

GHOST STORIES WITHOUT GHOSTS:
A STUDY OF AUTHORSHIP IN THE FILM SCRIPT 'THE SEABORNE'

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ABSTRACT

In 'The Crypt, the Haunted House of Cinema', Cholodenko argues that film is, metaphorically speaking, a haunted house: an instance of the uncanny. This raises the possibility the film script is also uncanny, from the Freudian notion of *das Unheimliche*, the strangely familiar and familiarly strange – and thus also a haunted house. This proposition engenders a search as self-reflexive practice for that which haunts the script – an uncanny process to explore the uncanny. The search requires drawing on Barthes, acting 'as dead' with that process' attendant contradictions and problematics – the most likely ghost in the script being the writing self.

Establishing the characteristics of the writing self involves distinguishing that figure from the author. This requires outlining the development of theories of the author from the concept of authorial will, as per the argument of Hirsch, to the abnegation of the author as a philosophical certainty. Barthes and Foucault call this abnegation the death of the author. Rather than that marking the end of a particular branch of analysis, the death of the author can be considered an opening to the writing practice. From this perspective, the death of the author becomes a strategy in Foucault's game of writing, effecting the obfuscation of the writing self, by placing a figure as dead, the author figure, within the metaphorical topography of the text. Indeed, the author as dead is akin to a character in the narrative but at a substratum level of the text. What places this dead figure within the text is an uncanny writing self, a figure of transgression, brought into being in the experience of Blanchot's essential solitude.

‘The Seaborne’ written by Matt Marshall, provides an example of a film script that constitutes a haunted house, a site of the uncanny. In terms of the generic characteristics of the film script as text type, its relative unimportance in relation to any subsequent film based on the script becomes of itself a feature of the film script. This makes the film script a site of negotiation and contestation between the implied author as hidden director on the one hand and the implied reader as implied director on the other. This confirms the film script as, using Sternberg’s terminology, a *blueprint* text type. Examples of the negotiation and relationship between hidden director and implied director are found in analysis of ‘The Seaborne’ as are the tensions in the relationship between the individualistic impulses of the hidden director and the mechanistic, formal requirements of the text type as blueprint. These tensions are ameliorated by the hidden director who is then effaced within the constructed layers of the film script text to allow interpretive space for the implied director.

‘The Seaborne’ as representative of the film script text becomes the after-image of a written text and the foreshadowing of a future filmic one. It therefore never finds completion within its own construction process and its formation begins in templates that accord with the Bakhtin’s description of the epic, as is shown by comparing the construction notes for ‘The Seaborne’ with Aristotelean dramatic requirements. But at the same time there is present in ‘The Seaborne’ a Bakhtinian dialogism that points towards the individual markers of a writing self. This writing self, referring to Kristeva, is a figure of abjection. It transgresses itself and transgresses its own transgressions. It is a ghost in a ghost story without ghosts.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is an examination and exploration of authorship in the film script text type.

The essay is a study of authorship in the film script ‘The Seaborne’, written by me, Matt Marshall. As a basis for investigation and analysis, I pose the question: what authors the film script ‘The Seaborne’, written by Matt Marshall?

In the first part of this paper I will examine the developmental logic that informed this question and suggested an approach to answering it. Both question and approach emerged from two theoretical strands. One strand concerns the operation of the uncanny and cryptic incorporation within film. The other strand deals with contemporary authorship studies, which arise from the (theoretical) death of the author.

The uncanny is the English translation of the term *das Unheimliche*, used by Freud to describe the familiarly strange and the strangely familiar.¹ Freud associated the uncanny with the state of cryptic incorporation, a psychological rupture emerging from an inability to accommodate the loss of a loved one. In the case of cryptic incorporation the psychological imprint of the departed within the mind of the grieving person is not assumed into the mourner’s broader psychic framework. It retains a distinctive and separate identity, very much like a ghost haunting a crypt. The ghost is strangely familiar and familiarly strange. In the psychoanalytic field, Abraham and Torok refined the

¹ Sigmund Freud (1959) ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol XIV*, Hogarth Press, London: 237-260

concept of cryptic incorporation further.² It is their view of cryptic incorporation which Derrida transfers to a consideration of texts and textual formation.³ Cholodenko uses Derrida's theories to argue for a view of film as an entirely uncanny experience from its inception and throughout the entirety of its history.⁴ To support his argument, Cholodenko refers to one of the first accounts written about the film watching experience: that of Maxim Gorky.⁵

As regards the problematics arising from the death of the author and the operation of the author function: Barthes argues that the representational nature of language destroys the philosophical certainty of the authorial presence within a written text and that such a circumstance is a precondition for writing.⁶ Foucault argues that the metaphorical death of the author arises from the contemporary cultural and historical mindset.⁷ Foucault then argues the death of the author is countered by a discursive operation used by critics and readers of a text. That operation is made to behave as an author might. Foucault calls the operation the author function. Both Foucault's and Barthes' theorizations address authorial operations within general critical, literary and social discourse. But in analysing the death of the author, they do not consider any such operations that may exist within the interiority of a text, or the construction process that brings the text into being.

² Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1986) *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans Nicholas Rand, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis

³ Jacques Derrida (1994) *Specters of Marx*, trans Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, New York and Jacques Derrida (1986) 'Foreword: *Fors*: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok', trans Barbara Johnson, in Abraham and Torok (pp xi-xlvi)

⁴ Alan Cholodenko (2004) 'The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema' in Chris Healy and Stephen Muecke (eds) *haunted: Cultural Studies Review*, Melbourne UP, Carlton: 99-113

⁵ Maxim Gorky (1896) cited in Colin Harding and Simon Popple (1996) *In the Kingdom of Shadows*, Cygnus Arts, London

⁶ Roland Barthes (1977a) *Image, Music, Text*, Fontana Press, London

⁷ Michel Foucault (1979) 'What is an Author?' trans Josué V Harari, in Paul Rabinow (ed) (1986) *The Foucault Reader*, Penguin, London: 101-20

That is, to say, Foucault in particular, and Barthes in some respects, seem to separate the figure of the author from the writer, but neither the death of the author nor the author function account for a consideration of the writer.

However, in works written by Foucault and Barthes subsequent to the theorized death of the author, they both discuss the construction of a text.⁸ Foucault and Barthes also posit a role for the writer within the context of the construction process. This role is of the writer as a text brought into interdependent existence with the written work. As the writer creates the text, so the process of textual construction creates the writing self. And, as the identity, meaning, value and operations of a text are not fixed, but mutable, multiple, shifting, contextual and destabilized, so too is the identity of the writing self.

What or who authors any written text, according to the schemas proposed by Foucault and Barthes, is going to be fractured, unstable, multiple, contextual and contradictory. I will argue this is the case for 'The Seaborne'. However, because 'The Seaborne' is a film script, what truly authors it is multiple, contradictory, unstable and so on, but in the particular manner of the uncanny and the cryptically incorporated. What authors 'The Seaborne' is a haunting writing self that has made a crypt of the text. In addressing the question in this paper, I suggest that what I explore in the way I explore it is, becomes, or is in the process of becoming, a ghost story without a ghost.

⁸ Roland Barthes (1975) *S/Z* trans Richard Miller, Cape, London,
Roland Barthes (1977b) *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* trans Richard Howard, Macmillan, London,
and
Michel Foucault (1987) 'Postscript: An Interview with Michel Foucault by Charles Raus' in *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel* trans Charles Raus, Athlone Press, London: 169-86

To support this, in the second part of this essay I will outline developments in authorship studies and undertake an analysis of certain theoretical trends. I will discuss the theories of Foucault⁹ and Barthes.¹⁰ I will also discuss other theoretical positions in the field of authorship studies; positions that in various ways complement or combine with the arguments of Foucault and Barthes.

Burke in *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*¹¹ has provided a history and overview of the field of authorship studies. I will draw extensively on Burke's work to analyse several theories of authorship. The theories of Blanchot, Bakhtin and Kristeva are also of particular note regarding the discussion in this essay.

Blanchot's work considers what happens to the writer's identity when engaged in the act of writing.¹² Blanchot calls the experience the essential solitude. The essential solitude is a form of alienation, in which the writing self is alienated from both the work and his, her or its own identity. What effects this alienation is what Blanchot calls fascination's gaze. Fascination's gaze occurs when a person views something so compelling that the viewer ceases to be aware of his or her own existence and corporality. All attention, all awareness is fixed on the object of fascination's gaze. In the case of the essential solitude, fascination's gaze is fixed on the external product of the writing self: that

⁹ Foucault 1967

¹⁰ Barthes 1977a

¹¹ Seán Burke (1992) *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Edinburgh UP, Edinburgh

¹² Maurice Blanchot (1982) *The Space of Literature*, UP Nebraska, Lincoln

product being the words written on the page or screen. However, because the writing self is taken out of itself, Blanchot argues that in the process of writing, the writing self does not merely think the thoughts, record them and then read them back. Instead, the words appear from somewhere and someone else, from the realm of the essential solitude, and the writing self merely reads them, as though for the first time. I will argue this is doubly the case in the instance of writing a film script, because the screen, from which the writing self reads, is doubled. There is the screen of writing and, as a film script is designed to be adapted into a film, there is the screen of the imagined film within the mind of the writing self.

Bakhtin suggests a view of writing, at least in the case of the novel, as being an action of rebellion, of subversion, primarily in the form of laughter.¹³ He defines the novel text type as dialogic where the authorial voice occupies the same plane as all the other voices in the text. He contrasts this with the epic text type, which is monological. The voice of the author is dominant in the epic. Indeed it is the only voice in the epic. I want to consider this dichotomy of text types in relation to the writing of the film script. The film script, in terms of both form and content, is bound by certain generic conventions, as outlined by Sternberg,¹⁴ which suggest an epic form. However, there are dialogic elements within the film script at all levels, from surface to structural, which suggest a novelistic work. Indeed, Bakhtin himself argues that the novelistic infects all other

¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin (1967) 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' in David Lodge (ed) (1988) *Modern Criticism and Theory, A Reader*, Longman, London: 105-36, and Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) 'The Epic and Novel' in Michael Holquist (ed) *The Dialogic Imagination*, University of Texas Press, Austin: 3-40

¹⁴ Claudia Sternberg (1997) *Written for the Screen: the American Motion-Picture Screenplay as Text*, Stauffenberg-Verlag, Tübingen

textual forms. The film script text type is a hybrid of the novel and the epic. This raises questions about the authorial voice in such a work.

Kristeva presents and develops Bakhtin's theories in her own work and I want to address her views of authorship on that front.¹⁵ However, she also presents a view of the writing self in some of her other works as a disturbed, ruptured, virtually psychotic subject, a transgressive, abjected self that manifests primal rage through misogyny and bigotry.¹⁶ This complements some of Burke's and Derrida's considerations of the writing self as compulsive, self-defeating, as well as literally and metaphorically masturbatory.¹⁷ This is the writing self as monster: not the friendly ghost, but rather the terrifying apparition, the poltergeist, the banshee, the spectre.

In the third part of this essay I will provide a history of the development of the film script 'The Seaborne' through its drafts and attached notes. I will also outline the structural layers and framework of the text, both in particular and in terms of the general film script text type, which has been described as a blueprint text.¹⁸ I will then consider the film script, as general text type and with particular reference to 'The Seaborne', in relation to the theories on authorship that I have already mentioned.

¹⁵ Julia Kristeva (1980) 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' trans Alice Jardine, Thomas Gora, and Leon Roudiez, in Toril Moi (ed) (1986) *The Kristeva Reader*, Columbia UP, New York: 34-61

¹⁶ Julia Kristeva (1981) 'Psychoanalysis and the Polis' trans Margaret Waller, in Toril Moi (ed) (1986) *The Kristeva Reader*, Columbia UP, New York: 301-20

¹⁷ Burke 1992, and

Jacques Derrida (1976) *Of Grammatology*, trans Gayatri Spivak, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore and London

¹⁸ Sternberg 1997

Finally, I will present my conclusions and suggested areas of consideration. Again, I will propose that the writing self within the film script 'The Seaborne' is one that is cryptically incorporated within the development of the film script, while the script is cryptically incorporated within the writing self. Furthermore, I will suggest that the writing self of 'The Seaborne' is not a presence, but rather a palpable absence, an instance of the uncanny, of the spectral and that the film script is a haunting.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE: THE SPECTRE IN FILM

In 'The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema'¹⁹ Cholodenko posits the experience of viewing a film as an uncanny event, set in a crypt and peopled, not with the living, but with the living dead, the spectres and ghosts of childhood fears. These spectres are central to cinema, as far as Cholodenko is concerned. They are its impetus, its representation, its manifestation and its psychological effect.

But this raises a particular question as to whether this ghostly figure was merely there in the cinema during the viewing experience, as opposed to during the preceding development and construction of the film. Cholodenko's article places the spectre at the centre of cinema. Surely such a figure wouldn't simply apparate, as it were, at the end.

Where does the spectre come from? Who was it when it was a living person; because a spectre is not a devil or a demon. It is the soul of a deceased man or woman trapped half in and out of the corporeal world. At what point does the spectre make a home for itself in a film; because the spectre's home can't be the actual, physical movie theatre, or rather theatres – since tens of thousands of cinemas across the world can be showing the same film at more or less the same time. Due to its ubiquity, its similarity to every other cinema and as it is used for no other purpose a theatre is meaningless without the films played in it. And spectres do not float randomly. They fix themselves in places or to

¹⁹ Cholodenko 2004

people that meant something to them in life, from which they were separated by a usually traumatic death. The places spectres haunt are homes they cannot leave.

It seems to me that the spectre has to be one of the film's creators. This is the only person for whom a film could be a home before it was shown in the cinema. And if, which may be possible, given the essentially cryptic and haunting nature of film, the ghost has been in the film from its inception, it seems logical that the first builder of the film, its first creator would have created the ghost. The film is built not just as a house to be haunted later. It is built as a haunted house. And, like a house, a film is built from a plan. Whoever made the plan for the house as haunted house from the beginning made the ghost too.

I would suggest that the person that most directly equates with the plan-maker is the film script writer. And it seems possible, if not likely, that the ghost in the film, the ghost in the film plan, is a constructed figure based on the writer. In other fields of writing, there's a term for a constructed figure based on the person of the writer. That term is author.²⁰ Based on Cholodenko's article, the author of the film script may well be a spectre, a ghost, which is, by tradition, the projection of the dead. And the ghost haunts every aspect of film, from plan to execution. This seems to be exactly what Cholodenko suggests:

From this point of view, that of the necrospective, that of the vanishing point of view, every film and every analysis is a tale from, and of, the crypt, making it

²⁰ Foucault 1967

necessary to rethink cinema, each and every modality of it, through the ghost, the spectre, the Cryptic Complex – the animatic – to conceive of cinema, of film, as *spectography* (the writing of the spectre – ghost writing), as *cryptography* (the writing of the crypt), as *thanatography* (the writing of death); to conceive of spectatorship, as of analysis, as spectreship, as haunting and being haunted, as encrypting, as mourning and melancholia in perpetuity...²¹

To explore this further requires looking more closely at what Cholodenko means by the uncanny, the crypt and the spectre. Firstly, by uncanny, Cholodenko is not talking about the merely frightening other, as opposed to the comforting self. Instead, Cholodenko activates Freud's concept of the uncanny, which describes something that is both frightening and comforting at the same time, that is both self and other at the same time:

... the uncanny means not simply that the familiar becomes strange but that one is confronted with something strangely familiar and familiarly strange at the same time.²²

The important part of this idea of the uncanny is that distinct borders between self and other, between strange and familiar, begin to blur. But they blur in a very particular way. This is the point Cholodenko brings out in his consideration of the crypt. A crypt is not a grave, a closed space to hold the dead from the living. The living can access the crypt. They can visit it. If it is their family crypt, they can imagine being in it as a permanent

²¹ Cholodenko 2004: 111

²² Cholodenko 2004: 109

resident one day. The crypt is thus a space of projection, creation, identification and ongoing interaction between the living and the dead, in a way that the grave or cremation is not. The crypt is an open house for the dead to entertain the living.

This function and experience of the crypt allows for an understanding of the sort of blurring between self and other that occurs in the particular case of the uncanny. The crypt is an uncanny place. And what happens in the crypt is that the living, as living, go into a place of death. There is an encryption, as it were. At the same time, when the living, in the crypt, think on the dead in the crypt, the dead enter into the psyches of the living. However, for the most part that when people picture a dead relative or loved one, they don't picture them only as dead. The living also recall the dead as they were in life and probably at the height of their life. So, when looking at the dead, those dead projected into the minds of the living are both living and dead within those minds, the living dead. And, again, the presence of the living dead within the mind, as memory and recollection, is also an encryption. Finally the inverse of this would be true in the circumstance that the living create a projection of themselves as dead that is separate and distinct from their own view of themselves as living. It is another case of encryption.²³

Cholodenko compares this directly with the cinema-viewing experience. The crypt is the theatre, a place of death into which the living enter. The theatre is an empty space given purpose by the living. But the living do not use it. They are relegated to the role of spectator, albeit emotionally engaged spectator, while images are projected before them in the form of the film. Apart from the fact that the actors in the film being watched

²³ Freud 1959

could actually be dead, the animation itself of mere light, shadow and sound constitutes a living death of sorts. There is movement evident in the film, but the impetus for that movement, the will behind it, has long since passed. There is only repetition, a prescribed display that is only surface. The figures in the display, the objects, the scenes, as much as they seem concrete, almost tangible, are only formed of light and shadow, cast up on a blank sheet. And those projections awaken sensations within the spectator, while opening the spectator's viewpoint out onto a much wider scene. A cinema-goer steps into a smaller space to see a larger world:

The strange, irreconcilable, irresolvable topography of the crypt – at once ‘inside outside and outside inside’, both inside and outside, neither inside nor outside, at the same time – is for me the topography, or rather atopography, the (non)place, of the place of cinema, place of ‘the unconscious of the other’.²⁴

The living spectator is metaphorically encrypted into a dead space and the dead projection is encrypted into a live mind. Such figures, both the projected figures on the screen and the viewers, are thus living dead. They are ghosts and spectres both:

The life of the spectre in and of the crypt, the life of the spectre in and of the crypt of cinema, is that of *lifedeath*, at once the life of death and the death of life, life and death inextricably coimplicated, haunted, cryptically incorporated, making it impossible to determine, reconcile and resolve them – life and death –

²⁴ Cholodenko 2004: 102

individually and jointly, even as they cryptically incorporate the world and the spectator-subject, and vice versa.²⁵

It's important to point out that the spectre or the ghost is different from other forms of living dead, or undead. What is key to the filmic nature of this form of living dead lies in the one clear distinction between ghosts and spectres, on the one hand, and vampires, zombies, ghouls, golems, or Frankenstein reanimations on the other. Ghosts and spectres do not have physical bodies. They are not there. But that's not to say they are mere absences. The ghost is a negative presence, a palpable absence. The arrival of a ghost is marked by a sudden cold on a warm day, a chill on the nape of the neck. It is an invisible hand on the shoulder, a blur in the mirror. In less mythic or paranormal terms and more psychologically speaking, for those who grieve the loss of a loved one, the spectre is the empty setting at the dinner table, the surviving partner sleeping on one side of the bed, or the expected comment that never comes. They are, very cinematically as it were, projections. For Cholodenko, the ghost, or the spectre, is the Ur figure of cinema, its prefiguration, its manifestation and its essence:

In taking the spectre as 'ur' figure of cinema... I take a cue from the fact that the spectre is a privileged subject of film, even giving birth to its 'own' genre – the ghost film – a staple of cinema from its earliest days to the most recent of times.²⁶

²⁵ Cholodenko 2004: 102

²⁶ Cholodenko 2004: 103

To support his argument, Cholodenko references Derrida's notions of the spectre and hauntology.²⁷ Derrida considers the possibility that operations or constructions that are not readily apparent in a text, but must be sought out by interpretation or analysis, can be viewed as hidden figures best represented by the notion of the ghost: 'The figure of the ghost is not just one figure among others. It is perhaps the hidden figure of all figures.'²⁸

Derrida then suggests how to accommodate these figures when in the critical process of textual analysis that doesn't involve a discovery, an unearthing or an uncovering of a secret truth, or special meaning or single answer or dominant presence. In place of a textual analysis that reveals, Derrida suggests hauntology as an approach in which the power of the ghost is retained not by being explained away, but by being recognized as a spectral figure that is more contradictory and paradoxical in nature than a simple binary of hidden and revealed, or present and absent can cover: 'The hauntological makes every concept a concept of the spectre and the spectre of a concept.'²⁹

Cholodenko further explores Derrida's notion of the spectre in respect of this binary and what Derrida suggests in its place. And what Derrida suggests is an instance of cryptic incorporation, hence Cholodenko's view of the cinema as crypt.³⁰ The concept describes a particular psychological response to the loss of a loved one. Cryptic incorporation is not, however, the 'normal' or desired response to grief: 'In normal mourning, Freud says,

²⁷ Derrida 1994

²⁸ Derrida 1994: 120

²⁹ Derrida 1994: 161

³⁰ Jacques Derrida (1983) in Ken McMullen (dir) *Ghost Dance*. Transcribed in Alan Cholodenko (2004) 'The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema' in Chris Healy and Stephen Muecke (eds) *haunted: Cultural Studies Review*, Melbourne UP, Carlton: 99-113

one interiorises the dead. One takes it into oneself, one assimilates it; and that interiorisation is idealization. It accepts the dead.'³¹

What Derrida is describing here is the incorporation of particular aspects of the deceased's personality into the survivor's psyche. This leads to the re-establishment of a reconciled, complete and consistent mental schema. This process also maintains the boundaries between the internal and the external. This is due to the fact that the foreign object within the psyche, the representation of the deceased created by the survivor, is absorbed, accepted and disempowered as a result. The construction is turned from a presence, albeit an imagined one, into a memory.

In the case of cryptic incorporation, however, none of this happens. There is a desire on the part of the survivor to keep the deceased alive, no matter in what form. As a result the representation of the deceased retains a distinct personality and presence within the mind of the survivor, but with the survivor aware that the representation is of a dead person. This awareness recasts the representation as a ghost, kept in a mental crypt that possesses the survivor:

The dead is taken into us but doesn't become a part of us. It occupies a particular place in our body. It can speak on its own. It can haunt and ventriloquise our own proper body and our own proper speech. So that the ghost becomes enclosed in a crypt in us, a sort of graveyard for the ghost.³²

³¹ Derrida in McMullen 1983

³² Derrida in McMullen 1983

In psychological terms, cryptic incorporation is a form of disrupted communication between the unconscious and conscious mind. For Derrida, cryptic incorporation can be used to describe a range of different communications, not just between the simple binary of conscious and unconscious:

A ghost can be also not only our proper unconscious but more precisely the unconscious of the other. It is the unconscious of the other which speaks in our place. It is not only our unconscious but the unconscious of the other that can play tricks on us which speaks in our place. It can be terrifying, it can be terrifying. But that's when things really start to happen.³³

This speaking by the unconscious can feasibly happen through various different media, texts of all kinds, as well as ways of consuming those texts. Cholodenko, as stated, argues that the prime example of such an experience is the viewing of a projected film within a cinema. Cholodenko presents one of the earliest accounts of the film viewing experience, that of Maxim Gorky:

Last night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows.

If you only knew how strange it is to be there... It is not life but its shadow, it is not motion but its soundless spectre.

³³ Derrida in McMullen 1983

Here I shall try to explain myself, lest I be suspected of madness or indulgence in symbolism. I was at Aumont's and saw Lumiere's cinematograph – moving photography.³⁴

Gorky's experience is convincingly presented as one of cryptic incorporation, of an uncanny, haunting event. Gorky is certainly taken out of himself, out of his location by the experience:

This mute, grey life finally begins to disturb and distress you. It seems as though it carries a warning, fraught with a vague but sinister meaning that makes your heart grow faint. You are forgetting where you are. Strange imaginings invade your mind and your consciousness begins to wane and dim...

But suddenly, alongside you, a gay chatter and a provoking laughter of a woman is heard... and you remember that you are at Aumont's, Charles Aumont's...³⁵

In Gorky's account are the combined elements of cryptic incorporation. Gorky enters into a dead space with its attendant promise of death. Gorky engages with the experience of death, is emotionally drawn to it, even though the cinematographic show is only a projection. At the same time, however, Gorky is displaced from himself by something strange that encrypts itself into his mind. It is only a distraction that returns him to his sense of self and ceases the incorporating event. Cholodenko then, as part of his

³⁴ Gorky in Harding and Popple 1996: 5

³⁵ Gorky in Harding and Popple 1996: 5

argument, extrapolates from this single, telling film viewing to other aspects of film, back to film's creation, as instances of the ghostly, uncanny and cryptically incorporated:

For me, cinema is not only uncanny. The advent of cinema is an uncanny advent, replayed every time a film is projected – as well as, to not overlook its importance, every time the projection ends, as well as every time an attraction, a 'suddenly', erupts to shock the spectator – the posthumous shock of the uncanny, followed by the posthumous aftershock of mourning and melancholia.³⁶

Cholodenko returns, not to the beginning of one film, but to the beginning of all film. And that raises the possibility that there is a ghost at the beginning of a film's construction: in the film script. This again points to the film scriptwriter, though only in a general sense: whereas, to speak personally, the argument for the placing of a ghost in the construction of the film script is not general for me. Rather, the import of this theory, that the film script is a spectral projection towards a film as a haunted object, lies in its relationship to my practice as a writer of film scripts. I can't speak to the haunted nature of other films or film scripts, but I can speak to mine.

And this is the direction I've decided to take, a ghost hunt. This is what opens up the field of authorship studies in relation to my work. As argued, the author is a construction based on the person of the writer, while the ghost in the script, extrapolating from Cholodenko's schema, may also be a construction based on the writer. It seems a logical step in considering the spectre in the film script on the one hand and the author in the film

³⁶ Cholodenko 2004: 110

script on the other that they link in some way. What is worth noting here is that, while on the surface of things the author can be considered as a presence within a text, the spectre is more a negative presence within the text. Thus to equate the two in the case of a film script, to argue that a film script author is a spectre, means that the subsequent search won't be for what is in a film script; rather the search will be for what is not in it.

As stated, this has a particular concern for me, not just on a theoretical level, but in terms of my own practice as a film script writer. I know that I am the writer of my work. I sat down in front of the computer and I did it. I was physically there. But I cannot say with the same certainty who or what is the author of the film script 'The Seaborne'. That figure to me does seem ghostly, cryptic and uncanny. It seems to occupy a position within the text I have written, but there is a question as to what kind of position that can be. For me that position is elusive, possibly shifting and – to return to the spectral, uncanny and ghostly – perhaps profoundly not there. I also cannot say with certainty that the author, whether that figure was entirely me or not, did all of the authoring within the text. There are a number of possible processes and operations authoring could include. There are processes of inclusion and exclusion in a text, operations of power, acts of playfulness and of serious intent. Authoring, as a concept, seems to cover all the acts, excluding perhaps the merely physical, of determining what goes into a given text. And I don't know who or what authored 'The Seaborne'. All I know from direct experience, memory and comprehension is that – put simply – it wasn't me.

Nietzsche wrote of his own work: 'I am one thing, my writings are another matter.'³⁷ He wasn't talking specifically about the kind of experience I had in writing 'The Seaborne'. He was separating his personal identity from the identity present in his work: the identity of Nietzsche the author. Nietzsche's statement here began the trajectory of critical thought that separated the figure of the author from the writer (Foucault uses Nietzsche's statement to support his formulation of the author function³⁸). That is why I quote Nietzsche in the context of my argument. In addition his particular line of thought also opens up the fracturing of the self from a philosophical certainty into a multiplicity. This multiple view of general identity, in concert with the construction of an author figure, may also be the case as far as writing is concerned. The author figure is a construct and may have limited or no agency. Something else, not the constructed author figure, may perform the authoring processes. The author, unable to author, may instead only look as though it is authoring. Perhaps the author is authored. Perhaps the creation of the author figure – or whatever the process it is that positions, or encrypts, the author within the text – is one of the actions of authoring. Then the author is not the only authoring force, unless such a figure authors itself, which seems unlikely given the already mentioned issues of agency in respect of what is merely a construct: not much more than another character among the others within the body of the film script text.

The film script text as a type of text is another area that opens up ruptures in this matter of the author and authoring. Every text type has its own peculiarities, principles, forms, generic conventions and modes of communication and representation. This is the case

³⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche (1989) *Ecce Homo* trans Walter Kauffman, Vintage Books, New York: 258

³⁸ Foucault 1967

with the film script. The characteristics of the text type may modify the processes of authorship and the figure of the constructed author accordingly. The shape may define the content. However, that may not be the case. The processes, presences and absences I explore here in the context of a film script may apply equally to any other genre of text. The theories of authorship that I draw on refer to prose texts without any mention of the film script text type. What I am doing in this essay is taking those theories and expanding their ambit to cover a different genre. I can't discount the possibility that any arguments I make are as applicable to, say, prose, or essay writing, as to the film script. And my only concern would only be if any arguments I make are so broad in their application as to be meaningless.

To counter the problem of generalization, I will therefore focus on only one text type: the film script. And, as stated, I will focus on only one text: 'The Seaborne'. This is not meant to be a critical literary analysis of my own work. I don't intend to comment on either the script's aesthetic qualities or hidden meanings. I do intend to use the script as evidence to assist in a search: that search being the aforementioned ghost hunt. I want to find the operations, presences and locations of authorship. And I suspect that in the film script I wrote, I will find the operations of the uncanny, the presences of the spectre and the location of the crypt. And, 'lest I be accused of symbolism'³⁹ like Gorky in describing the 'Kingdom of Shadows'⁴⁰, I will state I do not expect to find these spectres and ghosts in paranormal or mythical terms, but rather in philosophical and metaphorical

³⁹ Gorky in Harding and Popple 1996: 5

⁴⁰ Gorky in Harding and Popple 1996: 5

ones. I may well be looking at ghost stories, but if so I am looking at ghost stories without ghosts.

CHAPTER TWO: THE DEAD AUTHOR

Cholodenko's article was a point of entry for me into a consideration of film script writing. In a similar manner, Foucault's 'What is an Author?'⁴¹ framed much of my thinking on the matter of authorship. The majority of Foucault's article presents an argument for the existence of the author function within critical and interpretive discourses. However, it was not so much the concept of the author function that came to interest me, though it is a key component of the article and still formed part of my consideration. What particularly engaged me and opened up an area for subsequent exploration was the argumentation that preceded the formulation of the author function. Just as I discussed Cholodenko's article, so too would I like now to review Foucault's, beginning with his reference to a quotation from Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*: 'What matter who's speaking, someone said what matter who's speaking.'⁴²

This quotation, and particularly the question it contains, encapsulates for me the philosophical destabilization of any notions of self and other, of subjectivity, of position, point of view and presence. In fact, it's not just the question itself, but that it is asked by a 'someone'⁴³, a third person without identity, an anonymity, the very someone who may well be speaking, not that that seems to matter, not that anything seems to matter. And yet it does; otherwise why ask the question, whoever it is that asks it? But, again: who is it that asks; and does it matter; or does merely the statement itself matter? The question circles on itself. Identity also circles on itself without a starting point. I think this

⁴¹ Foucault 1967: 101

⁴² Samuel Beckett (1974) *Texts for Nothing*, Calder & Boyars, London:16

⁴³ Beckett 1974: 16

response to the question is very much as Barthes, following similar lines of thought in a related context, puts it: ‘today the subject apprehends himself elsewhere, and “subjectivity” can return at another place on the spiral: deconstructed, taken apart, shifted, without anchorage...’⁴⁴

The question posed in Beckett’s work threatens a disembodied voice, without a speaker, without a human presence. To take Derrida⁴⁵ and Cholodenko⁴⁶ into account, it’s an uncanny question. It is a question asked perhaps by a spectral anonymity and, if it cannot be answered in the positive, if it doesn’t matter who’s speaking, it is a question that creates spectres. Spectres are, after all, often nothing more than disembodied voices. Beckett himself says as much: ‘And the voices, wherever they come from, have no life in them.’⁴⁷

It’s clearly a question that interrogates more than authorship. It is really a question about the dilemmas and problems of existence, on the ways and whys and, particularly, the whos of knowing. What Foucault does is draw that line of inquiry towards the question of authorship in terms of the author’s existence: ‘The coming into being of the notion of “author” constitutes the privileged moment of *individualization* in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences.’⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Barthes 1977b: 168

⁴⁵ Derrida 1994

⁴⁶ Cholodenko 2004

⁴⁷ Beckett 1974: 21

⁴⁸ Foucault 1967: 111

However, I would suggest that in Foucault's essay, the notion of the author's existence is extremely curtailed. The emphasis in Foucault's essay falls, in terms of the question found in Beckett, on the 'speaking', not on the 'someone'⁴⁹. That is, Foucault's essay engages not with the identity of the author, but rather with authoring, or authorship: the actions that are undertaken on a text in the name, or through the convenient use, of the author function:

The author's name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture. It has no legal status, nor is it located in the fiction of the work; rather, it is located in the break that founds a certain discursive construct and its very particular mode of being.⁵⁰

Thus the focus of Foucault's article is away from the process of production. However, in the context of an approach to identity that includes but is not limited to function, a continuation of the questioning found in Beckett seems to me worthwhile:

What matter how you describe yourself, here or elsewhere, fixed or mobile, without form or oblong like man, in the dark or the light of the heavens, I don't know, it seems to matter, it's not going to be easy.⁵¹

This sentence in the Beckett piece for me reveals many of the issues that come into play concerning all aspects of identity. At the same time I believe it shows an approach to the

⁴⁹ Beckett 1974: 16

⁵⁰ Foucault 1967: 107

⁵¹ Beckett 1974: 18

manner in which an exploration of identity, beyond only function, could be undertaken. I also think it reveals why such an exploration should be undertaken. Firstly, I would suggest that the Beckett text can be read as supporting a refocusing on broader questions of identity, not just function, in any study of authorship. That the identity examined is one's own raises certain difficulties, especially in respect of the authorial role as Foucault expresses it:

The author allows a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one's resources and riches, but also with one's discourses and their significations. The author is the principle of thrift within a proliferation of meaning.⁵²

In the context of self-description and self-reflection, the operation described by Foucault is destabilized. Should I undertake a study of myself as object of description or reflection, of myself as the basis for constructing a figure, a range of issues threaten the undertaking. This is because, in the first instance and in some circumstances, I think I know myself. This is not a case of the unknown, but of the uncertain. I am, as far as I'm concerned, familiar, but in describing me, I make myself strange. I take part of what is imagined to be known, move it into a descriptive frame, that is make an object out of a subject, and construct what already exists. Am I killing me to make me? Do I cease to exist, or become another kind of existence entirely when I describe myself rather than

⁵² Foucault 1967: 118

just be? Again, I don't know. It seems to matter. And, finally, it's not going to be easy.⁵³

This accords with Cholodenko's view of the uncanny: the strangely familiar and familiarly strange.⁵⁴ Like film, self-reflective writing or self-description is an uncanny act, the creation of a spectre, who is both dead and alive, cryptically incorporated within the act of describing and the description itself. If I write the description, I become limited by the description. The description does not necessarily just describe me, it also proscribes me. It limits me. To put it back in the terminology of the spectre and the crypt, it possesses me:

From this point of view there is always a spectre and a speculator in the spectator-analyst, always a corpse and a crypt. In fact, the specters are always in the plural; and they are never laid to rest, never resolved, never reconciled. So too the analysis of the crypt is itself 'the crypt of an analysis'.⁵⁵

It is not going to be easy.⁵⁶ However, within the context of an approach to the self-reflexive review, to the issue of identity, Beckett's narrator goes on to suggest: 'Take the road again that cast me up here, then retrace it, or follow it on, wise advice.'⁵⁷

⁵³ Beckett 1974: 18

⁵⁴ Cholodenko 2004: 109

⁵⁵ Cholodenko 2004: 111

⁵⁶ Beckett 1974: 18

⁵⁷ Beckett 1974: 18

There is still room for wisdom, though, at the same time, perhaps this section is laden with irony. At least there is the hint of a choice. And it's not just me that recommends following it. I have already noted that in 'What is an Author?' Foucault abandons the facets of identity for an emphasis on authorship as action within society and culture, as discursive practice, which Foucault sees in terms of operation not presence:

In our culture (and doubtless in many others), discourse was not originally a product, a thing, a kind of goods; it was essentially an act – an act placed in the bipolar field of the sacred and the profane, the licit and the illicit, the religious and the blasphemous.⁵⁸

However, 'What is an Author?', as much as it was a starting point for me in the study of authorship, is only a point in a continuum along a trajectory of Foucault's developing thoughts in the area.⁵⁹ And, while Foucault's thoughts on discourse remain consistent, he expands on his notion of identity in writing practice. His views of authorship expand beyond the function within culture, beyond discursive practices, to looking at the way action, even before it gets to society, constructs identity:

I believe that it is better to try to understand that someone who is a writer is not simply doing his work in his books, in what he publishes, but that his major work

⁵⁸ Foucault 1967: 108

⁵⁹ Kevin Brophy (1998) *Creativity*, Melbourne UP, Carlton: 20

is, in the end, himself in the process of writing his books... The work is more than the work: the subject who is writing is part of the work.⁶⁰

In terms of Beckett's call for self-description this allows for a convenient limitation on the question of identity. All identity, for a writer, does not necessarily need to come under scrutiny. Rather, the description describes the 'speaking', describes the ongoing process of description itself. To return to the initial view of Beckett's question – what does it matter who is speaking – it is one that turns upon itself. This possibly gyroscopic view of identity actually makes more possible a self-description of the self-describing. Though there is self-description, it is not necessarily of the same self. It is uncertain.

