA

Not the last one, he hasn't. And I'm going to need it at some point.

An awkward silence spreads between them as neither pushes the conversation forward.

MARIOS

You mean right now?

ROULA

What a great idea.

MAYA

We're in the middle of something.

Roula's attention **is** grabbed by the old carpet. Maya **has started sweating**, struggling under the weight.

*
*

ROULA

I **swear to God**, I have that exact same **Persian**.

*
*
*

MAYA

Not quite, I'm sure.

ROULA

I'm telling you, it's exactly the same. Here, let me show you.

*

Roula **climbs down the stairs and** extends her wrinkled hand to unfold the carpet.

*

MARIOS

You're right, it's the same, I've seen it too!

ROULA

See? Told you! **Of course my husband** spilled whole bottle of red on it couple **of months** ago and that was that.

*
*

MAYA

Tragic.

*

ROULA

You spilled red as well?

MAYA

You have no idea.

ROULA

Oh well, what can you do. Health is the most important thing in life. Objects are expendable. **Humans** are not.

*

Maya and Marios nod in agreement to the inspirational remark.
Maya takes advantage of the prolonged silence and starts
climbing down the stairs.

*

ROULA (CONT'D)

(off)

Marios?

*

MARIOS

Yes!

*

ROULA

Don't come back without my rent.

Marios freezes. *Did he just get evicted?*

*

Maya nudges him to keep moving. The dead body wrapped inside
that carpet allows for no other considerations so they climb
down the stairs leaving Roula standing alone at the top of
the stairs.

*

*

*

*

44 **EXT. AVENUE IN ATHENS - NIGHT**

44

Maya's car *races* through the streets of night-time Athens.

*

45 **EXT. LANDFILL SITE - NIGHT**

45

The headlights illuminate the landfill site as the car stops
in front of a mountain of rubbish.

*

Maya pulls the lever, opens the driver's door and *jumps out*
of the car. She *runs* to the back of the car, covering her
mouth and nose with her shirt, and *lifts* the trunk. She
stares inside *in silence*. Despite her confidence, the sight
of a dead body still unnerves her.

*

*

*

*

She eventually *reaches in* and grabs the body. She tries to
pull him out but he's too heavy. She sighs and lets the body
fall back in the trunk.

*

*

MAYA

You wanna help me?

*

Marios' *white* face behind the windshield. *The tears have*
dried up. His vacant *eyes* stare *in* the *distance*. He remains
glued to his seat, despite Maya's call.

*

*

*

Maya's hand *thumps* on the window. Marios *startles* and turns
to face her through the closed window.

*

MAYA (CONT'D)

You wanna help me maybe?

*

Marios stares back at her with a blank gaze but does not open the door. After a few **silent** seconds, he turns the other way as if Maya was invisible. **Maya scoffs.**

*
*

MAYA (CONT'D)
Yeah, sure, don't bother. I'll
clean your fucking mess on my own!

*

She shakes her head in disbelief and turns to leave but then decides she has more on her mind she'd like to share.

*

MAYA (CONT'D)
It would've been a bit more helpful
if you had killed him when he
attacked Petros, you know. You'd be
a hero and everything... and we
wouldn't be stuck with a fucking
body!

46 **INT. CAR**

46

Maya's voice comes muffled to Marios's ears who tries to ignore the angry woman **raging** outside his window.

*
*

MAYA
(muffled)
*Where were you when he was killing
him? Oh, yes, right. You were
hiding behind cars... and now you
can't even move your ass out of
this one to clean up your mess.*

*

Maya's outburst leaves Marios **untouched** and his gaze remains fixed on the endless **piles** of garbage spreading in the distance.

*
*

47 **EXT. LANDFILL SITE**

47

MAYA
Fucking coward...

Maya shakes her head in **disgust** and **heads to the** back of the **car**. **She** grabs Takis's legs and drags him out of the trunk. Marios remains glued to his seat, even **as** Maya passes by his door **lugging** Takis's dead body behind her.

*
*
*
*

48 **EXT. LANDFILL SITE**

48

Maya's panting breath over blackness. Suddenly, **a beam of light** is allowed to pass through. Maya's hands dig through the dirt.

*
*

49 INT. CAR 49

Marios watches Maya struggling to dig a grave from the warmth of her car. Seat-belt still fasten and eyes fixed straight ahead, he **stares** at her as she moans and curses her fate.

*
*

EXT. LANDFILL SITE

Maya gives up. She stands up and hurries towards the car. She opens the back door and leans towards the seat. A small, semi-plastic shovel and a few pots visible underneath the seats. Maya grabs the shovel and slams the door behind her.

She walks back to that pathetic little hole she's opened with her bare hands and gets to work once again digging frantically with that shovel.

[illegible]

Marios watches Maya digging the grave of the man he accidentally killed mere hours ago. His eyes wander to the immobile body laying next to her, ready to be buried.

*

52 EXT. CAR 52

As the minutes pass, Maya digs deeper and deeper - her image reflected on the front window while Marios's mind races, his sullen face reflecting the dark thoughts plaguing his brain.

*
*

53 INT. CAR 53

What is that thing that Marios feels? What is that thought buzzing inside his head?

*

Is it fear...?

Or is it sadness...

It certainly isn't remorse.

Fuck. Shouldn't it be remorse? He just killed a man.

And yet, no. It's something else. Something worse.

Something much, much worse.

54

EXT. LANDFILL SITE

54

Marios opens the door and storms out of the car. The safety belt **halts** his **dramatic** exit and he falls face down on the ground.

*

He curses under his breath and removes the safety belt. He stands **up and struts** towards Maya who is **dumping** the body into the **pit**.

*

*

Marios cannot even feel himself walking. It is as if somebody else has taken host of his body; his stride so confident, so effortless; a dark power pulling him towards his boyfriend's killer with immense force.

*

*

*

*

Maya notices Marios approaching and stops. Marios grabs Takis by the legs and **drags** him out of the grave.

*

*

MAYA

What-

Marios **kicks** Takis's **frozen** body **with fury**.

*

MAYA (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing?

*

Maya grabs him by the jacket and tries to stop him but Marios brushes her aside with a shake of his hand. He is out of control, **pounding** Takis **like a maniac**.

*

Maya **cowers** in shock **and covers** her mouth with her hands. Marios **throws** one last kick **on** Takis's face and the cracking noise is unmistakable. He **pauses** and **bends over to** catch his breath.

*

*

*

MARIOS

He looked so strong that day. So scary. **All of them. Kicking him, beating... I wanted to move. But I couldn't.** I couldn't even take a good look at them. **And I hate myself for it.** But now he's got a face. **Now, I can finally look at him.**

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

MAYA

We should bury h-

MARIOS

No! We'll leave him like that.

*

MAYA

We have to hide the body!

Marios takes a step towards Maya, and she insitctively
stumbles back.

*
*

MARIOS

I want them to find me. I want them
out of their nest. His family, his
friends... I want them out in the
open.

*

MAYA

Why?

MARIOS

So I can find them. So I can kill
them.

Maya observes him in shock. His bruised, bloody face and his
low, menancing tone inspires a sudden fear in her.

*
*

55 INT. SQUAT / BATHROOM - NIGHT

55

Marios's hand turns on the tap. Head moving under the nozzle,
a rain of cold water washes dirt and blood off a bruised
body.

*
*
*

56 INT. SQUAT / PETROS'S OLD ROOM

56

Marios flinches; a thread piercing his skin. Maya sits on a
stool in front of him, stitching his wounds.

*
*

MARIOS

You're really bad at this.

*
*

MAYA

I'm a trainee doctor but, please,
do tell me how to do it.

*
*
*

MARIOS

For one you should be more careful
with the-

*
*
*

MAYA

Shut the fuck up, I was being
sarcastic.

*
*
*

Marios shuts his mouth and lets Maya finish the job.

*

MARIOS

Ouch!

*
*

MAYA

Oops. Sorry.

*
*

BIT LATER...

Maya enters the room carrying clean sheets and towels. Marios sits on the bed and reads an article from a print magazine. His head is now covered in stitches and bandages.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Is that the one about the refugee camp?

Marios nods.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Interior Minister was not happy about that.

MARIOS

They released a statement.

MAYA

He was very good at annoying powerful people.

They smile at the shared memory. Maya examines Marios and there's compassion and even concern in her eyes for him.

MAYA (CONT'D)

He received threats for that article. He received threats for almost every article he wrote.

MARIOS

He never told me that.

MAYA

He wanted to protect you.

Marios jumps up and walks to the door.

MAYA (CONT'D)

If these are really fascists that killed Petros, you stand no chance. Fighting is their life. They've almost been brought up like that. Their Nazi parents raised them with Nazi flags on the cribs and riffles hanging on the country house walls. You work in a martial arts centre, you know that better than me. All of them are masters in mixed martial arts-

MARIOS

Train me. You're the best, Petros
was always saying that about you.

MAYA

I'm a pacifist-

MARIOS

Bullshit. Petros told me all about
those terrorists back in Nigeria.
He told me what you did to them.

MAYA

-and you're terribly out of
practice!

Marios chuckles in disbelief.

MARIOS

It doesn't matter! What if that cop
talked to somebody else before he
attacked me? They're gonna come
after me anyway, you know that.
It's either them or me now.

MAYA

That's why we had to bury the body.

MARIOS

What, put him in a three feet grave
you dug with a plastic shovel and
pray he never gets found? We're not
mobsters, we don't know how to hide
bodies.

MAYA

You'll be protected here.

MARIOS

I don't need protection!

Marios storms out of the room and climbs down the stairs to
the main hall rushing to the front door.

57

INT. SQUAT / MAIN HALL

57

Maya runs after him.

MAYA

I'm sorry about what I said before.
You don't have to prove anything.
It was perfectly natural for you to
hide.

Marios freezes on the spot. His breath quickens, his heart-beat rises fast. Maya climbs down the stairs and walks up to him.

*
*

MAYA (CONT'D)

They're thugs. I get it. I'd be
shitting my pants too.

Marios spins around and lunges at Maya. As if she was anticipating the attack, Maya blocks his blow and shoves him back with ease. Marios stumbles, hits his back on the wall and slips down.

*
*
*
*

MAYA (CONT'D)

I'd stick with the karate school if
I were you.

Colour rising in his cheeks, Marios stands up and throws himself at Maya once more. This time, he lasts at least a few seconds and even manages a blow before Maya overpowers him and thrusts him to the floor, twisting his arm behind his back. Marios shrieks as Maya steps over him.

*
*
*
*

MAYA (CONT'D)

Fuck's sake, don't you get it? A
couple of punches from these
gorillas and you'll wish you were
never born!

*

Tears flood Marios's eyes. Maya notices and, for some reason, it angers her. Her expression changes to disgust as she releases Marios from her grasp and steps aside. He is not worth the fight.

*

MAYA (CONT'D)

You just don't have it in you.

Marios wipes the tears off his eyes with his sleeve. He leans on both his palms and rises up. Maya throws him a half-exasperated, half-amused look. She turns her back to leave and Marios lunges at her.

*
*
*
*

Maya, once again, blocks his first punch but this time Marios anticipates her blow. He blocks it and takes the upper hand. He proceeds with power kicks and punches, and corners her. Maya is forced to retreat, stepping backwards towards the stairs. Just as it looks like this fight she's going to lose, she grabs a broomstick lying around and manages a surprising blow on Marios's nose. Marios yells and touches his nose.

*
*
*
*

Maya swings the broomstick and intensifies her attack. Marios ducks to avoid her blow and pounds her with a spinning kick on the legs. Maya's stunned and loses her balance. Marios jumps on her and forces her on the ground. She tries to fight

*
*
*
*

back but he grabs her arm with the same move she grabbed his mere minutes before and twists it behind her back.

*

MARIOS

You think you can hurt me? Nothing will ever feel worse than it felt that night! I can fix it now and I swear to God I won't rest until all three of them are dead and buried.

*

LUISA

(off)

HEY!

*

Marios spins around, startled, to face Luisa and Violet who stand on the top of the stairs. They glare at Marios who's on top of Maya holding her hand behind her back.

*

*

VIOLET

Leave my sister alone!

Two 30-year-old women come out of the rooms as well and run into the main hall - ROVEENA and JENNY.

*

*

ROVEENA

Maya, you're ok?

*

*

MAYA

It's all good.

*

*

They climb down the stairs, their eyes promising trouble for Marios. Marios stands up and readies himself for yet another fight. Maya smirks. She is almost enjoying this.

*

*

*

MAYA (CONT'D)

Four.

Everyone stops and turns to face Maya on the floor. Maya is looking at Marios.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Four dead and buried.

(a pause)

If that really was an organised attack... you're forgetting the one who ordered it.

*

*

*

*

Marios breaks a smile and Maya smiles back at him.

*

58

EXT. GYM - DAY

58

Thomas looks at his watch and sighs. He waits at the gym's entrance, scanning the busy street in front of him with anticipation.

*
*
*

GIOTIS

(off)

Kids are ready to start.

Thomas takes another look at his watch.

THOMAS

We'll start in ten.

GIOTIS

It's been like, what - three, four days? He's not coming.

Thomas doesn't move. Giotis shakes his head and walks back into the gym.

*

GIOTIS (CONT'D)

Ten minutes it is.

59

INT. GYM / THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY

59

The clock on the wall now reads 14:00. Thomas sits behind his desk and picks up the phone. He dials a number and waits. No one answers and the call goes straight to voicemail.

*
*
*

THOMAS

Marios, where are you? Please call me back. I'm worried sick.

*
*
*

VOICE FROM PHONE

(v.o.)

To submit message, press 1. To delete message, press 2.

*
*
*
*

Thomas considers this for a moment and presses 2. He hangs up, then picks up the phone again and redials the number. Once again, it goes to voicemail.

*
*
*

THOMAS

Marios, it's me. I thought I made myself clear the other day. Be here tomorrow morning or there will be consequences.

*
*
*
*
*

Thomas presses 1 and slams the phone on his desk.

*

60

EXT. LANDFILL SITE - DAY

60

*

TWO MALE YELLOW-VEST WORKERS chat with animated voices as they enter the landfill site.

*

WORKER #2

*

...but just because you don't agree with them it doesn't make them fascists. Have you seen Victoria Square recently?

*

*

*

*

*

WORKER #1

*

Fuck you! I live near Victoria Square.

*

*

*

Worker #2 moves to the side. He unzips his trousers and pees. Worker #1 lights a cigarette and walks towards a bulldozer.

*

*

WORKER #2

*

(off)

*

And you're OK with hundreds of illegals camping outside your house then?

*

*

*

*

*

WORKER #1

*

(off)

*

They're war refugees, you moron.

*

*

WORKER #2

*

(off)

*

Yeah, sure, that'll be very helpful when one of them yells Allahu Akbar and then blows you up to smithereens.

*

*

*

*

*

Worker #1 freezes as he gapes at the pile of garbage in front of him. Worker #2 zips his pants, turns around and walks towards his colleague.

*

*

*

WORKER #2 (CONT'D)

*

Hey, dickhead. I said, how would you feel if a fucking Muslim-

*

*

*

He notices Takis's body lying on top of the garbage.

*

WORKER #2 (CONT'D)

*

Fuck me.

