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The representation of betrayal and its impact on character development in barrer, ferrari, and pearson's *transformers one* script (2024)

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Abstract. This study examines the representation of interpersonal and institutional betrayal in the script of *Transformers One* (2024) and their impact on character development, using a psychological approach to literary criticism. Employing a qualitative descriptive method of textual analysis, the study treats the script as a literary text and draws its primary data from dialogue, narrative description, and character interaction. The analysis relies primarily on Harry T. Reis's theory of Perceived Partner Responsiveness, which interprets interpersonal betrayal through the components of understanding, validation, and caring, while Herbert Spencer's Social Organism Theory serves as a supporting framework for explaining institutional dysfunction. The findings show that interpersonal betrayal develops as the responsiveness cycle between Orion Pax and D-16 gradually collapses, transforming a bond of mutual trust into emotional invalidation and irreparable distrust. Institutional betrayal is represented through Sentinel Prime's abuse of authority, manifested in the confiscation of T-Cogs and the systematic falsification of Cybertronian history to exploit the mining class. These two forms of betrayal operate as a single, interconnected mechanism of psychological injury that produces divergent developmental outcomes: D-16's transformation into Megatron reflects radical identity dissolution and defensive self-reliance, while Orion Pax's transformation into Optimus Prime reflects moral consolidation and an expanded capacity for relational responsibility. The study concludes that betrayal functions in the script as a multi-layered psychological mechanism shaping identity, ideology, and leadership.

Keywords: ***Betrayal; Character Development; Psychological Approach; Representation; Transformers One Script***

INTRODUCTION

A screenplay is a written narrative composed of dialogue, description, and dramatic structure (Field, 2005), and as a literary text it presents conflicts of trust, loyalty, power, and moral responsibility through dialogue, narrative description, and character interaction (Culler, 1997). Betrayal recurs across literary texts as a central engine of conflict, since it constitutes a transgression of trust and expectation within interpersonal and societal relationships (Jones, Couch, & Scott, 1997). It is rarely represented as a direct act of disloyalty; more often it is conveyed through manipulation, concealment, abuse of

authority, or conflicting values expressed in dialogue and narrative description (Booth, 1988; Chatman, 1978; Jones, 1996).

The script of *Transformers One* (2024) foregrounds betrayal as a central thematic concern. Although it narrates the origin of characters within the Transformers universe, it also depicts, through dialogue and narrative description, a society organized around hierarchy, leadership, and collective trust, the kind of power relation and moral struggle that narrative conflict typically reveals (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017). Betrayal in the script emerges through authority figures who demand loyalty while controlling information and maintaining unequal power relations (Reis & Clark, 2013; Freyd, 1996; Chatman, 1978), producing an institutional misuse of trust. This institutional betrayal does not remain confined to structures of power; it extends into interpersonal relationships, as differences in belief, loyalty, and response to authority gradually erode the trust between characters who were once closely connected. According to Reis and Shaver (1988), the absence of responsiveness in a relationship leads to declining trust, emotional distance, and relational deterioration, a claim supported by Crasta et al. (2021), who found that perceived responsiveness significantly shapes intimacy, trust, and relationship quality.

Two previous undergraduate studies inform the present research. Zanjabila (2020) examined betrayal in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* through the lens of mental contamination, interpreting the protagonist's infidelity not as a moral failure but as the psychological consequence of prolonged emotional neglect within an oppressive social environment, a reading consistent with Freyd's (1996) claim that betrayal by a trusted figure produces severe psychological distress. Susanto (2023) approached the same novel structurally, identifying betrayal as a "turning point" that forces characters into new configurations of identity. Both studies illuminate the emotional and structural dimensions of betrayal, yet both remain confined to romantic and marital relationships within realist fiction. The present study departs from this focus by examining betrayal in a science-fiction script, *Transformers One* (2024), and by analyzing both its interpersonal and institutional dimensions through Harry T. Reis's theory of Perceived Partner Responsiveness and Herbert Spencer's Social Organism Theory. Where earlier research treats betrayal primarily as a personal or romantic problem, this study investigates how betrayal operates simultaneously in interpersonal interaction and institutional structure, and how this dual operation shapes character and identity transformation, an approach that offers an alternative perspective on how betrayal is represented in literary texts more broadly. Zanjabila's (2020) focus on emotional neglect and mental contamination within an intimate relationship, and Susanto's (2023) focus on the structural mechanics of a single romantic rupture, both leave institutional structures of power outside their analytical scope; the present study addresses this gap by treating institutional dysfunction not as background context but as a psychological trigger with direct causal weight in the collapse of interpersonal trust.