It seems to me that Foucault in arguing that 'the subject who is writing is also part of the work'⁶¹ points Beckett's call for self-description towards the matter of authorship in the same way as he did for Beckett's question as to who is speaking. And it indicates to me that as much as Beckett's question leads to the problematic of self-description, so too does Foucault's line of thought develop into a consideration of the writer self in the process of writing as a component of the issues to do with authorship.

As discussed, Barthes, like Foucault, argues for the death of the author, though he develops different arguments from Foucault's.⁶² Also, like Foucault, Barthes comes to consider the process of writing and the identity of the writing self.⁶³ However, Barthes

⁶⁰ Foucault 1987: 184

⁶¹ Foucault 1987: 184

⁶² Barthes 1977a

⁶³ Barthes 1975 and 1977b

focuses more on the writing self of Roland Barthes himself, arguing: ‘why should I not speak of “myself” since this “my” is no longer “the self”?’⁶⁴

Barthes considers the subjectivity constructing the text constructing the subjectivity: that is, engaging in self-description that creates what is described. In this consideration he provides an approach for engaging in such a process of self-description that avoids many of the traps inherent in the project:

The Author himself – that somewhat decrepit deity of the old criticism – can or could someday become a text like any other: he has only to avoid making his person the subject, the impulse, the origin, the authority, the Father, whence his work would proceed, by a channel of expression...⁶⁵

The importance in this view of self-description is that it recognizes that the self is in an unfixed state. It is not the precursor. It is not an absolute. It does not remain static. It exists in a relationship with the text, a relationship that modifies both self and text. Indeed, the two sides of the relationship text and self are not separated. They are joined and, more than that, conjoined, both inside and outside each other. Barthes continues his line of thought by arguing as much: ‘he [the Author] has only to see himself as a being on paper and his life as a bio-graphy (in the etymological sense of the word), a writing without referent, substance of a connection and not of a filiation...’⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Barthes 1977b: 168

⁶⁵ Barthes 1975: 140

⁶⁶ Barthes 1975: 140

A manifestation of the possible establishment of the pre-eminence and pre-existence of the author seems to exist in the potential for proliferation. The concern is what should or shouldn't be referred to in viewing a self in the context of the writing. There is the possibility that the biographical details of the writer can be used to explain away everything in the text, or, perhaps worse still, justify errors, especially where one might see the reflexive undertaking as being not to explore the work, but to confirm it. This is an older analytical approach that Barthes reviewed in his consideration of the death of the author:

The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us.⁶⁷

Barthes offers another way to re-engage the figure of the author, or even the writer. He doesn't tend to distinguish between the two. Rather than the entirety of the writer's life being the end point of a search into text, the writer becomes relevant in the context of writing. It can be put simply that a writer is someone who writes: thus, when not-writing, that self becomes something else. Hence it is best to focus on the writer writing. Also, it is important not to fall into accepting fixity, pre-eminence or precedence in distinguishing between writer and work:

[T]he critical undertaking... will then consist in returning the documentary figure of the author into a novelistic, irretrievable, irresponsible figure, caught up in the

⁶⁷ Barthes 1977a: 143

plural of its own text: a task whose adventure has already been recounted, not by critics, but by authors themselves, a Proust, a Jean Genet.⁶⁸

Rather than certainty, this approach accepts the possibility of confusion, inconsistency, paradox and multiplicity. It is not, to return to Beckett, easy.⁶⁹ It is also uncanny in the sense that Cholodenko considers it. The relationship between work and self writing the work is a relationship between an interior exteriority and an exterior interiority. It is a cryptic relationship as Cholodenko discusses it. The writer contains a crypt within the self of the writing and the writing becomes a crypt for the writer who already is encrypted and contains a crypt and so on. The writing self and text become spectres haunting one another, perhaps become spectres to each other. They are not as solid and real as the truly fixed and corporeal. In the relationship between text and writing self, both are permanently shifting, permanently in the process of movement and change. They are to one another as substantial as mist, as substantial as ghosts. The approach that Barthes suggests recognizes this, accepts it and not for the purposes of resolution. The approach Barthes suggests becomes as cryptic and uncanny as the relationship it offers to review. By way of parallel, Cholodenko, in looking at the spectral, the uncanny and the cryptic refers to '*spectography* (the writing of the spectre – ghost writing)... *cryptography* (the writing of the crypt)... *thanatography* (the writing of death)'.⁷⁰ Cholodenko is referring to film in these terms, but Barthes uses more or less the same term in relation to the kind

⁶⁸ Barthes 1975: 140

⁶⁹ Beckett 1974: 18

⁷⁰ Cholodenko 2004: 111

of self-descriptive writing under discussion: *'I am speaking about myself as though I were more or less dead.'*⁷¹

This is the answer to the problematics of self-description, of reviewing authorship, of writing the self, of picking the details of the writing self writing, of not falling into old traps. This is the solution to the problems Beckett posed. Write as dead, 'more or less'⁷².

⁷¹ Barthes 1977b: 168

⁷² Barthes 1977b: 168

CHAPTER THREE: WRITING AS DEAD

Barthes, in undertaking reflexive writing and analysis, argues he is able to accomplish such a task when acting as dead: more or less.⁷³ I want to focus at this point on the qualification evident in the statement: the more or less. In the first instance Barthes is not suggesting a real death. It is actually impossible to do anything at all when dead – as far as anybody knows. So, this is the conditional: write as though dead. But which self is dead? Is Barthes suggesting that when self-describing, that is writing about a former writing self, that former self should be considered as dead from this contemporary perspective? This would be the most obvious approach here, because then the autobiographical viewpoint would be a mere biographical viewpoint.

I think in particular reference to what Barthes is trying to achieve here, this approach is a push away from placing the figure of the author at the centre. A dead author in the form of the dead writing self cannot be readily found. Such a figure can no longer continue, perhaps will no longer continue, to speak on its own behalf. It is spoken of. It is spoken through. Perhaps it speaks through those that come after it. Perhaps it is made to speak but without its own impetus or drive. It undergoes the critical process. It is remade as a text. It is not an origin, then, but an object. The writing self, when dead, when unable to object or counter or speak as itself, when engaged in hidden, possessing processes, when encrypted into the text and the critical undertaking, becomes just what Barthes wants him

⁷³ Barthes 1977b

to be: ‘a novelistic, irretrievable, irresponsible figure, caught up in the plural of its own text’.⁷⁴

But there are, I think, a few additions that can compound this interpretation of what Barthes suggests when writing as dead. Simply because the former self is dead, doesn’t mean that the self writing about the former self is not also ‘more or less’ dead. What this view offers is the possibility of writing not just about a dead person, but from the perspective of the dead person. A previous self is kept as the irretrievable figure, the as-dead, but surely the self writing back to that should be kept that way as well. It’s no good to replace one author figure with another, one absolute centre with another. Otherwise the former question that is the figure of the writing self is retained but contextualized within an even more totalizing answer.

This kind of writing, writing from the perspective of death about one’s own dead former self, is what retains the hidden figures as hidden. It is the complication and the co-implication between and across the selves that allows this sort of project to succeed. It is the ongoing desire to pursue the hidden, but not pin it down, to illuminate it, but not expose it that stops a project about one’s own writing self from being twee, boring, self-indulgent or arrogant. Pride is not the province of the dead, I hope. And I also hope that any work, even one that one of my selves wrote, cannot so easily be explained away by my own subsequent commentary. If it can, then ultimately the writing cannot speak to anyone else, for there’s no room in the work by which they can enter the work, which

⁷⁴ Barthes 1975: 140

they can occupy to enliven the work, or reflect on in themselves so they can find something of interest in the work.

Derrida, like Barthes and Foucault, approaches the relationship between work and writer.⁷⁵ Again, also like Barthes and Foucault, Derrida does not separate the author from the writer, whereas I think there is a line between the two, between the writing self and its projection onto and through the text. Thus, where Derrida uses the term author, I would like to suggest he means writer or the writing self, rather than, say the discursive construct of Foucault's author function for example.

Either way, the issue for Derrida, as for Barthes and Foucault, is how to consider the potential presence of the writer within the work without raising the monosemic, dictatorial figure of the author that explains the work. And further, the question is: in what ways can the writer be included? What aspects of the writer are relevant to the study of the text, of the exploration and review of it? The most obvious issue on this question is that of the biographical details of the writer; following on from the line of reasoning that says the author included such and such a section in a text because of an event in the author's actual life. It is this parallel between life and text that so limits the review of a work and points any textual reading towards seeking the one meaning, rationally explained, conditioned by or extrapolated from particulars of a life progressing along a strictly linear trajectory. And yet, there is a place for looking at, not the meaning of the text, but the meanings possibly arising from or thwarted by the conflicting,

⁷⁵ Derrida 1976, 1994, and Jacques Derrida (1986) *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida* trans Peggy Kamuf and Avital Ronell, Schoken Books, New York

intersecting relationship between text and the writing self in the act of writing the text.

Derrida expresses the problematic as follows: ‘the line that could separate an author’s life from his work... becomes unclear. Its mark becomes divided; its unity, its identity becomes dislocated.’⁷⁶

To compound matters, Derrida, like Barthes, looks at the case of the writer writing back on the self. The details then are not merely biographical but autobiographical, the instance of the writing self’s lived experiences intersecting with the production of a work and the subsequent temptation to want to explain the work, contextualize it, excuse its errors, justify its statements and, perhaps most importantly, through the text, try to maintain the *a priori* status of the writer as author, the first and last word of the text, the owner of power, the dominant discourse within the hierarchy of discourses outlined in the text. However, Derrida points out that now there is a choice. The seeing of the self as an unfixed entity, as something other than the rational product of a readily determined set of experiences and characteristics, as multiple and variable, allows for a shift in the approach to autobiography, or the consideration of the self. Of course, this is not necessarily an approach without difficulty, for how can there be any autobiographical project when there are multiple and variable autos at work?

When this identity is dislocated, then the problem of the *autos*, of the autobiographical, has to be totally redistributed ... one has to ask whether one will understand the autobiographical in terms of this internal border... or instead rely on the standard concepts prevailing throughout tradition. Once again, one is faced

⁷⁶ Derrida 1986: 44-45

with a division of the *autos*, of the autobiographical, but this doesn't mean that one has to dissolve the value of the autobiographical recit.⁷⁷

The answer for Derrida is the same as it is for Barthes, with the same considerations, issues and implications: 'one must restructure [the autobiographical recit] otherwise on the basis of a project that is also biographical or thanatographical.'⁷⁸

Derrida suggests an approach that is death writing, writing as dead about the as-dead. This is where Cholodenko draws his approach to film and runs parallel with views – like Barthes', Foucault's and Derrida's – on writing about the self, about the value and approach of writing about the self. Do it as dead. However, to return to Barthes' particular consideration of reflexive writing, there is one final aspect of his suggested approach that I now want to explore. This aspect is the 'more or less' of writing as dead.

The reason I return to Barthes at this point is because the 'more or less' is a qualifier. It is a small inclusion and maybe not so very important. And yet, to return to Beckett, it seems to matter.⁷⁹ I think it is because the more or less, on the surface of things, looks irrelevant. It's unnecessary. The sentence already conveys the metaphorical operation of such a project. Barthes will write as dead, but not be dead while writing. That is patently impossible and it would be absurd for Barthes to suggest he would write, not as though dead, but while dead. So why the more or less?

⁷⁷ Derrida 1986: 44-45

⁷⁸ Derrida 1986: 45

⁷⁹ Beckett 1974: 18

I think it opens up a gap within Barthes' suggested approach. It allows for an infiltration of life into the project where such an infiltration may unsettle and destabilize the whole undertaking the project comprises. The writing as dead, as argued, is a push away from the dominance of a single meaning for a text, over the uses a text is put to, over the reviews and explorations a text undergoes. And since the writing is 'as... dead',⁸⁰ it is already spectography, cryptography and thanatography. The writing is already in the realm not of death, but of animated death, death in life and life in death. Such a critical undertaking is already an instance of a living dead approach towards a living dead figure. It is the hidden chasing the hidden. It is already the kind of project that Foucault, Derrida, Cholodenko and Barthes himself have proposed in varying ways and across various fields of study.

To include one more element of life, to include the more or less, upsets the project, takes it further into potentially being a return to the dominance of the author. But it does not do so with certainty. It also does not do so obviously. I would think a subsequent reader of the critical undertaking would never know, would be fooled in all probability by the layers of the approach that are set up to hide the flaw of life and hide themselves as layers too. I would also think that such a reader, in engaging in the chase of the undertaking, in being encouraged to explore but not reveal, in seeing an instance of attempting to keep the hidden hidden by the hidden, would not even be motivated to look for any such flaw.

This is the more or less that indicates the trick, the lie, the play and the game of writing. This is the glee of spinning circles over circles that when viewed closely reveal nothing,

⁸⁰ Barthes 1977b: 168

but only hypnotise. This is the ghost of the ghost story, or rather, the ghost story without a ghost. But the unmasking that reveals the culprit behind the deception never occurs.

The spiral of the spectre had no beginning, but it also has no end.

And this is because, while the reader of the critical undertaking is bamboozled by the sleight of hand at play, that does not mean the trickster is not similarly bamboozled. I always thought the best way to tell a convincing lie was to believe that it was true. Then it's not really telling a lie, is it? In a similar way, I think the 'more or less' fools the writer of the critical undertaking as much as, if not more than, any subsequent reader. I've already argued there are links across the multiple and various selves engaged in the project of the self writing about the former writing self. But I think there are also great differences and, more importantly, those differences create not just failures in communication, but profound miscommunications. And these miscommunications can include game playing, deceit and trickery of all sorts. There is no guarantee that every self under review has to be good. This is the essence of the irresponsibility that Barthes talks about when he discusses reviving the figure of the author.⁸¹

Barthes, when reviewing the old approach to authorship he was attacking, the approach that set the author in the dominant position in and over a text, ascribed to this construct the attributes of divinity. Meanwhile, those engaged in the critical undertaking in relation to the figure of the author, and the work of the author, were relegated to the roles of keepers and, especially, revealers of the divine mysteries. Barthes outlines this particular process in semiological terms:

⁸¹ Barthes 1975: 140

The *author* is always supposed to go from signified to signifier, from content to form, from idea to text, from passion to expression; and, in contrast, the *critic* goes in the other direction, works back from signifiers to signified. The *mastery of meaning*, a veritable semiurgism, is a divine attribute, once this meaning is defined as the discharge, the emanation, the spiritual effluvium overflowing from the signified toward the signifier: the *author* is a god (his place of origin is the signified); as for the critic, he is the priest whose task is to decipher the Writing of the god.⁸²

In some ways, this kind of author is such a comforting old deity with a staid and respectable priesthood to manage the divinity's will on earth. There's something so predictable in this model, so familiar, so 'jam and Jerusalem'. And it has gone. In its place, I think, Barthes is raising another god, but not one nearly so ordered and predictable. More or less, for me, releases a trickster god from its torturing prison onto the world as destroyer. More or less means that the joke, as it were, has gone too far.

Fickle, capricious, deceitful, underhanded and spiteful: these are the flipside characteristics to the joy of the hidden, to the fun of maintaining the mystery, to playing in the ghost house rather than being profoundly and disturbingly haunted by something that possesses and won't let go. Malice is hidden in the hidden. To suggest a little of what I mean, I want to return to Derrida, who in this instance is speaking of the particular but may be referring to perhaps any writer in this context:

⁸² Barthes 1975: 174

He *himself*, *he is dead*, and yet, through the spectres of memory and of the text, he lives *among us* and, as one says in French, *il nous regarde* – he looks at us, but also he is our concern, we have concerns regarding him more than ever without his being here. He speaks (to) us among us. He makes us or allows us to speak of us, *to speak to us*. He speaks (to) us [*Il nous parle*].⁸³

What Derrida describes here, while exciting and engaging, is also threatening, unnerving and destabilizing. It is, in short, uncanny. But all of the above is a starting point, a series of intersecting notions and concepts that suggest an approach, justify it, present it and then destabilise and disrupt it, undermine it, turn it into a game of deceit, perhaps, with the hidden chasing the hidden in multiple ways through across and over multiple texts that include multiple selves. To return to the matter of the research question, how does any of this equate with asking what an author is, which is just as Foucault began his exploration of the issue, as he began his critical undertaking that was ‘himself in the process of writing his books’?⁸⁴

In the first instance, all of the above suggests such a question can be approached as the self writing back about the self writing a particular text or work with an awareness and an acceptance of the multiple selves at play. Further, the critical project should be from the perspective of death towards a dead figure. The critical project should not be hagiography, or an attempt to lionize either text or writer. It should not be the

⁸³ Jacques Derrida (1988) ‘Like the Sound of the Sea Deep within a Shell: Paul de Man’s War’ in *Critical Inquiry* Volume 12, Number 3, Spring: 639

⁸⁴ Foucault 1987: 184

opportunity to establish a preeminent author figure. Rather it should be an engagement with the difficulties of the process of writing in the context of the relationship established between writer and text, aware of the process of construction, destruction and deconstruction that take place over the course of that relationship both as regards the text and the writing self. Given the already established parallels between film and the spectrographic, cryptographic and thanatographic approach, my personal feeling is for the text in question being both filmic and written. I think it should be a film script. And, I happen to have one.

Finally, I suggest that an awareness remains that such a critical project is not necessarily either honest or decent. There is a process of play here, a danger in the enjoyment, shadows in which to hide, darkness in which to lurk. There is scope and room for selves that are broken, twisted or otherwise malformed. The project has the capacity to include all the bleakest and blackest selves and aspects of selves, but the inclusion may be a process not of revealing, not of transfiguration, but of covering and obfuscation. Such selves may be placed within the critical undertaking to be hidden, not revealed, to destroy the project, not make it, to deceive and lie and cheat.

More or less...

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR: OVERVIEW

This second part of the essay will explore the notions of the author, authoring and the writing self. To some extent what is involved in this part of the essay is an explanation and an exploration of the development of authorship studies. I will trace the emergence of the philosophical view of the author as a quasi-divine, transcendental figure and then show how that construction was attacked, leading to the theoretical position that argued for the death of the author.⁸⁵ However, there are instabilities within the concept of the death of the author. Firstly, the concept means different things to different theorists. Barthes sees the death of the author as a product of language and so a part of the writing process. Foucault, on the other hand, argues the death of the author is part of the interpretation of a text in critical discourse. But Foucault does point to the death of the author as a repeat of the linguistic process, which would then posit the death of the author as part of the game of writing. Indeed I think the death of the author is a defining part of that game. It is both a tactic for playing the game and a goal of the game. This raises questions and possibilities regarding who or what it is that, during the writing process, causes the death of the author, effects it, or operates it. This collection of processes concerning the death of the author and the game of writing is described in a number of metaphorical ways in various theories. To return to Barthes' version of the death of the author, he describes it as the silencing of a voice. Foucault sees the death of the author as the text killing the author figure. My preference is to see the death of the author as the

⁸⁵ Barthes 1977a, and
Foucault 1967

placement of an already dead author figure within a text; in amongst the planes and layers that make up the text's metaphorical topography.

Much of this second part of the essay could be seen as the development of a definition of the author. Put simply, defining the author entails asking the question: what is an author? This question references Foucault's essay of the same title.⁸⁶ I have already discussed Foucault's essay in relation to the problematics of authorship leading to a consideration of thanatographical writing, writing as dead. I now want to review Foucault's essay in terms more of the extent to which it answers the question it poses: what is an author? And I would suggest there is only a very limited answer to what an author is. Indeed, after some initial opening comments, the main thrust of the essay, dealing with the author function, has more to do with authorship than with the author. The term 'authorship' seems to be located, defined and engaged from the critic's rather than from the writer's perspective. Consequently, Foucault deals with how critics employ the figure of the author – in this case the 'author' being a construct based on the biographical details of a text's writer – to constrain the placement and operations of the text within discursive fields of criticism and interpretation. This has nothing to do with the authorial process as regards the production of a text. Indeed, the author function has only an arbitrary link to the writing of the written text. Brophy, who looks at the development of Foucault's essay in some depth, assesses its content as follows:

Wanting to avoid the tiresome question of who is the real author of any text,
Foucault proposes in this essay that an author is not so much an origin as a

⁸⁶ Foucault 1967

function of discourse. The author is constructed by a set of interpretative acts which are historically specific. The author is a strategy in the play of power relations over a text.⁸⁷

I'm not so sure the question is tiresome and I'm not sure that Foucault would have thought so either, but what is accurate in this analysis is that the author function, as Foucault describes that construct, is involved in discourses subsequent to the development of a text. 'What is an Author' deals with the circulation of a text in discourse and the power operations involved, not the writing. Interestingly, in the early parts of Foucault's essay there are some tantalizing possibilities raised in relation to the distribution of the figure of the author and modes of authoring in the process of writing, rather than in the critical endeavour. But I want to leave that for the moment. At this point, I think it's useful to draw a few important distinctions, especially as these distinctions are important for my choice of terminology.

Firstly, I suggest that just as 'the author' is not the same thing as 'authorship', so too the writer is not the same thing as the author. In terms of the author and authorship, the distinction between the constructed figure and the process is first suggested by Foucault. He argues that authorship is first a function: a process, a role or action, a usage of power that operates on a text and is employed in the operation of a text. By nominating the author as function, he raises the issue of action over form, of operation over characteristics. Foucault's argument about the author function is precisely that the appearance of stable, dependable and consistent characteristics is a product of the author

⁸⁷ Brophy 1998: 20

function's operation. He then focuses on the author function's operation and on the use of discursive power subsequent to the text's creation. That does not exclude similar operations of power being mobilized within the text or in the process of the text's creation. To extend Foucault's separation of function and form, I would argue there is the possibility that not all authoring operations are performed by an author figure. Indeed there is the possibility certain authoring processes are performed on, rather than by, the figure of the author.

The next distinction is between author and writer. The writer is the person who sits down and physically writes (types, dictates, etches or otherwise inscribes) the text. The writer is the origin in that very simple sense. The writer, as part of the context of textual construction, though a beginning in some respects, is not a precedent, or a pre-eminence. Instead, the writer as a self, occurring in the construction of the text, is a product of that textual construction. The writer writing the text writes the self writing.

This view of the writer needs to be strongly distinguished from the figure of the author. The author is not a person, but a construct. It may share certain attributes or characteristics with the writer, but they are not the same thing at all. In some instances, possibly most instances, there has been consistent confusion in terminology between author and writer, but I want to argue later on that that may well be one of the characteristics of the author as a constructed figure. It looks so very human even while it is not.

It may seem pedantic to insist on a separation of terms like author and writer which in common parlance and across the trajectory of authorship studies are used interchangeably. My subsequent argument about these roles makes such a distinction helpful for clarity's sake. But, more importantly than that, the separation of these terms acts as acknowledgments of developments in understanding in terms of the author and writer. That is to say: theorists like Barthes⁸⁸ and Foucault,⁸⁹ who themselves do elide author and writer, make possible the separation of those two terms. Only through the theories of the death of the author and the author function can different functions, roles, roles and characteristics be apportioned over the two.

Finally, as part of that, as part of its projection from the person of the writer into and over the text, I think an argument will stand that the author is a spectre, a figure cryptically incorporated in the work, in the writer writing the work and maybe even in much of the theory about the author itself. I intend to argue that the author is an uncanny, haunting, possessing figure.

⁸⁸ Barthes 1977a

⁸⁹ Foucault 1967

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF THE AUTHOR

The historical trajectory of the figure of the author is a development from a much broader philosophical issue. Kant and Husserl ascribed to the human being an essence or aspect that transcended such limitations, a transcendental ego. Husserl states: 'I myself, as transcendental ego, "constitute" the world...'⁹⁰ Seán Burke describes the establishment of the transcendental ego in *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*⁹¹ a work I plan to use as a foundation for much of the following argument. Burke states: 'Kant and Husserl both found the postulate of a transcendental ego necessary to guarantee the objectivity of our knowledge about the world; only through such a postulate could individual knowledge be reconciled to the universal.'⁹²

In the field of literature, Hirsch theorised the authorial will as the source of meaning in a text and argued that the critic and analyst's task was to determine that will. He states:

The interpreter's primary task is to reproduce in himself the author's 'logic', his attitudes, his cultural givens, in short, his world... the imaginative reconstruction of the speaking subject. The speaking subject is not, however, identical with the subjectivity to the author as an actual historical person; it corresponds, rather, to a

⁹⁰ Edmund Husserl (1954/1970) *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Northwestern UP, Evanston; *Part IIIB: The Way into Phenomenological Transcendental Philosophy from Psychology*: Section 57. 'The fateful separation of transcendental philosophy and psychology'

⁹¹ Burke 1992

⁹² Burke 1992: 109

very limited and special aspect of the author's total subjectivity; it is, so to speak, that 'part' of the author which specifies or determines verbal meaning.⁹³

In many respects the authorial will of Hirsch equates to a transcendental ego of the writer.

Burke establishes the parallels between Kant, Husserl and Hirsch:

It is easy to see how, in miniscule, Hirsch's use of authorial will as the ultimate principle of textual validation repeats this logic. Given the indeterminacy of textual meaning in the absence of any adjudicating norm, the premise of authorial will is a necessary epistemological condition of the existence of objective meaning.⁹⁴

The transcendental ego of Husserl and Kant as transformed into Hirsch's authorial will is a starting point for analysis, a base level from which subsequent analysis can launch, rather than a review of the process of textual construction. It is a formal principle, the principle of nothing more than common sense or the most readily accepted meaning, that is satisfied or merely accepted and then passed over in pursuit of richer analytical tasks. It is an interpretive principle, a presumption that the most common meaning is, unless rebutted, probably the right one. It is not a statement of what that meaning might be:

The author thus constituted is neither a locus of forces nor a psychobiographical site, but a metaphor for the text operating at the most consistent and plausible

⁹³ Eric Donald Hirsch (1967) *Validity in Interpretation*, Yale UP, New Haven: 1410

⁹⁴ Burke 1992: 109

level of interpretation, a purely formal principle of the determinacy of textual knowledge.⁹⁵

And, in terms of characteristics, the author is a tool for interpretation, a construct again, not a pre-eminence or precedent to the text. This transcendental authorial position is one of distance at which critical evaluation can begin to be conducted:

Interpretation is not here a vivid or agonistic struggle of an author with his material, but rather the ultimate tribunal at which criticisms vie, lay claim to their truths, and consent to be judged. The place of the author is therefore above and beyond the level at which textual meanings conflict and contest, and it is through this omnified agency that these conflicts can be neutralized in the interests of a higher, self-verifying 'truth', or determinate meaning.⁹⁶

In the area of writing practice, rather than critical evaluation, this particular view of the authorial position has its precedents. The strongest is that of Emile Zola, who outlines a strict position for the writing presence, the author, at great remove to the text:

The novelist is but a recorder who is forbidden to judge and to conclude. The strict role of a savant is to expose the facts, to go to the end of analysis without venturing into synthesis; the facts are thus: experiment tried in such and such conditions gives such and such results; and he stops there; for if he wishes to go

⁹⁵ Burke 1992: 109

⁹⁶ Burke 1992: 109

into phenomena he will enter into hypothesis; we shall have probabilities, not science...⁹⁷

This is a clear example of the formal, objective, scientific, empirical position of the author as neutral and removed. It is a fairly blunt expression of naturalistic writing and a path to achieving verisimilitude. But clearly, it is not a call for the author to stand as absolute determinant of meaning. And yet, in relation particularly to Barthes, this may be just what subsequent theorists made a stance against and nominated as a limitation, as Burke points out: 'We could also, with little effort, imagine Barthes arguing for subjectivity against objective realism, arguing, that is, for the author against the kind of authorial abnegation promoted by Zola.'⁹⁸

However, Zola does not create a limiting, desiccated god out of the author with his approach. Rather, he removes the author from the picture altogether. The meaning of the text is not found in the preferences or personality of the author, nor in the specific details of the author's life, but in the text's accord with objective and verifiable data:

He [the author] himself disappears, he keeps his emotion well in hand, he simply shows what he has seen... a novelist who feels the need of becoming indignant with vice, or applauding virtue, not only spoils the data he produces, for his intervention is as trying as it is useless, but the work loses its strength; it is no longer a marble page, hewn from the block of reality; it is matter worked up,

⁹⁷ Emile Zola quoted in John Hospers (1946) *Meaning and Truth in the Arts*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 146

⁹⁸ Burke 1992: 45

kneaded by the emotions of the author, and such emotions are always subject to prejudices and errors.⁹⁹

And looking at this, I am aware that I may even be overstating what Zola suggests here. This injunction, as severe as it is, could merely be a call towards a certain stylistic principle, a way to set a certain attitude towards the work and the writing process that will most readily achieve verisimilitude and have, by Zola's standard, the greatest literary merit and emotional impact on the reader. What Zola here may be suggesting, in arguing against tendentious writing, is that room be left for the reader to engage with the text. Zola is arguing for the exercise of restraint in writing, as a combination of style and practice, not necessarily as a theoretical standpoint. That is, in this case, what the disappearance of the author entails.

That concept of the disappeared author has come to mean much more than this reading of Zola suggests, however. And this is what brings us to Barthes and Foucault, with, for the time being, an emphasis on the theories of Barthes. Barthes answers the godhead of the author with the author's death. Whether there ever was such a godhead in theoretical circles is questionable, as already argued. By presenting a divine authorial figure and then killing off that figure, Barthes outlines the intellectual and philosophical trajectories that led to his argument regarding the author's disappearance. By nominating the author as god, Barthes shows his lineage, the tradition from which he draws. Like the transcendental authorial ego, the tradition precedent to the author's death begins in the broader field of philosophy, though not with Kant and Husserl, but with Nietzsche.

⁹⁹ Zola 1946: 146

Nietzsche's theories are very much like an answer to Kant, a refutation of Kant's argument for the transcendental ego in terms of its potential, if not actual, religiosity. Nietzsche denies absolute knowing, an absolute self, an immortal soul. In place of those concepts, Nietzsche brings to the fore the viscera of the human experience, the power and compulsions of the corporeal. It is physical humanity, as lived, that is the source of knowledge, morality, creation, wisdom and learning. Furthermore, the nature of that physical humanity is not fixed. The human self can be multiple and contradictory:

The concept of 'God' invented as a counterconcept to life – everything harmful, poisonous, slanderous, the whole hostility unto death against life synthesized in this concept in a gruesome unity! The concept of the 'beyond,' the 'true world' invented in order to devalue the only world there is – in order to retain no goal, no reason, no task for our earthly reality! The concept of the 'soul,' the 'spirit,' finally even '*immortal* soul,' invented in order to despise the body, to make it sick, 'holy'; to oppose with a ghastly levity everything that deserves to be taken seriously in life...¹⁰⁰

This line of thought informs, I think, Barthes', Foucault's and Derrida's lines of thought. Just as Nietzsche answers Kant, so Barthes answers Hirsch. When Barthes writes about the concept of the death of the author, his argument uses Nietzsche's argument for the death of god, in the same way that Hirsch's authorial will uses the transcendental ego of Husserl and Kant.

¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche 1967: 334

This is the cause of the possible overstatement of the authorial position in transcendental terms. The transcendent authorial will was not, when first expressed, an argument for a kind of writing divinity whose voice had the same authority as that divinity and whose will was implacable. And it's not even as Burke argues: that both Barthes and Foucault exaggerated the former theories as a necessary precondition of their own work. Instead, I would suggest that, to draw a parallel between the trajectories of authorship studies and concurrent philosophical theories on the self, Barthes re-enacted the points of debate between the Kantian and Nietzschean positions. Just because the original theory on authorial will was only a formal principle, that does not mean it didn't have the scope to place the author in a position of quasi-divine pre-eminence in literary fields. This is how Barthes expresses it: 'The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions...'¹⁰¹

Barthes counters this notion with the death of the author. The death of the author is a combination of effects arising from the nature of language. In setting up the death of the author, Barthes draws a distinction between lived experience and its reportage in language. Language is a sign system, never the real world itself. It is not a thing, it merely points to a thing. Once there is an entry into language, away from the experienced, or actual, there is a step away from the living self into the simulacrum of the living self. But, so ubiquitous is the presence and use of language, it comes to refer only to itself and thus becomes a simulacrum of a simulacrum. Thus, the view of the author as

¹⁰¹ Barthes 1977a: 143

anything other than simulacrum, say as a transcendental figure outside of the use of language, is denied. Burke discusses this view of the author as follows:

Within the discourse of the death of the author, however, it is not enough to exclude the author but to recognize that the author has always been absent, that there never could be an author in the first place. Barthes, Foucault and Derrida thus take anti-authorialism to the extreme of promoting authorial exclusion from a methodological prescription to an ontological statement about the very essence of discourse itself. The appearance of writing is a priori identifiable with the disappearance of the author.¹⁰²

Now, I don't think that Foucault and Derrida necessarily do what Burke says here, but Barthes does. The disappearance of the self on entry into language is, for Barthes, part of the nature of language:

No doubt it has always been this way. As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality, but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters his own death, writing begins.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Burke 1992: 16

¹⁰³ Barthes 1977a: 142

What this opens up is a very interesting range of possibilities and areas for consideration. Barthes here allows for the split between author and writer that I discussed earlier. Because it is only once the figure of the author is dead that the writing practice is undertaken. If it is possible to take that, not as a theoretical position or prescription on the part of Barthes, but as a suggestion – the opening of a door to writing, rather than the closing of another for the critical analyst – then it seems possible that it could comprise an approach to the construction of a text.

It entails acting as though dead, to refer to Barthes' later work.¹⁰⁴ It means, as writer, separating the writing self from the authorial position within the text. It means the writer does not, in writing, pursue truth, or veracity, or any virtuous purpose. The writer does not seek to instruct, provide a meaning or be the centre. Instead, the writer, in constructing an authorial self within the text, constructs that self as dead, unable to comment, answer or limit; a self that opens a mystery, that becomes a beginning, rather than a conclusion. And in the process of working up this blankness, the experience of doing so feeds back on the writing and reworks the self writing in the relationship between self and text:

[W]riting is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin.

Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips

¹⁰⁴ Barthes 1977b

away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.¹⁰⁵

There is a focus here away from a distinct, pre-existent authorial self towards the writing self that is not the authorial autocrat in and over the text, but one engaged in the process of creation with the text, in the double sense that the writer creates the text and the text is engaged by the writing self to create the writer writing the text. There is a loop of interactivity here that to me accords very well with viewing writing and the writing self in a codetermining, commingled relationship as acting ‘intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than the very practice of the symbol itself’.¹⁰⁶ Thus, perhaps, the death of the author is not an unquestionable state – though it may be for the critic – but is for the writer a task undertaken in setting up the process and practice of writing. At the least, I think, the death of the author can be that. But that is all from the writer’s side and prior to the commencement of the work.

There is still a something that may reside within the text. That is why I think Barthes’ death of the author allows the separation of author from writer. It is because Barthes focuses on the writer as author. That focus removes the author as writer from above and before the text. It does not change any presence or figure that may remain within a text. However, and as a result, Barthes does not address what may remain as a presence or construct within the text.

¹⁰⁵ Barthes 1977a: 142

¹⁰⁶ Barthes 1977a: 142

To come now to the distinction between Barthes' and Foucault's discussions of the death of the author, I think that Foucault, unlike Barthes, does address that very presence, construct or figure. In later works, Foucault and Barthes both resurrect the figure of the author. But, in making his argument for the establishment of his argument for the author function, a constructed figure based on the writer and used for purpose of critical analysis, Foucault focuses on the death of the author.¹⁰⁷ In terms of Foucault's view of the death of the author, I feel Burke does not consider Foucault's essay as thoroughly as he could. Burke comments comprehensively on the part of the essay dedicated to founders of discursivity, but I want to turn to an earlier section. Indeed, I want to look at the one that establishes the author function before describing it. Foucault's essay begins, as it were, with the birth of the author, indicating that the author is a part of a broader discursive set of processes that brought into prominence the notion of the individual as a distinct entity.¹⁰⁸ The author as the pre-eminent figure is simply the symptom of a generally impersonal historical moment and, presumably, everyone has to wait until that moment passes. This is Burke's view of Foucault's reasoning here, which Burke bases on Foucault's other works:

Within his prodigious text, *The Order of Things* (1966), Foucault attempts the formidable task of presenting a history of thought within which the role of individual thinkers over some four hundred and fifty years of discourse is entirely subordinate to impersonal forces. The determinism that Foucault promulgates is,

¹⁰⁷ Foucault 1967

¹⁰⁸ Foucault 1967: 101

superficially at least, akin to Marxist critique in that it is periodised into self-regulating historical structures. The statements, the texts, the philosophical systems and sciences of any given era will obey a prediscursive network of coherencies and rules of formation which constitutes the most fundamental level of knowledge.¹⁰⁹

And I would be inclined to agree with Burke for, surely, Foucault's general theory should accord with the particular. That is, his argument for the history of thought should agree with his theory of the author. But, apart from the opening of his essay, Foucault does not settle on vast impersonal forces as the main explanation for the death of the author. Instead, he studies writing as the cause: both writing as the written object and writing as the process. Firstly Foucault views writing as the entry into a language system of representation on representation:

Referring only to itself, but without being restricted to the confines of its own interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority. This means that it is an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier.¹¹⁰

This does refer to writing as the object, as the written work or text or book, or whatever term is variously used by theorists. It also represents a vast impersonal cause for the death of the author in the operation of language itself. But Foucault focuses past this

¹⁰⁹ Burke 1992: 62

¹¹⁰ Foucault 1967: 102

broad consideration. In his discussion, Foucault presents a view of writing as an act, as a process, which argues writing is not just a discursive function, a by-rote action that taps into the passing principles and issues of a society, allowing the writer to act as a mere scribe or node in a field of discourse. Writing is more playful and also more combative than that: 'Writing unfolds like a game (*jeu*) that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits.'¹¹¹

Writing, by this view, is a cheat and a game for cheats. It is a game into which the writer willingly enters, and while there are no rules per se – at least not rules that can't be transgressed, circumvented or otherwise overcome – there is a point to playing. The game has a set of criteria by which victory can be attained. The writer wins the game by hiding, and hiding utterly: 'In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language; it is, rather, a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears.'¹¹²

This is the goal of the game of writing. Its purpose is to turn the process of writing and the written object into a crypt of the self. In this view of writing, the death of the author is not a function of language as a representational system, nor is it a product of historical, abstract processes. The death of the author is the outcome and the prize of playing at being the writer while writing. It is what the writing self strives for while engaged in the writing game, and the board on which and in which the writing self plays is the written text. Writing is thus the ultimate game of hide-and-seek. However, there is no discovery

¹¹¹ Foucault 1967: 102

¹¹² Foucault 1967: 102

at the end, only greater and greater depths of being hidden, even to playing dead within the text. But since the best games are the ones that are taken seriously, seriously as the grave it could be said, the playing at death becomes death and more, it becomes living death, a trick that, even in revealing the body obscures the writing self even further.

CHAPTER SIX: THE GAME OF WRITING

In looking at Foucault's concept of the game of writing, one of the key concerns has to be the extent to which Foucault argues that the game arises from a conscious intent. This concern is perhaps more pressing since, as Burke argues,¹¹³ Foucault's broader theory of the history of thought, as presented in *The Order of Things* (1966), does not attribute the development of any thought to individual agency. It could be strongly argued that writing is the trace of thought, meaning it should in Foucault's work be bound by the same principles. I would argue that Foucault, in his discussion of the game of writing, presents a case for personal action on the part of the writing self within that game: 'Using all the contrivances that he sets up between himself and what he writes, the writing subject cancels out the signs of his particular individuality.'¹¹⁴

Whether such action is conducted with conscious intent is trickier to establish. The reason for this has to do with the characteristics of the writing self, which may not be conscious at all, though I will come to a consideration of the writing self's characteristics in a later chapter. Looking, though, at what the writing self, consciously or otherwise, enacts in the game of writing, the death of the author is not simply an outcome or prize. It is also a strategy for playing the game. The writing self plays at the death of the author to achieve, as it were, the death of the author. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that the entire figure of the author, no matter its shape as a construct, 'here or elsewhere, fixed or mobile, without form or oblong like man, in the dark or the light of the heavens'¹¹⁵ is a

¹¹³ Burke 1992: 62

¹¹⁴ Foucault 1967: 102

¹¹⁵ Beckett 1974: 18

strategy on the part of the writing self. The author is placed in the text to further hide the writing self. The author is a decoy, a dummy, a false trail, a red herring, a distraction. And if the author is dead, then the author was placed in the text as dead to further the game of misdirection: 'the mark of the writer is reduced to nothing more than the singularity of his absence; he must assume the role of dead man in the game of writing.'¹¹⁶

I think the author, at the point of textual development and from the perspective of the writing self, is exactly that role, the dead man Foucault is talking about here. And, of course, looking at the rest of Foucault's essay in this context, critics and society at large have to create an author function to perform certain discursive tasks because the author is written into the text as dead, while the writing self has masked the traces of its passing. In the face of such obfuscation, what hope can a critic have of unearthing anything but more subterfuge within a text?

At least I think that this is what Foucault is indicating within his essay. There is a final piece of evidence in the essay that what Foucault is arguing for is a death of the author that is more than a mere failure of the transcendental ego or a product of discourse only:

To imagine writing as absence seems to be a simple repetition, in transcendental terms, of both the religious principle of inalterable and yet never fulfilled

¹¹⁶ Foucault 1967: 102

tradition, and the aesthetic principle of the work's survival, its perpetuation beyond the author's death, and its enigmatic *excess* in relation to him.¹¹⁷

Certainly, as much of the essay subsequently addresses, there is a point to this consideration of the tradition of the continuation of the work after the writer's death when dealing with works that actually have survived the physical death of their writers. For 'founders of discursivity' like Nietzsche or Marx, both of whom Foucault references, the study of their work extends into multiple fields and reflects the impact of the entire corpus of their work. But Foucault is studious, in his discussion of the author function, to avoid reference to living writers, those contemporary to him. His discussion of the author function is like a consideration, not necessarily of a literary critical approach, but of an archaeological study. And yet, he begins his essay with Beckett, who was alive at the time Foucault wrote the essay. Where is the study of the 'enigmatic *excess* in relation to' Beckett?¹¹⁸

I think the study is deferred, that the game is being played still over the entirety of Beckett's work and over Foucault's. That, I think, is what makes the work an excess over the writing self. The writing self in the work is an excess of the work. This is the game of writing, cryptically incorporating the writing self in the work and cryptically incorporating the work into the writing self. The author, as a construct within the text, exists to assist this, to work as a transition, to nominate success and draw attention away from this very process. I would go so far as to suggest that the author is authored to do

¹¹⁷ Foucault 1967: 105

¹¹⁸ Foucault 1967: 105

this and operates in many ways like any other character presented within a work. It's just that the author has a specific function and form within the text that is not readily apparent on the surface of things.

I take support for this view of the author as type of character from the work of Bakhtin,¹¹⁹ who follows a different theoretical tradition from Barthes and Foucault and does not discuss the death of the author at all. Rather, Bakhtin places the author on a dialogic plane with the other characters in a work. The authorial voice is but one among many. He states:

If we were to abolish all the intonational quotation marks, all the divisions into voices and styles, all the various gaps between the represented 'languages' and direct authorial discourse, then we would get a conglomeration of heterogeneous linguistic and stylistic forms lacking any real sense of style. It is impossible to lay out the languages of the novel on a single plane, to stretch them out along a single line. It is a system of intersecting planes.¹²⁰

Burke points out that Bakhtin's dialogic author is not the kind of transcendent figure that needs to undergo a death. He discusses this as follows: 'The author in this mode of writing was not to be conceived as a transcendent, annunciative being, but rather as that

¹¹⁹ Bakhtin 1967 and 1981

¹²⁰ Bakhtin 1967: 132

voice amongst the many which holds together the polyphonic strands of the text's composition...'¹²¹

This to me does place the figure of the author at a substratum point in the text, but the author can still be seen operating and negotiating with the other characters in the text. They, the author and the other characters, share enough in common that there is communication evident, or inferable between them. What Bakhtin also introduces is the beginning of a study of the traits of this author character. Though a construct, the author character, like other characters, has certain attributes that are recognizably authorial. The first is the authorial voice, which is actively engaged throughout the operation of the text. A number of questions arise from this, revolving around what the voice sounds like, as it were, and who it is addressed to. In the first instance, the novelistic author figure's tone of voice is humorous and its language contemporary. For Bakhtin: 'Familiarization of the world through laughter and popular speech is an extremely important and indispensable step in making possible free, scientifically knowable and artistically realistic creativity in... civilization.'¹²²

In fact, Bakhtin argues that humour, or laughter, ridicule, parody, farce, satire, mockery, japes and jibes were precedents, in some respects, of the novel as a genre:

The most ancient forms for representing language were organised by laughter – these were originally nothing more than the ridiculing of another's language and

¹²¹ Burke 1992: 48

¹²² Bakhtin 1981: 23

another's direct discourse. Polyglossia and the *inter-animation of languages* associated with it elevated these forms to a new artistic and ideological level, which made possible the genre of the novel.¹²³

The novel, for Bakhtin, is a multi-vocal, multi-linguistic site, where a mash of voices contest and communicate one with the other. It is a polyphony written down, hence the term polyglossia. The precondition for the novelistic genre is the first awareness of multiple languages and multiple modes of speaking. That awareness takes the form of derisive mockery at the alien, the odd and unusual, hence laughter. The laughter is directed from the centre to what is at the periphery, from what is considered normal to that which is foreign or other. But, of course, there is no centre and there is no normal. This means that the laughter shifts into something else. In the novel, laughter is a collection of laughters, contextualized as positional and subjectively limited. The author organises the laughter, adds the author's own laughter, but that too remains conditional and subjective. There is no univocality in Bakhtin's schema of the novel: 'The language of the novel is a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other. It is impossible to describe and analyse it as a single unitary language.'¹²⁴

If the author figure performs as it should, the reader should be altogether unaware of its presence. That is because the author is there to be dead, to be obfuscated and to obfuscate. The author figure is so innately connected to the deepest level of textual construction that it is invisible to outside observance. Now, one reading of this would

¹²³ Bakhtin 1967: 133

¹²⁴ Bakhtin 1967: 131

suggest that I am arguing against reader-centred textual interpretation. This line of reasoning could be a call to seek out this author as the hidden figure of truth. But I am simultaneously suggesting that the reader can't access this authorial figure. Textual analysis that seeks authorial will, presence or intent then becomes a complete impossibility. The text is instead the manifestation of a completely private and inaccessible in-joke.

And on one level, this may be the case. But it mistakes the effect of placing the author figure within the text. As I've argued, the author figure is a strategy for removing the markers of the writing self from the text and also for placing the author as dead figure, albeit one with all the characteristics of a human being. The thing is, though, that the author figure is placed within the text, not to be a living human being, or the simulacrum of a human being, but to play at dead, to exist as dead, as a former human being that was never human in the first place. The author is a corpse hidden in the most secret part of the text. I would suggest this is what Derrida means when he says writing is a carrier of death. What the writing in its textual form is carrying, from its inception, is the corpse of the author figure: not its remains per se, but its non-living actuality:

What writing itself, in its nonphonetic moment, betrays, is life. It menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit's relationship with itself. It is their end, their finitude, their paralysis. Cutting breath short, sterilizing or immobilizing spiritual creation in the repetition of the letter, in the commentary or

the *exegesis*, confined in a narrow space, reserved for a minority, it is the principle of death and of difference in the becoming of being.¹²⁵

This is something Derrida sees as particular to writing, and as opposed to spoken and living language. For Derrida, writing is a capsule, an execution chamber that muffles the intonations and expressions of living voices to their remainder, their echo. The written word makes a capsule of language, hollowed out from its meaning: ‘writing is always atonal. The place of the subject is there taken by another, it is concealed. The spoken sentence, which is valuable only once... loses its place and its proper meaning as soon as it is written down.’¹²⁶

The removal of voices with tone, inflection, emphasis and subjectivity creates a space into which the reader can enter and conduct the apportionment of those characteristics. The writer placing the author figure as dead within a text, so as to remove the presence of the writer’s self and any authorial stand, achieves the same effect. So, the form of the author and the operation of the author merge together. The author is dead, as it were, to be dead, thus allowing for a living reading of the text. And the process of writing introduces the dead figure into the text, while hiding that the text has been made to act as a crypt:

Already in the *Phaedrus*, Plato says that the evil of writing comes from without...
the *Phaedrus* denounced writing as the intrusion of an artful technique, a forced

¹²⁵ Derrida 1976: 25

¹²⁶ Derrida 1976: 315

entry of a totally original sort, an archetypal violence: eruption of the *outside* within the *inside*, breaching into the interiority of the soul, the living self-presence of the soul within the true logos...¹²⁷

And this is also a part of the game of writing; that, for the author figure to have operation, there must be a kind of life, an activity, albeit a deathly activity. And there must be some kind of presence of the writer's self within the text to continually manipulate the author as a manipulator itself away from being noticed and noticing the writer's self. Indeed, why would the author figure need to exist to remove the markers of the writer's presence if the writing self were not present? 'The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.'¹²⁸

Multiple selves exist within the text to hide one another and themselves. And every figure is a ghost of another figure and of itself. Each ghost exists to create or reinforce an absence, to perpetuate the lie, to play the game of hide and hide and hide. This is what allows the reader to read the text, this is what allows the critic to theorise the text and the analyst to interpret the text. This is what the author is.

¹²⁷ Derrida 1976: 315

¹²⁸ Jacques Derrida (1978) *Writing and Difference*, trans Alan Bass, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London: 354

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE WRITING SELF

To pass beyond the author as dead within the text, I will now consider the writing self and what it is. First, the writing self is what does the work of placing the author as dead within the text. This means, more or less, that the writing self is that which authors the author. I don't want to suggest that the writing self is a constancy, a prefiguration of the text. What I will suggest though is that the writing self is always in the process of construction, both of itself and the text. Further, I will also suggest that the writing self is not all that authors, though it may be the only self that does, albeit a self that is unfixed, shifting, vanishing, extruded from itself, dead, ghostly, transgressive and possibly psychotic: 'Psychotic persons... remind us, in case we had forgotten, that the representational contrivances that cause us to speak, elaborate or believe rest upon emptiness.'¹²⁹

This is the problem with the writing self as the authoring agent, as Kristeva and others point out. In the same way that Hirsch's authorial will emerges from broader Kantian notions of the self, in the same way that Barthes, Foucault and Derrida draw on Nietzschean notions of the self, once there is a return to the self there is a return to the same problems that necessitated the theorization of the self by Kant, Nietzsche, Husserl and so many others. The opening onto the writing self is not an opening onto the answer, but an opening onto further questioning. Burke, referring to the author, which I will take

¹²⁹ Julia Kristeva (1983) 'Freud and Love: Treatment and Its Discontents' trans Leon Roudiez, in Toril Moi (ed) (1986) *The Kristeva Reader*, Columbia UP, New York: 258

to mean the writing self, argues as follows: ‘the author is neither the original nor the final term of analysis, but the opening to the race, the milieu, the moment...’¹³⁰

However, the issues regarding the writing self must still be approached, interrogated, negotiated, contested and examined. The writing self cannot be ignored as a mere mystery, because it is the subjectivity that undertakes authorship. It does write the text. It is somehow, in some way, there. This is also as Burke argues:

[T]he essential problem posed by the author is that whilst authorial subjectivity is theoretically unassimilable, it cannot be practically circumvented. The processes of intention, influence and revision, the interfertility of life and work, autobiography and the autobiographical, author-functions, signature effects, the proper name in general, the author-ity and creativity of the critic, all these are points at which the question of the author exerts its pressure on the textual enclosure...¹³¹

So, it is still important to look at the writing self in its various manifestations and forms. To interrogate this issue I want to refer particularly to Blanchot’s notion of the essential solitude and Kristeva’s view of the transgressive authorial subjectivity. I want to do both in light of Bakhtin’s notion of laughter as the precondition of the novelistic form. I’ve already argued that the written text can be seen, in some ways, as the outpouring of laughter arising from the writing self’s joy at engaging in Foucault’s game of writing.

¹³⁰ Burke 1992: 26

¹³¹ Burke 1992: 174

There is now the question of what kind of self it is that laughs like this, what kind of self it is that plays at the game of writing.

Such a self is difficult to track down, since, as discussed, the author figure masks its existence, removes the traces of its presence within the text to allow for interpretive space. Deliberate gaps are included within the planes of the work to allow access by a reading or critical subjectivity. Nevertheless, at some substratum, some echo of a laugh remains, some outpouring, the trace left from playing the game of writing.

Kristeva, in undertaking her study of Bakhtin, locates the writing self as a reader and a rewriter. The writing self reconstructs the past discourses, and in so doing alters them from their previous form. Kristeva puts this as follows:

Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them.

Diachrony is transformed into synchrony, and in light of this transformation, *linear* history appears as abstraction. The only way a writer can participate in history is by transgressing this abstraction through a process of reading-writing; that is, through the practice of a signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure.¹³²

The writing self is a transgressor of what has come before. The writing self does not treat the past tradition with distant respect, but engaged contact. Bakhtin states:

¹³² Kristeva 1980: 36

This is the zone of maximally familiar and crude contact; laughter means abuse, and abuse could lead to blows. Basically this is uncrowning, that is, the removal of an object from the distanced plane, the destruction of epic distance, an assault on and destruction of the distanced plane in general. In this plane (the plane of laughter) one can disrespectfully walk around whole objects; therefore, the back and rear portion of an object (and also its innards, not normally accessible for viewing) assume a special importance. The object is broken apart, laid bare (its hierarchical ornamentation is removed): the naked object is ridiculous; its 'empty' clothing, stripped and separated from its person, is also ridiculous. What takes place is a comical operation of dismemberment.¹³³

This view of the writing self, the subjectivity engaged in the process of writing, ties in with the view of writing as an attempt not just to remain within the sign system, but to adapt and modify it, as per Derrida's view of writing.¹³⁴ However, under Derrida's schema, as discussed previously, such a practice turned writing into a chamber of death, a betrayal of life, the stifling of breath, which allows for no laughter, no living writing self to be found beyond the crypt of the text. The atonality of Derrida's view of writing closes an approach to the writing self, it would seem. But this is only the start of Derrida's approach to writing, for he argues for a life within the death, an animation in the stillness, a manifest haunting of the crypt of writing.¹³⁵ The subjectivity may be

¹³³ Bakhtin 1981: 22-24

¹³⁴ Derrida 1976

¹³⁵ Derrida 1994: 120

concealed, but it is the act of concealment that reveals the figure, not as corporeal, simply living, or simply dead, but as ethereal and uncanny.

This does allow for a revealing of the writing subject, but only as spectral, neither living nor dead and both living and dead, all at the same time. This accords with Kristeva's view of the writing self, which, in its transgression, transgresses the fixed views of self by overcoming 'diachrony': that is, dichotomies in various terms such as living and dead, present and absent, one and the other. This is due to the acceptance of dialogue as the basis and defining characteristic of the novelistic text. Dialogue is a continuous activity, an ongoing separation of viewpoints, speaking positions and discourses. The dialogue never resolves, there is never agreement, so both sides of the argument are accommodated within the text. For the writing self to construct such a text, the writing self must operate dialogically as well, both within the text and when writing the text, or rather, rewriting all the other texts transgressively in order to create this one text. The writing self, or its manifest form within the text, operates like another character, engaged on a planar level with the other voices and characters within the text. Outside the text, in the process of creating the text, the writing self denies and negates all previous texts, denies and negates the self, to permit the text and the self writing the text: 'Dialogue and ambivalence are borne out as the only approach that permits the writer to enter history by espousing an ambivalent ethics: negation as affirmation.'¹³⁶

It is this 'negation as affirmation' that is so like Derrida's uncanny spectre cryptically incorporated into text and the writing self. It is both living and dead, here and absent,

¹³⁶ Kristeva 1980: 40

collapsing opposites on all levels of textual production. This is, according to Kristeva and Bakhtin, the shifting of the subjectivity and of the text from abstract, certain and monological to ambivalent: ‘Bakhtinian dialogism identifies writing as both subjectivity and communication, or better, as intertextuality. Confronted with this dialogism, the notion of a “person-subject of writing” becomes blurred, yielding to that of “ambivalence of writing”.’¹³⁷

This ambivalence describes the instance of the writing self writing the text and the self writing at the same time. It is a counter to the threat of the authorial presence prefiguring and absolutely speaking the text, denying other approaches to meaning. It also conveys something of the particular experience of the process of writing, a process of mutual co-creation and co-destruction.

This ongoing co-implicated and complicated process of blurring, this ambivalence, this life in death, haunting and cryptic incorporation are presented as a result of the evolution of the novelistic form. Kristeva, referencing Bakhtin, argues that this figuration of the writing self, of the writing process, of the presences within the written text, all arise from the carnivalesque tradition that gave rise to the novel as a particular genre of text:

The carnival first exteriorizes the structure of reflective literary productivity, then inevitably brings to light this structure’s underlying unconscious: sexuality and death. Out of the dialogue that is established between them, the structural dyads

¹³⁷ Kristeva 1980: 39

of carnival appear: high and low, birth and agony, food and excrement, praise and curses, laughter and tears.¹³⁸

What is suggested here is that on all levels of a novelistic text there is a commonality. In and on all these levels, there is a conflating of opposites, the establishment of seeming paradoxes and a continuous dialogic operation that includes a silence, a presence that includes an absence, an absence that is a presence and so on, leading then to further presences and absences. The laughter creates the writing self playing the game of writing, which involves the laughter that then creates the text creating the writing self playing the game of writing and so on. This is true intertextuality: 'Within the carnival, the subject is reduced to nothingness, while the structure of *the author* emerges as anonymity that creates and sees itself created as self and other, as man and mask.'¹³⁹

The clearest way to express this situation, especially the situation of the writing process by a writing self, is as a *mise en abyme*, an act of opening out onto the self opening, which is also a closing off of the self closing, through all the levels of textual production and into the text itself. Kristeva, again referring to Bakhtin, expresses the situation of creative production, of the relationship between writing self and written text, as follows.

The writer's interlocutor, then, is the writer himself, but as reader of another text.

The one who writes is the same as the one who reads. Since his interlocutor is a text, he himself is no more than a text re-reading itself as it rewrites itself. The

¹³⁸ Kristeva 1980: 49

¹³⁹ Kristeva 1980: 49

dialogical structure, therefore, appears only in the light of the text elaborating itself as ambivalent in relation to another text.¹⁴⁰

And this is why it is so difficult to pin down the writing self in any consistent way. It is because the writing self is relational. It exists only in a relationship, is brought into being only in a relationship, or rather, a series of relationships. The most obvious relationship is with the text being written. The process of constructing the text is the trajectory of the relationship, its history, its passage and, finally, cessation. And there are the subordinate relationships that inform this one, the past relationships with all the other texts, all other texts, either as writer, reader, analyst, user, subject, victim, perpetrator and all of the ways humans interact with the world around them. The experience of those relationships informs the creative relationship with the text being written. Those past texts, those past relationships with those texts, most importantly, are read by the writing self – by Bakhtin's reader-writer – in such a way that they can establish the rules of conduct for the relationship between the writing self and the text being written.

In this kind of approach then, it's not necessary that the writing self be the source of the content of the text being written. That emerges in the context of the relationship, as the distinct facets of the writing self emerge in the context of the relationship, all based on the previous relationships the writing self has had up to the construction of the written text. But, of course, in those past circumstances, the writing self was not the writing self. That subjectivity only exists in the context of the relationship with the text being written, so the writing self, in the process of constructing the text, is also constructing the writing

¹⁴⁰ Kristeva 1980: 56

self, but with reference to the other subjectivities that up until then have acted as textual readers. They are relegated in the key creative relationship to sites of information only. They are reduced to texts. The reading self, or selves, the living self or selves are rendered in the creative writing process as ghosts, alienated from the viscera of the body as the writing self is brought into being. It is a process that has been described by both Kristeva¹⁴¹ and Blanchot,¹⁴² but what is telling is that it has been described from the perspective of the reading, living self or selves, not from the perspective of the writing self.

The limitations on the reading, living self are the liberation of the writing self, its coming into being. And the product is the written text, which is then a necessity for bringing the writing self into being and so it loops around relationally. The writing self in the process of writing is engaged in the joy of birth, of being birthed. The laughter that Bakhtin speaks of is also the laughter of coming into being. Kristeva expresses this situation in similar terms: 'Identifying the semiotic disposition means in fact identifying the shift in the speaking subject, his capacity for renewing the order in which he is inescapably caught up; and that capacity is, for the *subject*, the capacity for enjoyment.'¹⁴³

However, this is not the end of the laughter and enjoyment for, as it gets to the text, the laughter is frozen. It is not stopped, necessarily. It doesn't vanish into the air like audible laughter. Its traces remain, modified into the laughter of cessation. By the time

¹⁴¹ Kristeva 1980

¹⁴² Blanchot 1982

¹⁴³ Julia Kristeva (1973) 'The System and the Speaking Subject', in Toril Moi (ed) (1986) *The Kristeva Reader*, Columbia UP, New York: 29

the text is read, the writing self has ceased to be, for the relationship that brings it into existence has ended. The text has been written, or at least abandoned. So the laughter is an echo, a ghost, a dead man or woman. But at the same time, since the writing of the text is the relationship between writing self and text, the text is thus incorporated within the writing self, while the other selves are excluded from the relationship, from the body writing and that means that the writing self continues on in the text in the same way. The writing self is both dead and alive inside the text. There are traces of that subjectivity, the remains of the relationship, the markers of a presence. That is what has to be covered by the author figure and replaced by the implied author. The writing self is the dead figure behind all other dead figures within a text, the last shadow of a dead relationship:

The subject exists only inasmuch as it identifies with an ideal other who is the speaking other, the other in so far as he speaks. A ghost, a symbolic formation beyond the mirror, this Other, who is indeed the size of a Master, is a magnet for identification because he is neither an object of need nor one of desire...¹⁴⁴

I've already looked at the writing self as it draws in past relationships and different manifest subjectivities, transitions from existence to being to a trace and its dead remains within the already written text. But what are the characteristics of the writing self in the process of writing? How does the relationship operate? What's it like on the inside? The issue is to look at what sort of self is created in the process of creation.

¹⁴⁴ Kristeva 1983: 252

Kristeva's view of a relationship, between the self and other, the 'death sentence that causes me to be',¹⁴⁵ strikes me as an ideal representation in some respects of the writing self while in the constructive process of writing. It accords with Blanchot's argument regarding the operation of the self and the subjectivity while writing. Blanchot's theory of essential solitude is taken from the perspective of the lived self which is negated or put aside in the process of writing, but what he describes runs in close parallel to what Kristeva discusses above. Blanchot discusses the negation of the experiential self as follows:

The third person substituting for the 'I': such is the solitude that comes to the writer on account of the work... The third person is myself become no one, my interlocutor turned alien; it is my no longer being able, where I am, to address myself and the inability of whoever addresses me to say 'I'; it is his not being himself.¹⁴⁶

This third person, this outside self, impinging upon, possessing the experiential self: this is the writing self. The writing self is alien to the lived self because it only comes into being in the process of writing. A writer writes: when a writer doesn't write, he or she is something else. Blanchot's essential solitude is the removal of the something else and the emplacement of the writer writing. It is both a life and a death, a possession, a cryptic incorporation, an operation of death and life conjoined spectrally: 'The dead present is the impossibility of making any presence real – an impossibility which is present, which

¹⁴⁵ Kristeva 1983

¹⁴⁶ Blanchot 1982: 28

is there as the present's double, the shadow of the present which the present bears and hides in itself.'¹⁴⁷

This hiding, this operation of hiding, the author figure hiding the writing self, the writing self hiding the experiential self, and all hiding itself in the process of hiding the other: this is exactly the writing process that creates the writing self creating the written text and the writing self together. From the outside, from the experiential self, this writing self, as constituted, is impersonal and multiple. It is the presence of the abstracted 'They', Blanchot argues, which is really the manifestation of death, the dead presence, the dead utterance, the creation of the dead word in the written text:

Someone is the faceless third person, the They of which everybody and anybody is part, but who is part of it? Never anyone in particular, never you and I. Nobody is part of They. 'They' belong to a region which cannot be brought to light, not because it hides some secret alien to any revelation or even because it is radically obscure, but because it transforms everything that has access to it, even light, into anonymous, impersonal being, the Nontrue, the Nonreal yet always there. The They is, in this respect, what appears up very close when someone dies.¹⁴⁸

But can I suggest that the reason 'They' cannot be revealed is because they are the text and the writing self in the relationship of writing? They are in the process of being

¹⁴⁷ Blanchot 1982: 31

¹⁴⁸ Blanchot 1982: 31

brought into being and also entering into death, the death of the subjective self, the death of the word into writing, the creating of constructs as dead, the playing at dead, the game of death, which is also the game of life. To return to Kristeva at this point, and to something already quoted previously in relation to the roots of novelistic writing, she outlines the tensions in this relationship which accord with what Blanchot presents here: ‘The carnival first exteriorizes the structure of reflective literary productivity, then inevitably brings to light this structure’s underlying unconscious: sexuality and death.’¹⁴⁹

It looks as though Blanchot only describes the abstracted self, the death and not sexuality or love. Yet this is the final aspect of the essential solitude. The processive nature of the relationship between writer and text is exactly like that of love, or of seeing the one that awakens profound longing, desire and need. It is the first sight of love stories. It is what Blanchot calls fascination’s gaze.