*

*

61

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICES - DAY

61

*

Marios and Maya argue with LINA, 39, - Petros's editor - in her crammed office at the headquarters of the radical magazine where Petros worked.

*

*

*

LINA
Police said it was immigrants
anyway.

MAYA
Since when do you trust the cops?

MARIOS
He was working on an article before
he was murdered. *

LINA
About the Greek Power party, yeah. *

MAYA
I knew it!

LINA
This doesn't prove anything. *

MAYA
Come on! You're a leftist paper,
you know it- *

LINA
We've been fucked by the police,
politicians and their lawyers
countless times. What do you want
me to do? Print speculation and get
my ass sued again? You have any
proof? *

MAYA
You're the newspaper. *

LINA
Petros was being very secretive
about this.

MAYA
He must've kept notes.

LINA
His desk is over there. Let me know
if you find something because I
haven't.

MARIOS
There was nothing in the house
either.

LINA
Greek Power... they have strong
links inside the police, we know
(MORE) *

LINA (CONT'D)
that much. And we know from the
elections that the police supported
them.

*

MAYA
So, do something about it.

*

LINA
I'm a journalist, not a judge.
There's only so much I can do.

*

Marios stares back at Lina.

*

62 EXT. KIOSK - DAY

62

*

Takis's body graces the cover of various newspapers on the
newsstand. One heading reads: COP'S BODY FOUND IN PIT -
POLICE SUSPECT MOBSTERS BEHIND HIT.

*

*

*

63 INT. SQUAT / KITCHEN - DAY

63

*

Maya slams the newspaper on the kitchen table in front of
Marios who finishes his breakfast.

*

*

MAYA
So what's the plan now?

*

Marios glances at Takis's picture in the paper, and then
looks up at Maya who is clearly expecting a course of action.

*

*

ROVENNA
Care to fill us in at all?

MARIOS
Maybe it's better if you don't
know.

ROVENNA
Maybe it's better if you found
another place to live.

MAYA
Or maybe they can help us.

MARIOS
I don't need help.

*

ROVENNA
We didn't offer any.

MAYA
We need to find some men.

*

*

LUISA

What men?

MAYA

(pointing at a picture of
Takis)

His friends.

MARIOS

We should have taken his phone or
his wallet. Why didn't I think of
that? We would have all his
contacts now.

LUISA

Well, he's dead.

MARIOS

I know...

LUISA

So you can just go to his funeral.

Marios and Maya exchange a stunned look; *why didn't they
think of that?*

64 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

64

A small congregation of family and friends is gathered around
Takis's grave. They leave flowers next to the grave as the
priest finishes his chanting.

Marios and Maya watch from a safe distance, like spies,
hidden behind the cypresses. Marios takes a step forward so
he can get a closer look at the gathered crowd. Maya grabs
him by the shirt to stop him and Marios suddenly freezes. He
and Maya gape at a YOUNG WOMAN who raises her hand in a clear
Nazi salute before other people force her arm down.

MAYA

Fucking hell...

65 INT. CEMETERY CAFE - DAY

65

Alexis, Andreas and NIKI, the young woman who raised her hand
in a Nazi salute, sit at one of the many round tables in the
cemetery cafe where mourners gathered for the traditional
Greek coffee and cognac.

ALEXIS

(to Niki)

I should come stay with you.

ANDREAS

Nobody needs to go and stay with anyone.

Maya and Marios spot Andreas, Niki and Alexis and get a table right next to theirs but also one that's hidden behind a big column.

ALEXIS

That wasn't a robbery. His wallet was in his jacket.

ANDREAS

(to Niki)

I liked your brother. But you know that better than me, he was involved in some shady business with some really shady people. It wouldn't surprise me if-

ALEXIS

That wasn't a mob hit, dad! I saw the body at the morgue. It was a sloppy job.

Niki thumps her fist on the table; eyes full of tears.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

What if that was retaliation for Adamou?

*

ANDREAS

Keep your voice down!

ALEXIS

If it was, she's not safe.

NIKI

Let them come. I'll beat them to death like I did with that faggot!

Marios's hand shakes and pushes his coffee cup on the floor. Andreas turns abruptly as if just realising there are people sitting so close to them. He picks up the coffee mug.

*

*

*

MAYA

We're so sorry.

ANDREAS

Not at all. Didn't notice you there.

Marios reaches for the mug.

*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
May I ask how you knew the
deceased?

Marios has no reply.

MAYA
They were army pals. *

ANDREAS
Really? Where did you serve?

It takes a while for Marios to calm his nerves in front of
Andreas's presence. *

MARIOS
Messologhi. *

Andreas smiles, apparently satisfied with the correct answer.
He hands the coffee mug back to Marios. *

MAYA
How did you know him, Mr.
Alexandrou? *

ANDREAS
Takis was a family friend. Came to
pay my respects to a great police
officer as all political leaders
should do. Have a good day and
don't forget to cast your vote in
the elections.

Andreas fires his most friendly, politically-savvy smile at
her, which disappears completely when he turns to face Niki
and Alexis. He lowers his voice to a whisper. *

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
(to Alexis)
Adamou's tragic death was a
mugging. His wallet was gone.
Police never found the
perpetrators. There were no
witnesses on the scene and the case
is now closed. End of story. *

66 INT/EXT - SQUAT - DAY/NIGHT

66

MONTAGE SEQUENCE *

Marios wears his shorts and a tank top.

Maya sets up a punching bag in the main hall. *

Marios starts intense practice. He does crunches and push-ups and sweats in mere seconds.

MARIOS

One... two... three... four...

TERRACE

On the squat's terrace, Maya teaches Marios how to fight effectively.

His moves are heavy and hesitant. Her moves are light, effortless and yet forceful.

MAYA

You don't trust yourself enough!
You have the skills but you're
afraid to use them!

Maya exploits Marios's constant hesitations and beats him every time.

SQUAT HALL

Marios punches the bag -- He keeps up with the crunches and push-ups.

MARIOS

Twelve... thirteen... fourteen...

TERRACE

Maya teaches Marios how to move effectively.

Her motion resembles an elegant dance. Marios imitates her, follows her steps, attempts to flex his body in the same effortless way she flexes hers.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

This looks silly.

MAYA

Stop worrying about how you look.
Forget about other people for a
moment. If you don't feel
comfortable in your skin, you're
doomed to fail.

TERRACE

Maya places a boombox on the ledge and presses play.

She and her friends, Luisa, Jenny and Roveena start dancing to the loud music. Marios stands on the side, grimacing.

MARIOS
You're kidding me.

Maya grabs him by the hand and drags him towards the "dance floor".

MAYA
Free yourself.

Maya dances waving her hands in the air, doing every silly dance move she can think of. *

Marios laughs. He shakes his head but finally joins the dance. *

SQUAT *

Marios's blows on the punching bag are now more forceful. The counting of crunches has reached an impressively high number. *

MARIOS
62... 63... 64... *

TERRACE *

Marios's moves are now both elegant and liberated. His footing much more confident. *

His battles with Maya last longer and he manages as many blows on her as she does on him. *

67 **EXT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - DAY**

67

Thomas opens the door and sees Marios standing on the doorstep. He smiles widely but then checks himself and wears his usual stern expression.

THOMAS.
You're late. Come on in.

68 **INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM**

68

Thomas and Marios finish their lunch in silence. Thomas has made a savoury pasta bolognese. He occasionally glances at his son who is not in the mood for chit-chat. *

THOMAS
You like it?

Marios nods. *

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You could've said so.

*

MARIOS

Actually, I wanted to tell you som-

THOMAS

I went by your flat the other day.
Roula told me she hasn't seen you
in a while.

MARIOS

You stopped paying rent.

THOMAS

Well. Yes. But only to force you to
come back to work.

MARIOS

How did that go?

THOMAS

Sooner or later, you'll have to
take responsibility for your life,
son.

MARIOS

Sure.

THOMAS

Where are you staying now?

MARIOS

I told you, I'm staying with
friends.

THOMAS

And what are you doing with money?

MARIOS

I'm good, don't worry about it.
Dad, please. Can I talk to you
about something?

Thomas is pleasantly surprised.

*

THOMAS

Of course. Mind if I do the dishes
first?

*

Marios sighs but nods. He needs some time himself anyway.
Thomas stands up, picks up his empty plate and Marios's
almost untouched one.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Imagine if you *didn't* like it.

He *exits* the living room and *walks into* the kitchen, holding the plates. *

69 INT. THOMAS HOUSE / BATHROOM

69

Marios washes his hands, then looks up at his reflection in the mirror. He takes a deep breath.

MARIOS
Dad... I'm gay... No. Fuck. Dad, I wanted to talk to you about something. Petros wasn't just a friend. If you know what I mean. Ugh. Dad. I'm a fucking faggot. Deal with it.

70 INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE / MARIOS'S OLD BEDROOM

70

Marios exits the bathroom and stops just outside his old bedroom. He *peers* inside. *The room's* boyish to a fault: *painted blue, with* karate champions posters *gracing the walls* and a glass cabinet dedicated to his old martial arts trophies. *On the shelves,* pictures of his younger self posing with his dad *and wearing* various medals around his neck. *

THOMAS
(off)
Look what I found.

Marios turns to face his dad standing behind him holding an old photographic album.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Come.

Thomas walks into the bedroom and sits on the bed. Marios follows him and sits beside him. Thomas opens the photo album and looks at all the pictures with a nostalgic smile glued on his face.

MARIOS
I've seen all these.

THOMAS
This one you haven't.

Thomas points at a photograph of a sweet-looking 25-year-old pregnant woman. Marios's mother. Marios's heart skips a beat. *

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It's the only picture that I have
with the both of you.

Marios tears up but he's quick to wipe his eyes before his
father notices. *

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I know it's a cliché that everyone
always says but you really were a
kicker!

Marios chuckles.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Your mum was *ecstatic*, "he'll be a
fighter, like *his* parents"!

(pauses)

I *did try* to make a *fighter out of*
you. You were really good at it. *

Thomas *gazes* at all the trophies proving his son's fighting
spirit. *

THOMAS (CONT'D)

But then you gave up... for
whatever reason. I *wanted you to be*
strong. To *be* the best version of
yourself. So that it... *

Thomas *pauses*. Marios looks him straight in the eye and
finishes his sentence for him. *

MARIOS

...So that it would all be worth it
and mum wouldn't have died in vain?

Thomas opens his mouth to protest *but* stumbles on his words. *

THOMAS

No! I...

Marios *springs* up, turns his back on him and *strides* to the
door. *

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Wait. You wanted to talk to me
about something.

MARIOS

Never mind. It doesn't matter.

Marios *hurries out of* the bedroom. Seconds later, Thomas
hears the front door slamming. He closes the album on his lap *

and turns his gaze to a framed picture of himself and young Marios smiling at the camera.

71

INT. SQUAT / MAIN HALL - NIGHT

71

The pick-up needle **drops and caresses** the spinning **vinyl record**. **A scratching noise and then** loud music from the speakers.

*
*
*

Roveena **parades down** the amateurish runway in the middle of main hall. She **has the air** of a professional model. She wears a black, teared-up costume.

*
*
*

Jenny and Maya, **watching from the couch**, clap and yell enthusiastically. Roveena reaches the end of the runway. She winks at them, then **twirls** and gets off the stage among a thunderstorm of applause.

*
*
*

Luisa's shinny heels **plunge** on the runway. Luisa, who is usually dressed in jeans and vests, now **displays a beautiful**, shiny dress. Her walk is not as "professional" as Roveena's and she **struggles** in high heels. She stumbles and falls down **on her knees**. Maya and Jenny crack up as they help her back on her feet.

*
*
*
*
*

LUISA

It happens to the best of us.

Luisa brushes her friends aside with a pretentious wave of her hand and then she turns her back **on** them and stands aside waiting for the final performance of the night.

*

The violin strings from the speakers shake violently as Marios steps his foot on the runway **absolutely** rocking Petros's **stunning** blue dress from the first scene.

*
*

All eyes **dart to** him but, this time, the appearance of the model is not accompanied by laughter and applause but by open **mouths** and **stunned** gazes.

*
*
*

Marios doesn't bother to **pretend the** professional model. His walk remains as awkward as his gaze that still seeks approval. **His insecurities don't let him see** how beautiful he looks inside Petros's blue dress; how **vibrant, even if** sad, his eyes look, **surrounded by the** eyeliner and the black shadow underneath; how sensuous his lips **appear**, painted with **red** lipstick.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Maya claps in approval and her friends follow suit, wiping tears from their eyes at the same time. The **enthusiastic** reaction encourages Marios who breaks a smile and, as he reaches the end of the runway, strikes a fake pose for the

*
*
*

imaginary photographers in front of him in order to lighten up the mood.

*

MARIOS

I think I'm ready for my close-up.

72

INT. SQUAT - NIGHT

72

It is impressive how much volume an old vinyl player and two **small** speakers can punch.

*

Alcohol **pours** into glasses. **Empty** bottles **lay** all around the floor.

*

Marios downs a glass of gin in seconds while the girls yell and laugh in approval.

Maya and Luisa dance together to the electronic beat pouring out from the speakers while Roveena, completely **pissed**, dances in a corner on her own.

*

73

INT. SQUAT / PETROS'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT

73

Maya **falls back** on the bed in Marios's room. Marios, **still dressed in Petros's dress**, **examines his feminine reflection in the mirror**.

*

*

*

MAYA

It feels good, doesn't it?

Marios smiles and runs his hand on the dress feeling the **soft** fabric on his skin.

*

MAYA (CONT'D)

You should wear that.

Marios **responds** with a drunken **grin**. Maya **sits up on the bed**; the enthusiasm boils inside her as she realises how brilliant her idea really is.

*

MAYA (CONT'D)

When we attack, you should wear that!

MARIOS

(chuckles)

Yeah, right.

MAYA

It's empowering, isn't it?

MARIOS

In here. With you. Yes.

MAYA

It's a disguise!

Marios takes a **moment** to **consider** this. It's not *entirely* outrageous. *

MAYA (CONT'D)

You don't want them to know your identity, the whole plan will collapse in seconds. This is how you hide yourself!

For a moment there, it looks like Marios accepts Maya's idea and the crazy enthusiasm that goes with it. Seconds later, however, the smile fades out and gives way to the all too familiar melancholic expression.

MARIOS

Or I could just wear a hoodie.

Maya cannot deny that this idea is rational too.

MAYA

Or you could just wear a hoodie.

She stands up and **wobbles** to the door. *

MAYA (CONT'D)

But where's the fun in that?

She winks at him and then **walks out of** the room. *

Marios turns to the mirror again. He sighs, takes a handkerchief from the bedside table and wipes the lipstick off his lips. **He tosses the handkerchief away and lowers the dress from his shoulder.** *
*

A hand **grabs Marios's** arm and stops him. The unknown hand **climbs** up Marios's arm. **Marios** looks up in the mirror, **terrified, and** sees Petros, fully dressed in drag as his alter-ego, Petra, standing behind him, caressing his arm with his palm. Petros's hand **traces** Marios's dress, it pulls it back up on his shoulders **and zips it.** *
*
*

Marios stares himself and Petros in the mirror. Petros puts his hands on Marios's shoulders and smiles at him through the glass. Marios's smile returns as a warm sense of pride and empowerment overwhelms him.

