PERFORMING INTERACTIVITY EFFECTIVELY:

WORKING WITH ACTORS
AS A WRITER-DIRECTOR OF A
NARRATIVE INTERACTIVE SHORT FILM

SOPHIE SCHULZE

MASTER BY RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

MARCH 2023

Abstract

The dissertation 'Performing Interactivity Effectively: Working with Actors as a Writer-Director of a Narrative Interactive Short Film' focusses on the importance of the role of a writer-director as an aid for actors of an interactive short film. To underline research, justify discussion points, and illustrate approaches, an interactive short film titled 'A Slimming World' was written, directed, and produced alongside the dissertation. This dissertation follows a chronological outline of research into and development of said interactive short film and aims to give practical and theoretical insights into the approach of working with actors and aiding them in the context of an interactive short film. Research into the roles of writers and directors, into interactivity, into approaching the writing of a script, pre-production, and production will be discussed and, further, exemplified by references to 'A Slimming World'.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

1. Introduction

> As a director/writer/producer, all you ever want is to work with actors who make you look better, who make the work you do seem as good as it can be and even better than it is.[1]

This quote by J.J. Abrams suggests that the worth of an actor and the distinction between good and bad actors is based on their ability to improve the work of a director/writer/producer. However, this allegation neglects the importance of a solid basis on which the actor can found their work. This basis is generated by the writer/director/producer of any given film. In the case of a narrative interactive short film, the groundwork of a writer/director/producer differs, as interactive aspects are added to the status quo of dramatic visual storytelling. The narrative alters through interactivity and vice versa. The writer/director/producer needs to know how these two aspects inform each other and how they can be assembled. A vital aspect in this regard is the performance of actors and how they communicate the story to an audience. Through research, the production of a narrative interactive short film, and the dismantling and examining of the findings, this dissertation intends to show the importance of collaboration in the context of narrative interactive film.

1.1. The Research Question

The initial research question of this master's dissertation 'how does audience interaction in live-action short films affect the directorial work with actors?' intended to be broadly asking how much performance affects the perception of an interactive short film and how a director can be of assistance to make this performance as believable as possible. However, over the course of developing the approach to the research, it became apparent that the work that can aid actors needs to start even earlier: with the writer. Hence, a new question emerged asking 'how a writer-director of a narrative interactive short film can assist the process of the actors clearly understanding their characters to make their performance believable'. Further, sub-questions arose:

- How does interactivity fit into a character-driven story?
- How can a writer utilise the information that they will also be the director of the interactive short film? What difficulties does this awareness implicate?
- How does collaboration affect the work on an interactive short film? Can collaboration make a narrative interactive short film more plausible to an audience? And what role do actors play for the intelligibility of the audience?
- Can an actor exercise creative agency in an interactive production?

---

[1] 'J. J. Abrams Quotes'; in *BrainyQuote* https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/j_j_abrams_482969 [accessed: 16 January 2023].

These questions highlight the importance of the writer; their knowledge about interactivity and the strategic implementation of interactivity into the script can make a performance effective as it influences the perception of the audience. A director, then, uses the information within the script to work with the actors of a narrative interactive short film. Hereby, the roles of the audience and the actors are vital for conveying the story, for '[d]rama explores character and ideas through the medium of events […]'[2] and is at its best when '[…] the level of engagement between the audience and the story is ideal.'[3] Further, drama means action and action is generated through conflict, as this dissertation will explain and discuss.

1.2. The Claim of the Dissertation

I claim that collaboration is at the heart of performing interactivity effectively. Here, effectively pertains to and implies the believability and plausibility of performance, script, and the resulting comprehension of the audience. Further, believability and plausibility are related to a standing of reason behind narrative and visual decisions which communicate the meaning of the interactive story to an audience. However, this can only be the case if the actors believe in the action. The actors performing the action need to understand and, further, convince the audience of their actions. Hence, interactive performance can only be believable and, thus, effective, if the actors are convinced of the action. The argument is founded on research and the development of a narrative interactive short film called 'A Slimming World'. The research into topics related to this film and the consultation of drama practitioners shaped and informed the approach to script and directorial work.

There are three terms to unpick in this context: narrative film, interactive film, and short film. Paul Cobley defines 'narrative' as '[a] movement from a start point to an end point, with digressions […]. Narrative is a *re*-presentation of events and, chiefly, *re*-presents space and time.'[4] This representation needs to be reflected within a plausible plot which immerses and interests the audience.[5] Interactive film, as opposed to linear film, does not necessarily follow a pre-determined linear story. Instead, the viewer gains agency over the structure and the development of the narrative, as will be explained further.

In a short fiction film, the narrative is more focused. According to Cynthia Felando '[…] the short favors the narrative economy and unity that are enabled by its most basic storytelling conventions: a simple story that focuses on a single event, character, situation, or moment with no subplots; fewer characters—usually only one or two central characters with few (or no) secondary characters; and a

---

[2] Mike Harris; 'Introduction to Scriptwriting' in *The Handbook of Creative Writing*; ed. by Steven Earnshaw; 2nd edn.; (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); pp. 251-262 (p. 252).
[3] Ken Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; (Burlington, UK: Focal Press, 2013); p. 3.
[4] Paul Cobley; *Narrative*; (London: Routledge, 2001); p. 236-37.
[5] Harris; 'Introduction to Scriptwriting'; (pp. 251-52).

brief story time.'[6] In the next chapter of their book *Discovering Short Films: The History and Style of Live-Action Fiction Shorts*, Felando outlines two different forms of short films: the 'classical short' and the 'live-action fiction short'. The former '[…] have easily discerned meanings and transparent situations, linear organizations, and closed endings. In addition, characters tend to have clear goals and motivations, and to be drawn broadly, usually because they are based on familiar types […].'[7] The latter is similar to the typical Hollywood film narrative; conflict is generated through the opposition between protagonist and antagonist (the terms will be discussed later in this dissertation) which moves the action forward. There is a closed ending in which the goal of the protagonist is either achieved or failed. Both, the 'classical short' and the 'live-action fiction short' prefer simple stories with a clear focus and limitations regarding situations and story time. The running time of a short film is also vital for the complexity of the narrative: the shorter the film, the simpler the narrative.[8] Here, it should be noted that there is just as broad a variety of short films as there is variety in feature-length films, depending on genre and the era in which the short film was produced.

Patricia Cooper highlights the freedom of a short film related to creative and economic factors. As much as the production of a short film is limited in its budget, its success does not rely on famous names and the format and the output of the short film are more malleable. Even though, it is limited in its length, there is much more variety in what a short film can address; the short film is accompanied by an expectation of interpretation just as other short narrative forms like a short story, poem, or, even, a photograph. For this reason, the writer-director, or the general authorial body, as will be explained in this dissertation, have the chance to indicate their voice and interpretation.[9] As 'A Slimming World' can be considered a short film, the information about the authorial voice and interpretation influenced the approach to the script and the research.

The role of the writer-director will receive much consideration within this dissertation, as it was the role that I occupied for this production. Both roles, separately and together, are significant for the work with the actors. According to Mike Harris '[s]criptwriters create the interest and attention of an audience mainly through narrative.'[10] A filmmaking director of all genres needs to inspire creative energy and coordinate the resources that the creative team provides. Their intention is to connect the audience with and immerse them in the story. They need to communicate directly and clearly with the

---

[6] Cynthia Felando; 'Chapter 3: Short Film Specificity Narrative Compression, Unity, Character, and Endings'; in *Discovering Short Films: The History and Style of Live-Action Fiction Shorts*; (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015); pp. 45-63 (p. 47).
[7] Cynthia Felando; 'Chapter 4: Storytelling and Style: The Classical Short'; in *Discovering Short Films: The History and Style of Live-Action Fiction Shorts*; (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015); pp. 65-93 (p. 66).
[8] Felando; 'Chapter 4: Storytelling and Style: The Classical Short'; pp. 65-66.
[9] Patricia Cooper; 'Chapter 17: The Opportunity for Renewal' in *Writing the Short Film*; 3rd edn.; (Waltham, Mass.: Focal Press, 2004); pp. 223-232 (p. 228).
[10] Harris; 'Introduction to Scriptwriting'; (p. 251).

cast and crew.[11] The difference between the writer and the director is, thus, the manner of how they communicate. Whilst the communication of the director is active, the writer communicates passively through a script. This distinction will be evidenced and explained further within this dissertation. In addition, a discussion about the practical approach of the distinction will be highlighted. I argue that collaboration is vital throughout both roles within the production of a narrative interactive short film. The dissertation aims to explain, based on research and practical exploration, why and how a collaborative approach influences and improves the effectiveness of interactive performance.

Here, performance refers to the actors, guided by the script – the writer – and the director, conveying the meaning of the film through actions to an audience. In the context of an interactive film, the actions are reciprocal, as the audience actively interacts with the film and becomes part of the narrative. These aspects of interactivity will be investigated and examined in the light of the development of the narrative interactive short film 'A Slimming World'. In addition, interactivity, interactive structures, as well as general narrative structures will be discussed and explored. Further, the approach of various practitioners and their influence on the development of 'A Slimming World' highlight the importance of actors, audience, and collaboration. Overall, the following chapters will outline how research and development informed the evolution and production of this narrative interactive short film, concluding with a discourse about the effectiveness and influence of the findings and implemented strategies, and whether they are useful for future works and subsequent research.

1.3. Outline of the Production Approach

The research undertaken, and the development of the script and the approach outlined in this dissertation aim to propose that there are effective ways of writing a script for and working with actors on a narrative interactive short film. These approaches build upon various drama principles and intend to make the performance of actors of a narrative interactive short film more believable and plausible for the audience, and, further, justify the interactivity of a narrative interactive short film.

The presentation of this dissertation follows the chronological approach of the project, as it accurately represents the methods and ratiocination. The interactive aspects of the project were inspired by the *Black Mirror* episode *Bandersnatch*[12]. There are other interactive films, television episodes, and documentaries that can be looked at. However, *Bandersnatch* gained extensive attention before and during its release, but failed to produce the anticipated, explosive increase of interactive film and television productions. To explain the reasons why interactive media is not as popular as

---

[11] Michael Rabiger, and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; (Waltham, Mass.: Focal Press, 2013); pp. 4-7.
[12] *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*; dir. by David Slade (House of Tomorrow and Netflix, 2018).

expected after the release of *Bandersnatch*, the dissertation outlines some of the reasons and factors why an increase cannot be registered.

As described above, the focus of the dissertation is on a writer-director's work with and for actors of an interactive short film. The aim of research, dissertation and, subsequently, the script of the respective narrative interactive short film called 'A Slimming World' is to explore the possibilities, opportunities, and limits for the writer-director; the dissertation argues that the plot should not be simple in terms of its theme, twists and turns, and throughline, but simple in its structure and the way the plot is communicated to an audience. Further, the limitations due to technology and user agency will be explored, as well as how these limitations can be reduced to a minimum. The reasons behind and implementation of a collaborative approach will be explained within the following chapters, always referring to and examining the practical approaches that were undertaken.

As I had been fascinated by the novelty and uniqueness of interactivity, the urge to produce a narrative interactive short film emerged. However, I became aware of various difficulties regarding a potential production which were initially based on research into the *Black Mirror* episode *Bandersnatch* and the interactive aspects of it. One of these identified difficulties was the work of and with the actors and became the basis for the research done alongside the production of 'A Slimming World'. Thus, the focus was on identifying which aspects of the script, the pre-production and the production are keys to make the work of the actors accessible. This led to the devising of a plan to prepare specific aides for the actors to help them overcome the difficulties of working on a set of an interactive short film.

The approach to the script was divided into two parts: the research and the development. Research informed all aspects of the process and of this dissertation. After demonstrating the general research, the specific research impacting the structure and thematic aspects of the script is illustrated. The result of the writing period was an interactive, character-driven short film, resorting to approaches usually used for dramatic narration. The story of the written script follows one main character, Charlie, whilst they are developing an eating disorder and is showing the impact that society can have on someone's mental health. The audience receives agency over the plot and the character by making decisions; the outcomes of the chosen options are shown in form of branches, leading to Charlie being confronted with the consequences of the eating disorder. Consequently, their inner protagonist and antagonist face each other during the climax of the film. These and other circumstances and aspects of the film will be discussed in the research and development chapters and highlight the importance of a collaborative relationship between writer-director and actors.

Further, the subchapter 'Preparation for the Shoot' discusses the essentials of what it means to be a director in the case of this narrative interactive short film and the pre-productional work undertaken with the actors and the crew. The production was not possible to proceed as planned; the focus of the dissertation is, thus, on the work of the writer-director prior to the shoot. As this dissertation highlights, the development of the script and the preparation of the shoot are vital for a narrative

interactive short film and the work with the actors. Having a background in theatre and film, I examined and used different techniques and approaches by various filmmakers, and theatre and film directors and practitioners to approach the production of 'A Slimming World'. Research and previous experience shaped the approach to the production of 'A Slimming World' and can be applied to the development of narrative interactive short films in general.

As the master's had to be completed within the span of eighteen months, research was intended to take place during the first three months; an intense writing-period of about up to six months was planned to take place afterwards. At the end of the writing period, pre-production was expected to start, and production would take place before the first twelve months were over. The remaining three months were set to be the post-production and, simultaneously, the phase of finishing the dissertation.

Even though a crew and cast had been found in advance, illnesses and personal issues made it impossible for vital members of cast and crew to be available for the shooting days anticipated. Unfortunately, re-scheduling was impossible and an application of a leave of absence was emitted; it was granted in form of an extension of three months to the original time frame. Due to the cancellation of the shoot, the structure of the master's and, moreover, the dissertation needed to change; consequently, the dissertation ended up focusing on the pre-production. The aim of the dissertation, based on research and practical examination, is to explore and highlight how important actors are for the success of a narrative interactive short film, and why and how the writer-director can be an aide for the actors.

2. Research

No script can be written without research. 'Screenwriting is an activity and so it becomes important to conduct research not just *about* practice, but also *for* practice.'[13] Research is vital regarding the background and reasoning behind the script. The theme, one's role as a writer, the ingredients for a successful script (related to the respective project one is working on), and how the script should be structured need to be examined for the approach of each production; research informs what is written and how it is written.

In the case of 'A Slimming World', the research question of 'how a writer-director of an interactive short film can assist the process of the actors clearly understanding their characters to make their performance believable' was informed by and formulated because of the research that was initially done regarding the lack of anticipated success of interactivity in film. The following chapter will look at this apparent lack of success before moving on to the research that was conducted regarding the role of a writer-director and interactivity.

---

[13] Craig Batty; 'Screenwriting Studies, Screenwriting Practice and the Screenwriting Manual' in *New Writing*; (Clevedon, England: Routledge); 17:3 (2020); pp. 333-347.

2.1. Background

To understand where the research question is coming from, it is of significance to look at the history and development of interactive films. Interactivity in any form of media is not a new phenomenon, neither a field which has not been researched and discussed. Interactive narrative films, however, have not received as much attention as the interactivity of games, books, and documentaries. This changed a few years ago when Netflix announced their new episode of *Black Mirror*: *Bandersnatch*. The episode received attention because of its novelty, as it incorporated a level of interactivity which had not been well-known to the general consumer of mainstream films. However, *Bandersnatch* did not produce the anticipated interest in narrative interactive films which could have ignited the release of a multitude of additional films.

2.1.1. *Bandersnatch*

Bandersnatch is a *Black Mirror* episode created by Charlie Brooker.[14] Rebecca C. Nee describes it as a 'hybridized video game within a TV show or movie'.[15] *Bandersnatch* is part of an emerging form of entertainment: interactive digital narratives (IDNs).[16] The episode is not the first IDN[17] but was supposedly going to increase its popularity due to its scale and to Netflix as a producer[18]. *Bandersnatch* focuses on audience interaction and is a form of a choose-your-own-adventure story where decisions can be made by the audience.[19] Initially, the reception on social media was extensive with many hashtags trending.[20] In light of this, it was surprising to see that there was no increased release of popular interactive films afterwards.

2.1.2. An Unexpected Reaction

Searching on IMDb for Interactive films that were released after *Bandersnatch*, the following results (as seen in *Figure 1: IMDb Search*) emerged: A total of fifteen short films and nine feature films could

---

[14] Rebecca C. Nee; 'Wild, stressful, or stupid: Que es Bandersnatch? Exploring user outcomes of Netflix's interactive Black Mirror episode' in *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*; 27:5, 5th March 2021.

[15] Nee; 'Wild, stressful, or stupid: Que es Bandersnatch? Exploring user outcomes of Netflix's interactive Black Mirror episode'.

[16] Christian Roth, and Hartmut Koenitz; 'Bandersnatch, Yea or Nay? Reception and User Experience of an Interactive Digital Narrative Video' in *Proceedings of TVX '19: ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video* (TVX '19); June 05-07, 2019, Salford (Manchester), United Kingdom; ACM (New York, NY, USA); 8 pages.

[17] Roth and Koenitz; 'Bandersnatch, Yea or Nay? Reception and User Experience of an Interactive Digital Narrative Video'.

[18] Nee; 'Wild, stressful, or stupid: Que es Bandersnatch? Exploring user outcomes of Netflix's interactive Black Mirror episode'.

[19] Nee; 'Wild, stressful, or stupid: Que es Bandersnatch? Exploring user outcomes of Netflix's interactive Black Mirror episode'.

[20] Nee; 'Wild, stressful, or stupid: Que es Bandersnatch? Exploring user outcomes of Netflix's interactive Black Mirror episode'.

be found in the database between 2018 and 2022; the figures for TV programmes were similar.[21] In a period of five years, this result poses unexpected after all the extensive publicity around *Bandersnatch*.
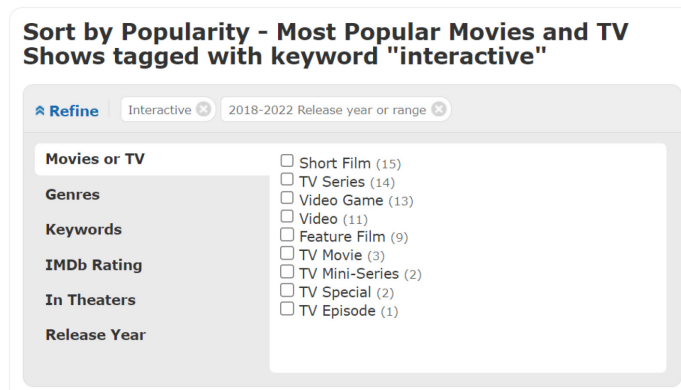
Figure 1: IMDb Search

Moreover, it was surprising to learn that IDNs are a substantial part of educating the public; they are increasingly used to address complex issues.[22] These findings suggest that incorporating interactive aspects in media like film, TV series, and streaming series is complicated. Moreover, IDNs seem to be practical for educational purposes, but not adaptable for entertainment. This sparked further research into the challenges of the entertainment media and interactivity, and how these issues might be resolved.

2.1.3.   Reasons

There are multiple factors that come into play when looking at difficulties for a writer-director and producer of an interactive short film. Most of them are related to the audience and how the story is presented to them. The audience should always be the focus of a film, as the film is targeted at them, especially when looking at interactive films; to interact means to engage with something which reciprocally engages back. '[…] [T]he word as a whole indicates an active relationship between two entities.'[23] The audience is now an active part of the narrative and needs to be considered from the start.[24] The following pages will focus on the reasons of why interactive storytelling can be difficult. All these reasons have the audience, their agency in telling the story, and their available mediums – the technology and platforms accessible to them – in mind.

---

[21] IMDb search; results for 'Most Popular Movies and TV Shows tagged with keyword "interactive" after 2018'.
[22] Andrew Perkis, and Kuldar Taveter; 'Applications of Complex Narratives' in *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia*; Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) (Trondheim, Norway); Institute of Computer Science (University of Tartu, Tartu: Estonia); 2nd December 2022.
[23] Carolyn Handler Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; Burlington, MA: Focal Press (2014); Third Edition; p. 58.
[24] Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; p. 70.

2.1.3.1. Technology

One of the first and most obvious issues is technology. As alluded to above, technology is influenced by the audience. The telling of the story will, in turn, be influenced by the technology that may be used. An array of platforms can be utilised for interactive storytelling.[25] The film should be released on whichever platform is most likely to be available to the majority of the audience, as it is in the interest of the producer to gain the biggest audience possible.

There are other technological factors that influence decisions and may produce difficulties. The technical scale of *Bandersnatch* was enormous; an example is the software tool 'Branch Manager' which was created solely for the episode.[26] Although there is other interactive software, not many producers can afford to use or create tools like this. Netflix on the other hand has more resources than other production companies. Moreover, creating a tool means to adjust this tool to the media and how the media will be presented. Interactivity in television, for example, looks notably different to the interactivity that this dissertation is referring to. In television, decisions are made through a call or a vote that will have to be evaluated through a different medium (a website for example).[27] This creates a disruption to the viewing experience which may lessen the sense of identification of the audience with story and characters, as will be discussed in the following sub-chapter. Large-screen interactivity is mainly used in museums and is, hence, an example for the use of IDNs for educational purposes.[28] Only a few examples of interactive cinemas showing entertainment orientated films can be found.[29] As cinemas and television broadcasters are often not equipped to show an interactive film, these films are mainly released online, changing the demography of the audience significantly.[30]

2.1.3.2. Lack of User Agency

'Agency is something that is built into an interactive work right from the start, as an integral part of the concept, and in fact helps define what kind of work it will be. It is up to the creative team to decide what kind of agency the user will have and how it will be integrated into the work.'[31] But how much agency is a user willing to have and how much agency is truly needed to make a film interactive? Agency can be an asset or a limitation, depending on what the spectator expects and wants. *Bandersnatch* is an example where agency has not worked in favour of engaging the audience.

---

[25] Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; p. 266.
[26] Nee; 'Wild, stressful, or stupid: Que es Bandersnatch? Exploring user outcomes of Netflix's interactive Black Mirror episode'.
[27] Wieslaw Godzic; 'Various Faces of Interactivity: Remarks on Television' in *La Revista Icono 14: Revista Científica De Comunicación Y Tecnologías Emergentes*; 2012; Vol.8 (1); pp. 22-36; https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v8i1.278 .
[28] Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; pp. 406-09.
[29] Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; pp. 406-09.
[30] Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; pp. 143-44.
[31] Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; p. 60.

Christian Roth and Hartmut Koenitz explain the importance of user agency through the example of an experiment; they showed *Bandersnatch* to thirty-two media students from the University of the Arts Utrecht. The binary choices and the fact that a decision is made for the viewer after the timer runs out are named as main reasons for a feeling of limited agency. They also name a lack of identification with the protagonist as one of the possible reasons that the participants of the study did not see *Bandersnatch* as immersive. On the other hand, they agree that the technology available cannot guarantee an altogether immersive experience which can give the viewer full user agency.[32] It needs to be said that media students are more likely to have been exposed to interactivity before (through gaming, films, etc.) and are hence not a true reflection of the general public. Nevertheless, user agency is a crucial factor to consider when writing and directing an interactive film.

Adriano D'Aloia argues that the lack of identification with the characters, as well as the awareness of the spectator of their role as a spectator are main reasons for a feeling of detachment. D'Aloia argues that having to make a decision by physically interacting is imposing the awareness of being a spectator on the viewer. 'In fact, this physical gesture, however minimal and quick, continually "awakens" me from physical relaxation, imposing itself as a factor that makes me self-aware of my status as spectator, with the result of keeping me emotionally removed from the events of the narrative.'[33] To overcome this, a filmmaker should give the audience agency by making clear what role they play in the film or episode.

2.1.3.3. Confusing Aspects of Branching

Films are rarely shot in a linear way – meaning, in the chronological order of the plot.[34] Nevertheless, adding multiple branches to a film means adding possibilities for the characters to develop differently and for their circumstances to take multiple different forms; this can be confusing for audience, actors, and crew. According to John Howard Swain in *The Science and Art of Acting for the Camera: A Practical Approach to Film, Television, and Commercial Acting*, an actor needs to fully understand their character and their circumstances, meaning their background and why they make decisions the way they do.[35] If multiple branches are introduced, an actor will be faced with the difficulty to understand different decisions that their character makes and the consequences of these decisions. In life a decision is made; one never knows what would have happened if the decision would have been made differently. The actor, in the case of an interactive, multi-branched film, must do the opposite: they need to face themselves with outcomes of different decisions and understand the consequences of

---

[32] Roth, and Koenitz; 'Bandersnatch, Yea or Nay? Reception and User Experience of an Interactive Digital Narrative Video'.

[33] Adriano D'Aloia; 'Against Interactivity: Phenomenological notes on Black Mirror: Bandersnatch' in *International Journal of TV Serial Narratives*; Vol. VI, N° 2, Winter 2020; pp. 21-32.

[34] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 178.

[35] John Howard Swain; *The Science and Art of Acting for the Camera: A Practical Approach to Film, Television, and Commercial Acting*; (London: Routledge, 2017); pp. 61-62.

each of these decisions. Thus, they need to understand their character not as a linear character but a character in different realities – different branches.

If one looks further into what Swain describes as 'the underlying causes of our actions'[36], it becomes apparent that these causes are mostly shaped by the character's so called 'main objective'. Swain describes this main objective as something that the character is striving for – an external want or an internal need. This main objective drives the plot forward, and, moreover, gives the characters and the actors an intention to do something. The main objective is seemingly constant; however, once the possibility of different branches is introduced, even the seemingly constant main objective alters.[37] In their book *From Stage to Screen: A Theatre Actor's Guide to Working on Camera*, Bill Britten quotes Uta Hagen by stating that it is an actor's task to make the character 'a vivid, three-dimensional human being, with a thoroughly fleshed-out past, present and future existence.'[38] Through branches, this past, present, and future existence becomes blurred; the actor needs to fully understand which branch has led them to the scene that they are performing in at any particular moment. Misunderstandings and misconceptions from the actor will lead to a character that is not sufficiently fleshed out which will be visible to the audience. Ultimately, the actor needs to know exactly where they are in the story, and, furthermore, which branch of the story they are in. The more branches, the more confusing it is for the actor to understand their character's past, present, and future. Alongside each added branch, an additional layer of past, present, and future is appended.

This induces looking at the branches and some available possibilities of branching. In *Bandersnatch*, the branching gets very confusing over time; as shown in *Figure 2: Gauntlet Structure*, the branching structure of *Bandersnatch* is close to a so-called 'Gauntlet-Structure'. As described by Anna Marie Rezk and Mads Haahr, this structure follows an almost linear thread which has branches emerging from it; these branches sometimes loop back or lead to dead ends.[39] As Britten and Hagen argue, to navigate their way through the branches and fully grasp their character, an actor needs to understand where their character has come from (their past), where they are in the moment of time that they are portraying (the present), and where they might be headed (the future).[40]

Figure 2: Gauntlet Structure

---

[36] Swain; *The Science and Art of Acting for the Camera: A Practical Approach to Film, Television, and Commercial Acting*; p. 62.
[37] Swain; *The Science and Art of Acting for the Camera: A Practical Approach to Film, Television, and Commercial Acting*; p. 62.
[38] Bill Britten; *From Stage to Screen: A Theatre Actor's Guide to Working on Camera*; (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); pp. 13-14.
[39] Anna Marie Rezk, and Mads Haahr; 'Beyond Free Will: Understanding Approaches to Agency and their Suitability for Bandersnatch-like Titles' in *Entertainment Computing*; Volume 43, August 2022.
[40] Britten; *From Stage to Screen: A Theatre Actor's Guide to Working on Camera*; pp. 13-14.

This takes different shapes and forms in *Bandersnatch*; due to the loops and dead ends of branches, a viewer might watch one branch – one decision – then loop back and watch another outcome by making a different decision. By doing that, their experience is different to a person choosing the second decision without having watched the branch of the other outcome and looping back first. The actor's portrayal of the character is still the same; nevertheless, they need to have both possibilities in mind whilst acting. Their character can either make one decision, realise that this will lead them nowhere, to then make a different decision, or make that different decision in the first place. The outcome must always look the same but their character has had a different past in each scenario. Understanding this and acting in a way that makes both scenarios possible and explicable is a task almost undoable. Further, this unclear structure of the plot is in opposition to what 'narrative' represents: a clear journey.

In the case of *Bandersnatch*, there is a seemingly dysfunctional relationship between the main character and their believability. Combined with an already existing lack of user agency, the audience cannot feel as connected to the main character and, hence, immersed into the story. The confusing aspects of branching make it difficult to follow and understand the story. Usually, a film and its plot are linear; '[l]inear is a narrative in which the goal directed character moves through the narrative toward resolution of that goal. […] 95 percent of screen stories adhere to this structure.'[41] For an audience mostly used to linear film, the non-linearity of the plot of an interactive film can be difficult to understand. Hence, an interactive film's success can be enhanced through a certain level of structure within the film, as will be discussed in one of the following chapters.

2.2. Writer-Director

As established above, the dissertation looks at the role of a writer-director. It is usual for a short film to be written and directed by the same person as it lowers the production costs. In the case of 'A Slimming World' no costs arose for hiring a writer-director. Moreover, the producer and the writer-director are sometimes, as in this case, the same person; the visualisation concept of an idea stems from the producer who then writes and directs the short film. The following chapters will explore the role and work of the writer-director.

2.2.1. The Work of the Writer-Director

As the dissertation focuses on the importance of the script and on how the writer-director can be an aide for the actors to understand their characters and the plot, it was essential to research into and understand who or what a writer-director is. In the professional world, unless they have established

---

[41] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 10.

themselves as competent and skilled writer-directors (like Christopher Nolan, Steven Spielberg, and Quentin Tarantino), most directors are handed a script; usually, the script is written by someone else who is hired by the production company. This creates an undeniable distinction between the writing process and the process of realising the written work and shaping it into a produced film – the directing process. As Michael Rabiger and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier remark in *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*, '[u]sually, [scripts] have already undergone multiple revisions before they land in a director's hands.'[42] How can a director, then, who is not handed a script that was written by someone else, still maintain a healthy distance to the script? How does one, as Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier describe it, keep their writer's hat on whilst writing, and put their director's hat on whilst, subsequently, directing?[43]

In *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production* Dan Gurskis argues that the writer needs to be able to abandon individual aspects of their script for it to be interpreted and produced; filmmaking is a collaborative and fluid process.[44] Gurskis outlines an approach for a short film script and explains key words and core points of structure and form; the goals of the writer and the importance of character development, narrative, and dialogue are some of them. Gurskis' book looks at the essentials of a short screenplay to be successful and convincing; moreover, they offer insightful information for any genre. The main objective of a writer-director is made apparent: to have a clear focus within the script to inform the subsequent work with the actors.[45] This, repeatedly, demonstrates the importance of the work with actors in form of discussions during the writing process.

As outlined above, the actor is required to believe in the action they are performing to make the action believable for an audience. As the action is taking place in an interactive context, the interactivity demands to be believable and convincingly be performed. A writer-director is required to understand the craft of an actor to adapt the script to their needs. The claim made above that a writer does not work as closely with the actors is just partially true. The cooperation between a writer and actors is more passive than the collaboration between a director and the actors. The writer communicates through a script with the actors, whilst the director can give the actors direct instructions. Hence, the writer, in this case the part of the writer-director that is working on the script, is expected to use their tools to communicate with the actors through the script. In addition to the story and the story's structure (the plot, as explained below), aspects of technology influencing said structure demand to be conveyed. Interactivity influences structure and, thus, urgently needs to be communicated to the actors through the script. As the following chapters will explain, multiple factors affect the work of the writer-director and their work with actors.

---

[42] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 76.
[43] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 76.
[44] Dan Gurskis, *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*, (Boston, MA: Thomson Course Technology, 2007), p. xv.
[45] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 5.

2.2.2. Maintaining Distance

In the 'Beginnings, Middles & Ends' lecture of the lecture series *Writing for Film and TV*, the importance of maintaining a distance to the script and of making the process of writing and producing as collaborative as possible are made apparent; the lecture lists writers' tables as an opportunity to get feedback.[46] Further research uncovered the significance of consulting others, being open to suggestions and discussions about the work, not writing with a finished product in mind, and being open for change at any stage.

Bonnie O'Neill's chapter 'Writing for Film' in the book *The Handbook of Creative Writing* can be used as helpful guidance when approaching a script. Even though this chapter focuses on future length films, O'Neill indicates that the methods explained can be used for shorter projects alike.[47] The chapter offers a detailed plan on how to approach the writing process, the premise, the research, the writing of a logline, knowing the characters and their journeys, the creation of a diagram, the writing of a treatment, and the writing and rewriting of scenes. Some of these steps are useful for the writer of a feature-length film, however, they are less suitable for the writer-director of an interactive short film (as outlined and discussed about in this dissertation). O'Neill's approach to fleshing out the characters is, in this context, too detailed; especially looking back at Gurskis' remark about letting go of certain aspects of one's script. By imagining the characters' physiology too much, a writer-director might get too attached to their initial character sketch which may introduce difficulties during the casting. Focusing extensively on the physiology might influence and limit the writer-director (if involved in the casting process) to choose an actor who does not fit the envisioned physiology of the character, would, however, be perfect for the role regarding other aspects. Likewise, this applies to the psychology of the characters; this may produce problems for discussing the characters with the actors at a later stage of the production. Nevertheless, formulating and imagining the psychology of the characters should not be disregarded entirely; however, it should be open enough to be interpreted by someone else. This, again, leads back to Gurskis' argument about being open and leaving the script open for interpretation. A film is a collaborative project; hence, aspects like the psychology and the physiology as well as the sociology of the characters should be left open to be discussed and interpreted by other members of the production.

In two of their works – their book *Film Authorship* and their article 'Collective Authorship in Film', C. Paul Sellors focuses on authorship in film. They argue that the notion of the director being the author of a film should be dismissed. In *Film Authorship* they explain where this notion comes from and that there are many influences from different parts of the production team throughout the production since a film is a collaborative effort; these influences can be described as aspects of

---

[46] 'Beginnings, Middles & Ends' in *Writing for Film and TV*; lecture notes; (York: University of York, 15 Jan 2022).

[47] Bonnie O'Neill; 'Writing for Film' in *The Handbook of Creative Writing*; (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2014); pp. 293-302 (p. 293).

authorship. To Sellors, authorship means to communicate something in the story, as well as in the film, to a spectator.[48] The spectator is very important; the interpretations of the spectator make a film different in terms of authorship to any other artform. Implications that lead to interpretations can be made visually and textually; a colour scheme for example can hint at the setting. This can be interpreted alongside other implications made through content like music; it informs the spectator and what they gain from the film. There is a distinction that needs to be made between authorship and narration: whilst a narrator is fictional, the author is not.[49] Hence, narration is the structure of a story, the plot (as will be explained in a later chapter), whilst authorship is the approach to said story structure. Further, Sellors and Gurskis seem to come to the same conclusion: film authorship is a collaborative effort and negotiating with members of cast and crew is at the centre of this collaboration.

In the article 'Collective Authorship in Film', Sellors clarifies the reasons of this collaborative authorship. As said in the book *Film Authorship*, negotiating is important.[50] However, the article goes further by stating that sociable human beings create so-called 'we-intentions' when collaborating. These we-intentions are collective intentions that coordinate the process of collaboration. In fact, individual goals are attached to this we-intention and will eventually lead to the we-intention being carried out.[51] To conclude, multiple authorial voices are always present in a film production; the only questions that need to be asked when looking at individual films are: How many authorial bodies are there, and how do they and their work relate to each other?[52]

According to both the article and the book written by Sellors, all the creative bodies working on film, with a few exceptions[53], are part of the authorship of the film and communicate something to the audience. These collaborations are founded on a we-intention; thus, negotiation between the individual bodies is extremely important. For example, the crew members involved in technology are also part of the authorial body.[54] Martin Stollery, in 'Technicians of the Unknown Cinema: British Critical Discourse and the Analysis of Collaboration in Film Production', explains that measuring someone's value for the collaborative effort (authorship in film) cannot be based on '[…] aesthetic value judgement'.[55] New challenges and looking at film in a different way is at the heart of collaboration. This creative collaboration needs to be more in focus than the interpretation of the results.[56] Although this statement seems to differ from Sellors' view about the importance of interpretation and about

---

[48] C. Paul Sellors; *Film Authorship: Auteurs and other Myths*; (London: Wallflower Press, 2010); p. 69.

[49] Sellors; *Film Authorship: Auteurs and other Myths*; pp. 34ff., pp. 58-60.

[50] Sellors; *Film Authorship: Auteurs and other Myths*; pp. 34ff., p. 75.

[51] C. Paul Sellors; 'Collective Authorship in Film' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*; 65 (2007); pp. 268-67.

[52] Sellors; 'Collective Authorship in Film' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*; pp. 267-68.

[53] Sellors; 'Collective Authorship in Film' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*; p. 267.

[54] Sellors; *Film Authorship: Auteurs and other Myths*; pp. 22ff.

[55] Martin Stollery; 'Technicians of the Unknown Cinema: British Critical Discourse and the Analysis of Collaboration in Film Production' in *Film History*; 21; p. 385.

[56] Stollery; 'Technicians of the Unknown Cinema: British Critical Discourse and the Analysis of Collaboration in Film Production'; p. 386.

authorship being about communicating something to the audience, their core opinions are similar; both emphasise that attention is taken away from authorial bodies of a film when the works of the director and actors are overemphasised. Thus, keeping in mind to collaborate with all members of the film (cast and crew) is the key to maintaining a distance to the script and being open to suggestions, even when the work is supposed to focus on the actors, as it is the case in this master's project.

The aspect of collaboration and consulting other members of the team suggests a difference between the roles of a writer and a director like Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier claim useful for a writer-director. It is important to – as Gurskis established – leave certain aspects of the script open for interpretation during the writing process. Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier agree as they state that a writer should not '[…] "direct the film" on the page. A film develops its full expression through the creative input of a collaborative team—its final form is not set in stone in the script.'[57]

2.3. Interactivity

Keeping technological aspects in mind whilst approaching this film project helped to maintain an emotional distance to the script. One of these technological aspects is interactivity. The dissertation and the corresponding film look at the branching structure, as it was used in *Bandersnatch*. This technology is easier to access with the budget and opportunities available for a short film. Nevertheless, the examination of other possibilities of interactivity and the consideration of the origins of interactivity to understand what a user – the audience – is going to expect from an interactive film are vital.

2.3.1.   Kinds of Interactivity

As mentioned, interactivity in films is mainly used for educational purposes. An example are the so-called 'i-DOCs' – documentaries in which the filmmaker intends to use digital interactive technology to capture something real.[58] Early 'i-DOCs' combined aspects of games and of progressive documentaries to integrate the user completely.[59] The entertainment industry adopted interactivity for series (such as *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*), short films (like *Cat Burglar*[60]), games (*Minecraft: Story Mode*[61]), and everything intersecting with these genres. According to the OED, interactive means to be '[r]eciprocally active; [to act] upon or [influence] each other' on one hand, and, on the other hand, describes the interplay of '[p]ertaining to or being a computer or other electronic device that allows a

---

[57] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 75.
[58] Michael R. Odgen; 'I-DOCS: The Evolving Practices of Interactive Documentary' in *Journal of Film and Video*; (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2017).
[59] Florian Mundhenke; 'From i-DOC to VR Experience: New Forms of User Engagement in Immersive Digital Documentaries' in *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*; 17.1 (2020); pp. 37-48; doi: https://doi-org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.1386/ncin_00003_1
[60] *Cat Burglar*; dir. by James Bowman (Netflix Animation, Broke & Bones, 2022).
[61] *Minecraft: Story Mode*; (Telltale Games, 2015-2017).

two-way flow of information between it and a user, responding immediately to the latter's input.'[62] This alludes to the technological aspect of interactivity which can be found in interactive storytelling.

Interactive film is founded on literature, theatre, and cinema.[63] Thus, it is part of the tradition of interactive storytelling. Interactive storytelling, however, is based on the tradition of storytelling dating back thousands of years. Carolyn Handler Miller lists 'contemporary storytellers', 'Aristotle', 'myths', and 'games' as main sources for learning about storytelling tools.[64] This dissertation (and the concomitant film script) is focussing on interactive digital narratives (IDNs). As already alluded to and defined by Andrew Perkis and Kuldar Taveter, 'IDNs are digital experiences in which users create or influence a dynamic storyline through actions, either as the protagonist of the unfolding storyline (as in digital drama) or as an observer who can navigate the story space aided by a system. Thus, the goal of interactive narrative is to immerse the user in an intellectual as well as emotional experience so that the user's actions can have a direct impact on the direction or outcome of the storyline.'[65] This presents narrative challenges compared to linear film. Whilst linearity generates a specific interpretation, non-linear narratives function differently; the interpretation varies depending on the audience's actions and viewing experience.[66] Hence, he audience, in a way, becomes part of the authorial body, as will be discussed further in the next chapters.

Different systems, through which interactive digital narratives can be separated from each other, are bottom-up, emergent systems (the stories are not pre-scripted) and top-down systems (here, the stories are pre-scripted).[67] The dissertation and the film focus on the latter. Without a script, the role of a writer would become almost redundant and be more of consulting nature. Furthermore, the technologies and the budget available were not suitable for the filming and post-production of an un-scripted film; more time would have to be spent on both processes.