Fascination’s gaze is the experience of being so arrested by something external to the body, so drawn towards it, that self-awareness vanishes. The only awareness that remains is the awareness of the object of the gaze, what it is that is being looked at, studied. The self projects out towards that object, but of course, not to be it, but to view it more closely and completely, while the self loses its attachment to its own nature, location and singularity. The gaze, fascination’s gaze, is the gaze of Someone, the impersonal They that Blanchot talks about, because it is the gaze that means the death of the experiential self: or rather, the experience is so total that it removes the notion of

¹⁴⁹ Kristeva 1980: 49

experiencing: 'Fascination is fundamentally linked to neutral, impersonal presence, to the indeterminate They, the immense, faceless Someone.'¹⁵⁰

But fascination is also, by this description, the lover's gaze. It is the gaze of sexual yearning, of desire that continues even in the consummation of the creative act. It is a never-ending gaze in terms of love. The gaze itself does not cease, the love and the sexual longing behind the gaze do, or they shift onto a new love object, the next text, the next writing self writing the next text, the next death:

Fascination is solitude's gaze. It is the gaze of the incessant and the interminable. In it blindness is vision still, vision which is no longer the possibility of seeing, but the impossibility of not seeing, the impossibility which becomes visible and perseveres – always and always – in a vision that never comes to an end: a dead gaze, a gaze become the ghost of an eternal vision.¹⁵¹

However, fascination's gaze is unique in the case of writing, because what draws the gaze is what the writing self writes. The writing self is the creator: the text does not have agency, in at least the physical sense. The writing self puts thoughts onto the page or screen and is simultaneously fascinated by precisely what is there on the page or screen, thus lifting the writing self from the viscera of the body, from the sense of physical self-awareness. Nothing is left to replace it because the experiential self has already been put aside, is continually put aside by the very same process. The question then is whether the

¹⁵⁰ Blanchot 1982: 33

¹⁵¹ Blanchot 1982: 32

writing self is writing onto the screen or page and then reading it back, or whether it is merely reading back the already written, the source of which exists only in the process of writing, and not at all in the mind, the interiority of the self, writing or otherwise. I suspect that that is a question that cannot be answered because it is basically the question, *where does it come from?* It is the question that sits at the heart of the consideration of the writing process and, due to the fact that it can't be answered, is one that must be left as a tension, an uncertainty, an ambiguity and a haunting. But what can be said is that, given the constant projection of the writing self outwards in an act of fascination's gaze and in terms of the body as a locus of subjectivity, the writing self must be cast as an absence, a palpable absence, an absent presence, not aware of itself but aware as awareness, the unfixing point that is drawn towards the other.

Again this is an example of the cryptic, the uncanny and the spectral. The writing self is taken out of the self in the context of the relationship between the text and self. The text inhabits the writing self, which is a self that has inhabited, but only as absence, the viscera normally occupied by the experiential self. It seems a kind of life, but is an entry into death. It seems a kind of creation, but only the creation of dead figures; simulacra with at best only the illusion of life. What kind of self is created in such a process and with such an end? What kind of self could create this ghostly, ghastly process? What kind of self is a present absence, a notable, palpable gap?

CHAPTER EIGHT: TRANSGRESSIONS

There has already been mention of the transgressive writing self, of writing as transgression. What has been discussed so far seems to describe exactly both the product and perpetrator of transgression. But such transgression is not just that of disobedience, of a certain wilfulness or difficult attitude. The transgression is of the most serious kind: a rupture of order, a displacement of selves, murder and reanimation. It is a transgression not of replacing one self with another. It is not just theft of the body, identity theft. It is destruction of the possibility of self, it is the self extruded out from the body to create another thing. It is the energy of the living appropriated and transferred into a ghastly energy that awakens the inanimate and dead. The transgression is the transgression of the necromancer.

Kristeva, who views the birth of subjective identification in relational terms, presents a view of the writing self that is transgressive on a number of levels. The first has already been mentioned, which is the transgression of the past tradition, the transgression of abstracted history, but I would suggest that the continuation of such a transgression, the transgression of linearity, leads to a transgression of the linear subjectivity itself. I would suggest the writing self transgresses the notion of the self.

An aspect of this has been argued already. The living, experiential self is transposed out of the viscera of the corporeal when the writing self is born. The experiential subjectivity, the non-writing subjectivity, is put to one side when the writing self comes into being. But I would suggest that the transgression goes beyond that, that the writing

self further betrays the experiential self. In some respects the writing self cancels out the experiential self, but in others it reveals the weaknesses of the living self, confesses its own transgressions, shows the subconscious beneath the conscious, places the unconscious over the conscious or simply demonstrates the tension between and across the conscious, unconscious and multiple selves, variously brought into existence, displaced, destroyed or encrypted.

I imagine it would be difficult to name all the transgressions that may occur in the establishment and operation of a writing self writing a text. Equally, to collate them under a broad heading or systematic unity seems impossible. Apart from the difficulties of the self, a transgression wouldn't really be a transgression if it could be so easily systematized, I would think. However, given the discussion of death in life as writing, of the uncanny, the spectral and the cryptic, I suggest that the ghost may also be the necromancer in terms of the writing self: perhaps not just a haunting, but a malevolent wraith.

But rather than expanding on that now, I want to bring up some particular examples of transgressive behaviour, the self betrayal of the self, that Burke, Derrida, Kristeva and finally Blanchot discuss in various ways. Some of the transgressions are discussed as particular to a writer under study (de Man, Rousseau, Celine) but I suspect that these kinds of transgressions aren't limited to a singularity. These transgressions can be shared, may even be evident in a great deal of writing and writing selves. Other transgressions are more theorized and general. Of course, though they are discussed

outside specific persons, they are not necessarily totalizing across the entire field of transgression.

Burke opens a discussion of authorship with a consideration of the intersection between de Man's writing and his biographical details, including the way that de Man autobiographically limited the importance of those details, especially as they concerned his behaviour in occupied France during World War II:

Theoretical articulations of the void of personality find a constant analogue in de Man's voiding of his personal history. Autobiography as de-facement becomes de-facement as autobiography, a cancellation of the self that is self-willed and mirrored in the life of the self-cancelling subject; text and author are united under the signs of their disunion.¹⁵²

This is a difficult situation since the experiential self in de Man's case, if he was indeed a collaborator, seems clearly transgressive on its own. Thus there is the chance that his theoretical position is a deliberate act of inveiglement that conveniently masked its presence under the aegis of the academic field. But then again, this is not greatly different from the kind of game I have suggested the writing self engages in regardless of the particulars of any biographical details. This is the death of the author, the establishment of the dead author figure, the destruction of the experiential self by the writing self and transgression all in one. Further it is unclear what type of transgression it is, processive or, perhaps, opportunistic. And, in some key respects, it doesn't work.

¹⁵² Burke 1992: 6

Burke uses de Man as the entry into a consideration of authorship precisely because of the details of de Man's life and the convenient accord between those details with the effect of his theoretical stance; that he could not be judged for his war-time activity. And yet, Burke does judge him for that activity. Burke takes the specific details of de Man's life and theory and uses them to form a broader view of authorship:

A disembodied voice, a voice that speaks strangely to us now through the fissures of seemingly impersonal and imperturbable theoretical prose. A voice that cannot be kept silent in death. And a voice that, we shall argue, can still less be quieted by literary theory.

This voice, the voice of Paul de Man is also the voice of authorship itself...¹⁵³

It seems that the very statement that the biographical doesn't matter makes a study of the biographical necessary to determine the truth of that assertion. De Man will always now be associated with his life, and presumably that small segment of his life. He betrays himself, as, Burke then argues, does every writer engaged in the process of writing. In his study of Derrida, Burke then goes on to show how Derrida located a similar self-betrayal in the writings of Rousseau, a self-betrayal that is more total than even de Man's:

Derrida's analysis of Rousseau presented the critical establishment with a formidable and unprecedented model of reading, whereby the critic demonstrates

¹⁵³ Burke 1992: 7

at great length, and with exemplary rigour, that a text finally says quite the reverse of what its author intended.¹⁵⁴

Derrida's argument focuses on a number of factors contributing to this reversal of Rousseau, but mostly on writing as the cessation of life, as an atonal outpouring into a lifeless space that then pours back into the writing self. It is the opening out onto the inside and the entry into the outside of writing that pervades and frustrates Rousseau's efforts at communication, that reverses those efforts, that betrays Rousseau. He cannot write what he wishes, for he is not himself. He is dead to himself in the process of writing. Derrida puts it as follows:

...Rousseau, caught, like the logic of identity, *within* the graphic of supplementarity, says what he does not wish to say, describes what he does not wish to conclude: that the positive (is) the negative, life (is) death, presence (is) absence and that this repetitive supplementarity is not comprised in any dialectic, at least if that concept is governed, as it always has been, by a horizon of presence.¹⁵⁵

I would argue as well, in the case of Rousseau, that there is a double betrayal, for while the writing self denies Rousseau and what it is he wants to say, it also reveals the experiential Rousseau, especially in his privacy. The frustration of Rousseau's writing, the wasteful excess, the pointless release indicates Rousseau's compulsive masturbatory

¹⁵⁴ Burke 1992: 23

¹⁵⁵ Derrida 1976: 246

practices, parallels them and attaches them to the process of Rousseau's writing practice. Burke draws the link between the two actions:

Like writing, masturbation (when accompanied by object-fantasy) is a supplement or proxy of lived experience, an imago of an unattainable or unmasterable presence... Writing and masturbation alike are methods of mastering presence in the mode of absence...¹⁵⁶

This is similar to Burke's linking of de Man's theory to his life. It is also similar to the way Kristeva discusses the relation between the living self of Celine and Celine's work. Of course, in some respects, Celine is an extreme case as his writing is so extreme itself. But Kristeva is clear in stating the two driving transgressions of Celine's writing are transgressions that carry through all writing, if not all culture. I want to look at both of these closely for they are misogyny, of a particular type, and bigotry: in Celine's particular case, this bigotry taking the form of anti-Semitism. I would suggest that for Kristeva, both emerge from a common transgressive root, the desire to destroy the other.

The reason this urge emerges though is because of the very process of writing and its effect on the notion of subjectivity, writing's transgression of subjectivity. It is vengeance for the destruction that fascination's gaze enacts upon the self, upon all the selves, even the self engaged in fascination's gaze. The desire to destroy the other is the result of the desire to be the self, a desire frustrated by the presence of absence, by fascination's gaze, by a spectral haunting, by the possession of the dead in the case of

¹⁵⁶ Burke 1992: 124-125

cryptic incorporation. I would argue that in Kristeva's schema, this frustrated desire, this haunting and possession accord extremely closely with her concept of the abject: 'The abject, not yet object, is anterior to the distinction between subject and object in normative language.'¹⁵⁷

What is interesting here is that the transgression becomes at least double at this point. I have already argued that the transgression is a betrayal of the self, a revealing, and simultaneously a hiding of the flaws of the self, of the gaps and the shortcomings, of the personal and the visceral. Now, the transgression betrays its own transgression. It betrays the betrayal of the self. It betrays destruction, as it betrays creation. And of course, if it arises from fascination's gaze, if it arises in the creation of a work, which is also a destruction, then it must betray both creation and destruction, both self and other for the very reason that they are both co-implicated, complicated, conjoined in absence and presence. Kristeva sees this tension, this ongoing betrayal manifest, culturally speaking in a particular kind of misogyny, the misogyny of a symbolic, psychological form:

But the abject is also the non-objectality of the archaic mother, the locus of needs, the attraction and repulsion, from which an act of forbidden desire arises. And finally, abject can be understood in the sense of the horrible and fascinating abomination which is connoted in all cultures by the feminine or, more indirectly,

¹⁵⁷ Kristeva 1981: 317

by every partial object which is related to the state of abjection (in the sense of the non-separation subject/object).¹⁵⁸

Kristeva here is arguing that the abject, the spectral and cryptic incorporation is mother love/hate. It is Oedipal in the sense that there is a desire, culturally speaking, to appropriate the regenerative, procreative faculty of the mother-figure, to love and possess the mother as the father does with the concurrent guilt and rupture that such a desire engenders, turned back towards the mother figure to destroy it. This is archetypal hatred of woman, the combined repulsion and attraction operating at the most profound level. It is the desire to be joined and the need to be separate running concurrently with the desire to be separate and the need to be joined. It cannot be satisfied, it cannot be, so it plays itself out again in simulated acts of creation, conjoining and separation; but the acts are dead acts, miscarriages of life, entries into death, the making of a dead thing to place at the heart of the created space, a shrine to the dead, a crypt. Cholodenko draws the link between the crypt and the mother, the uterine gap, when talking about the film experience, the theatre: 'a doubled womb that is at the same time a doubled tomb.'¹⁵⁹ I think it holds true for writing as well, with its own projector, screen, space and fascinated gaze. However, Kristeva argues that this requires a catharsis, this mother love/hate, the creative and destructive impulse, this running together of sexuality and death: 'It becomes what culture, the sacred must purge, separate and banish so that it may establish itself as such in the universal logic of catharsis.'¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Kristeva 1981: 317

¹⁵⁹ Cholodenko 2004: 110

¹⁶⁰ Kristeva 1981: 317

Of course, if the writing process is the Oedipal mother longing/loathing, then the creation of the text here, as Kristeva expresses it, is not an act of creation, but rather of destruction. A living thing is not birthed to achieve catharsis, the mother is not incorporated into the creative act. Rather the mother is expunged. Again, the completion of writing, as it has been through its process, its entry into living death, is yet another manifest abandonment: a permanent, unforgivable separation. And even then, the ghost would remain:

[T]he writer is tempted to give one interpretation and one only to the outer limit of the nameable. The *Sacherverhalt*, the abject, is then embodied in the figure of a maleficent agent, both feminine and phallic, miserable and all-powerful, victim and satrap, idiot and genius, bestial and wily.¹⁶¹

This whole process plays out in different forms, it would seem that Kristeva argues. In viewing Celine's writing, Kristeva argues that his bigotry is a result of abjection, of the blurring between self and other and the desire to be equally separate and joined, which manifests as the need to destroy, to remove the source of the rupture and the destruction:

His [Celine's] anti-Semitism also has a more subtle foundation, more intrinsically linked to the psychic instability of the writer and the speaking subject in general: it is the fascination with the wandering and elusive other, who attracts, repels, puts one literally beside oneself. This other, before being another subject, is an object of discourse, a non-object, an abject. This abject awakens in the one who

¹⁶¹ Kristeva 1981: 318

speaks archaic conflicts with his own improper objects, his ab-jects, at the edge of meaning, at the limits of the interpretable. And it arouses the paranoid rage to dominate those objects, to transform them, to exterminate them.¹⁶²

Thus it would seem that authorship is an act of destructive creation and creative destruction. It is fueled by the psychotic, murderous fury of a self taken out of its body, carried into a text and carrying the text back into the self. Writing is love as madness, it is unrequited love, insatiable lust, burning desire. It is as compulsive and fruitless as masturbation, as transgressive as the urge to appropriate the mother figure and the simultaneous invagination of the crypt and the encryption of the vagina. And the self, the writing self, away from itself and wanting to be itself, to be the text, to make, to love, to kill with kindness, to love to death, is the frustrated lover and the guilty lover.

As discussed at the beginning of this second part of the essay, before there was the possibility of theorizing a split between the author and the writing self, the author was presented within the academy as a transcendental ego, which could act as a principle of reason and consistent judgment. In the establishment of the author as function and construct, the potential for the deification of that transcendence was made manifest for the purpose of attacking, subverting and bringing down such a view of the author. But maybe in light of the above considerations of the writing self, by way of conclusion on the topic, that self can be seen again as a sort of deity, at least in metaphorical terms. The writing self is ideated. It is created in creation, destroyed in destruction as more than itself, but as the concept of itself. I would suggest, however, that if the writing self is a

¹⁶² Kristeva 1981: 318

god, that god is not a distant arbiter. It is not a principle of order weighing virtue against a feather. To me it is a trickster god, made destroyer.

But, more than that, more than a god-killing god, a self-killing self, the writing self, for me, is an atheist god. There is no need when studying authorship to awaken the divinity of the writing self so as to subvert it. The writing self does that each time within the interiority of creating the text. The god of the writing self, constructing the work, renders itself not as a part of religion but of mere mythology: the study of what is no longer worshipped, no longer held as truth, but instead thought of only as a story. The god is not a revelation, but a revenant. Indeed, it is less than that in the logic of the ghost story without ghosts.

PART THREE

CHAPTER NINE: THE SEABORNE

This third part of this essay will undertake an analysis of a specific text in relation to the theories presented previously. The text in question is my work, 'The Seaborne'. What distinguishes this text is its type. 'The Seaborne' is a film script. I draw support for this manner of film script study from Sternberg, who states: 'The analysis of the single script, the investigation of the work of individual authors and the study of genres within and without traditional narrative cinema could open up a multitude of previously unconsidered research areas.'¹⁶³

While I don't intend to consider in great depth the plot of 'The Seaborne', to provide a context for the examples of the script given later in this part of the essay, here is a brief synopsis of the film script's final draft. Perhaps 'teaser' is a better term than synopsis, since, of course, I don't want to give away the ending. The plot of the film script, it should also be noted, has altered profoundly over the drafting of the film script.

'The Seaborne':

Pen has been recently widowed. Her husband, David, drowned at sea. Pen has lionized his memory. She repairs the boat he was on when he died and plans her own suicide. But, at the point of taking her life, she instead comes across a near-drowned refugee, Feroze, and chooses instead, consciously or unconsciously, to rescue him, bring him back to health and use him as a proxy for her dead husband.

¹⁶³ Sternberg 1997: 232

Simultaneously, Eleanor, Pen's sister, is carrying a secret. Eleanor had an affair with David and, when she ended it, David sent Eleanor a farewell note and killed himself. As Eleanor wrestles with both the need to confess the truth to Pen and the desire to avoid all responsibility for her actions, she turns to the local country cop, Mitch, for support and the satisfaction of her own needs. But Eleanor's done this before, found comfort in the arms of a man, and she can't escape the knowledge of how that ended the last time. The two sisters must face each other, each alone, and with nowhere to hide from each other and themselves...

As the emphasis throughout this essay so far has been on authoring in terms of construction, rather than in the subsequent realm of discourse, I will be considering 'The Seaborne' across the trajectory of its development. Sternberg also suggests viewing a script across the multiple stages of its construction, because of the characteristics of the text type: 'The legitimization and investigation of each version of a text appears more helpful in the analysis of screenplays than of prose or drama because it does the text-type (which is by nature multi-versioned) particular justice.'¹⁶⁴

Sternberg bases this argument on the applicability of the general theory of versions¹⁶⁵ to the context of a film script's development: multiple drafts are created over the entire course of production, from pre-production to pick-ups; there are often multiple authors over the course of a single script's development and so on. As a result, I will not simply be analyzing the film script's final draft, but choosing points along the development of

¹⁶⁴ Sternberg 1997: 39

¹⁶⁵ see J McGann (1991) *The Textual Condition*, Princeton Up, Princeton: 9

the text to examine more closely. To facilitate this, I will describe in brief the development of 'The Seaborne'.

Between February 2005 and July 2008, the film script was been written over, roughly nine drafts. The second draft of the script was actually written in four discrete sections, none of which had a title page, but which were stored electronically as files titled T&TDAVID, T&TPEN, T&TPAST and T&TPRESENT. These sections were then consolidated in the third draft of the script, which was at that time called 'Time and Tide'. The third draft of 'Time and Tide' is the first time that the script is dated for the purposes of ascribing copyright, a practice continued in subsequent drafts. I note this for the sake of thoroughness, rather than anything else. The attribution of copyright, however, does signify an acknowledgment of the script's place as a piece of intellectual property within several fields of discourse: industrial, legal and so on. This awareness is a component of the awareness of the film script's place in an overall field of film and filmic production. The awareness evident in such attribution will be considered more fully later. The drafts with their various titles and dates of copyright attribution are as follows:

'Time and Tide': Draft 1 – dated 24/2/05

'Time and Tide': David (last modified 25/7/05)

'Time and Tide': Pen (last modified 24/8/05)

'Time and Tide': Past (last modified 7/9/05)

'Time and Tide': Present (last modified 9/9/05)

‘Time and Tide’: Draft 3 © December 2005

‘Time and Tide’: Draft 4 © May 2006

‘Time and Tide’: Draft 5 © August 2006

‘Time and Tide’: Draft 6 © April 2007

‘From the Sea’ © February 2008

‘The Sea Borne’ © April 2008

‘The Seaborne’ © July 2008

In addition to the drafts, I wrote a number of notes based on writing exercises, which will also be reviewed in relation to the production process. In reviewing these drafts and notes I will argue that ‘The Seaborne’ does indeed contain a constructed dead author and a transgressive writing self. However, the conventions of the film script text type as manifested in ‘The Seaborne’ modify these operations, constructs and presences in a number of ways. The template nature of the film script, since it is designed for adaptation into another textual form, the film, introduces two elements that lead to these modifications. The first element is the implied reader, which in this textual form, operates as an implied director. At the same time, placed within the text as part of the construction process is an implied author that operates as a hidden director. These implied constructs operate to foreshadow potential power relations in the adaptation of film script to film. Simultaneously, the writing self acts in opposition to the mechanistic, industrial, commercial forces also present in the film script in the form of the template format itself. This oppositional relationship leads to the writing self masking the traces

of its presence to the extent that it becomes a haunting figure, an instance of the uncanny, within the crypt of the script.

CHAPTER TEN: THE FILM SCRIPT TEXT TYPE

Before continuing, it may be appropriate to outline some of the generic characteristics of the film script as text type, especially as these characteristics form a key component of my argument. However, I am tempted to discuss most of those characteristics in relation to specific examples drawn from 'The Seaborne' as and when relevant. In descriptions of the film script, in *Written for the Screen* say, this is the usual format: to provide a characteristic and then support by example drawn from a script. That said, there are some general, introductory points that can be made in relation to the text type. Jahn provides the following definition: '**film script / screenplay** A text containing a film's action narrative and dialogue. A film script is either a "recipe" for making a film (to use Searle's characterization of play scripts) or a written record of a finished film.'¹⁶⁶

In the context of this essay, the film script will be considered as the text written for the purpose of adaptation into a film, rather than as the recording document of a film's prior creation. This document, the film script, holds a position in the relevant discourses as mere data for the making of a film, something I think Jahn's definition above implies. Sternberg sees that position of the film script in the film production process as follows: 'the screenplay occupies a position of minor importance. It is rendered to nothing more than malleable raw material...'¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ M Jahn (2003) 'A Guide to Narratological Film Analysis.' *Poems, Plays, and Prose: A Guide to the Theory of Literary Genre*, English Department, University of Cologne, <http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppf.htm>: F1.4

¹⁶⁷ Sternberg 1997: 16

At the same time, Sternberg finds a parallel treatment of the film script text type in the academic field: ‘research and criticism have indirectly negated the existence of a text and have thus prevented textual analysis.’¹⁶⁸

This raises the issue as to whether a film script can actually constitute a text. What is a text? In relation to the academic field, a text seems merely to be that which can be studied and analysed. In the last fifty years of academic development, particularly with the rise of cultural studies as a discipline, this would indicate that anything could be considered a text. Indeed attempts to limit or narrow the definition of a text represent a profound misunderstanding as to the proper approach to any textual study. Hall argues:

In my own work, the textual is the moment when culture and the discursive is recovered; and that moment is absolutely decisive for me – endlessly displacing any kind of homogenous return to the economic or the political, the material in some simple vulgar sense. To me, cultural studies is impossible without retaining the moment of the symbolic; with the textual, language, subjectivity and representation forming the key matrix.¹⁶⁹

I would strongly argue, based on Hall’s comments, that a film script is exactly the sort of text that forms a matrix of ‘the textual, language, subjectivity and representation’.¹⁷⁰ The

¹⁶⁸ Sternberg 1997: 22

¹⁶⁹ Stuart Hall in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds) (1996) *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, Routledge, Great Britain: 404

¹⁷⁰ Morley and Chen: 404

reasons for the film script's relatively unimportant position in both industrial and academic fields are practical, historical and conceptual. The fact that the script is designed for adaptation into another medium, a medium that usually requires a high level of technical expertise and a large number of people to realise, tends to make the script writer presuppose an expert audience familiar with specific language uses, formats and conventions. Jahn describes the presentation of the film script as follows:

A film *typescript* has a unique standard format which is functional rather than attractive to read. (One of its functional characteristics is that, as a rule of thumb, one page of text is approximately equal to one minute of performance time.)...

Film scripts are notorious for their technical jargon, and they are often hard to read for the non-professional.¹⁷¹

I don't want to dwell on the terminology and jargon used in the construction of a film script. I don't think it is necessary to discuss what an intercut is and how it operates, or the differences between a cut and a jump cut, or why it is not necessary to write 'cut to' at the end of every scene (of course there's a cut: the scene is over). More important than the specific requirements of a film script's appearance is what the existence of those specific requirements arises from and what it indicates. Issues of format, appearance and linguistic framework are what make the consideration of a film script, in terms of it being a literary text, or even a text capable of academic study, somewhat difficult to achieve for those not familiar with the visual characteristics of the text type. Film, I would suggest,

¹⁷¹ Jahn 2003: F1.5

is much easier to read and so analyse than is a film script. Furthermore, film is what is purchased and consumed in the public arena. Film is not only easier to read, it is easier to access so as to be read. Sternberg outlines the intersection between the problems of the text type with the history of its development and reception as follows:

[T]he screenplay as ‘text’ and particularly as ‘artistic text’ has not been given due consideration. The conditions involved in screen writing and a certain bias in film criticism and film history have instead led to the assumption that authorial status as it is specified for literature and drama cannot be established for the screenplay.¹⁷²

This problem of authorship in terms of the film script is, I think, the conceptual cause of the relative position of the film script. Or to put it another way, the conceptual failure to accommodate the film script writer in terms of the author or authorship has limited the standing of the film script as text type: the repeated negation of authorship has thwarted any further occupation with the screenplay text and its recipients.’¹⁷³

However, I would like to suggest at this point that the unimportance of the film script in the process of production and the problematic of authorship attribution over the film script have become, in their own right, characteristics of the text type. Importance or the lack thereof is relative, of course, and, the film script, just as obviously, is only unimportant in relation to the film adapted from the script, or is seen to be so in the fields

¹⁷² Sternberg 1997: 7

¹⁷³ Sternberg 1997: 1

of discourse in which both operate. Equally, if a film script has no author, in terms of the general consensus in those same fields of discourse, that does not mean that any subsequent film also lacks an author. Authorship in film is, more or less, attributed to the director: 'The overriding recognition of a film's director has far-reaching consequences for the interpretation of the screenwriter's role regarding the question of authorship.'¹⁷⁴

I don't think it necessary here to get into a debate regarding the relative power or authority of the director in the film making process, or to consider the merits or otherwise of *auteurism* as a theoretical framework:

Within its distinguishable currents ...*auteurism* shares certain basic assumptions: notably, that a film, though produced collectively, is most likely to be valuable when it is essentially the product of its director [...]; that in the presence of a director who is genuinely an artist (an *auteur*) a film is more likely to be the expression of his individual personality...¹⁷⁵

For the sake of discussion, I will consider the term director as representative of a director function, in the same way Foucault argues for a view of the author as an author function.¹⁷⁶ In using the term director, I am speaking of a set of functions, processes and of the director as a particular site of power and authority, all evident and engaged in the process of constructing a film (in comparison to constructing a film script) regardless of

¹⁷⁴ Sternberg 1997: 13

¹⁷⁵ J Caughie (ed) (1981) *Theories of Authorship: A Reader*, Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the British Film Institute, London/Boston/Henley: 9

¹⁷⁶ Foucault 1967

how those characteristics are distributed across individual persons involved in that same film-making process. And I would suggest that the writing self prefigures the discursive force of the director function and the discursive status of the film over the film script in combined effect during the construction of the film script. The writing self, while writing the film script, anticipates the place and purpose of the film script in relation to the film and director: 'As a prestructuring interface of word, sound and image, the screenplay reveals the narrative *and* dramatic potential of the medium's [film's] form and content through the use of verbal signs.'¹⁷⁷

The effect of this prefigured combination creates a number of generic characteristics of the film script as text type. The first characteristic that arises from the writing self's recognition of the film and director's standing within discourse is to set the film script text type as prefiguration itself:

[T]he screenplay sign has meaning on a literary level while also alluding to meaning on a filmic one. It is the foremost task of the screenplay reader to decode the meaning of the latter. The screenplay text must therefore be written and read with the notion that the transposition process from the written to the filmed text is already inherent in the script pages. This process must be conceptualized through language, format and style.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Sternberg 1997: 64

¹⁷⁸ Sternberg 1997: 52

I will expand on the preemptive characteristic in more detail later. But first, as can be seen in Sternberg's above argument, one of the characteristics that emerges in the film script as text type is that it contains constructions regarding the writing and reading of just such a text: an implied author and an implied reader. The implied author in the film script text type is a hidden director, while the implied reader is an implied director. These two directorial constructs placed within the text are a sign of anticipated power relations, conflicts, shifts, compromises and acts of persuasion, which form part of the adaptation process from film script to film.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE IMPLIED AUTHOR AND IMPLIED READER

To establish the terminology and operation of the implied director and hidden director within the film script as text type, I would first like to discuss the implied reader and the implied author. These constructs are theorized in literary studies, particularly narrative theory. However, they operate in the film script text type in much the same way. I take support from this paralleling of operations across different text types from Rimmon-Kenan: ‘the study of narrative is no longer restricted to poetics but becomes an attempt to describe fundamental operations of any signifying system.’¹⁷⁹

Now, it could be argued that it was more appropriate to include this discussion in the second part of the essay dealing with the author and writing self, which is to say, with author studies, a branch of literary studies. There are a few reasons I have chosen not to do that. Firstly, the arguments presented in the second part of the essay are not affected by the presence or otherwise of the implied author and implied reader. The implied author and implied reader are concepts drawn from a section of literary studies that deals with readers and the critical analysis of texts, whereas the second part of this essay deals with the construction of a text, not its consumption. As such, the implied author and the implied reader have a place within the broad argument of this essay’s second part as an addendum, or subordinate issue. However, in relation to the film script text type, the implied reader recontextualised as implied director and the implied author placed within the text as hidden director are, I think, much more central to theorized authorial operations.

¹⁷⁹ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983) *Narrative Fiction*, Methuen & Co, London and New York: 132

For the purposes of a definition, the implied reader is theorized as an ideal subjectivity that will undertake the correct interpretation of the text, the correct creation of the text within the process of correct reading. Alternately, the implied reader could be that which is created by the text in the process of reading: ‘The reader is thus both an image of a certain competence brought to the text and a structuring of such a competence within the text.’¹⁸⁰

The implied reader is the one to whom the text, as it were, speaks, particularly as regards literary texts where the text actually has a narrative voice. The narrative voice is not an essential in a text for there to be an addressee of the text. There can be, in place of a narrator, what is termed a focaliser, or focalising agent. In the context of a film, by way of parallel, Jahn refers to this focaliser as a Filmic Composition Device (FCD).¹⁸¹ The FCD can be seen as directing the attention of the implied film viewer. This particular point is interesting, since, in the case of the film script, as opposed to the film, Sternberg argues against there being a focaliser,¹⁸² suggesting other operations at work in the text of the film script. This will be addressed in relation to the implied author. But as a final point on the implied reader, I think it important again to state that the implied reader of a film script, which will be discussed further, is an expert reader given the technical nature of the film script text type, as Sternberg points out: ‘Dialogue and scene text, in which

¹⁸⁰ Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 119

¹⁸¹ Jahn 2003: F4.1.2

¹⁸² Sternberg 1997: 157

film technique and narrative are combined, demand a certain degree of cinematic-technical imagination from their readers.’¹⁸³

The implied author is not a figure, but a set of guidelines, as it were, which is the result of a process undertaken by the reader engaged in interpreting the text, rather than from the extra-textual biographical details of the writer. The implied author is a product of the reader using what is already in the text for the purposes of making the maximum amount of sense and leading to the most common or logical meaning and interpretation. I would even accord it with something akin to Burke’s interpretation of Hirsch’s transcendental author figure,¹⁸⁴ as discussed in the second part of this essay. This view of the implied author as site of common sense is certainly the approach Rimmon-Kenan takes. She sees the implied author not as a simulacrum of the writer, including a simulacrum of the writer’s voice “‘confiding’” in us’¹⁸⁵ (to borrow Barthes’ ‘image of literature... tyrannically centred on the author’¹⁸⁶), but as a principle of reading, a set of norms operating to facilitate communication from text to reader:

My claim is that if it is to be consistently distinguished from the real author and the narrator, the notion of the implied author must be de-personified, and is best considered as a set of implicit norms rather than as a speaker or a voice (ie a

¹⁸³ Sternberg 1997: 231

¹⁸⁴ Burke 1992: 109

¹⁸⁵ Barthes 1977a: 143

¹⁸⁶ Barthes 1977a: 143

subject). It follows, therefore, that the implied author cannot literally be a participant in the narrative communication system.¹⁸⁷

This suggests the effacement, or at least silence, of the implied author. However, even without a voice to instruct, the implied author's function remains instructional. Chatman describes the implied author, as well as the intersection between its lack of voice and instructional purpose as follows:

Unlike the narrator, the implied author can tell us nothing. He, or better, it has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn.¹⁸⁸

But still, 'it instructs us'.¹⁸⁹ According to Chatman here the implied author is still a communicative principle, silent but alive and a unitary presence within the text, organizing, collating and directing clearly towards a didactic purpose, or purposes.

