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Rosie's Pigeons

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A thesis + exegesis submitted to Auckland University of
Technology in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Creative Writing.

This thesis consists of a full-length screenplay for a feature film. A summary of the screenplay is as follows:

A plucky twelve year old Rosie lives in a homeless tent city with her mother Mary. Mary's ex-military, PTSD sufferer and an alcoholic. Rosie keeps Mary safe, until one day Mary enters a derelict building and disappears.

Rosie goes searching for mum. Inside is an eerie underworld - a woman is locked in a loft Rosie can't unlock. On the rooftop Rosie discovers pigeons. Their keeper, Tata, is a mysterious fancier. Tata allows Rosie to stay as long as she helps with her pigeons.

Rosie's mission is uncovered by Tata's son Sam - a predatory pimp who keeps women under lock and key. He orders Rosie to do as he says. Rosie becomes a cog in a machine of drug trafficking. To get the keys she endures Sam's drunk advances. Rosie finally frees the woman, but it's not Mary. Sam reveals that Mary is dead.

Tata takes Rosie under her wing. Rosie sets up Sam and he's gone. Things settle, until Tata orders to prepare the room for a new captive. Rosie has to decide - return to the streets or accept Tata's world.

Rosie chooses to leave, but not before freeing the pigeons and setting their cages on fire.

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

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

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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.’

Tamara Azizian _____

EXEGESIS

by Tamara Azizian

The following is a two-part essay providing an in-depth exploration of the script 'Rosie's Pigeons'. The first part will elaborate on the genre-specific expectations. The second part will focus on the mechanics of the script itself.

Part 1

In this part I'll identify the genres of 'Rosie's Pigeons'. I will then provide historical background, as well as analysis, of contemporary audience's expectations of these genres. Finally, I'm going to discuss specific genre elements as they apply to this story.

Genre and Model Films

Rosie's Pigeons is a Missing Person/Crime Mystery with a Tween Coming-of-Age at the heart of it, Indie Film. Presented with a quality of an Adult Fairy Tale. Additionally influenced by Neorealism.

Model films are:

- Winter's Bone.

Rosellini, A & Madigan, A. (Producers), Granik, D. (Director). (2010). Winter's Bone.

[Motion Picture]. United States: Roadside Attractions.

- Nobody Knows.

Koreeda, H. (Producer & Director). (2004). *Nobody Knows* [Motion Picture]. Japan: Cinequanon, IFC Films.

- *Chop Shop*.

Brody, J., Muskat, L., Turteltaub, M. (Producers), Bahrani, R. (Director). (2007) *Chop Shop* [Motion Picture]. United States: Big Beach Films. Axiom Films. Koch-Lorber Films.

- *Conducta*. (Behavior)

Prendes, I., Moya, A., Ortega, J., Leon, D. (Producers), Daranas, E. (Director). (2014). *Conducta* [Motion Picture]. Cuba: RTV Comercial, Instituto Cubano del Artee Industrias Cinematográficos

Coming-of-Age and Missing Person/Crime Mystery genres have been recognised by the industry.

When analysing the statistics of popularity in movie genres in North America - 1995 to 2017 by total box revenue (in billion U.S. dollars) - the genre of Mystery/Suspense/Thriller is in fifth place with 17.06 billion).¹

Contemporary film audiences have certain expectations that they want the film to satisfy. The audience for 'Rosie's Pigeons' are adults, who enjoy the tension and suspense of Mystery/Crime genre, as well as the transformative Coming-of-Age stories with textured characters and imagery, set in the current social climate.

I feel I am somewhat straying from the traditional Coming-of-Age with making it a Tween Coming-of-Age by dropping my protagonist's age to 12 years. In keeping her pre-teen innocence and fusing

¹ [statista.com](https://www.statista.com) (The Statistics Portal)

it with Mystery/Crime I feel it elevates the stakes, adds tension and works well with the way I present it as an Adult Fairy Tale.

The fluidity of genre creation is in that the audience can serve as an influencer. If they see a film and they like it - they want to see more of such films and so demand is there, the industry reacts and a genre develops.

“Genre is a close-knit community”,² there are twitter accounts, podcasts, websites designed for movie buffs. Such as: Birth, Movies, Death (birthmoviesdeath.com). Where fans congregate to read up on the latest news, including Indie film sub-genres Coming-of-Age.