74 EXT. ATHENS / EXARCHEIA - NIGHT

74

Marios's high-heel boot sinks into a puddle. His hands rest inside the black jacket's pockets but underneath that dull jacket, Petros's vibrant blue dress is still visible. Marios's face sneaks underneath the hoodie: he's wearing red lipstick, eye-liner and Petros's blonde wig.

*
*
*
*
*

75 INT. POLICE STATION / OFFICE

75

Niki sits on Alexis's lap at her desk inside the police station office. They snog and chuckle while a popular Greek song plays from Niki's smartphone.

*
*
*

76 EXT. POLICE STATION EXARCHEIA

76

Three black-dressed figures, with hoodies covering their faces, march towards the police station, with beer bottles in hand - MAYA, JENNY and ROVEENA.

*
*
*

The GUARD at the entrance plays candy-crush on his phone. He notices movement in the distance and looks up. A Molotov cocktail flies towards him. He dives for cover and the Molotov smashes on the booth and sets it on fire.

*
*
*
*

GUARD

Fuck's sake!

ROVEENA

GO TO HELL, PIG!

*
*

The guard stands up and, along with another POLICE OFFICER who storms out of the station, charge towards the three rioters.

*
*
*

Marios takes advantage of the confusion and the officers' absence and sneaks into the station unnoticed.

*
*

77 INT. POLICE STATION

77

Marios turns left as Alexis opens the office's door and bumps into Marios.

*
*

ALEXIS

Niki, run!

*
*

Marios punches Alexis in the face. Alexis stumbles back but then finds his balance and readies himself to strike back. Niki stands up to leave and Marios spins towards her. Alexis grabs him by the waist and hurls him on the wall.

*
*
*
*

ALEXIS (CONT'D)
(to Niki)

Now!

Niki dashes out of the office and runs towards the exit. *

ALEXIS (CONT'D)
(to Marios)
Who the fuck are you, slut?

Marios stands up to chase Niki. Alexis lunges at Marios and pounds on him. His attack is a nuisance for Marios. Vengeance is the only thing on his mind and is in a hurry to get rid of Alexis so he can hunt Niki down. *

But Alexis fights ferociously - determined to protect his girlfriend. He corners Marios and pushes him back towards an old bookcase. Marios spins around and Alexis' fist hits the wall. Marios pushes the bookcase down on Alexis. It misses Alexis's leg by inches but it creates a barrier between him and the door. *

Marios rushes out of the office and runs down the corridor towards the station's exit. *

78 EXT. POLICE STATION BACK EXIT

78 *

Marios runs out of the station and a crowbar comes swinging towards his face. *

NIKI
I'll fucking kill you, bitch!

Marios ducks just in time; the crowbar misses him and smashes the window behind him. Marios strikes Niki's arm with a side kick and disarms her. The crowbar rolls down the street. *

Niki is small, light and flexible. Her hits are swift and abrupt. But Maya has taught Marios well and he rebuts her every single time. Niki loses patience. She grabs a plastic bin and throws it on Marios's legs. Marios stumbles and plunges into the scattered garbage. Niki lunges at him. Marios grabs a black bin bag and whacks Niki in the head with it - stinking rubbish shower her as she falls back. *

Marios rises - ready to strike the final blow. He hadn't realised that his hoodie fell back during the fight. He quickly covers himself again but it's too late. Niki squints her eyes and an evil grin distorts her face. *

NIKI (CONT'D)
Bloody hell, you're a man? *

That cracks her up.

*

MARIOS

Shut up!

Marios's anger only intensifies Niki's mean enthusiasm.

*

MARIOS (CONT'D)

Why did you kill Petros?

*

NIKI

(laughing hysterically)

*

"Why did you kill Petros?"

79

EXT. POLICE STATION ENTRANCE

79

*

A RIOT COP strikes Maya from behind and forces her on the ground. As he drops down with her, his gun slips out of his belt.

*

*

*

RIOT COP

Fucking bitch!

*

He twists her arms to cuff her. Maya spins around and wraps her legs around the cop's neck, slightly twisting it. The cop screams.

*

*

80

EXT. POLICE STATION BACK DOOR

80

*

NIKI

My turn, now: isn't it painful
forcing your cock in those tights?
Or do you just have a tiny cock?

*

MARIOS

I said shut up!

Marios charges at her. Niki pretends she sees people behind Marios.

*

NIKI

SIR, PLEASE HELP! THIS FAGGOT'S
TRYING TO KILL ME!

*

*

Marios turns in panic but sees no one. Niki grips the crowbar behind her and smashes Marios' face with it. Marios screams in agony and falls back on the ground clutching his bloodied face. Niki rises up and towers over him. Her grin has given way to contempt.

*

*

*

*

*

NIKI (CONT'D)

Do you have no shame, walking
around in dresses? Didn't you have
a dad to beat the shit out of you
when he caught you wearing mommy's
heels?

Marios slithers back, **struggling to escape** Niki. She steps on
his leg.

NIKI (CONT'D)

I've got news for you honey. Your
kind is going extinct. Your
boyfriend was just the beginning.

Niki **lifts** the crowbar.

NIKI (CONT'D)

Give him my best, won't you?

Niki lowers the crowbar **as a gunshot blasts through the
night. Niki freezes for a split second - her eyes goggled.
The crowbar falls to the ground with a loud bang and Niki
collapses next to it. Maya is revealed behind her with the
cop's gun in her hand - the barrel still smoking.**

Marios turns on **his back** to face Maya while **he strives to
contain the bleeding with his hand. They lock eyes. Niki's
dead** body lies between them.

MAYA

We have to leave.

MARIOS

Her phone.

MAYA

What?

Marios **slides** towards Niki's body. He searches her pockets
and **pulls** her phone **out of her jacket.**

MAYA (CONT'D)

Hurry!

Maya helps Marios stand on his feet **and he wraps his arms
around her.** They turn **left** at the first alleyway they meet
and **scuffle away.**

Niki's body lays still on the street. **The sound of running
footsteps breaks the silence. THREE COPS rush towards Niki's
soulless body. They kneel next to her, feel her pulse and
verify her death with solemn gazes.**

Alexis limps out of the police station. He squeezes through the gathered crowd and his eyes spot Niki laying on the ground.

*

His face is distorted from grief and rage. He kneels next to his dead girlfriend and holds her into his arms while his inhuman scream rips the dark sky in two.

*

81 **EXT. EXARCHEIA**

81

Alexis's scream spreads over the city and reaches Marios and Maya. They make yet another left turn and reach the squat building. Maya takes out her keys, unlocks the door and they disappear into the dark hall.

*

*

82 **INT. SQUAT / PETROS'S OLD ROOM - DAY**

82

It's early in the morning and the night sky has started turning blue. Maya stands by the window staring out in the distance.

*

*

*

Marios opens his eyes. He's lying on the bed, his face once again covered in bandages. Maya notices him moving.

*

*

MAYA

You should lie down.

Marios ignores her. He sits up on the couch and grabs Niki's phone from the coffee table in front of him.

*

MAYA (CONT'D)

Look in the videos.

Marios follows her advice and opens the video folder. He plays the only video in there; dated 10.12.2013 at 23:06. His heart races as he watches the brief, 30-second clip and catches something about a "Menios" and his "hotel" - yelled out by Niki at the end. Marios looks up at Maya.

*

*

*

*

*

MARIOS

Who is Menios?

MAYA

We should make that public.

*

MARIOS

What for?

MAYA

Listen carefully at the beginning. They discuss the attack. And she says his name.

*

MARIOS

So we should use that to find him.

MAYA

We should use it to expose them.

*

MARIOS

I don't care to expose them.

*

MAYA

We should've been more careful. Now it just looks like anarchists attacked the police and killed an officer.

*

MARIOS

Who cares?

*

MAYA

I care! We should've have disguised ourselves as fascists or something.

MARIOS

This is not ideological!

MAYA

Are you serious? They murdered him because of his activism!

*

MARIOS

You wanna do politics, Maya? Go be an MP. I just want to kill the men who killed my boyfriend.

MAYA

I didn't see you killing anyone last night.

MARIOS

(ignores the remark)

Maybe you just don't have the balls.

MAYA

Well spotted, dickhead.

Maya bolts out of the bedroom and shuts herself in the bathroom. Marios hangs his head in shame.

*

Marios opens the door and steps into the bathroom.

*

MAYA
People knock!

MARIOS
What are you doing in here?

MAYA
Shaving my balls.

MARIOS
Sorry.

MAYA
About what?

MARIOS
I realise I didn't thank you for
saving my life.

Maya relaxes.

MAYA
I'd forgotten what it feels like.
(pause)
My sister, Violet, had just been
born days before the attack in
Nigeria. The terrorists appeared
out of nowhere. Dad was not quick
enough. Mum and Vi would be done
for but I reached for the gun
without even thinking about it.
(pause)
I was so relieved when we came to
Greece. I thought we've found
heaven. What an idiot... Mum used
to tell me it's my fault because
I'm constantly "provoking the
locals". We should keep our heads
down and be grateful for what we
already have. We fought about this
almost every single day.

MARIOS
Is that why you left from home?

MAYA
(nods)
Vi has to sneak out to see me here.
Mum's not happy about it. I swore
to protect her. I've killed
terrorists to that end. I won't let
some pathetic fascists to ever harm
her. I want them gone.

MARIOS

Me too! But the video's of no use.
They're not idiots, Maya. All three
attackers have no official
connection to the party.

MAYA

Come on!

MARIOS

They're members but not *official*
members. I've looked into it.
They're not on their records. Not
on the website. And you know the
party's infiltrated the police. We
make that video public now, all
that comes out of it is three
homophobes killed Petros because he
was gay. But the party remains
untouched.

Maya falls silent.

*

MAYA

I cannot do this alone. You need to
be strong.

*

*

MARIOS

I am-

MAYA

She threw you off just by mocking
you.

MARIOS

I'll practice more! You'll train
me.

MAYA

I can teach you martial arts. I
can't teach you confidence. This
one's on you. I took a woman's life
to save your skin. Prove to me you
were worth it.

Maya passes by him and exits the bathroom leaving him behind
alone.

*

*

Andreas stands outside his house, wearing a well-rehearsed
solemn expression on his face as he addresses the cameras and
microphones in front of him.

*

ANDREAS

Niki Filioti's death is a solemn reminder of our nation's moral decay. A brave and kind police officer murdered at the hands of violent leftist terrorists. This is frankly a disgrace to our country and it shows this government's complete inability to bring those terrorists down and protect our citizens. The time has come for them to step aside, call for elections so we can step forward and build a new, secure and mighty Greece.

85

INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - DAY

85

Andreas enters the living room of his luxurious house and is immediately attacked by Alexis who throws himself at his father.

*

ALEXIS

You fucking hypocrite!

ELENI

Alexis, stop!

ALEXIS

You should've listened to me! You should've protected her!

Andreas pushes his son back and grabs him by the shirt.

ANDREAS

Think, you moron. They're not supposed to have any connection to the party. They're on their own, they knew that when they took the job. That's how it works.

ELENI

It shouldn't.

Andreas turns to Eleni and releases Alexis from his grip.

*

ANDREAS

(to Alexis)

Leave.

Alexis hesitates. His mother nods at him and he finally walks out of the living room and shuffles to his bedroom.

*

*

Andreas turns his back to Eleni. He paces to his desk, grabs a bottle of whiskey and pours himself a glass. He drinks a gulp and exhales. When he speaks again his voice is smooth and calm.

*
*
*
*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
You want a drink?

ELENI
No. Thank you.

*

Andreas slinks towards her and almost sticks his body against hers, pushing her back the on wall. He's relaxed - pleasant even - but when he casually puts his hand on the wall, right next to her face, Eleni quivers.

*
*
*
*

ANDREAS
I appreciate your concerns. I really do. And I'm grateful you found out about Minas's contact with Adamou. But I do not want you to interfere anymore.

*
*
*
*
*
*

ELENI
He's right, though. You should've protected her. Her death has ruined him.

*
*

ANDREAS
He'll get over it.

ELENI
He's impulsive. You know it. You have to be careful with him. What if he does something... stupid?

Andreas considers this for a moment and then drinks another gulp.

*

ANDREAS
He's stronger than that.

Andreas empties his glass and ambles away from Eleni. She sighs in relief but keeps her eyes on his back.

*
*

The sound of his steps on the floor... the alcohol pouring into his glass...

*
*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
(off)
And besides... I can protect him.

*

An ironic chuckle escapes Eleni's lips before she can stop it.

*
*

ELENI

Yeah. Like you protected Filip-

The whiskey bottle lands on her face before she can finish her sentence and it smashes into thousand pieces. Eleni collapses on the floor, screaming in pain, blood running from her forehead.

86 INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / ALEXIS'S ROOM

86

Alexis jumps from his bed and darts to the closed door. He grips the handle, but then changes his mind. He retreats back to his bed and sits down.

87 INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM

87

Andreas towers over Eleni, the bottle's broken neck still in his hand. He puts it down and kneels next to his wife who is shivering on the floor. She slithers away from him and scratches her legs on the broken glass. She stifles a cry. Andreas pulls a handkerchief out of his jacket's pocket and wipes some of the blood off his wife's head.

ANDREAS

I still love you, you know.

Andreas stands up, throws the handkerchief in the bin and walks away. Eleni lies helpless on the floor, her body still trembling from shock, the multiple cuts on her head still bleeding.

88 INT. PARTY'S HEADQUARTERS / ANDREAS'S OFFICE - DAY

88

Andreas scampers towards a small safe in the corner of his office. He inserts the combination on the padlock and the tiny door opens with a click.

Andreas reaches in and searches blindly with his hand inside the safe. He fishes out a small wallet. He opens it and rummages inside. He takes out credit cards, a driver's license, an ID... It's Petros's picture on the ID and it's his name written on the document. That's his wallet.

Andreas turns the wallet upside down and shakes it, in the hope it will reveal something useful to him. A folded piece of paper drops from the wallet and lands on the floor.

Andreas picks it up and unfolds it. It's a tatty, washed-out photo of Petros and Marios hugging and smiling at the camera; the very same picture Marios had framed on his bedside table. Andreas grins.

ANDREAS

*

I know you.

89

INT. POLICE STATION BASEMENT / BOILER ROOM - DAY

89

Stratos is holding Marios's and Petros's picture, taking a good look at it.

STRATOS

What's his name?

He and Andreas are in the boiler room; two dark silhouettes conspiring in whispers, standing against a maze of metallic pumps.

ANDREAS

You'll find out his name and everything else about him.

STRATOS

DNA results from the crime scene are expected next week so we'll be able to cross-check.

Andreas takes a step towards Stratos and lowers his voice even more.

ANDREAS

I thought I made it clear I want the investigation buried. Niki's phone was missing and we don't know what else this guy may have on us. We don't want the police digging. We deal with this internally.

Andreas turns his back and climbs up the stairs to leave.

STRATOS

You know, cops get particularly jumpy when one of our own is killed. Anarchists murder an officer? My guys want blood. I cannot ask them to drop this.

Andreas climbs down the stairs again and approaches Stratos.

ANDREAS

The government is crumbling. Our time's coming soon. When we rise to power, police and armed forces will be my crown jewels. Your guys want blood? I'll hand the anarchists' hearts in a plate for them and they
(MORE)

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
 can shower in it, for all I care.
 But if I'm behind bars... you'll
 just keep getting killed.

