

Greatrex - Overall assessment

Yes. The principal characters in *Greatrex* have recognisable individual voices, particularly John Greatrex, Alexander McCall, Jessie Greatrex and the two Grimshaw brothers.

The screenplay's overall dialogue differentiation is approximately **7.5–8/10**. The central contrast between Greatrex and McCall is especially effective:

- Greatrex speaks to persuade, perform and evade.
- McCall speaks to establish facts, duty and certainty.

The main area needing further work is not the central cast. It is the larger body of minor officials, policemen, investors and tradesmen, some of whom share a broadly formal Victorian register.

John Greatrex

Greatrex has the screenplay's strongest and most distinctive voice.

His dialogue is:

- theatrical;
- self-aggrandising;
- persuasive;
- evasive;
- grandiose;
- opportunistic;
- adaptable to his audience.

His first exchanges establish this immediately. Asked his trade, he claims to be an actor and answers scepticism with:

"Even Shakespeare learned his craft there."

When told that nobody escapes, he responds:

"Then they have not met me."

He does not merely answer questions; he turns every exchange into a performance of his superiority.

A defining feature of his voice is his ability to reframe dishonesty as injustice, enterprise or ambition:

"I only took what I was owed."

"One cannot make a life merely holding on to what one has."

"There are bigger prizes to be had."

He rarely accepts the language other people use to describe him. Theft becomes entitlement. Fraud becomes business. Abandonment becomes opportunity.

His speech also changes according to whom he is manipulating.

With investors, he uses reassuring commercial language:

"We are partners in an excellent opportunity. Have faith."

"You have my word."

With Jessie, he minimises and redirects:

"Do not fret. Everything is in order."

“Because he is a man whose greed exceeds his loyalty.”

With Jane, he uses intimate reassurance:

“My dear...you worry too much.”

“Give it time.”

With congregations, he becomes a moral authority, quoting scripture while embodying the very pride, greed and deception he condemns.

That adaptability is not inconsistency. It is his character. Greatrex is always acting.

His recurring phrases also create identity:

- “You have my word.”
- “My dear.”
- “Everything is in place.”
- “There is opportunity.”
- “I have a plan.”

The final line—“I have a plan”—is therefore especially appropriate. Even defeated and imprisoned, he narrates himself as the architect of the next opportunity.

Voice distinction: 9/10

Alexander McCall

McCall’s voice is the opposite of Greatrex’s.

He is:

- restrained;
- exact;
- duty-bound;
- economical;
- morally certain;
- unimpressed by ceremony;
- occasionally dry.

Where Greatrex decorates his intentions with elaborate language, McCall strips situations down to their essential facts.

Examples include:

“Then I had best begin.”

“The work speaks for itself.”

“Criminals do not stop on my account.”

“Let us depart this pomp and get back to what matters.”

Even when receiving an award, McCall redirects attention away from himself and towards duty. He regards praise as distraction:

“Trinkets are for men who require reminding of their worth.”

His humour is also different from Greatrex’s. Greatrex uses wit to charm and dominate. McCall uses dry observation:

“I suspect the Devil is more inclined to be waiting for Pritchard.”

That line is controlled, morally pointed and distinctly McCall.

In the pursuit sequences, his language becomes increasingly compressed:

“Any progress?”

“We must secure the bags.”

“Hold her!”

“It’s over.”

He does not indulge in a triumphant speech when he captures Greatrex. “It’s over” is enough. Nor does he celebrate publicly afterwards. His instruction is simply:

“Let us be gone from here.”

That restraint makes him recognisable and protects him from becoming a melodramatic avenger.

McCall’s voice could occasionally use a little more private emotional variation, particularly in scenes with Audley. However, his consistency serves his character: he believes feeling must remain subordinate to duty.

Voice distinction: 8.5/10

Greatrex and McCall as opposing voices

Their dialogue styles embody the central conflict.

Greatrex	McCall
Expansive	Compressed
Persuasive	Investigative
Reinvents facts	Establishes facts
Seeks admiration	Rejects praise
Speaks of opportunity	Speaks of duty
Treats morality as performance	Treats morality as obligation
Always promises a future	Concentrates on the immediate task

Greatrex says:

“Life is an adventure to be lived.”

