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An Unsuitable Woman: A Critical Analysis

This essay offers a retrospective analysis and theoretical agenda for *An Unsuitable Woman*, and critically evaluates the development process of screenwriting within a programme of academic study. This essay offers a case study of creative work in the specific genre of social realism. Investigating screenwriting theory as a creative framework also offers insights into the applied methodology; this requires a particular theorisation of the contexts and conventions of genre specific screenwriting.

This essay will reflect on the development process, critical areas of thinking and social realism as the conceptual framework for this screenplay, drawing on sociological analysis of creative production. This approach enables a critical examination of the particular demands of a practice based doctoral screenwriting/film studies/politics research, and in which ways the theoretical aspects of the research inform the creative product that characterises this form of screenwriting.

This practice based interdisciplinary research is an attempt to situate 'practice' in terms of the development of a feature length screenplay that incorporates political and social imperatives into critical thinking in regard to British cinema. This programme is one that views both screenwriting and politics as the central dynamic of film. Thus, the thesis reflects on issues which are critical to both screenwriting as creative labour and the politics of British cinema. By merging film, screenwriting and politics, and producing a synthesis between the three, we probe a range of practices and strategies which, in the conclusions from the theoretical investigation into the relationship between socio-political issues and British film, become manifest in the creative practice.

The research draws influence from a mixed resource of politics, cultural studies, sociology, traditional film studies and textual analysis and film. In this context, questions about the socio-political character of British film take on a much more direct and tangible urgency. Similarly we are able to probe film's potential in times of political and socio-cultural crisis and within existing debates on contemporary moral issues. Working from a strong theoretical basis, the screenplay is an attempt to execute a range of stylistic and conceptual strategies, which demonstrate and justify the conclusions of the theoretical text, giving the creative submission an intellectual underpinning and theoretical framework.

An Unsuitable Woman is set in Meir in Stoke-on Trent and tells the story of Natalie, a working class female in her late 30's and her attempts at fostering a child and the unlikely friendship she forms with a Pakistani illegal immigrant, against the backdrop of illegal employment in the city. As well as representing the complexities around adoption and fostering policy in the UK in which those holding specific criminal convictions are considered not suitable for foster parenting, the story investigates working class existence, both from a traditional British and ethnic minority perspective and how the simple desire for motherhood can create a complex class/race nexus in which human potential can be identified.

The idea for the story originated from my own experiences and observations while working in a factory producing pre-packed supermarket food in North West London in 2005. 99% of the workforce were foreign nationals, many of whom were in the UK illegally. Through interaction with the various nationalities and groups, what became clear was that many of them were working 12-hour days, 7 days a week. These experiences stayed with me, and I later felt I could give this experience some kind of narrative treatment. Having spent a considerable amount of time in Stoke-on-Trent, and examining the effects of the unemployment in the city and the recent influx of asylum seekers and migrant workers, I felt that I could create a story about two opposite characters finding a common bond through a particular shared interest; this could be the axis around which a story could develop. Personal introspection is important, and within social realism, screenwriters often draw their stories and characters from personal experiences and knowledge. It is the role of the screenwriter to make emotions, reactions, conflicts and tensions visual to make the audience relate to the characters in a personal way. *An Unsuitable Woman* is about unrecognised virtue finally realised and the rewards received through an unexpected opportunity, and the battle for this to be legitimately enjoyed.

Yet, according to the ideology that grips so many social workers at UK adoption and foster agencies, the character of Natalie is an example of something which must be avoided at all costs. For all the appearance of an affable person, they would argue, she is

in fact not ‘a suitable woman’. More recent political measures, notably the Adoption and Children Act of 2002 – have once again given official encouragement to social services departments with a visceral disapproval of the aspiration of parents with a previous criminal conviction to either adopt or foster children; they believe that it is not enough for a would-be parent to demonstrate that they could provide a loving home for a child. They assert that such people, purely by virtue of the previous crimes, just won't be able to provide the appropriate care which apparently is an inalienable right of conviction-free applicants – and, allegedly, no amount of love and support can compensate for this intangible loss:

It's certainly not something that we would proceed with. Of course we look at applications without prejudice as the main concern is the wellbeing of the child, but someone with that kind of conviction would not be deemed a suitable person to be considered for fostering, given the seriousness of the crime (Stoke on Trent Social Services: April 2011).

This is the central argument, or issue, that is being brought forward throughout the screenplay. Thus, in this story Natalie is trapped not only by her past conviction, but also by the official institutions that do little to offer her full rehabilitation even though that is their ostensible purpose.

We must now analyse how this premise, and its socio-political themes, was expanded and developed into a 90-minute feature length screenplay. Firstly, there must be a consideration of contemporary definitions of narrative, and how this work relates to its conventions. Jill Nelmes states that “for a film to be a narrative it must present us with a series of events in ways that imply connections between one event and the next. Narratives, must therefore have constitutional parts, which are also discernibly related. Most commonly we expect a “cause and effect relationship, one event has the effect of causing another event, which causes another, and so on. Narratives also require narration, or communication”(Nelmes, 2007:61). So we can determine that *An Unsuitable Woman* adheres to this theory in its stylistic approach; the screenplay contains the necessary, related constitutional parts in which each scene contributes to the creation of another.

Further, Nelmes states that “the most conspicuous way that the plot shapes how the story is told is in terms of its chronology. One way in which plot may present a story is the order in which we presume events take place and the characters experience them” (Nelmes, 2007:63). Against this, we can again consider how the narrative is delivered. As this is an attempt at a form of social realism, its plot needs to travel in *real time*; events and situations take place in chronological order, resisting the employment of flashbacks and other storytelling techniques that will affect its realism. It is in Hollywood produced films where the principle of cause and effect is adhered to most, because it is this approach that produces a story’s triumphant ending. For this reason, most Hollywood films feature heroes with who have definite goals; the central character desires something, and the story consists of the actions the character undertakes to fulfill such aim. In most cases the story is closed; that is the ending offers a complete conclusion to the character’s goals. The narrative will end “with the character’s goals having been met, or the attempt having failed, although the industry’s aim of giving pleasure has led to the predominance of the former outcome” (Nelmes, 2007:65). However, because social realism is not governed to the same degree by a commercial imperative to provide entertainment and pleasure, the narrative conventions differ from those of mainstream films. Social realism is not governed by the same strategy of cause and effect; it tends to avoid closed ending, favoring instead “a sense of irresolution and indecision. Many films give the impression that they have stopped, rather than ended, that the plot has ceased to dramatize rather than resolve the story’s dilemmas”(Nelmes, 2007:66).

From Nelmes’ definitions, I will argue that social realism consists of four distinct narrative imperatives; reportage, explanation, description and evaluation. It first reports on what is happening, on events, processes and situations (Natalie has been rejected as a potential foster mother). Second, it tries to explain why those events or processes have taken place, what were the reasons and the causes for their occurrence (her previous criminal conviction for manslaughter). There is then an attempt to describe the experience of these issues and themes through the movement of a protagonist through the narrative, commonly achieved through their reactions to sub-characters and what

transpires around them. Finally (and crucially as this provides the audience with the storyteller's distinctive 'voice') it may attempt to evaluate or offer an original perspective on the events or processes, declaring the result in either a positive or negative light. In the context and practice of a screenplay as a filmic experience, these imperatives tend to be interwoven. However, within the prism of screenwriting theory these conventions remain separate.

These conventions are correlated to a broad number of characteristics that contemporary understandings of social realism explore. While in conventional mainstream narratives it is the specific protagonist and their behavioral codes that are activated in service of telling the story and pushing it to its climatic resolution, in social realism this progression and resolution are not of paramount concern; it is the investigation of the protagonist's social circumstance that is given 'right of way' in the narrative. The subjectivity of the character is one way that we may account for the screenplay's dramatic ambiguities. Central to these uncertainties is the notion that human behavior cannot be seamlessly resolved in filmic narratives, just as they can't in life. Thus, Natalie's experience of the world and behaviour in reaction to it cannot be compressed dramatically into a neat cause and effect.

Focused on the lives of ordinary people, a conventional thematic of British social realism, the content and concern are extended so that a specific marginalized group takes up a central position in the narrative. Natalie represents this on several terrains. Her character is that of a young, overtly working class woman situated in a post-industrialized city in the North Midlands. These physical and environmental facts alone render the character an exceptional feature in contemporary British cinema, with a particular focus on her character as a working class woman and her position in the narrative. John Kirk argues that the historical role of women in working class treatments has been both problematic and unbalanced, and states that "British social realist films traditionally focus on the personal experiences and discourse of male characters, with women characters positioned on the periphery as the objects of male sexual desire and violence, or presented as background characters with a cliché that in no way represents

working class people and the real conditions and structures of working-class life” (Kirk, 2009:44).