Andreas climbs up the stairs and leaves the boiler room,
 leaving Stratos behind alone with his thoughts.

90

INT. DRAG CLUB - NIGHT

90

Alicia performs a vibrant drag show on the stage. Marios
 watches from his table; the wounds on his face have started
 to heal. Their eyes meet and Alicia winks at him. Marios
 smiles and winks back. It's the first time in a while he's
 enjoying a drag show. It's the first time in a while he's
 enjoying anything. He even taps his feet to the music.

TALL MAN
 (off)
 You should be on that stage.

Marios turns to face the TALL BEARDED MAN, 45, as he grabs a
 chair and sits next to Marios without bothering to ask for
 permission. He is the same man from one of the earliest
 scenes checking out Marios.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
 You have a beautiful face. Very...
 feminine.

MARIOS
 Do I know you?

TALL MAN
 (points at Marios's
 wounds)
 If you told me who did that to you,
 I could kill them for you.

Marios doesn't respond. The man laughs and drinks from his
 glass. He drags his chair towards Marios and lowers his
 voice.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
 Don't want you to think I'm blunt
 or anything... but do you want to
 come back to my hotel and fuck?

Marios chokes on his drink.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
 (lowers his voice)
 But you'll have to dress up like
 her. I'm no faggot.

MARIOS

Wow. How are you when you are actually blunt?

TALL MAN

(smiles)

Come fuck with me and you'll find out.

Marios chuckles and shakes his head in disbelief at this guy's nerve. He stands up to switch tables but the man's hand grabs his arm and pulls him back to his chair. *

TALL MAN (CONT'D) *

You know my problem with feisty little bitches like yourself? You make me even hornier.

A stunned Marios opens his mouth to retort. *

ANGELA

(to the tall man)

Are you harassing my friend?

Angela appears behind them with a big SECURITY GUARD by her side. The bearded man drops Marios's arm and wears a fake, innocent smile. *

TALL MAN

Just having a friendly chat.

ANGELA

You're drunk. Get the hell out of my bar or he'll see to that. *

The Security Guard takes a threatening step and the tall man jumps up and puts his hands in the air, as though he's surrendering. He lumbers to the door and turns to face Marios one last time. *

TALL MAN

Offer's still on the table.

He smirks and winks at him. The Security Guard grabs him by the shirt and forces him out of the bar. Angela turns to Marios who is still a bit shaken. *

ANGELA

Sorry about Menelaos. He can be annoying but he's usually harmless, when he's not drunk. He has a lot of issues to sort out. *

MARIOS

Don't worry about it.

*

Angela smiles at him and walks back behind the bar. Marios returns to his drink. As he brings the glass to his lips, he realises something and pauses. He jumps up and runs to Angela, at the bar.

*

*

*

MARIOS (CONT'D)

How did you call him?

ANGELA

Who? Menelaos?

MARIOS

Menios?

ANGELA

Sure. If you're on a first-name basis already...

MARIOS

What do you know about him?

ANGELA

Well, he's a bit of a prick.

MARIOS

He invited me back to his hotel. Do you know which hotel he's staying at?

ANGELA

Oh, sweetie, no. It is actually *his* hotel. He owns the place. Really classy establishment too if you catch my drift. I'm ashamed to say I've, uh, been there a few times with... friends.

Marios darts out of the bar before Angela has finished everything she'd like to share.

*

91

EXT. DRAG CLUB

91

Marios storms out of the drag club and scans the desolate alley. He sees a GUY passing by, waving at an approaching cab.

*

*

*

MARIOS

Sorry, mate, did you see a tall bearded guy?

*

GUY

Uh, yeah. He was here just-

MARIOS

Which way did he go?

GUY

He was pissed, man. He grabbed a cab.

The guy gets into the cab and the vehicle drives away.

*

MARIOS

Fuck!

92 **EXT. XXX HOTEL / METAXOURGHEIO AREA - DAY**

92

*

The rain is pouring down. An XXX Hotel with a flashing, neon sign and mouldy, wooden shutters to shield the stained windows.

*

*

*

Maya's car is parked across the street. A 13-year-old black boy, visible behind the iron fence, playing basketball in the rain, alone in a derelict court that resembles a prison.

93 **INT. PARKED CAR / METAXOURGHEIO AREA**

93

*

Marios glances nervously at his watch. He looks up, catches a glimpse of the boy's jersey as he fires a shot; the number 34 on the back.

*

The car's door swings open and Marios spins. Maya, hair wet, sits on the driver's seat and slams the door behind her.

MARIOS

So?

MAYA

Yeah, he's aware someone's coming for him.

MARIOS

How many?

MAYA

Two guards at the door and at least three more guys inside. It's going to be tricky. And I don't know if the girls would-

MARIOS

There is another way.

MAYA

It's too dangerous.

MARIOS

You can keep any eye for the guards. You can pretend you're waiting for someone. And I can take Menios.

*
*
*
*

MAYA

Not on your own.

MARIOS

You told me to be confident. I'm being confident. I've got this.

Maya throws Marios a concerned look; she's not entirely convinced but nods in agreement nevertheless.

*
*

94 INT. DRAG CLUB - NIGHT

94

The club is buzzing with life. A drag queen performs on stage. Some yelling customers line up to the bar and others dance and sing-along.

*
*
*

The door to the club swings open and Marios walks in fully dressed in drag for the first time in his life. Angela's face behind the bar drops when she sees him but he ignores her. He scans the place and eventually spots the man he's looking for. He takes a deep breath and struts towards him with his head held high.

*
*
*
*
*

Menios stands near the left side of the stage; he tries to light his cigarette but he's lighter's out of gas.

*
*

Marios's hand appears in front of him, holding a lighter, and lights Menios's cigarette for him. Menios looks up at Marios. He recognises him and grins as he takes a puff.

*
*
*

MINUTES LATER:

*

Menios grasps Marios's hand and leads him out of the club. As they pass by the bar, Marios glances at Angela. She mouths a stunned: "What the fuck are you doing" but Menios drags Marios out of the club and there's not time for explanations.

*
*
*
*

95 EXT. XXX HOTEL - NIGHT

95

Menios leads Marios inside the sleazy XXX hotel he owns in the degraded area of Metaxourgheio.

*
*

has come for him to cast the first blow. Menios's arms squeeze him harder and harder.

*
*

MARIOS (CONT'D)
You're hurting me.

MENIOS
That's the idea.

Marios's pulse quickens. His eyes dance all over the place in panic.

*

MENIOS (CONT'D)
(a whisper)
I like it when you hurt.

*

Imprisoned in this tight embrace, Marios suddenly realises how big and strong Menios really is. *What on earth was he thinking?*

*
*

MARIOS
NO!

In a moment of panic, Marios pulls away from Menios's tight embrace and shoves him back. Menios's smirk still hangs from his lips as if he was expecting the reaction. Marios is shaken but tries to regain his calm as not to alert Menios.

*
*

MARIOS (CONT'D)
(a fake smile)
Sorry. I'm not really into that.

*
*

MENIOS
Sure thing.

*

Marios wobbles towards the door and Menios circles him, like a predator closing in on his prey. Marios swallows and forces yet another smile.

*
*
*

MARIOS
I, uh... I better go then.

*

Is that lingering smirk on Menios's face a permission or a threat? Marios takes his chances and reaches for the door.

*
*

MARIOS (CONT'D)
Bye then.

Shivering, he turns his back to leave. Menios's hand grabs the liqueur bottle and downs it on Marios's head.

*

Marios cries in pain and falls to the floor as the bottle breaks in two. He remains semi-conscious but his vision has gone blurry. As his body's being dragged on the soft Persian

*
*

carpet, his gaze sleepily wanders around the room although he can only distinguish colours.

Menios pulls him up by the shoulders, his blurry face panting next to Marios's so that Marios can smell his assailant's warm, nasty breath more clearly than he can see his features.

A glimpse of gold and a taste of iron as Marios is forced towards the bed's post, his lips touching the cold metal. An alarming clicking noise. As Marios's vision gradually sharpens, he can see his own two hands in front of him, locked in handcuffs around the bed's golden post.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

No...

It's like Menios's eager breath - reeking of booze and horniness - is the only sound in the room. He climbs on the bed beside Marios's lying body. His hand fondles Marios's feet and slides slowly all the way up to his thighs. It lingers there for a moment of self-control, then gives in and sinks under the skirt to meet Marios's butt-cheeks.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

No.

The very sound of that word forces Menios to shut his eyes and lower his other hand to his crotch; Marios's objection only intensifies his enjoyment.

Marios's consciousness returns. He winces at Menios's invasive touch, but at the same time strives to think of a way out of this clusterfuck.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

Please stop...

Menios's horny sigh seals the deal and Marios decides to play the game.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

It hurts...

Every objection is an invitation and Menios climbs on top on Marios, eyes closed, plunging his sweaty face in Marios's skin.

Exploiting Menios's lack of attention, Marios struggles to remove his hands from the cuffs. He sticks his thumbs to his palms; he tries to make his hands as thin as possible so they can slip through the handcuffs. His palms sweat and redden as he squeezes them through the metal but it's all in vain... He pauses and takes a breath.

Menios's tongue traces his body and Marios *flinches* in disgust as Menios *drools on his skin*. Menios *forces his body against Marios's*; it's only a matter of time before *it gets worse*.

Marios's gaze falls on the handcuffs' tiny lock. He *looks up and* scans the place, *trying to spot* anything that can pick it, but every object is far out of reach. Menios's right hand climbs all the way up to Marios's head, grabbing his wig. *Marios has an idea*.

MARIOS (CONT'D)
Yeah, baby. Pull my hair.

Menios's grip tightens on the fake hair.

MARIOS (CONT'D)
It hurts!

MENIOS
Shut up.

MARIOS
It hurts so much...

The whimpering Marios adds to his plea gives the final stroke. Menios's hand *shakes* violently in enjoyment until the wig is almost unstuck from Marios's head and *tilted* slightly to the side.

Menios cannot hold it any longer. He sits up on his knees, removes his belt and undoes his zip. Marios *grimaces* as Menios lies on top of him again, this time, with his *naked* crotch touching Marios's thighs.

Marios has no time for tears. He *leans* his head towards the golden post; *he* brings his right hand to his head and grabs one of the bobby pins used to keep his real hair glued on his scalp. Menios rips Marios's panties. Marios bends the bobby pin and creates a tiny key. *He glides* the pin to the lock. *Freedom's only seconds away*.

A black leather belt is wrapped around Marios's neck like a noose. Marios *startles* and drops the bobby pin on the floor.

MARIOS (CONT'D)
NO!

Menios *squeezes* the belt around Marios's neck with one hand *and* starts masturbating with the other. *As horrifying as the sight is, it still gives Marios a last chance*. He *slides his body towards the edge of the bed, even if the belt around his neck is pulling him back*. He lowers his cuffed hands on the golden post and strives to reach the floor.

Menios tightens the noose. Marios is chocking. Oxygen is leaving his brain. His vision becomes blurry again.

Menios spits on his right hand and brings it to his crotch. He lies back on top of Marios. Marios extends his fingers... his hand now mere inches from the pin... he finally touches it. He grasps it, puts it in the lock and twists it.

That faint "click" is music to Marios's ears as his hands are released before Menios can penetrate him. Marios snatches the belt and spins around. He wraps it around Menios's neck and pulls him towards him.

MENIOS

UGH!

Menios resists. He pulls the belt out of Marios's hands but falls back off the bed. He jumps up quickly and glares at Marios from the other side of the bed.

MENIOS (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing?

MARIOS

I guess I like it when you hurt.

Marios vaults over the bed and lands on Menios.

MENIOS

GUARDS!!!

98 INT. XXX HOTEL CORRIDOR

98

The TWO BLACK-DRESSED GUARDS charge towards the room.

MAYA

HEY, DICKHEADS!

They turn to their right and see Maya at the end of the corridor, standing in front of a food trolley.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Room service.

She hurls the silver plates at them. They dive to avoid them. It only takes three flips for Maya to reach them and she attacks them both.

99 INT. XXX HOTEL ROOM 503

99

Marios and Menios fight inside the room. Menios is strong and heavy. He kicks Marios back. Marios is shoved on the door,

which swings open and he lands with his back on the corridor floor. *

100 INT. XXX HOTEL CORRIDOR

100 *

Menios storms out of the room and jumps on Marios. Marios sticks his feet up in the air and, as Menios jumps on him, Marios kicks him and Menios flies over him, and breaks the other room's door open. *

101 INT. XXX HOTEL ROOM 510

101 *

A 30-year-old gay couple having sex in the room freeze as Menios and Marios burst inside, through the broken door. The couple (NICK and FOTIS) watch the fight in horror. *

MARIOS

Aw, Sorry guys! *

Menios charges at Marios and pushes him on the ground. *

NICK

Is this some kind of attraction? *

Marios grabs Menios by the neck and smashes his head on the wall mirror. *

FOTIS

Nope. This is definitely not an attraction! *

Menios resists; he kicks Marios back. Marios lands on the two guys who are still naked on the bed, with their clothes in hand, more than ready to leave the hotel. Marios gives them the thumbs up. *

MARIOS

Don't worry, guys, you're safe with me! *

FOTIS

Yeah, whatever, bitch. I'm out of here. *

102 INT. XXX HOTEL CORRIDOR

102 *

Nick and Fotis run out of the room and step into the corridor... *

...only to find themselves entangled in Maya's fight with the security guards. *

FOTIS

Oh, you gotta be shitting me!

The guys duck to avoid silverware flying over their heads and run to the lift.

NICK

I think it's kind of exciting!

FOTIS

You thought that terrorist attack when we were in India was exciting.

Fotis grasps Nick's hand and drags him into the lift.

NICK

Well, the counsellor did say we should do more fun, adventurous [things].

FOTIS

Shut up, Nick!

The lift door closes and the two guys disappear.

103 INT. XXX HOTEL ROOM 510

103

Marios rises up and faces Menios who is wiping the blood off his face with a sheet. Menios throws a fake laugh.

MENIOS

Look at you! You're a fucking whore, that's all you are. A freaky faggot dressed in women's clothes.

MARIOS

Oh, I thought you'd like my clothes. Took them right out of your closet.

Menios storms at Marios and strikes him with countless blows. Marios is on top of his game now and blocks every single one of Menios's furious hits. Menios throws a punch. Marios dives; he slides to the bed and grasps the handcuffs that the guys were using. He jumps up, grabs Menios's right hand and ties it on the bed's post.

MENIOS

Fuck!

Marios wraps his arm around Menios's throat.

104 **INT. XXX HOTEL CORRIDOR** 104 *

Maya fights the security guards at the far end of the corridor. They push her back. She falls on the food trolley and they charge at her. *

Maya picks up a huge silver platter and whacks one of the guys on the head with it. He falls unconscious to the floor. The other guard rushes towards her. Maya stands up, rolls the trolley towards him. He stumbles on it, trips, and he falls over the stairs all the way to the previous floor. *

105 **INT. XXX HOTEL ROOM 510** 105 *

MENIOS
Please, you wouldn't kill a member of the community, would you?

MARIOS
Tell me who ordered the attack and I might let you live.