The implied author and the implied reader are prefigured in the construction of a text. In the first case, I would argue that the writing self places in the text material from which the implied author is drawn or constructed. I also think that some of that material constitutes effacements, absences, lacks, gaps and spaces. Indeed, as argued, the author figure as dead within the text and the absented writing self are preconditions to the reader

¹⁸⁷ Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 89

¹⁸⁸ Seymour Benjamin Chatman (1978) *Story and Discourse*, Cornell UP, New York: 148

¹⁸⁹ Chatman 1978: 148

having the opportunity to engage and occupy, as it were the text. For a writing self to fail in the provision of material necessary to construct an implied author is, in essence, to deny a reader of the text. And this, by extension, shows that an implied reader needs to be accounted for in the process of textual construction.

CHAPTER TWELVE: DIRECTORS IN THE TEXT

In the case of the film script as text type, the implied reader is cast in the form of an implied director, while the implied author, or the material that makes such a set of principles, operates within the text as a hidden director. One of the key functions of these constructs is to enact a relationship with the other that prefigures the projected relationship between film script and film. To restate, the film script text type has a strong influence on the construction of the implied reader and implied author because of the purposive nature of the film script text type, which Sternberg describes as a blueprint: ‘The *blueprint* is the classic metaphor used to characterize the function and the significance of the screenplay during the production process...’¹⁹⁰

The signs of the implied reader and implied author are evident in the general form of the film script. I would suggest that a particular kind of sign points to the construct of the implied author:

In addition to description and report, the scene text also includes information which cannot be transmitted audiovisually or it makes use of figures of speech, which contribute only indirectly to sound and image. Passages or parts of sentences which explain, interpret or add to the clearly visible and audible elements of the screenplay can be termed *comment*...¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Sternberg 1997: 50

¹⁹¹ Sternberg 1997: 72-73

This comment, which is extra-narrative, extra-technical and extra-filmic, so to speak, is the most obvious marker of an implied author within the film script. I would argue that such commentary usually includes judgment. Throughout the drafts of 'The Seaborne' there is an increasing amount of commentary over the drafts of the script, but even then its presence is limited. To demonstrate, I will consider various descriptions of the characters Pen and Eleanor as they appear in 'The Seaborne' over the trajectory of the film script's development.

Here is the first draft description of Pen. It starts with a general coverage of her age and physicality. Then there is a brief description of the type of clothes she is wearing. Description is loose, what could be called 'broad brush strokes'. Finally there is a description of her action at the time of the character's introduction and a hint of the character's interiority. This final part almost seems to be commentary, but serves more as a performative cue for the potential actor playing the part.

She could be thirty and is pale, thin, fragile, but also beautiful.

She's wearing black - the demure, feminine dress of a demure woman ready for a funeral service.

Her hands are on the railing of the balcony, gently resting there. Her back is straight. Her face is free of expression. This is a comfortable place for her.¹⁹²

¹⁹² 'Time and Tide', Draft 1: 3

What follows next is the description of the Eleanor character from the same draft. Again, the focus of the introduction is on appearance, action and general approach to an actor's performance of the role. Any commentary is implied and suggested.

Near the exit, a woman sees Pen and Mitchell approach. She is older than Pen, but still stunning: thin, immaculately made up, fashionable hair-do and expensively power-dressed. She has a sharp face with intelligent eyes and is very self-contained.

This is Eleanor.¹⁹³

If there is commentary in either of these instances, it emerges by establishing an implied reader that compares these characters to a type. The commenting process is prefigured for the implied director to make, not the implied author. Such a commentary emerges from a process of generalization that is not tied into the specifics of these characters as unique in any way. At draft one of the script, Pen and Eleanor are both described, not just with 'broad strokes' but as 'broad stroke' characters. This I would suggest marks a failure of the constructed relationship between implied author and implied director, as this part of the film script points the implied director towards generalizations, suggests an author not confident with the material and thus destabilizes the value of the script. What follows now is the description of Pen and Eleanor at draft six of 'Time and Tide':

The front door swings wide open. Pen, early thirties, strides into the hall. She seems fragile, but there are ice floes in the oceans of her eyes.

¹⁹³ 'Time and Tide': Draft 1: 7

Eleanor, maybe three-four years younger, maybe more, at least in terms of attitude, remains in the doorway, leaning against the frame and watching her sister's receding back. Eleanor is like Pen in looks, but more open and therefore more likeable, but that doesn't make her any better. Eleanor pushes off from the door frame and follows her sister.¹⁹⁴

As can be seen, a number of changes have occurred between drafts one and six. There are a number of phrases that could constitute commentary or suggested commentary. The 'ice floes in the oceans of her eyes' definitely constitutes commentary in the sense that it is metaphorical language, possibly overwrought metaphorical language, but metaphorical language nevertheless. It is not a direct visual reference. Pen's eyes are not oceans. Nor is the description strictly speaking a performative indicator for the actress. I don't think it's possible to act as though one has ice floes in the eyes. Nor is it a casting request such as 'blonde, five-nine, ice floes in the oceans of her eyes'. The description is instead a commentary designed to engender a certain mood, a certain perspectival frame for consideration of the character by the implied director.

The second clear case of commentary in the description is attached to the character of Eleanor and it is predominantly a caveat. Firstly the character is described as likeable. This in many respects serves the same sort of purpose as the above description of Pen, a shared broad frame for the implied director. However, the comment after that, that Eleanor's likeable presentation 'doesn't make her any better', is a judgment that goes beyond the scope of character-specific indicators. It is a comment on both Pen and Eleanor, which states they are as bad as each other. The comment is an indicator of

¹⁹⁴ 'Time and Tide': Draft 6: 1

narrative direction, in that it shows the characters are in a morally questionable state at the opening of the script, suggesting potential directions the narrative will follow and the general mood of the entire film. By linking Eleanor and Pen through a commonality of bad behaviour, it also sets up a narrative structure driven by dual protagonists. This, I would suggest, is supported by the more elided and hidden processes of commentary here. In draft one the characters' introductions were separated by three pages. Here the two characters are introduced virtually simultaneously and both on the first page of the script. They are both, as it were, headlined, with Pen, visibly and metaphorically, slightly in the lead. Unlike in draft one she is older than Eleanor and first through the door. Eleanor, as it were, takes her lead from Pen, but not without an initial tension evident in her attitude towards the receding Pen. There is still a gap between the two, which prefigures, I would argue, the chief inter-character conflict of the script. And I would compare this with the signs of intra-character conflict in the description, which is the tension between Pen's seeming fragility and the aforementioned iciness. By the final draft of 'The Seaborne', the sequence reads:

The front door swings open. Pen, early to mid-thirties, strides into the hall. She seems fragile, but there are ice floes in her eyes.

Eleanor, maybe three-four years younger, maybe more, at least in terms of attitude, remains in the doorway, looking around: a touch of nerves. Eleanor is like Pen in looks, but more open and therefore more likeable. That doesn't make her any better, though.

Eleanor follows her sister.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ 'The Seaborne': Final Draft: 1

This version of the sequence is very close to that from the sixth draft. There are three changes. Firstly, Pen is older by a few years. Secondly, the phrase ‘in the oceans of her eyes’ has been deleted. The commentary has been reduced and subsequently the compositional frame for the establishment of mood has been cut back to the absolute minimum. The potentially overwrought, maybe literary quality of the sentence has been largely excised, leaving only enough to establish a sense of mood and present a very general note for both casting and performance. In a similar way, Eleanor’s actions accord more with establishing, not only the conflict between her and Pen, but her own internal conflict. Rather than pausing at the door to observe the receding figure of Pen, an action left in the script from an earlier draft when Eleanor was the older, seemingly more superior character, Eleanor now hesitates, showing her own doubt and relative status as the younger sister. Furthermore, Eleanor attaches her behaviour to the setting of the action, the beach house. The house is a site of conflict for her. The commentary is more thorough and supported by more readable action.

Is the sequence in the final draft better than the first one (and by this I mean in terms of artistic merit or quality)? I would hope so, after all those different attempts. But that is not really important. What is important is that it employs clearer, multi-layered construction techniques between implied author and implied director. There is a minimum of direct commentary, but in combination with the implied and suggested commentary, the character descriptions and actions specifically suggest the characteristics of Pen and Eleanor, the conflict between them, their internal conflicts, the narrative direction and the metaphorical language of the script, namely that of the sea.

Regardless of whether any of these elements are particularly good or not, they are part of a framework that can be engaged by a reader to construct an implied author and implied director engaged in communication, negotiation and interpretation much more effectively than is evident in draft one.

Direct commentary in the form of extra-diegetic narration, as opposed to what has just been discussed, is not prevalent in the film script 'The Seaborne'. Rather the voice, if there is a clear voice, speaks in limited metaphor, through elision, by association and within the limits of a future form. That is, it is possible through use of direct language and more overt narration to explain character interiority in much more detail and, certainly, more obviously. Sternberg stresses the importance of interiority in her coverage of the film script's function: 'The most fundamental consideration in the interpretation of the film story is an understanding of the psychology of the characters.'¹⁹⁶

And I would suggest this consideration is also fundamental in the relationship across text types as represented in the implied constructions within the text and their relationship.

That there is no overt description of character psychology references the inability of film to express interiority except through outer show, what can be seen and heard. Of course, the most obvious way to circumvent the difficulties inherent in presenting interiority through audiovisual means would seem to be the voice-over. Yet in 'The Seaborne' that narrating method is not used. Access to interiority of that sort is denied. The implied author is not voiced through a character, or through direct commentary, except in a very limited sense on a scene-by-scene basis, and the commentary is suggestive rather than

¹⁹⁶ Sternberg 1997: 53

prescriptive, much less very clear. To touch on the scene-by-scene basis of commentary on character psychology, this is part of that psychology not being fixed. Character psychology shifts throughout the progression of the narrative. An example of the most obvious commentary on character psychology comes in the form of a particular scene between Pen and Feroze, which I will now discuss. The sequence is presented in the first draft of the film script as follows:

Then Pen thrusts her head forwards and kisses Feroze.

Feroze leans back at the sudden contact then he begins kissing Pen just as fiercely in return.

Pen's hands are constantly moving over Feroze's cheeks and hair. Her arms are wrapping and unwrapping about his neck. She is like a thing possessed.

She pushes Feroze back onto the sand. The water swirls in small bubbles of foam around his head.

Then Pen is on top of Feroze, her skirts covering the tops of his legs.

Pen reaches down between her legs and under her skirts, working at his clothes.

Feroze rises up in weak resistance, but Pen pushes him back down.

Pen thrusts down onto Feroze.

Feroze's eyes go wide as Pen bears down on him. Pen's hips rock backwards and forwards. Her head tilts back: mouth open, eyes unseeing.

Then all her tension escapes in a burst of tears and racking sobs. Her body shudders and still she keeps moving: grinding over Feroze, of whom she is now almost totally unaware.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ 'Time and Tide' Draft 1: 120-121

In this first draft, I think the commentary is very clear, too clear really, as are the actions involved. There is a degree of repetition between what is described as action and what is described in terms of the emotional context. The repetition is compounded by the nature of the characters' emotions and actions, which I would suggest, rather than capturing the specifics of the characters, are instead clichéd. The sequence, in the action and commentary, constitutes a repeat of a repeat. There is too much in the sequence and none of it effective. Indeed, part of its ineffectiveness arises from the glut of information. This all combines to show at this stage of the script's development the weakness of the implied constructs and their attendant relationship within the text. This draft also shows the problems arising from an overabundance of commentary. Unless there is an exercise of control in terms of use and content, commentary is redundant and lends to a sequence a sense of tiredness and, frankly, the ridiculous. In the sixth draft, the sequence is as follows:

Pen and Feroze are close to each other: so close.
They kiss: passionately. Behind Pen and Feroze, the
water suddenly shines with the reflected light of the
sun, silhouetting their bodies.¹⁹⁸

Here, there is no commentary at all, except perhaps for the use of the word 'passionately', which is, it must be said, not a very descriptive term. The actions are framed by an interaction with the environment that captures the filming of the sequence in that the actors are placed in silhouette between the camera and the rising sun. However, the context of the moment and the metaphorical links between the characters and their

¹⁹⁸ 'Time and Tide' Draft 6: 40

location are unclear. The sequence is an emotional one and so, it would seem, there is more of a need to express the emotion in the writing of the scene. I think the description of the sequence tends too far in the opposite direction from the first draft. In other words, there is a failure equal to that in the first draft in the constructed relationship between implied author and implied reader in that the sequence is not fully communicated. Given the particulars of the sequence, it would seem there is a need for some, but not too much, commentary. This is the final version of the sequence:

There is no fight left in either of them. They kiss. It is a kind of desperation, the grasping reaction of the living to the presence of blank, insensate death. It is the need to touch something, anything; to feel something, anything, in the face of oblivion.

Behind Pen and Feroze, the water suddenly shines with the reflected light of the sun, silhouetting their bodies.¹⁹⁹

Again, I don't want to speak to the quality of this final iteration of the sequence, to its literary merits or otherwise. As perhaps in the case of the previous sections analysed, it could be argued this iteration of the scene is better than the earlier versions because it better communicates its content. This draft of the scene is superior then in pragmatic or functional terms vis-à-vis its role as blueprint text, but as a purely critical assessment of the scene's interiority, I do think this sequence may again veer too close towards the overwrought. However, as the scene falls at the script's mid-point, it does sit within the context of the overall story at a stage of high emotion and drama. Moving away from that, this final draft of the sequence operates on multiple communicative levels. It gives

¹⁹⁹ 'The Seaborne' Final Draft: 40

the context for the actions between the characters, contextualizing the elements that make up the *mise en scene* and describing the emotional states of the characters. At another level of textual interpretation, it conveys a sense of the mood of the sequence, the emotion that perhaps should be communicated to the viewing audience in the text of the film based on the script. Beyond that, also, I would suggest that the sequence as written conveys something of the thematic tension within the script. This is perhaps where the focus of the sequence lies. I am uncertain as to how effective the sequence is for providing acting notes in terms of the characters' intent so much at this stage, or lighting cues beyond what is given in an outdoor shoot taking place at a certain time of day. But I do think that the sequence is an attempt to impart to the implied director the meaning of the work, as it were, or the materials that will be comprised to construct the meaning of the work, in either filmic or script form, that should subsequently be communicated to an audience.

To return to whether the sequence is appropriately written or not, the tension between qualitative and stylistic determinants arises. There is equally a tension between implied director and implied author in terms of discursive standing. Attached to that is the tension between the template nature of the film script and what seem here to be markers of a personal artistic, thematic impulse. Sternberg considers the tension between the broad requirements of the blueprint text and the presence of these sorts of marker of the implied author:

Neither the distribution of modes nor the use of particular figures of speech are exclusively related to film genres or to narrative considerations. It is rather the individualism of the author... that becomes manifest in the relationship between dialogue and scene text, and the design of the modes of report, description and comment.²⁰⁰

While not exactly according with Rimmon-Kenan's view²⁰¹, in the context of the film script the implied author contains elements that are both impersonal, in the form of 'a set of implicit norms',²⁰² and seemingly individual and human. To understand this further, I want to reference Kristeva's view of the ambivalent word as expressed initially by Bakhtin and the kind of implied author constructed in such a schema. I want to quote at some length because there's a lot here worth discussing:

A third type of ambivalent word, of which the *hidden interior polemic* is an example, is characterized by the active (modifying) influence of another's word on the writer's word. It is the writer who 'speaks', but a foreign discourse is constantly present in the speech that it distorts. With this active kind of ambivalent word, the other's word is represented by the word of the narrator. Examples include autobiography, polemical confessions, questions-and-answers and hidden dialogue. The novel is the only genre in which ambivalent words appear; that is the specific characteristic of its structure.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Sternberg 1997: 84

²⁰¹ Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 89

²⁰² Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 89

²⁰³ Kristeva 1980: 43-44

Kristeva's claim that ambivalent words are the unique province of the novel is, I think, not true given the film script. Instead I would suggest that the '*hidden interior polemic*'²⁰⁴ is exactly the individual characteristic of the implied author in a film script. The trouble that emerges in the case of the film script, unlike the novel, is that the narrator's voice is not precisely a voice. In a novel, the narrator would speak the narrative, obviously, while simultaneously, the implied author would maintain the hidden interior polemic. But in a film script there is no narrator. The closest thing to a narrator is actually the equivalent to the implied author, an impersonal set of principles that contain the material of the narrative. It is a frame, a machine eye. It is the eye of the implied camera. The narrator of the script, the voice that speaks the big print of the text, is what the camera sees. It is the voice of the technology, which has no voice, employed to make the film. It has no agency. It is form and format, technical requirements, bare communication and information transfer. This is really the blueprint aspect of the text:

On the one hand, what distinguishes the *screenplay* as substratum is exactly that *telling* by a narrating agent does *not* take place despite its high degree of prose. The text only anticipates a narrative perspective in the target medium of film... The presentation of words and story, therefore, takes place without a mediating, that is narrating and focalizing agent.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Kristeva 1980: 43

²⁰⁵ Sternberg 1997: 157

But there is still a hidden interior polemic within the film script, which is held by the human and the individual. The implied author is then both the implied camera and something else, a human variously activating the roles of the film-making machine, resisting them and twisting them to the individual's needs. The camera, the impersonal eye, the inhuman machine, has an operator. This is the tension of the ambiguous word. It is the tension between the human and the industrial, between art and commerce, that seemingly drives much of film making and establishes much of its unique position as corporate entity, artistic expression, cultural product, text, societal signpost and network of discourse. However, at the script level the ambiguity is dependent on an oblique narrative frame on the one hand and a human-seeming, individualistic construct on the other that together constitute the implied author. Sternberg looks at this interaction in terms of the direct engagement of the stylistic roles of the script, the industrial requirements, with the markers of an individual personality:

Choices regarding the distribution and design of modes, as well as the various uses of comment, are open to the screenwriter, who works within the syntagmatic requirements of the text-type (scenic structure, character action and dialogue, time and place specification). Together, they form the stylistic paradigm of the text type...²⁰⁶

I think the double nature of the implied author is one of the defining characteristics of the film script. The script operates as a site of contention between the mechanical, industrial and commercial and the human, craft-oriented and artistic. They are artificial distinctions

²⁰⁶ Sternberg 1997: 80

and binaries, but I think a script contains just this binary to reflect the broad questions seemingly at play within film discourses and industry practice. Further, the binary prefigures a tension that acts to enliven a script, give it a sense of dynamism and conflict that suggests the potential for an interesting and engaging film adaptation. I think this is what Sternberg is suggesting as well:

Within the pragmatic poetics of the screenplay – its *ars recte dicendi* – the writer is given stylistic license in the service of an *ars bene dicendi*. The literary dimension of this rhetorical license is subject to authorial style and general self-limitation. The latter ensures that the requirements for communication, that is, the cinematic competence of both author and blueprint reader, are maintained.²⁰⁷

But that does not yet move on to cover the nature of the relationship between implied reader as implied director on the one hand and implied author on the other. This is also I think, as a separate layer of textual construction, a site of contestation, conflict and power relations. It is this aspect of the script that I think leads to the effacement of the implied author. The implied author is there in the script as written text to ameliorate the impersonal neutrality of mechanistic industrial determinants with human individualism. The individual human characteristics of that implied author are then effaced to allow for a competing individual construct in the form of the implied director. This is a complicated position for the implied author to take and one that cannot be fully circumvented because film scripts are still written to be adapted into films. Very few films emerge without one kind or another of a script and the more complex the subsequent film, the more need

²⁰⁷ Sternberg 1997: 90

there is for a template or blueprint to work from in constructing it: 'Embedded narrative constructions and differentiated focalization cannot be created ad hoc by the director on location. The more complex the narrative perspective, the more clearly it is anchored in the screenplay.'²⁰⁸

At the same time, as much as the implied author is a necessary presence vis-à-vis the mechanistic balanced with the individual, it is also a necessary absence in relation to the implied director, in terms of the establishment of the implied director as creative centre of the subsequent film, the implied film, as it were. This absence on the part of the implied author is not the same as playing at the dead author figure as it appears in other written texts, particularly prose. The role of the implied author is not a death so much as a stepping aside, an effacement and simultaneously a position of guidance and persuasion. The implied author doesn't declaim. The construct has no voice, does not explain, outline or seemingly determine. It is more a guiding principle, but I would go so far as to say that it is not truly absent. The implied author is neither the dead author figure, nor the god-like author attacked by Barthes²⁰⁹ or Foucault²¹⁰. Nor is it necessarily the dialogic author of Bakhtin²¹¹ as found in prose texts. There is a process of dialogue in the film script, but it is facilitated by the implied author, not necessarily engaged in by that author. The implied author creates a space for negotiation, but is not necessarily a negotiator.

²⁰⁸ Sternberg 1997: 147

²⁰⁹ Barthes 1977a

²¹⁰ Foucault 1967

²¹¹ Bakhtin 1967

It is disingenuous to suggest that such a position does not exert a certain power over the text, nor engage in operations that are operations of power. It is just that there is a greater level of subtlety at play than is evident in the construct of implied director. However, it is not the total abnegation evident in the author figure as dead. That figure will be discussed later. The implied author is more a middle ground construct, an operation that presents the text and not the construct itself, suggests an approach to the text and an interpretation of the text, but makes it look like the implied director's idea. In short, the implied author, both there and effaced, presenting and suggesting, but gently, subtly and with due deference, is a construct that is first and foremost politic. How the implied author operates, in terms of a construct, is as a hidden director, which is the term that Sternberg uses:

Dialogue and scene text, in which film technique and narrative are combined, demand a certain degree of cinematic-technical imagination from their readers. If these combinations are very complex, the directorial input can be anticipated to a large extent. The screenwriter therefore becomes a *hidden director*.²¹²

I think this linking between directorial process and authorial process is something that is particular to the blueprint template text type. Because the text is designed to be adapted into a different text type, through the actions and determinations of those other than the writer, the future design is prefigured in the original blueprint text. And similarly, the later contestations and conflicts between discourses, personnel and sites of power are also prefigured. The tension between implied director and hidden director is manifest in a

²¹² Sternberg 1997: 231

number of ways within the film script as a text type. Sternberg outlines the contemporary script writing practice of the master scene script format and how that distinguishes itself from earlier script constructions:

It is significant to note that screenplays up to the 1950s tended to contain more detailed camera and shot instructions. Since then, the *master scene* script format, which only registers changes of place and time, has become the standard form.²¹³

By way of example of what the master scene script format looks like, what follows is the opening scene of the final draft of 'The Seaborne'.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Surging into the water... small bubbles rush past... and then, down, down... into the black.²¹⁴

There are no camera directions, no particular description of the eye that views the scene. There is, however, a perspective. These two factors in concert, the lack of direction combined with the implication of perspective, I would suggest, is a direct product of the internal conflict manifest in the implied director/hidden director relationship. The camera type, position, placement, lighting and so on are all decisions, it would seem, that rest on the side of the implied director, it is thus not the place of the hidden director to present them. But there is a framework and a perspective present. It is not presented directly

²¹³ Sternberg 1997: 75

²¹⁴ 'The Seaborne' Final Draft: 1

however, but implied in the syntactical construction. Sternberg states that ‘Indirect or *paratechnical comments*... are commonly used today...’²¹⁵

In the first instance, the location of the scene is the ocean. Speaking in terms of possible approaches to the scene, the camera could be located high above the water or on top of the water, bobbing up and down. However the scene constructs a position for the camera as located underwater already. Not only that, but the camera is not still, as much as a camera can be held still on the water. It is in motion and the motion is already presented by the construction of language in the scene. The direction taken by the camera is neither forwards, backwards nor up. It is down. Furthermore, the focus of the camera could be near or far in the context of what is possible. It could fix on a distant point, perhaps a sunken boat, a coral reef or a school of fish. It doesn’t matter what. But in this case, the initial point of focus is close. The objects of the camera lens are small bubbles, requiring a close-up, as it were. The relative action of these bubbles reinforces the direction of the camera without needing to state clearly that is what is presented here. Finally, a shift in focus and, even camera attitude is suggested. To catch the bubbles passing in front of the camera requires that the camera be positioned level with the horizontal. The camera shoots what is directly in front of it. But to capture the ‘black’, presumably the point where the water is dense enough to block the passage of light, the camera must be turned through ninety degrees to bring it level with the vertical axis. That is, the camera needs to be pointed down to satisfy what is presented in the scene.

²¹⁵ Sternberg 1997: 75

There is an aspect of convenience in terms of technical comments within a screenplay, especially in relation to camera directions. A massive number of camera shots can be taken in a film, potentially more than one per second, and to write them all would take an inordinate effort. In addition it would make a script unreadable. Imagine the two lines of the draft six first scene presented with the kind of information given in the subsequent description. Those two lines would expand to twenty and that is in the instance of a very short, relatively simple scene. There are no characters, no sound, no particular effects and the ‘bubble’ action is extremely simple. Of course, the scene requires specialized equipment and personnel in the form of a camera with underwater capability, scuba gear and harness plus an appropriately qualified camera technician, not to mention special insurance, emergency contingencies and, presumably, a boat. But again, there is a question of convenience. Does it serve any purpose to include all of this information in the script?

Screenwriters do not strive for completeness, because it is impossible to create a full ‘verbal’ likeness of the audiovisual film to be produced. Instead, they rely on the implicit referential double function of single instructions and the cumulative nature of the text as a whole.²¹⁶

However, as much as there is a need to maintain some principle of brevity and readability, the master scene screen format, as demonstrated above, represents the relationship between hidden director and implied director. The script, even in those two lines, operates as a recognition that those technical determinations – and they will be

²¹⁶ Sternberg 1997: 229

made should the script be adapted into a film – are not the purview of the screen writer, but of other personnel under the command of the director. Furthermore, technical and material decisions like those for the scene above are only made once it is determined the scene be shot like that. At this stage of construction, at the level of the script, the scene remains a suggestion only from hidden director to implied director. However, the suggestion is designed to be as persuasive as possible. Alternatives are not offered and the scene is constructed in such a way that, while not overt, there is the strong implication that it be filmed in the way presented. It is, again, politic and subtle.

This kind of operation within the script across constructed sites of power and authority that prefigure possible later operations is not the same as the dead figure of the author found in the theories of Barthes or Foucault. However, I would suggest that such a constructed relationship within the textual framework of the film script becomes possible because of a dead author figure. One of the ways an effective film script can be described is that, in reading it, one watches a movie in the mind's eye. This is the hidden director interacting across the plane of the script as implied film with the implied director. But the film script still needs to be read. And popular belief is that written texts are made by authors, while film texts are made by directors. For the film script to operate as an effective implied film, its written elements and attributes have to be suppressed, effaced or removed. Part of this is done already by the establishment of the implied author as hidden director, the effaced, politic and subtle construct, but the author figure, dead to the text, dead in language, placed to hide the writing self and then itself, is then constructed to hide the text as written. Of course, it is ironic that what removes the

literary from a film script is the literary construct of the dead author, but the film script is a double game in that way. The film script remains a field for Foucault's game of writing,²¹⁷ just with somewhat different playing conditions.

It is difficult, of course, to give a specific example of an absence within a text. How can anyone show what's not there? A magician's vanishing act works because what disappears is shown beforehand. The question then is, are any of the removals from the 'The Seaborne' script indicative of the dead author figure? I would suggest that, to return to the role of the author in a prose text, one of the indicators of an authorial presence would be an address to a reader. In the first draft of the film script there is one such direct address that may be indicative of an author:

Then she [Pen] shakes her head and closes her eyes against the vision. Ridiculous. Delusional.

But the man on the beach has seen her and reaches towards her.

FIGURE

Help... Help...

But at this distance the words are not much more than a barely audible ululation that could just as easily be:

FIGURE

Pen...

That is, if you really wanted for it to be that: if you were prepared for a moment to accept the impossible.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Foucault 1967: 102

²¹⁸ 'Time and Tide', Draft 1: 23-24

The use of the second person pronoun in this case isn't, strictly speaking, referring only to the reader. The 'you' is something of a generic you, as it were, the 'you' that means 'one'. However, the operation of that particular syntactical construction in this context does simultaneously address the reader. The way it operates is by according the emotional state of the character, Pen, at this point in the script, with the reader, or rather a request that the reader share that state. It is an appeal for the reader, at the same time, to suspend disbelief on the presentation of barely audible dialogue. In terms of the script as implied film it suggests a particular effect, presumably done in the process of sound mixing. But the way it does this is by utilising a written textual frame rather than an implied filmic one. It threatens, as it were, an authorial presence within the text, by creating a reader that has to read the scene in a particular way for that scene to operate effectively. It is, because of that, impossible to film.

In subsequent drafts, this particular construction and operation is abandoned. At draft three of the script, the sequence is presented as follows:

Pen is again at the railing of the balcony, chin raised, gaze fixed on the horizon.

A sound drifts towards her.

It is very faint, not even comprehensible. But what is actually being said is:

 FEROZE (O.O.S.)
 ... help... help...

Pen barely registers the sound. But it continues:

 FEROZE (CONT'D - O.O.S.)
 ... hello... help... please...

Pen opens her eyes. She scans the water. Off to one side is a dark patch in the swell. It is waving.

FEROZE

Help.

Pen looks down and then back to the distant figure.²²⁰

This version of the scene remains fixed within the frame of the implied film. It does not employ the operations of a prose text, either in the form of constructing an implied reader or by requesting that the implied reader share the emotional state of the characters which is explained in the text. Empathic engagement is not requested. Instead, the character of Pen is engaged in an act that clearly demonstrates her emotional state. Rather than standing on a balcony staring out winsomely, she is on a boat with an anchor in her hand. The expectation is that she is going to throw herself in the water. Hence her emotional state is suicidal. At the same time, her behaviour is contextualised in terms of her relationship with Eleanor. Eleanor trying to contact Pen while Pen is about to suicide adds to the dramatic tension of the moment, as well as to the attached emotional intensity. Pen's death means more because it affects more than just her.

Now, this is not necessarily a quality judgment on one draft over another. Nor is it a statement that such requests to an implied reader's empathy are 'good' writing in a prose text. Such spelling out and such an appeal would, I imagine indicate poor writing in a prose text as well. What I'm saying instead is that while such an intrusion, raising the author figure, may be poor form in a written text, it is impossible in a film text and thus

²²⁰ 'The Seaborne' Final Draft: 23-24

to employ it in a film script actually destabilizes the script as an implied film. It resets the text as a written text, constituting an operational failure of the text type.

This is the double bind of the film script. It is a written text that operates as a denial of its written status to operate as an implied film. The implied author is translated to the hidden director, an effaced figure that operates to persuade by carefully, subtly engaging in presenting a lack of options that create the illusion of decision-making power in the implied director. To reinforce the non-written characteristics of the film script as implied film, the prose operation of the author figure as dead is engaged. But at the same time, the exclusions conducted in constructing the dead author figure act as evidence of individual style.

The author within the film script and particularly within 'The Seaborne' is a multiple figure that hides itself and the writing self in a number of ways and across a number of levels within the text. At the same time, it exerts a covert power and presents an individuality. But the author constructs of the film script 'The Seaborne' present the individuality of the dead figure, of the palpable absence and of the missing presence. They are ghosts, and in occupying the film script, they make of it a crypt, a place of moving shadows, which is, after all what a film also is and what the film script is designed to become.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE EPIC

Already, in looking to the authorial constructs within the film script 'The Seaborne', such as the implied director, hidden director and the dead author figure, it can be seen how they are positioned and constituted to enact within the structure of the text the broader potential operations and tensions of communication, power and authority in the adaptation from film script to film. Similarly, the characteristics and relational distributions of those constructs within the text foreshadow the later cryptic, spectral and uncanny operation of the filmic experience as described by Cholodenko.²²¹ Indeed those constructs are themselves spectral figures, lifelike simulacra in the form of the once-living or the to-be-living that cryptically incorporate the film script, making of it an uncanny object, neither written text nor film, but the shadow of one, its afterimage as it were, and simultaneously the blueprint of the other.

What is clear is that the film script sits as a developmental stage or series of stages that seems never to find completion within its own process or construction. It does however come to embody in its various forms certain key aspects of what it has developed from and what it is designed for. The film script, in its form as a text type, represents the broader continuous process of which it is constructed to be a part. The latter aspects of this progression have been discussed in relation to the constructs within the text. The processes that placed those constructs within the text open up a consideration of the aspects that go into the text in its formative stages and the extent to which those aspects prefigure the broader continuum. In some respects, both of these issues centre on the

²²¹ Cholodenko 2004

relationships between the writing self, the script and the formative elements that informed the script writing process. There are particular issues concerning the extent to which the writing self authored the script, the extent to which the script, or at least the formal principles of the text type authored, as it were, the writing self and thus the script. As was argued, the presence of both the mechanistic and the personal was one of the key characteristics of the film script text type. In the developmental notes of 'The Seaborne' there is evidence of a similar intersection between the personal and the mechanistic, or at least the formulaic, as regards developing the narrative and characters.

In the first entries of one of my notebooks, dated 17 March 2005, a number of writing exercises record the outline plot and character elements under the heading 'Time and Tide'. By reference to the drafts of the film script, it is clear these notes were written prior to the writing of the second draft of the film script, or rather the two parts of the film script, entitled T&TPAST and T&TPRESENT, which were then combined into the third draft. To explain all of these exercises, I will quote from the *University of Canberra Online Masters Course in Scriptwriting*, which I wrote at the beginning of 2004. I include this, not because it may or may not be accurate, but rather because it informs and explains these exercises as they were done at the time. In order as they appear above, the 'Big 5' is described as follows:

These are five questions that ask about the core components of a film story.