I will now describe how these conventions have been executed in the screenplay. In the 1st Act, beginning from the premise that the first ten pages of the screenplay are the most fundamental as it sets up the heartbeat of the script, I have employed an understated and subtle narrative method to establish the principle character(s), their back-stories and motivations while still being aware of the structural considerations within the script. More specifically, in SCENE 2 I’ve established the protagonist as soon as possible to draw the reader/audience in, develop empathy and establish subconscious links and identifications that will allow the reader to experience the script through the main characters point of view:

INT. TOWN HALL COUNCIL OFFICE - DAY

NATALIE, 37, sits in an office of the Town Hall. She is average height, slim, with light hair. She looks aggravated. Scars and lines of hard living line her forehead and eyes. A SOCIAL WORKER, 42, a short, fat woman with brown hair is sat next to her with a notepad and pen.

SOCIAL WORKER

Criminal Record checks are standard.

NATALIE

From 15 years ago.

SOCIAL WORKER

It doesn't matter; we have to do these checks to ensure suitability.

Natalie goes to her bag and pulls out a scrunched-up letter.

NATALIE

This isn't fair.

Natalie shakes her head in defiance.

NATALIE

Why don't you just do checks for every parent out there?

SOCIAL WORKER

Natalie.

NATALIE

Cos any parent can be unsuitable.

SOCIAL WORKER

You have to understand that it's different Natalie, the reason the fostering assessment process is so thorough is because fostered children have particular needs, that must be met within their new family.

Natalie shakes her head in disagreement.

SOCIAL WORKER

It's true Natalie.

NATALIE

No, that makes no sense, you are punishing me for-

SOCIAL WORKER

We're not trying to punish you.

NATALIE

Something that happened years ago.

SOCIAL WORKER

Nobody is trying to punish you but you have to accept that what has been revealed to us is a serious criminal offense.

The Social Worker readjusts herself to face Natalie fully.

SOCIAL WORKER

I appreciate everything you're saying but you've not thought this through.

With nothing left to say, Natalie looks down and shakes her head.

SOCIAL WORKER

Look, you've just turned up without an appointment so I can't talk to you about this anymore.

She begins to talk in script, like a robot.

SOCIAL WORKER

If you are unhappy with the decision, or the service you have received; you can make a complaint through the agency's complaints procedures within 28 days. Your agency should provide you with details.

Natalie shakes her head. Then the shaking of the head graduates to a small cry.

In this 2nd scene we have identified the *inciting incident*; Natalie has been turned down for fostering because of her criminal conviction. Within each scene, I have determined what a character wants, why they can't get it, and what do they do about the fact that they can't get it. By isolating the story beat and making the beat the absolute guiding principle of that scene, I was able to structure each scene to the service of the inherent drama.

Further, the reader also needs to have a full understanding of the world the story is set in to render the story believable to the audience. I reveal that as a character, Natalie is isolated, both from her immediate family and the wider society in general. From instances where Natalie is bringing home left over produce from the factory, we are told that the index of both Natalie and Tim's low salary is that there is not always enough money for the very basics (food). This also adds another dimension to the psyche of

Natalie's character; she takes home leftovers from work yet the emotional result of the absence of motherhood has created an obsession with buying unrequired baby clothing. In SCENE 27 we see the dramatic action of her taking the baby gro, looking at it, and Natalie's facial expression:

NATALIE & TIM'S FLAT - BEDROOM - DAY

She takes a suitcase from under her bed and unlocks it. The suitcase is full of baby clothing, some still in its packaging.

She carefully places the new purchases in the suitcase, before locking it and placing it back under her bed. Natalie gets upset as she does this, sighing heavily. There is a long pause. She then takes the suitcase out from the bed again, opens it, and takes out some the baby clothes.

She holds the babygro aloft, staring at it, before placing it back carefully in the suitcase. She then looks at herself in the mirror on the wall. She takes off her shirt to reveal a huge scar running across her abdomen. She stares at herself, and then puts her shirt back on.

From an audience's perspective, the baby clothes are a big turning point. We need to know if we are looking at a deranged woman buying clothes; is she deluded, or is she hopeful – what is her emotional temperature? With no dialogue the process can become about the whole experience, the looking, but also the sensing. The image is the visual record, but the exposition of the character can become the vehicle to allow the encounter to become accentuated, giving the reader a sense of what is beyond the visual. So the entirety of the scene and the potential of what it can suggest is vital. The detail of the scar on Natalie's stomach gives an indication of three psychological planes of information; a relationship between her longing for motherhood, the past crime, and her need for redemption.

As a consequence of Natalie's 'retail therapy' the narrative tells us that Natalie and Tim are constantly at the brim of civil war with one another, with Tim willing to absorb both rejection and public humiliation in the 1st and 2nd act for the greater good of Natalie's wellbeing. Further, in the opening act the reader learns how each primary character makes a living, their attitude to their jobs (if they live to work or work to live) and their

level of affluence or poverty. With specific regard to Natalie and Tim, the couple is presented as being members of the employed, lower working class. As a result, we are given details of the working environments; the factory and the call centre. Whereas historical narratives of working class existence may place the employed of this milieu in the coal mines, mills, steelworks and supermarkets, the post – modern working class en masse are found in the contemporary hub of the service industry; the customer service call centre. The hallmarks of this type of occupation; the low salary, mundane, repetitive work nature and the absence of job security are all injected into the narrative to create an absence of agency; both Tim (and his colleagues) and Natalie have little control over their lives. In terms of the factory, in SCENE 18 we see the mundane nature of the place – machines, pastry and discarded food, to create a visual metaphor.

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

Natalie approaches the factory entrance, a certain poise and sternness in her walk. A large sign reads LA FORNA above the buildings doors. The building does not inspire; it's a large building with just a few windows on its upper floors. It's surrounded by nothing but a large car park, just off a dual carriageway.

This is significant as it creates the financial circumstances in which the couple live, and how this affects the characters' motivations, social relations and affiliations and the absurdity of their desires. From the descriptions and actions in the 1st Act, the inequality of their situation is established through descriptions of their domestic life. I also fill out the background details in this act; the language, dialect and vernacular of the characters, the characters code of conduct and behaviour. Her shift in the cornershop described in SCENE 7 details the mundanity of her existence; oscillating from one temporary, insecure job to the next:

INT. CORNER SHOP - DAY

Natalie sits cramped behind the till in an empty corner shop. The radio plays. She leans her head back. She opens a can of coke and sips it.

INT. CORNER SHOP - DAY

She drags three crates of beer away along the floor, all the way to the middle of the shop. She opens one of the crates, and begins to stack the shelves, placing each 4-pack of canned beer heavily on the shelf each time.

In the first twenty pages I have attempted to provide everything we need to know about the character in order to engage the reader/audience and retain their attention for the remainder of the screenplay. The protagonist; she is an angry person. Her character is angry, she wants motherhood, even briefly, and has been denied. The reader has been signposted that as a result she is abhorrent and while we are asked to empathise with her situation (in being rejected as a potential foster mother) we are still uncertain as to if we should invest all of our empathy in her; there is a specific reason why she has been turned down for fostering and this is revealed in SCENE 2:

NATALIE

No, that makes no sense, you are punishing me for.

SOCIAL WORKER

We're not trying to punish you.

NATALIE

Something that happened years ago.

SOCIAL WORKER

Nobody is, you have to accept that what has been revealed to us is a serious criminal offense.

In earlier drafts, this discussion took place later in the 1st Act. Further, Natalie was initially scripted to meet with the social worker in a formal meeting. However, the informality of the meeting is dramatically better as it describes Natalie's war with bureaucracy; it suggests that she's been there many times before. The set up (her being turned down for fostering) initially took place off stage - we did not see this visually. This was problematic as an audience would need to see this; this is a social worker going over what has happened to Natalie. Thus, the reader needs to see what this means to her by seeing her emotional reaction with social services in the very first scene. Because as this is the first scene, we are told in a microcosm what the nature of the story is; there is a woman fighting for what she wants, but it is a fight with social services. It is much more

cinematic from a filmmaker's point of view, and much more effective to see it visually as opposed to second hand in a pub.

