

Practicing Adaptation: One Screenplay, Five Films

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Submitted for the degree of PhD
The University of East Anglia
School of Art, Media, and American Studies

©March 2016

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Abstract

In this thesis I examine the relationship between a screenplay and the films made from it. I test the hypothesis that a film based on an original (not adapted from an existing text) screenplay is an adaptation of this screenplay. In order to investigate the potential range of adaptations that occur during the process of film production, I commissioned a short screenplay which was made into a film five times, by five different production teams, each entirely independent of one another. Utilising these films as my primary set of data, I engage in comparative analysis of the screenplay to the five films and of each of the five films to one another. My framework for analysis is grounded in adaptation studies, which has engaged in close comparative analysis of novel to film, but has not made significant inquiry into the discrete phase of adaptation between screenplay and film. Additionally, I argue that an investigation into the relationship between written and filmed creative work is ideally conducted by engaging with practice and practitioners. My thesis is therefore comprised of dual written and filmed components.

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Preface

This is a creative and critical thesis that examines the relationship between the screenplay and its film. My research and findings are presented in written and filmed form.

Because both my research and the presentation of my work span two different platforms there is, for the sake of clarity, an optimum order for consideration of the components.

My research entailed an examination of 'what would happen' if a screenplay was made into a film by more than one production team simultaneously. Five short films were produced based on a bespoke screenplay written for this thesis. The screenplay entitled, *The Box*, should be read after reading to the end of the Introduction. After reading the screenplay which is inserted directly following the Introduction, the five films made from this screenplay should be viewed before reading Chapter 1.

Having read up to the end of Chapter 3, the filmed thesis entitled, *What If: An Examination of Adaptation* should be viewed. At this point, the remainder of the written thesis can be read.

Acknowledgements

There are a number of people I would like to express my gratitude to for their various contributions over the past three years.

Thanks to Brett Mills, my supervisor, for challenging my assumptions.

The academic elements of this study were made possible by a studentship from the University of East Anglia.

I am grateful to Martin Barker for generosity of time, sound advice, and enthusiasm for the project and hearty encouragement when I very much needed it.

I am indebted to Anna Blagrove for being my running buddy and for not running away from me when I droned on and on, kilometre after kilometre. And also for her sound and pragmatic council issued forth when I finally stopped talking long enough for her to interject.

Huge thanks to ‘Guru’ Sarah Ralph for her decisive guidance and, on more than one occasion, knowing the magic words to make everything better in an instant.

Thanks to Sarah Elsegood who is most excellent at her job and who I have referred to more than once as my PhD Fairy Godmother.

I’m thankful for Selma Purac who offered her commiserations before I even started and, despite this, lent a sympathetic ear and acutely intelligent, hilarious observations throughout.

Thanks to Timothy Barnard for the ‘crazy’ book deals, lively communications over them, and for the contribution his translations have made to this thesis.

Appreciations to Ed Vollans for plant cuttings and proof-reading.

Thanks to Reagan Thomas for always being sensible (when necessary) and helping me find my perspective which was lost on numerous occasions.

I am ever grateful to my mother, Agnes Bone, for always encouraging me.

To my Dad: I wish you could have known about this.

Most importantly, I wish to thank Matthew Knight for always wanting the best for me and helping me to figure out what that is.

(All film-related thanks are in the film credits, as is customary)

Introduction

On two deaths and three births.

‘My movie is born first in my head, dies on paper; is resuscitated by the living persons and real objects I use, which are killed on film but, placed in a certain order and projected onto a screen, come to life again like flowers in water.’

— Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*¹

Walter Murch ‘likes to quote Robert Bresson to the effect that a film is born three times

– in the writing of the script, in the shooting, and in the editing.’

— Michael Ondaatje, *The Conversations*²

In this thesis I will engage with both theory and practice in an examination of the relationship between the screenplay and the film made from it. I will examine the hypothesis that a film based on an original screenplay is best described as an *adaptation* of this screenplay. I explore the set of modifications and contributions made after a film script has been written through an analysis of the end-product; the films. I have conducted a study that engaged five different production teams to make a film from the same ‘original’ screenplay entitled *The Box*,³ written by Alexander Gordon Smith. By ‘original’, I mean bespoke for this project and, as such, not purposefully adapted from another literary work. The resulting artefacts, the five films, are the focus

¹ Robert Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography* (New York: Urizen Books; London: (Distributed by) Pluto Press, 1977), p.7.

² Michael Ondaatje and Walter Murch, *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002).

³ Alexander Gordon Smith, *The Box*, (Norwich, 2013).

of my examination of adaptation.

I will introduce both the written and filmed aspects of my work in this introduction. My filmed work and the written work are inextricably linked because the process of creating them involved a perpetual and pervasive mutual informing. However, to best facilitate a clear and coherent discussion, I will first address the written portion of my thesis and its aims before moving on to discussion of the filmed portion of my thesis. Finally, I will clarify some of the language used in the written thesis, how I define certain terms, and why.

THE WRITTEN COMPONENT OF THIS THESIS

In this component of my thesis I examine the relationship between *The Box* screenplay and the five films made from it. I suggest that the screenplay is adapted during the process of pre-production through post-production and therefore the making of a film can be described as an adaptation of a screenplay. This theory will be tested by engaging in a comparative analysis of the screenplay and the five films as well as a comparison of the five films to one another.

Through my engagement with adaptation studies literature, which will be reviewed in Chapter 1, I have determined that the comparative analysis employed in fidelity discourse to compare book to film can be applied in my study. Whether there is value in determining if the film is 'true' to the novel has been the subject of much debate in adaptation studies.⁴ However, in an exploration of screenplay to film adaptation, there is no acknowledged pre-existing reputation or value associated with the screenplay as text in the manner that this often exists with the adapted novel. I acknowledge that the scriptwriter may place value on their work and have an investment in whether the resulting film is, in their opinion, faithful to their work. However, for the purposes of this study and applying comparative analysis as used in fidelity studies, this is immaterial. As a result, a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between *The Box* screenplay and the resulting films can be a fruitful examination without the fidelity 'baggage'.

⁴ See, for example, *True to the Spirit: Film Adaptation and the Question of Fidelity*. ed. by Colin MacCabe, Rick Warner, and Kathleen Murray (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); *In/Fidelity: Essays on Film Adaptation*. ed. by David L. Kranz and Nancy C. Mellerski (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008).

Medium-specificity is another subject that receives regular discussion within adaptation studies and will also inform my analysis. While the novel-to-film discussion examines how the story might be similar and different in the written, novelistic form and in the audio-visual, filmed form, my study will further subdivide this existing analysis by examining the adaptations that occur specifically from *scripted page* to screen. Because the screenplay is by its nature intended to be ‘made into’ a film (unlike the novel) the examination of medium-specificity will, in my study, examine whether there are aspects of the screenplay that are not put on the screen and if this can be explained as having been dictated by medium change.

My primary research question is thus: What is the relationship between a finished film and its screenplay? My approach to researching this question is the production of five films from the same original screenplay. The adaptation-based structure for analysis that I am adopting is intended to underpin a detailed analysis of the five films in my study and this in turn will give way to an exploration of their relationship to their screenplay and to each other. In adaptation studies, there have been attempts to address who the adapter is, such as in Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation*,⁵ for example, and to what extent the collaborative nature of film might impede ability to make such a distinction, but there is no significant body of work that looks solely at the adaptations that might occur from original screenplay to screen. This is where this study intervenes. If a bespoke screenplay, one that has not been adapted from an existing source, is made into a film, is this process an adaptation? In this study I am not interested in determining when and by whom each perceived adaptation was made, but *that adaptation occurred* and what this reveals. The intended audience for this work is, therefore, adaptation theorists as my findings will have direct application to both existing and future examinations of adaptation. My analysis and presentation of the gathered data reflects this.

The screenplay is often referred to as a ‘blueprint’ which is a term I will shortly discuss in more detail. My use of the term ‘adaptation’ acknowledges potential variances in its applied definition and also adaptation studies’ scholars’ tendency to examine the possible utility of a variety of alternate terms to encompass the processes of ‘making’ a book into a film. These terms include but are not limited to transmogrification, metamorphosis, transfer, and translation⁶ and each comes with its

⁵ Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), pp.81-85.

⁶ Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p.4.

own additional potential pitfalls related to how various theories have been built up around them establishing specific, tailored definitions. For example, Brian McFarlane's distinction between 'adaptation' and 'transfer'.⁷ Further alternate terms are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1. I am adopting 'adaptation' with the assumption that my analysis will explore the specific similarities and differences between script and films and between films and make further clarifications as and when necessary. As Anna Rossholm does in her examination of Ingmar Bergman's notebooks, I will employ the term adaptation in a 'broad sense'⁸ that implies movement from one creative work to another.

Peter Wollen writes of the director that 'his [*sic*] source is only a pretext, which provides catalysts, scenes which use his own preoccupations to produce a radically new work'⁹. As I have indicated, adaptation studies has looked at what happens when a book or a play is made into a film (and, tentatively, other sources including graphic novels, poetry, and more) but have not made a dedicated investigation into the association between the original screenplay and its resulting film. This is understandable given that the field developed as a discussion of pre-existing works, predominantly literature, adapted for the screen. From George Bluestone to the contemporary works of McFarlane or Sarah Cardwell,¹⁰ studies discuss 'finding resemblances between novel and film'¹¹ or how '[l]iterary textural characteristics cannot be reproduced from the completely different technical foundations of film'¹² or McFarlane's declaration that [o]ne does not find film-makers asserting a bold approach to their source material'.¹³ Robert Stam alone notes that all films 'adapt a script'¹⁴ in *Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation*.

What is lost in this line of inquiry the degree to which adaptation occurs

⁷ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp.23-30.

⁸ Anna Sofia Rossholm, 'Auto-Adaptation and the Movement of Writing across Media: Ingmar Bergman's Notebooks', in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, ed. by Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp.203-22 (p.206).

⁹ Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington; London: Indiana University Press, 1969), p.113.

¹⁰ Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited : Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

¹¹ George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1957), p.ix.

¹² Cardwell, p.47.

¹³ Bluestone, p.7.

¹⁴ Stam and Raengo, p.45.

between novel and screenplay (a page-to-page metamorphosis) as a potentially 'discrete' phase of adaptation, and what degree of adaptation occurs between screenplay and film (a page-to-screen metamorphosis) as another discrete phase. I am therefore proceeding under the assumption that there are *two phases* of adaptation and that the latter, screenplay to film, warrants a close analysis in order to discover to what degree adaptation takes place when the source text is an original screenplay.

As such, my study uses method to intervene by engaging in the production of five original films based on *The Box* screenplay. By producing five films that are created simultaneously, this study produces data that can be examined as adaptations uninfluenced by previous work. For example, an examination of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*¹⁵ and Gus Van Sant's *Psycho*¹⁶ – both films adapted from the same novel, with similar screenplays written by the same scriptwriter – would provide insight into how different production teams interpreted a *similar* treatment of the same novel, but Van Sant's adaptation was made with knowledge of Hitchcock's adaptation. This influencing factor is eliminated by design in my study. My method deviates from the majority of adaptation studies by both seeking to conduct my research utilizing practice *and* theory and then expressing my findings utilizing practice *and* theoretical analysis. My assumption is that by engaging in practice as research, the resulting analysis will be the best possible presentation of the work done if it involves a written and filmed analysis. If I am to argue that each medium has its limitations, then I must therefore avoid limiting my analysis to only one of the two media I am exploring.

While I will engage with academic theory and practitioner accounts in my analysis, I wish to be clear that the latter will be limited to that of published work including interviews. Included, therefore, are accounts of Ridley Scott's experiences as a director and Walter Murch's experiences as an editor, for example, but excluded are practitioner accounts from the practitioners involved in my study. The primary reason for the latter exclusion is that the scope of this study did not allow for these elements to be conscientiously gathered and then included in the written thesis due to time and space constraints. The secondary reason – and an important one – is that while I argue that practitioner accounts of how they work and their experience of how films are made are crucial to my analysis within this study I am interested in whether adaptation occurs from script to screen and what these adaptations are, and not in determining how they

¹⁵ *Psycho*, dir by Alfred Hitchcock, (Paramount, 1960).

¹⁶ *Psycho*, dir by Gus Van Sant, (Universal, 1998).

occurred. Thus whilst practitioner accounts that inform a discussion about adaptation are valuable, for the purposes of this study, these need not necessarily be taken from the filmmakers involved in this study and the attempt to conscientiously gather this could, furthermore, have impacted negatively on the study by making the filmmakers exceptionally aware of their practice in a manner that would not be consistent with their usual practice. This method was preferable to attempting to gather thorough practitioner accounts from each production team. I therefore asked only the directors to provide me with production journals with the intention that these would potentially help me to clarify my analysis. An example where this proved fruitful was when Steve Philipson's journal was able to clarify the relationship he intended between Adam and Eve. I was initially unsure whether Adam was a ghost and former romantic partner of Eve's or whether there was simply an age gap. In this case, my analysis benefited from an explicit understanding of Philipson's intention because this was an adaptation that he made to the screenplay.

As one of the five directors, and the author of this written thesis, I must however recognise my own filmic input in this study and also reflect on my role within the study. Additionally, I will reflect on the critical function of my own adaptation. So, in this manner, there is an element of my own practitioner account present but this is intentionally limited to self-reflection regarding this thesis as a whole rather than an account of my creative process as the director of *The Box*. Also outside the realm of this study and its analysis are detailed examinations of the filmmakers' gender, ethnic groups, and professional experience. These elements are not treated in depth but are acknowledged in Chapters 2 and 3.

A public screening of the five filmed versions of *The Box* was held on Thursday 16th October 2014. Part of this event was a Q&A with the directors, which I hosted. The primary impetus for the screening was an expressed interest from the production teams in gathering to watch one another's work. The opportunity therefore existed for a group Q&A as well as conducting audience research via a questionnaire. These materials, while of potential interest for a connected work, are not included in the written thesis as they would ultimately have distracted from the intended focus. My method, which is detailed in Chapter 2, will explain the elements that *have* been included in this study and this will further elucidate the breadth of data that focuses most precisely and beneficially on my primary research question.

THE FILMED COMPONENT OF THIS THESIS

Both my method and my presentation of my findings utilise practice. While I engage with adaptation studies literature and its frameworks for analysis to examine how adaptation applies to my study in theory, my method also involves a practical study that whereby a bespoke screenplay is made into a film engaging five different production teams in order to allow for an examination of what *actually* happens (in this particular study) when the same screenplay is ‘adapted’ five different times. The five resulting films are included as research in this thesis and are meant to be viewed at the end of this introduction in order that their viewing inform the written chapters that follow.

My filmed thesis is entitled, *What If? An examination of adaptation* and is a creative address of my research questions through a combining and (re) editing (re-adapting, even) of the footage from each of the five films. The filmmaking process facilitates an immersive and tactile engagement with the material and has allowed me to develop a thorough understanding of each film visually and aurally and how each can be juxtaposed with the screenplay and with the other films. As such, my filmed thesis facilitates the revelation of the various adaptations I have observed and how they are similar or different to the screenplay and one another. The medium of film allows me as filmmaker and researcher to engage with the visual and oral elements of adaptation in these films in a manner not possible in a written thesis. It is the combination of these two components therefore that promotes a comprehensive exploration of my research questions.

My filmed thesis is something of an an experimental and exploratory stitching together of components from each of the films with the intention of examining and comparing their various adaptations of the screenplay. *What If* seeks to elucidate the audio-visual specific nature of each interpretation of the screenplay via the editing together of interpretations of the same scene: a construction of a new artefact intended as a reflection on its components. For example, the features of each actor cast or the musical score can be discussed in a written analysis, but to see and hear these is a type of communication of information executed more precisely through the medium of film by affording the viewer the opportunity to examine an actor’s facial features or expression as it happens rather than relying on my written depiction (adaptation) of this.

The majority of narrative or fiction films are made using a screenplay. This is for both business-related reasons, as detailed in John Thornton Caldwell's *Production Culture*,¹⁷ and for organisational and structural purposes as Robert McKee discusses in *Story*.¹⁸ In an interview for *Starlog* magazine, Ridley Scott says that 'what one gets in blueprint or screenplay is hopefully a good story or a thrilling story or a sentimental story, well told. After the blueprint, things are wide open for interpretations'.¹⁹ If the filmmaking process is *necessarily* an adaptation from one medium to another, then a comparative analysis of the five films to both the screenplay and to one another should reveal both the variety of contributions made across each production and feasibly give way to an assessment of the *relationship* between the script and the film based on it. Linda Hutcheon notes that 'William Goldman sees the finished film as the studio's adaptation of the editor's adaptation of the director's adaptation of the actors' adaptation of the screenwriter's adaptation of a novel that might itself be an adaptation of narrative or generic conventions'.²⁰ This idea – so similar to Bresson's and endorsed by Murch – has helped form my thinking about this thesis. I will focus on the adaptations themselves as I observe them in each of the films and what they can contribute to an understanding of the relationship between the screenplay and the finished film.

Within the context of my study, practice or filmmaking is research as well as a medium for delivery of the research findings. The method I employed involved a close examination of the function or possible function(s) of the screenplay. As one of the five directors who developed *The Box* into a film, the practice aspect of my research extended from this to the making of *What If*. Having the intention to present my work in both written and filmed formats, the degree to which these two should overlap has been a consideration. *What If* has very little 'text': there are no talking heads and a limited number of title cards. My intention, as the thesis developed, became to keep separate the manner of communicating my findings: the written thesis became the

¹⁷ John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture. Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, N.C.: London: Duke University Press, 2008), pp.232-38.

¹⁸ Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), pp.32-42.

¹⁹ Robert Greenberger, 'Ridley Scott: A Talk with the Director of Blade Runner, Sure to Be One of the Brightest Spots in This Summer's Film Offerings.', *Starlog*, 60 (1982) <https://ia600603.us.archive.org/10/items/starlog_magazine-060/060.pdf> [accessed March 2013] (p.61).

²⁰ Hutcheon and O'Flynn, p.83.

medium for articulation of ideas in writing with few visual aids and the filmed thesis purely for audio-visual communication of ideas. In short, I have aimed for a focussed exploitation of two media with as little crossover or overlap as possible, intending them to work in tandem or as a diptych of sorts.



The language used in this thesis requires a brief introduction and clarification.

When discussing adaptations, I will refer to either the director or to the ‘production team’. I consider the director to have primary creative control due to the structure of this project (see Chapter 2 for discussion of this) but this is not to say I expect all creative ideas originated with the director. By ‘production team’ I mean to include everyone who worked on the film at any stage. There are roles that are often considered the ‘creatives’ – the director, cinematographer, editor, for example – and there are others that make it onto some people’s lists and not onto others (see Chapter 2) – the composer, costume designer, production designer, for example. My personal experience as a filmmaker, which I discuss later in this thesis, tells me that *anyone* who works on a film production *might* have an effect on a creative decision. It is perhaps far less likely that craft services will contribute in this manner, but as assigning responsibility for creative input is not the focus here, I prefer to include every possible contributor than potentially exclude one because they do not have what is often considered to be a ‘creative role’.

I use the terms ‘screenplay’ and ‘script’ interchangeably and when either is prefaced by ‘original’ I am not making a creative judgment, I am simply indicating that the script has not been adapted (i.e. from a novel or play) but is a bespoke, new work.

‘Practice’ and ‘practitioner’ are terms used regularly in current academic parlance. These terms allow for discussion about creative work in general and creative workers in general. As this thesis deals specifically and exclusively with film and filmmaking I will use specific terms wherever possible. Because this is a director-led project, the term filmmaker refers to the director as s/he is the primary driving force. The directors are the filmmakers I approached to participate in this project and were therefore the organizing force behind their production teams. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The primary investigation I have undertaken is to discover *if* adaptation takes place and *what* specific adaptations can be identified in the data collected. As such, for the purposes of this study, the aim is to identify and examine adaptations, not

pinpoint who is responsible rendering the question of authorship moot.

