THE CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF FILM GENRE

FOR THE SCREENWRITER

Creating Film Genre's Mental Space

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led PhD project consists of two sections: the first examines a breakdown of the components of film genre to be used as practical guideposts for my own creative practice as a screenwriter and (hopefully in the future) for other screenwriters; the second section contains my practical application – first acts of three screenplays that are constructed utilizing my research and subsequent assessments. Using a theoretic construct presented in the area of philosophy in the 1990s by cognitive theorist Gilles Fauconnier called 'mental space', a concept exploring a person's natural inclination to construct a comprehensible idealized cognitive model (ICM) of any given situation in order to understand his or her role in it (Fauconnier 1994:8), I examine how Fauconnier's concept can be applied to building a film narrative and specifically how it can be applied to a screenwriter's understanding and breaking down of the components of film genre. I also employ the work of scholars focused on the audience's reception, especially the reception of film genre. In the practical section of my practice-led PhD, the writing of the first acts of three screenplays that share location, similar core cast of characters and plot points but are constructed in three distinctly different film genres (western, horror, romantic comedy), I endeavor to apply elements I have termed the 'mental space of film genre' in order to determine the adjustments and changes necessary to move narrative from one genre to another in order to fulfill various genre perimeters and genre expectations. This work is meant to increase a screenwriter's technical skills in the craft of screenwriting.

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INTRODUCTION

My research into film genre and subsequently my compilation and extrapolation of that research into practical guideposts for my own creative practice as a screenwriter and (hopefully in the future) for other screenwriters has been one of the most edifying tasks I have undertaken. This work towards my PhD in the Film Studies Department at the University of Exeter (College of Humanities) has been beneficial in many ways:

- In solidifying my academic endeavors towards the understanding of how film genre can be approached in the construction of a screenplay
- In approaching student learning in an understanding of film genre, its components and its importance for the screenwriter in reaching an intended audience
- In examining my work as a professional screenwriter with an increased understanding of film genre as a constructive component
- In expanding my skills as a storyteller

Upon entering the University of Exeter program, I was new to the concept of a practice-led research within the university context and was interested in reading Graeme Harper's interpretation on practice-led research as central to the 'future of humanities':

What practice-led research is revealing is that while what can be called "post-event" analysis (that is, analysis after the "event" of creating) can produce knowledge about the artifacts produced, it does not easily produce knowledge about the practices themselves. So, for example, literary study can substantially enhance our knowledge of literature, but it does relatively little to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the practice and process of creative writing... Practice-led graduate work is meant to add to a student's own creative understanding, as well as to a critical knowledge of a chosen topic (Harper, 2009).

I quickly grasped the significance of practice-led study for myself - as a university professor of film and television with an emphasis on screenwriting, as a professional screenwriter in California, as a life-long student of film narrative. I determined to pursue an exploration of the practice of how a screenwriter could use the idea of and components of film genre as explored through genre history and genre theory within the academic discipline of Film Studies in the ideation and construction of a screenplay to help ensure its viability as a "blueprint" for production and perhaps even as a literary work – and if the production gods were smiling - help contribute to its success with a film-viewing audience.

I have been a professional writer for over twenty years. After years of professional work as a writer in theatre, television and film, I was asked to give seminars in the craft. In my preparation and desire to clarify approaches to film narrative, I initially focused on story structure and character illumination. I wrote two books that are now used in universities across the United States, *Screenplay; Idea to Successful Script* (2007) and *The Rewrite: First Draft to Marketplace* (2008). In those books I included chapters on film genre, however did not explore the topic in great depth. When I was invited to head up the screenwriting program at California State University, Fullerton and build a degree pathway for the screenwriting student, I was struck by how helpful it was for the student in the classroom to embrace a specific film genre in the initial stages of screenplay construction. This realization was the impetus for my pursuit of my PhD in

Film Studies at Exeter and my choice of project: The Constructive Use of Film Genre
For The Screenwriter; Creating Film Genre's Mental Space.

My PhD Practice-led Project

I began my work at University of Exeter with a clear idea of where I wanted to focus my
studies: film genre. My supervisors provided me with a reading list that greatly expanded
my perceptions and ideas and attitudes concerning film genre, including works by Rick
Altman (1984, 1995, 1999), Carol Clover (1993), Barry Keith Grant (1977, 1986), Jim
Kitses (1969), Raphaelle Moine (2008), Steve Neale (1995, 2000, 2002), Thomas Schatz
(1981, 1983, 1997), Linda Williams (1991) and more. Through my readings, especially
those of Rick Altman, Raphaelle Moine and Steve Neale, I came to the realization that an
understanding of audience reception of film genre is an extremely valuable asset for the
screenwriter and an area that has not been fully explored in a practical manner for those
studying the craft of screenwriting. It was suggested by my supervisors that I seek out
ancillary work in this area and in my readings I came upon the theories of cognitive
scientist Gilles Fauconnier (1985, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2002). His work concerning the
human need to build/ascertain cognitive patterns and cognitive worlds (idealized
cognitive models) led me to thinking about how, in a film narrative, it is important to
build a world that an audience can quickly grasp and engage in – and how film genre
could be one of the more important building blocks in achieving this goal. I focused my
energies researching and extrapolating elements in this area of linguistic philosophy and
believed culled from it important corollaries that can inform the screenwriter-at-work.
Approaches to the task of building a world for an audience to "live in" for 90-120
minutes in a darkened movie theatre or home entertainment setting are of great
importance to the screenwriter and the value of using film genre in efficacious
construction became my paramount interest. This desire led to the question: How does an
author ensure an audience engages in the project as the author intended? I am aware of
the various approaches to the study of authorial intent and want to point out that this work
does not argue against post-structuralist theories, specifically Roland Barthes's "Death of
an Author" (1967) suggesting that the concept linking the author's intent and the author's
biography is not necessarily important to literary criticism or the interpretation of a

specific text - however, my approach is along the lines of Stuart Hall's reception theory (1973); I explore the "intent" of the screenwriter using Hall's theories on encoding material in such a way that an audience (reader) is able to decode the message as the author intended it to be received and in context to the world in which the audience exists. This encoding is done to establish and evoke an emotional reaction and a clear narrative structured to engage, challenge, fulfill and (hopefully) surpass the expectations of a film audience.

In discussing the importance of a clear authorial intent with my supervisors, I was encouraged to explore the work of Hall (1973/1980), Andrew Tudor (1995), Noam Chomsky (2002), Bertrand Russell (1927) and others to explore theories concerning the most efficient encoding and decoding of messages sent and theories concerning group vs. individualistic reception. This research (along with my new role as co-editor of Intellect Press' *Journal of Screenwriting*) seemed to naturally lead to Torben Grodal (1997, 2009), Rapahelle Moine (2008) and others to explore a more targeted look at audience receptions and expectations of specific film genres. Along with my reading lists, I was also given a list of films to view such as the work of Agnes Varda *(The Gleaners* [2000], *Cleo From 5 to 7* [1962]*, Vagabond* [1985]) Claire Denis (*Beau Travail* [1999], *Chocolat* [1988], *Trouble Every Day* [2001]), Sally Potter (*Yes*, [2004], *Orlando* [1992]), Lynne Ramsay (*Ratcatcher*, [1999]), Andrea Arnold (*Red Road,* [2006]) Asif Kapadia (*Warrior* [2001]) Diane Kurys (*Entre Nous* [1983]), Ozon (*Under the Sand,* [2000], *5 x 2,* [2004])*, Water Drops On Burning Rocks,* [2000]*,* Pierre Boileau (*Eyes Without A Face,* [1960]) Akira Kurosawa (*Ikiru,* [1952]), Gurinda Chadha (*Bride and Prejudice* [2004]) and more. The emphasis was on non-American films as my base knowledge of American films was already extensive; these films expanded my base knowledge of a variety of national cinemas and contributed to my understanding of various styles and uses of film genre in film narratives outside the United States.

After completing the compilation of material based on my research and ideas regarding the screenwriter's constructive use of film genre, I undertook the second component of my practice-led PhD final project: writing the first act of three screenplays, all constructed with "classic" film genre components – and written in three different film genres. The perimeters of the experiment: three narratives take place in the same

geographical location, feature a core cast of characters that would be adjusted as each film genres seemed to dictate and feature similar events that would be adjusted as the specific film genre needs dictated. The task was to take into consideration the classic components of each film genre and let those components take precedence in actualizing the script.

The film genres chosen were the western, the horror and the romantic comedy. The reasons for these choices will be discussed in the Pre-Script section (Part #3) of this work.

The writing:

In my professional work as a screenwriter in Hollywood[1], I have been hired to write scripts employing a variety of film genres (among them sci fi, horror, family, adventure, historical), however in my own estimation, the romantic comedy genre was the film genre in which I felt most comfortable. The theatrical plays that I wrote and were produced in New York and American regional theatres revolved around the male-female relationship and featured elements of romance. When I moved into the professional film and television marketplace, I wrote a romantic comedy "spec"[2] script and used it as my calling card. That one script (entitled *Big Sky Romance* and focusing on a young woman, Ellie, in Montana who falls in love with a traveling crop duster, finds out he has duped her by not telling her he was married and ends up, much to her dismay, in charge of his five children while his wife kicks up her heels and avenges the affair…) opened many doors for me in the professional industry; I began to be hired to write projects in the romance and comedy film genres. Among the work-for-hire projects were romantic comedies, family comedies with romance, family comedies, dramatic romances, adventure comedy romances, teen romances etc. When embarking on this task I therefore assumed that the first act of the romantic comedy script would be the "most successful" of the three first act scripts written for this PhD project due to my experience

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[1] See professional resume: Appendix
[2] "Spec" script refers to a script written on "speculation", usually written in hopes of selling it to a producing entity. The writer controls ownership of the material. This is different from a script written on "assignment", a term that means a screenwriter is getting paid from the outset for his/her work (and thus has no ultimate legal ownership of the material, ownership belongs to the entity paying the screenwriter).

working in this genre. In fact, the opposite proved to be the case and this experience was one of the more powerful "lessons" learned from this endeavor. I will go into more detail in the Pre-Script section (Part #3) of this work.

I have set out the above introduction in order to focus the reader on the task that I set for myself and to introduce the genesis of my theories and the basics of my approaches. The following pages will illuminate my research and building of my concepts meant to add to the "screenwriter's toolbox".

METHODOLOGY

As an American screenwriter working in Hollywood for nearly twenty years I have worked in film and television, writing live action as well as animation projects. I resisted categorization of my capabilities or strengths as a writer; I wrote a romantic comedy for Columbia Pictures, drama fantasy for Paramount, a bio-pic for Disney, action-adventure/coming of age scripts for George Lucas' *Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*, melodrama for Aaron Spelling's *Melrose Place*, sci-fi for 20th Century Fox and adaptations of children's literature for Disney, Fox and PBS and others[3]. I jumped into writing in these genres relying almost entirely on the surface knowledge I had gained over years of reading literature and viewing films. Being one who enjoys analysis, even as I worked as a professional screenwriter, I continued studying my craft in classes in the area of story structure – mostly because I never came across classes dedicated to the understanding or dissection of film genre for the screenwriter. To my mind, an analysis of genre was a blind spot in the teaching and writing on the craft of screenwriting. This lack of attention to the question of genre became even more clear to me when I began my academic career and it became my task to instruct students in screenwriting; I recognized this gaping hole in the examination of film narrative – the understanding of film genre and its importance in the craft – and art – of screenwriting. Popular American screenwriting how-to books such as those by Syd Field (1989, 2005), Robert McKee (1997, 2005), Christopher Vogler (1998, 2007) and Linda Seger (1999, 2003, 2010) and others concentrate on structure (the three act structure, the steps of the Hero's Journey

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[3] See Appendix for full professional resume

etc.) and ignore the potential use of film genre in the construction of a screenplay. In my own screenwriting manual *The Rewrite* (2008)*,* I dedicate 40 pages to explication of classic film genre components but do not explore the use of genre during the constructive phase of a screenplay. Neill D. Hicks' book, *Writing the Thriller, The Terror Within* (2002) and Tamara McDonald's *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* (2007) are of use for the screenwriter, but again, do not investigate specifics about using film genre in the construction of a screenplay. I determined to contribute to knowledge in this area and thus undertook this topic for my PhD project.

The key aims of my PhD by practice will therefore build on my desire as both a professional screenwriter and as an educator to focus attention on the importance of film genre in screenplay construction and to break down film genre for the screenwriter so he/she can employ a deeper knowledge of its function and appeal to the film-going audience and, in a practical manner, use this knowledge as a craftsman to conceive and aid in the construction of a screenplay. My focus is American filmmaking, being a national cinema that has embraced film genre from its early days. As film theorists David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson note:

> In the late 1940s André Bazin and his contemporaries started to point out that different sorts of films had standardized their forms and styles quite considerably. Bazin attributed the success of Hollywood cinema to what he called 'the genius of the system.' In (our) view, his phrase referred not to the studio system as a business enterprise but rather to an artistic tradition based on solid genres and a standardized approach to cinematic narration. (Bordwell/ Thompson, 2010:2)

My doctoral research therefore aims to enable me, as a screenwriter (and hopefully other screenwriters in the future) to take advantage of the narrative, emotional and intellectual connections an audience understands about inherent components of film genre. In striving to reach this aim, I will examine what film genre is, the screenwriter's and the audience's reactions to film genre as well as their understandings of various film genres,

and also how a screenwriter can use film genre in a practical manner, both classically and in a deconstructive way.

Genre Theory and History in Film Studies: Literature Review

Film theorist Steve Neale, in his book *Genre and Hollywood* defines genre as "a multi-dimensional phenomenon and that its dimensions centrally include systems of expectation, categories, labels and names, discourses, texts and corpuses of texts, and the conventions that govern them all" (Neale, 2000: 25). Neale suggests that this broad understanding of genre is almost universally accepted by theorists and critics in the areas of film and literature (Neale, 2000:25). There are, however, different schools of thought about the hierarchy of importance of the aforementioned components of genre. Whereas Neale attempts to offer a comprehensive approach that incorporates multiple forms of genre classifications, I intend to be uniquely and deliberately narrow in scope. It is my intention to explore film genre as it pertains specifically to the task of the screenwriter's construction of a film narrative and to propose a working definition of film genre for the screenwriter; in other words to define how a screenwriter can use the functions of genre in creating a film story. Neale, noting a gap in the understanding of film genre and its perimeters and categorizations, supported Rick Altman's observation that: "…genres might serve diverse groups diversely" and that "multiple genre practitioners use genres and generic terminology in potentially contradictory ways." (Neale, 2002:2-4) The recognition of the gaps in film genre study as well as the acknowledgment of the various needs of filmmaking's "multiple practitioners" serve as instigators of my research. In my opinion, the screenwriter needs to approach genre from a wholly unique perspective, more conceptual than empirical, more creational than deconstructive. It is in the ideation stage, in the constructive stage of the narrative that the screenwriter can make efficacious use of film genre and I will explore the "how" in the following pages.

My interest is not the rewriting of genre theories as presented by film study scholars such as Steve Neale (1995,2000, 2002), Rick Altman (1984, 1995, 1999), Barbara Klinger (2003), Thomas Schatz (1981, 1983, 1997) and many others, but to expand on these existing explorations and apply them directly to the practice of screenwriting. I want to examine how film genre can be understood and used as part of

the screenwriter's <u>craft</u> - in the ideation and writing stages of film narrative. Once I have delineated the work on film genre that has come before and pointed out its benefits to the screenwriter, I intend to explore film genre's role in screenplay construction. It is my assertion that a knowledgeable use of film genre theory and an understanding of individual genre histories can aid the screenwriter in his/her abilities in building a script for film production and also in the ultimate examination of the narrative in the rewrite and final stages of the writing process before it is committed to the filming process.

I will also examine how film genre can be broken down into three elements that I have termed the "mental space of film genre" and how a screenwriter can use these elements as checkpoints to measure the efficacy of his/her use of film genre as a screenwriting tool while in the constructive stages of a screenplay.

The Professional Hollywood Screenwriter's Response To Film Genre Study

In June 2009, I fashioned a short survey to investigate my assumption and sent it to a group of 50 feature film screenwriters who have worked for the major Hollywood film studios[4]. 99% of those surveyed agreed that the audience chooses the film it wishes to view primarily because of its marketed genre elements such as movie ads or posters featuring visuals that bring to mind horror or action or romance or other specific genre. (This is also supported in the research of Altman (1995, 1999), Neale (1995, 2000), Grodal (2009) and other film scholars.) Of those screenwriters I surveyed, 50% believed if the film's genre(s) do not deliver on a <u>conscious</u> level, the audience feels dissatisfaction or disappointment. The remaining 50% believed the audience's dissatisfaction or disappointment is felt on a subconscious level. A large percentage of screenwriters surveyed (70%) acknowledged taking classic genre criteria into consideration when approaching new work; 40% of those felt that their naturally accrued knowledge of film and literature gave them a necessary base and were disinclined to study genre from a more technical aspect. A larger percentage (60%) felt the need for deeper understanding of specific genre criteria (such as the eight steps of romance (Selbo, 2008:51), the expectations of the mystery genre, the western genre, the melodrama and so on) when tackling new work in a specific genre. Only 20% of all screenwriters surveyed

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[4] See Appendix

felt that in absolutely no situation would they take into consideration genre criteria when approaching their creative endeavor because, in doing so, they might endanger their individuality and originality. The survey was an initial step in an attempt to determine the most efficacious use of breaking down genre elements for the screenwriter or other creatives[5] in the filmmaking process (Selbo, 2009).

It is interesting to note that a small percentage of surveyed screenwriters worry too much knowledge may endanger originality. It's important to keep in mind that creativity is often approached from two perspectives. The first is the18[th] century Romantic idea of poetic inspiration - creativity is fabricating something absolutely and irrevocably new from a virginal, intuitive wellspring (Bennett, 2007). An alternate approach is the more normative definition: creativity is essentially the synthesis and adjustment of existing elements in ways that bring about a <u>sense of newness</u>. It is my belief that this latter definition is better suited to the professional (commercial) screenwriter for a variety of reasons: screenwriters cannot live in vacuums, it is their task to not only know the past and present of film literature, but also to stay up-to-date with trends, societal shifts and social dilemmas. I agree with screenwriter Budd Schulberg [6] in his observation " I believe the (writer) should be an artist-cum-sociologist. I think he should see his characters in social perspective. I think that is one of his obligations." (Harrison, 2005:10) Commercial film is at its best when it reflects on and examines themes and mores relevant to contemporary society. Therefore the screenwriter, in order to create something of interest, must reflect what has come before and be relevant to the present. Margaret A. Boden writes: "Creativity is not a single capacity. Nor it is a special one. It is an aspect of intelligence in general, which involves many different capacities; noticing, remembering, seeing, speaking, classifying, associating, comparing, evaluating, introspecting and the like." (Boden, 2003: pp 4-5) By embracing the normative approach of creativity, the screenwriter may point to the obvious - that the startling and marvelous moment of inspiration does not, in most cases, leap out of nothingness. It follows that the more one is exposed to information and innovations, the more opportunities one has to

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[5]The term "creative" is used as a noun and refers to one on the creating side of a film project; usually a writer or director.

[6] Budd Schulberg, novelist and screenwriter: *On the Waterfront* (1954)*, What Makes Sammy Run* (1959)*, A Face in the Crowd* (1957) and more

cherry-pick elements, to revise, manipulate and deeply examine – go beyond the already created – and use the <u>known</u> as a springboard to create the next extrapolation or hypothesis or observation and thus create <u>a sense of newness</u>. In a profession where great lip service is paid to the desire for originality but where a marketplace tends to reward the more familiar, a screenwriter's task often becomes finding ways to make the familiar film narrative (and film genre) feel fresh, novel and original. This may seem paradoxical because the term 'genre film' often refers to a product that has been termed formulaic or imitative. Therefore before examining film genres' uses, it is important to create a common definition/understanding of just what film genre <u>is</u> for the screenwriter.

One way of viewing film genres…

One way of viewing film genres, in simplistic terms, is as <u>types of stories</u> told in the film medium. Film genres have been examined from many perspectives - originally categorized into groups similar to prose and poetry and other broad literary groupings (romance, western, war and others) and gradually relegated to somewhat arbitrary groupings, which may include literary groups but also non-literary groups such as independent, documentary, low-budget and blockbuster to suit the various needs of film historians, film critics, film scholars or film marketers (Staiger, 1997:188; Bordwell, 1989:148; Stam, 2000:14). Film genre studies, mostly focusing on the Hollywood commercial/studio film[7], began to emerge in the early-1950s, though genre, as a marketing tool, had existed before that. Over the years there has been a narrowing of the study towards specific perspectives that has expanded the breadth of interest in the field (Altman, 1999:7-11). However, in my opinion, there are certain limitations to these studies, mostly due to the fact that scholars, out of necessity concentrate their dissections on a canon of existing films. These limitations raise questions regarding one of the initial sparks of the filmmaking process: what of the film narrative that does not yet exist?

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[7] "Genre has always been the prime seedbed of American films. The neo-realists and the European school in general… have usually treated the individual film as a work situated in the history of art, or in the eternity of nature, while (in consideration of) even the most ambitious as well as the most perfunctory American films, it is the pressure of the history of film displayed in genre form that has been the most crucial factor." (Braudy, 1986:18)

What are the constructive elements of film genre, from ideation to polished screenplay that contribute to the clear communication of the storyteller's intent?

I propose that film genre, as it pertains to the screenwriter, refers to <u>an active component in the creation of a screenplay.</u> I will first examine this proposal as it relates to screenwriters in these three areas:

- Film genre's role in the creation of a short circuit of comprehension of narrative intent for the audience
- A film genre's appeal to a particular audience and how the screenwriter can benefit from understanding the reasons for specific audience preferences
- Film genre as a tool in the craft of screenwriting to be used by the screenwriter to reach a targeted audience

Keeping in mind these three components of film genre, I will delineate studies that have been undertaken in these areas, underlining their importance to the screenwriter and then moving on to my conceptions of new approaches to film genre for the screenwriter. Finally I will consider the practical applications of these concepts in screenplay form.

FOUNDATION WORK

Film genre vs. genre film

> The clock has struck thirteen; we had best call in the theoreticians. The more genre criticism I read, the more uncertainty I note in the choice or extent of essential critical terms. (Altman, 1984:27)

To be able to use film genre as an active element in the craft of screenwriting, it is important to identify a practical definition of genre <u>for the screenwriter</u>. There has been a prevalent misunderstanding of the word "genre" for the creative in the film industry, mostly due to negligence of taking into account the vast difference between "film genre" and the often-pejorative term "genre film". As previously stated, one way of understanding "film genre" is to see it as referring quite simply to the <u>type of film</u>

categorized by elements such as locations, themes, iconography and characters as well as certain filmic and story attributes and intentions of the film's creative team (Altman, 1999:20-24). When viewed in this way, there is no qualitative assumption attached to the term "film genre". The "genre film", on the other hand, refers to a close copy or imitation of a known product, in most cases - another film. Neale and Altman have examined the differences between these two terms: Neale points to an accepted reason for the pervasive misappropriation of the term. In his 1986 *Film Genre Reader,* Barry Keith Grant featured this observation: "Genre movies are those commercial feature films which, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations." (Grant, 1986:xv) Neale identifies Grant's definition (which clearly, in my opinion, leans towards an examination of genre films) as the one that, unfortunately, most film critics and genre theorists accepted for many years as a base from which to discuss film genre (Neale, 2000:9). I suggest that this misuse of Grant's "definition" in the eighties contributed to a long-term misunderstanding of the validity of film genre as part of the craft of filmmaking to be used by a producer and director and, most specifically the screenwriter, because in most cases, the initial creative work on a film begins with the writing of the script. It is Altman's broad distinction between film genre and genre film in 1999 that can be of great value to the screenwriter and serve as one of the initial steps on the journey of understanding of film genre.

> 'Film genre' is the type of story, be it science fiction, horror, comedy, tragedy, western or other specific family of story.
> 'Genre film' is a film of lower artistic value due to its unoriginality and close emulation of previous work. (Altman, 1999:20-24)

In considering Altman's definitions, I believe it benefits the screenwriter to consider the distinction between film genre and genre film in relation to film narratives; for example - all westerns exist in the western film genre, but not all westerns are genre films (think, for example, of the groundbreaking westerns such as *The Searchers* (1956, Wr: Frank Nugent, Dir: John Ford) *High Noon* (1952, Wr: Carl Foreman, Dir: Fred

Zinneman) in relation to less originally conceived "B"[8] westerns such as the westerns featuring Buster Crabbe, Hopalong Cassidy or Big Boy Williams as western heroes in a series of films that tracked down the "bad guy" (usually a bank robber or cattle rustler or violent gambler) and saved the day. Likewise all horror films exist in the horror film genre, but not all horror films are genre films. This equation is applicable to romantic comedy, sci-fi, war, action-adventure and all film genres[9]. Therefore, a screenwriter (the person who is often the first creative in the process of filmmaking responsible for the components of and approach to construction of a film narrative) that desires artistic respect, when approaching a story set in a specific film genre, may be wise to consider marrying a fresh perspective on the film genre in order to gain a 'sense of newness' in his or her project.

It is my opinion that there are laudable "genre" films and there are weak and disappointing genre films. Adhering to the semantics that divide the two terms, genre films fall into various categories. The lowest form (and the one least likely to gain artistic respect) is the re-telling of familiar material that does not feature new or original characters, motivations or points of view (most prevalent in "B" westerns or "B" horror or sci-fi films); what Leo Braudy describes as films where the "creator is gone and only the audience is present." (Braudy, 1976:104) Consider the early giant monster "genre" movies. The storylines basically featured a giant monster terrorizing a community or city or nation of humans – the monster was out of control and destructive and man, somehow (through scientific hubris or not paying attention to the environment) helped create the situation of destruction. Examples include *The Lost World* (1925, Wr: Marion Fairfax, Dir: Harry Hoyt) *King Kong* (1933, Wrs: James Creelman and Ruth Rose Dir: Merian Cooper) *Godzilla* (1954, Wrs: Ishiro Honda, Takeo Murata, Al C. Ward), Dir: Ishiro Honda, Terry Morse) and more (James Nintendo Nerd (2008). The storyline and "genre" were set, the fun of these films, at the time of their releases, for the audience was the special effects. In the 1950s there was a series of animal/insect mutation horror films;

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[8] The term "B" movie refers to low budget pictures of lesser artistic quality. Studios originally sent out their "B" unit to shoot a less expensive film to be paired with the "A" film in a double feature; thus the name "B" movie.

[9] Neale notes that film genres are identified in various ways by various genre theorists and lists (and numbers) of major genres vary from era to era. He notes that certain genre attributes are also in constant flux. (Neale, 2000:4)

most reflecting concerns of runaway science, atom bombs and radiation. Examples of these "genre" films include *Them* (1954, Wr: Ted Sherdema, Dir. Gordon Douglas) *Tarantula,* (1955, Wr: Robert Fresco, Martin Berkeley, Dir: Jack Arnold) and *The Fly* (1958 Wr: James Clavell, Dir: Kurt Neumann).

A group of genre films that may garner more critical interest is the "pastiche" category (Moine, 2008: 126) - the popular franchises such as the *Indiana Jones* series, the *Back to the Future* series, the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series or the *James Bond* series. There are also the lampoons (*Airplane!* (1980, Wrs: Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Dir: Jim Abrahams), *Scary Movie* (2000, Wrs: Shawn Wayans and Marlon Wayans, Dir: Keenen Ivory Wayans) *Tropic Thunder* (2008, Wrs: Justin Theroux, Ben Stiller, Dir: Ben Stiller) that feature generic genre elements and plot points exaggerated for humor and perhaps even social commentary. Genre films, no matter the production values, rarely enjoy kudos for narrative excellence at the film industry's requisite awards ceremonies (The Academy Awards, Cannes Film Festival etc.) and rarely gain a high artistic reputation, but their appeal to audiences is often evident at the box office.[10] Genre films, despite lack of critical acclaim, may inexplicably achieve "cult status" due to specific audience reception (McKendry, 2010:164). Those who understand the decision process of financing commercial films as well as the vagaries of film production, comprehend that even "genre films" demand vast amounts of time, energy, talent and financial resources - thus grouping all types of genre films in one pejorative category seems inaccurate. However, no matter their artistic values, it is important for the screenwriter to note that all genre films exist in and employ elements of specific film genres; at its core a film in the horror film genre examines evil and its existence in an ordinary world, a western is set in a specific time frame in a specific area of the American West, a romantic comedy has, at its heart, a journey towards true love. There are many approaches (old and new) to these basic tenets – those films that ape others that have gone before in the film genre are likely to be termed "genre films" – those that have

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[10] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson in the blog "Observations on Film Art " lament the loss of fine directors' talents because of the monetary rewards of doing genre films. It's a "… one for them, one for me…" motto pointing to the promise of Christopher Nolan's work in *Memento* to his less than original work in *The Dark Knight.* (Bordwell/Thompson, 2008; Superheroes for Sale)

instilled a sense of newness in storyline, character motivation and themes simply represent a stellar use of the components of "film genre".

There is value for the screenwriter in Altman's distinction between genre films and film genres, especially in the examination of films that have already been produced. However, the constructive use of film genre that a screenwriter can employ has yet to be fully explored. What, for example, are the unique building blocks of the horror film genre? (Or western or adventure or sci-fi or buddy or…) What areas of film genre need to be examined on a more multifaceted level – areas that go beyond a general definition and beyond the study of a canon of produced films and into an exploration to aid the screenwriter in the creation process? Accepting that certain audiences are attracted to certain genres (Selbo, 2008), what are the audiences' expectations and the reasons for those expectations?

As already stated, one of the key aims of my practice-led PhD project is to examine film genre as a constructive tool for the screenwriter and to identify the elements that can inform the screenwriter in his/her approach to practice. I found the work of many genre theorists and analysts very helpful in this regard. Of great importance to a screenwriter's deeper understanding of film genre is David Bordwell's distinction between mode and genre: mode is the vehicle of delivery (documentary, animation, musical, pornography, short film, television, internet); Bordwell notes that choice of delivery does not illuminate content, whereas film genre is an integral part of the content of the film narrative (Bordwell, 1989:147). Rick Altman's examination of the inclusive and exclusive practice of genre as well as its semantic/syntactic elements contributed to new interpretations of film genre (Altman 1984:6-18). The inclusive practice of film genre refers to a "simple, tautological definition of the genre" (Altman, 1986: 8); all 'true' musicals have diegetic music, all 'true' westerns take place in the American West between 1860 and 1900, all 'true' crime genre films include an investigator – be it an official detective or untrained character set on the task etc. This knowledge can aid the screenwriter in constructing a screenplay through consideration of using or adjusting classical elements in themes and plots. Considering the exclusive traits of specific film genre can also be helpful for the screenwriter; for example classic western themes include examinations of justice and/or personal freedom, classic crime films include

examinations of social justice and/or personal morals. Altman's work on the language (semantics) as well as the structure (syntactic elements) of film genre is also helpful to the screenwriter; for example a classic horror film sets out to unsettle and create anxiety as it explores evil elements in our society thus implementing a structure that is unsettling and meant to keep an audience on edge. A romantic comedy sets out to explore the veracity of true love and classically employs a 'boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back' structure. Thomas Schatz's historical examinations in the early 1980s note the popularity of certain genres in certain socio-political eras. This observation opened new dialogues on film genre (Schatz, 1981:11). I will delve into this area in more detail later in this work, examining how the choice of film genre in various decades of war films or historical films or other genres can relate to current political climates and social mores. John G. Cawelti's ritual approach, the relationship between formula and culture, examined the necessary evolution of genres due to ever-changing cultures and audiences (Neale, 2000: 220-221). The screenwriter, in a constant pursuit of a 'sense of newness' may be wise to consider how classic film genres can be manipulated and/or massaged to bring about a deconstructed or revisionist bent and thus provide a 'newness' to the use of a specific film genre. An example is *Scream* (1996), written by Kevin Williamson; his constant commenting on the horror genre as a horror narrative was in progress deconstructed the film genre and let the audience enjoy the film on various levels – intellectually and viscerally. Likewise the westerns *Unforgiven* (1992, Wr; David Webb Peoples, Dir: Clint Eastwood) and *The Assassination of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford* (2007, Wr: Andrew Dominik, based on novel by Ron Hansen, Dir: Andrew Dominick) deconstructed the classic western by allowing characters to comment on the myths and legends of the American West as the western tale played out. Attempts by film critics, historians and theorists to construct strict genre categorizations induced film analyst Andrew Tudor to argue against "extreme genre imperialism" (Tudor, 1995: 4-10) and ask the question: Is it the attributes of the film that place it in a film genre grouping or is it the intention of the filmmakers? (A horror film intends to horrify, its attributes may vary from film to film, whereas a western has certain attributes and its intentions may vary from film to film.) In calling for a more pliable approach, Tudor applauded film theorist Jim Kitses' assertion: Genre is "…a varied and flexible structure, a thematically

fertile and ambiguous world of historical material shot through with archetypal elements which are themselves ever in flux." (Kitses 1969:63) Neale notes that genre gives the audience "a means of recognizing and understanding" (Neale, 2000:31) – essentially agreeing with Altman's observation in 1984 that film genre is a means to create a short course to narrative comprehension by using familiar and iconic elements that are quickly recognized and understood (Altman, 1984:6). I will examine this observation in more depth later in this work for it is of extreme importance to the screenwriter.

The work of theorists such as Kitses (1969/2007), Will Wright (1975), Laura Mulvey (1975) John G. Cawelti, (1996/2004/2007) Carol Clover (1992), Thomas Elsaesser (1995) as well as Linda Williams' descriptions of body genres (1991/2000) have illuminated patterns and themes of specific genres such as horror, romance, western and melodrama. The screenwriter who understands the classical patterns that have helped shaped audience expectations, is better able to construct or deconstruct elements that will satisfy a film genre savvy audience as well as helping to create a 'sense of newness'. As Steve Neale notes, most films make use of two or more genres; his term for this amalgam is "genre hybrid" (Neale, 2000:51). However, in most cases, one overriding genre will be dominant, the other genres will be supporting the dominant genre and can therefore be termed "supporting" genres (Selbo, 2008:42-43). For example *Casablanca* (1942, Wr: Julius Epstein, Phillip Epstein, Dir: Michael Curtiz) employs the war genre and is supported by the romance genre, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969, Wr: William Goldman, Dir: George Roy Hill) employs the western genre and is supported by the buddy genre and the romance genre. Film theorist Janet Staiger, in her 1997 article in *Film Criticism*, "Hybrid or Inbred: The Purity Hypothesis and Hollywood Genre History" argues that Hollywood films have never been 'pure' (as in implementing a sole genre). A screenwriter, when constructing his or her screenplay, can be aided by recognizing these observations as guiding principles and taking care to fulfill each film genre he/she employs in a film narrative.

These scholars and analysts have completed distinguished and methodical work in the field and simultaneously made obvious areas of film genre study that could benefit from further examination - such as the screenwriter's use of film genre in narrative construction. By understanding the successful use of film genre within the limited format

of a screenplay, the screenwriter is able to include cues that allow the audience to quickly grasp key storyline elements. This thoughtful use of film genre can leave the necessary room for the induction of original narrative, visual, aural, emotional and thematic content in a script designed to serve as a detailed narrative blueprint for the production of a film.

The treatment of a subject matter can vary from comedy to drama; note the difference between two films that explore kidnapping; the western *The Searchers* (1956) and the black comedy written and directed by the Coen brothers' *Raising Arizona* (1987). The former was constructed in the western/drama genres, the latter in the black comedy/crime genres. Another example is the exploration of possession by the devil – *The Exorcist* (1973, Wr: Peter Blatty, Dir: William Friedkin) is built in the horror/drama genres while *The Mask* (1994, Wr: Mike Kerb, Dir: Chuck Russell) is constructed in the comedy/horror genre. One can also compare the intimate *Casablanca* (1942) built in the war/romance genres and *Gone With the Wind* (1939 Wr: Sidney Howard from Margaret Mitchell novel, Dir: Victor Fleming[11]), constructed in the epic/war/romance/drama genres. For clarity purposes, I would like to, at this point, address the use of the term "drama" as it relates to a screenwriter's use of film genre. The word "drama" has been over the years, serving a dual purpose - historically it has been used to refer to any narrative work that was meant for or produced for performance purposes. In film genre terms it has also come to designate a tonal approach to a subject – a drama is, in most cases, an earnest and serious approach to a subject manner (with tragedy (a narrative featuring somber themes and a character that has a tragic flaw that brings about his or her demise and possibly that of an entire society) being another specific film genre at the far end of the serious spectrum) as opposed to a comedy, a genre that manifests a lighter, less serious approach. In this work, I will be using the term "drama" as it relates to film genre.

I want to suggest that for the screenwriter the term film genre, to date, has mainly suggested/reflected two considerations: first a tonal approach (as mentioned above either comedy or drama) to the narrative and character delineation (traits considered light and comic or traits considered serious and/or possibly tragic), secondly film genre has contributed guidelines in the plotting of the narrative (as in romance the broad strokes of boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back or as in horror the broad strokes of evil

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[11] Many writers and directors were used on this project; these are the ones that are credited.

force versus hero/heroine). I believe there is a possibility for a third, more cogent approach, and in the following pages I intend to illuminate these possibilities by evoking the concept of what I term the 'mental space' of film genre.

Genre and literary theorist John Frow writes that genre "gets a certain kind of work done" (Frow, 2005:14). In my endeavor to substantiate this notion for the screenwriter and to understand how this observation could be of use in the construction of a film narrative, I began my research. In consultation with Professor Susan Hayward at the University of Exeter, my idea emerged of how a screenwriter might build a 'mental space' for an audience by drawing on the codes and conventions of film genre. Professor Hayward suggested I develop this notion in my doctoral research. In my readings, I came upon a theoretic construct presented in the area of linguistic philosophy called the "idealized cognitive model" (Fauconnier 1994:8). In the 1990s, cognitive scientist Gilles Fauconnier proposed the idea of mental space corresponding to possible worlds in philosophy. Possible worlds are not exact but close – or faithful representations - of the world as it is assumed to be or might be (Fauconnier, 1994:xi, forward by Lakoff). The main difference between a mental space and a possible world, they assert, is that a mental space does not contain a faithful representation of reality, but is an idealized cognitive model of a possible world. I submit that 'idealized' in this context does not have a qualitative (good or bad) connotation but is used to mean 'imagined' or 'imitative', as in Aristotle's assertion in his *Poetics* (335 BC) that successful narratives are "imitations" (mimesis) of life – stories taken from life but structured to contain a certain beginning, middle and end and actions throughout to keep the narrative moving forward (Tierno, 2002: 13). Extrapolating this idea in relation to feature films (my concentration is on feature filmmaking in the United States), it can be argued that a film is not a complete world - but, to borrow Fauconnier's term, an idealized cognitive model (an "ICM"). This theoretic construct suggested correlations that could be of benefit to the screenwriter's understanding of film genre.

Film Story as a 'Mental Space' or 'Idealized Cognitive Model'
Components of film genre of practical use to the screenwriter

I want to propose that the screenwriter, in each screenplay, constructs a specific universe for specific characters suited to bringing out distinctive storyline elements and thematic threads and discards other "real world" elements that could distract the audience from narrative and thematic comprehension. For example, the ICM (mimesis) constructed for the film adaptation of the Mario Puzo novel, *The Godfather* (1972, Wrs: Mario Puzo, Francis Ford Coppola, Dir: Frances Ford Coppola), focuses on Michael (Al Pacino) and his initial reluctance and ultimate decision to engage in the family business, the Mafia. Other areas of the protagonist's life that would create a more complete 'possible world' (hobbies, friendships from his military service, relationships to his children, daily machinations of existence) are not examined in the film at all and other areas of his life such the relationship with his wife, time spent in exile in Italy etc. exist only as they pertain to the understanding of Michael's change and trajectory to power in the crime 'family'. These ancilliary illuminations of character are not necessary to the story, thus are not parts of the idealized cognitive model necessary to tell the story of this coming-of-age crime drama. Likewise the ICM of *Casablanca* is limited to an exploration of two areas of the life of Rick (Humphrey Bogart) – his nightclub/café that serves as a gathering place for multi-national refugees displaced by the war and his obsession to understand a woman's romantic feelings for him. Full delineations of other areas of his life (his home, his hobbies, his past in America etc.) are not necessary (or as Aristotle points out in *Poetics,* desired) in order to most fully comprehend the intended narrative, thus are not part of the "idealized cognitive model" of this war drama.[12]

> ICMs are matched to the world in complex ways. What counts here is only the idealized assumption that, in a given situation and for a given match-up between elements and real-world objects, the space fits or does not fit the situation, in the sense that the objects have or do not have the properties assigned to the space elements associated with them.
>
> (Fauconnier, 1997:68)

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[12] Both of these feature film examples are adaptations: *The Godfather* from the Mario Puzo novel and *Casablanca* from the play by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison. It would be an interesting future project to compare the ICMs created by the original authors in these other formats to the ICMs created for the film adaptations, however, this exercise is beyond the scope of my doctoral thesis.

Fauconnier purports that people achieve (or try to achieve) an understandable model of a circumstance by constructing a mental space using long-term schematic knowledge - a recognizable structure such as a boxing match or a tea party or funeral - and long-term specific knowledge - the individual's personal memory/experience of events such as a boxing match or tea party or funeral (Fauconnier/Turner 1994:1-3). In transferring these ideas to the examination of film genre, I propose an examination of the mental space (the components that add up to an idealized cognitive model) a screenwriter can build using film genre: the schematic (or structural) knowledge as it is applicable to the frame of a film (the film genre) - and the examination of specific knowledge as it is applicable to an audience member's personal memory that aids in experiencing a specific film genre. These two components are part of the Fauconnier ICM that I believe can be extrapolated for film genre study.

Just as Fauconnier investigates the use of language in order to understand the meanings of why sentences/thoughts are understood in a unique way, the *film* can also be approached in this manner. Fauconnier's assertions that "Meaning in everyday thought and language is constructed at lightning speed. We are not conscious of the staggering complexity of the cognitive operations that drive our simplest behavior." (Fauconnier, 1997: i) can also be used to look at how a film's meaning is perceived cognitively by the audience.

I would like to add another component to the idea of the mental space of the ICM, one that would relate specifically to the construction of film narrative: relevant knowledge. This component relates to the social and ideological milieu of the contemporary audience and takes into consideration the use of film genre to generate a sense of currency in the approach to the film narrative. I intend to use this to explore Thomas Schatz's observation in his book *Hollywood Genres*, "…any genre's narrative context imbues its conventions with meaning. This meaning in turn determines their use in individual films..." (Schatz, 1981:10). For clarity: Mental space goes beyond Schatz's concept of *spatial context,* which refers to conventionalized settings or locales or generic milieus of specific film genres (Schatz, 1983: 67). An example: A story focusing on the organized crime underworld is usually set in an urban setting, with a community of

characters that are easily identifiable by their sociopathic traits. This is the *spatial context* of this subset of the crime genre. The western is likely to take place in the western area of the United States between 1860 and 1900, in territories not yet under the federal umbrella, where "the fastest gun" settled most disputes. The spatial context is, however, not interchangeable with the idea of the *mental space of film genre*, for spatial context only pertains to physical location. Mental space refers to an imagined narrative/diegetic 'world' and I propose for this PhD, a 'world' that includes the plot, characters, location, themes, genres etc. of an entire film narrative.

In the sections that follow, these three areas - schematic knowledge, specific knowledge and relevant knowledge - will be dissected as they relate to film genre so as to gain maximum insight into how a screenwriter's approach to film genre can be active and aid in the creation of the screenplay.

Mental Space of Film Genre
Breaking down components of film genre for the screenwriter

> Every film is unique. Production and promotion are therefore governed by the need to recognize and celebrate difference as well as by the need to reuse capital assets and to recycle and signal the presence of tried and tested ingredients. **(**Steve Neale, 2000:4)

SCHEMATIC KNOWLEDGE
Film genre as the frame of the film; the first step in the creation of a short circuit of comprehension of narrative intent

Traditional film narrative has evolved over more than a hundred years of filmmaking and in its most successful guise, presents itself as a system of visual and verbal clues – a puzzle, if I may – where puzzle pieces are buried in scenes and sequences and are revealed to fit within a certain story frame as well as reveal character and plot. I suggest that the film's frame (the opening and closing and interior framing using genre specific

scenes) is its overriding genre, be it comedy, tragedy, romance, mystery, western, action or adventure, thriller or other film genre.

> …subject matter is the weakest criterion for generic grouping because it fails to take into account how the subject is treated.
> (Robert Stam, 2000:14)

Film theorist Robert Stam's observation supports the need to understand film genre's purpose for the screenwriter. Because a story can be told using a variety of film genres – drama, comedy, horror western and so on, the choice of film genre, as discussed previously, is of paramount importance to the screenwriter due to its inherent ability to comment on the narrative. I will explore this in more detail later in the section of <u>relevant knowledge</u>.

Stanley Solomon remarks on film genres' structural elements, "… the defining aspect of a genre is a certain mythic structure, formed on a core of narrative meaning found in those works that are readily discernible as related and belonging to a group" and allow "identifiable narrative patterns (to) develop from a core of ideas…" (Solomon, 1976: 3) In other words, the identifiable genre patterns <u>frame</u> unique story elements and thematic threads, thus giving shape to an incomplete (but seemingly complete) model, an ICM. Thus the concept of film genre as a framing element of an impressionistic story puzzle (the screenplay) may be helpful to the screenwriter who understands that an audience does not need (or desire) a realistic moment-to-moment enactment of a character's journey, only <u>impressions</u> of that journey (enough to build a recognizable ICM) that allows for narrative comprehension and audience satisfaction of the story.

> People tend to think of screenplays the way they think of novels. In truth writing a script is much more like writing poetry. The form and structure are paramount, and the goal is to convey as much information as possible in as compact a form as possible... (Screenwriter Terry Rossio[13], 1997)

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[13] Rossio, Terry: *The Mask of Zorro* (1998), *Shrek* (2001), *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003, 2006, 2007) and more.

As noted previously, Altman observes that film genre allows for a short-circuiting of narrative comprehension (Altman 1984:8). This refers to the viewers' rapid understanding of the cues implanted by the screenwriter – cues such as framing that allow the audience to determine if the film story is a romance or a western or sci-fi or fantasy or war or other film genre. Altman's observation falls in line with Fauconnier's point that most persons have an ability to recognize features present in nature and are able to conceptualize these features and "relate them to other aspects" of life (Fauconnier 1997:19). Extrapolating on this observation, one can reasonably suggest that persons are also able to recognize features present in art and literature and assess them in relation to one another and subsequently form groupings of particular features. Fauconnier refers to this ability to recognize structure as schema induction (Fauconnier 1997:103), noting that the recognition is not merely a list of properties, but an integrated schema that accepts certain variations and rejects elements that do not belong in the frame. Fauconnier points out that this schematic induction (ability to perceive a framing) - though one of the mysteries of cognition - is so commonplace that it is taken for granted. One could point to the works of literary theorist John Frow and film theorist Thomas Schatz to corroborate this author's idea of the importance of the schematic component of the mental space of genre; Frow notes that the genre framework constitutes the <u>unsaid</u> of texts, "…one way of understanding both the cognitive and the textual processes involved in the supplementation of given information by this broader frame of background knowledge is through the concept of schema." (Frow, 2005: 83) Thomas Schatz writes, "A viewer's familiarity with a genre is the result of a *cumulative process…"* (Schatz, 1981:11). Therefore, I suggest that it may be beneficial to the screenwriter to assume that the film-viewing audience raised in a culture where films are readily available for viewing in the commercial theatres as well as on television, computers and home-viewing devices, has garnered a sense (conscious or unconscious) of the framing device of film genre, and are able to accept certain variations on the frame but will ultimately reject films that do not, in some way, satisfy a perceived category. If, using the results of my survey of 50 Hollywood screenwriters[14], one accepts that audiences desire film genre satisfaction - a

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[14] Page 3-4 in this paper

screenwriter may be advised to take into consideration inclusion of elements that satisfy film genre categories.

I would like to provide technical examples to further elucidate the framing process of film genre and highlight how it has been used in produced films, as a short circuit to narrative comprehension. I shall attempt to do this through a series of case studies that follow over the next ten pages. Here I will take specific films that, in my opinion, make good use of a sense of schematic (framing) the narrative with film genre elements and in doing so, keep the integrity of the "type of" narrative (film genre being a "type" of film as noted before using Altman's definition) on track. Noting the less than desirable position of using examples of produced films that have been shaped by a collaborative team (writer, director, producer, actor etc.) where the screenwriter's initial work may not be absolutely clear, I will begin with a broad example of framing and move into specifics in the scripting process. Perhaps one of the most recognizable frames is that of the popular action genre - a film genre that, invariably, uses as an element of its framing an opening chase or action sequence to alert the audience to the type of film they are about to view.

Quantum of Solace (2008, Wrs: Paul Haggis, Neal Purvis & Robert Wade[15], Dir: Marc Foster) is the 22nd James Bond film and the first screenplay for a Bond film that was not an adaptation of an Ian Fleming novel. The narrative quickly demonstrates the action genre as its overriding genre and clearly frames its narrative accordingly (Arroyo,

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[15] Proper crediting format per WGA, the "&" indicates writing team

2000:vii-xiv). The film opens with a two and a half minute action sequence and, at its conclusion, employs a nearly six minute climactic action sequence. Interspersed in the produced film are nine other action sequences that vary in length (twenty seconds to three minutes) totaling approximately twenty-seven minutes. Action scenes and sequences make up nearly thirty-six minutes of screen time. The film runs nearly one-hundred-and-two minutes (without the requisite Bond credit sequence), leaving approximately seventy minutes to fulfill the narrative needs of plot and character explication. The supporting genre of *Quantum of Solace* is the crime genre, a genre that calls for a set up of a criminal act, complications of execution and/or deduction of the act and a strong antagonist that is not only intent on carrying out the criminal act but that will serve as a worthy opponent of the protagonist (in this case James Bond). *Quantum of Solace* devotes sixty-three minutes of screen time to the crime genre (set up and complications and final outcome of the crime). The remaining seven minutes of the film serve to reveal connecting character, emotional and thematic threads; two somewhat motherly scenes where M (Judi Dench) worries about Bond (Daniel Craig) where the question of trust (a thematic thread) is discussed as well as a scene where Bond connects on an emotional level with Camille (Olga Kurylenko) due to commonalities of personal betrayals (relating to the thematic issue of trust) in their pasts. The action genre frame is not only manifested at the beginning and end of *Quantum of Solace* but also internally as scenes focusing on the crime and personal/emotional conflicts are themselves framed by action sequences.

    How does the use of action sequences as a framing device in this action film relate to narrative comprehension? Perhaps the most obvious is character elucidation; the opening action sequence introduces James Bond as a man who moves fast; he is fit, resourceful, fearless, cool under pressure and indomitable. Another element is pacing, the

audience is quickly informed that this narrative will move at breakneck speed (often an expectation of the action genre). Locales are also important; for example in the action/international crime genre hybrid, exotic locations are requisite; the audience expects (and enjoys) globetrotting. Given that action films attract male viewers (Meagher (2003:3-4, Oliver 1993: 315-342) the relatively short emotional scenes framed by action sequences assure the targeted audience that 'feelings' will be minimally explored; this film will be more like a carnival ride than a session with a mental health specialist. Within moments of the opening of the film, the audience comprehends the type of film they are about to view and enjoy the experience of the familiar as they expect (hope for) original components in the narrative.

Further examples of framing (use of schematic knowledge) as a technical tool for the screenwriter will focus on two classics included in the American Film Institute's list of Top 100 Films (2007) – *Casablanca* (1942)*, The Philadelphia Story* (1940). The choice of films was determined by the expectation that these films are widely known so as to make the examples quickly understood.

CASABLANCA

(1942), written by Phillip Epstein & Julius Epstein and Howard Koch, directed by Michael Curtiz

The opening of the dramatic *Casablanca* is clearly <u>framed</u> in the war genre at the outset of the screenplay and at its conclusion. The war genre is also used internally to frame supporting genres, most specifically the romance genre.

Opening of film:

> *Insert – A revolving globe. When it stops revolving it turns briefly into a contour map of Europe, then into a flat map.*
>
> *Superimposed over this map are scenes of refugees fleeing from all sections of Europe by foot, wagon, auto and boat, and all converging upon one point on the tip of Africa - - Casablanca.*
>
> *Arrows on the map illustrate the routes taken as the NARRATOR describes the migration.*
>
> > *NARRATOR (V.O)*
> > *With the coming of the Second World War,*
> > *many eyes in imprisoned Europe turned*
> > *hopefully, or desperately toward the freedom*
> > *of the Americas…*
>
> *Casablanca* (1942:1)

The Academy Award winning script continues, highlighting the dramatic desperation of war refugees' intentions of finding a safe haven away from war-torn Europe. The screenwriters build the opening sequences (using maps, images of strong military presence in Casablanca, anxious refugees angling for transit papers in outdoor cafes, military police shooting a criminal with false papers) to set the war genre schema. Ex-patriot Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart), the main character, is not mentioned until page ten of the screenplay and does not appear until page eleven, nearly ten minutes into the film. He is referred to as a man who does not take sides in the war. The supporting

genre (romance) does not present itself until page thirty-four when Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman), Rick's former lover, enters Rick's Café. Despite *Casablanca*'s position as number one on the AFI List of Most Romantic Films, it is interesting to note how the overriding genre (war) dominates the narrative - the romantic desires and decisions are continually weighted in regards to a world at war. Even the lovers' guarded, subtext-filled exchange when meeting again for the first time in Rick's Café stays in the war schema.

The exchange is set up by Police Captain Renault (Claude Rains); he is intrigued to discover Ilsa has known the mysterious American, Rick, before his arrival in Casablanca.

> RENAULT
> *I can't get over you two. She was asking*
> *about you earlier, Rick, in a way that made*
> *me extremely jealous.*
>
> ILSA
> *(to Rick)*
> *I wasn't sure you were the same. Let's see,*
> *the last time we met—*
>
> RICK
> *It was "Le Belle Aurore."*
>
> ILSA
> *How nice. You remembered. But of course, that*
> *was the day the Germans marched into Paris.*
>
> RICK
> *Not an easy day to forget.*
>
> ILSA
> *No.*
>
> RICK
> *I remember every detail. The Germans wore gray,*
> *you wore blue.*
>
> ILSA
> *Yes. I put that dress away. When the Germans*
> *march out, I'll wear it again.*

Casablanca (1942:46)

In the final moments of the film, the
audience awaits Rick's decision: Will he
choose romantic gratification with a
woman he deeply loves or a re-
connection with a world -- which means
taking sides in a world war. Rick clearly
chooses the re-connection, again
reflecting the overriding genre, war.

