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Comprehending the anti-heroine: Scripting order amongst chaos through character archetypes

Abstract:

The objective of this article is to define the archetypal features of a television anti-heroine to aid screenwriters with the scripting of their own anti-heroine teleplay. Once this has been accomplished the article will present additional secondary character archetypes which are specific to the storyworld of the television anti-heroine. It will explore how archetypes offer ‘systems of meaning’ (Pryor & Bright 2008: 74), providing audiences a necessary entry point of comprehension. Ultimately the archetypes presented could be utilised to guide screenwriters as they work to circumvent chaos and fragmentation while crafting the journey of their anti-heroine. Much of the literature centred on archetypal paradigms is heavily influenced by Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and Christopher Vogler’s *The Writer’s Journey*. While these texts are of some use, they are inherently gender biased in favour of the hero. Therefore the vast majority of archetypes are not entirely compatible with the heroine, let alone an anti-heroine. It should be noted that the outcomes of this paper have emerged from the author’s scripting of an anti-heroine teleplay, alongside case study textual analyses. To ensure the credibility of conclusions drawn, the article will first provide a short synopsis of their teleplay, *Angela*.

Biographical note:

Levi Dean is a practice-based PhD researcher in the field of Screenwriting Studies at Bangor University. His research explores how far the television anti-heroine can be pushed morally before an audience disengages. Levi is a lecturer in Media and Screenwriting at South Gloucestershire & Stroud College (SGS), while also working as a script editor and screenwriter.

Keywords: television, anti-heroine, characterisation, archetypes, screenwriting

Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore findings discovered through the author's practice-based PhD research that comprised the scripting of an anti-heroine teleplay. The article explores how the author's initial draft of their teleplay, *Angela*, resulted in a chaotic and fragmented narrative. It argues that this was a result of the development of too many characters orbiting the storyworld. In need of guidance to aid the development and crafting of specific characters within the author's anti-heroine narrative, it became apparent that there is limited research surrounding characterisation outside the universal concept of the hero's journey. Thus the vast majority of archetypes are not entirely compatible with the heroine, let alone an anti-heroine. This, of course, should be of no surprise since western societies are in the embryonic stages of anti-heroine-led television and film screenplays. Only since 2005 have morally complex lead characters more readily begun to appear on screen – that is, characters such as Nancy Botwin (*Weeds*, Kohan 2005-2012), Jessica Jones (*Jessica Jones*, Rosenberg 2015-2019), Piper Chapman (*Orange Is the New Black*, Kohan 2013-2019), Carrie Mathison (*Homeland*, Raff 2011-2020), Sarah Linden (*The Killing*, Sud 2011-2014) and Floyd Gerhardt (*Fargo*, Hawley 2014-).

Ultimately the importance of this article is grounded in the dearth of research concerning the characterisation of the television anti-heroine as well as pertinent characters orbiting her immoral descent into the criminal underworld. The implication of this, as the article will explore, is that archetypes invite 'the psyche to enter [a] story' (Estés 2004: xxxvi). In essence archetypes offer 'systems of meaning' (Pryor & Bright 2008: 74), providing audiences a necessary entry point of comprehension. Without appropriate archetypes to provide guidance to structure a character's journey, a screenplay is easily vulnerable to becoming chaotic. Chaos indeed captures the author's own predicament. Chaos, it will be argued, manifested because there was no applicable archetypal theory available to help craft the author's anti-heroine narrative.

Therefore the objective of this article is to understand what precisely encapsulates the anti-heroine archetype and then unveil which secondary character archetypes could orbit her. The proposed archetypes will then be available to guide screenwriters as they work to circumvent chaos and encourage audience engagement when crafting the journey of their anti-heroine narrative. To ensure the credibility of conclusions drawn, the article will first provide a short synopsis of the author's teleplay, *Angela*. Before proceeding to engage with the crux of the paper, a number of definitions are also resolved. The first of these are chaos and order. This will provide the basis to formulate a theoretical description regarding the term archetype, which is a contentious area of study. Finally, while this article is centred on the author's own critical exploration of writing an anti-heroine teleplay, to bolster the credibility of conclusions drawn, case study anti-heroines will also be referenced throughout. These case study anti-heroines are Nancy Botwin (*Weeds*), Sarah Linden (*The Killing*) and Floyd

Gerhardt (*Fargo*). The justification for selecting each of these anti-heroines is grounded in their popularity among audiences, coupled with their diverse ages and criminal transgressions.

Background and context

Overview of the teleplay Angela

This exploration of character archetypes references the pilot episode of my anti-heroine teleplay, *Angela*. The story is centred around Angela Sparks, a thirty-something university graduate trying to break free from bartending so she can provide financial security and a better life for her six-year-old son, Clarence Sparks. Angela's ambitions are compromised when imprisoned Mikey Thompson, father of her son, admits that he owes drug money to a vicious inmate. Despite not having any money, Angela agrees to help Mikey one last time, but under one condition; she will not be asking her mother, Mia Jones, for money because it truly means asking Dr Eamon Jones, Angela's officious stepfather. In Eamon's eyes Angela is the root cause for all of their household disputes, whereas Angela's sister, Charlie Sparks, is the cause for all that is good within their family. Indeed, Angela is reluctant to hand Eamon any further influence over her life – he already has a large stake in it since Angela has become reliant upon him and her mother, Mia, for Clarence's childcare.