Representation, in this context, refers not to a simple reflection of experience but to the construction of meaning through language and narrative (Hall, 1997). In literary texts, representation renders abstract human experience accessible through the organization of plot, characterization, and dialogue (Abrams & Harpham, 2015); in a film script specifically, it operates through dialogue and narrative description rather than through visual or performative elements. Interpersonal betrayal, accordingly, becomes visible in a text through the erosion of dialogue patterns and shifts in how characters address and

respond to one another, since it constitutes the violation of an assumed relational contract (Jones, Couch, & Scott, 1997).

The interpersonal dimension of betrayal is analyzed through Harry T. Reis's theory of Perceived Partner Responsiveness, which holds that relational health depends on the degree to which a partner is perceived as genuinely attentive to the other's needs, emotions, and sense of self, through three components: understanding, in which a partner accurately perceives the other's situation; validation, in which the partner acknowledges that the other's feelings are legitimate; and caring, in which the partner shows proactive concern for the other (Reis, 1988). The institutional dimension draws on Herbert Spencer's Social Organism Theory (1876), which conceives society as a living organism whose stability depends on the coordinated function of its component parts; when governing structures exploit rather than serve the body they govern, the resulting dysfunction manifests, at the individual level, as distrust and psychological injury (Smith & Freyd, 2014; Freyd & Smith, 2013; Monteith et al., 2019; Christl et al., 2024). In this study, Spencer's framework functions only as a supporting explanation for how institutional dysfunction becomes the psychological trigger of the interpersonal and identity-related consequences examined through Reis's model.

Guided by this framework, the study addresses two questions: how are interpersonal and institutional betrayal represented in the script of *Transformers One* (2024), and how does betrayal impact the development of its principal characters, D-16 (Megatron) and Orion Pax (Optimus Prime)? Accordingly, this study aims to analyze and describe how interpersonal and institutional betrayal are represented in the script through the theoretical frameworks of Reis and Spencer, and to describe the impact of betrayal on the character development of D-16 and Orion Pax. Theoretically, the study is expected to enrich the application of Reis's theory of Perceived Partner Responsiveness and Spencer's Social Organism Theory within literary textual analysis; practically, it is intended to help readers, students, and future researchers in English literature understand how the breakdown of trust and emotional responsiveness, as represented in a film script, can drive significant psychological and character transformation.

METHOD

This study employs a psychological approach to literary criticism as its primary analytical lens. The analysis begins with the script's intrinsic elements, namely character, dialogue, conflict, characterization, and plot, to identify how betrayal is represented within the narrative, before these findings are interpreted through extrinsic psychological frameworks: Harry T. Reis's theory of Perceived Partner Responsiveness as the main analytical framework, and Herbert Spencer's Social Organism Theory as a supporting framework explaining how institutional dysfunction functions as the psychological trigger affecting D-16 and Orion Pax. Literary narrative, in this sense, offers a model for how characters experience conflict, transformation, and social interaction within a structured storyline (Herman, 2009).

The research is designed as a descriptive-qualitative study focusing on textual analysis, a method suited to processing qualitative textual data with the aim of generating knowledge, new insight, and a representation of textual facts (Krippendorff, 2018; Abbott, 2021). The official script of *Transformers One* (2024) serves as the primary text, from which specific lines of dialogue, narrative description, and character interaction

manifesting institutional and interpersonal betrayal are identified. Only dialogue, narrative description, and character interaction are treated as primary data; stage directions are excluded from analysis. The script is treated strictly as a literary text rather than as a cinematic or visual work; elements specific to film production, such as cinematography, directing, acting, and mise-en-scène, as well as other films within the broader Transformers franchise, therefore fall outside the scope of the analysis.