The Box
By
Alexander Gordon Smith

INT. ROOM. DAY.

We begin inside an ordinary living room. It is late afternoon, sunlight streaming through net curtains over the window. The furniture is clean but faded. The air is full of dust. There is an old-fashioned clock on the wall, with a pendulum. Its monotonous ticks are the only sound.

There is a box on the floor.

A man stands by the window, staring out through the net curtains. This is ADAM. A woman sits on the sofa, her head in her hands. This is EVE. We cannot see her expression.

ADAM
Open it.

Eve looks up. She is nervous.

EVE
I can't.

ADAM
Open it.

EVE
I *can't*, Adam.

Adam slowly turns to look at her. His eyes drop to the box on the floor.

Eve smudges a tear from her eye.

EVE
I don't want to know what's in there. I don't want to see it.

Adam wipes a hand across his face, as if he is tired. He stares down at the box.

ADAM
What are you scared of?

EVE
If I don't open it, then none of this has to be happening.

ADAM
What do you think's in there?

Eve looks up, angry now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2.

EVE

Everything is in there, Adam. And once I open it, everything changes. We can't hide from it, not once we open it. There's no more pretending.

She wipes more tears away, shaking her head. Adam glances at the door.

ADAM

He's going to be back soon.

Eve puts her head back in her hands.

EVE

Oh god. Don't. Please.

ADAM

He's going to be back soon, and we need to decide. You either open the box, or it's over. We're finished.

EVE

But if we open the box it's finished too, don't you get that? There's no way out of this.

Adam walks around the box, kneels down by Eve's feet. He looks up at her.

ADAM

There is a way out. Come on.

He holds his hand out to her. She sobs, then wipes her face again, taking his hand. She slides off the sofa onto the floor beside him. As she does so, Adam casts a nervous eye at the clock.

They kneel side by side on the floor, the box in front of them.

EVE

We do it together, yeah? It has to be together.

He nods at her. There are faint footsteps, like somebody crunching over gravel, or walking along a corridor.

ADAM

Together. But it has to be now.

They grip each other's hand. Eve reaches out, opens the box.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

3.

THE END

Literature Review

The intention of this chapter is to present a review of adaptation studies literature paying particular emphasis to fidelity studies and medium-specificity. These two areas of study have played a significant role in shaping my analysis of the screenplay to film relationship. This chapter review will also call attention to the way in which practice and/or practitioner accounts are utilised in adaptation studies because practice is a significant aspect of my method and my analysis includes published practitioner accounts of their own work, as previously indicated. This review will show that practice and practitioner accounts seldom figure into adaptation studies and have a somewhat uncomfortable role when they do.

David Bordwell proposes a thought experiment in his blog post 'Who the devil wrote it?'¹ where four directors are given the same script. He says that he thinks 'that we intuitively believe that the result would be four substantially different movies' and suggests that Michael Mann's TV movie *LA Takedown*², which was remade as *Heat*³, shows that there 'are enough similarities to allow us to see how different two realisations of a scripted scene can be, even in the hands of the same director'. My thesis is based on a similar idea: one script and five different directors such that we can dispense with what Bordwell says 'we intuitively believe' and examine what actually happens in terms of fidelity to screenplay or the similarities and differences between script and film.

Fidelity studies is an area of focus within adaptation studies that looks at the source text and its film and whether or not the latter is 'true' to the former. This notion was addressed by Lewis Melville in 1912⁴ and remains subject to regular debate, as

¹ David Bordwell, 'Who the Devil Wrote It?', in David Bordwell's Website on Cinema, <<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2006/11/03/who-the-devil-wrote-it-apologies-to-peter-bogdanovich/>> [14 September 2013].

² *L.A. Takedown*, dir by Michael Mann, (NBC, 1989).

³ *Heat*, dir by Michael Mann, (Warner Home Video, 1999).

⁴ Lewis Melville, 'Vanity Fair: Special Review by the Eminent Thackeray Biographer', *Bioscope*, 14 (1912), pp. 415-17.

will be shown. The study of medium-specificity in adaptation studies examines whether there are elements of the written story that cannot be 'transferred' from page to screen. This idea can be considered a response to fidelity studies in that it claims that there are some circumstances in which fidelity is an impossibility. This concept dates back to Vachel Lindsay⁵ (1915) and has been examined by Bluestone (1957), Seymour Chatman⁶ (1980), Rossholm (2013), and others.

The position of my thesis is that practitioner accounts and understanding of practice are important factors in analysing adaptation from script to screen. There is benefit in understanding how films are made if pursuing an inquiry into adaptation and this has been a driving force in my study. I have directed one of the five versions of *The Box* in addition to producing a filmed component of this thesis and therefore my interrogation has straddled practice and theory. Hence, this literary survey will undertake an examination of existing applications of practice or filmmaker's accounts and how these have been applied to an understanding of adaptation.

The inclusion of a discussion about practice and practitioner accounts will allow for a critical examination of the use and misuse of production-related terms such as 'shooting script' and 'transcript'. Inconsistent use of these terms, or using them interchangeably, can confuse the role of the screenplay, and I believe has contributed to the dearth of work on the screenplay-to-film phase of adaptation. An explicit methodological decision may determine that practitioner accounts are inappropriate or unnecessary, but often theory can benefit from a knowledge of practice particularly if analysing processes such as adaptation.

In addition to a review of relevant literature, I will provide a review of two films, *The Five Obstructions*⁷ and *Flirt*,⁸ that have informed my work and that constitute a particular area of practice that addresses the multiple adaptations of one screenplay outside of the more common 're-make' as referenced by Bordwell. The two films I will discuss offer multiple interpretations of one screenplay by the same director, who is also the author of the screenplay. One of the primary purposes for these films' creation was to experiment with the idea of various potential interpretations stemming from a single source, and it is because of this that they are particularly relevant to this study.

⁵ Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (Marston Gate: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 1915).

⁶ Seymour Chatman, 'What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)', *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1980), pp.121-40.

⁷ *The Five Obstructions* (De Fem Benspænd), dir by Jørgen Leth and Lars von Trier, (Trust Film Sales, 2003).

⁸ *Flirt*, dir by Hal Hartly, (Artificial Eye, 1996).



FIDELITY

'Fidelity studies', 'aesthetic primacy', or 'proximity to text' are each shorthand for an area that is widely considered the key debate within adaptation studies or even the 'default mode'⁹ Morris Beja asks in *Film and Literature*: 'What relationship should a film have to the original source? Should it be 'faithful'? Can it be? To what?'¹⁰ and these questions are raised repeatedly by scholars and critics. Rochelle Hurst proclaims that fidelity is 'the prevailing paradigm, a fixed feature of critical and theoretical approaches to adaptation' and she asserts that James Naremore, Sarah Cardwell, and Robert Stam each 'acknowledge its continued domination of the discourse of adaptation'.¹¹ Within this paradigm, there is often an assumption that the source text is by default superior and the adaptation inferior, a notion that precedes Bluestone's influential 1957 *Novels into Film* and utilises what Mireia Aragay refers to as 'the foggy concept'¹² eluded to by phrases such as 'spirit of the original work'. The notion of value judgement remains a lively debate within fidelity studies and will be addressed first. I will follow this section with a discussion of the connection between copyright/ownership and audience.

Value Judgement

In 'For an Impure Cinema: In Defence of Adaptation', André Bazin lauds Robert Bresson for not limiting himself to 'ransacking'¹³ his source when filming *Diary of a Country Priest*¹⁴ and claims it achieves 'dizzying fidelity by means of a ceaselessly creative respect for his source' (125). Bazin elaborates that 'novels need to be treated with a certain degree of inventiveness if they are to be adapted from the printed page

⁹ Christine Geraghty, 'Foregrounding the Media: Atonement (2007) as an Adaptation', *Adaptation*, 2 (2009), pp.91-109 (p.94).

¹⁰ Morris Beja, *Film & Literature, an Introduction* (New York; London: Longman, 1979), p.80.

¹¹ Rochelle Hurst, 'Adaptation as an Undecidable: Fidelity and Binarity from Bluestone to Derrida', in *In/Fidelity: Essays on Film Adaptation* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), pp.172- 96 (p.173).

¹² Mireia Aragay, 'Introduction', in *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship*, ed. by Mireia Aragay (Rodopi, 2005), pp.11-36 (p.17).

¹³ André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* trans. Tim Barnard. ed. by Tim Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), p.108. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁴ *Diary of a Country Priest*, dir by Robert Bresson, (Criterion Collection, 1951).

to the screen' (109) and ultimately concludes that cinema 'borrows' from literature because 'we wish to rediscover' (137) literary stories through film. Bazin is writing at a time when the Nouvelle Vague were re-acting against the 'tendency' of French film to rely on literary adaptations – adaptations which were initially favoured in part to alleviate 'low-brow' film through their canonical literary predecessors. For examples see Aragay, Robert Ray, and K.S Rothwell.¹⁵ Indeed the Nouvelle Vague played a role in fostering distain for adaptation in order to bolster the director's role as 'unique creator'. These ideas are explored by Francois Truffaut¹⁶ and Aragay who references J.G. Boyum.¹⁷

Nearly fifty years after Bazin, Ray bemoans that the history of the novel-to-film debate is replete with discourse that too regularly concludes very simply that 'the book was better'¹⁸ (44). Christine Geraghty concurs that 'methods of analysis that rely on comparisons between original source and film and make judgements that are rooted implicitly or explicitly in the concept of fidelity'¹⁹ are easily located within the predominant literature. Both Bluestone and Timothy Corrigan note that the 1950s was an era when literature's hierarchy over film began to wane as film's status graduated from entertainment into art.²⁰ Yet this perceived hierarchy perseveres in adaptation studies more than sixty years later. Terms like 'true' or 'faithful' or 'authentic' are used earnestly as often as they are criticised. Colin MacCabe describes the writing collected in *True to the Spirit* as 'unified by the equal importance that they attach both to source text and film adaptation rather than by any attempt to promote one over the other'.²¹ This compilation is a concerted attempt to reclaim the word 'fidelity' rather than

¹⁵ Robert B. Ray, 'The Field of Literature and Film', in *Film Adaptation*, ed. by James Naremore (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp.38-53; Kenneth S. Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: A Century of Film and Television* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁶ François Truffaut, 'Une Certain Tendance Du Cinéma Français', in *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), pp.1-18.

¹⁷ Joy Gould Boyum, *Double Exposure: Fiction into Film*, (New York: Universe Books, 1985).

¹⁸ Ray, p.44.

¹⁹ Christine Geraghty, *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama, Genre and Beyond* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), p.1. Further references to this book will be given after quotations in the text.

²⁰ Timothy Corrigan, *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader*. ed. by Timothy Corrigan (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999), p.48.

²¹ Colin MacCabe, 'Introduction', in *True to the Spirit: Film Adaptation and the Question of Fidelity*, ed. by Colin MacCabe, Rick Warner, and Kathleen Murray (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.3-26 (p.8). Further references to this introduction will be given after quotations in the text.

condemning and banishing it as irredeemable. MacCabe makes an argument for maintaining fidelity studies under a new guise having noted that 'endless attacks on fidelity [are] common to almost all the new literature on the subject' (7). Yet, despite this, his collection has also been condemned for clinging to 'notions of fidelity and value' thus 'narrow[ing] the scope of Adaptation Studies further'²² suggesting that the re-appropriation of the term is certainly not a universally welcome solution or one that will pass without further debate.

Elliot remarks in 'Theorizing Adaptations' that she finds the field of adaptation dominated by scholars who continuously re-invent already existing theories (and therefore also terms), regularly without progression, further noting that fidelity has 'been challenged on intertextual, dialogical and post-structuralist grounds from at least the late 1970s, and opposed for producing cultural and aesthetic hierarchies since at least 1996'.²³ Simone Murray suggests that the 'standardized routing of fidelity criticism has come to function as a smokescreen'²⁴ that serves to disguise lack of methodological or theoretical innovation. Bruhn, Jørgen, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen claim that 'most current research considers fidelity discourse as no longer viable' but add that 'the issue of similarities and differences is still very much present in contemporary research'. As such, they say that comparison must persist based on 'non-evaluative grounds' as pursued via the medium specificity debate – revived, they say, from Chatman's 1980 study – and also through a new 'translation'²⁵ of fidelity that renders it more neutral. This re-invention of the theory both says that fidelity is an 'unavoidable question' *and* that 'fidelity discourse has been abandoned'... and then attempts to re-define the term. Fidelity is a dirty word that cannot be entirely abandoned because once stripped of its association with 'faithfulness' or 'truth', it is still unavoidably useful because it demands a comparison of two texts in order to discover how they are similar and different.

McFarlane's contribution to the fidelity discussion in *Novel to Film* is in part to argue against the established literary elitism by describing the adaptation as adding to

²² Eckart Voigts and Pascal Nicklas, 'Introduction: Adaptation, Transmedia Storytelling and Participatory Culture', *Adaptation* (2013), pp.139-42 (p.140).

²³ Kamilla Elliot, 'Theorizing Adaptations/Adapting Theories', in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, ed. by Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp.19-45 (p.24).

²⁴ Simone Murray, 'Materializing Adaptation Theory: The Adaptation Industry', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 36 (2008), pp.4-20 (p.6).

²⁵ *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*. ed. by Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp.5, 6, 5.

the original narrative (or source text). While I think this is an attempt to 'add' value to the film and acknowledge the act of adaptation can be positive rather than 'cannibalism', for example, it is an over-simplification of the adaptation from book to script to screen that does not specify at which stage such additions occur. McFarlane condemns the fidelity criterion and says that the 'general film viewer'²⁶ cannot be stopped from making comparison from source novel to film, but he then proceeds to engage in extended discussion about how a film can and cannot be faithful to its source himself. This tendency for scholars to self-contradict as regards the fidelity debate is noted by Leitch in his panel presentation 'Fidelity Discourse: Its Cause and Cure'²⁷ and also applies to the Bruhn et al example given in the previous paragraph.

Lars Elleström writes that fidelity has generally been used to engage 'in issues of evaluation, focussing on what makes adaptations successful or unsuccessful' thus explaining 'why the issue of fidelity has become anathema'.²⁸ Clare Foster writes about fidelity and originals and copies but acknowledges the desire for '[g]ood adaptations'²⁹ which turns the discussion back to value or perceived value and demonstrates how fidelity discourse persists. Leitch claims simply that 'adaptation theorists seem to have a deep, institutional need to deliver value judgements'.³⁰ Fidelity is regularly associated with a desire to assign value. Erica Sheen seems to confirm this as central to François Truffaut's position on fidelity when she notes that he concludes that 'fidelity manifests itself as a positive rather than negative value within filmmaking'³¹ *when undertaken by the auteur* who writes and directs his/her own films rather than a professional scenarist approaching the material from a cynical professional standpoint. Dedication to art, according to Truffaut, is how fidelity defies its negative associations.

Acknowledging the general absence of discussion about the screenplay in the fidelity debate, Elleström concludes that 'the field of adaptation generally does not

²⁶ McFarlane, p.23.

²⁷ Thomas Leitch, 'Fidelity Discourse: Its Cause and Cure', in *In/Fidelity: Essays on Film Adaptation*, ed. by David L. Kranz and Nancy C. Mellerski (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008) (p.205).

²⁸ Lars Elleström, 'Adaptation within the Field of Media Transformations', in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, ed. by Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp.19-45 (p.115).

²⁹ Clare Foster, 'Adaptation in Theory and Practice: From Site of Contest to Site of Collectivity' (2010)
<https://www.academia.edu/11754823/Adaptation_in_theory_and_practice>
[accessed June 2015] (p.11).

³⁰ Leitch, p.206.

³¹ Erica Sheen, 'Anti-Anti-Fidelity: Truffaut, Roché, Shakespeare', *Adaptation* (2013), 243-59 (p.249).

include media products that belong to qualified media such as scripts and libretti, which are designed to be transmediated'.³² With regard to the screenplay-to-film transition, Bordwell and Kristin Thompson write that '[a]lthough the writer prepares a script, later phases of production can modify the script beyond recognition'.³³ Leitch criticises Desmond and Hawkes's use of fidelity as 'conceptual timidity'.³⁴ Yet theirs is a definition, similar to the Bruhn et al 'similarities and differences' variation on fidelity, that makes inroads in dispelling the desire to value one work over the other and is also quite useful applied to a screenplay-to-film analysis. Desmond and Hawkes suggest one 'use fidelity not as an evaluative term that measures the merit of films, but as a descriptive term that allows discussion of the relationship between two companion works'.³⁵ Here, value is dispensed with in favour of an agreed companionship between two works which eventually leads Leitch to ask: 'how is a film's relation to its literary source different from its relation to its screenplay? ... what exactly is it that film adaptations adapt, or are supposed to adapt?'.³⁶

Attempts at addressing the screenplay-to-film relationship tend to be unspecific and sometimes make reference to practitioner accounts without the same rigour regarding referencing the source that is applied to scholarly theory. McFarlane, for example, claims that '[w]hile the fidelity criterion may seem misguided in any circumstances, it is also true that many film-makers are on record as being reverently disposed towards reproducing the original novel on film'.³⁷ McFarlane does not give a reference for this statement nor does he define his use of 'film-makers' or his sudden, brief mention of (and prompt disposal of) practice/practitioners. More helpful in understanding the page to screen relationship is Leitch's connection of fidelity, hierarchy, and canonicity as problems 'inherited'³⁸ by adaptation studies from literary studies as this makes inroads towards an understanding of how literature dominates while the role of the screenplay is often unaddressed. David L. Kranz's explanation of

³² Elleström, p.130.

³³ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), p.33.

³⁴ Thomas Leitch, 'Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads', *Adaptation*, 1 (2008), pp.63-77 (p.70).

³⁵ qtd in Leitch, (p.70).

³⁶ Thomas M Leitch, 'Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory', *Criticism*, 45 (2004), pp.149-71 (p.150).

³⁷ Brian McFarlane, 'It Wasn't Like That in the Book', in *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*, ed. by James Michael Welsh and Peter Lev (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2007), pp.3-14 (p.22).

³⁸ Leitch, (p.76).

method – indeed the one I have adopted, but without the attempt at gleaning intended meanings from the results – is a good example of this:

...the heart of fidelity criticism is the *comparative textual method* which allows critics to put a source and film adapted from it side-by-side in order to see what the similarities and differences are, what patterns emerge from the variety of these contrasts, and what these patterns might say about the consciously or unconsciously intended meanings in both source and adaptation.³⁹

The screenplay is a source and it is part of the adaptation process: it is not *the* 'source literature' somehow re-formatted word-for-word into screenplay format. The screenplay has been *adapted* from the book and, as I will argue, the film is (then) adapted from the screenplay. Kranz furthers that:

by seeing what a screenplay, director, producer, all of the above, or the film itself kept and rejected or changed in a source document, we raise the *probability* that what gets into the film was consciously or unconsciously *intended*, thus allowing for *greater intellectual satisfaction* than other kinds of evidence (purely textual, biographical, historical, economic, and cultural) usually can supply.⁴⁰

Is Kranz expanding the notion of comparative textual analysis to include examination of what was kept, rejected, or changed between book and screenplay as well as attempting to ascertain exactly what adaptations were made by director and producer and 'film itself'? The language is unclear: a director or producer are people capable of making adaptations, whereas a screenplay or film is a creative work and any adaptations that appear in the screenplay have been made by a scriptwriter and those that appear in the film made by the filmmakers. Thus Kranz not only potentially conflates 'the source' by failing to differentiate between book and screenplay, but he anthropomorphises the screenplay and the film seemingly giving each the ability to accept or reject aspects of the source document. Additionally, to suggest that which ends up in the film was 'intended' does not account for unexpected events during

³⁹ David L. Kranz, 'The Golden Continuum of Probability', in *In/Fidelity: Essays on Film Adaptation*, ed. by David L. Kranz and Nancy C. Mellerski (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), pp.202- 04 (p.203).