MENIOS
What fucking attack?

Marios tightens his grip around Menios's throat. Menios gasps for air.

MENIOS (CONT'D)
Please... It was Andreas. Don't tell them I told you.

Marios relaxes his grip.

MARIOS
Andreas Alexandrou? *

MENIOS
I just received a call from somebody that Petros Adamou had a contact inside the party. They said this was coming from the top. They ordered me to kill this guy so... *

A seemingly endless second. *

MARIOS
...So you did it. *

MENIOS
Yes. Please. Can I go now?

Marios relaxes his arm a little more and Menios attempts to slip away from his assailant's grip. But as he does, Marios **breaks his promise** and tightens his arm around Menios's throat.

*
*

MENIOS (CONT'D)

No! You promised.

*

Menios **strives** to fight his way out of his death sentence but that handle is **too tight**; it's as if Marios's arm has been strengthened by a super-human force. Menios runs out of breath and his face turns purple.

*
*
*
*

MENIOS (CONT'D)

You promised...

*

The last bit of oxygen escapes Menios's lips and it's all over. Marios finally releases him from his grip and Menios slips down on the floor, **dead**, his **cuffed** hand still **hanging from** the bed's post.

*
*
*

MARIOS

I lied.

Menios's **frozen** face is a horror mask reflecting his last feelings of pain, fear, anger and regret while Marios's face is exactly the same.

*

Marios looks up and sees Maya at the room's entrance, staring at him **in shock**. **Footsteps echo from the lower floor**.

*

MAYA

We have to leave.

106 **EXT. STAIRCASE OUTSIDE XXX HOTEL ROOM 510**

106

*

Maya takes Marios's hand and leads him out of the room and towards the fire escape. They **rush** down the **metal** staircase to escape the hotel unnoticed while sirens **shriek** in the distance.

*
*

107 **EXT. METAXOURGHEIO - NIGHT**

107

The traditional February Greek carnival is in full swing and Metaxourgheio is famous for its wild celebrations of the festival. Maya leads the way through **dozens of revellers who have immersed themselves in** the ecstatic mood. Loud music blasts from unseen speakers while people **bang** the **big drums that hang around their necks**.

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*
*

All these dancing bodies **pull** Maya and Marios away from **each other**. Battered and bruised, both physically and emotionally,

*
*

Marios scuffles through the partying people in Petros's drag costume and it's as if he has sank into one of his nightmares.

*
*

A man dressed as a woman whistles at him; her make-up appears cartoonish in Marios's eyes. A bunch of kinds charge towards him wearing Scream-movie masks. They stumble upon Marios and swear at him. A woman dressed as a slutty nurse displays her inflated breasts to him and licks her lips with her tongue, sensually.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Marios runs past her and then... the devil himself appears in front of him with black horns coming out of his hair and a red tail swinging behind his back. His evil laughter wraps Marios in desperation while the torch burning in his hand promises eternal damnation.

*
*
*
*

Marios pushes the devil out of the way. The devil curses and runs after him seeking trouble. Maya appears in front of Marios. She grasps his hand and leads him away from the maddening crowd. They cross the street and make their way towards the squat.

*
*
*
*

108

INT. SQUAT / PETROS'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT

108

*

Marios stares out of the window in the distance; his back turned on Maya.

*

MARIOS

They're pawns. We've been killing
fucking pawns. They ordered him to
kill Petros and he just did it. He
didn't even need a reason. Like a
fucking robot.

MAYA

Marios-

MARIOS

(turns to face Maya)
*So why the fuck do I feel sorry for
him? Why does it hurt so much?*

Maya tears up for the first time. *Does she recognise herself in Marios?*

MAYA

Because you're a good person.

Marios turns his back on her again.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Listen, I think we should call the whole thing off-

MARIOS

It was Alexandrou who gave the order. He's the only one that ever mattered. And I'm gonna make him pay.

MAYA

You just said how bad it made you feel!

MARIOS

I said it made me feel bad. I didn't say it didn't make me feel good.

*
*
*

*
*
*
*

109

INT. ANDREAS'S OFFICE - DAY

109

The door to the office opens and Stratos walks in with a newspaper in hand. He puts the paper on the desk, in front of Andreas.

*

STRATOS

Guess who was found dead in his own hotel last night. Page 32. Witnesses talk about two women. One looking suspiciously like a man. I guess I'll tell the guys to drop this too.

*

Andreas bows his head but he has more important things on his mind than Menios.

ANDREAS

What did you find?

STRATOS

Marios Evangelidis. Mum died at birth, dad trained him in karate.

*

ANDREAS

He's into martial arts?

STRATOS

Got a shitload of trophies when he was younger but then for some reason kind of gave up few years back. He kept working at his dad's gym as an instructor but hasn't been there in ages. Think he lives
(MORE)

STRATOS (CONT'D)
in a squat now. And, uh, yeah. He
was in a relationship with Adamou.
Although apparently wasn't too keen
shouting about it to the world.

ANDREAS
You think it's him?

STRATOS
DNA results are back. I know it's
him.

Andreas smiles.

STRATOS (CONT'D)
What the hell are you smiling
about?

ANDREAS
I'm smiling because our army will
need fighters like him.
(pauses)
How do you reckon he knew who the
attackers were? He must've been
present in the-

STRATOS
I didn't realise we were building
an army.

Andreas smirks. He grabs his cigarette pack from the desk and
takes out a cigarette. He lights it, brings it to his mouth
and inhales.

ANDREAS
When you want to play the game, you
get into politics. You hold
passionate rallies, you give
interviews, you charm the public,
you get into parliament. When you
want to change the game, you
govern. You form coalitions. You
influence, you make decisions, you
change the rules.
(leans forward on the
desk, stares Stratos in
the eye)
And when you want to win the game -
when you want real, total power -
you build. an army.

Stratos looks both terrified and awed but Andreas's ruthless
ambition persuades him so he doesn't press the subject.

STRATOS

If he's such a brave, skilful
fighter and he was present in the
attack... why didn't he run to save
his boyfriend?

*
*
*
*

Andreas grins. He's onto something.

*

ANDREAS

That is the question, then, isn't
it?

110 INT. SQUAT / PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

110

Marios's fists land on the punching bag that hangs from the
ceiling with immense force. His kicks send the bag swaying
back almost touching the window, ten meters away.

*
*

LATER...

*

Marios lies down on the cold, wooden floor doing crunches.

*

MARIOS

32... 33... 34...

*

Maya watches him concerned from the open door.

111 EXT. SQUAT / TERRACE - DAY

111

Rain is pouring down in buckets but Marios doesn't care. He
trains alone, practicing his moves, his kicks, his blows, his
hits...

*

112 INT. SQUAT / KITCHEN - NIGHT

112

Maya, Rovenna, Jenny and Luisa dine in the kitchen. They
notice a soaked Marios passing outside the room. Maya rushes
to the door to welcome him in.

*
*

MAYA

Hey-

*

But Marios ignores her and climbs the stairs up to his room.
Maya sighs and turns to face her friends who all share her
concerns.

*
*
*

113 INT. SQUAT / PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

113

Marios is doing push-ups.

*

MARIOS

54... 55... 56...

His punches throw the bag flying across the room and he repeats the blow again and again. His face reddens. Sweat pours down his forehead in buckets but he keeps going.

*
*

114 INT. SQUAT / CORRIDOR

114

Maya knocks on Marios's door. She holds a plate with pasta bolognese.

*
*

MAYA

I've made pasta bolognese.

*

No reply. She opens the door and storms into the room uninvited. But the room is empty and the window is wide open.

*

115 EXT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / ENTRANCE - NIGHT

115

A SECURITY GUARD paces lazily outside Andreas's house. He glimpses at his wrist-watch and grunts. He glances left and right making sure sure no one watches. He walks to the flower bed, unzips his trousers and takes a nice, long wee. He sighs in relief and grins.

*
*
*
*
*

He hears a scratching sound and turns to look. Marios, dressed in Petros's drag costume, smacks him with a wooden plank on the face. The Guard falls on the ground unconscious, his dick still in his hand. Marios looks down at his legs to see his stockings wet from the guard's piss.

*
*
*
*
*

MARIOS

That's gross.

*
*

116 INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

116

Andreas, Eleni and Alexis dine in total silence. Only the clutter of forks and knives on the plates is audible. Andreas looks up at his son and attempts a conversation.

*
*
*

ANDREAS

(to Alexis)

Stratos told me you didn't go to the meeting today.

Alexis doesn't reply. He finishes his food, then stands up and turns to leave. Andreas bangs his fist on the table.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

You will answer me when I speak to you!

Alexis opens his mouth but a loud, crashing noise from the kitchen interrupts the ensuing argument. The family exchanges dark looks. Andreas grabs the bread knife from the table and walks to the kitchen. Eleni and Alexis follow him.

117 INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / KITCHEN

117

Andreas inspects the broken window and then lowers his gaze to the scattered glass on the floor and the brick lying next to the kitchen table.

He picks the brick up, then walks to the broken window and peeks outside, in the garden.

MARIOS

(off)

It's over!

ELENI

No!

Andreas turns around to see Marios has put a knife on his son's throat.

ALEXIS

I'm gonna fucking kill you!

Marios presses the knife harder against Alexis's throat and that shuts him up.

ANDREAS

It's me you want, Marios.

Marios flinches at the sound of his name. He tries to appear calm.

MARIOS

Drop it.

Andreas drops the brick on the floor.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

The knife!

Andreas smirks and drops the knife too. He gestures at Marios to set Alexis free. Marios releases Alexis and shoves him aside.

ALEXIS

You just made the biggest mistake
of your life!

Alexis charges at Marios. Marios grabs him by the neck and bangs his head on the fridge breaking his nose on the door handle. Alexis drops on the floor shrieking.

ELENI

(kneeling next to him)

Alexis!

Marios charges towards Andreas; his blows are fast and swift. Andreas retreats, startled, even though he's a great fighter himself.

Marios glides on the floor, grabs the fallen knife and, as he rises up, scratches Andreas's cheek. Andreas stumbles back and touches his face. He looks at the blood on his hand and smiles again.

ANDREAS

Very well!

ALEXIS

Just fucking kill him, dad!

MARIOS

Coward. You sent three against one, kicking him on the ground while he was begging them to st-

ANDREAS

So you were present.

Marios falls silent.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

Why didn't you save him, then? You certainly have the ski-

MARIOS

Because I was a fucking coward!

ANDREAS

(smirks)

Well. That's convenient.

MARIOS

How the fuck is that convenient?

Marios throws himself at Andreas. He attempts a side kick but Andreas blocks him and shoves him back.

ANDREAS

Would a coward attack a police station and almost single-handedly kill two police officers in the course of a single week?

*

Marios grabs yet another knife and swings it in front of Andreas's face. Andreas strikes Marios's arm with his hand and Marios drops the knife.

*

*

*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

Would a coward attack a big guy like Menios in his own hotel with his security guards standing right outside the door?

*

Marios lunges at Andreas. But he has lost his footing and his confidence. His blows are sloppy and rushed and Andreas rebuts his every hit with deftness.

*

*

*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

Would a coward break into the house of a famous politician and have the nerve to attack him in front of his whole family?

Marios grabs a plate and hurls it at Andreas. Andreas bends down and the plate smashes on the wall behind him.

*

*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

No. You're not a coward, Marios. You never were. People don't change like that in mere months. You didn't let Petros die because you weren't brave enough to save him. You let Petros die... because a part of yourself wanted him dead.

Andreas's words are more painful than any of Marios's blows. Marios's face turns red; but is it from anger or from shame? He storms at Andreas but Andreas is done fooling around. He rebuts Marios's attack with a spinning kick on the chest and Marios flies back and out of the kitchen, smashing the window and landing on the ground with a thud.

*

*

*

*

*

Marios moans and clutches his chest, defeated, gasping for air. Andreas steps out of the kitchen and struts towards him in the garden.

*

*

*

118

EXT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / GARDEN

118 *

ANDREAS

And you know what your real tragedy is? You're so ashamed of it... but this is actually the healthiest part of yourself.

Marios **strives to** stand but Andreas kneels next to him and **stops** him. He reaches out his arm and places his palm on Marios's chest. His touch is **suddenly** soft. Paternal.

*
*
*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

That feeling of shame burning in your heart? I know that pain. I've seen it before. You want to know a secret?

My son, **Filippos**, carried that exact same pain.

*

Eleni quivers at the sound of her son's name.

*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

*

But I didn't pat him on the back when he came to me with it. I didn't say "it's fine, son". Nor did I ignore it, like your dad **probably** did. I stood next to him - no, not next - *in front of him*. I lifted that darkness over him and led him towards the light. And by doing so, I took his shame and crushed it in my hand.

*

*

*

Marios **stares at** Andreas as though hypnotised by a master manipulator.

*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

I don't wish to hurt you. You're free to walk away. But I want you to know that whenever you're ready... I'll be waiting for you. **I can help you**. I know there's only hatred in your heart for me right now but ask yourself: why is that shame still there? After all of Petros's inspirational talk about how normal you are... *Why is it still burning in your heart?*

*

*

*

*

Marios stares at Andreas with teary eyes. Andreas's lips break into a smile.

*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
See? He's not an enemy. He's a
friend.

Andreas stands up and walks away from Marios. *

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
He just doesn't know it yet.

119 EXT. ATHENS / STREET - NIGHT

119

Marios, still dressed in drag, waddles down a street in Athens. His head is bowed and his gaze glued to the ground; he makes sure to avoid eye-contact with all the nosy people who pass by him and throw him judgmental looks. *

He hears a bus approaching the bus stop. He waves his hand to the driver and runs to catch it. The bus halts and Marios jumps on it just before it departs from the stop. *

120 INT. BUS - NIGHT

120

Marios stands in the middle of the bus, his eyes staring out of the window. *

The vehicle is empty apart from three 20-year-old GUYS sitting at the far end. Their gaze is immediately captured by the new passenger. They're not of the brightest variety so it takes them some time to realise Marios is not really a woman. When they finally do, they look equally disgusted and fascinated by it; excited about the prospect of tormenting him. *

Marios catches a quick glimpse of their grinning faces and listens to their giggles. He turns around, wary once again of inviting eye-contact. He closes his eyes, praying to God they will not approach. *

MARIOS
(off)
Why did you have to dress like
this? *

121 INT. BUS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

121

Back in 2013, Marios and Petros argue inside the bus. Petros wears black skirt over his tights. *

PETROS
You don't like it? Did you prefer
the red one? *

MARIOS

We just went for a bloody beer!

*

PETROS

Who cares? You can say it's the carnival.

MARIOS

It's November!

PETROS

Halloween, then.

MARIOS

That's in October!

*

PETROS

Well, I'm out of holidays. Could I pass for Holy Mary or is this too slutty?

*

MARIOS

You never take me seriously!

Petros smiles and puts his arms around Marios in an attempt to calm him down.

*

*

PETROS

Why are you so grumpy all the time?
What are you so scared of?

Marios glances at the rough-looking guys at the other end of the bus staring at them with stupid smiles glued on their faces. Petros follows his partner's gaze and smiles bitterly.

PETROS (CONT'D)

Fuck them.

Marios scoffs. Petros fondles Marios's cheek.

*

PETROS (CONT'D)

Can I have a kiss, please?

