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Cold Water

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of practice-led research in the form of a full-length script for a feature film; plus a 6000-word essay (exegesis). A summary of the script is as follows:

Heidi Walters often thinks with her heart and not with her head. Semi-estranged from her family, 25-year-old Heidi is living in Queenstown and championing causes important to her. However, a sudden job loss and the threat of eviction causes Heidi to seek out a new source of income quickly. Putting her values aside, Heidi charms Medella Wellness and Research Clinic director Dr Kate Morgan into giving her a job, even though she is concerned by the clinic's significant class divide.

Heidi also finds herself increasingly attracted to Kate's property developer husband Oscar. As Heidi begins to suspect there's trouble in the marriage the pair teeters on the edge of an affair. At the same time, a suspicious phone call leads Heidi to believe there may be something more sinister going on behind the scenes at the clinic.

Heidi confronts Kate, who admits she has developed a procedure which can transfer a terminal illness from one person to another. Her justification is that Oscar is dying. The only matches she's discovered to save him are a 3-year-old boy with cancer, Stanley, and Heidi. Devastated by this news, Heidi's feelings for Oscar escalate. When he tells Heidi he wants to spend his last months with her, Heidi is compelled to offer to give up her life in order to save his. However, Heidi discovers this was Kate and Oscar's plan all along. She puts together a plan to stop them and save Stanley's life at the same time.

The script is framed by an Exegesis which is a 6000-word essay on the subject of:

- a) The genre of the script
- b) The development process from synopsis to second draft

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Amy Johnstone
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Exegesis

Cold Water

Introduction – Love and lies

From the dramatic irony used by Sophocles in his tragedy *Oedipus Rex*; to Lady Macbeth manipulating her husband into committing murder in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; and Carol having to decide between her lover and her daughter in the eponymous film; audiences have been enthralled by tragic romances, and stories of betrayal and manipulation from the time of the Ancient Greeks through to the present day.

What is it about these types of stories which makes them so compelling to watch? Is it a touch of schadenfreude – deriving pleasure from the misfortune of others; or a form of escapism – watching complex situations that we hope to never find ourselves in?

At the core of all these stories is “drama”, relatable characters audiences can identify with, feel empathy for and try to understand. We watch how they react in moments of tension, tragedy and conflict from the comfort of our seats, and can use them as a vessel to explore ethics, morals and values. What would we do if we were in their place?

In this exegesis, I will be comparing and contrasting five texts, along with the second draft of my script *Cold Water*, to better understand how they deal with common core stories and themes; and how they fit into the zeitgeist of women in film.

Core story

Cold Water is the story of a woman whose values are tested when she enters into a problematic relationship.

Synopsis

25-year-old Northern Southlander Heidi Walters is a woman of strong convictions. She often thinks with her heart and not with her head - even if it has a detrimental effect on herself or the people around her. Semi-estranged from her family, Heidi is happy living in Queenstown and championing causes important to her. However, a sudden job loss and the threat of eviction causes Heidi to seek out a new source of income quickly.

Putting her values aside, Heidi charms Medella Wellness and Research Clinic director Dr Kate Morgan into giving her a job after volunteering to give blood to one of her research projects. Despite Kate's efforts to show Heidi that she is making a difference in the lives of others, she is soon dissatisfied with the role and is concerned by the significant class divide in the people treated in the 'wellness' and 'research' areas of the clinic.

Heidi also finds herself increasingly attracted to Kate's property developer husband Oscar. Kate encourages Oscar and Heidi to spend time together, and as Heidi begins to suspect there's trouble in the marriage the pair teeters on the edge of an affair. At the same time, a suspicious phone call made by a former patient of Kate's causes Heidi to believe there may be something more sinister going on behind the scenes at the Medella Clinic.