So we have set that up in the first 20 minutes that, despite seeing and emphasising with her desire for motherhood and fostering, born out of her being denied this by both physical and bureaucratic forces, she has nevertheless been told that she does not deserve this by social services. As a result, in SCENE 21 we see instances of an angry, aloof Natalie:

INT. FACTORY HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE - DAY

Natalie bursts into the small office and heads straight for the HR WORKER, 30, a woman with blond hair, a slightly podgy face and thin-rimmed glasses. She's organised; everything on her table appears to be laid out neatly. The room is small, with four desks propped up against the wall, surrounded by wall units and shelves holding dozens of files.

There is a plant in the corner and a water fountain by the door. There is a seat next to the desk she approaches, but Natalie opts to stand. The HR worker is engulfed in work, typing at frantic speed on her PC.

This is disrupted as Natalie angrily slams a piece of paper onto the table. She is upset and fed up. The HR worker stops what she's doing and looks up, a little startled.

NATALIE

Done!

The HR worker scans the piece of paper, then simply puts it in a tray, adding it to an overflowing pile of forms on her desk.

NATALIE

I've had enough of these SIX month contracts. I've been working here for years as a temp - give me a permanent job!

The HR worker just stares back blankly. There are THREE other STAFF MEMBERS scattered around the open plan office, who have now stopped their own work to observe the action, watching in silence as she walks out.

Natalie character – what makes us want to sympathise with her? This question is related to the issue of the commercial viability of a central character and needed to be answered in all thinking in relation to the script – what would happen if we see a warmer side to

her? What happens if we see her dealing with her plight in a more fatalistic way that we can identify with – is it just anger? Freddie Gaffney argues that this method of characterisation is justifiable on the premise that we are creating an unorthodox protagonist, who may not appear to possess the required heroic characteristics in the 1st Act, carrying the audience through a story of *becoming*; the hero must become a person of conscience and ability, although she may not be aware of this ability at the beginning of the story. The hero is an ordinary person doing an extraordinary thing by motivation to discover their hidden resources and strength.

‘A non conventional hero, an anti hero who may even be unlikeable, at least at the start.’
(Gaffney: 2010:)

Gaffney further justifies this approach, stating that:

The sum total of all the internal aspects of characterisation is the dominant impression. This is the view that the underlying psychology of a character produces and is often the hook for the audience’s perception of a character. An abhorrent character could well be the dominant expression of a character, but this does not necessarily sum up all aspects covered since the dominant impression does not include consideration of complexity. (Gaffney, 2008:49)

For Natalie, this complexity, (for social realism to be effective) must expose indirectly or directly the screenwriter’s sensibility or perspective on the specific issue. This is because at its root, the screenplay has an essence and purpose that drives it to its conclusion, becoming the overriding message of the script. This can involve manipulating the characters and events to “elicit a specific response from the reader/audience” (Becker, 2012: 2). Thus, the theme of the story can be interpreted as a look at the vertical relationship between woman and state bureaucracy; the social services who deny her the opportunity to foster, the Human Resources department at work who refuse to give her a permanent working contract and keep her on a minimum wage. Whilst Natalie is later softened dramatically, if she did not display an angrier side,

and we see this warmer, benevolent Natalie from the first page to the last, early on the audience would develop empathy, but she would be reacting in an inauthentic manner to the numerous injustices she endures on a daily basis throughout the 1st Act. Further, the scenes when Reshma is introduced would appear less dramatic, more predictable – she is a benevolent person; so what is the *absurdity* of the story? Where is the character's arc and how does the relationship with Reshma contribute to this?

At this point, I will now consider the methodology employed in the development process. The objective throughout this period of practice-based study was to replicate an industry standard of script development. However, it's possible that there is no industry standard of screenwriting development as it is highly ambiguous to suggest that there is a certain *standard* of development. We are referring to a creative practice – thus, there is little or no objectivity. BBC, Channel Four, and various independent production companies throughout the UK; each one of their films will be different; the development process will be different depending on the writer, the director (who in film have much more influence than in TV). Thus, there is no uniformity and huge variations within the development process. One way to overcome these variations was to maximise the use of teachings of both contemporary and historical screenwriting manuals and books as a conceptual and structural framework. Screenwriting manuals serve a purpose that is very different from that of traditional narrative studies. As a consequence, the terminology developed on both the practical and the theoretical side of storytelling is considerably distinct – the definition of the protagonists, the primary characters, dramatic goals, and more specifically in the use of the term *wants and needs*. Screenwriting manuals adhere to a notion that narratives should feature at least one (sometimes two) protagonist and that a protagonist should have a specific *dramatic goal* to achieve. Natalie's dramatic goal is to feel motherhood. However, why this is so is not always coherently expounded in the opening act. Here I take the position that it is much more arduous to entice an audience to invest interest in *someone* as opposed to *something* – justifying the need for a protagonist. More specifically, it is easier for a potential audience to believe in someone who is fighting for something than in someone who does not want anything; the dramatic goal.

In order to establish what Natalie's dramatic goal is, what was necessary was to create a character biography for each of the primary characters. These biographies contributed to understanding more thoroughly how the characters relate to and announce the specific social issue. Whilst in some instances the detail included in the biography was not deployed in the narrative, they continued to inform me about what initially shaped the characters and helped develop an understanding at a much deeper level. Thus, as I drive them through the screenplay, I could render their actions believable and plausible because those actions "will be rooted in the characters fictional history" (Becker: 2010 36). Further, since every piece of dialogue comes directly from the characters and actions can be explained and justified by the character, it was essential to create a biography that is complete and informative. This was approached and extended in story format, as I felt a biography responding to specific character information such as height, age, background etc would not be full enough to provide the narrative stimuli required to create a broad character with subtext and depth. I could describe Natalie's learning curve through significant incidents and images describing her relationships with Reshma, social services and her family. Further, it was important to include information about why she is so sensitive in certain scenes, and how this sensitivity produced the negative character we witness in the 1st Act. This required including several poignant images in the character biography to root the character emotionally with the issue at hand:

Natalie

Natalie is a 37 year old a shift manager in a supermarket factory in the town of Meir in Stoke-on-Trent. She lives on a nearby council estate with her call centre advisor husband, Tim. Unable to conceive children due to a medical problem caused by a car accident in which she ran over and killed a young girl they have recently been turned down as possible adoption and foster parents due to her conviction for Manslaughter. She served 4 years in Drake Hall prison in Staffordshire. She has in the 13 years since being released turned her life around, rising from a factory floor worker to a shift manager.

Natalie's ultimate objective in life is to be a mother. She feels she has paid for her crimes and worked hard to make amends, and therefore feels hard done by council officials who turn down her applications for fostering and adoption. She feels the system is punishing her for her past crimes, despite her reformation being evident.

Her view on the world is pessimistic – born out of her own frustrations and lack of opportunities, and as a result of her not being accepted as a foster mother she is bitter about the world she lives in, envious of other mothers and bears no hope of being able to transcend her limitations, or her past. She is a tough, feisty

character and refuses to be dominated by anyone, though this is in fact facade to mask a deep dissatisfaction with herself as a person and with the life she lives. She's at constant war with her husband's family because of her criminal past and the way she appears to dominate Tim.

Natalie is still very angry with society at large / Natalie fears a lack of acceptance / Natalie craves the unconditional, receptive love from a child, without the weight of history that she carries. We see how in creating an emotional biography I have provided material that can be executed for maximum dramatic effect, in scenes where the character can develop and reveal herself and provide the audience with an indication to her dramatic goal.