Petros leans towards Marios but the move angers his partner who pushes him back in panic.

*

MARIOS

Stop doing that!

The bus comes to a halt at the bus stop and, without thinking about it, Marios jumps out off it. Immediately feeling the sting of guilt, he turns to face a stunned Petros who is staring at him from inside the bus.

MARIOS (CONT'D)
I'll call you.

122	EXT. BUS STOP	122
	The doors close and the bus departs leaving Marios alone at the bus stop.	* *
123	INT. BUS - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)	123
	The three 20-year-old guys get off their seats and swagger towards Marios.	*
	GUY #1 Hey!	
	MARIOS It's just a costume!	*
	They laugh.	*
	MARIOS (CONT'D) It's the carnival!	
	The bus stops and Marios jumps out off it before the three guys can reach him.	*
124	EXT. BUS STOP / EXARCHEIA STREET	124
	Marios doesn't even turn to see if the guys stayed on the bus or if they followed him. He scurries down the street, heading towards the squat.	*
125	EXT. STREET ACROSS THE SQUAT	125
	Marios makes a left turn and the beautiful, neoclassical building he's been able to call home for the past month comes into view.	* * *
	Just as he crosses the street, he notices a lonely figure exiting the squat, looking miserable and disappointed. The lonely figure looks up and notices Marios as well. And as their eyes meet, Marios finally recognises the man and stops dead.	
	Thomas climbs down the stairs and walks towards the man dressed as a woman. He stares at Marios squinting, trying to make sure his eyes don't play tricks on him.	* * *

THOMAS

Marios?

*

MARIOS

No.

Marios goes white as he steps back. Thomas is pretty close to him now, and there can be no mistake; underneath the dress, the wig and the make-up, the person who stands there staring back at him, horrified, is his only son. Thomas stumbles on his words.

*

*

*

THOMAS

Why on earth are you dressed like that?

MARIOS

No, no, no, no, no.

Marios turns his back at his father and runs away from him.

*

THOMAS

Marios!

The cacophony of cars on the main street buries Thomas's cries. He makes to follow Marios across the street.

*

*

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Wait!

A horn honks through the night and two bright spotlights blind Thomas. Thomas steps back just as the Porsche zooms past him. The driver curses at him and then accelerates and disappears into the night. When Thomas looks across the street again, his son has disappeared as well.

*

*

*

*

*

126 EXT. DRAG CLUB / ANGELA'S FLAT - NIGHT

126

*

Marios buzzes Angela's flat repeatedly.

*

ANGELA

(v.o.)

Who the hell is it?

MARIOS

Marios!

*

127 INT. ANGELA'S FLAT

127

Angela opens the door and Marios storms into the flat without any explanation.

*

*

ANGELA

What-

MARIOS

Help me take this off!

Marios **strives** to **remove** Petros's blue dress but it's stuck on him, refusing to leave his body.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

TAKE THIS FUCKING THING OFF ME!

Angela **runs** to him and, with her calm, experienced hands, helps him out of the tight dress. **Marios grabs it and tosses it childishy across the room. He stands there in his tights and underwear looking miserably at Angela.**

MARIOS (CONT'D)

Can I stay here, **please**?

ANGELA

Of course, sweetie.

Angela **holds** him in her arms.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Of course...

128 **INT. ANGELA'S HOUSE / ATTIC - DAY**

128

The time is 13:30. Marios wakes up in Angela's flat. His eyes are red and puffy. The diffused sunlight passing through the room's white curtains blinds him so he covers himself with the duvet and goes back to sleep.

129 **INT. SQUAT / PETROS'S OLD ROOM - DAY**

129

Maya knocks on the door. **She gets** no response **and** enters the room. Still empty. She sighs and closes the door behind her.

130 **INT. DRAG CLUB - DAY**

130

It's still midday. Angela **sweeps** the **floor**. Marios **sits at a table in the corner** and drinks.

131 **INT. ANGELA'S HOUSE / ATTIC - DAY**

131

Marios lies on the bed on his side, staring blankly out of the window.

132 **INT. SQUAT / PETROS'S OLD ROOM - DAY**

132

ONE WEEK LATER...

Maya unmakes Marios's bed. She pulls the sheets and duvet covers and folds them together.

*

LATER...

*

She takes out her phone and dials his number. He never answers her call so she hangs up disappointed.

*

*

She stands up, shuts the blinds and walks out of the room locking the door behind her.

*

*

133 **INT. ANGELA'S HOUSE / ATTIC - DAY**

133

Marios lies on the bed, channel-surfing. He spots Andreas on one of the channels and stops. He watches one of his political rallies on mute. His mobile vibrates next to him. He picks it up and glimpses the sender's details. He tosses the phone aside.

*

*

*

*

*

Seconds later, he glances back at the phone. He picks it up again and opens the incoming message to read it.

*

*

134 **INT. SQUAT / MAYA'S ROOM - DAY**

134

It's a peaceful, lazy Sunday. The sun's midday rays pierce the swaying, white curtains and dance on the wooden floor. Maya lies back on the bed with Violet and reads the book for her.

*

MAYA

"And then, the dragon flew all the way to the castle with the princess on his back. He landed on the bridge and left the princess on the entrance. "Thank you for this great adventure" said the princess but before she could turn to face the dragon, he had already flown far away".

VIOLET

So she lived happily ever after?

MAYA

So she lived happily ever after.

Violet claps in excitement and as she does, her inhaler falls from her pocket. Maya picks it up for her and puts it back in her sister's pocket.

*
*
*

MAYA (CONT'D)

Careful.

Knocking on the front door. Maya frowns. She's not expecting anyone.

*

135

INT. SQUAT / MAIN HALL

135

Maya opens the door and sees Thomas standing on the doorstep.

THOMAS

Hi. I'm Thomas, Marios's dad.

MAYA

Yes, I remember.

THOMAS

Is Marios here?

Maya shakes her head.

MAYA

He's left the squat. Haven't seen him in a while.

THOMAS

You know where he is? I've been trying to find him. I don't understand what's going on. Last time I saw him he was all bruised and dressed as a woman-

MAYA

You want to come in? We're about to have lunch.

Thomas considers this.

*

THOMAS

Yes. That would be lovely, actually.

136

INT. SQUAT KITCHEN - DAY -- BIT LATER

136

Maya holds her phone to her ear. She's called Marios and waits for him to pick up. He never does so she hangs up.

*

MAYA
(to Thomas)
He's not answering.

Maya returns to the table where Thomas and Violet enjoy their soup. *

THOMAS
So you actually live here?

Maya smiles and nods.

THOMAS (CONT'D) *

With how many people?

MAYA *

They come and go really. About fifteen?

THOMAS *

But I don't understand why he moved here. Why was he beaten up that night? Is he in trouble?

Maya glances at Violet and smiles politely at Thomas.

MAYA

I will explain after lunch.

137 INT. ANDREAS'S GYM - DAY

137

Marios opens the main door and enters Andreas's gym. Andreas is in the middle of his speech.

ANDREAS

(off)

This idea of individuality is our society's major failure. *

He turns right and finds himself in a smaller room with at least six rows of chairs and Andreas pacing up and down the room, lecturing a bunch of new recruits. *

138 INT. "GREEK POWER" GYM / ROOM

138

Andreas notices Marios. He smiles and gestures to him to grab a seat. Marios obliges and sits down at the back of the room. *

ANDREAS

And look at the results. People are obsessed with themselves. You are obsessed with yourselves. You have (MORE)

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
 your face glued on your mobile
 screens, constantly checking
 yourselves out. But obsession comes
 with a cost. AS much as you'd like
 to love you reflections, you now
 also notice all the imperfections.
 And they've started hating
 yourselves because of those
 imperfections too.

139 INT. CAR - DAY

139

Alexis drives his small car in a busy Athenian street. The
 squat building comes into view. Alexis parks the car **across**
the street and exits.

*
 *

140 INT. "GREEK POWER" GYM / MAIN SPACE

140

The new recruits are now all practicing with equipment,
 punching bags, weight-lifting, etc.

ANDREAS
 (v.o.)
*So how do we break the cycle? Is
 the solution to tell you to love
 yourself regardless of your
 imperfections? Of course not.*

Marios **does not participate**. He stands next to a punching bag
 staring his reflection in the mirror while all the other
 recruits behind him practice like they're training for the
 Olympics.

*

141 INT. SQUAT / KITCHEN - DAY

141

Maya stands up. She picks up the plates and takes them to the
 sink. The kitchen's back door to the squat bursts open with a
bang and Alexis storms in. He immediately attacks Maya
 pushing her out of the way, hitting her head on the corner of
 the kitchen bench.

*

MAYA
 (to Violet and Thomas)
 LEAVE!

Thomas steps out of the kitchen intimidated.

Violet **kicks** Alexis' leg. It's a heroic move but to little
 effect. She is **shoved** violently by Alexis and **slams** her head
on the wall. Her asthma inhaler **drops** out of her pocket.

*
 *
 *

Alexis kicks the inhaler by accident across the kitchen.
Violet panics. She starts breathing fast.

*
*

Maya charges towards Marios but he grabs her by the throat.

*

ALEXIS

Where's that fucking faggot,
Marios?

MAYA

Fuck you!

Maya grabs a frying pan and whacks Alexis on the head. Alexis yells and releases Maya. Maya attacks with swift kicks and punches. Alexis tries to block her; he is clumsy but also very strong and knows how to fight back.

*
*
*
*

Maya thinks on her feet. She grabs the pot from the table and empties the soup inside on Alexis's face. Alexis shrills. He charges towards Maya. She jumps up and hits him with a spinning kick that sends him flying out of the kitchen and into the main hall.

*
*
*
*
*

Maya kneels in front of Violet. The girl can barely breathe. Maya searches into her pocket.

*

MAYA (CONT'D)

Where's the inhaler?

Violet shakes her head, points towards the other end of the kitchen. Maya searches frantically on the floor.

*

142 INT. SQUAT / MAIN HALL

142

Alexis stands up, moaning, and grabs a knife laying on the floor next to him. He makes to attack Maya but Thomas breaks a vase on his head. Alexis screams and turns to face Thomas.

*
*
*

THOMAS

I'll have you know that my son is
not a fucking faggot.

(pause)

He's a proud homosexual!

Alexis lunges at him. Thomas, a karate master himself, blocks the first blows but he's too old and too slow for the young man and he soon finds himself overpowered.

*
*

143 INT. SQUAT / KITCHEN

143

Maya still searches for the inhaler.

*

MAYA

Fuck!

144 INT. "GREEK POWER" GYM

144

The party's new members train hard at the gym. Marios stands all alone in a corner, next to a punching bag, *leering at his reflection* in the mirror.

*
*
*

ANDREAS

(v.o.)

The only way out of this vicious circle is to surrender yourselves to something bigger. Forget about your precious selves for a moment. You're not as important as you think you are. We don't care about your lives. We don't care about your selfies. And neither should you. Stop looking at yourselves and look around you.

145 INT. SQUAT / KITCHEN

145

ALEXIS

(off)

OI!

*
*
*

Maya turns to look into the hall through the open door. Alexis has put a knife to Thomas's throat. Maya stands up and steps into the main hall.

Violet is losing consciousness. Her eyes close and her head *tilts* to the right but Maya doesn't notice.

*
*

146 INT. SQUAT MAIN / HALL

146

ALEXIS

Where is Marios?

THOMAS

Don't tell him!

Maya hesitates. Alexis presses the knife harder on Thomas's throat.

ALEXIS

Where is he?

THOMAS

Don't. Tell him.

147 INT. "GREEK POWER" GYM

147

Andreas walks up to Marios and stands next to him.

MARIOS

(to Andreas)

Only thing I ever wanted was to
look myself in the mirror and be at
peace with what I see.

ANDREAS

(v.o.)

*Cure your obsessions by
surrendering yourselves to the
cause. By surrendering yourselves
to your country. By surrendering
yourselves to the party.*

Andreas picks up a **dumbbell** from the floor and **hands it over**
to Marios. He **points at the mirror with his gaze**. Marios
chuckles. Andreas **nods**, giving him permission. Marios **raises**
his arm and smashes the mirror with the dumbbell.

*
*
*
*

148 INT. SQUAT / MAIN HALL

148

ALEXIS

(to Maya)

Last chance!

*

Maya opens her mouth to say. **She** meets Thomas's eyes who
plead "no", **so she just** shakes her head. **Alexis was not**
expecting Maya's insistent refusal. The gravity of his threat
suddenly **dawns on him**. **Is he really a killer?**

*
*
*
*

He **hesitates and lowers the knife just an inch**. Maya **sighs in**
relief. Thomas **smiles at her to assure her it's going to be**
alright.

*
*
*

THOMAS

Don't worry. **I know his kind**. He
wouldn't dare t-

*
*

Alexis **slits Thomas's throat**. Maya **gasps** in horror as the
blood **pours** out and **Thomas** falls to the ground dead.

*
*

ANDREAS

(v.o.)

*Only then, you'll be free. Only
then, you'll find true meaning.*

Alexis **steps back, away from the body**. He looks horrified by
his own deed; He **stuffs the bloodied knife in his pocket and**
bolts out of the squat.

*
*
*

Violet's unconscious body collapses on the kitchen floor with a thud. Maya spins around to look at her.

*
*

149 INT. "GREEK POWER" GYM

149

Marios examines his distorted reflection in the broken glass. Andreas puts his hands on Marios's shoulders in a paternal embrace and smiles at him.

*
*
*

150 INT. SQUAT / KITCHEN

150

Maya kneels in front of Violet and shakes her to wake her up but to no avail.

*

151 INT. "GREEK POWER" GYM

151

The punching bag sways back from Marios's powerful side-kick. His fists pound it furiously.

*
*

His phone rings inside his pocket but he doesn't notice.

*

It takes him some time to hear it and when he finally does, he stops practising, removes his earphones and takes the mobile out of his pocket.

*
*
*

He answers it and shock is reflected on his face as he receives the news from the other end of the line.

*
*

152 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE MORGUE - DAY

152

Marios watches in stunned silence, through the door's rectangular window, as the morgue employee places his father's corpse into the freezer.

*
*
*

He sits back on one of the plastic chairs, all alone in the dark corridor, not knowing what to do with himself.

*
*

153 INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

153

Maya sits on a chair next to Violet's bed. She caresses her sister's hand with her palm.

Marios enters the room hesitantly. He's too scared to approach Maya. Maya turns to face him. An awkward silence spreads between them. Then Maya stands up, runs towards him and offers him a warm hug.

*
*
*
*

Marios flinches. Maya pulls away and stares at him with tears in her eyes.

*

MAYA

We needed you there. **Your dad
needed you.** I needed you! Where
were you?

*
*

Her eyes seek an answer but her voice is more pleading than
angry. Marios opens his mouth to reply but **stumbles on his
words.** Maya **softens.**

*
*

MAYA (CONT'D)

(comforting him)

I don't blame you, shit happens.

*

MARIOS

I was at a "Greek Power" meeting
with Andreas.

Maya **turns white. She steps back.**

*

MARIOS (CONT'D)

Don't know what came over me. He
was so convincing. He saw right
through me and he still didn't
reject me.

Maya **glowers** at him.