⁴⁰ Kranz, p.203.

production such as losing a location at the last minute, so while 'probability' may be raised in this scenario, it could easily lead to incorrect assumptions particularly if these are made by someone who has not taken into account the production process.

Ian W. MacDonald declares that the screenplay 'is a form that requires training (and/or experience) to use'⁴¹ and that the word 'blueprint' is 'common' while further noting that Richard Corliss says the screenplay is 'less than a blueprint and more than a libretto', Eisenstein calls it a 'hint fixed on paper', and finally concludes himself that the screenplay is 'an approximation' (90). These descriptions strongly suggest that the screenplay and its role are far more complex than the bulk of adaptation literature would lead us to believe based on the superficial treatment it tends to receive. MacDonald says that the screenplay is 'not a finished piece of work' as the finished film ('screenwork', in his terms) is and that it is 'not (ever) complete, as a description of all the aspects of the screenwork' (90). Bordwell seems to agree in his blog post, 'Who the devil wrote it?', where he declares that 'a screenplay isn't a blueprint or road map... [a]t best it's an approximation, a set of suggestions'.⁴² Robert L. Carringer's interview with Richard Sybert focuses on the creative contribution of the production designer. Of the script, Sybert says that it 'sometimes describes things well and sometimes badly. Some writers do a certain amount of research, but for the most part what they're doing is trying to give you some clues'. Referencing an idea of Elia Kazan's about acting, Sybert says that after reading the script, the film is built '... element by element. And you keep adding and adding and adding until you've built this thing'.⁴³ Sybert, like McFarlane, describes the process of adapting the screenplay to film as one of 'additions' which one can presume includes the addition of absence or the removal of a(n) element(s), and this concept exhorts elaboration and a deeper examination as a distinct phase of adaptation.

Copyright/Ownership and Audience

Raw notes that adaptation 'only really became significant in Western cultures with the development of copyright laws, which gave authors the power to preserve the integrity of their work, protecting it from alteration, distortion, or mutilation'.⁴⁴ Similarly, Foster

⁴¹ Ian W. Macdonald, 'Disentangling the Screen Idea', *Journal of Media Practice*, 5 (2004), 89-99 (p.89). Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

⁴² Bordwell.

⁴³ Robert L Carringer and Richard Sylbert, 'Designing Los Angeles: An Interview with Richard Sylbert', *Wide Angle*, 20 (1998), 97-131 (p.102).

⁴⁴ Laurence Raw, 'Introduction', in *Translation, Adaptation and Transformation*, ed. by

says that '[f]amous texts, in which there is are [sic] institutional investments separate from their internal characteristics, make possible the assumption that the reason for making an adaptation has to do with the inherent quality, interest, or value of the source' (3). Both these points buttress the observation that 'lack' of fidelity is often described using negative language such as 'mutilation' and to some degree explains the literary history that contributed to this. Christine Geraghty recalls Bazin's declaration that the play 'is unassailably protected by its text', (76) or as Timothy Barnard's translation reads, 'the stage play, whether classic or contemporary, is irrevocably upheld by its text'.⁴⁵ Geraghty uses Hugh Gray's translation of Bazin's 'Theatre and Cinema – Part One'⁴⁶. I prefer Timothy Barnard's translation which was published after Geraghty's *Now a Major Motion Picture* and have chosen to include both as this quotation itself is too a matter of adaptation/interpretation/translation. This line of thinking and the way it connects page to screen is reflected in film credits in various ways including, 'Story by' followed by 'Screenplay by' or 'Based on the novel by Jane Austen' followed by 'Written for the Screen and Directed by', for example. These are the on-screen credits in *Emma*.⁴⁷ This careful portioning of authorship both ensures each author is credited for being the book author or the scriptwriter/(an) adapter and lets the audience, who might have previously been unaware, that the film they are about to watch was 'based on' a pre-existing story. It also, I posit, strongly suggests that there is a defined and clearly acknowledged stage of adaptation between book and screenplay.

If a film is 'upheld by its text', then in the case of the film made from an original screenplay, is the film upheld by the screenplay? The screenplay's audience is limited to the production team only unlike the literary text and film which are made available to a much wider, public audience. As such, the film made from an original screenplay would be therefore 'upheld' by a text unknown to its wider audience. On audience, Geraghty writes that faithfulness 'matters if it matters to the viewer' (3). The public audience, unaware of the source text in this case, would be unaware of whether the film was faithful to the screenplay, or not. Geraghty points to Martin Barker's work on audience studies and *The Lord of the Rings*⁴⁸ as a good exploration of how faithfulness

Laurence Raw (London; New York: Continuum, 2012) (p.4).

⁴⁵ Bazin, p.169.

⁴⁶ André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray. ed. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1971).

⁴⁷ *Emma*, dir by Douglas McGrath, (Miramax, 1996). Screenplay by Douglas McGrath.

⁴⁸ Martin Barker and Ernest Mathijs, *Watching the Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's World Audiences*. Vol. 3 (Peter Lang, 2008).

can matter to the viewer. I would also include Barker and Brooks' *Knowing Audiences: Judge Dredd, its Friends, Fans and Foes*.⁴⁹ If the production team is audience to the original screenplay, then this team is both reader *and* able to influence the film with their reading of the screenplay: this is the audience to whom faithfulness matters, or not, and to varying degrees this audience has the agency to affect the adaptation(s). The film editor(s) as audience to the filmed footage, also known as rushes, would be particularly influential within this scenario because it is in the editing room where a narrative can be formed or reformed through the ordering or re-ordering of existing shots. Foster refers to the 'recognition' of the text by the audience, noting that adaptation 'is always a gesture about the present: about present audiences'.⁵⁰ The term 'negotiation' figures into her argument and this is an interesting one to apply to the production team: I suggest that they 'negotiate' the various meanings in the screenplay and this is influential in the process of adaptation from script to screen.

To conclude on fidelity, I will once again invoke Leitch as his idea presented during the discussion on 'The Persistence of Fidelity' included in Kranz and Mellerski's collection of essays in many ways sums up my own methodological approach: 'take fidelity not as your evaluative criterion, but as your subject'.⁵¹ To adopt fidelity as *the issue* facilitates a productive exploration of what is added or removed in the process of adaptation. Embracing the persistence of fidelity is also to embrace the persistence of its re-invention. By this I mean both utilising fidelity as the/my subject and incorporating its more recent definition(s) which seek to distance the term from evaluation while persisting in the pursuit of the examination of similarities and differences between two (or more) texts.

MEDIUM-SPECIFICITY

"Nothing more inelegant and ineffective than an art conceived in another art's form."

— Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*⁵²

McFarlane distinguishes between what he terms the 'transfer' process and the

⁴⁹ Martin Barker and Kate Brooks, *Knowing Audiences: Judge Dredd, Its Friends, Fans and Foes* (Indiana University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ Foster, p.10.

⁵¹ Leitch, p.208.

⁵² Bresson, p.30.

'adaptation' process in examination of medium-specificity. 'Transfer' denotes:

the process whereby certain narrative elements of novels are revealed as amenable to display in film, whereas the wisely used term 'adaptation' will refer to the processes by which other novelistic elements must find quite different equivalences in the film medium, when such equivalences are sought or are available at all.⁵³

McFarlane is addressing the journey from novel to film, but medium-specificity can also be applied to the journey from screenplay to film. One might imagine that the 'novelistic elements' are able to 'find' their 'equivalences in the film medium' via, or in part via, the screenplay. With regard to the use of terminology to explain the 'process' that takes the story from one medium to another, Stam lists some other possibilities as: 'translation, actualization, reading, critique, dialogization, cannibalization, transmutation, transfiguration, incarnation, transmogrification, transcoding, performance, signifying, rewriting, detournement'.⁵⁴ Andrews and others also contribute similar lists. Raw's previously mentioned compilation on adaptation and translation adds the term 'transformation' to the mix. Julie Sanders uses 'appropriations' noting that there 'are as many opportunities for divergence as adherence, for assault as well as homage'.⁵⁵ Must an adaptation be either an assault or an homage? As Stam's significant yet not exhaustive list suggests, language plays an important role in attempting to define the movement of story from one medium to another, and whether or not particular story elements are amenable to such movement. Kamilla Elliott references Keith Cohen's definition of literary film adaptation as 'seeing words changed into images' which she terms 'crude'⁵⁶ as she turns her focus on word-to-word transfer of a novel's dialogue or narration as a key aspect of how the story is moved from one medium to another. Elliott also critiques Andrew's description of semiotic systems of film and language because this does not account for what she calls 'film words'⁵⁷ which is her term for the verbal language in a film.

⁵³ McFarlane, p.13.

⁵⁴ Robert Stam, *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (Malden, Ma.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.4.

⁵⁵ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation, The New Critical Idiom* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), p.9.

⁵⁶ Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.13.

⁵⁷ Elliott, p.13.

Within the discussion of medium specificity, there is again a tradition of value judgement as seen in fidelity studies. Ray invokes Derrida's idea of original and copy and notes that the copy is arguably of great value and thus should not be dismissed as a poor imitation of the superior authentic original because an inevitable 'refunction[ing]'⁵⁸ has taken place. This is his response to theorists who uphold the 'Platonic model' based on Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave' that is often used to shame the 'imitation' or 'shadow' as inferior. Foster also engages in discussion about original and copy which delves into how and when value assessment has developed over time, noting that Horace claimed that a 'faithful interpreter is one who will *not* try to translate 'word for word'.⁵⁹ Sanders suggests defining adaptation as an 'attempt to make a text 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences'⁶⁰ which suggests a goal or motivation for any changes made but also that the new adapted artefact might be of more value to a modern audience.

Virginia Woolf's writing on the cinema clarifies her determination that there can be a superior medium for a particular expression:

Even the simplest image; 'My love's like a red, red rose, that's newly sprung in June,' presents us with impressions of moisture and warmth and the glow of crimson and the softness of petals inextricably mixed and strung upon the lilt of a rhythm which is itself the voice of the passion and hesitation of the lover. All this, which is accessible to words, and to words alone, the cinema must avoid'.⁶¹

Woolf is acknowledging that some aspects of a written text should not be subject to an attempted transformation or adaptation because they are already expressed in their ultimate form. However, she also writes about 'symbols for emotions' that 'if found, the filmmaker has enormous riches at his command'.⁶² When a discussion is instigated about what written texts can do and what films can do, often a hierarchy favouring the canonical text emerges quite quickly. However, Woolf articulates the possibility of the distinctive capabilities of film. Similarly, McFarlane staunchly suggests that 'it seems wiser to drop terms like 'violation', 'distortion', 'travesty', and those others which, like

⁵⁸ Ray, p.45.

⁵⁹ Foster, p.5.

⁶⁰ Sanders, p.19.

⁶¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Le Cinema'

<<http://www.woolfonline.com/?node=content/contextual/gallery&project=1&parent=45&taxa=46&content=6271&pos=60>> [accessed March 2015 2015] (pp.315-16).

⁶² Woolf, pp.316.

them, imply the primacy of the printed text'.⁶³

Bluestone claims that literary characters are inseparable from the medium that constructs them and they 'cannot be liberated in order to make a personal appearance in another medium'. He suggests that the adapter is limited to finding the 'filmic equivalent for literary characters'.⁶⁴ Yet Leitch argues that Cartmell and Whelehan's repeated use of the title/phrase 'literature on screen' to be a contradiction in terms that is indefensible and a divisive aspect of adaptation studies. He goes on to argue that there is no single 'source' for an adaptation and cites Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Stam as other supporters of this idea.⁶⁵ Simone Murray takes an alternate standpoint on the 'source' by arguing that the book, as source/single source, is often erroneously considered as the product of a single writer in comparison to the 'collaborative' nature of film.⁶⁶ This discussion highlights the scope of various arguments about medium and how the relationship between the page and screen might be (re)examined. Foster writes that, in her experience, practitioners who attempt to be 'faithful' will 'view 'adaptation' as the creative invention *required* if you want the meaning of a gesture to remain the same, despite being repeated in a different context'.⁶⁷

IN PRACTICE

If a screenplay's audience is the production team who are making it into a film, as I have suggested, then there is an argument to be made that there is value in their practitioner, and *practitioner as audience*, accounts. Those within adaptation studies who acknowledge or engage with practice in some manner include Colin MacCabe, Kamilla Elliot, Brian McFarlane, Christine Geraghty, and David L. Kranz and Nancy C. Mellerski. The latter, for example, include an account of adaptation by screenwriter Robin Swicord in their collection of essays on film adaptation. Kranz and Mellerski say that they 'hope the plurality of perspectives' in their book will provide a valuable contribution to the existing literature but they fail to define Swicord's role in this collection. Hers is the first essay/chapter in the book which *might* be said to suggest

⁶³ McFarlane, p.22.

⁶⁴ Bluestone, p.48.

⁶⁵ Leitch, (p.63).

⁶⁶ Murray, (p.8).

⁶⁷ Foster, p.10. Emphasis and quotations in original.

that the editors felt a practitioner account was the best way to set the tone for a discussion about adaptation, but if this is the case, it is not made explicit by the editors. The practitioner account is a piece of a puzzle, and it seems a significant oversight to avoid explicitly placing it in context, at least within the purview of the compilation it contributes to, if not overall within the field. My reading of this compilation is that the elephant in the room is the one practitioner account preceding the 'academic' chapters that make little or no application of practitioner accounts. Swicord's contribution discusses the process of adapting a novel into a screenplay, yet as this chapter has already discussed, scholars often either ignore this stage or meld it together with the finished film as though the 'filmmaking' is one distinct stage of adaptation. However, it is clear from Swicord's account of her process of adaptation that this is in fact distinct from the adaptation her screenplay will undergo during production and post production. Swicord directly addresses this when she notes that in working with director Mira Nair on *The Perez Family* (1995) she found that:

Nair's interpretive choices were at odds with the creative decisions Julia Chasman and I had made as we worked on the screenplay over several years. Taking nothing away from Nair's many gifts, and acknowledging the director's DGA-given right to interpret, I nonetheless mourned the loss of Christine Bell's distinctive voice in the final film.⁶⁸

Christine Bell is the author of the novel of the same name upon which the script and film were based. The inclusion of Swicord's essay demonstrates how a knowledge of how films are made can clarify a discussion about adaptation particularly where there are blurred lines about where one text ends and another begins. The screenplay as distinct text and a launching point for the adaptation to film is clarified in this scriptwriter's account of the process.

McFarlane notes that when, for example, MacCabe says that the 'camera shows us what happens', Bordwell takes issue with what he calls 'privileging of camera work... over other film techniques'.⁶⁹ I agree with McFarlane that, in this instance, Bordwell may be taking MacCabe's comment too literally, but this example of an attempt at discussing practice and the specifics of practice – whether it be camera work

⁶⁸ Robin Swicord, 'Under the Skin: Adapting Novels for the Screen', in *In/Fidelity: Essays on Film Adaptation*, ed. by David L. Kranz and Nancy C. Mellerski (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), pp.12-23 (p.16).

⁶⁹ McFarlane, p.17.

or ‘other techniques’ – illustrates how brief explorations of this kind can be, and the reluctance to reference a practitioner when making such a statement. Conversely, Sarah Kozloff includes a reference in ‘The Life of the Author’ to the DVD commentary track on *Thelma & Louise*⁷⁰ during which Ridley Scott talks about an adaptation he made regarding the weather and how he felt this contributed to his storytelling.⁷¹ Kozloff observes that American directors in particular are loath to be regarded as ‘artistes’ and also fear being labelled as ‘pretentious’ and can be reluctant to answer questions about their work, but she disagrees with Bordwell who simply dismisses the notion of consulting the filmmakers because ‘they can’t tell us’⁷² how they made a film (and often also how or why it was a success). Kozloff’s inclusion of the Ridley Scott commentary illustrates precisely how practitioner accounts can be of value: Scott explains a creative, or adaptive, decision he made and why he felt it was important for telling the story he wanted to tell. And he elaborates on what that story is, in his opinion. Taken from the perspective of adaptation, such comments can help to flesh out whether or not something in the finished film was in the screenplay (and/or novel), or not.

Timothy Barnard has published two volumes in the ‘Theory and Practice’ series, *What is Cinema?* by André Bazin⁷³ – a new translation that challenges the Hugh Gray version⁷⁴ – and *A True History of Cinema* by Jean-Luc Godard⁷⁵. Barnard has translated both works and this focus on theory and practice can be seen as an attempt to redress the balance between practitioner accounts into scholarly analysis. This perhaps owes a debt to the intertextual approaches that have been championed as an alternative to the fidelity model. In an extensive and necessary translator’s note, Barnard discusses his use of the words *découper* (the verb) and *découpage* (the gerund) and its regular mis-use or mis-translation or, indeed *adaptation* in English to simply mean ‘editing’. For support of this translation, see Dudley Andrew and Prakash Younger’s review of *André Bazin: What is cinema?*⁷⁶ As a noun, Barnard says,

⁷⁰ *Thelma & Louise*, dir by Ridley Scott, (Pathe, 1991).

⁷¹ Sarah Kozloff, *The Life of the Author* (Montreal: Caboose, 2014), p.13.

⁷² Kozloff, pp.14, 13.

⁷³ Bazin.

⁷⁴ André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray. ed. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2004).

⁷⁵ Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television* trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: caboose, 2013).

⁷⁶ Dudley Andrew and Prakash Younger, ‘André Bazin, What Is Cinema?, Translated by Timothy Barnard, Montréal, Caboose, 2009. André Bazin, What Is Cinema?, Translated by Timothy Barnard, Montréal, Caboose, 2009’, *Cinemas: Revue*

découpage is 'the definitive form of a script' according to *Cinémagazine* (1921) and as a gerund 'the process of creating such a finished script'.⁷⁷ Eventually, he notes, the 'finished script came to be known as a *découpage technique*, freeing *découpage* up for more abstract duty'. As such, Barnard translates *découper* in *What is Cinema?* as 'breaking down' or 'cutting up' using this example from *Le Film*, 1917, 'He *découpe* scripts without any trouble'. What is to be gleaned from this term and its use here and elsewhere in French journals is a discussion of the process by which a script is broken down or cut in order to be filmed. Barnard notes that from an early date the terms were 'associated exclusively with scriptwriting and other preparatory processes of film production, not with editing practices'.⁷⁸ Roger Leenhardt writing for the journal *Esprit* in 1936 offers a concise definition of *découpage* as 'being carried out before the fact, in the filmmaker's mind, on the subject to be filmed'.⁷⁹ The unfortunate fall-out of mistranslations of *découpage*, and the primary reason I have included a summary of the discussion of it here, is the potential impact it has had on the understanding of what happens when an original screenplay is made into a film as well as a loss of the importance placed on this process by French filmmakers and theorists and a foreshortening of the various processes of, as I suggest, adaptation, that occur from script to screen.

Inspired by the previously mentioned exchange between Bordwell and MacCabe about camera and story, McFarlane expresses his concern that 'omniscient *narration* is inextricably part of the novel's total discourse', but that by 'exercising control over the *mise-en-scène* and soundtrack or through the manipulations of editing, the film-maker can *adapt* some of the functions of this narrational prose'. He goes on to note 'tone of voice' as a significant potential adaptation or actor's posture or facial expression which he includes as aspects of *mise-en-scène* and he says that these 'guide the viewer's perception of the remark' and goes on to say that an actor's vocal inflection would be considered part of sound-track.⁸⁰ For more on a similar idea, see John O. Thompson's 'Screen Acting and the Commutation Test'.⁸¹ This type of conversation, while addressing practice and specific aspects of the filmmaking process,

d'études cinématographiques *Cinémas: Journal of Film Studies*, 20 (2009), 205-10.