> *Rick*
> *We'll always have Paris. We didn't have, we'd*
> *lost it, until you came to Casablanca. We got it*
> *back last night.*
>
> *Ilsa*
> *And I said I would never leave you.*
>
> *Rick*
> *And you never will. But I've got a job to*
> *do, too. Where I'm going, you can't follow.*
> *What I've got to do you can't be any part of.*
> *Ilsa, I'm no good at being noble, but it*
> *doesn't take much to see that the problems of*
> *three little people don't amount to a hill*
> *of beans in this crazy world…*

Casablanca (1942:122)

Casablanca consistently remains on Top Ten Lists of best films ever made. Using the
war genre as a <u>frame</u> enables this film to stand out from other romances that did not (do
not) tackle relevant issues of the time (such as war). In recalling Solomon's remarks on
film genres structural elements noted previously, I suggest the use of film genre as a
framing element in a screenplay allows the screenwriter to encode impressions of the
story (enough to build a recognizable ICM) that allow for the audience to comprehend the
intent of the narrative. Using film genre scenes or sequences to frame sections of
narrative can help orient the audience as to tone and purpose (as in using war genre
scenes/sequences to give perspective to the love story in *Casablanca*). Such a way of

thinking about and analyzing the use of genre by the screenwriter in *Casablanca* thus relates directly to the research of my PhD project.

THE PHILADELPHIA STORY (1940)

Adapted by Donald Ogden Stewart from a play by Phillip Barry
directed by George Cukor

Romantic comedy is, obviously, a blend of two genres: romance and comedy. The components of the romance genre rely on the acceptance on the primacy of the couple, of the belief in or desire for true love (McDonald, 2007:13). The components of the comedy genre center mostly on a lighthearted or ironic view of human existence, focusing on foibles, flaws and sometimes exaggerated physical and mental "pratfalls" (Dirks, accessed 2011). Due to romantic comedy's long heritage and recognized specific components, it is often considered a film genre in its own right. Romantic comedy, a film genre that struggles to gain respect from film analysts (McDonald, 2007:7-8) often examines the idea of "true love" and "soulmates". The origin of the idea of soulmates is credited to Plato; in Plato's philosophical play *Symposium,* the character of Aristophanes presents this idea*:* humans originally consisted of four arms, four legs, and a single head with two faces. Zeus feared their power so he split them in half, condemning humans forever to be "in search of their other half". (Jowett, 2001) The "other half" is often related to the idea of a soulmate – the person who "completes" another person; in other words the person who makes up for what may be lacking in temperament (such as passion, freeness of spirit or other trait thought desirable in a well-rounded and appealing person). The idea of 'fitting together' is explored in many romantic comedies. Genre theorist Tamara Jeffers McDonald writes, "…the basic ideology of the romantic comedy is the <u>primary importance of the couple</u>." (McDonald, 2007:13) The pursuit of love (and even better, the pursuit of <u>true</u> love) must be paramount in a romantic comedy. The comedy element must be evident, but it is secondary to the romance.

> A romantic comedy is a film which has as its central narrative motor a quest for love, which portrays this quest in a light-hearted way and almost always to a successful conclusion. (McDonald, 2007:9)

The opening of the Academy Award winning screenplay overtly frames the romantic comedy genre. The <u>couple</u>, relatively recent newlyweds are in a personal war. Tracy Lord (Katharine Hepburn) ejects her husband C.K. Dexter Haven (Cary Grant) from their home, tossing his bag of golf clubs at him, setting up the break-up of a romance/marriage.

Dexter responds with a gentlemanly but firm flat hand to Tracy's face that causes a comical upending of her arrogant sense of entitled dignity (literally and figuratively). The seriousness of the romantic situation is evident; the comedy is evident.

Screenwriter Donald Ogden Stewart frames the comedy and a "troubled romance" in the opening scene. He moves the screenplay narrative quickly to a year later to reveal the still unbending and judgmental Tracy, a woman who expects her own personal perfection and absolute perfection in others is still in pursuit of being part of a perfect couple (she is about to be married again and wedding preparations are in progress). This pursuit of the perfect marriage will be difficult because intelligent, beautiful Tracy cannot accept faults in others, she expects (and demands) people "be perfect". Dexter is charming and caring but he does have flaws; he doubts himself, drinks too much at times (it is insinuated that this reliance on alcohol may be <u>because</u> he is afraid of never achieving the perfection Tracy expects). However, Dexter has the ability to understand the human condition; that people are made up of strengths <u>and</u> weaknesses, and he celebrates this condition. He also has the ability to forgive - something that Tracy is incapable of doing. <u>Because</u> of their differences (their ability to complete each other) the audience understands these two people <u>should</u> be together. However, Tracy is about to marry a social climber (romantic comedies often examine social hierarchies and movement between upper and lower classes, rich and poor, educated and non-educated etc.). This social climber is the annoying "working man" George (John Howard); he worships Tracy- he wants to keep her on a metaphorical pedestal and worships her. The romantic comedy framing is evident throughout the narrative – action sequences and comedic sequences are consistently preceded and followed by scenes examining the importance of love, the ability or inability to love and what constitutes "true love". Also the supporting stories feature romance or romantic problems between Tracy's mother and father, the reporters who arrive to cover the society wedding, Tracy's uncle's flirtations, and Tracy's younger sister's fascination with all that concerns love. And finally - all comes to a happy conclusion as Tracy experiences a maturation (part of the supporting coming of age genre) and understanding of "true love" when the "fiancé-we-love-to-hate" takes umbrage with Tracy for a perceived imperfection. Finally, reflected in his misguided judgment and arrogance, Tracy sees her own weaknesses. Tracy calls off the imminent wedding allowing for another quick proposal from Dexter and a second exchange of vows between the now wiser and more forgiving Tracy and her "soulmate" C.K. Dexter Haven. The external and internal framing of the narrative by romance genre driven scenes

or comedy driven scenes or romantic comedy driven scenes help to assure the audience that the tone and narrative will deliver to their expectations. The schematic framing evident in the above examples, *Quantum of Solace, Casablanca* and *The Philadelphia Story* serve, in my mind, as support for the research of my PhD project that is focused on ways a screenwriter can use film genre in the constructive stages of the writing of a screenplay.

Summing up the schematic knowledge component of the mental space of film genre; the creation of a short circuit of comprehension of narrative intent for the audience

The use of the schematic component of the mental space of film genre to frame narratives is evident in classically structured screenplays, especially in the opening and closing sequences. For example, classic westerns (one of the genres I will be using in my series of first acts that will form the practical part of my submission) are often framed by the "stranger" entering a small western community – and then departing at the end of the narrative. This stranger either brings justice with him (he is then, most likely, the hero), or is bent on destroying the thin stronghold of justice in the community (he is then, most likely, the villain). These schematic uses help to fulfill the expectations of the audience – an audience drawn to westerns because of narratives that often explore the conflict between the West as garden and as desert, between culture and nature, community and individual (Kitses, 1969). The schematic choices used in the framing of classic horror films are also familiar; the threat of an evil force is often introduced in the opening

sequences and thus alerts the audience to the type of narrative they are about to experience. It is equally important and of benefit to the screenwriter to understand that internal framing is also important – the use of scenes and sequences in the overriding genre to frame narrative threads (as in *Quantum of Solace)* or to frame scenes in the supporting genres (as in *Casablanca, The Philadelphia Story)*.

The schematic component of the mental space of film genre can therefore be grasped relatively easily and should moreover be considered an important and practical implement in the screenwriter's craft. The notion of external and internal framing (schema induction) of scenes and/or sequences with film genre help to assure the audience that the tone and narrative will deliver to their expectations. Connecting this notion to my PhD research and my practice as a screenwriter suggested new approaches to the construction of a screenplay and in the practice-led section of this PhD project (Part #4) I will explicate how these approaches came into play.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Film genre as a touchstone for audience recognition

There are at least two types of audiences: real and intended. The real audience is anyone who reads or perceives the author's message and the intended audience is the target group that the message-sender has in mind as he creates (Chandler, 2000: 1-3). Commercial films are designed to attract a paying audience; these viewers obviously vary in age, temperament, and preferences, social and economic positions. Therefore the task of constructing a story that appeals to everyone is not only daunting and constricting but, in most cases, undesirable and - I would argue - impossible. It is reasonable to assume, for example, that a sci-fi film based on a video game may not appeal to a middle-aged female whose passion is romance novels. Likewise, a teen comedy may not appeal to all sectors of the population. Therefore the screenwriter, when choosing to pursue a narrative and creating the characters to inhabit that narrative's idealized cognitive model (ICM), must consider embarking on the task of identifying his or her intended audience.

As important as any relationship happening between characters on screen
is the relationship between protagonist and audience. (Rossio, 1997)

Terry Rossio, co-author of *The Pirates of the Caribbean* cycle, *Shrek* and other box-office successes is focusing on the empathetic or sympathetic connection of a film character and the audience, thus supporting the idea of the need to build an ICM for the audience. It stands to reason that the understanding of the audience is of equal importance to the understanding of construction of characters. If the characters act in ways that honestly reflect ritualistic or mythic or psychologically understood behaviors and still do not draw the audience into the story - the work of the screenwriter may (will) be deemed unsuccessful. Likewise if the choice of genre does not engage the audience, the film may not satisfy expectations. Therefore how does a screenwriter use what I have defined as the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre to tap into an audience's memories or expectations or deeply embedded needs to ensure there is a connection to a film's narrative or author's intent?

Audience preferences and film production are inextricably linked. As previously noted, Altman asserts, "By choosing the films it would patronize, the audience revealed its preferences and beliefs, thus inducing Hollywood studios to produce films reflecting its desires." (Altman, 1984: 9) Arguably, those "desires" are most often linked to a preferred film genre. The film-goer searching the internet or newspaper for what is playing at the local cineplex or ordering a film for home viewing will, in most cases, choose to view a film that reflects his or her preferred genre. The film-goer, as previously proposed, is cognizant (consciously or unconsciously) of the schematic structures of film genre and has expectations that certain criteria of that film genre will be met, whether it be horror, sci-fi, romance, fantasy or other genre (Selbo, 2009). Therefore an exploration of other elements of the construction of a satisfying ICM - <u>apart from the schematic (internal and external framing of scenes or sequences with film genre elements) -</u> are also important.

Genres do not consist only of films: they consist also, and equally, of specific
systems of expectation and hypothesis that spectators bring with them to the

cinema and that interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process. The system provides spectators with a means of recognition and understanding. (Neale, 1995:160)

Instructional texts on screenwriting, to date, tend to focus on internal elements of the screenplay. Texts have extrapolated work by social scientists such as Sigmund Freud (1856 -1939), Bronislaus Malinowski (1884 -1942), Joseph Campbell (1904 -1987) and their explorations of social interaction through interpretations of rituals, dreams and myths and how they might be used in the creation of a film story. These how-to-write-a-screenplay books (I have written two that are regularly used in universities and film schools[16]) advise usage of these social studies in order to aid in the creation of believable and unique characters. What, in my opinion, needs more examination is an external element - the desired reactions of the potential audience. How does a screenwriter encode into his or her narrative the elements that will evoke memories of experiences or visceral connections that erupt from past associations to enhance a link to the audience? This encoding relates to the building of the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre.

The author's intent

In his examinations of the effect of media in the area of Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall explores the traditional *sender-message-receiver* process that is part of the cultural or creative text being transferred from production to consumption by focusing on the transfer of the author's intent. Hall believes that when the author (the sender) successfully encodes the message he or she intends to send, the audience decodes the message in the way the author intends it to be understood (Chandler, 2000: 1). Hall notes that this dominant (successful) encoding occurs when the author's "preferred reading" of the media text is what the author intends and the audience receives (Hall, 1980:1). However, Hall notes that not all receivers (audiences) will read the text as the author prefers because of variant social situations and backgrounds. He calls this variant reading

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[16] Selbo, *Screenplay, Idea to Successful Script*, 2007, Garth Gardner Publications, Washington D.C., London and Selbo *Screenplay: The Rewrite*, 2008, Garth Gardner Publications, Washington D.C., London

the "negotiated" reading of the work. An "oppositional" reading is also possible – an occasion where the audience's social position may put them in direct conflict with the preferred reading. Hall asserts that although there are limits to group interpretation, the understanding of meaning in a text cannot be totally individualistic due to similarities in environmental conditions such as location, education, and accepted religious and social mores (Hall 1980:135). This brings to mind film theorist Andrew Tudor's work in *Film Genre III*; Tudor comes to a similar conclusion concerning film audiences, asserting that each culture assesses films in different ways <u>as a group</u>, therefore he suggests that strict genre "rules" can never be completely functional (Tudor, 1973:3). Bertrand Russell differs in his assessment of audience perception preferring the idea of individualistic perception (Russell, 1927:137); "What I see, no one sees, what I hear, no one else hears; what I touch no one else touches and so on". Russell acknowledges that experiences may be <u>similar</u> (depending on social perimeters and age), but they remain individualistic. This suggests - in simple terms for the screenwriter - that the film story is always " in the eye of the beholder". This becomes evident in a perusal of an assortment of the yearly awards for top films; some are compiled by critics and some are compiled by industry professionals such as writers, directors and actors such as the Golden Globes, the Academy Awards, the BAFTA awards as well as the Directors Guild of America (DGA), Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and Writers Guild of America (WGA) awards. There are also lists compiled by diverse bodies of audiences such as the People's Choice Awards and Audience Favorites Awards at various film festivals. These lists rarely feature the exact same films. One must take into consideration that metropolitan areas with diverse populations are more likely to embrace, along with widely released studio films - a broader variety of product such as experimental, edgy, ethnic, controversial or artist-driven films. Mainstream films tend to dominate in less populated and less sophisticated areas because access to alternative fare may be limited, thus leaving tastes uncultivated or unsatisfied. Therefore it is evident that the voting by the audience for "audience favorites" is rarely based on an even playing field.

Although Russell, Hall and Tudor differ on the extent of individual perception (Russell believing in total individualization, Hall and Tudor believing in collective interpretation that must also account for "local" variants amongst collective audiences

and individual spectators) all leave room for potential audiences to be distinct and to experience the film story in a distinct manner. Therefore it is of paramount importance for the screenwriter to build the specific knowledge component of mental space of film genre by encoding his/her message (story and themes) with exemplary clarity in hopes to maximize the possibility that the author's intent is clear and successfully communicated. Screenwriter Steven deSouza[17] notes:

> You must keep in mind you're always writing for the reader first, not the movie audience that will see the collaboration (on the screen) of 200 people a year later. (Iglesias, 2001: 141)

Because the first hurdle on the track to production is the reader (be it a film or development executive or director or actor or financier), and that reader needs to acknowledge the production and marketing potential of the script, it is the task of the screenwriter, using only the words on the page, to bring the reader to the most common possible experience (dominant decoding of the screenwriter's intent) of the story. What role does film genre play in this communicative task? How does the screenwriter use film genre to make a strong and effective connection with the reader (the initial audience of a screenplay, be it a film or development executive or director or actor or financier) so as to increase the likelihood of successful connection (empathetic or sympathetic) to the film narrative, without aid of a soundtrack, specific actors and filmic visuals. Editor and novelist Gordon Lish pointed out, "It isn't what happens to the people on the page – it's what happens to the reader in his heart or mind." (Iglesias, 2001:139)

Screenwriter Ron Bass[18], in an interview in *101 Habits of Highly Successful Screenwriters* notes:

> You definitely write a script knowing that someone is going to read it… I communicate intent to the reader, who may be the studio executive, the director, or the actress... what you say between the lines helps the reader

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[17]Steven deSouza, screenwriter: (*48 Hours* (1982), *Die Hard* (1988) *Blast* (2004) and more
[18] Ron Bass, screenwriter: *Rain Man* 1988), *Stepmom* (1998) *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1999)

get the idea and the feeling of the atmosphere of what's going on, compensating for the fact that you're not watching the movie. (Iglesias, 2001:139)

To help explain the above points, I propose an example: in using Fauconnier's idea of long-term schematic knowledge (the audience's knowledge of as well as the audience's expectations), Writer A (Betty) is considering writing a screenplay in the horror genre. She understands the audience, when choosing to view a horror film, expects an examination of evil, expects being "played with" psychologically and physically - experiencing a disturbing, unsettled, anxious state of being. The long-term <u>specific</u> knowledge Betty may expect a reader/audience to bring to the experience might include a memory of psychological or physical danger- or fear of the unknown. Perhaps a memory of abuse or fear of abuse - or fear of being alone or even more specifically, a creaking closet door, a power-outage, a strange noise in the middle of the night that activated the imagination <u>and caused, most importantly</u>, a specific knowledge (memory) of a rapid heartbeat, dilated lungs, the formation of goosebumps as a defense mechanism and the adrenalin released to allow blood to the muscles for the "fight or flight" impulse. All human beings are designed to experience fear, some enjoy it and seek the rush; others avoid it. Science writer David Meyers in the American Psychological Society magazine *The Observer* states: "We fear what we cannot control, we fear what's immediate, and we fear what's most readily available in our memory" (Meyers, 2005). The specific knowledge the audience brings to the horror film - and <u>desires</u> in a horror film - is a re-enactment of a <u>physical</u> memory. These clues to the audience's psyche inform the screenwriter, Betty, regarding the *mental space* of the horror genre. She would be advised to take these clues under consideration and build scenes or sequences that would activate memories of fear, memories of lack of control or power or security, memories of feeling helpless and vulnerable, memories that instigated a strong, mostly negative, physical responses. The screenwriter is, essentially, imagining a targeted audience and using the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre to build an ICM for that audience.

As a side note, it's interesting to consider Alfred Hitchcock's attempts to shape

the audience's reaction to 1960's *Psycho* (written by Josef Stephano based on a novel by Robert Bloch and directed by Alfred Hitchcock). When the film was first released, Hitchcock asked theatre management not to let anyone into the theatre after the beginning of the film because he wanted to control the audience's decoding of what I term the mental space of genre - he wanted them to be deep into the "sleep of the film-going experience" (Hitchcock's terminology) so that when the horrific scenes eventually played out, the audience would be primed to experience the adrenalin rush created by the sudden excitation of 'fear'. Another way to describe Hitchcock's ploy (whether it was for marketing or purely artistic reasons) is that Hitchcock was deliberately building an ICM for his audience; each frame, scene and sequence was designed to activate certain sensations in the audience (such as the feeling of anxiety that is endemic to successfully encoding the horror genre). The script thus reflects the building of the mental space of the horror genre: In the opening action lines of the film, the tension of frustrated illicit desire and destructive discontent is presented even as the film lured the audience into "the sleep" of the dark theatre and the passive role of the spectator; "The very geography (of the seedy side of town with transient hotels) seems to give us a climate of nefariousness, of back-doorness, dark and shadowy. And secret." (Stefano, 1960: 1) The screenplay suggests the camera <u>peep</u> into the cheap room. The screenplay suggests there is a sense of heat and airlessness - that flies buzz around egg salad sandwiches and into the faces of the lovers. The mental space of the film genre is being built by (encoded by) the screenwriter with description of images that relate to a specific knowledge of the reader (in this instance the first reader was, presumably Hitchcock) and gives that reader the opportunity to imagine visuals (shots, camera angles, pacing etc.) to successfully decode the intent of the screenwriter.

The study of the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre can also be further explored by the recent work in audience cognition.

> Because films engage mental processes, cognitivist film theorists have looked to theories of normal human cognition and emotional response to help account for the experience of cinema. (Hampton, 2006:150)

Film theorist Torben Grodal explores developments in neuroscience and cognitive science in relation to narrative theory and film theory as they relate to the audience's experience of cinema. The breakdown of his PECMA model (perception, emotion, cognition and motor action) focuses on the flow from the film audience's perception of a filmic situation or intent and experiences an emotional activation and/or cognitive processing that results in a physical (or motor) reaction. Grodal strives to explore the reasons for audience preferences in film genre and narrative by keeping in mind the accepted theories of evolution (not just physical but mental) as well as human predilections "embedded in our cognitive DNA". (Grodal, 2009:5) Grodal notes critics of his work (he lists Asbjorn Gronstad, Tico Romao, Christer Mattson among others) point to what they see as an overly psychological/cognitive approach to film theory – projecting their opinion that the more 'filmnost' approach (a Russian term for close textual and piecemeal production analysis) is a more appropriate domain for film studies (Grodal, 2006:1). I would like to submit that Grodal's work is of great interest to the screenwriter – and the fact that as the study of screenwriting itself is one of the newer areas in film studies – it is fortuitous that his work in film audience cognition as it relates to film genre is now available.

In Grodal's exploration of the key aesthetic phenomena in an audience's experience of film, he points out that it can be understood only in relation to the brain's way of processing information from the screen; "…our eyes and ears pick up and analyze image and sound, our minds apprehend the story, which resonates in our memory; furthermore, our stomach, heart and skin are activated in empathy with the story situations and the protagonists' ability to cope." (Grodal, 1997:1) Using research in a variety of sciences, Grodal makes his case: Each person is not self-created, there is a DNA heritage specific to the evolution of physicality as well as to emotions and even a deeply embedded heritage of thought (Grodal, 2009:5). Referring to Fauconnier's work on mental space, Grodal asserts that films utilizing narratives in the action genre quickly create a strong connection to the audience due to working on long-term memory. For example, the popularity of the hunter-versus-hunted scenario in action, crime and horror genres can be traced to early man's need to battle beastly predators as well as human enemies for survival. Grodal supports the theory that the 'fight or flight' impulse is not

being learned in the <u>real</u> time of one human life, but it is an impulse embedded in human nature due to oft-repeated experiences of previous generations; "When we watch a film, our heart rhythms change, we sweat, and our muscles alternately tense and relax throughout… These bodily changes are linked to emotional reactions that also play a central role in memory, cognition and consciousness." (Grodal, 2009:4-7) This research might be used to partly explain the popularity and financial success of the action genre; franchises featuring the action genre, such as *Star Wars, Indiana Jones* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* are among the top grossing films of all time.[19] Eight of the USA's top ten grossing films in 2007 were in the action genre and seven out of ten in 2006[8]. The popularity of this genre (especially when narrative and character elements are also successful) speaks to the audience's desire to experience increased heart rate and the adrenalin rush as well as identify with a protagonist who is able to overcome great odds. It is a rare action/crime genre film that does not revolve around a successful protagonist who bests the "bad guy". Whatever the final outcome of the narrative, Grodal's research seems to support my PhD research, pointing to the fact that the screenwriter is wise to consider the importance of building the mental space of the action film genre in his or her screenplay in order to satisfy the expectations of the audience. In relation to an unsuccessful "righting of wrong" or an unsuccessful capture of "the bad guy" it is interesting to take into consideration Raphaelle Moine's work in her book *Cinema Genre;* she points to the audience's desire for a sense of reassurance (comfort) as a desired narrative component, noting the audience's penchant for reaffirmation of "normative social values." (Moine, 2008:74) The screenwriter may choose variations on the protagonist's reaction to achieving his/her immediate goal - such as a sense of personal renewal or increased self-esteem or increased social standing (*Die Hard* (1988, Wr: Jeb Stuart, Dir: John McTiernan) *Gladiator* (2000, Wr: David Franzoni, Dir: Ridley Scott)

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Box Office Mojo: 2007 top grossing films in the USA: *Spiderman 3, Shrek the Third, Transformers, Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, I Am Legend, The Bourne Ultimatum, National Treasure: Book of Secrets, Alvin and The Chipmunks, 300.* Wikipedia list of top grossing films in the USA 2006: *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest, The DaVinci Code, Ice Age: The Meltdown, Casino Royale, Night at the Museum, Cars, X-Men: The Last Stand, Mission: Impossible III, Superman Returns, Happy Feet* (accessed August 8, 2009) (www.movieweb.com/movies/boxoffice/alltime.php)

The Bourne Identity cycle (2002, 2003, 2009), *Alien* (1979, Wr: Dan O'Bannon, Dir: Ridley Scott), *Salt* (2010, Wr: Kurt Wimmer, Dir: Philip Noyce). Alternately, the screenwriter may opt to explore a duality: the protagonist may experience a lack of personal gratification (romantic or social) in order to follow socially accepted mores (law and order) or become doubly cognizant that criminal tendencies and/or evil will always exist and his or her recent success is only one small - perhaps even insignificant - triumph against social disorder. Examples are the sci-fi action film *The Matrix* (1999) written and directed by Andy and Lana Warchoswki, *L.A. Confidential* (1997, Wr: Brian Helgeland, Dir: Curtis Hanson) and *Chinatown* (1974, Wr: Robert Towne, Dir: Roman Polanksi).

My research into the use of the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre seems to also connect to Grodal's examination of film genres in relation to the innate (embedded) attraction of those genres to the audience. He uses research in brain chemistry to examine why film stories exploring physical and emotional security appeal to children, pointing out that attachment "is linked to two estrogen derivatives, oxytocin which influences the bonding of mothers and babies, and vasopressin, which influences male parenting behavior." Grodal's point is that an audience who seeks to activate feelings in this area will support films that explore parent/child bonding (Grodal, 2009: 27), thus connecting again to my research examining how the screenwriter can make use of the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre. It is interesting for the screenwriter to note Hollywood films in the recent decades presenting narratives that explore this attachment between parent and child enjoyed high grosses in their initial domestic releases - films such as *Lion King* (1994), grossing nearly $318 million, *Monsters Inc.* (2001) grossing nearly $256 million, *Spy Kids* (2001), grossing nearly $113 million, *Finding Nemo* (2003), grossing nearly $340 million, and the successful *Harry Potter* cycle, each of the first six films (2001 - 2009) grossing between $250 million and $317 million in their first one hundred days of release (Imdb, accessed July 29, 2010, grosses reflect initial USA releases.) Taking into consideration Grodal's observation that family films featuring a narrative about parent/child bonding do strike a chord with the audience, a screenwriter might consider this information when plotting the initial narrative that falls into the 'family' genre (one that appeals and is appropriate to a young (ages 3-12) teen (ages 13-19) and adult (ages

20-90) audience. Grodal also explores the romance genre. He notes the evolutionary reasons for emotions connected with sexual or romantic desire. The romance genre is often a supporting genre in many screenplays (top action films such as the *Bourne* cycle (2002, 2004, 2007), *Pirates of the Caribbean* cycle (2003, 2006, 2007) and *Indiana Jones* cycle (1981, 1984, 1989, 2008). Many crime films feature a romance line (a "B" or "C" supporting story) as do horror films, war films, westerns and other genres that have strong appeal to the male audience. This points to the deep-seated human desire for intimate connection whether it is for survival, for procreation, for status, or for self-esteem. Grodal also notes (and this is important for the screenwriter) how the longing for love forces action and conflict, two components at the base of most successful screenplays. Grodal asserts that pitting the female's desire for long-term bonding - and her use of negotiation to achieve that end - against the male's acceptance of anonymous (or at least non-bonding) sexual relations, is an immediate discord that fuels much of the romance genre.

In looking at Grodal's work in relation to other proscriptive writers on the craft of screenwriting, one can find sympathetic comparisons. Lajos Egri (1888-1967), author of the highly regarded and widely used text *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, notes that it is not enough to know the attitudes of characters, it is of utmost importance to know the why – why the character is as he or she is (which could be extrapolated to a consideration of Grodal's notion of 'cognitive DNA'), what drives a character from within (Batty, 2010: 294). In addressing the issue of creating characters, Egri writes, "We have found that every human being consists of three dimensions: physiological, sociological and psychological. If we make a further breakdown of these dimensions, we shall perceive that the physical, social, and mental make-up contains the minute genes – the builder, the mover in all our actions which will motivate everything we do." (Egri, 1960: 89) Another popular screenwriting how-to text is former film development executive and now screenwriting guru Chris Vogler's *The Writer's Journey; Mythic Structure For Writers* (2007) based on the work *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (1949) by noted anthropologist and mythologist Joseph Campbell. Campbell's book maps his monomythic "Hero's Journey", work that writer/director George Lucas cites as seminal in his building of the screenplay *Star Wars* (1977, Wr: George Lucas, Dir: George

Lucas). Campbell was a strong believer in the unity of human consciousness and made it a goal to prove, despite environmental and educative and tribal variances, the similarity among all human beings: the monomyth that all humans create for themselves and attempt to live by. Campbell writes: "…[t]he unconscious sends all sorts of vapors, odd beings, terrors, and deluding images up into the mind – whether in dream, broad daylight, or insanity; for the human kingdom, beneath the floor of the comparatively neat little dwelling that we call our consciousness, goes down into unsuspected Aladdin caves." (Campbell, 1993: 8) Vogler adapts the Hero's Journey to aid screenwriters in the use of mythic structure and in the construction of characters that embody universal archetypes. Vogler notes that the surface of a human being may present itself in a multitude of ways, however the subterrain is always universal (Batty, 2010: 295). Vogler, adapting Campbell's ideas to the craft of screenwriting, supports the idea that humans share a universal understanding of goals, fears, tensions, and desires. He notes that if a screenwriter creates for the audience a story that connects them to one or more of these universal elements, the chances of his or her screenplay satisfying an audience are increased. Egri's focus is not on illuminating film genre but on illuminating the need for writers to consider the deep desire of characters. Vogler's focus is not on film genre but on the use of Campbell's ideas on the monomyth and the universality of character archetypes. These are excellent sources for the screenwriter in the area of character construction and in 1999, Hollywood screenwriting guru Robert McKee brought some of these ideas together, "…the archetypal story unearths a universally human experience, then wraps itself inside a unique, culture-specific expression…" (McKee, 1999:4). These writers (along with other how-to-write-a-screenplay coaches and film theorists) have provided some of the groundwork for Grodal's explorations; for examples, McKee writes that while the protagonist may be unaware of his subconscious need, the audience senses it (McKee, 1997:138). What is important for the screenwriter is that Grodal is working more specifically in the area of film genre, noting that types of stories (film genres) and the types of characters that inhabit specific film genres are important elements in creating a meaningful and relatable experience for the audience. Whether or not one accepts Grodal's evolutionary theories, it seems that certain stories employing certain film genres have a deep affect on the audience that tends to seek out certain experiences (physical

and psychological) that stimulate or comfort and thus connects to my interest in the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre.

Raphaelle Moine examines the audience's interaction with film genre from a different viewpoint. "For some (theorists) genre expresses the desires, aspirations and beliefs of the audience; for others, conversely, genre is a repressive structure of ideological containment that shapes and formats its viewers." (Moine, 2008: 71-75) When exploring the former option one might ask: if genres are expressing for the audience, what is it that the audience wants expressed? Grodal might point to bio-chemical satisfaction (identifying with characters in a love story, thus experiencing a rise of endorphins) or a desired physical reaction (rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath in a thriller or action or horror film) or a longing for a deeply embedded 'DNA' connection (connection with a mothering instinct or a survival determination or desire for an understanding of the universe or a desire for immortality or fear of death etc.). Moine's latter option points to the audience's desire for the comfort that follows when experiencing a reaffirmation of "normative social values" (Moine, 2008:74). This relates to Altman's assertion that "film genres are functions for their society" (Altman, 1999:26) by suggesting an audience's primary desire is to connect with a story that reflects and supports personal beliefs about how the world should function. Thus the criminal is punished (the traditional crime genre), the most deserving woman wins the man's affections (the traditional romance genre), the naïve or misguided character comes to understand the world in a more profound way (the traditional coming of age genre) and so on. (One can also point to the way that the screenwriter can use genre to subvert rather than reaffirm, and I will explore this notion more fully later in this work when examining Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964). Moine also notes the neo-Marxist theory that musicals and adventure films "are genres of evasion" and allow the audience short-term consolation due to experiencing a " break from reality". In this context, we must ask if the screenwriter should ponder whether he or she wants to use film genre to console or offer hope or reassure or stimulate a bio-chemical or physical desire of the audience? Would these musings be beyond the normal purview of the creative? Certainly there are screenwriters who set out to inform, such as David Seidler in his Academy Award winning coming of age drama *King's Speech* (2010) that explored the emotional and

physical challenges of stutterers. Academy Award nominee Lisa Cholodenko's aim was to shed light on social systems (parenting in a homosexual relationship) in her dramedy *The Kids Are All Right* (2010, Wrs: Lisa Cholodenko, Stuart Blumberg, Dir: Lisa Cholodenko). What of a version of *Finding Nemo* (2003) featuring a storyline where father and son are not reunited, physically or in an understanding of a parent/child relationship, thereby implementing a film genre change from family/coming-of-age comedy/adventure to family/tragedy/adventure? What of a version of *E.T.* (1982) where the alien child does not have the opportunity, against all odds, to "go home", thereby implementing a film genre change from family/coming of age/adventure to family/tragedy/adventure? The careful use of film genre dictates how to approach the specific knowledge component of film genre (memories of feelings that certain genres evoke) and, in my consideration, have much to do with the audience appeal of a film. Film theorist Leo Braudy points to screenwriters/directors such as Francis Ford Coppola and Brian De Palma and their penchant of exploring Catholic rituals (objects and status) in their film narratives and characters, "…(their work is) linked to an effort of making a visual style a mode of moral exploration, an almost priestly urge to re-educate the audience in the timelessness and ritual stories, along with the attitudes necessary for their reinterpretation" (Braudy, 1986: 17-28). Braudy seems to be suggesting that the impulses of Coppola and De Palma are to approach the audience in an instructional manner. If so, one might wonder why Coppola and DePalma choose to explore these rituals using (in most cases) the crime genre – such as in Coppola's *The Godfather* cycle (1972, 1974, 1990), *The Conversation* (1974) and De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980), *Blow Out* (1981) and *Body Double* (1984). Is this using film genre to subvert, to question? Is this one of the roles the screenwriter, consciously or unconsciously, embraces when choosing the overriding genre of a narrative? These writers have a targeted audience and purpose in mind and have used the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre to appeal to those audiences. Examining this component relates directly to the research I undertook in my PhD project and for my professional work as a screenwriter. It therefore seems valid to consider that writers who build stories aimed at appealing to the specific knowledge of film genre of their targeted audience are maximizing their screenwriting tools.

Summing up the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre

The task of the screenwriter is, in most cases, to create a feeling of satisfaction by using the schematic knowledge and specific knowledge of film genre of the audience. While building satisfaction, the screenwriter also wants to strive to gain a sense of closure of the narrative without providing a "by-the-numbers" or predictable plot line. It is the journey that must be original, it is the characters that must feel fresh and new and contemporary while at the same time connecting with expectations of the audience. The outcome may surprise but at the same time, it needs to satisfy. Understanding the specific knowledge component of the mental space of film genre and using it to appeal to a targeted audience can benefit the screenwriter in the construction of a screenplay.

The specific knowledge of the audience is an important element in the construction of the mental space of film genre and includes the understanding of the desired emotional or intellectual experience that draws an audience to a specific genre. It also addresses the importance of personal memories and/or experiences that an audience member brings to the circumstance of reading and/or viewing of a film story of a specific film genre. My PhD research (and my practice as a screenwriter) is further enhanced by the notion that the efficacious encoding of the overriding genre and of supporting genres can enhance the audience's decoding of the intent of the narrative. In the practice-led section of this PhD project (Part 4) I will explicate how these approaches come into play.

RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE

The use of film genre to address currency and targeting audience

Howard M. Harper Jr., in *Trends In Recent American Fiction,* proposes that literature can exist only in relation to a culture and that culture sets limits on its form and content. (Harper, 1971:1) The screenplay, I believe, is specifically married to this precept, because it aims to appeal to an audience at a certain time and place. I intend to explore the factors beyond choice of director or casting or production techniques and even story structure to examine the importance of the use of <u>relevant knowledge as a component of film genre</u>

when building a film narrative. I will examine why certain film genres at certain times will strike a chord – subconsciously or consciously – with a contemporary audience.

Literary scholar John Frow, in his book *Genre*, agrees with theorist Ann Imbrie's insight, "…genre is defined 'by the way it expresses human experience (subject matter) through an identifiable form (formal character) that clarifies or discovers the values in or attitude toward that experience (generic attitude).'" (Frow, 2005:73) Extrapolating from this observation, one could observe that a comedy expresses a specific point of view regarding a situation or subject and focuses on a specific kind of character that is either exaggerated or buffoonish where as a film narrative constructed in the drama genre focuses on a subject and characters that tend to be explored in a more realistic or tragically heightened manner. Comedy often investigates the irony or outrageousness or silliness of societal or personal expectations of community or self. An example: One of the most popular films of 1959, *Some Like It Hot* [20] (Wrs: Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond, Dir: Billy Wilder) puts forth its comedic point of view of America's prohibition (1920-1933), New York gangland mobsters and falling in love. These subjects could have been explored in dramatic fashion, such as in *Scarface* (1932, Wr: Ben Hecht, Dir: Howard Hawks). The chosen genres fit the times; in 1932, America was in a financial and (some would say) moral decline, the prohibition of alcohol created criminals and often villains. In 1959 prohibition was long over, there was a nostalgia for the "Roaring Twenties" and America had enough distance from the hard times of the 1920s and 1930s to enjoy a comedic tale set in the mob world. Therefore *Scarface* spoke of its specific era to its specific audience just as *Some Like It Hot* spoke to its specific audience.

Rick Altman observes that one of the tasks of the film critic is to use genre to inform viewers on the content and veracity of films as support systems of approved social practices, as "functional for their society" (Altman, 1999:26). This can be extrapolated to the concerns of the screenwriter who, in most cases, wants to ensure the film narrative relates to and reflects concerns and interests of the contemporary audience, for example: the melodramatic women's picture enjoyed a high popularity when women did not enjoy

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[20]*Some Like It Hot* (1959) is #22 on American Film Institutes Top 100 Films of All Time
http://www.afi.com/100years/movies10.aspx

certain freedoms or sense of equality or opportunity (Schatz, 1981:222), science fiction tends to be popular when governmental domestic and international policies threaten a society (science fiction became very popular in American in the 1950s, during the uneasiness that followed the discovery and use of the atomic bomb (Sanders, 209:10). Thomas Schatz points out that genres, instead of pandering to an audience, support the formulation of collective values and ideals and even contribute to American folklore (Schatz, 1981: 11).

Noam Chomsky, in his book *On Nature and Language* writes: "Each internal language has the means to construct the mental objects that we use to express our thoughts and to interpret the limitless array of overt expressions that we encounter." (Chomsky, 2002:48) I would argue that the use of symbols, iconic images, specific places and time make up an internal language that aids in the art of storytelling and also has an ability to lend a multitude of layers to the machinations of plot and character. I suggest that film genre can also be considered part of the internal language of film, it can silently speak to the audience while helping shape a narrative.

Three components that can help build a sense of relevancy in film genre

As noted previously, Margaret A. Boden writes: "Creativity is not a single capacity. Nor it is a special one. It is an aspect of intelligence in general, which involves many different capacities…" (Boden 2003: pp 4-5) She lists "noticing, associating, introspecting and the like." I believe that by considering these three rather broad components in specific relation to the construction of a screenplay a screenwriter can begin to examine the relevance of a film genre to a contemporary audience.

Noticing: Without noticing the evolution of standards and moralities in societies the screenwriter may be in danger of producing work that is out of touch with a contemporary audience. One may point to the recurring themes, emotions and deeply imbedded heritage of thought (Grodal, 2009:5) such as a desire for love and family that has served as the base for decades of film narratives. However, even in these (for the most part) universal desires, there are societal evolutions such as in courting rituals, expectations of marriage and roles in a relationship, acceptance of sexual preferences, the construction and acceptance of family dynamics due to proliferation of divorces and re-

marriages and other social institutions. The standard of 1900 varies from the standard of 1950 from the standard of 2000 and so on and apply to most (if not all) deep-seated human desires such as love, respect, adventure, justice, survival and so on. Therefore the art of noticing is of paramount importance to a screenwriter with hopes of ensuring a construction of work that embraces a sense of currency. I propose that a deliberate choice of film genre (attune with deliberate choice of characters, location and plot points) during the construction of a film narrative may aid the screenwriter in addressing current social climates and help to more fully engage (and in some cases, challenge) an audience. One can point to two films, both released soon after the Cuban Missile Crisis during the American/Soviet Cold War of 1964: *Fail-Safe*, based on a novel by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler and adapted by Walter Bernstein, and *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* based on a novel *(Red Alert)* by Peter George and adapted by Stanley Kubrick and Terry Southern. *Fail Safe* was constructed in the melodrama genre, its tone somber and serious. The film narrative examines the lives of government officials who have responsibility for or connection to the problematical "fail-safe" devices that could unleash an atomic attack. Columbia Pictures had high hopes for this film in terms of box office and awards; it was topical, it had the requisite star casting and the serious drama genre, sprinkled with social commentary that had been recently popular (*Days of Wine and Roses* (1962) and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962). However, a few months previous to the *Fail-Safe* opening, Columbia released *Dr. Strangelove* – it too was based on a serious, melodramatic narrative of accidental atomic war - however, Kubrick (as screenwriter), recognized an absurdity in the novel's primary situation – that of two super powers helmed by fallible leaders with world-ending atomic power at their fingertips (Ford (2007). Kubrick and Southern invented a new character named Dr. Strangelove to add to the mix and constructed the story in the black comedy/satire genres. By doing so, the irreverent and sinister comedy spoke to the contemporary audience perhaps exhausted by fear mongering, fallout shelter advice and feeling powerless to control their destinies. *Fail-Safe* (which features remarkably similar war room scenes and situations to *Dr. Strangelove,* written and produced, in its case, with dogged seriousness[21]) failed to gain traction at the box office (Imdb, accessed July 2011)

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[21] Peter George won a plagiarism lawsuit (settled out of court) against the *Fail Safe* production company.

or in the yearly round of award ceremonies. *Dr. Strangelove* garnered Academy Award
Best Picture and Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay nominations. A comparison
of these two films is just one example of how the choice of genre may forge a new
creative currency that will sharpen and enhance a film narrative and increase its appeal to
a contemporary audience.

John Frow points out that "within the constraints of a particular generic frame, a
much larger structure of meaning which is not 'contained' in what the text explicitly
says" can be communicated (Frow, 2005:77). As in *Dr. Strangelove*, the cautionary
melodramatic source material was transformed into a darkly satiric film that spoke to a
contemporary generation. It stands to reason the screenwriter could be well served to
implement careful choices of overriding and supporting genres[22] in order to bring fresh
sensibilities and/or significant connotations to his or her screenplay. Noticing changing
mores, social norms and philosophies is an important first step when one is considering
using the relevant knowledge component of the mental space of film genre in the
construction of a screen story.
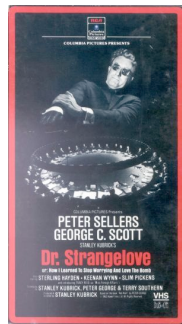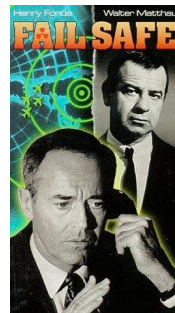
1964   1964

For above everything else, genre is a convenient arrangement of significant
human actions that can be returned to, over and over again, to provide new

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The book the film was claimed to be adapted from (*Fail Safe* by Eugene Burdick (also a screenwriter) and
Harvey Wheeler published in 1962) was deemed to be too close in resemblance to George's novel *Red
Alert* written in 1958.
[22]Overriding genre refers to the dominant film genre evident in a specific film narrative (Selbo, 2008: 42)
As Neale notes, most films make use of two or more genres; his term for this amalgam is "genre hybrid"
(Neale, 2000:51). However, in most cases, one genre will be dominant, the other genres will be supporting
the dominant genre, therefore can be termed "supporting genres" (Selbo, 2008: 43). It benefits the
screenwriter to identify the overriding genre as the dominant frame of the film.

understanding of basic human motivations or needs… patterns are repeated on purpose because filmmakers see, in those first films of a genre, latent possibilities for the reinterpretation of human conduct in archetypal situations. (Solomon, 1976: 7)

In exploring Solomon's theory that audiences identify and respond to repeated patterns but are desirous of re-interpretations that bring about a sense of newness, it is important for the screenwriter to examine subject matter <u>and the use of specific film genres</u> in relation to the contemporary audience's experience of the world. It is interesting to examine the original *King Kong* and its two "remakes". Raphaelle Moine, in her book *Cinema Genre* makes mention of the 1933 *King Kong* (Wrs: James Creelman, Ruth Rose, Merian Cooper, Dir: Merian Cooper) and how it constructs itself around a double displacement of the Great Depression. (Moine, 2008:76) I decided to dig deeper into three versions of the *King Kong* story (1933,1976, 2005), to see how the various constructions regarding the mental space of film genre contributed to the productions and relative success of the endeavors. In the 1933 telling, the heroine, Ann (Fay Wray), attempts to steal an apple to stave off hunger. Privileged and arrogant filmmaker Carl Denham (Robert Armstrong), in search of an actress for his latest film, witnesses the incident and convinces the grocer not to have Ann arrested. The social danger (the arrest as well as society's lack of humanity) is averted for the moment; the audience is momentarily assured there is safety in the kindness of strangers. But not for long – Ann soon realizes she, and eventually Kong, who represents the once strong and mighty now headed for destruction, are but pawns on the "bigger chessboard" where greed and power hold dominant positions. The film story evidenced its relevancy to the Depression era, the politics of the day and its society with metaphorical allusions to super powers' tentative hold on domination and how personal egotism can endanger the general populace. Considering Moine's work that I detailed previously, the choice of constructing this story in the adventure and fantasy genres mesh with her theory that musicals and adventure films "are genres of evasion" and allowed the American audience steeped in the woes of the Depression short-term consolation due to experiencing a " break from reality", however still speaking to "its time"

The specific knowledge component of mental space of film genre is set up in the early scenes by depicting the hardships of the disadvantaged during America's Great Depression. The second scene of the film features the selfish Denham putting his personal desires above all else, making it clear that a mere casting problem will not stand in the way of him shooting his film on the far-off island. He plans to go in search of a leading lady:

> DENHAM
> I'm going to bring back a girl for
> my picture – if I have to marry one!

DISSOLVE TO LONG SHOT – BROADWAY AT NIGHT - STOCK

CUT TO:

Denham walking along, scanning faces as he walks.

DISSOLVES of faces of women, Broadway types, bold, indifferent, heavy, ugly - most of them heavily painted.

Rapidly passing, as though the camera were Denham looking them over.

CUT TO:

Denham. He shakes his head disgustedly, stops, wheels around and starts in another direction, as though he's given up that part of town, and thought of another possibility.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR OF A WOMAN'S MISSION

A bread-line waiting. Camera moves slowly down the line of faces as though Denham were looking them over.

CUT TO:

Denham. He shrugs his shoulders in despair, turns away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR ONE OF THOSE SMALL WOODEN STANDS YOU SEE IN THE WEST 40s

A fruit-tobacco and candy shop just big enough for the proprietor and one customer to get into, a stand of fruit and peanut-roaster on sidewalk. Denham comes along, takes out cigarette case, it's empty, he goes in to buy some. We see through window that he is taking cigarettes and paying the Greek proprietor.

Ann Darrow comes slowly into picture; she hesitates, her hand goes stealthily toward a piece of fruit. She is fingering it when the Greek dashes out and seizes her. She tries to pull her arm away. Denham comes out of shop.

GREEK
(very excited)
Ah-ha! I catch you, you stealer! I catch the cop –
you like that, ha!

ANN
(she keeps her head bent,
struggling weakly to pull away)
No-no, I didn't. Please let me go. I wanted to,
but I didn't.

GREEK
I had enough dese stealers --

DENHAM
Oh, dry up. The kid didn't take anything.

ANN
I didn't, truly I didn't.

DENHAM
So, shut up, Socrates. Here's a dollar.
Forget it.

The Greek takes the money and releases Ann who stumbles back against Denham. He catches her round the shoulders and she half-collapses. Her head falls back on his arm. He has his first sight of her face.

CLOSE UP: Ann, her eyes open as she looks up at Denham, terrified.

MEDIUM SHOT: Denham, holding Ann. He looks at her. Suddenly his face lights up, he snaps his fingers triumphantly.

DENHAM
(looking up the street)
Hi! Taxi!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A ONE ARMED LUNCH ROOM

Tiled wall, two chairs. Ann has emptied plate and coffee mug on arm of her chair. Denham in other chair watching her. She sighs happily over having satisfied her hunger, and leans back.

DENHAM
Feeling better?

ANN
Yes, thank you. You're very kind.

DENHAM
Don't fool yourself. I'm not bothering with
you just out of kindness.

Ann opens her eyes wide, half-puzzled, half afraid.

DENHAM
How come you're in this fix?

ANN
Bad luck I guess. There are lots of girls
just like me.

DENHAM
There aren't such a lot who've got your looks.

ANN
(laughing it off)
Oh, I can get by in good clothes. But when
a girl gets too shabby --

Denham asks Ann if she's ever had any acting experience, if she's afraid of adventure, if she wants a job…

ANN
But - but what is it?

DENHAM
(excited)
It's money, and adventure, and fame. It's the
thrill of a lifetime. And a long sea-voyage that
starts at six tomorrow morning.

Ann is faced with a decision: Trust this Hollywood director and sign on for a mysterious adventure or continue to starve on the streets of New York…

ANN
What do I have to do?

DENHAM
(leaning over her chair
and looking straight at her)
Trust me. And keep your chin up.

Ann looks at him for a moment, then he holds out his hand.

She takes it and they shake.
FADE OUT.

King Kong (1933:6-9)

Denham's absolute and myopic resolution to assuage his personal desires (find an actress so he can make his film), despite the state of the world and the danger of his planned film shoot is apparent in his statement:

DENHAM
I'll find a girl even if I have to
marry her.

The down-and-out victims of the economic downturn are introduced and Denham, like a beast, walks among them searching for his the specific prey. There is a sense of social relevancy in Ann's dilemma and the decision she needs to make, just as there is relevancy in the choice of the adventure genre; taking a risk could save this girl – the audience of the times empathizes and understands and perhaps many who are in similar circumstances want to feel that risk and adventure could save them too.

> ANN
> I do want the job so – I was
> starving – but…

Ann faints in Denham's arms. She opens her eyes to see him and is "terrified". This moment is directly mirrored when, on the island, she is held in the palm of Kong. Kong falls in love with Ann and wants to protect her. When one analyzes the film narrative it is clear that rich and selfish Denham is really the monster of the narrative, seeing only what Ann can do for him.

It is interesting to continue this exploration in relation to the relevant knowledge component of the mental space of film genre using subsequent King Kong films. The 1976 *King Kong, The Legend is Born* (Wr: Lorenzo Semple Jr., Dir: John Guillerman) was constructed to take place in the disco era of the 1970s and to reflect the 1970's OAPEC oil embargo that caused an economic crisis in the USA; the reason for the dangerous journey on the Petrox Explorer to remote Skull Island is to find new sources of oil. A hippie anthropologist (Jeff Bridges) stands in the way of the oilman's exploitation in order to protect a one-of-a-kind beast, Kong. (In this adaptation, Kong represents one of the last unique specimens of an increasingly westernized and industrialized (oil-consuming) world.) The poor and hardworking Ann (of the 1933 film story) is replaced by spoiled socialite Dwan (Jessica Lange) who has been set adrift from her yacht and her privileged status. She feels entitled to a continuation of the "good life" despite the fact that her circumstances have changed. The film, again using the fantasy and action-adventure genres, adds a romance line (perhaps in hopes of bringing in the female audience) and a preposterous sci-fi element (the island is covered in a fog of carbon dioxide), a hint of the crime genre (the criminal intent of an evil oil corporation that is not fully realized). Unfortunately the film is full of careless elements and did not perform well at the box office (Mante 2011), but the adaptor's attempts to be relevant and reflect

the perils and personalities of the contemporary world in subject matter – and in film genre choices (adding the sci fi, crime and romance to attract a contemporary audience) - provided a sense of currency to the audience.

The relevance of Peter Jackson's *King Kong* (2005, Wrs: Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Peter Jackson, Dir: Peter Jackson) is, in my opinion, less successful than the mentioned predecessors for a few reasons: First there is a lack of examination of an embedded primal desire – in other words, lack of efficacious use of the <u>specific knowledge</u> of the drama genre for the audience. The characters' primary goals do not concern survival of self (1933 *King Kong*) or saving of the world as they know it (1976 *King Kong*) but focused on a more cerebral and shallow desire, they desire fame. Although this desire reflects the plethora of celebrity magazines and interest in the lives of the rich and famous in the early years of the new millennium, the choice of character goals seems not only disconnected with the decision to keep the story in a Depression-era setting. In addition, this non-primal and non-universal desire cannot connect in a strong emotional way with an audience. The stakes are not high enough, therefore when the audience, when asked to <u>care</u> about Ann (Naomi Watts) or Denham (Jack Black) or the narcissistic playwright (Adrian Brody) – each desirous of fame and vocal about their desires – stay uninvolved because the primal connection is not made.

Secondly, there is also a lack of currency and authorial introspection in relation to its chosen film genres. The genres simply mimic the 1933 version - fantasy and adventure and a weak stab at romance - and do not challenge the audience to examine the story in new ways. The choices to create an ICM set in America's Great Depression era and focus on the fantasy and adventure genres were out of step with the 2005 audience. Fine production values (Jackson's exceptional use of sets, camerawork, computer special effects etc.) cannot make up for the lack of relevancy in subject matter or genre to the contemporary milieu. One is left to ponder what could the screenwriters have <u>noticed</u> about their current world that could have influenced their choices of genre, setting and characters? What are the film genres that would have given a sense of newness, a fresh twist to the familiar narrative?

Steve Neale points out, "… that successful genres gradually lose their effective power through continual reproduction…" (Neale, 2000: 214). The audience, as previously noted, appreciates the familiar but also <u>desires a sense of newness.</u>

1933   1976   2005

In accepting Frow's point concerning genre's ability to lend a "larger meaning which is not contained in what the text explicitly says" (Frow, 2005:77), it is interesting for the screenwriter to explore the notion that if the combination of chosen genres for a narrative reflect contemporary associations, the audience may experience a truth that goes beyond the story told. In other words – a screenwriter, taking into consideration the relevant knowledge component of the mental space of film genre may discover new and fresh ways to approach a narrative, thus employing a normative creativity that has potential to bring originality to the screenplay execution.

In comparison, Gus Van Sant's remake of *Psycho*, although updating the narrative to the present era, does not offer new insights or challenges to the audience. Film critic Roger Ebert notes, "The movie is an invaluable experiment in the theory of cinema, because it demonstrates that a shot-by shot remake is pointless; genius apparently resides between or beneath the shots, or in chemistry that cannot be timed or counted" (Ebert, 1998). Van Sant admitted that it was an experiment, one that proved that no one could really copy a film exactly the same way as the original (Morris, 2002). In my opinion, Van Sant's endeavor falls flat not because of a lapse in Van Sant's skill as a director, but because the audience of 1998 is very different from the audience of 1960. Additionally, there is no 'sense of newness' or fresh currency to the narrative, there is no reflection on the issues and/or acquired knowledge of film genre of the millennium audience. Van Sant

seems to be of the same mind; in an interview on webwombat, he noted that he was considering another *Psycho* remake: "The idea this time is to really change it – we're talking about doing a punk rocker setting. Viggo Mortenson suggested it…" (Morris, 2002). *Psycho*, set in the punk rocker world and with possible re-tooling or additions of film genres could be an attempt to bring more currency to a re-telling of the narrative. Through this section of preparation of my PhD methodology I found this to be an important point garnered from the above case studies: taking into account the fact that film is a communicative tool and that, to garner critical and financial success, must speak to its targeted audience or face commercial disinterest, one can accept that a considerate use of film genres can help reflect the concerns, systems, functions and deep emotional connections that individual viewers desire (and expect) in a film story. As a screenwriter and as an educator, this research into the relevant knowledge component of the mental space of film genre has expanded the series of questions concerning the concerns/expectations of an audience anticipating (consciously or unconsciously) contemporary relevance in a narrative. It is an opportunity to consider if the employment of a certain film genre can aid in that relevancy. These questions can be examined while creating the ICM of the narrative and, I believe, aid in the creation of a screenplay that will attempt to address a current audience.