While Angela strives to no longer rely on her toxic family for childcare, she does accept an unpaid internship at *The Bristol Post*, with the long-term intention of eventually cultivating a better life for Clarence and herself. During her internship Angela quickly impresses Managing Editor Callie Turner, who invites Angela on a drive as Callie digs into Bristol's criminal underworld for a story. Meanwhile, time is running out for Mikey and Angela has made zero progress with finding the money for him. Not knowing where to turn, but recently learning of the vast amount of wealth available within the criminal underworld, Angela forges an illicit plan to cover Mikey's debt. Angela kids herself that once she covers Mikey's debt, she will be straight. However, when she learns that Eamon is bankrolling Charlie's legal case to take full custody of Clarence, Angela's hand is forced back into the criminal underworld. As her financial status spirals into chaos so does her morality and she descends deeper and deeper into the criminal underworld.

Chaos and order

The Oxford Dictionary (2019) defines *chaos* as 'complete disorder and confusion'. This article focuses on the 'confusion' aspect of the dictionary definition, particularly in relation to fictitious narratives. Conversely, *order* is defined as 'the arrangement or disposition of people or things in relation to each other according to a particular sequence, pattern, or method' (Oxford Dictionary 2019). For this article, which is specific to screenwriting, order entails a

definition beyond the typical understanding of assimilating story events into a cohesive and climactic order. Notably, order will also denote the development and intrinsic motivations of specific character archetypes that generate narrative events which resonate with viewers. In short, this article will reveal that structuring narrative events will not suffice to circumvent audience confusion. Events must be entwined with archetypal imagery as points of comprehension to offer audiences relatable stimulus to grip onto (Faber & Mayer 2009; Vogler 2007).

Scripting order amongst chaos through character archetypes

Archetypes as a key pillar for narrative order

After a live reading of the teleplay, it became clear that Angela had too many characters orbiting her, resulting in a plethora of plotlines, which took away from the narrative focus of her character arc [1]. As a consequence, chaos materialised early on in the narrative. This is problematic given order is of paramount importance for viewers at this time since their engagement with the anti-heroine is at its most delicate. To subvert chaos and render narrative order, I began to conduct research into characterisation, hoping to uncover some useful writing tools. However, as Berry and Brown point out, Aristotle's prioritisation of plot has led to it dominating 'much literary theory during the last two millennia' (Berry & Brown 2017: 288). Indeed the breadth of research on creative insights pertaining to characterisation is much more limited, particularly regarding the development of female characters. The text which became the starting point to help cultivate order among the characters orbiting Angela was Carl Jung's *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1968). Jung believed that people have a set of universal collective ideas and memories. This concept, which he termed *archetypes*, is unconscious to individuals and permeates through characters and themes in our dreams. He supported his claims by referring to similar characters and themes that emerge across different cultures through myths, books and films. He also maintained that people suffer from repressed inner conflicts that can be resolved when the individual looks within themselves (Jung 1968). In turning inwards they are presented with archetypal characters, spirits or objects that they either face in conflict or find support from along their journey.

Jung's theory influenced Joseph Campbell's (2004) archetypal framework of the Monomyth, which has been specifically adapted for filmic storytelling by Christopher Vogler (2007) in his book, *The Writer's Journey*. Since then there has been a selection of alternative archetypal frameworks published (Macdonald 2013). Helen Jacey, screenwriter and author of *The Woman in the Story*, promotes the importance of archetypes in stating that 'archetypal systems, including Campbell's work, are potentially very useful for character development in that they can stimulate decisions about character functions' (Jacey 2010: 321). For this research, archetypal theory became vital in shaping the structure of my anti-heroine's journey.

Archetypes are typically presented in categories such as mentor, healer, mother, antagonist and shapeshifter. These general categories denote specific characteristics that an archetype encompasses (Faber & Mayer 2009; Jacey 2010). Yet even though Jung (1968) claimed that archetypes are generally biologically fixed, today this notion is debated. While archetypes are concrete in the cultural epoch in which they exist, they are not biologically fixed, thus the gender bias that exists must be acknowledged (Faber & Mayer 2009; Jacey 2010; Murdock 1990). Jung's stance that archetypes are biological ignores the overwhelming evidence that societal structures have long been biased in favour of men. Murdock explains that

[f]or the last five thousand years culture has been largely defined by men who have had a production-oriented, power-over, dominating approach to life... Our notions of wisdom, justice, regularity and endurance were man-based, man-oriented, and man-regulated. (Murdock 1990: 79-80)

The influence of Jung's theory is observable by the fact that the majority of archetypal frameworks have been, to some degree, built on his literature and, as a consequence, are inherently biased towards men. It is plausible that Jung, in his time, miscalculated man's influence on shaping societal values and beliefs on gender. Nevertheless, as Jacey (2010) and Valerie Frankel (2010) suggest, many archetypal frameworks are incompatible with women's stories. Jacey specifically states, 'women's motherhood role ... does not fit easily into a pattern in which the human need for intimacy, affiliation and collectivity is relegated to the individual quest' (Jacey 2010: 313). Without a clear female-centric archetypal system available to aid in the writing of *Angela*, the question arose: which archetypes should support the anti-heroine's journey and what gives rise to their formation? To answer these questions, a specific definition first needs to be reached concerning the archetype.