After going undercover to find out more information, Heidi confronts Kate, who admits she has developed a procedure which can transfer a terminal illness from one person to another. Her justification is that Oscar is dying. She hasn't been able to perform the procedure to save him yet because of his rare blood type. The only matches she's discovered are a 3-year-old boy with cancer, Stanley, and Heidi. Devastated by this news, Heidi's feelings for Oscar escalate. When he tells Heidi he wants to spend his last months with her instead of Kate, Heidi is compelled to offer to give up her life in order to save his.

But when Heidi discovers this has been Kate and Oscar's plan all along, she stays calm and puts together a plan to stop them and save Stanley's life at the same time.

World

Queenstown is a jewel in New Zealand's crown. It's a region of vast natural beauty, but with an increasing population comes increasing pressure. In this script, some of the societal problems which are becoming more of an issue in present day New Zealand have been amplified to illustrate the divide between classes. Homelessness is rife and people are struggling to survive from payday to payday, which is driving them towards desperate measures. Landlords are taking advantage of this desperation and are turning any spare space they can into expensive accommodation; while development is threatening to encroach upon the habitat of local fauna.

To illustrate this, the Medella Wellness and Research Clinic is a physical representation of the divide between rich and poor, with the wealthy and privileged treated in the 'wellness' area of the clinic, while the downtrodden and desperate are seen in the 'research' area.

While it is set in the present day, there is an advance in medical technology which acts as a device to drive the action of the story. Kate has developed a procedure which allows a person's terminal disease/illness to be transferred to another human - known as a volunteer - effectively curing them. It's a delicate balance - like Indiana Jones replacing the Golden Idol with a bag of sand in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Kasdan, 1981). If the switch isn't seamless everything will fall apart. Primarily, the two need to be the same blood type for the procedure to be successful. Instead of getting symptoms of the disease themselves, the illness is concentrated and slowly floods their brain, until they die peacefully in six to eight weeks. The only side effect is it feels like cold water pulsing through their body.

Theme

Intention

There are two major themes that I wanted to explore while writing this script - *Who deserves to live?*; and *How far would you go to save the life of somebody you love?*.

When in fourth form (Year 10), our class was presented with an existential brain teaser. It was along the lines of this: The last six people left on Earth are stuck together in a bunker. There's a child, a mother, an elite sports person, a teacher, a gay person, and an elderly person. However, there's only enough supplies for five of them to survive. Who should be the one to sacrifice their life? Of course, there were many philosophical answers bandied about by curious 14-year-olds – the elite sports person should live because of their physical prowess; the elderly person should die because they're nearing the end of their natural life anyway for example. Ultimately the conclusion was that there is no answer – no-one has the right to decide who lives and who dies, as every life has value. This is something that's always stuck with me.

However, to increase the dramatic tension, this concept was juxtaposed with the question of *How far would you go to save the life of someone you love?* Although Kate's actions are morally reprehensible, when you peel back the layers to her core objective – doing anything she can to save her husband's life – the audience will be able to understand the desperation she's been driven to. To a degree it's the wrong thing for the right reasons.

During the first draft workshop of the script my peers also responded strongly to the Heidi and Oscar relationship line and suggested I should add more beats to this. I thought it would be interesting to explore having someone who is ill and gradually declining in health as a romantic lead. Because of this I tried to include moments of tenderness between Oscar and Heidi; such as her holding his trembling hand and helping him back into the house when his legs gave way after they met at the development site. I wanted these to be genuine moments, instead of something deliberate and manipulative by Oscar.

Audience

With events such as the Donald Trump presidential election; the Brexit referendum win; and continuing racial tensions; every day it seems like we are living in a more divided world. It would be my hope that after being confronted by the clear line between those who are privileged and those who are not in the world of Cold Water, audiences members would be compelled to do something to help those who are struggling and stop them being taken advantage of if they know something is wrong – instead of just turning their back like the barman in the opening sequence.

I would want the audience to feel Kate's invention and treatment of people like they are disposable to be reprehensible. My only concern is that by having Stanley, an innocent, saved by the treatment at the climax of the film some people would see the procedure as something positive. My intention of that scene is that it's a form of retribution for Kate and Oscar. By performing the procedure on themselves it's a punishment that is fitting of the crimes and betrayals they have committed and is an act of penance.