As established, it is vital to keep a form of agency. Hence, the branching of the story is important to keep a certain level of agency. There are multiple different ways of branching, as can be seen in *Figure 3: Branching Structures.*[68]; 'The Time Cave Structure', for example, was used in Edward Packards books *Sugarcane Island* and *The Cave of Time*. Simon Christiansen's science-fiction novel *Trapped in Time* is an example for the 'Loop and Grow Structure', whilst the 'Gauntlet Structure' was used in *Bandersnatch*. 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure' was the most appealing structure for this

---

[62] OED; *'Interactivity'*; accessed: 10.02.2023, 10:30am;
[https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/97521?redirectedFrom=interactive#eid]
[63] Rebecca Gallon; Thesis: *Lights, camera, interaction! Interactive Film and its Transformative Potential*; 2021 (University of York; York); p. 15.
[64] Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; pp. 73-79.
[65] Perkis, and Taveter; 'Applications of Complex Narratives'; pp. 1-2.
[66] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 138.
[67] Rezk, and Haahr; 'Beyond Free Will: Understanding Approaches to Agency and their Suitability for Bandersnatch-like Titles'.
[68] Rezk, and Haahr; 'Beyond Free Will: Understanding Approaches to Agency and their Suitability for Bandersnatch-like Titles'.

film, as the budget was limited and it would allow for the composition of the film to be clearer and more coherent, as will be explained below.

Figure 3: Branching Structures
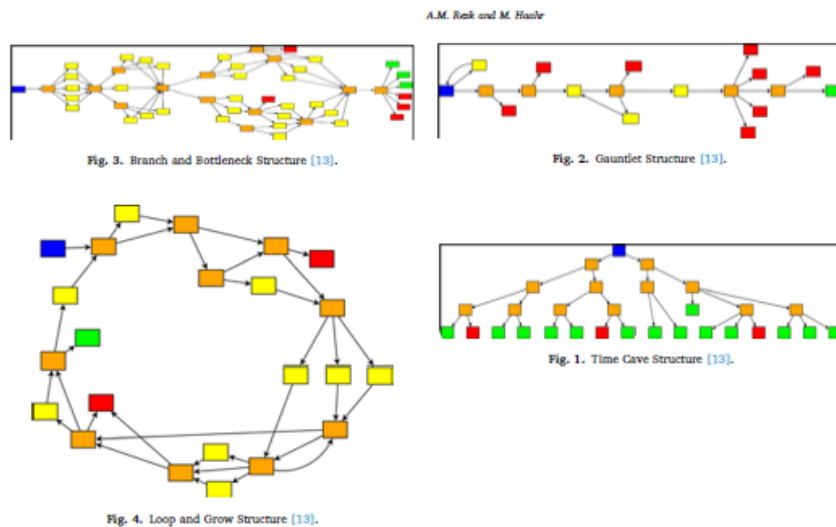
The process of developing the story and the overall structure of the film (not solely related to interactivity) was informed by the knowledge about the structural outline of the interactive aspects of the film. Over the past thirty years, practitioners conducted extensive research into interactive storytelling and interactive narratives. A groundbreaking example is Janet Horowitz Murray's book *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*[69]; the version from 1998 as well as the version from 2017 have shaped the ongoing research into interactive narratives. Horowitz Murray laid the groundwork for most of the sources regarding interactivity and interactive storytelling that are sited in this dissertation. However, as explained above, interactive storytelling should be regarded as part of the history of storytelling in general. Hence, there was a demand for research, as outlined below, regarding the specific interactive ways of telling stories most appropriate for the kind of research that this dissertation aims to enhance.

2.3.2.   Interactivity and Characters

As established above, past and present of a character are ambiguous in the case of an interactive, branched film. Moreover, the future of the character is ambivalent too; the actor needs to portray a character that might make different decisions. The main objective and intention of the character portrayed by the actor must be ambiguous enough to justify each of the character's decisions. Even though the choice for making a decision is not necessarily the character's but, rather, the viewer's, the actor is required to be clear about why the character makes the decision.. On screen the decision ought to appear like the character's decision which the acting needs to represent. The actor should be open

---

[69] Janet Horowitz Murray; *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*; (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2017).

for their main objective to change or decide upon a main objective which justifies each decision, is contextually plausible, and can be understood by the audience.

2.3.3. Decision to Use 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure'

There is, as discussed above, a difficulty for the actors to know where they are in the story and to have an overview of the plot overall. Branching is almost inevitable to create a sense of audience agency. Hence, the decision about the most suitable branching structure is one of the most vital aspects that need to be decided before approaching the script; a simplified version of 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure' was chosen for 'A Slimming World'. For budget, production, efficiency, and experience level reasons, simplification was important to pre-empt problems that could arise in the development process thereafter.

Here, it is vital to confirm the importance of analysis regarding how branching structures can be an aide to the actors performing the interactivity of the anticipated short film to make the performance effective. As established, the audience's interpretation of the film is almost unpredictable due to interactivity. However, the audience is, through the decisions that they are making in an interactive film using branches, part of the authorial body. Their decisions structure the plot of the film. To ensure an indubitable amount of structure and, thus, give the film creators a certain authority over the film, a branching structure that would incorporate these aspects was significant. 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure' is, compared to the 'Time Cave Structure' one of the more linear structures of all the branching structures and, hence, in this context suitable. However, it was structurally adapted to fit the purpose of giving the creators of the film more authority. After showing the outcome of a decision, the plot, thus, comes back to the same path (as made visible in *Figure 4: Branching Decision*). The actors need to be able to be aware of where they are in the story. The fewer options a viewer has for each decision, the easier it is for an actor to make sense of where they are in the story. Further, this makes the deciding less complicated for the audience, as the more options they can choose from, the harder it is to make a decision. This phenomenon is called 'The paradox of choice' and can be observed in various aspects of western society. People who are overloaded with choices '[…] find a large number of options paralyzing rather than liberating.'[70] As there is more time pressure due to the continuation of the film, having too many options proposes to be overwhelming for an audience. As one option would diminish the sense of agency completely, two options are the minimal number they should choose from. Two options, as much as there would be a minimal amount of agency, were achievable regarding the budget and the production time of 'A Slimming World'. For simplicity reasons and to make the plot as straightforward as possible for cast, crew, and audience, the number of options is the same for each of the questions.

---

[70] Barry Schwartz; 'The Paradox of Choice' in *Positive Psychology in Practice Part II: Values and Choices in Pursuit of the Good Life*; (Wiley Online Books, 2015); pp. 121-138 (p. 123).
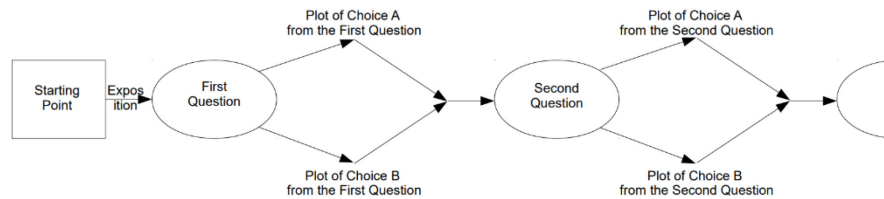
Figure 4: Branching Decision

2.3.4. Keeping the Illusion of Agency Upon First Viewing

Justly, the simplicity of the branching diminishes the agency of the viewer which the audience can only realise upon a second viewing. The illusion of a certain amount of agency is still prevalent at first. Watching the film for the first time, the audience has a feeling of making influential decisions; they are not aware that the story leads to the same point regardless of their chosen option without watching the film a second time. If justified in the story (for example in form of a moral), the options leading to the same outcome can be used as a narrative tool of the specific genre. Hence, the moral will, in a way, inform the genre; further, the genre, and story and its structure influence whether and how the audience will perceive this moral. Some audience members will not watch the film twice; for them, the moral still needs to be obvious upon the first viewing. 'Having agency does not mean being in control; it merely means that "meaningful" outputs will be achieved in a dynamic system. The word "meaningful" is subject to the logic of said system, i.e., the logic of the world in which the story takes place. Therefore, the definition of the word "meaningful" must bend to the logic of the relevant story world and for a satisfying experience also make thematic sense.'[71] By justifying the decision to make agency an illusion and keeping the different viewers and their expectations of the story in mind, agency and the illusion of agency may function as a narrative device. The expectation of the audience is dependent on the genre of the film;[72] the genre, hence, needs to reflect agency, moral, and interactivity, as will be discussed further in the chapter 'Genre, Characters, and Conflict – Developing the Story'. Agency, moral, and interactivity are linked to the audience; the audience has agency because of the interactivity and perceives a moral through the story. As the audience has an expectation because of the genre, their expectations are the connection between agency, moral, interactivity, and genre. The audience's agency, upon and after the second viewing, will be almost obsolete; this, too, needs to be reflected within the genre and the associated expectations. However, this narrative device of illusion is not immediately recognisable, as the audience has to watch the film a second time.

---

[71] Rezk, and Haahr; 'Beyond Free Will: Understanding Approaches to Agency and their Suitability for Bandersnatch-like Titles'.
[72] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 73.

Quentin Tarantino is an example of a filmmaker whose key narrative devices are sometimes not immediately obvious to an audience. Tarantino uses this hidden drama and sets it up to surprise the audience and to make them aware of their place within the story: as a sometimes-gruesome spectator.[73] Setting up a similar awareness was a key intention of the approach of this interactive short film. Interactivity and, hence, agency can make the audience aware of their presence within the film. As said above, the audience becomes part of the authorial body; they believe that their decisions have a direct impact on the story structure and, further, on the outcome of the story. Taking the awareness away after having established it is a way to create hidden drama that will only come into focus when one watches the film for a second time. It creates a different perspective of the audience on the film and intends to make the film interesting and animate the audience to watch it again. However, the want of the audience to watch the film repeatedly needs to be generated by their first watching experience. In one of the next chapters, the role of an open ending and of other narrative tools will be discussed, and how they have an impact on this want of the audience.

Another example of filmmakers who use narrative devices that are not immediately apparent to an audience is Martin Scorsese. Scorsese sometimes misleads the audience and makes them believe something which then turns out to be untrue. In *The Last Temptation of Christ*[74], the audience expects some parts of the story to be real; later, it is revealed that portions of the film are, in fact, an imagination.[75] Tarantino and Scorsese use these elements of surprise to fit the narrative. Despite being fictional, the story is told truthfully with the use of a narrative device that engages the audience. In the case of 'A Slimming World', the illusion of agency is a narrative device to creating an element of surprise. However, the audience needs to be motivated to watch the film again to understand this narrative device.

As established, the story and genre are demanded to make sense regarding the structure of the film. Both need to benefit from each other: the technological as well as the thematic elements of creating the film. This thought perpetuated more research into technological aspects and how they intersect with the telling of the story and, further, the perception of the audience, as the audience needs to be animated to watch the film for a second time to perceive the illusion of agency as a narrative device.

---

[73] SC Lannom; 'Quentin Tarantino Interviews, Directing Tips & Quotes on Film'; studiobinder; 14 May, 2023; https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/quentin-tarantino-quotes-and-interviews/; [accessed: 18.09.2022].
[74] *The Last Temptation of Christ*; dir. by Martin Scorsese (Universal Pictures, Cineplex Odeon Films, Testament Productions, 1988).
[75] Elliot Panek; 'The Poet and the Detective: Defining the Psychological Puzzle Film' in *Film Criticism*; Vol. 31, No. 1/2 (Fall/Winter, 2006); pp. 62-88.

2.3.5. Time Limitations and Decision-Making

The concept used in *Bandersnatch* of having a time limit on making a decision was very appealing. As much as it can cause a feeling of stress in the spectator, it makes the decision instinctive. Giving enough time ensures that there is no excessive amount of stress applied to the viewer.

In Bear Grylls' *Animals on the Loose: A You vs. Wild Movie* the interactive aspect of the film in relation to continuity is not well thought out; decisions can be made whilst the protagonist Bear Grylls still explains the circumstances. As soon as one makes a decision, a cut to the film clip linked to the decision is made. Grylls is sometimes cut off mid-sentence, interrupting the flow of the action happening on screen and disrupting the film experience.[76] In 'A Slimming World' the viewer has a time limit to make their decision to counteract interrupting the experience of the viewer; the rest of the scene is acted out until the end of the time limit, allowing the film the continuative character of movies where cuts and edits are made deliberately to go along with the intension of the film.[77]

As Valerie Orpen describes in *Film Editing: The Art of the Expressive*, one '[…] important motivation to make a cut is to keep the audience interested, and interest is often the result of emotion. This constitutes the second 'office' of rhetoric: to please.'[78] The story needs to progress to evoke emotions in the viewer whilst making the film pleasing to watch; hence, in 'A Slimming World' the edits need to seem seamless and there should be no cuts between the action. As much as this appears to be an editorial choice, the script needs to be an aide and the foundation of the work of and with the editor.[79]

To get a sense of how long different amounts of time can feel like in a film, different lengths of time were timed whilst watching various films and clips. After much consideration, ten seconds were determined to be an appropriate length to give the spectators to make their decision. It seems to be a reasonable time to not evoke stress; at the same time, the activities shown before the cut to the decision, which are not narratively influential, however, not boring for the viewer to watch.

2.3.6. Short Cuts

Another crucial decision for the script was made after reading Adriano D'Aloia's article 'Against Interactivity: Phenomenological Notes on *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*'. As alluded to above, one of the things D'Aloia discusses in this article is the notion of not being emotionally connected to the narrative events. This stems, according to D'Aloia upon watching *Bandersnatch*, from the spectator's

---

[76] *Animals on the Loose: A You vs. Wild Movie*; dir. by Ben Simms (The Natural Studios, 2021).
[77] Julie Lambden; *Film Editing: Emotion, Performance and Story*; (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022); p. 80.
[78] Valerie Orpen; *Film Editing: The Art of the Expressive*; (Columbia University Press, 2019); p. 15.
[79] Orpen; *Film Editing: The Art of the Expressive*; p. 9.

awareness of their status as a spectator. In their opinion, actively making a decision is the main reason for this awareness.[80]

To make a film interactive, there needs to be a certain level of physicality of the spectator. Only a few examples exist that make the interaction not evident at all. One of them is Richard Ramchurn's film *The Moment*.[81] It is a brain-controlled film, meaning that the audience can wear a headset measuring their brain activity (in particular, related to their attention); the narrative of the film is played according to the spectator's focus of attention. This kind of interactivity is of passive nature. The technology developed for a film like this is complex and cost-intensive; further, the script written has to be as multi-layered as it was for *The Moment*. Richard Ramchurn used four different layers to allow for the plot to diverge at multiple different points.[82]

Using this kind of technology was not feasible due to reasons of time, budget, and expertise. To still make the process of watching as pleasurable and non-interruptive as possible, using short-cuts instead of actively having to click on the decision was the best option to investigate. This eliminates the nuisance of a cursor appearing on the screen and the mentioned panic and stress that viewers might feel when having to correctly click on the appearing bar of their decision. Moreover, the viewer would still be able to focus on the action happening on the screen. As 'A Slimming World' would be released online, the short-cuts would relate to familiar and often used keys of a regular keyboard.

2.4. The Writer-Director and Interactivity

The writer-director – in both of their capacities – is extremely important in justifying and conveying the interactive aspects of an interactive film to an audience. Hereby, the writer-director uses the script and the actors to convey the intended message of the interactivity. This subchapter highlights how the research and conclusions made from said research informed the development of the top-down interactive digital narrative that is part of this dissertation. Further, these conclusions can inform future filmmakers as to what the difficulties of devising a script for an interactive short film are and how these difficulties might be pre-empted.

First, technological aspects need to be kept in mind; as to interact means to engage with something that engages back, the frame of how the interactivity will be taking place technologically is vital. With the film being released online, a specific audience is generated. This needs to be kept in mind, as the film is targeted at an audience. Moreover, the audience of an interactive film is an active part of the narrative through their engagement with it and, hence, needs to be considered as a part of the authorial body. The way in which the story is presented to them informs their interpretation of the story and, hence, their authority over the structure of the story. As much as their interpretation is almost

---

[80] D'Aloia; 'Against Interactivity: Phenomenological Notes on Black Mirror: Bandersnatch'; (p. 24).
[81] *The Moment*; dir. by Richard Ramchurn (Albino Mosquito, 2018).
[82] Richard Ramchurn, and Sarah Martindale, etc.; 'Brain-Controlled Cinema' in *Brain Art: Brain-Computer Interfaces for Artistic Expression*; (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019); pp.377-408.

unpredictable and their decisions instinctive, this can be partially counteracted through structuring the story in a way that makes the audience's interaction and interpretation more predictable.

By using a structure such as 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure' and modifying it, making the branches always come back to the same path, the creators of the film obtain more authority and agency. This is enhanced by giving the audience fewer options to choose from, which can be seen as counterintuitive, as it is the intention of interactivity to give the user as much agency as possible. However, the limitation of options can also be an asset for the audience as they might not be overwhelmed by the number of choices they have. Further, interactivity is biliteral, meaning that both sides (creators and audience) are engaged. Hence, agency of the creators needs to prevail too. In the case of a narrative interactive short film, the creators consist of a multitude of voices; the writer-director and the actors are part of this creative body. Multiple branches generate possibilities for the characters to develop differently. Past, present, and future of the characters are more ambivalent. To prevent this, collaboration is key. Collaboration – in form of consulting others and being open to suggestions and discussions – gives the writer-director the needed distance to the script and, further, creates a 'we-intention'. Through this we-intention, the plot and the characters seem clearer and more understandable for actors and the audience. If actors understand the layers of their character, they can formulate the character's intention and main objective. This, in turn, makes their characterisation and performance more believable and understandable for an audience. Hence, it is important that all parts of the creators understand and make sense of the story and its structure.

A moral can be another asset to justify the agency, or the lack thereof, of the audience. The genre and the story structure influence whether and how the audience perceives this moral. As interactivity plays a vital part of structure, the perception of the audience is also influenced by interactivity. Moral, interactivity, story structure, and genre need to correlate to justify the audience's agency over the story. This, further, generates an objective for the characters and, hence, the actors. This, combined with adjusting the story structure, creates an understanding of the story and makes the experience of the audience as enjoyable as possible.

Another aspect that generates user satisfaction is counteracting the interruptive aspect of interactive engagement; using a time limit of ten seconds in which a viewer must make a decision so that the rest of a scene can still be acted out is one of the tools to prevent interruption, whilst using short-cuts is a second tool.

The goal is to make the audience feel engaged and to make them believe what they see. This highly depends on the work between director and actors. However, both are mainly influenced by the script. In the case of 'A Slimming World', the writer is the same person as the director and should consult actors in all stages of the development, as both, writers and directors of an interactive short film need to understand the work of actors. The actors are the vessel to convey meaning to the audience. Most importantly, a 'we-intention' needs to be clear on which the actors can base their character's main objective.

To ensure that a character's main objective in the story and their objective in each scene is coherent, the communication between actor of said character and the director of the film becomes even more vital than usual. 'Specifically, during the shoot, the director works closely with the actors in an atmosphere of trust and respect so that the actors' performances tell the story as interpreted by the director.'[83] In this quote from *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing*, Bethan Rooney and Mary Lou Belli state that the actors bring the vision of the director to life. Obviously, there are many more components that will tell the story as interpreted by the director; however, the performance of the actors plays a vital role. By communicating well with the actors, the director ensures that filming time is used as efficiently as possible and that the actors give their best in their performance. This communication needs to start even before the shooting can begin; pre-discussions during rehearsal time are vital.[84]

Through experience in various theatre departments (such as directing, designing, acting, producing, and set management), I am aware of the importance of clear communication and discussions during rehearsal times. Two theatre practitioners that have influenced and shaped my approach of rehearsals are Konstantin Stanislavsky and Katie Mitchell. Stanislavsky's methods of planning and running rehearsals changed significantly during their career; around 1904 Stanislavsky had moved away from a dictatorial approach to the so-called "mental reconnaissance". This method uses collaboration to gather a shared understanding of the play. 'Decisions about the artistic direction of the production arose from [the cast and director's] collaborative process of discovery […]'.[85] This method which Bella Merlin describes in their book *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* aims to place the actor in the heart of creative discoveries as they are the main conveyor of the text's message and intentions.[86] In *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*, Katie Mitchell goes into detail about how collaborative rehearsals should be approached; she combines movement work and acting exercises with work around a table where listing facts and questions plays a vital role. These facts and questions are not exclusively related to the play itself, they, further, concern themselves with what exists before the action of the play.[87]In film production an approach like this is very unusual. However, one example for a director working closely with actors before the start of the shoot is Luca Guadagnino. In an interview about their film *Call Me By Your Name*[88] with online news site 'Deadline Hollywood', Guadagnino compares filmmaking to the collaboration between a conductor and an orchestra: "You can listen to a great symphony of Mahler and have a bad experience, because the conductor and the orchestra are not aligned to make that symphony resonate in the ears of the listener.

---

83 Bethan Rooney, and Mary Lou Belli; *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing*; (Saint Louis: Routledge, 2012); p. 127.
84 Rooney and Belli; *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing*; pp.132-36.
85 Bella Merlin; *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit*; (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007); p. 89.
86 Merlin; *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit*; p.89.
87 Katie Mitchell; *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*; (London: Routledge, 2009); pp. 141-147.
88 *Call Me By Your Name*; dir. by Luca Guadagnino (Frenesy Film Company, La Cinéfacture, RT Features, M.Y.R.A. Entertainment, Water's End Productions, 2017).

Or, you can be lifted to the heavens."[89] For this film, Guadagnino brought the two lead actors to the film location in advance of the shoot. The director wanted them to get to know each other and the location regarding the script.[90]

This highlights that the director and the actors are informed by a script. In the case of this interactive short film, writer and director would be the same. Hence, the intentions of the writer and the groundwork for the work with the actors need to be reflected within the script. The characters and, thus, the actors are influenced by the interactivity that the script provides. As a result, the interactivity must correlate with the intentions of the writer to lay the groundwork for the director's work with the actors on their characters and the justification of their actions. The grasping of the actors' needs calls for a process of discussions and discourses with the actors before the shoot. The writer, thus, is required to consult actors during the development of the script to pre-empt confusion.

3. Development

Developing the script was the most essential part of this dissertation; as much as the director, unlike the writer, works directly with the actors, it is the script that informs the actors and the director.[91] If the script is not solid and has put markers for the actors in place to make the understanding of the story and the plot graspable, the director will ultimately have difficulty working with the actors. Thus, ensuring that the story and plot will narratively be clear was the priority in the case of 'A Slimming World'.

3.1. Substantial Aspects and Choices

As alluded to and explained in this chapter, there are multiple aspects that need to be considered before writing a film: Who or what is going to be at the centre of the script? Which technological and financial aspects will influence the writing and producing of the film? Which narrative devices can be used in the script? Who will be addressed and, moreover, what role is the audience going to play? These questions have an impact on how the story and plot unfold and how they are structured. Research into characters, their setting, and the technicalities of how the story will be told pose as the foundation of the script. All these questions can be answered through critical thinking about the script before starting to write.

---

[89] Joe Utichi; 'Luca Guadagnino and Cast On 'Call Me By Your Name' And The Alchemy Of Conjuring The Butterflies Of First Desire' in *Deadline Hollywood*; https://deadline.com/2017/11/call-me-by-your-name-armie-hammer-timothee-chalamet-oscars-interview-1202207499/ [accessed: 26.02.2024].
[90] Utichi; 'Luca Guadagnino and Cast On 'Call Me By Your Name' And The Alchemy Of Conjuring The Butterflies Of First Desire'.
[91] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; pp. 16-17.

3.1.1. The Key to the Heart of the Film

Since the work with the actors is the focus and theme of this dissertation titled 'Performing Interactivity Effectively: Working with Actors as a Writer-Director of a Narrative Interactive Short Film', the story of the film should reflect this theme. Michael Rabiger and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier explain that '[t]he purpose of a character-driven film is to explore what it means to be human through examination, and often transformation, of a character.'[92] Actors portray characters – with the focus being on actors, the spotlight is on the characters as well; the film should, hence, be a character-driven film. As such, action is generated through characters as the following paragraphs will explain.

Initially, it is important to look at what and who fictional characters are; as much as they differ in how they are constructed, there are certain similarities between characters of drama. As established, drama means action. Thus, characters of dramatic storytelling are doing something – they are in action. This action can be defined by two opposing characteristics: the action can either be heroic or villainous. However, a distinction needs to be made between heroes/heroines and villains, and protagonists and antagonists. Whilst the former two imply good and bad qualities of a character, the latter are simply referring to a leading character – the protagonist – and an opposing character – the antagonist. Dan Gurskis describes the antagonist as someone or something opposing the objectives of the protagonist thus creating a problem that needs resolving. A condition, according to Gurskis, makes resolving the problem even more complicated.[93] Here, it is important to note that protagonists and antagonists can be heroic, villainous, or a combination of both. However, it is the opposition of protagonist and antagonist that can create tension which results in action and drives the plot forward.

In 'Chapter 2: Character' in *The Short Screenplay*, Dan Gurskis argues that a character's choices are incredibly important; their decisions need to be life altering. The protagonist needs to have a main objective that the antagonist counteracts, as outlined in the subchapter 'Confusing Aspects of Branching' and explained by John Howard Swain. Gurskis, furthermore, makes the importance of outlook versus attitude clear; a character's outlook is how the character views the world whilst their attitude is how the world views the character. The narrative arc makes visible how the character changes through the change of their objective and/or the change of their outlook and/or attitude.[94]

In Gurskis' following chapter 'Chapter 3: Narrative', they suggest that the antagonist does not need to be a character. The conflict might also arise because of the opposition of the protagonist and society, themselves, nature, fate, etc. Nevertheless, a form of conflict is always important to drive the plot forward.[95] In many of Christopher Nolan's films, the opposing force is not visible. In *Dunkirk*[96], for example, the German troops who are the antagonist of the film are never seen. *Interstellar*[97]

[92] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 57.
[93] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 36 & p. 54.
[94] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; pp. 24-39.
[95] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; pp. 45-47.
[96] *Dunkirk*; dir. by Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros. Pictures, Syncopy Inc., RatPac-Dune Entertainment, 2017).
[97] *Interstellar*; dir. by Christopher Nolan (Legendary Pictures, Syncopy, Lynda Obst Productions, 2014).

features an even more impalpable opposing force: time. Here, the protagonist is fighting against various aspects of time: his daughter aging and the time until humanity is wiped out by nature. Time is portrayed as only sounds as there is a ticking within the music.

This gave the impulse to think about other ways of showing a conflict. As described in the subchapter 'Lack of User Agency', the audience of an interactive film should feel included and the interactivity justified; making them part of the narrative and giving them and their decision-making a purpose, justifies using interactivity. The questions arising in this context were: Who would the audience be? And, further, would they act as themselves or represent someone else? If the viewer represents themselves, having only two options to choose from (as explained above) cannot be justified; they might imagine another option that they would like to choose and would, thus, feel limited in their decision-making. If they, on the other hand, act as a character, they are forced to think and act as the character rather than themselves. Giving them a limited number of choices is, hence, justified; it makes thinking and acting as their assigned character easier, especially if the decision must be made within a limited amount of time. The two options give the audience markers and help them to understand and empathise with their character. Further, a sense of agency is ensured, as they have different options to choose from. 'A Slimming World' does not pose as a video game where interactivity can be used to a different extend; to make the structure of the film cohesive, limiting the options and decision-strands was vital.

3.1.2.   Few Key Characters

'The challenge for storytellers is to find ways to use interactivity effectively, so that users can enjoy both agency and a meaningful narrative experience.'[98] By actively having an influence, the audience obtains agency to feel immersed. Through having to empathise with the character that they are acting as, their actions – the choices they are making – feel justified. However, as this interactive short film should not resemble a game, the so-called 'character of the audience' must not be an active and visible character. Thus, the main character may not be aware of the audience's presence. As explained in the next subchapter, there will not be asides; this, thus, means that the main character is not reacting to the audience and, hence, is not aware of them. The audience, however, is aware of the character and, through the interactivity, taking part in the action. The audience has the expectation of interacting, as they know about the interactive aspects of the film but will not necessarily have the expectation of being a character. This, hence, needs to be justified through the genre, plot, and, ultimately, a moral.

By making the audience part of the action, having fewer supporting characters is plausible. The audience, in a way, compensates for fewer key characters. Still, some supporting characters need to be part of the script. As Dan Gurskis explains, a confidant gives an insight into the thinking of another

---

[98] Miller; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; p. 71.

character for example.[99] There is also the aspect of action; according to Gurskis, actions speak louder than words in a film. Words are how the character decides to present themselves to the world around them; actions show the audience what and how the character feels.[100] These two statements from Gurskis functioned as the catalyst to formulate two major aspects of the characters in this interactive short film; firstly, as it is supposed to be a character driven film, at least one confidant of the main character must be included in the script; secondly, the character's feelings and thoughts need to be very clear. Moreover, clarity should stem from actions. How can the actions, contradicting what the main character is saying, be shown? Producing a character driven film allows to focus on one character. Following them through their life, even when they are alone, is a feasible option. The decision was made to fully exploit that possibility and show as much of the character on their own as possible.

As this short film is limited in budget, fewer actors are needed. The more characters, the more actors willing to work for free need to be found. Moreover, there are limitations to the size of the crew; the more actors on set, the more members of crew are needed. This, again, creates the problem of payment. Keeping track of the storylines is more complicated the more different characters there are (especially due to the interactive aspect of the film). By having fewer characters, the audience's focus can be more on the key characters and the director can devote more time to each of the actors and their characters. Hence, the decision to have only one character in focus was made.

3.1.3. No Asides

Dan Gurskis names another plot device that can give an insight into what a character feels: asides.[101] Following the character through their life, even when they are alone and undertake actions of their normal life, can be seen as an indirect long aside; through their actions, the character shows the viewer how they feel without breaking the fourth wall. This option – breaking the fourth wall through actual asides – was considered but soon discarded. Using asides means that the viewer functions as an active character; they are, thus, expected to be recognised as such and addressed as someone who the main character is aware of. Further, the possibility for a certain element of surprise – the viewer realising that they have more influence on the action than they thought – would be diminished. Scenes would have to be written in which the situation and setting would justify for an audience to be there. Showing the character on their own and letting their actions speak louder than the words addressed to the audience (asides) is more appealing than having the character interact directly with the audience. Interactivity, as explained above and characterised by the OED, is a two-way flow of information; in the case of this narrative interactive, branched short film, the action on screen informs the decisions made by the viewer and the other way around: the decisions need to have an impact on the main

---

[99] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 39.
[100] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 26.
[101] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 39.

character's life. Moreover, this justifies having fewer supporting characters; if the character is shown alone relatively often, other characters are not needed to explain the main character's feelings and emotions through interactions with these other characters. Someone who does not feel observed behaves more honest. Asides would give the audience an active role; further, the main character would be aware of that role. This awareness would make them act less natural and honest as they would be aware that they are never alone.

When Mario Klarer speaks about asides in the television series *House of Cards*[102] in their article *Putting Television 'Aside': Novel Narration in House of Cards*, they explain that the main character is '[…] most of the time in the middle of a dialogue with interlocutors or audiences *within* the diegesis […]' when they are performing asides.[103] If asides are part of the action of this narrative interactive short film, they need to happen in a setting with multiple people involved for the aside to have the full effect. In the case of this interactive short film, as established above, fewer characters are part of the story. As asides do not have the same effect with few characters, they would not be adequate for this interactive short film.

In the television series *Fleabag*[104], asides are used to make the audience seem to be the protagonist's confidant. In their article 'Where did you go?! Trans-diegetic Address and Formal Innovation in Phoebe Waller-Bridge's Television Series *Fleabag*', Anna Wilson alludes that the asides in the series generate closeness and intimacy between protagonist and audience; they are a tool for the writer to win the audience over and lure them into the story world.[105] Both aspects, having a big pool of characters as well as the aspect of creating closeness between audience and main character, are not what this interactive short film aims to show.

Many characters, as alluded to above, mean more complications for the branch-structure of the film and the work with the actors in understanding it. In light of the dissertation, thinking about the effect of possible complications was important; further, these difficulties informed decisions about the script. Additionally, the writer-director directs the audience's acting if they are representing and acting as characters; if they act as an active character – meaning that they get recognised by the main character, they need to be directed more precisely in their decision-making. By being rather passive as a character but active in terms of their influence on the story through their decisions, their role within the interactive story can be justified. Further, they still maintaining the needed distance to spectate. Further, the impact of the audience's decisions can function as an element of surprise as they expect to have an influence on the story but not on the main character's life. The idea to include asides later in

---

[102] *House of Cards*; created by Beau Willimon (Media Rights Capital (MRC), Netflix, Panic Pictures (II), Trigger Street Productions, 2013-2018).
[103] Mario Klarer; 'Putting Television 'Aside': Novel Narration in House of Cards' in *New Review of Film and Television Studies*; Vol. 12, 2014, Is. 2; pp. 203-220.
[104] *Fleabag*; dir. by Harry Bradbeer (Two Brothers Pictures, 2016-2019).
[105] Anna Wilson; 'Where did you go?! Trans-diegetic Address and Formal Innovation in Phoebe Waller-Bridge's Television Series Fleabag' in *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies*; Vol. 17 (2022), Issue 4, pp. 415-435.

script was also discarded; asides need time to be established which the time frame of a short film does not allow.

A simple form of asides is a direct look into the camera to demonstrate and create closeness and sympathy for the character, as done in the series *Fleabag* for example. This decision lies in the hands of the director; in order to distinct between the role of the writer and of the director, frames and camera angles were not considered during the writing process. As mentioned above, not writing with a fully formed image in mind but rather leaving the script open for interpretation was in order. It is the director's task (here, the same person in another role) to visualise the script.

3.1.4. The Familiar

In the 'Introduction' to *The Short Screenplay*, Dan Gurskis explains that a story should be drawn from oneself to be made one's own.[106] In a Filmmaking lecture, Andrew Vickers illustrates that 'memory and personal experience' are some of the places where ideas can come from.[107] This notion of drawing from familiar sources and imitating life through a narrative is not a new concept; even Aristotle wrote in *Poetics* that different medias draw from 'mimesis': a kind of representation of actions, characters, and emotions – in short: the familiarities of life.[108]

3.1.5. Influences of Technicalities

The procedure of thinking about the theme and the key characters proposed to be the starting point of the writing process of 'A Slimming World'. To constrain the development of the script, a step-by-step document was created listing important aspects of what the script should include (see *Figure 7: Starting Points* and *Appendix 1: Approach of the Screenplay*). The approach of Dan Gurskis was influential as their book *The Short Screenplay* had already been useful for the approach heretofore. In 'Chapter 1: Key Concepts', Gurskis describes the different kinds of short films subjected to their length and action. The consideration of technicalities was vital to determine the length of 'A Slimming World'; the two main minutiae were budget and time. With the budget and the time to develop, write, and produce the film being minimal, approximately six months were set aside for the development and writing of the script.

The question about branching imposed further adjustments to the length of the film; it needs to be long enough to allow for an adequate number of branching possibilities to arise. On the other hand, the longer the film, the longer is each of the branches. This, in turn, indicates an increase of the length of needed material for the film.

---

[106] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 7.

[107] Andrew Vickers; 'Idea Generation' in *Filmmaking Lectures*; lecture notes; (York: University of York, 04.10.2021).

[108] Aristotle; *Poetics*; ed. and trans. by Stephen Halliwell; (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

3.1.6.   Genre, Characters, and Conflict – Developing the Story

> The purpose of a character-driven film is to explore what it means to be human through examination, and often transformation, of a character. In this type of film, we devise our conflicts, actions and plot to reveal or transform that character over time. The momentum of such a story comes directly from the desires, decisions and reactions of the particular character under our dramatic microscope.[109]

Genre was the next aspect studied; according to Bonnie O'Neill, the essence of the story, the audience which is going to watch the film, and the tone and code are important factors that need to be considered before writing. O'Neill goes further by giving an outline of a possible approach to a screenplay: First, the premise should be made clear. The second step, according to O'Neill, is researching into genre and audience. These two aspects cohere as the genre determines the specific audience which is going to watch the film. In turn, the genre reflects the expectations of the specific audience. As 'A Slimming World' is a character-driven film, the melodrama was initially seen as an appropriate genre. Melodrama often has a negative connotation as it is associated with afternoon telenovelas that feature exaggerative acting and storytelling. In fact, one should '[…] suggest that melodrama at its most basic concerns itself with stories that are essentially realistic.'[110] Patricia Cooper dedicates a chapter of the book *Writing the Short Film* to the melodrama and explains that this genre is not as stereotypical as often conceived. 'Melodramas […] are stories that may have happened, or that at least in the mind of the audience, *could* have happened.'[111] The story of 'A Slimming World', even though fictional, is supposed to be truthful to make the actions believable for the audience – the reason for the genre being an interactive melodrama. This decision informed other aspects of the story as well; in their book chapter, Cooper discloses the importance of relationships, the main character's struggle, psychologically complex storylines, and current issues. These are some of the most important characteristics of a melodrama which informed further development of story and plot.

However, it soon became apparent that there would be a metagenre; according to Ken Dancyger '[m]etagenre, or the genre that transcends specific genres, can be categorized as melodrama, hyperdrama, docudrama, and experimental narrative.'[112] Whilst docudrama mixes aspects of documentary and drama, hyperdrama is more fictional whilst still offering a social, spiritual, or political moral and dealing with current issues often related to globalisation. Experimental narratives focus less on plot and character than on the style and the voice of the writer-director.[113] Looking back from the perspective of having written the script, the metagenre of the developed interactive short film script is closest to the hyperdrama. However, I propose that there is more than one metagenre present

---

[109] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 57.
[110] Patricia Cooper; 'Chapter 13: The Melodrama' in *Writing the Short Film*; 3rd edn; (Waltham, Mass.: Focal Press, 2004); pp. 153-69.
[111] Cooper; 'Chapter 13: The Melodrama'; pp. 153-69.
[112] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 197.
[113] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; pp. 197-208.

in this interactive short film, as t features aspects of the experimental narrative; the style in form of the interactivity and the structure suggest the existence of this second metagenre. According to Ken Dancyger, mixing multiple genres, in this case metagenres, can be regarded as working against genre. 'This works best when one genre occupies the plot layer and the other genre occupies the character layer.'[114] Here, the experimental narrative occupies the plot layer, whilst the hyperdrama is related to the character layer. However, 'A Slimming World' cannot be classified as a docudrama; as established, there are no asides or any other features that give the impression of the main character or other characters being aware of the camera. Moreover, the film will not give the impression and, hence, set the audience's expectation to be related to documentary or 'i-DOCs'. As the film addresses an issue related to our globalised world, as will be discussed in chapter '3.2.1. Implementation of the Substantial Aspects of the Film', and presents the audience with a moral through interactivity and the authorial body, the hyperdrama combined with the experimental narrative can, justifiably, be seen as the film's metagenres.

Upon research, the importance of characters became more apparent. Many sources either talk about character as a convenient starting point for the development of scripts (Gurskis)[115], as being at the heart of the melodrama (Cooper)[116], or as the gate through which the audience enters the story (Dancyger)[117]. When looking at character, it needs to be said that character is not identical to characterisation. The latter can be observed and is more subjective than the former.[118]

As this dissertation focuses on the work with actors, concepts surrounding character are essential to look at: Who are characters and what do they represent in a film? The foundations of character lie, partially, within the poetics of Ancient Greece, as many aspects of Western modern-day drama do.[119] 'Drama […] is a level of conflict that is shaped, as Aristotle suggests, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. This conflict may be internal, interpersonal, intersocietal, or between man and nature. The consequent clash of goals brings us into an identification with a character.'[120] Character is vital for developing a conflict that can shape the dramatic action of a narrative. Further, characters need to fit the genre and type of film in which they are depicted. 'Character, its nature and its goal, should function within story form expectations. Not to do so is to undermine the story form.'[121]

At the heart of drama lies conflict.[122] Thus, if character and conflict are at the heart of drama, conflict and character must be connected whilst fitting the genre they are depicted in. Gurskis states that character functions as a catalyst for the action to unfold.[123] Drama means action and conflict lies

---

[114] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; pp. 73-74.

[115] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 90.

[116] Cooper; 'Chapter 13: The Melodrama'; pp. 153-69 (p. 154).

[117] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 26.

[118] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; pp. 24&28.

[119] Cobley, Paul; *Narrative*; (London: Routledge, 2001); p. 47.

[120] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 3.

[121] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 32.

[122] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 3.