⁷⁷ Timothy Barnard, 'Translator's Note', in *What Is Cinema?*, ed. by Tim Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009) (p.263).

⁷⁸ Barnard, pp.262, 62, 63, 63. Emphases in original.

⁷⁹ qtd in Barnard, p.266.

⁸⁰ McFarlane, p.18.

⁸¹ John O. Thompson, 'Screen Acting and the Commutation Test', in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.183-97.

concerns novel-to-film and narration and does not address the screenplay and what role it plays in adaptation instead focussing on what might be done during production and post-production. Bridget Conor, in writing about creative labour and professional practice, observes that '[s]creenwriting work bridges the discrete categories of 'writing' and 'filmmaking', and she quotes Anita Loos as saying she sat about with producers and directors 'doping out plots' as an example of the collaborative nature of filmmaking. Conor's focus on professional practice leads her to conclude that scriptwriters are often viewed as 'blueprint generators'. She also notes that, as I have previously mentioned, unlike playwrights who are often involved in the 'whole lifecycle' of the theatrical production process, 'screenwriters are often much less visible [and] are openly barred from film sets or other screen production processes'.⁸² Perhaps considering scriptwriting as a 'bridge' could lead to more of a focus on how it functions in adaptation.

Little focus on screenwriting as a stage of adaptation has also lead to a somewhat confused and varied usage of the term 'shooting script' within the field. Aragay quotes Bluestone's account of his own method whereby he relates the need for 'viewing the film with a shooting-script at hand',⁸³ noting that this is 'at odds' with a thesis that is medium-specific but this also highlights a second stage of adaptation based on Bluestone's apparent understanding of the shooting script. Practitioners would describe the shooting script as an annotated version of the screenplay that includes camera angles, props, costumes, and even scene numbers and their order of shooting. And this is the correct definition of a shooting script and its purpose in production.⁸⁴ The shooting script as described by Bluestone is instead a *transcript* of the sort that might be published following the successful release of a film to satisfy ardent fans and is, by definition, a written or printed version of material originally presented in another medium. Bluestone's misuse of the term shooting script obfuscates the journey from page to screen, whether intended or not, by ostensibly eliminating an entire stage of pre-production.

On production, William Goldman notes that it is exhausting to mention all the technicians involved in making a film and one reason for claiming the existence of a single 'creator' is simple want of a shorthand. He goes on to say that 'most people who

⁸² Bridget Conor, *Screenwriting: Creative Labor and Professional Practice* (Routledge, 2014), pp.1, 3, 2, 2, 2.

⁸³ Aragay, p.14.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Steven Ascher and Edward Pincus, *The Filmmaker's Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age* (Penguin, 2007).

write about movies don't know much about the actual problems of making one'.⁸⁵ One might argue that a further confusion of responsibility for a film lies in the pseudonym, Alan Smithee aka Allen Smithee. This fictitious patsy makes so many appearances in film credits that 'he' has his own IMDb page (found under the 'Alan' spelling).⁸⁶ On this page, under the category, 'nickname', is written 'The World's Louisiest Director, The Scapegoat'. Don Siegel writes in his book *A Siegel Film* that the Directors' Guild made up the pseudonym Allen Smithee for himself and Bob Totten because they both refused to take credit for directing the film, *Death of a Gunfighter* which was an adaptation from a book of the same title by Louis Patten.⁸⁷ Smithee has also 'taken responsibility' for a variety of roles in production, not just direction or scriptwriting, which is an indication that numerous roles in film production are responsible for the adaptations that end up on screen. Smithee might be seen as simply an industry 'joke', which 'he' is, but to relinquish one's credit on a film is not a decision taken lightly after having invested so much time and energy in the project, and therefore suggests how seriously filmmakers take their creative contribution to a project.

NEW WORK, NEW PRACTICES

New work is needed to collect and examine accounts from film practitioners to augment or balance existing academic and critical debates. Engagement with practice will in turn raise new questions. MacCabe notes that few theorists factor in or value filmmakers' statements about their own work and how it is conducted.⁸⁸ An example of an attempt to include practitioner accounts is the Andrew Davies interview included in *Literature on Screen*.⁸⁹ However, as is the case with Kranz and Mellerski, Cartmell and Whelehan also do not address where such 'first-hand' or 'anecdotal' accounts belong in the breadth of adaptation studies or indeed in their book. This is a discrete inclusion of a practitioner account rather than an overall inclination for scholarship to incorporate

⁸⁵ William Goldman, *Adventures in the Screen Trade : A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting* (New York: New York: Warner Books, 1983), pp.101, 02.

⁸⁶ Alan Smithee, (IMDb).

⁸⁷ Don Siegel, *'A Siegel Film' Don Siegel* (London: Faber, 1993), p.320.

⁸⁸ MacCabe, p.7.

⁸⁹ Andrew Davies, *A Practical Understanding of Literature on Screen: Two Conversations with Andrew Davies*. ed. by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

practitioner accounts, when appropriate, within academic analyses. Elliot makes a case for the importance of theory and practice in her book because it is her belief that the former has 'obfuscated' a clear understanding of the latter. She states that adaptation studies is a field where 'theory and practice have been so greatly at odds'.⁹⁰ Leitch also directly addresses the issue of practice in *Twelve Fallacies* when he questions the collaborative nature of adaptation by asking if it is similar to filmmaking in this respect or whether the screenwriter or director act as a 'single agent'.⁹¹ While Elliot addresses practice she also acknowledges her limitations are similar to that of adaptation studies in general in that typically word and image are regular subjects of debate while short shrift is given to music or sound design.⁹²

A lack of clarity with regard to the difference between adaptation at a scriptwriting stage, and at production stage can be found in Stam's discussion of fidelity. He asks, '[i]s the filmmaker to be faithful to the plot in its every detail?'.⁹³ Is the scriptwriter the filmmaker in this statement? If so, aren't the director and the editor (and others?) also 'the filmmaker' and therefore also responsible for fidelity, or lack thereof? And is Stam assuming that all the filmmaker's involved have equally in-depth knowledge of the source material (book or play) as well as the screenplay? Another assumption here is that screenplays contain all the necessary information with which to make a film (despite belonging to the same medium as the novel): the action and dialogue require no further interpretation or adaptation and the concept of the visual and aural entirely sidestepped. Thus, how does this 'information' and, equally, the lack of it, correlate with the finished film on screen. How much more information is contributed after the script is written? MacDonald, as previously mentioned, suggests this stage is more complex than Stam communicates. MacCabe's discussion of *The Butcher Boy* acknowledges a director's adaptations however it is worth noting that this example involves a writer/director and thus these changes, by MacCabe's estimation, were made to the script and not in the middle of production or editing. It is worth noting that unlike the majority of his peers, MacCabe has worked in film production as a producer. MacCabe later notes that Bazin's notion of the true adaptation was to 'find other matters of expression for material that could not be transposed directly'.⁹⁴ I would juxtapose this with a quote widely attributed to Miles Davis about a musician's

⁹⁰ Elliott, pp.6, 5.

⁹¹ Leitch, (p.150).

⁹² Elliott, p.6.

⁹³ Stam and Raengo, p.15.

⁹⁴ MacCabe, p.17.

interpretation of a piece of sheet music, 'don't play what's there; play what's not there'. This statement is repeatedly attributed to Miles Davis in popular culture, often as something he would say to his band. In other words, whilst there is material that cannot be 'transposed' directly from script to screen, there is also material that is absent from the script – a costume detail, birds chirping in the background, a sunset, for example – that exist in the finished film. The problem is summarised by Leitch who says that there is not any general theoretical account of 'what actually happens, or what ought to happen, when a group of filmmakers set out to adapt a literary text'.⁹⁵ I counter that rather than *or* as well as a theoretical account we need an *actual* account based on practitioner accounts of what actually happens.

THE FILMS

There are two collections of films that have been influential to my work because they experiment with various interpretations of a single screenplay.

Lars von Trier's and Jørgen Leth's *Five Obstructions* (2003) and Hal Hartley's *Flirt* (1996) involve the multiple productions of a single screenplay. von Trier's collection of films is based on a dare: Jørgen Leth's 1967 short documentary *The Perfect Human* has long been admired by von Trier who 'tasks' his friend and fellow filmmaker to re-make this short film five times under five sets of obstructions of von Trier's invention. The curiosity of both directors is to discover how each set of obstructions might be overcome and also how this will affect the new version of the film. While audiences are provided with a plethora of re-makes every year, this particular film experiment is not an attempt to profit from a story with a pre-existing audience, but an attempt to discover something about how and why films are made and, to my mind at least, a bit about the relationship between the screenplay and its film.

Hal Hartley's *Flirt* is described on the DVD cover by Roger Ebert as 'a cultural experiment, an exercise in storytelling and movie going'. Hartley re-films the same screenplay in three different cities. The 'rules' of this game are not revealed to the audience, each version of the (short) story runs one immediately after the other forming a feature-length total running time. The actors in each version are different and the city

⁹⁵ Leitch, (p.150).

as both backdrop and character impact the storytelling as well. Like the von Trier/Leth film, *Flirt* came about as an idea based on Hartley's previously made and released 'first' version of *Flirt* in 1993.⁹⁶

While von Trier/Leth's film is a documentary about their film experiment, it is as much about the two directors as characters in the story of the making of the original film, five times over. Conversely, Hartley's short films are purposefully packaged together as one event with no explanation given for the unusual format. The audience does not see each of Leth's efforts in their entirety, but instead edited snippets that tell the story of their making and of Leth's unravelling in the face of the challenge. The idea is the story. Hartley's idea is also the story, but the story in *Flirt* is in viewing each of the films, back-to-back, and therefore seeing their similarities and differences unfold throughout the course of the feature-length experience. In this case the result of the experiment is of paramount importance, where as in *Five Obstructions*, there is arguably equal or more importance given to the experiences had by von Trier and Leth in undertaking the challenge than to the outcome.

These two film projects both involved directors re-making their own work and therefore both men had a pre-existing knowledge of their own other versions once they had made the first. Leth eventually made six versions of *The Perfect Human* and Hartley made three of *Flirt*. Both directors wrote their own screenplays and initially intended to make only one filmed version of their screenplays. Because the versions of these films were not created independently from one another, each adaptation/film was influenced by the adaptations that came before. This is the point at which my work intervenes.



Adaptation studies literature and the select films I have reviewed indicate a persevering interest among scholars, critics, and filmmakers to compare one version of a story to another. To apply a method that examines a text and its resulting artefact seeking to determine their similarities and differences, as this study does, invokes the 'new' definition of fidelity (one that is concerned with a degree of exactness to source without assuming the source superior) and employs medium-specificity. From this point

⁹⁶ *Flirt*, dir by Hal Hartley, (Pandora, 1993).

onward, I will refer to this as *new* fidelity. The literature suggests that to utilise fidelity in this manner, I am purposefully conducting a non-evaluative comparison. Indeed, my intention is to treat the screenplay and film with equal interest thus enabling focus on how observed similarities and differences elucidate the relationship between screenplay and film.

CHAPTER 2

A Practice-Based Methodology and Method

METHODOLOGY

An Introduction to my Methodology

This study looks at the original screenplay as the text subject to adaptation. I will explore the relationship between the screenplay and the film made from it where the former is an original, not an adaptation of another work, and therefore the only possible launch point for transformation. Traditionally adaptation studies have examined a novel that is transformed into a screenplay that is transformed into a film and made comment only on the resulting film. This is routinely done without demarcation of the potential variation between the script adaptation and the film adaptation which I contend are two separate adaptive phases. The writing of the screenplay and the making of the screenplay into a film are often discussed as though they are one in the same as I have discussed in the previous chapter. In recent years this has been addressed to some degree. Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Erik Frisvold Hanssen note in their introduction to *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* that there has been a rich development in adaptation research in the past 15-20 years and this has included an examination of the 'relationship between screenwriting and adaptation'. They do not include many examples, but note Leitch's examination of Pasolini's musings on the screenplay and the ways in which it 'wants' to transform. Crucially, however, Bruhn et al note that the 'underdeveloped field' that is the 'adaptive relation between screenwriting and films... after long neglect, has surfaced in recent years as a

core question in film studies, including adaptation theory'.¹

This chapter will examine my methodology and the work that it has grown out of it, which will lead to a detailed explanation of my method. While I have discussed the 'inevitable' or 'unavoidable' question of fidelity in my literature review, I will now turn the discussion toward how I have applied 'new' fidelity to my study of the adaptation of an original screenplay into a film. Medium-specificity has been used by scholars, as previously discussed, to argue against fidelity and I will consider how the five films I have commissioned can be evaluated for *both* new fidelity and medium-specificity and what this method is intended to accomplish and why. With a continuing attention to practice and practitioner accounts, I will discuss the film experiments of Leth/von Trier and Hartley and how these have informed my methodology and methods. Finally, I will detail my method of production of the five short films, my method for analysing them and the adaptations observed, and the method I utilised for the filmed portion of my thesis.

This study is interested in contributing to the understanding of the adaptive relationship between screenplay and film. Although I am specifically looking at the original screenplay and the resulting films, much of what is discovered could be applied to exploration of when (and therefore also how and why) adaptation occurs between the screenplay adapted from a novel, or other source, and its film. By combining creative practice with written analysis, my method is based on a similar idea to Lev Kuleshov's notion of the relationship of theory and practice as quoted in Frank P. Tomasulo: 'studying film history and theory without a corresponding experience in the elemental aspects of filmmaking leaves theoretical research without a solid basis'. While Kuleshov's principle is about teaching film and film students, I agree with Tomasulo that it is common for the 'valuable nexus between motion picture theory and practice'² to be disregarded entirely. My work is intended as a step toward re-addressing the balance by using practice as research and then producing joint written and filmed analyses in response to this data to form my thesis.

An examination of the relationship between a screenplay and its finished film can be achieved by examining a body of existing films and their original screenplays.

¹ Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, 'There and Back Again': New Challenges New Directions in Adaptation Studies', in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, ed. by Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp.1-16 (pp.4, 8, 4).

² Frank P. Tomasulo, 'Theory to Practice: Integrating Cinema Theory and Film Production', *Cinema Journal*, 36 (1997), pp.113-17 (p.113).

This approach can be useful in order to note and analyse similarities and differences between these two creative works. The model for my study, however, attempts another step beyond this that has not yet been explored. If a *single screenplay* is produced *five times*, the production teams having no knowledge of each others' work, what similarities might be observed in what was added, removed, or kept 'true' to the screenplay? *What would happen?* And how would these five films compare to *one another*? This method of inquiry allows for examination of a variety of possible outcomes from a single screenplay creating data for a thorough examination of the observed adaptations illuminating this discrete stage of adaptation.

Rather than using the types of adaptations observed in the study a variety of existing screenplays and their films and then speculating about what might or might not have been pursued had each screenplay been in the hands of another production team, I am able to examine what *actually resulted* from five production teams producing the same screenplay. This is a rigorous scrutiny of the similarities and differences: a model that utilises both new fidelity and medium-specificity. As noted by Bruhn et al, '[a]daptation must necessarily incorporate some kind of comparative element' and this is acknowledged by the field by attempting to *adapt* the term 'fidelity' into one that is 'more neutral'³ and can be used in conjunction with (rather than be disproved by) medium-specificity. The expectation is that while some elements will be identified as being medium-specific and present in one creative work and not the other, this can be combined with a comparison for fidelity of elements that *can* be transferred and either were or were not in each of the five filmed adaptations.

This study has a different focus of inquiry under the umbrella of adaptation studies and there is therefore a potential for the resulting analysis to contribute to the current understanding of the novel/film debate as well as the increasing interest widening the scope of adaptation to more often include a variety of source works. Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, for example, acknowledges and discusses this. Along with engaging with practice as research, my inclusion of directors' production journals is a less usual method but one that has been gaining some prominence. Anna Sofia Rossholm, for example, discusses creative process by examining artist's diaries as a mid-point between the source and final result in her examination of Ingmar Bergman. More often, however, the scholarly theories employed indicate little attempt to incorporate practitioner accounts of 'what actually happened' which is problematic particularly because the majority of film scholars are unfamiliar with the elemental

³ Bruhn, Gjelsvik, and Hanssen, p.5.

aspects of filmmaking. By engaging in a range of film productions, requesting journals from directors, and producing both written and filmed analyses, this study attempts to commingle practice and theory to develop an inclusive analysis in the service of addressing the research question.

Methodology and Adaptation Studies

In *Film Adaptation and its Discontents*, Leitch says that adaptation studies is 'one of the oldest areas in film studies' and notes that he, along with a number of his peers, came to adaptation with a background in literature which he claims is in part responsible for his peers' inability to allow that the 'film might actually improve on the novel'.⁴ Elliot traces several currently prevalent ideas in adaptation studies back to the turn of the twentieth century citing the work of Lewis Melville and Vachel Lindsay in 1912 and 1915 respectively.⁵

While the field of adaptation studies 'traces its descent more directly from literary studies' than from film theory, it is unsurprising that the route taken often allows for a hierarchy of the novel or the 'original' particularly when the original author is as revered as William Shakespeare or Charlotte Brontë or other canonical authors whose work is often seen as 'ripe' for adaptation to film. As Leitch notes, American universities offering film courses in the early days were often dividing studies into areas such as canonical texts on film and classical works of cinema. And these two strands would often be taught by literary scholars and were thus courses structured similarly to literature courses: the literature angle being one to lend legitimacy to the study of film but also therefore likely to favour the source text. Leitch notes that there is what he calls a 'rift between the aesthetic approach of literary studies and the analytical approach of cinema studies'⁶ which has affected adaptation studies in turn. He claims adaptation studies has been isolated from film studies and as a result 'aligned' more closely with literary studies. As film studies drifted in one direction, adaptation studies drifted in the other widening the gulf between them and therefore contributing significantly to the 'problem' of fidelity discourse.

Because the screenplay as a creative work has a relatively discrete audience that consists of only the filmmakers and potential funders, it has unsurprisingly been

⁴ Thomas M. Leitch, *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to the Passion of the Christ* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), pp.1, 2.

⁵ Elliot, pp.25-26.

⁶ Leitch, pp.3, 4, 5.

excluded from an arena that has been for much of its history, primarily concerned with literature: written works with an established audience who are often aware of the work prior to seeing its adaptation. As previously noted, Geraghty writes about the importance of the audience being aware of the adapted text when viewing the film or as John Ellis says, [t]he adaptation trades upon the memory of the novel' which can be 'a generally circulated cultural memory'⁷ in the case of classic literature. As the screenplay's audience is so small, there are few who might complain or even notice that the finished film has in any way strayed from the perceived excellence of the screenplay. The majority of these 'few' are also likely to be involved in the making of the film and express their views in situ rather than as over-all dissatisfactions after the fact and are not, as such, the ultimate audience. Extrapolating from audience-centred ideas from Geraghty and Ellis, one might see the scholarly neglect of the role of the screenplay in adaptation as due to lack of audience or lack of as wide an audience as a novel or film has by comparison.

There is often an absence of clarity within adaptation studies about what a screenplay *is* and what role it plays in the creation of its film. The screenplay tends to fall between the cracks as neither 'source' nor 'end product' therefore escaping the critical gaze. There is no assumption of a canon of screenplays: the screenplay is not revered in the same way as the novel might be. Films are honoured for their 'greatness' at awards ceremonies such as The Academy Awards in the USA, or the British Academy of Film and Television Arts in the Britain. Both of these ceremonies acknowledge film and screenplay separately and both make separate awards for the best 'original' screenplay and the best 'adapted' screenplay. Screenplays are not routinely made available for public consumption, so the audience of such award shows are judging the merit of each screenplay award on the film they saw on the screen, not on the written script as it went to camera or even an earlier draft. This suggests at best that the film industry and its awards shows are also content to blur the role of the screenplay in the making of a film. Screenplays are usually only published when a film has been particularly successful and/or has a well-known scriptwriter, but this screenplay is often a transcript of the finished film and as such reflects all the changes made to the screenplay as it was written through the course of production and post-production.