Considering Solomon's suggestion that film genre can be considered as a structural and convenient arrangement of significant human actions that can be revisited in various eras to re-interpret human conduct in relation to changes in society and accepted morals of conduct (Solomon, 1976:7), it is interesting to contemplate this question: If an overt, aggressive approach is used by the screenwriter to use film genre primarily to illuminate the change in the norms of human or political interaction could the narrative come across as heavy-handed and obvious? Here the craft of the screenwriter must be employed, story and character arcs are to be supported by film genre – and if film genre is the main and or leading component, there is a definite possibility of a film narrative that is out of balance and ultimately unsatisfying.

Associating: The associationist theory is anticipated in Plato's *Phaedo* as part of the doctrine of anamnesis (recollection). However, Aristotle is credited with originating associationist thinking based on this passage:

> When, therefore, we accomplish an act of reminiscence, we pass through a certain series of precursive movements… we hunt through the mental train, excogitating from the present or some other, and from similar or contrary or co-adjacent experiences. Through this process reminiscence takes place... (Beare, 2000)

For the purposes of the screenwriter, the basics of the associationist theory may be adequate: actions, sensations and states of being occurring together or in close connection tend to grow together and are apt to bring up memories and feelings or ideas. Screenwriters have often used association as a short cut in storytelling; consider, for example, visual associations in films such as the baptismal ceremony (associated with rebirth and thus signaling Michael Corleone's rise to power and plans for change) in the climax of *The Godfather* (1972). We might also cite the too-often-used (cliché) visual used in romances - a confused lover observes a tender or affectionate moment between random old or young lovers and experiences an epiphany of emotion. Audio association (use of music or echoing of a phrase, word or sound) is also used as a storytelling tool in films.

In addition to visual and aural cues, a screenwriter may also consider associations generated by the use of certain film genres. Audiences have certain expectations of film genres; the horror genre is meant to examine evil and, in most cases, attempts to elicit anxiety and fear in the audience, a romance typically revolves around potential lovers, a comedy is constructed to elicit laughter, etc. These expectations are associations the audience makes and the screenwriter must take into consideration.

In examining two adaptations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland,* I found that the use of chosen genres and their associative qualities reflect on the audience's reception of the film. The schematic (use of genre as a frame) set up of Disney's 1951 animated telling of *Alice in Wonderland*, the coming of age genre (a maturation that leads to a deeper or new understanding of the world) is framed in the first moments of the film:

Alice is a young girl who is bored with her sister's reading of a book on the History of England and decides she wants to live in a world of nonsense. The fantasy genre (an imagined existence based on no solid foundation, often unrestrained and extravagant and conjectured out of fanciful thought) is introduced when she dreams - she falls "down the rabbit hole" - and encounters characters personifying illogic and lack of reason. At the narrative's end, Alice wakes from her disturbing dream considering the possibility that a nonsensical world is not always desirable (the 'lesson learned' prevalent in the coming of age genre). The adventure genre (a seemingly unattainable goal or treasure is sought against great odds) in the 1951 film is not completely fulfilled; this Alice is given no concrete over-arching treasure to find or real goal to accomplish (other than to eventually find her way out). This film was not received well by critics or audiences and considered a box office disappointment for Disney. Perhaps because the coming-of-age genre by itself is a thin structure and, in most cases unable, without strong supporting genres, to drive a strong narrative and that the nonsensical fantasy is ultimately non-engaging without the goals implicit in the adventure genre. One could posit the 1951 film's lack of box-office was due only to its weak narrative and weak use of base elements of each film genre. However, one might also consider the chosen genres' relevancy to the era and the social and political climate and the 'sensible' American audiences of the time. Many were recently returned soldiers building lives and families using GI loans and others were intent on building the post World War II 'American Dream' through hard work and safe suburban living. 1950s Americans were more inclined to respond to understandable narratives built on understandable actions and consequences. Popular genres of the time, crime/noirs such as *The Third Man* (1949) *Asphalt Jungle* (1950) and *D.O.A.* (1950) where the protagonist waded through a sinister world but the 'bad guy' was revealed and 'taken care of' as well as edgy relationship dramas or comedies such as *All About Eve* (1950) and *Born Yesterday* (1950) explored very realistic problems and situations. Disney's successful release of the straightforward narratives focused on the disadvantaged 'making good', *Cinderella* and *Treasure Island* in 1950, were also understandable to those dedicated to believing in the American dream and fared well at the box office. It is interesting to note that in the mid-1970s Disney's animated *Alice in Wonderland* did find a new audience, mostly American college students experimenting

with altered states that found favor with the animated 'trippy' *Yellow Submarine* (1968) and recognized, in the 1951 surreal *Alice in Wonderland*, similar characteristics. Initially Disney did not want this box-office disappointment or its equally commercially unsuccessful 1940 release *Fantasia* to be associated with an audience embracing the drug culture, however in 1984, when Disney re-released *Alice* and were interested in attracting audiences, the film was promoted as relevant and in tune with the "psychedelic" times (Milliken, 2011).

In contrast, the 2010 *Alice in Wonderland* (written by Linda Woolverton and directed by Tim Burton) is constructed to speak to a contemporary audience. Woolverton, who originated the concept of a post-adolescent Alice going back to Wonderland, noted that her story is an imagined sequel to Lewis Carroll's original; Alice has convinced herself her first experience was a dream and now she discovers it was real (Boucher, 2010:2). The schematic (the framing that helps build the mental space of film genre for the audience) of the overriding genre (coming of age) is set up quickly and clearly: Alice is 19 and about to be engaged to an unsuitable suitor whose father desires the marriage to cement his business plans (he was once business partners with Alice's beloved and now deceased father). Alice's inability to stand up for herself (introduction of the coming of age genre) causes her to retreat to the garden to consider her options. She falls "down the rabbit hole" into Underland and the adventure and fantasy genres are introduced, with an emphasis on the adventure genre. Alice finds that those in Underland hope she will deliver them from an arbitrary and cruel ruler. To do so, Alice must slay the monster, the Jabberwocky (thus creating the goal necessary to satisfy the adventure genre, thus giving an inherent logic to the plot that grounds the audience (addressing their specific knowledge of the emotional goal of the adventure genre) while the fantastical plays out). The drama genre and its promise of putting an "every person" (Alice) into unfamiliar conflict, is also framed and specified. The war genre is also built into the screenplay (the battle-burned villages, the armies, search for weapons of mass destruction, the battles lines drawn by the Red and White Queens and finally the battle, again playing into the audience's schematic knowledge of the war genre). The high caliber of craftsmanship is evident in the screenplay, each chosen genre is fulfilled – the goal of the adventure is achieved by overcoming great obstacles; the war is defined and

fought and also helps bring about Alice's maturation. Alice "comes of age" by stating her belief that she can step into her father's business shoes and thus gains the respect of her father's business partner. The audience of 2010 can employ their knowledge of the chosen film genres (war, coming of age, drama, adventure) for they are familiar with the ideological and functional containments of the genres. Audiences of 2010 also 'feel' (consciously or unconsciously) the sense of currency – or relevant knowledge for they are familiar with on-going wars that, at times, seem convoluted and arbitrary. They are familiar with fear of an 'ultimate weapon' as well as the goal of destroying weapons of mass destruction. They are aware of how contemporary businessmen build strong alliances for power and control and finally, they are aware of the concerns of the contemporary female who must, at times, demand equal consideration in a business world dominated by men. I would argue that the 1951 animated film narrative seems tepid in comparison because it is constructed using only fantasy and coming of age – two genres that need the support of a strong protagonist's specific goal in an strongly structured genre (such a romance or adventure) to drive the narrative. The 2010 adaptation can be used as an example of building a successful ICM by employing an actual fulfillment of the tenets of each film genre in a single screenplay, by artful framing (schematic) and use of the specific knowledge of the audience and how, by considering the relevant knowledge of the chosen genres to a contemporary audience, a screenwriter can hope to construct a more fully realized and innovative work. These findings have been instrumental in the fashioning of my methodology and have been useful in my professional work as well as in the classroom.
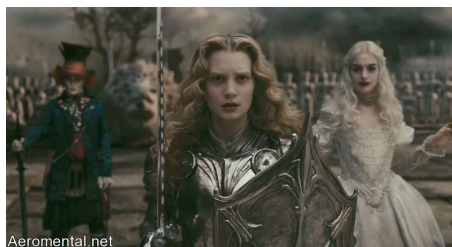
1951   2010

Introspection: It is my opinion that introspection may be of the most important element of the relevant knowledge component in the mental space of film genre.

Focusing on consideration of introspection may help the screenwriter discover personally resonant themes and ideas of the state (and future) of the world, relationships, moralities and societies and bring a sense of originality/newness to the work.

Introspection is self-observation, a process relying on thinking and examining one's own thoughts, feelings and, in more spiritual cases, one's soul (Pronin, 2007). Considering film genre introspectively as an authorial tool may help the screenwriter successfully encode his or her personal point of view into the screenplay. The screenwriter may discover personally resonant themes and ideas of the state (and future) of the world, relationships, moralities and societies. The tasks of noticing and associating do bring currency to the work but introspection (as Kubrick also exemplified in *Dr. Strangelove*, Woolverton and Burton in *Alice in Wonderland,* the Coen brothers in their films*)* is an active tool the author is able to use to put an individual stamp on the screenplay.

American filmmakers/screenwriters, Joel and Ethan Coen implement intense use specific locations (Luhr, 2010) as well as construct intensively specific characters. They also, with great intensity and fulfill tenets of specific genres. I suggest they are building ICMs that seem fresh and innovative by intensifying every element – character, location, plot and especially film genre. They successfully frame their films with genre, understand the audience's specific receptive skills in relation to each genre and use genre in ways that make their films surprising – and feel very current. A good number of their films are constructed in the crime genre; they push the violence and malfeasance of the crimes to outrageous limits in *Fargo* (1996), *No Country for Old Men* (2007) and *Raising Arizona* (1987). In addition, their varied and concentrated use of supporting genres such as intense

black comedy *(Fargo, Raising Arizona, The Big Lebowski* (1998)*, Burn After Reading* (2008) and the extremist thriller/horror films (*No Country for Old Men, Blood Simple* (1984) *Barton Fink* (1991) contribute greatly in the creation of their singular voice. Brent Johnson, on the website *Coenesque* observes, "… the Coen brothers have become synonymous with a style of filmmaking that pays tribute to classic American movie genres – especially film noir – while sustaining a firmly postmodern feel." (Johnson/Flint, 2004)

Screenwriter Judd Apatow *(Knocked Up* [2007], co-writer of *40-Year-Old Virgin* [2005] and more) has imbedded an introspective, personal point-of-view into his films: men need to 'grow up' and be honest with themselves or they may miss out on fulfilling romantic relationships. Apatow has turned the traditional female-protagonist-driven-screwball- comedy on its head and focused on the 'screwball' male protagonist. Woody Allen (*Vicky Christina Barcelona* [2008] *Husbands and Wives* [1992] *Manhattan* [1979] *Annie Hall* [1977] *Hannah and Her Sisters* [1986] and more) concentrates his narratives on exploring the male/female relationship and questioning why it is so important to most people to pursue coupling. Allen uses various genres (comedy, romantic comedy, drama, crime, thriller) to gain various reflections on his narratives. Allen's comedies have outperformed his dramas in terms of critical accolades and box office (Green, 2010) suggesting that the audiences are more receptive to his explorations in a lighter, more comedic frame. Horror screenwriter David Cronenberg (*The Scanners,* [1981], *The Fly,* [1986] *History of Violence* [2005] *Eastern Promises* [2007] and more) focuses his work on exploring peoples' fears and violent tendencies often brought on through misuse of science or societal expectations. Although Cronenberg remains close to his horror genre roots, his later work shows him adding the classic components of the crime genre to the mix. This addition has attracted a new audience to his work, an audience attracted to examinations of the procedures of law and order and perhaps questions of justice. Screenwriter Nancy Meyers (*It's Complicated* [2009], *Something's Gotta Give* [2003] and more) focuses much of her work on the over age 50 female who still desires romance and passion – but struggles with self-esteem issues when feeling she is in competition with younger females for male attention. Meyers uses romantic comedy in order to get across her message that aging females are not sexual, emotional 'throw-aways' and

deserve (can demand) respect. It stands to reason that if Meyers constructed her message solely in the drama/romance genre, her core audience would change. It is important to note that it is the romantic comedy genre that allows Meyers' social commentary to find an audience.

Considering film genre introspectively as an authorial tool may help the screenwriter successfully encode his or her personal point-of-view. This may help the screenwriter discover personally resonant themes and ideas of the state (and future) of the world, relationships, moralities and societies.

Summing up the relevant knowledge component of the mental space of film genre

The screenwriter may be advised to explore the notion that if he or she notices/takes into account the changes in social mores, political climates and challenges to belief systems, a deliberate choice of film genre(s) might aid in providing fresh and contemporary connections, thus allowing the audience to experience a truth (as Frow suggests) that goes beyond the story told. Using Boden's suggestions of how a normative form of creativity can be explored for a structure to break down elements of the relevant knowledge component of the mental space film genre – (her guidelines such as noticing, associating and introspection) I found a fresh approach to my working practice on the use of film genre in an ICM of a screenplay. In gathering my original research on the relevant knowledge component of the mental space of film genre and coming to conclusions for my practice-led PhD, I believe the basic elements include considerations of 'noticing' and 'associating' current trends and mores in order to access contemporaneous insights as well as implementing personal 'introspection' in order to illuminate the screenwriter's individual point of view on his/her narrative and themes. I also think important elements of the relevant knowledge component of the mental space of film genre are considerations of the ideological containment that engages an audience in a specific genre and how a screenwriter can use certain film genre elements to aid in creating a fresh perspective on a narrative/ICM of a screenplay.

RESULTS

The Constructive Use of Film Genre for the Screenwriter:
Exploration of The Mental Space of Film Genre

The most exciting element of this research into the constructive use of film genre for the screenwriter, for me personally, is how the labor has affected my own work in two areas: as a professional screenwriter and in my role as a university professor dedicated to the exploring the craft of screenwriting with students.

The recognition of the gaps in film genre study as well as the acknowledgment of the various needs of filmmaking's "multiple practitioners" served as instigators of this research. As quoted previously, film theorist Steve Neale noted a gap in the understanding of film genre and its perimeters and categorizations; he supported Rick Altman's observation that: "…genres might serve diverse groups diversely" and that "multiple genre practitioners use genres and generic terminology in potentially contradictory ways." (Neale, 2002:2-4)

A screenwriter who works in the professional and commercial film industry has to be an accomplished craftsman. There are many reasons for a solid grasp of good storytelling skills - often a screenplay or story treatment for a film project has to be completed to meet a strict deadline - therefore the writer cannot rely solely on inspiration as a guide. Often the screenwriter is in a position where he or she has to please a varied group of producers, script developers or teachers and he or she must have strong reasons to defend narrative choices. The screenwriter may have to work with or rely on a director who stresses camera work above story – or actors who focus on moment-to-moment character illumination and do not consider overall storytelling as their primary job. These are among the situations where the craft of the screenwriter may be called on to create a strong blueprint for the film. Part of that blueprint can be (and in my opinion must be) a strong imprint of film genre. Examinations of film narrative structure, such as breakdown of the three-act structure, John Truby's 22 points lighting the narrative path (Truby, 2008), Chris Vogler's adaptation of Joseph Campbell's *Hero's Journey* for screenwriters (Vogler, 2007), my own eleven-step story structure (Selbo, 2007) are well-

used and do their part to aid the screenwriter. I assert that the understanding of and the implementation of components of film genre is an excellent addition to the screenwriter's craft. The conventions and historical provenance of each specific genre must be of importance to the screenwriter who is intent on pushing the film stories into new territories - for understanding the origins of an art, in most cases, allows one to appreciate its various forms and give impetus to move the form forward. In understanding the rudimentary components of each film genre as well as taking into consideration the audience's understanding of each genre, the screenwriter can advance his or her knowledge of building a film narrative.

The screenwriter can also address the relevant knowledge component of the mental space of film genre by asking how certain film genres or fresh combinations of film genres (new hybrids) might work to reflect and comment on contemporary society.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, in their article "Observations on Film Art; Superheroes For Sale" note the shift in America from an "auteur" cinema to a genre cinema (Bordwell, Thompson, 2008). They observe that in the past, while the classic American studio system maintained a fruitful, sometimes tense balance between a directorial expression and genre demands, the most distinctive directors (or filmmakers – which include screenwriters) could bring their own sensibilities and personal stamp to projects big or small. Bordwell and Thompson see that "tense balance" disappearing while American films embrace implementation of genre to the detriment of personal artistic vision. Through my research and creation of my methodology for my practice-led PhD in Film studies I have determined that it is important for the screenwriter to understand film genre as an expressive tool of the creative – to be used to further individual point of view and not dominate it. Previously my perception on the use of film genre for a screenwriter was unspecific and I did not perceive how to use film genre components to help in illuminating the intent of the narrative or the personal vision of the screenwriter. If one accepts Bordwell and Thompson's observations (and Hollywood studio fare of the recent years supports their veracity) it stands to reason that the professional/commercial screenwriter, of necessity, is advised to become a genre practitioner. However, there is more to it than using previous film genre templates, previous film genre hybrids and simply repeating successes (and failures) that have come

before. Through this research for my PhD, I have concluded that all practitioners and students of screenwriting can be advised to understand and implement the components of the mental space of film genres (a more sophisticated approach to the understanding of film genre) in order to excel at the craft. Therefore I would like to strongly suggest that as part of the craft of screenwriting, the ability to understand and implement components of film genres, both classical and revisionist – and the mental space elements of each genre - are necessary in order to excel at the craft.

In review, this work sets out to propose that a feature film can be examined as an idealized cognitive model (an ICM) that is made of various components such as location, era, characters, plot and themes and, of extreme importance, the components of the mental space of film genre.

I would like to sum up in bullet points what I see to be the important elements in this work as it relates to the understanding and use of the mental space of film genre in the construction of the screenplay:

- The importance of the understanding the construction of a screenplay as an idealized cognitive model (ICM).

- The notion that an idealized cognitive model is created through the building of a mental space for the audience.

- The understanding that the mental space of film genre is an important component in the construction of the ICM.

- The mental space of film genre can be explored by assessing and implementing three main components
    - o Schematic Knowledge
    - o Specific Knowledge
    - o Relevant Knowledge

The mental space of film genre can be looked at as an extremely important element and can be broken down into three separate categories. Understanding these categories can be considered as a tool in the screenwriter's toolbox. The three categories:

- **Schematic Knowledge**: Fauconnier, in his work on mental space, purports that people achieve (or try to achieve) an understandable model of a situation or circumstance by using long-term schematic knowledge to create a recognizable

structure (such as a boxing match or a tea party or funeral or other situation of event) (Fauconnier/Turner 1994:1-3). For my practice-led PhD in Film Studies examining the screenwriter's use of film genre in the construction of a screenplay, I transferred this idea to the examination of film genre. I determined that the schematic (or structural) knowledge could be applicable to the frame of a film. The frame is built by addressing film genre expectations of the structure of the romance genre, the horror genre, the western etc. Schematic knowledge is the ideological containment that engages an audience in a specific genre; in other words, the system of beliefs regarding certain film genres that guides the viewer. For example: An audience has an acquired knowledge that a romance is primarily a love story, that a classic western is set between 1865 and 1900 in the American West and in most cases examines personal or social justice, that a horror film primarily examines a component of evil, an action film will include action sequences etc. Using film genre as a frame for the beginning and end and also internally while constructing the narrative sequences allows the audience to feel like their expectations have been well-met. (Selbo, 2010: 281-283)

- **Specific Knowledge:** Fauconnier lists a second component of mental space - specific knowledge; it can be examined as an individual's personal memory/experience of a boxing match or tea party or funeral or other situation or event. In transferring these ideas to the examination of film genre for my practice-led PhD, I contend that the specific knowledge, by addressing the personal memory of an audience, adds an emotional layer to the response to a film genre. An audience expects that a melodrama may elicit tears or that a horror film may elicit anxiety or other genres' functional tonal elements may engage the audience in a specific manner. As a simple example: a romance paired with comedy may examine absurd or silly or more "surfacey" foibles (no matter how emotionally real) of finding true love (*When Harry Met Sally* [1989] or *Knocked Up* [2007]), whereas a romance drama hybrid will, in most cases, focus on the emotional chaos of lovers who for various reasons, have great difficulty in coming together and perhaps fail in their endeavor (*The English Patient* [1996], *Atonement* [2007]). Understanding the specific knowledge component of the mental space of

film genre and understanding the emotional and personal appeal of specific genres to an audience can benefit the screenwriter in the construction of a screenplay. (Selbo, 2010: 281-283)

- **Relevant Knowledge:** This is the consideration of the <u>currency</u> of the film genre and how film genre can aid in a contemporary audience's connection to a story. For example: A dramatic western where the "good guy" is all good and the "bad guy" is all bad, such as *High Noon* (1952) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) would be out of step with contemporary sensibilities that tend to appreciate (or acknowledge) a duality of good and bad in human nature – a duality explored in *Unforgiven* (1992) and *True Grit* (2010). Likewise romances featuring a female protagonist who pleads to the man she loves "…you'll have to think for both of us…" *(Casablanca*, 1942:104) or where marriage defines a woman's life and aspirations (*My Man Godfrey* (1936), *That Touch of Mink* (1962) do not play to contemporary audiences who demand currency with social and sexual mores. In some cases currency can be approached by careful choice of film genre.

As a result of my research and preparing an addition to the craft of the screenwriter for my practice-led PhD, I suggest that the screenwriter, in regards to building the idealized cognitive model for the particular audience and using film genre as a component of the ICM, has much to consider: The framing (schematic knowledge) can help orient the audience to the types of film narrative employed, thus creating a short circuit to comprehension. Encoding the film genre as a frame can also help focus and communicate the author's intent. The film audience is also drawn into a genre due to personal emotional experience (specific knowledge). Specific knowledge can be identified and explored by considering the primal desires (embedded in cognitive DNA, to use Grodal's term) that appeal to the audience interested in a specific genre. The screenwriter can also address the relevant knowledge of film genre by asking how certain film genres might work to reflect and comment on contemporary society.

I submit the following as a concise definition of the mental space of film genre:

The mental space of film genre, composed of schematic, specific and relevant knowledge, is a component of film genre to be used by the screenwriter in building an idealized cognitive model of a film story to help address the expectations and desires of the audience, and - in addition - challenge the audience to consider narrative material in new and fresh ways.

As stated in the opening of this work, the ultimate intention of this PhD research project was to find a definition of film genre that would speak to and function as a helpmate to the screenwriter. It is my intention to suggest an inclusive and thorough working definition of film genre for the purposes of a specific film practitioner, the screenwriter:

Film genre, for the screenwriter, refers to the type of film story and its essential elements such as iconography and themes and mental space which have a historical heritage known to attract and emotionally affect a particular audience.

I would now like to move into Part #3 where I lay out my processes as I worked on and completed the first acts of three scripts; one in the western genre, one in the horror genre and one in the romantic comedy genre.

FOCUS ON CONSTRUCTION OF SCRIPT PAGES

In preparation for the construction of the creative scriptwriting portion of this work, I put together an extensive notes section on each of the three chosen genres; western, horror and romantic comedy (Appendices A, B, C). The reasons I chose to work on these three specific genres was that I believe each of them has a deep and long and unique heritage in American cinema and each has easily identifiable components that audiences recognize. I also selected these three genres as case studies because I believe the components of the specific film genres (western, horror and romantic comedy) are very dissimilar from one another. This dissimilarity was attractive to me because it was my goal to approach the project allowing the classic genre components to lead my choices in character, plot and structure. I also felt that the use of strongly dissimilar genres would illuminate my concept of constructing a film narrative as an ICM, and my use of the mental space of film genre as part of an ICM transparent. As stated above, the Appendices include my extensive study notes on three specific genres that I prepared to guide my choices of character, plot, tone and themes. However below are the most obvious differences between the three genres:

- The **classic western** film has a unique component; generally speaking and with few exceptions, it takes place between 1865 and 1900 and is set in the American West. The classic western also typically explores the freedom of the individual vs. the role of community rule. There are the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' and the heroic "outsider" who confronts lawlessness or unfair practices and dedicates himself to implementing justice.[23]

  The **classic horror** film has a unique component; it contains an acknowledgment or assertion that there is an evil force in the universe. This force can be supernatural or human or monstrous. An audience expects to confront the

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[23] For more details on the historical development, codes and conventions of the genre, see: Appendix: Western notes

possibility that just under the surface of normality, there are malevolent forces that could be pervasively destructive if unleashed. The aim of the horror film is often to create anxiety and/or provide moments of fear that cause a rush of adrenalin. There are many sub-genres of horror such as slasher, psychological, thriller, sci-fi and monster.[24] Whatever sub-genre the screenwriter is using, at the core of all horror is the examination of evil forces at play.[25]

- The **classic romantic comedy** film has its unique narrative thrust; it is focused on the desire for - and pursuit of - true love. The romantic comedy genre often features characters that are verbally adept while exploring the pros and cons of love – providing a "battle of the sexes". This genre also has a history of exploring the vagaries of social status, as well as gender equality. [26] This recognized and popular film genre is also a "genre hybrid" (Neale, 2000:51), therefore it promised particular interest.

To reiterate the perimeters of the experiment that comprised the practical submission of my PhD: To write the first act of three screenplays, each screenplay constructed in a different overriding film genre. These three narratives would:

- take place in the same geographical location
- feature a core cast of similar characters that would be adjusted as each film genre seemed to warrant
- feature similar events that would be adjusted as each the specific film genre needs seemed to warrant

The task was to build an ICM taking into consideration the classic components of each overriding film genre. I designed the narratives so as to allow the mental space of film genre components to take precedence in the actualization of the script. I also took into consideration that supporting stories, in most film narratives, exist in different film

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[24] For more details on these sub-genres, see Appendix: Horror Notes
[25] For more details on the historical development, codes, conventions and characteristics of the genre, see: Appendix : Horror Notes
[26] For more details on the historical development, codes, conventions and characteristics of the genre, see: Appendix : Romantic Comedy notes

genres than the overriding genre (for example the overriding genre for *Casablanca* (1942) is the war genre, the supporting genre (B and C stories) is romance). Therefore I also addressed the need to fulfill these specific supporting film genres. This latter task proved interesting; especially in the romantic comedy genre and I will examine that point later in the section on romantic comedy.

The writing:

As in any creative screenwriting endeavor, authorial choices of character and plot points are often intuitive. However, it should also be noted that my deep exploration of the classic elements of each of the three film genres actually suggested and supported many of my "intuitive" choices I was making as a writer. Obviously, once narrative and character choices were made in the first script (the western) I followed the set task and adjusted story and characters as consideration of the horror genre and the romantic comedy genre, in my opinion, seemed to warrant.

The Western

In the writing of the script pages for my practice-led Ph.D. project, I decided to start with the western for various reasons; first, I assumed this would be the most difficult for me since I had never written in the classic western film genre. Secondly, in my opinion, the western holds more specific audience expectations than the horror or romantic comedy genres, such as location, character types and themes. The research and organization of my notes increased my knowledge of the specific film genre and were a great help. Using the first part of my "new" approach – the concept of building an ICM with particular attention paid to what I have termed the 'mental space' of film genre[27] - I consciously worked to fulfill the tenets of the classic western film genre - building a believable late 19th century world in the American West for the "outsider" to enter, and then building the conflicts that would demand the pursuit of justice. The western is often referred to as one of the most important creations of American movies (Muscovitz, 2006: 5-6). The most compelling reason to support this claim is that the Western genre helped create the myth of America (Wright, 1975:4-16) - this myth is personified in the

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[27] See Methodology section: this document

American character that accepts nothing less than freedom, believes in a personal vision and feels that hard work can transform circumstances and character. The American West's wide-open spaces and unsettled territories provided blank slates for persons to create new lives, even new personas. Whether the protagonist is a wanderer with a murky past, such as the gunslinger/drifter title character in *Shane* (1953 Wr: A.B. Guthrie, Dir: George Stevens**)**, or the East Coast lawyer searching for a new life in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962, Wrs: James Warner Bellah and Willis Goldbeck, Dir: John Ford), or the female taking on a male persona in order to control her destiny in *Ballad of Little Jo* (1993, Wr: Maggie Greenwald, Dir: Maggie Greenwald), the Western mythology is built on the opportunity for renewal and regeneration. No matter a person's past, the Western presents a possibility to identify and embrace his or her <u>real</u> – or perhaps – <u>new</u> (imagined/idealized) self. Classic westerns provide a plethora of stories that rely on a relatively small stable of situations and plots that focus on themes concerning justice and renewal, with conflicts often growing out of several archetypal situations:

- ranchers vs. farmers
- Indians vs. settlers
- courage vs. cowardice
- outlaws vs. civilization

Successful screenplays are based on the emotional, physical and psychological conflict of characters in, for the most part, life-changing situations. The successful Western builds conflict by using the inherent difficulties of its burgeoning society and its location and, as film theorist Will Wright points out, resolves its conflicts not in the courtroom, but through brawls and gunplay, re-establishing the moral order with a single shot (Wright, 1975, 4-16). Part of the allure of the Western is this simplicity and its inherent lawlessness. Film critic Richard Schickel writes, (Westerns appeal because) "everyone wore a six-shooter (and) complex moral conflicts could be plausibly resolved in clear, clean violent action." (Schickel, 1988:11) [28]

I then embarked on the second part of my "new" approach – building the ICM of my western using concepts inspired by the work of Fauconnier - specifically the mental space

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[28] See Appendix: Western for continuation of notes

of film genre. It was an exciting endeavor for by using this new approach – working at the ideation and initial constructive stages of the screenplay with the elements I determined to be the basic components of the mental space of film genre, the creative task felt more manageable and less daunting than former screenwriting endeavors. Not only did I have the classic three-act structure (Field, 1989) and my own 11-Step Structure on Character Arc to use as guideposts on the creative journey, I also employed the components of the mental space of film genre, taking into consideration the idea of fulfilling audience expectations of the western film genre, using genre-specific scenes/sequences for external and internal framing (schematic knowledge), and emotional touchstones that audience expects of the western genre (specific knowledge) and sense of currency (relevant knowledge)[29]. At the completion of the first act of my western, after more in-depth discussion with my supervisor regarding the mental space of film genre components in relation to my narrative, I was able to rewrite and polish the first act of the western script. I absolutely found these added guideposts (the focus on building an ICM with the focus on using the components of the mental space of film genre) on the creative journey helpful. The ideation stage enjoyed a focused purpose and challenge. I have delineated my thought processes in the following breakdowns of plot as well as choices of scenes and sequences. At the completion of the first act of the western, I was excited about "my new process" and the outcome, so much so that I plan to complete the entire screenplay of the Western narrative.

This new approach (a clear example of how my Ph.D. research has had a direct influence on my screenwriting practice) made the task of writing the first act of the western more manageable and exciting: The outsider arrives in a town, this is JERROD BELL, 38, the former sheriff of No Bluff in the Oklahoma Territory.

Opening sequences of the western script: *No Bluff*

EXT. OKLAHOMA – 1898 – NIGHT – FULL MOON

A small campfire adds light to the dry and low-mountainous terrain. A tall thin man is silhouetted; he's digging a grave. The ground is hard, his breathing labored. But he continues on…

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[29] See Methodology section, this document

DISSOLVE TO:

SUN RISING - A rope twists together two dry branches of scrub oak. Sinewy hands hold the old Starr 44 pistol and pound the makeshift cross into the shallow grave.

MOMENTS LATER - A well-used blanket is tossed over a sturdy chestnut mare, followed by a saddle that has the sheen of years of heavy use.

A dusty boot fits into the stirrup and the rider groans as he settles onto his ride. He turns his back on the sun and heads west. This is JERROD BELL, around 35, his stubble turning grey, his skin like leather stretched over his tight jaw, looks into the jagged Quachita hills ahead of him. He hasn't felt good for - well he doesn't think that far back. His horse has been with him a long time and is reliable, but doesn't have the spark for the future either. They're a pair alone.

Bell reins in his horse, turns in his saddle and looks back at the grave.

Then he turns his horse around and heads into the sun, a direction he hadn't planned on - but drew him all the same.

EXT. OKLAHOMA TERRITORY - 1898 - MORNING

Ranching and farming co-exist in the plains. The soil is good if the rains come.

Long stretches of clouds float above low hills. Bell rides, there's no one else in sight.

EXT. BEHIND THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE — DAY

DEPUTY HANK, 22, and SHERIFF COOPER, 45, take potshots at a row of tin cans. Deputy Hank doesn't hit one and this frustrates him. The Sheriff's aim's been true - but now his pistol jams.

Deputy Hank looks up, notes Bell riding onto the Main Street.

> *DEPUTY HANK*
> *Someone.*

Jerrod Bell has come back to the community that he abandoned two years ago. He has come to claim his land, fortune and his true love. I created the ICM required to support the story: Jed Bell discovers that his former friends and allies have been beaten down by the greedy and violent rancher Price Richards who has taken control of the town - its

justice system, its banking, its soul; Richards rules the community through fear and violence. Discovery of oil-rich lands is fueling Richards' megalomania. Bell discovers his true love has married one of his good friends, a friend that has capitulated to Bell's strong-arm tactics. Bell considers the possibilities to stay un-involved and move on to the seemingly less-complicated freedom of the West's "wide open spaces", however Bell's sense of justice and fair play – and deep emotional feelings for the woman he loves - forces him to "do what he's got to do" and face off against "the bad guy". I consciously used the mental space of film genre: I used the schematic knowledge component by framing the narrative (at beginning and end as well as internally), I used the specific knowledge component by illuminating strong friendships and emotional ties and then showing the betrayals of some of those relationships, thus addressing the audience's sense of just and right in personal relationships. I addressed an audience's knowledge of how injustice is present when those in power use violence and unethical tactics to sustain greed and dominance. I also addressed racial inequities and realities of racial tension in the West at the time, again playing to the audience's specific knowledge (an emotional reaction) of these story elements in the ICM. Finally I addressed the relevant knowledge component (using current topics that an audience can relate to) of the mental space of film genre by nodding to the wealth and power engendered by control of oil, by employing the idea of the "little guy" having to deal with corrupt banking policies and heavy-handed authority.

The following is a practical breakdown in outline form of how the schematic knowledge, specific knowledge and relevant knowledge components were used in the construction phase of the first act of the western. Comments regarding the implementation of my "new approach" – of constructing the screenplay keeping in mind the concept of a film narrative as an ICM and using the components of the mental space of film genre to help construct the ICM are included.

*The scripts (available in Part Four) are presented with production scene numbers attached (on either side of the slug lines that give the reader the location of the scene) to provide easy reference for the reader.
* Below is in outline form to showcase how a screenwriter would practically work, the outline form is often used by screenwriters to help lay out story – and in this case it also contributed to my "new approach" and helped me make sure all the mental space of film genre elements were being used.

THE WESTERN SCRIPT: *No Bluff*

Overriding film genre: Western

Supporting film genres: Action and Romance

JERROD BELL, 38, former sheriff of the town of No Bluff in the Oklahoma Territory, comes back to the community that he abandoned two years ago. He has come to claim his land, fortune and his true love. On his return, he discovers that the woman he loved has recently married and his former friends and allies have been beaten down by the greedy and violent rancher Price Richards who has taken control of the town - its justice system, its banking, its soul; Richards rules the community through fear and violence. The discovery of oil-rich land is fueling Richards' megalomania. The fact that Bell knows he can move on to the seemingly less-complicated freedom of the West's 'wide open spaces' is appealing to the character. However, Bell's sense of justice and inner need to try to help those in need to attain the freedom the West has promised forces him to face off against 'the bad guy'. Bell's sense of justice is based, above all, on the Western hero, who, like the medieval knight, has a sense of his role based on personal honor. As the hero prepares to face the villain, he is often asked by a more innocent character, "Why do you have to be the one?" The answer is, more than likely, a variation on, "Cause I got to." No more explanation is necessary; the hero simply cannot live with himself if he does not follow his own deeply embedded convictions.[30]

Iconic Western Locations Created to fulfill this specific western genre ICM: Western landscapes, wide open spaces, Saloon, Sheriff's Office, Coffin Alley, General Store, Barbershop, Blacksmith, Ranch, Schoolhouse, Jail

Iconic Western Characters created to fulfill this specific western genre ICM: The Outsider, Sheriff, Barber, American Indian, Rancher, Ranch-hands, Barkeep, Coffin-maker, Town Drunk, Blacksmith, Less than Virginal Woman, "Pure" woman

Breakdown of the western script: *No Bluff*

SCHEMATIC KNOWLEDGE:

- External schematic, framing using the opening scene:
  o Western genre Scenes 1-13: The opening scenes of the script set up the West – location and time; Oklahoma, 1898. The scenes also quickly set up some of the main supporting characters of the narrative.
    § **Specific Knowledge** also woven in:
      • Scene 1: Jerrod Bell is digging a grave; this is a visual that evokes an understanding of emotions connected with death.

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[30] For more details on the historical development, codes and conventions of the genre, see: Appendix: Western notes

- Scene 3: Jenny Sand is set up as an attractive, independent woman that the men in the town covet
- Scene 3: Set up the impending decision of territory to embrace statehood or not; the audience (at least the American audience) understands how that will affect the "freedom" of the community
- Scenes 4-8: Set up the "law" of the town and Bell's disregard for it (also that he used to be a sheriff/thus member of "law".
- Scenes 9-14: Set up the basic life/need to know how to do basic chores for survival.
  - **Relevant Knowledge** woven in, Scene 12
    - The idea of oil rich land is introduced, contemporary audience understands the significance of this in terms of personal greed and future of the land[31]
- Internal schematic (framing) includes
  - Western genre Scenes 1-13 and Scene 17 frame Scenes 14-16
    - Scenes 14-16: Move the plot along. The framing scenes have set up time, location, characters that will come into conflict.
      - **Specific Knowledge** woven in
        - Scenes 17-18: Introduce the threat of violence (Barber has gun) and Deputy's worry that Bell could cause trouble (violence) in the town
  - Western genre Scenes 17-18 and Scene 20 (shoot out/action scene) frame
    - Scene 19: Introduces the relationship line; possibility of romance; the audience understands this thread and anticipate its playing out
  - Western genre scene 20 and Scene 29 frame
    - Scenes 21-22: Set up of "bad guy" and consideration of oil rich lands as well as Richards' past relationship/dislike of Bell. This scene also highlights the Sheriff's attempt at law and order and justice – and Richards' dominance in the community
    - Scene 23: Sets up the "love triangle" of the romance line and impending conflicts
    - Scene 24: Explores the community vs. the "bad guy" conflict to come
    - Scene 25: Continues the romance thread
    - Scene 26: Continues the conflict of romance thread and Bell's growing knowledge of Richards' power over community – the injustice (important in the Western genre)
  - Western genre Scenes 29-37 and Scene 45 frame

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[31] Oil was first discovered, seeping to the surface of the land in Oklahoma in 1859. It was found that it successfully treated cattle for ticks. Oil wells were dug as early as 1889, however the first commercial oil well was dug in 1896. No one knew there would be an extensive and lucrative supply.

- Scenes 38 – 40: Focused on the romance thread
- Scenes 41-44: Focused on the oil plot line
  - Western genre Scene 45 and Scenes 48-55 frame
    - Scene 46: The oil plot line and injustice of Richards stealing Bell's metal box
    - Scene 47: The romance line

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS WOVEN IN THROUGHOUT:

- Expectations of exploration of the idea of freedom of the individual in the Western
- Expectations of exploration of the idea of community justice and personal justice in the Western
- Romance expectations/ understanding of pain/injustice of lost love
- Death of a loved family member
  - Specifically the injustice of harm caused to a loved one by outside forces
- An understanding of possible injustices meted out by more powerful entities

RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS WOVEN IN THROUGHOUT:

- The role of oil in our society – how it can/did create great wealth and power in America[32]
- Banking and the recent injustices/problems with greed/power of controlling factions
- Dictatorships/ strong rulers making decisions without consult or voter support (recent upheavals in many Middle Eastern countries)
- Financial circumstances/ corporations ignoring the little investor (economic crises in America and other countries)
- Wanting to fight back against injustice

At the end of a classic ACT ONE [33] the protagonist has hit a wall of denial on all fronts and must find a new tack or opportunity to achieve his/her goal (Selbo, 2007, Field, 1989). At the end of act one in *No Bluff:*

- Bell is in jail and wounded
  - he knows Caroline is married – love of Caroline is gone (he thinks)
  - money and deeds are gone (empty metal box)
  - his brother is dead
  - Garr is dead
  - Crank is near dead
  - The "bad guy" and his forces are dominant
  - It is unclear where Sheriff's loyalties will lie
  - It is unclear what Jenny's sympathies are

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[32] The world's desire and need for oil continues to this day. The choice to use oil and the wealth it promises to those who own the land on which it comes was a conscious one; I feel it speaks to the relevant knowledge of the audience.

The Horror Film

       As per the task I had set for myself, I adapted the narrative components of the western story to fulfill the expectations of the horror genre. Horror films have been a favorite genre of audiences since the silent film era. Film theorist Torben Grodal writes, "Horror stories still often focus on the fear of becoming food for some other, alien creatures." (Grodal, 2009:5) He notes that the hunter-versus-hunted scenario in action, crime and horror genres can be traced to early man's need to battle beastly predators as well as human enemies for survival. Grodal supports the theory that the "fight or flight" impulse is not being learned in the <u>real</u> time of one human life, but it is an impulse embedded in human nature due to oft-repeated experiences of previous generations (Grodal, 2009: 5-6). Horror films feature plots where <u>evil</u> forces, events or characters invade the everyday world and upset the social order. Well-executed horror films feature main characters that are psychologically challenged as well as physically threatened. It is very important for the audience to feel that just under the surface of normality, there is a world that is dangerous and evil and one that could be pervasively destructive if unleashed. (Dirks: accessed 2010) There are distinct sub-genres in horror films; these include the psychological horror film, the slasher film, the sci fi horror film, the monster horror film and the thriller horror film. [34]

       I decided to construct my horror script in the slasher sub-genre because I felt that it would be the sub-genre that would be most compatible with certain story elements I had set up in the western script such as the "body count" of the violent gun battles. In making this observation, I realized I was also discovering common ground and even, possibly, shared themes between certain film genres/sub-genres. For example, the western genre and the slasher often share a theme that centers on a desire for justice. Just how the desire for personal justice is created and determined (westerns often concentrate on evident and understandable issues of personal freedom whereas slasher horror films often focus on emotional issues sometimes understandable but more likely twisted, supernatural or monstrous) and just how personal justice is meted out varies in the two genres (iconic gun battles in the western genre vs. exaggerated and often outrageous

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[34] See Appendix: Horror for continuation of notes

methods of causing extremely bloody deaths in the slasher horror genre). It is interesting to note that the hero in both the western and the slasher is often the character in the narrative with the highest moral code (whether it is the western sheriff or the bounty hunter pursuing what is right and just or, in the slasher genre, the "final girl" (Clover, 1993) who outwits and outlasts the villain to understand the demented purpose of his/her actions). I realized these commonalities and dissimilarities would be interesting to explore (and made a note for post-doctoral research.)

The slasher film often explores the actions of an evil force that is absolutely bent on the destruction of a safe haven. The evil force can be human, alien, or any form of monstrosity. The methods and madness of the evil force can come in many forms. Often a high body count (death, dismemberment etc.) and a high quantity of violence and blood are considered important elements (Clover, 1993). The slasher horror film is sometimes referred to as a "dead teenager movie." (Ebert, 2007:1) A prototypical set up: A psychopathic killer (sometimes wearing a mask) stalks and graphically kills a series of victims (in most cases, teens who are engaging in sex or drugs or alcohol or other unsanctioned behavior). The teens are attacked in what seems to be a random fashion - but eventually a dark, psychotic reason (perhaps revenge for a snub or a vindictive word or action or an event that destroyed the familial nest) is revealed at the end of the film story. The film usually starts with the murder of a young, sexually active female and ends with the survival of the virginal or sexually responsible female, "the final girl" (Clover, 1993).

In creating the ICM for my slasher script, broad considerations were first made: Because the audience of the slasher film is predominately composed of teenagers and young adults (Worland, 2007:80), I changed the ages of the main characters (previously set up in the western genre script pages) so that the targeted audience could better identify with the characters. I also moved the time period from the western's late 19th century era to present day to address the "this could happen to you – today, tonight or tomorrow" factor. Again I employed my extensive research into the horror genre (see Appendix) to make educated creative choices in character and plot points. Carol Clover's work *Men, Women and Chainsaws, Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1993) on the slasher genre was of particular help.

Then I constructed the script pages keeping the schematic, specific and relevant knowledge components of the mental space of the specific film genre (in this case, the slasher film) paramount in my mind. This new approach (again a clear example of how my PhD research has had a direct influence on my screenwriting practice) allowed the task of writing the first act of the horror genre script seem, at times, like filling in the pieces of a puzzle; an intellectual exercise – and very enjoyable. The story starts with JER B BELSON, 18; he is driving his car from California to Tennessee to enter the University and play college football. His car breaks down and he is pulled into a strange community by an "unseen" force (we will ultimately realize it is an evil force) that takes control of his car at a curve in the highway called Sham Pass. This strange community is the once-oil-rich small town of Bluff, Oklahoma

Opening sequences of the horror script: *Bluff*

EXT. OIL FIELD – NEAR OLD DERRICK – PRESENT DAY – NIGHT

It's dark. No signs of life. But there is a presence, a low sound of a very very slow heartbeat.

UNKNOWN POV sees: Car lights of the old Camry approach. They shine on the field. An oil derrick is illuminated by the car's headlights.

A GIRL 18 and BOY 19, laughing, running, are on a high of sexual foreplay. They stop to kiss deeply. The Girl, flirty, skips a few steps off -- stops - GASP.

She sees a DEAD BIRD, its neck broken and outstretched wings crooked, in a shallow pool of oil.

> GIRL
> *Oh look - how awful*

> BOY
> *Stupid enough to fly into it -*

> GIRL
> *Oh you're mean*

> BOY
> *Oh no, I'm very very very nice ---*

He lifts off her top, unbuckles his belt. She steps back under the derrick structure, slips behind one of its broad metal legs,

giggling. She extends a hand and motions with her finger for him to follow her -

Her sneaker hits another dark, oily puddle.

> GIRL
> *Ewhhhhh - - it's slick -- it's slippery --*

The Unknown POV moves in a circle as it watches the Boy join the Girl. She's giggling; leans down. She dips a finger into the oil and draws a line between her breasts that are plump under her bra.

> BOY
> *'Slippery Sandy' sounds good -*

She takes one more step back -

Suddenly LARGE CHAINS descend from the upper regions of the derrick, whipping around the surprised couple - they SCREAM.

The chains tighten mercilessly fast, forcing the couple together - mercilessly tight, puncturing skin with rough iron edges, blood vessels burst, lungs are squeezed so tight that breathing is impossible. Blood erupts through tortured throats. The chains lift the couple, pressed together now in blood-soaked death, swing the corpses over a pool of the dark viscous fluid of the earth.

MOMENTS LATER

The abiotic lovebirds sink into the thick oil puddle....

EXT. OKLAHOMA TWO LANE HIGHWAY - MEANWHILE — NIGHT

Long expanse of desolate ranchland - Barbed wire fences silhouetted. A lone armadillo crosses the road, his eyes beady red.

No sign of civilization.

One car approaches, its headlights like two unblinking eyes. The SOUND of its engine is a steady HUM, like the insistent buzz of night flying insects seeking blood.
The highway bends through two low hills, the car speeds on.

INT. 2000 HONDA CIVIC — NIGHT

Metallica's BLACK ALBUM roars from the car's CD player.

JER B BELSON, age 18, square-jawed athlete with California good looks, slaps at his well-worked-out chest in time to the music - and to keep himself awake.

The passenger seat is filled with banana peels, health bar wrappers. Fruit Smoothie cups rest on top of his high school letter jacket. The backseat holds a packed laundry basket, duffel bags filled with clothes, footballs, a San Jose California high school yearbook and hand weights.

Jer B mutters under his breath, reading a sign on the road as he zooms past it.

>   JER B
>   Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 300 miles… middle of
>   nowhere -

A yellow sign flashes as he passes it, cautioning a curve ahead. Jer B yawns, his eyes want to close. He presses the requisite button and the driver's side window descends. Jer B hoots and hollers along with the heavy metal band —

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Honda Civic takes the sharp curves expertly, the MUSIC pounds into the still night.

The car hits the straightaway, passes oil fields.   Derricks dot the area, loom like shadows at night - large and solid.

INT. HONDA CIVIC

Jer B's cell phone, resting on the dashboard, BUZZES. He grabs it and glances at the caller ID: "SUZY" and a picture of a perfectly beautiful cheerleader pops onto the screen. Jer B hesitates - and then presses IGNORE.

Suddenly his car SWERVES heavily to the right, the wheel JERKS back and forth. Jer B tries to muscle it - it seems to have a will of its own —

>   JER B
>   Oooooh fuck -

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Honda's tires slip off the highway, the shoulder is rough - the tires SKID back across the two lanes leaving rubber marks -

INT. HONDA CIVIC

The whip of the out-of-control car pushes Jer B against the driver's side door. Loose food wrappers and cups fly through the air. His letter jacket flips up against his chest. The piled packing in the back seat slips, a football tumbles into Jer B's lap.

Jer B pumps the brakes - the brake pedal hits the floor - useless.

His cell phone, sliding across the dash, goes AIRBORNE and SAILS out the open window, past Jer B's eyes - right before his suntanned Roman nose hits the window frame with a CRACK

BLOOD spurts from his nose, gushes into his mouth - he tries to spit blood before he swallows it -

And then the car WHINES WITH A HOWLING SOUND, MERGING WITH THE HEAVY METAL MUSIC and - the car SKIDS across the highway and heads DOWN and DOWN into a STEEP GULLEY

The car SLAMS to a precarious stop - and then TIPS so the passenger side of the car is buried in the dry ditch.

No movement. Just the sound of the last chords of death metal before the CD player dies.

A long moment. And then Jer B's head, bloodied, emerges out of the driver's side window -- his shoulders are hunched- he GROWLS in pain. He pushes against the door - gravity and his sore shoulder make it hard - but he gets the door open and TUMBLES TO THE GROUND NEXT TO THE CAR

Jer B lands on his back - a makeshift CROSS, made of twigs tied together with shoestring is wedged between his arm and torso, it is adorned with plastic flowers. The car lights land on a blown up school photo in the center of the cross-- that of a smiling boy with a misshapen face - the skin droops on the left side as if the facial muscles never kicked in. The words "RAPTURE?" is written on a piece of cardboard taped to the photo -

Jer B, face to face with the tortured photo, freaks and rolls away -

                    JER B
          Sheeeeeez!

As he waits for his car to be fixed in the town's only garage, characters in this out-of-the-way community (some "good", some "bad" and a very attractive "final girl"). He finds himself in a position where he must defend himself – and others – from the evil force determined to mete out a demented form of justice against a town steeped in greed and disregard for social responsibility. In building the ICM and satisfying the slasher film genre, I knew I had to construct a series of possible villains and a series of possible

victims. I also knew I needed to build a community where sexual tensions were bubbling to the surface. I wanted to make the oil (lack of) resources part of the model, as well as the dysfunctional social hierarchies to increase anxieties and possible motives. I employed the schematic knowledge (framing) component of the mental space of film genre by featuring scenes of victimization and real or possible violence at the beginning of the script and internally to increase tension. The specific knowledge component (addressing the emotional expectations of the horror film audience) was addressed by constructing scenes where violence/evil could explode, as well as constructing scenes illuminating characters that could have evil intent. The relevant knowledge (currency) was addressed by constructing a world where wealth has dried up, resources such as oil are no longer viable, and an environmental message that the earth just might rise up against those who have depleted its resources. Because the horror genre often uses religious iconography, I also changed the Sheriff and Deputy characters from the western pages to leaders of the church in the troubled community. The religious leaders' fears that evil has descended on the town due to greed, hubris and mismanagement of resources help to set up the anxiety and sense of doom that pervades the odd and disenfranchised town.

THE HORROR SCRIPT: *Bluff*

Overriding genre: Horror
Supporting genres: Romance

JER B BELSON, 18, is driving his car from California to Tennessee to enter the University and play college football. He is pulled into a strange community in the once-oil-rich small town of Bluff, Oklahoma by an 'unseen' force that takes control of his car at a curve in the highway called Sham Pass. As he waits for his car to be fixed in the town's only garage, Jer B finds himself in a position where he must defend himself – and others – from a force determined to mete out a demented form of justice…

Iconic Horror Genre Locations created to fulfill this specific slasher horror ICM:
- Deserted spaces
- Use of night locations to enhance sense of danger
- Church
 *Note: Evil lurking in 'everyday, normal environs' is common, supporting the fear that evil is everywhere
 * POV of unseen 'evil force' is often put to good use

Iconic Horror Genre Characters created to fulfill this specific slasher horror ICM:
- Teens who are sexually active or on the cusp of being sexually active
- Silent or angry "troubled" characters
- Members of religious community
- The "final" girl

SCHEMATIC KNOWLEDGE:
- External schematic, framing using the opening scene:
  - Horror genre Scene 1: The script begins with a mysterious and horrific attack and death of two sexually active teenagers in a desolated area. This lets the audience know that there is an evil force (basic component of the horror genre) possibly bent on destruction in the community.

    - **Specific Knowledge** also woven into the above scene:
      - Youthful, sexual recklessness, joy of youth
      - Lust
      - Fear of darkness, especially in a desolate area and the expectation that strange or evil forces are free to roam in these environs.
    - **Relevant Knowledge** also woven into the opening scene:
      - Oil production, importance to world today

The internal schematic (framing) includes
  - Horror genre Scenes 2-3 and Scenes 6-7 frame Scenes 4-5
    - Night. Desolate. Heavy metal music. Main character alone. Middle scenes give us location and the beginning of the character backstory. Jer B experiences his first 'horror' of the story.
    - **Specific Knowledge:**
      - Fear of desolate highways at night, an understandable fear that something going wrong with the car and there would be no one around to help
      - Fear of loss of cell phone/communication; film-goers will relate to this because cell phones have – for many – become the connector to society/safety.
      - Leaving home, sense of independence
      - Not wanting to talk to someone who calls – possibly specifically an ex-girlfriend or boyfriend
    - **Relevant Knowledge:**
      - The recent predictions of 'end of the world' and 'the rapture'
  - Horror Genre Scenes 8-14: Set up an off-center/off-kilter 'religion' component (often part of horror tales, setting up the conflict of God (good) vs. the Devil (evil)) and frame Scene 15, a scene that gives us backstory on past horrors at Sham Pass.
    - **Specific Knowledge:**

- Personal experiences of Church/ ministers in religious orders
- Personal experience of looking at people with irregular facial features
- o Horror Genre Scene 15 and Scene 21 frame Scenes 16-20: set up supporting characters and stories (and provide potential victims and suspects)
    - **Specific Knowledge**
        - Possibility of romance
        - Social hierarchies
        - Brother wanting to protect his sister from sexual advances of inappropriate suitors
        - Loss of control of plans due to vehicle disrepair
        - Deconstruction of horror genre/fun through character dialogue
    - **Relevant Knowledge**
        - Oil resources are ultimately limited

- o Horror Genre Scene 21 and Scenes 28-29 frame Scenes 22-27, scenes that further character development and backstory of the cursed town as well as introduce the last of the supporting characters of the story.
    - **Specific Knowledge**
        - A mother's concern for her child
        - Moving 'underground' – relation to descending into Hell
    - **Relevant Knowledge**
        - Apocalypse/rapture
- o Horror Genre Scenes 28-36, end of act one, set a strong internal frame at the end of Act One.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS WOVEN IN THROUGHOUT

- Setting up the tone, a sense that horrific events could happen at any time in the narrative. Audiences respond with an "enjoyable" anxiety, hearts beat a bit faster, nerves a bit on edge.
- Audiences understand that a lone teenager is vulnerable in a new place. The youth of Jer B helps play into his vulnerability.
- Audiences have knowledge of the slasher/horror sub-genre; interest piqued by wondering who 'will be next'.
- Audiences understand the juxtaposition of Church (God) and Force Rising From Beneath the Earth (Devil, Hell etc.)

RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS WOVEN IN THROUGHOUT

- The role of OIL in our society – shortages, supplies, taking it from the earth, environmental opinions on extracting/using up our resources
- Society's reliance on instant communication via cell phones/internet etc. An anxiety that can surface when those avenues of communication are taken away.
- Recent predictions of the apocalypse and the rapture

OBSERVATIONS OF MOVING NARRATIVE FROM WESTERN GENRE INTO THE HORROR GENRE:

- Over a third of the all horror audiences are between the ages of 18-24[35], therefore I changed the ages of the main characters to be more in line with the targeted audience
- I changed the time period to present day; placing the horror film in current time increased the audience's feeling that "this could happen to them"…
- I felt I needed the strong "horror" opening to set the tone/genre for the audience
- In the slasher/horror genre there is an "accepted convention" that pre-marital sex (or sex out of wedlock) is a punishable act, I adjusted characters and relationship to lend a sense of foreboding in this area
- Strange, unknown POV added to keep the audience off kilter
- Strange sense of humor – where characters are on the edge of humor but not all out comedy - just enough to make it uncomfortable
- I increased allusions to religion and changed the sheriff and deputy characters to pastor and assistant pastor
- Horror screenplays are, for the most part, shorter than dramas/westerns. I worked at moving the story at a swifter pace

What is of interest to me is that my student assistants at California State University, Fullerton (ages approximately 20-22) that I have asked to read the script pages noted that of the three first acts of the three screenplays, the horror genre was the one they wanted me to complete in its entirety. Noting that, as mentioned, I had constructed the story to appeal to teenagers and young adults, this response was welcome.

The Romantic Comedy

Finally I approached the classic romantic comedy script – and attempted the same approach constructing a viable ICM using the components of the mental space of film genre as major guideposts – while using the western script as a sort of jumping-off point for narrative and characters. As noted in my introduction, in my professional work as a screenwriter in Hollywood[36] I have been hired to write scripts employing a variety of film genres (among them sci-fi, horror, family, adventure, historical), however most of my work fell into the romantic comedy genre. Therefore I felt that romantic comedy would be the film genre in which I felt most comfortable. In fact, the opposite proved to be the

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[35] http://www.valmorgan.com.au/au/audiences/profiles/horror/
[36] See Appendix: professional resume

case. At first this outcome frustrated me but I gradually came to realize that this was one of the powerful "lessons" learned from this endeavor - for the problems came from trying to adapt the ICM (narrative and the characters and themes) I had set up for the western genre script to fit a classic romantic comedy narrative. I was struck by how this endeavor became extremely problematical – which I believe ultimately supports my assertion that taking film genre –and specifically the mental space of film genre - into consideration at the ideation and initial construction stages of a screenplay is essential. It is in the ideation stage that schematic, specific and relevant knowledge components can be shaped to maximize an audience's reception of the author's intent. I would like to elaborate on some of the problems of trying to retro-fit a western ICM into a romantic comedy ICM and the reasons for them but first - I will set out my process in approaching the romantic comedy script:

Tamar Jeffers McDonald, in her book *Romantic Comedy, Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* provides this definition: (A) romantic comedy is a film which has as its central narrative motor a quest for love, which portrays this quest in a light-hearted way and almost always to a successful conclusion (McDonald, 2007: 9).   Obviously, the romantic comedy is a blend of two genres, romance and comedy.

- The components of the romance genre rely on the acceptance on the primacy of the couple, of the belief in or desire for true love. A sub-genre of romance would be romantic comedy.
- The components of the comedy genre center most on a lighthearted or ironic view of human existence, focusing on foibles, flaws and sometimes exaggerated physical and mental "pratfalls" (Dirks, accessed 2011). Comedy sub-genres include screwball, farce, satire, lampoon, black comedy and sophisticated comedy.[37]
- Due to romantic comedy's long heritage and recognized specific components, it is often considered a film genre in its own right. A sub-genre of romantic comedy is the screwball romantic comedy.

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[37]   See Appendix: Romantic comedy for continuation of notes

I chose to build an ICM for the screwball romantic comedy for my script pages: The screwball romantic comedy is often a comedy of manners, specifically an investigation of romance between varying social classes. There is one trait that is a constant – the <u>female</u> is the lead character, she is the protagonist that drives the story (McDonald, 2007). The adaptation of the western narrative into the screwball romantic comedy focuses on JENNIFER SOLO, who is nearly 30 and prone to making a fool of herself. She heads to a small town in Oklahoma to be the "best man" at her former boyfriend's wedding. She won't admit it but she does hope to find a true love of her own. Her best friend (and assistant at the romance novel publishing company where Jennifer works) wants Jennifer to approach each available man during the wedding festivities as if "he could be the one". Jennifer's car swerves off the road outside of town (due to her fighting a rather large Oklahoma flying bug that found its way into her car and up her skirt). Jed, an environmentalist and owner of oil-rich land who has a very contentious relationship with the area's oil baron, rescues her.

In creating the ICM for my screwball romantic comedy script, broad considerations were first made: Because the audience of this film genre is predominately female (and the screwball romantic comedy genre has historically featured a female lead), I changed the protagonist from male (initially set up in the western genre script) to a protagonist of the female gender. I employed the present-day time period so that societal (particularly male/female relationships) and technological concerns would feel current (relevant). I focused the main characters ages and personas to ally with society's notion of marriageable ages and possible partners (specific knowledge concerns). I adjusted the tone to meet the comedy expectations. Schematically I focused on thoughts of/discussions of/desires for love (specific knowledge plays in here also) and comedy elements such as physical and verbal comedy. Again I employed my extensive research into the romantic comedy genre (see Appendix) to make educated creative choices in character and plot points.

Opening sequences of the romantic comedy script below: *Double Bluff*

EXT. OKLAHOMA TWO LANE HIGHWAY – DAY

Expanse of ranch land any cow would jones for. A cheap rental car
that never was good car to begin with speeds along —

INT. CHEAP RENTAL CAR - DAY

JENNIFER SOLO, 30 and a little freaked by that, is on her cell
phone.

> JENNIFER
> (into phone)
> Fran, Fran - There was no car for me. I ended up
> going to tuna fish can car rental —

> FRAN (VOICE OVER PHONE)
> Oh my god

> JENNIFER
> - it's rusty and smelly and

She sees a gnarly large-antennaed bug crawl out of one of the
car's air vents

> JENNIFER (CONT'D)
> Ahhhh! There's a bug there's a bug there's a bug

> FRAN (VOICE OVER PHONE)
> Oh my god!

Jennifer swats at it - it flies! The frizzly ugly bug ZOOMS past
her face -

> JENNIFER
> Ahhhh! It's a flying bug!

She swats at it. The bug flies into the backseat, out of her
sight.

INT. STANDMAN PUBLISHING OFFICES, LOS ANGELES

Posters of the bodice-ripping romance novels that are the
heartbeat of Standman Publishing line the walls. FRAN, 25,
dressed in pink with a red cardigan covered in hearts is on her
headset. She is freaked out for Jennifer

> FRAN
> Oh my god!!!! It's not on your Babette shell and
> pencil skirt is it? - don't squish it on that -
> that's your first impression outfit-
> (looks through her iphone notes)
> I have it right here, Kansas City —

INTERCUT WITH JENNIFER

Jennifer tries to keep an eye on the bug as she continues her conversation -

                    JENNIFER
          *I'm not in Kansas City -- you were supposed to
          have a car waiting in Oklahoma City...*

                    FRAN
          *Ooooohhh my god - I would've definitely suggested
          more bling for Oklahoma City -*

                    JENNIFER
          Really?

                    FRAN
          *Oklahoma women sparkle - we went too muted, way
          too muted —*

                    JENNIFER
          Don't say that —

                    FRAN
          *Oh well, you'll have to power through, remember
          the goal —*

                    JENNIFER
          I don't have a goal - you have a —

                    FRAN
          *Fun. Sex. Be loose. The "serious" Jennifer is
          taking a haitus —*

                    JENNIFER
          I don't have time for —

                    FRAN
          *You're 30. You're miserable - not everything has
          to be about the big love -*
                    JENNIFER
          Who's thinking about love?
               (she always does)
          *Just let me know if Standman has sent out any
          memo about the promotion*
                    FRAN
               (searching through memos)
          Promotion memo -- right it's --

                    JENNIFER
          Ahhhhh!

*The fly has whizzed by her again - she bangs at the window
control to get it down - the window does not budge. The bug
lands on her bare knee -*

                JENNIFER (CONT'D)
      It's on my leg. Fran, it's a big big ugly bug -
                (it's not THAT big)
      Fran- THE BUG IS CRAWLING UP MY…!!!

*She swats at her skirt, swerves and hits the shoulder of the
road; the tires slip off into a DEEP GULCH on the side of the
road -*

            FRAN (OS, VOICE ON PHONE)
        ennnn i fffer?????????

The car jerks downwards.

*The windows fall open - Jennifer's cell phone flies out of her
hand and out the window.*

*The car slips another six inches and then SKIDS sidewise into the
gulch.*

Jennifer calls out after the phone -

                JENNIFER
    Fran - can you hear me now?? - NOOOOOOoooooo!

*The cell phone has PLUNKED into the slimy mud at the bottom of
the gulch. Jennifer GROANS; frantic, she struggles to push open
the door -*

EXT. GULCH

*Jennifer races to her phone. Her legs SINK into the muddy-gunk.
Jennifer GROANS in disgust —*

                JENNIFER
      No… no… no…

*The phone sinks out of sight. Gone. Jennifer reaches for it -
her arms plunge into the gunk - she GAGS in disgust -- and then
loses her balance and FLOPS FORWARDS -- her butt the only thing
sticking up out of the oily gunk -*

A moment. And then Jennifer emerges, GASPING for breath.

               JENNIFER (CONT'D)
      Oh my God - oh my God -

*She grabs onto the cross rising from atop the mini-road sign that
reads ROAD MAINTAINED BY THE CHURCH OF PRICE - SINNERS WELCOME -
- and pulls herself up wailing in desperate grief —*

           JENNIFER (CONT'D)
      My phooooooone!

Jennifer opens her eyes and sees a mud-spattered JEEP CHEROKEE approaching. She stumbles forward ---

           JENNIFER (CONT'D)
      Help!!! Helllllp!!!!!!

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE

JED GRANT, 32, in jeans and t-shirt sees a mud-soaked Jennifer rise from the gulch, waving her mud-drenched arms like a banshee in heat -

           JED
      Shit!

He slams on the brakes and stops 100 feet from her. Wary. He reaches for the baseball bat in the backseat as he watches Jennifer stumble erratically towards the car. Jed presses the LOCK DOOR button.

Jennifer presses her mud-stained wet face against his window and shouts, panicked.

           JENNIFER
      Do you have a cell phone?!!!!

       Once Jennifer arrives at the wedding site, Jennifer finds herself surrounded by no less than four possible love interests - and as her romantic options play out she is in danger of not noticing the "good guy" among the "bad".

       I continued the screwball romantic comedy framing internally throughout the script using physical comedy and setting up the social hierarchy among the characters. I also kept Jennifer's need for love, self-esteem and affirmation of her worth as a love "object" paramount. I employed the specific knowledge in a few ways; each potential lover represents a different possibility for Jennifer, appealing to various sides of her nature. I feel the targeted audience could identify with this for I would assume most women (the core audience), when ready to commit to a long-term relationship, take into consideration what a relationship might offer in relation to location, temperament and social standing as well as, ultimately, true love. I also wanted to appeal to the audience's understanding of being a "fish out of water", feeling out of depth due to lack of

experience or knowledge of a particular situation. I continued with the last element of the mental space of film genre – relevant knowledge – playing with a comedic need for cell phones/instant communication (perhaps one could argue this is related to a self-esteem issue) as well as a nod to a format similar to the popular television series *The Bachelorette* where a female is presented a series of "possible mates" and chooses which one matches her needs and desires. Due to the initial western script, I again brought in the element of owning oil resources, how these resources bring wealth and can bring out greed and – in this case - can even affect choices in a romantic relationship.

THE (SCREWBALL) ROMANTIC COMEDY: *The Big Bluff*

Overriding genre: Romantic Comedy
Supporting genres: Romance, comedy

JENNIFER SOLO, nearly 30 and prone to making a fool of herself, heads to a small town in Oklahoma to be the 'best man' at her former boyfriend's wedding. She won't admit it, but she hopes to find a true love of her own. Her best friend (and assistant at the romance novel publishing company where Jennifer works) wants Jennifer to approach each available man during the wedding festivities as if 'he could be the one'. Her car swerves off the road outside of town (due to her fighting a rather large Oklahoma flying bug that found its way into her car and up her skirt) and she is rescued by JED, an environmentalist and owner of oil-rich land who has a very contentious relationship with the area's oil baron. Jennifer finds herself surrounded by no less than four possible love interests - and as her romantic options play out she is in danger of not noticing the "good guy" among the "bad".

Iconic Romantic Comedy Genre Locations/Events used in this specific romantic comedy ICM in Act One:
   - Pre-wedding parties such as an afternoon BBQ
   - Home where the wedding party is housed
   - Room full of wedding presents

Iconic Romantic Comedy Genre Characters (specifically screwball romantic comedy) used to create this specific romantic comedy ICM:
   - Female protagonist hoping to find true love
   - Various possibilities for 'true love'
        o The 'wrong guy(s)'
        o The 'right guy(s)'
   - The best friend/advisor
   - The antagonist who is getting in the way of the protagonist finding true love
        o Rival for affections of "right guy"

- o Boss with vested interest in protagonist <u>not</u> having a relationship with true love/soulmate

SCHEMATIC KNOWLEDGE:
- External schematic, framing using the opening scene:
  - o Romantic Comedy genre scenes 1-4: The script begins with a comedy sequence, introducing the female "screwball" protagonist as well as the purpose for her journey to Oklahoma; an upcoming wedding (iconic romantic comedy event).
    - **Specific Knowledge** the audience will recognize as classic comedy or romance elements also woven in:
      - Dealing with flying bugs while needing to pay attention to driving
      - Low self-esteem of female protagonist that considers herself 'unworthy' or not attractive enough
    - **Relevant Knowledge** also woven in:
      - Fear of losing "communication" (cell phone) with work/with a person that understands/accepts and is willing to give advice
- Internal schematic (framing) includes
  - o Romantic Comedy genre Scenes 5-12 and Scenes 14-17 frame Scene 13
    - 5-12: Jennifer has cute meet of first potential suitor; comedy continues
    - 13: introduces the oil subplot; comedy light touch
    - 14-17:Jennifer meets three other potential 'loves'; comedy continues
    - **Specific Knowledge:**
      - Audience understands potential suitors being set up
      - Audience understands the wedding set up; romance is expected to be 'in the air'
      - Audience understands she is the 'outsider' with a very weak support system in place in this new place/event
      - Audience understands the screwball romantic comedy protagonist who tends to get in her own way in romantic endeavors (and other endeavors)
    - **Relevant Knowledge:**
      - The Bachelor and Bachelorette TV series that set up potential mates for the person who desires love
  - o Romantic Comedy Genre Scenes 14-17 and Scene 19 frame Scene 18
    - 14-17:Jennifer meets three other potential "loves"; comedy continues
    - 18: The oil subplot continues
    - 19: Jennifer hopes (a bit) but doesn't get support from old boyfriend – he has made his choice and it's not Jennifer
    - **Specific Knowledge:**
      - Old "loves" that do not spark anymore

- Greed and oil
  - **Relevant Knowledge**
    - Oil and its ownership is still a huge worry/ topic of debate in the world
- Romantic Comedy Genre Scene 19 and Scenes 21-23 frame Scene 20
    - 19: Jennifer hopes (a bit) but doesn't get support from old boyfriend – he has made his choice and it's not Jennifer
    - 20: Relationship with 'help' and oil-rich son; add tension to the class structure in place (rom coms often look at class hierarchies – in this story, Jennifer is 'working class' as opposed to the rich and privileged Price family
    - 21-23: Set up of rival/ person who is out to make Jennifer feel unworthy and sabotage her 'attractiveness' and self-esteem; the catty female. Also another scene with other of the potential suitors. Also the "advisor/best friend" tries to build up Jennifer's self-esteem
  - **Specific Knowledge**
    - Possibility of romance
    - Social hierarchies
    - Deconstruction of Romantic Comedy genre/fun through character dialogue
  - **Relevant Knowledge**
    - Racial relations/Hispanic and Caucasian in the Southwest
- Romantic Comedy Genre Scene 21-23 and Scenes 25-34 frame Scene 24
    - 21-23: Set up of rival/ person who is out to make Jennifer feel unworthy and sabotage her 'attractiveness' and self-esteem; the catty female. Also another scene with other of the potential suitors. Also the 'advisor/best friend' tries to build up Jennifer's self-esteem
    - 25: Continues the oil/land issue subplot
    - 26-34: Jennifer prepares for BBQ, deals with potential suitors and ends up making a fool of herself
  - **Specific Knowledge**
    - Predatory neighbors who want to control land
    - Romantic comedy scenes that push the female protagonist to a breaking point by the end of Act One
    - Slapstick comedy/over-the-top heightened comedy
  - **Relevant Knowledge**
    - The Entertainment Tonight or media acceptance/intrusion into private events; current acceptance of invasion of privacy and always being 'on camera'

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS WOVEN THROUGHOUT:
- Setting up the comedic tone so that audiences know they are invited to laugh and enjoy the heightened sense of reality

- The audience (targeted audience is women) understanding of Jennifer's desire for a romantic relationship but also of her fear that she is not 'worthy' or 'attractive' – the low self esteem train in her character.
- Audiences of romantic comedy expect/enjoy the fun of having possible 'true love' candidates introduced and guessing which is the one that will truly win the protagonist's heart
- Audiences of romantic comedy expect/enjoy luxurious/rich surrounds, clothing etc. and especially when experienced by the "outsider" who cannot afford/has never experienced these things. It's the Cinderella frame of mind – the misunderstood/mistreated but worthy young woman ventures into a rarefied world where she eventually is appreciated.
- Weddings and the events that go with them are "romantic" or at least invited highly emotional reactions to love or lack of love.

RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS WOVEN THROUGHOUT:
- The nod to the recent fad of TV series such as *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* that attempt to match strangers by putting them in a contest to win each other's affections
- Women of a certain age and career finding it more difficult to find suitable mates
- The role of OIL in our society –environmental opinions on extracting/using up our resources. The wealth it can bring to those who own oil-rich land.
- Society's reliance on instant communication via cell phones/internet etc. An anxiety that can surface when those avenues of communication are taken away.
- Media intrusion into private lives

OBSERVATIONS OF MOVING NARRATIVE FROM WESTERN GENRE INTO THE ROMANTIC COMEDY GENRE:
- I felt I needed the strong Romantic Comedy opening to set the tone/genre for the audience and wanted to stress the comedic element first because I knew I wanted the screwball element.
- I wanted to add a strong ingredient of 'physical comedy' which is an important element of the romantic comedy/screwball comedy subgenre.
- The Romantic Comedy is often referred to as a 'chick flick'– meaning that its target audience is women. Therefore I changed the protagonist to a woman and gave her a 'best female friend' advisor.
- The male characters in the script were adjusted so that they could all become 'possible love interests'.
- Even in the scenes regarding the oil subplot, I tried to inject comedy elements (word play and character traits) to keep the rom com genre evident.

I would like to return to my earlier observation regarding the first act of the romantic comedy script and why it ended up being more problematical than expected. In examining this event, I determined it was because the elements of the world that I had created for the western script (and translated to relatively acceptable results in the horror

script) were not at all conducive to the classic romantic comedy form. I wrote and re-wrote the romantic comedy pages in hopes of making them (in my opinion) professionally "viable".

Finally, I realized that the difficulty I was having was a <u>positive result,</u> that my problems were supporting my argument that approaching the screenplay using classic film genre components and the elements of the mental space film genre as strong building components in the construction of the ICM of the screenplay <u>does</u> strongly suggest structural, tonal, and plots choices that must be addressed at the initial ideation stage. After analyzing my problems, I determined the main reasons for my dissatisfaction with the romantic comedy script were:

- The romantic comedy, in most cases, cannot support multiple diverse plot lines as well as the western or horror film. The romantic comedy narrative is classically 'simpler' and focused on primarily one narrative – the primacy of the couple.
- Supporting (or 'B') stories in classic romantic comedies tend to be about romance, this aids in obtaining the audience's emotional satisfaction in the narrative. Supporting plot lines in westerns and horror films can employ various film genres that support the main plot and the dominant film genre
- The classic romantic comedy narratives tend to focus on a smaller cast of main characters. In trying to weave in the multiple characters from the supporting plot lines of the western narrative, the focus of pursuit of love and the implementation of the comedy element of a classic romantic comedy were diluted.

The task was to build three ICMs using similar plot, location, character choices and explore how taking into consideration the classic components of each overriding film genre and the mental space components of each specific genre affected the film narrative and structure. I stress the word 'classic' for my task was not to attempt to use film genre components to subvert narrative (as in *Dr. Strangelove*[38]) or use the film genre element of an ICM to help create an alternate world (as in the surreal Coen brother's film *Burn After Reading*[39]). My task was to explore how narratives, using similar base elements such as

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[38] See Methodology in this document
[39] See Methodology in this document

locations and plot points, would undergo changes of tone as well as character and character intentions and interactions when film genre was put in a primary position of consideration in the construction of the ICM for a feature film. I allowed the mental space of film genre components to take precedence as I focused on building and or adjusting (after the initial realized western script pages) the idealized cognitive models of these scripts. The first acts of the three narratives (a western, a slasher horror film and a romantic comedy) are included in Part #4 of this practice-led PhD project.

SCRIPTS

NO BLUFF

a western

NO BLUFF OKLAHOMA

EXT. OKLAHOMA - 1898 - NIGHT - FULL MOON

A small campfire adds light to the dry and low-mountaino
terrain. A tall thin man is silhouetted; he's digging a
grave. The ground is hard, his breathing labored. But
continues on-

DISSOLVE
TO:

SUN RISING - A rope twists together two dry branches of
scrub oak. Sinewy hands hold the old Starr. 44 pistol a
pound the makeshift cross into the shallow grave.

MOMENTS LATER - A well-used blanket is tossed over a stu
chestnut mare, followed by a saddle that has the sheen o
years of heavy use.

A dusty boot fits into the stirrup and the rider groans
he settles onto his ride. He turns his back on the sun a
heads west. This is JERROD BELL, around 35 or 40, his
stubble turning grey, his skin like leather stretched ov
his tight jaw, looks into the jagged Quachita hills ahea
him. He hasn't felt good for - well he doesn't think tha
far back. His horse has been with him a long time and i
reliable, but doesn't have the spark for the future eith
They're a pair alone.

Bell reins in his horse, turns in his saddle and looks b
at the grave.

Then he turns his horse around and heads into the sun, a
direction he hadn't planned on - but drew him all the sa

EXT. OKLAHOMA TERRITORY - 1898 - MORNING

Ranching and farming co-exist in the plains. The soil is
good if the rains come.

Long stretches of clouds float above low hills.

Bell rides, there's no one else in sight.

EXT. NO BLUFF - MAIN STREET - MORNING

A one-saloon, dusty town that grew out of the Land Rush
years earlier - a supply-stop for ranchers and farmers.

JENNY SAND, 30, married and widowed twice and tired of
relying on men, strides out of the Bluff Hotel. She lift
her skirts above fine ankles as she makes her way over t
thirty yards of packed dry dirt that separates the hotel
the saloon.

DRUNK TOM ogles her. As does the nervous General Store
owner, MEL BENNETT, 35, who inherited the store last wee
when his father choked on a chicken bone and fell dead i
the street. Mel now has prospects and hopes Jenny will
that. But she doesn't even look his way. He may be nerv
but this makes him angry.

Jenny passes by SMITH, 28, idealistic and nationalistic,
setting up a rough-wood booth that is covered with Ameri
flags - the ones with 45 stars on them. He takes note o
her too, but then all men take note of Jenny.

                    SMITH
          Good mornin' to ya Mrs. Buster.

                    JENNY
          Good morning, Smith. I already
          signed your petition, you're not
          gonna ask me again, are ya?

                    SMITH
          If you could talk to some of your -

                    JENNY
          If the topic comes up.

Jenny enters the saloon. Smith props up his sign next t
his booth "STATEHOOD FOR OKLAHOMA - THE FUTURE WAITS FOR
YOU"

EXT. BEHIND THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

DEPUTY HANK, 22, and SHERIFF COOPER, 45, take potshots a
row of tin cans. Deputy Hank doesn't hit one and this
frustrates him. The Sheriff's aim is true - but then hi
pistol jams.

Deputy Hank looks up, notes Bell riding onto the Main
Street.

> DEPUTY HANK
> Someone.

> SHERIFF COOPER
> Goddamn gun –

> DEPUTY HANK
> Sheriff –

Sheriff looks up and gets a good look at Bell. He's
perturbed. He heads back through an open back door and

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff   heads past his empty jail cell to his beaten-u
desk; pulls out a drawer. Deputy Hank has followed him

> DEPUTY HANK
> Who is it?

> SHERIFF
> Go ask 'im what he's doin' here –

> DEPUTY HANK
> It'd help if I knew –

> SHERIFF
> Bell. Jerrod Bell you fool.

The name means something in this town.

> DEPUTY HANK
> Sheeee-it

Deputy Hank goes to the window – he watches Bell ride pa
notices he's in no hurry. He even looks, fleetingly, li
every muscle hanging on his bones ache.

> SHERIFF
> I wanna know how long he's plannin'
> on bein' here. Now git.

Sheriff, with a piece of paper in his hand, heads out th
back.

> DEPUTY HANK
> Where you goin'?

Sheriff's gone. Deputy Hank, heart racing a bit, grabs

rifle from the gun rack, moves out the front.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Deputy Hank stands, unsure. He watches Bell ride toward
the Blacksmith's Shop.

EXT. BACK OF SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff nods to a Choctaw youth HANTA, age 12, a baby-fa
opportunist who draws with a stick in the dirt nearby.
Hanta races over.

                    SHERIFF
               (in Choctaw)
          Schoolteacher. Pronto –

Hanta waits for a coin. Finally the Sheriff provides one
Hanta races off.

Sheriff gets on his horse and rides off.

EXT. Main street – blacksmith shop – DAY

Deputy Hank walks into Blacksmith shop.

                    DEPUTY HANK
          You!

Bell, taking the saddle off his horse, ignores him.

                    DEPUTY HANK (CONT'D)
          I'm the Deputy.

                    BELL
          That something you proud of?

                    DEPUTY HANK
               (taken aback by the
                question)
          – yeah.

Bell looks him up and down – proud is one thing, capable
another. Deputy Hank tries for authority –

                    DEPUTY HANK (CONT'D)
          Sheriff wants to know –

                    BELL
          The Sheriff –

> DEPUTY HANK
> Which ain't you no more.

> BELL
> (quietly)
> That's right.

Bell's tone gets Deputy Hank's back up even more –

> DEPUTY HANK
> How many days an' nights you
> plannin' here – I need ta tell him.

Bell doesn't answer. He walks out of the stable, picks u
some small stones – he tosses them at a second-floor win

After a moment, the window goes up. CRANK, 45 – showing
sleepy round doughy face – peers out.

> CRANK
> Who's there?

> DEPUTY HANK
> It's Jerrod Bell, Crank.

Crank sees Bell. Window goes down. The sound of heavy
footsteps on a rickety stairway.

Sound of an iron bar being slid out of a locking device.
Crank opens the door, heads back upstairs.

Bell goes inside. Deputy Hank doesn't want to come up
short.

> DEPUTY HANK (CONT'D)
> I gotta git a' answer.

Bell closes the door without a glance back.

EXT. OWEN'S CLAPBOARD FARMHOUSE – MORNING

Small, but homey – on about five acres of land. Freshly-
painted wood fence and front porch – and a chicken coop
a barn.

INT. OWEN'S FARMHOUSE

JIMMY, 35, lean and serious, wearing a collarless white
shirt and wool vest, packs books into a large trunk. Th
bookshelf is almost empty. The furniture is covered in
blankets that are held on tightly with rope. He looks o

window towards the coop, sees his wife CAROLINE, 28, a f
beauty with a strong chin, tying on an apron and picking
a well-sharpened axe.

EXT. OWEN'S FARMHOUSE

Caroline's axe comes down on the chicken's neck. She
expertly grabs the decapitated chicken by two of the str
together legs and hangs it upside down on a nail on the
nearby fencepost - next to five other headless carcasses

She grabs one of the already bled-out chickens and drops
into a nearby oversized iron pot resting atop a wood fir
The chicken lands in the boiling water -

INT. OWEN'S BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Caroline enters with a small bale of hay. She fills a
trough. Her two milk cows, white in color and thick, mov
the trough. As they lap up the water with their thick ro
tongues, Caroline is able to check the tick sores on the
rumps.   The cows' tails swish across their irritated sk

Caroline reaches for a pair of large heavy cloth workglo
and a glass bottle on a high shelf. She uncorks it, po
the thick oil on her gloved hands and massages it into t
cows' backsides. The dark petroleum oil stains the skin
but the tails stop swishing.

Caroline peels off the gloves - hangs them on the hook o
the shelf. She reaches for a bucket and her milk stool.

EXT. OWEN'S BARN

Caroline moves out, carrying a bucket of milk. She look
- takes in the blue sky, the young trees she planted jus
year ago. She catches sight of Hanta racing towards the
farmhouse.

She uses a stick to pull the chicken out the water; it's
ready for de-feathering. She drops it on the carving ta
She walks to meet Hanta at the fence.

INT. OWEN'S FARMHOUSE

Jimmy notices Hanta's arrival too. He watches Caroline
Hanta as they talk - for a moment - then Hanta runs off.
Caroline heads to the house.

EXT. OWEN'S FARMHOUSE

Jimmy strides out the door to meet Caroline on the front
porch.

                    JIMMY
          What is it?

She hesitates. Then gives him the note Hanta gave her.
Jimmy reads it.

                    JIMMY (CONT'D)
          - this could change things.

Caroline hurries inside. Jimmy looks after her, he's no
sure of himself right now.

INT. CRANK'S UPSTAIRS QUARTERS - MEANWHILE

Bell sits at the small hand-hewn table. Crank closes the
door to the bedroom area where two kids sleep next to hi
Quapaw woman who looks curiously out at Bell.

                    CRANK
          Ain't had a thought that you'd be
          back.

                    BELL
          Just movin' through.

Crank eyes him. Expects he's full of shit.

                    CRANK
          Where's your brother? He comin'
          too?

                    BELL
               (thinking of the grave)
          George didn't make it.

Crank waits for details. None come.

                    CRANK
          Seen anyone else?

Bell rubs his rough beard.

                    BELL
          I'll start with a shave.

INT. BARBERSHOP - AN HOUR OR SO LATER

Bell's face is covered in warm cloth towels; the shave i
done. The barber, GARR, age 35, underweight and high-str
takes off the towels. Through the window Bell sees Deput
Hank talking to Mel Bennett. They're watching him.

                    BELL
          Don't look like there's much
          happening in town.

                    BARBER
          Today ain't tomorrow. Now ain't a
          second later.

Garr opens a drawer under the counter. There's a Smith
Wesson Schofield .45; Bell sees it.

                    BELL
          Settle down, Garr.

Drunk Tom pushes the door open, his grin is ingratiating

                    DRUNK TOM
          I'm still alive.

                    BELL
          I can see that.

                    DRUNK TOM
          Ain't drunk myself to death yet.

                    BELL
          I can see that.

                    DRUNK TOM
          Anythin' you need you just holler.
              (points a shaky finger at
               Bell)
          You. You.

                    BELL
          Garr. Tom needs a shave.

Bell puts a coin on the counter. Garr scowls – Drunk Tom
straightens, puffs out his chest; there is glee in his e
– he heads to the lone barber chair.

                    DRUNK TOM
          A shave, my good man!

EXT. BARBERSHOP

Bell moves out of the shop and heads across the street t

the hotel. Doesn't exchange a word with Deputy Hank or M
Bennett.

                    DEPUTY HANK
          I'm watchin' you.

Bell enters the hotel.

INT. HOTEL DINING AREA- SHORT WHILE LATER

Bell sits; an OLD MAN fills his coffee cup. Jenny is in
corner, looking through bills. She's noticed Bell.

                    JENNY
          Don't eat much.

Bell stops.

                    BELL
          Say something to me... miss?

                    JENNY
          A man needs to eat.

                    BELL
          Kinda personal.

                    JENNY
          It's nice to be personal with
          strangers. I find that, at least.

Jenny goes back to looking over her bills. Bell leaves a
coin for the coffee, takes a moment and then gets up. He
walks past her to the door.

                    JENNY (CONT'D)
          I own the saloon.

Bell takes a moment, nods to her.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Bell comes out of the hotel. A few ranchers have come in
supplies. Two young boys ride by on ponies, on their way
school.

Bell's eyes shift. He's noticed movement on the roof of
General Store a split second before the RIFLE SHOT rings
out. The bullet SMASHES a hole in the post next to Bell
head.

Deputy Hank moves out of the Sheriff's office, what the
hell? Mel Bennett races inside his store, abandoning hi
task of arranging goods displays. Other townspeople duc
for cover, a few who have not dismounted their rides, tu
tail and ride off.

Another SHOT - this time Bell is ready. He catches sight
the shooter and takes aim - AND CONNECTS. The shooter fl
off the roof - and whumps onto Bennett's cotton fabric
display.

Bell's taken cover in the doorway, under the eave; eyes
rooftops. Sees nothing. No movement.

Silence.

Deputy Hank waits one more moment. Then he starts acros
the street -

                    DEPUTY HANK
          You! I'll take that gun!

Another SHOT trajects towards Bell, BINGS into the Hotel
sign. It comes from top of the outdoor stairs heading do
from the General Store roof -

Deputy Hank dives for cover under a horse trough -

Bell raises his Starr .44 again - pulls the trigger but
hammer jams. Bell growls in cool frustration - opens hi
revolver and blows into the cylinder.

Drunk Tom, his face covered with lather, stumbles out of
Barbershop.

                    DRUNK TOM
          You git him? Hee hee! You git him?

A SHOT rings out and blows off Drunk Tom's left ear - BL
spurts, his ear FLIPS through the air and slides under t
horse trough where Hank cowers. The whiskey numbs Drunk
Tom's pain; he whirls angrily - blood squirts like a ha
around his head - he yells in the direction of the hidde
Shooter.

                    DRUNK TOM (CONT'D)
          Hey! I use that ear!

                    SHOOTER (OS)
          You dumb fuck!

The Shooter shows a shoulder. It's enough for Bell. He
clicks his gun back in order, TAKES AIM AND FIRES. The

bullet connects with the rifle shoulder of the shooter - there's a YELP of pain and the SOUND OF HEAVY BOOTS descending the wood stairway -

Bell waits. Deputy Hank waits. Drunk Tom holds his blo head and falls to his knees, mumbling and patting the ground, looking for his errant ear.

Crank is half-dressed, shows in the alleyway next to the hotel, buttoning his fly, pulling on a suspender. He hu the building with his back, pulls a pistol from the gunb he'd grabbed -

>   CRANK
>   Got a sight?

>   BELL
>   Hold it.

Finally, Bell sees the Shooter, on a large black horse, riding out at the end of the town - heading south.

From behind the closed door of the Hotel -

>   JENNY (OS)
>   Now is that it for the day?

Bell pushes the door open, barely meets her gaze.   He h to the street to try get a view of the departing Shooter

Jenny sees Drunk Tom, she moves to him, joins Garr in pulling him up.

>   JENNY (CONT'D)
>   Tom, we gotta get you to Doc -

  Hank crawls out from under the trough.

>   DEPUTY HANK
>   I'll take your gun, Bell. I'll
>   take your gun.

Bell keeps moving. He joins Crank at the General Store; they get a look at the dying man; he's Mexican and his b is ruining bolts of cotton. His eyes are turning dull li brown jelly and as he tries to suck air, he swallows his blood. His body twitches one last time.

>   MEL BENNETT (OS)
>   Who's paying for this?

Bell and Crank ignore Mel Bennett who stands in the door red-faced in anger. They look down at the dead man.

                         CRANK
                Ain't seen him before.

EXT. PATIO OF RICHARDS RANCH HOUSE - MEANWHILE

Mexican servants place a platter of roasted pig, fried e
and grits in front of PRICE RICHARDS, 50, barrel-chested
vain. He sits with Sheriff Cooper on the patio where
Richards can look out on his acreage, land that stretche
for more than 50 miles.

Richards' three grown SONS and his half-blind NEPHEW sit
a table a few feet off. All wear pistols in holsters, t
rifles at their side.

CARMEN PLENVUE, 30, a Boston air about him and always
impeccably dressed, sips his thick coffee nearby.

                         RICHARDS
                Nothin' he can do.

Richards eats with relish, slopping up egg with a piece
bread. Doesn't offer to share his food.

                         SHERIFF
                Is that right?

                         RICHARDS
                That's your job.

                         SHERIFF
                I ain't got no reason to make him
                move on.

Richards shakes his head at what he perceives as weaknes

                         RICHARDS
                You gotta see what's not there yet,
                Cooper.

                         PLENVUE
                I do have men pulling equipment,
                Mr. Richards, and due to arrive.
                You assured me that my time and
                know-how would be well-served.

Richards nods in introduction.

                         RICHARDS
                Plenvue. Colorado Mining.
                Speculator.

                  PLENVUE
I don't imagine things. I enjoy
knowing my business.

                  RICHARDS
Bell don't worry me.
    (to Sheriff)
You go on back to town.

Sheriff hesitates but recognizes the dismissal. He nods
Plenvue and heads off.

EXT. LONG ROAD FROM THE RICHARDS' RANCH TO NO BLUFF - LA

Sheriff Cooper heads back to town. A rider gallops towa
him, nearly fully bent over the saddle. Sheriff reins i
thinking the rider will stop. But he doesn't - it's the
Shooter, his shoulder bloody - an arm hanging useless at
side - riding at top speed towards Richards Ranch.

Sheriff, figuring something went down, urges his horse i
a gallop and heads to back to town.

EXT. OWEN'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

Jimmy, having now added a string tie and a wool jacket,
helps Caroline, now in a clean gingham dress, into the
buckboard. She pulls on her bonnet. Her face is solemn
there's anger brewing.

                  JIMMY
We gotta talk about this.

                  CAROLINE
I want those pots of flowers to the
schoolhouse.

Jimmy notices two large flowerpots by the fence. He lif
them into the back of the buckboard.

                  JIMMY
Caroline.
    (she doesn't respond)
You're thinking he's here to do
what's right, but maybe it's just
your version of right.

                  CAROLINE
Talk doesn't help. I tried. You
tried. Til' you were blue in the
face.

Caroline senses Jimmy's insecurity. She does respect hi
noble-ness and she responds with kindness.

> CAROLINE (CONT'D)
> I don't know what he's here for.
> - Now I can't be late.

Jimmy gets on board, snaps the reins and the two horses
towards town.

INT. DOC'S CLAPBOARD HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

DOC, 45, bandages Drunk Tom's head. His ear is on the
counter next to surgical instruments and iodine. Drunk T
takes another slug of whiskey - grateful that right now
considered medicine and it's free. Crank and Garr confr
Bell; he won't be baited.

> CRANK
> You can't say you don't make
> someone uncomfortable -

> BELL
> Someone shoulda asked. I'da told
> him I was outta here soon as the
> bank opened.

> DOC
> This used to be yer town.

> BELL
> I had a job in this town. That
> ended.

> DRUNK TOM
> You gave up. Surprised the shit
> outa me.

> GARR
> (quietly)
> Where the hell were you?

> DRUNK TOM
> I was in my cave. Where I go when
> I know I can't be of any help -

> GARR
> Where you go to save your skin.

> DRUNK TOM
> I regret it.

His eyes tear up in drunken humiliation.

                    DRUNK TOM (CONT'D)
          I were a coward. The truth of it.

                    DOC
            (to Drunk Tom)
          Stop moving, I'm workin' here.

                    CRANK
          We mighta backed down then - won't
          do it now.

                    GARR
          You can't let Richards just have -

                    BELL
          You have. Not me.

                    DOC
          Barber here lost his wife and two
          kids. Crank's oldest boy burned in
          the fire. Half the town moved on,
          the other half were in terror in
          their homes 'til they couldn't take
          it no more and deeded all they
          owned to Richards and packed up and
          headed to Federal land. Maybe we
          all coulda stood next to you and
          your brother and had our heads
          blown off - sure we all coulda -

Bell is through listening. He heads out. Crank, Doc, Ba
share frustrated looks. Drunk Tom downs another shot gl
of whiskey.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE ON EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

Caroline steps out of the buckboard, a dozen students,
mostly of Irish and German descent, wait for her. Hanta
the only Indian among them. He sticks to the side of
Caroline, as if he's determined he's her protector. Jimm
puts the flowerpots next to the front door.

                    YOUNG BOY
          There was shootin' in
          town this mornin'. Man died.

Caroline and Jimmy share a look.

                    JIMMY
          You know who? Died?

The students shrug.   Jimmy hurries into the buckboard,
urges the horses to a fast pace -

Caroline's face is a study in concern. Deep dark concern

EXT. MAIN STREET- BANK - DAY

Jimmy pulls his buckboard to a stop. He sees Bell waiti
for him, leaning against the heavy door of the only ston
building in town.

                    JIMMY
          See it wasn't you that croaked.

                    BELL
          Not this time.

Jimmy heads to the door, unlocks it. He's not unfriendl

                    JIMMY
          Surprised to see ya.

                    BELL
          You got my brother's money. He
          told me to pick it up.

                    JIMMY
          I'll check the ledger but I don't
          recall George havin' a deposit
          here.

INT. BANK

Bell follows Jimmy in. There's an oak desk in front of
large wall safe. There's a bookshelf filled with ledger

                    JIMMY
          Where is George?

                    BELL
          Dead.

Jimmy is startled - and sincere.

                    JIMMY
          Didn't know.

                    BELL
          Buried him yesterday. Never did
          mend. Wanted to get here to get his
          money 'fore we headed to Mexico.

                          JIMMY
             Mexico. That your plan? Just get
             the money and go?

                          BELL
             You wanna look for that ledger?

                          JIMMY
             Yeah.
                  (gathers himself)
             You hear about Caroline?

Bell takes a moment. This is tender territory.

                          BELL
             I plan on seeing her.

                          JIMMY
             We got happily married. Been
             three-- no -- four months.

Bell takes this in. Eyes grow cold.

                          BELL
             The ledger.

Jimmy goes to the shelf, pulls down a ledger with a "B"
engraved on it. He opens it.

                          JIMMY
             As I figured. I do not have any
             deposit for a George Bell.

Bell is not pleased with this news. His suspicions are
raised. He takes out a slip of paper from his vest pock

                          BELL
             Here's a receipt. You signed it.

Jimmy chooses his words carefully.

                          JIMMY
             The bank's changed hands since
             then.

Bell's voice gets scary steady and low

                          BELL
             What about the deed to my property.

                          JIMMY
             You know better. If you don't
             settle there, it can't be held -

                    BELL
          So you just work for someone now.

                    JIMMY
          That's right. There's a few of us
          who are pushing to join the States,
          this territory's one of the last
          that's not under the Federal
          shoulder- which would help if it
          was - in banking matters. But as
          of right now - that's right - I
          just work for someone now.

Bell heads to the door - Jimmy calls after him.

                    JIMMY (CONT'D)
          I don't want you upsetting
          Caroline.

A rancher walks in with his wife as Bell leaves. Jimmy
forces a smile on his face.

                    JIMMY (CONT'D)
          Good morning, Mr. Zakler. Mrs.
          Zakler. How are you today? We can
          certainly talk about that loan you
          were asking about. I got some news
          for you -

EXT. MAIN STREET

Bell heads to the saloon. Sheriff Cooper, just back, ge
off his horse in front of the Sheriff's office. Deputy
meets him in the doorway -

INT. SALOON

Bell enters, goes to the long bar. Wooden card tables w
mis-matched chairs and mirrors fill the narrow room. Je
has an apron on, she's in front of a large iron stove, a
kettle of stew heats on top of it. The bartender, KURT,
large and mean-faced stocks bottles. He walks with a dec
limp and he has a scar that never lost its redness acros
his cheekbones.

                    JENNY
          I'll take care of him, Kurt.

                    KURT
          I know Sheriff Bell.

Kurt puts a bottle of whiskey and a glass on the bar.

                    BELL
          Kurt.

Kurt grabs an empty crate, heads to the back of the salo

                    JENNY
          Sheriff?

                    BELL
          Two years back.

Bell looks at the whiskey, doesn't pour himself a glass.

                    JENNY
          Well then I've heard about you.
          You back to stay?

                    BELL
          No. Soon as I get what's owed –

                    JENNY
          I see. Then you move. So you are a
          true western man.

                    BELL
             (slaps the bar)
          This is new. You re-done the
          place.

                    JENNY
          I have an investor.

                    BELL
          Richards.

Jenny nods.

                    JENNY
          Almost paid him off.

 Bell's laugh is not mirthful.

                    BELL
          Which is his table?

Jenny points to the one well-polished table that boasts
cushioned armchair pulled up to it. Bell takes out his
pistol, walks over to it and SHOOTS a hole into the top.

                    JENNY
             (angry)

                    You git outa here.

                         BELL
                    You talk to Richards - tell him
                    Bell's the one who done it. And
                    that he owes my brother.

EXT. CRANK'S BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Bell saddles his horse, leads it out of the barn.

EXT. CRANK'S BLACKSMITH SHOP

Price Richards' sons, WAYNE, 30, LYLE, 28, BRICK, 24 and
Half-Nephew wait for Bell. They are astride their large
horses; an extra horse is tied to the Half Nephew's sadd
horn.

                         WAYNE
                    Pap sent us.

                         SHERIFF (OS)
                    Boys, I just seen ya. Whatcha
                    doin' in town?

Sheriff Cooper and a nervous Deputy Hank approach on foo
Sheriff has a rifle at his side.

All share a tense silence. Bell's hand goes to rest on
revolver. Finally:

                         WAYNE
                    Came to get some supplies.

Wayne moves his horse off; his relatives follow him.
Sheriff turns to Bell.

                         SHERIFF
                    Seen a photograph of you. Been
                    told to be on the lookout. So now
                    you show up and one is dead and
                    another maimed. Pretty quick work.
                    So I figure you are a problem and
                    problems don't do well here. Best
                    you head out.

                         BELL
                    How far you think I'll get?

                         SHERIFF
                    Depends on how good you are.

Bell gets on his horse.

                    DEPUTY HANK
          So you're goin' -

                    BELL
          When I'm ready.

Bell rides off.

Wayne and brothers, heading into an alley between the
Sheriff's Office and the General Store, watch Bell.

EXT. MAIN STREET

Wayne and his brothers walk towards Smith's political bo
Smith raises his head from a book, sees them coming and
quickly hurries off towards the General Store.

Richards' Half Nephew kicks the Oklahoma for Statehood s
it falls over into the dust.

EXT. COFFIN ALLEY

Wayne and brothers walk past rows of pine coffins.

INT. FUNERAL ROOM

This is the back room of a small clapboard house. The d
shooter lays on a slab table. No one has cleaned the bl
off him. The FUNERAL CLERK sits at a desk. Wayne enter
The others wait outside.

                    WAYNE
          I come to claim the body.

Clerk looks up. Flips open a recording book.

                    FUNERAL CLERK
          Relationship to deceased.

                    WAYNE
          An acquaintance of the family wants
          to bury his little brother.

Clerk scribbles on a piece of paper. Hands it to Wayne.

                    FUNERAL CLERK
          That's for the coffin, the storage
          of the body and the straightening

of his hair.

                   WAYNE
        Straightening of his hair.
        Straightening of his hair.

                FUNERAL CLERK
        All right, I can take that off.

Wayne tosses coins on the desk. Nods for his brothers t
get the body. They enter, lift the corpse and haul it
outside.

EXT. COFFIN ALLEY

The brothers drop the body into the coffin. Slide the t
on. Nail it shut.

                SHERIFF (OS)
        You takin' responsibility for this
        man?

Wayne turns to eye the Sheriff. Doesn't answer.

EXT. LONG ROAD OUT OF NO BLUFF TO RICHARD'S RANCH - NOON

The coffin is tied to the extra horse. Two Richards
brothers ride out of town to the open country that leads
the Richards Ranch.

Bennett and Smith watch from the General Store doorway.
Suddenly, GUNSHOT hits the post next to Bennett's head.
Bennett and Smith duck for cover. Sound of LAUGHTER.

Wayne, coming out of the alleyway, is LAUGHING, putting
gun in his holster. Half-Nephew takes another SHOT, thi
one skipping along the floorboards of the porch, inches
Smith's face.

ON DOC'S OFFICE

Doc moves his curtains aside, his guns are on his hips,
hands resting on the handles.

Wayne and Half Nephew head towards the Bank.

INT. BANK

Jimmy sees Wayne and Half Nephew approach. He goes to t
safe, turns the dials so as to open it.

Wayne and Half Nephew enter. Jimmy takes two bags of c
from the safe, closes the safe and hands over the bags t
Wayne. Wayne's voice drips with sarcasm.

> WAYNE
> Always ready for me, ain't you
> Jimmy.

Wayne and Half Nephew head back out –

> HALF NEPHEW
> I'm gonna get me a bath, Wayne.
> I'm gonna get me a bath.

The door closes behind them. Jimmy blows out his anger a
disgust with himself.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE – MID-AFTERNOON

Small narrow structure, front and back door and a few
windows. Caroline dismisses the class as she collects th
handwriting exercises.

> CAROLINE
> Take your history book and read
> while you eat. Then you have ten
> minutes to run around. Back here
> in when I ring the bell. We have
> one more lesson and then you're off
> to go do your chores. You hear me?

The students race out, all except Hanta.

> CAROLINE (CONT'D)
> You want to wash the slate again
> today, Hanta?

> HANTA
> Yes, ma'am.

> CAROLINE
> All right.

She goes out the back door

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE – NOON

Caroline sinks onto a tree stump. The strain of not kno
what's happening in town has gotten to her. She calls o

> CAROLINE

                        Hanta!

Hanta races out, stands next her.

                    CAROLINE (CONT'D)
          Go into town. Find out the news.

                    HANTA
          Yes, ma'am.

Hanta runs off. Caroline stands. Impatient. Frustrated
Then she sits. Feeling helpless.

EXT. OWEN'S FARMHOUSE - MEANWHILE

Bell rides up. Notices the packed trunks, the covered
furniture. He notes that no one is there.

He dismounts, walks into the barn.

INT. OWEN'S BARN

Two cows moan, chew on hay as they follow him with their
eyes. Bell goes into an empty stall where tools are stac

He moves the tools and the layer of hay on the ground.
Scrapes away a layer of dirt. Is surprised by the visco
in the dirt - he smells his hands - a light smell of oil

But he's focused on something else. Under the dirt he
uncovers a metal box. He pulls it out. Hacks off the
makeshift lock with a shovel.

He opens the box. It's empty.

EXT. RICHARDS' RANCH - SUNSET

A good distance from the ranch house, five Mexicans, al
wearing leather cartridge belts across their chests, sta
next to a freshly dug grave; one is pale, his face
sweating, he holds his infected shoulder wound, his arm
hangs useless.

A hundred yards behind them two wooden oil derricks stan

EXT. OIL DERRICKS

Richards and Plenvue watch as Mexican workers haul up a
bucket from the shaft. Plenvue ladles out a sample, move

the shed. Richards follows.

INT. SHED NEAR OLD DERRICKS

Plenvue's beakers and instruments line one wall. A larg
table is covered with maps - maps of the territory also
cover the walls. Plenvue dips a finger into the ladle o
sludge, brings his finger to his mouth - a taste.

                    RICHARDS
          Well?

                    PLENVUE
          There're more tests.

                    RICHARDS
          What'd you taste?

                    PLENVUE
          My taste buds are not definitive -

                    RICHARDS
          What the hell did you taste?

Plenvue doesn't appreciate being bullied. But he also h
to string this man along - he wants to continue his work
Plenvue holds out his hand to congratulate Richards.

                    PLENVUE
          Are you ready to be a very rich
          man?

                    RICHARDS
          I'm already rich.

                    PLENVUE
          I said very rich.

Richards takes this in - he doesn't smile, his eyes just
narrow in determination.

EXT. MAIN STREET - SUNSET

Crank leads a freshly-shoed horse from his stables, wrap
the horse's reins around the hitching post outside the
saloon. His children play stickball nearby. His wife i
behind the Blacksmith shop's low fence, taking laundry o
line.

Drunk Tom, his head bandaged, steps out of the outhouse
the end of an alleyway, pulling on his suspenders. He s

Crank, waves.

> DRUNK TOM
> Crank! Crank!
>> (holds his bandaged head)
> I took one for us. Buy me a drink!

Mel Bennett loads goods onto a wagon for a FARMER. The
Farmer steps into the buckboard, snaps the reins for his
team of horses and moves off.

> MEL BENNETT
> You're a dirty disgrace, Tom

> DRUNK TOM
>> (whirls happily to
>> Bennett)
> You don't lift a finger when your
> pa was chokin'. Died with a
> chicken bone in his gullet while
> sonny boy watched - hee hee

Bennett, incensed, rushes at Drunk Tom, tackles him. Dr
Tom hits the dirt hard, the wind nearly out of him. Ben
KICKS the unconscious Tom as Crank shoos his children ba
towards the Blacksmith Shop.

Sheriff and Deputy Hank move out of the Sheriff's office
take their time moving towards the altercation.

Tom's inability to fight back takes the wind out of
Bennett's ire - he spits on Tom and moves off.

Sheriff and Deputy look to Crank. Crank takes Drunk Tom

INT. RICHARDS' RANCH HOUSE

Richards and Plenvue arrive on horseback. A Mexican ser
races out of the house - he holds an empty metal box in
hand - the same one Bell had dug out of the Owen barn.

Richards looks at it.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - MEANWHILE

The students are gone, all except Hanta who is stacking
books. Caroline gathers her materials. The back door op
Caroline looks up; it's Bell.

Hanta steps next to Caroline. A small boy who sees hims
as a protector. Bell picks up Caroline's bonnet. Holds

for a moment. Puts it down. Then leaves.

Caroline watches Bell get on his horse and ride off.