These components are: main character, plot, dramatic focus, motivation, consequence and empathy.²²²

Felicity Packard, who taught me scriptwriting and who supervised the writing of 'The Seaborne', told me the five questions that make up the 'Big 5' were drawn from a talk given by Digby Wolfe at the University of Canberra in 1999. The questions in the 'Big 5' are as follows:

1. Whose story is it?
2. What's the story about?
3. What is the Central Dramatic Question?
4. What is the Prize/Price?
5. Why do we care?²²³

The Premise is described as follows:

For want of a better term, the Premise is the moral of the story. It defines the scope of the story and helps set the chief characteristics of your hero and villain.²²⁴

Finally, the Catalyst, Crisis, Climax and Hero's Journey are described as follows:

²²² Matthew Marshall (2004) *Online Masters Course in Scriptwriting*, University of Canberra: 3

²²³ Marshall 2004: 78

²²⁴ Marshall 2004: 3

A story has three main events. These are called the Catalyst, Crisis and Climax and with the Big Five and Premise established, these three can be set down with an eye to filling the gaps in between. To fill those gaps we refer to a template established by Joseph Campbell called 'The Hero's Journey'. There are twelve steps to it that cover the major events that take place in a classical narrative.²²⁵

The twelve steps are described as follows:

- The Ordinary World
- Meet the Mentor
- The Call to Adventure
- The Refusal of the Call
- Crossing the First Threshold
- Tests, Allies and Enemies
- The Approach to the Inmost Cave
- The Trial of the Inmost Cave
- Rebirth & Seizing the Gift
- The Race Home
- The Final Test
- The World Restored²²⁶

²²⁵ Marshall 2004: 3

²²⁶ Marshall 2004: 105

The 'Hero's Journey' is a modified version of Christopher Vogler's adaptation in *The Writer's Journey*²²⁷ of the monomyth structure outlined in Joseph Campbell's *Hero of a Thousand Faces*.²²⁸

Here are the first five pages from the entry for the character of David. There are twelve pages of notes on David and forty-four pages covering the other characters.

David's Big 5

1. David
2. David, a golden boy, whose cultural stock is rapidly dropping, takes his passive aggressive frustration out on his wife as part of a growing self-destructive urge.
3. Will David destroy everything of meaning in his life, including himself?
4. Prize – he destroys everything including himself.
PRICE – he appreciates Pen at the end.
5. Many people have self destructive urges. People take out their problems on those closest to them. And many malicious acts are carried out without conscious intent.

PREMISE: Appreciate what you have – if you don't you'll lose it.
Careful what you wish for – you may just get it.

Catalyst: David starts/ returns to the affair with Eleanor. He loses interest in Pen and increasingly neglects her

Crisis: Pen separates from David and he comes at last to realise he really does love her.

Climax: Recklessly, David sails into the storm and is killed – alone and, as far as he's concerned, with nothing.

David's Hero's Journey

1. David is married to Pen. He dominates her unconsciously being, as he is, a large personality.
2. David starts working with old flame – Eleanor.
3. Eleanor mocks David over his treatment of Pen.

²²⁷ Christopher Vogler (1998) *The Writer's Journey*, Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City CA

²²⁸ Joseph Campbell (1993) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Fontana Press, London

4. David criticises Pen for not being more assertive (like Eleanor) – he buys her clothes like Eleanor’s. He starts ‘encouraging’ her to do something – go back to work, get a hobby etc etc. It doesn’t work.
5. David starts an affair with Eleanor.
- 6.a) David overcompensates with Pen out of guilt – dirty weekend away, dinners out, sexual experimentation.
- b) Pen is uncomfortable though she tries to be what David wants. Still, it looks like she’s trying.
- c) Disappointed, David goes back to Eleanor.
- d) Eleanor and David settle into the affair.
- e) David starts neglecting Pen – he’s more attracted to Eleanor. ~~and he feels guilty~~
- f) David starts avoiding Pen – he feels guilty about²²⁹

The above is only one example of a series of exercises that were repeated a number of times over the drafting of the script. What I want to argue is that this kind of narrative structure, as evident in the template exercises and so within the framework of the film script, is a case of epic monologism as Kristeva and Bakhtin present it. More than that, I would argue that this structure, as evident in ‘The Seaborne’, is exactly the structure of the epic.

I intend to focus at some length on Aristotle’s writing for my consideration of the roles of the epic. Aristotle strikes me as the most epic of writers on the epic. He certainly comes to us from an epic historical distance. Also, one of the characteristics of the epic is its unchanging nature. I would suggest that a view of the epic would be that it is not open to amendment. Because of this, Aristotle’s writings, though several thousand years old, are as applicable in some respects to the contemporary epic form as they were to the ancient Greek equivalents. I would suggest also that Aristotle’s directions on dramatic writing, as the first of their kind, make him what Foucault would nominate as a founder of

²²⁹ Writing Book, 17 March 2005 - , Matthew Marshall: 1-5

discursivity.²³⁰ His writings are also appropriate for this discussion for reasons that will become clear when discussing Bakhtin and Kristeva's theory on dialogism later.²³¹

To begin the argument as to the epic nature of 'The Seaborne', the three major beats of the form of narrative divide the script into three sections or 'Acts', which correspond roughly with a beginning, middle and end. And 'The Seaborne' has three distinct Acts because it has a Catalyst, Crisis and Climax. This three Act structure almost exactly accords with the base line formal requirement of tragedy narrative as described by Aristotle:

We have laid it down that a tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete in itself, as a whole of some magnitude; for a whole may be of no magnitude to speak of. Now, a whole is that which has beginning, middle and end. A beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end is that which is naturally after something itself, either as its necessary or usual consequent, and with nothing else after it; and a middle, that which is by nature after one thing, and has also another after it. A well-constructed Plot, therefore, cannot either begin or end at any point one likes; beginning and end in it must be of the forms just described.²³²

²³⁰ Foucault 1967

²³¹ Kristeva 1980

²³² Aristotle (1993) 'Poetics (de Poetica)' trans Ingram Bywater in Paul W Goetz (editor in chief) *The Works of Aristotle Volume II*, Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc, Chicago: 681-99

Furthermore, I would suggest that the developmental exercises for ‘The Seaborne’ have a further two effects. In the first instance, between plot and character, the plot is foremost. Character in the exercises is not encouraged to be stable in the course of story. It changes in the face of plot developments and then creates further plot developments. This reflects another Aristotlean principle, namely that tragedy is about action:

Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery. All human happiness or misery takes the form of action; the end for which we love is a certain kind of activity, not a quality. Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions – what we do – that we are happy or the reverse.²³³

Plot is causally conceived in ‘The Seaborne’. The plot does not operate by serendipity. It is a linear progression of cause and effect. Earlier drafts of ‘The Seaborne’ developed the cause and effect principle through the backstory presented in the document T&TPAST, hence the above entries about the David story (which has been excised from the script). What is important here is that the plot is presented in a chronologically linear fashion and it operates causally, which Aristotle again demands for the epic tragic form:

The action, proceeding in the way defined, as one continuous whole, I call simple, when the change in the hero’s fortunes takes place without Peripety or Discovery; and complex, when it involves one or the other, or both. These should each of them arise out of the structure of the Plot itself, so as to be the consequence,

²³³ Aristotle 1993: 684

necessary or probable of the antecedents. There is a great difference between a thing happening *propter hoc* and *post hoc*.²³⁴

Here, Aristotle talks of Peripety and Discovery in particular relation to plot developments and I would argue that ‘The Seaborne’ is predicated on both. Firstly, a Peripety is a reversal in fortune or attitude in a character: ‘A Peripety is the change of the kind described from one state of things within the play to its opposite, and that too in the way we are saying, in the probable or necessary sequence of events...’²³⁵

All of the characters undergo this reversal in one way or another. By the final draft of ‘The Seaborne’, Pen goes from grieving over her husband, through suicidal inclinations, towards an acceptance of his loss and a need to go on living. Eleanor changes from keeping the secret of her affair to revealing it and going from dependent to dependable. As indicated by the narrative trajectory of the Eleanor character, much of the Peripety in the story is based on the tension leading up to the Discovery of the affair, the actual Discovery and then the aftermath. Aristotle defines Discovery as follows: ‘A Discovery is, as the very word implies, a change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus to either love or hate, in the personages marked for good or evil fortune.’²³⁶

Of course, Aristotle outlines a third element required to satisfy the formal criteria of tragedy and ‘The Seaborne’ also has plenty of that: ‘Two parts of the Plot, then, Peripety

²³⁴ Aristotle 1993: 686

²³⁵ Aristotle 1993: 686-687

²³⁶ Aristotle 1993: 687

and Discovery, are on matters of this sort. A third part is Suffering, which we may define as an action of a destructive or painful nature...²³⁷

Suffering, or more specifically grief, is a key component of 'The Seaborne'. Pen and Eleanor are responding to the death of the David character and manifest their grief by inflicting Suffering on the Mitch and Feroze characters.

All of this should strongly suggest that the nature of the film script 'The Seaborne' is epic. It accords with a series of templates with, roughly speaking, a three thousand year history of use. It contains many of the narrative elements that satisfy the Aristotlean notion of tragedy. Bakhtin argues this attachment to the past, to past forms and rites is a key characteristic of the epic:

The absolute past is a specifically evaluating (hierarchical) category. In the epic world view, 'beginning,' 'first,' 'founder,' 'ancestor,' 'that which occurred earlier' and so forth are not merely temporal categories but valorized temporal categories, and valorized to an extreme degree.²³⁸

Attached to this, I would suggest in some ways that following the templates present at the narrative level in 'The Seaborne' worked in such a way that the writing self did not develop a plot independent of pre-established formalist requirements. Kristeva, in discussing Bakhtin, points out that the narrative strictures within a form are precisely

²³⁷ Aristotle 1993: 687

²³⁸ Bakhtin 1981: 15

what make that form epic: ‘With Bakhtin, who assimilates narrative discourse into epic discourse, narrative is a prohibition, a *monologism*, a subordination of the code to 1, to God. Hence the epic is religious and theological...’²³⁹

All of these epic characteristics would indicate a particular kind of authorship at work on ‘The Seaborne’ during its development. All of these narrative forms evident in ‘The Seaborne’ and that were conducted as key parts of developing ‘The Seaborne’ (the Aristotlean, the heroic, the three Act structure) could be seen as enacting authorship over the film script. In some ways at least, the tragic form, the ‘Hero’s Journey’, the three Act structure, the epic and monological all authored ‘The Seaborne’. And perhaps that is another way of saying that the film script is formulaic. But I’m not sure whether that is the entirety of the picture in relation to ‘The Seaborne’. And that is because, as yet, there has been no consideration of the writing self in relation to the construction process. To get to that, I want to consider Bakhtin and Kristeva’s view of the epic form as monological.²⁴⁰ Kristeva describes exactly what monologism entails: ‘in an epic, the speaker (subject of the epic) does not make use of another’s speech... The organisational principle of epic structure thus remains monological.’²⁴¹

However, the film script as text type does make use of others’ speech, namely the speech of the characters. This is not to say that simply because a text contains speaking characters it is, by definition, dialogic. Dialogue and dialogic are two different things. Instead, dialogism operates at more than the surface level of the text. This will be

²³⁹ Kristeva 1980: 41

²⁴⁰ Kristeva 1980: 41

²⁴¹ Kristeva 1980: 48

discussed later in more depth, but for the sake of the present argument, the dialogic can be seen as the dispersal of the single voice into a multiplicity of voices. Rather than there being a dominant voice, or perspective, which carries the prime communicative operation, communication is achieved by all the textual voices in all their variety. This should not be confused with thinking that the voices present in a text communicate in concert, except insofar as they communicate their mutual disagreement. Characters that are mere mouthpieces for a single unitary thesis are not indicative of the dialogic. Synthesis is not conducted within the text, but rather there is a unity of the disparate. Kristeva compares dialogism to synthesis, in the context of Hegel's dialectic, while at the same time pointing to the position Aristotle holds within this and related fields of discourse:

The notion of dialogism, which owed much to Hegel, must not be confused with Hegelian dialectics, based on a triad and thus on struggle and projection (a movement of transcendence), which does not transgress the Aristotlean tradition founded on substance and causality. Dialogism replaces these concepts by absorbing them within the concept of relation. It does not strive towards transcendence but rather toward harmony, all the while implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation.²⁴²

In this context, 'The Seaborne' is dialogic in that there is no voice to unite the disparate speaking positions within the text. As argued in the previous chapter, any such monological presence is reduced, in the construction of the hidden director, to a mere

²⁴² Kristeva 1980: 58

perspectival framework. And the nature of the framework is such that the characters are not directly presented in relation to an overarching norm or set of absolute criteria, but in comparison only to each other. By this I mean that the speaking position of each character is determined relationally with the other characters and relative to the other characters. Dialogue thus occurs on multiple planes of textual operation. Indeed, there are instances where characters operate on certain textual planes to frame other characters. David is only accessed through Eleanor's and Pen's recollections. I would even suggest that the dialogic relationships between David and Pen on the one hand and David and Eleanor on the other manifest in such a way that, not only are Pen and Eleanor motivated by David, but they imitate him for much of the narrative. Indeed, it is the cessation of those relationships that allows the narrative to conclude. In a similar manner Feroze is only encountered within the script in relation to Pen and interacts with none of the other characters. And again, it is the cessation of Feroze and thus Pen's relationship with him that allows for narrative resolution.

Further, in relation to the script's dialogic elements, 'The Seaborne' picks up on the earliest foundation of polyglossia, the counter to monologism, which is the awareness of the foreign, especially foreign language, according to Bakhtin.²⁴³ The foreign position in 'The Seaborne' is occupied by the character Feroze, a Muslim refugee Pen rescues from the sea. The actual nation he comes from is not specified in any drafts of the script. Of course, though he is not ridiculed, a situation which for Bakhtin is the foundation of polyglossia,²⁴⁴ the character is not only killed within the script, but also rendered nothing

²⁴³ Bakhtin 1967: 133

²⁴⁴ Bakhtin 1967: 133

more than a mirage. This is almost a case of Bakhtin's already mentioned 'comical operation of dismemberment'.²⁴⁵ The final draft of the text is ambiguous, but there's the possibility that Feroze is only a figment of Pen's imagination, a psychotic delusion and manifestation of her cryptic incorporation of David. As already discussed, Pen is the only character to interact with Feroze, much less see him. He arrives and departs at very fortuitous times for Pen. He is never present in a scene without Pen. His body, once he has presumably drowned, is never shown. Rather, he simply fades from Pen's sight. Feroze's termination, whether at the end of the narrative or *ab initio* – as well as permitting the establishment of a dialogic relationship between Pen and Eleanor without engaging proxies in the form of Mitch, Feroze and David – distinguishes the script from Bakhtinian dialogic comedy and Aristotelean comedy: 'Comedy [is]... where the bitterest enemies in the piece (eg. Orestes and Aegisthus) walk off good friends at the end, with no slaying of any one by any one.'²⁴⁶

In Aristotelean terms, Feroze's death makes 'The Seaborne' tragic. At this point I want to state that my personal understanding of tragedy as a genre is stricter than what is presented here. Following Aristotle, I hold that a tragedy is the story of one character brought low and then to death due to the 'fatal flaw'. However, Aristotle only distinguishes between tragedy and comedy in his work, so I suggest that a drama, in the contemporary sense of a serious dramatic piece, can be covered by Aristotle's criteria for tragedy. And I would suggest that, in comparing 'The Seaborne' with the requirements

²⁴⁵ Bakhtin 1981: 24

²⁴⁶ Aristotle 1993: 688

for an Aristotlean comedy, it is Feroze's death, or abnegation, that makes 'The Seaborne' tragic or, at least, quasi-tragic.

However, in certain ways, 'The Seaborne' breaks the tragic form, reconstructing it across different lines. Someone is slain, but it is not the tragic hero or closest equivalent. Pen projects her tragic death metaphorically onto Feroze. He dies as her factor so that she can, indeed has to, go on living. Meanwhile Eleanor has already projected her self-destructive impulse onto David, leading to his suicide. And, in spite of the slayings, the physical sacrificial death of Feroze and the metaphorical death embodied in the burning of the boat, the 'bitterest enemies' Pen and Eleanor as already discussed, do 'walk off as good friends at the end'.²⁴⁷

In further reference to Aristotle's strict formal requirements, I want to make particular note of the female characters and their usage in the film script. Firstly, the presence of two main characters equates to two parallel stories. Multiple narratives in the one work are, according to Aristotle, an inferior form when compared with tragedy:

After this comes the construction of Plot which some rank first, one with a double story (like the *Odyssey*) and an opposite issue for the good and the bad personages. It is ranked as first only through the weakness of the audiences; the poets merely follow their public, writing as its wishes dictate. But the pleasure here is not that of Tragedy.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Aristotle 1993: 688

²⁴⁸ Aristotle 1993: 688

Already 'The Seaborne', as much as it serves the Aristotlean form, subverts it. Matters worsen. Aristotle comments further on the construction of characters within tragedy:

First and foremost, that they shall be good. There will be an element of character in the play, if (as has been observed) what a personage says or does reveals a certain moral purpose; and a good element of character, if the purpose so revealed is good. Such goodness is possible in every type of personage, even in a woman or slave, though the one is perhaps inferior, and the other a wholly worthless being.²⁴⁹

The actions of both protagonists are difficult to classify as 'good', and their purpose throughout the narrative, I would hazard, is predominantly selfish. Pen wants to commit suicide and Eleanor is dealing with her sexual indiscretions and, having slept with her brother-in-law, pseudo-incestuous indiscretions at that. Of course, terms like 'good' and 'bad' are highly subjective, if not entirely subjective. But these terms of Aristotle point to a more problematic issue, which is the types of characters included in the narrative.

The only character who might satisfy Aristotle's requirements is David, and his character is removed entirely from the film script after draft three. I would suggest that, from an Aristotlean perspective, the other characters, the ones left in the narrative, are really only women and slaves. Mitch as a lover and Feroze as a *de facto* prisoner are both reduced to slave-like status, while the women are not presented as inferior, but as story drivers and superior to their male counterparts. This goes beyond Aristotle's schema for tragedy:

²⁴⁹ Aristotle 1993: 689

The Character before us may be, say, manly; but it is not appropriate in a female Character to be manly, or clever.²⁵⁰

And yet, both female characters are clearly intelligent. Furthermore, Eleanor propositions Mitch and Pen engages in physical violence. They both express anger. They both occupy dominant roles, and by dominant I mean the characters are the focal point of the narrative, the story drivers and centre of attention. They are the protagonists of the narrative. And again I would suggest those dominant roles, throughout various drafts, reflect or copy directly the actions of the David character. Though David was removed from the script, his actions remain evident in the way Pen and Eleanor reference him. So, even if Pen's and Eleanor's behaviour is not manly generally speaking – as much as that can even be determined – David's behaviour prefigures it as such.

At this point it is worth discussing the relationship between the female and the male characters in that it is important to note the female characters, as protagonists, are dominant over the males in narrative terms. At the same time it has to be noted that much of the female characters' behaviour, jointly and separately, is motivated by those same male characters. Pen's and Eleanor's particular character arcs are supported and realized through reference and in response to the characters of David, Feroze and Mitch. However, the movement of both protagonists in relation to the figure of the male is from the Aristotelean masculine hero, through the relationship with the slave characters – the outsider as foreigner in the instance of Feroze and as destabilised authority figure as in

²⁵⁰ Aristotle 1993: 689

the case of Mitch – to a position independent of the masculine and rather in unity with the female in the form of the healed self and the sister.

What I think all of this suggests is that at every level of the script, there is a tension between the formal framework shown in the writing exercises that informed the script and a freer, more individualistic, counter-formulaic impulse. That impulse does not manifest in the formulae of the epic, the monological, and the heroic narrative structures and strictures. Those strictures, as Aristotle argues, are of the order of the universal, the impersonal and the absolute, not the individual, the subjective and the particular:

poetry is something more philosophic and of greater import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do – which is the aim of poetry.²⁵¹

By containing elements of both the personal and the general, ‘The Seaborne’ in its narrative form constitutes not a strict tragedy, but a hybrid in Aristotelean terms of tragic and comic elements. Attached to that, ‘The Seaborne’ also contains elements of the monological and the polyglot, and so of the epic and the novelistic. To support this finding, Bakhtin argues in general terms that the existence of the novel alters the operation of all other textual types:

²⁵¹ Aristotle 1993: 686

They become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the ‘novelistic’ layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and finally—this is the most important thing—the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the openended present).²⁵²

In terms of the writing process, the construction of ‘The Seaborne’, there is evidence of an authoring force of the tragic, monological and epic elements of the script. However, these aspects cannot, by their nature and operation, author the comic, polyglot and novelistic elements of ‘The Seaborne’, Kristeva argues, in defining the epic:

The dialogue of language does not manifest itself except within a narrative infrastructure. There is no dialogue at the level of the apparent textual organization (historical enunciation/discursive enunciation); the two aspects of enunciation remain limited by the narrator’s absolute point of view, which coincides with the wholeness of a god or community.²⁵³

There is no such wholeness within ‘The Seaborne’. It is not unitary. There is, in Bakhtin’s terms, ‘an indeterminacy’.²⁵⁴ It is itself on the levels of character, narrative and construction, as perhaps can be seen, a ghost story without ghosts. The film script is

²⁵² Bakhtin 1981: 7

²⁵³ Kristeva 1980: 48

²⁵⁴ Bakhtin 1981: 7

split between the unitary and something else. That something else, I believe, is the writing self. It is the only possible part of the script writing process that could satisfy the criteria for individuality, subjectivity and particularity. And I would suggest that the writing process of 'The Seaborne' was a relationship between the writing self and the formulaic principles, the sites of contestation and conflict giving rise to the relationship between writing self and film script in its various forms and across its various drafts. Thus, I would suggest that much of what allowed for the relationship between the writing self and the film script was the capacity of the writing self not to acquiesce or follow the formulaic impetus, but to survive it, to dominate it, subjugate it, use it, but even more importantly, to subvert it, deconstruct it and turn it against itself and its stated purposes. For this reason, I want to suggest that the writing self of 'The Seaborne' operates in the context of formal narrative requirements and in the subsequent relationship with the film script as a transgressor.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE ABJECT WRITING SELF

I now want to consider 'The Seaborne' writing self. To do that I'm going to return to Kristeva's theories on Celine's anti-Semitism and her concept of the abject.²⁵⁵ Within the film script 'The Seaborne' there are certain markers that indicate the authorship of the epic. I think there are similar markers of the writing self within the script and they are instances of both bigotry and abjection that show the authoring writing self as transgressive.

To consider the concept more fully, according to Kristeva²⁵⁶ the abject is that which is still a part of the body but not the body. It has not yet been made an object, distinct in its own right, but nor is it of the same material as the body. It is attached to the body, within the body, but still separate though not separated. Attached to the presence of the abject is the desire to remain and to part simultaneously. The abject raises the desire to be absorbed back into the body, to possess it, or repossess it, but also to be released from it, to be, as it were, born. This forbidden desire, which is to be born, to be absorbed, to be abject and main body at the same time, to enter into and out of the state of oneness, into and out of the state of separation, to be alive and dead, in the dead and living worlds of separation and unity give rise to an archetypal figure of horror, representing the moment of abjection. This figure, feminine in form, the potentiality of abjection, arises as something that culture, particularly dominant, theological, determinant culture needs to expunge.

²⁵⁵ Kristeva 1981

²⁵⁶ Kristeva 1981: 317

I've already discussed the ways that Pen and Eleanor as characters defy the traditional, Aristotlean epic mould for tragedy. Their presence within the film script is not monological. Nor, I would suggest based on what Kristeva argues here, is their presence 'sacred'.²⁵⁷ Kristeva attaches to the monological the religious and the theological.²⁵⁸ The female presence alone, as seemingly argued by Kristeva, breaches that. And the breach is not just one of narrative rote, but a serious breach of the principles of language and thus of communication, logic and sense.

This is a symbolic operation of course. I would never suggest, and I don't think Kristeva does either, that the presence of a woman disrupts society, culture, faith and language. I think there are those who believe that (Aristotle seemed to), and I think the echoes of past belief are manifest in the traditions and forms within a culture, including the epic, monological and tragic. Thus, within those narratives, the representation of the female must follow more conventions than merely being stupid and unmanly. What Kristeva suggests here is that for social purgation its traditional forms should represent the expulsion of the female as a site of power.

I would suggest that some examples of such a disempowerment, from a film perspective, are variously the destruction of the *femme fatale* figure, or the subjugation of the female in a hetero-normative relationship. Instances of this abound, but not in 'The Seaborne'. The 'universal logic of catharsis'²⁵⁹ entailing the purging of the female is denied in the film script. Indeed the progression within the narrative is anti just that sort of catharsis.

²⁵⁷ Kristeva 1981: 317

²⁵⁸ Kristeva 1980: 41

²⁵⁹ Kristeva 1981: 317

It is the male that I purged. The female figures, both Eleanor and Pen, start in parallel barren hetero-normative relationships and by the end of the narrative unite in a shared female, abject relationship. The narrative arc follows the abjection of the protagonists in the response to the male and masculine. Thus the catharsis in the case of 'The Seaborne' is the formation, not the cessation, of the abjection.

This is a double transgression, because it transgresses the narrative form of the epic, as religious and normative, and then transgresses it again by using the epic form to conduct the transgression. To conduct this, then, would seem to require authorship by a transgressive writing self. Furthermore, I would suggest that the process of writing, what it is that creates the writing self, is a state of abjection in itself and thus the writing self is an abjected self in the case of 'The Seaborne', doubling the transgression again. The reason I link the abject with the writing self is because during the existence of the writing self, the written work, the text, the film script in this case, is incomplete. It is unborn and unformed. It is in the generative, the gestation process. It is still attached to the writing self, but separate from it. The written work is not the writing self. But at the same time, the writing self ceases to be when the writing is concluded. That means that the writing self is only existent within the state of abjection.

Unlike for society, a catharsis does not resolve this. There is only parallel creation and destruction, a birth and a death. The bringing into being of the film script, its completion, ends the writing self. The writing self does not emerge from the writing process. It

merely becomes something else. To return to Kristeva, this situation goes beyond the abject into the spectral:

The subject exists only inasmuch as it identifies with an ideal other who is the speaking other, the other in so far as he speaks. A ghost, a symbolic formation beyond the mirror, this Other, who is indeed the size of a Master, is a magnet for identification because he is neither an object of need nor one of desire...²⁶⁰

In the case of 'The Seaborne' this spectral transgression, a transgression of the borders between life and death, existence and destruction, between text and self, is doubled and indeed multiplied by all the drafts of the script. The multi-version nature of the film script impacts on the spectral transgression of the writing self authoring 'The Seaborne', because the writing self becomes a spectre of a spectre across the writing of every single draft of the script. The writing self is both fractured and repeated. It is made abject, not only to the script but to itself, a multiplicity of times. Each writing self of each draft of the script is attached to the previous writing selves in what is repeated across the script and separate in what is changed. Simultaneously, throughout the scripts, there are writing selves and a writing self. It is a contradiction and a paradox. It is ultimately transgressive, for it transgresses logic, language, understanding, unity, separation and both its self and selves. 'The Seaborne' is a *mise en abyme* of the writing self.

²⁶⁰ Kristeva 1983: 252

Strangely enough, this brings us to Celine's anti-Semitism. Kristeva argues that Celine in his writing, by displaying bigotry, is also manifesting the problem of the abject.²⁶¹ I would suggest that in 'The Seaborne', the object of bigotry is represented in the character of Feroze, who is dominated, transformed and, by the conclusion of the narrative, exterminated, if not rendered non-existent from the first instance, a figment of the imagination, an exotic projection. That character's presence and role within the script point to a writing self under the grip of a 'paranoid rage' arising from 'the psychic instability of the writer',²⁶² which is manifest within the script in the characters of Pen and Eleanor.

As already discussed, the character of Feroze operates in a polyglot manner. Now, as is evident, the Feroze character marks a series of transgressions in the writing self while authoring the film script. And I think those transgressions come predominantly not just in the form of a simple bigotry – a transgressive enough act – but as a betrayal of the transgressive self. As argued, the shift of the female characters towards a state of abjection as the cathartic process of 'The Seaborne' indicates a writing self that is characterized by its own abjection. The writing self is then betrayed by the transgression of the bigotry against Feroze. Simultaneously, as abjection is accepted and valorized in the female aspect of the writing self, the writing self destroys the abject of the 'wandering and elusive other'.²⁶³ And Feroze, as a refugee and illegal immigrant is a wanderer. Furthermore, the nature of his end is such that he dies so Pen can live.

²⁶¹ Kristeva 1983: 252

²⁶² Kristeva 1981: 318

²⁶³ Kristeva 1981: 318

This is the writing self against itself, a final transgression that transgresses the transgressive and does point back towards a unifying impulse. What is outside is excluded. What is inside is confirmed. The abject is permitted in one form, but only at the sacrifice of another abject. A double act is conducted; one that doubles on itself across all the double selves, one that in transgressing becomes individual and subjective against the monologism of epic tradition and that is then transgressed, including the epic within the subjectivity. The markers of such a transgressing transgressive writing self are evident within the script, but the writing self is effaced through dead figures, made dead and living in death. It is co-implicated within the writing. It is separate to the writing, but joined to it, causing the writing to be and caused by the writing and destroyed by the same.

It seems impossible to capture the writing self in language, even with statements about it being transgressive. It can be argued that it is, as Cholodenko argues of all film, a ghost, a haunting.²⁶⁴ It is a cryptic incorporation and is cryptically incorporated by the work. It haunts and is haunted. It is dead and alive, present and absent. It is also epic and novelistic. It is abject and abjected, while expunging both at the same time. It contradicts. It contradicts contradiction. Strictly speaking, it transcends any distinctions and all language. It is transcendental, but the miracle of transcendence is predicated on a religiosity that the 'The Seaborne' writing self transgresses and subverts. The religious is denied and destroyed in 'The Seaborne'. The transcendent is just a projection, a false image, a ghost itself, an empty haunting of an empty house. So, the writing self, if transcendent, is only a ghost, in a secular ghost story, a ghost story without ghosts.

²⁶⁴ Cholodenko 2004

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THE SEABORNE

FINAL DRAFT

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EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Surging into the water... bubbles rush up... then down...
... into the black.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT HALL - DAY

The front door swings open. Pen, early to mid-thirties, strides into the hall. She seems fragile, but there are ice floes in her eyes.

Eleanor, maybe three-four years younger, maybe more, at least in terms of attitude, remains in the doorway, looking around: a touch of nerves. Eleanor is like Pen in looks, but more open and therefore more likeable. That doesn't make her any better, though.

Eleanor follows her sister.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen glides through the bare, simple living room. She passes a wall on which are a number of photos. They are all of the same man, David, in his late-thirties: confident, charismatic and handsome.

In these photos David is variously fixing up a near-antique, single-mast twenty-four-footer, or sailing the same boat now restored to its former glory, or getting married to Pen. Pen passes the photos without a glance in their direction, though her hand trails lightly along the wall.

Eleanor walks up to the photos and stops. She turns. She looks. She raises her hand and puts her finger to an image of David, smiling behind glass.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

Pen pushes away from the open door and walks up to the balcony rail. She places her hands on the rail and looks out.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The sea is still, stretching as wide as can be seen.

INSERT: water surges and bubbles rush upwards.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

Pen lets her gaze drop.

PEN'S POV: next to the balcony is a walkway that leads down a steep bluff to a private beach. On one side of the beach is a small jetty with a wooden boat house by it. Nothing is berthed at the jetty.

ELEANOR (OOV)

Pen...

Pen raises her head and looks back. Eleanor is standing at the door to the house.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You okay?

Pen strides past Eleanor. Eleanor follows.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT - DAY

Pen emerges from the front door of the house. She looks around. She vanishes around the side of the house. Eleanor comes out the front door and follows.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, SIDE - DAY

Pen is standing, looking straight ahead. Eleanor appears behind her. Eleanor walks up and puts her hand on Pen's arm.

PEN

It's here.

In front of Pen and Eleanor is a boat: single mast twenty-four-footer, once restored and now looking the worse for wear again. She has been through some very rough weather. The boat is set on a brick-footed boat trailer and there is a tarpaulin covering some of it. Visible, however, is the name plate of the boat: Seaborne.

ELEANOR

Yeah. Here it is.

Pen walks up to the boat and puts her hand against the hull.

PEN (CONT'D)

I'm going to fix it.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Pen is sitting at the kitchen table. Eleanor puts two cups of tea on the table. Pen reaches out and closes her hands around one of them.

ELEANOR

So... fixing the boat that...

PEN

Killed him?

Eleanor sits opposite Pen.

ELEANOR

Least you're not in denial. Okay then. Why?

PEN

Know why you do everything?

ELEANOR

I don't know why I do anything.

She circles the tea cup by its handle.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I just thought we were going to clear up a bit to sell.

PEN

This is my home.

ELEANOR

This was David's beach house. You like it more now he's not here?

On Eleanor's face: she's said the wrong thing and she knows it. Pen pushes away from the table, stands and looks down at Eleanor. Eleanor nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Right.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The sun glitters on the still surface of the sea.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

Pen is at the balcony looking out. Eleanor steps through the door behind her.

ELEANOR

Remember me? I'm your idiot younger sister - the one with the big mouth. We've met before.

Pen smiles slightly. Eleanor steps closer.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I'm worried about you, Pen. To reverse the usual state of affairs. I don't understand what's going on here.

Pen turns to face Eleanor.

PEN

Do you have to?

ELEANOR

What?

PEN

I'm doing this because it's what I want. Can that be enough for now?

ELEANOR

I guess.

Pen nods and very gently:

PEN

El, with all the love in the world: please get out of my house.

Eleanor shrugs: okay then.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eleanor and Pen are walking back to the front of the house. Pen stops.

PEN

Wait. Do you have any photos of him?

Eleanor doesn't really have time to answer.

PEN (CONT'D)

You don't, do you?

Pen turns to the wall of photos and gives it a quick scan.

ELEANOR

No...

Pen grabs one of the photos off the wall. It's of David standing in front of his just restored boat. He's the personification of manly pride. Pen hands the photo to Eleanor.

PEN

Take this.

ELEANOR

I can't...

Pen presses the photo on Eleanor.

PEN

Eleanor.

ELEANOR

But you won't have the full set.

PEN

Come on. You liked David. And he liked you.