I used the way Natalie is sensitive to issues surrounding children to develop ways in which the reader can become sensitive to the same issue. The biography provided an actual process in which to draw the reader into the issue. The emotional biography also influenced how Natalie reacts to other characters in the film. Once I became familiar with my principle characters by preparing these biographies, I needed to further focus the social issue stance by developing Natalie's feelings about and reaction to the specific external issue that is central to the screenplay. Specifically, as Natalie is dealing with injustice, I needed to visually describe how she reacts to this and why. To achieve this, what were created was story *plot points*. This refers to all the important structural points as defined by Syd Field in *Screenplay* and provided the necessary framework for developing the script:

1st Act (goal: to establish genre, characters, environment and problems)

1. Set Up: Inciting incident (Natalie is turned down for fostering because of her crime)
2. Hook (Bina starts working at the factory)
3. Major Plot Point (Reshma is found by Natalie)
4. Story Development (Natalie agrees to look after Reshma)
5. Story Development (Natalie develops as a mother)
6. End of 1st Act (Page 20-30)

2nd Act (goal: to further develop characters, working on solving the issue)

7. 2nd Act dramatic turning point 1 (pg 45 (substantial movement)
8. 1st Dramatic Shift (Natalie is abused in the Street by a relative of the killed child)
9. Midpoint (Major Narrative Shift Forward) (Natalie confesses to Bina)
10. 2nd Dramatic Shift (Tim breaks the strike/fights with his family)

3rd Act (solve the problem, tie up relationships, bring home critique of issue)

12. Dramatic Turning Point 2 (substantial Movement to propel the end of the 3rd Act (Praveen Returns/Natalie Confesses to Tim)

13. Dramatic Climax (Bina, Reshma and Praveen are caught by the UKBA)
14. Resolution (Natalie waves Reshma and Bina goodbye, and returns to her old life)

Similar to the character biography, the plot points are fluid; this means that during the development process themes and story beats that were vital to the character development affected the plot points, which were then changed to reflect where the plot is needed to go. Further, throughout the development process new plot points are created that have significant implications for what had been written in the 1st Act. These plot points gave me the opportunity to draw from my image map/character biography. But creating that material and looking at it closely I found a whole new story line and direction in which to take my story. I realised that the relationship between Natalie and Bina is a much more subtle and engaging way of drawing in an audience into the story rather than concentrating on the relationship with a state institution. The subplot has been woven into the story. By plotting the structure this way, I can identify where the holes are and where the subplot can be inserted. If the plot points had been constructed according to the main plot, the screenplay would have been far too short. Thus, this structure became vital when trying to *pace* the narrative.

The information about the social issue is given clearly and in order, at specific important points in the story (act breaks and spikes) and allows for lots of distinct exposition in the form of mini lectures. This mini lecture, often employed by Jim Allen (*Raining Stones*, *Riff Raff*) is used in SCENE 33 to inform the audience about the social issue at the heart of the script;

INT. FAMILY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tim, sat next to Natalie, leans back in the sofa, talking to his mother and father.

TIM

They've got to do a CRB check for everyone. Tim hesitates before continuing.

TIM

Obviously Natalie's stuff came up so that's it. But it's in the past, its not fair.

CLAIRE

Can you appeal?

NATALIE

(interrupting)
Not against a criminal record like that. Look.

Natalie rubs her forehead in repressed frustration.

NATALIE
There's no point talking about it.
They're not going to change their minds, I'm
never gonna be a foster mother, or any kind of
mother so that's it.

There is a long silence.

NATALIE
Forget about it.

There is something final in her response. The rest of the room exchange awkward glances.

The 1st Act is spent showing us that Natalie is a feisty character. She is tough and resilient and this strategy is necessary to make the audience believe that she has the nerve and benevolence to take on the challenge of raising Reshma. And that's what begins to happen at the end of act one when she is introduced to Reshma/Bina. In the 2nd Act, following the aforementioned plot points, we read how the crucial information tallies with certain plot points. In plot points 10 and 11 we are given clear indication that Natalie's dreams are about to be shattered. And midpoint plot point 12 as the 3rd Act spins out, we experience the pain of those suffering and the implications of the actions both Natalie and Tim undertake.

Many screenwriting theorists may say the Inciting Incident is in the 1st Act at with Natalie being turned down for adoption, or at least within the first 15 minutes. However, the actual *conflict* occurs in the 2nd Act. Gaffney argues that "Conflict does not necessarily start at the beginning of a narrative, but happens once the audience has been given time to become familiar with the characters and their situations"(Gaffney, 2008: 88). Specifically, Natalie's conflict with the social worker in the first scene creates a backdrop for Natalie's behavior and her situation in the 1st Act, all of which are conducive to setting up both the motivation and the drama once she comes into contact with Bina and Reshma. Thus, the conflict is not the rejection by social services, but the meeting of Natalie and Bina in the 2nd Act with Natalie finding Reshma in the factory.

At the start of act two the antagonist's intentions are revealed
and the two parallel storylines are propelled towards an
inevitable confrontation and crisis (Gaffney, 2008: 94)

We don't see Bina or Reshma in the first part of the 1st Act, as neither is key to the set up. Reshma is the *adjuster*. The action that follows this meeting will set the dramatic character arc that will follow for the rest of the script.

Relationships are what drive social realism, gives it meaning and depth and context. The key to this approach is the revelation of characters and their interaction as a *result* of the various social issues. Natalie would not be in contact with Bina if not for her social standing; the introduction of Bina, written in SCENE 38 is a key moment in the script as it demonstrates the interwoven nature of the story:

INT. IMMIGRANT WORKERS HOUSE - living room - DAY

BINA (25, Asian with long black hair tied into a tight bun) sits in the corner of a packed house, amongst NINE other foreign workers, asylum seekers, and illegal immigrants. She holds a sleeping baby, RESHMA, in her arms.

Bina is wide-eyed, skinny and small. She wears a green cloth with a flower Pattern, a matching fabric is wrapped around her head.

ANGELO, (40, white, large, bald headed) the landlord/employment agent, addresses Bina, a young brown haired Ukrainian, BARBARA, and a lanky Bulgarian man, STILIAN.

Bina looks up to Angelo as he speaks. He's tall, bald headed and wears a black winter coat with a hood, stone wash blue jeans and brown walking boots.

ANGELO

The rent will be £400 per month including council tax and the water bill. The electricity and gas bill is paid separately every three months.

When Angelo dips his chin to talk, his forehead sticks out, making his bald head look huge.

ANGELO

If you move out before the three months, I will calculate the bill you owe and take it out of your deposit.

Angelo gets up and gestures for them all to follow him as he leaves the room.

There is a significant shift in the story's point of view (P.O.V) at this stage. The choice of point of view from which the story was told was crucial as it affects the way the audience responds. I did not want the story to feel unbalanced in terms of the empathy we show to either character (Natalie/Bina). I feel this method of changing viewpoints helped carry the story forward without losing any important aspects of the narrative. Thus, the switching of viewpoints had to be part of a wider aesthetic plan, or the audience's understanding of the story would have been disturbed.

This introduction of Bina in the middle of the 1st Act reveals another theme in the screenplay; the experience of the illegal immigrant in the UK. As the European Union expanded and the movement of population became more fluid, after 2004 when the East European countries joined the EU; the number of illegal immigrants seeking asylum dropped from its peak of 84,130 in 2002, after this official expansion took place (Runnymede: 2007). Such expansion within the EU however did not solve the issue of illegal immigration, as highlighted in the general Election debates of 2010. However, what was drawn from this is the suggestion that illegal immigrants/asylum seekers, despite being outside of the tax system, contribute to the British economy by providing cheap yet illegal labour, the index of this is the often horrendous working conditions the immigrants must endure. This reality, written in SCENE 46 must be dramatised to place the theme in a realist context:

INT. FACTORY CHANGING ROOM - MORNING

Bina stands along a mass of human bodies changing from one uniform into another. The room is ultra bright, with some workers still half asleep. There is a mass of people of all ethnicities in one room, with people stuffing clothing into lockers and scrambling for uniforms from the large trolleys placed around the room.

An Unsuitable Woman presents multiple perspectives of a group of refugees and their integration into British society, both in relation to and with each other. *An Unsuitable Woman's* characters are multi-national immigrants, most of whom are illegal or asylum seekers. However, these are the marginal people in Stoke on Trent, just like Natalie. The aim here was to create a sense of community and common bond between Natalie and Reshma; both through motherhood, and that they are both seen as social outsiders,

underserving of benevolence from the state through the low estimations accorded to them.

When writing the scenes, it was vital to find the *inherent drama* in each one. If there is no drama present then it was necessary to reconsider the scene or cut it. More specifically, there was the consideration of a number of particular questions in each scene. Firstly, what is the emotional change? And secondly, what is the conflict? What is each scene doing? What is it doing for the characters for the scenes, what is it telling us? Is it doing anything for the plot? Is it setting up the character's world? What is being said in each scene so each scene has a fundamental dynamic and a dramatic sustainability? If the purpose of the drama of the scene is that Natalie is angry (1st Act, SCENE 2) we do not need other characters standing watching/commenting that she is angry. The drama of SCENE 28 is that Tim and Christopher can't get Sam (in his wheelchair) through the door, but the effort in getting someone through the door in a wheelchair is conducive to the setup, the characterisation and subplots.