INT. BATHING ROOM ABOVE THE SALOON - NIGHT

Wayne and Half Nephew SNORE, naked, in tubs of water, bo
hold nearly empty bottles of whiskey in their hands.

Jenny enters, tosses towels on their faces. They stir —
Jenny leaves the room.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Pretty crowded. Bell stands at the bar. Crank and Doc a
beside him; Garr is dipping a bowl in the kettle of bean
the stove. Drunk Tom grins in a corner, sipping his
whiskey. Bartender Kurt serves drinks to the myriad of
ranch hands and farmers who have come to town.

Bennett and Smith enter. Drunk Tom HOOTS and holds his
"aching side", just to get under Bennett's skin. Bennett
scowls.

Jenny comes down the stairs, sees Bell. Bennett approach
tips his hat.

                    BENNETT
          Mrs. Sand.

                    JENNY
          Mr. Bennett —

Smith moves in next to Bennett.

                    SMITH
          Always a pleasure, Mrs. Buster —

                    JENNY
          Mr. Smith —

EXT. SALOON

Richards, followed by two of his sons (SKINNY and CHUNK)
three Mexicans, rides into town.

Through the window of the Sheriff's office — it's clear
Deputy Hank sleeps in the Sheriff's chair.

INT. SALOON

Jenny approaches Bell.

                    JENNY
          I think I told you there's no
          welcome here -

                    BELL
          Crank here insisted.

                    CRANK
          What?

                    BELL
          Maybe it was Doc.

                    DOC
          It's okay, Jenny. No trouble's
          gonna happen.

The doors of the saloon SWING OPEN. Richards and his tw
sons enter. The Mexicans can be seen waiting outside.
There is a momentary stillness. But Richards makes eye
contact with no one and moves to "his" table and settles

Jenny hurries to Richards. Bell keeps his eyes on his
drink.

Wayne and Half Nephew, now dressed, holding their almost
empty whiskey bottles, descend the staircase into the ba
area. They have their eyes on Richards.

Richards, talking to Jenny, casually RAISES HIS ARM. Jen
is oblivious to the significance of this action. Wayne
Half Nephew move into position.

Bell, looking up to the mirror above the bar, sees Wayne
Half Nephew situated behind him. Half Nephew fills a so
bowl from the pot on the stove.

Without warning, Wayne HURLS his whiskey bottle at Bell'
head. Bell sidesteps, but the bottle catches the side o
his head - a gash opens on his cheekbone.   The noise of
crashing bottle is hardly heard above the din of voices
drinking but Crank and Doc and Garr are aware. Bell doe
go for his gun - not yet.

Half Nephew moves past quickly and throws the hot soup i
Garr's eyes.

                    GARR
          Ahhhhh!!!!

Bell goes for his gun, shoves it into Half Nephew's back
before anyone else can react. Half Nephew throws his ha
up in the air -

                    HALF NEPHEW
          Whoa, what an accident! Accident!

Bell cracks down on Half Nephew's neck with his gun, Hal
Nephew crashes to the floor. Wayne's pistol is already
his brothers stand on either side of Richards, their pis
aimed at Bell.

Jenny moves behind the bar, grabs her rifle.

                    BELL
          Put it down.

All goes down in what seems to be an instant. Before Jen
can decide what to do, the skinny Brother SHOOTS at Bell
Bell's fast, his aim is true. Smoke and fire from Bell's
pistol and the Brother's lung is hit, blood spurts from
mouth, deep red and thick.

Crank's shot is almost simultaneous, the chunky Brother
falls, his kneecap shattered. He howls in pain.

Wayne's pistol shot misses Bell but connects with Garr w
is stumbling, groaning and holding his eyes. His neck t
the bullet, bringing him down to his knees.

Doc has kept his gun on Richards who stands in front of
door -

EXT. SALOON - MEANWHILE

Drunk Tom, his gun cocked and pointed menacingly -- hol
Richards' three Mexicans at bay. They don't look like
they'd give them life for this boss, they are watching,
kinda curious.

INT. SALOON

There's a moment of silence and assessment. Bartender K
silently reaches for a rifle under the bar. Jenny's fac
drawn, her toughness for the moment, gone. The rest of
patrons have taken refuge in corners, under tables. Thi
not their fight. Not yet.

Wayne and Bell are at a standoff.

On the floor, Half Nephew's hand moves, he's reaching fo

his pistol. His fingers grasp the metal, his hands are
shaking; he lifts it up and gets a shaky aim –

Bell hears the click. BLAM, the shot is almost
instantaneous, and it seems as if Bell didn't even have
aim – Half Nephew's pistol flies from his hand, his wris
hit, a chunk of flesh flies and flaps against a chair ra

                    HALF NEPHEW
          Uncle!!!!!! Get 'im – get the
          fucker –

Crank shoots, grazes Half Nephew's side, Half Nephew cur
into a fetal position, mad as hell and hurting just as
Wayne, his mean eyes steely, his ego at stake, takes a
towards Bell, his pistol primed –

Bell's pistol, on Wayne, CLICKS. Wayne stops.

                    RICHARDS
          All right. That's enough. Wayne.
          Put your gun down. Bell here won't
          shoot an unarmed man.

Wayne, after a long moment, puts his gun on the table.
Crank moves to pick it up – and is surprised when Half
Nephew KICKS his leg out, shoving Crank to the side, an
SHOOTS. Crank is hit in the high chest, crashes down
against a table and table and Crank land on top of Half
Nephew.

                    HALF NEPHEW
          Get 'im off me!!!

Wayne's grabbed his gun again and SHOOTS at Bell, hittin
his thigh. Bell flinches, his jaw tightens, but he gets
SHOT off, but Wayne's moved too fast – he misses the bod
but his the pistol – Wayne's pistol hits the ground and
skids across the room.

JUST AS Sheriff and Deputy Hank bust in and stand behind
Richards, rifles aimed into the room.

                    SHERIFF
          This stops here. Kurt –

Bartender Kurt nods, he walks towards unarmed Wayne, rif
pointed at his head.

                    SHERIFF (CONT'D)
          Doc, stand back.

Doc steps back, gun still pointed at Richards.

                    SHERIFF (CONT'D)
              Gun down, Doc.

Doc puts his gun down. Deputy scurries to take Doc's gu

                    SHERIFF (CONT'D)
              Jenny, do me a favor. Take Mr.
              Bell's gun from him and give it to
              Deputy Hank here.

Jenny, rifle in hand, comes from behind the bar and
approaches Bell. She sees the blood seeping through the
torn pant leg. Bell's eyes never leave Wayne's. Bell
Jenny takes his gun.

Deputy Hank picks up Wayne's pistol off the floor. Garr
lying nearby, his burned face red and raw, his neck bloo
his eyes open in death.

                    DEPUTY HANK
              Garr's dead, Sheriff.

                    DRUNK TOM
                 (standing in doorway,
                  really affected)
              Oh shit. Oh shit.

Bell's eyes move to meet Richards'.

                    DEPUTY HANK
                 (sees Skinny dead up
                  against the wall)
              Looks like Skinny's dead too.

                    SHERIFF
              Mr. Richards, you take what you can
              'a your family back to your ranch.
                 (looks to Bell)
              I'll get these over to the jail.
              Doc, you come and fix what you can.

EXT. SALOON - MOMENTS LATER

Richards and Wayne are on their horses. Two Mexicans sit
behind the reins of a wagon. A groaning Half Nephew sits
the back of the wagon across from Skinny's dead body.

They head out of town.

INT. JAIL CELL - MEANWHILE

Bell, wounded, sits inside a cell.

END OF ACT ONE

BLUFF

a horror/slasher film

EXT. OIL FIELD - NEAR OLD DERRICK - PReSENT DAY - NIGHT

It's dark. No signs of life. But there is a presence, a
sound of a very very slow heartbeat.

UNKNOWN POV sees: Car lights of the old Camry approach.
They shine on the field. An oil derrick is illuminated b
the car's headlights.

A GIRL 18 and BOY 19, laughing, running, are on a high o
sexual foreplay. They stop to kiss deeply. The Girl,
flirty, skips a few steps off -- stops - GASP.

She sees a DEAD BIRD, its neck broken and outstretched
wings crooked, in a shallow pool of oil.

                    GIRL
          Oh look - how awful

                    BOY
          Stupid enough to fly into it -

                    GIRL
          Oh you're mean

                    BOY
          Oh no, I'm very very very nice ---

He lifts off her top, unbuckles his belt. She steps back
under the derrick structure, slips behind one of its bro
metal legs, giggling. She extends a hand and motions wit
her finger for him to follow her -

Her sneaker hits another dark, oily puddle.

                    GIRL
          Ewhhhhh - - it's slick -- it's
          slippery --

The Unknown POV moves in a circle as it watches the Boy
join the Girl. She's giggling; leans down. She dips a
finger into the oil and draws a line between her breasts
that are plump under her bra.

                         Boy
            'Slippery Sandy' sounds good -

She takes one more step back -

Suddenly LARGE CHAINS descend from the upper regions of
derrick, whipping around the surprised couple - they
SCREAM.

The chains tighten mercilessly fast, forcing the couple
together - mercilessly tight, puncturing skin with roug
iron edges, blood vessels burst, lungs are squeezed so
tight that breathing is impossible. Blood erupts through
tortured throats. The chains lift the couple, pressed
together now in blood-soaked death, swing the corpses ov
a pool of the dark viscous fluid of the earth.

MOMENTS LATER

The abiotic lovebirds sink into the thick oil puddle....

EXT.   OKLAHOMA TWO LANE HIGHWAY - MEANWHILE - NIGHT

Long expanse of desolate ranchland - Barbed wire fences
silhouetted. A lone armadillo crosses the road, his eyes
beady red.

No sign of civilization.

One car approaches, its headlights like two unblinking
eyes.   The SOUND of its engine is a steady HUM, like th
insistent buzz of night flying insects seeking blood.

The highway bends through two low hills, the car speeds

INT. 2000 HONDA CIVIC - NIGHT

Metallica's BLACK ALBUM roars from the car's CD player.

JER B BELSON, age 18, square-jawed athlete with Californ
good looks, slaps at his well-worked-out chest in time t
the music - and to keep himself awake.

The passenger seat is filled with banana peels, health b
wrappers. Fruit Smoothie cups rest on top of his high
school letter jacket. The backseat holds a packed laundr
basket, duffel bags filled with clothes, footballs, a Sa
Jose California high school yearbook and hand weights.

Jer B mutters under his breath, reading a sign on the ro
as he zooms past it.

                          JER B
               Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 300 miles
               - middle of nowhere

A yellow sign flashes as he passes it, cautioning a curv
ahead. Jer B yawns, his eyes want to close. He presses t
requisite button and the driver's side window descends.
B hoots and hollers along with the heavy metal band --

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Honda Civic takes the sharp curves expertly, the MUS
pounds into the still night.

The car hits the straightaway, passes oil fields.
Derricks dot the area, loom like shadows at night - larg
and solid.

INT. HONDA CIVIC

Jer B's cell phone, resting on the dashboard, BUZZES. He
grabs it and glances at the caller ID: "SUZY" and a pict
of a perfectly beautiful cheerleader pops onto the scree
Jer B hesitates - and then presses IGNORE.

Suddenly his car SWERVES heavily to the right, the wheel
JERKS back and forth. Jer B tries to muscle it - it seem
to have a will of its own --

                          JER B
               Oooooh fuck -

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Honda's tires slip off the highway, the shoulder is
rough - the tires SKID back across the two lanes leaving
rubber marks -

INT. HONDA CIVIC

The whip of the out-of-control car pushes Jer B against
driver's side door. Loose food wrappers and cups fly
through the air. His letter jacket flips up against his

chest. The piled packing in the back seat slips, a footb
tumbles into Jer B's lap.

Jer B pumps the brakes - the brake pedal hits the floor
useless.

His cell phone, sliding across the dash, goes AIRBORNE a
SAILS out the open window, past Jer B's eyes - right bef
his suntanned Roman nose hits the window frame with a CR
-

BLOOD spurts from his nose, gushes into his mouth - he
tries to spit blood before he swallows it -

And then the car WHINES WITH A HOWLING SOUND, MERGING WI
THE HEAVY METAL MUSIC and -- the car SKIDS across the
highway and heads DOWN and DOWN into a

STEEP GULLEY

The car SLAMS to a precarious stop - and then TIPS so th
passenger side of the car is buried in the dry ditch.

No movement. Just the sound of the last chords of death
metal before the CD player dies.

A long moment. And then Jer B's head, bloodied, emerges
of the driver's side window -- his shoulders are hunche
he GROWLS in pain. He pushes against the door - gravity
and his sore shoulder make it hard - but he gets the doo
open and TUMBLES TO

THE GROUND NEXT TO THE CAR

Jer B lands on his back - a makeshift CROSS, made of twi
tied together with shoestring is wedged between his arm
torso, it is adorned with plastic flowers. The car light
land on a blown up school photo in the center of the cro
- that of a smiling boy with a misshapen face - the skin
droops on the left side as if the facial muscles never
kicked in. The words "RAPTURE?" is written on a piece of
cardboard taped to the photo -

Jer B, face to face with the tortured photo, freaked, ro
away -

                    JER B
                Sheeeeeez!

He realizes he's been lying on a bed of plastic flowers

Jer B scrambles to his feet. There's a sharp pain when puts weight on his ankle -

                    JER B (CONT'D)
          Awwwww

He looks at his car. One ton of metal and wires and computer chips now useless. Jer B looks around - where t hell is he? Just the dark frames of the silent oil derricks in the fields.

Jer B looks at his car. What the hell happened?

A SUDDEN CRASH OF HEAVY METAL as the CD player kicks in one last gasp.

                    JER B (CONT'D)
          Whoa!

Scared the hell out of Jer B.

EXT. NO BLUFF, OKLAHOMA - RESURRECTION CHURCH - EARLY MORNING

A large wooden cross is on top of the church.

PASTOR KOOP, 45, tall and broad with a face that belies weary discontent, and his assistant seminarian HENRY, 25 whose wandering eye rarely rests, both dressed in cleric cassocks, hurry towards the front doors.

Pastor Koop quickly opens the church's double doors.

                    HENRY
          I told you, Pastor Koop. I told
          you.

Henry points to a stained glass window, the one depicti the 5th station of the Cross. It is shattered.

INT. CHURCH

Pastor Koop strides towards the window. One the floor beneath it is a DEAD BLACKBIRD.

Pastor Koop lifts the dead bird up off the floor, using un-ironed handkerchief he pulls from his cassock.

> HENRY
> That's number 5

Pastor Koop looks up at the stained glass windows to his
left. The first four stations of the cross windows are
boarded up with plywood.

Henry looks out the large hole in the fifth broken windo

> HENRY (CONT'D)
> Someone's walkin' in –

> PASTOR KOOP
> (re: bird)
> Broke its neck.

> HENRY
> Pastor Koop –

Pastor Koop looks up to where Henry is pointing.

KOOP'S POV OUT BROKEN STAINED GLASS WINDOW:

It's Jer B, his face streaked with dried blood, wearing
letter jacket and clearly favoring his left shoulder –
limping down the Main Street of No Bluff.

Then Pastor Koop feels the sticky liquid seeping onto hi
hands. He looks down – the bird's blood has soaked
through his handkerchief – it's vivid deep red and thick

> PASTOR KOOP
> Find out if that person needs
> help, Henry. – I need a wash –

Pastor Koop drops the dead bird and handkerchief into a
nearby trash can. He shoves the trash can with his foot
towards Henry.

> PASTOR KOOP (CONT'D)
> And you'll have to bury this.

> HENRY
> Where sir?

> PASTOR KOOP
> I'm givin' you the bird, Henry.

Henry looks at Pastor Koop. Not sure if he is using the
phrase with a purpose orÉ Koop holds Henry's gaze, his

face unreadable.

                    PASTOR KOOP (CONT'D)
          With the others, Henry. Be
          courageous. First -
               (nods towards Jer B)
          The person. Second - bird. Can
          you handle that?

Pastor Koop hurries towards the back of the church. Henr
looks for a spot to put down the wastebasket - can't
decide -

INT. CHURCH SACRISTY - MOMENTS LATER

The room is used for storage as well as for preparation
church services. Pastor Koop washes the blood off his ha
at a mop sink, muttering to himself words from the
Scripture...

                    KOOP
          '...That day will bring about the
          destruction of the heavens -
          heavens by... by fire, and the
          elements will melt in the heat...'

He scrubs under his fingernails.

                    PASTOR KOOP
          Han -

Pastor Koop reaches out behind him. A towel is put into
his hands by HAN, 25, whose lopsided palsied face is
emotionless, one eye is dropped permanently shut and his
shoulders are slumped due to his hunched back.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CAR REPAIR SHOP - DAY

Henry approaches Jer B who stands in at the shop's close
garage door - looking at the "Hours Of Operation" postin

                    HENRY
          Do you need help?

Jer B turns around, is startled by Henry. Jer B tries no
to look at Henry's wandering eye.

                    JER B

               Like yeah. - My car - skidded off
               the road - just - skidded.

Henry doesn't look surprised.

                    JER B (CONT'D)
               I'm driving from California -

                    HENRY
               Never been there.

                    JER B
               Well, I lost my cell phone - so I
               --- walked É

                    HENRY
               I work at the church.
                  (points)
               There.
                  (re: Jer B's jacket)
               You play football? I like
               football. Always wanted to play.
               Never did.

                    JER B
               Yeah. I play. Got a scholarship to
               college to play - just finished
               high school. - ahhh - I need to
               get my car fixed -

Jer B rolls his shoulder, testing it - his worry is clea

CRANKER, 45, crusty and worn, opens the window of his
apartment above the shop

                  CRANKER
               Shut up.

                    HENRY
                (to Cranker)
               His car broke down at Sham Pass.

                    JER B
                (surprised, to Henry)
               I didn't tell you where -

                  CRANKER
                (interrupts)
               Fifty dollar tow

                        JER B
                 (that's half of what he's
                  got but what choice does
                  he have)
              Fifty?

Cranker lowers the window. Jer B sees a pay phone next t
the garage.

                    JER B (CONT'D)
              I gotta call my coach.

Jer B moves over to the public phone. Lifts the receiver
Digs into his jeans for coins. Drops them in. No
connection.

                       HENRY
              That phone don't work. You could
              try the one at the church.

Jer B looks towards the church. Hesitation. This hesitat
has an emotional edge. Just then Cranker slams out of do
to the apartment above the garage.

                        JER B
              I better get my car-

EXT. CLOWEN'S CLAPBOARD FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Large and sprawling, it's seen better days and definitel
needs a coat of paint. But someone has filled the clay
planters with bright yellow bitterweed flowers and place
them to hide the broken porch rails.

INT. CLOWEN'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

JAMES, 20, bone-lean and serious, wearing a spotless whi
t-shirt, packs books into a large trunk. The bookshelf
almost empty. The furniture is covered in blankets that
held on tightly with rope.

James looks out a window towards the shiny late model
Mustang convertible - sees his sister CARI, 18. She's a
fresh beauty with a strong chin, in tight short-shorts a
crop top, leaning over the polished car door. She's talk
to WHALE, 22, arrogant and spoiled, one of the sons of t
richest oilmen in the county.

James scowls.

EXT. CLOWEN'S FARMHOUSE

Whale reaches up to touch Cari's blonde hair that falls
onto her bare shoulder.

                    WHALE
          Tell your brother you're just
          goin' for a ride.

                    CARI
          I gotta help pack - yer daddy's
          kickin' us out as if you didn't
          know.

                    WHALE
          Hey I'm not my daddy -

                    CARI
             (flirts)
          Can't ya talk to him?

Whale takes in her physique.

                    WHALE
          How hard you want me to try -

Cari giggles, races around to the passenger side to jump
-

                    JAMES (OS)
          Cari.

Cari stops, looks to the porch where James polishes an
antique Springfield Trapdoor Rifle.

                    WHALE
          That a gun?

                    CARI
          Just an old one - he thinks he's
          sooooo scary.
             (yells at James)
          You can't boss me -

                    JAMES
          You want me to pack up your
          underwear drawer?

                         CARI
           Don't you touch that!

James heads back inside. Cari, torn, makes a decision.

                         CARI (CONT'D)
                (to Whale)
           Come back tonight - soon as it's
           dark.

Cari plants a deep kiss on Whale's lips.

                         CARI (CONT'D)
           Tonight.

She races into the house, calling after James -

                         CARI (CONT'D)
           James, don't you touch my thongs!

Whale watches her til the door closes behind her. Then h
backs out of the drive, smirking, definitely he sees
promise for "tonight".

INT. CRANKER'S AUTO SHOP - GARAGE - MEANWHILE

Jer B gets into the passenger side of the tow truck.
Cranker sits behind the wheel.

                         JER B
           Weirdest thing. I wasn't sleepin'
           I swear I wasn't -

Cranker adds a mark on his dash - (like hash-marks in
fives)

                         CRANKER
           You're number 13

                         JER B
           13 what?

                         CRANKER
           Sham Pass

Cranker touches the crucifix that hangs from the rear-vi
mirror.

                         CRANKER (CONT'D)

                    See anyone? Anything?

                         JER B
                    It was the middle of the night.
                    There's like a -- plastic flowers
                    and –

                         CRANKER
                    Yeah. Rest of them didn't make it.

                         JER B
                    What do you mean, didn't make itÉ?

                         CRANKER
                    You the only one ever lived through
                    it–

Cranker looks at Jer B. Then at the cross hanging from h
rearview mirror. Then he puts the truck in gear; the gea
whine and – he drives off.

They pass a well-used 1990 VW bus that is making a turn
onto Main Street.

The VW bus stops in front of

EXT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Druggie T-Tom, his Mohawk-styled hair dyed green, gets o
of the VW bus and heads towards the front door. He wear
coveralls with RICHARDSON OIL stitched on the back.

INT. BARBERSHOP – CONTINUOUS

T-Tom pushes the door open, his grin ingratiating. GARVI
50, is not happy to see him. T-Tom slams an official-
looking letter onto the counter.

                         DRUGGIE T-TOM
                    I'm still alive.

                         GARVIN
                    I can see that.

                         DRUGGIE T-TOM
                    You still wanna slam me a fifty to
                    get a crew?

Garvin looks at the letter. Looks at his son, suspicious but wanting to trust.

                    GARVIN
          Marines agreed to take ya?

                    DRUGGIE T-TOM
          Doin' you proud Pa

Garvin opens the register, counts out five ten-dollar bills. Slaps them on the counter.

                    GARVIN
          You bullshittin' me, don't ever
          show your face around here again.

                    DRUGGIE T-TOM
          Seen the light. I have. This
          fried brain is joining up and
          getting me a M243 Sawmachinegun-
          arama -

T-Tom crooks his arm to mimic a machine gun, points his finger and "shoots" into the mirror, liking his own ferocity

                    T-TOM
          Ba ba ba bam ba ba ba bam

EXT. SHAM PASS CURVE - SHORT WHILE LATER

Jer B sits on the roadside as Cranker connects chains to Jer B's car. A motorcycle approaches; it's sky blue with white leather seat. It swerves to a slow stop near Jer B

The helmeted rider, in jeans and a leather jacket, takes off a white helmet - it's JORDAN, 19, nobody's fool and maybe too curious for her own good.

Jer B looks up at her as her dark hair cascades onto her shoulders.

                    JORDAN
          What time was it?

                    JER B
          Huh?

                         JORDAN
              When you rolled.

                         JER B
              Ahhh-- midnight - around
              midnight. I think.

                         JORDAN
              I'll give you a ride back into
              town. Diner makes good pancakes -

                         JER B
              I should stick with my car. I
              gotta be in Tennessee tonight -

                         JORDAN
                   (calls to Cranker)
              How long's it gonna take, Mr.
              Cranker?

Cranker wipes sweat off his upper lip. His teeth are
yellow, except for one gold incisor.

                         CRANKER
              Axel's cracked. Brake fluid line
              bust. I'll have to order parts -

                         JER B
              But I gotta get on the road -

                         JORDAN
              Won't be in that car. Come on, I
              own the diner.

Jer B is frustrated.

                         JER B
              Is there like - a bus or
              somethin'? - A bus go through
              here?

                         JORDAN
              No.

                         JER B
              You have a cell I could use?

                         JORDAN
              Don't like to be so available.

Jer B's frustration grows.

> JER B
> Man, this sucks. Sucks! Sucks!
> What is this place?

Jordan simply waits. Jer B sighs. She is really pretty.

> JER B (CONT'D)
> Diner have a phone?

> JORDAN
> Come have some pancakes. Figure
> it out over some pancakes.

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jer B rides behind Jordan back into town.

INT. SACRISTRY - MEANWHILE

Henry polishes candlesticks while Han helps Pastor Koop
into his daily vestment.

> HENRY
> Sham Pass again.

Henry sneaks a look at Pastor Koop. Pastor Koop moves ou

INT. CHURCH PROPER - MOMENTS LATER

Pastor Koop moves to the altar, kneels. Henry follows hi
and sits in front of the church organ.

There is no one in the pews.

Henry starts to play the opening hymn-

A sudden CRASH of stained glass window. Koop watches the
colored glass scatter on the Mexican-tile floor - the
carcass of the bird evident among the shattered glass.

Henry has stopped playing, he's breathing hard. Sweat fo
on his forehead.

Koop, angry, stands and storms back to the sacristy,
pulling off his vestment.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

Jordan, with Jer B on the back of her motorcycle, drives
They pass ranchland fenced in with barbed wire - and the
low flat land dotted with oil derricks looking like gian
prehistoric animals; heads pumping - pumping in a strang
rhythmic patternÉ

EXT. OIL FIELDS ON RICHARDS RANCH

Oil derricks pump.

A pick-up truck and Whale's Mustang convertible are on t
service road. Whale stands with his father, RICHARDS, 50
the town's richest landholder and a vain man used to
getting his way and KEVIN PLAIN, 30, impeccably dressed
pressed jeans and oxford-cloth shirt and baseball cap
sporting a Colorado Mining logo.

                    PLAIN
              (to Richards)
          These derricks are old. Reason
          you're not pulling in as much as
          you're used to is you have to go
          deeper now. And to do that, you
          need new equipment. You got me all
          the way out here to tell you what
          I already told you on the phone.

                    WHALE
          And you came 'cause you want to
          sell more of your new fancy stuff-

                    RICHARDS
          Not your money Whale. Not yet.

Whale scowls, he's been reminded of that way too many
times.

                    PLAIN
          You got a lot of money Mr.
          Richards. But if you want more,
          you know what you've got to do.

Plain shrugs. Life is simple, when you get right down to
it.

Just then, a 1990 black TOWN CAR drives up. Pastor Koop
gets out. Car door slams shut. His eyes meet Richards.

Richards' mouth goes sour, his eyes harder.

                    RICHARDS
          We'll go deeper, Mr. Plain. We'll
          go deeper.

Richards heads off - Koop follows him.

Plain now sports a grin, it's clear he's "won". He turns
Whale. Whale flips Plain off, follows his father and Koo

EXT. NO BLUFF MAIN STREET - JORDAN'S DINER - DAY

Jordan brings the motorcycle to a stop. Jordan and Jer B
hop off bike.

                    JORDAN
          Cook's already been at it - Smell
          that bacon? - There's a washroom
          in the back

Jordan unlocks front door just as James and Cari pull up
an old pick up truck. James, tie and sports jacket on no
gets out fast -

                    James
          Hey Jordan

Jordan ignores him - heads into the diner. James is
disappointed.

Cari hops out, looks at Jer B. She can't help but flirt

                    CARI
          Hi. Hi. Hi.

Cari bounces into the diner. James looks Jer B up and do
and then heads across the street to the No Bluff Bank.

INT. DINER

Jer B is on the pay phone. A few customers enter the din
take places in booths.

                    Jer b
                  (into phone)
          ...okay Coach. If I can't get my
          car fixed today I'll find a way to

                    where I can catch a bus... thanks.
                    For understandin'...Yeah, I'll keep
                    in touch. Bye.

Cari watches Jer B as she puts on her apron. The Mexica
cook, JOSE, works in the kitchen visible through the
service counter. He is staring at Jer B. As Jer B hangs
he feels the Jose's stare. He meets Jose's eyes. Jose lo
away quickly.

                         CARI
                    Sham Pass. OOOOOOOoooooo. Scary.
                    And you survived.

Jose, in the kitchen, eyes still on Jer B, makes the sig
the cross on himself.

Jer B gets on the phone to coach. Sits

                         CARI (CONT'D)
                    Did you feel the eeeeevil? No
                    one's been able to tell the story
                    ... yet.

Cari GIGGLES.

                         JORDAN
                    Cari - stop it

                         CARI
                    The Devil's hand pulling you -

                         JORDAN
                    Cari

                         CARI
                    Some say it's the the sign of the
                    apocapipse -

                         JORDAN
                    Oh lord -- you mean 'apocalypse' -
                    and whoever says that-

                         CARI
                    The last one to go was on the run
                    from killing his wife, his neck
                    was broken. Then there was that
                    serial murderer - of kids I think.
                    Or horses. Was it horses? Cows?
                         (giggles)

My favorite was the guy who
traveled with the heads of dead
people he dug out of their graves.
For some reason they all find
their way to No Bluff for their
apopacouplelips -
> (puckers her lips at Jer
> B)

                    JORDAN
Would you get to work....

                    CARI
Or else maybe we're like a real
life horror movie---

Cari leans into Jer B, her breasts plumped.

                    CARI (CONT'D)
You must've done something to
attract the Devil's haaaaand...
> (GIGGLES - enjoys her
> innuendo and word play)
Make too many touch-downs?

                    JORDAN
Cari - go wait on your tables.

Just then T-Tom, now with a shaved head, bangs into the
diner, shouts with glee -

                    DRUGGIE T-TOM
You're new American IIIIIIdol!

Silence for a moment. T-Tom swings onto a stool at the
counter.

                    JORDAN
T-Tom, you can stay and eat if you
keep it quiet -

T-Tom is immediately cowed by her presence, wants to be
good behavior for her. He mumbles quietly -

                    DRUGGIE T-TOM
Whatever you say Jordan...

Cari GIGGLES and flounces off to customers.

                    JORDAN

                    (to Jer B)
          Don't pay any attention to Cari -

Jer B sits at the far end of the counter away from T-Tom
Jordan serves him a plate of pancakes.

                    JER B
          So what'd the kid with the weird
          face do? The one - his picture is
          attached to the cross where I
          skidded off the road?

                    JORDAN
          Oh. Little George. He did nothing.
          Except believe in 'the rapture".
          That's why Cari's full of shit.

Cari walks by on her way to put in her orders.

                    CARI
          That's why I stay a good girl.

BONNILA BENDEN, age 40, enters, she's in tight jeans and
tight t-shirt, heels. She's on a mission - and gets righ
Cari's face -

                    BONNILA Benden
          Don't give me crap Cari. Where the
          hell is Sandy? She stayed out all
          night - the tramp -

                    CARI
          I don't know where she is - but I
          do know she complained a lot about
          never knowin' where her mom was -

                    BONNILA BENDEN
          You little bitch. Stop coverin' for
          her   -

Cari and Bonilla look ready for a cat fight -

                    JORDAN
          Mrs. Benden - is there a problem?

                    BONNILA BENDEN
          My kid's bed's empty. Her and this
          tramp are thick as thieves-

                    CarI
          Hey! Crazy woman. I don't know
          where she is -

Ext. OIL FIELD OFFICE

Koop, Richards and Whale walk towards the office - the
whining sound of the derrick pumping punctuates their
exchanges -

                    KOOP
          There are signs - they cannot be
          ignored -

                    RICHARDS
          This is my land, Pastor. My point
          is that God gave it to me to do
          with it as I see fit -

                    KOOP
          We are only caretakers, Genesis
          "The Lord God took the man and put
          in the garden of Eden to work it
          and keep it..."

                    RICHARDS
          We take care of ourselves in
          America - it's everyone out for
          themselves - our country's built on
          it-

                    KOOP
          That's a very sad philosophy Mr.
          Richards - you are a leader in this
          community, you can set a different
          frame of mind -

They pass the oil puddle where the dead bird is awkwardl
laid out, its wings akimbo, its beak open as if mid-scre
All three stop, look at the bird.

A long moment.

                    WHALE
          This is my dad's land.

                    RICHARDS
          Shut up Whale -

Richards moves off towards the office door. Others follo

                    RICHARDS (CONT'D)
               (to Koop)
          Bottom line. This is my land to do
          with - like I want to - why don't
          I show you how hard I have to work
          at it Pastor Koop.

Richards looks at Koop.

>   RICHARDS (CONT'D)
>   Your guy in the sky appreciates
>   hard work, doesn't he?

Richards and Whale enter the office - Koop hesitates, th
decides to follow them in -

INt. OIL FIELD OFFICE

Rough, no frills here. Richards grabs a clipboard. Whale
grabs a bucket that is filled with measuring tools and a
large, sharply pointed hook on a short pole. They move t
stairway that leads deep into the ground -

INT. STAIRWAY DOWN INTO WELL WORK AREA

Richards, Whale, Koop descend. Richards clicks on the di
lights - a series of bare bulbs that create cold shadows

>   KOOP
>   (nervous)
>   Your family helped build the town,
>   your father understood
>   responsibility for dominion over
>   the birds of the heavens and over
>   the creeping things that creep the
>   Earth...

>   RICHARDS
>   Likewise-

>   WHALE
>   What creeping things?

Int. WELL WORK AREA

The dirt walls are rimmed with thick planks of weathered
wood. A large pipe, darkly streaked with oil and mud is
center of the area. Work table to one side. Series of he
chains hang from beams that traverse the small area.

>   RICHARDS
>   This is our oldest well. Gettin'
>   cranky -

Whale takes the sharp hook and hooks into the large iron
chain that lifts the heavy metal top of a testing well.
pulls down hard, the interior chain (connected to the me

top) is revealed - dripping with viscous oil and dirty w
-

ON WHALE

As he sees something that sends his stomach acids churni
his throat constricts, bile rises, PROJECTILE VOMIT jets
of his mouth -

                    WHALE
          Ahhhhhgggggggggg

The vomit keeps coming - his entire stomach contents are
ejected -

                    RICHARDS
               (off screen)
          What the hell?

WHALE'S POV REVEALED:

The two teens, squeezed by the chains are rising out of
testing well - covered in oil and mud, their intestines
spilling out, their tongues hanging from their lips, the
eyes empty of eyeballs

                    KOOP
          Holy God.... there's no stopping it
          now

Koop crosses himself as Whale hurries to the stairs,
stumbles up them still wrenching -

INT. CRANKER'S AUTO SHOP -

Jer B's Honda Civic is towed into the dusty dark shop.
windows are streaked with dirt, dust and oil.

Cranker unhooks the oil-covered chains; the car drops to
the cement floor.

Cranker lowers himself on the wheeled pallet, he grabs a
tool belt, slides under the car -

UNDER THE CAR

Cranker eyes the damage. The oil pan is punctured. Oil d
next his head.

He hears something. Cranker peers out - his view is grou
level. A LARGE RAT scurries by.

                    CRANKER
          Shit.

He tosses a wrench out at the RAT. The RAT emits a mean
screech, eyes Cranker. Then trundles off.

                    CRANKER (CONT'D)
          Yeah, who's bigger - asshole -

But then a certain sound of footsteps.

                    CraNKER (CONT'D)
          Hey -- who's there?

Cranker skids out from under the car. He walks through h
garage - past hanging parts, hanging chains, walls fille
with "girlee" pictures. He grabs a short length of chain
serve as a weapon

                    CRANKER (CONT'D)
          Who's here?

                    JER B
                (off screen)
          -- me. Just me.

Cranker whips around, sees Jer B.

                    JER B (CONT'D)
          Wanted to check on my car

                    CRANKER
          Don't sneak in here, kid

Cranker's eyes go mad for a moment, he whips the chain -
skids across the dirty concrete towards Jer B

                    CRANKER (CONT'D)
          I said git out --

Jer B sees the chain speeding towards his feet - he jum
out of the way -

                    JER B
          Sheeeeeiiiiiit -

Out of the corner of his eye he sees the trio of large f
rats under the workbench - the CHAIN WHIPS AT THE RATS -
they SQUEAL ANGRILY and scatter back into the shadows.

Jer B realizes the chain was meant for the rats. Or at l

he hopes it was....

                    CRANKER
               More rats every day --

Suddenly the SOUND OF A SHERIFF'S CAR SIREN fills the ga
-

EXT. Main street

Sheriff's car screeches by - SIREN blaring

Bonilla skirts out of the Diner -- as if she knows this
tragic clue to her daughter's whereabouts -

Jordan, Cari are behind her --

EXT. CRANKER'S GARAGE

Cranker and Jer B come out, see the Sheriff's car blarin

EXT. BANK/BARBERSHOP

James comes out the bank's front door. Garvin comes out
the barbershop

EXT. CHURCH

Henry stands in the open church door -

INT. DINER

T-Tom keeps eating his pancakes, looking over his should
out into the street.

EXT. DINER

Bonilla's face is drawn, white. Her chin is shaking, tea
spring to her eyes

                    BONNILA BENDEN
               Oh no

                    JORDAN
               Mrs. Benden, don't think the worst

                    BONNILA BENDEN

I feel it -- I feel it ...

End of act one

BIG BLUFF

A romantic comedy

EXT.   OKLAHOMA TWO LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

Expanse of ranch land any cow would jones for. A cheap
rental car that never was good car to begin with speeds
along -

INT. CHEAP RENTAL CAR - DAY

JENNIFER SOLO, 30 and a little freaked by that, is on he
cell phone.

                    JENNIFER
                (into phone)
            Fran, Fran - There was no car for
            me. I ended up going to tuna fish
            can car rental -

                    FRAN (OS, voice over phone)
            Oh my god

                    JENNIFER
            - it's rusty and smelly and

She sees a gnarly large-antennaed bug crawl out of one o
the car's air vents

                    JENNIFER (CONT'D)
            Ahhhh! There's a bug there's a bug
            there's a bug

                    FRAN (OS, VOICE OVER PHONE)
            Oh my god!

Jennifer swats at it - it flies! The frizzly ugly bug Z
past her face -

                    JENNIFER
            Ahhhh! It's a flying bug!

She swats at it. The bug flies into the backseat, out of
sight.

INT. STANDMAN PUBLISHING OFFICES, LOS ANGELES

Posters of the bodice-ripping romance novels that are th

heartbeat of Standman Publishing line the walls.

FRAN, 25, dressed in pink with a red cardigan covered in
hearts is on her headset. She is freaked out for Jennife

> FRAN
> Oh my god!!!! It's not on your
> Babette shell and pencil skirt is
> it? - don't squish it on that -
> that's your first impression
> outfit-
> > (looks through her iphone
> > notes)
> I have it right here, Kansas City -

INTERCUT WITH JENNIFER

Jennifer tries to keep an eye on the bug as she continue
her conversation -

> JENNIFER
> I'm not in Kansas City -- you were
> supposed to have a car waiting in
> Oklahoma City...

> FRAN
> Ooooohhh my god - I would've
> definitely suggested more bling for
> Oklahoma City -

> JENNIFER
> Really?

> FRAN
> Oklahoma women sparkle - we went
> too muted, way too muted -

> JENNIFER
> Don't say that -

> FRAN
> Oh well, you'll have to power
> through, remember the goal -

> JENNIFER
> I don't have a goal - you have a -

> FRAN
> Fun. Sex. Be loose. The "serious"
> Jennifer is taking a haitus -

> JENNIFER
> I don't have time for -

                         Fran
          You're 30. You're miserable - not
          everything has to be about the <u>big</u>
          love -

                         JENNIFER
          Who's thinking about love?
               (she always does)
          Just let me know if Standman has
          sent out any memo about the
          promotion

                         FRAN
               (searching through memos)
          Promotion memo -- right it's --

                         JENNIFER
          Ahhhhh!

The fly has whizzed by her again - she bangs at the wind
control to get it down -   the window does not budge. T
bug lands on her bare knee -

                         JENNIFER (CONT'D)
          It's on my leg. Fran, it's a big
          big ugly bug -
               (it's not THAT big)
          Fran- THE BUG IS CRAWLING UP MY -
          !!!

She swats at her skirt, swerves and hits the shoulder of
road; the tires slip off into a

DEEP GULCH

on the side of the road -

                         FRAN (OS, VOICE ON PHONE)
          Jennnn i fffer?????????

The car jerks downwards.

The windows fall open - Jennifer's cell phone flies out
her hand and out the window.

The car slips another six inches and then SKIDS sidewise
into the gulch.

Jennifer calls out after the phone -

                         JENNIFER
          Fran - can you hear me now?? -
          NOOOOOOooooooo!

The cell phone has PLUNKED into the slimy mud at the bot
of the gulch. Jennifer GROANS; frantic, she struggles to
push open the door –

EXT. GULCH

Jennifer races to her phone. Her legs SINK into the mudd
gunk. Jennifer GROANS in disgust –

                    JENNIFER
          No- no- no-

The phone sinks out of sight. Gone. Jennifer reaches fo
- her arms plunge into the gunk - she GAGS in disgust --
then loses her balance and FLOPS FORWARDS -- her butt th
only thing sticking up out of the oily gunk -

A moment.

And then Jennifer emerges, GASPING for breath.

                    JENNIFER (CONT'D)
          Oh my God - oh my God -

She grabs onto the cross rising from atop the mini-road
that reads ROAD MAINTAINED BY THE CHURCH OF PRICE - SINN
WELCOME -- and pulls herself up wailing in desperate gr
-

                    JENNIFER (CONT'D)
          My phooooooone!

Jennifer opens her eyes and sees a mud-spattered JEEP
CHEROKEE approaching. She stumbles forward ---

                    JENNIFER (CONT'D)
          Help!!! Helllllp!!!!!!

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE

JED GRANT, 32, in jeans and t-shirt sees a mud-soaked
Jennifer rise from the gulch, waving her mud-drenched ar
like a banshee in heat -

                    JED
          Shit!

He slams on the brakes and stops 100 feet from her. War
He reaches for the baseball bat in the backseat as he
watches Jennifer stumble erratically towards the car. J
presses the LOCK DOOR button.

Jennifer presses her mud-stained wet face against his wi
and shouts, panicked.

                    JENNIFER
          Do you have a cell phone?!!!!

MOMENTS LATER

Jed calmly looks at the piece of junk rental car in the
muddy ditch. Jennifer, hair plastered, DKNY heels broken
stands next to him, a hay-flecked blanket over her
shoulders.

                    JED
               (re: car)
          This ain't goin' anywhere.

                    JENNIFER
          I can't believe you don't have a
          cell phone-
               (tries to get a clear
                view of her damaged
                watch)
          Oh no - I have a wedding party
          barbecue at four -
               (taps watch, it's not
                working)
          - am I late? Am I dead? Is this
          hell?

                    JED
          You goin' to Price Ranch? I can
          drop you off -

Jennifer needs a ride but she wasn't born yesterday. She
eyes him warily.

                    JENNIFER
          Are you a murderer or a serial
          rapist?

                    JED
          I gave that up after puberty.

                    JENNIFER
          What?
               (realizing he's joking --
                or is he?)
          Oh -

Jennifer looks at her car, looks at the desolate country
around her and comes to a decision.

                         JENNIFER (CONT'D)
                    I need my baggage.

MOMENTS LATER

The rental car trunk is open. Jennifer hauls out a 100 p
roller bag, like the ones big enough to haul a small
elephant in.

                         JENNIFER (CONT'D)
                       (he hasn't offered)
                    Don't worry - I've got it -- fifty
                    dollars a month gym membership - I
                    can benchpress one sixty three

                         JED
                       (calmly watches her)
                    Well then, can you lift my car?
                    Always wanted a look at my crank
                    shaft -

She lifts the bag into the open back hatch of the Jeep.
Jeep lowers a good six inches.

                         JED (CONT'D)
                    Also always wanted a low-rider.

Jennifer takes out another suitcase - the same size

                         JED (CONT'D)
                    Anything left in the state of
                    California?

                         JENNIFER
                    You obviously don't understand the
                    importance my assistant puts on me
                    looking good this weekend -

Jed takes in her mud-gunked rancid appearance.

                         JED
                    But now you've set the bar for me
                    -

Jennifer stuffs her last bag precariously into the back
the Jeep.

                         JENNIFER
                    I'm here for a wedding. Of my ex-
                    boyfriend.

                         JED
                    Ahhh.

                         JENNIFER
                I'm best man. Best person,
                technically I guess. I'm not a
                transsexual -

                         JED
                Okay.

Jennifer's bag falls, the clasps break open and delicate
thong-y lingerie items are picked up by the breeze - ju
as the SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR approaches -

INT. SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR

SHERIFF COPP (50, fat and easy-going) drives. He and DE
HEN (25, nerdy and retentive) watch the see-through gauz
thongs and bras hit the patrol car's windshield.

                         DEPUTY HEN
                I see foreign objects, Sheriff.

                         SHERIFF COPP
                I suppose they are to you, Junior.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY

Sheriff and Deputy get out of the patrol car. Jennifer i
groaning unhappily as she races around, picking up undie
bras, camisoles, slips.

Deputy Hen knows the letter of the law; the Sheriff puts
with him 'cause he's his brother's slowest kid and he ow
his brother money.

                         DEPUTY HEN
                Looks like we got some litterin'
                here. Yep. There's a fine for
                that.

Sheriff takes a look at Jennifer's tipped car, nods to J

                         SHERIFF COPP
                Hiya, Jed.

                         JED
                    (nods to Jennifer pulling
                     underwear off a fence)
                Sheriff. That - lady's - overdue at
                the Price Ranch. She's in the
                wedding party.

This means something. Sheriff straightens.

Deputy Hen gets to Jennifer, thongs and bra in hand –

>   DEPUTY HEN
>   Now I could write you per item
>   tickets or we could deal with this
>   in bulk –

>   SHERIFF COPP
>   Junior. Give the lady her undies –

>   DEPUTY HEN
>   (flips out ticket book)
>   These are traffic hazards and
>   tickets are a form of behavorial
>   modification, Sheriff –

>   SHERIFF COPP
>   Junior. What question did I ask you
>   this mornin'?

>   DEPUTY HEN
>   Who's the Sheriff here?

>   SHERIFF COPP
>   Think about it.

Deputy Hen finally "gets it". He sulks, hates to click s
his ticket book. Jennifer, with an armful of underwear,
heads to Jed's Jeep.

>   JENNIFER
>   I'm really sorry about all this,
>   but I don't want to be late – I
>   don't want to be late –

INT. PRICE RANCH – CARA LYNN'S BEDROOM SUITE – MEANWHIL

CARA LYNN, 22, bleached-blond and spoiled, in silk jammi
diamond earrings and diamond breakfast necklace takes a
jewelry box out of her dressing table drawer. She GIGGL
HAPPILY, heads to the door –

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CARA LYNN'S BEDROOM

Cara Lynn moves past Mexican MAIDS carrying linens to th
various rooms.

>   MAIDS
>   Good morning, Miss Cara LynnÉ

Cara Lynn slips into a door at the end of the hallway -

INT. GROOM'S BEDROOM SUITE - DAY

JAMESON, 30, his body is toned to perfection, sleeps,
lightly snoring, on 1000 thread-count sheets in Texas-st
opulence

Cara Lynn JUMPS onto the huge bed and snuggles next to
Jameson

                    CARA LYNN
          Ooooh, sleepy-head, I think you
          need to know what time it isÉ

Jameson slowly wakes, mutters

                    JAMESON
          Is it late?

                    CARA LYNN
          Open your eyes and see for
          yourself.

Jameson opens his eyes. She opens the jewelry box to rev
a gold with diamond chips Rolex

                    JAMESON
          Whoa -

Jameson likes nice things -- Cara Lynn lifts her wrist,
has the matching female version.

                    CARA LYNN
          Being married is being a matched
          set. Won't it be wonderful?

Cara Lynn KISSES Jameson and moves on top of him. It ta
Jameson perhaps a bit too long to respond due to his
admiration of his new watch - but...

EXT. HIGHWAY INTO PRICE - MOMENTS LATER

Jed's Jeep follows the Sheriff's patrol car - its lights
twirling

INT. JED'S JEEP

Jennifer finds a crushed box of Kleenex among scattered
papers and old coffee cups on the floor of the Jeep. She

tries to clean the gunk off her face. She isn't very
successful.

>   JENNIFER
>   I'm not here to break up the
>   wedding - even though my assistant
>   has fantasized that scenario and I
>   told her this isn't the beginning
>   of some crazy psycho romance novel.
>   I really am just here as a best
>   friend at my best ex-boyfriend's
>   wedding -

>   JED
>   Okay -

>   JENNIFER
>   - there's 'in love' and there
>   there's 'love'. Like Anthony and
>   Cleopatra. Anthony's love was
>   obsessive - his "in love" was
>   really a loss of soul. That's why
>   Anthony couldn't help turning his
>   back on his own soldiers to
>   hightail it off after Cleopatra -
>   ruining himself - she owned his
>   soul.

>   JED
>   I don't know much about the Greeks
>   -

>   JENNIFER
>   Romans and Egyptians -

>   JED
>   Or them

>   JENNIFER
>   I was a History/English Lit major
>   in college - plan was to be a
>   writer by now - mmmm
>   (thinking this plan of
>   hers not working out,
>   sighs - shakes it off)
>   I'm just here for 'Best friend'

They pass a sign, "WELCOME TO PRICE, OKLAHOMA" and enter
Main Street

>   JENNIFER (CONT'D)
>   (distracted by signs on
>   buildings in town)

                              Look - Price Hardware - and
                              there's Price LumberÉ And there it
                              is - Price Oil.

Jed points to an old brick building.

                    JED
                    Yep and Price Bank

Jennifer spies the country church with a large sign on i
front lawn: PRICE CHURCH WELCOMES ALL SINNERS

                    JENNIFER
                    And Price Church that welcomes all
                    sinnersÉ
                         (little catty under her
                          breath)
                    I wonder if Cara Lynn Price
                    confesses there...

                    JED
                    Huh?

                    JENNIFER
                    Didn't say think anything -

                    JED
                    Thou shalt not covet some other
                    chick's boyfriend on national TV?

                    JEnnifER
                    Oh Jamey and me - we've been long
                    over - timing was all wrong -
                         (to herself)
                    Always is --

They head off the Main Street and back onto country road
open country. The Sheriff HONKS and waves and speeds of
the other direction. Jed turns into the

EXT. PRICE RANCH

The Jeep glides through gates with bronze sculptures of
derricks as posts.

It's amazing. It's huge. It's let's-show-how-rich-we-are
land, manicured and fenced.

                    JENNIFER
                    -    Oh my God

They head into the ranch - perfect horses canter, their

perfect manes flow in the perfect breeze – a stand of
antique wooden oil derricks rise in the distance, symbol
old money that came from old oil.

ON THE ROAD TO THE BIG HOUSE

The latest model pick-up truck with monster wheels
approaches – HONKS. Jed brakes. WADE, 30, leans out th
window, his smile is forced.

                    WADE
          Whatcha doin' here, Jed?

                    JED
          Hey Wade. Droppin' off the best
          man.

                    JENNIFER
               (leans over to see Wade)
          Person. Best person.

Wade stares at Jennifer's mud-streaked face.

                    JENNIFER (CONT'D)
               (to Wade)
          Do you have a cell phone I could
          use for just a moment?

                    WADE
          Sorry.

                    JED
          She needs a shower. I'll take her
          to the big house –

                    WADE
               (smile gets colder)
          Don't want you at the big house,
          Jed.

                    JED
               (smiles bigger at Wade)
          But I got an invitation – don't I,
          Wade?

                    WADE
          You also got an invitation to see
          my lawyers about that piece a'
          property I need.

                    JED
          Nice to see you, Wade.

Jed drives off.

INT. JED'S JEEP

Jennifer looks at Jed.

                    JENNIFER
          So you're coming to the wedding.

                    JED
          Wasn't planning on it but now...
               (looks at Jennifer)

Jennifer tries to take more gunk off her face and neck,
shards of Kleenex stick to her - she's just looking wors

                    JENNIFER
          My assistant would point out to me
          if this were a book - or a movie -
          we'd probably be thrown together in
          all sorts of odd ways, grow to hate
          each other but out of great
          dislike, respect and eventually
          love would bloom and you'd catch
          the bridal bouquet at the end and
          I'd get down on one knee -

                    JED
          I'm married -

                    JENNIFER
          Of course you are - why shouldn't
          you be? It'd certainly be too pat
          if you rescued me and that sealed
          the deal. She'd tell me now that
          the story would shift to Wade - the
          bride's single and unattached
          brother - driving away from our
          initial meet thinking 'wow - she
          just could be the love of my life'

                    JED
          You seem to - kinda think about
          your life as a ... book?

                    JENNIFER
          Not me. My assistant. She points
          out the dumped girlfriend who
          deserves love steels herself to
          attend the dumper's wedding because
          she is a good person - and that in
          doing so she is rewarded by finding

                        true love herself at an event where
                        most people are swept away by
                        romance - wanting to be love ...
                        crap, right? I edit romance books
                        for a living and I'd throw it out
                        the window.
                             (looks ahead)
                        Holy moley roller - is that a
                        house?

Jed pulls up to the front of the

BIG (HUGE) RANCH HOUSE

just as Jameson runs out of the house and towards Jed's
jeep; he's dressed and perfect-looking.

                        JAMESON
                  Jennifer!   Jennifer!

                        JENNIFER
                  Ooooooo Jamey!

Jameson pulls her out of the Jeep and goes to hug her. S
she's wet and mud-streaked - decides to just hold her ha

                        JAMESON
                     (big smile, happy)
                  You look like shit - I thought you
                  were gonna really try when you were
                  here -

                        JENNIFER
                  There was a bug -

Jed is already out of the jeep and unloading her huge ba

                        JENNIFER (CONT'D)
                  My car broke down -

Jameson insults her with so much sweet charm.

                        JAMESON
                  Oh Jennifer, can't you do anything
                  right? -

                        JENNIFER
                     (tries for laugh)
                  Of course I can. I'm up for the
                  promotion. Corner office.

Jameson's phone DINGS -- a text has come in. He checks i

                         JAMESON
               Cara Lynn's doing a fitting on her
               Vera Wang - why don't we get you
               cleaned up. -- Bye Jed.

Jameson leads her inside as Mexican housekeepers hurry t
get Jennifer's bags into the house.

Jed watches Jennifer as she goes - that woman is weird -
funny - butÉ weird. Jennifer turns to him, waves

                         JENNIFER
               Oh -- thanks

                         JED
               Jed

                         JeNNIFER
                    (smiles)
               I know. Jed.

INT.   PRICE RANCH HOUSE ENTRYWAY

Jameson leads Jennifer in. There's a stuffed stallion on
dais in the center of the massive entryway.

                         JENNIFER
               Okay - a horse. A dead horse.
               Inside the house. That's nice.

                         JAMESON
                    (waves his arm around to
                     show it off)
               It's big, huh?

ANTONIO CARRERA, 32, the Hispanic house butler and perha
the most handsome man alive is coming down the staircase
carrying a breakfast tray. He wears a white shirt and
pressed black jeans.

                         JAMESON (CONT'D)
               Antonio, this is Miss Jennifer
               Solo.

Antonio smiles a smile that could melt a woman's heart.

                         ANTONIO
               Miss Solo. I have the honor of
               being assigned as your "go-to" man.
               Anything you need when you are here
               - please do not hesitate.