Defining the archetype

Michael Faber and John Mayer (2009) promote an updated definition of the archetype termed neo-archetype. This definition denotes that archetypes are centred on five key characteristics:

1. They are story characters.
2. They embody psychological mental models akin to other schemas – in essence, they have been learned.
3. They 'elicit intense emotional responses when encountered' (Faber & Mayer 2009: 308).
4. They work at an unconscious and automatic level.
5. They are culturally recognisable.

Faber and Mayer further expand on the neo-archetype definition 'as learned conceptualisations as opposed to being predisposed through evolutionary history' (2009: 309). Notably, this learned cultural recognition of an archetype explains how cultural

influences have led to women being associated with ‘weakness’ and ‘emotionality’ (Murdock 1990; Jacey 2010; Frankel 2010), which Margaret Tally argues has limited ‘the range of understanding by which we might usefully begin to identify female anti-heroines’ (Tally 2016: 7). This is why Alyssa Rosenberg (2013) and Jacey (2010) recommend, at least implicitly, that we build our own archetypal systems. Furthermore, Robin Matthews (2002) and Faber and Mayer (2009) note it is generally understood that archetypes evolve and, therefore, as our current culture continues to expose gender inequalities, female archetypes, too, are evolving within this cultural shift.

Archetypes as systems of comprehension

The importance of developing relevant character archetypes is articulated by Clarissa Estés, who states that archetypes invite ‘the psyche to enter the story’ (Estés 2004: xxxvi) as they offer ‘systems of meaning’ (Pryor & Bright 2008: 74). As our culture shifts and evolves, these systems of meaning become even more important to ensure narrative order. Robert Pryor and Jim Bright discuss how it is innate for humans to try to ‘comprehend their world and themselves’ (Pryor & Bright 2008: 72). Norman Amundson (2003) adds that people will always look for patterns and narratives to disclose fundamental structures for interpreting human experience. Ed Tan emphasises the importance of these patterns, which act as narrative stimulus and in turn, aid audience understanding of the storyworld, assuring them further comprehension ‘at a later stage’ (Tan 2011: 86). This comprehension encourages viewers to continue to engage with a narrative.

It should be noted that stimulus denotes a point, or points, of understanding and familiarity within a narrative to prevent confusion or disorientation. For an audience to comprehend and engage with a narrative, there needs to be a lucid point of entry to generate meaning and understanding. At this entry point the true significance of archetypes can be discerned because they function as recognisable narrative stimulus, providing a layer of meaning for viewers. As Jordan Peterson states, ‘we need to know what things are ... to keep track of what they mean – to understand what they signify...’ (Peterson 1999: 3). Peterson is alluding to people having an innate need to make sense of the world they inhabit, which is also true of film and television viewers concerning a particular storyworld. In the case of a pilot episode, or at the beginning of a film, there is much the audience does not know, but archetypes are loaded with subtle, recognisable information that encourages viewers to engage with the narrative (Jung 1968; Estés 2004; Berry & Brown 2017). The audience identifies with particular characters who embody traits that personally resonate. In turn the audience can comprehend the narrative direction and interplay between characters. Of course, as Tan (2011) reminds us, it is only at the end of a narrative that the audience will know if the goods have been delivered.

Archetypes should not only be spoken of in terms of the audience, as they also provide guidance for the screenwriter (Jacey 2010). Particular archetypes organically fuse together,

for example the hero and sidekick, to support screenwriters to ensure each character they develop is adding value to the narrative journey of the protagonist. The result is a cohesive character-driven screenplay that avoids chaos and audience disorientation.

Having now established the definition and importance of archetypes I will explore the encompassing structure of the anti-heroine archetype and the secondary character archetypes orbiting her journey.

Anti-heroine as an archetype

Murdock stated long ago that ‘so many women having taken the hero’s journey, only to find it personally empty’ (1990: 10) and have followed this model because no alternative paradigms exist to emulate. Murdock continues to posit that ‘the path of the heroine is not easy; it has no well-defined guideposts or recognizable tour guides’ (3). The heroine will typically define herself in terms of what she does not have or has not accomplished. This is the result of a patriarchal structure that upholds values centred on individual recognition and achievement (Murdock 1990; Jacey 2010). As a consequence women may repress their femininity and instead masquerade characteristics associated with masculinity as a means of achieving societal status and recognition (Irigaray 1985; Butler 1990; Jacey 2010). Often women who embrace male behavioural traits and clothes signal clout and authority. However, when men embrace femaleness, they are often perceived as weak and inferior (Murdock 1990). Murdock believes this is highly problematic because, fundamentally, ‘women will never be men, and many women who are trying to be “as good as men” are injuring their feminine nature’ (1990: 14).

Western society is now at a time where, as discussed, culture is evolving and femininity is perceived more positively. Recognising this shift and developing an anti-heroine who grapples with this identity crisis, instead of simply embracing masculine traits, is vital for encouraging audience engagement (Murdock 1990; Jacey 2010). Understanding and exploring precisely what encompasses an anti-heroine’s identity crisis was a challenge during the initial drafts of *Angela*. To resolve this challenge, and ultimately craft Angela into a more nuanced character, Estés’ principles surrounding an identity crisis were advanced. Estés teaches that one must look inwards to ‘find the resources of a richer interior life – one that can also inform outer life’ (Estés 2004: lxi). This understanding was then explicated through the application of Jung’s shadow. Jung (1968) describes the shadow as either an internal or external archetype, who embodies both light and dark aspects. Jung’s internal archetype can be extended through John Truby’s (2007) classification ‘ghost of the past’. This is the hero/ine’s inner, psychological wound which is the source of their weakness (Truby 2007). In the typical hero/ine’s journey, viewers are presented with an external shadow which attacks the hero/ine’s internal shadow.