““Chop Shop” is about a hard coming of age”³ reflected the late Roger Ebert. Roger Ebert’s website categorises films under major genres. NY Times critic pick review defines Winter’s Bone drama as follows: “Winter’s Bone is about her discovery of how cruel her native habitat can be and also about her initiation into its ways — a Coming-of-Age story that is not entirely about breaking free”.⁴

Furthermore, Rotten Tomatoes reviews indicate the recognition of Coming-of-Age and Mystery/Crime. IMDb is an example of a site where followers and fans of a specific genre discuss, review and make lists of their favourite films within that genre. Filmsite⁵ managed by Tim Dirks, dedicates a whole section to dissecting Drama into sub-genres including Coming-of-Age.

² IndieWire; Genre Fanatics. Nov 15, 2016. www.indiewire.com

³ Ebert, Roger; Great Movie. April 22, 2009. www.rogerebert.com

⁴ Scott, A. O.; Where Life Is Cold, and Kin Are Cruel. June 10, 2010. www.nytimes.com

⁵ www.filmsite.org

Independent films have grown to a genre of their own. There is an audience hungry for films categorised as Indie. Indie films are usually low budget, artistic and often portray themes of social struggle and awareness - in line with the themes that I'm exploring in this script.

History of the Genre

To develop a deeper understanding of the audience expectations, I'm going to investigate the early history that shaped the elements and characteristics of these genres. I will also include my findings into the background of Neorealism movement, due to its influence on my script and on all of the model scripts that I've considered for 'Rosie's Pigeons'.

At the end of 1920s the world of cinema has been revolutionised through the introduction of synchronised sound dialogue. As a consequence, the sound in films has affected the entire industry - in both the film form and structure. "The silent comedies were replaced by wisecracking of Mae West and the Marx Brothers. Playwrights and script-writers assumed a new importance"⁶. The sound has become both a challenge and an opportunity for creativity.

In the late 1930's the experimental film makers have echoed the changes in the political and social landscapes by delving in the themes that included social and international struggle. At the end of the World War II, the cinema revival reflected the collective need for fresh stories to rebuild strength and self-affirmation.

As a result, social dramas with powerful messages and lessons such as *Hell's Highway* (1932) and *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* (1932) - a film that talked about the wandering youth on freight

⁶ Nowel-Smith, G. (1997). *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford : OUP Oxford.

trains during the Depression - Wild Boys by William Wellman's became the "message" films of the era. 'Road to Ruin' (1934) and 'Girls of the Underworld' (1932) highlighted the youthful deviance as a foundation in dealing with topics like drugs and prostitution⁷.

However, declining number of audience goers have shifted the production of films to Independent Companies producing films that attracted and targeted younger viewers. They featured themes relevant to teenagers, including the rites of passage and identity narratives. Contributed by the formation of teen culture in the 1950s. Acclaimed films that challenged parent culture have followed in the 1960's with 'The Graduate', 'Bonnie and Clyde'.⁸

During the late 1940's, after the Second World War, driven by circumstances and the postwar environment - "as the fascist control was finally broken, Italian filmmakers De Sica, Visconti, and Rossellini, along with writers like Cesare Zavattini and others, were eager to express themselves after years of repression"⁹. Consequently they turned to more extreme and ground-breaking exploration of "real life", which gave birth to Neorealism.

So, what has made Neorealism so different? "Italy found itself devastated by the war, as was the infrastructure of the Italian film industry"¹⁰. Neorealism stories brought attention to the realities of life - featuring the suffering and the disadvantaged society, working class, the isolated and the oppressed, while using actual locations and mainly non-professional actors.

⁷ Drama Films; www.filmsite.org

⁸ Neale. S. (2000). Genre & Hollywood. London: Routledge

⁹ 15 Great American Movies Influenced by Italian Neo-realism; tasteofcinema.com

¹⁰ 15 Great American Movies Influenced by Italian Neo-realism; tasteofcinema.com

The neorealist elements in drama films continued to be mobile and adaptable and to influence filmmakers worldwide. Especially inspiring the Independent Films that often lack in resources and funding, however the film makers are still as passionate in exposing pressing social themes.

Neorealism was considered a pioneering cinematic movement and continued to capture the world's attention. The now iconic films have propelled their makers to a world stardom. One of the pioneers of Neorealism was Roberto Rossellini's and his film *Open City* (1945). The films achieved depth of emotion, and intimacy through their simplicity and powerful character depiction.