[123] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 38.

at the heart of it. According to Dancyger, '[c]haracters have a particular kind of struggle that is generated out of their goal, which is to change their life circumstances or experiences. The problem is that they are powerless [...]' in a melodrama.[124] Cooper describes this as the powerless main character struggling against 'the power structure'[125]. This struggle represents the story's conflict. Action is generated through conflict. As 'A Slimming World' is a melodrama, a character-driven film following mainly just one character, the struggle and the conflict need to come from within the main character. One of the possible initiators of conflicts within a story is, according to Gurskis, a character versus themselves.[126] This corresponds with the notion of Aristotle that a conflict can be internal. However, I propose that there is a way of combining multiple of the different types of conflicts that Aristotle addresses; an internal conflict of a character can, for instance, be combined with an intersocietal conflict and a conflict between man and nature. A character's want might corelate with a societal standard, whilst their need might be essential for survival and opposing the want. This creates tension and, thus, an internal conflict based upon intersocietal and humans versus nature discrepancies. In conclusion, multiple conflicts can be carried out internally by a main character.

Two principles of drama are archetypes and stereotypes. Especially in short films, these principles can be of effective use, as, '[...] the short film's narrative compression and limited, often continuous, story duration supports abbreviated characterization. Even the main characters in shorts have a limited number of clearly defined traits, which are established with quick strokes.'[127] To establish characters quickly, shorts rely on recognisable characters.[128] These recognisable characters can be forms of archetypes or use stereotypes to evoke recognition within the spectator. As stereotypes are often untrue perceptions of society, the focus lay more on archetypes. According to C.G. Jung, a differentiation between 'archetype' and 'archetypal ideas' needs to be made; whilst the former is irrepresentable, the latter is what we call archetypes in narratives. 'The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.'[129] Archetypes, in the psychological as well as the narrative sense, have existed over centuries and are founded on religious and ideological beliefs.

> There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition
> has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution, not in the form of
> images filled with content, but at first only as forms without content, representing
> merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action. When a situation
> occurs which corresponds to a given archetype, that archetype becomes activated and

---

[124] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 64.
[125] Cooper; 'Chapter 13: The Melodrama'; pp. 153-69 (p. 155).
[126] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; pp. 45-46.
[127] Felando; 'Chapter 3: Short Film Specificity Narrative Compression, Unity, Character, and Endings'; pp. 45-63.
[128] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 70.
[129] C. G. Jung; *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 9 (Part 1): Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*; (Princeton University Press, 1969); p.5.

a compulsiveness appears, which, like an instinctual drive, gains its way against all reason and will, or else produces a conflict of pathological dimensions, that is to say, a neurosis.[130]

Archetypes are, thus, not simply a way to make a character and their traits easily recognisable, they are also a device for exploration of, as Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier pronounced, '[…] what it means to be human'.[131] Using archetypes, as opposed to stereotypes, means to reflect real life within a character whilst still using familiarity to quickly establish characters and conflict. Hence, it was important to be aware of the ordinaries of characters of the interactive short film and on the significance of archetypal patterns easily recognisable by the spectator.

3.1.7.   Plotting the Plot – What is the Narrative?

To plot is to understand what a plot is which ensures that the development of the script is logical. Philip Parker distinguishes between the words story and plot. Story is a pattern of events which gives the audience and the writer a structure. Plot, on the other hand, is how this story unfolds – how it is told.[132] Story represents how the events unfold realistically, whilst plot is the pattern in which the information is fed to the audience. As authorship is related to how the story is fed to the audience, authorship and structuring the story into a plot corelate. Authorship, as mentioned, means collaboration; hence, the best structure that conveys the story and its moral need to be determined through collaboration. In this case, collaboration in terms of thinking of how performers can show the action effectively leads to structuring the story to create an understandable plot and narrative. Through previously made decisions regarding the story, a framework for the story had already been constructed. Further, the interactivity determined for the structure to be almost linear; thus, an altered version of 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure', as explained above, works in the context of this story. The determined aspects and outlines of the plot influence how the plot is developed.

Some concepts help to establish story and plot; the first concept is the logline – a condensed version of the plot.[133] According to O'Neill, the synopsis – the next step – is a more concise version of the story.[134] Arguably, it is not the story but the plot that O'Neill is referring to here, as the synopsis is a one page version of the script; it is already in a 1:2:1 ratio (referring to the acts) and, further, mentions the names of characters. The logline, on the other hand, is not a version of the plot yet; it represents the story and theme within a short number of sentences.

As said above, character is a suitable place to start and immensely important for the narrative shape. Bonnie O'Neill outlines how a writer can make characters as 'believable and unique'[135] as Dan

---

[130] Jung; *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 9 (Part 1): Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*; p.48.
[131] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 57.
[132] Philip Parker; 'Chapter 2: A Creative Matrix' in *The Art and Science of Screenwriting*; (pp. 16-25).
[133] O'Neill; 'Writing for Film'; (p. 295).
[134] O'Neill; 'Writing for Film'; (p. 296).
[135] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 9.

Gurskis demands of them to be. This is extremely important in terms of interactivity; the story and the plot – influenced by interactivity – are more believable if the characters are believable. O'Neill proposes to create a character sketch of the characters' physiology, sociology, and psychology to make them tri-dimensional.[136] As established, a writer-director is required to be as open to change and interpretations as possible during the writing process. Fleshing out a character to the extent that O'Neill suggests can easily mean for a writer-director to abandon the needed distance. Gurskis proves this point by stating that a screenwriter imagines an end product but should not be extremely specific.[137]

‘The Hero's Journey', as developed by Joseph Cambell, is another interesting aspect of O'Neill's approach. The main character's plot becomes apparent, as 'The Hero's Journey' explores the main character's conflict, how it develops, and how it resolves.[138] It is important to think about how the audience is fed information when developing the plot. The 'Hero's Journey' can be useful. Gurskis names three possibilities for the audience to get their information which can be mixed and matched within the plot: the audience knowing less than the characters (mystery), audience and characters learning at the same time (suspense), and the audience being more informed than the characters (dramatic irony).[139] As the audience should not be aware of the moral that will be proposed to them and the main character should not have the information before them, suspense is created. The short film being a character-driven film, audience and main character need to receive their information simultaneously. The main character is in focus and, hence, the story and plot are simultaneously the characters story and plot, meaning that the 'Hero's Journey' is almost identical to the plot presented to the audience (see *Figure 5: Similarities between 'Hero's Journey and initial 'Synopsis'* for similarities between the 'Hero's Journey' and the initial 'Synopsis').

Figure 5: Similarities between 'Hero's Journey' and initial 'Synopsis'

---

[136] O'Neill; 'Writing for Film'; (pp. 295-96).
[137] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. xiii.
[138] O'Neill; 'Writing for Film'; (p. 297).
[139] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 51.

The next aspect of writing became apparent through looking at the three-act structure (see *Figure 6: Three Act Structure*). The three-act structure is part of a third word that needs unpicking: narrative. According to the OED, narrative is '[a]n account of a series of events, facts, etc., given in order and with the establishing of connections between them'.[140] Narration is not just the sequence that the story (the events) is told in, which is the plot; it represents the next step of storytelling: it is '[…] the mode selected for [the showing or telling of these events] to take place.'[141] To develop the narrative, one needs to be sure about the story and the plot. Without knowing in which order the story is going to be shown, establishing how it is shown is illogical. The interactive aspects of the story are highly influential on the structure. The interactivity represents aspects of the order of the story and how it is shown. 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure' and the mode and platform that the audience will interact and receive the interactive short film, determines which structure is most appropriate for the format. As the audience desires to follow and understand the action and their own interaction, the story, despite the interactive aspects, should be as linear as possible. Hence, the structure of 'A Slimming World' needs to combine interactivity and linearity.

According to Ken Dancyger, '[t]he three-act structure, organized along two general principles-a beginning, middle, and an end, and along an arc of rising action-essentially provides a linear shape to the structure.'[142] This notion leads back to the narrative and how the story will be told. Dancyger lists certain characteristics that link narrative and three-act structure: '[…] the focus of the narrative is the main character; […] the premise of the narrative, two opposing choices for the main character, will provide the emotional spine for the narrative; […] if there is a plot it will challenge the main character and his or her goal; […] the character layer will articulate the two choices implicit in the premise; and […] the story will move to closure or resolution. All these elements will be organized within the three-act structure.'[143] The two choices for the main character are their wants and needs.[144] In the case of an internal conflict, the wants and needs might take on the roles of the character's objective and an antagonistic force. The main character's goal is their objective.[145] The two choices represent the conflict (character versus self, character versus society), whilst the closure or resolution is dependent on what the ending should tell the audience.[146] However, as the plot is supposed to create a challenge, the plot itself can create conflict. The conflict can be exaggerated through the structure of the story. In this case, the structure is highly influenced by the interactivity. Consequently, the interactivity can be part of the conflict within the plot layer. Further, the ending needs to function within the world of the story and to emphasise the moral that is supposed to be told to the audience. An ending does not always need to have a closure; the ending can be open if it makes sense in the story world and for the

---

[140] OED; '*Narrative*'; accessed: 16.02.2023, 10:00am.
[141] Cobley; *Narrative*; p. 6.
[142] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 43.
[143] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 43.
[144] Vickers; 'Idea Generation' in *Filmmaking Lectures*; lecture notes; (York: University of York, 04.10.2021).
[145] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 28.
[146] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 58.

plot. On that account, interactivity and an open ending are part of the plot layer – the experimental narrative metagenre.

The plot must follow a certain outline before reaching a resolution if the three-act structure is deployed. Act I features the set-up; a character and their goal, premise, plot, and genre are introduced. The plot starts at a moment that thrusts the audience into the story. Now, character and premise are introduced before the catalytic event propels the unfolding of plot and character-layer in a feature-length film. In a short film, this catalytic event is complementary to the turning point of Act I. The turning point ends the set-up and marks the transition into Act II. Ken Dancyger provides an insightful framework of Act II which generates dramatic conflict through plot: triangulation. The turning point at the end of Act I and the turning point at the end of Act II are the cornerstones of the triangle. They are connected through the development of plot and character. The tip of the triangle is represented by the midpoint – the point that marks the shift between the two axes of the triangle. The turning point of Act II marks a poignant break in the plot. From here, Act III unfolds representing the resolution of the plot.[147] Ken Dancyger suggests that a third act in short films is not by all means necessary: '[t]he short film has the equivalent of a very short Act I and then, depending upon whether you are deploying resolution or not, what follows will be Act II (no resolution) or Act III (resolution).'[148] Notwithstanding, it is important to know the ending before starting to write, as this informs the structure. Cynthia Felando argues that many, but not all, short fiction films make use of an intense ending in form of twists and surprises.[149] Surprises can, additionally to action, be generated by structure – the plot. These structural surprises need to, simultaneously, be set-up accordingly within the three-act structure.

Diagram of Three Act Structure (to control what I've written so far: is it clear/precise?):

Act 1: establishing; introduce premise, characters, conflict; tone, texture, setting become clear; problem for main character arises
Act 2: series of conflicts; tension and suspense
Act 3: resolving; crisis and resolution

Page Markers:
- Set up - page 3/4
- Midpoint - page 15
- Climax - page 27
- Turning Points - before end of act 1 and 2

Figure 6: Three Act Structure

The treatment is the first version of the narrative. O'Neill alludes to its dramatic characteristics and calls it the 'writer's storyboard'. It mentions outlined scenes, actions, and specific locations, and may include quotation marks for dialogue ideas. As it is written in present tense, the narrative

---

[147] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; pp. 43-58.
[148] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 14.
[149] Felando; 'Chapter 3: Short Film Specificity Narrative Compression, Unity, Character, and Endings'; pp. 45-63.

character of the treatment is undeniable.[150] The 'writer's storyboard' can highly influence the collaborative work, as it informs the discussions with, for example, actors. Moreover, it can also be influenced by collaboration. As collaboration informs the script, it needs to inform the development of and tools for writing the script.

Alongside the aides and recommendations for writing a script, a writer is required to establish their own narrative strategy. Narrative strategies are 'the particular mix of plot, character layer, and genre that a writer deploys. It also refers to variations in expectations as to how the main and secondary characters are treated in the script.'[151] Each and every writer approaches a script differently. Nevertheless, there are certain elements of narration that almost every writer utilises. These elements are not ways of approaching a script, such as 'The Hero's Journey', or recommended steps, like the logline, synopsis, or treatment, which lead toward the script. These elements have been used for centuries to write drama just like the Three-Act-Structure.

There are similarities and differences between the narrative of feature films and short films. According to Ken Dancyger, the main differences are length, structure, and origin. Short films are similar to paintings or poems and are sometimes even based on them as there is limited time for character development and exploration of backstories; here, interpretation is key. Thus, short films often tend to use experimental narratives.[152] In the case of this short film, the interactivity can be seen as the device and style of the experimental narrative.

The aim of telling an engaging story is the key similarity between short and feature films. To tell it truthfully and engagingly, similar approaches are needed. As the following subchapter will outline, drama and narration are the frame of the different medias through which stories are told like books, poems, photographs, plays, or films. Dancyger names narrative terms, such as surprise, tension, energy, tone, and voice, as important for a script writer.[153] In my opinion, these terms can be useful for every engaging story that is told either visually, aurally, or on paper. The overall approach of writing the script is not altered by the length and interactive nature of 'A Slimming World', as the outlined elements are still useful for the writing of the script. However, these two aspects informed the aspects of story, plot, and narrative development and should be kept in mind in any case of writing a narrative interactive short film.

3.1.8.   Explanation and Justification of the Use of Interactivity

The wish to make an interactive short film came first, whilst the story was developed out of the circumstances. Thoughts about interactivity informed structure and genre, which, in turn, influenced the development of the story and its theme. Consequently, the interactivity can be justified as it was

---

[150] O'Neill; 'Writing for Film'; (p. 298).
[151] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 14.
[152] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 24.
[153] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; pp. 6-14.

the basis for the overall development of the film and the story. The story is suitable for the format of an interactive short film, as the impact society has on one's mental health can be shown visibly by making the audience interact with the story and serving as society in form of making decisions that influence the story.

Imitation of real life is at the core of drama. 'Both Plato and Aristotle considered drama a 'mimetic' art […]'[154]. Melodrama – the chosen genre for this interactive short film – is, as explained above, a way of telling stories that in the eyes of the audience could have happened. Making a melodrama interactive, in this case through the branching, indicates that the interactivity requires to be purposeful and, further, an imitation of something that the audience could perceive as real. Usually, a person makes their own choices; in this interactive short film the opposite is the case: the audience influences some of the actions of the main character as they are influencing the course of the journey and, hence, alter the character's journey. Hence, the question whether this interactive short film can be a melodrama is a valid question. Here, the metagenre comes into play; a hyperdrama offers a moral related to the issues of our globalised world which the film is dealing with. The moral of the story must, thus, be related to the interactivity to justify the use of the melodrama, experimental narrative, and hyperdrama. As a moral questions something from an ethical point of view, the moral of this interactive short film with a melodramatic genre, and hyperdramatic and experimental narrative metagenre should question the interactivity or, rather, what the interactivity represents in this film. Here, the interactivity is represented by an audience making decisions that alter the course of the story and, further, the course of the main characters journey. Consequently, the moral needs to question this influence that the audience has on story and character – their agency and their part within the authorial body. Moreover, the film features a disclaimer, explaining the interactivity and the audience's role within the film: they act as an actor, making the decision as their assigned character. Giving them a purpose is aimed to satisfy the audience and justify the awareness of their active role within the film. One of Adriano D'Aloia's points of critique of interactivity is the lack of identification with the characters because of physical interaction with the action. By assigning a role to the audience, the physical interaction is justified and identification can be provoked. However, the exact amount of influence that the audience has within the film wholly manifests later in the film. This, then, relates to the moral of the film, questioning the ethics of the audience's interaction with the film and, subsequently, the main character. This slow reveal of the moral enhances the chances of the audience wanting to watch the film for a second time, as they want to know whether making different decisions would influence the moral and the outcome of the story.

The main character is not aware of the decisions that the audience makes, as they have no asides and do not indicate any awareness of the audience's presence. Further, the questions for the audience are should-questions: What *should* the main character do? The questions are never assertive. This way

---

[154] Cobley; *Narrative*; (London: Routledge, 2001); p. 61.

of asking the questions is reflective of the subtle influence that the audience has on the character. Their expectation is that they have an influence on the story. However, the influence that these decisions have on the main character will only become apparent to the audience over the course of the story and plot unfolding. With each decision, they become more and more part of the narrative, giving them more agency and, hence, more value as part of the authorial body. If the story and plot reflect this influence and immersion, the interactive aspects are justified on structural as well as on thematic grounds.

Drama is not a recent invention – it has existed for thousands of years. With film, and particularly interactive film, a relatively new – seen in context of the age of drama – way of exploring drama has emerged. Whilst the packaging in which drama is delivered is new, drama itself is still founded on some of its primordial principles. One of these principles of Athenian drama, which is also applicable to modern day drama, is '[…] that action is needed in order to create drama.'[155] Further, in Ancient Greek 'drama' or δρᾶμα means 'action'.[156] As established earlier, action can arise through conflict. In Athenian drama, the origin of the conflict – and hence of action – and the methods of delivering said conflict and action was influenced mainly by the public. The chorus of Greek tragedy posed as the link between public and agency. 'The chorus manifests itself as a kind of naïve consciousness that desires to retain a unified yet differentiated wholeness. Because this type of collective and naive consciousness usually does not participate directly in tragic conflict, it therefore tends to remain neutral.'[157] In the case of a narrative interactive short film, however, the audience does participate by interacting with the story. This means that the audience cannot be seen as neutral from the perspective of a writer-director. If parts of the audience are not familiar with interactive film, they might still have the expectation of being a neutral spectator. Just as the chorus of Greek tragedy, they wish to remain neutral and to spectate rather than participate. Through their actions (interactivity), however, they facilitate action, resulting in drama. In the case of an interactive film, the actions are not passive but rather active in form of making decisions that directly influence the story. The audience is, thus, not neutral. Nevertheless, they can be seen as naïve, as they are not aware of the amount of impact that they have on the story and, subsequently, the main character. This naïveté decreases over the course of the narrative interactive short film.

Just as the main character, the audience is – upon first viewing – not aware of the illusion that is created for them; since the storylines always come back together after a decision has been played out, the audience has less agency over the story than they think. Once they are aware – upon second viewing – they have witnessed the end, hopefully understanding the moral of this short film, questioning the ethics behind having an influence on a person. An audience member that understands which issues this short film raises is likely to understand why the audience was granted the illusion of

---

[155] 'Introduction: What is Drama?' in *Part III - Drama*; p. 184.
[156] OED; *'Drama - Etymology'*; accessed: 08.03.2024, 10:31am.
[157] 'Introduction: What is Drama?' in *Part III - Drama*; p. 187.

agency only. Moreover, the audience is allowed another form of agency that becomes apparent at the end of the film: their influence on the main character.

Overall, the techniques required to approach the development of an interactive film are similar to those of a linear film, as explained before. The writer-director needs to focus on the same focal points: everything needs to serve the story; the characters, the actions and reactions, the dialogue, the delivery, and the shots, they all need to tell the story truthfully and engagingly. The interactivity is a means to tell the story. The story and plot, just as in any other narrative film, come first. However, they are highly influenced by the interactivity. The story is told to an audience, here, the audience becomes an active part of the story. Thus, the audience functions as the link between story and interactivity. When keeping the audience in mind, whilst developing an engaging story, the writer needs to, subsequently, have the interactivity in mind; it informs how the audience will perceive the narrative interactive short film. Interactivity needs to serve the story and its characters and vice versa. To understand and shoot an interactive short film, one needs to understand the processes of production of narrative film. Developing and writing a short film script featuring interactivity still means to write with the story in mind.

3.2. The Script

The script conveys the meaning of the story; characters, their relationships, the action, and the moral are decipherable through the script. Scripts are the link between the story and the directors and actors. Further, a script is also the link between the story and the producers. According to Ken Dancyger, '[a] script is presented in visual detail and dialogue organized in a distinct fashion unique to film. That format is called the master scene format […] This format is useful because it facilitates the reading of the script as well as the budgeting of the script. The scene numbering changes as there is a location change. This allows tabulation of personnel, cast, crew, and props per location facilitating budgeting.'[158] Thus, the formatting of the script is just as important as the implementation of the substantial aspects and choices that are predetermined. The script of 'A Slimming World' adheres to the structure of the master scene format. However, details about shots are not covered, as the distinction between writer (the concept) and director (the visual) needed to be clear. The following paragraphs aim to detail how the substantial aspects and choices, outlined in the previous sub-chapters, were incorporated into the script of 'A Slimming World'.

3.2.1. Implementation of the Substantial Aspects and Choices

As much as a narrative strategy is a writer's particular mix of plot, character layer, and genre, the perception of the audience was the key to my own narrative strategy implemented in 'A Slimming

---

[158] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 7.

World'. Interactivity plays an important role in how the story is communicated to an audience; hence, examination and analysis of interactivity and issues surrounding it were a constant in my narrative strategy of this film.

The determination of some of the technicalities of the film was the first step, before looking at content aspects.. Budget and targeted length needed to be kept in mind to create margins in which the script of this narrative interactive short film functions. The initial aim was to write a Medium Short with a length of about 20 to 25 minutes (see: *Figure 7: Starting Points)*. According to Dan Gurskis, a Medium Short features a traditional A-Plot and, further, a B-Plot (secondary plot), in which complex dramatic action allows for multiple crises (branching opportunities) to arise. Here, it was intended to include about twelve to fifteen major scenes to allow for an adequate number of branching possibilities to arise without having to produce an excessive amount of filming material.[159] However, looking back at the written script of this interactive short film there is no apparent B-Plot. Due to the complexity of the interactivity, adding a B-Plot seemed inadequate; another level of conflict would need further justification within the interactive aspects of the film that informed the story and plot. Keeping the story simple and straightforward in terms of conflict was necessary to maintain a sense of clarity and credibility within the script.

STARTING POINTS:

Concept:

Medium Short
- 20-25 minutes (maybe, a little bit longer because of the branches)
- Multiple crises
- B-plot (but not too complex)
- 12-15 major scenes

Focus: conflict clear -> action arises; character

Image based, not too much dialogue

Central Problem: Development of an Eating Disorder

Figure 7: Starting Points

The goal of drama is to show and tell a truthful and engaging story through actions that are generated by conflict. To show a story that could have happened in the eyes of the audience, the story world needs to appear plausible. It is important to be clear about the essence of the story, the audience which is going to watch the film, and the tone and code. In the case of the development of this film, all these aspects were influenced by the desire to make an interactive short film. However, to show a truthful and engaging story, one should draw from oneself through memories, personal issues, and/or stories that might give inspiration for the premise. A topic close to my heart is the development of an eating disorder (ED) – particularly Anorexia Nervosa (AN) – and the impact that society has on its development. Further research into this topic, as will be discussed in the following sub-chapter, inspired the essence of the film and how it can be linked to already established aspects of the film like interactivity.

---

[159] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 4.

The chosen topic and the interactive short film format informed the tone and code of this narrative interactive short film. Making this a character-driven film was premised on the thesis that short films usually focus on a single character to ensure unity.[160] The goal of a character-driven film is to investigate what it means to be human through a character. Thus, character was a good way to start approaching this script. As the development of an eating disorder is the premise of the film, the film follows a main character, Charlie, developing an eating disorder. Charlie is non-binary to ensure being open about the main character. Moreover, this decision can be justified by the main characters insecurities about how others perceive them and their body, as they do not conform to the gender binary. Bernadetta Izydorczyk devotes *Body Image in Eating Disorders: Clinical Diagnosis and Integrative Approach to Psychological Treatment* to the link between body image and eating disorders. They argue that '[b]ody image is a mental structure describing the experience of the individual's internal world in relation to the external (social, i.e., shared with other people) environment […]'.[161] Meaning, that one's own perception is influenced by their surroundings. Izydorczyk addresses the role of social media in the development of an ED and the interplay of social media and body image: 'Food myths are passed down across generations not only through the family system, but also through mass media. Some myths propagated by media concern the perception of thinness and overweight.'[162] Eileen Anderson-Fye emphasises this aspect by arguing that an increase of interconnectivity of the world has changed the perception of the ideal body significantly. In the chapter 'Cultural Influences on Body Image and Eating Disorders', they name 'migration and travel, multifaceted media outlets, new technologies, and transnational economic institutions' as some of the reasons for the transnational change of this ideal.[163]

Multifaced media outlets and recent technology seemed particularly relevant for the film script, as social media combines society with new technologies and, most importantly, with interactivity. Platforms such as Instagram are interactive. The user receives information through stories, reels, posts, etc.; in turn, Instagram receives information from the user through their activity. These platforms use algorithms to tailor the shown content to the user. The user will see content that they can relate to; moreover, content of the same topic is shown to the user repeatedly.[164] Making use interactivity in the film script, allows to combine the interactive aspect of the film with the interactive aspect of reality, as interactivity is not solely an aspect that informed the tone and code of this interactive short film, it is, further, part of the tone and code, and of the narrative of the film.

---

[160] Felando; 'Chapter 3: Short Film Specificity Narrative Compression, Unity, Character, and Endings'; pp. 45-63.
[161] Bernadetta Izydorczyk; *Body Image in Eating Disorders: Clinical Diagnosis and Integrative Approach to Psychological Treatment*; (London: Routledge, 2022); p. 4.
[162] Izydorczyk; *Body Image in Eating Disorders: Clinical Diagnosis and Integrative Approach to Psychological Treatment*; p. 23.
[163] Eileen Anderson-Fye; 'Chapter 9: Cultural Influences on Body Image and Eating Disorders', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eating Disorders*; 2nd Edition, 5th Oct. 2017; pp. 187–208.
[164] Kelley Cotter; 'Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram' in *New Media & Society*; 21:4 (April 2019); pp. 895-913.

Another aspect informing the essence, code and tone, and generic outline of the audience is genre. Here, melodrama, hyperdrama, and experimental narrative were selected to be the most suitable genres that can convey this kind of story convincingly. Hyperdrama usually communicates a moral. This moral needs to reflect and be supported by the action taking place. Action arises through conflict. Here, conflict is generated by the premise: the development of an eating disorder. However, thoughts had circulated around blending an internal conflict of the main character with an intersocietal and a conflict between man and nature. This blend is supported by the premise, as eating disorders are manifested within a person through external influences and result in a quasi-defiance against nature by disregarding their health. Further, the combination of the different types of conflict is founded in the notion about wants and needs. Here, the needs are reflected by nature and Charlie's initial outlook and perspective. The wants are mirrored by society and its standards, and Charlies striving for a different body. Thus, a conflict between society and nature is carried out within the main character Charlie. Charlies outlook changes gradually, which perpetuates for their attitude to change as well. This growing conflict moves the action and the plot forward. As much as it is a conflict between society and nature, these two opposing forces manifest internally within Charlie. They can be seen as internal protagonist and antagonist. The term protagonist originally referred to the first character entering the scene. Charlie's initial outlook, perspective, and nature can be regarded as the protagonist of this interactive short film. Their want, which is influenced by society and its standards, opposes this protagonist and can, hence, be regarded as the antagonist of the story. (see *Figure 8: Conflict/Problems and Characters*).

Focus: conflict clear -> action arises; character

Central Problem: Development of an Eating Disorder

B-Plot Problem: Change of character of Protagonist

Antagonist: Audience (choices of audience)

Protagonist: Character who develops an Eating Disorder

    Outlook: World is evil

    Attitude: Lovely person

    Arc: Decline of mental health, realisation

    Catalyst: established before film

Figure 8: Conflict/Problems and Characters

Generally, characters in a short film are elusive and rarely undergo significant changes because of the length and impossibility of a long exposition and are usually not active narrative agents. However, they react to dramatic changes that are happening either to them or around them. In the case of this interactive short film, the characters see changes happening to the main character. However, the sudden imposing force of the audience interacting with the story and, in a way, with Charlie's life can be seen as changes that are happening around the main character. Interactivity, thus, becomes part of the conflict and of the action. On the other hand, it should be noted that the main character is, as

established, not aware of the interactivity and its impact. Hence, the question about who the audience is in this interactive short film needs to be answered.

To answer the question, looking at interactivity and eating disorder development is of importance. Social media platforms are, as discussed interactive and influence people with an eating disorder. Further, these social media platforms are influenced by society and its standards. This creates a link between the story where Charlie's wants are influenced by society and society having an influence on people through social media: interactivity. In real life this interactivity is represented by social media interactivity, whilst the interactivity of the short film is represented by the audience having an impact on the story and Charlie. The most logical conclusion is, thus, that the audience should represent society. They are, hence, part of what fuels Charlie's antagonistic traits. If the conflict is carried out internal, society in form of the audience is not the antagonist itself but features antagonistic traits. Here, it is worth noting that, as explained, an antagonist does not necessarily mean villain. The true villain of the story is the ED manifested within Charlie. The representation and influence of the audience in form of interaction proposes a moral and is still in support of the fundamentals of drama: the imitation of real life. Further, the audience is constrained to make decisions from society's perspective. They are forced to act as a character rather than themselves. In a previous chapter, the certain lack of agency that stems from only two options of choice being proposed to the audience was justified through assigning a character to the audience. By making the audience think as society, they have another guideline to adhere to that might be familiar to them but still gives them enough freedom to act in accordance with their own perception.

After having established who the audience is in relation to genre, story, and interactivity, the way the interactivity is presented was the next step in terms of implementing the substantial aspects of the film. 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure', although altered by resulting to come back to the same path after the outcome of a decision is shown, implies that the audience is asked questions. These questions open two possibilities for the plot to evolve from; the audience needs to choose one option. How the questions are asked is of importance. In the interest of the audience not being persuaded to choose a specific path, the questions need to be free from bias. Moreover, the options need to be laid out to not be tendentious, as the audience needs to feel a sense of agency rather than feeling persuaded. Hence, questions along the lines of 'What should the main character do?' were created. The questions are never assertive. This way of asking the questions is reflective of the subtle influence that the audience has on the character and, thus, of the moral. The moral needs to question the influence that the audience has on story and character – their agency and their part within the authorial body. In broader terms: it examines and challenges the ethics behind having an influence on a person. Further, it is the subtlety and the lack of agency that individuals within a society often have that this narrative interactive short film reflects.

Archetypes are as typical and divers as recognisable situations in life. They reflect what it means to be human, which coincides with the aims of drama. The creation of Charlie and the other characters

was, thus, informed by archetypes. As much as there is a certain number of Jungian archetypes, these can be expanded. Archetypes bear relations to a society and culture. As cultures change, archetypes vary regionally and historically. Further, a character can be seen as a cluster of archetypes. In Charlie's case, their archetypal characteristics change over the course of the plot; at first, they appear to be the archetypical student, a rebel, and a hero. They are outgoing, charismatic, defiant of societal norms, and seem to be sure of themselves. These characteristics alter gradually; increasingly, Charlie can be seen as a victim, and a slave to and addict of their behavioural patterns.

Additionally to the main character Charlie, other characters can also be seen as characters featuring archetypal behaviours. One of these characters is the confidant; the confidant is a character or multiple characters who give an insight into the thinking of the main character.[165] The confidants are in this case Charlie's best university friend Mel and Charlie's sister Lizzie. Even though this film focusses on the main character, confidants are still necessary to introduce the viewer to the character and plot. Mel is the typical companion and features aspects of the modern student and the queen bee at the beginning of the film. Further, aspects of a wounded impostor are present within her, as she reveals her insecurities. Lizzie is Charlie's companion, liberator, a mediator, and subsequently a form of mentor. She appears around pivotal moments of the plot and does not develop as an autonomous character but is always depicted in relation to Charlie. Some might argue that Lizzie functions as a kind of *deus ex machina*; however, Lizzie is not supposed to resolve the plot. Her function is simply to make Charlie aware of their situation to set up the third act. Other characters perpetuate Charlie's internal conflict and represent aspects of the intersocietal conflict. These characters function as femme fatale, saboteur, bully, and trickster archetypes to personify the demonic aspects of the conflict. Conflict arises through character but, further, can be exaggerated by the plot. Notably, this can often be observed in melodrama and represents the two metagenres: hyperdrama and experimental narrative. Here, this exaggeration is generated by the audience not being immediately aware of the moral that is proposed to them. With each decision they make, their influence becomes more and more apparent to them. Their awareness of their part within plot and narrative as an authorial body heightens. In combination with Charlie not having more information than the audience, suspense and tension is created. Through their decisions, the audience is influencing Charlie and the story negatively. This creates a conflict between them and Charlie. However, they only become aware of their influence gradually and are, as explained, not the antagonist. Nevertheless, tension arises through the influence and creates conflict. Interactivity is, thus, functioning as two narrative devices: one that creates tension and one that works as an element of surprise. This element of surprise operates in two ways; upon watching the interactive short film for the first time, the audience is gradually surprised that their decisions have an immense impact. Upon second watching they are made aware that their influence and agency is not as immersive and profound as they were made to believe. Rather, they realise that

---

[165] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 39.

the storylines come back together after the chosen part of a decision has been played out. Thus, the illusion of agency created by the structure of the interactivity functions as an element of surprise as well. Interactivity, consequently, informs plot development and the creation and perception of the moral.

Another aspect informing the perception of the moral is the resolution of the story. An ending, as explained before, does not always need to have a closure; the ending can be open if this makes sense in the story world and in terms of the story and the plot. Moreover, there is the opportunity to convert the resolution from being predictable to being unexpected – another element of surprise. This, however, needs to be set-up by the writer to generate an expectation. Here, a carefully implemented three-act structure comes into play; before writing actual scenes, the major elements of the three-act structure need to be identified and events/beats of the story demand to be associated with these elements to create a plot. As this is a character-driven, narrative interactive short film, the plot of the story and the plot of Charlie as a character are almost identical. As explained above, the concept of the 'Hero's Journey' is a useful tool to structure and make sense of the plot of the story. Charlie is not a hero in the typical sense; nevertheless, they battle their way through the story valiantly. Furthermore, hero means, in this case, main character. Other tools, as established above and further discussed in the following sub-chapter, useful in creating the plot of this interactive short film were the logline, synopsis, beat sheet, scene outline, sequence outline, and the three-act structure.

As writing a narrative interactive short film was already not the easiest task, following a pre-existent structure meant to build on something that has existed and worked for more than two centuries of drama. One of the lessons learned, was to not rush through establishing the situation that the viewer is exposed to.[166] The establishing scenes show who the protagonist within Charlie is and take place before the viewer can make their first decision (see *Figure 9: Synopsis - Establishing Scenes*). This first decision marks the first shift in the script and is, in accordance with Ken Dancyger, the catalytic event or the turning point of Act I. The establishing scenes hint towards the problem and the end of the film.[167] People – especially in a university setting – seem to be most honest when they had a few drinks; this fits the notion of the confidants being the main character's sister and their best friend. Hence, the establishing scenes revolve around a night out of these three characters.

```
CHARLIE PARVUS, a seemingly outgoing university student,
confesses after a night out in a campus bar to their best
friend MEL that they are insecure about how they appear to
other people.
```

Figure 9: Synopsis - Establishing Scenes

---

[166] Linda Aronson; *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*; (Los Angeles, Calif.: Silman-James Press, 2010); pp. 130-31.
[167] Aronson; *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*; pp. 50-53.

The catalytic event is the first decision that the audience can make (see *Figure 10: Synopsis - Inciting Incident*); it reflects and is part of the problem and starts perpetuating the conflict. Charlie, thus, needs to be exposed to the discourse around body image. Charlie is not very sure of themselves; therefore, comments about how they look influence them which sets the conflict in motion. Most of the time, people are surrounded by family and friends almost constantly; often, they are confidants whose opinion people value the most. The comment setting the conflict in motion, thus, comes from someone close to Charlie. Their confusing relationship with their family was determined by asking the Charlie a set of questions. To make this relationship clear, one of the options and, subsequently, one of the decision-strands of the first decision needs to give Charlie's mother the opportunity to comment on Charlie; hence, one of the options is Charlie calling their mother. To hint at social media's influence on people, the second option that the audience has for their first decision is Charlie scrolling through social media.

```
                  Their insecurities start to extend to relate
         their physical appearance, after the AUDIENCE (as antagonist
         of the story) can decide for Charlie to either listen to their
         mother talk about her new diet or Charlie looking at diet
         culture related social media posts. Both outcomes affect
         Charlie's mental health.
```

Figure 10: Synopsis - Inciting Incident

This turning point of Act I marks one end of the triangulation. The next milestone of the script is the midpoint; it has less weight as the turning points. However, it still needs to signify a shift in tone regarding plot and character. The mid-point of the plot marks the middle of the second act, whilst the climax is the turning point at the end of this second act.[168] The mid-point can be found where Charlie has nothing left to lose – the possibility for Charlie to lose their last friend. Having an ED can be very isolating and sufferers from an ED often try to avoid social situations in which they must face food choices.[169] Charlie not interacting with their best friend and having to face consequences for that action is the mid-point of the plot. Charlie decides not to go to Mel's birthday party because of their eating disorder. This decision, made solely by Charlie themselves, shows the true demise of Charlie compared to how Charlie acted and interacted at the beginning of the film. There is a clear shift of character and plot at this point.

Here, it needs to be said that in the initial outline and during the development of the script, the mid-point was supposed to be the turning point of Act II – the climax. However, this is not the case retrospectively. As much as there is weight to this point in the story, another major plot point takes place not long after the now-established mid-point: Charlie opening up to their sister and promising to change. This point shows the extreme shift in the character, the plot, and the tone. For the first time, the audience realises, despite always seeing Charlie in intimate moments, that Charlie is aware of their

---

[168] O'Neill; 'Writing for Film'; (pp. 297-98).
[169] Alan Warde, and Lydia Martens; *Eating Out: Social Differentiation, Consumption and Pleasure*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); p. 169.

internal antagonist. Thus, this is the defining moment between the internal protagonist and antagonist; now, Charlie can, in the eyes of the audience, choose between internal protagonist and antagonist. Further, the action taking place between the mid-point and the second turning point differs in structure and style from the first axis of the triangle between the first turning point and the mid-point. This second axis features no interactivity or montages but focuses on the character and how they have changed. During the climactic moment, the character-layer (narrative) and the plot-layer (interactivity) culminate. Arguably, the mid-point and the second turning point follow each other too quickly. However, short films and especially interactive short films tend to be more experimental. This structural deviation from the norm can be seen as part of an experimental narrative.

As mentioned by Bonnie O'Neill, a series of conflicts needs to unfold in the second act to create tension and suspense (see *Figure 11: Synopsis - Twists and Turns of Act Two*). To make the shift of the mid-point and the climax most effective, a build-up needs to happen in which the tension rises and in the plot can take unexpected turns. These turns dictate when and where the interactive decisions are placed. The placing of these decisions is always made to serve the plot through the through-line and theme. The point where an interactive rule is broken for the first time reflects one of these unexpected turns: a bartender is asking Charlie for their order. Through the set-up in the script– Charlie stalling and hesitating, the spectator assumes that they can make a decision. However, Charlie is making the decision themselves: they order a water. This represents that even though the audience and, hence, society through have led Charlie to this point, Charlie has now slipped beyond their grasp and is at a point where these decisions are not led by the influence of society but by a reflex that Charlie has developed. The decisions are not conscious but subconscious now and the mental illness has consumed Charlie to a degree that is beyond reasoning. Upon the initial development, this was seen as the mid-point of the story, as a tonal and structural shift is taking place. The shift in character, however, is in retrospect not as strong as during the mentioned two plot points which now function as the mid-point and the second turning point. Yet, this change still plays a vital role in pushing the plot forward and provides an unexpected twist in the plot. To function as an unexpected narrative agent, the rules need to be set-up convincingly. Hence, the set-up of Act II needs to build up the end. Act I reflects and, in a way, mirrors Act III. Here, the idea to use Charlie's sister to make Charlie aware of their situation was formulated early within the writing process. As Mel had been used to show how much Charlie and their attitude had changed, Lizzie as the second confidant was the ideal choice to make Charlie realise the situation they are in and to set-up Act III.

```
Charlie starts to feel more and more insecure about
themselves; they weigh themselves, sign up for a gym
membership, and keep track of their calorie intake. The
audience can make multiple decisions for them, ranging from
having breakfast or not, working out or working on an essay,
going out with friends or staying in, throwing up or not. All
these decisions lead to Charlie getting worse and worse.
Charlie is seen being more and more focused on their weight
and appearance, and less on their social interactions.

The midpoint of Charlie's demise happens when the audience can
no longer make a decision for them; they order a water instead
of their usual drink. After that, the mental and physical
strain that their eating disorder has on them becomes more and
more visible: they spend more time in bed, stop going to the
gym, keep checking their body and their calorie intake, and
try to avoid friends and family as much as possible. It all
culminates when they decide to skip Mel's birthday party after
not having been in contact with her for a long time.
```

Figure 11: Synopsis - Twists and Turns of Act Two

The third act in drama represents resolution of the drama. For that, a clean slate is necessary. By having Charlie be at their lowest point and opening up about how they feel, a resolution is inevitable and, hence, the start of the third act is inevitable. Here, the crisis is either resolved or left open. Some examples of filmmakers who seem to prefer for their endings to be ambiguous and interpretable are Spike Lee (*She's Gotta Have It*[170]), Christopher Nolan (*Interstellar*[171], *Inception*[172]), and Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*[173], *Shutter Island*[174]). An article in 'The Guardian' discusses the open ending of Scorsese's *Shutter Island*. Many, even people involved in the film like actor Leonardo DiCaprio, wondered and are still wondering about the film's interpretable ending. There are many reasons for Scorsese's decision; one of them is connected to the psychology of the character, as this interpretable ending makes sense regarding the main character's journey. The second reason is related to plot; a twist shortly before the ending which, further, opens the ending, propels people to talk about the film more. Moreover, Professor James Gilligan, a psychiatric adviser for the film, states that: 'Martin Scorsese said this film will make double the income because people will have to see it a second time to understand what happened the first time.' And he was right: back in 2010, shortly after the release of the film, it was Scorsese's highest-grossing film to date.[175] More than a decade after the release of Christopher Nolan's film *Inception*, fans still wonder about its ending; Nolan justifies his decision with reference to the character and the character's story: 'There is a nihilistic view of that ending,

[170] *She's Gotta Have It*; dir. by Spike Lee (40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks, 1986).