Jennifer wipes her face, wishes she looked better.

                    JENNIFER
               (in Spanish)
          I did plan on making a better
          impression -

                    ANTONIO
               (in Spanish)
          You speak Spanish?

                    JAMESON
               (does not speak Spanish)
          Antonio's worked here at the ranch
          since he was a kid but he's about
          to finish his MBA and move from the
          house staff into the office of
          Price Management. Come on -

                    JENNIFER
               (in Spanish)
          Is a guest allowed to ride this
          horse around the house?

                    ANTONIO
               (smiles, in Spanish)
          I will see what I can arrange.
          Despues, senorita.

Antonio moves off.

                    JENNIFER
               (in Spanish)
          Oh my god -

Jameson and Jennifer pass the open door to THE LIBRARY.
Jameson waves to someone inside.

                    JAMESON
          That's Cara Lynn's daddy. My almost
          father-in-law...

Jennifer cranes her neck to look inside just as CARM PLE
35, wearing a Price Oil baseball cap moves into the door
He and Jennifer's eyes meet and hold for an extra long
moment. He's taking in her disarray, she's taking in his
steel blue eyes.

                    CARM
          Excuse us.

Jennifer nods

                         JENNIFER
               Okay.

Carm closes the door.

                         JENNIFER (CONT'D)
               Who was that?

                         JAMESON
               No idea. Not involved in the
               "business". Think I'm muscle no
               brain - fine with me -

Jameson has already started up the stairway

                         JAMESON (CONT'D)
               Come on Jenny -

Jennifer moves after him -

INT. LIBRARY

RICHARDSON PRICE, 52, used to power and getting his own
scowls at the door.

                         RICHARDSON
               Asshole.

HALF W. PRICE, 32, sits in a big leather chair, boots up
a coffee table.

                         HALF W.
               He's some goddamned trinket on her
               charm bracelet, you shoulda never
               let her go on that goddamn TV show
               -

                         RICHARDSON
               Cara Lynn wanted to be a
               "bacheloretta". Who knew she was
               gonna pick a dud. 'sides - she
               didn't want you.

Half W. belches.

                         HALF W.
               Don't know why.

                         RICHARDSON
               She ain't had a mama since she was
               five - I do my best.

Richardson swings his chair around to face Carm.

>   RICHARDSON (CONT'D)
>   This here is Half W. - my half
>   nephew once removed. He's got a
>   nose for bull.
>   (to Carm)
>   So?

Carm punches a key on the computer - a screen comes down
from the ceiling. Carm brings up maps of the area -
topographical, geological and property lines.

>   CARM
>   After doing a thorough sampling of
>   old wells, soil analysis down to
>   7500 feet on your property, we have
>   come to the conclusion that you're
>   dried up.

>   HALF W.
>   Bull meter - ding ding. Don't call
>   my Uncle dried up.

>   RICHARDSON
>   (re: Carm)
>   He's the new geologist and an
>   engineer I hired on. He better
>   know what he's talkin' about.

>   HALF W
>   I can smell bull. So watch it.

>   CARM
>   No more juice comin' into the pipe.
>   Depleted. These puppies ain't
>   scamperin' anymore and given that
>   oil production worldwide is
>   expected to peak in about five
>   years --

>   HALF W.
>   Whatdya mean, I just bought me a
>   new Hummer -

>   RICHARDSON
>   (to Carm)
>   So what do you suggest?

Carm punches about key on the computer and a map of the
adjoining property spreads across the screen. A photo of
is in the corner of the screen.

                    CARM
          Neighbors gotta be good for
          something.

INT. JENNIFER'S GUEST ROOM SUITE - MEANWHILE

Jameson leads Jennifer into a gorgeously appointed suite
Her suitcases rest in the sitting room. The bedroom and
attached bathroom are through a door -

                    JENNIFER
          Holy dog, Jamey.

                    JAMESON
          I know.

Jennifer turns to him - very serious

                    JENNIFER
          Are you happy?

                    JAMESON
          Why shouldn't I be?

                    JENNIFER
          What about your plans - the gym,
          the --

                    JAMESON
          Why work so hard now? I been
          personally training Cara Lynn, you
          can bounce a football off her abs -
          come on Jenny -
               (smiles his perfect
                smile)
          You finish the book?

                    JENNIFER
          All my endings are too sad. I can't
          write a happy one -

                    JAMESON
          The Bacheloretta pickin' me on
          national television. You could use
          that for happy -

Jameson's cell phone DINGS. He reads the text

                    JAMESON (CONT'D)
          Cara Lynn says it's time to sample
          some weddin' cakes.

Jameson kisses her nose, strolls out of the room. Jenni
is flustered by the kiss. Jennifer touches her nose -
quickly races to the door -

                    JENNIFER
          Jameson?

She opens it and looks down the

HALLWAY

No one is in the hall. She SIGHS closes the door - happe
to see herself in a mirror. She GROANS - realizes she lo
like she's been run over by a chicken truck.

EXT. PRICE BARN

CRENKSHAW, 45, the out of shape/scruffy stable manager,
finishes shoe-ing a horse. Wade drives up in his pick-u
gets out. Wade pulls out the just-tailored tuxedo in its
see-through plastic bag he's picked up in town. He hang
on a hook on the barn door -

                    WADE
          Crenk - take this into the house
          for me after you saddle up Victory
          - I gotta take a piss only -

Wade heads into the barn towards its bathroom area.
Crenkshaw takes a moment, clearly hates Wade and hates b
told what to do in this manner. He calls after Wade -

                    CRENKSHAW
          Sure thing, Mr. Wade. Here to do
          it for ya, man.

As he leads the shoed horse back into the stable, Crenks
"accidentally" knocks into the hanging tux; it falls to
dirt.

                    CRENKSHAW (CONT'D)
          Ooops.

Instead of picking it up, he decides to put the shoed ho
back in the stable first - making sure that the horse st
right onto the tuxedo's plastic wrapping.

                    CRENKSHAW (CONT'D)
          Ooooops.

INT. JENNIFER'S GUEST SUITE - BATHROOM - SHOWER

Jennifer is in the shower, soaping up. She smells the various bath oils, trying them out - she HEARS THE PHON RING

INT. JENNIFER'S GUEST SUITE - BEDROOM - MOMENT LATER

Jennifer, naked, races out of the bathroom and answers t phone.

                    JENNIFER
               (into phone)
          Hello?

INT. STANDMAN PUBLISHING - LOS ANGELES

Fran is on her headset phone -

                    FRAN
          You're alive. I thought you were
          dead.

INTERCUT WITH JENNIFER

                    JENNIFER
          I am so out of my league.

                    FRAN
          You are strong, you are sexy - what
          are you wearing right now?

                    JENNIFER
          Right now I am naked-

                    FRAN
          Are you alone?

                    JENNIFER
          Of course I am alone -

                    FRAN
          Wrong attitude. Every chance you
          can get naked WITH someone - you
          should take it. Any possibles yet?
          Tell me tell me

                    JENNIFER
          I only noticed because you told me
          to -

Fran SQUEALS

                    JENNIFER (CONT'D)
          Stop it, stop it stop it - Just
          tell me what the promotion memo -

SID STANDMAN, 60, short and bald and chewing on an unlit
cigar, strides up and barks into Fran's phone. He holds
PEOPLE magazine with "Bacheloretta Marries!" featuring a
picture of Cara Lynn and body-builder Jameson on the cov

                    SID
          I don't promote people who take
          personal time to go to goddamn
          weddings -

Sid walks on. Fran and Jennifer (Fran holding the phone
so Sid can hear) yell after him

                    FRAN/ JennIFER
          She's doing research! /I'm doing
          research!

                    FRAN
          For her book -

                    JENNIFER
          Don't tell him that -

                    FRAN
               (yells after Sid)
          For her life!

ON JENNIFER

                    CARA LYNN (OS)
          Jennifer? Jennifer???

KNOCK ON THE DOOR and it opens -

                    CARA LYNN (OS) (CONT'D)
          It's me, Cara Lynn. Can I come in
          and give you a big hug?

Jennifer grabs a pillow off the bed and holds it in fron
her naked self as Cara Lynn enters carrying a large hat
tied with ribbon.

                    CARA LYNN (CONT'D)
          Hi! Just wanna say hi!

                    JENNIFER
               (so Fran knows who she is
                talking to)
          Cara Lynn Price - so nice to meet

                             you -

Cara Lynn wraps her arms around Jennifer (and pillow) an
hugs her tight. Jennifer still has phone held up to her
ear.

                    CARA LYNN
          Ooooooohhhhhh Jenny - can I call you
          Jenny? I feel like I know you so
          well already, you being Jameson's
          best friend since high school - and
          now seeing you -
               (not a kind look-over)
          I know for sure you are 'just
          friends'...

                    JENNIFER
          Oh - ahhhh

                    CARA LYNN
          Guys like having girls like you as
          friends -

Cara Lynn moves to grab the box she left on the table.
Jennifer, taken aback by Cara Lynn's assessment, skirts
the bathroom.

                    CARA LYNN (CONT'D)
          I got you a hat to wear to my fancy
          BBQ. Being in love is wonderful-

Jennifer comes out with robe on, she has "really" heard

                    JENNIFER
          Well - the heart wants what the
          heart needs - Woody Allen said
          something close to that but I just
          do my ... spin on it -

                    CARA LYNN
          Who?

                    JENNIFER
          He writes very honest movies about
          love and -

                    CARA LYNN
          I like reality TV.

                    JENNIFER
          Oh. Well. Reality...can be harsh...
          sad... sometimes.

Cara Lynn walks out the door.

>   CARA LYNN
>   Jameson's happy. He's got me.
>   (that steel smile)
>   Don't forget that.

The door closes.

Jennifer takes a moment.

>   FRAN (OS, VOICE ON PHONE)
>   Oh my gaaaahhhhhd –

INTERCUT WITH FRAN

>   FRAN (CONT'D)
>   You prove that bitch wrong –

>   JENNIFER
>   I can't believe she said that –

>   FRAN
>   Would the romance heroines in our
>   books let some spoiled heiress make
>   her feel small and meaningless –

>   JENNIFER
>   You should've seen the way she
>   looked at me –

>   FRAN
>   Or would she gather her gumption –

There's a knock on the door. Jennifer pulls the robe
tighter around herself.

>   JENNIFER
>   (into phone)
>   Gotta go.

>   FRAN
>   Don't let her get to you! Jennifer?
>   Jennifer?

Fran realizes Jennifer's hung up.

ON JENNIFER

She hurries to the door –

>   JENNIFER
>   Yes?

She opens the door. It's handsome Antonio with a lunch t

                    ANTONIO
          Mexican hot chocolate - May I set
          it down for you?

Antonio enters the room. Places the tray on the table.
hands her an embossed card.

                    ANTONIO (CONT'D)
          And your schedule -

                    JENNIFER
          Thank you - I better get ready.
               (determination sets in -
                she tries for flirt)
          Make sure people know that I can
          clean up and sparkle -

                    ANTONIO
               (in Spanish)
          Ahhh. But natural is very
          refreshing.
               (shows her buzzer on
                wall)
          If you need me, buzz.

                    JENNIFER
          Okay. Gracias.

Antonio exits, closes the door. Jennifer sighs aloud "w

EXT. PRICE RANCH PROPERTY - LATER

Richardson Price, his son Wade - as well as Half W. and
- ride horses over the extensive property. They reach t
property fence - and look into the adjoining land.

                    WADE
          There's gotta be a way, Pa.

                    RICHARDSON
          There's always a way, son.

                    CARM
          What "way" are you thinking is a
          "way"?

                    HALF W.
               (points at property)
          That way's a way.

                         WADE
             I knew a way.

                         RICHARDSON
                    (snaps at Wade)
             That went away.

                         WADE
             It's not away yet. Wedding's not
             til Saturday –

Wade turns around and gallops back towards the ranch.

                         HALF W.
                    (to Richardson)
             You think he'll get his way, Uncle?

                         RICHARDSON
             He's a Price. Price always has its
             way.

Richardson heads back towards the ranch – the others fol

EXT. BACKYARD – PRICE RANCH – LATE AFTERNOON BBQ

Tables are covered with white cloths and flowers. A Mex
mariachi band plays. Waiters set polished glasses on th
tables. The huge BBQ pit features a whole cow roasting
feet and tail still attached – on the spit.

A network TV CREW sets up their cameras. The HOSTS, CHAD
GRAND, 30, and MICHELE BLANG, 28, are clean cut and whit
smiled and judging by the inflection of their voices, we
to the same "How To Be An Entertainment News Host" train
school. They talk to camera

                         CHAD
             Well, Michele – aren't you lookin'
             pretty –

                         MICHELE
                    (flirty)
             Oh Chad

                         CHAD
             – here we are at Cara Lynn Price's
             Ranch in Price Oklahoma. The
             wedding of Bacheloretta and Venice
             California's most Ripped Man is
             only three days off...

                         MICHELE

                    And the pre-wedding festivities are
                    about to begin. I wonder how the
                    prospective bride and groom are
                    feeling? Excited? Nervous? What
                    exactly is being barbecued in those
                    big Oklahoma BBQ pits? Those of you
                    at home who want the answers - stay
                    tuned! Isn't that right Chad?
                         (flirty)
                    And well - aren't you looking good
                    for this hoe-down -

                              CHAD
                    Ahhh Michele, how about you and me
                    getting some BBQ and mingling with
                    the guests --
                         (they snuggle, smile to
                          camera)
                    Give us a second -we'll be back
                    later -

The camera lights shut off. Chad and Michele give their
mikes to a P.A. and head off in different directions. Th
two clearly HATE each other.

                         CHAD/MICHELE
                    Prima donna/Jerk.

EXT. LONG DRIVE UP TO THE PRICE RANCH - MEANWHILE

Guests arrive in expensive cars. The ladies wear sequin
and rhinestoned dresses and fashionable cowgirl hats. T
men are in pressed jeans and freshly pressed cowboy shir
Children, dressed up, race out of cars and head to the p
GUESTS move towards the backyard.

INT. JENNIFER'S GUEST SUITE - MEANWHILE

Jennifer, dressed in a non-blingy dress, moves to the ha
and takes off the ribbon and top of the box. She sees th
hat. Her face falls.

                         JENNIFER
                    Oh god -

EXT. LONG DRIVE LEADING TO PRICE RANCH HOUSE - MEANWHILE

Jed gets out of his mud-splattered Jeep. But he's cleane
up, looks good.

He hands his keys to the valet

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE JENNIFER'S GUEST SUITE

Jennifer exits her suite, wearing the oversized cowboy h
that looks like a 747 landed on her head, just as Wade,
spiffed up Oklahoma style, exits his room.

                    WADE
          Some hat -

                    JENNIFER

          Your sister gave it to me -

Wade snorts, tickled by his sister's sense of humor.

                    WADE
          Guess I get the honor of escortin'
          you downstairs -

Just then, Carm exits his guest room, he's also dressed
the BBQ.

                    CARM
          I'll join ya.

                    JeNNIFER
              (bright, trying to joke)
          Now I feel like the Bacheloretta

                    WADE
          Damn show. Made me look like a
          ninny and my sister look like she
          hops in and out of guys' beds like
          a jackrabbit -

They head down the carpeted stairway. Jennifer sees Anto
waiting at the bottom of the stairs.

                    JENNIFER
          And there's Antonio.

Jennifer mis-steps and TRIPS and TUMBLES down the stairw

                    JENNIFER (CONT'D)
          Ahhhhhhhhhh!

She lands at the bottom of the stairs, her dress wrapped
halfway up over her head. And her hat is crushed. Antoni
rushes to her side.

                    Antonio
              (in Spanish)
          Are you all right?

                          WADE
                    Stand up before the TV crews see
                    ya-

Jennifer looks up - a TV crew is rushing towards them.

Wade whips her to her feet like a rodeo calf.

                          JENNIFER
                    Ahhhh -!!

                          WADE
                    You must be 120 - bout the same as
                    one year old calf -

Wade carries Jennifer into the library. Carm follows.
Antonio locks out the TV crew -

INT. SUN ROOM

The sun room is full of tables stacked high with wedding
presents; silver platters and tea sets, china, expensive
artwork, vases; extravagant and expensive presents. Way
way over the top.

Wade puts Jennifer down. She's totally discombobulated.
and Carm look at her.

                          WADE
                    Might want to check out the hair.
                    The dress.

Carm holds out one of Jennifer's shoes.

                          CARM
                    Here's your shoe -

                          WADE
                    - We'll see you round the BBQ -

Wade and Carm head out. Jennifer can't believe this is
happening -

                          JENNIFER
                    Shit.

EXT. BACKYARD - PRICE RANCH HOUSE

Jed stands at the champagne bar. Michele is next to him,
downs two glasses of champagne in quick succession. She
him looking at her.

                        MICHELE
          It's really good stuff.

                        JED
          You look familiar

                        MICHELE
          I'm on TV. I ask people way too
          many personal questions. Who are
          you?

                        JED
          Neighbor

                        MICHELE
          Old boyfriend of Cara Lynn's?

                        JED
          She hog-tied me once and kissed me.

                        MICHELE
          When you were kids

                        JED
          No, I think it was last year.

                        MICHELE
          You're cute. You know - they say at
          weddings everyone gets a free
          pass...

Suddenly there's a huge sound of APPLAUSE. Michele turns
see that Cara Lynn and Jameson have made their entrance

                        MICHELE (CONT'D)
          Shit.

She hurries off.

Cara Lynn, dressed a chiffon-y and breezy sundress, and
Jameson, dressed in a white suit and open shirt, wave to
cameras and guests from the back porch -- Guests CHEER.

Cara Lynn squeals and jumps into Jameson's arms. He hol
her up above his head like he's lifting a barbell! MORE
CHEERS!

INT. SUN ROOM

Jennifer tries to get her dress back in place and uncrus
the hat. She takes her cell phone from a pocket, speed d
-

                              JENNIFER
                        (into phone)
                  I'm getting on the next plane-

INTERCUT WITH

INT. PUBLISHING OFFICE - HALLWAY

Fran is walking, carrying a stack of files. She's got he
earphone on -

                              FRAN
                  No - no - no -

                              JENNIFER
                  I've already ruined everything --

                              FRAN
                  Buck up, get a spine

                              JENNIFER
                  I'm coming home -

Fran walks into her boss' office

INT. STANDMAN's OFFICE

Standman is on the phone. Fran plops the stack of paper
his desk

                              FRAN
                        (to Standman)
                  I'm going to Oklahoma -

Fran walks out

                              FRAN (CONT'D)
                        (into phone to Jennifer)
                  I'll be there tonight - suck it up
                  and smile -

ON JENNIFER

                              JENNIFER
                  Fran? Fran? You're what?

Half W. belches - she looks around, he's behind a huge
chair in front of the mini-frig cracking open a can of b
-

                              JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Ahhh –

Jennifer drops her phone, startled.

                    HALF W
                (winks)
             I'm Half. Recommend you don't head
             out – things'll are only gonna get
             better.

Half winks again and saunters out the French doors.
Jennifer sighs -- things are really not going well.

EXT. BACKYARD BBQ

Sheriff and Deputy, in spiffed up officer shirts, stroll
over a rose-covered bridge that extends over the backyar
pond.

Richardson, Cara Lynn and Jameson greet guests on a deck
the pond.

Jed grabs two glasses of champagne and goes up the steps
Jennifer who is slipping out the sun room's French doors
wearing her squished hat.

                    JED
             Champagne?

Jennifer turns to see Jed. He tries not to react to the
sight of her in the hat. Jennifer is not fooled.

                    JENNIFER
             I'm not going to wear it.

She tosses it behind a chair.

                    JENNIFER (CONT'D)
             Where's your wife?

                    JED
             Sick. – Come on, let's eat.

Just then, Jameson rings a cowbell on the deck by the po
Silence comes over the crowd – TV Cameras start shooting
Jamie picks up a microphone from the band –

                    JAMESON
             Welcome everyone.

Off to Jameson's side

Chad and Michele take their places. Michele still carrie
her champagne glass

>   CHAD
>   (to camera)
>   The happy couple welcomes their
>   friends and families -

>   MICHELE
>   (sips champagne, to
>   camera)
>   And the champagne is good

>   CHAD
>   (serious under his
>   "kidding)
>   Don't get too silly on me now, you
>   beautiful lush -

Michele giggles but shoots him a "don't mess with me" lo
and downs the rest of her glass -

Jameson continues into microphnone -

>   JaMESON
>   Cara Lynn and I are just popping
>   with pride to see you all - and I
>   want to give a special welcome to m
>   best... person who came all the way
>   from Southern California today -
>   there she is - on the back porch -

Jameson waves to Jennifer

ON JENNIFER

She waves awkwardly

ON JAMESON AND CARA LYNN

>   JamESON (CONT'D)
>   Come on over here and join us
>   Jenny!

>   CaRA LYNN
>   (leans in to mic)
>   I gave you a special hat to wear
>   for the occasion, Jenny. Where is
>   it?

ON JENNIFER

Stuck. She plops the huge stetson onto her head. Jed,

amused, watches Jennifer walk down the steps of the porc
through the crowd. Jameson starts "applause" and Jennife
walks -- it feels like forever - through the applauding
crowd -

--- she passes Carm, past Wade, past Half W., past Anton

TV Cameras ROLL

>   Chad
>   (into camera)
>   A huge welcome for
>   (checks his notes)
>   Jameson's high school friend

Michele takes another glass of champagne from a nearby
waiter

>   MICHELE
>   Fashion do's and don'ts here ladies
>   and gentlemen

Jennifer gets to the deck. Jameson extends a hand to hel

Cara Lynn move to HUG Jennifer - she's too quick, too
aggressive and Jennifer intuitively steps back -

A STEP TOO FAR -- OFF THE DECK

She loses her footing -- TOPPLES

>   JENNIFER
>   Ahhhhhhhhh!

BACKWARDS and INTO THE POND! All GASP!

Jennifer doesn't surface. SILENCE for a LONG MOMENT - An
then bursts up out of the water -

She looks up - sees Jameson's concerned face, Cara Lynn
hiding her pleased laughter behind her hand, the Price
Family looking at her as if she's insane -- she hears th
LAUGHTER AND CHEERS from the guests --

And sinks back under the water.

UNDERWATER

Jennifer faces the ultimate realization: she is a social
disaster - nothing nothing will ever go right for her -

>   End of act one

CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction of this practice-led PhD work, my research into film genre and my subsequent compilation and extrapolation of that research into practical guideposts for my own creative practice as a screenwriter and (hopefully in the future) for other screenwriters has been one of the most edifying tasks I have undertaken. This work has been beneficial in many ways:

- In solidifying my academic endeavors towards the understanding of how film genre can be approached by screenwriters in novel ways in regards to the construction of a screenplay as well as in reaching a targeted audience
- In how to approach my professional screenwriting work with increased understanding of ways to implement film genre as a constructive component in a screenplay as well as in reaching a targeted audience
- In how to approach student learning regarding an understanding of film genre, its components and its importance for the screenwriter in reaching an intended audience
- In expanding my skills as a storyteller

In examining and using cognitive theorist Gilles Fauconnier's concept of the idealized cognitive model (ICM)[40] and mental space (specifically the schematic knowledge and the specific knowledge components of an ICM)[41], I was inspired to approach the construction of a film narrative in original ways – using methods that could be used in addition to popular how-to manuals on screenwriting[42]. While extrapolating Fauconnier's concepts to apply to the screenwriter, I determined the ICM of a feature film screenplay includes location, characters, plot and other narrative ingredients – one of these being, in my opinion, the important component of film genre. I focused my work on how a screenwriter can use film genre to fulfill audience expectations and, in some cases, to add a 'sense of newness' to the endeavor. Using Fauconnier's theoretic construct,

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[40] See Methodology section in this document
[41] See Methodology section in this document
[42] See Methology section in this document

'mental space', a concept exploring a person's natural inclination to construct a comprehensible idealized cognitive model (ICM) of any given situation in order to understand his or her role in it, I employed his ideas on schematic knowledge, a person's knowledge of situation or circumstance in general terms (thus for a screenwriter one can think about the schematic or framing scenes highlighting plot and character motivations with genre specific scenes and sequences to keep the audience on the desired narrative track) and specific knowledge, an understanding of a person's emotional response to a situation (thus for a screenwriter, an understanding an audience's expectations and emotional responses to certain genres) and found these concepts useful in the ideation stages and construction stages of a screenplay. I concluded there was another important area that could fit into what I have termed the 'mental space of film genre' that would be of efficacious use to the screenwriter. This added component is relevant knowledge[43] – a consideration of the use of film genre to support a sense of currency within a film narrative. In the last year of my PhD work, I concentrated much of my efforts on this relevant knowledge area because it is the concept that was original to me and came as a direct result of my practice-led research. I have presented this work at academic conferences and published articles on it in Intellect's *Journal of Screenwriting* (2010, 2011).

The screenwriter, in regards to building the idealized cognitive model for the particular audience and using film genre as a component of the ICM, has much to consider:

- The framing (schematic knowledge) can help orient the audience to the types of film genre employed, thus creating a short circuit to audience comprehension. Encoding specific elements of the chosen film genre as a frame, both internally and externally, can also help focus and communicate the author's intent as well as keep the narrative on a cohesive track.

- The film audience is also drawn into a genre due to personal emotional experience (explored in Fauconnier's work on specific knowledge). Specific knowledge can be identified and explored by considering the primal desires (embedded in

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[43] Page 50-68 of this document

cognitive DNA, to use Grodal's term) that appeal to an audience interested in a certain genre.

- The screenwriter can also address the relevant knowledge of film genre by asking how certain film genres might work to reflect and comment on contemporary society.

In the practical section of my PhD I set the task of writing the first act of three different screenplays based on similar characters and plot points but situated in three different genres. This was to explore how narratives, using similar base elements, would undergo changes of tone as well as character types and character interactions when film genre was put in a primary position of consideration in the construction of a screenplay. I allowed my breakdown of the mental space of film genre components to take precedence as I focused on building and or adjusting (after the initial realized western script pages) the idealized cognitive models of these scripts.[44]

At the outset of this PhD work, I determined my goal was to delve into an alternate and effective way for screenwriters to use film genre as a practical tool in the screenwriter's "toolbox". I suggest that I have been successful, for in my own professional work as well as in classroom situations and in dialogue with other academics studying various aspects of screenwriting, I have found edifying, fresh and exciting avenues to explore in the ideation and construction of the screenplay. In review, I submit the following as a concise definition of the mental space of film genre:

> The mental space of film genre, composed of schematic, specific and relevant knowledge, is a component of film genre to be used by the screenwriter in building an idealized cognitive model of a film story to help address the expectations and desires of the audience, and - in addition - challenge the audience to consider narrative material in new and fresh ways.

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[44] See Scripts section of this document

As previously stated, my ultimate intention was to find a working definition of film genre that will speak to and be a helpmate to the screenwriter. It is my intention to suggest an inclusive and thorough working definition of film genre for the purposes of a specific film practitioner, the screenwriter:

> Film genre, for the screenwriter, refers to the type of film story and its essential elements such as iconography and themes and mental space which have a historical heritage known to attract and emotionally affect a particular audience.

The research area of my practice-led PhD work has been significant in the evolution of my growth as an academic. Specifically it has been vital in my understanding of the heritage and various theories of film genre. This has brought increased vigor and intellectual challenge to my classrooms as well as in dialogue with other academics in film, literature and philosophy studies. The study and research has fueled my contributions to academic journals and helped secure a position as a co-editor of *The Journal of Screenwriting*. I have presented papers on my research and findings at conferences (University Film and Video Conference (2007, 2008, 2009,2011), Popular Culture Association Conferences (2007, 2008), Screenwriting Research Network Conference (2009, 2010, 2011) and have cultivated professional friendships with academics from across the globe.

Equally important, "The Constructive Use of Film Genre For the Screenwriter" has enhanced my professional approaches to writing of screenplays and other creative narratives. I have determined that the three first acts of the film narratives that I constructed for this practice-led PhD work will be the bases of three screenplays that I intend to complete in the next year. Given that I have added this new approach to my work, the construction of the screenplays will continue to be a welcome challenge.

Where this work leads me in the future

Andrew Tudor asserts that each culture assesses films in different ways, therefore strict 'genre' rules can never really be applied (Tudor, 1973). I would like to explore the

veracity of this comment in relation to various national cinemas, approaching the study using the concepts of film narrative as an ICM as well as the components of the mental space of film genre. The author's encoding and the audience's decoding of narrative material is of great interest to me and I am not, at this point, convinced of Tudor's assertion that 'genre rules' cannot be applied across the global narrative film industry. My recent study (2008-2011) has focused on American films and American audiences, and now it is time for me to expand my studies: I would like to continue my film genre research into various national cinemas and cultures. For examples: the reasons for importance and immense popularity of the romantic comedy/musical in India, the fantasy/adventure genres that define much of commercial Japanese cinema and the coming-of-age genre that Turkish cinema embraces through a narrative exploration of identity and dreams and why these film genres speak to their specific film audiences.

I am also dedicated to exploring how, in the construction of an ICM, the mental space of film genre components can be used to subvert and/or energize a narrative so that it can, perhaps, be decoded from a fresh perspective that will surprise and provide the audience a novel experience with a specific film genre.

I will also continue to work in my professional capacity as a screenwriter, using the new and exciting tools I have garnered through this practice-led PhD. The work I have done on the three narratives has illuminated new paths of discovery as well as new methods of working. I have begun to share these methods with the Masters in Screenwriting students program that I originated in 2011 at my University. Because I have found that the concepts of an ICM and the mental space of film genre are understandable and helpful, I will continue to hone a targeted presentation of the work to use in the classroom as well as plan to introduce it to a wider audience of screenwriters.

I would like to strongly suggest that the ability to understand and implement components of film genres, both classical and revisionist – and the mental space elements of each genre - are extremely useful in the craft of screenwriting and can bring a fresh perspective to the screenwriter's task.

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APPENDIXES:

1. WORKING NOTES:
Western, Horror, Rom Com

2. Candidates Personal CV

3. Survey Sent to Screenwriters

THE WESTERN GENRE/ NOTES

The Western is often referred to as one of the most important creations of American movies. The most compelling reason to support this claim is that the Western genre helped create the myth of America. This myth is personified in the American character that accepts nothing less than freedom, believes in a personal vision and feels that hard work can transform circumstances and character. The audience of the Western expects and <u>anticipates</u> an introduction to a protagonist who, in some way, represents these ideals, whether he (or she) wears the pure-of-heart "white hat" or the troubled or tainted "black hat". President Theodore Roosevelt, a supporter of Western expansion, predicted that the Unites States, at a crisis point in its growth and national mission, would find its identity "in the thought and action of the West, because the West accentuates the peculiarly American

characteristics of its people … (the) iron qualities that must go with true manhood."
[45]

Mythology of the West

   The American West's wide open spaces and unsettled territories providing blank slates for persons to create new lives, even new personas. Whether the protagonist is a wanderer with a murky past such as the gunslinger/drifter title character in *Shane* (1953) or the East Coast lawyer searching for a new life in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) or the female taking on a male persona in order to control her destiny in *Ballad of Little Jo* (1993) - the Western mythology is built on the opportunity for renewal and regeneration. No matter a person's past, the Western presents a possibility to identify and embrace his or her <u>real</u> – or perhaps – <u>new</u> self.

          This possibility resonates with film audiences who, consciously or subconsciously, relish the exploration of renewal. Will Wright explored the essence of myth in his book *Sixguns & Society: A Structural Study of the Western*: "If a myth is popular, it must somehow appeal to or reinforce the individuals who view it by communicating a symbolic meaning to them. The meaning must, in turn, reflect the particular social institutions and attitudes that have created and continue to nourish the myth. Thus, a myth must tell its viewers about themselves and their society." (Wright, 1975) Western films do just this; they hold a mirror up to three ideals: re-invention of character, individual strength of purpose and most particularly, the ideal of reasonable and personal justice. Classic Westerns provide a plethora of stories that rely on a relatively small stable of situations and plots that focus on these themes, with conflicts often growing out of several archetypal situations: ranchers vs. farmers (films such as *Shane* and *Man Without A Star* (1955), Indians vs. settlers (*The Searchers* (1956) and *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon* (1949)), courage vs. cowardice (*High Noon* (1952) and *The Tin Star* (1957) and *Rio Bravo* (1959) and perhaps the most popular conflict; outlaws vs. civilization (*Stagecoach* (1939) and

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[45] Muscovitz, Jennifer (2006) "The Cultural Myth of the Cowboy, or How the West Was Won" *Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-Present),* Spring, Vol 5, Issue 1

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962) and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and *Unforgiven* (1992)).

Successful screenplays are based on the emotional, physical and psychological conflict of characters in, for the most part, life-changing situations. The successful Western builds conflict by using the inherent difficulties of its burgeoning society and its location and, as Wright points out, resolves its conflicts not in the courtroom, but through brawls and gunplay, re-establishing the moral order with a single shot. Part of the allure of the Western is this simplicity and its inherent lawlessness. Film critic Richard Schickel writes, (Westerns appeal because) "everyone wore a six-shooter (and) complex moral conflicts could be plausibly resolved in clear, clean violent action." [46] This lawlessness and might-wins-out allowed the Wild West to take on mythical dimensions, to become a place where legends (of "good guys" and "bad guys") could be born.

Basic Elements of the Western Genre

French film theorist Jean Mitry provides an <u>inclusive</u> definition of the Western, one that is useful to the screenwriter: "(A) film whose action, situated in the American West, is consistent with the atmosphere, the values and the conditions of existence in the Far West between 1840 and 1900." [47] Jim Kitses, author of *Horizons West: Anthony Mann*, *Budd Boetticher*, *Sam Peckinpah; Studies of Authorship Within The Western* explores a more <u>exclusive</u> definition by stating that the western grows out of the conflict between the West as garden and as desert, between culture and nature, community and individual. [48] Both observations are of importance to the screenwriter.

The Western is set apart because, unlike other film genres, it focuses on a certain period of history as well as a certain locale. There are various critical opinions that assign, somewhat arbitrarily, non-Western films into the Western

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[46] Schickel, Richard (1988) *BFI Companion to the Western*, Deustch Publishing, pg. 11

[47] Mitry, Jean (1963) *Dictionaire du Cinema* Paris, Larousse, p. 276

[48] Kitses, Jim (1969) "Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Sam Peckinpah; Studies of Authorship in the Western" *Horizons West,* Indiana University Press

genre. Acclaimed films such as *Giant* (1956) and *Hud* (1963) and *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and *No Country For Old Men* (2007) are often lumped into the Western genre simply because of their locales (and iconographic cowboy hats), not taking into account their lack of fulfillment of the inclusive definition of the basic Western as well as other exclusive motifs. The classic Western genre, unlike epic melodrama (*Giant*) or coming-of-age drama *(Hud)* or romance *(Brokeback Mountain*) or drama/horror *(No Country for Old Men*) first and foremost, explores a <u>particular</u> period of time and <u>particular</u> characters who exist in this particular period of time. Film stories based in other genres may borrow Western motifs such as expansionism and quest for reasonable and personal justice such as the sci-fi adventures *STAR WARS* (1977) and *Serenity* (2005) (sometimes labeled "space westerns") or the pioneering spirit and quest for new self in a film such as *Easy Rider* (1969), (sometimes referred to as an "acid western") or the disaster film (sometimes labeled an "apocalyptic western") such as *Mad Max* (1979), however they do not belong on the list of true Westerns. For the purposes of the screenwriter, it is beneficial to understand the classic Western in order to successfully cherry pick from its basics the elements that might enhance a story in another distinctive genre.

Period

The classic Western takes place between the mid-1800s (end of the Civil War) and 1890 (the end of the Indian Wars at Wounded Knee). Some film theorists may push the Western back to the Battle of the Alamo in 1836 and even allow for the Mexican Revolution (1920), but most will agree that the height of western migration (1860 to 1900) is the time period that most exemplifies the Wild West experience. Film historian John Cawelti writes: (The Western takes place) "at a certain moment in the development of American civilization, namely at that point where savagery is in decline before the advancing wave of law and order, but still strong enough to pose a local and momentarily significant change." [49]

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[49] Cawelti, John G. (1975) *The Six Gun Mystique* Bowling Green University Press, USA

SHANE (1953)   THE TIN STAR (1957)

An important element of the Western (also known as the Horse Opera or the Oater) is the use of the horse as the main mode of transportation. Horses represent freedom, man's connection to the un-conquered terrain. The horse gets its fuel from the land, the horse allows the hero to roam freely; there is no need for marked paths. Fences are anathema to the free spirit. Young boys in the western dream of owning their own horse - for the animal represents not only freedom but also manhood – as seen in films such as *The Tin Star* and *Shane*. The horse connects the western character in a muscular way to physical survival and it is essential in frontier chases and battles. If the horse does not survive, the cowboy (or cavalry man or pioneer or outlaw) may not survive. Trains, known as "iron horses" portended the end of the Wild West - no longer did the pioneers need the courage to endure the hardships of a cross-country trek on foot or horseback or in a horse-drawn covered wagon; they could travel to the West with relative ease. The replacement of the horse (by the train and eventually the automobile) as the main mode of transportation inexorably altered the Western landscape and the tough, free, resourceful and determined Western character.

Locale

The terms "Old West" and "Wild West" refer to life beyond the settled United States territories and are usually meant to refer to the "Frontier Strip"; six territories from North Dakota to Texas and west to the Pacific Ocean. Due to

passenger ships traveling around the southern-most tip of Africa (a 14,000-mile trip from New York) to reach the gold fields of California, Oregon and Washington, areas along the Pacific coast became "civilized" earlier than the arid and land-locked Oklahoma, Arizona and New Mexico territories. These three areas were the last to be awarded statehood – and thus are the locales where most Western films live most comfortably. It only makes sense that the silver-mining town of Tombstone, Arizona rose to prominence and drew the likes of Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and the McLaury brothers. Tombstone's infamous Gunfight at the OK Corral is an event that often symbolizes the West's struggle for law and order against the open-banditry of the outlaws who terrorized brave and peaceful homesteaders and pioneers.
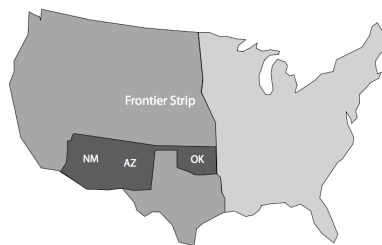
Cawelti points out that the classic western lives where man encounters his "uncivilized double". Cawelti writes: "The western is at its best when it takes place on the border of two lands, between two eras, and with a hero that remains divided between two value systems, for he combines the town's morals with the outlaw's skills." [50]

A good number of westerns stories such as *Cimarron* (1931) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971) use impending statehood as an element of plot and as a symbol of impending change. Conflicting opinions concerning statehood give the audience a window into the Western characters – those who desire a community that exists under the safety umbrella of

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[50] Cawelti, John G. (1975) *The Six Gun Mystique* Bowling Green University Press, USA

a federal government and those who are unwilling to give up the romance of the "Wild West" and the heady feeling of controlling their own destinies.

Characters

Just as the audiences recognize and enjoy the familiar characters in teen comedies (variations on the nerd, the jock, the smart student, the loser) or the familiar characters in the crime drama (the harried and possibly corrupt older detective, the young detective out to make a name for himself) or the romantic comedy characters (the young woman who can't stand up for herself or the man who refuses to risk maturation and commitment), the Western has its familiar characters – and in most cases, each of them serve a specific purpose. Will Wright writes: "Each film is the story of a hero who is somehow estranged from his society but now in whose ability rests the fate of that society. The villains threaten the society until the hero acts to protect and save it." Wright reduces each western story (he includes dime novels, short stories and films) to three sets of characters: the hero, the society, and the villains. [51] Cawelti gives these three basic groups a bit more dimension: the townspeople are the agents of civilization, the savages or outlaws threaten the agents of civilization, and the hero is above the mores of the savages or outlaws and the agents of civilizations.[52]

It's interesting to note that the Western film "created" the Caucasian Western hero. Thomas Gasque explores the historical cowboys and finds most of them to be Latino (Mexican, Argentinean, Chilean or Venezuelan) or of African descent. The white cowboy in the late 1800s was, in most cases, from a lower economic class – perhaps a poor, displaced Southerner or a European immigrant willing to roam territories in search of work.[53] The Hollywood film appropriated the idea of the

[51] Wright, Will (1975) *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*, University of California Press, Berkeley

[52] Cawelti, John G. (1975) *The Six Gun Mystique* Bowling Green University Press, USA

[53] Muscovitz, Jennifer (2006) "The Cultural Myth of the Cowboy, or How the West Was Won" *Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-Present),* Spring, Vol 5, Issue 1

cowboy, romanticized him and made him, initially, an ideal of the white American male.

Familiar protagonists

Familiar protagonists in the Western film include the purveyors of law enforcement (the sheriff or marshal or cavalry officer or justice-minded and activist rancher) who, for the most part, represent fair play and work to protect the community from injustice. Even as this protagonist evolves from the symbol of reason and right (the "white hat") to the rogue sheriff or the reformed outlaw or the "mysterious Western wanderer with a death wish" in the revisionist or deconstructed westerns, the typical (and most important) element of the Western film protagonist is that he is the character on screen with the strongest moral code. He fights the big corporations (banks, railroads, land grabbers) for the common man or defends the weak farmers against greedy ranchers or takes on the bullies interested only in acquisition or an assertion of unreasonable power. The classic Western protagonist puts the community or his emotional alliances before his own safety and personal happiness.

I will go more into depth on the classic Western protagonist after the following identifications of other classic Western characters.

Supporting characters

Familiar and recurring supporting characters include the sheriff's deputy or subordinate cavalry officer (often initially inept or cowardly or untested) who represents the future strength or moral code of the community. There is also the businessman (often a railroad baron or banker) who is risking great sums of money on the Western frontier and demands (or buys) protection (just or not) from the law (corrupt or not). This character represents the ever-increasing influx of those who do not intend to work or protect the land but gain wealth by catering to or taking advantage of the hard-working settlers.

The women

Westerns often feature the good woman with a tempting virginal beauty (often a daughter or niece of a rich or poor townsperson or high-ranked army officer); she has a strong moral character, shows uncommon bravery and refuses to leave the West to go back to the more civilized (and safe) East. She may be pampered and focus on the social aspect of the community or help work the farm (*Ride the High Country* (1962) or toil alongside her family in their business in town, perhaps in an eating establishment (*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*) or selling guns in her father's gun shop (*Forty Guns* (1957). She is the potential "mother"; the one who will ensure needed progeny for the new territory.

This good woman is often compared (and, in many cases, competes for the affection of the male protagonist) with the lady of dubious virtue. This "fallen woman" is often a madam or entertainer in the town's saloon. She may be bawdy or hard-nosed and practical. She is, in most cases, intelligent, worldly-wise and demands respect and she may have a mysterious, complicated past. This less than naïve and less than virginal woman represents the change that the West affords women -the chance to be self-sufficient, to test herself against adversity and deal on par with the male.

Wives (good-natured or not) often do back-breaking work in the fields or on the ranch by the side of their husbands and children or help run the store or local hotel in town. In most cases, even if the wives disagree with their husbands, they support his decisions because this was the role of woman in the late 1800s. As the Western genre evolved and women's roles in society evolved post WWII, films such as *Forty Guns* (1957) and *Big Jake* (1971) featured the independent and intelligent – and most times - lonely woman of means. She owns the ranch, runs the business and suffers in romance for her skills. No man can tame her and no man can stomach the competition for dominance.

FORTY GUNS

BIG JAKE

Other recurring characters

Other recurring characters include

- The community's **drunk**; this may be the doctor (the infamous Doc Holliday comes to mind) or the stable manager or army officer ne'er-do-well or newspaperman or simply the sloppy drunk in the corner of the saloon who betrays the hero for another glass of whiskey. This character often has no moral code and represents the spineless element of a community – and is usually shot and killed during the final climax because the West does not need the weak-willed.

- The profit-minded **coffin-maker**. He reminds the audience that death in the Wild West is a certain and expected occurrence and that, even in dealing with loss of life, the Western pioneer can engage in capitalistic pursuits.

- There is the requisite **saloonkeeper** or **general store proprietor** who does not take sides in any disputes – his priority is to maintain his business by serving both the upstanding citizens and the low-lifes of the community. This character represents the self-serving or cowardly component of the community – and rarely gains respect.

- The **itinerant gambler** (with "gentleman" traits) the **traveling judge** or **random stagecoach traveler** often make appearances and may serve as the audiences' eyes into the world of the Wild West; they ask questions and remain voyeurs of the complex relationships of those who have a stake in the community.

- The **preacher** in the Western is, in most cases, not the man with the strongest backbone or deepest reserves of courage. He may want to save souls, but the westerner's need to survive against rustlers, bandits and other oppressors trumps the desire to engage in defeating the amorphous devil out to procure a man's soul. The preacher is no match for the respect and honor given to the protagonist (upright or not) and the protagonist's prowess with the gun. *There Will Be Blood* (2007), a drama that uses elements of the Western genre, portrays a preacher out to expand his claim on the pioneers' mental territory while the protagonist, oilman Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis) obsessively tries to expand his claim on earthly goods. Their final showdown is not a battle of guns, but a battle of wills and desires to feel as if their lives, ultimately, contained any meaning.

- The Western's **children**, pre-teen, teens and boys about to be men represent the choices of the future. The allure of the power of the gun and the freedom of the open range vs. community and the working the land create conflicts for those deciding what to do with their lives. The youngest of them question their fathers and mothers and authority figures, wanting the world to be black and white – and in most cases, learn that there are gray areas in choosing a life's path.

- The cadre of **farmers** or **ranchers** or **cattle-drivers** or **cavalrymen** and their sweethearts along with local misfit gamblers and barflys. These are Cawelti's agents of civilization. The inciting incident that sets the problem of the film story in motion may begin with an injustice dealt to one or all them.

- ***The Native Americans***

  o **American Indians** are often a staple in the early Western film; characters determined to protect their lands, lives and natural resources. Western films such as *The Iron Horse* (1924) and *Stagecoach* (1939) painted Native Americans as the villains who stood in the way of the American Dream, denying dreamers of land, food and easy access to a new life. Revisionist westerns awarded the Native Americans victim or heroic status, taking into account their territorial

rights as well as their right to protect their buffalo and other food supplies. When, in the late 1980s and 1990s, Hollywood's zealous concern for politically correct stories emerged, the American Indian, for the most part, disappeared from mainstream feature film Westerns. *Dances With Wolves* (1990) is one of the last films to feature American Indians in major roles; they are portrayed as heroes - wise but mistreated, strong in heritage but outnumbered - and forced to be constantly on-the-move, homeless in the beloved expansive lands they called home.

- ***The thugs and the Western antagonist***
    - o There is the seedy group of Western thugs, initially identified by their black hats and rough-whiskered faces. These include the **outlaws** (the bank or stagecoach robbers or cattle rustlers) or the **hired men who carry out the dirty work** of the **greedy land barons**, terrifying the good farmers or simple folk (all to simply, it seems, have enough money in their pockets to drink whiskey at the saloon). Their leader, the classic bigger-than-life main antagonist of the Western is, in most cases, charismatic and powerful. He is quick with the gun and can hold his liquor and is usually surrounded by his violent dependents who admire or fear his violent nature.

The revisionist Westerns explores a protagonist/antagonist relationship that does not center on a simple good vs. evil battle. The moral question of "right" is more complex. The main antagonist might be the corrupt sheriff or heavy-handed cavalry officer who over-reaches or loses touch with the parameters of his orders to provide protection to Western settlers and takes on an aggressive, nation-building mission. Or he may be a man with a less-than-respectable past who has an agenda that is less-than-moral but has a personal vendetta in which the audience may empathize. Whatever characteristics, the main antagonist is a worthy opponent of the protagonist – both in his ability to gather forces to stand behind him, sometimes in his dominance in a moral argument and always in his prowess with his gun.

Over the 100-plus years of Hollywood Westerns, these classic characters have spun off the familiar and expected to surprise the audience who, while appreciating the language and comfort of recurring characters, take pleasure in the fresh twists on the familiar. A good example is the Academy Award winning *Unforgiven* (1992). The main antagonist is the sheriff; he is the most violent and misanthropic character on screen. The saloonkeeper is not passive – he demands his capitalist remuneration for destruction of his "property" (a mutilated whore). His demands set the story in motion. The saloon's prostitutes do not blend into the background; they are active and band together to become a force. The madam seeks respect and parity with the males, but realizes at the story's conclusion, that the males' high level of acceptance of violence is beyond her realm. The protagonist is an aging outlaw and ex-hired killer who has accepted God and the teachings of damnation, and has lost his skills with a horse and gun. He is visited by angels while he struggles to honor his commitment to walk the straight and narrow in hopes of reaching heaven. However, when his best friend is tortured and killed (showing, as previously noted, a requisite of the Western protagonist – that, no matter how flawed, he has the strongest moral code on screen) he descends into what feels like a pre-destined hell to avenge his friend's demise.

| Tom Mix | Gary Cooper | Henry Fonda | John Wayne | Clint Eastwood |

More about the classic Western protagonist

The classic western hero, as noted by Jennifer Muscovitz in "The Cultural Myth of the Cowboy", has much in common with Britain's medieval knight who

traversed the open country until he found a wrong that needed to be set right.[54] Muscovitz notes that the social structure, during this particular time in feudal England, appeared to be remarkably open; there was a spirit of adventure, respect for the self-made men, and ambition was considered to be a noble trait. This knight became romantically emblematic of a nation in transition. Likewise, the Western hero emerged when the United States was in need of a strong national identity. Due to the detritus of the American Civil War, the South was in shambles and forced to withstand occupation by Union soldiers and Northern opportunists. The economy of the United States was moving quickly towards widespread industrialization and the increasing numbers of immigrants was having a great impact on the Eastern cities. These circumstances fueled the desire of the adventurous (or the desperate) to travel west to pursue new opportunities and a new kind of freedom. These American dreamers needed protection from the less than right-minded capitalists and opportunists and other villains. The Western hero became the equivalent of the medieval knight, the lone individual (the angel on horseback) who makes a well-timed appearance or rises from the group to take on an insurmountable task to aid the oppressed as they pursue a new, just and stable life.

Above all, the Western hero, like the medieval knight, has a sense of his role based on personal honor. As the hero prepares to face the villain, he is often asked by a more innocent character, "Why do you have to be the one?" The answer is, more than likely, a variation on, "Cause I got to." No more explanation is necessary, the hero simply cannot live with himself if he does not follow his own deeply embedded convictions. The title character in *Shane* (Alan Ladd) initially avoids getting involved in the battle between farmer and rancher. Finally Shane cannot stomach the injustice inflicted on the upstanding but weaker contingent, he takes on the farmers' cause because his moral code dictates. He fights the good fight and eventually leaves the community (as Lancelot in medieval tales left King Arthur's Court) because of an unsettling (and impure) desire for another man's wife. *High*

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[54] Muscovitz, Jennifer (2006) "The Cultural Myth of the Cowboy, or How the West Was Won" *Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-Present),* Spring, Vol 5, Issue 1

Noon (1952) features Marshall Will Kane (Gary Cooper), a man who has every reason and opportunity to leave town before a recently released criminal (Kane was responsible for sending him to prison) comes back to town to kill him. Kane's just been married, he has hung up his guns and turned in his sheriff's tin star, he plans to go to a new frontier town with his bride and open up a store. The townspeople selfishly refuse to stand behind him and beg him to leave before any violence might touch them. His new wife, Amy (Grace Kelly), has recently embraced the pacifist Quaker religion and threatens to leave him if he faces his foe with a gun in hand. But Kane makes a decision to face his nemesis believing no man should be intimidated and therefore, as he says, "I got to." *Big Jake* (1971) features Jake (John Wayne), a man who has been in self-proclaimed exile from his wife and grown sons for years – he's a Western man who cannot be tamed. However, when his grandson is kidnapped, he returns to head up a group set on retrieving the young boy. There is no question of him not taking on the task – it's the way of the Western hero. Munny (Clint Eastwood) in *Unforgiven* has sworn off the life of the hired killer in hopes of some redemption that will allow him to join his deceased wife in heaven. However, the rough life of a pig farmer and having to care for two young children leaves Munny with no resources. He reluctantly takes on the task of pursuing justice for a victimized prostitute to earn the reward money. Munny talks himself into believing being the agent of revenge on the cowboy who disfigured a woman is a "just kill". He completes the task and accepts his money. He could ride off, mission accomplished, but the classic Western hero arc is not complete. Thus the film needs its Act Three; Munny discovers his best friend has been tortured and killed by the violent sheriff and put on display in a coffin in front of a saloon. Munny must avenge, do what "he must do" and enter the final violent climax of the film story. The principles and values of the Western hero will hold true, in most cases, in the classic, the revisionist, new revisionist and deconstructed Western. *Assassination of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford* (2007) breaks the classic structure; the protagonist Robert Ford "does what he must do" not because of a personal code of honor, but because of his cowardly self-serving decision to betray his hero. Robert Ford is the

celebrity-stalker and assassin and in the third act of this film, he pays for his cowardice by being ridiculed and shunned – and killed.

Despite the "I got to" code of the Western hero, it may be beneficial to the screenwriter to understand the duality of this attitude and the building of the popular <u>reluctant</u> Western hero. Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*[55] points out the reoccurrence of the <u>reluctant</u> hero in the identifying stories of nearly all the cultures around the world. Audiences respond to (and relate to) the everyman as the classic hero - the doubter, the man who wants to avoid conflict as well as celebrity and who hopes that he will <u>not </u>have to face or destroy the villain. The reluctant Western hero accepts that death might be imminent; the chance of losing the battle or final duel is certain and, in most cases, he regrets the necessity for action. But once engaged, the classic Western hero does not waver. Morg Hickman (Henry Fonda) in *The Tin Star* advises young and untried sheriff Ben Owens (Anthony Perkins) to make all efforts to sway or control the rogue elements in town with reasonable words. However, Hickman advises the insecure Owens if all else fails – (one must) "shoot to kill". The reluctant, questioning hero, the hero who may believe in his convictions but not in his prowess, the hero who, to repeat Cawelti's observation, "...is divided between two value systems, for he combines the town's morals with the outlaw's skills..."[56] is a complex and interesting hero that inhabits the classic tales of the Wild West.

Code of Friendship

The Western hero has a strong code of friendship. Due to the extreme hardships on the open trail (meager rations, facing nature's predators and life-threatening situations as well as facing antagonistic opportunists such as robbers or rustlers) male bonding is very important in the Western myth. Based on truth or not, the Western myth builds the fraternal connection; a friend has a friend's back. If this trust is ever betrayed - the bond is irrevocably broken.

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[55] Campbell, Jospeh (1972) *Hero With A Thousand Faces*, Princeton University Press
[56] Cawelti, John G. (1975) *The Six Gun Mystique* Bowling Green University Press, USA

The taming of the Western hero

The classic Western hero cannot be tamed; the pull of the open range must always be dominant. Therefore, the Western hero's entrance into frontier town (or the fort or across the prairie to the farmhouse or ranch) is often bookend-ed at the end of the film story with his riding out of town when his task is complete. There is honor and strength in a man's denial of the comfort of hearth and home and the love of a good woman. There is romance in following the call of freedom promised by traversing untamed territories. Susan Hayward, in her book *Cinema, Key Concepts* points out that the Western hero is a "man who lusts for adventure more than he lusts for a woman and domesticity." [57] Even in death, as seen in films such as *3:10 To Yuma* (1957/2007)*, Gunfight at the OK Corral* (1957)*, Ride the High Country* (1962), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) *The Wild Bunch* (1969), when the Western hero perishes in the final standoff, he is still, essentially, "moving on" with honor; he has made his mark on the community, caused change and his affect will be remembered.

