

‘A People To Come’
Screenwriting The New Social Subject.

Submitted by Carol Susan Noble, to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film, [June 2012]

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Signature.....

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ABSTRACT:

In this thesis I am going to investigate the ways in which characters in script texts might be re-written in order to move them away from being narrative objects and towards a sense of them as 'different social subjects'. By this I mean characters that are capable of multiple telling and that are portrayed as self-aware, self-determining individuals. Why should I want to do this?

The 3-Act structure and the associated formula for creating characters, to which most modern films adhere, compels the screenwriter to objectify all of the individuals portrayed. One reason for this is that the formula trades on a confusion between a character's 'identity' and the criteria we use to 'identify' them. Another reason is the 3-Act structure's demand for a seamless, cause-and-effect storyline and its simple interpretation of space and time. To meet these ends, the writer is forced to reduce characters to the status of objects.

In order to arrive at a new methodology I will investigate theoreticians and practitioners who have discussed subjectivity.

As a result of this I will propose a range of strategies a screenwriter might use to create subjects (rather than objects). And I will propose strategies for recognising the complexity of each character's identity. I will argue also that a film can be intelligible without a seamless cause-and-effect storyline; and where it reflects a subject's actual spatial/temporal experiences. I will then show how I would use these strategies (and others) when writing a film text: *Fungus*.

In my last Chapter, I will try to assess how useful my new method has been, firstly, for my work as a screenwriter and, secondly, in the opinion of other practitioners in the film industry.

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