Protagonist

Linda Aronson states that in a conventional narrative *"the story cannot start until the protagonist is identified and shown in their normal life (in their normality), and the story cannot move forward until a disturbance fractures the protagonist's normality and forces them into a course of action"*.

In Cold Water's first draft, Heidi was a 35-year-old woman in deep despair. She hated her job, was drowning in debt, and was a lost soul within a large non-descript metropolis.

In a moment of weakness, Heidi climbed up on the rail of a bridge and teetered over the edge. She had life ahead of her, but she wasn't sure she wanted it. It was here that she met Kate, who drew her in to the world of the clinic, performing the necessary medical testing in an underhand manner to discover she was a match for Oscar.

She also offered Heidi a job within the clinic without prompting.

Her escalating affair with Oscar was more emotional than physical and it was also something that he initiated. Their meetings happened more because of chance, rather than intention. Oscar's betrayal also came at the climax and was much more brutal. However, the main discussion point in the first draft workshop was about whether this version of Heidi deserved that betrayal. It was suggested Heidi wasn't the architect of her own fate – she needed to become the one who got herself into the core conflict and out of it again.

It was suggested Heidi be younger. This was an easy change; however her personality development was more intricate. The feedback suggested that the concept of Kate's attempts to thwart death and Heidi's escalating relationship with Oscar were still an interesting place to build the story. This meant Heidi would still need to be manipulated into offering up her life to save Oscar's without being suicidal.

With this in mind I read biographies on English suffragette Emily Davison, who threw herself in front of the King's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913; and American activist Rachel Corrie, who was tragically killed by an Israeli armoured bulldozer while protesting against the demolition of a Palestinian family's home in 2003.

With this as a starting point, I wanted to construct Heidi as being someone with strong values and conviction. She's stubborn, argumentative and radical, and would do anything to stand up for what she believes in.

Throughout the text Heidi reveals more about her nature – jumping in front of a car to save her dog; chaining herself to a tree to stop it being chopped down and protesting development near an endangered birds' nesting site. She has become an act first, think later character, which helps her drive the plot forward, while also giving Kate an opportunity to manipulate her, as she takes advantage of Heidi's compulsion to be the hero and stop others from suffering.

Stakes

The stakes for Heidi are extremely high. She gets to a point where she is willing to sacrifice her own life to save another. However, this is built towards throughout the script.

Initially, Heidi's livelihood and home were at stake – as she loses her job early in the script. She must put her ethics and personal feelings about the merits of aesthetic medicine aside to take on her new job. Then, when she begins to uncover some discrepancies about what is happening within the research centre, she puts her new job on the line by pretending to be a different clinic employee and visiting one of Kate's former patients in prison.

On an emotional level the largest stake is having her heart broken by falling in love with a man who has a terminal illness. She also must go against her core values, which are very strong, to initiate a relationship with a married man – something she is against morally.

Arc

The main change in Heidi's character is that she becomes less fiery, more methodical and starts to think about the consequences of her actions throughout the script. For example, when she discovers Oscar's betrayal, she sits on it and comes up with a plan for revenge that will also help someone else instead of confronting him or Kate about it straight away.

Kate does force this change. When she is trying to stop Heidi from leaving her job at the clinic, she teaches her to be less judgmental by explaining the history behind one of the patients who treated Heidi with disrespect. She also has an answer for all of Heidi's challenges about the ethics of aesthetic medicine, which leads to Heidi defending the clinic and its practices when she meets up with her former colleague Rose at the fundraiser.

Antagonist

According to Linda Aronson, “*antagonists need not be the protagonist’s enemy... antagonists always cause trouble or change for the protagonist. Their job is to create a conflict situation, often a major life change for the protagonist, therefore driving the plot*”. She also states a conventional three-act film has only one protagonist, but two or more antagonists, “*this is because there has to be one antagonist in the relationship line and at least one antagonist in the action line*”.