The *Bicycle Thief* (1949), filmed entirely on the streets of Milan, showed the grim realities of postwar Italy. Neorealism in drama films evolved into a strong worldwide movement, with filmmakers adapting it and fusing it with their own individual style. Other noted films are: *La Dolce Vita* (1960) by Federico Fellini and *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (1966) by Pier Paolo Pasolini.

In the following years it was noted that Neorealism is considered as a style and genre that finds its expression around the world at most critical times. Trailing through Bengal in the early 1960's, through work of Satyajit Ray, then on to Brazil, then Senegal in the 1970's and 80's, and then Iran in the '90s. The Iranian filmmakers Amir Naderi and Abbas Kiarostami, have purified the original Neorealist spirit through the '90s and into the next decade. In the contemporary Iran, Oscar winning Director, Asghar Farhadi has talked about his films being influenced by Neorealism. This movement genre also showed up in post-Soviet cinema in former Soviet Union Republics.¹¹

¹¹ Motion Pictures, History of 2016, Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia, World Book, Inc., Chicago

It is considered that American film is finally having its Neorealist moment. “Contemporary American filmmakers like Kelly Reinhardt and Ramin Bahrani’s films in many ways are effectively neorealist films. To one degree or another, these films, as well as others made around the world since the end of World War II, owe a debt of gratitude to Italian filmmakers who created the movement”.¹²

Key Elements of the Genre

So what are the key signifiers of the Coming-of-Age stories? First and foremost, whether they are mainstream or independent, they are stories where a protagonist is moving towards some type of maturation.

The protagonist may be a pre-teen, teen, adolescent or even older, going through a process of self-discovery, transformation, searching for identity, living through a life-changing event. Their emotional stakes are high and the focus is on the character’s arc.

The dramatic narrative wouldn’t work so well without the very interesting and endearing characters - someone to immediately identify with. The well-written dramatic characters are empathetic and can completely carry the narrative.

Therefore, in successful Coming-of-Age films the characters are not flat or one note. This genre usually presents - “realistic characters in conflict with either themselves and/or others”¹³. This genre often focuses on a character who is at a crucial moment in their lives. The film viewer’s sense of

¹² 15 Great American Movies Influenced by Italian Neo-realism; tasteofcinema.com

¹³ Drama Films; www.filmsite.org

identification is important. The writers may be required to include scenes showing the character's imperfections, habits, worries and insecurities to help make the person more "real" to the viewer¹⁴.

Usually, the character's morals are being tested at the earliest stage of their development and their moral decisions reveal their core and inner fabric. The signifiers of these elements manifest in their actions, dialogue and emotional responses.

Typically the Coming-of-Age protagonist is male around mid-teen or younger. Flashbacks are at times used as a narrative tool.¹⁵ "For the pre-teen Coming-of-Age genre it is considered that the films focus on friendship or teamwork or increased understanding of the adult world".¹⁶

The film's structure is most commonly a three act. The story begins with painting the 'ordinary' world of the character - in order to develop an understanding and then the subsequent obstacles, challenges, disruption and therefore the decisions the protagonist is facing in a given moment. Then weaving in the turning points, obstacles, conflict and causality that move the story forward to its climax. There is a chain of events that the character has to go through to get the solution or answers to a problem.

The subject matter is broad and vast but most commonly focuses on current issues, social messages and problems, such as societal ills, poverty, political unrest, corruption, class divisions, mental illness to name just a few. They can be reflective of the current issues that face the society.¹⁷ The

¹⁴ Selbo, J. (2014). *Film Genre for the Screenwriter*. Taylor and Francis.

¹⁵ Walker, S. (2012). *Screenwriting Secrets in Genre Film*. [San Francisco] : The Fiction Works.

¹⁶ Selbo, J. (2014). *Film Genre for the Screenwriter*. Taylor and Francis.

¹⁷ Drama Films; www.filmsite.org

story's credibility of the environment, time and place sets the tone and a sense of authenticity for the audience.

With adding a Missing Person/Crime/Mystery as sub-genre of this story, the film revolves around the solution of a problem, a puzzle, or a potential crime. It focuses on a goal and efforts of the protagonist to solve the mystery, by means of clues, enquiries and some form of investigation. There are unknown elements that the audience seeks to discover. The puzzle/question and high-stakes need to be established almost immediately to engage the audience's attention.