A key feature in social realism is the way character and place are linked together in order to expose some aspect of contemporary life, and show the effects of environmental factors on the development of character and whether these environmental factors are deterministic of the character's fates and fortunes. The traditional locations in social realist film are not used as realist descriptions of the predicament of the people living in that area, but for Natalie, as elements to constitute a psychological state of character. The grey sky in the background of concrete tower blocks, the deserted Rhyl seaside and the empty park all create a complete image of isolation, while the bus rides that both Natalie and Tim take give a sense of transit; means of transport as a metaphor for journey. There are numerous scenes where Natalie is travelling, either by Bus, on a train or simply walking. These means of transport function metaphorically, central to the script to the point where transport becomes a character in itself, and that movement and passage are key because these are results of desire. The image system of bus stops, getting on and off and waiting; what does that tell us about the nature of her life? She is not in control of her own *destiny*. She is always in transit.

However, considering the script's function as a journey, it is understandable that the location does not connect to all of the characters. For Bina, evading the UKBA constitutes the mind of both her and her housemates. Thus, there is nothing to depend on; there is no place to settle down, and no sentimentality between character and location. Further, the immigrants are not shown venturing outside of their communities, and into the wider Stoke areas. Firstly, the very nature of sub-characters (not imposing on the main narrative of the protagonist) means that any real investigation of the immigrant's integration into the community at large would be reduced to the level of surface feature and lacking in any real depth of treatment. Secondly, this isolation from Stoke is intended to reproduce the idea of *group density*, in which stigmatised groups of people living in more unequal societies can feel more comfortable when separated civically from those who look down on them. This sense of displacement is what characterises scripts that depict the British illegal immigrant experience.

While the screenplay was intended to be a demonstration of social realism, in early drafts the realism was not present in terms of the facts of the environment, the characters and the plot. Further, Natalie was not a *three-dimensional* character. Yes, it is a social issue, but the ambiguity rose around questions of whether an audience would invest in a film based on this script and character in its initial form. Does an audience feel strongly enough about this character to spend 90 minutes in the company of a character who is not nice, and either black or white with no shades of grey? This was unlikely, regardless of how they feel emotionally about the social issue. What was needed was Natalie's development as a character, which could only be achieved through *dramatic action* and the choices made throughout the story. How could her true character be brought out? This action can only be brought out dramatically through Natalie confronting and interacting with sub-characters. The danger in many scripts is creating sub-characters that conveniently move the story along but have no thematic value. The sub characters thus needed to be, realistic and contribute to the characters development and the scripts narrative. Their dialogue is individual, memorable, and limited. However, this was executed with a degree of subtlety in an effort to avoid the protagonist becoming simply

reactionary to the actions of others. Thus, the sub characters in *An Unsuitable Woman* are important but they never upstage the main protagonist. Gaffney would describe these sub characters in two forms; the *adjuster* and the *catalyst*.

ADJUSTER –

this characters function is to help adjust or modify the direction or action of the protagonist. They have a pivotal role in the illustration of themes and messages, and in advancing the story. Unlike the protagonist, the adjuster is likely to be in the same place at the end of the story as they were at the beginning. They go through no significant change or growth as this would decrease the focus on the protagonist's change and growth (Gaffney, 2008: 60).

CATALYST –

the character has a structure-centre role and is largely neutral in intention towards the protagonist. Their purpose is to present new situations that the protagonist has to respond to with action. They may have no direct contact with the protagonist but their actions impact directly (Gaffney, 2008: 61).

If we are to employ this definition, we can describe Bina as the catalyst. There is no great dramatic change or character arc. However, she presents (whether consciously or sub-consciously, directly or indirectly) situations that Natalie needs to confront and overcome dramatically in order to achieve character growth. Reshma can be described as the adjuster. She is at the centre of the narrative from her introduction to the final scene, and is the axis around which Natalie's actions, motivations and outcomes are built. While this character is passive, she has a direct impact on the protagonist, altering her natural trajectory.

As the main plot is not enough to sustain a 90 minute plus script or give the reader a complete understanding of the story, characters and meaning, creating subplots within the script will influence the main plot and the characters behavior. I feel the subplots both contradict and complicate the ideas in the main plot. This is an important element as it helped parallel action, provided extra dimensions to the principle characters and contextualised and suspended the development of the main story at key points in the script. The sub plot of Tim and the trade union activity is entwined with Sam's, which

are interwoven to produce a dramatic 3rd Act manifest in the reactions of both Tim, Sam, and their family. I will now consider SCENE 97, in which Claire observes for the first time Natalie's fleeting attempts at motherhood:

For a second, Natalie looks like she's about to lose her temper. But she regains control of herself as quickly as she loses it, turning like a robot to face Claire and blows out her cheeks, smiling at her error. Claire stands up to assist and now both women smile but the mood turns serious almost immediately as Reshma begins to CRY.

Claire makes an instinctive move to the child as she is closest; Natalie appears in a flash, positioning her body between Claire and the cot without actually barging her out of the way.

NATALIE

It's OK, I've got her!

As Natalie picks the child up, she offers Claire a smile. But this is not an apologetic smile; it's a smile of self-assurance. Claire looks at the baby and peers over. She tries to do this with great subtlety and patience, yet just enough to satisfy her curiosity.

She watches Natalie pick the baby and changes her nappy as if she's been a mother for years, changing the nappy, wiping Reshma's bottom and replacing it with a new one in one seamless effort. Claire is impressed but tries not to show it.

Natalie picks Reshma up, rests her over her chest and shoulder and gently rocks her into silence with formidable control, bouncing on her toes and speaking softly to her in words Claire can't discern. Claire sits and observes in amazement, watching Natalie facing up to this new responsibility with the maturity that motherhood requires.

The correlation between the parents is that despite their cultural differences, natural parental instincts transcend ethnicity, even if (in Natalie's case) these instincts at this stage appear to have a narcissistic imperative. It is in this 2nd Act that Sub plots become defined. We discover what Natalie's troubles in relation to her in-laws are really about, and through this action we are presented with a very complex mother in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. We learn about the relationship between the main characters and who or what tries to prevent this. It's important that the antagonist in this Act (Natalie's past) must visually confront her and push her to her limits. The experience of being verbally abused in public by a relative of the girl she killed forced Natalie to

take drastic measures to escape her past and find the acceptance she needs, shown in SCENE 122. This character growth was intended to give the story its meaning:

INT. CORNER SHOP - NIGHT

Natalie stands behind the till at shop. A MAN takes two 4-packs of canned lager from the fridge and approaches the till. He places the cans on the counter.

NATALIE

Ten pounds please.

The man takes a £10 note out of his wallet as Natalie bags up the cans. Natalie takes the £10 from him, opens the till then closes it again without putting the £10 in, pushing it in-between the till and the counter. She then begins fumbling with the receipt feed.

NATALIE

Sorry, this has been playing up all day.

The man takes the beer from the counter.

MAN

No bother about the receipt love.

Natalie watches as the man leaves the shop. She then takes the £10 note and folds it around a larger wad of bank notes in her pocket.

INT. CORNER SHOP STOCKROOM - NIGHT

Natalie stuffs a small rucksack full with food from the stockroom shelf.

In Natalie stealing both money and food, we are developing audience empathy for the character as she is doing the wrong thing for what she deems to be the greater good, the want, a day in Rhyl for herself, Reshma and Bina. She needs to steal the money because she wants to go to Rhyl for the day. These both contribute to what the protagonist is trying to achieve; a sense of motherhood. This draws another consideration within the development of the protagonist – defining the characters *dramatic goal*. In order to fully comprehend the character's behaviour throughout the narrative, there must be adequate consideration of the psychology of the character, in the development of the protagonist who possesses not only externally expressed characteristics, but they also “possess internal aspects that influence the external” (Gaffney 2008:45). We understand that Natalie's dramatic goal is motherhood. However, this dramatic goal can be concrete or abstract, external or internal, short term or long term, temporary or final, static or dynamic, simple or layered, conscious or unconscious.