My study produces what could be considered a 'base-line' or 'control' for the screenplay and its relationship to the finished film. The novel, for example, has been

⁷ John Ellis, 'The Literary Adaptation', *Screen*, 23 (1982), 3-5 (p.3).

compared to its final film using a variety of different frameworks based on fidelity studies or medium-specificity for decades without having a basis of understanding the degree of adaptation that is enacted upon the *original* screenplay when it is made into a film. If there is an understanding of the adaptation process between screenplay and screen, this should help further understanding of the novel-to-film relationship. Any number of adaptations observed in a finished film might have occurred from novel to screenplay *or* from screenplay to film. Bluestone noted, 'changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium'.⁸ I have difficulty with this sweeping statement because it suggests that while a story remains in the linguistic realm (novel *and* screenplay), changes are not inevitable or even, it would seem, acknowledged as a possibility. Changes are inevitable when adapting a screenplay into a film and some of these changes are inevitably motivated by the medium change and this is what feeds the medium-specificity debate. The screenplay, unlike the novel, is *intended* to lead to an audio/visual artefact, but still must be, at least to some degree, bound by its medium. Additionally, it is challenging to adapt a full-length novel (i.e. not a novella) into a 90 to 120-page screenplay (roughly the average length for a feature-length screenplay) as this can, for example, involve removing an entire subplot or group of minor characters to fit the usual theatrical release time of a feature film. Once this set of adaptations has occurred, the screenplay is given over for the remainder of pre-production during which time the production team might make changes – for example to location or characters' physical descriptions – and then throughout the production and post-production process (what I have referred to as 'script-to-screen') other adaptations might be made. As I am examining the relationship between original screenplay and film, this should better illuminate this particular 'step' in the adaptive process and raise its profile: First by naming it explicitly as an adaptation and then perhaps the novel-to-film or the novel/film debate might become the novel-to-screenplay-to-film or the novel/screenplay/film debate.

The idea that both the novel and the film might be of equal value as creative works is supported by several adaptation theorists – see Kathleen Murray, Elliot, or MacCabe, for example – although they often vary in their explicit definition of how the written word is or is not 'transferred' into a visual image. In a discussion about meaning in film, David Bordwell notes that the critic might ask: 'How did this anomaly *get in* the text?' with the possible follow-up question being 'Did the artist make a mistake?'.⁹ The

⁸ Bluestone, p.5.

⁹ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the*

term 'anomaly' is problematic in that it suggests something that is unexpected or perhaps should not be there. If something has been 'added' to the original text – either by the scriptwriter or filmmakers – then surely this is not an error, something that was done unintentionally? Even leaving this aside, what 'text' is Bordwell referring to? It seems that he means to refer to the film which would suggest that if the 'artist' made a mistake, that there is no question that the screenplay was entirely faithful to the novel and it is from the screenplay that the artist deviated. If he is referring to the screenplay, this is not explicit, nor is it usual to refer to the screenwriter as 'the artist'. Does any anomaly i.e. 'something that was not in the novel' constitute a mistake? I suggest that the process of adaptation involves both addition and removal and that rather than being peculiarities or oddities, these are to be expected when any adaptation occurs. My study will explore this idea of what Bordwell terms, the anomaly, as it occurs from screenplay to film. And if one is looking at that which was in the screenplay but is not present in the film, one must also acknowledge the opposite: that which is not in the screenplay, such as the film score for example, but is in the film. Additionally, one must also consider that creative input from the production team can alter an aspect of the screenplay as can unforeseeable circumstance(s) during production, however to describe any anomaly as a mistake seems unnecessarily reductive.

Virginia Woolf marvelled at the possibilities available in cinematic storytelling in *Le Cinema*, originally published in 1926. On her experience of viewing *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* she pondered, '[i]s there, we ask, some secret language which we feel and see, but never speak, and, if so, could this be made visible to the eye?'. About the audio-visual story and the editing of images she states that '[w]e should see violent changes of emotion produced by their collision'.¹⁰ The notion of collision immediately calls to mind Eisenstein's theories about montage in his 1929, *The Dramaturgy of Film Form*, in which he states (or, 'shouts' may be more accurate) that montage is, '*an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another* (the 'dramatic' principle)¹¹. Hartley also uses the word 'juxtaposition' when discussing his work and he notes that one can juxtapose words and shots in a film to a similar end.¹² Despite this, he goes on to quote Robert Bresson as having said: 'The

Interpretation of Cinema, Harvard Film Studies (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.12-13.

¹⁰ Woolf.

¹¹ Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form (the Dialectical Approach to Film Form)', in *The Eisenstein Reader*, ed. by Richard Taylor (1988), pp.93-110 (p.95). Emphases in original.

¹² Hal Hartley, *Flirt* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p.xi.

subject matter of a film is only a pretext. Form, much more than content, touches a viewer and elevates him' but manages to tie the ideas together in his recollection of what inspired *Flirt*. According to Hartley, he 'playfully' suggested to his cameraman and producer that *Flirt*, which he'd just shot in New York City, could be made 'many times and in many ways'. He says that there is 'something so typical, common and general about the piece... [that] it could be interpreted again and again, always to new effect. It would be exciting to see what would happen if the 'flirt' was a girl instead of a guy, or a gay man, a lesbian, an older person, a child etc.'¹³ Hartley utilises the sub-heading, 'Rules of the Game' to describe what could easily be termed 'the obstructions' he gave himself whilst shooting – he avoided 'covering' a scene and he saw the film partly as a project to use in learning computer editing technology. These are all in essence discussions about medium that have applications to the discussion of the screenplay and its film and how film can tell a story differently than it is told on the page. Since the early days of film the adaptation from page to screen has been addressed and examined as has the argument for using practice as research. As these examples show, from Woolf to Eisenstein to Hartley, there is an assumption that film both has the capability of telling a story differently from the way it is told on the page and that the act of making a film is revelatory.

Methodology and Film (Production)

My own experience as a freelance filmmaker has informed my methodology. Having attended film school and worked for more than ten years, primarily as a self-shooting director, the way in which I learned to make films and then continued to develop my practice have been influential in how I developed this study. While my background and personality have steered me down a path that led to this particular study, my professional contacts and discussions with them helped flesh it out. I had several discussions with fellow filmmakers around their ideas about the possibility that they were 'adapting' a screenplay in the process of making a film. Additionally, Smith and I had multiple conversations about the screenplay and the scriptwriter – my MA is in scriptwriting and my BA in film production involved a focus on writing – and the role of each and our personal expectations regarding the screenplay to film relationship. While my experience has led to a specific set of understandings about how films are made, it has also led to a set of assumptions. I strive to address these in a candid manner.

The relationship between screenplay and film could be described as symbiotic

¹³ Hartley, pp.xii, xii, xi.

because during the journey through pre-production, production, and post-production the interplay between screenplay and film is ongoing. The screenplay is used as 'blueprint' in pre-production and is often adapted – dialogue, details of location or costume changed or added, for example – to suit the evolving production and then evolves into a shooting script with numbered scenes and camera angles included. Then in production, the adapted version is clutched in the hands of much of the crew so that everyone is, literally, on the same page as the director with most crew heavily dependent on it to make sure shots match and the story remains coherent. In post-production the script is still often at hand for reasons of shot order, story, structure, or to recognise a day-for-night shot, for example. The way in which the screenplay evolves throughout the production process is similar across film productions in that it eventually includes scene numbers and camera angles, but the degree to which it is added to or changed or details or perhaps entire scenes removed is unique to each production.

Hartley's *Flirt* re-tells the same story – although each finished film has some variations in the script and dialogue – in three different cities with each city essentially becoming a character in each version of the story and therefore altering its tone. Hartley claims he made a rule that he could delete lines of dialogue (from the original NY version), but not add them.¹⁴ (For more on his specific 'method' regarding transposition and adaptation of his screenplay, see the full introduction to *Flirt*.) The director refers to this as an 'exercise'¹⁵ in his introduction to his published screenplay for *Flirt*¹⁶ and talks about how this exercise was his way of coming to terms with the medium of film. Steven Rawle notes that '[r]epetition is seen as a fundamental component of Hartley's authorship'¹⁷ in *Flirt*. Both von Trier and Leth and Hartley are exploring repetition by re-making the same screenplay, but they are also discovering the possibilities afforded by the same screenplay given new/different conditions of production whether it be 'obstructions' or the inclusion of a new city as a location. These film studies are similar to my thesis study primarily in that they are filmic experiments and that there is an element of repetition of production of a single script. Both *Obstructions* and *Flirt* can be considered experiments in adaptation. The key

¹⁴ Hartley, p.xiv.

¹⁵ Hartley, p.xi.

¹⁶ Although it is not explicitly noted in the publication, the screenplay as published appears to be the 'original' New York City version due to the character names given and other details.

¹⁷ Steven Rawle, 'Hal Hartley and the Re-Presentation of Repetition', *Film Criticism* (2009), pp.58-75 (p.59).

difference between these two projects and mine, as I have mentioned previously, is that in both Leth and von Trier's and Hartley's films it is the same director *re-adapting his own work*. As such, each adapter is aware of and ultimately informed by not only the previous versions of the film but also by the thought process (their own) that contributed to the adaptations made. My study specifically avoids this in order that the adaptations observed can be assumed to be 'original' adaptations to the screenplay. Often a novel is adapted to film by a production team who are aware of previous adaptations of the same novel. This situation raises the possibility that some or all of the adaptations made are a reaction to not only the novel (by the scriptwriter) and the screenplay (the production team) but to other existing adaptations. The latter can of course be a factor for both scriptwriter and production team. My intention was to use a method where the production teams were unaware of the 'other' versions of the screenplay was in order to make comparisons between screenplay and films that would lend insight to the potential adaptations that could be made working with the same screenplay without the influence of having seen other versions. This meant that the adaptations were only from script to screen and not also screen to screen. If there was a medium-related adaptation to make, for example, then each production team addressed this 'fresh' without any suggestion of how it had been done in the same situation by a previous team.

Leth and von Trier's *Five Obstructions* and Hartley's *Flirt* are two examples of film studies or experiments that address the screenplay, adaptation, and alteration. Leth's struggles to re-make his own film provides the focal point for *Obstructions* and shows quite effectively how various obstacles – although these are purposefully manufactured obstacles, they produce a similar response as the obstacles that present themselves in a typical film production – stimulate a new response to the same script/idea. Leth is depicted as both liberated and frustrated by the process of developing new adaptations to his screenplay, different to the adaptations he made in his previous version. As has been noted by Mary Jo Hatch¹⁸, Rawle¹⁹ and others, both these film collections are films about *filmmaking* and so is this thesis. The process of making the filmed component of this thesis is an examination of adaptation using the five short films to create a new creative work, *What If?*, but it is also a meditation on filmmaking: What is it to work from a screenplay? What variety of shots composing

¹⁸ Mary Jo Hatch, 'Organizing Obstructions to Manage Organizations Creatively: Reflecting the Five Obstructions', *ephemera*, 11 (2011), pp.204-11 (p.187).

¹⁹ Rawle, (p.59).

what variety of films can be developed with the same starting point?

What Actually Happens and What Questions Should We Ask?

I examine the five films made from *The Box* screenplay to discover what actually happened in the adaptation from script to screen. My method involved a scriptwriter completing a script and then having no further involvement in the project or contact with the production teams. The reason for this was to give each production team the same launching point, a screenplay, and for this to remain free from any further influence or adaptation that might occur should the team discuss elements of the story with the writer.

Screenplays are regularly referred to as 'blueprints', as previously mentioned, and this tendency warrants closer examination. It is an appropriate term in many ways: like a blueprint, a script gives instruction for what must be done from start until finish. It is a plan, a model, a template. That there is some room for adaptation is a trait shared between the blueprint and film script although perhaps it should be acknowledged that the degree to which this occurs can vary wildly. However, if the so-called blueprint is all that is required to make a film with the expectation that filmmakers will 'read between the lines', then this reading is worth investigating and may in turn effect the frequency with which critics and scholars continue to make casual use of the term. As Anthony Minghella summarises, the so-called completion of a film production is really, simply, the 'point of abandonment'²⁰ (xvi), which suggests the possibilities are numerous and the adaptation potential vast. Yet so much is actually *done* in between the script being written and this point of abandonment and this wants further investigation. James Welsh asks – although not being explicit about whether he is referring only to the finished film or also to the screenplay it was made from:

How was the story told? How is it retold? Is the story completely told? If not... was anything lost as a consequence? Do the characters appear much as most readers might expect? Has the story's meaning been changed and, if so, in what way or ways and to what degree? [H]ave... tone and nuance been scrupulously observed? ... has the film adaptation been true to the 'spirit of the original'.²¹ (xxiii-xxiv)

²⁰ Anthony Minghella and Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient: A Screenplay* (London: Methuen, 1997), p.xvi.

²¹ James M. Welsh, *Introduction: Issues of Screen Adaptation: What Is Truth?* ed. by James Michael Welsh and Peter Lev, *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of*

Again I suggest that this is a series of questions that would benefit from additional clarity. If the answers to these questions are given based on the finished film, then are we assuming that the story's meaning or tone and nuance were scrupulously observed in the screenplay but changed by the filmmakers? Might the 'changes' have taken place when the scriptwriter adapted the novel into a screenplay? Perhaps a lighter or heavier tone seemed more appropriate to the scriptwriter, for example? Or what if adaptations were made between novel and screenplay and then *again* between screenplay and film as recounted by Swicord? My method intentionally breaks the process down by working from an original screenplay to five films in order, in part, to be able to observe what adaptations *can* occur from screenplay-page to screen.

My Method

My method is a response to the tendency within adaptation studies to compare the novel to finished film without also seeking understanding about the relationship of a screenplay to finished film. This distinct stage of the process of filmmaking also offers up the probability that it is a distinct stage for adaptation to occur. The potential for adaptation from screenplay to film has not been thoroughly explored. While there is scope for comparison between existing films and their screenplays and much to be learned from this method of analysis, there is also a gap in existing research that can be augmented by the implementation of a method involving practice.

This thesis addresses the potential for adaptation between screenplay and film by implementing a practice-based model in order to facilitate a clearer understanding of the adaptations that occur in this discrete phase of film production. By utilising this model, five films are created which provide the data unobtainable from a study that uses a variety of existing screenplays and their films for comparison. These multiple adaptations of the same screenplay directly address Bordwell's thought experiment and Stam's assertion that every film is an adaptation of a screenplay. This is the method that seeks to expand understanding of the screenplay/film relationship by creating a model for examination of this particular adaptive phase.

The films created using this framework provide data for comparison: without speculation, it becomes possible to examine what adaptations *have been made* in each of five films. The analysis of the films and how they exhibit adaptations made from the screenplay and how each of these compares to one another – looking for similar

Adaptation (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2007), pp.xxiii-xxiv.

adaptations or untypical adaptations (based on this sample) – will develop appreciation for the practice of filmmaking and how it contributes to existing theories of adaptation.



My method is best divided into two sections: A method for *creating* my data and a method for *analysing* the data produced.

For a clarified sense of the bigger picture, what follows here is a timeline of key stages in my method and my aims on which I will elaborate further throughout the remainder of this chapter:

1. Commission a scriptwriter who is interested in this study – both in writing an original, short, narrative screenplay, and also in the *idea* of their work being produced multiple times. The latter was important because the creation of the screenplay, in order for it to be appropriate for the study, required several meetings and conversations and refining that a writer whose primary interest was their story, might not have had the desire or motivation to complete. Smith had an over-riding interest in the idea of the study and was keen to participate in discussions about how his screenplay might be interpreted. He voiced no qualms about making changes to his writing that potentially compromised his own creative vision or his perceived quality of his own writing in service of the overall study. His interest in the project extended to attending the public screening of the five short films and participating in a live Q&A with the audience and the five short film directors. Additionally, he provided me with written feedback on his experience of writing *The Box* screenplay as he wrote it as well as in retrospect.
2. Work with the writer to determine the ‘type’ of script that will, ideally, creatively stimulate the production teams while ‘leaving room’ for interpretation. Discuss genre in particular and what genre the screenplay should be and if there are any specific genres that we think production teams would be more or less likely to change in the course of production.
3. Commission five directors who are, as above, interested in this study and keen to make a short film to add to their portfolio of work while also being willing to discuss their work via production journals or oral commentary (recorded or live). Communicate to each of them, adhering as best possible to my own ‘script’ of

directions for their work in this project so as to attempt to give each the same information in the same way in an attempt not to bias one production over another by virtue of the amount of guidance offered.

4. Disseminate the final version of the screenplay to all directors on the same day, giving them the same timeline for production. Offer to answer any questions from production teams as they arise making note of their queries and my responses.
5. Collect the finished films, watch them, and transcribe their 'filmed' screenplays. My initial plan regarding transcription was to use it to compare the length of the screenplays that went to camera as well as specific aspects of adaptation such as character age or description, for example. Upon reflection after having completed these transcriptions, I determined that what I had done was enact yet another 'adaptation' by transcribing the films and that this should not be used for comparative analysis. I found the process of transcription extraordinarily helpful and revealing, however. I watched each film closely and slowly in order to perform the transcription. I also had to think very carefully about the language I should use in my own description of what I was seeing and hearing. Ultimately, I benefited as a researcher from completing the transcriptions and they also proved helpful during analysis when I needed to check whether, for example, a particular version featured the clock mentioned in the original screenplay without re-watching the film. As such, within my working model, the transcripts eventually served as written notes on my filmed data. I was careful only to consult the transcripts for clarification when my own transcription 'adaptations' would not be a factor.
6. Perform a comparative analysis on the finished films a) in comparison with the original screenplay b) in comparison with each other. As I am looking to see what adaptations occur from script to screen, I am performing the analysis of film to screenplay and not vice versa (screenplay to film). Unlike adaptations where the screenplay has been adapted from an existing source, this study looks at the original screenplay which is intended to be made into a film and therefore I have chosen to perform the comparison of film to screenplay as the former is the intended outcome of the latter.
7. Explore my findings in the written portion of my thesis.
8. Explore my findings in the filmed portion of my thesis.

METHOD FOR CREATING THE DATA

Method Detail: The Script

i. Concept and Development

Alexander Gordon Smith was my first choice to write the screenplay for this study. His previous work both in children's literature and in film convinced me of his ability to write a compelling narrative in various formats and also of his general enthusiasm for storytelling and film. The idea for the story for *The Box* was conceived following a series of meetings between myself and Smith. Initially I introduced him to the idea of my thesis and then we discussed whether or not he was interested in this and whether he thought he could write a very short screenplay of two to three pages with a traditional narrative structure. I wanted the story to be interesting and catchy in the way that an advert or music video wants to be to garner attention quickly but sustain interest for the duration. The reason for this is two-fold. The directors I approached to work on the project ideally had to read this short script and be entertained by the possibilities and challenges of the story whilst simultaneously acknowledging that it would be do-able on no/low budget. The reasons for this were primarily practical. I was aware that both interest and potential to be able to complete by my prescribed deadline were important simply so that I would receive the data/films I required within the necessary timeframe for completion of my thesis. A screenplay that is easy to shoot in terms of casting, organisation, and budget was also intended to be a lure to any potential director that was 'on the fence' because the project was unpaid and could interfere with paid work.

I also wanted the story to be very clear and linear such that it did not immediately read as an avant-guard or art film because my intention was to mimic popular, narrative feature films with a very short script. This latter concern developed as an attempt to control the script and constrain it: if the script was written too 'loosely' it would invite or indeed plead for extraordinary contribution from the production teams. My intention was to ask them to 'make a film' not experiment with the outer limits of their ability to embellish upon an atypically scant framework. Overtly put forth as avant-garde from the beginning (or experimental or art house) would place the films within the realm of 'specialty' cinema and thus potentially encourage an expectation for the teams to go off on more of a tangent than would allow them to keep their agreement to reasonably credit Smith as the scriptwriter.