The plot is driven by the unwavering need, urgency and necessity of the protagonist to solve the mystery. The more personal the stakes get the more empathy we feel for the character. The feeling of suspense is often maintained as an important element.

Foreshadowing is another tool used in Missing Person/Crime/Mystery. Some hints or insinuations will be expected by the viewer. There may be a trick of "red herring", which is dropped to mislead the viewer.

Overall the audience is not looking for easy answers, rather they want to solve the puzzle themselves, using the hints provided. Some of the concepts and themes of Missing Person/Mystery can include crime against social order, including family values.

Contemporary Audience Expectations of the Genre.

To further analyse the contemporary audience's expectations is to understand their desire for a familiar narrative to feel new, fresh and original. In addition, the work also has to remain relevant and not out of touch with current societal and political climate.

The Coming-of-Age genre's conventions evolve according to the ideological climate of the time.

"The films in the genre can serve as a barometer of the social and cultural concerns".¹⁸

For example, the film 'Moonlight' explores the topics of sexual identity, fractured family, bullying and survival in both poetic and confronting ways. The subject may have been taboo for the films of previous eras, but not so much for the contemporary audience. "Moonlight is moving and mysterious: a dance to the music of time, in its way"¹⁹, review by Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian.

Audience will expect to be moved by and to care for a well-developed, believable characters. In the case of Winter's Bone, Jennifer Lawrence's protagonist felt incredibly real. Roger Ebert noted:

"The movie heroes who affect me most are not extroverted. They don't strut, speechify and lead armies. They have no superpowers. They are ordinary people who are faced with a need and rise to the occasion. Ree Dolly is such a hero"²⁰.

Furthermore the expectation of the character would be that they have to be relevant within the story, as well as surprising'. Roger Ebert adds: "As Ree's journey takes her to one character after another,

¹⁸ Nowel-Smith, G. (1997). *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford : OUP Oxford.

¹⁹ Bradshaw, Peter; Moonlight review - a visually ravishing portrait of masculinity. February 16, 2017. www.theguardian.com

²⁰ Ebert, Roger; Winter's Bone. June 16, 2010. www.rogerebert.com

Granik is able to focus on each one's humanity, usually damaged. They aren't attractions in a sideshow, but survivors in a shared reality."²¹

The audience will expect to see iconic images through the visual narrative. For poignant films influenced by Neorealism, there is an opportunity for less dialogue and stronger imagery to convey the feeling and the sense of the story.

Audiences that are used to watching stories in the setting of an Independent/Festival film will look for symbolism in the story elements. Such as the end shot of the film 'Chop Shop' - Ale, the 12 year old protagonist feeding the pigeons, who then fly over the frame and into the sky. This image is hope - "Bahrani knows precisely how and when to strike the final note and leave it reverberating in the air. It's neither upbeat nor downbeat, just right. And it sends you soaring"²² reflects Jim Emerson.

'Rosie's Pigeons' Fulfilment of the Genre.

'Rosie's Pigeons' features a pre-teen homeless girl searching for her missing mother. She journeys through a dangerous world and at the end experiences a level of maturation.

Rosie, as a protagonist, fulfils the Tween Coming-of-Age expectations. She's faced with a traumatic situation and has to navigate it by herself. At the end she has to make a climatic moral choice by rejecting a mother-figure in Tata and refusing to become part of a place that trapped her mother.

²¹ Ebert, Roger; Winter's Bone, June 16, 2010. www.rogerebert.com

²² Emerson, Jim; Chop Shop, March 20, 2008. www.rogerebert.com

The Missing Person/Mystery elements are present in Rosie's active goal to find clues and unlock mysteries. All inside a Criminal Underworld. Presenting it as an Adult Fairy Tale adds mystery and layers to the concept and characters.

Referring to the Neorealism movement - often portraying the oppressed and the isolated communities - a world within a world within a world. The audience will relate to the current themes of homelessness, violence, slavery and the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Derelict building is a manifestation of that 'hidden' underworld - Mary's internal and emotional struggle, fractured society and the fragility of the current existence. The use of pigeons and doves is symbolic, the caged pigeons - as those people who are trapped and isolated.

Genre Characteristics in 'Rosie's Pigeons'.

I'd like to consider that the chosen genres of Tween Coming-of-Age and a Missing Person/Mystery enrich the way 'Rosie's Pigeons' exists as a story. My aim of fusing both the realistic feel i.e. the Neorealism and the dark and dreamy quality of an Adult Fairy Tale is to heighten the overall experience for the audience.