The primary antagonist on the action line in *Cold Water* is Dr Kate Morgan. Once Kate discovers Heidi has the potential to save her husband’s life, she begins to manipulate Heidi in ways that aren’t apparent until near the conclusion of the script and it’s these manipulations which drive the plot.

For a start she challenges and changes Heidi’s views on the aesthetic medicine industry. She introduces Heidi to Stanley to take advantage of Heidi’s sympathetic nature. She encourages Heidi and Oscar to spend time together and preys on Heidi’s need to be the hero to get what she wants.

By the end of the first draft of *Cold Water*, Kate was more of a black and white villain. Along with wanting to save Oscar, she was motivated by money and performed the procedure much more frequently. The most confronting example of this was regarding Stanley. Initially, he was the son of wealthy parents who were paying Kate to cure his illness. To do this, a young boy was taken from a playground to perform the procedure and later dumped – left to die.

However, to make Kate a more three-dimensional character it became clear that her moral justification was more of a grey area. She needed to be driven by love. She almost plays into the adage of ‘keep your friends close and your enemies closer’. Instead of being an ‘enemy’ Heidi is someone of extreme value to Kate.

She is also willing to walk away from her relationship with Oscar once Heidi has volunteered to go through with the procedure. However, this is another manipulative move as she had arranged this with Oscar and they planned on reuniting after Heidi’s death.

Aronson gives an example of a relationship line antagonist using James Bond as an example. “*Bond’s relationship line will involve a beautiful female antagonist who usually starts out as his enemy but ends up his lover*”. The reverse can be said about Oscar, the relationship line antagonist, as she falls in love with him and then ends up as an enemy once Heidi discovers his deep betrayal. However, it is also his personality and affection for her that makes her abandon her principles in the first place, not just Kate’s manipulations.

The Main Dramatic Question

It was never my intention to have Oscar and Heidi’s relationship as the central driving force of the story, however after the first draft workshop it became clear that my peers were more invested and interested in this relationship line than that of Heidi and Kate.

Therefore, in *Cold Water*, the audience is waiting to see if Heidi and Oscar will be together. It is their relationship, its obstacles and Heidi’s need to save him which generates the main suspense of the plot. Therefore, the setting up section of the story ends when Heidi loses her job and goes to the Medella Clinic to sign up for the sleep trials. It is here she first meets Oscar and encounters the strange world of the clinic.

The moment of truth in *Cold Water* is when Heidi confronts Kate about what she’s learnt from Khalil and Leah, and Kate tells Heidi about Oscar’s terminal illness. Once Heidi knows about this, things can never be the same again.

The end section of the script begins following the second act climax – when Heidi overhears Oscar’s phone conversation with Kate and suspects he has betrayed her. From here, the audience is waiting to see what Heidi’s reaction will be.

The dramatic question is then answered during the climax.

After baiting Oscar and Kate by pretending she is still willing to go through with the procedure, Heidi rebuts Oscar's protestations of love by saying to him "You just love what I can do for you". His reaction is to restrain her, and the audience knows for sure that Heidi has been betrayed and that there is no future for them as a couple.

The Main Character Question

In *Cold Water*, Heidi's inner journey is values driven. At the beginning of the script she is highly opinionated with strong moral views which she thinks are superior to those of others.

Through dialogue, the audience discovers that Heidi has been self-righteous since she was a child. She caused her parents financial hardship over a backyard tree; caused an accident by jumping in front of a car to save her dog; and illegally rescued factory-farmed hens. The problem isn't what Heidi is wanting to achieve by doing all these things – it's how she goes about it. She doesn't consider the consequences of her actions and jumps into doing something that could potentially be resolved in a less chaotic manner.

Two moments of self-righteousness in the set-up of the story is when she defiantly disrupts the real estate agent's property viewing with her one-woman protest, even though he calmly explains he is working to solve the problem she has taken issue with. She also shows her insolence during her first meeting with Kate after being rejected for the sleep trials by belittling the type of work she does in the aesthetic medicine industry.