[171] *Interstellar*; dir. by Christopher Nolan (Legendary Pictures, Syncopy, Lynda Obst Productions, 2014).

[172] *Inception*; dir. by Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros. Pictures, Legendary Pictures, Syncopy, 2010).

[173] *Taxi Driver*; dir. by Martin Scorsese (Bill/Phillips Productions, Italo-Judeo Productions, 1976).

[174] *Shutter Island*; dir. by Martin Scorsese (Phoenix Pictures, Sikelia Productions, Appian Way Productions, 2010).

[175] David Cox; 'Shutter Island's Ending Explained'; The Guardian; 29 Jul 2010; https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2010/jul/29/shutter-island-ending; [accessed: 14.03.2024].

right? But also, he's [the main character] moved on and is with his kids. The ambiguity is not an emotional ambiguity. It's an intellectual one for the audience.'[176] The ending is a conclusion of the character's story and further, proposes a moral to the audience which they can decipher for themselves. Here, the characteristics of a short film should be mentioned; as explained in the introduction, a short film usually features a closed ending. As the interactivity already proposes a certain complexity unusual for a narrative short film, a narrative interactive short film can already be seen as an unusual form of short films. Thus, an open ending can be justified by this already existing distinctiveness. All these aspects informed the decision to leave the ending of this narrative interactive short film open; it felt more natural to the plot and story and animates the audience to think about their decisions and their impact, and gives the audience more agency (see *Figure 12: Synopsis - Resolution*). Further, as mentioned above, the open ending functions as an element of surprise. Charlie is not aware of the problem; this is one of the conditions that make resolving the problem impossible at first. To resolve the conflict, Charlie needs to be aware that there is a conflict – that there is a problem. Only when they are at their lowest, Charlie can become aware of the issue and, thus, aim to resolve it in the third act of the plot. Since Charlie promises Lizzie to change, the audience expects to see a change at the end of the interactive short film. Leaving the ending open opposes this expectation, and, in connection with the interactivity, proposes a question to the audience: does the ending alter depending on the decisions made before?

After having written the drafts, this was the question most people asked when I gave them parts of the script to read. As they were not able to make decisions as on screen, I gave them a linear script indicating where and what other options there would have been. However, there was no indication of how these other options would have played out. After getting asked, I proposed a counterquestion: would this uncertainty make you watch the film again? Four out of five people answered with 'yes', which gave me an indication of how much the story structure and the set-up of the interactivity influence the audience's desire to watch the film a second time. Watching the film a second time, then, makes the audience aware that they do not have as much agency as the first viewing suggested. The ending and parts of the rest of the plot are still the same. As the conflict of Charlie is internal, the linearity of the plot and the unchanging ending are justified. Charlie is struggling with themselves – society "simply" has an impact on this internal conflict. As much as the particulars of the moral have changed, its substance is still the same, suggesting that society has a considerable effect on a person's mental health.

---

[176] Maria Streshinsky; 'How Christopher Nolan Learned to Stop Worrying and Love AI'; Wired; 20 Jun 2023; https://www.wired.com/story/christopher-nolan-oppenheimer-ai-apocalypse/; [accessed: 14.03.2024].

```
Charlie cries themselves to sleep frequently; they are
immensely unhappy. Unexpectedly, their younger SISTER knocks
on their door. She expresses how worried everyone, especially
Mel, is and that she had to check on them. Charlie has a
breakdown and opens up about their recent struggles. She
promises to not tell their parents if Charlie gets help and
gets in contact with Mel. Charlie meets Mel in the campus bar
(from the beginning and middle) and apologises. Mel offers her
help. Walking home alone, the last question for the audience
appears: 'Should Charlie chose recovery?' Before the audience
can make a decision, the screen fades to black.
```

Figure 12: Synopsis - Resolution

Generally, interactivity as an experimental narrative device influenced the outline, the development of characters, structure, and moral, and the narrative of 'A Slimming World'. This emphasises the importance of the justification of the interactivity within the plot and the characters, and the genre and the moral. Interactivity, plot, and character convey a moral to the audience using an appropriate genre and metagenres. As authorship, especially due to the interactivity, is related to how the story and moral is conveyed to the audience, collaboration is vital in approaching the script and its features. As established before, the audience cannot be seen as neutral from the perspective of a writer-director; however, they are, in a way, naïve in terms of their knowledge about the structure and the interactive aspects of the story. For that reason, the believability and clarity of the plot, characters, and moral are extremely important. In the case of 'A Slimming World', the drafts were read by and discussions were held with actor friends to make sure that the interactive aspects, the plot, the characters, and the moral are graspable, believable, and cohesive. The discussions informed further drafts. Before locking the script, I tried to make sure that the story is suitable for the format of a narrative interactive short film to the best possible degree and that the moral about the impact society has on one's mental health is shown visibly by making the audience interact with the story and serving as society in form of making decisions that influence the story. In a way, these first readers of the various drafts of the script can be seen as the first audience of this interactive short film.

3.2.2. The Drafts

With the focus of this dissertation being on the work with the actors, writing for them informed the drafts constantly. It is important to ensure that the decisions made in the script make sense to the actors. A clear and precise throughline of a story is important and the conflict should be omnipresent in every scene. If not present, the actions of characters seem incoherent and are, thus, not understandable for the actors and the audience.[177] According to Philip Parker, a story is held together by its theme; the theme always needs to be clear.[178] Further, Linda Aronson discusses 'showing and not telling' in their book *The 21st Century Screenplay* which informed the entire writing process of the

---

[177] Gurskis; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*; p. 5.
[178] Parker; 'Chapter 2: A Creative Matrix'; (pp. 18-20).

script.[179] As this is a character-driven short film with the focus on the main character Charlie, scenes showing Charlie on their own were unavoidable. In combination with the notion that the conflict is carried out internally by Charlie, making sure that the struggle between their needs and wants is made visible rather than verbal.

A *Writing for Film and TV* lecture with the title 'Need Equals Love' discusses the creation of drama through a character's needs versus their wants.[180] The want is linked to the body image that society proclaims to be the ideal, whilst staying healthy and true to themselves is Charlie's need. Establishing this need at the beginning to show how Charlie presents themselves without being influenced by the outer world was important. A few initial scenes in which Charlie interacts with their confidants give an insight into who they are. What unfolded after was influenced by and went along the plot points established through the three-act structure. Furthermore, the plot was developed by writing a logline, a synopsis, a beat sheet, a scene outline, a sequence outline, and the 'Hero's Journey'. These steps of the development helped to distinguish between story ideas and the plot that communicates the essentials of 'A Slimming World'. As the audience is the judge of whether the moral, the interactivity, and the characters are plausible and believable, involving an early audience was important. Moreover, this involvement of other people reflects the collaborative approach that the development of this narrative interactive short film envisioned. The test readers were familiar with drama, but not necessarily involved in creating interactive drama. Many of them have a background in theatre, some of them are actively pursuing a career in film.

Another form of collaboration took place after finishing the first draft of the first half of the script in form of a discussion with the supervisors and the TAP member of this dissertation. The plot needed to be tightened and fewer, well-placed decisions were necessary to keep the audience engaged. Three locations of the plot where an interactive aspect to the story would be sensible were determined: the 'First Decision' asking whether Charlie should call their mother or scroll through social media in scene five, the 'Second Decision' in scene 21 proposing the question of whether Charlie should meet their friends for lunch or stay at home, and the 'Third Decision' and, simultaneously, the proposed mid-point of the plot where the audience faces the question whether Charlie should go to Mel's party. This mid-point takes place in scene 57 which is relatively late, as there are only eleven more scenes after this decision. Nevertheless, all three decisions were placed carefully to serve the plot and the development of the character. The 'First Decision', all at once the first turning point, represents the starting point of the plot's conflict. Through the establishing scenes, the setting and the characters are introduced and, in a way, the internal conflict of the character is implied. However, the entire nature of the conflict and the audience's part in it is made apparent through the first use of interactivity – the turning point of Act I. The 'Second Decision' is needed to set-up a pattern which can, then, be

---

[179] Linda Aronson; *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*; (Los Angeles, Calif.: Silman-James Press, 2010).

[180] 'Need Equals Love' in *Writing for Film and TV*; lecture notes; (York: University of York, 15 Jan 2022).

demolished by a twist: the bar scene where the audience expects to make a decision but is robbed of his opportunity by Charlie choosing an option themselves. The 'Third Decision' represents the mid-point of the story. As the mid-point changes something in the plot-layer of the story and interactivity is, as an experimental narrative device, extremely vital for the plot, the interactivity needs to change after this point. Here, the decision was made to discard the interactivity all together after the 'Third Decision'. Collaboration, hence, informed the thematic and plot-related aspects of the interactive short film, as well as the structural aspects of interactivity and plot.

Further, advice on how to approach the re-writing process was given during the meetings with the supervisors which sparked further investigation; this examination focused on where the drama lies in each scene. Moreover, it included looking at the person holding the power in each scene and giving short synopses of each scene to understand which scenes are more important than others. The re-writing of the first half of the script informed the writing of the second half of the script. It was an efficient decision to re-write the first half before moving on to the second half; this allowed the second half to be more refined than it would have been if both halves would have been written back-to-back.

As the re-writes were guided by Linda Aronsons' *The 21st Century Screenplay*, their thoughts about vertical and lateral thinking when approaching a screenplay influenced the process. It was significant to decide on the level of importance of specific ideas whilst thinking about these ideas emotionally. According to Aronson, there needs to be a balance between the rational thinking (is the idea important or not?) versus the emotional thinking; the latter is not a step-by-step approach.[181] Aronson also explains the importance of clearness of scenario and message; they need to be obvious in every scene.[182] Three questions needed to be asked to decide upon the importance of all of the written scenes: is the scenario and the message clear? Does this scene serve the story and plot? And is the emotional response in line with the rational thinking about the scene? These three questions were extremely helpful for the re-writing; however, I added a fourth question: Is the action justifyable in the context of performing interactivity effectively?

The second step of re-writing the screenplay included looking at the script without the scenes that had been identified as not important enough to stay in the script. Here, again, Aronson guided the approach; does the structure (without these scenes) still fit the story and plot? Does the structure build towards closure? Are the beats still clear? Their idea of visualising the structure was inspiring; moreover, previous notes that had been written down for each scene were useful.[183]

The last step in the process of the first re-write was to look at how to 'condense, tighten, enrich'.[184] Previously, the question had been about which scenes should be cut. Now, the focus was on how to shorten them. Using the method of looking at the beat sheet (see *Appendix 3: Beat Sheet*) and the notes that were created about each scene (see *Appendix 4: Scene Outline*), some scenes were

---

[181] Aronson; *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*; pp. 5-12.

[182] Aronson; *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*; p. 39.

[183] Aronson; *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*; pp. 50-63.

[184] Aronson; *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*; p. 133.

combined into one, some aspects of a few scenes were left out, and scenes were enriched through information from scenes that had been cut; however, no new scenes were added. Some of the tips that a meeting with the supervisors produced in May 2022, informed this process as well: to start the scene at the latest and end it at the earliest moment possible, to use images instead of conversations, to pace the dialogue accordingly, to work with actions, and to make sure that the importance of what is unsaid is clear.[185]

At the end of the process, the second draft of the script was created which was then used for a table-read. This table-read took place to make sure that the dialogue had a natural rhythm to it and sounded authentic. As someone whose first language is not English, my greatest anguish is an unnaturalness of the dialogue. The purpose of the table-read was to discover flaws in the script and to get feedback from others. As mentioned above, the difficulty of being a writer-director is to get lost in the script. Getting input from others was therefore of highest importance. Hearing the script being read aloud by multiple people opened many possibilities; a few spelling mistakes and formatting issues were discovered, and changes to the dialogue at four points were generated. Interestingly, some of the changes were made because the actors of the table-read added layers to the characters that had not been thought about before. One of the actors, for example, spoke in a dialect that fitted the background of their character very well. Therefore, a saying in this dialect was added to the script. Another actor accidently rephrased a line differently; as it sounded more natural, it was also added to the final draft of the script. At the end of the table-read, the actors were asked to give feedback on the interactive aspects of the script. The focus of this dissertation is on making the story easily accessible to the actors. The actors of the table-read asserted that they were able to easily jump from one decision to the other without feeling confused. However, the filming and work on set is entirely different; it is less linear than a table-read, as scenes are commonly filmed according to setting. Nevertheless, the table-read posed as a successful trial for the script and would have informed the work on set. The draft created after the table-read is the locked script; the process of locking the script took place on the 15th of July 2022.

3.3. Preparation for the Shoot

A director always needs to have a vision. As much as it is important to collaborate and be open to suggestions and changes, knowing the script well to formulate a cohesive central idea is crucial. The collaboration with the members of the cast and the crew is based on that central idea which will inform all aspects of the film and generates the basis for a we-intension. Collaboration and, thus, communication ensure that everyone understands the structure of the film and the intentions of the script. The central idea guarantees that there is consistency in the work and a clear message in the

---

[185] Supervisor Meeting 6; 20.05.2022.

work produced.[186] To envision this central idea, there needs to be an awareness of the role of the director on the project, which can be done through research and preparation.

3.3.1. The Essentials of Directing

> A film team (cast and crew) is made up of a number of creative and technical collaborators. The director's job is to coordinate this collective expertise and inspire its creative energy into producing a single, stylistically unified and coherent cinematic story. Ideally, this story will ultimately connect with an audience and move them in some way. During preproduction this requires writing or working with writers; […] During production (the shooting of the film), the director essentially performs two functions: stage the scene for the camera and assure that the performances are strong, consistent and appropriate. The first task involves directing the crew and the second, directing the actors.[187]

This quote by Michael Rabiger and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier surveys the general responsibilities of a director in pre-production and production: to know the script, to work from a technical angle, and to work with the actors on a shared vision. This vision will, after the post-production, shape the finished film. As the writer of this interactive short film is also the director, the distinction between the roles needed to be clear; although the definition of the two roles had been researched at the beginning of the process, re-establishing and refreshing the knowledge was essential for the transition from one role to the other. Moreover, a familiarity with the approach of working with cast and crew had to be established. The pre-production was significant for the work on set as elaborated in the following paragraphs.

3.3.2. Moving from Writer to Director

'Let's return to the analogy of the film director as a conductor of an orchestra. We said that a conductor doesn't need to be a virtuoso on all the instruments under his or her baton—but they must understand the sounds and tonal range the instruments can produce as well as the traditional and potential creative contribution the instrument makes to the ensemble.'[188] Michael Rabiger and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier express the importance of the director always keeping aspects of script, aesthetics, and technology in mind. They need to be aware of how all these aspects can come together to create a whole. Interactivity is one of these aspects – it influences the work done by the director but does not change the process of working in general. These processes are the same as for any other narrative short

---

[186] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; pp. 6-7.
[187] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; pp. 4-5.
[188] Rabiger, and Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; p. 28.

film production. This is one of the differences between the writer and the director of an interactive narrative film; the writer considers the interactivity during every step of the development and the writing process, whilst the director uses it to communicate and work with the actors and parts of the crew. The director is already handed a script featuring the interactivity which the director is influenced by.

As described in the Research sub-chapter '2.4. The Writer-Director and Interactivity', Guadagnino proposes that a director, just as a conductor and an orchestra, can produce a film which is plausible and pleasing for the audience to watch, only when they are in harmony with the film team. In the same sub-chapter, I outlined strategies by the theatre practitioners Konstantin Stanislavsky and Katie Mitchell who put the actors at the heart of the discoveries about characters and moral. The approaches of Stanislavsky and Mitchell, adapted for the film industry and utilised in a similar way to Luca Guadagnino's approach, can help counteract the confusing aspects of branching and make the branching plausible for an audience. As explained above, the actor needs to be aware of their character's past, present, and future, which is difficult and might not be entirely clear in an interactive, multi-branched film. This can lead to an unclear performance and can interfere with the story. Hence, the director needs to be the person with the vision of the overall film; to say it with the words of Rooney and Belli: 'Only […] the director […] knows that each scene is a puzzle piece and where that piece fits.'[189] The director puts the puzzle pieces of the script in the right place to create the overall picture. In the case of an interactive, multi-branched film, the picture is often difficult to decipher and different for each viewer. Through initial discussions with the cast, these difficulties can be sought out and adjustments feasibly be implemented to counteract these difficulties. Further, rehearsals strengthen an understanding about the characters, the plot, and the interactivity. As much as table-reads are useful and were valuable for the writing of the film, rehearsals can make the interactivity – the interactive branches – and, thus, the narrative comprehensible. In the case of 'A Slimming World', the individual scenarios – the outcomes of the options – were acted out before the shoot of the film, asking the actor portraying Charlie a ratio of questions tailored to the situation and aimed at strengthening their understanding of the past, present, future, and objective of Charlie in the specific situation. Examples for questions that were asked are: How did Charlie get to this situation? How does Charlie feel? And why is Charlie experiencing these emotions? The answers to these questions needed to be related and justified by specifications within the script, whilst allowing the actor to interpret and customise the actions of the character.

However, in the case of this interactive short film, writer and director were the same person. Hence, the clear distinction between writer and director needs to be emphasised once more. The locked draft had to be finished before moving on to looking at the script from a director's perspective

---

[189] Rooney and Belli; *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing*; p.133.

to ensure a clear distinction between the two roles. On the other hand, being prepared for the role of a director was also essential and meant for more research to be undertaken whilst finishing the script.

Myrl A. Schreibman's *The Film Director Prepares: A Practical Guide to Directing for Film & TV* guided the transition from writer to director; Schreibman summarises that the responsibility of the director is linked to interpretation. Through interpreting the screenplay, the plot must become clear to the director as a creative, the producers, and the audience. To do so, the director should read the script three times. Each time a different aspect of the script is important to be kept in mind; upon the first reading it is the intention, the second read should focus on thoughts about relationships, and the third read should concern itself with thoughts about visualisation.[190] Once the script was locked, it was read three times following these steps, giving new insights into the story; as a result, the personal separation to what had been worked on for more than six months was less complicated.

The table-read and the initial discussions during the development process were helpful to gain different views and for taking a step away from the script to look at it with a fresh set of eyes. As it took place during the development stages, the work as a writer influenced the work as a director. Hence, the argument can be made that an outright distinction between the two roles cannot and should not be made in the case of developing a narrative interactive short film.

3.3.3.   Working with Cast and Crew

To go further and gain new opinions and thoughts about script, characters, and visualisation, a crew was found (see *Figure 13: Crew Advertisement*). As explained above, collaborators are vital; they can be part of the cast and of the crew. After interviews in mid-July, the crew was selected just a week after the interviews had taken place; initial conversations were the result. Especially the DOP, the Art Director, and the Production Manager were the main sources of input for new ideas and approaches during the pre-production. The creation of mood boards by some of the members of the crew (an example can be seen in *Appendix 8: Mood Boards (Director)*) was the starting point to gather the ideas and thoughts about visualisation. The notes that had been made whilst reading the script three times with Schreibman's three different aspects in mind were discussed and explained after the creation of the mood boards.

Documents like a shot-list (see *Appendix 9: Shot-List*) were created with the director, the DOP, and the Art Director present. The input of the other crew members allowed me, as the director, to work collaboratively and see the script in a new light. Regular meetings with the entire crew were organised to make the communication between all departments of the film clear and to keep everyone informed. This forward-thinking made the pre-production process smooth and was supposed to prevent the

---

[190] Myrl A. Schreibman; *The Film Director Prepares: A Practical Guide to Directing for Film & TV*; (Los Angeles, L.A.: Lone Eagle, 2006).

emergence of questions and issues during the production stage; with everyone having sufficient information, I felt like I could focus more on the work with the actors on set.

Figure 13: Crew Advertisement

Subsequently, the production manager and I found a cast (see *Figure 14: Casting Call*), started a fundraiser (see *Figure 15: Fundraiser Advertisement*), scouted locations (see *Figure 16: Location Scouting*), devised a shooting schedule (see *Appendix 11: Amended Shooting Schedule*), and created call sheets (see *Appendix 10: Examples of Call Sheets*). During the process of casting, staying truthful to the script whilst being open and flexible was, once more, of importance; for instance, finding a non-binary actor for the role of Charlie was vital. As much as truthful representation was crucial, not forcing someone to disclose personal information was even more essential; communicating clearly who we were looking for and explaining that a statement and/or declaration is not necessary was the strategy applied. Further, having the production manager present helped to be flexible in terms of casting and to not necessarily look for actors who resembled my visions during the writing process. Meanwhile, a storyboard was created which influenced and was influenced by the documents outlined above. Furthermore, discussions were held with cast and crew, and were considered for all the documents. Schreibman advises that one should be flexible when creating a storyboard and that the actors will motivate the camera and movements on set. Thus, the focus was on a storyboard with pictures of existing shots resembling the intended shots of this interactive short film and a shot-list. The shot-list is a suitable organisational tool that should still leave room for spontaneity as well.[191] A director who storyboards partially is Christopher Nolan, as he revealed in an interview with Denis

---

[191] Schreibman; *The Film Director Prepares: A Practical Guide to Directing for Film & TV*;.

Villeneuve for IMAX.[192] However, it was important to have a vision of how transitions would work out, especially with the interactivity in mind. As established above, ensuring continuity between scenes, notably scenes that transition from a decision to further action, is essential to make the experience of the audience continuous. Being prepared, having a plan, but being spontaneous in implementing said plan was, thus, the approach for the work on set.

Figure 14: Casting Call
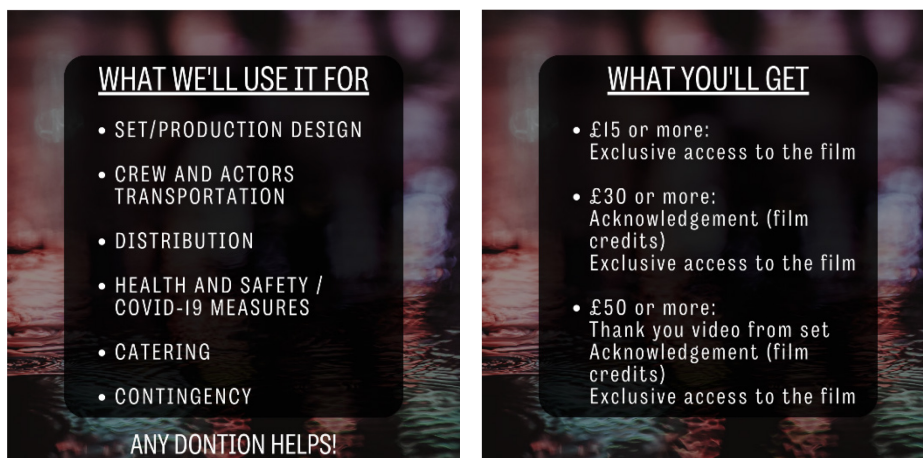
Figure 15: Fundraiser Advertisement

---

[192] IMAX. (2024). [Reel]. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/reel/C30tuZUyxOp/?igsh=MTJoYXRhN2xyaHpxMg== [Accessed 12 Mar 2024].

Scene	Setting	Place	Time of Day	Additional Information	Possible Location
1	Int.	Bar	Night		VBar
2	Ext.	Street	Night		Piccadilly
3	Ext.	Street	Night		Piccadilly
4	Ext.	Train/Bus Station	Day		Campus East Interchange, Rougier Street, Train Station
5	Int.	Kitchen	Evening		
6	Int.	Kitchen	Evening		
7	Int.	Kitchen	Evening		
8	Int.	Kitchen	Evening		
9	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
10	Int.	Supermarket	Day	Montage	Lidl, Aldi
11	Ext.	Mel's House	Night/Evening		Outside
12	Int.	Mel's Livingroom	Night		Livingroom
13	Int.	Mel's Bathroom	Night		Bathroom
14	Int.	Mel's Kitchen	Night		Kitchen
15	Int.	Bedroom	Day		Bedroom
16	Int.	Gym	Day	Montage	HesWest Gym
17	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
18	Int.	Gym	Day	Montage	HesWest Gym
19	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
20	Int.	Gym	Evening	Montage	HesWest Gym
21	Int.	Bedroom	Night		Bedroom
22	Int.	Bedroom	Night		Bedroom
23	Int.	Café	Day		Bruks
24	Int.	Café	Day		Bruks
25	Int.	Bedroom	Night		Bedroom
26	Int.	Bedroom	Day		Bedroom
27	Int.	Bedroom	Day		Bedroom
28	Int.	Bedroom	Day		Bedroom
29	Int.	Bar	Night		VBar
30	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
31	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
32	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
33	Int.	Gym	Day	Montage	HesWest Gym
34	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
35	Int.	Kitchen	Evening	Montage	
36	Int.	Gym	Day	Montage	HesWest Gym
37	Int.	Bedroom	Night	Montage	Bedroom
38	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
39	Int.	Bedroom	Night	Montage	Bedroom
40	Int.	Supermarket	Day	Montage	Lidl, Aldi
41	Int.	Supermarket	Day	Montage	Lidl, Aldi
42	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
43	Int.	Parents' Livingroom	Day		
44	Int.	Parents' Diningroom	Night/Evening	Set?	
45	Int.	Parents' Diningroom	Night/Evening	Set?	
46	Int.	Parents' Diningroom	Night	Set?	
47	Int.	Bedroom - Parents' House	Night		
48	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
49	Int.	Bedroom	Night	Montage	Bedroom
50	Int.	Gym	Day	Montage	HesWest Gym
51	Int.	Kitchen	Evening	Montage	
52	Int.	Bedroom	Night	Montage	Bedroom
53	Int.	Bedroom	Night	Montage	Bedroom
54	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
55	Int.	Supermarket	Day	Montage	Lidl, Aldi
56	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Montage	Bedroom
57	Int.	Bedroom	Day	Decision with different edits	Bedroom
58	Int.	Bedroom	Day		Bedroom
59	Int.	Kitchen	Day		
60	Int.	Corridor	Day		Corridor
61	Int.	Kitchen	Day		
62	Int.	Kitchen	Day		
63	Int.	Kitchen	Day		
64	Int.	Kitchen	Day		
65	Int.	Kitchen	Evening		
66	Int.	Kitchen	Evening		
67	Int.	Bar	Night		VBar
68	Ext.	Street	Night		Piccadilly

Figure 16: Location Scouting

Spontaneity was important regarding the production; furthermore, it was vital to the work with the actors. Schreibman explains that actors are similar to children, that they talk back, and that they are emotionally affected by their day to day; moreover, their day to day can influence their acting and the portrayal of their characters.[193] Being collaborative is one of the main tips, Spike Lee gives aspiring directors. Intuition and spontaneity are part of Lee's collaborative approach; moreover, there should be a sense of trust on set.[194] Flexibility and spontaneity are keys to adapt to the condition the actors are in on set each day. Drawing from own acting experiences to understand how the actors work was essential for the work before moving to a set and would have informed the work on set. A filmmaker who drew much on their own experiences as an actor was John Cassavetes; Cassavetes' films were made to be in alignment with the actors. Further, the characters portrayed were supposed to be authentic and multifaced, leading to '[…] a sense of moral ambiguity, a distorting of social mores, ethical action, and a frustration of identification and comprehension. Normal life is insane, and in that insanity, Cassavetes found familiarity.'[195] To make the fictional stories truthful, Cassavetes put

---

[193] Schreibman; *The Film Director Prepares: A Practical Guide to Directing for Film & TV*.
[194] 'Spike Lee Shares 4 Important Tips for Directing Actors'; MasterClass; 7 June, 2021; https://www.masterclass.com/articles/spike-lee-shares-important-tips-for-directing-actors; [accessed: 18.09.2023].
[195] Jeremy Carr; 'John Cassavetes' in *Senses of Cinema*; 79 (July 2016); http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2016/great-directors/john-cassavetes/.

emphasis on characters, their relationships, and, ultimately, the actors of said characters.[196] 'A Slimming World' aims to portray a sense of moral ambiguity, distorting of social mores, ethical action, and the frustration of identification and comprehension in form of the audience, initially, not being aware of the consequences of their decisions, Charlie being non-binary, decisions being made, based on the demands of society, and Charlie being unhappy with themselves and the world around them. To achieve a truthful and familiar representation, my aim was to, just as John Cassavetes emphasise the work with the actors. Moreover, flexibility – especially when transitioning from writer to the director – is important. Here, this flexibility, as addressed by Spike Lee, manifested itself in form of an open mind for new input during discussions with the actors to access the characters from a new angle.

Actors should be approached as one's equal; they need to know that everyone is on the same page in bringing the story and the characters to life. Everyone needs to be on the same page; to understand the characters, their actions and reactions, their relationships, and their motivations, initial conversations about the story took place. It is the task of the director to understand, how the actors see their characters, which backstories they have in mind for them, and how they see their characters progressing; thereafter, their vision and the director's vision are combined, as alluded to above. I approached the initial conversations with my own experience as an actor in mind and asked myself what I would expect from the director in this situation. I was able to think differently about the characters and helped to step back from the role of the writer and to start thinking from the director's perspective. By talking to the crew and the cast, and by letting them ask questions, they started to understand the script more. It was through the discussions afterwards that this understanding of cast and crew became apparent; they started to ask fewer questions, made more suggestions, were able to locate the decision strands, and knew which decision led to which point.

The discussions, as mentioned, influenced the creation of the storyboard. If the shoot would have taken place, the shot-list would have been a tool to make the work on set of this interactive short film less daunting for the actors. As said before, their need for appreciation and for understanding technicalities can influence their acting. Close-ups, for example, can feel intimidating as the actors are in a vulnerable position; they show raw emotions in public. To make them feel safe, seeing each other as equals was important. Actors need to be understood as people with a life outside the realms of the film and the production; they are people whose lives influence what they can bring to their role and affect their acting. Being prepared for every eventuality was something that had been learned from theatre directing experiences; hereafter something extremely useful.

There are a few film and theatre practitioners whose approaches of working with cast and crew or ensemble were highly influential for the creation of this interactive short film. Terrence Malick's approach of working with actors gives actors more agency over their characters. They, further, create a

---

[196] Ibid.

comfortable atmosphere on set. Is it possible to adapt this technique, used for cinematic films with a higher budget and famous actor names, and use it for this interactive short film? Authorship was an important aspect of research for this short film, as examined earlier in the dissertation; a collaborative approach gives the various departments of the film (including the actors) more agency over the creation of the film. For Terrence Malick, as described in *Filming Authenticity: Irony, Sincerity, and Belief in Terrence Malick's 2010 Cinema*, '[t]he task for the actors is to discover who their characters are as they film, which contiguously constructs a phenomenological plotline.'[197] However, Malick is famous for not using a script in their recent films. This, in turn, juxtaposes the concept of authorship as a writer-director. Still, the notion of the actors exploring their characters throughout being involved in the process of creating the film, is the kind of collaborative approach I was seeking for in this interactive short film.

An example of a filmmaker who was keen on actors being themselves whilst, at the same time, splitting them from the character they are portraying, was Jean-Luc Godard. Godard's filmmaking approach was to combine fiction and documentary. Thus, they demanded the actors to do the same.[198] A master of separating elements in drama whose approaches seem influential on Godard is theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht. Their thoughts about actors and spectators are interesting when looking at the approach, methods, and aims of this narrative interactive short film. Brecht never aimed to be a dictatorial director; 'If an actor asks, for example: should I stand up at this point?, the typical Brecht answer frequently follows: I don't know. Brecht really does not know, but only finds out at the rehearsal.'[199] This correlates with the aim of the collaborative approach of the interactive short film: working closely with the actors on understanding their characters to make them more believable. Once an actor understands their character, how that character stands, walks, their gestures and posture, all these physical expressions become more natural. Further, the inhibiting of the character becomes easier for the actor. For reasons of efficiency, the duration of production processes on set can be shortened by an actor already understanding their character to an extent where movements come natural to the actor. That, in turn, means that the work on set can be focused more on the camera being placed and moving in correlation with the actor than on exploring where to stand and move first. Thus, rehearsal time in the space and, further, establishing an understanding of the character, can shorten the time needed for each scene. However, the director's task – in Brecht's opinion – is not to stipulate. It is, rather, the director's duty to stimulate and stir the actor's thoughts about the character. This approach can, in my opinion, be useful for theatre and film; and, in this case, for a narrative interactive short film.

---

[197] *Filming Authenticity: Irony, Sincerity, and Belief in Terrence Malick's 2010 Cinema*; p. 20.
[198] Silviu Şerban; 'Godard and the Language of Cinema' in *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*; Vol. 3, No. 2 (2011); pp. 260-265.
[199] *Brecht on Performance: Messingkauf and Modelbooks;* p. 227.

3.3.4. A Turn of Events

It was supposed to be one of the highlights of the process: the first day of the shoot. Instead, it turned out to be the hardest day of the production; the decision to postpone the shoot had to be made as the circumstances would not have allowed to shoot the film successfully. The pros and cons of postponing were weighed up by multiple members of the crew (mainly the production manager, DOP, and director). By going ahead as planned, we would have lost parts of the budget and not all parties involved would have been satisfied with the produced film.

Initial preparations took place by all members of the crew. The gaffer was the only exception; after trying to reach out to them over the course of multiple weeks, they could not be contacted and did not respond. After a certain period, the decision was made to find a new gaffer; this task posed more difficult than expected. A similar issue had to be solved regarding the sound recordist; they had received an offer for paid work which they could not refuse. The crew had been prepared for a scenario like this and after a lengthy period of searching for a new sound recordist, it was initially decided to go ahead, help each other, and cover the missing personnel with members of the existing crew. As the actor of Charlie had fallen ill, the idea of postponing the shoot was raised. The final decision was made on the 22nd of August 2022. However, due to multiple reasons, the production of the film as part of the master's degree had to be cancelled in the end.

As the initial question of this master's degree had been about how a writer-director can ease the process of working with the actors of an interactive short film, the question had to be reconsidered. With the aspect of directing being limited to pre-production and hypothetical work on set, the dissertation needed to reflect this alteration. Having prepared intensively for the role as a director through research, and through implemented work during pre-production and initial discussions with the actors, essential and vital aspects of the director's work with the actors in the context of a narrative interactive short film can be outlined and explained.

3.3.5. Previous Work that Effected the Intended Work on Set

Knowledge was gained over the processes of pre-production and research and a certain distance to the process of the past months was acquired; a reflection on the work with the actors so far and a vision of hypothetical work with them on set is, thus, possible. Until the end of the pre-production period, discussions about characters, relationships, background, as well as about the script and the interactivity took place. These discussions were informed by the preparatory research as outlined in the subchapter 'Confusing Aspects of Branching'. The conversations included, predominantly, the actors; however, members of the crew were informed of findings about the characters and were sometimes invited to the discussions as well. They took place one-on-one and, in some cases, as group discussions; when a relationship and how it would be portrayed was important, all respective actors were consulted. The art director, as well as the director of photography were involved since image composition can reveal

many things about characters, their relationships, fears, likes, and dislikes. As much as this process was time-consuming, it meant that fewer questions and therefore problems would arise later in the process.

This process of discussions and exchanging information was supposed to be ongoing. The plan for the time on set was to allow enough rehearsal time to ensure that everyone would be well-prepared**.** A filmmaker who inspired this is Kenneth Branagh; being a director and actor for theatre and film, Branagh values rehearsal times. They are used as an aide for the actors as well as for the director; Branagh wants the actors to know their parts and, further, makes initial decisions about edits and cuts whilst watching the rehearsals.[200] In the case of 'A Slimming World', there was not enough capacity to rehearse everything with all the actors before the start of the shoot. However, after the initial table-read and discussions, rehearsals would have taken place on set. They would have, again, consisted of discussions and, later, initial blocking (with the director standing in as the camera). Meanwhile, the assistant director would have been responsible for setting up with the crew; then, the rehearsal would have moved to the prepared set and involve both cast and crew. Being familiar with the blocking would have been important for the actors; they then would have been able to concentrate on the portrayal whilst not thinking too much about technicalities; the crew would have been aware of where the actors move. The boom operator, for example, would have known where to place the boom without being in shot or interfering with the acting. An essential aspect of this process would have been to give the actors the feeling of intimacy and not fearing the camera. If rehearsals would have taken place without the crew present at first, the actors would have been more natural and not necessarily acted *for* the camera but *with* the camera.[201]

The most important aspect of the work with the actors regarding interactivity is clear communication.[202] Uncertainties and insecurities would have been reduced to a minimum by ensuring that the actors are aware of each aspect of the script, each decision that the audience can make, where it will lead, and how the decisions and their outcomes will be presented to the audience.. A stable relationship with the actors would have been vital regarding communication. If an actor feels comfortable enough to ask questions without fear of being branded as an actor who does not think enough about their character and the script, communication is clear and honest. It is better for a question to be answered than working with an actor who is unsure. Uncertainties would lead to insecurity which an audience can detect by watching an actor's performance. As explained above, actors and their performances are often influenced by their surroundings, feelings, and their background. By communicating clearly with them and by ensuring that they feel comfortable to communicate openly, performative insecurity can be avoided. I started the work of establishing a good

---

[200] Sahar Hamzah; Thesis: *An Examination of the Filmmaking Methods of Kenneth Branagh in his Directorial Film Work* on Thor*, Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit and Cinderella with Specific Reference to his Status as Auteur*; 2017 (Queen Margaret University; Edinburgh); pp. 89-92.
[201] Rooney, and Belli; *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing*; pp. 77-81.
[202] Rooney, and Belli; *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing*; pp. 230-32.

and professional relationship with the actors by having initial discussions and by making clear that questions should always be asked during the table-read.

This leads to the notion of trust. Through clear and open communication, trust can be established. A director needs to be sure that the members on set are honest and speak their mind. To guarantee this, the director needs to be an adequate example and communicate well and disclose their thoughts to the members of cast and crew. Trust can be created in pre-production but needs to be reestablished once on set. The circumstances on set are different to the circumstances beforehand; hence, actors needed to be reassured that a change of procedure in terms of communication and trust would not take place.[203]

The openness to change and suggestions that have been described in the chapter 'The Writer-Director', is as important on set as in pre-production. A similar atmosphere on set as it had been in the read-through and discussions can be achieved by staying open to change and by treating the time on set as an extension to the time in pre-production. Communication, once again, is key to maintaining this atmosphere; assuring the actors as well as informing them about changes or new ideas is the foundation of successful collaboration. By going further and letting the actors voice suggestions, the atmosphere is more collaborative and open. To trust the actors and their opinions means to ensure an openness to the script. After spending months on the script as a writer-director, this openness is key to ensure novelty.

In general, the central theme of my work with the actors would have been working on characters. Not just whilst preparing to shoot, but also whilst working on set. Coming from theatre, I am familiar with and value rehearsal time and, as part of that, a research and development period. The concept of film is different and, hence, many directors tend to not overtly use rehearsals in their approach. As film has the advantage of shooting a scene repeatedly, each individual take can be seen as rehearsal time. However, something in the performance can get lost the more often an actor does a scene in my opinion. Especially, when the scene is done multiple times in a row. During performances in theatre, scenes are not done multiple times in a row; still, actors have done these scenes multiple times before. Nevertheless, the scenes can still breathe some kind of liveliness, as they live from each night's energy and the explorations made by the actor through the previous scenes. By shooting a scene for an extensive number of times, this liveliness may become dull. Working with the actors before the shoot means that they can bring freshness to the set and still be familiar with the scene, the context, and their characters' emotions. This streamlines the filming process in terms of the number of takes and, further, helps the actors with their performance. In the case of an interactive short film, understanding the context would mean that the actors would know where exactly in the story they are and which branch the scene is placed in, allowing them to think less about technicalities and more about their characters and performance.

---

[203] Rooney, and Belli; *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing*; pp. 77-78.

4. Reflection & Conclusion

Ere answering the question of how a writer-director can be an aide for the actors of a narrative interactive short film, the following paragraphs of this dissertation will focus on how the research and process of writing and directing the interactive short film 'A Slimming World' influenced the concluding answer of said question. Fruitful approaches, as well as strategies that should have been adjusted in retrospect will be discussed. Further, the pros and the cons of external limitations will be examined and explained to conclude how interactivity can be performed efficiently and which role the writer-director can play in supporting the actors.