With respect to this goal, screenwriting manuals often highlight another distinction, that between a protagonist's *want* and *need*. Conceptualised, narratives should have a protagonist and that protagonist should have an important dramatic goal to achieve within the want/need nexus. Wants can be understood as external and/or conscious, whereas needs are defined as internal and/or unconscious dramatic goals. Further, the want can refer to the dramatic goal of the protagonist at only a narrative level, the need has the potential to operate at a much further level of interaction, residing in the space between the story as a filmic artifact and a real audience. However, while Natalie's want and need can be manifested in fragmented actions that contribute to the identification of the dramatic goal, three dimensional characterisation and motivation, the sub characters dramatic goals must be executed at a much less dramatic fashion as their very purpose is to contribute, support, but not parallel the want/need of the protagonist:

CHARACTER	WANTS	NEEDS
NATALIE	To have a Child	To be a mother/To be Accepted
BINA	To stay in the UK	Reshma to be safe
TIM	To Be A Good Trade Union Rep	To be respected By His Family
SAM	To Walk Unassisted Again	His pride/Sense of self reliance
CHRISTOPHER		
CLAIRE		
PRAVEEN	To Escape To London	To Evade the UKBA

Note that only the primary characters have both dramatic wants and needs. The sub characters, such as Christopher and Claire, do not possess any dramatic character arc and their presence in both the main and sub plot is limited; this technical decision is intended to keep the main plot, and its main characters (Natalie/Bina) in the centre of the narrative. As the need is more transcendent than the want, Natalie has been created as a character that only realises that she has achieved the need (acceptance) once it has been taken away from her at the end of the story. While the protagonist may be unaware of his subconscious need, it is revealed to the audience in the 3rd Act (McKee 1997: 138). Thus, the audience can see that Natalie's wanting of motherhood produces a by-product of

unconditional acceptance, which she has been deprived of by her family, her in-laws, the state and crucially, by her low self esteem.

Several critics use the concept of want and need to distinguish an external goal from an internal one. In *The Screenplay: A Blend of Film Form and Content*, Margaret Mehring states that ‘a character can be driven to achieve one goal while being simultaneously compelled to seek a very different and conflicting goal. It is this warring between the external and internal goals that is the essence of great drama’ (Mehring 1990: 195). Gaffney argues that this external want creates the narrative framework for Natalie’s motivations to be dramatically executed, and that the character needs is the psychological key to understanding her internal obstacles (low self esteem) and the character arc that is developed in order for her to overcome them:

A characters motivation may well come from the internal aspects of their character, and whilst supportive of story, this is where the screenplay becomes character centred. Where screenplays become weak is where an action is not motivated, as this is where the audience questions why the character is behaving in this way. This can be the point where they stop believing in the whole fictionalised world of the screenplay. (Gaffney, 2008:55)

There is a further conceptual framework that screenwriting theorists associate the want and need, with a conscious vs. unconscious dramatic goal. This definition has been expanded by McKee who executes want, need and goal interchangeably. However, the variant within his own conceptualisation of this theory is indicating that a protagonist may have a conscious desire and a self-contradictory unconscious desire: ‘the most memorable, fascinating characters tend to have not only a conscious but also an unconscious desire. Although these complex protagonists are unaware of their subconscious need, the audience senses it, perceiving in them an inner contradiction’ (McKee 1997: 138). David Trotter indicates that if the protagonist has a conscious goal, underneath this may lie a greater unconscious need, in which the protagonist’s need is correlated with a particular desired self-image, love, or whatever Natalie needs to be

truly happy/accepted. However, the need must parallel to the dramatic goal, at certain times supporting and/or motivating it. Crucially, it is the 3rd Act's crisis, conflict, and climax that brings the need into full audience consciousness Mark McIlrath (2004: 35). distinguishes between a want as a conscious objective and a need as an unconscious one. In agreement with McIlrath, McKee and Trottier, I argue that the need had to become visible to the main character at the end of the 3rd Act. For Natalie, the want to become a mother, by any form, would be rendered as a subjective, self-interest if the need is solely to be accepted unconditionally. Thus, within this narrative, the want and (unconscious) need, as argued by McKee, must operate as a nexus that creates the dramatic goal, and the acceptance that she wanted, found and lost, is dramatised as psychological residue that is manifested within her own externalized turmoil over losing the conscious, physical want (motherhood/Reshma).

The examples that script gurus advance to illustrate this concept of need – finding love, fighting a low self-image – show how a need defined as an internal goal may easily shift into (or be associated with) a need defined as an ‘unconscious goal’. Trottier relates this conscious want with what he describes as the ‘Outside/Action Story’ and the unconscious need is coupled with an ‘Inside/Emotional Story’; for Natalie the need has been blocked both by a previous character flaw and systemically by the wider society. The examples mentioned above show a common aspect of the want and need dilemma, in specific relation to social realism; the development of a conflict between an inner and an outer or between a conscious and an unconscious contributes to establishing a more psychological depth and dimensionality to the protagonist. However, holistically applying the want vs. need theory within this script would prove abortive. A story with a happy ending is a story where the main character abandons his want in time in pursuit of his need, whereas a tragedy represents a narrative where the main character adheres to his want, and thereby sacrifices (conscious) or loses (unconscious) his need. Thus, a cause and effect ending is when the protagonist exchanges her want for her need and therefore morally deserves to obtain her want in the end of the 3rd Act. This approach however, does not consider the conventions and variables of *genre*.

Bearing in mind that the screenplay is written with an adherence to investigated conventions of social realism and the marginality of a working class woman as a protagonist, we must consider that women have a particular way of seeing themselves and others, which is common to the group in this particular position in the social and occupational structure, which can often involve trying *not* to be working class. They pursue strategies for improvement but despite many attempts at passing as middle class, they have continued to remain anxious and insecure, constantly apologising for their tastes, never certain that they have succeeded in terms of body management, dress and interior design. This can be related to Natalie's need. In SCENE 99 we see that she wants acceptance, and by attending mother and baby class, the narrative shows her trying to achieve her want. More significantly, we are invited to again feel empathy for Natalie, so far as she seems to be aspiring towards, or holding to an idea of a particular form of conduct to find this want, which for Natalie is extremely hard for her to ever attain given her financial and social circumstances; her particular passage through life has restricted her opportunities.

As I have argued, social realism consciously rejects cause and effect as this is understood as a corrosive of authenticity; the realism of Natalie's situation is that despite her best efforts, state bureaucracy in the form of Social Services and the UKBA have combined to become too powerful a force, devouring both her want, need, and ultimately her dramatic goal. Thus, while Natalie indeed adhered to her conscious want, as she is unaware of her unconscious need she can neither abandon her want to achieve her need, nor trade her want for her need, which can then be revealed as the new, virtuous dramatic goal.

3rd Act

This act resolves the main and sub plots, and we see through action the new transformation in the protagonists. To tally with the aforementioned plot points, the 3rd Act act can contain less than six plot points. Further, I did not determine exactly how the story would end when I began writing. Stylistic approach is a crucial feature that was

considered from the very conceptualisation of the story. In traditional narration, each action is motivated by plausible causes, the most obvious example being “the happy ending that often seems contrived in order to make a moral point” (Nealms, 2007: 20). Thus the outline for the 3rd Act remained sketchy. In the script, I new I wanted Natalie to appear to have solved her problem yet still be denied her dramatic goal. I could work out how she was denied once the facts, particularly surrounding the operational methods of the UKBA, were acquired.

The 3rd Act is when as an audience we are confronted with the truth from Natalie’s past. Again, this is revealed dramatically in SCENE 119/120 as it has the triple effect of revealing parts of her motivation, increasing audience empathy as we head towards the dramatic conclusion and setting up her escape to Ryhl.

MAN

I'll tell you who I am! I'm someone who knows a
bout you, young lady, I'm the grandfather of that
little girl you killed.

He emphasizes his words, pointing at Natalie. Natalie closes her eyes, just for a moment.

MAN

(shouts)

I'm someone who's not forgotten the damage you caused
to my family!

He again gesticulates, pointing forward as if to suggest that the family he is referring to are standing in front of them.

MAN

(shouts)

That's who I am!

NATALIE

So I don't deserve a second chance?

MAN

Not someone like you. Not after what you did.
You're the scum of the earth, from the gutters!

The man spits at Natalie, who instinctively covers Reshma's face, taking the man's saliva full in the face. The bus stops and Natalie gets up, avoiding eye contact with him.

MAN

(shouts)

There is no way that they are letting people like you raise other people's children, would not even let you have your own, you're the lowest of the low!

Natalie and Reshma get on the bus.

INT. BUS - DAY

Natalie sits on the bus, tears slowly develop in her eyes, and one streams down her left cheek, which she quickly attends to, wiping both tears and saliva off her face with her hand.

We are shocked because what we have seen in the 1st and 2nd Act is a good and simple woman with no real malice or intent. Still at this point we can only speculate over the facts of her crime because Natalie does not say anything. She only cries, but that crying intimates a great deal. The specific details of her crime, and the discrimination that follows, does not come up until later in the Third Act, and this is what makes it unique; as the revelation is introduced at SCENE 129, it comes so late in the script that it keeps the audience invested in the story and it gives the script its big, emotional ending:

NATALIE

Erm, when I was twenty-two we.

She stops for a moment to compose herself.

NATALIE

I accidently killed a little girl.

Bina remains silent.