Once Smith and I had discussed narrative structure, we moved on to how specific the action and character description should be. We agreed to dispense with detailed character descriptions, so Adam and Eve (whose names were chosen by Smith) were not given ages, ethnicity, or modes of dress. These are details that would often be given for the two protagonists in a screenplay. It must be acknowledged, however, that giving the characters Western names and genders we were providing some description. While the chosen omissions may seem leading, we both felt that a story could be written where age, for example, need not be necessary to the story on the page, not required to drive it or define it. The story could work without characters of a specific ethnicity or belonging to an identifiable social group such as ‘hippy’ or ‘hipster’, for example. It is worth noting that we did not consider giving both character names that are commonly given to both genders such as Chris or Alex, for example which is an idea that occurred to me only after viewing the finished films – I will discuss this in more detail later in this chapter. We also felt that while the action would include location description – the eventual *The Box* screenplay opens in an ‘ordinary living room’ with faded furniture and sunshine streaming through net curtains – that was specific, that we could imagine this being ‘adapted’ without necessarily impacting the coherence of the story. As such, an ordinary living room *could* potentially be a park bench or a table at a restaurant without incontrovertibly being destructive to the story: the same emotion and action could be supplanted to any of these locations and still ‘work’ within the story as Smith wrote it. When I pitched the idea to each of the directors who participated in the project, I told them that they should make a film using the screenplay provided. If they asked questions about the screenplay or altering it in any way, I responded by saying they should do what they felt worked best for their film but that when the film was finished they were obliged to credit Smith as the scriptwriter and that they should feel this an accurate and fair credit. In other words, if they were to give another writer credit for the screenplay, would Smith have reasonable grounds to challenge copyright. This relied upon usual working practices in the industry being observed and understood as regards authorship but also involved participating in an activity that the directors may have perceived as challenging this. Some or all of the directors may have been more aware of their adaptations in making their version of *The Box* than they would have been on previous projects. As this was unavoidable, I have factored it into my analysis.

During my final meeting with Smith before he started writing, he told me that the idea of a closed box being the focus of the story intrigued him. I liked the idea and we

discussed the possibilities of this: could it be written such that genre was not obvious or, if it was indicated in some way, not set in stone? We liked the idea that it might be a romance or a suspense thriller or a horror film depending on the production teams' readings of the screenplay. Neither of us was able to draw on a specific example, but we both had recollections of reading trade articles about how X film was given to Y director who wanted to make it a musical when the producers wanted a terse drama. I also thought I recalled reading that Tim Burton was, at one point, in contention for the director's chair for *Jurassic Park*.²² As such, we agreed it was reasonable to hope that the script could be read as a variety of genres, especially as it would be so short as to prevent typical structures, as might be described by Robert McKee,²³ for example, from indicating one type overwhelmingly over another. At the least, we thought that a genre could be determined by the production team and then adaptations made to the screenplay to support this. We also wanted to limit the number of characters to two or three. This was due to the short length of the script but also primarily to help make it easily/cheaply film-able, as previously mentioned. Hal Hartley talks about a 'storyteller's particular interest in *telling* a particular story' as the key to the story being 'compelling'. He also gives the example of his Berlin re-write as a pivotal time when he decided that 'the dialogue and plot *were* acquiring new meaning as a result of [the] transposition'.²⁴ This provides a good practitioner-based example of how a director or production team works with a story and its screenplay in order to figure out the specifics of the story *they* want to tell and therefore what on the page will be adapted in service of this 'telling'.

Did Smith achieve these aims? I believe so. I found it interesting that he named the characters after the Biblical first man and first woman: this seemed like a flag indicating that their names could be changed, that they were symbolic. This reading depends on a knowledge of Christian symbolism, however despite being confident that each of the directors involved had the knowledge to pick up on this, it did not necessarily follow that they made this leap. Based on the finished films, analysis of which I will enter into in a later chapter, I realised that this symbolism was recognised but acted upon in different ways.

After a brief, but important introduction that establishes a confined, domestic space and an 'us versus them' situation, the screenplay jumps straight into the action.

²² *Jurassic Park*, dir by Steven Spielberg, (Universal, 1993).

²³ McKee, pp.86-89.

²⁴ Hartley, pp.xiii, xiv.

This is appropriate for such a short narrative, and gives the production teams strong themes to work with. We were unsure whether one theme would present itself so forcefully that each production team would focus their story similarly, but ultimately, each film seemed to find their own unique combination of the themes suggested in the screenplay.

The screenplay is written such that the audience learns information about the characters by observing them and their behaviour as regards a mysterious box. They have dialogue during this action, but its delivery can reveal a variety of emotions not explicitly written into the screenplay. The box itself is purposefully never described: it could be a ring box, a coffin, a new refrigerator, a match box and each of these types of boxes could impart a quite different meaning on the dialogue. These are all ideas Smith and I brainstormed when we discussed the screenplay together for the first time. There is urgency to open the box evident in the dialogue and to open the box before 'he' comes back – this off-screen character was Smith's idea and was interpreted quite differently by each production team – and then a resolution. The latter was a point of discussion. We agreed that the screenplay *does* end with a resolution: Eve and Adam decide to open the box together. But there is of course an aspect of the story that remains unresolved in the screenplay: what is *in* the box? We debated whether not revealing the content(s) of the box was a 'cheat' built in primarily to service the study. We discussed the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction*.²⁵ The content of the briefcase in Quentin Tarantino's film is never revealed. The briefcase *and* its contents are a MacGuffin: it drives the plot, but what it *is* is only important to the characters, not the story. Tarantino and his production team give their viewers only a glowing, orange light: an obscure hint as to what is in the suitcase. Smith similarly gives away nothing with the box and we discussed whether we thought any of the production teams might choose to resolve this in their films. Our discussion of these 'what ifs' were flights of creative fancy on our part, but they were also intended as brainstorming sessions to prevent unforeseen methodological calamity that could be caused by the screenplay including or not including specific information.

Smith and each of the directors were given a thorough description of my intentions for this study before they agreed to participate. The ethics of working on a project of this nature dictated clear communication from the onset to be certain that the scriptwriter and directors were all aware that their work was going to be critically analysed in a written and filmed PhD thesis. In addition to this, they were all made

²⁵ *Pulp Fiction*, dir by Quentin Tarantino, (Miramax, A Band A Part, 1994).

aware of the intent of the study to examine different filmed versions of the same screenplay which meant that they would be in a unique situation with regard to copyright. Smith retains copyright of the screenplay and each director and/or their production company is the owner of their finished film. Smith and each of the directors explicitly gave me permission to discuss their work in an academic context and to hold a public screening of their work for academic purposes. Additionally, I sought permission to use as much of each film's footage as I deemed necessary to complete the filmed portion of my thesis. This was done separately to ensure each director understood I would use footage from their finished film (and thus potentially their edits, music, or titles) in service of the thesis, but that this would not be displayed to the public without their express permission.

ii. Transcripts

While the original screenplay is almost exactly two pages in length, the finished films vary in length from 2 minutes and 15 seconds to 5 minutes and 40 seconds. For ease and accuracy of comparison of the finished films to the original screenplay and to each other, I chose to write out transcript screenplays for each. As previously noted, it is not common for films to publish their screenplays, and when they do it is sometimes the original screenplay without any changes, but it is also sometimes some version of a shooting script or a transcript of the finished film. Alan Ball comments on publishing the shooting script for *American Beauty*: '[t]he book that's published as the shooting script is actually the script of the movie as it turned out because they called me and they said, 'That's what we want to do'.²⁶ A shooting script is often somewhat altered from the original script, usually by the director following conversations or rehearsals with actors, their cinematographer, location scouting etc. For example, the shooting script might update a location: if a school classroom is deemed not ideal for story purposes, the same scene might be moved to the school playground and a shooting script would reflect this adaptation. If an actor improvised a slightly different or longer/shorter take on a scene in rehearsals, the shooting script might reflect this as well if for no other reason than for the sound crew to know what their correct dialogue cues were. A shooting script would also often be annotated with scene names and other practical information including types of shots i.e. dolly, crane, or costume details. The shooting

²⁶ Alan Ball, 'American Beauty Screenwriter Alan Ball Conducts Case Study at the Ifp West Screenwriters Conference' <http://www.insidefilm.com/alan_ball.html> [accessed March 28 2010]).

script is the version of the script that includes some notes on *how* the story will be told/shot. It is generally considered poor form in the industry for a writer (who is not also already slated to direct her/his own script) to include any camera movements or shot selections (pan, close-up etcetera) in a spec screenplay. These are added later to form the shooting script. Alan Ball is clarifying that what he wrote for publication was a *transcript*: 'the script of the movie as it turned out'. There is sometimes a different usage of the term 'shooting script' between the film industry, publishing industry, and amongst film scholars, as previously discussed. Publishers often use the term to suggest to the reader that what is published will at least very closely correlate with the film they are familiar with rather than the 'working draft' screenplay that was delivered to the production team in pre-production.

In writing up the transcripts for the films in my study, as I have mentioned in brief already, I realised that I was creating another adaptation. This realisation led to the transcripts being used only as a quick reference for quickly counting how many films named their characters 'Adam' and 'Eve', for example, or to check which films included the sound of a ticking clock as mentioned in Smith's screenplay. The transcripts were not used for detailed comparative analysis: the films themselves were used for this. The transcripts were incredibly useful because they made significant alterations to Smith's script immediately obvious, as with one script that omits two of the three characters and thus also a significant portion of dialogue that would have been spoken by Adam who never appears on screen. I considered asking the directors to provide their shooting script and/or transcripts but I decided that such a request might make them self-conscious of any adaptations they planned to make and this played a large part in my decision to transcribe the films myself much as another researcher might transcribe interviews. This is what, I think, led me to pursue the writing of the transcripts myself, not realising that much of my initial intended uses for them would be compromised by the adaptations I applied in the course of transcription. On the transcription of interviews and the potential 'adaptations' that occur, I found Evanthia Lyons and Adrian Coyle's and Carla Willig's work helpful.²⁷

²⁷ Evanthia Lyons and Adrian Coyle, *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (Sage, 2007); Carla Willig, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2013).

Method Detail: The Five Films

i. Directors and Production Teams

The directors involved in this study were selected based on my knowledge of their work and work ethic. Simply put, it was my aim to involve directors who I was quite certain would complete the project once they had committed. While this may seem obvious, all the directors I intended to approach work freelance which means that, despite the best intentions, paid work could materialise and compromise the shooting schedule for *The Box* and this effectively narrowed my list of ‘possibles’ down to those who I knew would honour their commitment to make a no/low budget film for free even if it meant exhaustion, extensive re-scheduling, exhaustion, extensive re-scheduling, or similar. I pitched the project to the directors either by email, or in person. The ownership of the finished film belongs to the director. This was made clear from the start and is both fair play and incentive to work on the project. A film that can be sent to festivals and/or included on one’s reel means that the directors are not working entirely for ‘free’ because they – and the actors and crew – gain experience and another item for their CV. Each potential director was told via email that, ‘The idea is that you are as creative with the script as you like as long as the finished film has recognisably been shot from the script provided. Any significant creative changes (i.e. major dialogue or location changes) should be okayed by me, as co-producer’. Apart from being required to name me as co-producer for my role in the project, the directors were free to assemble their own production teams however they wanted. They were told they could shoot on any format they wanted from 16mm film to the digital camera on their phone; the timeframe for shooting and delivery; the format for delivery; and that other directors would be getting the same instructions but that each director had the copyright clearance for the screenplay and ownership of their finished film including the right to distribute it however they saw fit.

After each of the directors had committed to the project, I sent an email (on 24th May 2013) with the screenplay – which was their first opportunity to read it – and the official ‘go’ for production. The intention was that each director have the same amount of time to plan their work after reading the screenplay for the first time. This email went to two directors, JH and AG (I use their initials as, because they did not complete the project, they did not give permission for me to discuss them in this work), who did not complete the project. JH was not someone I had worked with before, but was based in Norwich and a director who I thought might enjoy the project idea. We met and discussed the project in person and JH was intrigued and agreed to partake. JH was

offered a paid commission at the end of July that she felt could compromise her production of *The Box* as she'd intended: she had planned a Kickstarter campaign and already filmed interviews with myself and Smith to use for this. JH apologised and bowed out. AG was the only director I had not met in person and had been recommended by a colleague. He never replied to the email sent in May and, despite several follow-up emails, I never heard from him again despite his fervent commitment to the project at an earlier date. Shortly after committing to the project, he won a national award for a commercial he had directed. It is speculation on my part, but I think it probable that he received a flood of excellent offers of work as a consequence of the award and decided that if something had to give, it was *The Box* film: he did not know me, we had never met, he was unlikely to be burning a bridge he would need to cross any time soon. I strayed from my selection process (as above) in this one instance due to having been turned down by several filmmakers who fell within these self-imposed guidelines and thus having run out of options. Due to these two directors' departures from the project, I added another director who had been on my long-list, Emily Payne, and then, reluctantly, at first, decided to direct the 'fifth' film myself.

As I approached directors for this project (rather than producers), I consider this a director-led project. With the short length of the screenplay, the scale of production on each of the films involved minimal crew. As such, the directors were in a strong position of control over their final film. Here my personal experience was a strong decision-making factor: I felt that giving directors this level of control over their film would be a strong incentive to participate. After ten years working freelance myself, I knew I had missed having creative control over my finished work. While this project has a set of parameters to follow, there is, by design, a fair bit of room for creative input.

ii. Me as Director

Despite the urging of several peers and mentors, I remained convinced I was too involved in the planning of this study to be one of the directors. I was resolute in this until I lost two directors within two months of the delivery date I'd set for 30th September 2013. While two months is certainly enough time to shoot and edit a two-minute film, this assumes very quick planning/pre-production and few other commitments. One of the brainstorm sessions with Smith involved us wondering if anyone would choose to shoot guerrilla-style: perhaps using a phone camera, on location, with friends/non-professional performers etc. This was certainly within the remit, but an important factor in this consideration is of course the notion that this film is a potential calling-card for all

involved and, for some if not many, this means production value is a key factor. Any creative member of the production team that is not well-established in their career would have an interest in having films on their reel that proved their capability in making things look good/polished. This said, guerrilla-style can have a fun and edgy spirit to it that can easily equal or trump high production value. *The Blair Witch Project* is a good example of this. In the end, no one took this approach and, reading between the lines in their production journals, I think this was intentional. In part, perhaps, because they wanted *me* to believe they had taken the project 'seriously enough' to cast professional actors, cinematographers, editors, and so on. Or perhaps the aesthetic did not particularly appeal to any of them. I discuss this in more detail later in this chapter. Nonetheless, taking a new director into the project at such a late date – unless they were very wealthy and/or out of work or extraordinarily committed – would almost certainly dictate a guerrilla style of shooting.

It is important to bear in mind that my intention was to produce a set of data to analyse in order to develop a specific understanding of the relationship between a screenplay and its film (or between a film and its screenplay). As the five films *are* this data, I was involved in the creation of my own data both as organiser and as participant. The degree of liberty that *I expected could taken with the screenplay* was communicated by me to the other four directors. I had 'wonderings' (many of which developed during discussion with Smith) including, but not limited to: Will anyone make it a horror film as Smith had imagined the story while he was writing the first draft? Will anyone choose animation? What will be Adam and Eve's relationship to one another: brother and sister, romantic partners, friends? Despite these various wonderings, when I finally looked at the screenplay as something I was going to make into a film myself, I only imagined films that *I* might want to make. In other words, my own abilities, prejudices, and seemed to suppress all my earlier wonderings and buried them somewhere deep enough that they had no influence that I am, in retrospect, aware of. For example, despite extensive conversations about potential genres the script could be interpreted as, my interpretation was drama. In fact, in conversation with Smith after all the films had been completed, and obviously after we had had all of our wonderings conversations, he said that he never thought of puppets *or* of the idea of the characters being *inside* the box. This served to reassure me that my idea of the screenplay was at least to some degree formed outside of my expectations or wonderings about what might happen when I gave the film to the other teams.

METHOD FOR ANALYSING THE DATA

Written Analysis

My method for comparative analysis in the written thesis involves making a detailed comparison of the similarities and differences between the screenplay and each film as well as performing a comparison of the films to one another to observe the ways in which they adapted the screenplay that are similar and different to one another. The comparative analysis will encompass aspects such as changes to dialogue and/or action, alteration of character names, and addition of other content not in Smith's screenplay as well as elements that are not regularly included in a screenplay such as lighting, cinematography, music, or sound design, for example. This is in essence my 'new' fidelity study, as previously described. These comparisons, once completed, will give way to comparisons of the films *to one another* and allow me to comment on whether similar interpretations are employed by more than one production crew. The size of the sample group I have constructed is ideal for analysis that focuses on each individual film and production team. I am able to use the outcome of this comparative analysis to draw conclusions about the relationship between the original *The Box* screenplay and the five films made from it as well as to speculate on how these conclusions may or may not apply to this relationship in more broad terms.

According to Sarah Cardwell, scholars writing on adaptation have traditionally concerned themselves with 'the process by which an adaptation comes into being, as opposed to the 'end-product', the adaptation itself'²⁸ (11). The primary concern of my study is an analysis of the end product and *that* adaptation has occurred. I have worked under the assumption that the 'process' or 'film production' is distinct to the production team assembled, amongst other factors (such as, for example, weather, equipment availability, budget, time concerns), and therefore that examination of the final artefact is key to understanding the relationship of script to film. I will not attempt to ferret out who made each creative decision as this would not benefit my study which seeks to explore adaptation, not its agent, the adaptor. This could, however, be a worthwhile pursuit for an alternate study. The written method will allow for a qualitative analysis using close examination of additions, deletions, similarities, and differences between the screenplay and films which will lead to a comparison of the films to one another to see where their additions, deletions, similarities, and differences intersect (if at all) and what this reveals about the relationship each film and the films as a

²⁸ Cardwell, p.11.

collective have to their screenplay.

To elaborate on the terms I have used, additions will be any aspect of the finished film not explicitly described in the screenplay such as a 'new' location, or non-diegetic music. Deletions are aspects such as omitting a line of dialogue, a character, or a prop. Similarities will include actors cast to match physical descriptions in the screenplay such as male/female or dialogue delivered exactly as written. Differences will be a change of stated location or time of day, for example. The analysis of these aspects of the films is how I will address my research questions. This data will lead to conclusions about what *did* happen within the parameters of my study when five films were made from the same screenplay – i.e. *how* they are similar/different – and this examination will illuminate the relationship between screenplay and film and how 'adaptation' is or is not the best term to use to describe this.

As such, my written engagement addresses the current debates in the field and where my research can contribute as well as undergoing an investigation of the ways in which I observe the films of *The Box* in comparison to the screenplay and to each other and what this indicates about the relationship between these two creative works.

Filmed Analysis

The film entitled *What If*, is a creative endeavour and a different, complementary platform for analysis that will exploit the nature of the audio/visual medium to juxtapose the varieties in adaptation discussed in the written portion of my thesis, and also some that are not.

My objective is for my written thesis and my filmed thesis to complement and fortify one another with neither alone being intended as the 'primary' or sole investigation. Following the same logic that dictates that changes to a story will happen when there is a movement from one medium to another, my written and filmed analyses ultimately explore overlapping ideas but in different media that provide their own distinct means for communication. The process of analysing my data is invigorated by utilising the dual written and filmed approach affording me what I consider to be an enhanced overall perspective.