4.1. Reflection

To ratiocinate and answer the research questions, it is important to reflect on and dissect the work that was conducted. The following paragraphs will examine strategies that worked and strategies that did not work whilst approaching this project. Further, they will offer solutions and adjustments that can be identified retrospectively and may be useful for another project of similar structure.

4.1.1. Successful Strategies

Distinguishing between the roles of the writer and director was successful, as both processes were separated temporally and approached differently. Dan Gurskis' approach of working collaboratively helped to, furthermore, establish a personal separation to the work; being occupied with the script for an extended period of time and moving on to working on the script from a director's perspective immediately after, could have easily resulted in inflexibility. Being open to suggestions from others, especially as a director, opened new possibilities and ways of thinking about the script that had not been considered before. This made the process more creative and enriched the script during production, and confirms that collaboration is a useful approach when trying to distance oneself (especially as the director) from one's script.

Initially, working as both writer and director had been a daunting task. During research and the processes of writing and directing, benefits became apparent; the same person writing and directing the script accelerated the process. The director was already aware of some of the aspects of the film which shortened the preparation time. Of course, the script had to be approached from a different angle; however, the time to do so was shorter compared to approaching the script anew. Especially in the context of a student film, the less time consumed, the better for the production financially; a limitation of production time means that each of the production stages (such as writing) is shortened. If the preparation time is reduced, the amount of saved time can be allocated somewhere else. In this case, it was utilised for the writing process and allowed for the script to be redrafted even more. The result was a clearer and more coherent script.

It became apparent, soon after the initial research, that the development and the writing of the script are essential to the work with the actors. The script needs to be understood by the actors; making the script work for director and actors had to be the priority, especially due to the interactive nature of the film. The problem was prevailed and not encountered, because of the awareness of the possibility for this issue to arise. According to the actors of the table-read and the film, the script was clear to them. Initial discussions and explanations helped to clarify even further.

Being collaborative means to communicate the demands, the structure, and the intentions of the script, to explore the characters with the actors to make them understand the story and structure, and to be open to suggestions and ideas. The work on set is influenced by this collaboration as the communication between the departments is better and everyone understands the background of each task that is set, speeding up production processes.

4.1.2. Retrospective Adjustments

To make the collaboration more successful – meaning, to ensure that the script is enriched by ideas – the collaboration should have started even earlier. Although, a script supervisor had been present, discussions with the supervisors of the master's had taken place, and actor friends were consulted, the actual actors could have been found and involved at an earlier stage; the drafts could have also been read by even more people – a test audience not working in theatre or film. A cast and crew could have been found sooner to include them in the writing process even more. Although this would have meant for the roles of writer and director to not be as separated as it had been the case here, collaborating even more would have compensated for this.

A second person who the workload of both roles – writer and director – could have been shared with would have made the work even more collaborative. Being, in a way, the auteur of the production limited the collaboration as decisions were made much quicker. This jeopardised ensuring that everyone is aware of the structure of the film and the script's intentions. As an auteur, creative control lies in the hand of said auteur – in this case the writer-director. This limits collaboration, as the auteur has more creative power than anyone else on set. By adding a second person to the writer-director team, the problem of having an auteur – of being a dominant director, following the more common hierarchy of a film set – could have been avoided. Collaboration would have been present even within the writer-director team. This is often the case when co-directors work on a film or in television; here, there is a writers-room. It is rare for both roles being divided by two people, but not uncommon. An example are the Wachowskis; as a team, they directed nearly all of the films they wrote.[204] There are some downsides to working on a script and as directors in a team, such as spending more time on discussions and, hence, stretching the production time. However, this would be compensated by being able to divide tasks and sharing the workload.

---

[204] Cael M Keegan; *Lana and Lilly Wachowski*; (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2018); pp. 153-160.

Certainly, a shorter script would have helped too; more production time would have been distributed to other aspects than writing the script. Instead of the anticipated twelve to fifteen major scenes, as described in the subchapter 'Influences of Technicalities', the locked script included sixty-eight scenes. Not all of them can be regarded as major scenes; nevertheless, the script developed to be longer than imagined at first. A shorter script would certainly have made the script more comprehensible and would have proposed fewer technical difficulties. The benefits of a shorter script were discovered after being confronted with not having sufficient time to produce the entire film (after the postponing); by having fewer scenes, the shooting time would have been shorter. Potentially, more people would have applied for the crew, the shorter the shooting period.

In combination with the length of the script, external limitations lead to the postponing and, subsequently, the cancellation of the shoot. Considering these external limitations, as explained in the following paragraphs, should have been a priority. As much as they were considered initially, their full potential was only discovered after the shoot had been cancelled.

4.1.3. External Limitations

There are three main external limitations. The first one is the budget; it mainly affected the payment of cast and crew. Payment would have enhanced their loyalty to script and film and would have made the production seem more professional. Being able to pay members of cast and crew would have also ensured a larger pool of cast and crew to choose from. More members of the crew would have been able to be hired, which would have meant for the production time to be shorter. In this case, members of the crew had to cover other roles, as it was difficult to find more crew.

Another external limitation were the effects and aftereffects of Covid-19. Further measurements had to be considered and put in place to prevent an outbreak to happen on set. This affected time and the amount of interaction (rehearsal time, etc.) between the members of the cast and between the members of cast and crew. Furthermore, the worst-case scenario of a member of cast getting infected before the start of the shoot occurred.

The limitation of time meant that the production could not withstand multiple delays. In combination with the other limitations, insufficient time resulted in the postponing and, eventually, the cancellation of the shoot.

These external limitations were considered from the start; as apparent now, they should have been taken into account even more to counteract and prevent the scenario that eventually came to pass: the cancelling of the shoot. However, to have limitations was extremely helpful, as new ideas emerged. Moreover, it represents reality, as most productions face some form of limitation (budget, time, etc.). Creating an environment without any limitations would not have been a truthful representation of reality; both film and dissertation would have, thus, not been of research-value. To have limitations

means to have a necessary amount of strain to produce a creative product. As per the director Orson Welles: "The enemy of art is the absence of limitations."[205]

4.2. Summary of Work

To answer the question raised initially, the processes of writing and directing need to be separated; the demands and tasks of a writer are considerably different to those of a director. Whilst there are similarities as in approach by communicating clearly and being open to suggestions and discussions, the work and functions of the roles are diverse and distinct.

The writer lays the foundation and renders assistance by developing a well-researched, coherent, comprehensible, and structurally and thematically functioning script. As much as this is the task of a writer of any script, interactivity demands an even more accessible script; confusion can arise because of the interactive aspects (the branching in the case of this short film). Adding more confusing elements like a difficult storyline featuring time jumps for example, can make the work with the actors even more difficult.

One of the writer's main tasks is to make the interactivity accessible; actors, crew, and subsequently the audience need to be able to understand the mechanics of the interactivity. Moreover, the interactivity needs to make sense thematically and structurally, and needs to be justified accordingly. For an interactive short film, branching manifests itself to be the ideal choice for interactivity; it is easy for the audience to understand and financially the most fitting option. To ensure structural coherence and an intelligible plot, the branching needs to be straightforward and not abstruse. Loops and dead ends of the decision-strands add a layer of complexity to the branching which, especially in a short film, can lead to incomprehension. This confusion can be of structural nature and confuse the audience whilst watching the film. Moreover, it can stem from a lack of understanding by the actors and members of the crew; if the actors are not able to understand the plot, and therefore their characters and their journey, uncertainty will manifest itself and be reflected in the acting. The portrayals of the characters will no longer be clear. Hence, the audience will not be able to understand the characters and the plot.

In addition, it is the writer's task to keep (the illusion of) agency, as explained in the subchapters 'Lack of User Agency', 'Decision to Use 'The Branch and Bottleneck Structure'', 'Keeping the Illusion of Choices Upon First Viewing', 'The Key to the Heart of the Film', and 'Few Key Characters'. When watching an interactive short film, the audience expects a certain amount of agency. It is the writer's duty to enrich the script with aspects that will give the audience agency. The story and plot need to ensure that the audience is aware of their purpose. The interactivity needs to be justified within the script. Agency can also be an illusion, as demonstrated in this short film; the

---

[205] 'Orson Welles Quotes'; in *BrainyQuotes https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/orson_welles_109697* [accessed: 16 January 2023].

importance is that the illusion is prevailed throughout the first viewing of the film. The audience might notice their lack of agency upon second viewing; if this is justified by the plot and the moral of the film, illusional agency is then legitimate. In the case of this short film, it was the aim to achieve the illusion by using a branching structure that leads both decision-strands of each branching back together. Upon first viewing, the audience is not aware of this, as they do not know the plotline yet. Upon second viewing, the nature of the structure is revealed, as explained in the subchapter 'Keeping the Illusion of Choices Upon First Viewing'. The branching structure can be justified by a thematic choice: the audience functioning as the antagonist of the plot. The story hints at the illusion of agency, as thematical aspects and interactivity need to be conjoined.

The arrangements regarding the interactive aspects of the script should reflect and be linked to thematic choices. The result was a character-driven film that can be seen as a mixture of 'i-DOC' and melodrama. Thus, the audience can follow the plot of the film easily. It had to be a character-driven film, as the dissertation is looking at the work with the actors. An actor plays a character – character-work is, thus, important. A character-driven film also focuses on character-work and is hence a logical choice. Fewer key characters mean that not too many characters need to be established and the director will be able to direct more attention to each of the actors. Financially, having fewer actors and thus characters is a wise option.

To write about something one is familiar with, is one of the approaches many scriptwriters rely on. To have a connection to the theme of the script is vital for the writer of an interactive short film, as the focus of the writer can be on the link between interactivity and theme of the film; by knowing certain aspects of the theme already, research and development of the script are more effortless than otherwise. In the case of 'A Slimming World', knowing where to find resources for the research into aspects such as EDs and body image shortened the research period.

At large, it is the writer's task to make the interactivity work for the themes, story, plot, and narrative of the film. Further, the delivery of these aspects needs to be comprehensible. The type of interactivity used in this short film is justified by its assimilation to the script and approach of working that was aimed to be achieved. As explained, branching, the decisions that can be made being limited, and, hence, creating an illusion of agency of the audience are key to making the interactivity work for the script. The approach of working that was aimed to be achieved was to make the interactivity accessible for the actors. This, further, would mean that the performances would be believable enough for the audience.

When a writer is also a director, there needs to be an even deeper understanding of the two aspects of the role to make a clear distinction between them, as discussed by Michael Rabiger and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier and outlined in the subchapters 'The Work of the Writer-Director' and 'Maintaining Distance'. To make this differentiation obvious, the writer should not envision the script as a finished product but simply see it through the eyes of a writer and not a director. By being too specific about aspects of characters, locations, and more, a writer-director is not able to make the distinction about

their two roles clear. Being clear about the separation of the role and process of a writing versus directing, is key to a creative approach where collaboration can be made possible. These statements regarding separation of the roles and the importance of collaboration made by Dan Gurskis and other, proved accurate and were helpful for the development of the interactive short film 'A Slimming World'. Moreover, this seems to be the key to making interactivity efficient.

There are similarities between both roles that might make a distinction between them more complicated; conjoining the roles of the writer and the director are the notions of clarity and distinctiveness, straightforward communication, willingness to collaborate, and openness and flexibility. Both roles direct their focus on the script; if the script is clear, the director can work with the actors more efficiently. In pre-production, the director needs to look at the script with fresh set of eyes. This can be done through collaboration; different views and angles mean more creativity and create a distinction between the process of writing and the processes of production. Suggestions and discussions with cast and crew are the key to achieve this sense of collaboration.

4.3. Performing Interactivity Effectively:

Working with Actors as a Writer-Director of an Interactive Short Film

The practical approach to answering the research question of 'how a writer-director of a narrative interactive short film can assist the process of the actors clearly understanding their characters to make their performance believable' arose from an observed disfunction between characters and the audience of narrative interactive films. Through research it became apparent that the disfunction was mainly caused by the confusing aspects of branching; main objective, background, present, and future of the characters were ambiguous and, hence, generated a vague portrayal of the story's actions by the actors, resulting in an ineffectiveness of performance. This ineffectiveness – compounded by inadequate plausibility and a lack of believability – was, in part, the cause of a lack of immersion of the audience. The goal of the practical examination was, hence, to construct a functional narrative; ergo, believable characters, and a plausible story structure – plot and interactivity – needed to create effective performance and, further, immerse the audience.

The audience is key; their interpretation, however, is almost unpredictable, especially in a narrative interactive short film. Actors and directors have difficulty to grasp how individual audience members will conceive the actions, the characters, and the plot. Thus, a strong moral must justify and be justified by the moral. In the case of this narrative interactive short film, the moral questions the ethics of the audience's interaction with the film and, subsequently, their influence on the main character. It examines the audience's agency – their part within the authorial body – and, thus, the interactivity. The audience's decisions structure the film; giving them agency and making them part of the authorial body, depends on structure: on the plot. This underlies the notion of the director not being the sole author of a narrative interactive film, as the audience is now part of the authorial body through the interactivity. Here, the authorial body consists of writer, director, crew, actors, and the

audience. A well-elaborated 'we-intention' influences and is, simultaneously, influenced by everyone of the authorial body. In the case of 'A Slimming World', the 'we-intention' was to create and follow the journey of Charlie and to immerse the audience or for the audience to be immersed in this interactive narrative. The 'we-intention' came into fruition through research. Here, research means studying surveys, studies, books, and articles by established experts in the field, and consulting drama acquainted practitioners.

As the 'we-intention' needs an origin, the script is the perimeter and guide for the members of the authorial body to construe and adhere to the 'we-intention'. Just as the story's moral, the 'we-intention' is generated by the script. The circumstances of this narrative interactive short film produced the risk of a standstill within the development since the writer and the director are one and the same person. To have a distance to the script, a writer-director needs to distinguish between the two roles and collaborate as a writer and as a director to ensure inventiveness and an open approach to the script at all stages. Further, certain aspects – especially about character – need to be left open for interpretation when approaching the script of a narrative interactive short film. Charlie, for example, is intentionally non-binary. On one hand, to serve their initial non-conformity with social norms and to make their fall even more impactful; on the other hand, to be open about the physiology and biological sex of the main character. However, an openness about characters can easily lead to an ambiguity about their actions, making the interactivity ineffective. Thus, this openness still needs to serve characters and actions. In this case, the openness is adhering to the premise of the main character and their actions: to be non-conforming at first, and then slowly assimilating society standards. The focus of the writer as a writer needs to be clear: scripting a narrative interactive story for the screen in which the actors can perform believable to create plausible actions – drama – to, consequently, make the performed interactivity effective. In the case of the development of the script of 'A Slimming World', my personal experience with actors and as an actor was beneficial for adapting the script to the actor's needs. Further, discussions with various actors to gain a spectrum of input informed the process of writing consistently. Here, the discussions focused on characters, the plausibility of actions, and the believability of the story and plot. Suggestions and interpretations informed various aspects of the script; because of a suggestion, a plot point where a decision could be made was cut from the script as it would add confusion. Further, the outcome of a decision was slightly altered after an actor friend suggested that they could not see the character acting in this way.

Notwithstanding the discussions and external influences, a writer of a narrative film needs to have a certain agency over the narrative. In 'A Slimming World' this agency is generated by the conditions that were established through empirical and theoretical research: the use of a form of narrative linearity through an altered version of 'the Branch and Bottleneck Structure' and the development of the illusion of audience agency through the structure. These, once again, informed and were informed by the moral questioning the agency of an audience. This illusion of agency in combination with the writer's decision to leave the ending of this narrative interactive short film open was supposed to

animate the audience to watch the film for a second time to make them aware of a second layer of the moral: influencing another person always impacts the person's life – in this case Charlie. However, a moral is still perceived, even if audience members choose to watch the film once. The second layer of the moral is an addition to the initial moral. Both, the open ending and the illusion of agency, function in relation to the moral and, moreover, serve the plot and narrative. They work against the audience's expectation and form an element of surprise, which is a narrative tool serving the plot.

Just as the writer, the director needs to understand the craft of an actor. This was a given in this case, as writer and director were the same person. If this is the case, the transition from writer to director must be distinct. New people need to be consulted: the selected cast and crew. The writer passively interacts with the actors through the script, whilst the director is in active discourse with the actors through discussions in rehearsals and on set. Both roles, however, illustrate that interactivity plays a vital part not just between actors and the audience, but, further, between actors and the writer and the director. In short, interactivity is present between all authorial bodies. This interactivity is concomitant to collaboration. Thus, interactivity and collaboration go hand in hand. The collaborators on this narrative interactive short film were, to an extent, an early audience.

The approach of consulting actors as a writer and as a director in terms of dialogue and action, and, further in relation to structure and development of story and plot is unusual. Although writers sometimes work in writer-circles, in a writer's room, and consult other writers, actors are seldomly involved in the early development stages of narrative films, narrative series, or narrative short films. And even later, an unalterable plot is presented to the actors. Acquainted actors informed the plot whilst developing the script of 'A Slimming World'. Their input shaped and altered my own perception of the story and helped me to develop plausible and believable actions which informed the development of a, in their eyes, believable plot and an effective script.

Another unusual approach within the production is the use of rehearsals. Rehearsals before the shoot are not a common technique during the production of a narrative film, series, or short films. In this case, these approaches, derived from experience in theatre, were deemed useful to assist the actors in making their performance believable. The rehearsals are collaborative and strengthen the actors' understanding of character, plot, and, hence, interactivity. During the rehearsals for this narrative interactive short film, I asked the actor portraying Charlie questions in relation to Charlie within the scenario to deepen the actor's understanding of the character's objective within the scene. The answers were informed by the script but, further, gave an insight into an interpretation of the character and their actions. This, in turn, influenced my perception of the character and altered aspects of the shot-list and storyboard. It highlighted how some of the shots would have to be constructed to emphasise an emotion, intension, action, or reaction of the character. Rehearsals and the collaboration that was part of them, influenced the making of the film, once again. As much as there needed to be room for spontaneity on set, rehearsals – in form of discussions – before the shoot influenced the vision and

shaped and strengthened the 'we-intention'. Further, they would have influenced the rehearsals on set and would have guided the blocking, facilitating the process.

A writer-director can assist the process of the actors understanding their characters to make their performance believable and the performance of interactivity effective through collaboration during all stages of their work, as this dissertation and the practical work alongside it reflect. However, by trying to answer the sub-questions established in the introduction and through looking back at the developed script, a more fundamental question arose: are narrative film and interactivity mutually exclusive? To make an interactive narrative short film, a certain structure of the script – the plot – is needed. However, this linearity – in the case of 'A Slimming World' represented by the altered 'Branch and Bottleneck Structure' – diminishes the audience's agency and, thus, the interactivity. As much as the lack of agency, apparent upon second viewing, was justified by the moral and became part of the narrative, it still proposes the question whether this narrative interactive short film is truly interactive. This depends on the context and the definition of interactivity. Here, I have described interactivity as a two-way flow of information. As examined in chapter '2.1.3.2. Lack of User Agency', the more agency the audience has, the more they feel immersed into the story. Thus, giving them only two options to choose from and, further, making the branches come back together to create linearity of the plot, subsides their feeling of immersion, creating a distance to the characters and the action. The audience representing a passive character justifies the choice of giving the audience two options, as it is an indirect way for the writer-director to direct the audience. Nevertheless, their feeling of immersion can be much dependant on the expectations with which the audience is watching the film for the first and the second time.

A second reason for examining the question whether narrative film and interactive film are mutually exclusive derives from the concept of the main objective of a character. As established, the main objective was left open for interpretation to justify the actions of the main character Charlie within the different branches. As much as this ambiguity was intended to be justified by having the conflict be carried out internally, it diminished the narrative of the story for '[t]he benefit of a strong goal is that it creates drama.'[206] The actions and intentions of the main character were, thus, not as clear as they could have been without ambiguity and, further, interactivity. The narrative is the journey of the story which is perpetuated through action. Action means drama. If the narrative, due to the lack of justification and clarity of the character's actions, is unclear, is the script and film automatically anti-dramatic? This leads back to the interactivity and the agency of the audience; provided that the main character Charlie is be granted more agency, justifying the action and the narrative, the audience, in turn, receives less agency, making the film less interactive. In 'A Slimming World' the audience has agency because of the interactivity during the first half of the film, arguably until the climax. After this point, the character-layer sets in; now, there is no use of interactivity and Charlie seems more in

---

[206] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 8.

control of the narrative. They are, now, less passive and regain agency that they had until the first decision was made by the audience. Charlie is, thus, anti-dramatic whenever the pot layer (the interactivity) dominates. In conclusion, Charlie only functions dramatically if there is no use of interactivity.

As established, more agency of the audience generates less agency of the actors, as the justification and a believability of characters and actions is, thus, reduced. In turn, if a character and, thus, the actor receives more agency, the audience's agency is diminished. Consequently, the interactive aspect of the film is weakened and not used to its full potential. Thus, the sub-question of whether an actor should have agency in an interactive production can be negated. Further, more audience agency means less story structure; the plot, thus, becomes less linear, as various endings and stretched out branches add multiple layers to the story. There is, then, no apparent overall moral or 'we-intention' and the performativity of the interactivity delineates to be unclear and confusing. Thus, more audience agency counteracts interactivity and the narrative. A narrative – a well-structured plot – weakens the interactivity. However, the structure is vital for the narrative, whilst the ambiguity of the character's main objective is important to make an interactive performance effective. Ken Dancyger argues that many short films tend to use the '[…] experimental narrative, a story form that emphasizes style over content. It is likely that the character will not have an apparent goal, that the character will be reacting to another person, situation, or environment, and that there certainly will not be a plot. Consequently, the whole issue of linearity, or of cause and effect, will not be relevant.'[207] However, I argue that this is highly anti-dramatic and can, thus, not be seen as a functioning narrative form. In conclusion, the effectivity of narrative aspects of the film – a character's main objective driving the action and, thus, the plot forward – is weakened by the interactivity and vice versa.

The storytelling of a game, where the player interacts with the structure and plot, is, on the other hand, not reliant on a performance. Games are, thus, very suitable for interactivity. Some games, such as *The Sims*[208] are interactive and have no structure. Nevertheless, they still work since the audience does not expect a structure. Contrastively, audiences of narrative films, or narrative short films expect a certain structure and, hence, a causality of the actions. As short films are more experimental regarding the narrative, there is more scope for an audience's expectation regarding structure. However, for narrative short films, certain amount of structure to create a narrative is needed. Another form of interactive storytelling which is not necessarily dependent on performance is the 'i-DOC'. Here, something real is captured and made interactive. The story follows a structure but is not performative. Moreover, the audience does not expect a performance by an actor. An 'i-DOC' would be a very suitable approach to making an audience aware of the issues surrounding eating disorders. Further, the role of the writer-director would have allegorised differently, as there is not necessarily a

---

[207] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 25.
[208] Will Wright; *The Sims* (Maxis, 2000); Microsoft Windows, Mac OS, PlayStation 2, GameCube, Xbox, Game Boy Advance, Nintendo DS, PlayStation Portable, Java ME, BlackBerry OS, Bada, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii, Nintendo 3DS, macOS, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, iOS, Android, Windows Phone.

distinction between the two roles in documentary.[209] However, as much as the 'i-DOC' format would have been ideal, the intention was to explore the effectiveness of performance within and, further, produce a narrative interactive short film. Combined with the knowledge gained about the complexities about keeping a balance between the effectiveness interactivity and narrative, I argue that interactivity and narrative interactive short films are mutually exclusive. Further, this is applicable to a long film, as branching and interactivity in this context is even more complex and confusing as in a short film where the plot and its length are manageable. These finding explain why the use of interactivity in an educational context, and in games and books is more popular than in narrative film. Books, games, 'i-DOCs, and educational programmes are not as reliant on performance as narrative films are. Having found more suitable outlets for interactivity – games and 'i-DOCs' – my overall approach would, now, differ. Looking back at the development of the script and processes of pre-production, much knowledge was gained in terms of a useful approach for the development of an 'i-DOC' or of a feature-length film with a similar subject and theme. Further, it deepened my notion regarding the importance of research in relation to approaching a script and pre-production. I gained more knowledge about the general tasks of writers, directors, writer-directors, and actors, and the importance of the audience in film – particularly interactive film and narrative short films. In conclusion, this research and development, as much as it has not necessarily turned out to be in favour of 'A Slimming World', can be useful for my own future work and that of other writers/directors/producers in the future. Hereafter, I would approach interactivity differently; I would refrain from using interactivity in a narrative context or vice versa, as it is the performativity and the concomitant expectation of the audience that makes the combination of interactivity and narrative difficult. A narrative film follows a certain structure, whilst an interactive film does not. These two aspects pre-empt each other. However, I believe that if the audience's expectation regarding interactive films changes, narrative interactive films might have a more successful future.

---

[209] Dancyger; *Global Scriptwriting*; p. 25.

Appendix

1. Approach of the Screenplay

WT: A Slimming World

STARTING POINTS:

Concept:

Medium Short

- 20-25 minutes (maybe, a little bit longer because of the branches)
- Multiple crises
- B-plot (but not too complex)
- 12-15 major scenes

Focus: conflict clear -> action arises; character Time

Frame:

Image based, not too much dialogue

Central Problem: Development of an Eating Disorder

B-Plot Problem: Change of character of Protagonist

Characters:

Antagonist: Audience (choices of audience)

Protagonist: Character who develops an Eating Disorder

Outlook: World is evil

Attitude: Lovely person

Arc: Decline of mental health, realisation

Catalyst: established before film

Confidant: Best Friend (?)

Narrative:

Rising Action:

Exposition: Protagonist has already been exposed to factors that can cause an eating disorder (family influence, comments in childhood, etc.)

Mystery/Suspense/Dramatic Irony (at times the audience knows less than characters, but shifts to audience knowing more/being aware of more than the protagonist)

Open Ending: Protagonist makes a decision for themselves for the first time; it looks like audience can make the decision, but they are not able to click
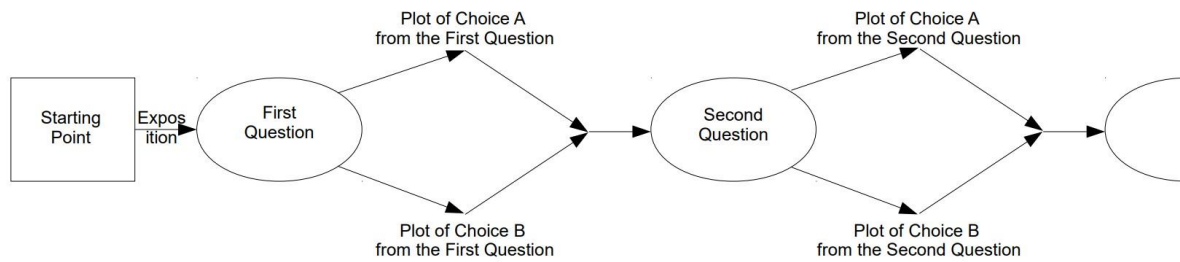
DEVELOPMENT:

Characters (ask them questions about themselves after writing the logline)**:**

Protagonist: Charlie Parvus

Antagonist: Audience

Confidant: Best Friend - Mel

Side Characters: Sister, Mel's friends, other friends

Mentioned Characters: Family - Mum, Dad, two grandmas, one grandpa

Theme: Self vs. Society, Facing Oneself, Facing Mental Illness

Premise: The more society has an impact on the protagonist, the more the protagonist retreats to themselves, causing them to face themself and their mental illness.

Setting:

- Relatable
- Student setting (i.e. student house/flat, campus, cheap restaurants/bars, etc.)
- York (for filming purposes)
- Restaurant
- Bar
- Gym

Genre: Interactive Melodrama **Form:**

Length: about 15-20 minutes long (adding the branches all together: 25-30 minutes long)

Structure: Three Act Structure; episodic because of choices that can be made; always coming to the same conclusion

Time:

Real Time: 25-30 minutes

Screen Time: 15-20 minutes Emotional

Time (shot length):

Narrative Time: Multiple Months (6-9 months)

Audience:

- Antagonist
- Making choices (not for the character, but in the sense of 'What would society expect the character to do?')

- Represent society
- Can be anyone

Logline (one/two sentence summary of plot)**:**

The decline of a person's mental health who is exposed to factors that can cause and perpetuate an

Eating Disorder, and how these factors affect their (social) life.

Synopsis (5 paragraphs; concise version of story)**:**

Synopsis

Beat Sheet (main action in scenes)**:**

Beat Sheet

Scene Outline (minor beats included)**:**

Scene Outline

Sequence Outline (connection between scenes)**:**

Hero's Journey (to control what I've written so far; is it clear/precise?)**:**

Diagram of Three Act Structure (to control what I've written so far; is it clear/precise?)**:**

Act 1: establishing; introduce premise, characters, conflict; tone, texture, setting become clear;

problem for main character arises

Act 2: series of conflicts; tension and suspense

Act 3: resolving; crisis and resolution

Page Markers:

- Set up - page 3/4
- Midpoint - page 15
- Climax - page 27
- Turning Points - before end of act 1 and 2

Treatment (prose version of screenplay with dialogue in present tense)**:**

2. Synopsis

A university student develops an eating disorder after being exposed to diet culture through decisions that the audience can make for them. They disconnect from their friends and family and ultimately themselves.

CHARLIE PARVUS, a seemingly outgoing university student, confesses after a night out in a campus bar to their best friend MEL that they are insecure about how they appear to other people. Their insecurities start to extend to relate their physical appearance, after the AUDIENCE (as antagonist of the story) can decide for Charlie to either listen to their mother talk about her new diet or Charlie looking at diet culture related social media posts. Both outcomes affect Charlie's mental health. Charlie starts to feel more and more insecure about themselves; they weigh themselves, sign up for a gym membership, and keep track of their calorie intake. The audience can make multiple decisions for them, ranging from having breakfast or not, working out or working on an essay, going out with friends or staying in, throwing up or not. All these decisions lead to Charlie getting worse and worse. Charlie is seen being more and more focused on their weight and appearance, and less on their social interactions.

The midpoint of Charlie's demise happens when the audience can no longer make a decision for them; they order a water instead of their usual drink. After that, the mental and physical strain that their eating disorder has on them becomes more and more visible: they spend more time in bed, stop going to the gym, keep checking their body and their calorie intake, and try to avoid friends and family as much as possible. It all culminates when they decide to skip Mel's birthday party after not having been in contact with her for a long time.

Charlie cries themselves to sleep frequently; they are immensely unhappy. Unexpectedly, their younger SISTER knocks on their door. She expresses how worried everyone, especially Mel, is and that she had to check on them. Charlie has a breakdown and opens up about their recent struggles. She promises to not tell their parents if Charlie gets help and gets in contact with Mel. Charlie meets Mel in the campus bar (from the beginning and middle) and apologises. Mel offers her help. Walking home alone, the last question for the audience appears: 'Should Charlie chose recovery?' Before the audience can make a decision, the screen fades to black.

3. Beat Sheet

WT: A SLIMMING WORLD

CREDITS

ACT ONE:

1. CHARLIE is in their kitchen cooking. They put something in the oven. FIRST DECISION: Should CHARLIE call their mum or scroll through social media whilst waiting?

    a. CHARLIE calls their mum. After initial chatting, she tells them about a new diet that focusses on a calorie deficit. She says that CHARLIE should try it out.

    b. CHARLIE scrolls through their social media. Most posts are highly food related and promote calorie deficits as most helpful tool to lose weight.

2. CHARLIE puts the phone away. They are frustrated. They get the packaging of their ready meal out of the bin and look at the calories. They throw it away, but don't seem happy.

ACT TWO:

3. MEL calls to confirm if CHARLIE is going to join her and her friends for dinner as an end of term celebration. CHARLIE says that they aren't feeling well. MEL tries to persuade them.

4. FOURTH DECISION: Should CHARLIE go out or stay in?

    a. CHARLIE joins their friends for a meal in a restaurant. One of the friends says: "Are you really going to finish all of that? That's impressive." CHARLIE gets anxious and leaves earlier instead of going to a bar afterwards. At home they go on the scales.

    b. CHARLIE decides to watch a film. They eat sweets instead of a meal. The film declares the main character as "fat" even though they are a healthy weight. CHARLIE pauses the film and goes on the scales.

5. After going on the scales, CHARLIE paces through the room. They go to the bathroom and immediately leave it again just to go back in. They slide down the door and sit on the floor.

6. Another day. CHARLIE and MEL meet up for a drink in a campus bar (same as beginning). SIXTH DECISION: It is CHARLIE's turn to order. There is a pause. The audience is made to believe that they can make another decision: Should CHARLIE order alcohol or a water? Before the audience can decide, CHARLIE says "A water please."

7. Their mum calls to ask when CHARLIE will come back for Christmas. They try to find excuses to go back only shortly before Christmas.

8. Christmas Dinner. Charlie is feeling very anxious, and not eating much. They seem uncomfortable talking to their family and go to bed early.

9. MEL texts that she just wanted to ask if CHARLIE is going to be at her birthday party, since they never pick up their phone. CHARLIE doesn't respond immediately.

SEVENTH DECISION: CHARLIE types on their phone: 'Shall I go to Mel's party? Pro/Yes or Con/No'. Con: 'Alcohol=Calories', 'Social Interactions=Bad', etc.

They record voice messages for MEL multiple times but delete them. After a while they send one. They get a message back: 'This was the last straw. That's it. Mel'

ACT THREE:

10.   A surprise visit from their SISTER. They sit down in the kitchen. SISTER explains that they're all worried and that MEL called. CHARLIE has a breakdown and tell SISTER everything. They explain that they don't know who they are or want to be, and that they are not satisfied with themselves. They confess that they feel like they get more attention from others since they have lost weight. SISTER explains that they don't seem themselves anymore, but like a shadow. CHARLIE breaks down again. They say that they feel less connected to people, but that they are scared and don't know what to do. SISTER tells them to contact MEL and that their family is always there for them. CHARLIE doesn't want their parents to know about it and SISTER has to swear to not tell them. She gives them a pinkie-promise under the condition for Charlie to get help.

11. Campus Bar (from beginning and middle). CHARLIE and MEL sit in silence. CHARLIE apologises. MEL is relieved and expresses that she wants to help. CHARLIE tells her that they have been in contact with the GP but haven't heard back yet (probably a lie). MEL is glad that they are taking steps in the right direction.

12. CHARLIE walks home alone this time. They pass the takeaway from the beginning, but don't stop. EIGHTH DECISION: A new question appears: Should CHARLIE choose recovery? The screen goes black before the audience can decide.

4. Scene Outline

WT: A SLIMMING WORLD

CREDITS

- Audience can choose: Should Credits be shown?
    - o Montage of pictures of food (flashing, scrolling effects, and quickly changing; like in social media or the news) with credits
    - o Montage of pictures of food (flashing, scrolling effects, and quickly changing; like in social media or the news)

ACT ONE:

1. CHARLIE PARVUS and their friend MEL are in a campus bar. They drink and are having a good time with their friends.

2. CHARLIE and MEL walk home. They are both drunk. They approach a takeaway. Whilst eating, they have a conversation about feeling out of place and sometimes being overwhelmed by people.

3. Another day. CHARLIE is in their kitchen cooking. They put something in the oven. FIRST DECISION: Should CHARLIE call their mum or scroll through social media whilst waiting?
    a. CHARLIE calls their mum. After initial chatting, she tells them about a new diet that focusses on a calorie deficit. She says that CHARLIE should try it out.
    b. CHARLIE scrolls through their social media. Most posts are highly food related and promote calorie deficits as most helpful tool to lose weight.

4. CHARLIE puts the phone away. There are frustrated. They get the packaging of their ready meal out of the bin and look at the calories. They throw it away, but don't seem happy.

ACT TWO:

5. Montage: CHARLIE in front of a mirror bodychecking. CHARLIE on their laptop signing up for a gym membership. CHARLIE in the supermarket checking labels of food. CHARLIE going on scales looking frustrated.

6. CHARLIE at the gym. They seem exhausted. They get home and weigh themselves.

7. CHARLIE and MEL go to a house party. CHARLIE gets drunk very quickly. They make out with someone they don't know. They feel sick.

8. CHARLIE and MEL in the bathroom. MEL asks if they had enough to eat before. CHARLIE says no. MEL makes them a toast which CHARLIE eats quickly. They ask for another one.

9. Montage: CHARLIE at the gym. CHARLIE working on essays. CHARLIE at the gym. CHARLIE working on essays.

10. MEL calls to confirm if CHARLIE is going to join her and her friends for dinner as an end of term celebration. CHARLIE says that they aren't feeling well. MEL tries to persuade them.

11. FOURTH DECISION: Should CHARLIE go out or stay in?

     a. CHARLIE joins their friends for a meal in a restaurant. One of the friends says: "Are you really going to finish all of that? That's impressive." CHARLIE gets anxious and leaves earlier instead of going to a bar afterwards. At home they go on the scales.

     b. CHARLIE decides to watch a film. They eat sweets instead of a meal. The film declares the main character as "fat" even though they are a healthy weight. CHARLIE pauses the film and goes on the scales.

12. After going on the scales, CHARLIE paces through the room. They go to the bathroom and immediately leave it again just to go back in. They slide down the door and sit on the floor.

13. Another day. CHARLIE and MEL meet up for a drink in a campus bar (same as beginning). They go to the bar to get drinks. A friend approaches them. MEL starts chatting to them, whilst CHARLIE looks on their phone. They look up the caloric value of drinks. MEL orders first.
     SIXTH DECISION: It is CHARLIE's turn to order. There is a pause. The audience is made to believe that they can make another decision: Should CHARLIE order alcohol or a water? Before the audience can decide, CHARLIE says "A water please."

14. They go back to MEL saying, "I just don't feel like drinking today." CHARLIE and MEL cheer to a great Christmas break. MEL says that she will miss them.

15. Montage: Body checking. Weighing. Workout. Opening the fridge but not eating. They eat sweets at night and cry themselves to sleep. They scroll through social media. They look up calories.

16. Their mum calls to ask when CHARLIE will come back for Christmas. They try to find excuses to go back only shortly before Christmas.

17. Christmas Dinner. Charlie is feeling very anxious, and not eating much. They seem uncomfortable talking to their family and go to bed early.

18. A cut. After Christmas (no decorations anymore). Montage: Body checking. Weighing. Workout. Opening the fridge but not eating. They eat sweets at night and cry themselves to sleep. They scroll through social media and see New Year's resolutions of people. They look up calories. Their MUM calls. Their SISTER calls. MEL calls. Their DAD calls. They never pick up.

19. MEL texts that she just wanted to ask if CHARLIE is going to be at her birthday party, since they never pick up their phone. CHARLIE doesn't respond immediately.
     SEVENTH DECISION: CHARLIE types on their phone: 'Shall I go to Mel's party? Pro/Yes or Con/No'. Con: 'Alcohol=Calories', 'Social Interactions=Bad', etc.

They record voice messages for MEL multiple times but delete them. After a while they send one. They get a message back: 'This was the last straw. That's it. Mel'

ACT THREE:

20. Montage: Body checking. Weighing. Opening the fridge but not eating. They cry themselves to sleep. They scroll through social media. Their MUM calls. Their SISTER calls. MEL calls. Their DAD calls. They never pick up. All of it in pyjamas this time.

21. A surprise visit from their SISTER. They sit down in the kitchen. SISTER explains that they're all worried and that MEL called. CHARLIE has a breakdown and tell SISTER everything. They explain that they don't know who they are or want to be, and that they are not satisfied with themselves. They confess that they feel like they get more attention from others since they have lost weight. SISTER explains that they don't seem themselves anymore, but like a shadow. CHARLIE breaks down again. They say that they feel less connected to people, but that they are scared and don't know what to do. SISTER tells them to contact MEL and that their family is always there for them. CHARLIE doesn't want their parents to know about it and SISTER has to swear to not tell them. She gives them a pinkie-promise under the condition for Charlie to get help.

22. Campus Bar (from beginning and middle). CHARLIE and MEL sit in silence. CHARLIE apologises. MEL is relieved and expresses that she wants to help. CHARLIE tells her that they have been in contact with the GP but haven't heard back yet (probably a lie). MEL is glad that they are taking steps in the right direction.

23. CHARLIE walks home alone this time. They pass the takeaway from the beginning, but don't stop. EIGHTH DECISION: A new question appears: Should CHARLIE choose recovery? The screen goes black before the audience can decide.

5. The Hero's Journey – Charlie's Journey

1. Heroes are introduced in the ordinary world, where

Charlie is introduced into a world where body image is important

2. They receive the call to adventure.

They start spiralling into the world of diet talk, calorie counting, etc.

3. They are reluctant at first or refuse the call, but

It is a step-by-step journey into this world

4. Are encouraged by a mentor the audience (the antagonist) **to**

Through their decisions, the audience pushes Charlie into the world

5. Cross the threshold and enter the Special World where

They finally comply.

6. They encounter tests, allies and enemies.

They isolate themselves more and more, don't see friends, etc.