Two categories of data inform the analysis. The primary data source is the official script of *Transformers One* (2024), comprising dialogue between Orion Pax and D-16, narrative descriptions of Cybertron, and character interactions involving Sentinel Prime's betrayal. The secondary data sources consist of academic journals and books on betrayal trauma (Freyd, 1996; Goldsmith et al., 2012), perceived partner responsiveness (Crasta et al., 2021), Reis's published work on interpersonal relationships, Spencer's writing on the social organism, and research on institutional betrayal (Smith & Freyd, 2014; Christl et al., 2024).

Data were collected in three stages. First, the script was read repeatedly to identify dialogue and narrative description related to the theme of betrayal. Second, data suspected of representing interpersonal betrayal (Reis, 1988) and institutional betrayal (Spencer, 1876) were identified and marked. Third, the selected data were coded and numbered to distinguish interpersonal from institutional betrayal data and to indicate their location in the script.

The analysis followed three corresponding stages: the coded data were first examined to determine their relevance to the study, then interpreted in relation to the theoretical frameworks of Reis (1988) and Spencer (1876), and finally used as the basis for drawing conclusions regarding the representation of betrayal and its impact on character development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings in relation to the two research questions guiding the study. The discussion of representation is organized into two parts, addressing interpersonal betrayal through Reis's model of Perceived Partner Responsiveness and institutional betrayal through Spencer's Social Organism Theory as a supporting framework; the discussion of character development follows, examining D-16's transformation into Megatron and Orion Pax's transformation into Optimus Prime as divergent outcomes of the same dual betrayal.

3.1 Interpersonal Betrayal: The Collapse of the Responsiveness Cycle

The relationship between Orion Pax and D-16 is established at the outset as one of authentic mutual responsiveness, grounded in their shared experience as miners stripped of their T-Cogs under Sentinel Prime's regime:

> ORION: "Always got your back."
>
> D-16: "No matter what." (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, p. 12)

This declaration encodes all three components of Reis's (1988) model in concentrated form: "always got your back" signals caring as a proactive commitment to the other's well-being, while "no matter what" conveys both validation, an acknowledgment that D-16's experience is legitimate regardless of circumstance, and understanding of their shared

condition of dispossession. Their alliance, forged in the crucible of a common grievance, establishes the depth of intimacy against which the eventual collapse of the relationship will register as betrayal rather than mere disagreement.

The responsiveness gap emerges at the narrative's critical turning point, when D-16 learns the extent of Sentinel Prime's deception and demands that Orion Pax join him in retribution:

> D-16: "All I can think about is Sentinel's smirking face. He must pay for what he's done. Someone has to do something."
>
> Orion Pax: "We are. With Alpha's proof inside that device, we will show everyone the truth."
>
> D-16: "You honestly believe it'll be that easy? Iacon doesn't want to hear the truth. They worship Sentinel. There's got to be a better way to bring him down."
>
> D-16 (through gritted teeth): "I trusted Sentinel. With everything. I will never trust a so-called 'leader' ever again." (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, pp. 74–75)

D-16's opening statement conveys not a preference but a moral necessity: the deontic modal "must" in "he must pay" frames retribution as the only ethically coherent response to what has occurred, while "someone has to do something," addressed directly to Orion Pax, functions as an implicit demand for understanding, the first component of Reis's (1988) model, which requires a partner to accurately perceive not only the factual content of a situation but its evaluative and affective significance. Orion Pax's reply, framed through the collective pronoun "we," sustains a register of institutional reform that fundamentally misreads D-16's psychological state; his rhetorical challenge, "you honestly believe it'll be that easy?", registers disbelief that Orion Pax could fail to grasp what it means to have lived an existence structured around systematic deception. The word "worship" further reveals D-16's alienation, recasting Cybertronian society as a complicit congregation rather than a potential audience for truth. The syntactic fragmentation of "I trusted Sentinel. With everything. I will never trust a so-called 'leader' ever again," short, disconnected clauses, performs the fracture of a worldview in collapse; "with everything" specifies that D-16's trust was total, so that its betrayal is experienced as the destruction of the entire category of trust rather than the disappointment of a single relationship, a repudiation of authority that, as the confrontation escalates, extends to Orion Pax himself.