As discussed in my literature review, there are various debates about *how* words can be metamorphosed into an aural and visual experience. George Bluestone summarises this by saying that there is a, 'lack of awareness that mutations are probable the moment one goes from a given set of fluid, but relatively homogeneous,

conventions to another; that changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium'.²⁹ This is also true of my analysis of the relationship between script and film, there is an 'inevitable' difference between what I can communicate with words versus images and sound as I address my research question. And thus the analytical discovery via written versus audio-visual is likely to broaden with this dual approach. The written affording detailed rhetoric and the audio/visual accommodating a juxtaposition of the film scores, the visage of the characters and their costumes, and more.

While analysis can be achieved utilising film stills and detailed written explication of a scene or scenes, there is a degree of intercourse that remains unexplored with this method. Explaining a visual and aural communication can be interpreted as an act of adaptation and a choice not to present this in its original form (as it was intended). The written analysis of a filmed artefact therefore also introduces the same trans-medium concerns discussed in the previous chapter that are prevalent within adaptation studies. Additionally, the *process* of creating or assembling a filmed thesis affords one to answer a different and complimentary set of questions. By this I mean the creative process of editing together the material into a new creative artefact will undoubtedly evoke different reactions in me as a filmmaker and researcher and will also give me the opportunity to experiment with and watch isolated clips of the five films cut together and re-arranged. As Desmond Bell notes:

when evaluation is autocritical in form, with the author of the work providing an analytical dissection of what they have produced, then some additional element of insight stemming from their intimate knowledge of the creative processes involved in a particular project might be brought to the analysis, a sort of experiential grounding for reflection.³⁰

As such, the act of creating the filmed thesis based on the five films, will enable a practical and experiential examination of how the emotion/tone of the story or its detail may be altered by the process of adaptation. As one of *The Box* directors, I have an 'intimate' insight into the process involved in taking *this particular screenplay* into production that will inform the creation of the filmed thesis.

²⁹ Bluestone, p.5.

³⁰ Desmond Bell, 'Creative Film and Media Practice as Research – in Pursuit of the Obscure Object of Knowledge', *Journal of Media Practice*, 7 (2006), pp.85-100 (p.86).

To examine the possibilities of combining aspects of each of the five films purely in a written thesis would require a degree of speculation (see the Bordwell thought experiment discussed in Chapter 2, for example [page number?!]) and limit the creative experimentation that has the potential to augment analysis. In other words, the act of 'doing the film' immerses me in both the shot footage – affording me 'experiential' knowledge of the other four films – as well as the potential in its re-assemblage including, of course, the addition of music, sound, titles, and/or voice-over. Working with the footage, reviewing it and playing it over and over and in different sequences gives me the opportunity to experience it differently and more intimately. (This calls back to mind the idea of repetition in von Trier's and Hartley's work.) David Bohm expresses a similar idea on the value of varying one's investigative methods in *On Creativity* when he writes that:

... penetrating insight may lead to important discoveries, and to new inventions of considerable practical importance. Yet, it is not creation. For in creation one perceives a new fundamental set of similar differences that constitutes a genuinely new order (and not merely a relationship between two or more orders that are already known). This new order leads hierarchically to a wide range of new kinds of structure. Generally speaking, an isolated penetrating insight connecting up one field with another falls short of doing all this.³¹

Within the parameters of my study, the combination of written and creative practice I have chosen is intended produce a compelling and thorough examination of the creative works. Additionally, as my research is grounded in the belief that the telling of a story in one medium must undergo a metamorphosis to take it to another medium, it is 'good practice' to let the investigation span both these media.

The filmed component is an aural and visual *revelation* of the perceived similarities and differences between the films and the screenplay and each other. The result is an experimental and exploratory stitching together of components from each of the films intended to create a new idea of what these films are and mean as a whole/group. The process of *making* this film elucidates the audio-visual specific nature of each interpretation of the screenplay via the experimental process that is film editing. The revelations born from making the film will inform my written thesis to some degree (as will the thinking on the written thesis inevitably inform the film), but I would add that

³¹ David Bohm, *On Creativity* (Psychology Press, 1998), p.19.

some ideas are better shown than told. The film is intended to be an entity unto itself: a distinct character that contributes to the narrative of my thesis.

Limitations of my methods

While I have outlined my intentions regarding the five short films and their analysis, there are limitations that should be recognised at this juncture. I have stressed that my focus is on *whether adaptations have taken place*, and not on determining if these adaptations are creative, born of circumstance, or who is ultimately responsible for them. However, I have also included practitioner accounts in my written thesis – William Goldman, Lars von Trier, Hal Hartley, Alan Ball, for example – and have requested production journals from each of the directors who worked on a version of *The Box* and my analysis has benefited from insights gained from these. My intention is that any materials drawn from the production journals is received as more than simply anecdotal. The included practitioner accounts should be received with equal consideration to the scholarly theories they are presented with. Critical analysis of the data is primary, particularly as data such as this has not previously been generated, and it will be informed where appropriate with material from the journals. For example, in Philipson's *The Box*³² his notes clarify that the relationship he as director intended for Adam and Eve is that of lovers. Adam is a ghost who is re-visiting Eve as she has a crisis later in life. It is possible to read this relationship differently upon viewing the film, and I was ultimately unsure of their relationship. This method is problematic in that I will engage with my interpretation of the films, as a researcher, but will also use information in the journals *where it exists*, to correct a potential mis-interpretation on my part. This decision is intended to clarify a potential adaptation from script to screen *when possible*. In discussion of how Eve and Adam's relationship is interpreted by each production team, I would have been unsure where Philipson's version stood if not for his journal notes. However, this choice calls to mind questions of audience and reception as well and an examination of what the directors intended and what was received by audiences raises the possibility of pursuing this avenue. When given the option to pursue what might be my singular misconception as 'audience', I have chosen to default to the director's journal if it directly contradicts my interpretation.

Because this study does not seek to examine *when and how* adaptations occurred, there was no attempt made to gather information from other members of the production team. Ostensibly this raises new research questions for further study into

³² *The Box*, dir by Stephen Philipson, (Independent, 2014).

the 'how and when' of adaptation from script to screen, but this is outside of the intended scope of the present study.

This creation of and analysis of a short screenplay and five short films cannot be seen as representative of the wider industry or practice because of its small scale, but this method does enable the study to focus on the individual films and be precise in their analysis. For a researcher, there is enough data to perform a close comparative analysis and this is the aim of the thesis. My choice of directors and the stage they are at in their careers is also a limitation of my method. There are no directors in this study who are in the later stage of their career, with an extensive or international body of work and experience. It is possible that a wider range of experience within the director pool *or* a pool entirely composed of later career stage directors might have produced significantly more varied results. This is speculation, but the directors involved do conform to early or mid-career with no representation of later career.

To conclude, the methodological approach that underpins my method is a collection of long-standing debates in the field of adaptation studies that demonstrate a dearth of focus on the adaptation from screenplay to film. My method is designed to explore the original screenplay to film and the adaptations that occurred when a single screenplay was produced multiple times by different production teams. Because my method involves practitioners and practice there is an emphasis in my analysis on the importance of both theory and practice and a conscious attempt to meld the two in pursuit of a comprehensive examination of what actually happens when a screenplay is made into a film. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of research by clarifying the relationship between original screenplay and film and also with the particular method devised to do so.

CHAPTER 3

Findings: An Analysis

Having organised and executed – to varying degrees¹ – the making of five films, with the process beginning in earnest in September 2012 and all five films being delivered by June 2014, the viewing of all of the films felt a long time in coming. My initial viewing of the films was back-to-back, in random order. The total running time is 17 minutes and 51 seconds. Each production team submitted what I asked for and adhered to the brief. The films are all obviously produced from Smith's screenplay and I will elaborate on this further.

I will divide this chapter into two primary sections each of which will report my findings and analyse them. As this thesis is interested in examining the relationship between screenplay and film, this comparison is of paramount interest. I will begin with a comparison of each film to the screenplay to be followed by a comparison of the adaptations to one another. Firstly, I will compare each of the finished films to Smith's screenplay looking what has been added and what has been removed from script to screen and within these acknowledging the ways in which the film is also 'true' to the screenplay. Regarding the language I will utilise, the use of 'additions' or 'removals' will indicate aspects that were or were not in the original screenplay and have been added or removed. These additions and removals will also be considered to be 'adaptations'. Any medium-specific issues such as music or sound effects, for example, will be addressed directly and considered to be additions and their role as 'adaptations' examined. Secondly I will compare the films to one another to examine whether there

¹ My version of *The Box* was directed, produced, and edited solely by myself. The remaining four films credit me as either Executive Producer or Co-Producer for the work I did in developing the concept, bringing on board the scriptwriter, consulting on the screenplay, and engaging the directors. This credit was agreed upon by each of the directors prior to joining the project.

is overlap in the adaptations encompassing both general features, such as the themes addressed, and specific details, such as presence or absence of a prop.

The order the films are discussed in Section I is the same order in which they appear on the DVD. Section II will prioritise similarities that apply to the greatest number of films and proceed in descending order and then do the same for differences. I consider both the similarities and differences between the films equally revealing. The order of their examination is not an indication of order of importance. As a prelude to these two primary sections, I have made an overview of several key observations that will be developed in greater detail in one or both of the primary subdivisions of this chapter.

AN OVERVIEW OF KEY OBSERVATIONS

The following are some notable adaptations made to Smith's screenplay and I provide them in this overview simply to flag them up prior to delving into the detailed analyses on a film-by-film basis. The following adaptation are those which, by my analysis, have had the most remarkable impact on the story from script to screen. These impacts will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

■ Adam is a ghost

This reading of the script both occurred to two directors and/or their production teams and survived to the finished films: *Burrows Road*² directed by Tania Freimuth and *The Box* directed by SP. While both directors addressed the ghostliness of their characters differently, this adaptation has the potential to alter the dynamic between Adam and Eve because he is no longer a corporeal part of Eve's life. I consider making Adam's character a ghost to be an adaptation as the screenplay does not definitively make clear that Adam *is* a ghost. The screenplay does not say he is *not* a ghost, but I will apply this same train of logic to all perceived adaptations henceforth. The decision Eve is struggling over regarding the box becomes hers alone in this case. Adam is involved as an influence, but it is unclear how the consequences will/can affect him. There is nothing in Smith's script that indicates the possibility that Adam alone is not alive or 'actually' present in the scene, so this adaptation noteworthy particularly as it occurs in

² *Burrows Road*, dir by Tania Freimuth, (Independent, 2014).

two of five films.

■ Removing Adam entirely

Eve's battle is externalised in Martin Tease's *The Box*³ as this film shows Eve delivering a medley of both Eve's and Adam's lines from Smith's script. Adam exists – he is causing Eve angst and there is an added line of dialogue, 'Stupid man!' – but he is not present. This adaptation leaves Eve to figure out the box-related dilemma on her own. Thematically, this is similar to the two ghost films. Eve is the focus and Adam literally fades into the background or is entirely absent. Tease's Eve is left to come to a decision about the box entirely on her own which shifts the focus of the drama.

■ Genre: Ghost Story, Science-Fiction, Drama

By Rick Altman's definition, while *The Box* films 'borrow devices from established genres' they do not necessarily 'foreground their generic characteristics to the point where the genre concept itself plays a major role in the film'.⁴ This is particularly evident in Payne's *The Box*⁵ which has an unexpected, arguably sci-fi or fantasy or supernatural denouement. This is a remarkable adaption in part because the content of the box is revealed (and is seemingly 'other worldly'), but also because there are not any typical science-fiction indicators⁶ in the screenplay. The genre of the script was intended to be flexible in that Smith purposefully avoided including potentially leading genre conventions – a Wild West setting, for example. Freimuth and Philipson both portray Adam as a ghost which might suggest a ghost story hybrid genre with drama. Neither ghost is frightening or horrific. Tease's *The Box* and Oey's *The Box* are both dramas while Oey's could also be considered a children's film due to the inclusion of puppets.

■ Revealing the third character

Freimuth put on screen a living, breathing man as the third character that in Smith's screenplay remains unseen. In the screenplay, Adam and Eve are very concerned that

³ *The Box*, dir by Martin Tease, (Independent, 2014).

⁴ Rick Altman, *Cinema and Genre*. ed. by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.279.

⁵ *The Box*, dir by Emily Payne, (Independent, 2014).

⁶ There is no fictitious science in the screenplay, this is an addition applied to Payne's version of the box. For more on science-fiction and its tropes, see Neale, Stephen, *Genre and Hollywood*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2000) pp.100-104, for example.

'[h]e's going to be back soon' and Freimuth gives a reason for this concern: the results of a pregnancy test and Eve being forced to reveal them. In *Burrows Road*, instead of hearing 'his' footsteps nearby, 'Luke' (he is named in the credits) is shown walking down the street towards Eve's flat as Eve and Adam have their urgent conversation.

■ Action sequence and pastoral sequence

Payne's film starts with a red car screaming down a residential street and coming to an abrupt standstill in front of a house. This is not in Smith's script and this raises the energy level of the story from the onset. Equally, Freimuth's film starts with a series of images of nature which creates a very gentle tone to the opening of *Burrows Road*.



SECTION I

The Original Script Compared to the Finished Films

Philipson's *The Box*

ADDITIONS – HOLE IN FLOOR, GHOST, A DOOR, AND A SIGNIFICANT AGE GAP

The opening shot is a slow movement down an empty hall which comes to rest on Eve, sitting on the edge of a bed. Eve is a White woman in the latter years of her life: white haired and seemingly wrestling with regret over the partner she chose many years ago. There are several floorboards removed near her feet, an inlaid wood keepsake box on the floor next to the ragged hole, and she appears to be alone. The boards have been pried up, probably in haste, as some are ragged and splintered. Eve is dressed smartly in a skirt and heels, hair styled, and make-up on suggesting she did not prepare for the task of pulling up the boards: this was an impulsive act. When she hears a voice come from behind her, she seems unsurprised. Adam is heard before being seen and to add to the discombobulation of his arrival, when he is revealed, he appears young enough to be Eve's son and is also White. Wearing matching necklaces, Eve and Adam would seem to have been sweethearts sometime in their 20s. Adam, it seems, has reappeared as a ghost to participate in the decision whether or not to open the box. Eve looks at him as an equal and increasingly, as the scene progresses, as her adviser.

The 'he' that is going to be back soon is likely the husband in the wedding photo on the side table. Based on the age of the couple in the photo, Eve and her husband have been married quite some time and perhaps since not long after Eve and Adam ended their relationship. But the matching necklaces are sentimental as is Adam's earnest behaviour. He seems naïve in his conviction to open the box and let loose all it holds but nonetheless, he eventually persuades Eve. It might be that his presence, which seems both comfortable and comforting to Eve, is what coaxes her to agree.

Whilst, as already noted, Smith's script makes no mention of age or ethnicity, the decision to have a considerable age gap between Adam and Eve is significant as it creates a particular, intense, dynamic between their characters which adds dimension not present in the screenplay. Eve is both girlish and weary in Adam's youthful and energetic presence. Smith's dialogue is juxtaposed by the two people, seemingly in very different stages of life, having the conversation.

Finally, the location Philipson has set his drama in is actually two rooms with an adjoining door. This means that after Adam has peered down the street through the sheer curtains, dreading the return of the unseen character, he returns to Eve's side having shut the adjoining door on his way. This makes a physical barrier between 'them' and 'him'. For this moment, they are the only two people in the world. This adaptation contributes to the magnitude of the situation.

REMOVALS – LIVING ROOM, DUST

Philipson's film is very similar to Smith's screenplay as regards dialogue, pacing, and location. The dialogue is almost identical apart from the removal of Eve's line 'We can't hide from it, not once we open it' and the change from 'We're finished' to 'Finished' in Adam's dialogue. These removals change the meaning of the scene. The omission of the 'we can't hide' line seems to imply that Eve will be alone in dealing with the ramifications of opening the box. There is no 'we' in the scenario because Adam exists only in Eve's imagination. In this version of *The Box* the living room has been adapted into a bedroom with a bookshelf, clock, and several (packed?) suitcases visible. The adaptation of the living room into a bedroom makes the scene between two old lovers a bit more intimate. It is also a better, more out of the way place for Eve to choose to hide a box under floorboards than a living room that receives daily household traffic. This adaptation indicates the degree of adaptation a production team can apply to one aspect of a screenplay. There has been a narrative applied to what was 'a box on the

floor' in the screenplay.

The bedroom is spotless and therefore it is unlikely that the light streaming through the sheer curtains might illuminate any dust. The immaculate room suggests a hermetic life and fuel for Eve's present regret and anguish over the contents of the box and her young love, Adam. It is in observing this that one might acknowledge how Smith's description of the room sounds moody or even sinister in comparison. As such, removing the dust has quite a profound effect on the mood of the scene in this case. With the transformation of Adam into a memory or apparition, the tidy bedroom of a house suggests a degree of comfort and wealth and makes Eve seem wistful in her conjuring of Adam. The theme of regret that permeates this adaptation is reinforced by the adaptations to age and setting.

Tease's *The Box*

ADDITIONS – ADAM'S LINES, ZULU, A MIRROR, AND A TV

There are a couple of significant adaptations in Tease's version of *The Box*. As previously discussed, the description of Adam and Eve in Smith's screenplay omits age, ethnic group, and appearance. Tease's Eve is a Black woman with long braids and in modern dress. She seems to be wearing a light coat despite being indoors which gives an indication that she might just have returned home/to this house. As Smith's screenplay has the characters firmly settled in their living room with no sign of having just arrived or intending to leave, this is an adaptation made by Tease. Eve paces as she talks aloud to herself, but not only has she been given some of Adam's lines to perform, as though she is playing both parts of an imaginary conversation, she utters distracted and irritated in Zulu. There are no subtitles for these outbursts, but the tone of Eve's voice and the delivery of her other lines suggest she's venting her frustration with the situation. The lack of subtitles creates a divide between Eve and her audience because they are not invited in to her world entirely unless they happen to understand Zulu and, as the English dialogue is not subtitled with Zulu, one can assume the film is meant to be delivered to an English-speaking audience. Giving Eve dialogue in Zulu is itself also an adaptation.

In addition to the Zulu dialogue, Eve also says, 'Stupid man!... Selfish!' which are lines not present in Smith's screenplay. This version of Eve is battling the problem of the box alone. Eve addresses herself in a large mirror and her dialogue is a loose mixture of Smith's dialogue for Adam and Eve to the effect that Eve is chastising

herself in Adam's absence, but also clearly holds him at least somewhat responsible for the present situation. With no one else to confront, Eve gazes at her own reflection in the mirror: her own adversary, her own solace.

Throughout the scene, as Eve talks to herself and paces and thinks, there is a television playing the background. At first it seems to be a sitcom and then a news report. These additions contribute to setting the scene for Tease's solo interpretation of the screenplay. Eve manages to have a debate with herself about whether or not to open the box despite the potential distraction of a television playing in the background, the only reminder of an outside world. Instead of Smith's net curtains with light streaming through, Tease's living room has black and brown curtains blocking all daylight out and giving more of an impression of a stage than a set. When combined, Tease's adaptations to the screenplay all point to an attempt to increase the sense of Eve's isolation: she speaks in an untranslated, uncommon language; Adam has been removed from the conversation; she paces alone in a room completely blocked off from the outside, not even a shaft of natural light penetrates her world.