7. They approach the inmost cave, crossing a second threshold

They are approached by Mel, who is worried and angry about them isolating themselves

8. Where they endure the ordeal.

Charlie pretends losing Mel as a friend isn't happening and isolate even further

(9. They take possession of their reward and)

10. Are pursued on the road back to the Ordinary World.

Charlie's sister is getting in contact, trying to figure out what's up with Charlie

11. They cross the third threshold, experience a resurrection, and are transformed by the experience.

Charlie is forced to face their mental illness and have to come to terms with the fact that they have an eating disorder

12. They return with the elixir, a boon or treasure to benefit the Ordinary World.

Is Charlie going to choose seeking help and starting recovery or not?

6. A Slimming World – Locked Draft

A Slimming World

(Locked - Draft 1)

by

Sophie Schulze

11 Argyle Street
YO23 1DW
York
United Kingdom

Tel.: 07388 249201

1   INT. BAR - NIGHT

         CHARLIE PARVUS (approx. 21), LIZZIE - Charlie's Sister
         (approx. 19), and MEL (approx. 22) sit at two sides of a
         table facing the interior of the bar. They have drinks in
         front of them. Inaudible chatter.

2   EXT. STREET - NIGHT

         Charlie, Lizzie, and Mel walk drunkenly on the pavement. A
         takeaway can be seen in the distance. Mel and Charlie have
         their arms around each other.

                         CHARLIE
                 Anyone fancy some cheesy chips?

                         MEL
                 You know I'm always up for that!

                         CHARLIE
                     (to Lizzie.)
                 Nice! What are you getting?

                         LIZZIE
                 The usual: cheesy chips and
                 curry.

                         MEL
                 Curry?! I still don't understand
                 how anyone can have curry on
                 their chips. The obvious choice
                 here is gravy!

                         LIZZIE
                 Have you ever tried it?

                         MEL
                 No, and I don't intend to.

                         CHARLIE
                     (laughing.)
                 I'm very sorry to break it to
                 you, but unfortunately, Mel, we
                 can no longer be friends.

                         MEL
                     (laughing.)
                 Well, I guess I'll have to live
                 with one less friend in my life.

                         PERSON AT TAKEAWAY
                 Next, please!

3   EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Charlie, Lizzie, and Mel are eating their takeaway.

Charlie non-verbally offers their cheesy chips with curry
to Mel who shakes her head vigorously. They laugh.

                    CHARLIE
          That's just what I needed.

                    MEL
          Soaking up all the drinks you
          had, huh?

                    CHARLIE
          Correct!
              (Short pause.)
          To be honest, I meant the
          evening. I just love to hang out
          with my two favorites.

                    MEL
          Much nicer than a big group of
          people.

                    CHARLIE
          Yes, right? I can't stand it
          anymore.

                    LIZZIE
          Why? Isn't that what Uni life is
          for? Making loads of friends and
          going out and stuff?

                    MEL
          Don't get me wrong, I really like
          being around loads of people,
          just not all the time.

                    CHARLIE
          It's just so exhausting! I can't
          stand the constant talking, the
          constant contributing something
          to the conversation even when I
          don't have anything to say.

                    MEL
          Yeah, and some people never seem
          to shut up - it just makes me
          uncomfortable.

                    CHARLIE
          And the: 'Charlie are you okay?'
          when you're just minding your own
          business. 'Yes, I just don't want
          to talk, thank you!'

                                        (CONTINUED)

                                   MEL
                              (Laughing.)
                         Glad you're feeling the same.

                                   CHARLIE
                         I'm just sick of pretending to be
                         someone I'm not. I just want to
                         be my weird self and not feel
                         judged all the time.

                                   MEL
                         I get you. And when you open up
                         about it, people treat you
                         differently. As if you're a
                         different person all of a sudden.
                         I hate it!

                                   LIZZIE
                         Maybe just don't listen to them,
                         you know? If they treat you that
                         way, are they really worth your
                         friends?

                                   CHARLIE
                         If it just were that simple...

4   EXT. TRAIN/BUS STATION - DAY

         Charlie and Lizzie stand on a platform. Lizzie has a
         little suitcase with her. They hug.

                                   CHARLIE
                         Safe journey. Text me when you're
                         home.

                                   LIZZIE
                         I will. And you should give mum a
                         ring. She'd appreciate that.

                                   CHARLIE
                         She's just going to complain
                         about something again. I can't
                         deal with that right now.

                                   LIZZIE
                         Don't expect the worst from her.

                                   CHARLIE
                         I know her. She's just gonna say
                         that I didn't take good care of
                         you or something...

                                   LIZZIE
                         You do whatever you want. It's
                         your decision.

         Lizzie boards.

5   INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - DECISION 1

Charlie is in the kitchen cooking; they are preparing to
put a pizza in the oven.

They put the pizza in the oven.

They lean against the kitchen counter, and get their phone
out of their pocket. Whilst they look at their phone, the
viewer can make their *First Decision*: 'Should Charlie call
their mum or scroll through social media?' 'Call Mum' or
'Social Media'. The viewer has ten seconds to make a
decision (otherwise the decision will be made randomly) in
which Charlie looks at their phone. There is a transparent
banner on the bottom of the screen. No matter when the
decision is made, the outcome is shown after the time has
run out.

6   INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - 1A

Charlie calls MUM. She picks up after a few rings.

                     CHARLIE
          Hi mum, it's me, Charlie.
                (listens.)
          Yeah, yeah, I'm alright.
                (listens.)
          Yeah, she left two hours ago.
          Should be home in a bit.
                (listens.)
          Yes mum, I took good care of her.
                (listens.)
          Yes, I made sure that she ate
          enough.
                (listens.)
          No, why would I? She's got her
          own money.
                (listens.)
          I ... mum, listen, it's not a big
          deal. We mostly cooked together
          anyway.
                (listens.)
          No, it wasn't junkfood.
                (listens.)
          My eating habits?! What do you
          mean?
                (listens.)
          I don't -
                (listens.)
          When have I ev -
                (listens.)
                (sarcastic.)
          Yes, mum, I'm sure it's a great
          diet. Like all the other ones
          you've tried.
                (listens.)
                     (MORE)   (CONTINUED)

                              CHARLIE (cont'd)
                    Different? How's it different?
                         (listens.)
                    Your counting what now?
                         (listens.)
                    Calories. Ah alright.
                         (listens.)
                    No mum, I don't want to try it.
                         (listens.)
                    Yeah, yeah, great.
                         (listens.)
                    Yep, I will!
                         (listens.)
                    No, all good. Thanks mum.
                         (listens.)
                    Listen, I've got something in the
                    oven. Can I call you back?
                         (listens.)
                    Great.
                         (listens.)
                    Yes I will.
                         (listens.)
                    Yep.
                         (listens.)
                    Yep.
                         (listens.)
                    Bye. Bye!

Charlie puts their phone back into their pocket.

7   INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - 1B

Charlie looks at their phone. The left side of the screen
represents the phone screen; Charlie scrolling through the
recommendations of their social media account can be seen.
The content is transparent but visible/readable. It is
mostly related to calories, recipe recommendations, and
weight loss.

Charlie puts their phone back into their pocket.

8   INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - 1

Charlie opens the oven to look at the pizza and closes it
again. They then move to the bin and get the packaging of
the pizza out. They look at it intensely and throw it away
again.
They squat down in front of the oven and stare at the
pizza intensely.

BEGINNING OF MONTAGE.

9   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

        Charlie in front of a mirror bodychecking, signing up for
        a gym membership (the format of the screen being
        represented on the screen is similar to before), weighing
        themselves and getting frustrated.

10   INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

        Charlie is checking food labels before putting things in
        the basket. They put some of the items back.

        END OF MONTAGE.

11   EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

        Charlie is seen in front of Mel's house. They have a
        bottle of wine in their hand and knock on the door. Mel
        opens the door. Music and chatter can be heard.

                        MEL
                Hey! I'm glad you could make it!
                Come on in.

                        CHARLIE
                Brought some wine.

                        MEL
                Perfect, thank you! People were
                already asking where you are.

                        CHARLIE
                Nice to know that I've been
                missed.

                        MEL
                    (laughs.)
                Always. Come in. You know where
                the wine glasses are.

                        CHARLIE
                Wine glasses? I'm a heathen,
                darling, I drink out of the
                bottle.

        Mel laughs and makes way for Charlie to go in.
        They walk into the living room where a lot of PARTY GUESTS
        sit on the sofa, on chairs, and on the floor.

12   INT. MEL'S LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Charlie sits on the sofa in between TWO STRANGERS with
their arms around them. They take their arms off the Two
Strangers to reach their drink, they fall forward, lean on
the coffee table, almost knocking it over, grab the drink,
have a sip, and fall back onto the sofa. They land on one
side and just sit on top of the stranger sitting on that
side. They start making out with her. They slump back onto
the sofa, look to the other side, look intensely at the
Other Stranger and start making out with him.Some Party

Guests cheer.

Charlie suddenly gets up, sways, and makes their way out
of the room. The camera follows them through a corridor
into the bathroom.

13   INT. MEL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The door shuts in front of the camera. Someone (Mel)
approaches and knocks on the door.

                    MEL
          Charlie?! Charlie, are you okay?
          Charlie?!

                    CHARLIE
               (off/muffled.)
          Hm come in.

Mel opens the door and walks into the bathroom. She sits
down next to Charlie on the floor.

                    MEL
          Come on, Charlie. Let's get you
          some water.

Charlie nods their head vigorously. They walk out the door
to the kitchen.

14   INT. MEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Charlie sits down on a bar stool whilst Mel prepares a
glass of water.

                    MEL
          Did you have enough to eat before
          you came to the party?

Charlie looks on the table and plays with a bottle opener
on the table. Mel puts the glass of water in front of
them.

                                        (CONTINUED)

                    MEL
          Drink.

Charlie starts to drink and puts the glass down after a
few sips.

                    MEL
          All of it.

Charlie starts drinking again.

                    MEL
          So? Did you eat enough? You
          usually don't get drunk like that
          so quickly.

                    CHARLIE
          No?

                    MEL
          Oh, Charlie!

Charlie starts playing with the bottle opener on the table
again.

                    CHARLIE
          I'm sorry.

                    MEL
          Let me make you something.

Charlie nods vigorously.

                    MEL
          What would you like? A jam
          sandwich?

                    CHARLIE
          Yes, please!

Mel gets the bread out of a cupboard, gets the jam out of
another cupboard, grabs a knife, and starts preparing the
sandwich.

                    MEL
          So, you made out with two people
          from my course within one night.
          That's a new record.

                    CHARLIE
          Are they? From your course, I
          mean?

                    MEL
          Yeah, I met them this term. We're
          in a seminar group together.

                              CHARLIE
                    At least I won't see them. Would
                    make it awkward.

                              MEL
                    What's so awkward about it?
                    Things like that happen.

                              CHARLIE
                    Me. I'm awkward.

                              MEL
                    Oh stop it, Charlie. You're not
                    as awkward as you think.

          Mel finishes making the sandwich and slides the plate
          across the table.

                              MEL
                    Eat. It will make you feel
                    better.

                              CHARLIE
                    Yes, mum!

          Charlie starts eating.

                              MEL
                         (laughs.)
                    Don't you ever call me that
                    again!

15   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

          CHARLIE is in their nicely made bed laying on their belly
          on top of the duvet. The alarm goes off. They move to turn
          it off and fall back onto the pillow.

          BEGINNING OF MONTAGE.

16   INT. GYM - DAY

          CHARLIE walks into the gym and into the changing room.

17   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

          Charlie sits at their desk with a laptop, a notebook, and
          multiple books on the desk, and works on their essay.

18   INT. GYM - DAY

Charlie on a rowing machine.

Charlie with dumbbells in front of a big mirror.

19   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie working on their essay with a similar set-up as
before.

20   INT. GYM - DAY

Charlie doing leg presses.

Charlie on the rowing machine again.

END OF MONTAGE.

21   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie is still working on the essay.

Charlie's phone rings. They get up from the desk and
retrieve it from their bed, which is nicely made. It shows
that it's Mel calling on the phone screen. Charlie picks
up.

                         CHARLIE
                    Hi.
                         (listens.)
                    No, I've not forgotten about it.
                         (listens.)
                    I'm not sure. Depends if I finish
                    my essay in time.
                         (listens.)
                    It's due on Thursday.
                         (listens.)
                    I know, I know. But still. This
                    one is actually important, that's
                    why I started early this time.
                         (listens.)
                    I know, but it's like seventy
                    percent of my module and you know
                    how bad I'm at writing essays.
                         (listens.)
                    Thanks, Mel. I really appreciate
                    that. But for you to read
                    something, I actually need to
                    write something, right?
                         (listens.)
                    You always say that, but even if
                    I feel better after having had
                    that break, I won't enjoy the
                         (MORE)   (CONTINUED)

> > > CHARLIE (cont'd)
> > > meal if it's still lurking in the
> > > background.
> > > > (listens.)
> > > I'll see how I feel.
> > > > (listens.)
> > > I know, I want to see you too.
> > > But I ... I'm just not feeling as
> > > energetic lately, and you know...
> > > > (listens.)
> > > Yeah, you might be right, I don't
> > > know.

The audience can make their *Second Decision:* 'Should
Charlie go for lunch with their friends tomorrow or stay
at home?' 'Yes' or 'No'. The viewer has a ten seconds to
make a decision (otherwise the decision will be made
randomly). There is a transparent banner on the bottom of
the screen. No matter when the decision is made, the
outcome is shown after the time has run out. Towards the
end of the ten seconds Charlie walks through the room and
says:

> > > CHARLIE
> > > I think ... I think I'm ...

22   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 2A

> > > CHARLIE
> > > Alright, you've convinced me.
> > > What time are you meeting?
> > > > (listens.)
> > > I'll be there.
> > > > (listens.)
> > > Nice, see you tomorrow!
> > > > (listens.)
> > > And I you.

23   INT. CAFÉ - DAY - 2A

Mel, Charlie, ELLIE (approx. 20), JASMINE (approx. 20),
and LYDIA (approx. 20) sit around a table in a little
café. They all have drinks in front of them.

> > > MEL
> > > So, how's the essay going,
> > > Charlie.

> > > CHARLIE
> > > It's going. Surprisingly, it's
> > > almost finished to be honest.

> > > MEL
> > > You really seem on top of things.

> > > > > > (CONTINUED)

                    LYDIA
          That's probably the reason why
          we've not seen you in so long.

                    CHARLIE
               (laughing.)
          Yeah, I just thought I focus on
          my course for once.

                    MEL
               (laughing.)
          Maybe some of us should take that
          advice.

Mel gives Lydia a nudge.

                    LYDIA
               (playfully angry.)
          Hey! It was a formative, okay?!

                    ELLIE
          Let's not talk about Uni, please!

                    JASMINE
          Says you?! It's all you ever talk
          about.

                    ELLIE
          Hey!

Jasmine laughs.

24   INT. CAFÉ - DAY - 2A

The set-up is the same. A WAITER (approx. 23) approaches.

                    WAITER
           Alright ladies, I've got two
          salad bowls.

Mel and Charlie look at each other. Charlie shakes their
head slightly.

                    JASMINE
          That's me.

The Waiter puts one salad bowl down and looks around.

                    LYDIA
          And for me, please.

The Waiter places the other salad bowl in front of Lydia
and goes back to the kitchen.

                                              (CONTINUED)

                    LYDIA
          He's cute, isn't he?

                    ELLIE
          Oh, Lydia!

                    LYDIA
          What?! Am I not allowed to make a
          comment?!

                    ELLIE
          I don't mean it like that, I just
          ... you know your track record...

                    LYDIA
          Hey, just because I don't have a
          lucky streak with men, doesn't
          mean I can't see any. Men are not
          food, right? You don't go on a
          diet from men.

                    MEL
          Haha, very funny.

The Waiter comes back.

                    WAITER
          Scrambled Eggs on Toast with
          Salmon.

                    MEL
          Thank you.

The Waiter places the plate in front of Mel.

                    WAITER
          The rest will be with you in a
          second.

The Waiter goes to the kitchen again.

                    JASMINE
          I get what you mean, Lydie. He's
          fit.

                    ELLIE
          That's even worse! Now you
          objectify him.

                    JASMINE
          Men love to be objectified. It
          turns them on, am I right,
          Charlie?

                    CHARLIE
          I don't think that...

                                              (CONTINUED)

                         MEL
               What the heck, Jasmine?! Charlie
               is not your man guide or
               something.

                         LYDIA
               Well, I think that men have
               objectified us long enough; it's
               our turn now.

                         MEL
               To be just as horrible as them?!

                         LYDIA
               Just so that they know how it
               feels.

                         MEL
               Don't do to others what you don't
               want them to do to you. Just
               saying.

                         JASMINE
               Alright, Miss 'I'm better than
               you'.

There's an awkward silence, whilst Jasmine is sulking. The
Waiter approaches.

                         WAITER
               The soup?

                         ELLIE
               For me, please.

The Waiter places the soup in front of Ellie.

                         WAITER
               And a Full English.

The Waiter places it in front of Charlie.

                         CHARLIE
               Thanks.

                         LYDIA
               Wow.

                         JASMINE
               What a portion! Are you sure
               you're gonna eat all that?!

Charlie looks at her.

                         CHARLIE
               What do you mean?

                                                      (CONTINUED)

                    JASMINE
Just saying that it's a massive
portion. *I* wouldn't be eating all
that, you know?

                    CHARLIE
Yeah.

                    JASMINE
Anyway, chin-chin everybody. To a
nice, relaxing, and well-deserved
Christmas Break!

                    MEL
     (mumbling.)
Which some deserve more than
others...

They all cheer, but Charlie seems somewhere else with
their thoughts.

Whilst they all eat, the sound fades out slowly and the
camera focuses on Charlie eating:

                    LYDIA
So, I met this guy in this club,
right? And he actually seems to
be really nice! I might be on to
something here...

Everyone except Charlie chatters.

25   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 2B

                    CHARLIE
I'm sorry, Mel, but I don't think
I can come tomorrow. I just... I
just really need to focus on
this. I'm sorry.
     (listens.)
I will. Thanks for understanding
though.
     (listens.)
Sorry.
     (listens.)
Yeah.
     (listens.)
Yep.
     (listens.)
Bye.

26   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY - 2B

        Charlie is in their bedroom, writing on their essay. They
        seem to finish their essay and close the laptop. They look
        at their alarm clock; it is 1:42pm. They open their laptop
        again and start looking at films to watch. They finally
        decide on a film.
        Once the credits start, CHARLIE stands up to go to a
        cupboard, gets some snacks out of the drawer, and throws
        the package on the bed.
        They take the laptop to the bed and make themselves
        comfortable.

        Charlie is watching the film.

        Charlie is upset and closes the laptop. They sit on the
        bed for a few minutes.

27   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY - 2

        Charlie walks through their room. They go on the scales,
        suddenly run out of the room towards the bathroom.

28   INT. CHARLIE'S BATHROOM - DAY - 2

        Charlie storms into the bathroom and open the toilet lid,
        looks at the toilet, closes the lid again, paces through
        the bathroom, closes the bathroom door.
        They slide down the door, sit on the floor for a second,
        and start to cry.

29   INT. BAR - NIGHT

        Charlie walks into the bar. Mel is seen sitting at the
        same table from the start. Charlie walks up to her.

                        CHARLIE
                Hello hello.

                        MEL
                Hey you.

        Mel gets up and walks over.

                        MEL
                I reserved us a table.

                        CHARLIE
                Wonderful!

                        MEL
                How've you been?

                                            (CONTINUED)

                         CHARLIE
               I'm good. Glad this term is over
               and all the essays handed in.
               What about you?

                         MEL
               You know me, I'm just happy with
               whatever comes my way. Want a
               drink?

                         CHARLIE
               Yeah, I'll just put my stuff
               down.

Charlie puts their stuff on a chair, whilst Mel gets her
money out of her coat pocket.

                         CHARLIE
               Let's go!

They walk over towards the bar.

                         MEL
               So, are you happy with your
               essay?

                         CHARLIE
               Not my best piece of work, but
               it'll do. I've done all I can.

                         MEL
               Isn't that what we all say?

                         CHARLIE
               True. But believe me, I've
               written better stuff.

                         MEL
               As long as you're happy with it.

                         CHARLIE
               Yeah, can't change it now anyway.

They approach the queue for the bar.

                         MEL
               That's the spirit.

The person in front of them turns around. It is ALEX
(approx. 24), a friend of theirs.

                         ALEX
               Charlie? Mel? Fancy seeing you
               here.

                         MEL
          Alex! Hi, how are you?

                         ALEX
          I'm good, how are you?

                         MEL
          Good as well. We were just saying
          how glad we are that it's the
          break now and all the essays are
          handed in. Weren't we, Charlie?

Charlie, who had gotten their phone out during the
conversation, looks up.

                         CHARLIE
          Yeah, yeah, we were.

                         ALEX
          It's great, isn't it? Knowing
          that there are a few weeks off.
          Are you guys going home soon?

                         MEL
          Yeah, I'm off the day after
          tomorrow.

                         ALEX
          I'll leave in a few days too.
          Saves me buying food and cooking
          and stuff.

                         MEL
               (laughs.)
          Main reason to go home.

                         ALEX
          What about you, Charlie?

                         CHARLIE
          Don't know yet. Probably a bit
          closer to Christmas.

Charlie fiddles with their phone.

                         ALEX
          Family being too annoying?

                         CHARLIE
          Yeah, I just have a lot to catch
          up on and can't really work well
          at home.

                         MEL
          Doesn't your dad have a study
          that he lets you work in when
          you're home?

                                        (CONTINUED)

                    CHARLIE
          Yeah, but ... he needs it this
          time.

                    MEL
          Ah alright.

Alex is next in the queue.

                    BAR STAFF
          Next, please.

                    ALEX
          Was lovely to catch up with you
          guys, and let me know when you're
          back. Should go for a drink or
          something.

Alex walks to the bar.

                    MEL
          Have a lovely break, Alex.

Mel turns to Charlie who was on their phone.

                    MEL
          You alright?

                    CHARLIE
          Yeah.

                    BAR STAFF
          Next, please.

                    CHARLIE
          That's you.

Mel walks over to the bar. Charlie gets their phone out
and types in 'Low calorie alcohol'. The typing can be seen
on a transparent on the left side of the screen (as
earlier).

                    BAR STAFF
          Next, please.

Charlie walks over.

                    BAR STAFF
          What can I get you?

Charlie fiddles with their phone. An awkward pause. It
seems like the audience can make another decision.

                    CHARLIE
          Can I ... can I get a water,
          please?

                                                        (CONTINUED)

                              BAR STAFF
                        'Course you can!

Charlie stands at the bar waiting, looking unhappy.

BEGINNING OF MONTAGE:

30   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

         Charlie stands in front of their mirror, checking their
         body for flaws.

31   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

         Charlie goes on the scales.

32   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

         Charlie stands in front of their mirror, checking their
         body for flaws.

33   INT. GYM - DAY

         Charlie on the rowing machine.

34   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

         Charlie in front of their mirror, checking their body for
         flaws.

35   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

         Charlie opens their fridge, looks in it, and closes it
         without taking anything out.

36   INT. GYM - DAY

         Charlie is lifting weights.

37   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

         Charlie eats biscuits whilst being on their laptop.

38   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie scrolls through social media. Almost everything is food related. The content can be seen on a transparent on the left side of the screen.

39   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie lays on their bed crying. The biscuits are next to them.

40   INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Charlie checks food labels.

41   INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Charlie at the till with not much in their trolley.

42   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie looks up calories on their phone and throws it on their bed after a while.

END OF MONTAGE.

The phone rings; it is Mum. Charlie stares at the phone for a second before they pick up.

                    CHARLIE
          Hi Mum.
              (listens.)
          Yeah, I'm alright.
              (listens.)
          I'm just very busy at the moment.
              (listens.)
          I don't really know. Depends on
          when I get everything done.
              (listens.)
          I know, I know.
              (listens.)
          I just really need to get this
          stuff done.
              (listens.)
          Don't do that, Mum. I know she
          wants to see me, but I can't just
          drop everything.
              (listens.)
          You know that I can't work well
          at home.
              (listens.)
          Since always?!
              (listens.)
                    (MORE)   (CONTINUED)

> CHARLIE (cont'd)
> Listen, I'll call you when I know
> more.
> > (listens.)
> It'll be probably in like a week
> or so...
> > (listens.)
> Alright, say hello to everyone
> from me, please.
> > (listens.)
> Yeah.
> > (listens.)
> Yes, I will.
> > (listens.)
> Yeah.
> > (listens.)
> Speak to you later. Bye. Bye.

43   INT. CHARLIE'S PARENTS' LIVINGROOM - DAY

Christmas Day. Charlie is at home. Charlie, Lizzie, Mum,
and DAD wear Christmas jumpers. GRANDFATHER and
GRANDMOTHER enter and are greeted.

> MUM
> > (to Dad.)
> I told you Charlie doesn't look
> well.

> GRANDMOTHER
> I totally agree, Carolyn, he
> looks a bit pale in the face.
> Probably from all the junk food
> that students eat nowadays.

> MUM
> And all that phone usage.

> GRANDFATHER
> In my time we would go out and
> explore. But I guess you can just
> do that from home now.

> DAD
> Just leave the boy alone.

> MUM
> It's 'them', Paul.

Dad mumbles something, takes the Grandparents' coats, and
leaves the room.

> GRANDMOTHER
> I don't really understand that,
> Charlie. You need to explain this
> whole 'they' thing to your old
> grandmother.

(CONTINUED)

                              CHARLIE
                    It's just, I don't identify as
                    male or female. I'm just me, you
                    know.

                              GRANDMOTHER
                    Well, you need to excuse me and
                    your grandfather if we don't get
                    it right. It's just all so new to
                    us.

                              CHARLIE
                    It's fine, grandma.

44   INT. CHARLIE'S PARENTS' DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The entire family is gathered around a table; Charlie,
Lizzie, Mum, Dad, Grandfather, and Grandmother have their
Christmas Dinner. There is typical Christmas food (roast)
on the table as well as used Christmas crackers. Charlie,
Lizzie, Mum, and Dad have changed into more formal
clothes. Everyone wears paper crowns.

Dad puts more on his plate.

                              MUM
                    Paul, could you pass me the
                    potatoes, please? It's a holiday
                    after all, isn't it?

                              GRANDMOTHER
                         (to Lizzie.)
                    So how are you, my love? How's
                    University?

Lizzie eats and does not look up.

                              LIZZIE
                    Good.

                              MUM
                    Come on, Lizzie, tell your
                    grandma a little bit more.

                              LIZZIE
                    There's not much more to say.
                    It's fun. Nice place. Cool
                    people. That's it.

                              GRANDMOTHER
                    Is your accommodation nice?

                              LIZZIE
                    Yep.

                                                      (CONTINUED)

                        MUM
          She's got this lovely, little
          room with a gorgeous view on a
          garden. It's a bit small if you
          ask me, but you know Lizzie, she
          doesn't need that much.

                        GRANDFATHER
          Our little Lizzie, all grown-up
          now.

                        MUM
          It's hard letting them all go.

                        GRANDMOTHER
          Must be very quiet now.

                        MUM
          Sometimes I forget about it and
          shout their names, and am
          surprised that no one answers.

                        GRANDMOTHER
          I know how that feels. Your
          grandpa never answers me either.

                        GRANDFATHER
          Only when it's important.

                        MUM
          I mean, Lizzie was always in her
          room playing loud music anyway.
          I'm used to it. Never thought I
          would miss those weird noises.

                        DAD
          Just leave the kid alone, will
          ya?!

                        MUM
          Nice that you are contributing
          something to the conversation as
          well.

                        GRANDMOTHER
          We know who Lizzie gets it from.

45   INT. CHARLIE'S PARENTS' DINING ROOM - NIGHT

        The set-up is as before, but a little bit less food.
        Everyone eats and passes food around.

                        GRANDMOTHER
          So, Charlie, what do you want to
          do once you finish your degree?

                                              (CONTINUED)

                         CHARLIE
               Something with music. Hopefully
               in the industry.

                         MUM
               I think it would be good for you
               to do a master's. You'll have so
               many more chances. But does
               anyone ever listen to me?!

                         GRANDFATHER
               Wouldn't a master's be quite
               expensive?

                         CHARLIE
               Not if you do it at the same Uni
               and get the master's loan.

                         GRANDFATHER
               Well, none of us ever got a
               master's...

                         GRANDMOTHER
               You would be the first, darling!

                         DAD
               The kid needs experience. You
               won't get that with another
               certificate.

                         MUM
               But you know how it is nowadays.
               You need those certificates for
               everything.

                         DAD
               If you make the right contacts,
               you don't need nowt.

                         GRANDFATHER
               I agree. Get your foot in the
               right door and you'll be alright,
               I say.

                         GRANDMOTHER
               Have some more greens, Charlie.
               That might make you look a bit
               healthier. Paul, could you pass
               Charlie the greens, please.

                         DAD
               Meat is what Charlie needs. Would
               make him look less like a stick
               figure.

Dad passes the greens and some meat to Charlie.

                                                    (CONTINUED)

                    CHARLIE
Thanks, I'm alright for now.

                    DAD
What? Can't even eat a little bit
more?

                    CHARLIE
No thank you, I'm alright.

                    GRANDMOTHER
Charlie, it's Christmas after
all.

                    DAD
Your mum worked hard for this...

                    MUM
Four hours in the kitchen. You'd
think you'd get used to cooking
for a big bunch, but since the
kids aren't in the house
anymore...

46   INT. CHARLIE'S PARENTS' DINING ROOM - NIGHT

They have all finished eating. The plates are still on the
table.

                    GRANDMOTHER
Didn't you start this new diet?

                    MUM
Yeah, and I tell you, it does
wonders.

                    CHARLIE
Would it be alright if I go to my
room? I'm not feeling so well.

                    MUM
Charlie, what's up?!

                    CHARLIE
It's just my head, sorry. I'll
try and come back downstairs
later on, but I'm just not well.

                    GRANDMOTHER
Maybe you should have something
else to eat instead. That'll
help.

                    CHARLIE
No, thanks grandma.

                        MUM
            Did you drink enough? You didn't
            drink enough!

                        CHARLIE
            I did mum, I just need to lie
            down for a second.

                        LIZZIE
            Can I go too, please?

                        MUM
            But it's Christmas!

                        LIZZIE
            Fine.

                        CHARLIE
            Can I go?

                        MUM
            If you have to... But be down for
            dessert later, please.

                        CHARLIE
            I'll see how I feel.

Charlie gets up to leave. They leave the room.

                        MUM
            Almost didn't come home for
            Christmas. Now this. I don't know
            what's wrong with the child.

                        GRANDMOTHER
            It's just a phase. All children
            go through that.

47   INT. BEDROOM AT CHARLIE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Charlie is lying on their bed. They scroll through their
phone. The voices of their family having fun can be heard
in the back.

BEGINNING OF MONTAGE.

48   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie stands in front of a mirror checking their body.
Mum calls - Charlie does not pick up.

49   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

        Charlie steps on the scales whilst Mum calls. Charlie does
        not pick up.

50   INT. GYM - DAY

        Charlie lifts weights whilst Mum calls. They ignore the
        call.

51   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

        Charlie opens the fridge whilst Mum calls. Charlie closes
        the fridge, looks at the phone, but does not pick up.

52   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

        Charlie lies on their unmade bed watching a film and
        eating biscuits. Lizzie calls. Charlie ignores the call.

53   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

        Charlie lays on their unmade bed crying. Lizzie calls
        again. Charlie does not pick up.

54   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

        Charlie sits at their desk scrolling through social media
        on their phone. The unmade bed can be seen in the
        background. The room is not tidy. A notification of a
        message from Lizzie saying 'Charlie??' can be seen on the
        phone screen. Charlie does not open it.

55   INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

        Charlie walks through the supermarket. There is almost
        nothing in their basket. They suddenly take their phone
        out of their coat pocket. Dad calls. Charlie puts the
        phone back in the coat pocket without answering.

56   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

        Charlie scrolls through social media. New Year's
        resolutions can be seen on a transparent on the left side
        of the screen. Mel calls. Charlie does not pick up.
        Charlie keeps scrolling through social media.

        END OF MONTAGE.

57   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY - 3A & 3B

A message from Mel appears on the screen: 'Are you still
planning on coming to my birthday party?' Charlie stops
scrolling. They look up the date of this day on their
phone (4th January). Charlie opens the message. They stare
at it for a while. They open 'Notes' on their phone and
make a pro and con list:

'Con: Alcohol/Calories, Social Interactions, Possibly
Snacks

Pro: Mel's birthday'

The audience can make their *Third Decision:* 'Should
Charlie go to Mel's Birthday Party?' 'Yes' or 'No'. The
viewer has a ten seconds to make a decision (otherwise the
decision will be made randomly). There is a transparent
banner on the bottom of the screen. No matter when the
decision is made, the outcome is shown after the time has
run out. It is always the same outcome but with different
edits. There are more zoom-ins on Charlie and the sounds
are more intense if 'Yes' (3A) is selected.

Charlie starts recording a voice message.

                    CHARLIE
          Hi Mel, sorry for...

Charlie deletes the message and records a new one.

                    CHARLIE
          Hi Mel, it's me - Charlie.

Charlie deletes the message.

                    CHARLIE
             (to themselves.)
          Of course it's me, idiot.

Charlie starts to record a new message.

                    CHARLIE
          Hi Mel, ... I'm really sorry. ...
          I won't be able to make it to
          your party, 'cause...

Charlie deletes the message and records a new one.

                    CHARLIE
          Hi Mel, ...

Charlie deletes the message, takes a deep breath, and
records a new message.

                              CHARLIE
                    Hi Mel, I'm so sorry, but I won't
                    be able to make it to your party.
                    We can catch up soon hopefully.
                    ... Hope you're well.

Charlie sends the message off. They start scrolling
through social media again. A message from Mel appears and
Charlie opens it: 'That was the last straw. That's it.'

58   INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie is in their pyjamas. Their bed is unmade and the
room looks untidy. They scroll through social media. They
put their phone into their pocket, seem bored, and go
downstairs.

59   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Charlie walks in, checks the fridge, closes it, sits down
at the table, and gets their phone out of their pocket to
scroll through social media. Before they can start
scrolling, there is a sudden knock on the front door.
Charlie ignores it. There's another knock. Charlie
contemplates, puts their phone away, and walks towards the
front door.

60   INT. CHARLIE'S CORRIDOR - DAY

Charlie walks towards the front door, hesitates, but then
opens the door. Lizzie stands in front of it. Both Charlie
and Lizzie are surprised.

                              CHARLIE
                    What are you doing here?!

                              LIZZIE
                    Why are you in your pj's?

They both look at each other for a second.
                    I was worried about you! We all
                    were. You've not responded to
                    anyone's messages or calls for
                    weeks.

                              CHARLIE
                    I'm sorry, I was just busy.

                              LIZZIE
                    Well, I'm here now. Can I come
                    in?

                              CHARLIE
                         (hesitant.)
                    Yeah, yeah, of course. Come on
                    in.

Charlie steps aside to unblock the entry. Lizzie squeezes
past them. The door shuts.

61   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Charlie makes a coffee. Lizzie sits at the table and plays
with things on the table.

                              LIZZIE
                    So, what have you been up to
                    then? What was so important, you
                    couldn't even pick up the phone.

Charlie acts busy.

                              CHARLIE
                    Oh, you know, just Uni stuff.

                              LIZZIE
                    Must be a lot of stuff then...

                              CHARLIE
                    It's my final year...

                              LIZZIE
                    Still.

Lizzie turns around.

                              CHARLIE
                    Could you stop judging me for a
                    second please?! You're almost as
                    bad as mum!

                              LIZZIE
                    Hey! Listen! I thought something
                    terrible had happened to you!

Charlie returns to prepare coffee.

                              LIZZIE
                    Mum is worried sick! Even dad is
                    worried! He would have come over
                    on the weekend if I hadn't come
                    up. Can you leave that bloody
                    coffee alone for a second and
                    talk to me?! It's not as if I
                    have anything better to do than
                    sit here and have coffee with
                    you!

Charlie turns around again.

                                                    (CONTINUED)

>   CHARLIE
>   Well, go home then.

>   LIZZIE
>   (without emotion.)
>   My train isn't until tonight.
>   Didn't know what to expect.

>   CHARLIE
>   I guess you'll have to deal with
>   me making coffee then.

62   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

There's silence. Charlie turns around with two cups in
their hands.
They sit down, and place one of the cups in front of
Lizzie.

>   LIZZIE
>   What the hell has happened to
>   you, Charlie. You're like a
>   completely different person.

>   CHARLIE
>   It's just me.

>   LIZZIE
>   The old Charlie wouldn't lash out
>   that easily.

>   CHARLIE
>   The old Charlie was just too
>   nice.

>   LIZZIE
>   No, the old Charlie was kind,
>   gentle, would listen to other
>   people's concerns. The old
>   Charlie wouldn't disappear for
>   ages and then react like that
>   when people are worried.

>   CHARLIE
>   You better get used to it, 'cause
>   I'm done with pleasing everyone.

>   LIZZIE
>   It's not about pleasing people,
>   Charlie. It's about treating
>   others with respect. Fair enough,
>   if you don't want to talk to
>   people, but at least let your
>   mother know that you are alive.
>   If it wouldn't have been for Mel,
>   we wouldn't have known that ...

Lizzie's voice breaks. She looks into her lap. There's silence between them. Lizzie takes a sip of her coffee. It's hot.

                    LIZZIE
          Listen, I was just worried about
          you. I'm glad you are alright. If
          you don't want to talk, fine.
          I'll have my coffee, leave, and
          you won't have to see me until
          the next time we are both home.

                    CHARLIE
          Lizzie, I'm ... I'm sorry. I
          just...

Charlie suddenly breaks down and starts crying.

                    CHARLIE
          I'm sorry, Lizzie. I really am. I
          ... I didn't want you to worry. I
          just...

Charlie is hit by another sob. Lizzie just sits there and looks at them.

                    CHARLIE
          I'm really not well, Lizzie. I
          don't know who I am anymore. I'm
          just so exhausted...

Charlie sobs. Lizzie sits down besides them and holds their hand. Charlie starts crying even more and Lizzie takes them into her arms.

63   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Charlie has calmed themselves down. Lizzie squats next to them and holds their hand.

                    CHARLIE
          I just don't know who I am
          anymore. And I feel like everyone
          else does, except for me. And
          they have expectations of me that
          I just can't meet. I'm just so
          confused. And everything is just
          so overwhelming right now. I
          don't know what I want to do or
          who I should be, and everyone
          keeps saying these things. And
          they all seem to have a plan, and
          then there's me who has no clue
          and doesn't know what's going on.
          I just don't want to feel so
          exhausted anymore, Lizzie.

                                        (CONTINUED)

Charlie starts crying again. Lizzie gets up, gets them a
piece of kitchen roll as a tissue, and hands it to them.

>   LIZZIE
>   Listen, that all makes sense.
>   You're about to finish your
>   degree and that's scary-

Lizzie walks to her chair and sits down.

>   CHARLIE
>   But it's not just that! I'm just
>   so sick of people telling me who
>   to be and what to do. Mum, Dad,
>   friends. It seems like everyone
>   is judging my every move. It
>   seems like everyone thinks they
>   know what is best for me. It's
>   just so ...

>   LIZZIE
>   They just want to help, Charlie.

>   CHARLIE
>   But it's not helping at all! It
>   just confuses me! Now I don't
>   know what *I* want anymore, because
>   it just feels like I'm repeating
>   what someone else wants for me.
>   And it doesn't feel right, you
>   know?

>   LIZZIE
>   So, what is it that you want
>   then?

>   CHARLIE
>   That's the thing: I don't know.
>   'Cause no one will shut up about
>   saying what *they* think.

>   LIZZIE
>   Just don't listen to them then.

>   CHARLIE
>   That might be easy for you. I'm
>   different. I can't just switch it
>   off.

64   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

>   LIZZIE
>   You don't seem like yourself, you
>   know? I was shocked when I saw
>   you at Christmas. You seemed like
>   a shadow of yourself.

                         CHARLIE
              If I don't seem like myself: it's
              just 'cause I've changed - it's
              still me in there. I'm still my
              own person. And I appreciate
              people pointing out things, but
              in the end it is my decision to
              be the way I am and do the things
              I do. You know, I am capable of
              making my own decisions, you
              know.

                         LIZZIE
              No, I don't know, 'cause you've
              literally just said that you
              don't know what you want. So, how
              can you make decisions if you
              don't even know what decisions
              you want to make?

                         CHARLIE
              But that's the point: I can't
              make decisions because people are
              saying all these things that just
              confuse me. If people would stop,
              I would be able to listen to
              myself for a change.

                         LIZZIE
              But Charlie, you'll never be able
              to stop everyone from saying
              things. The only thing you can do
              is to stop listening to them.

                         CHARLIE
              But how?

Charlie's voice breaks.

                         CHARLIE
              Tell me how, Lizzie.

                         LIZZIE
              I don't know. I seriously don't
              know. Just don't.

Charlie starts crying again.