THE WILD BUNCH (1969)   RIDE THE HIGH COUNTRY (1962)

The Western hero who decides to keep or accept the sheriff's star after being dominant in the final stand-off may gain the audience's momentary respect – but loses the mysterious and romantic attributes of the "knight" who rides off to the next challenge and adventure. In these cases, the protagonist has been tamed and loses allure - as seen in such films as *My Darling Clementine* (1946) and *Law and*

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[57] Hayward, Susan (2006) *Key Concepts in Cinema, Third Edition* Routledge Press, London

Order (1953) and *Silverado* (1985). Films such as *Open Range* (2003) where, at the story's conclusion, the hero settles into a romantic relationship (into a farmhouse that offers a daily home-cooked meal and featherbed) soften the Western hero and appeals to an audience that appreciates the romance genre above the basic harder-edge and mythic tenets of the classic Western film. *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* examines the retired outlaw, the man who now co-habits with his wife and children and attempts to hide from the law in his domesticity. James is out of his element and because of this, his paranoia grows. He has lost control of his gang, he is no longer in the terrain where he felt mastery and – when doing a simple domestic task, James allows himself to be shot in the back. The taming of Jesse James brought about his ultimate downfall.

Core of the Western Genre and the Building of its Mental Space

The **schematic** components of the Western film genre include time period, locale, characters and themes. These familiar framing elements attract a certain audience. The screenwriter then must build the singular elements of the idealized cognitive model of the unique screenplay, these elements constructed through consideration of the **specific knowledge** and **relevant knowledge** a screenwriter can bring to the film narrative. Screenwriters must find the fresh point of view or character that will bring a sense of newness to the Western story. The basic tools of the Western genre can be used by screenwriters to explore America's roots and psyches as well as the "American identity", fabricated or not. As Hayward writes in *Cinema; Key Concepts,* "The dime novels tried to explain 'how the West was won', even though, of course, it was not won. It was taken away from the Indians by the 'few' property speculators, and what was left over from the good gold-mining terrain and profitable land, which they kept, was sold to the beleaguered pioneers who had come so far for so little."[58] Hayward points out that early film audiences in the 1930s and 1940s did not want to see this less than romantic version of the West,

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[58] Hayward, Susan (2006) *Key Concepts in Cinema, Third Edition* Routledge Press, London

they wanted to see the West as it "should have been" – the myth. However by the 1950s, the audience was ready, because of its familiarity with the Western genre, to accept the film Western not only on its own merits but as a metaphor of contemporary situations such as McCarthyism (*High Noon, The Tin Star*) or the Viet Nam War in the late 1960s *(The Wild Bunch)* or in 2007 the perils of celebrity and the psychotic celebrity stalkers in *The Assassination Of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*.

As years, politics and psychology advance, the Western, because of its simple story and core characters, is a template that is ripe for metaphor and analogy. It is beneficial to the screenwriter to understand its core elements, to appreciate audiences' expectations and love of the genre in order to give the viewer what it expects and desires as well as adjusting or breaking genre traditions to surprise and challenge.

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MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (1946) Wr: Samuel Engel and Winston Miller, Dir: John Ford, 20th Century Fox USA

THE SEARCHERS (1956) Wr: Frank Nugent, based on novel by Alan LeMay, Dir: John Ford, Warner Bros USA

HIGH NOON (1952) Wr: Carl Foreman, Dir: Fred Zinneman, United Artists, USA

THE TIN STAR (1957) Wr: Dudley Nichols, Dir: Anthony Mann, Paramount Pictures USA

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962) Wrs: James Warner Bellah and Willis Goldbeck, Dir: John Ford), *Paramount Pictures*

FORTY GUNS (1957) Wr: Samuel Fuller, Dir: Samuel Fuller, 20th Century Fox USA

RIDE THE HIGH COUNTRY (1962) Wr: N.B. Stone Jr., Dir: Sam Peckinpah,, MGM USA

THE WILD BUNCH (1969) Wr: Walon Green and Sam Peckinpah, Dir: Sam Peckinpah, Warner Bros/Seven Arts USA

DANCES WITH WOLVES (1990) Wr: Michael Blake, Dir: Kevin Costner, Orion Pictures

BALLAD OF LITTLE JO (1993) Wr: Maggie Greenwald, Dir: Maggie Greenwald, Fine Line Pictures

UNFORGIVEN (1992) Wr: David Webb Peoples, Dir: Clint Eastwood, Warner Bros

OPEN RANGE (2003), Wr: Craig Storper, based on a novel by Lauren Paine, Dir: Kevin Costner, Buena Vista Pictures

ASSASINATION OF JESSE JAMES BY THE COWARD ROBERT FORD (2007), Wr: Andrew Dominik, based on novel by Ron Hansen, Dir: Andrew Dominick, Warner Bros

HORROR NOTES

Horror films have been a favorite genre of large audiences since the silent film era. The first horror film may have been *The Devil's Castle*, a two-minute film featuring a vampire, put together by French filmmaker George Melies in 1896, and is among one of the earliest films.[59] The horror genre is still alive and well today. Audiences like to feel the adrenalin rush, they like to shriek and gasp and be taken off guard. Film theorist Torben Grodal writes, "Horror stories still often focus on the fear of becoming food for some other, alien creatures." He notes that the hunter-versus-hunted scenario in action, crime and horror genres can be traced to early man's need to battle beastly predators as well as human enemies for survival. Grodal supports the theory that the "fight or flight" impulse is not being learned in the real time of one human life, but it is an impulse embedded in human nature due to oft-repeated experiences of previous generations. [60]

Horror films feature plots where

a. evil forces, events or characters invade the everyday world and upset the social order

b. the main characters in a well-executed horror film are psychologically challenged as well as physically threatened

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[59] Dirks, Tim www.filmsite.org/**horror**films.html

[60] Grodal, Torben (2009) Embodied Visions, Evolution, Emotion, Culture and Film Oxford University Press, p.5-6

c.   the forces of evil affecting the protagonist can be of supernatural or extraterrestrial origin – or the evil can lurk among the environs or people that are closest to the main character.

d.   raise the terror bar by sparking the viewer's imagination with original horrific situations that feed into psychological fear.

<u>It is very important for the audience to feel that just under the surface of normality, there is a world that is dangerous and evil and one that could be pervasively destructive if unleashed.</u>

Evil

The audience of the horror genre is fascinated with the exploration of the idea that "evil" is present in all of us, or the desire to <u>understand</u> how and why evil can triumph. On a subconscious level, they may also be searching to understand the "dark and hidden" aspects of their own existence and human nature.[61]

At the core of (most) horror films is "the monster", the personage or being that is without human decency or morals or power of self-control, the person with the dominant "id". The monster may be human or inhuman (think of the cannibal Hannibal Lechter *(Silence of the Lambs* in 1991, adapted by Ted Tally from a novel by Thomas Harris) or of the iconic horror villains such as vampires or werewolves or aliens of evil intent or…). The important essence of the horror villain is his or her inherent evil, the inherent "monstrosity".

Core evil forces

Why is the <u>evil</u> component so necessary in the horror film? The idea of evil is, for most people, a mysterious "unknown" and "un-understandable" component of psychopathic people. Most people find ways to deal with disappointment, betrayal, or tragedy in emotional, non-psychopathic ways. The screenwriter needs to make the distinction between psychotic (someone who suffers from a mental disorder

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[61] *Source: http://allpsych.com/psychology101/ego.html*

such as delusions or hallucinations or something that impairs clear connection with reality) and psychopathic (someone who suffers from a mental disorder that manifests amoral or antisocial behavior, lack of ability to love or form relationships combined with a failure to learn from experience). It's the pathology of evil that makes a horror villain truly scary, the uncontrollable, the un-understandable, the non-rational component that the everyman protagonist must face.[62]

Examples:

Supernatural or grotesque creature: Vampire, devil, ghost, monster, witch, demon, zombie, evil spirit, werewolf, evil alien or other creature of dark purpose.

Human: Demented madman, mad scientist, revengeful boyfriend or girlfriend (or revengeful husband, wife, best friend) the social outcast, the disfigured victim, vamp, freaks, or wronged person with a psychopathic personality.

Horror films come in different shapes and sizes

The horror genre contains various categories such as psychological horror, slasher horror, sci fi horror, thriller horror and monster horror. It's important to know into which category your story falls – not so as to repeat old models, but to satisfy the expectations of your audience and knowledgeably decide if there are other elements to bring about a stronger sense of newness and originality. Many of these categories will cross-pollinate and it is this hybridization that can bring a sense of newness into this genre that enjoys a long history in literature – and in film. [63]

[62] Dirks, Tim www.filmsite.org/**horror**films.html
[63] Neale, Steve (2000) *Genre and Hollywood*, Routledge, p. 51

- **Psychological horror:** The evil force is taking a mental toll on its victim, usually creating a great sense of paranoia, distrust, fear of the unknown or demise of the spirit. Psychological horror films go beyond merely the demise of the flesh.

- **Slasher horror**: The evil force is absolutely bent on killing and destruction of a safe haven. The evil force can be human, alien, or any form of monstrosity. The methods and madness of the evil force can come in many forms. Often a high body count (death, dismemberment etc.) and a high quantity of violence and blood are considered important elements.

- **Sci fi horror**: The evil force is an invasive force, either created or visiting from another world (future, past or present). The evil force can evolve from a science-experiment-gone-wrong or can be explained by some hypothetical bit of science that has been imaginatively extrapolated by the writer.

- **Monster horror**: The evil force is personified in a horrific form. The monster may be created by humans (thus perhaps blending into the sci-fi area) - or rise from the depths of the earth or descend from the heavens. It becomes uncontrollable and wreaks havoc.

- **Thriller horror**: The protagonist is often in the wrong place at the wrong time and falls into the horror scenario. It can be through mistaken identity or by taking a wrong turn on a dark road or by buying the wrong item in an antique store or… The evil force is exceptionally cunning and determined to play its game of horror, the game including stalking, malevolent teasing or other methods that create great suspense. There is a difference between "just a thriller" and a horror-thriller film. Thrillers (suspense films) use the element of anticipation, the element of surprise. A thriller features a protagonist who is almost constantly at risk. High stakes, sometimes non-stop action, sudden twists are often elements of successful thrillers. A sense of danger permeates the whole story. A thriller, in

most cases, lets the audience <u>know</u> (or suspect) the identity of the nemesis. Oftentimes, it is not the mystery that drives the story, but the drive to apprehend the villain or villains before they can strike again. The protagonist is often pitted against an antagonist who is out to destroy the protagonist's life, his community or his world. What makes for a thriller/horror is the addition of the <u>evil</u> component – the protagonist is up against a truly <u>evil</u> antagonist. This category is likely to be very strongly aligned with psychological horror.

Whatever the category, horror films are meant to be unsettling. They should invoke our worst fears (hidden or otherwise) – our vulnerabilities, our secrets, our revulsions, and terror of the unknown. The unknown could be the experience of death, dismemberment, sex, the occult, life after death, the irrational, a new location with a strange pedigree, a new relationship, the basis for a recurring nightmare or any foreign situation in which the <u>everyman</u> protagonist might unwittingly or unwillingly find himself.

Why the everyman? Most horror films will be based in the drama genre. The drama genre is best when it is focused on the <u>everyman</u> or <u>everywoman,</u> someone the audience can relate to, someone who has no – or very few - special skills. If that normal, unsuspecting protagonist of a horror film has a goal, a dream, or a mission and then – suddenly – horrific elements get in his way – then the story will affect and engage an audience. If the everyman protagonist has a lot to lose – perhaps his sense of self, a loved one or a family member or his entire world – the film story will resonate at a deeper level. A horror film can gain respect if the audience engages and empathizes with the characters while they are stalked or disfigured, terrified or brought to the edge of madness.

The horror film gives the audience a chance to experience the emotional and physical reactions to their deep fears in a "safe" environment – to experience a thrill ride that they <u>know</u> will be over in approximately two hours.

Linda Williams and beyond

Film analyst Linda Williams, in her 1991 essay, *Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess* compares three genres' use of bodily excess; pornography (excess sex), horror (excess violence), and melodrama (excess emotion). [64] If there is agreement with her assessments, the study of mental space in these particular genres may have a starting point; excess.

In finding a way to use Williams' assessments in a practical but creative way, the screenwriter, when building a story in the horror genre may opt for - in the case of the slasher/horror - an excess in blood, or in body count. In a psychological horror, the excess may be in constant and accelerating paranoia. In most cases the horror genre will feature a villain who is not a straightforward antagonist but an agent of an excessively deep and dark evil force focused on an excessively malevolent goal with no possibility of a change of heart. The key is <u>excess.</u> Consider psychological horror film ***ROSEMARY'S BABY*** (1968, written by Roman Polanski based on an Ira Levin novel) - an excess of evil intent, excess betrayal, lies and perceived paranoia. Consider the psychological horror film ***THE EXORCIST*** (1973, written by William Peter Blatty) - an excess of evil intent, vomit, levitation and vitriolic manipulation. The psychological/monster/slasher horror film ***THE SHINING*** (1980, written by Stanley Kubrick and Diane Johnson based on the novel by Stephen King) features an excess of snow, an excess of empty corridors, an excess of mental cruelty. Consider slasher ***HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL*** (1999, written by Dick Beebe), an excess of torturous contraptions in the excessively maze-like, excessively decrepit and excessively remote building that was once a hospital for mental patients. Consider the psychological/slasher ***NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN*** (2007, written by Joel Coen and Ethan Coen based on a novel by Cormac McCarthy) **-** an excess of cold-blooded killing, excess of greed, excess of testosteronic

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[64] Williams, Linda *Film Bodies; Gender, Genre and Excess* 1991

competition, an excess of single-mindedness as well as an excess of ability to withstand physical pain.

The script of the slasher horror film **HALLOWEEN** (1978, written by John Carpenter and Debra Hill), sets up the mental space of excess violence on the first page: The sister makes love to her boyfriend in her bedroom, someone is watching. Later she brushes her hair, naked, and is surprised by someone wearing a Halloween mask... *"The sister continues to stare incredulously. There is a rapid blur as the POV drives the butcher knife into the sister's chest and out again almost before we've seen it. The sister looks down at the blood forming at her hands, then back up at the POV with an astonished disbelief. Then in a wild paroxysm the butcher knife blurs continuously in and out of frame, slashing the sister mercilessly. She begins to SCREAM, trying to fend off the blows with her hands, then suddenly falls out...."* (12)

Every element – location, setting, weather, character strengths and weaknesses and purposes as well as plot points in all categories of horror films can be pushed, by the screenwriter, to explore the "excess" that helps create the *mental space* for the horror aficionado.

It is interesting to take this idea of "excess" into account when looking at and considering work in the horror film genre.

A QUICK LOOK AT THE CATEGORIES

Psychological horror

"Horror films, when done well and with less reliance on horrifying special effects, can be extremely potent film forms, tapping into our dream states and the horror of the irrational and unknown, and the horror within man himself... In horror films, the irrational forces of chaos or horror invariably need to be defeated, and often these films end with a return to normalcy and victory over the monstrous.

- Tom Dirks, 2007 American Movie Classics

Most films in the horror genre will have some psychological component to them, after all the protagonist in horror films goes through a steep learning curve - perhaps naively disbelieving that true evil exists to finally accepting with absolute certainty that it does - or believing in an ultimate protective benevolent power to understanding that a malevolent power is also at work in the universe – or trusting a loved one and then realizing that no one can be trusted. Often the psychological toll of these enormous revelations destroy all protagonists in well-made horror films. However, those films that concentrate solely on these psychological journeys and basically ignore large amounts of murder and mayhem can be placed in the **psychological horror category.** Examples such as *Psycho (1960) Rosemary's Baby (1968), The Exorcist (1973), The Shining (1980) The Hand That Rocks the Cradle (1992), The Devil's Advocate (1997) What Lies Beneath (2000), The Sixth Sense (1999)* and others do not focus on body count, but on the dissolution of peace of mind and relationships due to evil intent or action (often inflicted by a loved one or a trusted person).

Psychological horror films explore the normal life of the <u>everyman</u> that is surreptitiously invaded or threatened by an evil force. Life's status quo is slowly eroded by evil forces; in many cases suspicions are aroused only after a great trust is broken. Often there is a ticking clock component that will add a spine-chilling <u>thriller</u> component to the story.

Examples:

Les Diaboliques (1955)
Rosemary's Baby (1968)
The Devil's Advocate (1997) Wr:
I Know What You Did Last Summer (1997)
The Sixth Sense (1999*)*
Alien (1979)
Aliens (1986)
Psycho (1960)
The Shining (1980)

Slasher horror

The slasher horror film is sometimes called a "dead teenager movie". The set up is familiar: A psychopathic killer (sometimes wearing a mask) stalks and graphically kills a series of victims (in most cases, teens who are engaging in sex or drugs or both) in what seems to be a random fashion - but eventually a dark, psychotic reason (perhaps revenge for a snub or a vindictive word or action or an event that destroyed the familial nest) is revealed at the end of the film story. The time frame of the story is usually short - in many cases, the action takes place in one night. The film usually starts with the murder of a young, sexually active female and ends with the survival of the virginal or sexually responsible female.

Agatha Christie's 1939 mystery novel *And Then There Were None* that featured a psychopathic killer murdering a series of hapless victims in an isolated location has been pointed to as an early precursor to the slasher horror genre. [65] It was adapted for the screen in 1945 by Dudley Nichols. However, there was a film, *Thirteen Women* (1932, adapted by Bartlett Cormack and Samuel Omitz from Tiffany Thayer's novel) which may have actually been the very first "slasher horror" film. *Thirteen Women* tells a revenge story set in a college sorority, former members are set against one another by a vengeful "sorority sister" seeking retribution for the prejudice they bestowed on her because of her mixed race heritage.

Hitchcock *Psycho* is sometimes described as "the mother" of all slasher films. Although there are only two murders in the story, the idea of a disguised and insane killer came to prominence with this picture. (*Psycho* was so influential that many critics see it as a turning point in cinema history because it marked the transition from the Gothic horror stories of vampires, werewolves and monsters to modern issues and fears – "real people" facing "real psychopaths".) [66] The popularity and financial success of *Psycho* may have inspired the birth of this sub-genre of the slasher horror film: Francis Ford Coppola (*Dementia 13,* 1963) and a few other filmmakers in the mid-60s explored the "psychopath among us". Some film analysts will point to *Black Christmas* (1974 written by Roy Moore) and *The Texas Chainsaw*

[65] http://horror-movies.wikia.com/wiki/Slasher_film
[66] http://www.gothic.stir.ac.uk/blog/psycho-and-its-paratexts-the-material-production-of-a-gothic-text-part-1/

Massacre (1974, written b Kim Henkel and Tobe Hooper) *. Halloween* followed in 1978 as well as the seminal teen-slasher *Sleepaway Camp* (1983, written by Robert Hiltzik). The slasher film in the 1980s was popular and financially successful. In 1983 nearly 60% of the films made were slasher films (according to a 2005 book, Crystal Lake Memories, a book focusing on the history of *Friday the 13th* films). 1983 was the slasher film's biggest year - after 1983, there was a drop in the interest and the slasher horror box office draw began to suffer. However, less than ten years later, the 1990s ushered in a new and re-fashioned slasher horror film by deconstructing the genre and presenting a new approach (*Scream* (1996), *I Know What you did Last Summer* (1997), *Urban Legend* (1998) etc.)

Carol J. Clover, in her book, *Men Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992) lays out guidelines for the slasher horror genre[67]:

1. Locale – away from home - in a "terrible place "that usually has remnants of the past associated with it
2. Pre-technological - definitely no guns (guns are impersonal because they can be used at a distance thus no contact between killer and victim) preferred weapons have been hammers, axes, ice picks, hypodermic needles, knives, bare hands, red-hot pokers, pitchforks and other weapons that can tear, reveal or destroy
3. Victims are sexually active and often sexual transgressors, often immoral
4. Final girl is sexually reserved, gender-neutral and smart - she is attacked, screams, falls and RISES again to scream, fall and RISES AGAIN etc.
5. The killer is usually a product of a sick or damaged family, usually male, and usually propelled by a psychosexual fury
6. Sexual/gender identity questions/problems
7. Shocking, sudden attacks/ moments for screams from the audience

The Final Girl

Carol Clover coined the term "The Final Girl" - it refers to the female left standing at the end of the film, the one who outwits or outlasts the psychopath (at least for the time being) and represents the continuation of the human species. This girl is, in most cases, an outsider, she's not one of the pack; she's special. Special

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[67] Clover, Carol Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film, Princeton University Press, 1992 and the British Film Institute, 2004

qualities may include an ambition to leave the pettiness of her current situation and relationships behind (most often high school but it could be college, the office environment, strictures of family life or…) and to make something of her life. The Final Girl is not a flirt or sexually promiscuous, in many cases she is a virgin. She is practical and not given to hysterics. She dresses conservatively, sometimes like a tomboy. Her given name is, in many cases, gender neutral (Sidney in *Scream*, Reagan in *The Exorcist*, Ripley in *Alien* etc.). She's the ultimate "girl next door" and the audience roots for her to get the best of the story's "monster".[68]

Nina, in the 1922 *Nosferatu,* sets the template and is one of first of the "final girl" characters. Her husband has been unable to distract/destroy Nosferatu (based on the Bram Stoker's Dracula). Nosferatu is intent on consummating his desire for Nina. Nina happens upon the "how to destroy a vampire book" and reads that only a female of pure heart who accepts the vampire into her bed and keeps him there until sunrise can save the people she loves. Brave Nina sets the trap, lets the vampire Nosferatu into her bedroom for a sexual, vampiric tryst and keeps him there until the bright morning sun shines upon him – and destroys him.

> NOTE: Many film analysts point out that it is only in American horror films that the victims are "punished" (killed) for their interest and participation in sex. In European films, females murder because of their carnality, their desire for sex. American horror, in most cases, places the women in the victim role. European horror films are just as likely to place the female in the aggressor/killer role. Why? Many will point to the strong American Puritanism attitude toward sex (sex is sanctioned only in the marital state).[69]

Slasher films point of view

Clover points out that in most slasher horror films, the viewer begins by sharing the perspective of the killer, but eventually experiences a shift in identification to the final girl partway through the film. Consider *Scream* (1996,

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[68] Clover, Carol Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film, Princeton University Press, 1992 and the British Film Institute, 2004

[69] Totaro, Donato (2002) http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/new_offscreen/final_girl.html

written by Kevin Williamson)*;* various victims are murdered before we meet the female protagonist (the Final Girl) Sidney Prescott (portrayed by Neve Campbell).

Scream clearly sits in the deconstructive model of the slasher horror film – and that's the fun and brilliance of this film. Williamson builds a serviceable horror story, but gives it a deconstructive (lets the genre reflect on itself) twist - the characters in the film are slasher horror fanatics and especially knowledgeable about film. This is set up immediately in the film when the unidentified, mysterious "slasher" telephones one of his initial victims, Casey (portrayed by Drew Barrymore), and asks her the title of her favorite scary movie. Unsuspecting and slightly flirtatious (something a "final girl" would never be), Casey rattles off her picks – until she realizes she is in a **very real** slasher/horror story. She calls out "who's there" into the darkness. The aggressively malevolent voice on the phone tells her "You should never say, 'who's there?' - don't you watch scary movies? Casey, it's a death wish."

Drew Barrymore in *SCREAM*

Casey realizes she is the perpetrator's next target and tries to escape but she is soon brutally murdered. Once news of Casey's demise hits the high school, Randy, the nerdy-cool teen who works after school at the video store, solidifies for the audience the main characters' knowledge and acceptance of horror/death and mayhem in their lives. Randy knows "the rules" of the slasher horror genre and lets the characters (and audience) in on these rules, thus setting up the "fun" for the audience of seeing these rules play out (or not). The characters in the film even go so far as to cast themselves in the movie version of the film. (In the sequel, *Scream II*, the movie of the "real life mayhem" is being made (starring Tori Spelling in the movie within the movie) and taking the "insider" feeling (the deconstruction) to

another level.

Randy, the sage of the horror genre, speaks as if he's just studied Carol Clover's book: Excerpt of *Scream* written by Kevin Williamson

Randy refers to Billy who stands down the aisle talking to TWO GIRLS. (The twits from the bathroom perhaps.)

> RANDY
> *If you were the only suspect in a
> senseless bloodbath would you be standing
> in the horror section?*
>
> STU
> *It was all a misunderstanding. He didn't
> do anything.*
>
> RANDY
> *You're such a little lap dog. He's got
> killer printed all over his forehead.*
>
> STU
> *The why'd the police let him go?*
>
> RANDY
> *Because, obviously they don't watch
> enough movies. This is standard horror
> movie stuff. PROM NIGHT revisited.*

Randy moves down the aisle, re-shelving videos.

> STU
> *Why would he want to kill his own
> girlfriend?*
>
> RANDY
> *There's always some stupid bullshit
> reason to kill your girlfriend. That's
> the beauty of it all. Simplicity.
> Besides, if it's too complicated you lose
> your target audience.*
>
> STU
> *So what's his reason?*
>
> RANDY
> *Maybe Sidney wouldn't have sex with him.*
>
> STU
> *She's saving herself for you.*

> RANDY
> Could be. Now that Billy's tried to
> mutilate her, you think Sid would go out
> with me?

> STU
> I think her father did it. How come they
> can't find his ass?

> RANDY
> Because he's probably dead. His body
> will come popping out in the last reel
> somewhere...eyes gouged. See, the police
> are always off track with this shit, if they'd
> watch PROM NIGHT they'd save time.
> There's formula to it. A very simple one.
> Everyone's always a suspect--the father,
> the principal, the town derelict...

> STU
> Which is you...

> RANDY
> So while they're off investigating a dead
> end, Billy, who's been written off as a
> suspect, is busy planning his next
> hunting expedition.

> BILLY
> (o.c.)
> How do we know you're not the killer?

Randy spins around to find Billy right behind him. Busted.

> RANDY
> Uh...hi, Billy.

> BILLY
> Maybe your movie-freaked mind lost it's
> reality button?

Randy shrugs, laughing it off.

> RANDY
> You're absolutely right. I'm the first
> to admit it. If this were a scary movie,
> I'd be the prime suspect.

> STU
> And what would be your motive?

> RANDY
> It's 1995--motives are incidental.

Screenwriter Williamson's derogatory comments on the predictability of the

slasher horror genre (voiced through the characters in his film) makes his position clear – and he is out to take the sub-genre to the next level by deconstructing it. Even his lead character, his "Final Girl" clearly disdains the horror film - *Scream's* "final girl" Sidney carries on this conversation with the villain on the telephone:

> SIDNEY
> *…You know I don't watch that (horror film)*
> *shit.*
>
> MAN (ON PHONE)
> *And why is that?*
>
> SIDNEY
> *(playing along)*
> *Because they're all the same. It's*
> *always some stupid killer stalking some*
> *big breasted girl -who can't act- who*
> *always runs up the stairs when she should*
> *be going out the front door. They're*
> *ridiculous.*

In *Scream 2*, screenwriter Williamson again gives a nod to the knowledgeable slasher/horror film audience; he again uses Randy, the video-store worker and the character most knowledgeable about the horror genre, to state the rules for the slasher/horror <u>sequel</u> – and thus lets the audience know what to look for, what to expect and – in a way – promises more:

> RANDY
> *The body count is always bigger… the death*
> *scenes are always much more elaborate – with*
> *more blood and gore… If you want your films to*
> *become a successful franchise, never, ever under*
> *any circumstances, assume the killer is dead."*

Scream is a useful example of the evolution of the horror genre. Screenwriter Williamson deconstructs the genre as he pays homage to it. He encodes the film story for those "in the know" and also lends a hand to the horror film neophytes - letting them in on a few insights that will make them want to check out horror films that came before.

Displacement of Sex into Violence

Linda Williams refers to horror films and pornography films as "body genres". [70] The horror film's portrayal of violence and terror results in physical reactions on screen (the actors acting) but also causes a visceral reaction in the audience.

> *" ...a pertinent feature shared by body genres is the focus on what could probably best be called a form of ecstasy. While the classical meaning of the original Greek work is insanity and bewilderment, more contemporary meanings suggest components of direct or indirect sexual excitement and rapture... (in horror) the (audience's) uncontrollable convulsion or spasm of... fear and terror..."*
>
> *Linda Williams [71]*

Linda Williams points out that most horror films (and I would assert this most specific to slasher horror) are aimed at adolescents "careening wildly between two masculine and feminine poles". There is the fascination with sex, with gender roles and there is the desire for powerful sensation. Williams believes that the most successful horror films can be measured by how much the audience's sensations mimic what is seen on the screen (screaming, gasping, sense of doom, sense of entrapment etc.). The horror film is "the fearjerker" and while males victims (actors) in horror films may scream and shudder – the females do it much better. Hitchcock realized this and in most of his films, the women are the prominent victims: Hitchcock's advice to horror and thriller directors: "Torture the women!"[72]

James Twitchell, horror film critic, points out that the Latin *horrere* means "to bristle". He relates this to the way the "nape hair stands on end during moments of shivering excitement" when a person is suddenly faced with a great fearful situation and a decision to choose "fight or flight". Constructing a horror story that causes the physical reaction in the reader/audience is the goal of a successful horror writer.

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[70] Williams, Linda (1991) *Film Bodies, Gender Genre and Excess*
http://www.jstor.org/pss/1212758 (also in Film Genre Reader III)
[71] Williams, Linda (1991) *Film Bodies, Gender Genre and Excess*
http://www.jstor.org/pss/1212758 (also in Film Genre Reader III)
[72] Evans, Everett (2006) http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ent/4559423.html

Monster Horror

The Vampire[73]

In the monster horror category, one of the most explored legends is the one of the vampire. Studies into the origins of the vampire myth are varied, however many researchers agree that the notion of the existence of vampires was first prevalent in the Far East and worked its way to Eastern Europe. The legend of India's goddess Kali, who has fangs and wears a necklace of skulls, states that Kali battled the demon Raktabija, a demon that had the ability to reproduce himself from the blood of his victims. Kali defeated Raktabija by drinking all the blood of the felled soldiers in the battle before Raktabija could take advantage of his much-needed feast, and thus he was defeated and died a certain death.

An obscure myth suggests that the idea of vampires may have started with Judas Iscariot. After betraying Christ, Judas hangs himself. (In vampire folklore, it is believed that people who commit suicide are likely to come back as vampires.) It is also noted that due to Judas' guilt about his participation in having Jesus crucified, Judas goes to the Romans and gives them back their silver. (Vampires hate crosses and silver). Also, the night of Jesus' execution, Judas and the rest of his disciples took part in a communion where they drank "the blood" and ate "the flesh" of Christ.

Eastern Europe's belief in vampires was stronger than in the West, due to the split of the Catholic Church into the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches around the year 1054. Roman Catholics tend to view the "dead coming back to life" as a saintly enterprise, believing that the "dead that walk among us" are there to do good or show the way to everlasting life to believers (heaven). The Orthodox Church take a darker view – the dead come back to life to avenge a wrong and punish those not strong enough to resist the dead's seductive or hypnotic powers by leading them to a hellish everlasting life of lust, murder and mayhem. Eastern European gypsies

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[73] http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/~vampire/vhist.html
http://www.angelfire.com/tn/vampires/

had particular legends concerning vampires. The vampire, "a mullo", was revengeful. A mullo could return from the dead to suck the blood of a family member who killed him or who did not properly respect the ceremonies at the deceased's funeral.

The modern-day vampire legend has certain features that have become iconic - mostly due to two short stories and a popular novel; Joseph Polidori's *The Vampyre* written in 1819, and *Carmilla*, an 1872 short story in the collection *In the Glass Darkly* by Sheridan LaFanu. The novel *Dracula* written by Irishman Bram Stoker in 1897 is, perhaps, the most recognizable vampire story and definitely has set, in the audience, certain expectations - the idea of the vampire as immortal, wealthy, wearing evening clothes and a cape with a collar, a vampire with the ability to turn into a bat who has an undeniable thirst for the blood of a pure woman.

A writer of his times, Stoker's novel is often put in the sub-category of "invasion literature". [74] Between 1871 and 1914 (WWI) authors in Britain were writing fictional short stories and novels concentrating on invasions of armies or persons intent overthrowing the British way of life and government. (H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* is also listed in the era's invasion literature, in the sci fi genre.) Stoker's *Dracula* used the invasion idea in the horror genre; Count Dracula was tired of his own country and became intent on the creation of a vampire sect in Britain. The horror film exploration of "invasion" has moved, in modern-inspired stories from invasion of countries/continents to an invasion of society and human desires; invading the pure, the virginal and seducing by promising eternal life and youth. The male vampire is also, in a way, "giving birth", creating a being that will live in his own image and be a companion forever. Female vampire stories (more prevalent in Europe than in America) tend to explore a more homosexual arena; the lesbian vampire lusts after the virginal young woman who is meant to remain under the spell of her creator (but rarely stays loyal or true). [75]

[74] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_literature
[75] http://www.denofgeek.com/movies/187845/top_10_lesbian_vampire_movies.html

The "classic rules" of the vampire legend:

- Vampires belong to the undead, they are destined to live forever
- Vampires drink blood for survival
- Vampires are vulnerable to sunlight, garlic, mirrors and crucifixes
- Vampires can be killed only by putting a stake through its heart
- The burning the vampire carcass may insure that the vampire is truly destroyed. [76]

The legend of the vampire has been expanded by writers such as Anne Rice (the popular 1976 *Interview With A Vampire)* and Stephenie Meyer's teen-vampire novels (*Twilight Saga* 2005-2009*).* However both Rice and Meyers take care to stay true to their audience's <u>schematic knowledge</u> of the genre.   The success of vampire-inspired films such as 1922's *Nosferatu,* 1931's *Dracula,* 1972's *The Night Stalker,* 1977's *Martin,* 1979's *Nosferatu: The Vampyre,* 1983's *The Hunger,* 1994's *Interview With a Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* and 1992's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* can be attributed to adherence to the schema induction in the film story. Films that have not, such as 1972's *Blood Spattered Bride* and 1974's *Vampyres,* the 1998 western/horror, *The Vampires,* and the 2005 martial arts/horror *Vampires: The Turning*, films that only use elements that are plot-convenient and do not stay true to the entire vampire schema, are relegated to an inferior status because they do not completely satisfy the schematic knowledge of the audience in regards to the vampire legend.

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[76] http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/~vampire/vhist.html
http://www.angelfire.com/tn/vampires/

Examples:

Nosferatu (1922)
*Dracula (*1931)
Horror of Dracula (1958)
Black Sunday (1960)
The Night Stalker (1972)
Martin (1977)
Love at First Bite (1979)
Nosferatu, The Vampyre (1979)
The Hunger (1983)
The Lost Boys (1987)
Buffy The Vampire Slayer (1992)
Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992)
Interview With The Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles (1994)
Blade (1998)

Werewolf[77]

There are differences between werewolves and vampires – werewolves cannot give everlasting life and werewolves eat flesh (vampires merely drink blood - much more sexy). A vampire may be described as "moving like a wolf" or "feeding like a wolf" or hunting prey "like a wolf" – but he is <u>not a wolf.</u> A werewolf is a <u>shape-shifter</u> and <u>becomes a wolf.</u>

Werewolves, the shape-shifters (man to anima and back to man), represent man's inability to control his animal nature. Werewolves lack control and, in most cases, do not respond to reason.

Stories of werewolves (shape-shifters) can be found in ancient myths in China, Haiti, Iceland, Brazil and many other countries. In the year 1101, Prince Vseslav of Polock, an alleged Ukranian werewolf, was killed.

The first recorded werewolf sighting took place around the German countryside in 1591. An age-old pamphlet reported this incident; Peter Stubbe, at age 12, started to practice sorcery and was so obsessed with it that he tried to make a pact with the Devil. Wearing a magic girdle he began to secretly attack his enemies, real and imaginary. Eventually he donned the guise of a wolf and, at night,

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[77] www.**werewolf**page.com/

attacked unsuspecting villagers with great brutality. In the wolf form he would tear victims' throats and suck warm blood from their veins. Gradually his thirst for blood grew and he roamed fields in search of prey. The villagers, suspecting a monstrous killer on the loose, became terrified and did not dare to venture out at night. One day, at dusk, a few villagers cornered a large wolf and set their dogs upon it. The villagers started to pierce it with sharp sticks and spears. Surprisingly the ferocious wolf did not run away, it stood up and turned out to be man - Peter Stubbe - from their own village. Stubbe was put on a torture wheel where he confessed to sixteen murders, including two pregnant women and thirteen children.

The first film that featured the werewolf legend was in 1913; *The Werewolf* (written by Ruth Ann Baldwin), tells the story of a Navajo sorceress who sends her daughter to attack the white man's settlements in lupine form. In 1915, *The Inner Brute* was released; a story about a man struggling with bestial tendencies, having been born to a woman frightened by a tiger while she was pregnant. *The Fox (1915*, written by *)* is a story of a woman who transforms into a fox and steals men's souls. *Wolfblood (1925*, written by) tells the tale of a lumber camp foreman who sustains a severed artery and his rival-for-the-affections-of-the-girl is forced to transfuse lupine blood into him. The foreman is now referred to as "half wolf" and he starts to live as a wolf at night, racing through the forest. He is finally saved from his delusions by the love of his sweetheart, thus letting go of the true "horror hook" because it ends with love conquering evil. In true horror films, the "happy ending" is not completely possible; there is always the "hook" – the continuing existence of a new and possibly stronger evil force.

The "classic rules" of the werewolf:

- Werewolves are shape-shifters
- Werewolves are more likely to come out at full moon
- Werewolves can be killed by a <u>pure</u> silver bullet or <u>pure</u> silver stake through the heart
- Werewolves have regenerative capabilities so the heart <u>must be destroyed</u> after piercing
- Werewolves react negatively to wolfsbane, a poisonous plant, and may die if the wolfsbane touches their skin. But again – the heart must be destroyed or the werewolf may regenerate
- If someone is bitten by a werewolf, inject wolfsbane into the victim

Examples:

The Werewolf in London (1935)
The Wolf Man (1941)
*The Mad Monster (*1942)
Cry of the Werewolf (1944)
She-Wolf of London (1946)
I Was A Teenage Werewolf (1957)
An American Werewolf in London (1981)
The Howling (1981)
Wolfen (1981)
The Company of Wolves (1984)
Teen Wolf (1985)
Silver Bullet (1985)
Wolf (1994)
An American Werewolf in Paris (1997)
Tomb of the Werewolf (2003)

The Zombie[78]

A zombie is a dead person that is brought back to life through voodoo or necromancy (conjuring the dead through divination). The procedure destroys all of the victim's mental processes and he or she becomes the slave of its "creator". For a scientific rational explanation of this: In Haiti, it is common for voodoo practitioners to make a potion consisting of the poison of the puffer fish and to give it to someone - the potion makes the subject lethargic and slows down his/her respiration and pulse until they are almost undetectable. As a result, the subject is often believed to be dead, and so he or she is buried alive. The voodoo practitioner then will go to the gravesite and "brings the victim back to life", often as a slave. In story lore, a zombie will remain in a robot-like state until they taste either salt or meat. They then become conscious of their state and return to their grave.

The first "true" zombie film may have been *White Zombie (1932* written by   )*.* An evil voodoo master (portrayed by Bela Lugosi) runs a Haitian sugar mill with empty-faced, mindless zombie slaves and enters into an evil pact to win the soul of a

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[78] http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/z/zombies.html
http://science.howstuffworks.com/zombie.htm

beautiful young bride-to-be. In the early 40s, there were zombie films featuring evil, villainous Nazi officers or scientists building zombie armies that would aid in the villains taking over the world.

Categories of zombies:

a. **Slave zombie**s are part of the voodoo curse and are normally not undead but humans on drugs they can be killed like humans. Can also be detoxed back to human, but may be brain damaged (though no longer a zombie).
b. **Demon zombies** are possessed corpse by ghost / demons. It is possible that a spell or exorcism may be needed to release them from their state.
c. **Ghoul Zombie**s kill and eat humans. They are slow stupid mindless corpses. A bullet to the head normally kills them or a decapitation may be necessary. They may be afraid of fire as fire may also cause their demise.

Screenwriter and director George Romero *(Night of the Living Dead (1968), Dawn of The Dead (1978), Day of the Dead (1985), Land of the Dead (2005)* is known as the master of the modern zombie film. Romero-inspired zombies fall into the ghoul variety. They are often portrayed in large groups looking to eat flesh and infect others. Their skin is usually rotting, their gait is slow, and they have discolored eyes.

More recent zombie films include *Pet Semetary (1989), From Dusk til Dawn (1996), Resident Evil (2002), 28 Days Later (2002),* the remake of *Dawn of the Dead (2004)* and the horror lampoon *Shaun of the Dead (2004).*

The "classic rules" of zombies

- A zombie can be killed by a bullet to the head or a blow to the head "kill the brain and you kill the zombie"
- A zombie can be stopped with a strong blow to the spinal column, but this will not kill the zombie

Ghosts[79]

Belief in ghosts, spirits of the dead, may have stemmed from the concept of "animism", which states that all objects found in nature (humans, animals, rocks, etc.) have souls. Also, ghosts are referenced in the Bible on occasion. For instance, in the Book Of Samuel, King Saul summons the spirit of Samuel. Also, Jesus has to

[79] http://ghosts.monstrous.com/origins_of_ghosts.htm

reassure his disciples that he is not a ghost after his resurrection. Some cultures believe that ghosts cannot leave earth until everyone that knew them has died; however, the most common belief is that ghosts are spirits who cannot rest until they have completed a task that they did not complete while living. This goes hand in hand with the idea of ghosts coming back to take vengeance on those who killed them.

The Devil [80]

      The Devil, or Satan, can be seen in ancient and modern texts as well as in the Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and Zoroastrian faiths. He is in opposition to God and those who do God's will. The name "Devil" is derived from the Greek word, "Diabolos", which means "slanderer" or "accuser". Legend has it that Satan was an angel named Lucifer who became too prideful and was banished from heaven as a result (this, by the way, is mentioned nowhere in the Bible). This legend appears in later literary works such as *Beowulf* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Satan has been depicted in several ways throughout history. He has been portrayed as a serpent, a man with horns growing from his head (this derives from pagan ceremonies in which participants would often wear antlers), a dragon, and an angel. He is said to preside over hell and have many demons at his service.

      Faust or Faustus (Latin for "auspicious" or "lucky") is the protagonist of a classic German Legend who makes a pact with the Devil in exchange for knowledge. "Faust" (and the adjective "Faustian") has taken on a connotation distinct from its original use, and is often used today to describe a person whose headstrong desire for self-fulfillment leads him or her in a diabolical direction. Goethe's version of the story concerns the fate of Faust in his quest for the true essence of life (*"was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält"*). Frustrated with learning and the limits to his knowledge and power, he attracts the attention of the Devil (represented by Mephistopheles), who agrees to serve Faust until the moment he attains the zenith

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[80] http://who2.com/ask/satan.html
http://www.encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Satan

of human happiness, at which point Mephistopheles may take his soul. Faust is pleased with the deal, as he believes the moment will never come.

In the first part, Mephistopheles leads Faust through experiences that culminate in a lustful and destructive relationship with an innocent and nubile woman named Gretchen. Gretchen and her family are destroyed by Mephistopheles' deceptions and Faust's desires and actions. The story ends in tragedy as Gretchen is saved and Faust is left in shame.

The second part begins with the spirits of the earth forgiving Faust (and the rest of mankind) and progresses into rich allegorical poetry. Faust and his devil pass through the world of politics and the world of the classical gods, and meet with Helen of (the personification of beauty). Finally, having succeeded in taming the very forces of war and nature Faust experiences a single moment of happiness.

The devil Mephistopheles, trying to grab Faust's soul when he dies, is frustrated as the Lord intervenes—recognizing the value of Faust's unending striving.

Examples:

The Sorrows of Satan *(1926): An unsuccessful novelist sells his soul to the devil for mone.*

Student of Prague (1913) *Student sells his soul to the devil for wealth and a beautiful woman.*

The Devil's Advocate, (*1997) A young lawyer "sells his soul" for power and success and pay the consequences.*

One of the most notable examples of Satan appearing in a horror film would be *The Prophecy* (1995). In the movie, angel Gabriel feels that God shouldn't allow humans into heaven, so he goes down to earth in order to incite a war between the angels and humans. Lucifer arrives and intervenes, because he feels that if the angels win, they will turn heaven into another hell, and he doesn't want that.

Examples:

Rosemary's Baby (1968)
The Exorcist (1973
Race with the Devil (1975)
The Omen (1976),
Damian: The Omen II (1978)
The Amityville Horror (1979)
The Final Conflict (1981)
The Devil's Advocate (1997)
End of Days (1999)

Demons[81]

Today, demons are understood to be supernatural beings that are inherently evil. This was not always the case. For instance, Homer used the words "demons" and "gods" almost interchangeably in his works. Also, one school of thought saw demons as intermediaries between men and gods.

In Christianity, demons are widely understood to be fallen angels who chose to follow Lucifer/The Devil after he was cast out of heaven. Demons have the power to possess humans; however, through the power of Christ, they can be cast out. This can be seen in *The Exorcist* (1973)

Examples:

The Evil Dead (1983)
Army of Darkness (1992)

There are also witches, mummies, gremlins, blobs, malevolent dolls, malevolent televisions, malevolent fogs, malevolent cave creatures and other beasts - monsters of all shapes, sizes, human and non-human, animate and non-animate.

Voodoo

The Vodun religion, which has transformed and come to be known as "voodoo" Western cultures, is as old as the first humans to inhabit West Africa. It is widely accepted that the Yorube tribe of Dahomey were the originators of Vodun.

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[81] http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhi.cgi?id=dv1-79
http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/demons.html

The word "Vodun" translates in several different dialects with meanings such as "The Great Creator" and "The Great Spirit". [82]

Followers of voodoo believe in magic such as potions, incantations, and the casting of spells through the voodoo gods or "Loa". Very few of the spells and incantations of voodoo are written down. Instead they are passed down orally from generation to generation. Unlike many other religions, followers of voodoo do not attempt to convert others to their religion; however, they openly welcome anyone who wants to join. However, it is said that sharing voodoo secrets with an outsider could be fatal. Today, many of the followers of voodoo loath the reputation voodoo has garnered in western culture as a "dark religion". They instead see it as beautiful and a celebration of life.

Sci Fi Horror

Science fiction differs from fantasy in that, within the context of the story, its imaginary elements are largely possible within scientifically established or hypothetical scientific laws of nature (though *some* elements in a story may remain imaginative speculation, there is a possibility of someday becoming possible). Exploring the consequences of medical, technological or other new scientific advancements is the traditional purpose of science fiction. Horror is often a natural partner to the sci fi genre and usually stems from the hubris of the scientist/inventor or from a human frailty in understanding or laxity in watching over an experiment or the dastardly greed that consumes a villain who has lost regard for the "little people" of the human race. Science fiction focuses on alternate possibilities in settings that are contrary to known reality.

Mad Scientists and Soul-less Monster Creatures

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[82] http://www.angelfire.com/wy/cooll/voodoooriginsweb.html

The most famous mad scientist is, perhaps, Dr. Frankenstein, and the *Frankenstein* story has been adapted many times into films. But the idea of the mad scientist is prevalent.

The Secret Room (1915*)*: A doctor attempts to implant the soul of a healthy young man into the body of the doctor's retarded son.

Go and Get It (1920): A doctor implants a gangster's brain into an ape and the ape goes on a revenge killing rampage.

A Blind Bargain (1922) In need of cash, a young veteran of WW I agrees to be the guinea pig for Dr. Lamb. The doctor wants to graft the glands of an ape to a man and preserve "youth forever". It turns out that the doctor's hunchbacked assistant used to be an ape and mid-operation, the angry assistant unleashes one of the beast-men from a cage and that beast-man savages Dr. Lamb to death. (This story was inspired by actual research being done in France by a Dr. Serge Voronoff.)

Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) A man named Francis relates a story about his best friend Alan and his fiancée Jane. Alan takes him to a fair where they meet Dr. Caligari, who exhibits a somnambulist, Cesare, that can predict the future. When Alan asks how long he has to live, Cesare says he has until dawn. The prophecy comes to pass, as Alan is murdered, and Cesare is a prime suspect. Cesare creeps into Jane's bedroom and abducts her, running from the townspeople and finally dying of exhaustion. Meanwhile, the police discover a dummy in Cesare's cabinet, while Caligari flees. Francis tracks Caligari to a mental asylum. He is the director! Or is he? Written by Rick Gregory {rag.apa@email.apa.org}

The Fly (1958) and remade in 1986. Seth Brundle, a brilliant but eccentric scientist attempts to woo investigative journalist Veronica Quaife by offering her a scoop on his latest research in the field of matter transportation, which against all the expectations of the scientific establishment have proved successful. Up to a point. Brundle thinks he has ironed out the last problem when he successfully transports a living creature, but when he attempts to teleport himself a fly enters one of the transmission booths, and Brundle finds he is a changed man. This Science-Gone-Mad film is the source of the quotable quote "Be afraid. Be very afraid." Written by Mark Thompson {mrt@oasis.icl.co.uk}

Willard (1971)**:** A 27 year old wimpy Mama's boy (Willard) trains his bloodthirsty pet rodents to vengefully attack his co-worker enemies.

A Clockwork Orange (1971): Behavorist experiments are meant to eradicate aberrant sex and violence – but are unsuccessful and go terribly wrong.

Alien (1979) "In space, no one can hear your scream." Ripley (portrayed by Sigourney Weaver) is "the final girl", she challenges the murderous alien invader within the spaceship (wonderfully named Nostromo).

Darkman (1990) Peyton Westlake is a scientist who has discovered a way to produce synthetic skin – which is revolutionary but there is a catch: The synthetic skin degrades after 100 minutes of exposure to light. When gangsters attack Peyton, he is horrifically burnt, and assumed dead. For revenge, Peyton, now the Darkman, is able to take on the appearance of anyone (using the synthetic skin) but he must accomplish his tasks 100 minutes or less.

OTHER FILMS WATCHED

Dracula (1931) Wrs: Bram Stoker, Hamilton Dean, John Balderston, Dir: Tod Browning, Universal Pictures, USA 75 minutes
Psycho (1960) Wr: Joseph Stefano based on the novel by Robert Bloch, Dir: Alfred Hitchcock, Universal Pictures, USA
What Ever Happened To Baby Jane (1962) Wr: Lukas Heller based on the novel by Henry Farrell, Dir: Robert Aldrich, Warner Bros. 134 minutes
Rosemary's Baby (1968) written by Roman Polanski, based on the novel by Ira Levin
The Exorcist (1973) Wr: William Peter Blatty, Dir: William Friedkin, Warner Bros. 122 minutes
Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974) Wr: Kim Henkel and Tobe Hooper
Halloween (1978) Wr: John Carpenter and Debra Hill
The Shining (1980) Wr: Stanley Kubrick based on the novel by Stephen King
The Evil Dead (1983) Wr: Sam Raimi, Dir: Sam Raimi
Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) written by Wes Craven
The Lost Boys (1987) written by Janice Fischer and James Jeremias
Hellraiser (1987) Wr: Clive Barker
I Know What You Did Last Summer (1997) Wr: Kevin Williamson based on the novel by Lois Duncan, Dir: Jim Gillespie, Columbia Pictures USA 100 minutes
Scream (1996) Wr: Kevin Williamson, Dir: Wes Craven, Dimension Films 103 minutes
Drag Me To Hell (2009) Wrs: Sam Raimi, Ivan Raimi, Dir: Sam Raimi, Universal Pictures, 99 minutes

In thinking of the Relevant Knowledge Component of the Mental Space of Film Genre: Horror films that reflect on the times

Just a few:

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920, Germany) A somnambulist is sent out to kill by an insane carnival mountebank called Dr. Caligari. "The analogy to the millions of young men who had recently been sent out to kill, and be killed, by lunatic

governments was a transparent one and when it opened in February 1920 in Berlin, it was a sensation." (page 22-23 (American Gothic, by Jonathan Rigby 2007, published by Reynolds and Hearn Ltd, London)

Boys From Brazil (1978) From the jungles of Paraguay, Dr. Josef Mengele, the chief doctor at Auschwitz, plans the rebirth of the Nazi empire. He has Hitler's DNA, he is ready to clone his Fuhrer.   ** This was when the hunt for Nazis in South America was in the news.

Shivers (1975) *David Cronenberg*: A scientist concocts a genetically engineered parasite that gets loose in an apartment complex. Soon it takes over people, causing orgiastic abandon and spreads quickly. This film was a bit prescient of the AIDS crisis.

Last House on the Left (1972 and 2009 remake) A brutal fable that explores the capacity for savage behavior among civilized people. This is a COMMON function of the horror film and many films could be put into this description – this is consider one that takes the challenge of examination head-on – and goes beyond simply torture and body count for gore and shock.

The Hills Have Eyes (remake) Director Alexander Aja was hired by Wes Craven to remake Craven's 1977 film. Aja turned Craven's story of a suburban family besieged by mutant cannibals in the desert into a "powerful commentary of US Foreign Policy in the Middle East." LA TIMES, Jan 25, 2009 Gina McIntyre *Horror...Horror*

25/8 (2009) Wes Craven A young man discovers he's the son of a serial killer who had unconsciously committed his crimes. Craven quote "That just intrigued me, both the idea of doing things that you're not aware of – which I think is a lot of the history of the United States, that hidden history – and then just the inheritance of violence from one generation to the next, whether we're doomed to repeat it, how deeply we're implicated." LA TIMES, Jan 25, 2009 Gina McIntyre *Horror...Horror*
Major Reading:

Clover, Carol J. (1993) *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film,* Princeton University Press

Dirks, Tim, www.filmsite.org/**horror**films.html

Williams, Linda: Film *Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess* Film Quarterly 44, no.4 (Summer 1991) pp 2-13

Williams, Linda: *When a Woman Looks*
http://www.scribd.com/doc/22603110/When-the-Woman-Looks

Williams, Linda (1999), *Hard Core and the "Frenzy of the Visible",* University of California Press

ROMANTIC COMEDY   *NOTES*

Are romantic comedies just "fairytales for adults"? Can they be more?