It is this internal need to be a saviour that gnaws away at Heidi throughout the script, culminating in her offer to save Oscar's life at the expense of her own.

A major turning point for Heidi is when she agrees to work at the Medella Clinic in the ‘wellness’ area which deals with the aesthetic medicine clients. It is a point of no return because it goes against her values and puts her out of her comfort zone.

Heidi going to visit Khalil in prison is also a significant turning point because she pretends to be something she’s not – it’s the first time she outright lies. At the beginning of the script she was ultimately an honest person, not being able to lie to her boss about leaving early to attend the protest for example. Every other time she decides to bend the truth – such as asking Kate if she can attend the fundraiser with her and missing the bus in order to spend more time with Oscar – she draws on the truth as part of her reasoning.

This also foreshadows the turning point at the second act climax when she learns of Oscar’s betrayal. Instead of leaving the relationship or confronting Oscar, she chooses to pretend everything is okay and their plan is still going ahead in order to record Kate confessing how her procedure works in the climax of the script.

The dilemma Heidi ultimately faces therefore is to decide to put herself and her own well-being first. In the final scene, Heidi and Leah are working together to help the homeless and those who are less fortunate than themselves by seeking them out and directing them towards a new social housing enterprise which has been established on Oscar’s land. Instead of putting her life at risk to save one person Heidi is using her skills, compassion and empathy to save many people and create hope for a brighter future.

COMPARATIVE STUDY

Primary texts

After the Wedding, drama, 2019

An Education, drama, 2009

Body Heat, crime, drama, romance, thriller, 1981

Rebecca, drama, mystery, romance, thriller, 1940

Never Let Me Go, drama, romance, sci-fi, 2009

Although the stories told through the creative works are vastly different, they all share common elements such as themes, structure and core stories.

In *An Education*, Jenny is a 16-year-old schoolgirl in London, 1962. She's bright, but bored, and is easily seduced by the much older David, who gives her a taste of the cultured life she craves. But it is all too good to be true.

After the Wedding sees Isabel, who runs an orphanage in India, invited by a potential donor to New York. When media company owner Theresa meets Isabel she insists she attends her daughter's wedding so they can get to know each other better before they conclude the deal. However, when Isabel reluctantly attends the wedding she is confronted with her past - and her future can never be the same again.

During a Florida heatwave, *Body Heat's* sleazy lawyer protagonist Ned Racine falls in lust with married woman Matty Walker. He pursues her and they start an affair, culminating in his idea to murder Matty's husband to get him out of the way. However, that was her plan all along.

Never Let Me Go is set in an alternate reality, where a medical breakthrough in the 1950s has enabled the human lifespan to increase significantly. It centres around Kathy and her two friends Tommy and Ruth, as they find out they are destined to be donors who will give away their organs one by one until they die, or "complete".

They have heard rumours about how to defer their fate, and are separated, then brought back together by this notion.

In *Rebecca*, the protagonist is unnamed. Simply “I” in the script, the audience meets a shy 20-year-old woman in Monte Carlo. Working as a paid companion to a garish middle-aged woman, she is quickly swept away by handsome widower Maxim de Winter. On becoming Mrs de Winter, “I” finds herself living in the shadow of Maxim’s deceased first wife Rebecca, and she must learn to assert herself as the new head of the household, while the mystery of Rebecca’s death lingers over the couple.

Genre

The Internet Movie Database (imdb.com), categorises all the works as belonging to the drama genre, which is a reason why there is such tension between the protagonists and the antagonists, or other supporting characters. There needs to be conflict to force the characters to change.

“Each genre imposes conventions on story design... The audience knows these conventions and expects to see them fulfilled. Consequently, the choice of genre sharply determines and limits what’s possible within a story, as its design must envision the audience’s knowledge and anticipations.” (McKee, 2010)

Although each story falls into different subgenres, the constraints of the drama genre are a common thread.