To fulfil the requirements of my chosen genres I've been working on all of the characters to feel sincere and real, as well as unique. From the very first scene I want the audience to have empathy and concern for this girl. Rosie has to be and behave in a way that is authentic to who she is and to her background.

As Rosie embarks on her quest to find her missing mother, I'd like for the audience to walk, search and worry alongside her. To try and solve the puzzle and look out for clues together with her - or perhaps figure things out before she does.

Rosie obviously loves and needs her mother, regardless of their current situation and the fact that her mother frequently leaves her alone to fend for herself. Rosie has learnt the ways of her world.

But when she is taken out of her comfort zone Rosie has to adjust to this mysterious and dangerous place. Because she has to. Further along the way she is faced with challenges and decisions she has to make by herself. Including the very last confronting decision for Rosie, that'll serve as a transformative force for her.

The secondary characters need to have the characterisation and uniqueness. They are quirky, vulnerable, powerful and frightening at times too. I would like for them to feel relatable. They are all afraid of something. They are the 'forgotten' people who live in an isolated world. However they are also insecure, inhumane and cruel - they are survivors of that world.

The script needs to push the emotional boundaries and buttons of the viewer. Anyone who has/had a mother, or is a mother or a daughter, will relate to the story in some way.

The way I set the pace of the story is important for the genre. In line with it to keep moving forward. The world Rosie enters needs to feel vivid in its texture, colour, and all around sense of the mystery. The stakes need to feel high, while the world needs to feel everyday.

'Rosie's Pigeons' - a Fresh Perspective.

I believe that 'Rosie's Pigeons' takes a fresh perspective on the hybrid genres that I'm using.

The theme covers the current issues of homelessness, modern-day slavery and post-traumatic disorder of women in the military. It highlights their isolation and neglect.

As mentioned before, historically with the Coming-of-Age films the protagonist is a male character, so 'Rosie's Pigeons' is not a traditional Tween Coming-of-Age. I feel there is still not enough stories featuring strong, young female protagonists experiencing the world.

When merging genres, there is a need to fulfil the expectations that come with each genre. For the Mystery part, I need to make sure there are clues, hints, discoveries that eventually answer the question - what happened to Mary?

With the Coming-of-Age I need to demonstrate that Rosie has made her moral choice and matured - without her mum beside her.

Additionally, I wanted to illustrate the complete separation and isolation of Rosie's world and so deliberately chose not to feature any Social Workers or School involvement. In fact, she hardly interacts with anyone at all before she has to with Tata and others in the building. The lack of 'authority' also adds to the sense of Fairy-Tale like style. As in tales of Red Riding Hood or Alice in Wonderland - Rosie trudges through a dark, derelict building (instead of a forest).

For the Coming-of-Age Neorealism, I need to ensure the story feels real, authentic as well as emotive. That means reducing the expository dialogue and narrating through dramatic actions, details and images. I've been researching the real-life stories of homeless and have drawn

inspiration from photography exhibitions, as well as documented stories of military women who have suffered PTSD, often ending up homeless and succumbing to their addiction and mental illness.

Because pigeons/doves serve as a metaphor/symbolism of those fallen from grace and those caged/trapped, innocent people, being used. I have been researching everything from pigeon training to pigeons being used by the criminal world to carry drugs/money to/from prisons, to ensure this could actually happen in the real world.

I think in creating the Derelict Building as a character itself adds a point of difference to the script. As with films inspired by Neorealism, they are often filmed in a non-studio location, mostly one location (helps lower the costs), and also helps with creating the world within the world and contributes to the mystery of the story.

Part 2

In this part of the essay I will take a closer look and reflect on my intentions and decisions in constructing the dramatic narrative of 'Rosie's Pigeons'. This will include analysing the character arc, story structure and theme.

Synopsis

A plucky twelve year old Rosie lives in a homeless tent city with her mother Mary. Mary's ex-military, PTSD sufferer and an alcoholic. She frequently leaves Rosie to fend for herself. Rosie

idolises her mother and tries to keep her safe. She succeeds, until one day Mary enters a derelict building and disappears.

Against Mary's orders, Rosie goes searching for her. Inside is an eerie and dark underworld - a woman is locked in a loft Rosie can't unlock. On the rooftop Rosie discovers pigeon aviaries. Their keeper, Tata, is a mysterious, ailing, pigeon-obsessed fancier. Tata's grandson Bobby is a fragile boy that never talks. Rosie earns Tata's trust by mending her prized pigeon, Magda.