*

MARIOS (CONT'D)

The truth is I let him die because
I wanted him to die. I loved him to
death and for some reason I
couldn't stand being with him. What
is wrong with me?

Maya **doesn't bother answering him. She** returns to her **chair
in silence** and turns her **full attention** to her sister.

*
*

MARIOS (CONT'D)

Please say something. Anything.

But Maya won't give him the satisfaction. She extends her
hand and softly touches her sister's hair completely ignoring
Marios. Marios gives up. He turns his back and leaves the
room.

154

INT. ANDREAS'S OFFICE - DAY

154

Andreas sits **at his desk, staring outside the window with his
back turned to Stratos.**

*
*

ANDREAS

We'll have to move it. I told
everyone in the meeting **the**

*

(MORE)

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
ceremony would take place in the
gym. There's an abandoned wine
factory, just off-

STRATOS
Everything's already arranged.

Andreas spins his chair around to face Stratos, unable to
hide his annoyance for the interruption.

*
*

ANDREAS
We cannot risk it. Marios knows the
place-

*

STRATOS
And whose fault is that?

ANDREAS
What did you say?

STRATOS
Maybe Minas was right about your
lot after al-

*

Andreas jumps up and grabs Stratos by the throat. He pushes
him against the wall and holds him there, inches above the
floor. Stratos is choking, struggling for breath. The mere
strength of Andreas's arm is awe-inspiring even if terrifying
at the same time.

*
*

ANDREAS
It seems I might have given you the
wrong impression that this is a
democracy; an anarchist group of
sorts, where all hippies are
welcome to voice their opinions
equally.

*

Stratos's face has turned red.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
So let me be clear once and for
all. This is not a fucking
democracy. This is indeed fascism.
Loud and proud. And as this fascist
organisation's sole leader I
demand nothing less than your blind
and total submission. *Understood?*

*

*

Stratos nods frantically. Andreas loosens his grip and
Stratos falls on the floor with a thud. He coughs loudly,
struggling to regain his breath. Andreas returns to his desk.

*
*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

There is an abandoned wine factory just off the national road *outside Athens*. This is where the initiation ceremony will take place. Make sure all new members are notified of the change.

*
*

155 **INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - DAY**

155

Marios, dressed in black, paces aimlessly in his father's living room. A deathly silence has infested the place. The day's pale light paints everything *in* a mournful, greyish shade. Marios makes his way towards his childhood bedroom.

*

156 **INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE / BEDROOM**

156

He pushes the door gently and walks in. He sits down on the bed and his eyes travel over all the framed pictures of him and Thomas, celebrating his many athletic achievements.

Marios's trembling hand reaching in his jacket's pocket, fishing out his mobile. He dials a button and brings the phone to his ear.

*

THOMAS

(v.o.)

It's me. Dad. Please, let's talk about this.

*

Marios listens; a lonely figure shrinking on the bed, as Thomas's voice begins his emotional confession.

157 **INT. BUS - DAY**

157

Marios sits on the *back of the bus, with his head leaning against the window on his way to* the cemetery.

*
*

THOMAS

(v.o.)

It's me again. Where are you? You haven't answered any of my calls.

158 **EXT. CEMETERY - DAY**

158

The bus departs and Marios stands in front of the cemetery iron gates. This is like *deja-vu*. Marios has found himself in such a place many more times than he would've liked to.

*
*
*

THOMAS

(v.o.)

OK, then. I'll start first. I admit
There are certain things that don't
make sense to me. Things that I
don't entirely understand. Men
falling in love with men seems
strange to me. Men dressing up as
women... I don't get it.

*

He passes through the cemetery gates and makes his way among
the tombstones. There are no colourfully-dressed people in
attendance today. Marios's family mourn Thomas in the most
traditional way possible: dressed in black and weeping
loudly.

*

*

*

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(v.o.)

But then again, I don't really have
to understand everything, do I?
This is your life and you lead it
and I'm so sorry if I've given you
the wrong impression but... it
never really mattered to me if
Petros was your friend or your...
partner. Is partner the right word?
Better than boyfriend?

*

And yet, strangely enough, his real family feels less like a
family to Marios compared to all the people who attended
Petros's funeral.

*

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(v.o.)

Anyway. There was only one thing
that I had to understand and I did
so the very first moment I laid
eyes on you and I swear to you, it
hasn't changed since, even after
your mum died hours after you were
born. I never blamed you for her
death and it pains me to know that
you blamed yourself.

When the family members see him, they nod at him, but there
are no smiles on their lips, nor is there a mutual
understanding of the shared pain in their eyes. Instead, they
greet him with judgmental gazes, ironic smirks or even
disgusted expressions and Marios is not even sure why.

*

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(v.o.)

I made mistakes. I pushed you hard,
I know. But it wasn't to justify

*

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

*your existence in any way or to
turn you... straight. You don't
have to prove anything to anyone
least of all to me. You can be with
anyone you like or dress however
you like... my only concern was
that you're safe.*

The FUNERAL HOME EMPLOYEE *stands by the coffin and* hands
Marios and the rest of the family the tiny plastic boxes with
the dirt inside. *

FUNERAL HOME EMPLOYEE

*Please throw the plastic box in the
dustbin next to you when you're
done. It's so you don't get your
hands dirty.*

The *casket* sinks into the grave. All the other relatives
follow the employee's instructions and throw the dirt on the
coffin straight from the plastic box. *

Marios opens the plastic box and empties the dirt *in his*
hands. He *feels the rough substance in his palm and then*
tosses the plastic box in the bin and *scatters* the dirt on
the coffin with his bare hands. *

THOMAS

(v.o.)

*I guess what I'm really trying to
say is... I love you. Always did.
Always will. Please call me back
when you hear this.* *

159

INT. CEMETERY CAFE - DAY

159

Marios *stares* at all his relatives sitting around the big
ornate tables in the cemetery's cafeteria. He *examines* their
sad, *miserable* faces and *observes* their *mean*, judgmental
gazes. He makes an impulsive decision. He jumps on the table
and clears his throat. *

MARIOS

*Can I have everyone's attention,
please?*

He *has it* indeed, even without asking. He takes a breath. *

MARIOS (CONT'D)

I'm gay! *

Silence falls like a blanket over the cafeteria. *Few awkward
chuckles here and there.* And then, the murmurs begin: *

RELATIVE #1

Who's late?

*

RELATIVE 2

Don't look at me, I was on time.

*

RELATIVE #3

He's says he's gay.

*

RELATIVE #1

No way!

*

RELATIVE #4

*(laughing)**Tell us something else we don't know!*

*

*

RELATIVE #5

Yeah, big news, Vassos has already told half the village.

*

*

VASSOS

Hey, leave me out of this. It was Soula who told me that she saw him with a guy in Athens.

*

*

*

SOULA

I'm not judging. It's none of my business what people do in their bedroom. As long as they don't do it out in the streets.

*

*

*

*

The chorus of narrow-mindedness intensifies and soon, everyone feels they have to contribute something to the discussion. The noise amuses Marios who cracks up. His cousin, JULIA, 23 - short hair, dressed in jeans and plain, black jacket - extends a helping hand and invites him to get down.

*

*

*

*

*

JULIA

Come on, cousin. Get down.

Marios takes Julia's hand. He jumps off the table...

160

INT. ANGELA'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - DAY

160

...and lands right onto Angela's living room, where they unfold together a large piece of silver fabric.

*

Angela takes the sewing machine out of her closet, places it on the table and they get to work making Marios a new dress.

*

*

HOURS LATER...

*

Marios covers his naked body with the beautiful, armour-like silver dress they sewed, and looks himself in the mirror. Angela stands next to him smiling.

*
*
*

161 INT. ANGELA'S FLAT / ATTIC - DAY

161

Marios enters his room in the attic, dressed in his normal clothes, and comes face to face with a dark silhouette whose face he cannot distinguish as she is standing in front of the window.

*
*
*

Marios flicks a switch and the bedside lamp's warm light reveals Eleni standing next to the bed. Marios grabs the lamp as a weapon.

*
*

MARIOS

*

Get out!

ELENI

I didn't come here to hurt you. I wouldn't be able even if I wanted to. Andreas told me you were the best fighter he'd ever seen.

*
*

MARIOS

And you can tell him I'm gonna kill him if I ever see him again.

ELENI

Good. I can tell you where to find him.

Marios frowns. He puts the lamp down and fixes his questioning gaze on Eleni, seeking more answers.

ELENI (CONT'D)

He told you about our son, Philippos. But he didn't tell you what he did to him. How he "cured" him from his homosexuality. I could hear the screams. We found him with a bullet in his head. Andreas still lies to himself a terrorist broke in and killed him but it was Philippos's fingerprints on the gun. My baby took his own life and I-

*
*

MARIOS

Why are you telling me this?

ELENI

The initiation ceremony...

MARIOS

At the gym **basement**.

*

ELENI

They **moved** it. It's an old wine
factory **just outside Athens**. I will
text you the exact **location**.

*

*

*

*

Eleni passes by Marios and opens the door to leave. Marios
frowns.

MARIOS

You don't have my number. Where **the**
hell will you text me?

*

*

Eleni turns to face him; **somewhat** surprised he hasn't figured
that one **out** already.

*

*

ELENI

In Petros's phone, of course.

Marios opens his mouth to respond but Eleni exits his room
and climbs down the stairs before he can mutter a single
word.

162 **INT. DRAG CLUB - EVENING**

162

*

It's still early **in the evening** and the bar is empty. Marios
sits at a table on his own and drafts a message on his phone.
The message reads: I'M GOING TONIGHT. I NEED YOUR HELP. I
KNOW I'VE FUCKED UP BUT-

*

He stops. He presses the delete button and bins the message.

*

163 **INT. ANGELA'S HOUSE / ATTIC - EVENING**

163

*

Marios opens the closet in his room in Angela's house and
takes out the beautiful **silver** dress they **made** together. He
grabs a **long-haired** wig, **places** everything **carefully** on the
bed and starts getting out of his **mens'** clothes.

*

*

*

*

164 **INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / ALEXIS'S ROOM - NIGHT**

164

Alexis sits on the bed, dressed in the party's fake military
uniform, ready for the ceremony. He has his eyes on the
floor, lost in deep thought.

*

ELENI

(off)

Want me to drive you?

Alexis spins - startled - and sees Eleni on the doorstep. It takes him a couple of moments to find his voice.

ALEXIS

Dad doesn't want you there.

ELENI

You have a minute? I want to show you something.

Alexis glances at his watch. Eleni smiles enigmatically.

ELENI (CONT'D)

It's a secret...

165 **INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / STAIRS TO BASEMENT**

165

Eleni leads the way down the stairs towards the basement. *

ALEXIS

Dad's said we're not allowed in here.

Eleni fishes a key out of her pocket and unlocks the door.

ELENI

Don't be a wuss.

166 **INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / BASEMENT**

166

Alexis chuckles at his mother's language and steps into the dark room. Eleni switches the light on and Alexis's face drops. *

The whole room is a love letter to nazism: a Nazi flag hanging from the ceiling, old Hitler posters on the walls, various copies of "Mein Kampf" on a small table, old German rifles hanging behind a glass cabinet... It's hard to say if the sight's more horrifying or ridiculous. Alexis stares around in awe. Eleni, on the other hand, looks like she's about to vomit. *

ELENI

I just wanted you to know who your father really is.

ALEXIS

This is amazing! *

ELENI
 (hangs her head
 disappointed)
 I was afraid you might say that.

Eleni **steps out of** the room, takes the key out and locks Alexis inside.

*
 *

ALEXIS
 Mum?

*

167 **INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / OUTSIDE BASEMENT**

167

Eleni **rests her head against** the door.

*

ALEXIS
 (off)
*What are you doing? I have to go!
 Open the door! Open the fucking
 door! You fucking bitch, let me out
 of here! OPEN THE GOD DAMN DOOR!*

ELENI
 (whispers to herself)
 I'm not losing you too...

168 **INT. ANDREAS'S HOUSE / HALL**

168

Eleni grabs the car keys from the table in the hall, then opens the front door and exits the house.

169 **EXT. HOSPITAL - EVENING**

169

*

Marios's semi-naked back as he's heading defiantly towards the hospital. His blonde hair waving in the cold breeze's touch. The automatic glass doors open as if he'd ordered them to and he strides into the hospital fully dressed in drag and not giving a fuck about it.

*
 *
 *
 *
 *

170 **INT. HOSPITAL**

170

*

Everyone, from the receptionist to the **snot-wiping** patients, stare at him with their mouths open but he **ignores them all** and **heads** to the lifts.

*
 *
 *

171 **INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR**

171

The lift doors open and Marios exits. **He walks down the long corridor all the way to Violet's room. He makes to enter but**

*
 *

then notices the family scene from the open blinds: Violet has woken up. Her family is gathered around the bed, chatting happily. Maya has thrown herself at Violet, embracing her and shedding tears of joy at the same time.

*
*
*
*

Marios hesitates. His hand still on the door handle, he stares at the emotional scene and then turns his back and walks away.

*
*
*

172 **INT. HOSPITAL RECEPTION**

172

Marios sits down next to a couple of patients leering at him. He hangs his head, takes off his wig and holds it in his hand, looking defeated.

*
*

173 **EXT. OUTSIDE OLD FACTORY - NIGHT**

173

The remains of an old, abandoned wine factory, in the middle of nowhere.

*
*

Stratos emerges from behind the trees. He strides towards the arch entrance of the factory, where Andreas stands. Andreas casts him a questioning look and Stratos shakes his head. Andreas looks at his watch and then turns around and enters the factory.

*
*
*
*
*

174 **INT. OLD FACTORY - NIGHT**

174

A dozen torches burn bright inside the ruins of the old, stone building, forming a circle. Inside this circle, TWENTY NEW MEMBERS brace the freezing cold displaying their naked torsos.

*
*
*

Andreas circles the men with Stratos, and a SECURITY GUY by his side guarding him.

*

ANDREAS

After this ceremony is over, you will be our party's newest members. And yet, you'll have no affiliation with the party. No official connection. Nothing. You'll be its heart and soul and yet you'll be invisible, operating in the shadows. Once you've taken this oath, there's no turning back. You ask no questions. You bring no objections. Once you've sworn to join the cause, you surrender yourself to the country. To the people. To me.

He lets this dramatic conclusion sink in for a moment.

*

ANDREAS (CONT'D)
Do you surrender?

MEN
Yes, sir.

ANDREAS
DO YOU SURRENDER?

MEN
YES, SIR!

ANDREAS
I CAN'T FUCKING HEAR YOU! I SAID:
DO YOU SURRENDER?

MARIOS
(off)
NEVER!!!

Marios's thundering response roars through the night as if it was coming from God Himself. He leaps from the factory's wooden balcony and lands on the ground. He rises up and faces Andreas and the men defiantly.

*
*
*
*

His silver, spangly dress is feminine, yet somehow resembles a medieval knight's armour. A white leather belt keeps the pieces together and it even has a case on it, to hold a whip on the right-hand side. The black eyeliner around his eyes gives him an air of both sexiness and threat.

Some of the men giggle when they see Marios in women's clothes. Others, however, have heard the stories and don't take this as lightly. Marios examines their naked torsos and their silly, fake-looking military trousers.

*
*
*

MARIOS (CONT'D)
And there I was, thinking I'm the one with the crazy dress.