The Script Lab website defines a drama film as *“a genre that relies on the emotional and relational development of realistic characters”*. It states that *“dramatic themes play a large role in the plot. Often, these dramatic themes are taken from intense, real life issues.”* (thescriptlab.com)

The truth slowly unravels as the story unfolds, and each of the texts deals with a human struggle in a way which is relatable to the audience.

“*The protagonist in the drama is an everyman or an everywoman. He or she has no extraordinary powers or talents; the everyman protagonist should feel “ordinary” to the audience.*” (Selbo, 2014)

I think this is true of all the protagonists who feature in the five texts. They are realistic characters, some of which have held up as cinema greats for decades. Audience members can understand how it feels to find yourself out of your depth (*Rebecca*), to be betrayed, used or manipulated (*An Education*, *Body Heat*, *Never Let Me Go*), or have ghosts from your past come back to haunt you (*After the Wedding*).

Heidi is also an everyman. She has flaws such as stubbornness, self-righteousness and insolence; however she cares for the world around her and supports the people she loves – Oscar when she discovers he is unwell; and Leah, when it is revealed she is homeless.

Moral spectrums

Another of the themes *Cold Water* has in common with these films is self-interest versus morality.

They discuss themes about right and wrong; and what compels a character to change in a way audience members don’t expect them to be capable of in the set-up of the story. Like Ned Racine says to Matty Walker in *Body Heat* when they’re discussing their plan to kill Matty’s husband, “*The man’s gonna die for no reason but we want him dead.*” (Kasdan, 1981)

In Jeanette Catsoulis’s critical review of Bart Freundlich’s *After the Wedding*, a remake of the 2006 Danish film of the same name, she cites the morality of Theresa’s actions as one of the reasons why the film falls flat. Theresa invites Isabel from India to New York under false pretenses. While she offers to make a large financial contribution towards the orphanage Isabel works at, she cuts their meeting short and manipulates Isabel into attending her daughter’s wedding.

While there, Isabel realises Theresa's husband is her former partner and the bride is the daughter she thought they put up for adoption 21 years ago. This was all premeditated, although Theresa initially denies it. Then, Theresa makes it a condition of giving the money to Isabel that she stays in New York. This is because Theresa is dying, and she wants Isabel to replace her as a mother figure in her family. *"The movie juxtaposes rich and poor, selfish and selfless, motherhood and its substitute. But its characterisations are hollow and its ethics questionable, the cruel manipulation of Isabel softened and, ultimately, forgiven."* (Catsoulis, 2019)

Another takeaway from the film for her is that it is *"a movie that openly admires the casual ability of the rich to purchase whatever they want"*. This is something I was wary of when writing *Cold Water*, so chose not to focus on the people whose lives were saved by Kate's procedure. Instead I wanted to explore the morality of it through Heidi's investigation, protestations and Kate's justifications.

Another similarity *After the Wedding*, *An Education*, *Never Let Me Go* and *Rebecca* have with *Cold Water* is that they have strong female characters representing both sides of this moral spectrum.

In *An Education*, Jenny has Miss Stubbs, a compassionate teacher trying to help her recognise the danger she's getting herself into. *Never Let Me Go* has Miss Emily, Hailsham's stern head guardian, who raises children, eventually for slaughter; while Mrs de Winter is beaten down by the resentful housekeeper Mrs Danvers in *Rebecca*.

Particularly, Miss Emily and Mrs Danvers are similar types of characters. They are authoritarian, middle-aged women, much older than the protagonist, with an air of menace. They are the personification of the old-maid archetype. However, this doesn't make them any less interesting as characters, as their motivations prove to be just as complex as the protagonists.

Never Let Me Go's, themes explore what it means to be human. Kathy and her friends are clones raised in a private school purely to use their organs for transplants.

The moral implications of the donation programme are discussed by Miss Emily when Tommy and Kathy confront her as adults, pleading for a deferral from donating because of their love for each other.