The collapse of all three components becomes explicit in the second confrontation:

> D-16: "So do I! He took everything from us... I have to do this."
>
> Orion: "No, you don't. Rebuilding Iacon cannot begin with an execution."
>
> D-16: "He deserves to die, can't you see that?"
>
> Orion: "We're better than this. Don't be like Sentinel."
>
> D-16: "Pax, you need to move out of my way ... before I move myself." (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, p. 103)

The shift from "us" to "I" repositions D-16's grievance from a shared wound to a private one that Orion Pax has failed to honor; his question, "can't you see that?", functions as a

direct bid for validation. Orion Pax's response, "we're better than this, don't be like Sentinel," constitutes the most devastating failure of all three components at once: it denies understanding of D-16's psychological necessity, withholds validation of his emotional response, and, by equating D-16's anger with Sentinel Prime's calculated tyranny, fails the caring component by delegitimizing the entire experiential reality that produced his rage. D-16's ultimatum, "you need to move out of my way... before I move myself," discloses the extent to which Orion Pax, established at the narrative's opening as a source of proactive care, has become in D-16's experience an obstacle to his self-determined mission; the address "Pax" rather than "Orion Pax" registers both residual familiarity and incipient distance. When Orion Pax remains immovable, the ultimatum crystallizes into the clearest evidence that perceived caring has collapsed, directly preparing the total rupture that follows:

D-16: "I'm done saving you." (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, p. 104)

The divergence between D-16 and Orion Pax is not merely strategic but profoundly ideological, and it is precisely this ideological dimension that transforms a disagreement about method into an irreparable relational rupture. D-16 has concluded that Sentinel's deception has rendered all existing social structures irredeemably tainted, while Orion Pax believes in the possibility of institutional reconstruction through truth; within this framework, Orion Pax's willingness to work alongside existing institutions, even in opposition to Sentinel, constitutes, from D-16's perspective, a form of ideological complicity. When partners respond to the same relational crisis with fundamentally divergent orientations, the divergence itself becomes a source of perceived non-responsiveness, because each partner's response implicitly rejects the validity of the other's. The result is a collapse of perceived partner responsiveness not merely at the behavioral level but at the level of shared meaning.

This deterioration is further encoded in the dialogue's shifting pronominal grammar: early exchanges rely on collective pronouns, "we're the same," "they took everything from us," "together, we can change all of it," that construct the two characters' identities as interdependent, while later exchanges are marked by an insistent singular voice, "I have to do this," "I trusted Sentinel," "I will never trust." This pronominal shift traces the exact point at which a relational "we" fractures into two opposing individual positions. The brevity of "I'm done saving you" offers no explanation or opening for reconciliation; the verb "saving" recontextualizes the friendship as unacknowledged sacrifice, while the singular "you" completes the grammatical dissolution of "we." Ultimately, the script represents interpersonal betrayal not as a single act of disloyalty but as the gradual disintegration of understanding, validation, and caring, in which two characters who once shared a bond built on trust respond to the same painful revelation in fundamentally divergent ways, transforming mutual support into irreparable rupture.