NATALIE

I was driving when I was banned, and drinking, and this girl was crossing the road, and I tried to stop but I was too drunk, and I hit her.

There is a short silence.

NATALIE

Then we drove away, and then crashed into a car. I
cut my stomach up, had to have an operation, and now
I can't have children.

She looks out to the sea and breaths it all in, lost in her thoughts.

NATALIE

I got what I deserved.

Crucially, this scene reveals to the audience Natalie's internal, unconscious need. She is rejected by both her own family, and by her in-laws for her previous crime. And in revealing this to Bina, she is unconsciously externalizing the psychological genesis of her want (motherhood) and origins of her need; her lack of acceptance created the need for acceptance. Further, the social issue acts as a catalyst for the relationship and drives it. The social issue also defines the relationship. In this model, characters work out, around, or through the issue as they work out their relationships. The social issue in this fashion is part of the characters life story and drastically influences it either positively or negatively – it cannot be passive. It may not dominate the person's life, but it should be present enough in the script so that it influences the behavior of the person at the end of the script.

If we consider the want-need dilemma as a conflict between the character and the audience rather than between the character and herself/himself, this shifts the central focus of the conflict from the story level to the level of interaction between the plot and the audience. At the story level all kinds of options remain open: Natalie may never learn about a conflict between her want and their need or may learn about it after the audience does, or she may become aware at the same time as the audience. The character may be more or less conscious of an inner conflict, feel troubled by the conflict and act upon it or not. The inner conflict at story level may play immediately or start only later on. By Natalie running out of the factory amid a professional crisis to try and remedy a personal one, she, as a heroine, has sacrificed her only visible means of income for Reshma, an act of motherhood. By the UKBA not allowing the character to do what she really wants to do; it compels her to do what absolutely must be done, irrespective of the consequences.

Key subplots are resolved in the 3rd Act. As Tim's character (and his involvement in subplots) are related to his quest for respect, I felt that the resolution of this could be executed in one scene in SCENE 164, as opposed to numerous instances of him confronting his antagonists (his boss, Sam) as this would affect both the pace of the script and shift Tim into the centre of the 3rd Act when it is Natalie who should be the dominant feature at this stage.

Natalie gives Tim a powerful, aggressive shove in the back and something snaps inside of him. He turns around on the instant and grabs Natalie by the neck, drives her through the living room and onto the sofa.

He sits over her, and brings his head into hers, SHOUTING in her ear. Natalie is terrified.

TIM

Now listen to me! What happened today was not my fault and you know it. I am not to blame and it is as simple as that. What is your problem? What makes you think that you can come home, every day, and talk to me like I am nothing?

Natalie stops struggling against him, and becomes motionless and limp. She looks away from him as he continues SHOUTING in her ear.

TIM

(shouts)

I, am sick and tired of people, talking to me like I am nothing. Don't ever, ever, push me again, or I will fucking knock you out.

This is Tim's form of redemption, his subconscious need. While Natalie's redemption is manifest in her caring of Reshma, proving to both herself and society what social services deemed her unsuitable for, Tim's can be described (paradoxically given the actual nature of the act) as his coming of age. Visually, Natalie's shove in the back acts as a timely metaphor in the end of the 3rd Act and this is the last we see of Tim as an *active* character. He has had enough of being pushed around, by Natalie, by his family and at work. Crucially, Tim's behavior, whilst uncharacteristic of him, is characteristic of unemployment amongst males. Boredom, isolation, anxiety, aggression and loss of

self-confidence are among the main issues normally associated with being unemployed. One of the important reasons for the distress is the loss of social identity and self esteem experienced by those jobless. In societies where work is central significance, both in terms of the social value attributed to it and as a means of structuring life, the loss of a job can mean “the loss of purpose for a male as well as the loss of a meaningful source of identity” (Abercrombie, 2007:33).

The social realist messages in films made during the 1980’s and 1990’s, particularly the scripts of Jim Allen such as *Raining Stones* were explicit in their delivery, with characters often providing polemics on the central issues in the story. However, because audiences are now much more sophisticated and (crucially) depoliticised, social realist sentiments have to be expressed less didactically – with subtlety. However, as I have attempted to show in SCENE 168 this can still hold the same impact if the emotional subtext is present:

NATALIE

You behave like I intended to kill
that boy. I’ve been to prison and
I’ve come out, but you still punish me.
You look down at me like I’m not good
enough for your precious son! Tim
shows me no love whatsoever!

CLAIRE

Now I’ll stop you there young lady.

NATALIE

Yeah, defend him of course.

CLAIRE

I will defend him because that’s
not true.

NATALIE

I get no respect from anyone. I
wake up each morning and go to
work just like you do. I get
people abusing me in the street,
like I have no right to ever be a
mother. It’s me, I’m the one who
always has to accept no. I can
never be anything other than a
murderer.

Natalie’s eyes swell up with the tears of the loss of a motherhood that filled her with such happiness that it could not be broken by common sense.

NATALIE

I just tried to help someone, and
then it felt like it was real.

Natalie speaks in a frantic speed.

NATALIE

Then, I thought that looking after
Reshma would prove to you that I can
be a mother and that we-

Natalie takes a moment find her words. She's still taking far too fast and now it's making her breathing erratic. Claire just looks at her. The news is piercing and right now, they both can only listen to Natalie's various heartbroken tones of anger, sorrow and frustration.

NATALIE

That it would make me properly part
of the family and we could be closer.

Claire notices that Natalie's lips are dry and her breathing is irregular. She is visibly dehydrated. Claire comes closer.

CLAIRE

Calm down, you're not breathing, I
can't hear you properly.

Natalie pays no attention.

NATALIE

I want to be a mother.

She seems immersed in a remote, inaccessible world. Claire comes closer and turns her face to hers so that she can read her lips.

CLAIRE

OK Nat.

NATALIE

Why does everyone get a second chance apart
From me?

The reader is left to form his/her own conclusions. There are no direct messages about social injustice, marginalisation and discrimination. However, the unspoken message is clear; she is angry and the effects of government policy and society on her life and the relationship between her and her in-laws. More significantly, this is the first instance in which Natalie is verbal about her *dramatic goal* or *want*; she wants to be a mother. Further, the "I want to be a mother" is in the present tense; she has still not given up despite the events in the 3rd Act. This acts as an important piece of propaganda to sway the reader. A social issue can be defined as a topic that influences, or impacts a certain number of people. These issues tend to be sweeping and broad but social realism scripts make them much more concentrated by focusing on the effects on specific individuals or groups. So while the legacy of criminality affects thousand of people, the script attempts to bring home this issue by demonstrating its effect on one family and individuals, engaging the reader both emotionally and intellectually. Further, this ending is the peak emotional moment of the script, however understated it is. Even Claire referring to

Natalie as “Nat” as opposed to Natalie, is the moment of acceptance that she *needs*. The “why does everyone get a second chance apart from me?” summarises the entire essence of the script; redemption and acceptance, and the injustices of its pursuit.

This method of telegraphing the ‘issue’ works best because it is a story that is not filled with facts; these facts do not have the dramatic power to capture audience attention for two hours unless they are embedded in stories that involve engaging characters. I kept in mind that issues investigated can be complicated and bifurcated. They can include extremely compelling sub issues, which also stand-alone. And in the screenplay I have presented several issues under an umbrella issue that contains subsidiary social issues. Government policy on adoption and fostering can then extend to the rehabilitation and re-integration of the criminal, contemporary moral issues, the breakdown of the family unit, class politics, low paid employment, immigration issues and exploitation.

Characters give the script its depth and its memorability. Specifically, *An Unsuitable Woman* is propelled by its characters; the facts and events themselves are neutral; their impact rests in the effect they have on people. The script’s plot develops as a result of how characters experience and react to events and facts. Because of this, there was a need to create characters that are strong, interesting and complex enough to take on the issue as in their actions and reactions, the story will unfold, drive the issue forward and make the reader understand and relate to this issue. In addition, it was vital to keep in mind that to render the script commercially viable, it was necessary to create three-dimensional characters with range and passion to attract a name actor/actress. If we take a closer look at the script, we find that they are memorable not just because of the statements they make about social issues but also because of how the scripts characters reacted to their situations and in Natalie’s case, become emblematic of the issue.

However, the paramount concern must be the responsibility to entertain. Without the element of entertainment within the dramatic storytelling, the reader will be disengaged. Further, this will have a dramatic effect on the social issue the writer is using the script to highlight. Thus, the solution to this was minimizing the use of dialogue in the 3rd Act,

especially in key scenes such as SCENE 172; the visual storytelling is much more entertaining and more direct.