Miss Emily says: *"You have to understand. Cancer used to kill almost everyone. Now it kills no one at all. (Beat.) You see, it's not an ethical issue. It's just about the way we are. If you ask people to return to darkness, the days of lung cancer, and breast cancer, and motor neurone disease... (She shrugs.) They simply say no". (Garland, 2009)*

This implies, to me, that in the world of *Never Let Me Go* everyone understood there was no difference between the lives of the donor children and the people they were created to save, but the reality of this was simply ignored.

Women in film

When I began developing the outline for this script, it was also important to me to create a story which featured a female protagonist and antagonist, as studies show there's still a lack of representation on our screens.

While praising Kathleen Turner's performance in *Body Heat*, Roger Ebert states: *"Women are rarely allowed to be bold and devious in the movies; most directors are men, and they see women as goals, prizes, enemies, lovers and friends, but rarely as protagonists"*.

Although this article was published in 1997, recent studies suggest that the female protagonist is still a rarity more than 20 years later – even if they're popular at the box office.

In Center for the Study of Women in Television in Film director Dr Martha M. Lauzen's study *It's a Man's (Celluloid) World: Portrayals of Female Characters in the 100 Top Films of 2017*, she finds only 24% of the films featured female protagonists, compared to males making up 58% of the roles. The final 18% featured ensembles as protagonists. The study also reports 24% was a decline of 5% from the previous year.

This is particularly interesting when taking into account an article on the *New York Post* website in 2018 outlines a study by Creative Artists Agency and Shift7 which has concluded that "*female-led films out perform others at the box office*". Of the 350 top-grossing films released between 2014 and 2017, "*only 105 starred a woman as a main character... but those 105 films grossed more than the [other] 245 together*".

Money aside, this shows audiences want to see women in lead roles. However, those roles still need to be multifaceted, not just for the protagonist – but for other characters such as the antagonist.

Complex characters

In Eliana Dockterman's *Time* article *Is Gone Girl Feminist or Misogynist?*; the author praises *Gone Girl* author Gillian Flynn. "*Very few writers are creating complex, evil female characters with interesting motivations. Gillian Flynn is. It seems sexist to assert that female characters ought to be, at their core, loving and good*". While Kate's actions in *Cold Water* do come from a place of loving, I wanted her motivations to be thought-provoking to an audience and be an interesting twist when they are finally revealed – like the character of Matty in *Body Heat*.

To Lawrence Kasdan's credit, *Body Heat* is a movie which deserves a second viewing. When you first watch it, you see what's happening through Ned's eyes, however when the ending is revealed it's clear that Matty was the one pulling the strings all along.

As an antagonist she forces him to change from a man of dubious morals to a murderer. He's motivated by lust, but she also preys on his manly pride. For example, in this scene when they are discussing the reality of their plan to commit murder.

Matty: *I've been thinking, too... I think we should give it up. We haven't done anything criminal, yet.*

Racine: *It's not too late to back out.*

As their conversation continues, he begins to think she is insinuating he won't be able to pull it off. Although she protests, this encourages him more.

Racine: *That'll be it then. Nothing will stop us.*

Matty: *Is that what you really want? Are you sure?*

Racine: *Yeah. I wasn't before, but I am now.*

As Ebert asserts in his review of the film, "*Body Heat is a movie about a woman who gets a man to commit murder for her. It is important that the man not be a dummy; he needs to be smart enough to think of the plan himself*".

This means that he is the one driving the plot forward, which is a commonality with Cold Water. Heidi must be the one who thinks she is initiating the affair with Oscar and to decide to sacrifice her life for him to make her an active protagonist – even though this has been suggested to her by Kate through the subtext of the dialogue.

Conclusions

The five texts show that it is possible to create complex, engaging female characters who are able to stand up for what they believe in, discover hard truths, and become stronger people through their experiences – both good and bad – which is pivotal in drama.

In a New York Times review of *Rebecca* by Frank S. Nugent, March 29, 1940, digitised online at nytimes.com, he says “*Rebecca stands or falls on the ability of the book’s “I” to escape caricature. She was humiliatingly, embarrassingly, mortifyingly shy, a bit on the dowdy side, socially unaccomplished, a little dull*”.