During the scripting of *Angela*, initial drafts failed to explore the internal shadow. Instead a number of external antagonists were developed with the hope of guiding the viewer to excuse the immoral character arc that Angela was journeying on. It soon became apparent that the narrative had become bloated and chaotic with too many external antagonists physically and psychologically attacking Angela, thus inhibiting her character arc. On reflection, it was discovered that the focus needed to be on Angela's internal shadow as the main antagonist for a sense of order to be rendered. While there may be an external antagonist or two, above all else, Angela is her own worst enemy. Her internal shadow is herself, which attacks her own inner wound. Again, this is congruent with Estés (2004) who states that one must look inwards. Jung eloquently captures the essence of this journey inwards by describing how one's internal shadow may begin to appear:

whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the *persona*, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face. (1968: 20)

Angela's mask to the world signifies independence, ambition, resilience and intelligence. The masquerading of these characteristics has been, to a large extent, the influence of culture – the need to be more than oneself in order to be revered (Murdock 1990; Jacey 2010). For Angela to remove the mask and confront her true self would cause chaos for her. Though, ironically, this masquerade is an important point of comprehension for the audience, which initial drafts of *Angela* failed to effectively capture.

In subsequent drafts, to set up a believable dichotomy between Angela and her internal wound, Angela's ghost of the past was scripted to centre on her allowing her stepbrother, Hugh Jones, to drown. As a young girl Angela allowed Hugh to drown because of the torment she endured on a daily basis from him and her stepfather. Angela was always second best to Hugh, never receiving the love and respect from her stepfather that she so craved. In young Angela's eyes, she saw the only advantage that Hugh had over her was that he was a boy. This, combined with cultural cues portraying femininity as second to masculinity, confused and infuriated her. Consequently, this amalgamation of cultural teachings and Angela's ghost of the past marks her as her own worst enemy. In particular, her wilfulness to repress her childhood memory of Hugh drowning often spills into her life, perpetually haunting her. Equally, the culture Angela was moulded in, western society, failed to acknowledge individual and external achievements that celebrate the feminine (Estés 2008; Jacey 2010; Murdock 1990). Incidentally, Angela's innate desire for respect and recognition, and failure to obtain it, tragically leads her child-self to allow Hugh to drown.

Now, as an adult, Angela refuses to look at her reflection in the mirror, too fearful to peel away her mask and see her true self. Angela's path and actions are heavily influenced, not by

her innate personality, but by the cultural teachings that surrounded her as a child. This entire setup acts as a point of comprehension for the audience. We are taught to strive for personal success and consequently, at times, act out immorally to achieve what society deems successful. For the anti-heroine, this is important as it fosters an audience understanding that her journey towards moral bankruptcy is heavily entangled with cultural teachings. Audiences can resonate with the anti-heroine because they recognise in themselves, or people they know, the suffering that exists when one strives for personal success, naively believing it will lead to a sense of wholeness. The anti-heroine, as an archetypal figure, is characteristically personified by suffering at the hands of her culture. This point of comprehension for the audience provides order for them as they grasp that, in part, the anti-heroine, like them, is searching for wholeness and meaning, although the anti-heroine ignores her own moral compass and tends to solely rely on cultural teachings, thus committing to a journey of self-destruction.

Defining the anti-heroine archetype

To summarise, the anti-heroine embodies four characteristics that are key to defining her as an archetype:

1. She grapples with an identity crisis, repressing her femininity.
2. She wrestles with her intrinsic motivation for personal success.
3. Her main shadow is her internal shadow.
4. She ignores her moral compass and relies solely on cultural teachings.

The anti-heroine grapples with an identity crisis, as she represses her femininity in order to fully embrace and be associated with masculine norms. This is because, in her own mind, by embracing masculine characteristics she can achieve status and recognition. However, this dichotomy leads to her not fitting into any traditional masculine or feminine roles. The anti-heroine wrestles with her intrinsic motivation for personal success, as encouraged by society, while also fulfilling the cultural expectation that a woman is mainly responsible for the raising of their offspring. Her main shadow is her internal shadow, resulting in her continuously attacking her own inner wound. The anti-heroine, unlike the heroine, refuses to acknowledge and face her true self and therefore does not experience a revelation about her past or regarding her misplaced cultural beliefs. It is this refusal to look inwards and experience a revelation that tragically results in the anti-heroine journeying into a morally ambiguous path. This is unlike the heroine who looks inwards and experiences a revelation, enabling her to heal her wound and take a moral path. A direct upshot of the previous criteria, the anti-heroine, while searching for wholeness and meaning, refuses to follow her moral compass and solely relies on cultural teachings, consequently leading herself into self-destruction.