Eleanor takes the photo.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT - DAY

Pen waves as Eleanor's car disappears down the drive way. Pen turns back towards the house.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen stands in front of the wall, right where there's now a gap amongst the photos. Pen runs her finger around the faint outline marking where the photo was. Then she presses her hand against the wall.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

Pen is again at the balcony, looking out.

INSERT: waves foam onto the beach.

Pen pushes away from the balcony railing.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, SIDE - DAY

The tarpaulin floats away from the boat. Pen runs her hand along the hull.

JUMP CUT TO: Pen is mounting a step ladder to get on the boat.

JUMP CUT TO: Pen is on the deck, staring at the base of the mast. It has snapped off its housing. Pen fingers the jagged spines of wood.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT - DAY

Pen runs in through the front door and slams it shut behind her.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Pen is sitting in the bath, hands pulling her knees up to her chest.

INSERT: a drop of water falls from the tap.

INSERT: water rushes down into the deep ocean.

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eleanor's apartment is cold and lifeless looking: a tribute to modern, single living. It has a combined kitchen/living area.

Eleanor is in the living room part of the room. She is sitting on the couch, glass of wine in one hand, open mobile phone in the other. On the coffee table in front of her is the photo of David.

INSERT: the mobile face shows a list of unread TXT messages sent variously by Jack, Tom, Nick, Will, Liam, Michael, Pete, and Ash. The list goes off the screen.

Eleanor looks up to the photo of David.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Pen sits at one of the short ends of the dinner table, resting her weight on her elbows. She stares ahead while vaguely stirring the food in front of her with her fork.

SFX: the phone rings loudly in the silence.

Pen turns her head towards the sound.

JUMP CUT TO: Pen is standing at the edge of the living room.

SFX: the phone is still ringing.

Pen walks over to the phone, stands over it, then picks it up.

PEN

Yes?

Eleanor has her mobile phone to her ear.

ELEANOR

I'm home.

Eleanor leans forward a little in the couch.

ELEANOR

How's... the boat? It's the mast, isn't it?

PEN

Yeah. I don't think it can be repaired. I'll figure something out.

ELEANOR

Maybe you could get some help.

PEN

Thanks. But I'll be okay.

Eleanor shakes her head.

ELEANOR

I didn't mean me. Maybe you don't have to do it on your own.

PEN

Thanks for the suggestion.

ELEANOR

No worries...

But the line is already dead.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pen lies face-up on one side of the bed, her arms folded in front of her, her eyes fixed on the ceiling. The other side of the bed has been turned down as though waiting for someone to get in.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, SIDE - DAY

The boat trailer and boat are hitched to the back of Pen's car. Pen is in the car backing the trailer around. The trailer starts to jack-knife and Pen hits the brakes hard.

INT. PEN'S CAR - DAY

Pen grips the steering wheel.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Pen has backed the boat down towards the jetty. She stops the car and switches off the engine. She steps out of the car.

INT. ELEANOR'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eleanor is on the phone, drumming her fingers on the table next to her. Finally:

ELEANOR

Yes. I want to buy a mast.

She listens for a moment.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

How am I supposed to know? A boat?

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - DAY

Eleanor is at the steering wheel. She is rapping a staccato on it with her hands.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Eleanor's car disappears down the road.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Pen has set up the boat's mast on several work horses. She is at the mast's base, cutting off the shattered end with a saw. The saw jags into the wood.

EXT. TOWN, PIER PARKING LOT - DAY

Eleanor's car pulls into an empty parking spot near the pier. There are a number of small boats moored in the water. Around the pier are the buildings and signs of a small, coastal town. Eleanor gets out of her car and looks towards the pier.

MITCH (OOV)

Excuse me?

Eleanor turns around. Facing her is a broad, tanned, dusty-looking country cop in his early thirties. He's laidback, open, friendly, polite and unflappable. Or, at least, it takes a lot to flap him. This is Mitch.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You wouldn't be David's wife...
Pen?

ELEANOR

No.

MITCH

Right. Sorry to bother you. You just reminded me of some photos I've seen.

ELEANOR

I'm Pen's sister, David's... sister-in-law.

MITCH

That's the resemblance then.

ELEANOR
Probably where it stops too.

Eleanor puts her hand out.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Eleanor.

MITCH
Mitch. And my condolences.

They shake.

ELEANOR
So. You and David were friends?

MITCH
Not close, but yeah.

ELEANOR
You've been to the house, though.

MITCH
That was mostly after.

ELEANOR
Oh.

MITCH
Police duties.

ELEANOR
Right.

MITCH
Look. If there's anything I can do...

ELEANOR
I don't know. Is there?

MITCH
Ah. Right. Okay. Try me.

ELEANOR
I need a mast.

MITCH
For Seaborne...

On Mitch's face: it's love.

ELEANOR
You know it then?

Mitch smiles.

MITCH
Her. Yeah.

EXT. TOWN, PIER END - DAY

Mitch is leaning his elbows against the railing at the end of the pier. Eleanor moves up next to him and rests her elbows against the railing as well. In front of them, seagulls hover.

MITCH
From what I saw the mast's really
the only problem.

ELEANOR
That's good then. Isn't it?

MITCH
It's a big problem. Snap the
tiller, that's her direction.
Breach her hull, she floods. But
she can still make it back home.
The mast, though, the mast's her
centre, what lets her harness any
wind, sail through the worst seas...
Lose that, it's... it's like
breaking her heart.

ELEANOR
Oh.

MITCH
And the one she had was
handcrafted. If she needs a new
one, could take weeks to replace.

ELEANOR
Let's do that then.

Mitch looks over at Eleanor.

MITCH
Sorry?

ELEANOR

You and me... Actually you. I don't know what I'm doing.

Mitch points to the uniform he's wearing.

MITCH

I'm not the best qualified. You know I'm a police officer?

ELEANOR

I've seen your kind before.

MITCH

And who's to say I have the time?

ELEANOR

Oh, yeah. I'm guessing this place is a hotbed of crime. They don't give you afternoons off?

Mitch gives Eleanor an appraising look.

MITCH

I do love that boat.

ELEANOR

Come on. You're the first person I've spoken to who hasn't treated me like an idiot.

MITCH

How many other people have you spoken to?

ELEANOR

Some.

Mitch draws a breath in through his teeth: he's still not sold.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I'll pay you.

MITCH

Think you can afford me?

ELEANOR

How much?

MITCH

A fortune. Twenty bucks an hour.

Eleanor puts out her hand.

ELEANOR

Done.

EXT. TOWN, PIER PARKING LOT - DAY

Eleanor unlocks her car.

ELEANOR

I'll give you a lift.

Eleanor gets in the car, reaches over and opens the passenger door for Mitch.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Coming?

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Eleanor's car shoots straight down the road.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - DAY

Eleanor is at the wheel. Mitch is seated beside her.

MITCH

So. This must be a hard time for your sister. I hope she's all right.

ELEANOR

Oh, she's fine. She lost her husband at sea. Now she's staying at his beach house, which she never really liked when he was alive. I mean, she went there when they were courting, or whatever you call it. And she learned to sail. But once she had that ring on her finger, I don't think she went there again. And I don't know if he minded.

MITCH

Right...

ELEANOR

I mean: I'm really not the best person to ask. Bit biased, you know.

Eleanor just can't let it lie.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I just think Pen always wanted a David and when she got one...

Now she's on a roll.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Anyway, now she's fixing up the boat he died on, or off, wherever it is you die when you drown. And she threw me out and kind of hung up on me. But, apart from that? Absolutely fine.

Eleanor glances over at Mitch.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You didn't really need to know all that, did you?

Mitch looks out at the road.

MITCH

Watch your speed.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

The end of the mast falls to the dust-covered jetty and rolls away. Pen straightens up and wipes her brow with her sleeve.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT - DAY

Eleanor's car, with Eleanor driving and Mitch in the passenger seat pulls up to the front of the house.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - DAY

Eleanor stops the engine.

ELEANOR

Here we are then.

And she opens her door.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Pen is atop the boat. She is looking at the joist that links the mast to the top-deck. She is rolling it backwards and forwards, trying to figure out how it operates. There are still the shattered remnants of wood in the top link of the joist.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, SIDE - DAY

Mitch is standing, looking towards the beach. Eleanor comes around the corner.

ELEANOR
She's not at home.

Eleanor points towards the beach.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
There she is.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Pen has a wrench and a spanner and is trying to undo one of the nuts on the joist. The spanner slips off and Pen lets out a breath.

ELEANOR (OOV)
Pen! Hey!

Pen looks over towards the road leading down to the jetty. Mitch and Eleanor are approaching down it.

Eleanor has a too-big grin on her face, like she's going to go through with this no matter how badly it pans out.

Pen stares at the two for a moment, shakes her head then turns back to the nut and resets the spanner.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Look what I found. This is Mitch.
He can help with the boat. He's,
like, the boat man.

Mitch gives Eleanor a sideways look.

MITCH
Thanks for the introduction.

He turns to Pen.

MITCH (CONT'D)

How do you do? Mind if I take a look?

Pen nods, once, and makes room. Mitch hoists himself up onto the boat and surveys the joist.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Thread's frayed. Too much pressure when it all came down.

Mitch examines the broken joint closely. Pen watches.

MITCH (CONT'D)

But it's not that bad. It's only the base, see? Where it's attached to the hawser? The rest is still sound. You only need to cut away any damage and then reconnect.

PEN

Thank you for the advice.

MITCH

My pleasure.

Pen turns to Eleanor.

PEN

So, Eleanor, back again.

ELEANOR

Yes...

PEN

Why?

Pen rises and walks over to the ladder against the side of the boat.

ELEANOR

I felt bad...

Pen is part-way down the ladder. She stops.

PEN

So you drove all the way back here?

ELEANOR
What's a six hour round-trip
between family?

Pen steps off the ladder and up to Eleanor.

PEN
And you're inviting friends over.

Pen looks at Eleanor for a moment and then turns and walks away down the beach.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Pen is walking down the beach. Eleanor is pacing up behind her.

ELEANOR
Shit, Pen. It's not like he's
just my friend or anything. I
mean, he is. My friend. I just
met him. He knew David. And
boats. I thought he could help.

PEN
So, this is for my good?

Pen stops and turns towards Eleanor.

PEN (CONT'D)
What's going on in your head,
Eleanor?

ELEANOR
I wanted to do something.

PEN
Then why not do what I asked?

ELEANOR
Pen...

PEN
Go home.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Mitch is standing by the boat house, waiting. Pen and Eleanor walk up, side by side.

MITCH

If you want any help with...

PEN

No. But thank you.

MITCH

It's fine. I'm pretty sure you'll find some books in the boat house that'll help. This was in much worse nick when David started on it.

PEN

Eleanor said you knew him.

Mitch smiles and steps up to the boat. He puts his hand on it.

MITCH

I helped him on this every now and again. Just extra muscle, really. Not that it mattered what I was doing. I loved the work. But then I love this boat. Only time I've ever been jealous.

Mitch looks over at Pen with a smile, but she's looking impassively at him.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Anyway. Time to get going. And, if I can say, I'm really sorry about David.

He offers his hand to Pen.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Good meeting you.

After a moment Pen takes Mitch's hand. Pen and Mitch shake.

JUMP CUT TO: Pen is alone on the boat. She has a hack saw and is sawing away at the bolt.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, SIDE - DAY

Eleanor and Mitch are standing next to each other and looking down towards the beach, though as much as anything, Eleanor is not looking at Mitch.

ELEANOR

Look. About the boat... My sister,
she...

MITCH

None of my business.

ELEANOR

Okay...

Mitch turns to Eleanor.

MITCH

I mean: it's fine. This must be a
difficult time. For both of you.

ELEANOR

It's my fault. I was stupid.

Eleanor looks up at Mitch.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Anyway...

Eleanor breaks eye contact to rummage in her bag.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I don't think we'll be needing
your services any more. So...

Eleanor pulls a cash note out of her bag.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Can you break a fifty?

MITCH

Give me a lift back to town, we'll
call it even.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT - DAY

Eleanor's car speeds up the driveway and away from the
house.

INT. BOAT HOUSE - DAY

Pen is standing in the doorway. There are bits and pieces
of junk everywhere. Pen reaches down and touches a pile of
rope. She crosses the boat house, patting on the way the
one saw horse. She comes to the work bench.

Piled on one side of the bench are electric tools and on the ground in front of them a diesel generator. On the other side of the work bench is a collection of books.

Pen reaches in and pulls out a book. She opens it.

INSERT: simple line drawings of various wood joints - dovetail, mortis and tenon.

Pen opens another book.

INSERT: more line drawings, but of rope knots - half hitch, clove hitch, reef knot.

Pen grabs yet another book: older than the others, well-thumbed and with the spine coming loose. She opens it.

INSERT: a schematic of a twenty-four-footer boat. In the margins are tight hand-written notations. Pen's finger runs down the page.

Pen holds the book against her chest.

INT. TOWN, CAFÉ - DAY

The café is a cute, little boutique number with just a touch of tack. There are a few patrons nattering away. Eleanor and Mitch are sitting at a table by the window. A waitress puts two coffees down in front of them.

ELEANOR

Thank you.

Eleanor picks up her coffee.

ELEANOR

Did I ambush you?

Mitch thinks for a little second. He's smiling faintly.

MITCH

No. Close thing, but for me it wasn't that bad.

ELEANOR

I didn't want to face her by myself. In case things didn't go so well.

MITCH

What were the chances? If I can say, you two have a few things to sort out.

ELEANOR

I know. But I couldn't leave her on her own. I had to see if she was okay.

MITCH

No good deed goes unpunished.

EXT. OUTSIDE CAFÉ - DAY

Mitch is holding the door open for Eleanor, who is smiling back at the people in the café.

ELEANOR

Thank you!

The door swings shut behind Mitch and Eleanor who fall into step with each other.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

What do you think? How's she holding up? From the outside perspective?

MITCH

Look. I can't possibly imagine how she feels.

ELEANOR

I don't know how she'd have been if it hadn't looked like an accident.

Mitch turns to face Eleanor. This might be him finding out he is a bit flappable.

MITCH

Looked like? Are you saying it wasn't? There was no evidence of anyone else out there.

Eleanor looks askance at Mitch. She's been caught out.

ELEANOR

No.

MITCH

What are you saying? He killed himself?

ELEANOR

Of course not.

MITCH

Have you mentioned this to your sister?

ELEANOR

No!

Mitch takes her by the elbow and turns her to face him.

MITCH

All right. But, look, if you've got no reason to think a thing, you shouldn't. It just hurts people. Okay?

ELEANOR

Yeah. Okay.

Eleanor and Mitch walk on in silence.

EXT. TOWN PIER, PARKING LOT - DAY

Eleanor is at the driver side door of her car. Mitch is standing nearby.

ELEANOR

Look... I'm sorry... I...

Mitch cuts her off.

MITCH

It's been good meeting you, Eleanor. Really.

ELEANOR

You sure about that?

MITCH

Yeah. And, you know, if you're ever back this way...

ELEANOR

After what I threw you in the middle of?

MITCH

I thought your sister and I got on pretty well actually. Just you she's got issues with.

ELEANOR

Who wouldn't, you know?

MITCH

Oh, you're all right.

Eleanor takes a small step towards Mitch.

ELEANOR

Thanks for everything.

Mitch shrugs.

MITCH

Didn't do much.

The two of them stand for a moment. Then Eleanor steps up and gives Mitch a sudden kiss on the lips. Before he can react she steps back.

ELEANOR

Sorry for that.

MITCH

No. It's...

ELEANOR

It's a bad habit. Gets me in a lot of trouble.

Mitch is trying to take Eleanor's behaviour in stride.

MITCH

You kiss a lot of men you've just met.

Eleanor grins.

ELEANOR

Not all of them.

MITCH

Right. Of course not.

ELEANOR

Bye.

MITCH

See you.

JUMP CUT TO: Eleanor's car is driving away from Mitch. Mitch is standing, watching the car go, shaking his head a little bit: city girls...

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pen is propped up on the couch. There is a pile of books beside her on the coffee table and she is absorbed in another one in her lap.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Pen is running a plane over the newly cut end of the mast. The plane bites too deep and takes a chunk out of the wood. Pen stares at the plane for a moment and then has another go.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pen has sheets of paper and open books laid out over the coffee table. She is chewing on a pencil. She leans forward and writes something down.

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eleanor is on the couch. Her mobile is in her hand and she's looking at it.

INSERT: scrolling down the list of people who've sent Eleanor a TXT message. At the bottom of the list is DAVID. That message has already been read. It's an old one.

Eleanor snaps the mobile phone shut and crosses her arms.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

SFX: the explosive roar of the diesel generator, now out of the boat house.

Pen lowers the protective goggles over her eyes. She hoists up the angle grinder and turns it on. The angle grinder screams incredibly loudly and frighteningly. Pen immediately shuts it off. She drops the grinder down and raises her goggles quickly.

PEN

Shit.

Pen takes her hands gently off the grinder and looks at it like it's a thing alive.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen is back at the mess of the coffee table, leafing back and forwards through a book.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Pen is tightening the bolt of the joist to the base of the mast.

JUMP CUT TO: Pen is attaching the mast to the top deck. The mast is supported by a rope and pulley system. The pin in the joist slips out and the mast swings around wildly.

Pen scrabbles out of the way as the mast slips out of its rope cradle and clatters onto the deck of the boat then rolls off it and onto the ground. Pen blows some stray hairs away from her face.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - NIGHT

Pen stands at the railing. She looks down to one side.

INSERT: there is the boat, barely visible on the jetty.

Pen looks straight out. Her fingers drum rapidly, expectantly on the rail.

INSERT: what little moonlight there is ripples on the dark surface of the water.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Pen is straining on a rope, pulling at it with all her might. Jerkily, the mast rises up against the blue sky. Pen ties off the mast and steps back. The boat is finished, the mast completely repaired.

Out on Pen's face: calm as still water.

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eleanor is back at the couch. She is staring at the photo of David and rapping her mobile phone lightly on her chin. She puts the phone down and stands. She walks away from both the photo and the phone.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Pen, unmoving, sits at one of the table's short ends. Her plate is untouched.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pen lies on her side of the bed, staring up at the ceiling. She rolls onto her side.

She can't sleep. But it doesn't matter. She can sleep when she's dead.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A little moonlight shines on the photos on the wall. Pen glides past the photos in her night gown.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - NIGHT

Pen steps out onto the balcony and up to the rail. She stands there, her hands tight around her night gown as the wind tries to whip it off her. Pen stares towards the sea.

INSERT: there is the surge of deep black water at night and the glimmer of moonlight on rising bubbles.

EXT. OCEAN, DAVID'S BOAT - DAY

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen is at the helm of the boat. The sails snap in the bluster. The prow rises and drops in the chop. Pen scans as far ahead as she can see. On one part of the horizon is a patch of grey. Pen turns the boat towards it.

JUMP CUT TO: the boat is moving under a strong headwind. Pen's face is set on the horizon.

JUMP CUT TO: the storm clouds are closer now and the sky is dark. Pen looks straight up into the sky.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Eleanor is looking at her mobile phone screen.

INSERT: there is David's name.

The storm is sweeping towards Pen and the boat, whipping up the choppy sea into spray. Pen is lowering the sail. The boat bobs up and down.

Eleanor has the phone to her ear.

SFX: the phone rings loudly in Pen's empty living room.

Pen is at the stern, looking straight ahead. In her hands is the boat's anchor, small but probably enough to drag her down.

INSERT: far in the distance can be seen land looking like a low cloud on the horizon.

SFX: the phone rings in Pen's living room and then is suddenly silent.

Eleanor snaps the phone shut and puts her hands over her mouth.

Pen looks down at the water.

INSERT: the aft hull of the boat slaps into the water.

Pen raises her head and closes her eyes. Her right foot steps out from the boat.

 FEROZE (OOV)
 ... help me... please...

The voice is very faint. Eyes closed, Pen frowns. Then:

 FEROZE (OOV)
 Help... Please...

Pen opens her eyes. She scans the water. Off to one side is a dark patch in the swell. It is waving.

 FEROZE
 Help.

Pen looks down and then back to the distant figure.

JUMP CUT TO: Pen is raising the mainsail.

JUMP CUT TO: Pen is at the wheel, spinning it towards where the sound came.

JUMP CUT TO: the boat's prow cuts through the water. Up ahead, is a piece of flotsam. Clinging to it with one arm, while waving weakly with the other, is Feroze. He is in his late-twenties, but ageless in a way and beautiful: dark skin, sodden dark hair and badly sunburned.

 FEROZE
 ... thank you... thank...

 PEN
 Just, stay where you are. I'll
 throw a rope.

 FEROZE
 ... yes... thank you... thank...

And with that, his eyes close and he loosens his grip on the piece of wood. Feroze slips into the water.

 PEN
 No.

And she steps up and dives off the boat.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Pen is swimming forward just under the surface, scanning around in the murk.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. OCEAN, DAVID'S BOAT - DAY

Pen breaks the surface of the water. She draws in a deep breath and dives down again. The swell rises and falls. David's boat clunks into the piece of flotsam.

Pen emerges, clutching Feroze against her chest. She backstrokes towards the boat.

JUMP CUT TO: she and Feroze are at the boat. Pen grabs a hanging rope and wraps it around Feroze.

JUMP CUT TO: Feroze is secure above the water line. Pen reaches around and grasps the lip of the deck.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Pen pulls herself onto the deck, turns and starts hoisting the rope.

PEN

Oh, god! You weigh a ton!

Pen leaps off the boat again. She treads water in front of Feroze and gives him a quick, light slap on the cheek.

PEN (CONT'D)

Hey. Hey! You've got to help me.

Feroze is unresponsive. Pen gives him another slap.

PEN (CONT'D)

Come on! You're too heavy!

Pen slaps Feroze once more. He rouses.

PEN (CONT'D)

You've got to pull yourself up.
Do you understand?

Feroze nods and, with much pushing and pulling, he and Pen drag themselves into the boat.

Pen drags Feroze fully onto the top deck of the boat.

Pen throws a hypothermia blanket over Feroze.

Pen holds Feroze around the blanket and rubs warmth back into his body.

Pen tears her wet top off.

Pen is under the blanket with Feroze, grasping him tight, pulling him into her. Feroze's head lolls back.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen drops Feroze onto the bed. They are both sodden and covered in sand. Pen starts undoing the buttons on Feroze's shirt, but it's fiddly work.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Pen is in the kitchen, rifling through an open drawer. She pulls out a pair of scissors.

Eleanor, on her couch, has her mobile to her ear.

ELEANOR

You've got to be home now.

SFX: the phone rings in Pen's living room.

Pen turns her head at the sound.

Eleanor leans forward and taps her fingers on the table.

SFX: the phone is still ringing, but distant here in the bedroom.

Pen is leaning over Feroze, cutting up his shirt with the scissors. She's paying no attention to the phone.

The phone rings out in Eleanor's ear.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Would it kill you to pick up?

She puts the phone down and glances across at the photo of David.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

The storm is closing in and the waves are surging onto the beach.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pen walks into the room. She has a bowl in one hand and a cloth in the other.

Feroze is lying in the bed, sandwiched between crisp, new sheets. He has been cleaned and gauze has been put on his cuts.

Pen sits on the side of the bed and puts the cloth into the bowl. She squeezes the cloth out, which she uses to pat Feroze's forehead with.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pen walks into the living room, holding a large quilt. She spreads it out over the couch. She stands at the couch for a moment.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The storm has hit the shore and the wind is up. The windows are rattling as rain and gusts strike against them.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pen is asleep on the couch. Outside is the noise of the storm. Over it, Feroze is screaming.

Pen sits bolt upright.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pen races into the bedroom, turning on the light as she goes. Feroze is thrashing about on the bed, still screaming.

Pen rushes to the side of the bed and hovers over it.

On Feroze: still in the clutches of the night terrors.

Pen sinks to the side of the bed and grabs at Feroze's flailing arms.

PEN

It's all right. It's all right.

She grabs his hands and pulls them towards her.

PEN (CONT'D)

No one is going to hurt you.

Feroze's eyes snap open and he stares wildly at her.

INSERT: Pen's hands tighten around Feroze's.

PEN (CONT'D)

No one is going to hurt you.

On Feroze's face: uncomprehending.

PEN (CONT'D)

Go to sleep.

Feroze sinks back into the bed.

PEN (CONT'D)

It's going to be all right.
Everything's going to be all
right.

Feroze's eyes close. Pen reaches forwards with one hand, while still holding Feroze's hands with the other, and strokes Feroze's hair.

PEN (CONT'D)

Shh. Shh. Shh.

Pen's hand stops moving on the side of Feroze's head.

On Pen's face: looking down at Feroze. Then she leans forward and kisses Feroze's forehead.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE - DAY

The storm has blown over and the day is crisp and fresh.

SFX: the distant sound of Pen's phone ringing.

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Eleanor is on the phone again.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

The sunlight comes in through the pale curtains over the bedroom window.

SFX: the phone is ringing in the other room.

Eleanor puts the phone down.

ELEANOR

Fine. I can take a hint.

Pen is curled up at the foot of the bed, sunlight shining on her face. She opens her eyes and lifts her head.

PEN (CONT'D)

Wha...?

She looks over at Feroze, who is under the sheets, pulling back from her. Pen is suddenly awake.

PEN (CONT'D)

Wait. It's all right.

She reaches towards Feroze. He pulls back even further.

PEN (CONT'D)

I'm not going to hurt you.

FEROZE

Who are you?

PEN

Penelope... Pen. I'm Pen.

FEROZE

What sort of hospital is this?

PEN

No. It's my home... my husband's home.

Pen scrabbles back from Feroze as he makes his way to the side of the bed. Just as he's about to get out of the bed, he looks down.

FEROZE

I am naked.

Pen is off the bed by now.

PEN

It's all right.

FEROZE

But I am naked.

PEN

There are some clothes.

Pen goes over to the wardrobe in the room and opens it. Hanging in wardrobe is a wide collection of men's clothes. She starts making her way to the door.

PEN (CONT'D)

I'll wait out here.

Pen is at the door by now. She squeezes out of the door, closing it behind her.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen stands in the middle of the living room. She looks around for something to do, but there's nothing.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Pen is at the counter, putting the kettle on, pulling cups out of the cupboard. She stops for a moment. Her hands are shaking.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen walks into the living room with a tray of cups, sugar, milk, pots in her hands. Feroze is on the other side of the room, looking through the window. He spins to face her.

PEN

I made coffee.

She walks wide of Feroze and places the tray down on the coffee table.

PEN (CONT'D)

And tea.

On Feroze's face: watching Pen's every move.

PEN (CONT'D)

You should have something. You'll feel better.

Pen stands back and looks at Feroze. She tries to smile comfortingly.

PEN (CONT'D)

Please, sit down.

On Feroze's face: then he gives a small nod and slides onto the couch. There is an awkward face-off between the two. Pen busies herself making coffee. Feroze watches.

PEN

So. What's your name? I'm Pen... but I already told you that..

FEROZE

Where am I?

PEN

Australia. On the..

FEROZE

Are you the police?

PEN

No.

FEROZE

You have called them.

Pen pauses over the coffee things.

PEN

No.

FEROZE

Why?

PEN

I don't know.

Feroze looks at Pen for a long moment, assessing her. Eventually she looks down. Feroze's expression softens.

FEROZE

I am Feroze.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen gently leads Feroze by the arm out onto the balcony. He looks around uncertainly as Pen draws him up to the railing.

PEN

There's no one for miles.

Feroze looks out.

INSERT: the water surges onto the beach.

Feroze looks away.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Eleanor is shaking her head.

ELEANOR

One more try and then, that's it.

SFX: the phone is ringing again inside Pen's house.

Feroze is sitting at the outdoor table setting. In front of him is a tray with a bowl of porridge, tea things and so on. Pen is tucking a blanket around Feroze's knees.

FEROZE

Are you going to answer that?

Pen picks up the bowl of porridge and stirs it with the spoon.

SFX: the phone stops ringing.

Pen visibly relaxes.

Eleanor sits back into the couch.

ELEANOR

Fine, Pen. Play it your way.

FEROZE

Who is trying to call you?

PEN

It's not important.

She stirs the bowl a bit longer and then Feroze reaches forward and takes it from her.

PEN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

She sits back. Her hand fiddles with the edge of the coffee tray.

PEN (CONT'D)

What happened to you? Can I ask?
Why are you here?

FEROZE

Where else is there?

They look at one another for a moment. Feroze breaks the contact by focusing on the bowl of porridge and putting a small spoonful of the stuff in his mouth. He gags slightly and places bowl and spoon on the table. Pen leans forward.

FEROZE

No. I am fine.

PEN

Feroze... where are you from?

FEROZE

It does not matter. Somewhere you
cannot love is...

Feroze looks around for a clue. He finds it.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

... an empty house. It is just walls.

On Pen: looking at the walls around her. She turns back to Feroze.

PEN

You're here now. That's all that matters.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pen is helping Feroze back into the bed. She settles his back against the headrest and then pulls the bedclothes over him.

FEROZE

You said you had a husband.

Pen freezes in place, her hands closed over the sheet and blankets.

PEN

Yes.

FEROZE

I should meet him.

PEN

You... can't...

FEROZE

Why?

PEN (CONT'D)

He's... ah... My husband is... He's...

She wants to say it. The effort to get the words out is huge but the urge to burst into tears is equally as strong. Pen is shaking, her muscles pulling rigid with tension.

She grits her teeth, holds the tears back and grasps the bed clothes, knuckles white.

Feroze doesn't know where to look. He finds himself staring.

Pen shakes her head. It's too much. She pushes the bedclothes down onto Feroze, presses them flat with one violent sweep of her hands and leaves the room.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Pen is at the sink, washing out a cloth and compulsively wringing it under the stream of water. Feroze is standing at the door way to the kitchen, leaning weakly against the frame.

FEROZE

Are you all right?

Pen keeps at it.

PEN

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

She turns off the tap, but keeps wringing the cloth, twisting it as tightly as she can, her attention fixed entirely on it.

PEN (CONT'D)

It's just... It hasn't been very long since he... passed on. But that's no excuse. I shouldn't have... in front of a stranger... a guest. I shouldn't have... burdened you. And I... I need to be strong.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

Do you have... someone? Children?

PEN

No.

FEROZE

You don't...?

PEN

David... There wasn't time.

FEROZE

Family?

In on: Pen is twisting the cloth around her hands.

PEN

I have a sister: a younger sister... We're not... close... She's got problems of her own...

FEROZE

Is it her that's been calling?

PEN

She... wouldn't understand.

Feroze looks at Pen for a moment, wanting to tell her something. Then:

FEROZE

Everyone I ever loved - my family,
my friends - they too are all gone
now.

Pen stops wringing the cloth. She breathes, calming herself. She turns to Feroze and puts the cloth on the counter behind her. She gestures around her.

PEN

This was my husband's house. He
came here to sail. On weekends.
He loved it. He even managed to
teach me a thing or two.

Pen smiles weakly. She steps closer to Feroze.

PEN (CONT'D)

He was such a good man my husband.

FEROZE

..Yes.

PEN

He would have wanted me to look
after you.

Pen shakes her head, smiling at her own foolishness.

PEN (CONT'D)

When I found you I was...

She looks up and her gaze ranges questingly over Feroze's face. She puts her hand on Feroze's cheek. She is trembling.

PEN (CONT'D)

It's like he sent you to me.

Pen awkwardly cranes her face towards Feroze. Feroze leans his head back. Pen freezes.

PEN (CONT'D)

I was just...

FEROZE

I need to rest.

He turns away and heads back into the house.

On Pen's face as:

FEROZE (OOV - CONT'D)

I'm tired.

Pen remains unmoving, still holding up her hand.

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The front door is open and Eleanor is at it. She is pushing at someone, trying to stop them from coming into the apartment. She's a bit tipsy, but is probably playing it up more than anything else.

ELEANOR

You can't come in. Not tonight.
Go away. Go on. Go away!

She pushes hard and quickly slams the door shut. She rests her back against it and breathes heavily. She looks around the apartment.

INSERT: the photo of David.

Eleanor looks at the photo for a moment. She turns her back on it and walks into the kitchen area. She opens a cupboard below the counter and rummages around in it.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

There's got to be one left.

JUMP CUT TO: Eleanor is standing at the open fridge, looking in despondently.

JUMP CUT TO: Eleanor is at the sink. In the sink are two bottles. Eleanor has another in her hand. She is turning it upside down. It's very empty.

JUMP CUT TO: Eleanor is sitting on the floor of the kitchen, her back to the cupboard, the empty bottle held loosely in her hand. She is quietly crying her eyes out.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Pen is standing at the doorway to the bedroom, staring in at Feroze. His back is turned to her, but his eyes are open.

FEROZE

Perhaps, you should call... someone:
about me. There must be... someone.

Eleanor is on her couch, phone to her ear and looking at the photo of David.

PEN

Don't you want to stay? With me?

Feroze rolls over and looks at Pen as though she were a child.

SFX: the phone rings loudly in the living room.

Pen keeps looking at Feroze, waiting for an answer from him.

FEROZE

That will be your sister again.

Eleanor wipes the dried tears off her face.

Pen stares at Feroze for a moment. Then she goes out of the bedroom.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pen goes over to the phone and picks it up.

PEN

What?

ELEANOR

Hi.

PEN

This is a bad time.

ELEANOR

It's just... I've been thinking
about you and... I've been thinking.

PEN

Are you drunk?

ELEANOR

No.

PEN

Eleanor...

ELEANOR

All right. A little. But you won't talk to me. You don't answer the phone. I don't know what's going on with you.

Pen looks over and watches Feroze step out of the bedroom door, cross the living room.

PEN

My husband died.

Eleanor leans forward.

ELEANOR

But you didn't.

Feroze silently steps out the balcony door. The handle clicks as the door shuts behind him.

PEN

Fine. Let's talk. What's wrong?

ELEANOR

Nothing...

PEN

Come on. Every time you want to talk something's wrong.

ELEANOR

Yeah. Okay. Something is wrong. With you.

PEN

All right. This is ridiculous. Good bye.

Eleanor jolts up.

ELEANOR

No! Wait!

PEN

I said, good bye.