McCall effectively answers through action: crime changes, so law enforcement must change with it.

The distinction means that even before they directly confront one another, the audience understands that they inhabit opposing moral and verbal worlds.

Jessie Greatrex

Jessie has a quieter but distinct voice.

She is:

- practical;
- dutiful;
- emotionally restrained;

- increasingly sceptical;
- observant;
- capable of contained anger.

Her language is usually grounded in domestic realities:

“But you have been paying him?”

“Yet he visits again?”

“Try not to be too late.”

“Will you be joining us?”

She asks the questions Greatrex does not want answered. He responds with grand explanations, while she returns to money, children, work and broken promises.

As the story progresses, her voice hardens. Her final assessment of him is especially strong:

“Long enough to know he does not change. He lies as easily as he breathes.”

This does not sound like McCall’s legal judgement or Jane’s emotional disappointment. It sounds like the accumulated knowledge of a wife who has lived through repeated deception.

Jessie’s controlled delivery also distinguishes her from Jane. Jessie rarely romanticises Greatrex. Even when she supports him publicly, her private dialogue increasingly tests his claims.

Her weakness is that earlier scenes sometimes leave her primarily asking questions so Greatrex can deliver explanations. Later scenes give her a much stronger individual perspective.

Voice distinction: 8/10

Jane Weir

Jane’s voice is softer, more romantic and more dependent on reassurance than Jessie’s.

She often speaks through:

- concern;
- hesitation;
- emotional appeal;
- repeated requests for certainty;
- loyalty despite growing unease.

Examples include:

“Someone will come.”

“You promised.”

“Are you displeased?”

“There is something troubling you?”

“What have you done?”

Jane wants Greatrex to confirm the romantic story she has accepted. Her questions are emotional rather than practical. Jessie asks what happened to the money; Jane asks whether Greatrex still loves or trusts her.

This gives the two women meaningfully different relationships with him.

Jane also tends to speak in incomplete or emotionally weighted phrases:

“Oh, John.”

“John?”

“You should not need to ask.”

Her language shows that she has made Greatrex central to her emotional world, even when she recognises his danger.

She is distinct, although her repeated questioning can occasionally become passive. A few more moments in which she articulates her own desires independently of Greatrex would strengthen her further.

Voice distinction: 7.5/10

Audley Thomson

Audley’s voice is more conversational and human than McCall’s.

He is:

- respectful;
- curious;
- observant;
- occasionally humorous;
- more willing to verbalise what McCall leaves unsaid.

He asks:

“Do you make a habit of witnessing the end of those you capture?”

He comments:

“A good hanging does bring every Tom, Dick and Harry out of the woodwork.”

McCall answers with moral judgement, while Audley responds to the oddity of the immediate situation.

Audley also provides a more personal and everyday register. His reference to Aunt Hilda’s portrait contrasts with McCall’s immediate speculation about photography’s criminal applications.

That difference works well:

- Audley sees ordinary life first.
- McCall sees investigative possibilities first.

Audley remains somewhat defined by his assistant role, but he does not simply sound like a younger McCall.

Voice distinction: 7–7.5/10

Thomas and Sewell Grimshaw

The brothers are successfully differentiated.

Sewell

Sewell is:

- ambitious;
- impatient;
- greedy;
- volatile;
- willing to increase the risk.

He asks:

“Why two thousand when we can print five thousand?”

“But no one will be the wiser. We can be set for life.”

Sewell sees possibility and immediately wants more. He is also more forceful with Agnes:

“Hush woman. Money will be forthcoming.”

Thomas

Thomas is:

- cautious;
- technically exacting;
- calmer;
- more controlled;
- better able to disguise the truth.

When Sewell says the plate is nearly ready, Thomas responds:

“Nearly isn’t good enough.”

“I will and that is sufficient.”

He is the perfectionist. He accepts the crime but wants it executed carefully.

When Agnes becomes suspicious, Thomas attempts to reassure her, while Sewell responds with anger. Thomas invents the “private commission” explanation and guides her away; Sewell tells her to be quiet.