At this point, Reshma CRIES, and both women instinctively stand up in unison, towards the baby. There is an exchange of embarrassed but sympathetic looks between them both, a look of understanding of roles.

Natalie reluctantly stands back as Bina attends to the baby, with the longing look of someone wishing to be the one to hold the child. Reshma settles, and they both sit down.

There is an excruciating, long silence between them. Bina looks at Reshma, and then at Natalie, who avoids eye contact. Bina hands Reshma to Natalie, who takes her. Natalie smiles as she sits with her on her lap, using one hand to wipe away a small tear developing from the corner of her eye.

I felt excessive dialogue would lead to melodrama. I believe a more panned down story can be achieved through dramatic action rather than explanatory dialogue. The key to writing realistic dialogue in the script was to ensure the dialogue fits the characters and their emotions in that particular situation, which meant leaving out what the audience can deduce for itself. So the encounter is taken a stage further with no dialogue because the sense of objectification is shifted and it is very much about the metaphor of the physical exchange; Bina's handing of Reshma to Natalie is dramatising the acceptance.

The characters, their reactions and their relate-ability are much more paramount than exposition. Obviously there is a need for audiences to understand the issue so information is vital, but the nexus is in them connecting emotionally to the characters in their struggle with the issue. The more subtle the exposition, the more compelling the character, the better the issue is addressed.

Again, we must consider Natalie's dramatic goal. This is a really important aspect of the script. It's vital that the audience understand that Natalie is not taking in Reshma because she is anticipating becoming her mother. Her commitment becomes clearer and stronger as the SCENE 172 progresses and her friendship with Bina is affirmed; its acceptance.

Bina looks at them for a moment. There is a picture of them all at the beach. Bina turns it to read the back. It simply says 'you, me and Bina'. She smiles at her.

BINA

Thank you.

She puts it into her pocket. Bina gets up, with Reshma in her arms and sits next to her. She places Reshma into Natalie's arms. Reshma gestures, and Natalie beams, looking at Bina quickly, just to confirm that the gesture was real and not something that occurred in her imagination.

NATALIE

Reshma! Hello Reshma it's Natalie!

Natalie rubs her index finger over Reshma's chest.

NATALIE

Reshma, how are you? Are you alright?

Reshma gestures again and Natalie loves her more than ever. She looks at Reshma with as much sadness as happiness, so much love that she almost gets upset. And this is what she's waiting for, because she is silent in her arms.

Reshma makes a little noise and she loves her like she never thought possible except in her dreams. Reshma grips Natalie's fingertip and smiles at her. Natalie is going to cry.

Bina puts her arm around Natalie and she collapses her head into her. Natalie tries to recover, before speaking, but she can't.

It's a loose, dystopian, painful end in storytelling terms, but it's satisfactory because these things happen in real life. It's intended to leave the reader with an endearing feeling of reason for the story. Socialist texts differ from mainstream in terms of form and narrative. Mainstream works to a cause and effect template – social texts are less linear. The script resists resolutions because this is true to life it belongs in the world of real people and not just strictly in the parallel world of cinema. Further, the scenes location setting and characterisation allows it to distance itself to a degree from the political aspect of this subject matter, in order to represent the emotional side of their experience. It is important to be very clear about who is telling the story and taking action. Natalie's situation and her personality are the catalyst for the final outcome. This cradling of Reshma closes their story on an altruistic level. Because of their relationship, Reshma reminds Natalie that she is accepted and valued, and she is more than what she believes.

The reader is left with the triumph of that. While the dramatic goal of motherhood was short lived, more crucially, Natalie has achieved her subconscious need.

British films since the late 1990s have attempted to present, if not advance, the issue of immigrants and asylum seekers in a number of various stylistic and narrative approaches. However, very few place the immigrants and their circumstance at the heart of the story. At this point, it is necessary to clarify the term ‘immigrant’; immigrants are persons who possess a legal right to be in a particular country, whilst in many cases refugees come to the UK seeking asylum status, which will eventually result in them receiving immigrant or illegal immigrant status. *An Unsuitable Woman*’s sub-characters are a blend of these distinctions. ‘Economic immigrants’ (Yanis, Tomaz) enter the UK workforce with permission (mostly from East European countries), but subsequently they engage in low paid, unskilled work. Asylum seekers (Bina, Stilian) while waiting for the result of their application also face the issue of survival due to their financial status (they are not allowed to work). This is further complicated if they, as in the case of Bina and Praveen, have had their applications rejected. Thus they face the arduous task of finding casual, insecure work, often below the minimum wage and the perpetual threat of being caught by the UKBA and subsequently deported.

In *Last Resort* (2000), Pawal Pawlikowski’s careful manipulation of the location clearly succeeds in adding a very sensitive atmosphere to the film, to create a sense of non-place. However, there is no genuine probe into the systemic operations that have placed the character in both location and circumstance. Instead of putting forth the cases of genuine asylum seekers, i.e. those who, according to the principles of the Geneva convention, escape political oppression and abuse in their home countries, *Last Resort* presents an ostensibly indefensible case of the much-maligned “bogus asylum seeker” – a person motivated by purely individual and emotional, rather than by socio-political needs. In *Gypo* (Jan Dunn, 2005) this examines a working class family and its breakdown through a friendship of between the working-class wife Helen (Pauline McLynn) and a Roma Czech refugee, Tasha (Chloe Sirene). This film set in Margate and as we see in *Last Resort*, a town that has been one of the entrances for asylum seekers.

Cruel prejudice towards Tasha and other refugees are depicted throughout the film, *Gypo* creates the narrative from different perspective of three family members (Helen, Paul and daughter Kelly (Tamzin Dunstone), and provides an insight into their reaction towards refugees through their psychological state.

While both these films attempt to illustrate immigrants and their relationship with British society in a fictional setting, the documentary drama *Ghosts* (Nick Broomfield, 2006) captures in a more observational way the life of Chinese illegal workers, reconstructing the real-life tragedy of their accidental death whilst cockling at night in Morecambe Bay. As a documentary drama, Broomfield carefully selected the actors, who can reflect their own experience onto the screen.

It's a Free World (Ken Loach, 2007) applies all the style that Ken Loach developed in his entire career, to create another documentary-drama on this new issue. It tackles the issue of exploitation of illegal workers from the eye of the exploiter, who has been trapped in a spiral of the causality chain. The film actually provides an objective, economic analysis of this situation, but the screenwriter Paul Laverty allows the audience to witness it within a story of Angie, who wants to make her life work.

The issue of immigration is still current at this moment, and there will be more films on this subject. British films since the 1980s have been expanding the margin of representational subject in order to show the diversity and hybridity of the nation, to project something invisible onto the screen. At the same time, there is an expanding concern on illegal immigrants and asylum seekers, which is projected onto the screen in various ways. This question of representing the new Other, in terms of style and aesthetics of the film, allow the screenwriter to combine genre writing with social realist elements to develop the techniques of representation. There is still a risk in the representation of this subject matter of reproducing verticality between subject and practitioner, since three out of the four films studied were created by white British directors and writers. *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears 2002) employs the genre screenwriting to reduce the political temperature of the film, whilst *It's a Free World*

depicts a more complex hierarchy of capitalist exploitation in global society. As the social realist subject matter expands its concern, it seeks more various style of screenwriting to represent the truthfulness of experience

For *An Unsuitable Woman*, the objective was to create a strong individual character who represents the particular social issue. And because there is the central character you can follow her through the narrative, developing empathy for the protagonist. This is the most powerful narrative tool for writing in this genre. Further, single character scripts are more conducive to social realism as the audience can relate to the film and a single individual as opposed to a multi-character films several interwoven themes and voices; unless the screenwriter is particularly skilled, the audience will be lost. Thus, characterisation is the paramount concern for the social realist screenwriter.

That's why the definitions investigated in this thesis are relevant today. Yet, the success of British social realism will be dependent on practitioners making meaningful films that have universal appeal without reducing itself to either casual misrepresentations of both protagonist or issue, or offering rigid ideas of socio-politics that distort any engaging narrative. The challenge for social realist scripts today is to represent its context and be clear about their critique of the systemic forces affecting the protagonist, without appearing overtly political in the story's delivery; confronting the social experience *within* a dramatic story. It has to engage with situations and create a representation that is layered and not immediate. As long as social realism understands and presents the genuine social circumstancing affecting its central character, without limiting itself to solely the socio-politics of the protagonist, it will be able to create complex and audience engaging representations of reality.

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