                         LIZZIE
              I'm sorry. I know this is not
              helpful.

                         CHARLIE
              It's fine. I...

Charlie's voice breaks again under a sob. They try to calm
themselves down.

65   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Charlie is much calmer now. The coffee cups are empty.

                    CHARLIE
          I'm sorry I've put all of this on
          you.

                    LIZZIE
          Hey, that's what I'm here for.

Lizzie takes Charlie's hand.

                    LIZZIE
          Listen, I think you need to get
          some help from someone
          professional - someone who knows
          more about these things, you know
          what I mean?

                    CHARLIE
          Yeah.

                    LIZZIE
          I mean, it's up to you, and I
          don't want to pressure you into
          something, but after all you've
          said, and ...

                    CHARLIE
          And?

                    LIZZIE
          Mel called me. She was worried.
          And not just 'cause you didn't
          make it to the party and all.
          Mainly 'cause she thinks you
          aren't eating enough, and are too
          focused on losing weight.

There is silence. Charlie looks at the floor.

                    LIZZIE
          Do you know what I'm talking
          about?

                    CHARLIE
          Yeah.

There is another short silence. Charlie fiddles with their
clothes still looking at the floor. Charlie looks up at
Lizzie. They look at each other.

                    LIZZIE
          Will you promise me to speak to
          someone?

                                        (CONTINUED)

> CHARLIE
> Yeah.

> LIZZIE
> Will you promise me to speak to
> Mel?

> CHARLIE
> Yeah.

66   INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

> LIZZIE
> Do you want me to speak to mum?

There is another silence.

> LIZZIE
> I don't have to. You can call her
> if-

> CHARLIE
> No, no, it's fine. You can speak
> to her. Please don't mention what
> I said though. Just say that I'm
> sorry and that I'm alright.

> LIZZIE
> What shall I say about you not
> calling her?

> CHARLIE
> Just, you know, just say I was
> busy or lost my phone or
> something.

> LIZZIE
> Alright, I'll think of something
> and will let you know.

> CHARLIE
> Cheers. Thank you, Lizzie.

> LIZZIE
> No worries. Just promise me to
> speak to someone and to give Mel
> a ring.

> CHARLIE
> Yeah.

> LIZZIE
> She's not mad at you or anything,
> she wouldn't have called me if
> she was.

Charlie looks on the floor and then up.

                              CHARLIE
                    Thanks, Lizzie.

Short pause.

                              LIZZIE
                    I mean it. Thank you.

                              LIZZIE
                    No need to thank me, Charlie.
                    That's what I'm here for.

67   INT. BAR - NIGHT

Mel sits at their usual table with a drink. Charlie walks
up to her with a water. Charlie sits down and fiddles with
their drink. Awkward silence. They look up at the same
time and start to talk:

                              MEL
                    Are you alr-

                              CHARLIE
                    I'm sorry, Mel.

They both look at their drinks.

                              MEL
                    I'm just glad you're alright.

                              CHARLIE
                    No, no, it's not fair on you
                    like...

                              MEL
                    What happened, happened. There
                    are plenty of other birthdays to
                    celebrate. I shouldn't have
                    reacted like that and... I don't
                    know... I should have checked on
                    you instead of being angry... I'm
                    the one who should be-

                              CHARLIE
                    No, please don't be. I just...

                              MEL
                    I wish you would have talked to
                    me.

                              CHARLIE
                    I just... I just couldn't. It's
                    not that I don't trust you or
                    anything, but it was just...

                                              (CONTINUED)

                    MEL
          I get that. I didn't mean to push
          you...

                    CHARLIE
          You didn't.

Silence.

                    CHARLIE
          Thanks for calling my sister by
          the way. Her coming over, it
          really helped.

                    MEL
          I'm glad. I wasn't sure, but I
          didn't know what else to do,
          so...

                    CHARLIE
          Thanks.

They both take a sip.

                    CHARLIE
          So, how was your birthday?

                    MEL
          Good, good. The party was fun.
          Only thing missing was you.
               (Beat.)
          Sorry, sorry, I didn't want it to
          come across like that.

                    CHARLIE
          No, no, don't worry.

                    MEL
          I missed you, Charlie.

                    CHARLIE
          I missed you too.

They hug and get emotional.

                    MEL
          Is there anything I can do?

                    CHARLIE
          No, just... seeing you already
          helps.
               (Beat.)
          I've been chatting to my GP and
          they are going to refer me to a
          specialist team. I should be
          alright, you know.

                                        (CONTINUED)

                          MEL
          Good.

     They look at each other.

68   EXT. STREET - NIGHT

          CHARLIE walks down the street where the takeaway is. They
          shortly stop, look at the takeaway, and then move on.

7. Scene Specifications

Scene	Pages/Length	Characters	Specifications	Notes
1	<1/2 page	Charlie, Lizzie, Mel, Extras	Int. Bar - Night	no dialogue
2	1 page	Charlie, Lizzie, Mel, Person at Takeaway	Ext. Street - Night	
3	1 1/2 pages	Charlie, Lizzie, Mel	Ext. Street - Night	
4	1/2 page	Charlie, Lizzie	Ext. Train/Bus Station - Day	
5	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Kitchen - Evening	no dialogue, First Decision
6	1 page	Charlie	Int. Kitchen - Evening	on phone, Decision 1a
7	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Kitchen - Evening	no dialogue, social media, Decision 1b
8	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Kitchen - Evening	no dialogue, First Decision
9	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
10	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Supermarket - Day	Montage
11	1/2 page	Charlie, Mel	Ext. Mel's House - Night	
12	<1/2 page	Charlie, Mel, Two Strangers, Extras	Int. Mel's Livingroom - Night	no dialogue
13	<1/2 page	Charlie, Mel	Int. Mel's Bathroom - Night	
14	2 pages	Charlie, Mel	Int. Mel's Kitchen - Night	
15	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	no dialogue
16	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Gym - Day	Montage
17	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
18	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Gym - Day	Montage
19	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
20	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Gym - Day	Montage

21	1 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Night	on phone, Decision 2
22	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Night	on phone, Decision 2a
23	1 page	Charlie, Mel, Ellie, Jasmine, Lydia, Extras	Int. Café - Day	Decision 2a, multiple cameras
24	3 pages	Charlie, Mel, Ellie, Jasmine, Lydia, Waiter, Extras	Int. Café - Day	Decision 2a, multiple cameras
25	1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Night	on phone, Decision 2b
26	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	no dialogue, Decision 2b
27	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	no dialogue, Decision 2
28	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bathroom - Day	no dialogue, Decision 2
29	3 1/2 pages	Charlie, Mel, Alex, Bar Staff	Int. Bar - Night	
30	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
31	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
32	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage

33	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Gym - Day	Montage
34	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
35	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Evening	Montage
36	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Gym - Day	Montage
37	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Night	Montage
38	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
39	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Night	Montage

40	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Supermarket - Day	Montage
41	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Supermarket - Day	Montage
42	<1/2 page 1 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage on phone, no Montage
43	1 page	Charlie, Lizzie, Mum, Dad, Grandfather, Grandmother	Int. Charlie's Parents' Livingroom - Day	
44	1 1/2 pages	Charlie, Lizzie, Mum, Dad, Grandfather, Grandmother	Int. Charlie's Parents' Dining Room - Night	multiple cameras
45	<2 pages	Charlie, Lizzie, Mum, Dad, Grandfather, Grandmother	Int. Charlie's Parents' Dining Room - Night	multiple cameras
46	1 page	Charlie, Lizzie, Mum, Dad, Grandfather, Grandmother	Int. Charlie's Parents' Dining Room - Night	multiple cameras
47	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Bedroom at Charlie's Parents' House - Night	no dialogue
48	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
49	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Night	Montage
50	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Gym - Day	Montage
51	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Evening	Montage
52	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Night	Montage
53	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Night	Montage
54	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
55	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Supermarket - Day	Montage
56	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Montage
57	1 1/2 pages	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	Decision 3a&b -> different edits, voice recordings, multiple cameras?

58	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Bedroom - Day	no dialogue
59	<1/2 page	Charlie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Day	no dialogue
60	1/2 page	Charlie, Lizzie	Int. Charlie's Corridor - Day	
61	1 page	Charlie, Lizzie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Day	multiple cameras
62	1 1/2 pages	Charlie, Lizzie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Day	multiple cameras
63	1 page	Charlie, Lizzie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Day	multiple cameras
64	1 page	Charlie, Lizzie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Day	multiple cameras

65	1 page	Charlie, Lizzie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Evening	multiple cameras
66	1 page	Charlie, Lizzie	Int. Charlie's Kitchen - Evening	multiple cameras
67	2 pages	Charlie, Mel	Int. Bar - Night	
68	<1/2 page	Charlie	Ext. Street - Night	no dialogue

8. Mood Boards (Director)

Colour Progression

Bright to Dark

Two Colours

The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby

Angles

The Party 2017

Film Inspiration

Call me by your name

Closeness & Character

Closeness & Isolation

Lost in Translation

Symmetry Out of Balance

The Grand Budapest Hotel

Food
Items

Associations

9. Shot-List

Shot-List

1

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Image from shotlist

- **Establishing shot**
- **One shot -> pull out**
- POSSIBLY USING ZOOL LENSE / CU ON CHARLIE
- **Charlie wears different clothing**
- **Charlie does not interact with Extras**

18

INT. GYM - DAY

- **Slight tilt down**
- **Symmetrical**

Charlie on a rowing machine.

Charlie with dumbbells in front of a big mirror.

35

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Image from shotlist

Charlie opens their fridge, looks in it, and closes it without taking anything out.

DUTCH TILT

52

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie lies on their unmade bed watching a film and eating biscuits. Lizzie calls. Charlie ignores the call.

Charlie lies on their unmade bed watching a film and eating biscuits. Lizzie calls. Charlie ignores the call.

MAKE NOTE OF PHONE IN SHOT

SAYING LIZZIE

2

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

- **floaty/handheld**
- **Sense of extra person there**
- **Movement around the three whilst walking**

Image from shotlist

Charlie, Lizzie, and Mel walk drunkenly on the pavement.

SLIGHT PROFILE ANGLE

go through scene dialogue

get plenty of coverage

potential 180 move

Image from shotlist

DO A 180 MOVEMNT AROUND THEM

takeaway can be seen in the distance.

19

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

- **Over shoulder -> tilt down, static**
- **Opposite light source**

Image from shotlist

HAVE A BIT WIDER

CAMERA TO THE RIGHT

36

INT. GYM - DAY

Charlie with dumbbells in front of a big mirror.

DUTCH TILT

53

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie lies on their unmade bed watching a film and eating biscuits. Lizzie calls. Charlie ignores the call.

MAKE NOTE OF PHONE IN SHOT

SAYING LIZZIE

3

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

- **Shoulder level**
- **floaty/handheld**
- **Brightness of light (Takeaway) in contrast to darkness around**
- limited coverage

NOT BY TAKE AWAY / BY A SQUARE
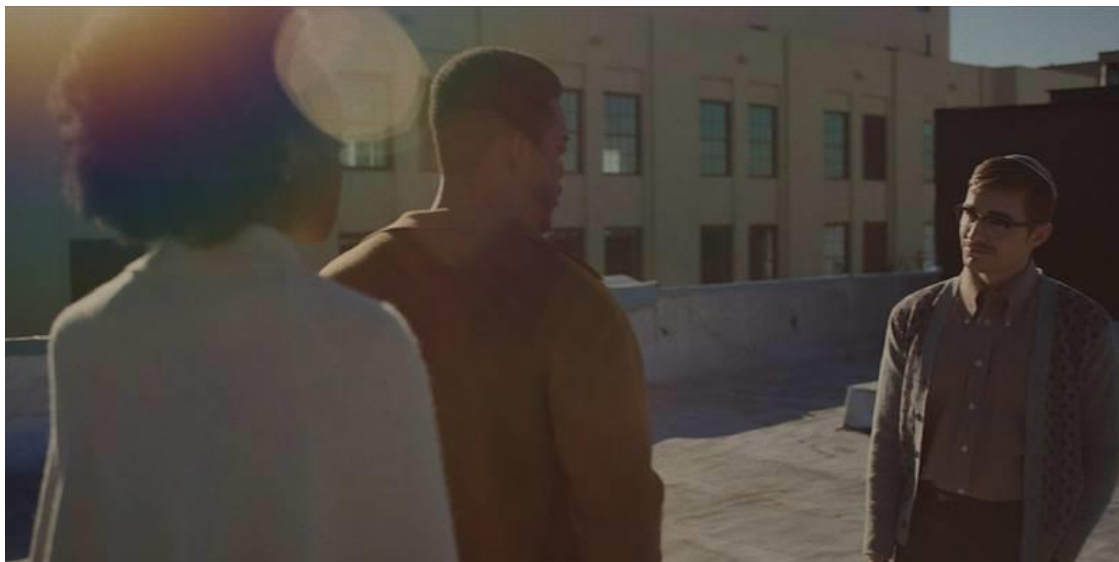
Image from shotlist

ESTABLISHING WIDE/MID

CHARLIE That's just what I needed. MEL Soaking up all the drinks you had, huh? CHARLIE Correct! (Short pause.) To be honest, I meant the evening. I just love to hang out with my two favorites. MEL Much nicer than a big group of people. CHARLIE Yes, right? I can't stand it anymore.

MOVE TO PROFILE OF LIZZIE

LIZZIE Why? Isn't that what Uni life is for? Making loads of friends and going out and stuff? MEL Don't get me wrong, I really like being around loads of people, just not all the time.

PULL BACK TO WIDE FOR REST OF SCENE

CHARLIE It's just so exhausting! I can't stand the constant talking, the constant contributing something to the conversation even when I don't have anything to say. MEL Yeah, and some people never seem to shut up - it just makes me uncomfortable. CHARLIE And the: 'Charlie are you okay?' when you're just minding your own business. 'Yes, I just don't want to talk,

thank you!' (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 3. MEL (Laughing.) Glad you're feeling the same. CHARLIE I'm just sick of pretending to be someone I'm not. I just want to be my weird self and not feel judged all the time. MEL I get you. And when you open up about it, people treat you differently. As if you're a different person all of a sudden. I hate it! LIZZIE Maybe just don't listen to them, you know? If they treat you that way, are they really worth your friends? CHARLIE If it just were that simple...

Image from shotlist

LIGHT REFERENCE

end scenE

20

INT. GYM - DAY

- **Slight tilt down**
- **Symmetrical**

Charlie on a rowing machine.

MATCH MOVEMENT OF ROWING MACHINE WITH LEG PRESS

EXP.

LEG PRESSRAISE CAMERA UP TILT DOWN

37

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie eats biscuits whilst being on their laptop

54

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie sits at their desk scrolling through social media on their phone. The unmade bed can be seen in the background. The room is not tidy. A notification of a message from Lizzie saying 'Charlie??' can be seen on the phone screen. Charlie does not open it.

4

EXT. TRAIN/BUS STATION - DAY

- **Hug a bit too long**
- **'It's your decision' Lizzie not in shot -> reactions from Charlie til end**
- **Preferably overcast morning**
- Lizzie leaving the shot
- longer lens
- focus on charlie

START SCENE

Image from shotlist

MATCH CUT

SLOW PUSH IN HANDHELD BEFORE CONVERSATION

Charlie and Lizzie stand on a platform. Lizzie has a little suitcase with her. They hug.
CHARLIE Safe journey. Text me when you're home.

Image from shotlist

SOME SPACE LONGER LENSE

CHARLIE Safe journey. Text me when you're home. LIZZIE I will. And you should give mum a ring. She'd appreciate that. CHARLIE She's just going to complain about something again. I can't deal with that right now. LIZZIE Don't expect the worst from her. CHARLIE I know her. She's just gonna say that I didn't take good care of you or something... LIZZIE You do whatever you want. It's your decision.

THEY HUG

Image from shotlist

REVERSE OF CHARLIE SLOWLY PUSH IN

LIZZIE You do whatever you want. It's your decision.

THEY HUG

21

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

- **Camera pan -> follow Charlie**
- **Cut to Charlie -> upper body shot**
- **Wider during decision -> dolly**
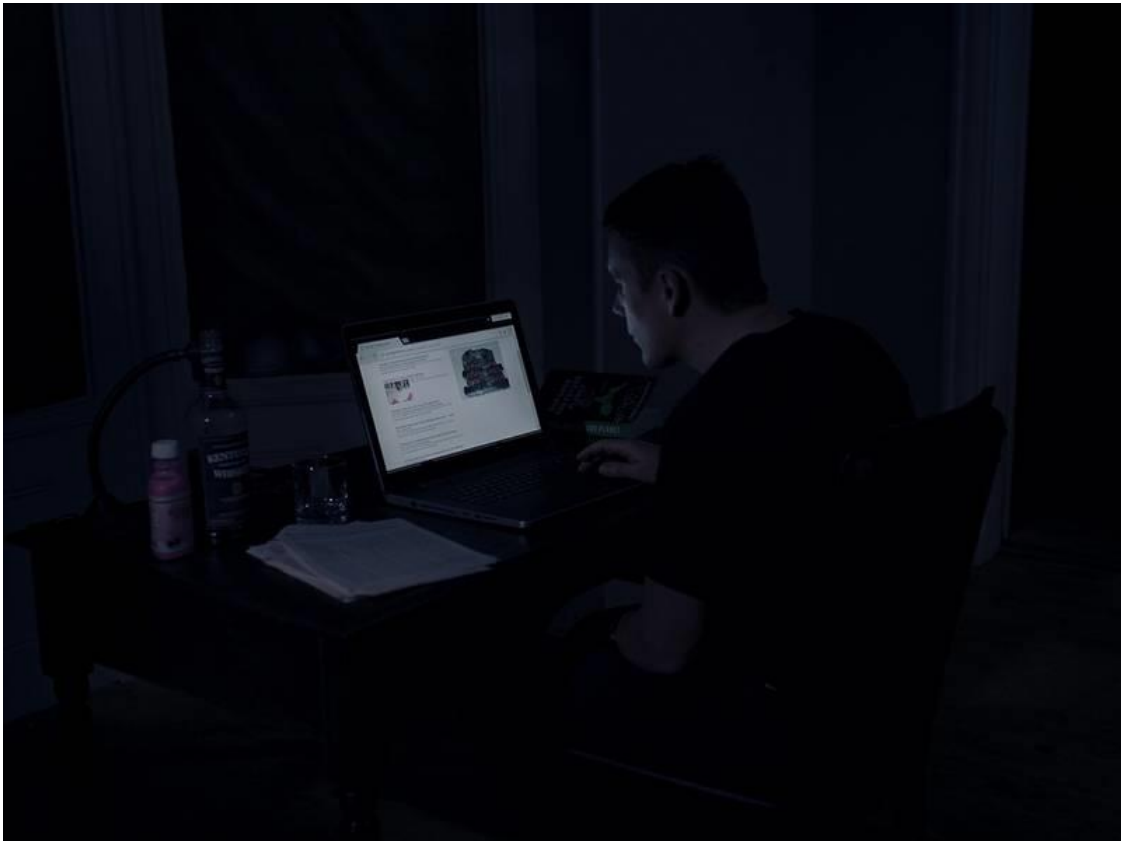
Image from shotlist

CAMERA TO THE RIGHT

pan -> follow Charlie

Charlie is still working on the essay. Charlie's phone rings. They get up from the desk and retrieve it from their bed, which is nicely made.

Image from shotlist

DOLLY OUT DURING DECISION TO END

PAN

38

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie scrolls through social media. Almost everything is food related. The content can be seen on a transparent on the left side of the screen.

FLIP TO HAVE CHARLIE ON THE RIGHT

55

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

- *Charlie walks through the supermarket. There is almost nothing in their basket. They suddenly take their phone out of their coat pocket. Dad calls. Charlie puts the phone back in the coat pocket without answering.*

Image from shotlist

5

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - DECISION 1

Image from shotlist

- **Ideally shot preceded by scene 7**
- **Shot of 'Her' is inspiration**
- **One shot, static and** dolly
- **Almost shoulder level**
- push in
- first question
- shoulder level
- phone placement
- colour schemes

22

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 2A

Image from shotlist

It shows that it's Mel calling on the phone screen. Charlie picks up.

push back in as she answeres

Start/stay like end of scene 21

39

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie lays on their bed crying. The biscuits are next to them.

56

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie scrolls through social media. New Year's resolutions can be seen on a transparent on the left side of the screen. Mel calls. Charlie does not pick up. Charlie keeps scrolling through social media.

6

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - 1A

Image from shotlist

- **Medium close-up**
- **Push in til 'My eating habits?'**
- **Pull out around 'Listen, I've got something in the oven.'**

- **Shot after scene 5**

23

INT. CAFÉ - DAY - 2A

- **Ideally two cameras**
- **Establish through pan from one table to the table on which characters sit (follow waiter?)**
- **No centre of attention/focus**
- **Multiple cuts between people**
- establishing the scene
- show another part of scene first then pan to show are subjects
- more frequent cuts
- show tension
- focus on everyone

MEL So, how's the essay going, Charlie. CHARLIE It's going. Surprisingly, it's almost finished to be honest. MEL You really seem on top of things. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 12. LYDIA That's probably the reason why we've not seen you in so long. CHARLIE (laughing.) Yeah, I just thought I focus on my course for once. MEL (laughing.) Maybe some of us should take that advice. Mel gives Lydia a nudge. LYDIA (playfully angry.) Hey! It was a formative, okay?! ELLIE Let's not talk about Uni, please! JASMINE Says you?! It's all you ever talk about. ELLIE Hey! Jasmine laughs.

slow trucks right with dolly

Image from shotlist

Mel, Charlie, ELLIE (approx. 20), JASMINE (approx. 20), and LYDIA (approx. 20) sit around a table in a little café. They all have drinks in front of them.

start panned off in a greater wide then pan to frame

MEL So, how's the essay going, Charlie.

Image from shotlist

CHARLIE It's going. Surprisingly, it's almost finished to be honest. MEL You really seem on top of things.

CHARLIE (laughing.) Yeah, I just thought I focus on my course for once.

Image from shotlist

MEL LYDIA ELLIE

MEL (laughing.) Maybe some of us should take that advice. Mel gives Lydia a nudge. LYDIA (playfully angry.) Hey! It was a formative, okay?! ELLIE Let's not talk about Uni, please! JASMINE Says you?! It's all you ever talk about. ELLIE Hey! Jasmine laughs.

LYDIA That's probably the reason why we've not seen you in so long.

CHARLIE ALONE IN MAYBE WITH MEL

WE DONT WANT XCHARLIE SEEN IN THE OTHERS SHOT

40

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

- Charlie checks food labels.

TILT

57

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY - 3A & 3B

- **Charlie in focus => 'Yes' selected**
- **Wider shots/less focus on Charlie => 'No' selected**
- **Two shots: one before decision, one after decision**
- **Transition from scene 56 to 57 seamless**

Image from shotlist

tilt up dolly back

charlie sits up

Image from shotlist

stop at Charlie opens stop

They open 'Notes' on their phone and make a pro and con list:

dolly out to wider shot than this

when they start scrolling again push in

no

Image from shotlist

next decision

birthday party more focused on charlie

no birthday party wider or focused on ther action

possibly one/two shot

one before choice

and one after choice each

dolly in on charlie on no

keep it tight on yes

yes
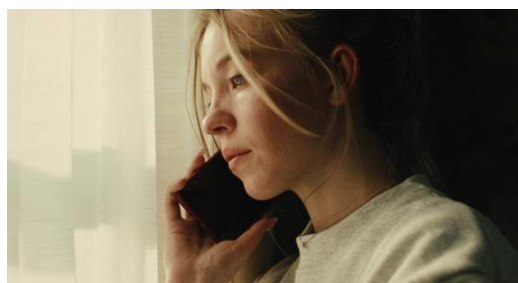
Image from shotlist

Yes choice

pan follow them as they pace on the fun

pull out when they start scrolling again

Image from shotlist

Image from shotlist

Charlie starts recording a voice message. CHARLIE Hi Mel, sorry for... Charlie deletes the message and records a new one. CHARLIE Hi Mel, it's me - Charlie. Charlie deletes the message. CHARLIE (to themselves.) Of course it's me, idiot. Charlie starts to record a new message. CHARLIE Hi Mel, ... I'm really sorry. ... I won't be able to make it to your party, 'cause... Charlie deletes the message and records a new one. CHARLIE Hi Mel, ... Charlie deletes the message, takes a deep breath, and records a new message. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 30. CHARLIE Hi Mel, I'm so sorry, but I won't be able to make it to your party. We can catch up soon hopefully. ... Hope you're well. Charlie sends the message off. They start scrolling through social media again. A message from Mel appears and Charlie opens it: 'That was the last straw. That's it.'

push in

Image from shotlist

A message from Mel appears on the screen: 'Are you still planning on coming to my birthday party?' Charlie stops scrolling.

trucking movement

They look up the date of this day on their phone (4th January). Charlie opens the message. They stare at it for a while. They open 'Notes' on their phone and make a pro and con list: 'Con: Alcohol/Calories, Social Interactions, Possibly Snacks Pro: Mel's birthday'

7

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - 1B

Image from shotlist

- **Same as scene 5**
- **Shot just before scene 5**
- **Left side is transparent and same colours as Charlie?**

24

INT. CAFÉ - DAY - 2A

trucking movement through out

Image from shotlist

WAITER ENTER BETWEEN CHARLIE AND MEL

The set-up is the same. A WAITER (approx. 23) approaches. WAITER Alright ladies, I've got a salad bowl. Mel and Charlie look at each other. Charlie shakes their head slightly. LYDIA That's me. The Waiter places the salad bowl in front of Lydia.

Image from shotlist

WAITER Scrambled Eggs on Toast with Salmon. MEL Thank you. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 13. WAITER The rest will be with you in a second. The Waiter places the plate in front of Mel and goes back to the kitchen. LYDIA He's cute, isn't he? ELLIE Oh, Lydia!

ELLIE For me, please. The Waiter places the soup in front of Ellie. WAITER And a Full English.

Image from shotlist

MEL LYDIA AND ELLIE

LYDIA What?! Am I not allowed to make a comment?! ELLIE I don't mean it like that, I just … you know your track record… LYDIA Hey, just because I don't have a lucky streak with men, doesn't mean I can't see any. Men are not food, right? You don't go on a diet from men. MEL Haha, very funny. JASMINE I'm just saying: he's fit. ELLIE That's even worse! Now you objectify him. LYDIA Men love to be objectified, Ellie. It turns them on. Am I right, Charlie?

MEL Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you. Just saying. LYDIA Alright, Miss 'I'm better than you'. There's an awkward silence, whilst Lydia is sulking. The Waiter approaches.

Image from shotlist

CHARLIE AND LYDIA

LYDIA Men love to be objectified, Ellie. It turns them on. Am I right, Charlie? CHARLIE I don't think that... MEL What the heck, Lydia?! Charlie is not your man guide or something.

LYDIA Well, I think that men have objectified us long enough; it's our turn now. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 14. MEL To be just as horrible as them?! LYDIA Just so that they know how it feels.

Image from shotlist

Whilst they all eat, the sound fades out slowly and the camera focuses on Charlie eating: LYDIA So, I met this guy in this club, right? And he actually seems to be really nice! I might be on to something here... Everyone except Charlie chatters.

START WIDER

WHEN CHARLIE SAYS YEA

PUSH IN ON CHARLIE

41

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Image from shotlist

Charlie at the till with not much in their trolley

tilt down to reveal scarce trolley

BY TILLS

58

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

- **Reflecting scene 47**
- **Tight -> dolly out to wider/establ. Shot**
- **Pan follow**

Image from shotlist

Charlie is in their pyjamas. Their bed is unmade and the room looks untidy. They scroll through social media. They put their phone into their pocket, seem bored, and go downstairs.

pull out and then pan

8

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING - 1

- **Tilt down on Charlie -> same angle as before Cut to camera in the oven**

Tilt down on Charlie -> same angle as before

Cut to camera in the oven

25

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - 2B

CHARLIE I'm sorry, Mel, but I don't think I can come tomorrow. I just… I just really need to focus on this. I'm sorry. (listens.) I will. Thanks for understanding though. (listens.) Sorry. (listens.) Yeah. (listens.) Yep. (listens.) Bye.

42

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie looks up calories on their phone and throws it on their bed after a while.

Image from shotlist

- **mid**
- **One shot**
- static/dolly

CUT TO THIS TO MARK END OF MONTAGE

59

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

- **Pan when walking into kitchen (cont. from last scene)**
- **Roughly like scenes 5+7 -> 'Her'**

- **Follow -**
- one take

walk pan into this frame then pan follow into end of scene

9

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Image from shotlist

Charlie out of focus on the right mirror

SWAP AROUND

MIRROR ON LEFT CHARLIE ON RIGHT

LAPTOP ON THE LEFT CHARLIES SHOULDER ON THE RIGHT

Image from shotlist

OVER SHOULDER

SCALE ON THE LEFT CHARLIES SHOULDER ON THE RIGHT

- **Charlie out of focus on the right**
- **mirror, scales, laptop screen on left**

Image from shotlist

Image from shotlist

26

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY - 2B

Charlie is in their bedroom, writing on their essay. They seem to finish their essay and close the laptop. They look at their alarm clock; it is 1:42pm.

it is 1:42pm.

Image from shotlist

Once the credits start, CHARLIE stands up to go to a cupboard, gets some snacks out of the drawer, and throws the package on the bed.

PANNING

SSNACK ONS ON BED

Image from shotlist

They take the laptop to the bed and make themselves comfortable.

TILT UP FROM SNACKS MCU

Charlie is watching the film.

Image from shotlist

Charlie is upset and closes the laptop. They sit on the bed for a few minutes.

PULL OUT AS THEY SIT ON THE BED

TILT UP

- **Audio of film**
- **Establishing (mid/wide) in beginning**
- **Wide when walking to bed**
- **Extreme close-up when watching film and getting upset -> light change to indicate time has passed**
- **Mid shot when on bed**

43

INT. CHARLIE'S PARENTS' LIVINGROOM - DAY

Image from shotlist

panning off from parents landing on charlie

- **Mcu -> pan to mid-wide**
- **Dolly in on 'It's them'**
- slow movements
- Christmas Day. Charlie is at home. Charlie, Lizzie, Mum, and DAD wear Christmas jumpers. GRANDFATHER and GRANDMOTHER enter and are greeted. MUM (to Dad.) I told you Charlie doesn't look well. GRANDMOTHER I totally agree, Carolyn, he looks a bit pale in the face. Probably from all the junk food that students eat nowadays. MUM And all that phone usage. GRANDFATHER In my time we would go out and explore. But I guess you can just do that from home now. DAD Just leave the boy alone. MUM It's 'them', Paul. Dad mumbles something, takes the Grandparents' coats, and leaves the room. GRANDMOTHER I don't really understand that, Charlie. You need to explain this whole 'they' thing to your old grandmother. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 23.
- **Dolly in on now**
- CHARLIE It's just, I don't identify as male or female. I'm just me, you know. GRANDMOTHER Well, you need to excuse me and your grandfather if we don't get it right. It's just all so new to us. CHARLIE It's fine, grandma.

- **Parents not in shot for most of it**
- **Mcu -> pan to mid-wide**
- **Dolly in on 'It's them'**
- **Similar to party scene (Charlie in between grandparents now) but feels tighter**
- lots of space in living room
- make sure we don't see the dining room
- they're sitting down
- conversation starts when adults walk in
- start away with grandparents talking
- pan across to charlie with their family
- end in symmetrical frame

- similar party
- dolly in to charlie as they listen

60

INT. CHARLIE'S CORRIDOR - DAY

- **Over shoulder -> Charlie not in focus**
- **Lizzie walks past, Charlie closes door, turns around and walks past camera**

shooting from inside the house

over the shoulder of charlie looking outside

lizzie squeezws by

door closes and cut to next scene

Image from shotlist

Charlie walks towards the front door, hesitates, but then opens the door. Lizzie stands in front of it. Both Charlie and Lizzie are surprised. CHARLIE What are you doing here?! LIZZIE Why are you in your pj's? They both look at each other for a second. I was worried about you! We all were. You've not responded to anyone's messages or calls for weeks. CHARLIE I'm sorry, I was just busy. LIZZIE Well, I'm here now. Can I come in? (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 31. CHARLIE (hesitant.) Yeah, yeah, of course. Come on in. Charlie steps aside to unblock the entry. Lizzie squeezes past them. The door shuts.

handheld

10

Image from shotlist

- **Symmetric**
- **Static**
- **Wid-ish**
- **Charlie alone**

27

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY - 2

EVERYHTING HAPPENS THEY WALK PAST CAMERA

44

INT. CHARLIE'S PARENTS' DINING ROOM - NIGHT

- **We get closer and closer to Charlie over the course of the scenes**
- **44:** wide, midi, establishing
- **45:** more shots, Charlie not in focus (people talk about them, not with them)

46: Charlie in focus, no one else, push in after Charlie has left

scene 44

dinner table scene

potentialy 2 cameras

a lot of wide shots for unimportant shots

numerous establishing family dynamics

180 degree rule depending on who the character is speaking too

charlie not seen on not in focus

GRANDMOTHER Must be very quiet now.

Image from shotlist

behind grand ma and grand pa

The entire family is gathered around a table; Charlie, Lizzie, Mum, Dad, Grandfather, and Grandmother have their Christmas Dinner. There is typical Christmas food (roast) on the table as well as used Christmas crackers. Charlie, Lizzie, Mum, and Dad have changed into more formal clothes. Everyone wears paper crowns. Dad puts more on his plate.

MUM Paul, could you pass me the potatoes, please? It's a holiday after all, isn't it?

MUM I mean, Lizzie was always in her room playing loud music anyway. I'm used to it. Never thought I would miss those weird noises. DAD Just leave the kid alone, will ya?! MUM Nice that you are contributing something to the conversation as well. GRANDMOTHER We know who Lizzie gets it from.

camera pushing in to create some movement

Image from shotlist

GRANDMOTHER (to Lizzie.) So how are you, my love? How's University? Lizzie eats and does not look up. LIZZIE Good.

Pan to mom

Lizzie still in shot

GRANDMOTHER Is your accommodation nice? LIZZIE Yep.

Image from shotlist

MUM She's got this lovely, little room with a gorgeous view on a garden. It's a bit small if you ask me, but you know Lizzie, she doesn't need that much.

slight angle on face

Image from shotlist

GRANDFATHER Our little Lizzie, all grown-up now. MUM It's hard letting them all go.

long lense

GRANDMOTHER Must be very quiet now.

MUM Sometimes I forget about it and shout their names, and am surprised that no one answers.

Image from shotlist

GRANDMOTHER I know how that feels. Your grandpa never answers me either. GRANDFATHER Only when it's important.

long lense

61

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

- **One shot: Lizzie in profile, Ch. in kitchen (back) -> shift focus during scene**
- **Cut to scene 62**

Image from shotlist

Charlie makes a coffee. Lizzie sits at the table and plays with things on the table. LIZZIE So, what have you been up to then? What was so important, you couldn't even pick up the phone. Charlie acts busy. CHARLIE Oh, you know, just Uni stuff. LIZZIE Must be a lot of stuff then… CHARLIE It's my final year… LIZZIE Still. Lizzie turns around. CHARLIE Could you stop judging me for a second please?! You're almost as bad as mum! LIZZIE Hey! Listen! I thought something terrible had happened to you! Charlie returns to prepare coffee. LIZZIE Mum is worried sick! Even dad is worried! He would have come over on the weekend if I hadn't come up. Can you leave that bloody coffee alone for a second and talk to me?! It's not as if I have anything better to do than sit here and have coffee with you! Charlie turns around again. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 32. CHARLIE Well, go home then. LIZZIE (without emotion.) My train isn't until tonight. Didn't know what to expect. CHARLIE I guess you'll have to deal with me making coffee then.

slight angle

11

- **Handheld**
- **From outside**
- **Cut earlier**
- looking over charlie's shoulder

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Image from shotlist

Charlie is seen in front of Mel's house.

They have a bottle of wine in their hand and knock on the door. Mel opens the door. Music and chatter can be heard.

Image from shotlist

Mel opens the door. Music and chatter can be heard. MEL Hey! I'm glad you could make it! Come on in. CHARLIE Brought some wine. MEL Perfect, thank you! People were already asking where you are. CHARLIE Nice to know that I've been missed. MEL (laughs.) Always. Come in. You know where the wine glasses are. CHARLIE Wine glasses? I'm a heathen, darling, I drink out of the bottle.

Mel laughs and makes way for Charlie to go in.

28

INT. CHARLIE'S BATHROOM - DAY - 2

Image from shotlist

Image from shotlist

- **Medium wide -> Charlie walks into frame**
- **Symmetrical, sliding into shot when sliding down the bathroom door**

45

INT. CHARLIE'S PARENTS' DINING ROOM - NIGHT

- **Two cameras**
- **We get closer and closer to Charlie over the course of the scenes**
- **44:** wide, midi, establishing
- **45:** more shots, Charlie not in focus (people talk about them, not with them)

46: Charlie in focus, no one else, push in after Charlie has left

scene 45

conversation fopcused on charlie

conversation about charlie

go into mid shots

less people in framre

GRANDMOTHER So, Charlie, what do you want to do once you finish your degree? (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 25. CHARLIE Something with music. Hopefully in the industry.

Image from shotlist

MUM I think it would be good for you to do a master's. You'll have so many more chances. But does anyone ever listen to me?! GRANDFATHER Wouldn't a master's be quite expensive?

slight angle on face

Image from shotlist

CHARLIE Not if you do it at the same Uni and get the master's loan. GRANDFATHER Well, none of us ever got a master's...

long lense

GRANDMOTHER You would be the first, darling!

Image from shotlist

DAD The kid needs experience. You won't get that with another certificate. MUM But you know how it is nowadays. You need those certificates for everything. DAD If you make the right contacts, you don't need nowt

camera pushing in to create some movement

Image from shotlist

GRANDFATHER I agree. Get your foot in the right door and you'll be alright, I say.

GRANDFATHER I agree. Get your foot in the right door and you'll be alright, I say.

long lense

Image from shotlist

wider version of this get grandmother in shot

CHARLIE Thanks, I'm alright for now. DAD What? Can't even eat a little bit more? CHARLIE No thank you, I'm alright.

GRANDMOTHER Charlie, it's Christmas after all. DAD Your mum worked hard for this…

focus on charlie dad out of focus

Image from shotlist

MUM Four hours in the kitchen. You'd think you'd get used to cooking for a big bunch, but since the kids aren't in the house anymore…

slight angle on face

very the cutback shots so theyre not the same

62

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

- **Other side of Lizzie**
- **Move towards symmetry (stand-off character - or sit-off)**
- **On and after 'Lizzie's voice breaks': cuts between the two**
- **On 'Charlie is hit by a sob': back to symmetry**
- **Pan follow of Lizzie sitting down**

Image from shotlist

end frame

angle on charlie slightly

They sit down, and place one of the cups in front of Lizzie.

before truck/pan into end frame

Image from shotlist

Charlie sobs. Lizzie sits down besides them and holds their hand. Charlie starts crying even more and Lizzie takes them into her arms.

truck/pan back into shot of charlie

make shot wide enough for lizzie to come in

12

INT. MEL'S LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

- **Symmetrical**
- **Push-in**
- **Distortion on edges, spotlight**
- experimental lighting
- strangers moving out of shot

Image from shotlist

Charlie sits on the sofa in between TWO STRANGERS with their arms around them. They take their arms off the Two Strangers to reach their drink, they fall forward, lean on the coffee table, almost knocking it over, grab the drink, have a sip, and fall back onto the sofa. They land on one side and just sit on top of the stranger sitting on that side. They start making out with her. They slump back onto the sofa, look to the other side, look intensely at the Other Stranger and start making out with him.Some Party Guests cheer. Charlie suddenly gets up, sways, and makes their way out of the room. ThAY WALK OUT OF FRAME

START VERY WIDE AND PUSH IN THEN PUSH OUT AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE

Image from shotlist

29

INT. BAR - NIGHT

- **'So are you happy with your essay?' -> camera is like person standing in the queue behind them**
- **Queue is moving and people walk through**

Image from shotlist

Medium frame

push in to follow charlie

Charlie walks into the bar. Mel is seen sitting at the same table from the start. Charlie walks up to her. CHARLIE Hello hello. MEL Hey you. Mel gets up and walks over.

Mel gets up and walks over. MEL I reserved us a table. CHARLIE Wonderful! MEL How've you been? (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 17. CHARLIE I'm good. Glad this term is over and all the essays handed in. What about you? MEL You know me, I'm just happy with whatever comes my way. Want a drink? CHARLIE Yeah, I'll just put my stuff down. Charlie puts their stuff on a chair, whilst Mel gets her money out of her coat pocket. CHARLIE Let's go!

Image from shotlist

cut to prifile of them let them walk across and follow

CHARLIE Let's go! They walk over towards the bar. MEL So, are you happy with your essay? CHARLIE Not my best piece of work, but it'll do. I've done all I can. MEL Isn't that what we all say? CHARLIE True. But believe me, I've written better stuff. MEL As long as you're happy with it. CHARLIE Yeah, can't change it now anyway. They approach the queue for the

bar. MEL That's the spirit. The person in front of them turns around. It is ALEX (approx. 24), a friend of theirs.