Rosie's presence is noticed by Tata's son Sam - a predatory pimp who keeps women under lock and key. Rosie tries to recruit Bobby to help, but he's too downtrodden by Sam's violence. Sam uncovers Rosie's mission and orders her to do as he says or her mother gets it.

Rosie becomes a cog in a machine of drug trafficking using pigeons. To get to the keys she endures Sam's drunk advances. Rosie finally frees the woman, but it's not Mary. During their confrontation Sam kills Magda and reveals that Mary is dead.

Tata comforts Rosie and takes her under her wing - to Sam's agitation. The Rosie and Bobby alliance quietly strengthens. Rosie sees a way to set up Sam. Sam's gone. Rosie frees the latest woman he captured. Things settle, until Tata orders Bobby to prepare the room for a new captive. Rosie challenges this. She has to decide - return to the streets or remain in Tata's world.

Rosie chooses to leave, but not before freeing the pigeons and setting their cages on fire. Rosie and Bobby break free, liberated and stronger.

Character

The main storyline is that of a homeless girl who enters a creepy building in search for her missing mother.

Rosie will do anything for Mary. She's her mother's protector - putting her own life at risk. The thought of losing her mother terrifies Rosie. So when Mary goes missing, Rosie's not going to sit and wait.

Entering the building alone puts Rosie in greater risk. She utilises all her senses - hides, listens, observes and spies. Rosie uses caution with everyone she encounters. She works hard to earn Tata's trust. She applies her street-smarts in order to survive in there.

Rosie tries to convince, then threaten Bobby into helping her, but he's far too afraid of his abusive father Sam. Sam's predatory and he's got his eye on Rosie. When he discovers the real reason she's there, she has to do what he says. By helping Sam, Rosie puts her and Tata's relationship in jeopardy.

Rosie's drawn deeper into the criminal underworld. Her physical safety is at risk, and so is her emotional innocence. But Mary's life is under threat, so when Sam's drunk Rosie goes to him. She lets Sam take advantage of her. When she finally learns her mother's gone, Tata and her pigeons become Rosie's saving grace. Tata's the matriarch who protects her, but Sam's still unpredictable. Rosie and Bobby's alliance strengthens. Rosie sets Sam up, potentially risking her safety further. The bad guys come to take him away, she can help him escape - she chooses not to. Rosie's faced

world of captured beings. Will she become one of them? No. Rosie frees the pigeons and burns the cages thus liberating her young adult-self.

In examining Rosie's character arc, at the beginning she desperately needs her mother - close and safe. Entering the derelict building puts Rosie at great risk. Inside, through making strategic decisions and from the things she witnesses, she's hit with a stark realisation of people's true colours, including herself. She loses Mary but discovers a potential mother-figure in Tata. At the end, she has to make a choice - submit and become one of the captors in Tata's world or let go of her need for a mother and mature into a young adult. Rosie listens to her moral compass.

Rosie's core conflict, comes from her being a protector. Her desire to save her mother and help others blinds her to risk. She's also at risk of being corrupted. We see beginnings of that, as Rosie's involved in drug trafficking and being temperamental and violent at the end. How far would she go to achieve her goals? She lets Sam far too close. When she loses Mary - she's broken and lost. We see her vulnerable and susceptible to Tata's plans towards her. Would her need for a mother-figure destroy her moral compass and turn her into inflicter of pain?

Story Structure

Here I will list the key turning points on the main relationship line of Rosie and Tata. They are:

- **Rosie's first discovered by Tata on the roof.** Tata's initial reaction is to 'shoo' Rosie away. There's no turning back - Rosie has been spotted by someone who may be of danger. This makes Rosie vulnerable. But Tata also seems too fragile to be a threat. She's mysterious and eccentric.

Rosie doesn't leave and wants to keep observing Tata. This may be her way to stay in the building.