It is important to note that the above criteria described are present to varying degrees in each of the case study anti-heroine shows that I have textually analysed. Nancy Botwin, Sarah Linden and Floyd Gerhardt are all single mothers and they wrestle with what Murdock (1990) describes as the male model of success. In contrast to supporting female characters orbiting their storyworld, Nancy Botwin, Sarah Linden and Floyd Gerhardt exist in a liminal space, unable to identify with purely masculine or feminine roles as they are left to bear the burden of being the breadwinner and raising their children alone. Ultimately these anti-heroines fail to come to terms with their deep wounds and remain blind to their misguided cultural beliefs. Tragically, their stories arrive at a point of no return. I argue that as a viewer, we can make sense of their chaotic journeys, to some extent, through these specific elements that comprise the anti-heroine archetype.

Secondary character archetypes

To date, the literature unequivocally focuses on the anti-heroine, omitting any exploration of secondary characters orbiting her journey. Naturally, when drafting earlier versions of the teleplay, the scarcity of literature influenced creative decision-making, leading to the neglect of appropriate secondary characters. Applying archetypal theory only to the anti-heroine is not adequate for rendering a sense of narrative order; pertinent archetypal secondary characters are necessary to support the anti-heroine on her journey. As Jacey states, a female protagonist endorses audience engagement alongside ‘a number of supporting female characters’ (Jacey 2017: 206). The anti-heroine works collectively with particular secondary character archetypes to afford further points of comprehension that enable the audience to make sense of the chaos the anti-heroine is experiencing. What characteristically encompasses these supporting characters was initially nebulous. It was only after reflection concerning my creative development, combined with gender and archetypal theory, that three secondary archetypes were revealed. These three supporting archetypes, pertinent to the anti-heroine, are the *mother*, *father* and *mentor*.

I should note that crossovers could be identified concerning the secondary character archetypes presented since certain elements are also specific to the heroine’s journey. This is indeed correct, however, what differentiates the anti-heroine from the heroine is her interaction with these archetypal categories. It could also be said that the plethora of secondary characters could be credited as an issue centred on plot. It is therefore important that I differentiate characterisation and plot, while also defining the relationship between the two components.

Characterisation versus plot

Generally speaking characterisation denotes the traits and backstory of a given character (McKee 1999; Truby 2007). Indeed the definition of characterisation is broad and fluid, but it

is reasonable to conclude that it is centred around the human qualities of a character that will, in some form, be explored throughout a story. In light of this understanding, if the characterisation of a character has been well drawn out then the character should organically drive the events of the story, rendering the action meaningful and purposeful (Batty 2015), thus resonating with viewers.

Plot, however, is specifically concerned with the sequencing of events or, in other words, the action that unfolds. It could be deduced that my own issues concerning *Angela*, that is, the development of too many characters, was centred on the deficiency of my sequencing of events (plot). I argue this inference would be inaccurate since it was the characterisation of my characters that informed the plot of *Angela* and therefore influenced the sequencing of events.

Notably, during my initial attempt to develop an anti-heroine that was relatable, memorable and uniquely engaging, I drew inspiration from my lived experiences. Human beings are indeed shaped by an unfathomable number of people. Therefore, when aiming to craft an authentic representation of a character – in my case *Angela* – drawing from lived experience can result in the development of a plethora of secondary characters. However, there is simply not enough space to explore countless characters in a two-hour film or one-hour television episode. This is why archetypes, particularly secondary archetypes, are significant. They afford guidance concerning decisions about which characters should be present within a storyworld through criteria specific to their characterisation. The upshot of this is that archetypes can help render narrative order grounded in characterisation, which then informs the organic development of plot.

The mother archetype

In the original drafts *Angela's* mother, Mia, was exhibited as weak and submissive, deficient of a nurturing and maternal instinct. Her backstory revealed that her first husband, *Angela's* father, had died when her two children, *Angela* and *Charlie*, were very young. Mia did not want to cope with the burden of raising and providing for her two children so she quickly found a new, wealthy partner, Dr Eamon Jones. Eamon, however, treated *Angela* poorly, ostracising her and constantly favouring his own child, *Hugh Jones*. Mia was submissive to his behaviour so she could selfishly experience financial security, eventually leading *Angela*, as an adult, to resent her mother and in particular, her mother's inability to nurture her. My original intention was to slowly reveal that *Angela* had suffered during her childhood, at the hands of a selfish, narcissistic mother, to subtly encourage audience sympathy for her. However, the feedback I received was that this interplay between mother and daughter was underdeveloped and lacked complexity. It became clear that Mia, as a mother figure, needed to be more than a simple narrative function for eliciting sympathy. Mia's backstory and character traits required further development. In need of creative guidance, I referred to

Murdock (1990) and Jacey (2010), who suggest that the successful character arc of a heroine's journey should be entwined with the rejection of the mother archetype.

To expand upon this concept, Jacey states that the heroine symbolises 'a metaphoric journey that articulates the difficult process of psychological separation from the mother that the girl attempts but never quite succeeds' (Jacey 2010: 315). Jung himself hinted at this too, stating 'that in the daughter a mother-complex either unduly stimulates or else inhibits the feminine instinct' (Jung 1968: 86). Murdock explores this further, as she attributes the daughter's rejection of her mother when she learns from her mother that to be female can equate to being powerless. Murdock states:

A young girl looks to her mother for clues as to what it means to be a woman, and if the mother is powerless the daughter feels humiliated about being female. In her desire not to be anything like her mother, she may strive for power at the expense of others' needs. (Murdock 1990: 19)