*

ANDREAS
Marios.
(dramatic pause)
I was hoping I would see you here tonight and you didn't disappoint. Although, I must admit, I'd prefer you in men's clothes. Still, I want you to know I'm here for you. My offer still stands.

*

MARIOS

Andreas.

(dramatic pause)

Has anyone told you you talk too
much? Just shut the fuck up,
already.

*
*

Andreas throws a fake laugh but his face **does not look
amused.**

*
*

ANDREAS

I take it then you won't join our
initiation ceremony.

MARIOS

Bitch, I didn't come here to
initiate shit. I came to finish
things.

ANDREAS

Fair enough.
(turns to his men)
Finish him.

*

Twenty **screaming** men **jump on** Marios, holding sticks and
shields, and he doesn't even blink. He blocks their attacks
and keeps his eyes on the prize - Andreas - who steps back
and walks away into another **chamber** hoping his minions will
finish the job for him.

*
*
*

Marios takes out the whip on his belt and **smacks** two
attacking men on the face. He wraps it around another man's
throat and he throws him **back** on the stone wall.

*
*

A man grabs Marios from behind. Marios uses the man's
strength; **he** bends over, picks **him** up and throws him on the
ground over his body, breaking his arms.

*

Two men **lunge on** him from either side. Marios grabs them
both, steps back and smashes their two heads together.

*

Stratos **pulls** his gun. Marios turns and seeks protection
behind a guy as Stratos shoots. The guy falls down dead.
Stratos raises his gun again but Marios picks up the guy's
dead body and **hurls** it on Stratos.

*
*
*

Stratos falls back and drops the gun. Marios **launches an
attack.** Stratos takes a knife out of his jeans' pocket just
as Marios jumps on him. He scratches Marios's face and arm.
Marios falls down.

*
*
*

**It is now Stratos who jumps on Marios, ready to slit his
throat. Marios grabs a big stone from the ancient, crumbling
wall and smashes Stratos's head with it.**

*
*
*

Another man attacks, **swinging** yet another knife in front of Marios. The man is clumsy. He **lunges** to knife Marios but Marios **twists** his arm and pushes the knife back into his own belly. The man falls down dead.

*
*
*

A man attacks Marios from behind, grabs him, and pushes him down on the ground. Marios turns around, wraps his legs around the man's neck and snaps it.

Marios stands up, finally able to catch his breath. Dead and wounded bodies lay all around him.

*

As he looks up he comes face to face with Andreas's personal security guy: a beast of a man, tall and muscular, skilfully swinging a sword in front of him and belting intimidating warrior cries in an attempt to both scare and impress Marios.

*
*
*
*

Marios glances at Stratos's gun on the ground in front of him. He steps on it with his foot, presses its edge to lift it up a bit, and then kicks it upwards and catches it mid-air.

SECURITY GUARD

Fuck.

Marios shoots the guard right between the eyes and the guard drops on the ground.

Marios looks up and he **meets** Andreas's eyes at the other hall. For the first time, Andreas looks **truly** intimidated, although he **strives** to conceal it. His eyes travel from the massacre on the ground to Marios, who is soaked in the men's blood.

*
*
*

ANDREAS

I guess my mistake was believing in you. Believing you had in you to change. To **cure** yourself **form** this **disease**.

*
*

MARIOS

No. Your mistake was murdering my boyfriend. **Everything** else was my **mistake**.

*
*
*

Andreas walks out of the room and **steps** into the **moonlight**. They **face** each other for a moment and then Andreas launches his attack. Marios **rebutts** his hits with ease. Andreas is a furious **fighter - fast and aggressive** - but Marios is able to defend himself this time. He grabs Andreas's wrist and twists it. Andreas yells. Marios takes the upper hand and fights back, pushing Andreas back with **swift** hits. Andreas stumbles and falls on the ground but just when it seems it's over he stands back up again **grabbing** the security guard's sword.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

He **swings** it in front of Marios and they stare each other for a second. Then Andreas lets out a horrifying scream and runs towards Marios **brandishing** the sword in front of him.

Marios steps back and avoids the blade with swift moves of his body; it looks like **a dance**. Marios **glimpses at a** metal tube lying around few feet behind him. He leads Andreas towards it.

As he glances towards it, he gets careless. He looks the other way and Andreas's sword pierces his belly. Marios winces but he's now close enough to the metal tube so he **kneels down and grabs it**.

Andreas brings the blade down on Marios's neck just as Marios picks up the tube, rolls on the ground and breaks Andreas's leg with the tube hitting him right on the knee.

Andreas **screams**. He drops the sword and falls to the ground **moaning** and panting. He glares at Marios, unable to defend himself.

MARIOS (CONT'D)

Don't **worry**. I'm not going to kill you. You're going to rot in jail.

Marios turns around to pick up the fallen sword and as he does, Andreas grabs the whip from Marios's belt. He wraps it around his neck and manages to drag him back to the ground in front of him.

Andreas **strangles** Marios. Marios struggles to breathe. Oxygen is **escaping** his brain.

ANDREAS

You either change yourself to my vision or **you die!** But our time is coming. And there's nothing you can do to stop it.

Andreas's eyes **suddenly** goggle. He stops talking as he can only muster a gurgle. A knife has been sank deep inside his neck **and blood has started dripping from a wound**. He lets Marios go and Marios falls to the ground breathing heavily.

Before he leaves his final breath, Andreas turns around and sees Eleni standing behind him. His brain cannot comprehend but he's too weak to even muster a simple "Why". He lies back on the ground and stares blankly at his wife. Eleni kneels over him.

ELENI

I still love you. And I hate myself for it.

Andreas dies. Eleni takes the knife out of his throat and holds it in her hands. She looks up at Marios who has his hand on his own belly wound where Andreas's sword pierced him just minutes ago. The gravity of her deed dawns on Eleni.

*

ELENI (CONT'D)
I killed him...

Marios kneels next to her and takes the knife out of her hands.

*

MARIOS
No, you didn't.

Marios puts the knife in his belt's case and stands up with great effort.

*

ELENI
Wait. This is for you.

She takes a piece of paper out of her jeans pocket, like a receipt, and hands it over to Marios.

ELENI (CONT'D)
Storage space next to the train station. Everything you need is in there.

Marios puts this in his belt as well and turns around. The flaming torches have all been blown out. The moon casts its silver light through the crumbling ceiling.

*

If there is any triumph to be found in this fight for Marios, it is buried underneath all the bodies laying on the ground, engulfed by the ruins of the old factory.

Marios starts walking across the vast space, where his victims lay, so he can finally reach the exit. He drags his legs among them, sinking his feet in small puddles of blood, unable to take his eyes off their mutilated bodies despite his will.

Some are dead. Others wounded. Some lay still and quiet, death having robbed them of their voice. Others stir on the ground, and even muster some strength for feeble cries of help, although their voices merely reverberate on the ancient stone walls and return back to their own ears. On this remote place, God is their only hope but, even if He exists, He has clearly forsaken them tonight.

As Marios crosses the hall to reach the exit, he looks at all their faces. He observes their fear, their sadness, their hatred, their remorse; behind every single pair of unmoving eyes lays a story that will never be told.

The sound of few bodies still moving on the ground grabs Marios's attention. One man is struggling for breath, as though every single air molecule counts for one more second of life. One man stares back at Marios, his features distorted from all the hatred. One man lies on his stomach, crying to himself that he doesn't want to die. And, right next to the door, one man even manages to stand up - blood spurting from an open wound in his stomach - and block Marios's exit while raising his hand in a defiant and unrepentant Nazi salute.

Marios stares back at him, observing him like a strange, rare specimen as he **walks** past him to exit the factory. *

175

EXT. OLD FACTORY - NIGHT

175

Leaving that warm, bloody mess behind him, Marios welcomes the night's cold breeze on his sweaty skin.

He stops to take a breath. He lowers his hand to his stomach and feels the warm blood spilling from the wound inflicted by Andreas's sword. Not being able to stand anymore, he lets his body collapse and he is almost relieved to do so. He lies there on his back, breathing silently, wondering himself if there is indeed a God hidden behind that starry sky and, if so, how harsh his judgment might be. And then his eyes close and he is plunged into darkness, death slowly creeping up on him.

176

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

176

OVER BLACK:

The echo of voices... footsteps on the floor... laughter and crying from afar... Life fading in. A consciousness slowly resurfacing. And then:

Blinding light.

Marios squints his eyes. The bright sunlight coming from the window blinds him. He makes to move but he's too weak. It takes him a while to realise he's lying on a hospital bed. Without really knowing why, he attempts to stand up.

A **DOCTOR** storms into the room. She **looks familiar but Marios's vision is still blurry. The Doctor** reaches his bed and throws herself at him hugging him. Marios is taken aback. *

MAYA

They weren't sure you'd wake up
from surgery! *

Maya gently pushes him back on the bed. **Marios's vision returns to normal again.**

*
*

MARIOS

What are you doing here?

MAYA

I work here. I'm a **trainee doctor**, remember? A woman dropped you at the hospital two nights ago. Never got to see her.

*

Marios takes a moment to absorb everything. He glances at the television on the wall playing the news **about** the massacre at the **wine** factory.

*
*

MAYA (CONT'D)

You killed him.

MARIOS

They'll recognise me.

MAYA

As long as I'm here, you're OK. I've taken care of it.

*
*

Marios looks around the room.

MARIOS

Where's my **belt**?

*

Maya opens the closet and takes out Marios's clothes. Marios ignores the rest and focuses on his belt. He searches inside the tiny pocket of his belt and takes out the receipt Eleni gave him.

MAYA

What is this?

177 **INT. STORAGE SPACE IN TRAIN STATION - DAY**

177 *

Marios and Maya stand in front of the lockers in the storage space. Maya types the password given to Marios by Eleni and the locker door opens **with** a click.

*

Maya reaches in and grabs a bag. She turns to Marios and **grins**.

*

178 **INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICES - DAY**

178

Maya leads the way towards Lina's office at the far end, holding the bag in her hand. Marios follows behind her.

179

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICES / LINA'S OFFICE

179

An editorial meeting taking place with LINA and THREE OTHER JOURNALISTS, two men and one woman.

*

LINA

The factory massacre is still front page along with the unrest in the detention centre.

MALE JOURNALIST

What about the club bomber in Canada? I have a contact in Toronto-

*

*

The door bursts open and Maya barges in with Marios following behind. Lina jumps up.

*

*

LINA

We're in the middle of a meeting, here.

*

Maya empties the bag on Lina's desk. Lina is boggled but then picks up one of the notebooks laying on her desk and notices Andreas Alexandrou's name on it. She opens it and skims it. She looks up at Maya stunned.

*

*

*

*

LINA

Change of plans, everyone.

Marios and Maya look each other and smile.

180

INT. ANGELA'S HOUSE / BATHROOM

180

The house is silent. A single drop hangs from the closed tap. It breaks free and lands on the sink.

The lights switch on and the door swings open. Marios storms into the bathroom and vomits in the sink. He opens the tap and washes his face.

Angela rushes into the bathroom and switches the light on. Marios turns to face her as he leans against the wall and lets his body slip on the floor.

*

ANGELA

Another nightmare?

Marios nods. Angela sits down next to him.

*

MARIOS

I've done some bad things, Angela. I keep dreaming about them.

(MORE)

MARIOS (CONT'D)

(pauses)

What would my mum think of me?

ANGELA

Oh, sweetie. Your mum's dead. She's been dead for 27 years. Whatever you've been told in Sunday school, chances are she doesn't think about you at all. She's at peace.

Marios isn't sure if that's any consolation. Angela chuckles.

MARIOS

What?

ANGELA

I just remembered my parents when I was little. Bickering every night in bed. Could hear them in my room. Same fight. My mum always asked my poor dad "Did you do this", "did you do that"? Did you take out the garbage, did you take the car to the mechanic? And my dad, so tired, would say "Why don't leave me sleep in peace". And my mum always replied the same thing: "Only the dead sleep in peace. Are you dead yet?"

Angela stares into Marios's eyes, asking him the very same question.

181

INT. DRAG CLUB / DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

181

Marios gets into his new, fancy dress in the dressing room. As he fixes the wig on his head, he hears a sound and turns to look. No one stands on the doorstep. He turns to the mirror again; checks everything's ok.

MAYA

(off)

They would be so proud.

Marios turns again, and this time sees Maya staring at him through the open door.

MARIOS

Bitch, you can't say things like that when I've put my mascara on!

Maya laughs.

MAYA
Break a leg. Bitch.

She heads away. Marios turns at his reflection in the mirror and exhales.

*
*

182

INT. DRAG CLUB - NIGHT

182

ANGELA
(off - voice from speakers)
Ladies and gentlemen! There's a new queen in town and she's not joking around. You mess with her and she'll eat you for dinner. You hurt her loved ones and she'll make yourself a living hell. It's her first time on the stage but she was born to own it so without any further ado, let's hear it for BLOODY MARY!

A bright spotlight follows Marios from above as he enters through the back door. Heads turn towards him. He cruises among the crowd, his head held high, then gets on the stage and takes his place in front of the microphone. The spotlight blinds him; makes him sweat. He stares around the packed club at all the eager faces. His eyes rest on Maya and Luisa, who sit at the first table, and then on Angela giving him the thumbs up from the bar. Marios smiles and opens his mouth.

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*

This is not lip-syncing. This is his own voice and it's as sweet and comforting as honey. Tender, soft and mellow, his melancholic performance of a sad love song has everyone tearing up in seconds.

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*

183

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

183

The sorrowful anthem carries through this next scene. As if his own singing from the future was empowering him, Marios reveals himself behind the cars where he was hiding. He stares at the young man lying in a pool of his own blood on the other side of the street.

*
*
*

He crosses the desolate street and drags his feet towards the lying man. Every step is painful but there's no turning back now.

*
*

Marios can distinguish Petros's face now; lying on the ground, shivering, bruised and cut, blood pouring out of numerous head-wounds. Marios lies down next to his dying boyfriend and peers into his eyes.

*
*
*

Petros himself even **breaks** a smile realising Marios came by his side for these last moments of his life. Marios is **unable to hold back his tears**. He reaches out his **trembling** hand and caresses Petros' cheek. Petros **grins at** the rare demonstration of tenderness.

*
*
*
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*

Marios puts his hand in his pocket to extract his phone but Petros grabs his arm to stop him; he knows it's too late. He stares into Marios's eyes and pleads with all the strength his voice can muster:

*
*
*
*

PETROS

Can I have a kiss, please?

Marios **leans** towards Petros and kisses him fully on the lips. The kiss is wet and soft and passionate, **and it** tastes of **tears and blood** and regret. Their lips remain sealed until Petros leaves his **dying** breath, and **the warmth escapes his body**. **The quivering stops and he goes still**. Marios can suddenly feel the freezing cold engulfing him so he **slides closer to his boyfriend and nestles up next to his dead body**.

*
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184

INT. DRAG CLUB - NIGHT

184

The mournful love song reaches its emotional **climax**. Marios **belts** the final note **like a true queen** and, as the **tearful** audience rise to their feet for a standing ovation, he opens his arms, takes a deep bow and the blood-red curtain closes with a swish, concealing the stage behind it, **and swaying ever so slowly to the air's gentle touch**.

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