3.2 Institutional Betrayal: Sentinel Prime's Regime as a Pathological Social Organism

Cybertronian society in the script functions as a pathological social body: a governing structure mandated to serve its members but instead consuming what it was built to protect. Spencer's (1876) Social Organism Theory, applied here only as a supporting framework, helps explain how this institutional dysfunction produces the distrust and powerlessness that later affect D-16 and Orion Pax. Society, in Spencer's (1876, p. 592) conception, is a living organism in which each differentiated organ must fulfill its designated function in exchange for the resources necessary for its own maintenance, and

when governing organs exploit the social body instead of serving it, the organism becomes pathologically unstable, a condition that, at the individual level, manifests as betrayal and emotional injury. Structures that consistently fail their members, Spencer (1876, p. 607) further argues, will eventually be dismantled through the adaptive responses of those most severely deprived, a principle that frames D-16's psychological radicalization not as irrational violence but as a predictable response to a predatory institutional environment. This concept of institutional betrayal is well established in contemporary psychology: it occurs when institutions violate the trust of those who depend on them for protection or fair treatment (Smith & Freyd, 2014), intensifying psychological harm when trusted organizations fail to protect or hold accountable those they have wronged (Freyd & Smith, 2013; Monteith et al., 2019; Christl et al., 2024).

Sentinel Prime's regime operates through two mechanisms of institutional betrayal: the systematic confiscation of T-Cogs from the mining population, and the deliberate falsification of Cybertronian history. The T-Cog is the biological foundation of Cybertronian identity, enabling the act of transformation that constitutes the birthright of every member of the species; by redistributing this organ to the military class, Sentinel Prime eliminates the miners' capacity for self-determination. He discloses the motive behind this act without remorse:

> Sentinel Prime: "That's why after I killed him, I took his cog for myself." (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, p. 88)

The insistent first-person syntax, "I killed," "I took," "for myself," positions this act as deliberate personal appropriation rather than institutional necessity. Spencer's framework clarifies why this qualifies as institutional betrayal rather than isolated misconduct: an authority that redirects collective resources toward private enrichment has abandoned its governing mandate. The scale of this betrayal is clarified further in a second confession:

> Sentinel Prime: "...What truth? That I plucked the cogs from your newborn chests? Forced you to mine, so that I could pay off the Quintessons and live like a king?" (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, p. 97)

The verb "plucked" carries the casual, contemptuous ease with which one removes something of little consequence, positioning the confiscation as routine; "from your newborn chests" intensifies this contempt by specifying that the violation occurred before the miners could comprehend or resist it. The causal conjunction "so that" establishes a direct relationship between the miners' forced labor and Sentinel's personal enrichment, while the reference to the Quintessons as external creditors reveals that Sentinel has mortgaged the mining class's labor and biological identity to secure his own political position.

The second mechanism, the falsification of Cybertronian history, constitutes the ideological dimension of Sentinel's regime, presenting the miners' subordination as natural and cosmologically ordained, thereby securing the ruling class's authority without constant coercion. The psychological toll of this epistemic violence is crystallized in D-16's response upon discovering the truth:

> D-16: "Every day... Every single day of my life... has been... a lie."
>
> D-16: "Sentinel... lied... to my face." (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, pp. 63–64)

The ellipses enact the cognitive disruption of a worldview collapsing in real time; the intensification from "every day" to "every single day of my life" extends the deception from a single incident to a totalizing condition, while the shift from the institutional register of the first line to the intimate "to my face" in the second reveals how systemic betrayal is internalized as a direct violation of trust between leader and follower, what may be described as the dependency paradox of institutional betrayal, in which the very institution responsible for D-16's oppression is also the institution within which his social existence has been wholly embedded, leaving him no alternative framework of meaning once the deception is revealed.

The institutional and interpersonal betrayals analyzed above are not two separate events but a single, continuous process of trust destruction: Sentinel Prime's institutional betrayal cascades into the interpersonal domain, generating the ideological fracture that ultimately destroys the bond between D-16 and Orion Pax. Institutional dysfunction, in other words, functions as the structural precondition that renders their interpersonal rupture not merely comprehensible but psychologically inevitable. The two characters' divergent responses to this same institutional reality, D-16's rejection of all institutional frameworks and Orion Pax's commitment to principled reconstruction, are themselves products of the differential psychological pressures that Sentinel Prime's regime exerted upon them through years of accumulated deprivation and manufactured consent.