In this sense, the heroine learns as a child that being a woman might mean one will struggle to acquire individual agency. The ability to evolve intellectually and pursue a rewarding career that could offer financial independence is seemingly an uphill battle for a woman (Butler 1990; Murdock 1990; Jacey 2010). The daughter realises this and in her own mind becomes intent on not becoming powerless like her mother. As Murdock adds, 'the heroine's reaction to a mother's total dependence on husband' is to be 'more self-sufficient than any man' (Murdock 1990: 66). The heroine feels she needs to overcompensate and will do her utmost to dissociate herself from traditional roles attributed to women, such as caregiving (Murdock 1990). As Murdock points out, which is still true today, '[m]ale norms have become the social standard for leadership, personal autonomy, and success in this culture' (Murdock 1990: 29). Therefore the heroine 'may go through a period of rejection of all feminine qualities distorted by the cultural lens as inferior, passive, dependent, seductive, manipulative, and powerless' (14).

At this point it could be argued that Murdock's work is outdated and western civilisation today is more progressive, though Jacey (2010) maintains that, whilst she does not subscribe to everything Murdock posits, Murdock's work is still relevant and that Murdock's text is pertinent for contemporary writers, even influencing her own work. She states that Murdock's work 'allows more recognition of the reciprocal nature of relationships and affective bonds' (Jacey 2010: 315).

Of course, Murdock and Jacey's critical and creative work is specifically for the heroine's journey who is on the path to recognise and engage in reciprocal relationships outside of personal gain. The heroine is able to evolve along this path with the help of her mother who, despite her own weaknesses, helps her daughter to see that rejecting all things feminine is not the answer to achieving a sense of wholeness (Murdock 1990; Jacey 2010). Conversely, the

anti-heroine has a much harder time accepting her mother as a mentor. She lacks empathy for her mother's situation and continues to embark on a criminal path as she strives for personal success. In other words, the heroine learns to embrace her femininity, fusing it with masculinity, and therefore cultivating a wholesome life. She becomes a stronger person, far better equipped to navigate the world and maintain meaningful relationships because she is secure in herself. Conversely, the anti-heroine, in trying to individuate herself as strong and successful in navigating the world she inhabits, fails to do so because she refuses to learn from her mother and embrace her femininity.

With these new insights to hand, Angela's mother was re-written as a more nuanced character. After the sudden passing of her first husband, instead of jumping at the next man who could take care of her, she secured a position as a nurse. This naturally led to further development of Eamon since Mia was no longer drawn to him solely for financial security. Eamon became more likable and while he still put his son Hugh ahead of Mia's children, this was not motivated by an inherent evilness, but instead a deep love for his biological child. In light of this, Eamon's actions as a father figure were not that abhorrent, which only increases the burden on Angela for allowing Hugh to drown. Yet Angela cannot accept this, and despite her mother showing strength of character, she despises her for allowing Eamon and Hugh into her life, subconsciously blaming Mia for her own actions against Hugh. Ultimately, Angela rejects her mother as she pursues individual success. This blinds her from building flourishing relationships that are also necessary for a balanced life (Murdock 1990; Jacey 2010).

In reference to the case studies, the mother archetype can be discerned in *The Killing*. Sarah Linden is warned by her foster mother, Regi Darnell, that her obsession with detective work is sabotaging her relationship with her fiancé. The pilot episode pays attention to Sarah's personal relationships as it builds towards Sarah and her family starting a new life in California. However, Sarah rejects her foster mother's advice and decides to stay in Seattle. Sarah cannot bring herself to give up her personal autonomy and financial independence which she fought hard to earn, particularly as a woman working in the police force. When examining *Fargo* and *Weeds*, Floyd Gerhardt and Nancy Botwin's mothers are not present in their lives. These characters embrace a male model of success and struggle to develop loving relationships with those close to them, rebuffing the mother-like characters trying to guide them.

In summary, the mother archetype nurtures the anti-heroine as she would the heroine, only the anti-heroine rejects her mother's mentorship of how to navigate the muddy waters of masculinity versus femininity. The anti-heroine, who largely identifies with the males in her life, cannot respect her mother's guidance. As a result, the anti-heroine fails to develop compassionate and caring relationships with the people who are most important to her. The anti-heroine's engagement with the mother archetype acts as a point of comprehension for the audience. This is because the audience understands, through lived experience, how easy it is

to fall into the myths perpetuated by cultural gender norms – particularly when women are intrinsically motivated to overcompensate, having been denied equality throughout history and even today (Butler 1990; Murdock 1990).

The father archetype

The mother archetype cannot be fully exploited without the inclusion of the father archetype. In combating cultural biases towards female gender, according to Murdock (1990), the heroine can avoid viewing herself as powerless and inferior by receiving her father's approval and encouragement from a young age. In turn, this results in 'positive ego development' (31) because the father has the power to define 'the feminine' (Murdock 1990: 29). In this sense, a young girl is more likely to accept herself since she has confidence in the world accepting her. The relationship she has with her father, or a significant male figure, has a critical influence on whether she develops a positive relationship with her masculine nature (Murdock 1990). Murdock further adds that a positive relationship with the father leads to the development of 'an inner masculine figure who likes them just as they are' (Murdock 1990: 31).