- **Rosie steps out to help with Magda.** Rosie observes Tata's struggle with trying to repair Magda's wound. She sees Bobby's not much of a use. Rosie risks being thrown out again, but she also senses that she can help Tata and be rewarded for it. Tata sees the potential in Rosie, gives her food and lets her stay, furthermore she convinces Sam not to touch Rosie, that she's no threat. It seems she needs Rosie, just as much as Rosie needs her. Rosie decides to work hard on looking after the pigeons, to keep Tata happy. This brings Rosie closer to Magda. She also gains some skills of caring for and training pigeons.
- **Sam makes Rosie take Magda against Tata's wishes.** Rosie knows this means betrayal. But she has to do it. Sam threatens her with hurting Mary, Rosie doesn't have a choice. By disobeying Tata's wish and taking precious Magda without her approval she puts herself at risk of losing Tata's protection from Sam. Tata's reaction is - don't come near my pigeons again! Rosie'd have to earn Tata's trust again.
- **Tata unlocks Rosie from the loft.** Rosie's found out her mother's fate, and Magda's killed. Tata's livid with Sam for killing Magda. Tata cares for her pigeons more than she does for people. By unlocking Rosie, a question's raised - can she be Rosie's mother-figure? Can she take care of Rosie? Tata provides comfort and support for Rosie at her most difficult time. She shares with Rosie her own background and opens up, for the first time, about her own mother being 'broken' and losing her at a young age. Tata shows her vulnerable / relatable side. Rosie starts to trust Tata more. I'd like for the audience to feel both relief and concern for Rosie. Does Tata genuinely care

- **Tata lets Rosie stay with her.** Their bond and understanding grows stronger. Tata's grateful for Rosie's help with pigeons and tells her she can stay in her hut with her. She also reveals her disdain and disappointment with Sam. She offers Rosie further security and an actual home, not to mention a more comfortable bed. Is Rosie now part of the family, or is this Tata's plan to lure and manipulate her deeper into her dark world?
- **Tata presents Rosie with a choice - Tata gives Rosie the keys to aviaries.** And later shows her true self when she explains her feelings towards the women/pigeons being held in captivity. Rosie challenges this and is given an ultimatum by Tata. Stay here, have a family and inherit the pigeons or leave and face the dangers of the street life again. I want the audience to also consider this question for a moment, does Rosie need Tata as a mother-figure? Does she need a family, any family? Is this better than her being back on the streets again. Is she becoming one of them? Or did Mary teach her morals that are ingrained in her young identity?

The dramatic question is - will Rosie have a mother? The audience is waiting to see whether Rosie finds her mother. Once we learn, that Mary's gone, the audience will wait to see whether Rosie accepts or rejects a mother-figure in Tata. Or is Rosie being trapped herself?

At the beginning of the story we see Rosie's closeness and love for volatile Mary. Rosie's her mother's carer, she desperately wants Mary to be close and safe. She looks after Mary's bruises and neglects her own. She follows Mary to the derelict building and doesn't want to leave her there. She enters the dangerous place and risks her life in order to find her mother.

At the end I answer that question by having Rosie face her climatic choice. If she submits to her

At the end I answer that question by having Rosie face her climatic choice. If she submits to her need for a mother, then she'd have to compromise on her true self - of a carer and protector. She'd

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end up hurting others for her own comfort and security. Tata has shown her care and protection. But Rosie rebels and doesn't follow order to do as she's told. To demonstrate this, she frees the pigeons and burns the aviaries. She's not welcoming this way of life.

The core conflict in the major relationship lines is:

Rosie and Tata

The initial tension comes from Rosie's need to earn eccentric Tata's trust, so she can remain in the building. Tata's ailing health motivates her moods. She's irritated and confused by Rosie being there and 'shoo's' her off the roof. Any mistake and Rosie can be sent off the building again. Later, there's a swap - Tata depends and needs Rosie's help to care for her beloved pigeons. Finally when Rosie rejects Tata and frees the pigeons, this spells an end for Tata's world, because she can no longer take care of her birds and she trusts no one else.

Rosie and Sam

Sam is predatory, paranoid and violent. He has his eye on Rosie and the only thing holding him back is Tata's protection of Rosie. Tata and Rosie's closeness agitates Sam. The conflict escalates further when Rosie develops a bond with Bobby - this threatens Sam's tyranny over his son. Sam can't seem to get a hold of Rosie and assert his control over her. Conflict escalates to Rosie being the only one who can help Sam, but she doesn't.

Tata and Sam

Their already complex relationship is impacted by the appearance of Rosie. Rosie's presence stirs

the problems between them. Sam thinks pigeons are diseased and uses Rosie for his benefit. Tata compares him to her father, but doesn't feel much warmth towards her son. She refers to him -

Fancy Lad - a breed that are particularly good looking, but are purely ornamental and bad at parenting. Tata feels she's losing grip on her wayward and unpredictable son. He's become too violent and greedy. The tension boils when he kills her prized Magda. This pushes a wedge between Tata and Sam. She won't forgive him.