> *Westley: Hear this now: I will always come for you.*
>
> *Buttercup: But how can you be sure?*
>
> *Westley: This is true love - you think this happens every day?*
> > *The Princess Bride 1987*
> > *Written by William Goldman*

In *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993), a woman (portrayed by Meg Ryan) in New York City hears the young son of a widower (portrayed by Tom Hanks) in Seattle on the radio talking about how great his dad is - and immediately decides this widower is the man of her dreams. She sets out to meet him and in a way, stalks him - and finally manages to arrange a "true love" moment on the top of the Empire State Building[83] without really speaking to him. The tagline for the movie on imdb.com is *"What if someone you never met, someone you never saw, someone you never knew was the only someone for you?"* Sounds a bit like a fairy tale. In *Never Been Kissed* (1999) a woman (portrayed by Drew Barrymore) who was "the biggest nerd" in high school and now, seven years later, is still a nerd but has a journalism career she desperately wants to jumpstart. She gets an assignment to go undercover as a high school student in her old high school to write about the youth of the day -- and while trying to re-live (and re-fashion) her past, she finds new self-esteem and meets the true love of her life. In *The Proposal* (2010) a successful, ambitious and cold career woman (portrayed by Sandra Bullock) is told her job will be terminated due to the fact that she is a Canadian working in America without proper work papers. She

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[83] McDonald, Tamara (2007) *Romantic Comedy, Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, London. *** Excellent book. McDonald makes note of the intertextual elements in *Sleepless in Seattle.* The Empire State Building as a place to meet harkens to *Love Affair* (1939) and its remake *An Affair To Remember* (1957) both referred to as examples of great romantic films. (I find them annoying)

immediately decides to marry her handsome, smart assistant (portrayed by Ryan Reynolds) and surprises him with her intent. He agrees to a marriage of convenience (despite the fact that they hate each other) and whisks the career woman away to his family's idyllic island retreat where the warmth of a good loving family softens her hardness and she discovers true love.

Are these storylines realistic? Fairytale-ish? Do the tales have a fantastical (unreal) element? Do audiences need to suspend disbelief to "fully buy into the stories"? What is this "true love" that seems so desirable?

TRUE LOVE

Where do these notions of "true love" and "soulmates" come from? In Plato's philosophical play *Symposium,* the character of Aristophanes presents this idea*:* humans originally consisted of four arms, four legs, and a single head with two faces. Zeus feared their power so he split them in half, condemning humans forever to be "in search of their other half". [84] The "other half" is often related to the idea of a soulmate – the person who "completes" another person – makes up for what may be lacking in temperament, passion, free-ness of spirit or other trait thought desirable. (Examples: In *Philadelphia Story* (1940) Tracy (Katharine Hepburn) cannot accept faults in others, she expects (and demands) people act decent and "be perfect". Dexter (Cary Grant) is flawed (doubts himself, drinks too much at times, is afraid of <u>not</u> being perfect). He wants to be with Tracy – <u>if</u> she can stop being judgmental, haughty and intolerant. In *Jerry Maguire* (1996) Dorothy (Renee Zellweger) believes in love, that loving a person is not tied up in what the other person can do for you. Jerry (Tom Cruise) is cynical and afraid of commitment. Distinct differences are tempered with the other's point of view; they "complete" each other. In *Bridget Jones Diary* (2001)*,* Bridget (Renee Zellweger) is odd, quirky and impulsive. Mark Darcy (Colin Firth) has trouble cutting loose and trusting people. Stories may revolve around an anti-social person who may in fact benefit from joining a community falls in love with a more socially adept person… A pessimistic person

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[84] Jowett, translation, *http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html*

mates with a person who sees the world though rose-colored glasses... etc.

German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788- 1860) asserted that if there wasn't the challenge of courtship in humans' lives, there could be an increased tendency to boredom and suicide. He purported that people seek out complementary mates – that sameness is not what is desired, that "opposites attract". [85]

BROAD STROKES ON: ROMANCE

The term "romance" in literature initially referred to <u>tales of fantastic and marvelous adventures of greatly skilled knights set on a chivalric goal</u>. Chivalry was a term that referred to the knights' actions of doing service to others – preserving honor of friends or family or some worthy person and often - aiding maidens in distress.

The <u>adventure</u> of the journey was the "romance". Anthony Giddons in his book *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Society* posits that along the way, with the growth of the novel form (as opposed to poems, tales, passed-down legends), the adventure story that focused on saving the damsel became very popular. The term "romance" began to be used to refer specifically to "saving damsel" stories and became the structure for finding/earning the love of a person worthy of the adventurer's trouble.

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[85] *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love)*

Romance has come to refer to intimacy, compassion and deep caring for another individual – so much so that one would put one's own personal happiness at risk to better the life of the one loved. "Romance" does not refer to just plain sexual coupling. Romance is a much deeper emotion.[86]

Literature in the 18th and 19th centuries focusing on love stories often reflected a more complicated meaning than the idea of finding "true love" or a "soulmate" for women of the time. Women's lack of freedom to choose their own partners, one could imagine, might be stifling and frustrating and bring about unhappy marriages. Because of the way society and the woman's role was set, many "romance" novels/poems spun tales of women "falling in love" with persons outside the sphere of family approval. These attractions were often all-consuming – and sometimes caused mental distress. Some stories ended happily, some stories were tragic tales of love-gone-bad. One might ask - Were these women really meeting their "soulmates" or were their actions the result of women struggling for the emancipation from parental control? Perhaps what women thought was "love" was really the romantic idea of freedom and self-rule. There were many novels/plays that related the tragic results of women going against familial advice and making the wrong choices of mates (*Middlemarch* (1871) by George Eliot, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) by Jane Austen, *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Bronte, *Gone With The Wind* (1939) by Margaret Mitchell and scores of others). These tales were romantic and lustful, but also flirted with (or embraced) tragic elements.

Film theorist Torben Grodal explores developments in neuroscience and cognitive science in relation to narrative theory and film theory as they relate to the audience's experience of cinema. In his exploration of the key aesthetic phenomena in an audience's experience of film, he points out that it can be understood only in relation to the brain's way of processing information from the screen; "...our eyes and ears pick up and analyze image and sound, our minds apprehend the story, which resonates in our memory; furthermore, our stomach, heart and skin are

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[86] *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_(love)*

activated in empathy with the story situations and the protagonists' ability to cope." [87] Using research in a variety of sciences, Grodal makes his case: Each person is not self-created, there is a DNA heritage specific to the evolution of physicality as well as to emotions and even a deeply embedded heritage of thought. [88] Grodal examines what he believes are evolutionary reasons for emotions connected with sexual or romantic desire. Grodal points to the deep-seated human desire for intimate connection whether it is for survival, for procreation, for status, or for self-esteem. A dominant or supporting story element ("B" or "C" stories) in many screenplays (top action films such as the *Bourne* cycle (2002, 2004, 2007), *The Fifth Element* (1997), *Twilight* (2008), *Pirates of the Caribbean* cycle (2003, 2006, 2007) and *Out of Sight* (1998) and countless more action films feature a romance line as do many horror films, war films, westerns and other genres that have strong appeal to the male audience. Adventure films such as the *Indiana Jones* series feature romance lines but are not considered "romance" films (such as romance-driven films like *Love Affair* (1939) and its two remakes *An Affair to Remember* (1957) and *Love Affair* (1994) or *The Notebook* (2004) or *A Walk to Remember* (2002).

Grodal asserts that pitting the female's desire for long-term bonding - and her use of negotiation to achieve that end - against the male's acceptance of anonymous (or at least non-bonding) sexual relations, is an immediate discord that fuels much of the romance genre.

Grodal refers to Nico Frijda's work *The Emotions* (1988)[89], positing <u>true love</u> often comes with a <u>negotiation</u> between partners - what is acceptable, what is not, how far one is willing to go, how much is one willing to risk etc. Once negotiations are completed there is a sense of closure; the final closing off of other romantic options as well as the closing of worries about bonding; and what there is as a result is a marriage or a commitment to build a life together.

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[87] Grodal, Torben (1997) *Moving Pictures, A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings and Cognition*, Clarendon Press, Oxford UK, p.1
[88] Grodal, Torben (2009) *Embodied Visions, Evolution, Emotion, Culture and Film*, Oxford University Press, p. 5
[89] Frijda, Nico (1987) *The Emotions,* Cambridge University Press

Romance is an <u>adventure</u> - an adventure of discovering or accepting deep human emotions/desires/needs - emotions/desires/needs that may be ingrained in our "emotional DNA" (if you accept Grodal's theories).

ROMANCE: A FILM GENRE

Romance, used as a term in film genre, refers to stories focusing on wanting love, finding love, losing love or gaining love and often examines the notion of true love.

To claim the romance genre as the overriding genre of a story, the desire for love must drive the story. The classic romance structure[90]:

- Boy meets girl (or vice versa or any love combination the story centers on)
- Boy wants girl
- Boy tries to get girl
- Boy gets girl
- Boy loses girl
- Boy realizes his life is empty without girl
- Boy strives to get girl back
- Boy gets girl back (or not).

If you have <u>not</u> addressed each of these story points in the classic film romance structure, you are in danger of not having your audience care about your lovers and/or in danger of your romance story falling flat because you were not able to evoke the desired emotions from the audience.

<u>The love connection needs to be primary;</u> Plato, again in *Symposium*, noted: "And I say that a lover who is detected in doing any dishonourable act, or submitting through cowardice when any dishonour is done to him by another, will be more pained at being detected by his beloved than at being seen by his father, or

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[90] Selbo, Jule (2008) *Rewrite: First Draft to Marketplace,* Gardner Publishing

by his companions, or by any one else." [91] Consider this in relation to the importance of the love connection, how the connections in many cases form the new families that form the new alliances and that, in many cases, keep the human race going because marriages are traditionally considered to be a step in the journey towards procreation.

In the romance genre, all major actions of the story need to be motivated by love – not career desires, not survival desires, not issues of justice etc – but by the pursuit (conscious or unconscious) of love.

WHY ARE ROMANCES CONSIDERED "CHICK FLICKS"

Laura Mulvey in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) presents these ideas of why romances appeal to women more than men. Mulvey, in her extensive work in film theory, asserts that film is viewed by both men and women through a "male gaze" – in part because of the male dominance in our society. Mulvey asserts that the male watching a romance does not, in most cases, want to identify with a "soft and sensitive" man who is led by emotions, he would rather see himself as strong and macho – willing to die for a cause or be heroic or even being a master thief. However, Mulvey notes, the female viewing a romance from the male gaze is fascinated, she feels she is gaining understanding of the "real man" – one that is often hidden in social situations. The female wants to believe that the male needs the female – and in viewing a romance film, she thinks she is coming to an understanding of the male psyche.

Mulvey does not explore the screenwriter in her theories – and it is interesting to note that many male screenwriters write romance dramas where men are willing to sacrifice all to love - such as *The English Patient* (1996, screenwriter Anthony Minghella)*, Titanic* (1997, screenwriter James Cameron), *Love Affair (1939,* screenwriters Delmer Daves and Donald Ogden Stewart) and many male screenwriters write romantic comedies such as *The Switch (2010*, screenwriter

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[91] Jowett, translation of Plato's Symposium http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html

Allan Loeb), *Easy A* (screenwriter Bert V. Royal).   Female screenwriters such as Mae West, Diablo Cody, Jane Anderson, Leslie Dixon, Nora Ephron and others also write romances and romantic comedies.

ROMANCE VS. PORNOGRAPHY

Just a simple thought about a difference noted between romance (deep desire for emotional connection) and pornography (desire for sexual stimulation): Linda Williams in her 1991 essay, *Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess* posits that pornography is connected to <u>anonymous desire</u> – desire devoid of relationship. The horror genre often examines pornographic tendencies/desires of characters. This is <u>not</u> the domain of romance. Romance is more personal, it focuses on the communion of souls, of interests, of personalities, of sympathetic and empathetic feelings. Romances that may begin with the "male gaze" (noting beauty or appealing sexual attributes), however, a true romance does not ultimately use the sexual attraction as the <u>sole reason</u> two people become a couple; strong psychological needs and desires must also come into play.

SEX AND THE ROMANTIC COMEDY

Most romantic comedy couples will end up accepting this notion: Sex with one partner (monogamy comes where true love exists) is optimal and in most cases procreation is expectation or at least considered. However, <u>romantic comedies</u> rarely have drawn out or explicit love scenes. Stephen V Duncan (p. 171-172) gives this advice to screenwriters: … "…use the sexual situation for comedy… (for example) in *Jerry Maguire,* Jerry's first date with Dorothy is cleverly erotic because he's seducing her by putting her clothes back on…. It's more romantic to create sexual tension than to have the couple actually having sex. The most successful romantic comedies avoid the sex act altogether. Indeed, even kissing is treated as a big deal."

BROAD STROKES ON COMEDY

Comedic situations/stories in film have been around since the beginning of film. Comedy shorts were popular with audiences - silent films were perfect for the form because physical humor did not rely on title cards. Slapstick, a subgenre of comedy, relied on pratfalls, accidents, acrobatic stunts, chase scenes – anything where broad, outrageous humor with a lot of action could be imagined.

The comedy film genre has certain narrative expectations connected with it. Most stories humorously <u>exaggerate</u> situational conflicts, language, actions and character traits. Comedies may examine, in a light or ironic or satiric way, the deficiencies, foibles and frustrations of life, provide <u>merriment</u> and a momentary escape from every-day life. Comedies <u>usually</u> have happy endings – but they may include a serious or pessimistic side.

Stephen Neale, in *Genre and Hollywood* (2000) notes that the comedy film genre is now getting more attention (and in some cases, respect) from film critics, theorists and analysts.

Neale points to the "basics" of comedies usually woven into the narrative structure[92]:

- gags
- jokes
- funny moments
- comic business
- logic of the absurd
- reversal of expectations
- often a sense of implausibility (physicality/danger without grave consequences)

Neale also lists common "comedic" <u>character traits</u>[93] :

- characters that may play outside the rules
- characters that may be anomalies and misfits
- characters that may be eccentric or deviant to societal norms

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[92] Neale, Steve (2000) *Genre and Hollywood* , Routledge p. 66
[93] Neale, Steve (2000) *Genre and Hollywood,* p. 69

- characters that may be given to dreaming, disguise or regression or bouts of madness

- characters that may be walking contradictions

Many film theorists are now looking at comedies to see how they may reflect gender issues, socio-cultural issues, sexual politics and psychoanalytic issues. (Neale, 2000:65) This list is important to the screenwriter – as a reminder that comedies – (including romantic comedies) – can reflect the mores and norms of contemporary society. When a film story works on various levels, the chances of it reflecting its world are greater.

Comedy films, driven by comedic situations may include a small romantic story line, such as *Hangover* (2009), *Dumb and Dumber* (1994) and *Big* (1988) but these films are not considered true, pure and genre-fulfilling romantic comedies. So let's concentrate on those now:

ROMANTIC COMEDY

Tamar Jeffers McDonald, in her book *Romantic Comedy, Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* takes aim at those that assert that romantic comedies are for the less sophisticated, are low brow and are merely guilty pleasures. She writes: "I dispute this idea, and think that the appeal to audiences of such films is more complex, especially if the viewer is inhabiting a position where conflicting pulls of realism and fantasy are operating…" [94]

Consider this: To create a narrative that presents "real life" in a believably fantastical way, where males and females can identify and relate but where convenience, outrageousness and extreme character traits are magnified – to write a good rom com takes skill.

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[94] McDonald, Tamara (2007)) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK, p. 7-8

McDonald notes that rom com appeals because it has patterns of "gain, loss and recovery" which speak to a large portion of the audience.[95]

McDonald's definition of romantic comedy:

A romantic comedy is a film which has as its central narrative motor a quest for love, which portrays this quest in a light-hearted way and almost always to a successful conclusion. [96]

IDEOLOGY OF THE ROMANTIC COMEDY

"The ideology of genre can both reflect and contest the anxieties, assumptions and desires of the specific time and specific agencies making the film…The basic ideology of the romantic comedy is the **primary importance of the couple**." [97]

McDonald points out that even in Woody Allen's romantic comedy *Annie Hall* (1997) where the couple does NOT get together, the ideology does not suggest that the goal of finding true love is no longer desirable; it's just not "in the stars" in this coupling - at this time - in this universe.

ROMANTIC COMEDY STRUCTURE

Important to remember: In romantic comedies, <u>romance </u>must drive the story. It must also include film-genre-fulfilling-comedy elements. There are many many variations (and you may think of new ones) but here are elements of a classic breakdown

- Boy meets girl in a "cute" meet
- Boy wants girl (sometimes in an overly obsessive or irregular or odd way)

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[95] McDonald, Tamara (2007)) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK, p. 5

[96] McDonald, Tamara (2007)) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK, p. 9

[97] McDonald, Tamara, (2007)) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK, p 13

- Boy gets girl (usually for a very very short period of time or in a "fake" way (pretending to be someone else, taking care of her for someone else etc)

- Boy loses girl (this may be in a funny situation but the emotional reaction is real)

- Boy realizes his life is empty without girl (this may be handled in funny situations but the emotional reaction is real)

- Boy strives to get girl back (hilarity ensues, outrageous tactics)

- Boy gets girl back (sometimes (often) this includes the embarrassing or awkward public confession to prove that <u>love is more important than dignity –</u>and in most cases the lovers unite and there is a sense they will have a significant (and happy) future together)

Billy Mernit in his book *Writing the Romantic Comedy* [98] suggests finding the right comedic tone by building a plausible world. One that has the right tone to allow for fantastical conveniences (a bit of that fairy tale quality).

Thomas Schatz, in his book *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood* [99] takes a look at the romantic comedy film genre conventions – below is a list of some of his observations that I think are applicable to the work of a screenwriter when working on a rom com script/idea:

- Strong romantic comedies often contain comments on society
- The two love interests are often foils for each other
- The story is usually focused on an embattled romantic couple
- There may be sexual confrontations with disdain for social propriety
- The two lovers must individually surrender to get together at the end
- There is often a cynicism that moves towards romantic love
- In a romantic comedy, women can be as wacky as the man and show a lack of social inhibition
- The romantic comedy celebrates spontaneity

[98] Mernit, Billy (2000) *Writing the Romantic Comedy*
[99] Schatz, Thomas (1983) *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood*

- The romantic comedy usually has a wedding or an engagement or a commitment that speaks of some kind of permanence in the final moments of the story
- The two lovers may be together at the end but it may not be clear if society will accept them. However, they decide <u>not</u> to lose their true identities
- The idea of unity wins out over division and loneliness
- There is not a sense of closure at the end - but one of open-endedness/hope and a strong future together
- ***these are tried and true elements, however it is always wise to ask yourself – is there a fresh/new/more relevant way to approach these elements*

Again, if the screenwriter has not addressed each element in the classic romantic comedy structure, he/she is in danger of not having the audience care about the lovers. In most cases:

- The lovers are kept apart until the very end of the film story
- The two lovers do not appreciate each other at the outset of the film story
- Both lovers have to change in order to make the romance work

If you are writing a romantic comedy and the lovers do not have trouble getting together, you may want to take another look and consider adjusting your script. If there is not comedy in your romantic situations, you may want to take another look and consider adjusting your script.

When writing the romantic comedy, the screenwriter may want to ask these questions:

Are the stakes of this romance high enough? Does the story concern <u>true</u> love? Flirtations and affairs, in most cases, <u>are not big enough canvasses</u> for the audience to invest their care and worry. Are the characters truly soulmates? Will their lives will be ruined/unfulfilled/unhappy if they do not come together?

Variations on the classic structure are always fun. Consider 2004's **50 FIRST DATES** (boy meets girl, boy wants girl, boy gets girl, boy loses girl over and over and over due to her short term memory loss, boy realizes his life is empty without girl, boy has to cleverly strive to get girl back over and over again, boy gets girl (over and over and over again).

Have you examined each step in the romance process? Have you found surprises within the steps? How does boy meet girl? (Or girl meets boy or any combination.) How does boy discover that he does, indeed, really want the girl? Does it take him a long time to realize this? What actions does he have to take to win the girl? How does he lose the girl? What difficulties arise as he strives to get the girl back? Is she now engaged to someone else? Does she despise him? Does he resent her even as he is trying to get her back? Find the singular ways to show how your particular character will fulfill the romance in the story.

McDonald points out that "romantic comedy is one of the most *generic* of genres, heavily reliant on stock elements and even dialogue such as ("I love you"). [100]

A character does not have to say EXACTLY those words. Some of the favorite lines in films that essentially mean "I love you"[101]:

Streetcar Named Desire (1951)

"Stella!"

As Good As It Gets (1997)

"You make me want to be a better man."

Don Juan Demarco (1994)
"Have you never met a woman who inspires you to love? Until your every sense is filled with her? You inhale her. You taste her. You see your unborn children in her

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[100] McDonald, Tamara (2007)) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK, p. 11
[101] http://allwomenstalk.com/20-greatest-romantic-movie-quotes/

eyes and know that your heart has at last found a home. Your life begins with her, and without her it must surely end.”

The Bridges of Madison County (1995)

“It seems right now that all I’ve ever done in my life is making my way here to you.”

The Notebook (2004)
“The best love is the kind that awakens the soul and makes us reach for more, that plants a fire in our hearts and brings peace to our minds and that’s what you’ve given me.”

Dirty Dancing (1987)
“I’m scared of walking out of this room and never feeling the rest of my whole life the way I feel when I’m with you”

The Princess Bride (1987)

“Death cannot stop true love. All it can do is delay it for a while.”

Casablanca (1942)

“We’ll always have Paris.”

There’s also

 “Kiss me. Kiss me as if it were for the last time.”

A Beautiful Mind (2001)
“Perhaps it is good to have a beautiful mind, but an even greater gift is to discover a beautiful heart.”

When Harry Met Sally (1989)
“I love that you get cold when it is 71 degrees out. I love that it takes you an hour and a half to order a sandwich. I love that you get a little crinkle in your nose when you're looking at me like I'm nuts. I love that after I spend day with you, I can still smell your perfume on my clothes. And I love that you are the last person I want to talk to before I go to sleep at night. I came here tonight because when you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible.”

Notting Hill (1999)

“I'm just a girl, standing in front of a boy, asking him to love her.”

A Knight’s Tale (2001)
“If I could ask God one thing, it would be to stop the moon. Stop the moon and make this night and your beauty last forever.”

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)

"I want to tell you with my last breath that I have always loved you."

Gone with the Wind (1939)

"You should be kissed, and often, and by someone who knows how."

Jerry Maguire (1996)
"I love him and I don't care what you think. I love him for the man he wants to be and I love him for the man he almost is."

There is also the line

 "You had me at 'hello'."

Good Will Hunting (1997)
"It doesn't matter if the guy is perfect or the girl is perfect, as long as they are perfect for each other."

Love Story (1970)

"Love means never having to say you're sorry."

Hitch (2005)
 "Do you know what it feels like to wake up every morning…feeling hopeless, feeling like the love of your life is waking up with the wrong man? But at the same time, hoping that she still finds happiness, even if it's never going to be with you?"….

Bridget Jones's Diary (2001)

" I like you, very much. Just as you are."

ICONOGRAPHY

"Films do not just reflect reality, they help to create it too."[102] The question McDonald asks is this: If romantic comedies follow a certain ideology, are they really just fantasies of perpetual bliss that is usually lacking in real life? Has film contributed to the iconography of romance in general?

There are many visuals - locations, objects, foods etc. that make up the recognized iconography of the romance – and the romantic comedy. Of course not all are (usually) used in one film narrative – and there's no reason to use them

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[102] McDonald, Tamara (2007) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK p 14

unless you want the visual recognition (using the audience's conscious or unconscious connection due to their memory of these iconic images being used in films/novels/etc before, thus they make the (usually unconscious) connection: [103]

- locations
    - urban setting
    - wedding chapel
    - homes of parents
    - separate homes of the two lovers
    - home they may share together
    - gathering place for friends/co-workers where advice is doled out
- objects
    - flowers
    - iconographic foods such as chocolates, oysters, champagne
    - candlelight
    - beds
    - romantic music
- activities
    - dancing
    - strolling
    - boating
    - sports that duos can share
    - eating in restaurants
- emotions
    - tears
    - heart palpitations
    - dry mouth
    - inability to speak coherently
    - inability to sleep
    - day-dreaming

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[103] Selbo (2011), pages 36-50 this document

- costumes
  - special clothes for big date
  - wedding garb
- supporting characters
  - best friend(s)
  - unsuitable partners (the Bellamy)
    - Stephen V. Duncan, in his 2008 book *Genre Screenwriting*[104] notes the term "The Bellamy" (named after Ralph Bellamy who was often cast in this role in 1930 and 1940 romantic comedies). The "Bellamy" is the "other man" – the tamer, the safer, the more practical choice. The "Bellamy"
      - provides another option for the protagonist
      - helps define who the protagonist is/what he/she wants
      - creates conflict for the protagonist, forcing the question – why isn't this person (the Bellamy) "enough"? The Bellamy can aggressively pursue protagonist making it more difficult for him/her to find time/energy/confidence in pursuing alternate relationship
      - creates conflict for the antagonist (the lover that is problematical for the protagonist – either emotionally or physically or psychologically)
- ****these are tried and true elements, however it is always wise to fresh/new/more relevant ways to approach these elements*

Helen Jacey in *The Woman in the Story*,[105] points out some of the accepted basics for the <u>female character</u> in the rom-com (she likes to call it a *dramantic comedy*).

- the heroine has major emotional baggage getting in the way of loving someone that is clearly her "soul mate"

[104] Duncan, Stephen V. (2008) *Genre Screenwriting* Continuum Press, p. 163
[105] Jacey, Helen (2010) *The Women in the Story,* Michael Weiss Publishing p. 169

- the heroine is unaware of her baggage (or thinks it actually is a good thing)
- the heroine is driven by an unresolved internal conflict
- the heroine has significant other conflict (than internal) that she focuses on during the story
- the heroine, near the end of the story, finally "hears" her "soul mate" and addresses the necessity of dealing with her emotional baggage
- ****these are tried and true elements, however it is always wise to find fresh/new/more relevant way to approach these elements*

Jacey's list can also be used, in my opinion, when looking at the male – **if he** is the protagonist (romance –needer/seeker) in your story.

Duncan *(Genre Screenwriting)* notes that the protagonist of a romantic comedy <u>needs</u> love in his/her life, whether he/she wants it or not. Many times the protagonist does not think he/she wants love – but when the possibility/reality of it surfaces, the desire grows. Duncan asserts that the protagonist has to be sympathetic so that the audience can identify with and root for the character. Even if the character is obnoxious or arrogant or whiny or nerdy or has other "faults", the need to root for the character may be necessary to the success of your script. Consider Sandra Bullock's character in *The Proposal (2010);* she is bossy, pig-headed, and emotionally unavailable and is only concerned with her career; she finally lets go of her defenses to let love into her life. In *Knocked Up (2007)* Ben (Seth Rogen) is an irresponsible, messy slacker and Alison (Katherine Heigl) considers herself perfect, thinks she knows best at all times – they both go through a change in order to find a common ground of respect and – maybe love in the film.

THE IDEA OF RELEVANCY IN ROMANTIC COMEDIES

McDonald sites a complaint about rom coms that they have been called "a clichéd emptiness", "rote vacuity". Complaints also include: "they repeatedly go over old ground without adding anything original to the mixture of traditional

soundtracks songs, picturesque urban views and initially antagonistic, ultimately blissful male and female protagonists" [106]

Of course, there are rom coms that do not move the art form in any direction, just as there are westerns, horror flicks, action/adventure films and sci fi narratives that feel unoriginal. But the good ones stand out – often times because the narratives have a relevancy, they speak to or comment on the times/the worries/attitudes/mores of the contemporary era.

In today's climate –there are topics that can be examined to make the romantic comedy narrative more relevant: divorce, biological clocks, supposed shortage of available single men, homosexuality acceptance, feminism, equal rights, racial biases, political biases, global living, new technology – all of these elements (and more, depending on the latest movements in society/news/areas of thought) can make the telling of rom com stories more relevant and interesting and help to keep the film genre perceived as a reflection on contemporary society.

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[106] McDonald, Tamara (2007) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK, p. 16

SHORT OVERVIEW OF ROM COMS

ROMANTIC COMEDIES AFTER THE ADVENT OF SOUND (late 1920's)

A quick overview:

COMEDY OF MANNERS

Romantic comedies in the late 1920s and 1930s were very popular and often were in the "comedy of manners" sub-genre. These are also called status comedies and revolved around love relationships between lower class and upper class persons. "*It Happened One Night* reassured Depression audiences that the filthy rich were, after all, just folks like you and me, and that although money didn't necessarily buy happiness, it certainly generated some interesting social and sexual complications." [107]
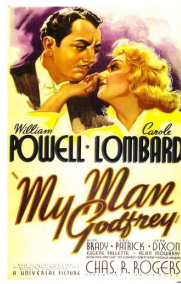
SCREWBALL COMEDY

Prior to the term's application in 1930s film criticism, "screw ball" referred to any pitched ball in baseball that moved in an unexpected way (made popular by major league pitcher Dizzy Dean who played mostly for the St. Louis Cardinals and then the Chicago Cubs). The advent of the use of sound in film encouraged wordsmiths (newspaper reporters, magazine journalists, playwrights, witticists, editorialists, short story writers, novelists) to write films – these writers helped bring about the golden age of comedy. "Screwball comedy was often a marriage of

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[107] Schatz, Thomas (1981) *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Studio System,* University of Texas, Austin Press, p.150

witty dialogue from East Coast writers and visual comedy from former silent comedy directors like Capra and Hawks" [108]

The screwball comedy may be a comedy of manners, or the narrative may not revolve around an investigation of romance between varying social classes. There is one trait that is a constant – the <u>female</u> is the lead character, the protagonist that drives the story.

Screwball comedy can be likened to "an innovative brand of farce, where the old boy-meets-girl formula was turned on its ear, producing free-spirited **heroines** who gave as good as they got." [109] The female is the main character and she does not simper, she knows her own mind. Screwball comedy traded on the anti-heroic element, such as the ritualistic humiliation of the male.[110] Think of Peter (Clark Gable) in *It Happened One Night* (1934) and his unsuccessful hitchhiking attempts – he is bested by the successful hitchhiking moves of Ellie (Claudette Colbert). Think of Walter (Cary Grant) and his inability to get the best of Hildy (Rosalind Russell) in *His Girl Friday* (1940)*.* Think of Gracie (Sandra Bullock) getting the better of her fellow detective (Benjamin Bratt) in *Miss Congeniality* (2000) *.* Think of Bridget getting the better of Daniel (Hugh Grant) and Mark (Colin Firth) in *Bridget Jones' Diary.* Many screwball comedies will feature physical and/or farcical comedy – often referred to as clown comedy.

Screwball comedies gained great popularity in America during the Great Depression, they were silly, they often made fun of the rich, they gave up to the "lower classes" that they could rise in the world. And because of the strong Production Code in place, the screwball comedy was often called the "sex comedy without sex". [111] "The screwball comedy has a rather odd rapport with the gangster genre in this regard; they both flourished in the 1920s and dealt with the erosion of traditional, essentially rural-based values with the gradual urbanization and industrialization of American life. Inevitably… things are resolved when one or both (lovers) realizes how financial and material values are less important than the

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[108] Gehring, Wes D. (2004) *USA Today Magazine*
[109] Gehring, Wes D. (2004) *USA Today Magazine*
[110] Gehring, Wes D. (2004) *USA Today Magazine*
[111] Gehring, Wes D. (2004) *USA Today Magazine*

traditional, spiritual and egalitarian values that contemporary city life threatens to render obsolete." [112]

   Some of the iconic early screwball comedies are *"It Happened One Night* (1934) and *"Twentieth Century* (year), *"Bringing Up Baby"* (1938), and *"His Girl Friday"* (1940). The screwball continues, *The Proposal (2010), Miss Congeniality* (2000) *Never Been Kissed* (1999) *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997) *Bridget Jones Diary* (2001) *Easy A* (2010) etc.
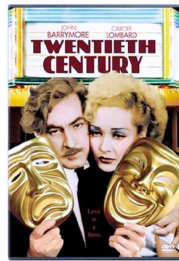
Screwball basics:
-   Everything is topsy-turvy (black is white, good is bad etc); inversion of expectation
-   Fast flung insults and physical violence (threatened or carried out, but of course comedic)
-   woman is the romantic aggressor or at least drives the story
-   role play – characters may engage in masquerade, taking on different names/personas, accents
-   characters may act in unpredictable ways – almost as if crazy or drunk
-   narrative sustains the discord until the end (instead of getting lovey-dovey once love of each other is recognized, pride or ego or other circumstances are constantly getting in the way)
-   character's affection are often expressed through aggression
-   proliferation of slapstick scenes
-   narrative may contain punishments/embarrassments and/or humiliation
-   Often involves conflicting social classes

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[112] Schatz, Thomas (1981) p 157

- reverse class snobbery / rich are looked down on, poor are "better" people; examples:
  - *It Happened One Night* (1934)
  - *My Man Godfrey* (1936)
  - *The Lady Eve* (1941)
  - *Palm Beach Story* (1942)
  - *The Proposal* (2010)
  - *Bridget Jones Diary* (2001)
  - *Bringing Down the House* (2003)
- reverse education snobbery/educated are clueless, uneducated know better; examples:
  - *Bringing up Baby* (1938)
  - *The Lady Eve* (1941)
  - *Bringing Down the House* (2003)
  - *What's Up Doc* (1972)

THE SEX COMEDY   Late 50s, 1960s and early 1970s

The sex comedy revolves around male and female differences – mostly in regards to <u>when</u> sex should enter a relationship – before or after marriage.

Tamara Jeffers McDonald, p.

This sub-genre of the romantic comedy flourished in the 50s and went out of fashion in the 1960s when sexual mores went through major changes in America. These changes came about due to

- growing acceptance and numbers of women in higher education
- female desire for equality
- female independence due to her acceptance and advancements in the workplace
- female independence from paternal home
- rise of recreational drugs

- availability of the birth control pill

The typical sex comedy narrative is: two professional rivals, one a hardworking woman who prepares for each new project meticulously and the other - a man who gets by relying on personal charm and "boys club" connections meet and dislike each other. They are pitted against each other for a job or a promotion or control of a client (the world of advertising was very "sexy" in this ear). Sparks fly. And then, one night after arguing or trying to outdo each other, they end up getting very very drunk… and wake up married.[113] Horrified they split and in taking care of the details of divorce or annulment, they fall in love. *Lover Come Back (*1961*)* starring Rock Hudson and Doris Day as advertising-executives-at-war as well as *Laws of Attraction* (2004), starring Julianne Moore and Pierce Brosnan as attorneys-at-war are examples. The mostly unsuccessful *Down With Love* (2003), set in this era also had this storyline – (so it's a period romantic comedy in the sex comedy sub-genre). McDonald notes that for her, this story line still works. There are often elements of screwball comedy in evidence because the narrative is full of insults hurled by the characters and other verbal or physical violence, while the dueling lovers try to outdo or sabotage each other.

The socio-sexual mores began to be what was look at rather than the socio economic – not it wasn't so much about status but about socio-sexual conflicts, Schatz doesn't feel they live up to the earlier screwballs "Although (Doris) Day and (Rock) Hudson's more engaging films (*Pillow Talk* 1958; *Send Me No Flowers* 1964) provides an interesting view of America's socio-sexual mores during the insecure prosperity of the 50s, they scarcely display the formal dynamics and thematic complexity of their predecessors." [114]

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[113] McDonald, Tamara (2007)) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK, p. 39
[114] Schatz, Thomas (1981) *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Studio System,* University of Texas, Austin Press, p. 171

McDonald purports that three events helped bring about the narrative and tonal changes and set the stage for the sex comedy: [115]

1. Alfred Kinsey's report *Sexual Behaviour In The Human Female (1953)* created a furor – he reported that half the women in America were having unmarried sex and that they did, indeed, have a sex drive.

> - The sex comedy of the 50s and 60s often examines the double standard (men could have sex with multiple partners and not be thought immoral or socially unacceptable, but a woman could not) that was thoroughly examined in PreCode films (1930-1934) but then disappeared from film narratives for a few decades due to the Production Code that was put in place in 1934). (Selbo, 2010)

2. *Playboy Magazine* premiered in 1953 and it had many articles for the bachelor telling him how to decorate his apartment, what music to play, what hors-deurves to serve – all in hopes of luring woman to spend time with him.

> -the male persona began to be re-shaped. The bachelor no longer lived at home (with mom) until married, he could be suave and sophisticated (didn't have to be rough and tumble and super macho to be attractive) and could be sexually active and also upfront about his desire to make no lasting commitment. He could be appreciative of a woman's charms but decidedly not have marriage in mind.

3. *The Moon is Blue* (1953) marked the first time the word "virgin" was said on screen. The Production Code of America denied its release but director Otto Preminger managed to find distribution (the Production Code began to weaken in the 60s and this led to the creation of the ratings system in 1966;

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[115] McDonald, Tamara (2007) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre,* Wallflower Press, UK

this is close to the rating system we have today).   This film pushed the sexual talk and topic envelope.

Two Sandra Dee (actress known for her sweet "every girl" roles) movies can be looked at as example of how quickly the acceptance/mores of the time were changing.   showing how it changed in 5 years (first one she is using manipulation to get married, second one she has a baby out of wedlock and there are three potential fathers

1961 *Come September:* Sandra Dee's character uses all sorts of manipulation of men to get herself married – because being married was the most important thing for a young woman – the ultimate goal.

1966 *Doctor You've got to be Kidding:* Sandra Dee's character has a baby out of wedlock and there are three potential fathers – and she's not sure she wants to marry any of them.

Sex Comedy basics[116]

1. Potential lovers often hate each other at first or at least feel adversarial
2. Bachelor looks at marriage as a tragedy or at least unnecessary
3. Narratives revolve around the female as professional worker vs. man as professional. In their work there is an elemental war and they set out to destroy each other
4. Drinking will cause people to act like idiots – but often bring out truth
5. Disguise or masquerade is often part of the storyline
6. Reversions and inversions of natural order
7. Hierarchy of knowledge (he knows more than she (or vice versa) and the audience knows more than either of the characters (open storytelling)
8. Tricks, insults, embarrassments
9. Anti-marriage speech is often a staple
10. Great apartment, great clothes

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[116] McDonald, Tamara (2007) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*, Wallflower Press, UK pages 40-55

RADICAL ROMANTIC COMEDY

Brian Henderson[117] asserts that radical romantic comedies came into being because, by the early 1970s, the rom com genre had been rejected by society. Popular films were action/adventures and action/crime, violence was popular, and male-buddy narratives were popular. Roles for females had diminished. Henderson asserted "…there can be no romantic comedy without strong heroines." Since by this time, men and women were talking freely about why or why they did not have sex or want a lasting relationship or why or why not they wanted children, hearth and home – there was no tension to be found in a filmic narrative in the rom com genre.

In assessing the film narratives that found success with the audiences: The rom com began to examine the <u>very idea</u> of true love. Did it exist? Did it have positive attributes (if it did exist)? Is there a happily-ever-after? Think of the questions that the coming-of-age dramantic comedy *The Graduate* (1967) raised. The radical rom coms had much to do with the political and social upheavals of the late 1960s – and the self-absorption of Americans in the "me" generation. A hilarious example is a film *Starting Over* (1979) and more dramatic comedies like *Harold and Maude* (1971) and *Annie Hall* (1977) – think of all of Woody Allen's "nervous romances".

Radical Comedy Basics
1. Breaking of social conventions (divorce, children out of wedlock)

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[117] Henderson, Brian (1978) p.18 – get from McDonald book, cited in McDonald p 59

2. Acknowledgment that everyone lives a lie on some level

3. Emphasis on self (the "me" generation)

4. Search for meaning of life beyond just romance

5. Wishing the romance was "all" that was needed, but realizing it is not

6. Sexual frankness

NEO-TRADITIONAL ROMANTIC COMEDY

McDonald posits that this group of rom coms revolve around a shift in desires and understandings of the new generation. The narratives are about <u>wanting</u> romance, and are self-conscious - about referencing old romantic notions/films/stories/hopes and dreams. [118] (*Sleepless in Seattle* etc.)

There is a desire prevalent that romance <u>is</u> the answer, that <u>love does</u> make things better - that true love <u>does</u> exist. These films include, at times, new characters in the rom coms—the older generation – the ones who perhaps grew up in the radical rom com era who now want a second chance – a chance to believe in love. Writer/director Nancy Meyers has produced a few of these romances that focus on "older folks" –*Something's Gotta Give* (2003) and *It's Complicated* (2009) *The Holiday* (2006).

Neo-Traditional Romantic Comedy Basics (McDonald)

1. Backlash against the ideologies of the radical film alongside a maintenance of its visual surfaces

2. A mood of imprecise nostalgia – referring to older films/stories/songs to fill in character and mood

   a. *The Wedding Planner* (2001) (they meet at a classic outdoor film fest)

   b. *Valentine's Day* (2010) (old film festival with romance film on is set for older couple getting together

3. Vague self-referentialism

4. De-emphasizing sex, relationship is of greater importance

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[118] McDonald, Tamara (2007) *Romantic Comedy; Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre,* Wallflower Press, UK

5. Inexhaustible energy (pushing it)

6. Male wants marriage too

7. One does not have to suffer for love

8. Compromises are the way of the future

9. Love is transparent, all flaws can hang out and be accepted

SEX AND THE ROMANTIC COMEDY

Sex with one partner (monogamy comes where true love exists) is optimal and in most cases procreation is expectation. Duncan, in his book *Genre Screenwriting,* gives this advice to screenwriters: "...use the sexual situation for comedy... (for example) in *Jerry Maguire,* Jerry's first date with Dorothy is cleverly erotic because he's seducing her by putting her clothes back on.... It's more romantic to create sexual tension than to have the couple actually having sex. The most successful romantic comedies avoid the sex act altogether. Indeed, even kissing is treated as a big deal."[119]

References for Romantic Comedy Notes

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Websites:

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6. http://www.filmsite.org/afi10toptennoms8.html
7. http://www.filmsite.org/50greatestcomedies.html
8. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Romantic_comedy_films
9. http://www.imdb.com

List of Some Romantic Comedies (by decades)

1920s
IT (1927)
GIRL SHY (1924)
THE CAMERAMAN (1928)
THREE AGES (1923)
OUR HOSPITALITY (1923)

1930s
IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT (1934)
CITY LIGHTS (1931)
BRINGING UP BABY (1938)
MY MAN GODFREY (1936)
THE AWFUL TRUTH (1937)

1940s
HIS GIRL FRIDAY (1940)
THE PHILADELPHIA STORY (1940)
THE LADY EVE (1941)
THE PALM BEACH STORY (1942)
MR. AND MRS. SMITH (1941)

1950s
SABRINA (1954)
THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH (1955)
SOME LIKE IT HOT (1959)
GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES (1953)
HOW TO MARRY A MILLIONAIRE (1953)

1960s
BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S (1961)
THE APARTMENT (1960)
CHARADE (1963)
THE FACTS OF LIFE (1960)

1970s
ANNIE HALL (1977)
HAROLD AND MAUDE (1971
HEAVEN CAN WAIT (1978)
WHAT'S UP, DOC? (1972)
SAME TIME, NEXT YEAR (1978)

1980s

WHEN HARRY MET SALLY (1989)-
 TOOTSIE (1982)
COMING TO AMERICA (1988)
MOONSTRUCK (1987)
BROADCAST NEWS (1987)

1990s
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY (1998)
10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU (1999)
SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE (1993)
MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING (1997)
PRETTY WOMAN (1990)

2000s
WHAT WOMEN WANT (2000)
MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING (2002)
ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND (2004)
WEDDING CRASHERS (2005)
THE 40 YEAR OLD VIRGIN (2005)
THE PROPOSAL (2009)
KNOCKED UP (2007)
SOMETHING BORROWED (2011)

AMONG OTHER FILMS VIEWED:

IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT (1934) written by Samuel Hopkins Adams and Robert

Riskin

BRINGING UP BABY (1938) written by Dudley Nichols and Hagar Wilde

MY MAN GODFREY (1936) written by Morrie Ryskind and Eric Hatch based on a

novel by Eric Hatch

THE PHILADELPIA STORY (1940) written Donald Ogden Stewart, based on play

by Philip Barry

THE LADY EVE (1941***)*** written by Preston Sturges, story by Monckton Hoffee

HOW TO MARRY A MILLIONAIRE (1953) written by Nunally Johnson and Zoe Akins

THE APARTMENT (1960) written by Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond

PILLOW TALK (1959) written by Stanley Shapiro and Maurie Richlin

LOVER COME BACK (1961) written by Stanley Shapiro and Paul Henning

CHARADE (1963) written by Peter Stone

HOW TO MURDER YOUR WIFE (1965) written by George Axelrod

HEARTBREAK KID (1972) written by Neil Simon based on story by Bruce Jay Friedman

ANNIE HALL (1977) written by Woody Allen

GOODBYE GIRL (1977) written by Neil Simon

STARTING OVER (1979) written by James Brooks based on novel by Dan Wakefield

10 (1979) written by Blake Edwards

VICTOR/VICTORIA (1982) written by Blake Edwards and Hans Hoemburg

SPLASH (1984) written by Brian Grazer and Bruce Jay Friedman

MOONSTRUCK (1987) written by John Patrick Shanley

THE PRINCESS BRIDE (1987) written by William Goldman

BULL DURHAM (1988) written by Ron Shelton

ROXANNE (1987) written by Steve Martin, inspired by *Cyrano* by Edmond Rostand

WHEN HARRY MET SALLY (1989) written by Nora Ephron

SOMETHING ABOUT MARY (1998) written by Ed Decter and John J. Strauss

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE (1998) written by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard

MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING (2002) written by Nia Vardolas

KISSING JESSICA STEIN (2001) written by Heather Juergensen and Jennifer Westfeldt

BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY (2001) written by Helen Fielding

50 FIRST DATES (2004) written by George Wing

MUST LOVE DOGS (2005*)* written by Gary David Goldberg based on a novel by Claire Cook

40-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN (2005) written by Judd Apatow and Steve Carrell

WEDDING CRASHERS (2005) written by Steve Faber and Bob Fisher

ONCE (2006) written by John Carney

ENCHANTED (2007) written by Bill Kelly

THE PROPOSAL (2009) written by Peter Chiarelli

EASY A   (2010) written by Bert V Royal

SOMETHING BORROWED (2011) written by Jennie Snyder, based on novel by Emily Giffin

JULE SELBO

Representation:
Paradigm Agency, NYC
Lucy Stille
212-897 6400

SCREENPLAY COMMISSIONS:
** = produced to date*

MRS. CALIBAN – Paramount Pictures (1990) *adaptation; screenwriter*
*HARD PROMISES – Columbia Pictures, Michael Douglas, producer (1992)
screenwriter
*RUNAWAY FATHER – CBS (1992)
AGGIE – Walt Disney Studios, Goldie Hawn, producer (1994) *biography; screenwriter*
THE MATCHMAKER – 20th Century Fox Studio, Geena Davis, producer (1995)
screenwriter
DANCE - Columbia Pictures (1996) *rewrite; screenwriter*
*HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME Part Deux – Walt Disney Studios (2002)
screenwriter
*CINDERELLA TWO - Walt Disney Studios (2002) *screenwriter*
*LITTLE MERMAID, ARIEL'S BEGINNING - Walt Disney Studios (2004)
screenwriter
FAIRIES - Walt Disney Studios (2005) *original story; screenwriter*
GIRL WHO STRUCK OUT BABE RUTH – Belle Productions (2005, 2009);
screenwriter
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST IIII – Walt Disney (2006) - *story*
UGLY - Jim Henson Company, Lisa Henson, producer (2006); *screenwriter*
THOMASINA – Belle Productions – (2006) *screenwriter*
FROGGER – IPW Productions (2007) –*story*
WHEN BETTE MET MAE – Reel History Films (2011; in production)

MAJOR NETWORK COMMISSIONS

*TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE – (1985-87) George Romero's television series –
screenwriter
*RAISING MIRANDA - CBS (1988)
*LIFE GOES ON- Warner Brothers (1989-1992) *producer; screenwriter*
*PRISON STORIES: WOMEN ON THE INSIDE – HBO (1991) *screenwriter*
*HERCULES – Universal Pictures (1995) *pilot episode; screenwriter*
*SPACE; ABOVE AND BEYOND - Fox Studios (1995) *screenwriter*

YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES – ABC, George Lucas's Lucasfilm (1992-1996) *screenwriter; multiple episodes*
FLASH - Warner Brothers (1997) *screenwriter*
TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL (1998) *screenwriter*
MELROSE PLACE – Fox Studios – Aaron Spelling (1999) *supervising producer; screenwriter, multiple episodes*
ANGELA ANACONDA Cartoon Network (1999-2001) *screenwriter; multiple episodes*
SLEEPING BEAUTY – Walt Disney/ABC (2002) *screenwriter*
MTV'S UNDRESSED – MTV (2002-2004) *executive produced, over 120 episodes*
MAYA AND MIGUEL – PBS Television (2005-2006) *screenwriter; multiple episodes*
TIGGER DETECTIVE SERIES – Walt Disney Animation (2006) *pilot episode and series arc, screenwriter*
H. HEROES - Walt Disney Animation (2007) *screenwriter, multiple episodes*
ANGELINA BALLERINA – PBS and HIT Entertainment (2008-2009) *multiple episodes*
OLIVIA – Nick, Jr (2009-present) *multiple episodes*
POUND PUPPIES - Hasbro Network (2011- present)
*** = *produced*

GRAPHIC NOVEL

Destination Force - John Force Entertainment (2010-2011)

(OPTIONED/SPEC materials available on request)

AWARDS

WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA AWARD, best daytime drama writing (1985)
LOS ANGELES WOMEN'S PLAYWRITING AWARD, best play ISOLATE (1992)
HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME PART DEUX, winner for the BEST DVD Premiere Award (2002)
CINDERELLA TWO, nominated for BEST DVD Premiere Award (2003)
MTV UNDRESSED, nominated for the GLAAD Award (2004)

THEATRICAL PLAYS

LAKE GIRLS – Chosen for the Last Frontier Theatre Festival, Alaska (June 2008) Rehearsed reading, Ensemble Studio Theatre, NYC (November 2008), scheduled for production at Malibu Stage (2010)
OBJECTS - Grand Central Playhouse, Santa Ana, California (2004)
TWO NOT SO TALL WOMEN – Interact Theatre, Los Angeles (1996)
ISOLATE – Westbeth Theatre, NYC (1988), Theatre 6470, Los Angeles (1992); Winner of the Los Angeles Women in the Theatre Best Play Award
THE WEDDING - Actors Theatre of Louisville (Kentucky), One Act Plays (1988)
NO STRANGER – Annenberg Theatre, Philadelphia (1988)

SOULS ON ICE - Westbeth Theatre (staged reading), New York City (1990)
BOILING POINT – No Smoking Playhouse, New York City (
DR. FEDDER AND HIS MAGIC PLANT – Children's Theatre Tour, Louisville (1980)

SHORT STORIES

Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine; short stories (1980s)

PUBLICATIONS:

Selbo, Jule *(2011) CONSTRUCTIVE US OF FILM GENRE FOR THE SCREENWRITER; RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE Journal of Screenwriting* Volume 3 Number 1
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*under contract: **GENRE FOR SCREENWRITERS,*** Garth Gardner Publications

MEMBERSHIPS

Writers Guild of America (WGA)
Academy of TV Arts and Sciences
PEN USA
Popular Culture Association (PCA)
University Film and Video Association (UFVA)

SURVEY:

GENRE FOR SCREENWRITERS

"Genre movies are those commercial feature films which, through repetition and very little variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations and predictable conclusions."

"Film genre refers to the type of film story and essential elements of the type of film story that have a historical heritage known to attract and speak to a particular audience and are constantly evolving so as to bring newness to the form."

Please make a LARGE **X** next to your answers and send the document back to Jule Selbo at jselbo@fullerton.edu   THANKS for your time!!!

1. A filmgoer chooses the film he/she wishes to view primarily because of its marketed **genre** elements (i.e. horror or action or romance or sci fi etc.)
   TRUE - X
   a. FALSE

   XI. If a film does not deliver genre elements that a filmgoer expects (from trailers or other marketing, i.e. horror or action or romance or sci fi etc.) the filmgoer may feel disappointed on a conscious level.
   a. TRUE - X
   b. FALSE

   XII. If a film does not deliver genre elements that a filmgoer expects (from trailers or other marketing - i.e. horror or action or romance or sci fi etc) the filmgoer may feel disappointment on an UNCONSCIOUS level.
   a. TRUE - X
   b. FALSE

   XIII. As a screenwriter I definitely pinpoint the genre (or genres) that I will employ while I am in the planning stages of a new script.
   a. 100 % of the time - X
   b. Sometimes
   c. Rarely
   d. Never

XIV.   As a screenwriter, I feel the use of the technical aspects of film genre study will hinder my creativity.
   a.   TRUE
   b.   FALSE - X

XV. As a screenwriter, I feel that I know enough about the classic elements of various genres through a naturally accrued knowledge of film and literature and I don't feel the need (or desire) to study it on a more technical level for my work in feature film writing.
   a.   TRUE - X
   b.   FALSE

XVI.   As a screenwriter, I think I could benefit from a more technical understanding of the classic and evolutionary elements of various film genres as they pertain to feature film writing.
   a.   TRUE - X
   b.   FALSE

XVII.   As a screenwriter I believe that one should <u>not</u> take genre elements into consideration when planning or working on a new piece of writing for the feature film market.
   a.   TRUE
   b.   FALSE - X

XVIII.   As a screenwriter, I fear that employing classic genre elements into a screenplay will tend to make the story/screenplay cliché and predictable.
   a.   TRUE
   b.   FALSE - X

XIX.   The terms genre films and film genre are often used interchangeably, thus confusing the understanding of the terms for the screenwriter.
   a.   TRUE - X
   b.   FALSE

XX. As a screenwriter, I feel it is beneficial to take into consideration the classic genre elements in film genres and then manipulate or twist or turn upside down some elements to give a sense of newness to the film story while, at the same time, fulfilling the audience's expectations but also giving them a surprise.
   a.   TRUE - X
   b.   FALSE
   c.   I never take genre into consideration

XXI.   I believe that today (2009), those in control of Hollywood film production tend to green-light films that are clearly in a specific genre.
- a. TRUE - X
- b. FALSE

XXII.   I believe that Hollywood film producers choose a certain number of films in various genres to fill out a yearly slate of production, knowing the audience preference for each genre.
- a. TRUE - X
- b. FALSE

XXIII.   I believe that Hollywood film producers do not take film genre into consideration when planning their production slate, only the quality of the script/actors/directors presented to them.
- a. TRUE
- b. FALSE - X

XXIV.   I believe that audiences are more savvy today about film genres than ever before.
- a. TRUE - X
- b. FALSE

XXV.   I believe that films such as SCREAM (Kevin Williamson) and UNFORGIVEN (David Webb Peoples) can attribute part of their successes to the fact that the audience understand/expects certain things about the horror or western genres and enjoys the self-comment and reflexive nature of the specific genre elements within the story – as well as the plots of the films.
- a. TRUE - X
- b. FALSE
- c. I have never seen the films or read the screenplays for SCREAM or UNFORGIVEN

XXVI.   I believe that certain economic and political climates will tend to raise the desirability for a certain film genre among the movie-going audience.
- a. TRUE - X
- b. FALSE

XXVII.   I believe that a screenwriter can be original and push the envelope in story and theme and character while still employing classic (or evolved) elements of film genre.
- a. TRUE - X
- b. FALSE

XXVIII. As a screenwriter, when starting a new project and knowing what film genre (s) I am going to employ, I would investigate more about the classic elements of my chosen genre (i.e. the seven steps of romance, the "final girl" element in slasher/horror, the garden vs. the desert/individual vs. community in westerns, expectations of the mystery genre etc.) and expect that the research might help evolve story and character elements.
   a. TRUE
   b. FALSE

XXIX. As a screenwriter, I am comfortable working with the idea of film genre knowing that it is an ever-evolving element in screenwriting and that the work I may do could adjust/alter/shed new light on a specific film genre and contribute to its further evolution.
   a. TRUE - X
   b. FALSE