Originally I developed Angela's backstory in which her biological father was a loving family man and successful lawyer. Angela endured a positive relationship with him throughout her early years and missed him dearly after his death. The intention was to infer to the viewer that because Angela lost her father, she began to 'go off the rails'. However, in adhering to Murdock's concept, a healthy relationship with her father would have encouraged Angela to value femininity and have more confidence in the world accepting her. Subsequently, I revised the role her biological father played in her life, making him the binary opposite to his original characterisation. As a child, Angela failed to gain her father's approval and support. He would often mock and make Angela feel ashamed of herself, failing to pay attention to her interests and ultimately form a bond with her. Unhappy in his relationship with Mia, Angela's father would often avoid staying at home and instead spend his free time at the local pub. Both Angela's biological father and stepfather failed to support Angela in the nurturing of a positive ego. As Murdock states, the implication of a girl having a negative father figure is that '[w]omen whose fathers did not support their ideas and dreams for the future or who gave them the impression that they lacked the ability to carry them out meander through life and may *back into* success' (Murdock 1990: 32).

For the heroine who faces rejection and a lack of support from her father, she will need to learn that the root of her unhappiness is her desire to please her internalised father figure (Murdock 1990). She is burdened by this inner father figure who provides negative guidance, yet in her journey she will come to realise her mother is the one to seek direction from. In this case, the father figure is a wedge between mother and daughter, relentlessly breaking them apart every time they reach touching distance. The difference for the anti-heroine here is that she consistently fails to recognise that her inner father figure does not have her best interests

at heart. Despite the damage this inner father figure causes her, she continues to strive for his approval, unable to seek guidance from her mother.

Unlike the mother archetype the father figure does not need to be a physical being. It is his treatment towards the anti-heroine, during her childhood, that helps steer her journey into the criminal underworld. In revising Angela's backstory and, more specifically, the relationship with her fathers, it became plausible as to why she allowed Hugh to drown. Her biological father, whom she had long been trying to seek approval from, is a key figure internally, and then to have her stepfather and stepbrother also belittling her, fuels her confused, rejected and angry mind. As Faber and Mayer (2009) discuss, archetypes help one make sense of ambiguity, which I argue is also true for the film and television viewer. For Angela, the father archetype promotes a further point of comprehension for viewers to fathom why, in some sense, she allowed Hugh to drown. This is because he is an invisible, tormenting shadow that ghosts Angela throughout her adulthood. As a consequence, she rejects her mother and continues to strive for her inner father's approval. In turn, further understanding is offered as to why the anti-heroine intrinsically rejects her mother, given viewers themselves have been exposed to a society which values the masculine over the feminine (Murdock 1990; Jacey 2010).

Still, it could be questioned as to why I have drawn this conclusion that a father figure does not necessarily need to be a 'physical being' since Angela's stepfather is in fact present throughout the pilot episode. When examining the case study anti-heroine narratives, neither Nancy Botwin, Sarah Linden or Floyd Gerhardt's fathers are physically present in each respective story. Simply put there exists creative freedom to explore the anti-heroine's relationship with her father figure without him being physically present in any screen time – that is, narratively speaking. When considering Angela, it is her stepfather who orbits her storyworld directly and not her biological father. Though it is her biological father who is at the centre of her wound and he is not physically present, which indeed mirrors the narrative setup of the aforementioned case study anti-heroines.

Mentor archetype

In the original drafts of *Angela* she was striving to become an outstanding MMA coach, an accountant and a loving mother, while simultaneously overcoming a serious drug addiction. Authentically exploring Angela in each of these domains led to the development of a number of characters and, more specifically, a copious number of mentors. During a live reading it came to light that each of these secondary characters were actually impeding Angela's character arc. Each mentor was fighting for Angela's attention to nurture her evolution. Naturally this led to a chaotic narrative that lacked both direction and believability, leaving no space to explore in any depth Angela's involvement in each domain.

At this point the decision as to what Angela's specific expertise should be was put on hold until a better understanding of the anti-heroine archetype was established. Logically a defined anti-heroine archetype could provide clues as to how to craft Angela's character arc and, in turn, relevant secondary characters. In practice this decision successfully played out. The definition of the anti-heroine archetype organically led to the development of the mother and father archetype, which then subsequently gave rise to the discovery of the mentor archetype.

Murdock (1990) states that for the heroine to contemplate healing the split with her mother, she requires an appropriate mentor. Murdock adds the heroine will search for a woman 'with whom she can identify' (26) which may perhaps be 'an older childless woman who has played by team rules and successfully made her way to the top' (Murdock 1990: 37). This ties in with Jacey, who adds that supporting female characters 'can open up perspectives that can still feel fresh and original and push the boundaries of the genre' (Jacey 2017: 206). The mentor archetype acts as yet another point of comprehension for the audience because they can relate to the positive influence a strong female can have on a particular individual. For me, exploring the mentor archetype led to the development of Callie Turner.

Callie is an experienced journalist with deep and personal knowledge of the drug world. Callie sees potential in Angela and aims to encourage her to be on the 'right' side of the law. Moreover Callie, once like Angela, overcame her identity crisis and is comfortable with the blend of masculine and feminine characteristics that she embodies. She does not reject her femininity to make room for the embodiment of pure masculinity. Callie also, as one of Murdock's (1990) recommendations, does not have children, which is a personal regret for her. This is a motivating factor for why Callie wants to try and help Angela value her relationship with Clarence. Angela distinguishes Callie as somebody who signifies strength and success unlike her own mother and is hence receptive to Callie's mentorship. Callie, as the mentor archetype, becomes a bridge that is built over the father archetype, offering Angela a path to reconnect with her mother if she chooses. Regrettably for Angela, her lust for power and refusal to meet with her true self result in her not walking across this bridge.