Image from shotlist

stil same shot move to the left charlie right of frame charlie head on

MEL Alex! Hi, how are you? ALEX I'm good, how are you? MEL Good as well. We were just saying how glad we are that it's the break now and all the essays are handed in. Weren't we, Charlie? Charlie, who had gotten their phone out during the conversation, looks up.

Image from shotlist

back to the medium wide of them both

looks up. CHARLIE Yeah, yeah, we were. ALEX It's great, isn't it? Knowing that there are a few weeks off. Are you guys going home soon? MEL Yeah, I'm off the day after tomorrow. ALEX I'll leave in a few days too. Saves me buying food and cooking and stuff. MEL (laughs.)

Main reason to go home. ALEX What about you, Charlie? CHARLIE Don't know yet. Probably a bit closer to Christmas. Charlie fiddles with their phone. ALEX Family being too annoying? CHARLIE Yeah, I just have a lot to catch up on and can't really work well at home. MEL Doesn't your dad have a study that he lets you work in when you're home? (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 19. CHARLIE Yeah, but … he needs it this time. MEL Ah alright. Alex is next in the queue. BAR STAFF Next, please. ALEX Was lovely to catch up with you guys, and let me know when you're back. Should go for a drink or something. Alex walks to the bar. MEL Have a lovely break, Alex. Mel turns to Charlie who was on their phone. MEL You alright? CHARLIE Yeah. BAR STAFF Next, please. CHARLIE That's you. Mel walks over to the bar.

Image from shotlist

stil same shot move to the left charlie right of frame charlie head on

Charlie gets their phone out and types in 'Low calorie alcohol'. The typing can be seen on a transparent on the left side of the screen (as earlier). BAR STAFF Next, please. Charlie walks over.

charlie walks past us camera pans over and cut

BAR STAFF What can I get you? Charlie fiddles with their phone. An awkward pause. It seems like the audience can make another decision. CHARLIE Can I … can I get a water, please? (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 20. BAR STAFF 'Course you can! Charlie stands at the bar waiting, looking unhappy.

BAR STAFF What can I get you? Charlie fiddles with their phone. An awkward pause. It seems like the audience can make another decision. CHARLIE Can I ... can I get a water, please? (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 20. BAR STAFF 'Course you can! Charlie stands at the bar waiting, looking unhappy.

46

INT. CHARLIE'S PARENTS' DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Image from shotlist

push in

MUM Charlie, what's up?! CHARLIE It's just my head, sorry. I'll try and come back downstairs later on, but I'm just not well.

STARTING WIDER PUSHING INTO CHARLIE

rest of dialogue

- **Two cameras**
- **We get closer and closer to Charlie over the course of the scenes**
- **44:** wide, midi, establishing
- **45:** more shots, Charlie not in focus (people talk about them, not with them)

46: Charlie in focus, no one else, push in after Charlie has left

63

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

- **Same frame as end of 62 -> Charlie calmer now (maybe arrange hair differently)**
- **Slow zoom in**
- **Lizzie comes back into frame when getting kitchen roll**
- **Lizzie out of frame when she is sitting down**
- **'They just want to help': cut to Lizzie -> mid shot**
- **'That's the thing' until end of scene: Close-up on Charlie**

scene 63

same as 62

leave frame as

dolly in slowly as monologue plays

closeness of character

focus on charlie as lizzie gets up

lizzie get sup again and leaves

camera dolly in

cut to lizzie

mcu

get lizzie reactions

cut to close up of charlie

Image from shotlist

Charlie has calmed themselves down. Lizzie squats next to them and holds their hand. CHARLIE I just don't know who I am anymore. And I feel like everyone else does, except for me. And they have expectations of me that I just can't meet. I'm just so confused. And everything is just so overwhelming right now. I don't know what I want to do or who I should be, and everyone keeps saying these things. And they all seem to have a plan, and then there's me who has no clue and doesn't know what's going on. I just don't want to feel so exhausted anymore, Lizzie.

dolly out for Charlie starts crying again.

pan right to allow space for Lizzie to come onto frame with tissue

CHARLIE But it's not just that! I'm just so sick of people telling me who to be and what to do. Mum, Dad, friends. It seems like everyone is judging my every move. It seems like everyone thinks they know what is best for me. It's just so …

Image from shotlist

end frame

angle on charlie slightly

LIZZIE They just want to help, Charlie. CHARLIE But it's not helping at all! It just confuses me! Now I don't know what I want anymore, because it just feels like I'm repeating what someone else wants for me. And it doesn't feel right, you know? LIZZIE So, what is it that you want then? CHARLIE That's the thing: I don't know. 'Cause no one will shut up about saying what they think. LIZZIE Just don't listen to them then. CHARLIE That might be easy for you. I'm different. I can't just switch it off.

dolly in

13

INT. MEL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Image from shotlist

- **Camera movement when door shuts**
- **Mel walks into frame**
- **Slight tilt when Mel is crouching down**
- camera reacts the doors slams
- possibly come down to their level

30

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie stands in front of their mirror, checking their body for flaws.

SLIGHT TILT

47

INT. BEDROOM AT CHARLIE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

- **Reflecting 38**
- **Closer**

Charlie is lying on their bed. They scroll through their phone. The voices of their family having fun can be heard in the back.

64

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

- **Same shot as end of 63**
- **From 'And I appreciate people …': symmetry**
- **On Charlie's voice breaking: cut to Charlie**

Image from shotlist

angle on charlie slightly

dolly in

And I appreciate people pointing out things, but in the end it is my decision to be the way I am and do the things I do. You know, I am capable of making my own decisions, you know**. till then**

Image from shotlist

On Charlie's voice breaking: cut to Charlie

eye level

14

INT. MEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

- focus on actions
- having what's going on more in focus
- change when we go through the "awkward" line

Image from shotlist

Charlie sits down on a bar stool whilst Mel prepares a glass of water.

PUSH IN

Charlie sits down on a bar stool whilst Mel prepares a glass of water. MEL Did you have enough to eat before you came to the party? Charlie looks on the table and plays with a bottle opener on the table. Mel puts the glass of water in front of them. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 8. MEL Drink. Charlie starts to drink and puts the glass down after a few sips. MEL All of it. Charlie starts drinking again. MEL So? Did you eat enough? You usually don't get drunk like that so quickly. CHARLIE No? MEL Oh, Charlie! Charlie starts playing with the bottle opener on the table again. CHARLIE I'm sorry. MEL Let me make you something. Charlie nods vigorously. MEL What would you like? A jam sandwich? CHARLIE Yes, please! Mel gets the bread out of a cupboard, gets the jam out of another cupboard, grabs a knife, and starts preparing the sandwich.

TRUCK RIGHT STILL ON A WIDE

MEL So, you made out with two people from my course within one night. That's a new record. CHARLIE Are they? From your course, I mean? MEL Yeah, I met them this term. We're in a seminar group together. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 9. CHARLIE At least I won't see them. Would make it awkward. MEL What's so awkward about it? Things like that happen.

Image from shotlist

CHARLIE SITTING ON A STOOL

CHARLIE Me. I'm awkward. MEL Oh stop it, Charlie. You're not as awkward as you think. Mel finishes making the sandwich and slides the plate across the table. MEL Eat. It will make you feel better. CHARLIE Yes, mum! Charlie starts eating. MEL (laughs.) Don't you ever call me that again!

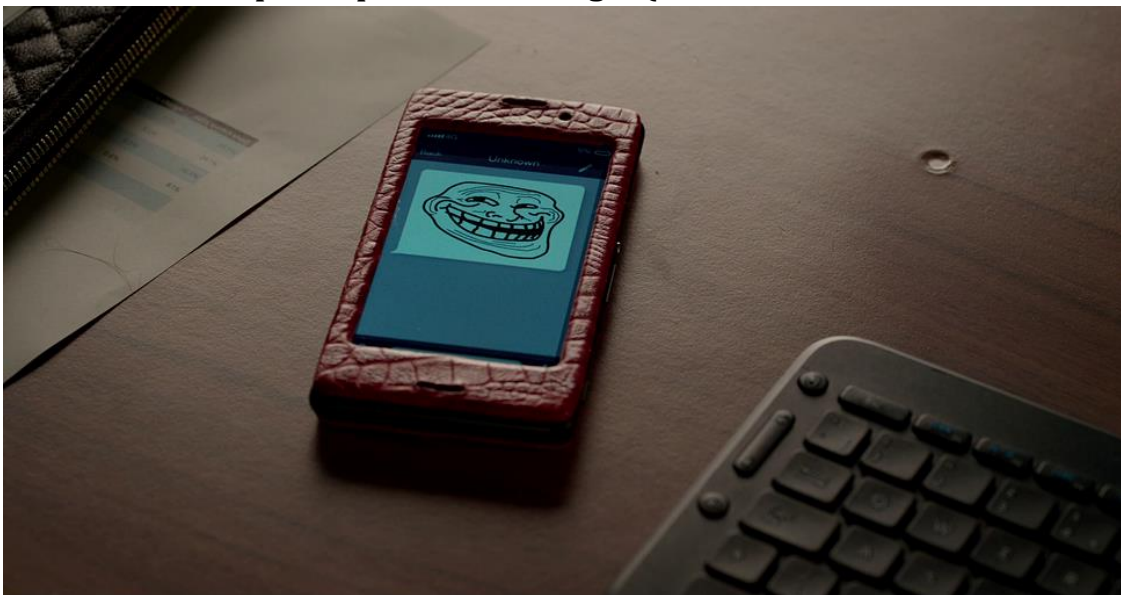PUSH OUT TO REVEAL ACTIONS

31

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

SLIGHT LEFT BIT OF A TILT

SLIGHT DUTCH TILT

48

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

- **Charlie out of focus (blurry) -> phone in focus**
- **Similar set-up as in previous montages (more surreal -> numbers, labels bigger)**

Mum calls - Charlie does not pick up.

Charlie stands in front of a mirror checking their body.

DUTCH TILT

PAN BACK TO SCALE

65

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Image from shotlist

Charlie is much calmer now. The coffee cups are empty. CHARLIE I'm sorry I've put all of this on you. LIZZIE Hey, that's what I'm here for. Lizzie takes Charlie's hand. LIZZIE Listen, I think you need to get some help from someone professional - someone who knows more about these things, you know what I mean? CHARLIE Yeah. LIZZIE I mean, it's up to you, and I don't want to pressure you into something, but after all you've said, and … CHARLIE And?

push in

Scene 65:

- Similar to beginning of scene 62 -> Charlie in focus
- Handheld and no cuts
- Focus on Charlie
- pan/zoom

15

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

- **One shot**
- **Mid to wide**
- **Slight push out**

Image from shotlist

- END FRAME
- **One shot**
- **Mid to wide**
- **Slight push out**

32

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

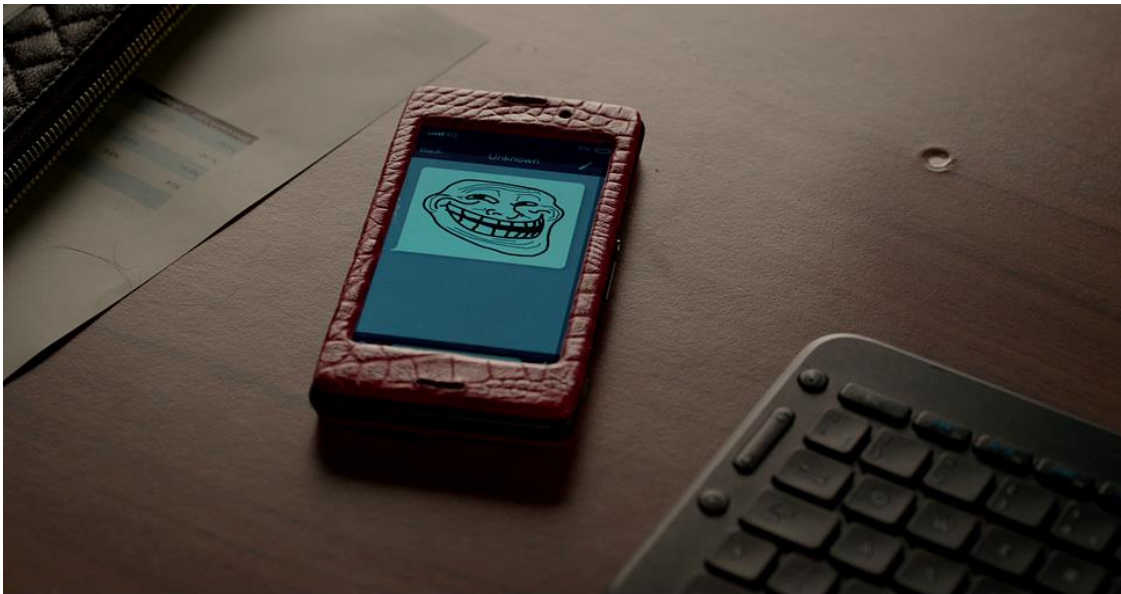*Charlie stands in front of their mirror, checking their body for flaws.*

SLIGHT DUTCH TILT

49

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie steps on the scales whilst Mum calls. Charlie does not pick up.

Mum calls - Charlie does not pick up.

66

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Image from shotlist

reverse on to lizzie

LIZZIE Do you want me to speak to mum? There is another silence. LIZZIE I don't have to. You can call her ifCHARLIE No, no, it's fine. You can speak to her.

Image from shotlist

Please don't mention what I said though. Just say that I'm sorry and that I'm alright.

pushin

t I'm sorry and that I'm alright. LIZZIE What shall I say about you not calling her? CHARLIE Just, you know, just say I was busy or lost my phone or something. LIZZIE Alright, I'll think of something and will let you know.

hold movement

CHARLIE Cheers. Thank you, Lizzie. LIZZIE No worries.

Just promise me to speak to someone and to give Mel a ring. CHARLIE Yeah. LIZZIE She's not mad at you or anything, she wouldn't have called me if she was.

reverse

trucking movent

Scene 66:

- Cuts between two -> multiple cuts
- Scene shot at least 3 times -> pick and choose

16

INT. GYM - DAY

Image from shotlist

- **Follow Charlie walking through gate**
- **Over shoulder (reflecting last scene)**
- MAKE SURE TO TILT DOWN

- MAKE SURE WE SEE GATE

33

INT. GYM - DAY

- **Slight tilt down**
- **Symmetrical**
- dutch tilt

Charlie on a rowing machine.

50

INT. GYM - DAY

Charlie with dumbbells in front of a big mirror.

FIND CLOSE UP OF PHONE FOR CHARLIE WORKING OUT IN THE BACKGROUND

Mum calls - Charlie does not pick up.

67

INT. BAR - NIGHT

- **Similar start to scenes 1 and 29**
- **Until 'I missed you, Charlie': multiple cuts (singles)**
- **Then: Dolly out/pan from Mel to both of them**
- **Going into a symmetrical shot (similar to Lizzie and Charlie)**
- **Continue dolly out**

Image from shotlist

Mel sits at their usual table with a drink. Charlie walks up to her with a water. Charlie sits down

Image from shotlist

- **start on the drink and when they start to talk tilt up onto charlie and mel**
- and fiddles with their drink.

silence cut back

push in during silence until how was your birthday

They look at each other.

Image from shotlist

MEL What happened, happened. There are plenty of other birthdays to celebrate. I shouldn't have reacted like that and… I don't know… I should have checked on you instead

of being angry… I'm the one who should beCHARLIE No, please don't be. I just… MEL I wish you would have talked to me. CHARLIE I just… I just couldn't. It's not that I don't trust you or anything, but it was just… (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 39. MEL I get that. I didn't mean to push you… CHARLIE You didn't.

MEL Good, good. The party was fun. Only thing missing was you. (Beat.) Sorry, sorry, I didn't want it to come across like that.

Image from shotlist

CHARLIE I just… I just couldn't. It's not that I don't trust you or anything, but it was just… (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 39. MEL I get that. I didn't mean to push you… CHARLIE You didn't.

CHARLIE No, just… seeing you already helps. (Beat.) I've been chatting to my GP and they are going to refer me to a specialist team. I should be alright, you know. (CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 40. MEL Good.

Image from shotlist

MEL I missed you, Charlie. CHARLIE I missed you too. They hug and get emotional. MEL Is there anything I can do?

mel walks around

they are facing each other

17

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Image from shotlist

HAVE A BIT WIDER

CAMERA TO THE RIGHT

- **Over shoulder -> tilt down, static**
- **Opposite light source**

34

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie stands in front of their mirror, checking their body for flaws.

DUTCH TILT

51

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Charlie opens the fridge whilst Mum calls. Charlie closes the fridge, looks at the phone, but does not pick up.

68

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

takeaway can be seen in the distance.

- **Similar to scene 2**
- **Follow Charlie from behind**

1-29 LOW CON/WARM/

- More fill
- Warm Colour balance

29-57 MORE CONTRAST COOLER

58-68 REALISTIC/NATURAL/INTENSE/HARD LIGHT

EVERYTHING THAT INFLUENCES CHARLIE IS ON THE LEFT

10. Examples of Call Sheets

10.1.Call Sheet 22nd of August (Day 1)

Producer	Sophie Schulze	07388 249201
Director	Sophie Schulze	07388 249201
1st AD	Amber Medway	07539 601466
Nearest Hospital		01904 631 313
York Hospital, Wigginton Road,		
York, North Yorkshire, YO31 8HE		

LUNCH	
TEA	
SUNRISE	
5:54 AM	
WEATHER	
Humidity	

In emergency contact Director or 1st AD.

ralCrewC **9 AM**

Pick up of equioment at
Film, Television, and Int

School of Arts and Creat
University of York, Hesli

SCENES	SET AND DESCRIPTION	CHARACTER #	D/N	PAGES	LOC
61	**Int. Kitchen**	1,3	D	31-32	
	Chatting and makes coffee.				
62	**Int. Kitchen**	1,3	D	32-33	
	Chatting.				
63	**Int. Kitchen**	1,3	D	33-34	
	Chatting.				
64	**Int. Kitchen**	1,3	D	34-36	
	Chatting.				
65	**Int. Kitchen**	1,3	N	36-37	
	Chatting.				
66	**Int. Kitchen**	1,3	N	37-38	
	Chatting.				

SCENES	Characters	Start	Set	Finish		Crew	Set-up	Start	Finish
	Charlie	11:30	12:00	13:00		All	11:00	12:00	13:00
61	Lizzie	11:30	12:00	13:00					
	Charlie	13:30	14:00	16:00		All	13:30	14:00	16:00
62	Lizzie	13:30	14:00	16:00					
	Charlie	16:00	16:00	18:00		All	16:00	16:00	18:00
63	Lizzie	16:00	16:00	18:00					
	Charlie	19:00	19:00	20:30		All	19:00	19:00	20:30
64	Lizzie	19:00	19:00	20:30					
	Charlie	21:00	21:15	22:30					
65	Lizzie	21:00	21:15	22:30		All	21:00	21:15	22:30
	Charlie	22:30	22:30	00:00					
66	Lizzie	22:30	22:30	00:00		All	22:30	22:30	00:00

1:00 PM	CRAFT SERVICES
6:00 PM	Armstrong Cate
	SUNSET
	8:18 PM

70° AM	80° NOON	72° PM
10%		Mostly Sunny

9am at Department of Theatre, :eractive Media:
:ive Technologies ington

CATION/NOTES

10.2.Call Sheet 23rd of August (Day 2)

A Slimming World - Day 2 · *A SLIMMING WORLD* · 23nd of A...

Producer	Sophie Schulze	07388 249201
Director	Sophie Schulze	07388 249201
1st AD	Amber Medway	07539 601466
Nearest Hospital		01904 631 313
York Hospital, Wigginton Road,		
York, North Yorkshire, YO31 8HE		

Tea	
SUNRISE	
5:56 AM	
WEATHER	
Humidity	

In emergency contact Director or 1st AD.

ralCrewC **12:00**

Pick up of equioment at
Film, Television, and Int

School of Arts and Creat
University of York, Hesli

SCENES	SET AND DESCRIPTION	CHARACTER #	D/N	PAGES	LO
42	**Int. Charlie's Bedroom**	1	D	21-22	17 Tri
	Charlie on the phone to mum.				
57	**Int. Charlie's Bedroom**	1	D	29-30	17 Tri
	Charlie voice messaging Mel.				
35,51	**Int. Kitchen**	1	D	20,28	17 Tri
	Just Charlie. Fridge				
60	**Int. Charlie's Corridor**	1	D	30-31	
	Lizzie visits Charlie.				
		TOTAL PAGES			

SCENES	Characters	Start	Set	Finish		Crew	Set-up	Start	Finish

6:30 PM	CRAFT SERVICES
	Armstrong Cate
	SUNSET
	8:16 PM

70° AM	80° NOON	72° PM
10%		Mostly Sunny

9am at Department of Theatre,
:eractive Media:

:ive Technologies
ıngton

CATION/NOTES
nity CourtYO1 6EL
nity CourtYO1 6EL
nity CourtYO1 6EL

10.3.Call Sheet 1st of September (Day 11)

Producer	Sophie Schulze	07388 249201
Director	Sophie Schulze	07388 249201
1st AD	Amber Medway	07539 601466
Nearest Hospital		01904 631 313
York Hospital, Wigginton Road,		
York, North Yorkshire, YO31 8HE		

Tea	
SUNRISE	
6:12 AM	
WEATHER	
Humidity	

In emergency contact Director or 1st AD.

ralCrewG **16:00**

SCENES	SET AND DESCRIPTION	CHARACTER #	D/N	PAGES	LO
12	Int. Mel's Livingroom	1,14,15	N		
47	Int. Bedroom - Grandparents' House	1	N		
		TOTAL PAGES			

SCENES	Characters	Start	Set	Finish
12	Charlie	19:00	19:30	20:00
	Extras & Strangers	19:00	19:30	20:00
47	Charlie	20:15	20:30	21:00

Crew	Set-up	Start	Finish
All	18:30	19:30	20:00
All	20:00	20:30	21:00

	CRAFT SERVICES
6:00 PM	Armstrong Cate
	SUNSET
	7:55 PM
70° AM 80° NOON 72° PM	
10% Mostly Sunny	

CATION/NOTES

10.4.Call Sheet 2nd of September (Day 12)

Producer	Sophie Schulze	07388 249201
Director	Sophie Schulze	07388 249201
1st AD	Amber Medway	07539 601466
Nearest Hospital		01904 631 313
York Hospital, Wigginton Road,		
York, North Yorkshire, YO31 8HE		

Lunch	
Tea	
SUNRISE	
6:12 AM	
WEATHER	
Humidity	

In emergency contact Director or 1st AD.

ralCrewC | **11:00**

SCENES	SET AND DESCRIPTION	CHARACTER #	D/N	PAGES	LO
47	**Int. Bedroom - Parent's House**	1	N	27	11 Argy
	Charlie on bed.				

SCENES	Characters	Start	Set	Finish
47	Charlie	20:30	21:00	21:30

Crew	Set-up	Start	Finish
All	20:30	21:00	21:30

1:00 PM	**CRAFT SERVICES**	
6:00 PM	Armstrong Cate	
	SUNSET	
	7:55 PM	

70° AM	80° NOON	72° PM
10%		Mostly Sunny

CATION/NOTES

le StreetYO23 1DW

11. Amended Shooting Schedule

	Thursday 6th of October	Friday 7th of October	Saturday 8th of October	Sunday 9th of October
Location	TBA		Ext. Mel's House	
Times	TBA		Night/Evening (9pm)	
			Mel, Charlie	
Scenes	TABLEREAD		11	
Location			Int. Mel's Bathroom	Int. Bar
Times			Night	Night (9pm)
			Mel, Charlie	Mel, Lizzie, Charlie, Alex, Extras, Bar St
Scenes			13	1,29
Location		Int. Mel's Livingroom	Int. Mel's Kitchen	Int. Bar
Times		Night (9pm)	Night	Night (9pm)
		Charlie, Extras (incl. Stranger	Mel, Charlie	Mel, Charlie, Extras
Scenes		12	14	67
Location				
Times				
Scenes				

Monday 10th of October	Tuesday 11th of October	Wednesday 12th of October	Thursday 13th of October	Friday 14th of October
Int. Gym Day (Montage Scenes) Charlie 16 (walk into gym)18a,20b,33 (ro	Int. Kitchen Day Lizzie, Charlie 61,62,63,64 (Charlie and Lizzie	Int. Bedroom Day Charlie 42 (on phone to Mum)57(2x) (pacing, re	Int. Bathroom Day Charlie 28	Int. Bedroom Day (Montage Scenes) Charlie 9a,30,32,34,48 (bodychecking)9b
Ext. Street Night (9:30pm) Mel, Lizzie, Charlie 2,68 (walking towards)3 (with foo	Int. Kitchen Evening (7pm) Lizzie, Charlie 65,66 (Charlie and Lizzie)	Int. Corridor Day Charlie, Lizzie 60	Int. Bedroom Day Charlie 15, 58 (Bed) 26 (Desk then b	Int. Kitchen Evening (8pm) Charlie 5,7,8 (Charlie - no dialogue)6 (Ch
		Int. Kitchen Evening Charlie 35,51 (Charlie - no dialogue)	Int. Bedroom Night (9pm) Charlie 21,22,25 (on the phone to Me	Int. Bedroom Night (Montage Scenes) Charlie 37,39,52 (biscuits in bed)49 (weig

Saturday 15th of October	Sunday 16th of October	Monday 17th of October	Tuesday 18th of October	sday 19th of Oc
Int. Parent's Living Room Day Charlie, Parents, Grandparents, Lizz 43	Int. Café Day Mel, Charlie, Lydia, Ellie, Jasmine, Waiter, Ext 23,24	Int. Supermarket Day (Montage Scenes) Charlie 10,40,55 (checking food lables) 41 (close to till)		
Int. Parent's Dining Room Night/Evening (8pm) Charlie, Parents, Grandparents, Lizz 44,45,46	Int. Bedroom - Grandparents' House Night Charlie 47	Ext. Train/Bus Station Day Lizzie, Charlie 4		
hing - could be during day)				

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Anderson-Fye, Eileen; 'Chapter 9: Cultural Influences on Body Image and Eating Disorders', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eating Disorders*; 2nd edn., 5th Oct. 2017; pp. 187–208.

Aristotle; *Poetics*; ed. and trans. by Stephen Halliwell; (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

Aronson, Linda; *The 21st Century Screenplay: A Comprehensive Guide to Writing Tomorrow's Films*; (Los Angeles, Calif.: Silman-James Press, 2010).

Batty, Craig; 'Screenwriting Studies, Screenwriting Practice and the Screenwriting Manual' in *New Writing*; (Clevedon, England: Routledge); 17:3 (2020); pp. 333-347.

'Beginnings, Middles & Ends' in *Writing for Film and TV*; lecture notes; (York: University of York, 15 Jan 2022).

Brecht, Bertolt; *Brecht on Performance: Messingkauf and Modelbooks;* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

Britten, Bill; *From Stage to Screen: A Theatre Actor's Guide to Working on Camera*; (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Carr, Jeremy; 'John Cassavetes' in *Senses of Cinema*; 79 (July 2016);

http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2016/great-directors/john-cassavetes/.

Cobley, Paul; *Narrative*; (London: Routledge, 2001).

Cooper, Patricia; 'Chapter 13: The Melodrama' in *Writing the Short Film*; pp. 153-69.

Cooper, Patricia, and Ken Dancyger; 'Chapter 17: The Opportunity for Renewal'; in *Writing the Short Film*; 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2005); pp.233-242.

Cotter, Kelley; 'Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram' in *New Media & Society*; 21:4 (April 2019); pp. 895-913.

Cox, David; 'Shutter Island's Ending Explained'; The Guardian; 29 Jul 2010; https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2010/jul/29/shutter-island-ending; [accessed: 14.03.2024].

D'Aloia, Adriano; 'Against Interactivity: Phenomenological notes on Black Mirror: Bandersnatch' in *International Journal of TV Serial Narratives*; Vol. VI, Nº 2, Winter 2020; pp. 21-32.

Dancyger, Ken; *Global Scriptwriting*; (Burlington, UK: Focal Press, 2013).

Felando, Cynthia; 'Chapter 3: Short Film Specificity Narrative Compression, Unity, Character, and Endings'; in Discovering Short Films: The History and Style of Live-Action Fiction Shorts; (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015); pp. 45-63.

Felando, C.; 'Chapter 4: Storytelling and Style: The Classical Short'; in Discovering Short Films: The History and Style of Live-Action Fiction Shorts (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015); pp. 65-93.

MA Thesis: 'Filming Authenticity: Irony, Sincerity, and Belief in Terrence Malick's 2010 Cinema'; (York: University of York, 2020).

Gallon, Rebecca; Thesis: 'Lights, Camera, Interaction! Interactive Film and its Transformative Potential'; (York: University of York, 2021).

Godzic, Wieslaw; 'Various Faces of Interactivity: Remarks on Television' in *La Revista Icono 14: Revista Científica De Comunicación Y Tecnologías Emergentes*; 2012; Vol. 8 (1); pp. 22-36; https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v8i1.278 .

Gurskis, Dan; *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production*, (Boston, MA: Thomson Course Technology, 2007).

Hamzah, Sahar; Thesis: *An Examination of the Filmmaking Methods of Kenneth Branagh in his Directorial Film Work* on Thor*, Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit *and* Cinderella *with Specific Reference to his Status as Auteur*; 2017 (Queen Margaret University; Edinburgh).

Harris, Mike; 'Introduction to Scriptwriting' in The Handbook of Creative Writing; ed. by Steven Earnshaw; 2nd edn.; (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); pp. 251-262.

IMDb search; results for 'Most Popular Movies and TV Shows tagged with keyword "interactive" after 2018'.

Izydorczyk, Bernadetta; *Body Image in Eating Disorders: Clinical Diagnosis and Integrative Approach to Psychological Treatment*; (London: Routledge, 2022).

Jung, C. G.; *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 9 (Part 1): Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*; (Princeton University Press, 1969).

Keegan, Cael M; *Lana and Lilly Wachowski*; (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

Klarer, Mario; 'Putting Television 'Aside': Novel Narration in House of Cards' in *New Review of Film and Television Studies*; 12:2 (2014); pp. 203-220.

Kuhn, Anette and Westwell, Guy; 'authorship (auteur theory, la politique des auteurs)' in *A Dictionary of Film Studies (2 ed.)*; (Oxford University Press; 2020); https://www-oxfordreference-com.libproxy.york.ac.uk/display/10.1093/acref/9780198832096.001.0001/acref-9780198832096-e-0046

Lambden, Julie; *Film Editing: Emotion, Performance and Story*; (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

Lannom, SC; 'Quentin Tarantino Interviews, Directing Tips & Quotes on Film'; studiobinder; 14 May, 2023; https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/quentin-tarantino-quotes-and-interviews/ [accessed: 18.09.2022].

Miller, Carolyn Handler; *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*; 3rd edn, (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2014).

Mundhenke, Florian; 'From i-DOC to VR Experience: New Forms of User Engagement in Immersive Digital Documentaries' in *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*; 17.1 (2020); pp. 37-48; doi: https://doi-org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.1386/ncin_00003_1

Nee, Rebecca C; 'Wild, stressful, or stupid: Que es Bandersnatch? Exploring user outcomes of Netflix's interactive Black Mirror episode' in *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*; Vol. 27, Iss. 5, 5th March 2021.

'Need Equals Love' in *Writing for Film and TV*; lecture notes; (York: University of York, 15 Jan 2022).

O'Neill, Bonnie; 'Writing for Film', in *The Handbook of Creative Writing*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2014); pp. 293-302.

OED; *'Drama - Etymology'*; accessed: 08.03.2024, 10:31am.

OED; 'Interactivity'; accessed: 10.02.2023, 10:30am;

[https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/97521?redirectedFrom=interactive#eid]

OED; 'Narrative'; accessed: 16.02.2023, 10:00am.

Orpen, Valerie; *Film Editing: The Art of the Expressive*; (Columbia University Press, 2019).

Panek, Elliot; 'The Poet and the Detective: Defining the Psychological Puzzle Film' in *Film Criticism*; Vol. 31, No. 1/2 (Fall/Winter, 2006).

Parker, Philip; 'Chapter 2: A Creative Matrix' in *The Art and Science of Screenwriting*.

Perkis, Andrew, and K. Taveter; 'Applications of Complex Narratives' in *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia*; (Trondheim, Norway: Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)); (Tartu: Estonia: Institute of Computer Science (University of Tartu)); 2nd December 2022.

Rabiger, Michael, and M. Hurbis-Cherrier; *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics*; (Waltham, Mass.: Focal Press, 2013).

Ramchurn, Richard, and S. Martindale, etc.; 'Brain-Controlled Cinema' in *Brain Art: Brain-Computer Interfaces for Artistic Expression*; (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019); pp.377-408.

Rezk, Anna Marie, and M. Haahr; 'Beyond Free Will: Understanding Approaches to Agency and their Suitability for Bandersnatch-like Titles' in *Entertainment Computing*; Vol. 43, August 2022.

Rooney, Bethan, and M. L. Belli; *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing*; (Saint Louis: Routledge, 2012).

Roth, Christian, and H. Koenitz; 'Bandersnatch, Yea or Nay? Reception and User Experience of an Interactive Digital Narrative Video', in *Proceedings of TVX '19: ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video (TVX '19)*; June 05-07, 2019, Salford (Manchester), United Kingdom; ACM (New York, NY, USA).

Schreibman, Myrl A.; *The Film Director Prepares: A Practical Guide to Directing for Film & TV*; (Los Angeles, L.A.: Lone Eagle, 2006).

Schwartz, Barry; 'The Paradox of Choice' in *Positive Psychology in Practice Part II: Values and Choices in Pursuit of the Good Life*; (Wiley Online Books, 2015); pp. 121-138.

Sellors, C. Paul; 'Collective Authorship in Film' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*; 65 (2007).

Sellors, C. Paul; *Film Authorship: Auteurs and other Myths*; (London: Wallflower Press, 2010).

Şerban, Silviu; 'Godard and the Language of Cinema' in *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*; Vol. 3, No. 2 (2011).

Stollery, Martin; 'Technicians of the Unknown Cinema: British Critical Discourse and the Analysis of Collaboration in Film Production' in *Film History*; 21.

Streshinsky, Maria; 'How Christopher Nolan Learned to Stop Worrying and Love AI'; Wired; 20 Jun 2023; https://www.wired.com/story/christopher-nolan-oppenheimer-ai-apocalypse/; [accessed: 14.03.2024].

Supervisor Meeting 6; 20.05.2022.

Swain, John Howard; *The Science and Art of Acting for the Camera: A Practical Approach to Film, Television, and Commercial Acting*; (London: Routledge, 2017).

'Spike Lee Shares 4 Important Tips for Directing Actors'; MasterClass; 7 June, 2021; https://www.masterclass.com/articles/spike-lee-shares-important-tips-for-directing-actors; [accessed: 18.09.2023].

Utichi, Joe; 'Luca Guadagnino and Cast On 'Call Me By Your Name' And The Alchemy Of Conjuring The Butterflies Of First Desire' in *Deadline Hollywood*; https://deadline.com/2017/11/call-me-by-your-name-armie-hammer-timothee-chalamet-oscars-interview-1202207499/ [accessed: 26.02.2024].

Vickers, Andrew; 'Idea Generation' in *Filmmaking Lectures*; lecture notes; (York: University of York, 04.10.2021).

Warde, Alan, and L. Martens; *Eating Out: Social Differentiation, Consumption and Pleasure*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Wilson, Anna; 'Where did you go?! Trans-diegetic Address and Formal Innovation in Phoebe Waller-Bridge's Television Series Fleabag' in *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies*; 17:4 (2022); pp. 415-435.

Secondary Sources

Braun, Timothy; 'Collaboration in the Theatre'; in The Handbook of Creative Writing; ed. by Steven
   Earnshaw (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); pp. 374-382.

Cantrell, Tom; 'Directing Actors in Continuing Drama: Meaning-making and Creative Labour'; in
   Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies; 13:3 (2018);
   298-313.

Carroll, Noël; 'TV and Film: A Philosophical Perspective'; in The Journal of Aesthetic Education,
   2001, 35: 1 (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001); 15-29.

Danesh, Darya; '5 Best Practices for Prepping and Sending Out Call Sheets'; studiobinder; 15 August,
   2019; https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/5-best-practices-for-distributing-call-sheets/
   [accessed: 16 August 2022].

Dave, Paul; 'Chapter 1: Tragedy, Ethics and History in Contemporary British Social Realist Film'; in
   British Social Realism in the Arts since 1940; ed. by David Tucker (United Kingdom:
   Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011); pp. 17-56.

Epstein, Michael; '10 Shooting Schedule Pro Tips to Build Momentum on Set'; studiobinder; 2
   February, 2017; https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/10-shooting-schedule-pro-tips-to-build-
   momentum-on-set/ [accessed: 20 June 2022].

Hay, Lucy V; Writing Diverse Characters for Fiction, TV or Film: An Essential Guide for Authors and
   Script Writers; (La Vergne: Oldcastle Books, 2017).

Horowitz Murray, Janet; *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*;
   (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2017).

Kirke, Alexis, with Duncan Williams and others; 'Unconsciously Interactive Films in a Cinema
   Environment: A Demonstrative Case Study'; in Digital Creativity; 29:2-3 (Exeter: Routledge,
   2018); 165-181 https://doi-org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.1080/14626268.2017.1407344.

Maio, Alyssa; 'What is a Shot List? Examples and a Brief Definition'; studiobinder; 5 February, 2020; https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-a-shot-list-example/ [accessed: 20 June 2022].

Mateer, John; 'Academic-Industry Collaboration for Commercial Film and Television Production: An Exploration of Case Studies'; in 2019 International Conference on Global Cultural and Creative Industries, 21-23 Nov 2019 (York: University of York, 2020).

Milne, John; 'Writing for Television: UK Differences'; in The Handbook of Creative Writing; ed. by Steven Earnshaw (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); pp.291-292.

'The Ultimate Guide to Call Sheets (with FREE Call Sheet Template)'; studiobinder; 21 June, 2019; https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/create-better-call-sheet-with-free-call-sheet-template/ [accessed: 15 July 2022].

van der Borgh, Simon; Supervision Meeting 3; 14.12.2021.

Films, TV Series, and Other Media

A Heist with Markiplier; dir. by Mark Fischbach (Rooster Teeth Productions, YouTube, 2019).

ANIMA; dir. by Paul Thomas Anderson (Pastel, 2019).

Animals on the Loose: A You vs. Wild Movie; dir. by Ben Simms (The Natural Studios, 2021).

Black Mirror: Bandersnatch; dir. David Slade; (House of Tomorrow and Netflix, 2018).

Call Me By Your Name; dir. by Luca Guadagnino (Frenesy Film Company, La Cinéfacture, RT
        Features, M.Y.R.A. Entertainment, Water's End Productions, 2017).

Christiansen, Simon; Trapped in Time; (2013).

Cat Burglar; dir. by James Bowman (Netflix Animation, Broke & Bones, 2022).

Dunkirk; dir. by Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros. Pictures, Syncopy Inc., RatPac-Dune
        Entertainment, 2017).

Fleabag; dir. by Harry Bradbeer (Two Brothers Pictures, 2016-2019).

House of Cards; created by Beau Willimon (Media Rights Capital (MRC), Netflix, Panic Pictures (II),
        Trigger Street Productions, 2013-2018).

Inception; dir. by Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros. Pictures, Legendary Pictures, Syncopy, 2010).

Interstellar; dir. by Christopher Nolan (Legendary Pictures, Syncopy, Lynda Obst Productions, 2014).

Minecraft: Story Mode; (Telltale Games, 2015-2017).

Packard, Edward; Sugarcane Island; (Bantam Books, 1986).

Packard, Edward; The Cave of Time; (Bantam Books, 1979).

Possibilia; dir. by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert (Prettybird, 2014).

She's Gotta Have It; dir. by Spike Lee (40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks, 1986).

Shutter Island; dir. by Martin Scorsese (Phoenix Pictures, Sikelia Productions, Appian Way
        Productions, 2010).

Taxi Driver; dir. by Martin Scorsese (Bill/Phillips Productions, Italo-Judeo Productions, 1976).

The Last Temptation of Christ; dir. by Martin Scorsese (Universal Pictures, Cineplex Odeon Films, Testament Productions, 1988).

The Moment; dir. by Richard Ramchurn (Albino Mosquito, 2018).

TryLife; dir. by Shaun Grant and others (TryLife, 2012-).

Will Wright; *The Sims* (Maxis, 2000); Microsoft Windows, Mac OS, PlayStation 2, GameCube, Xbox, Game Boy Advance, Nintendo DS, PlayStation Portable, Java ME, BlackBerry OS, Bada, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii, Nintendo 3DS, macOS, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, iOS, Android, Windows Phone.