The dual betrayal experienced by Orion Pax and D-16, institutional and interpersonal alike, thus produces profoundly divergent developmental trajectories, trajectories that are comprehensible only in light of the different psychological architectures each character brings to the same experience of violation. The following discussion examines these trajectories primarily through Reis's framework of Perceived Partner Responsiveness, which accounts for the differential psychological impact of interpersonal betrayal on each character's sense of identity and relational orientation, with Spencer's Social Organism Theory drawn upon only to support the explanation of how the institutional conditions created by Sentinel Prime's regime triggered these psychological effects in the first place.

3.3 Impact of Betrayal on D-16's Character Development

Prior to the double betrayal, D-16's identity rests on two mutually reinforcing anchors: his trust in Cybertronian society and his bond with Orion Pax as his primary source of perceived responsiveness. When both anchors are simultaneously revealed as compromised, the result is not the loss of two separate sources of support but the collapse of the entire relational and institutional architecture through which D-16's identity has been organized, precipitating the most radical form of adaptive response: the total dissolution and reconstruction of identity.

D-16: "I. Am. MEGATRON!" (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, p. 106)

The syntactic peculiarity of this declaration, each word isolated by a full stop, performs a form of psychological representation. The singular pronoun "I" establishes the self as the sole point of reference, no longer constituted through friendship, community, or institutional affiliation; the verb "Am," a verb of existence rather than action, declares an ontological condition rather than an intention. The designation "MEGATRON," typographically distinguished from the numerical designation "D-16," signals a repudiation of both the institution that assigned him a serial number and the relational partnership that had been his only source of meaning within that institution's shadow.

When perceived partner responsiveness collapses entirely, the affected individual frequently undergoes a defensive restructuring away from relational dependency and toward radical self-reliance; the adoption of the name "Megatron" enacts precisely this restructuring.

The Decepticon ideology that follows, the conviction that strength and domination are the only reliable principles of social organization, is not the expression of a pre-existing malice but a psychological defense structure built in response to the failure of responsiveness. Having been denied understanding, validation, and caring by both his institutional environment and his closest ally, D-16 constructs a worldview in which relational needs are rendered definitionally irrelevant, substituting coercive power for a trust that has proven perpetually vulnerable to violation. Spencer's supporting framework helps explain the predictability of this psychological logic: a member of the social body denied both institutional development and relational responsiveness is compelled toward an alternative survival strategy. Notably, the name "Megatron," unlike "D-16," is self-chosen rather than externally assigned, the first genuinely autonomous exercise of identity in D-16's arc, retaining a residual trace of the same impulse toward self-determination that first animated his resistance to Sentinel Prime. The tragedy of his transformation, then, is not that he abandons the desire for freedom but that he reconstitutes it in a form that reproduces the very logic of domination he originally opposed: his early articulacy becomes the rhetoric of domination, his emotional intensity becomes the fuel of revolutionary violence, and his vision of collective transformation is replaced by the solitary pursuit of power.

3.4 Impact of Betrayal on Orion Pax's Character Development

Exposed to the same institutional betrayal and to the genuine loss of his friendship with D-16, Orion Pax nonetheless follows a fundamentally different developmental trajectory. Rather than radical adaptation and identity dissolution, betrayal consolidates his moral identity, forcing him to articulate principles he had previously held only implicitly:

> Orion Pax: "My friends... We were all born with transformation cogs, and then Sentinel he stole them from us."
>
> Orion Pax: "What defines a Transformer is not the cog in its chest... but the spark that resides in their core." (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, p. 91)

The address "My friends" and the collective pronouns "we" and "us" generate a communal register that foregrounds shared loss rather than personal grievance, while "stole" reframes Sentinel's actions as unlawful appropriation rather than legitimate authority. The rhetorical movement from "we were all born with transformation cogs" to "what defines a Transformer is not the cog... but the spark" performs a deeper theoretical operation: by relocating Cybertronian selfhood from the T-Cog to an intrinsic moral core, Orion Pax rejects the institutional logic that had defined and diminished the mining class, and establishes a new framework of identity that cannot be confiscated by any governing authority. Where D-16's identity was constituted primarily through relational responsiveness and institutional position, Orion Pax's identity is anchored in an independent moral framework; the collapse of the responsiveness cycle therefore does not annihilate his identity but clarifies it, stripping away contingent relational and institutional attachments to reveal a stable moral core, a clarification formalized in the renaming that follows:

> Alpha Trion: "Orion Pax... Your noble sacrifice for the greater good has proven you worthy in the eyes of Primus. He entrusts in you the future of Cybertron... and... THE MATRIX OF LEADERSHIP."
>
> Alpha Trion: "ARISE, OPTIMUS PRIME." (Barrer, Ferrari, & Pearson, 2024, pp. 105–106)

Where "Megatron" signifies the severance of relational obligation, "Optimus Prime," the first among leaders, signifies the assumption of maximal relational responsibility: Orion Pax's new identity extends the loyalty and care he once invested in a single friendship to the entire Cybertronian community. The verb "entrusts" constructs legitimate authority as grounded in trust rather than coercion, directly contrasting with the appropriative register of Sentinel's confessions, while the externally recognized, relationally constituted nature of Orion Pax's transformation, "arise," contrasts with D-16's self-declared and self-contained "I. Am. Megatron." This parallel structure articulates the script's central argument: that the same experience of betrayal can produce diametrically opposed developmental outcomes, depending on the relational and psychological resources through which it is processed. Betrayal, in the script of *Transformers One*, thus functions as the primary catalyst for character transformation at both the individual and ideological levels, producing radical adaptation and identity reconstruction in D-16 and moral consolidation and identity elevation in Orion Pax, confirming that it is not betrayal itself, but each character's relational and psychological architecture prior to betrayal, that determines whether its impact is ultimately destructive or generative.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis demonstrates that the script of *Transformers One* (2024) represents betrayal as a multidimensional psychological phenomenon that operates through both interpersonal and institutional relationships, directly addressing the first research question. Interpersonal betrayal emerges from the gradual breakdown of perceived partner responsiveness between Orion Pax and D-16, in which understanding, validation, and caring progressively deteriorate until trust can no longer be sustained. Institutional betrayal is represented through the dysfunction of Sentinel Prime's regime, in which a governing authority abandons its responsibility to protect and instead exploits those it is meant to serve, through the confiscation of T-Cogs and the systematic falsification of Cybertronian history. Within this study, Spencer's Social Organism Theory functions as a supporting framework that explains how this institutional dysfunction becomes the psychological trigger underlying the characters' emotional conflict and eventual identity transformation.

In response to the second research question, the findings show that interpersonal and institutional betrayal are closely interconnected rather than independent: institutional betrayal initiates a crisis of trust that extends beyond the relationship between individuals, while the collapse of interpersonal responsiveness intensifies its psychological consequences. Although D-16 and Orion Pax are exposed to the same institutional dysfunction and experience the same relational rupture, their psychological responses diverge fundamentally. D-16's transformation into Megatron reflects the collapse of an identity constituted primarily through relational attachment and institutional belonging, resulting in radical adaptation and defensive self-reliance. Orion Pax's transformation into Optimus Prime reflects the survival and clarification of an identity anchored in an

independent moral framework, resulting in moral consolidation and an expanded capacity for relational responsibility. These contrasting trajectories indicate that the impact of betrayal is determined not only by the act of betrayal itself, but by each character's psychological architecture and capacity to reconstruct identity following the loss of trust.

This study contributes to the psychological approach in literary criticism by demonstrating the applicability of Harry T. Reis's theory of Perceived Partner Responsiveness, supported by Herbert Spencer's Social Organism Theory, to the textual analysis of a contemporary film script. It further extends the scholarly discussion of betrayal beyond the romantic and marital relationships examined in previous research, showing that betrayal in a science-fiction narrative can operate simultaneously at the interpersonal and institutional levels to shape identity, ideology, and leadership. The findings may serve as a reference for future research applying psychological approaches to the textual analysis of film scripts and other literary narratives.

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