Callie provides the audience a further point of comprehension as she, unwittingly, offers the guidance Angela needs to navigate the criminal underworld. Just before the midpoint of the pilot episode Angela meets Callie Turner for the first time when she interviews for a journalist role at Callie's newspaper. Angela does not acquire the advertised position, but Callie is impressed by Angela's excellent communicative skills and intelligence and offers her an internship. As Callie mentors Angela about crime reporting in Bristol, Angela soon learns the ropes of this criminal underworld. Then due to a set of unjust circumstances, coupled with financial pressures, Angela evolves into a criminal herself. This is the beginning of Angela's path of immorality which Callie continually tries to steer her away from. Sadly, Angela continues to use the knowledge and skills passed on from Callie to aid her in her criminal career.

Admittedly there are a number of correlations concerning the mentor archetype's relationship between anti-heroine and heroine. That said, a key distinction when specifically unpacking an anti-heroine narrative is that the mentor archetype is orientated in a position directly connected to the criminal underworld which the anti-heroine will ultimately enter. The mentor will sometimes unknowingly guide the anti-heroine to acquire knowledge and skills pertinent to her succeeding in her criminal field. Notably, this is a fresh and original approach to crafting the interplay between mentor and anti-heroine. However, the credibility of this specific archetype characterisation could be in question given that I have not provided any textual reference centred on the relationship between mentor and anti-heroine. In short, archetypal theory is fluid, which I will explore in the next section and, in turn, implicitly validate my discussion of the characterisation and relationship between mentor and anti-heroine.

The fluidity of archetypes

The archetypes that I have presented are not set in stone. Raya A Jones eloquently puts forth the analogy that archetypes are similar to a 'painter's set of primary colours, which can be used to create an infinite number of different pictures' (Jones 2003: 623). The characteristics I have put forth concerning each archetypal category are, in this sense, red, yellow and blue. How a writer decides to source, blend and filter these colours into the narrative will be at their own discretion.

It could be argued that by the time I have submitted this research article, due to shifts in culture, some of these archetypes may be slightly outdated. This is not to be denied. Archetypes are culturally entwined, and creative practitioners need to pay attention to cultural shifts in terms of values and beliefs (Roesler 2006). That said, I suspect that the archetypal categories I have presented will still be relevant for some time. If this is inaccurate, screenwriters will need to identify and reflect upon their own culture to reveal how archetypes orbiting the anti-heroine will be characterised to act as points of comprehension, based on concurrent cultural values.

Conclusion and future research

As Peterson (1999) argues, people have an innate need to make sense of the world around them. This has also been shown to hold true for audiences engaging with television storytelling, as found in the writing of *Angela* during the application of archetypal research. It is evident that developing a narrative centred around an anti-heroine figure, which audiences can make sense of, is an emerging area of research. The anti-heroine has long been ostracised from film and television screens and on those rare moments in which she has appeared, she

defies the gender expectations that have been perpetuated by the patriarchal structure (Buonanno 2017).

Due to the fact that the anti-heroine largely opposes gender and cultural expectations, character archetypes are particularly important for achieving narrative cohesion and assisting the audience to elicit meaning throughout her journey. With few archetypal models existing for the heroine's journey, let alone an anti-heroine's, the aim of this article was to define and present an anti-heroine archetype as well as several secondary character archetypes that could help guide her journey and achieve order in what could otherwise be a chaotic narrative.

Indeed, the secondary characters, in the form of archetypes, fused with my anti-heroine to provide further narrative cohesion. Secondary archetypes are vital in guiding the audience to comprehend why the anti-heroine has committed to an immoral path and how she evolves into a masterful criminal. Thus the anti-heroine and secondary character archetypes are not separate entities. They are an interlinking set of archetypes that work symbiotically to inject points of comprehension for the audience. They guide the screenwriter to identify which characters and plotlines are potentially most fruitful.

In summary character archetypes presented in this paper can aid screenwriters to avoid a chaotic narrative when scripting their own anti-heroine teleplay. It should also be pointed out that the character archetypes presented are for consideration only and are by no means concrete. As cultural movements and shifts occur it is highly probable that there will be further archetypes that are applicable to the anti-heroine's journey, which can assist in rendering a cohesive narrative.

It should also be admitted that the archetypes presented in this article are specific to a white, western anti-heroine, who is a mother. The limited anti-heroine narratives that have been produced and distributed for commercial viewing are also characteristically white and western. This is a limitation, as we do not only need more female-led narratives, but we need diversity concerning the representation of women more generally. I therefore encourage researchers to build upon this article and explore the anti-heroine as a social minority. This may provide new insights and possibly pertinent character archetypes, concerning the storyworld of the anti-heroine, which are specific to a social minority group. In turn, this could provide screenwriters with the development of more nuanced, diverse and accurate representations of women's experiences.

Notes

[1] It should be noted that one live reading was conducted with a group of six people: three adult males and three adult females. The setup was informal and listeners were simply asked to verbally communicate their thoughts on *Angela* after the reading. When receiving feedback from the listeners, I rarely interjected, only when it was needed to tease out more specifically what a participant was

trying to articulate. The feedback was recorded in written form and, in turn, correlations and conclusions were drawn.

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