This is a clear and useful distinction:

- Sewell pushes for greater reward.
- Thomas manages risk.
- Sewell reacts.
- Thomas contains.

They still share period vocabulary and a fraternal working-class register, but they do not feel interchangeable.

Thomas: 7.5/10

Sewell: 8/10

Agnes Grimshaw

Agnes has a grounded domestic voice similar in function to Jessie’s, but the emotional texture is different.

She is more openly anxious and confrontational:

“It is when there’s nowt coming in but the odd tuppence.”

“Since you met that man you have turned...both of you.”

Her use of money, absence and changed behaviour makes her concerns concrete. She does not possess Jessie’s years of resigned knowledge; she senses danger developing and pushes for an explanation.

Her regional and class register also helps distinguish her.

Voice distinction: 7/10

Richard Hicks

Hicks speaks as a cautious investor.

His dialogue is centred on:

- figures;
- deadlines;
- repayment;
- specificity;
- doubt.

“Breaking even?”

“You also have my loan to repay.”

“Can you be more...specific?”

“End of the month, John. I expect payment.”

He is recognisable within his scenes because he refuses Greatrex’s vague optimism and repeatedly drags the conversation back to measurable obligations.

However, his voice is mostly occupational. Another frustrated creditor might plausibly use similar language.

Voice distinction: 6.5–7/10

Andrew Neilson

Neilson has a precise, earnest and bureaucratic voice.

He introduces himself formally:

“My name is Andrew Neilson and I am in the employ of the Union Bank of Scotland.”

His language reflects institutional caution:

“My employer would like to be assured...”

“But to a professional quality?”

“So probability is low?”

His formality suits a young bank clerk who believes in systems and professional expertise. It also makes his trust in Greatrex more believable.

Later, his participation in the pursuit gives him a personal stake, but his voice remains primarily defined by his bank role.

Voice distinction: 7/10

Supporting officials and tradesmen

The screenplay contains many:

- officers;
- guards;
- judges;
- managers;
- businessmen;
- politicians;
- bank employees;

- hotel and shipping staff.

They generally sound appropriate to the period and their social positions. However, several share a similar formal construction:

“May I ask...”

“I believe...”

“Indeed.”

“That can be accommodated.”

“Good day, sir.”

This creates a consistent Victorian world, but it occasionally reduces individual differentiation.

That is not a major problem for characters who appear only once or twice. A minor functionary does not require a fully developed verbal identity. Nevertheless, a dialogue-polish pass could create slightly greater variety through:

- regional vocabulary;
- sentence length;
- social confidence;
- impatience;
- humour;
- class-specific idiom.

Voice scorecard

Character	Voice distinction
John Greatrex	9/10
Alexander McCall	8.5/10
Sewell Grimshaw	8/10
Jessie Greatrex	8/10
Jane Weir	7.5/10
Thomas Grimshaw	7.5/10
Audley Thomson	7–7.5/10
Agnes Grimshaw	7/10
Andrew Neilson	7/10
Richard Hicks	6.5–7/10
Minor officials/tradesmen	6–6.5/10

Verdict

The central characters in *Greatrex* do have their own voices.

The strongest achievement is that the protagonist and antagonist are differentiated not merely by vocabulary but by their entire relationship with language:

- Greatrex uses words to alter reality.
- McCall uses words to pin reality down.
- Jessie uses words to challenge deception through lived experience.
- Jane uses words to seek emotional reassurance.
- Sewell uses words to push ambition further.
- Thomas uses words to control risk.
- Audley uses words to voice curiosity and ordinary human observation.

The screenplay does not suffer from every character sounding like the same author. The remaining weakness is a degree of shared formality among the supporting cast. A targeted pass could strengthen minor voices, but **Greatrex, McCall, Jessie, Jane and the Grimshaw brothers are already individually recognisable and dramatically appropriate.**

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"Even Shakespeare learned his craft there."

When told that nobody escapes, he responds:

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He does not merely answer questions; he turns every exchange into a performance of his superiority.

A defining feature of his voice is his ability to reframe dishonesty as injustice, enterprise or ambition:

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