Pen puts the phone down.

ELEANOR

Wait! Shit!

Eleanor slumps back into the couch, the phone still to her ear.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I'm trying to tell you: David and I, we... We... It was a mistake... It was an accident. It wasn't my... it's not anyone's fault. It just... happened...

Eleanor lowers the phone from her ear.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

... oh, fuck it all!

Eleanor throws the phone across the room.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - NIGHT

Pen steps through the door onto the balcony. She stands looking forward. Feroze is at the railing, his back to Pen.

FEROZE

Your sister upset you.

PEN

She's a child and, god, I wish she'd let me be.

Feroze turns around at this.

FEROZE

Maybe He will hear your prayer.

PEN

What's that supposed to mean?

FEROZE

I had a brother, who was younger. He is dead now. And a mother and father. I had friends. Also enemies.

Feroze turns back to face the sea.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

If I too ask, perhaps God will
hear both our prayers. Though it
has been so long..

INT. ELEANOR'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eleanor goes over to her phone and opens it. She checks
that it's still working.

INSERT: the phone screen scrolling down to David's name.

Eleanor opens the message.

INSERT: David's message - good bye eleanor.

Eleanor looks at the message for a while. She presses a
button..

INSERT: DELETE MESSAGE?

Eleanor hits the button and closes the phone. She smoothes
back her hair with both hands then wipes her cheeks. She
stands.

JUMP CUT TO: Eleanor goes out the door and it shuts behind
her with a click.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - NIGHT

Eleanor is driving her car through the darkness. Her face
is pale in the wan light from the dashboard display.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD - NIGHT

Eleanor's car races away down the road as a glow of red
appears far off to one side.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

The sun is just rising behind Feroze as he kneels before
the sea, on a spread out towel.

FEROZE

Thank you for bringing me out
here. It is long overdue that I...
give thanks.

Pen is sitting off to one side of Feroze.

PEN

There's nothing to thank me for.

FEROZE

Thanks must be given.

Feroze leans forward, rests his hands on the impromptu prayer mat, about to start the prayer. He stops, his mouth open. It's like he's gagging. The thanks will not come out. Only small noises. Feroze leans back, looking sick.

Pen is disbelieving.

PEN

What... happened to you?

Feroze stare is bleak and endless.

FEROZE

There was a woman. Aisha. We were to be married. Of all the people I have known and loved, losing her was...

Feroze closes his eyes with terrible sadness.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

And yet, here I am, having fled across oceans.

Feroze drops his head and stares down at the sand in an attitude of total submission.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

I pray for the chance and the strength to join her, at last. Or for God to take all choice from me. Most of all for that.

Feroze leans forward, prostrating himself.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

I pray for a death I cannot escape.

Feroze's hands reach out past the towel. His hands close into fists, the sand squeezing out between his fingers.

Pen's eyes are wide. She can't help but watch Feroze.

A low wail emerges from him and then he is grabbing sand and pressing it against his arms, face, chest, grinding the grains into his flesh.

Pen registers that Feroze is injuring himself. She rushes up and seizes him by the arms. He fights her off. Pen grabs him again. The fight goes out of Feroze. He just looks at Pen, pleadingly and despairingly.

INSERT: the water surges against the beach.

Pen and Feroze are close to each other: so close. Feroze shakes his head.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

... no...

PEN

...please... I need you... please...

There is no fight left in either of them. They kiss. It is a kind of desperation, the grasping reaction of the living to the presence of blank, insensate death. It is the need to touch something, anything; to feel something, anything, in the face of oblivion.

Behind Pen and Feroze, the water suddenly shines with the reflected light of the sun, silhouetting their bodies.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - DAY

Eleanor is driving along in the car. The morning sun shines through the window.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Pen, eyes open, is lying inside Feroze's arms. He is spooning her. Their clothes are scattered around them.

Pen starts crying. She can't help it. At last, it has to come out.

Feroze pulls Pen tight and squeezes.

FEROZE

Shh. Shh. Shh.

Pen turns around inside Feroze's embrace. Wide eyed, body convulsed, she looks at Feroze and mouths: I'm sorry... I'm sorry. Feroze shakes his head and strokes her hair, gently, comfortingly. Then:

FEROZE (CONT'D)

Let us go inside. We can wash this sand from us.

Pen, smiling through the tears, nods, grateful.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Eleanor's car is heading along the coast towards Pen's house.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Pen is standing at the sink, staring out the window at nothing. She's dressed in a large bathrobe. Next to her the kettle is boiling away.

SFX: there is the sound of a car coming down the driveway.

Pen comes to and leans towards the window.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT - DAY

Eleanor's car pulls up out the front of the house and stops.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Pen races into the room.

PEN

Get up.

Feroze raises his head.

PEN (CONT'D)

My sister's here. You have to hide.

FEROZE

Where?

PEN

The boat shed. Hide there.

SFX: there is the sound of knocking at the front door.

PEN (CONT'D)

Go.

ELEANOR (OOV)

Pen?

PEN

Now.

INT/EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - DAY

Pen opens the front door. Eleanor is standing there.

ELEANOR

Hi.

PEN

What are you doing here?

ELEANOR

Sucker for punishment? No. I have to... uh...

PEN

What? What do you want?

ELEANOR

Can I... come in, at least?

On Pen's face: trapped.

PEN

No.

ELEANOR

Sorry?

PEN

You... can't come in.

ELEANOR

What the fuck, Penelope?

On Pen's face: nothing to say. With one hand she grasps the front of her bathrobe, pulling the sides tighter together.

Eleanor backs away from the door. She puts her hands up.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Fine. No, fine. I only wanted to talk. I only wanted to FUCKING TALK!

She goes over to her car.

JUMP CUT TO: Eleanor's car takes off down the drive. Pen watches it go. Then she closes the door.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen walks into the living room like she's in a daze. She looks up. Feroze is standing there.

PEN
You didn't hide.

Feroze shakes his head.

PEN (CONT'D)
What were you thinking? What if she'd seen you?

FEROZE
Why do you want to keep me here?

PEN
I'm trying to protect you.

FEROZE
But why?

PEN
I want to help you.

FEROZE
Why?

PEN
Isn't it enough I am helping you?

FEROZE
I do not think it is.

INT. MITCH'S OFFICE - DAY

Mitch is sitting at his desk, day-dreaming more or less.

The door clangs open and there is Eleanor. Mitch rises up out of his seat.

MITCH
Hi?

And Eleanor runs at him, crying like a child. He comes around from behind his desk. Eleanor seizes him around the waist and hangs on as tightly as she can. Mitch closes his arms around her and holds her.

MITCH (CONT'D)
What's happened? What's wrong?

Eleanor looks up at Mitch, her face is tear-streaked and she's still pretty much crying.

ELEANOR

I... I went back to the scene of the crime...

And, very tenderly:

MITCH

Funny. You silly bugger.

And he embraces her again.

PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pen and Feroze are facing one another with nothing really to say.

Pen nods.

PEN

Fine.

And she goes out the balcony door.

EXT. PIER - DAY

Eleanor, looking a bit pale, is leaning against the railing at the end of the pier. Mitch hands her a take-away cup of hot coffee. He keeps one for himself.

ELEANOR

Thanks.

She sips her coffee. Then she wipes at her eye automatically with her free hand.

MITCH

So. Have a big one last night?

ELEANOR

How did you...?

MITCH

Cop.

ELEANOR

Oh. Yeah.

MITCH

Besides it must have been the
booze made unexpectedly visiting
your sister seem like a good idea.

Eleanor's keeping mum on that point.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You could have killed someone.
You could have killed yourself,
you know.

ELEANOR

I think I was pretty all right by
the time I left.

MITCH

You'd be the one then.

There's a moment where only the distant call of seagulls
can be heard. Eleanor looks over at Mitch.

ELEANOR

I was irresponsible and I was
stupid and I'll never do it again.

MITCH

Better. So, you going to tell me
what's really going on?

Eleanor faces out towards the sea.

ELEANOR

I wouldn't worry about me. I
don't deserve it. Trust me.

MITCH

I think I'll make my own call on
that one.

Eleanor takes a big draw from her coffee, hastily,
nervously. Then:

ELEANOR

Mitch, would you sleep with me?
Please?

MITCH

Sorry?

ELEANOR

I want you to f...

MITCH

Yes, yes. I heard you. I just...
Is this something else you do with
men you've just met?

ELEANOR

No. But... I... like you a lot.

MITCH

I like you too. But that doesn't
mean we automatically jump in the
sack.

ELEANOR

I'm sorry... I need something right
now. I don't know what it is.
Sex is the closest thing I can
think of.

Mitch is looking at Eleanor. He's well and truly flapped
now. Eleanor is looking back openly and earnestly.

ELEANOR

Please?

INT. POLICE STATION, MITCH'S OFFICE - DAY

Mitch leads Eleanor into his office. Eleanor shuts the
door behind her. Mitch turns and the two seize on each
other. Eleanor cranes her head back.

ELEANOR

Wait. I want to clean up a bit
first.

INT. POLICE STATION, SHOWER - DAY

The shower room is a general use shower/washroom.

Eleanor and Mitch are naked together under the one stream,
holding tight onto each other, mouths locked.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

Pen is at the railing. The door to the balcony opens.
Feroze is stands in the doorway.

FEROZE

You should call her. She is your
sister.

PEN

Thank you.

FEROZE

How long can this last?

PEN

Until she's gone?

FEROZE

No. How long can this last?

Pen turns to face Feroze. She's about to say something. Then she shakes her head and turns back to face the sea.

INT. CELL - DAY

Eleanor and Mitch are lying on the bunk in the cell, covered in a mess of towels, blankets and sheets. Eleanor is resting her head on Mitch's chest.

ELEANOR

That was nice.

MITCH

Whatever it was.

ELEANOR

What do you mean?

MITCH

What just happened? Apart from the obvious? This is a bit of a first for me.

Eleanor glances behind her at Mitch.

ELEANOR

Really?

MITCH

No. Not like that. I've... before...
No. I mean: this... and you...

ELEANOR

Oh. Right. Yeah.

MITCH

You have no idea what you're doing. Do you?

Eleanor turns and wraps one arm around Mitch's waist. She rests her head against Mitch's chest and circles her hand on his stomach.

ELEANOR
What did you really think of
David?

MITCH
Ah.

ELEANOR
What?

MITCH
You slept with him.

ELEANOR
What?

MITCH
You slept with David.

Eleanor rolls off Mitch and starts getting out of the bunk.

MITCH (CONT'D)
I may be a country cop, but I'm
still a cop. And I knew him.

Eleanor starts looking around on the floor. Mitch is watching her. Then he puts his hand on the small of her back as:

MITCH (CONT'D)
It's not that bad.

Eleanor leans forward on her forearms.

ELEANOR
It's pretty fucking bad.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MITCH'S OFFICE - DAY

Pen is on the phone, waiting.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Eleanor and Mitch, both fully dressed, emerge into Mitch's office.

SFX: a mobile phone rings.

Eleanor fishes her phone out of her pocket. She looks at the caller ID. She turns to Mitch.

ELEANOR

Want to take this one for me?

Mitch raises an eyebrow.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Right.

PEN

Come on, El.

Eleanor has the phone to her ear.

ELEANOR

I'm here.

Feroze steps silently just inside the kitchen. Pen stares at him as she talks on the phone.

PEN

I didn't mean for what happened to go that way.

ELEANOR

Pen, there's something I need to tell you...

PEN

Okay. I'm listening.

Eleanor looks wildly over at Mitch for help he simply can't give in this instance.

ELEANOR

Ah...

Pen looks up. Feroze is standing close to her, looking directly into her face. He has a hand on Pen's elbow. Pen caves.

PEN

All right. Look. Come over.
I'll make dinner. You can tell me
then.

ELEANOR

Okay.

Feroze drifts out of the kitchen.

PEN

I'll see you at, I don't know:
seven.

ELEANOR

See you then. And... I do love you,
Pen.

Pen puts the phone down.

Eleanor stands facing Mitch.

ELEANOR

... fuck...

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

Pen walks out onto the balcony.

Feroze is at the railing.

PEN

Are you satisfied?

FEROZE

Yes.

PEN

Can you go down to the boathouse?
Please?

FEROZE

Yes.

PEN

Thank you.

EXT. TOWN, PARK - DAY

Eleanor and Mitch are sitting on a park bench watching
small town life walk past them.

MITCH

So. What makes you think he killed himself?

ELEANOR

You believe me then?

MITCH

Didn't say that.

ELEANOR

He sent me a goodbye before he did it.

MITCH

You?

ELEANOR

Yep.

MITCH

Not his wife.

ELEANOR

Don't think so.

MITCH

Stupid bastard. Had so much going for him: job, house, wife. Great boat.

ELEANOR

His mistress wasn't so crash hot.

MITCH

Is that what you were called?

ELEANOR

Guess so.

MITCH

I can see it. Him and you...

ELEANOR

It was an accident, really. We just got thrown together.

MITCH

That what you tell yourself?

ELEANOR

Sometimes...

MITCH

Believe it?

ELEANOR

No.

Mitch straightens up in the seat.

MITCH

Must be about time for you to head off.

ELEANOR

Are you angry at me?

MITCH

Not my place. Your sister will be, though.

ELEANOR

Nothing I don't deserve.

JUMP CUT TO: Eleanor and Mitch are walking away towards the car park. Eleanor puts her arm around Mitch's waist. Mitch puts his arm over Eleanor's shoulders. Eleanor pulls Mitch in tight and squeezes. He strokes her hair gently, comfortingly. He's getting something out of this too.

EXT. TOWN, PIER PARKING LOT - DAY

Eleanor is standing inside her open car door. Mitch is on the other side, close.

MITCH

You don't want me to come with you?

ELEANOR

I should do this on my own.

MITCH

If you need to, you can come back.

Eleanor looks at Mitch for a moment. Then she leans forward and kisses Mitch on the mouth: quickly but passionately.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Good luck.

Eleanor looks at Mitch for a moment then gets into her car. Mitch steps back as she closes the door. Mitch stands as the car engine starts, and as the car backs out of the parking spot...

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - DAY

Eleanor turns back to facing the front, puts the car into gear and drives away.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - DAY

Pen is laying out the cutlery for the dinner. It's a pretty showy effort for a family dinner.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - DAY

Eleanor is driving.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Eleanor's car is bloody in the light from the setting sun.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - NIGHT

The sun has set but the sky is not yet black.

Pen is standing at the balcony, looking down to one side.

PEN'S POV: And there is the boat house.

SFX: the distant sound of an approaching car can be heard.

Pen turns and heads back into the house.

INT/EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Pen opens the front door. Standing there is Eleanor.

PEN

Come in.

And, after a moment's hesitation, Eleanor does.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Pen is sitting at one end of the table. Eleanor is at the other. Each has a beautiful-looking meal in front of them, but neither is eating.

ELEANOR

Pen...

PEN

Yes?

ELEANOR

... this is... yummy...

PEN

Thanks.

Eleanor picks up her knife and fork and picks at her food. Then she clatters the cutlery onto the plate.

PEN

Is something wrong?

Eleanor closes her eyes.

ELEANOR

Pen... I slept with David.

Pen freezes.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

We... had an affair. For a couple of months. Not long before he died.

Pen's face is still, but her knuckles are white on her knife and fork.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I broke it off. And David came here. And he... I think it's my fault, Pen. I think it's my fault David's dead.

Pen is staring into the middle of the table. She gently puts her knife and fork down. She pushes back her chair. She stands. She starts walking along the length of the table. She rests a hand on the table to steady herself...

Eleanor half rises.

Pen puts her free hand up to Eleanor: stay where you are.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Pen. I'm so sorry...

PEN

No. I don't want to hear this.
I'm not... I think you should go.
Now.

ELEANOR

Pen...

PEN

No! I DO NOT WANT TO HEAR THIS!

And hands up, virtually against her ears, Pen rushes out of the room.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. JETTY - NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - NIGHT

Pen is racing across the living room. Eleanor rushes after her.

ELEANOR

Pen!

Pen turns to face Eleanor.

PEN

No! You're lying!

ELEANOR

I'm not! David...

PEN

He didn't sleep with you! He didn't kill himself because of you! He was a good man!

ELEANOR

He was a man! And this horrible grief of yours has got to stop! It's wrong!

PEN

What do you know about right and wrong? After what you've done?

ELEANOR

So, you believe me then?

PEN

You child! You stupid selfish, FUCKING child! I don't need to believe you! I KNEW! I've ALWAYS known!

Eleanor is stunned, frozen to the spot. Pen is trembling. then she bursts into uncontrollable weeping. She sinks to the ground, clutching her arms around her body.

PEN (CONT'D)

... but I mattered... he loved me and I mattered...

Eleanor takes a nervous step towards Pen.

ELEANOR

But... How did you...?

PEN

I was his WIFE!

ELEANOR

You never said anything.

PEN

That's because I'm not you.

Pen rises up and closes on Eleanor.

PEN (CONT'D)

I hate you.

And Pen slaps Eleanor across the face. It's not just the pain, but the shock of it that stuns Eleanor. Her head snaps to one side. Then she looks back at Pen.

ELEANOR

... Pen...?

PEN

You couldn't stay quiet. Had to unburden yourself. You've taken everything. Like always.

ELEANOR

Pen... I'm sorry... I'm so sorry...

PEN

Shut up, Eleanor! Just shut up!
Shut up! SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT
UP!

A part of Pen opens up that is nothing but long-repressed fury. And, as her screaming is growing louder and more shrill, she's hitting Eleanor, beating the younger sister across the face, about the ears, around the head, driving Eleanor back towards the wall of photos.

Eleanor's back hits against the wall and she collapses, hands over her head, photos tumbling down around her.

Pen stands over Eleanor, a tower of rage.

ELEANOR

... please... stop... I'm sorry... I'll be good... please don't hurt me anymore...

Pen is ashen with the enormity of what she's done, arms akimbo, hands splayed, eyes wide.

Then she rushes out the balcony door.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Pen is striding along the sand of the beach.

In the living room, Eleanor pulls herself to her feet. More photos clatter down around her.

Pen has reached the jetty. She heads towards the boat bobbing up and down in the water.

Eleanor is at the balcony, leaning heavily on the railing. She's looking towards the jetty.

ELEANOR

Pen?

Pen is at the boat loosening the mooring ropes.

Eleanor unsteadily heads down the stairs leading off the balcony.

Pen pushes at the boat and jumps aboard.

Eleanor is pacing along the sand. She holds up her hand.

ELEANOR

Pen! Stop!

The boat floats slowly away from the jetty. Pen stands atop the deck of the boat like a wraith. The moonlight shines on her hair, while the wind sifts her dress.

Eleanor runs up to the jetty, but the boat is out of reach.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Pen!

Pen looks down at Eleanor, almost beatifically.

PEN

Goodbye, Eleanor.

Eleanor's eyes go wide.

ELEANOR

Pen! Don't! I'm sorry!

But Pen and the boat are still drifting away.

Eleanor throws herself off the jetty and into the water, splashing after the boat.

There's a loose rope, dragged along behind the boat. Eleanor grabs for it, but it slips through her grip. Instead, Eleanor is left spluttering in the water.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

... Pen...

But her head slips under a wavelet.

Pen's face is ivory in the moonlight.

JUMP CUT TO: the boat has drifted further away from the shore.

EXT. OCEAN, DAVID'S BOAT - NIGHT

Pen is unfurling the sail. Feroze is standing at the entry to the cabin, watching her. She sees him.

PEN

What are you doing here?

FEROZE

There was no room in the boat house. And there is a bed...

He gestures back to the cabin.

PEN

You shouldn't be here.

FEROZE

Where are we going?

PEN

We are not going anywhere.

FEROZE

You will take me back to shore?

Pen goes back to rigging the sail.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

Will you perhaps put me back in the water where you found me then?

PEN

Just stay out of my way.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT - NIGHT

Eleanor, soaking wet, is sprinting towards her car. She pulls her keys out of her pants pocket and immediately drops them.

ELEANOR

FUCK!

Eleanor picks the keys up, jams them in the driver door lock, opens the door, leaps in the car, guns the engine.

The car tears up the drive.

EXT. OCEAN, DAVID'S BOAT - NIGHT

Pen now has the sail fully up and the wind has filled it. The boat is cutting through the water. Pen is at the wheel, facing forward. She turns her head.

PEN'S POV: The shore is a black blur with a few tiny dots of light.

Pen faces forwards again.

Feroze, somewhere out of the way, is watching her.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - NIGHT

Eleanor is driving. Her hands are tight on the wheel and she is leaning forward.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Eleanor's car rips through the darkness.

On one side of the road is a bluff overlooking the ocean. Moonlight glitters on the surface of the water.

INT. MITCH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mitch looks up from his desk as Eleanor bursts in.

MITCH

You came back...

ELEANOR

Do you have a boat? Say you do.

MITCH

Yeah. I have a boat. What...?

ELEANOR

My sister's going to kill herself.

EXT. OCEAN, DAVID'S BOAT - NIGHT

Pen is steering the boat, though she's not moving the wheel much. Feroze is watching her from the steps to the cabin.

FEROZE

Your sister: did she hurt you?

Pen keeps looking ahead into the darkness.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

Did you hurt her?

PEN

It's none of your business.

FEROZE

What are you going to do?

Pen ignores him.

FEROZE (CONT'D)

Your suffering does not make you special. Nor does your shame.

PEN

My husband...

FEROZE

Is dead. You are not.

PEN

You can talk! What about your wife?

FEROZE

We were not married.

PEN

Whatever! You can't wait to be with her!

Feroze cocks his head, perhaps genuinely curious.

FEROZE

And do you believe you will be reunited with your husband when you die? Will the purity of your love for him wash clean the sin of your self-murder?

PEN

It's not like that.

Feroze closes his eyes.

FEROZE

The water is cold - colder than you can imagine. And so deep, you think you will sink forever: in darkness and silence.

Feroze opens his eyes and looks at Pen with total serenity, total knowledge. Pen looks back defiantly. But she can't maintain it. She drops her gaze and then faces forward.

EXT. TOWN, PIER - NIGHT

A police cruise boat pulls away from the wharf and towards the open sea.

EXT. OCEAN, POLICE BOAT - NIGHT

The boat bounces along the water. It's going quickly, but nowhere near full throttle. Mitch is driving the boat. Eleanor is just behind him.

ELEANOR

She's going to where David died.

MITCH

Due west then.

EXT. OCEAN, DAVID'S BOAT - NIGHT

Pen is still sailing on. She looks up.

Feroze looks up as well.

The sky is just getting light.

EXT. OCEAN, POLICE BOAT - NIGHT

Eleanor is seated at the back of the boat. Her head is lolled forward. The boat bumps, jarring Eleanor, who opens her eyes.

ELEANOR

Wha...? How long?

MITCH

Few hours. Not long 'til dawn now.

ELEANOR

Thank you for this, Mitch.

MITCH

What else was I going to do?

EXT. OCEAN, DAVID'S BOAT - DAY

Pen has lowered the sail and the boat bobs up and down. Pen is at the rear of the boat, looking back.

The land is a low blue blur on the horizon. The sun rises up above it.

Pen's head goes back as the light hits her and she breathes in deeply.

Feroze is standing watching Pen. She opens her eyes and looks at him.

PEN

This is it.

Tears prick in Pen's eyes. But she is seized with a sudden levity.

PEN

Well, don't try and stop me.

JUMP CUT TO: Pen has the anchor cable in her hand. From one end hangs the smallish anchor - heavy, but light enough for Pen to lift. Pen circles her hands, looping the cable around them. Pen looks up at Feroze.

PEN

Nothing?

FEROZE

Only: thank you.

Waves lap against the boat. Pen steps off the boat and into the water.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

It is so quiet here. Bubbles trail out of Pen's mouth as she sinks down. And down... She breathes out the last of her air and then unwraps the anchor from her hands. She looks down. The anchor sinks away into the black.

Pen looks up. Above her, the sunlight filters through the water's surface. Pen, still looking up, closes her eyes.

EXT. OCEAN, POLICE BOAT - DAY

Eleanor leans forward, trying to see clearly.

ELEANOR

Is that her? I think that was
her. She's gone in.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Pen is floating still in the water, arms out, eyes closed,
waiting...

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The police boat is now scant metres from David's boat.

EXT. OCEAN, POLICE BOAT - DAY

Mitch cuts the engine. He takes off his shirt. And he
leaps over the side.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Pen is motionless but for how the water pushes her. She
opens her eyes and looks ahead.

PEN'S POV: A shadow in the water approaches.

EXT. OCEAN, POLICE BOAT - DAY

Eleanor is leaning on the side of the boat, looking at the
water.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The speed boat bumps against David's boat. There is a
splash and Mitch's head emerges from the water. He is
coughing.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Pen is still floating. Feroze is in front of her. He
reaches forward and takes her in his arms. Pen stares at
him. Feroze leans forward. He kisses Pen on the mouth.

Pen's eyes go wide and bubbles of air emerge from the edges of the kiss as Feroze breathes his air into her. Pen starts shaking her head, pulling away from Feroze. Feroze grasps Pen by the sides of the head and looks at her. He leans forward and kisses her again, giving her the last of his air.

Feroze takes Pen by the waist with both hands. He pushes her up towards the surface. The action pushes Feroze down towards the darkness.

Pen reaches towards Feroze, but he's already growing dim in the murk. His eyes are fixed on Pen, willing her to swim upwards.

And she does, her feet kicking her towards the light.

Feroze closes his eyes and sinks into darkness.

EXT. OCEAN, POLICE BOAT - DAY

Mitch is hanging onto the side of the boat. Eleanor is right next to him, her hand on his arm.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Pen is floating face up in the water. She is drawing in ragged, gasping breaths and, at the same time, weeping like she'll never stop.

EXT. OCEAN, POLICE BOAT - DAY

Eleanor raises her head from looking at Mitch.

ELEANOR

Can you hear that?

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Pen is still weeping, desperate, inconsolable, and shaking her head from side to side.

PEN

He's gone! He's gone! He left
me!

Then hands grasp her around the shoulders and pull.

JUMP CUT TO: The cruise boat is towing David's boat over a flat expanse of water.

EXT. OCEAN, DAVID'S BOAT - DAY

Eleanor comes out of the hatch. She has a mug of something hot in her hand. She passes Mitch at the wheel. She goes aft and there, huddled in the corner and wrapped in a blanket is Pen: bereft and devastated. Eleanor sits next to Pen and offers her the mug.

ELEANOR

Here.

But Pen can't even hear Eleanor.

Eleanor reaches forward and grasps Pen's hand. She prises Pen's fingers loose of the blanket and puts the mug in them. Pen stares into the mug. Then she looks up at Eleanor.

PEN

Why did he do it?

Eleanor looks at Pen for a moment. Then she hangs her head.

ELEANOR

I'm sorry, Pen. I'm so sorry.

Pen looks down at Eleanor, searching, desperately searching for... something. Then, like a child:

PEN

Don't leave me.

Eleanor raises her head and meets Pen's questing gaze. Eleanor takes Pen's hand and squeezes.

ELEANOR

I'm right here.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

David's sailing boat and the police boat are both moored at the jetty.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Pen is in bed. Eleanor is sitting next to her, stroking her hair. Mitch is standing at the door.

MITCH

I have to take the boat back. Do you want me to take her in to town? See a doctor? I should, you know.

PEN

... no...

Eleanor shakes her head.

ELEANOR

She's fine... with me.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mitch has the door to the balcony half open. Eleanor is facing him.

MITCH

I'll bring your car back from town.

Eleanor nods.

ELEANOR

Thanks.

Mitch goes out the door and closes it behind him.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

The sun is setting behind the police cruise boat as it glides along parallel to the beach.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights are on in the house, but that doesn't do much to the darkness around.

INT. PEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pen's eyes are closed. Eleanor is sitting, looking at Pen's face.

SFX: there is the sound of a car approaching.

Eleanor looks up. She stands and goes over to the door. Silently she opens it, slips through and closes it again. Pen's eyes open.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eleanor steps into the living room followed by Mitch.

MITCH

How is she?

ELEANOR

Asleep. At last.

MITCH

And you?

ELEANOR

I'm going to look after her. Do the right thing by her this time.

MITCH

Do you want me to leave you to it?

ELEANOR

Yeah. I kinda do.

MITCH

Okay.

ELEANOR

And Mitch...

MITCH

Yeah?

ELEANOR

Thank you. It's not enough. But, thank you.

MITCH

It'll do for now.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pen is lying on one side of the bed. She is stroking the other side slowly and gently with her hand.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, FRONT - NIGHT

Eleanor and Mitch stand in the driveway.

ELEANOR
You don't have a car.

MITCH
I'll walk.

Mitch looks back towards the house.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Before I go...

ELEANOR
Yeah?

MITCH
Two things.

ELEANOR
What?

MITCH
Get rid of that boat. It's no
good.

ELEANOR
And the second?

Mitch reaches forward and takes Eleanor in his arms. He kisses her passionately. She kisses him with equal fervour, but then, eventually and with an extreme exercise of willpower, she pushes him off her.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I can't. It feels like a reward
for bad behaviour.

MITCH
You do like me, don't you?

ELEANOR
... no...

Mitch raises an eyebrow. Eleanor looks askance at him. Then they both laugh, fondly, quietly, like old friends.

MITCH
Look after your sister. And when
things change for you, you know
where I live.

ELEANOR
You mean, when I've done my time?

MITCH
Funny.

Then they kiss again.

JUMP CUT TO: Eleanor stands in the front doorway looking out. Mitch is slowly trudging his way up the drive and away from her.

On Eleanor's face: watching him go.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pen is still, her hand resting on the otherwise empty side of the bed. Her eyes are closed. She is fast asleep. Eleanor stands at the door to the room, looking in. Slowly, Eleanor closes the door on Pen's bedroom.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE - DAY

The sun rises up over Pen's house.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Pen is sitting up in bed, resting her weight back on her arms. Her eyes are closed. She breathes in slowly. Then she opens her eyes.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eleanor is asleep on the couch. Pen, fully dressed, is crouched down in front of her, watching her sleep.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Pen is circling a cloth over the counter. The kettle boils beside her. Pen puts the cloth over the tap and turns the kettle off.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eleanor opens her eyes. She looks about.

EXT. PEN'S HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

Eleanor steps out onto the balcony. Pen is at the railing, her back to Eleanor. Between the two of them is the table setting and on it is a cup of tea.

Pen turns around. She has another cuppa in her hand. Eleanor picks up the cup from the table and sips from it. Pen sips from her own.

ELEANOR

How are you doing?

Pen shrugs.

PEN

Oh. You know...

Pen's eyes fill with tears. She smiles around them. She puts the cup down and leans on the railing. Eleanor reaches towards Pen, but can't yet bring herself to touch her.

ELEANOR

Are you... going to be all right?

Eleanor takes a deep breath.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You're not going to... do anything?

Pen looks at Eleanor. She shakes her head.

PEN

No.

ELEANOR

Are you sure?

Pen smiles the saddest smile.

PEN

Yes.

ELEANOR

What... happened, Pen?

Pen opens her mouth, but there are no words. Instead, she puts her cup on the railing and reaches out towards Eleanor.

After a moment's hesitation, Eleanor puts her own cup down and steps towards Pen. Pen draws Eleanor into a tight embrace.

Silently, the sisters hold onto one another.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Pen and Eleanor are walking down the beach. Pen is looking out at the ocean. Eleanor is looking at Pen.

ELEANOR

I thought you might want to sell
the house now. And, if you like,
I'd be happy to take care of
everything.

Pen stops and turns her head back.

PEN'S POV: The house has been left open. The wind catches the balcony door and it bangs against its frame.

PEN

Thanks. I'd appreciate that.

Pen keeps walking on.

PEN (CONT'D)

It's not like anyone lives there.

Eleanor catches up quickly.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

Pen and Eleanor have reached the jetty. David's boat bobs up and down at the jetty's end.

ELEANOR

What do you want to do about this?

Pen leaves Eleanor's side and walks down the jetty. She squats by the boat and circles her hand over its deck.

PEN

Say goodbye.

EXT. JETTY - NIGHT

The sun has just set, but the sky is still blue. David's boat is untethered, but still near the jetty. It is in full sail, but there's no one on board.

INT. PEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The wall has had all the photos removed from it. There are only the outlines of the frames left.

EXT. DAVID'S BOAT - NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. JETTY - NIGHT

The wheel has been tied on a straight course by rope. Around the wheel are all the photos of David, piled high like a pyre.

INTERCUT AS REQUIRED:

Pen and Eleanor are at the end of the jetty. Eleanor hands Pen a piece of wood with cloth tied to one end. The cloth is on fire. Pen takes the brand.

Pen turns towards the boat and throws the brand at it. The brand lands in the centre of the boat and immediately there is the burst of a kerosene fire.

The fire races across the deck and encircles the wheel and photos, creating flickering reflections in the glass of the frames.

A gust of wind sweeps up and pushes the boat further away from the shore. The wind also fans the flames.

The glass on the frames cracks and the photos blacken and curl.

Pen and Eleanor watch as the fire lights their faces. The boat drifts away.

JUMP CUT TO: the boat is a ways out now and the mast has caught alight. The sail is floating away in orange strips. Pen and Eleanor are still watching.

INSERT: the two sisters are holding hands.

Pen and Eleanor look at each other, then, out towards the boat burning brightly in the dark.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

Mitch is at the end of the pier, resting his forearms on the railing. He is looking out towards the ocean. He turns his head slightly.

MITCH'S POV: Far away a bright, glowing shape moves out further to sea.

Mitch watches.

EXT. DAVID'S BOAT - NIGHT

The name plate of the boat burns and blackens.

The mast collapses, dragging the boat down into the water.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - NIGHT

Pen is asleep in the passenger seat. Her head is resting on Eleanor's shoulder. Eleanor looks down at Pen briefly and then faces forward.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Eleanor's car drives down the road. Far ahead in the distance can be seen the lights of Perth and, over to one side, the glow of the coming dawn.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Low wavelets surge onto the sand, the sunlight glinting on the foaming edges.

A strip of burnt wood, charred and unrecognisable as what it once was, washes onto the wet sand, spins on an eddy and is dragged back out by the water.

Frothy trails swirl and are then covered by the next wave.

ENDS.