The final dilemma facing Rosie is whether to remain in Tata's world, or leave into the unknown - rejecting Tata and letting go of mother. Tata's world means having a mother-figure, safety and comfort. Rosie's been given things she never had before. It also means inflicting pain, trapping - being trapped herself. Descending into the criminal underworld. Becoming that dominant 'taker from the weaker' Mary talked about. Does she need a mother, no matter what or can she make her own moral choices? I didn't want to make it too clear what Rosie will decide, until the final confrontation. Rosie's shocked that Tata orders a room prepped for a new woman, Rosie challenges that. Has Tata convinced her to submit? By giving her the aviary keys she's showing Rosie her ultimate trust. At the end Rosie refuses to obey Tata, doesn't pass her the keys and takes control of the situation. She lets the birds out of the cages and sets the aviaries on fire. The final threat from Tata - you're out on the streets, don't be a hero like your mother tried are the words that stir the truth in Rosie and push her to her final decision/action.

Theme

In writing this story my intention and interest are in exploring the themes of people being trapped by either their state of mind, abuse, circumstances of hardship and addiction. Them not seeing a way out. The impact it makes on them and on their family. I wanted to highlight the contemporary

issues of homelessness, modern day slavery and the ex-military women suffering from PTSD - as a result of experiencing abuse in the military and the lack of support thereafter. Homeless - as they

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exist on the periphery of society, often judged by others. I am additionally paying homage to children as survivors - the street children, the refugee children who, as a result of adult's decisions, are impacted in the most dangerous of ways. My intention was to use a pre-teen girl as my protagonist - not only is there a sense of innocence and fragility, but also empowerment and courage in her. The sacrifices she's willing to make for her mother. Having a strong presence of an older female character, in Tata, brings texture and complexity and inter-generational dynamics. Those fallen from grace are paralleled with the pigeons who were once considered heroes are now seen as disease carriers. I am interested in parenthood, family dynamics and relationships enduring the most testing of times. Also the dynamics of a mother-figure and daughter at the times of hardship and conflict. The pureness of a child's love for their parent. As well as their dependency on their parent. I also feel the story can be taken into any context and carry a universal theme of overcoming darkness, making a moral stance and not succumbing to influence, will, assertion and dominance of others. But whatever the darkness, there must also be hope for the stronger, free'er, transformed and liberated human spirit.

I'd like the audience to be moved, surprised and captivated. To appreciate the strength of young spirit. To experience the darkness and eeriness of the derelict building - a manifestation of Mary's, addiction and internal struggle. To make the parallels drawn between the characters, subtext and the symbolic elements of the film. The audience may sense the central struggle in Rosie and Mary's family structure and hardship, and their love for one another. To contemplate what it means for a kid to grow up in this environment that's shaped her so far. When Rosie - a 12 year old girl, enters a creepy building, it should feel inherently suspenseful. We'd want Rosie to be safe and to find Mary. I hope to have an element of surprise and mystery when Rosie discovers pigeon aviaries. What are

they doing in this lifeless setting? With Rosie's every discovery, I'd like the audience to try and figure out the answers too. The mystery that has to be solved. There are hints and clues peppered

along the way. I aimed to create complex, multidimensional characters. They all fear something, they are all human. Having a girl as a lead - a protector, but still sensitive, makes her an interesting young female heroine. I focused on keeping the dialogue to a minimum, to keep the suspense and to enable a stronger visual narrative. The internal emotions of the character expressed through images, colour palette and settings of the unique world of the story. When Rosie discovers that Mary's gone - I'd like the audience to feel heart-break with her. And when Rosie makes her final decision and releases the doves there's a feeling of relief that she made the right choice. I'd like there to be a sense of hope for both Rosie and Bobby.

The key image would be that of Rosie standing on the rooftop freeing the birds from their cages. It is the notion of setting something free. To let birds fly in freedom as they're meant to. It parallels the setting free of women trapped in the building. It embodies the final, poignant moment of letting go of Mary. Birds in cages represented her torn and enslaved spirit. The image shows Rosie being in control and making that decision herself. And finally it represents Rosie liberating her young-adult self - rejecting the falseness and not being trapped by anything or anyone.

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