Although he does concede “I” is “sweet”, his initial view of the character is somewhat harsh. She is a twenty-year-old woman still finding her place in the world and her confidence grows as she responds to the situations presented to her.

“I’s” most triumphant moment in *Rebecca* is a powerful exchange with Mrs Danvers. The scene direction states: “*I” looks up as Mrs Danvers comes in. Her face is grimly set, as though she were ready for a fight.*” After asking Mrs Danvers to finally remove all of Rebecca’s things, which is met with an expression of anger, “*“I” standing by the desk. All the courage, all the determination that she possesses are now in play. Mrs Danvers comes up to her*”.

Mrs Danvers: *But those are Mrs de Winter’s things.*

“I” (with quiet determination): *I am Mrs de Winter now.*

This is a far cry from the “I” we encountered at the beginning of the text.

Perhaps the most haunting film is *Never Let Me Go*. As film critic Roger Ebert states in his review on rogerebert.com, “*One of the most dangerous concepts of human society is that children believe what they are told*”.

One of the most unsettling things about *Never Let Me Go* is how so many of the characters in the text accept their fate without question. Ebert believes “*Never Let Me Go would have made a serious error in ramping up contrived melodrama toward some sort of science-fiction showdown*”.

At the end of the script, Kathy supports Tommy as he completes, then as she drives along an empty road, her voiceover states, *“I’ve been given my notice now. My first donation is in six weeks”*. Her eyes fill with tears and she continues, *“What I’m not sure about is whether our lives have been so different from the lives of the people we save. We all complete... and none of us really understand what we’ve lived through. Or feel we’ve had enough time”*. (Garland, 2009)

Antagonist Ruth also manipulates Kathy’s relationship with Tommy because of her own fears. When Kathy, Ruth and Tommy take a trip together as adults to the country, Ruth confesses she kept Kathy and Tommy apart.

Ruth states: *“It should have been you two together. I always knew it, as far back as I can remember. But I kept you apart. It wasn’t just because of the rumours about deferrals. It was because I was jealous. You had real love and I didn’t.”*

It is a sad story, especially knowing that the characters have very little time together and they were kept apart for the wrong reasons. The themes also give the reader the opportunity to think about the moral implications of cloning and forced organ donations, and draw their own conclusions, rather than preaching.

As the technological advance Kate has made in *Cold Water* is speculative, one of the script’s sub-genres could be classified as “low budget science fiction”. However, it was important for the details of this technology to stay minimal, so they don’t overpower the emotion of the story. Like *Never Let Me Go*, the technology is not at the forefront of the story, it is in the background as a device. It is the reactions to it and the vulnerabilities attached to the use of this technology which drives the characters’ journeys forward.

Rolling Stone reviewer Peter Travers, at rollingstone.com states *“An Education is remarkable for the traps it doesn’t fall into. Jenny, for all her naïve impulses, isn’t a victim. She thrills to the concerts, jazz clubs and chic restaurants on David’s merry-go-round. She doesn’t see anything devious in David or his pals...”*

This is perhaps one of the most important conclusions I want the audience to make about Heidi – that she, too, is not a victim. Even though her love story ends with betrayal, she becomes a stronger person through her experiences, both good and bad. When Heidi starts to become suspicious about some of the practices at the clinic, she actively tries to find answers without jumping to conclusions. She pretends to be in a different role at the clinic to get information from a prisoner who has been a patient of Kate's; and uses technology to her advantage to set a trap once she has the whole story and not before.

However, she does stumble along the way. In *An Education*, Jenny is seduced not only by David, but by the lifestyle he can offer her. And, like Jenny, when Heidi finds out Kate is doing something illegal, she initially brushes it aside because of her feelings for Oscar.

However, when Oscar's true colours are revealed near the conclusion of the script Heidi is strong enough not to be devastated and suspended in self-pity. She finds the calmness and rational thinking within herself she needs to overcome the threat Kate and Oscar present to her; which she was missing at the beginning of the script.

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