REMOVALS – ADAM, CURTAINS AND CLOCK, TEARS, KNEELING, SUNLIGHT

Arguably, the most significant deletion in Tease's *The Box* is the physical removal of Adam. Some of his lines are given to Eve who faces the quandary about whether or not to open the box alone. Because of Adam's physical absence, it might be easy to overlook the other omitted character, the off-screen 'he' who is going to be back soon. This 'he' serves to heighten the tension throughout Smith's screenplay and this tension is replaced in Tease's version by the urgency with which Eve delivers her dialogue: she seems to be the only one placing pressure on the situation. While there is no clock visible in her living room, there is the sound of one ticking. Adam is not there to peek out through the curtains nor does Eve take this up in Adam's absence. The lack of a clock and sheer curtains in a room that is already more modern than described in Smith's screenplay is a departure, but possibly most striking is the light: there is no sunlight at all. Perhaps Tease has changed the time of day to night, but despite time of day not having a great impact on the story, the visual effect created by having Eve indoors with no natural light in the room does. Eliminated is the juxtaposition of a sunny day with a potentially ominous or, at least, charged situation as it exists in Smith's script. Tease's Eve is alone in her living room, no one to provoke or calm her, no outside world intruding on her situation. No sound from the outside world or indeed elsewhere in the house makes her living room seem more like a sound-proof box than

a home. This adaptation is focused specifically on Eve and a box.

Payne's *The Box*

ADDITIONS – THE SPEEDING CAR, A RANSACKING, DIALOGUE, A RESOLUTION (OF SORTS), SCI-FI (?), & MUSIC

Payne's version of *The Box* opens dramatically differently than Smith's screenplay. A red car screeches down a residential street and into a driveway. The driver, Adam, gets out swiftly and rushes into a ground-floor flat. Adam's arrival at the scene is an adrenaline rush that sets up audience expectation for a high-stakes situation. The situation unfolds, after this new beginning, very much as it does in Smith's screenplay but arguably with more urgency. Building on the tension of the 'new' beginning, Payne has Adam find Eve in a flat that has been ransacked. Items swept off shelves, furniture up-ended, household items strewn about: the flat has been thoroughly turned over. Eve sits in the living room, eyes red and swollen. Whilst Smith's screenplay has Eve in tears half-way through her conversation with Adam, Payne has Eve reach some sort of conclusion in Adam's absence and therefore her teary upset has already begun before he arrives on the scene.

Adam seems to be Eve's partner, but this is not explicitly revealed. Payne has added a line of dialogue that Adam delivers when he discovers Eve in the living room: 'Why didn't you say before?'. She replies with another new line, 'I didn't know until today. I just suddenly realised that it was right there under our noses'. In keeping with Smith's vague/open to interpretation dialogue, this adaptation could be understood to mean a variety of things and Payne does not attempt to clarify. However, another new line of dialogue has Adam informing us that Eve found the box. Smith does not say where the box came from in his screenplay, so this is an addition by Payne. This tells us that for better or worse, Adam and Eve were looking for something, if not specifically a box, and they have therefore some notion of what they might find *in* it. Or, at least they think they do. Whatever journey led the two to this point, as in Smith's screenplay, they are now hesitant to open the box for fear of what it might reveal and because 'he' is going to be back soon. The dialogue follows Smith's again here until a small change in Eve's dialogue from 'If we open the box it's finished too, don't you get that?' to 'If I open it we're finished, do you not get that?'. This change indicates the ramifications of opening the box directly effect Adam and Eve rather than some situation or object as Smith's screenplay suggests. This alteration of language has a meaning that becomes clear in the final shot of the film: Adam and Eve – or some version of them – are

trapped in the box. This adaptation, therefore, means the consequence shifts from 'it' being finished to Adam and Eve being finished.

Payne provides a resolution or partial resolution to Smith's open-ended script. Eve and Adam open the box. They both kneel, as scripted, and agree to open it together, now. Smith's script ends here, but Payne adds a series of shots where Adam and Eve open the box and then peer inside, seeing its contents. This reveal is an addition, but so is the fantasy or science-fiction or supernatural sight they see. Inside the box, Adam and Eve see themselves, moments ago, opening the box and then peering inside. This sight is open to interpretation, and they remain mesmerised and the film ends here. The lingering question for the audience is no longer 'what is in the box', but 'what are they going to do about what is in the box'?

Payne commissioned music for *The Box*. The sound effects at the beginning over the title denote something sinister is afoot. These are medium-specific additions. There is a ringing, buzzing type of sound at the end as Adam and Eve open the box and then the music plays over the credits. The withholding of the music until the end of the film serves to underscore the unexpected ending. As there is previously no strong suggestion of fantasy or science-fiction or supernatural situations until the last scene, the introduction of music and sound effects (that are appropriate to these genres) at this point intensifies how unsettling (and potentially other-worldly) their discovery is.

REMOVALS – CURTAINS AND CLOCK

While there are curtains in Payne's adaptation and Adam does look through them to the street, they are not net curtains. A shaft of light penetrates into the room as Adam looks intently out the window and this serves as a reminder of the 'us vs them' situation the two characters are in. Theirs is an 'ordinary' looking living room, the up-turned furniture could be 'clean, but faded', it is difficult to tell. The overall mood of Smith's living room is not lost here despite not being strictly heeded. If there is a pendulum clock in the room, it is amongst the rubble and therefore not seen or heard, and so its meaning is removed. Payne's additional car scene and the turned-over flat provide the pace and urgency that the clock provides in the screenplay.

Oey's *The Box*

ADDITIONS – PUPPETS, LOCATION (INSIDE BOXNESS, THEATRE STAGE, BEACH), NAMES, DIALOGUE, RESOLUTION/ESCAPE, MUSIC

Oey's version while still a live-action version of Smith's screenplay, is cast with puppets

rather than human actors. This is an adaptation because Smith's screenplay does not explicitly state that the story is one happening to marionette puppets. That the usual default for the reader is that the subjects are human unless otherwise stated is arguably reasonable, so I am making the assumption that to step outside of this is an adaptation. With wooden puppets, there is a great deal of latitude for communication of emotion in line with puppeteering skill, however the emotions that can be portrayed by the many muscles in the human face are arguably more numerous and subtle by nature therefore such considerations are a part of a choice to make this variation on the original screenplay. It is a different type of communication: the puppets are operated by humans meaning that one might argue that this is an additional level of adaptation or communication. The human performance is as puppeteer and that performance is translated through the marionette. Additionally, the use of puppets suggests the possibility that this drama is also a children's film.

The location of the main action in Oey's *The Box* is not a living room, but a theatre stage. This adaptation is a significant change of setting from the one described in Smith's screenplay as is the final shot of the puppets on a sandy dune at a beach. Another adaptation is that the characters are inside the box that is the subject of their conversation. This causes an adaptation of Smith's staging as the characters can no longer kneel next to the box. The two characters' show of solidarity is instead to take one another's hands as they escape from the box.

In this version of *The Box*, the two characters are named Stanley and Isadora which is an adaptation from the names given in the screenplay. This alteration does not have any particular impact on the story unless an assumption is made that the biblical story of Adam and Eve impacts upon the interpretation of the *The Box* story when these given names are intact. The puppets debate the merits of opening a box, as in Smith's screenplay, but with the adaptation that they are *in* the box. As puppets, they are packed up and transported as necessary to 'perform' in various ways. Isadora and Stanley see this as a restriction on their liberty and yearn to escape. While their dialogue is relatively similar to Smith's script, Isadora says, 'I don't want to know what's out there', rather than 'in there' and Stanley responds similarly. The discussion becomes about what is *outside* the box rather than what is *inside* the box: the outside world is the unknown for the puppets, but they are similarly apprehensive because one theme remains the same, fear of the unknown.

Oey's *The Box* does not end as Smith's screenplay does with a decision to open the box, instead this film shows the box opened and then abandoned. Stanley

and Isadora escape to sandy dunes on a beach. They sit on a sunny day, atop a beach blanket, staring out to sea: the music is upbeat. Not only is this resolution an addition to the original script, but so is having a second location, the beach. Smith's screenplay, as previously discussed, is contained within the living room it opens in which can lend the story a certain claustrophobia. A similar claustrophobia is achieved by filming the puppets inside their shipping crate, cramped and lit by the light streaming through the slats (which are a substitute for the net curtain of the screenplay particularly if compared visually to Payne and Philipson's versions of the window scene), but the opening of the box both releases the characters from the tension of their debate, but also removes them from very close quarters to the endless possibility suggested by turning their gaze out to sea.

Oey's *The Box* is scored. There is orchestral music at the beginning, music over the tense moments where Stanley peeks out of the box until they burst out and escape, and then again at the beach and through the credits. The music contributes to establishing the mood of the film. The sound of waves and seagulls at the beach are additional sounds but as this is a scene not present in Smith's screenplay, this adaptation is not subject to a medium-specific analysis.

REMOVALS – CURTAINS, CLOCK, LIVING ROOM

Whilst the puppets are *in* the box in this version of *The Box*, Stanley does still peek out at the 'he' that is going to be back soon. The insinuation in Oey's version is that 'he' is a stagehand or similar and will be back to either unpack the puppets or simply to witness and prevent their planned skedaddling. Light streams through the slats of the box which echoes Smith's screenplay and it is the slats that Stanley peers through to check if the coast is clear. As before, changing the location from a living room to a stage is a removal of the living room as a location and, in this case, the traditional domestic space.

The pendulum clock is also absent in this version, as is the sound of its ticking. However, the footsteps of the stagehand create a similar effect. The sound is created by a different instrument and they come and go rather than persisting throughout the entire scene, but they are menacing, based on Isadora and Stanley's reaction to them, and they help spur the characters to act in the same way that a pendulum clock ticking throughout might have.

Freimuth's *Burrows Road*

ADDITIONS – TITLE, LOCATION, CHARACTER, & MUSIC

Freimuth's first noticeable adaptation is the change of title from *The Box* to *Burrows Road*. Of all five films, this is the only one with a different title. While this version still focuses on whether Eve will or will not agree to open a box, there is a second box added to the story which perhaps prompted the change of title in this case. Like Payne, Freimuth has 'framed' the action, as described in Smith's screenplay, with a series of new shots. *Burrows Road* opens with shots of lichen, aged stone/gravestone, and moths flitting on yellow flowers that have past their best. This is in quite stark contrast to the opening visuals in the script which describes 'an ordinary living room', with 'clean but faded' furniture, and air 'full of dust'. The images Freimuth uses could be considered loose interpretations of the slightly faded and dusty scene Smith describes: there is in both a sense of slight decay. To open the film in an outdoor, natural setting is however an adaptation from the domestic room Smith details and Freimuth returns to another outdoor setting later in the film.

Burrows Road moves immediately from the pastoral opening shots into a shot of thick raindrops pelting on windows to the inside of first-floor city flat. Smith describes sunlight streaming in through net curtains and, after this single shot of heavy rain shower, the flat in *Burrows Road* is brightly lit and the day is sunny. The rainy shot is incongruous with the following sun-filled ones. The former is a departure from the original script which has no mention of rain or a row of rooftops seen through Adam and Eve's window.

Freimuth's Adam, who is White, is a ghost who appears into and disappears from scenes seemingly in the blink of an eye. Throughout the film there are shots of gravestones, old and new, as well as flowers, alive and dead, that suggest the theme of birth/life and death. The keepsake box featured at the start of the film – one of *two* boxes, which will be discussed shortly – seems to imply that Adam is gone, if not dead. Adam's spirit-like nature is an adaptation in *Burrows Road*. This adaptation gives way to another in the form of a reveal: the 'he' who is going to 'be back soon' in Smith's screenplay makes a physical appearance in Freimuth's film and is given a name, Luke. The choice to have Luke appear on screen gives the audience new information: he is a man, likely a romantic partner, White, slim, and Eve is not as comfortable in his company as she seems to be with Adam's ghost. Luke similarly reacts to Eve as though their relationship is either new and not yet comfortable or that they are engaged

in an awkward situation together, presumably as regards the pregnancy test.

As the title indicates, location is important in *Burrows Road*. The mood of the film is developed and maintained by contemplative shots of various locations. The camera lingers regularly on both the characters and their settings. Details are revealed both in the house and in gardens. The bright, sunny, lived-in flat is 'ordinary', or at least would not be described as extra-ordinary. Freimuth adds a change of location. From 'Interior. Room. Day.', Eve walks down a residential, city street, where she fleetingly sees Adam before he disappears (behind a passing double-decker bus) as quickly as he appeared, to a leafy park bench where she chats with Adam as he sits next to her. Taking the action out of a single, dusty room, removes the physical claustrophobia of the situation and potentially also the tension Smith's script involves two people who seem, in a sense, to be trapped in the room awaiting the return of someone who has the potential to greatly impact their lives or at least the events of their day. In *Burrows Road* the weather is predominantly dreamy: filtered sun through green leaves, flattering light, wispy white clouds. The primary burden of the decision whether or not to open the box rests on Eve's shoulders as Adam seems prone to disappearing mid-conversation and her heavy mood is therefore juxtaposed by the beautiful day. Yet the rain returns for Luke's arrival: as he walks down the wet pavement, he has his umbrella up. And, finally, the story concludes back in the sunny flat: Eve has come full-circle and seems no closer to solving her dilemma.

The second box in this version of the story is another significant addition. The first box the audience sees is a keepsake box with a black and white photo inside. Eve takes off her earrings and places them in the box. Bearing in mind the events that are about to unfold, in retrospect the removal of the earrings is probably the removal of the penultimate vestige of Adam, a gift he gave her or something they bought together that has sentimental value. She lays these next to a wedding band, hers. The second box is a pregnancy test box, the one that Eve refuses to open despite Adam's urging. Adam's final legacy may be in the form of his unborn child, but this is not confirmed. Meanwhile, Luke's arrival, letting himself into the house, embracing Eve immediately, all indicate that he is a romantic partner which means that Eve entered into her relationship with Luke very quickly after Adam's death or indeed was having an affair with him before Adam died. As such, Luke is elevated from the faceless and potentially threatening entity in Smith's screenplay to a young man, who seems to care about Eve and comforting her. He looks strong and gentle and mirrors Eve's awkward posture when they break their embrace. In Freimuth's version of the story, Luke is just a man

and one who will be affected by the result of the pregnancy test. His life too might change drastically once the box is opened.

TP has commissioned a gentle piano score for *Burrows Road*. It is heard over the opening scene and then while we are watching Eve with the keepsake box and apples. It is Adam's disembodied voice that abruptly puts an end to the music, and it starts again when Eve leaves the flat. Sound also plays an important role in this version of the screenplay. The outdoor scenes buzz with insects and birds sing in the distance, there is also a gentle hum of traffic. This contrasts with the stillness and quiet of Eve's flat.

REMOVALS – TITLE, CURTAINS, TEARS, AND KNEELING

In re-naming the film *Burrows Road*, the title, *The Box*, was removed. The working title for Freimuth's film was *Box*⁷, presumably because a second box had been added to the story, but ultimately this was replaced with *Burrows Road*.

Freimuth removed the old-fashioned pendulum clock and the net curtains from Smith's screenplay to *Burrows Road*. Freimuth has created a modern, 'ordinary' living room with a pretty, even, summer light illuminating her characters. The décor of this room has less of a story to tell than in Smith's screenplay which puts the characters front and centre, nothing to distract us from their plight. Even the keepsake box appears to be a recent purchase, something that could be found in a high street store. This is in keeping with the set design but also shows a light hand with regard to the sentimentality of the contents, or perhaps speaks to the person who has chosen to store such important items in an ordinary vessel.

In Smith's screenplay, Adam walks around the box and kneels by Eve's feet looking up at her. This pose of supplication is absent from Freimuth's version, Adam's tone is one of supplication as he delivers the line, but they are decidedly eye-to-eye when this happens. Adam is a ghost, however, and vanishes after delivering his plan to Eve. Smith's script also has Eve joining Adam kneeling on the floor which is a bit of a show of solidarity to 'do it together' – incidentally Adam looks at the clock at this point in Smith's screenplay – whereas in Freimuth's version, Adam disappears at this same point. Luke arrives moments after Adam disappears and *he* embraces/comforts Eve and it seems they are the ones who are going to move forward from this point on. So, instead of solidifying the strength of Eve and Adam's relationship, Freimuth's story

7 Information taken from Freimuth's production journal. See Appendix 2. Her first delivered copy of the film was entitled, *Box*, and was later amended.

ends with Eve and a previously unseen, unnamed man embracing but awkward in each other's company. What remains is a sense that the two characters, even though a different pair from Smith's story, are going to leave the past behind and look to the future.

Freimuth's Eve does not sob. Smith's script portrays Eve as sobbing over the decision to finally open the box, while Adam remains more stalwart and convinced they must take action. Eve is the central character in *Burrows Road* and while she is unsure how she wishes to proceed, she is relatively stoic and stays dry eyed throughout. In fact, Adam does not take her hand as he does in Smith's screenplay, but instead hands her the pregnancy test box while maintaining eye contact with her. It is still a very intimate moment and when Luke arrives at the end, it is clear Eve does not have this same level of intimacy with him: he embraces her, but there is less emotion in this moment than there is in Adam's eyes as he beseeches her to open the box.

SECTION II

The Finished Films Compared to One Another

This section of my findings is dedicated to a comparative analysis of the films to one another. Here I will explore the ways in which the finished films are similar to each other and the ways in which they are different. Making a list of these attributes and analysing them is performing a comparative analysis of the five films produced. While mention of the screenplay will occasionally be necessary here, the primary concern of this analysis is the films. Despite having divided this section into two seemingly clear categories, this is potentially misleading because a similarity might be between two films, rather than all five such that there is a similarity *and* a difference being highlighted at the same time. Both categories should be read and considered in conjunction with the other and the division understood to be intended for organisational purposes rather than a signal that the results can be easily parcelled out into discrete allotments. I have begun each category with similarities/differences observed in the greatest number of films. My intention is to present my analysis in groups that examine a particular aspect of a/the film/s under the broader division of similarities and differences in order for the comparisons made to be as direct as possible. These discrete analyses can then be referred back to and compared or connected with relative ease.

SIMILARITIES

Gender. A similarity that applies to all five films is the maintenance of the gender balance as it is in Smith's screenplay. None of the directors chose to make both characters female or male and none of the directors reversed the roles by giving Adam's dialogue to Eve and Eve's to Adam. As the dialogue and the situation could easily be applied to a same gender couple or two male or two female friends, for example, this was an adaptation that would have required little or no re-working of the script. While it is not explicitly confirmed in any of the five films, the relationship between Adam and Eve is likely to be interpreted as that of romantic partners rather than just friends or business partners. However, even if this relationship had changed, both roles could have been played either male or female.

Colour. All five films are delivered in colour. None are black and white or sepia or otherwise tinted. This is a choice, and one that can be made in post-production if necessary, that no director opted for. Payne reveals in her production notes that when she was in pre-production she considered shooting in black and white with strategic colour placement as an homage to *Sin City*, but for various practical reasons, changed her mind.

Live-action. All five films are live-action. Nothing in the screenplay indicates that the story being told is *not* an animated one, stop-motion or traditional. However, the directors chosen for the project all have a background in live-action rather than animation. Despite this, any one of the directors could have seen this as an opportunity to expand their portfolio with few perceived professional consequences. A flip-book animation, for example, would have been quite cost effective and certainly do-able under the time restraints given and still within the brief provided.

Ticking pendulum clock. Following on from analysis in Section I, the pendulum clock and its ticking is tantamount to the (silent) elephant in the room. Four of the five filmed versions of *The Box* eliminated the clock and its ticking. The only visible clock is not a pendulum clock and appears only briefly, and out of focus or masquerading as a book shelf, in Philipson's film.



Figure1. Stephen Philipson's *The Box: Pendulum Clock*

In his production journal, Philipson mentions adding the ticking of the clock as a sound effect in post production, but he is the only one to mention the clock at all. It is likely that none of the directors included a clock in their set decoration, unless it was so far from the action that it was a cutaway shot, meaning that prior to shooting the inclusion of a clock had probably already been discarded. As has been discussed in the previous section, there are a number of aspects in the films that can be interpreted as loose adaptations of the ticking clock that similarly amplify the tension represented by the ticking in the screenplay. Tease keeps the sound of a clock ticking, but there is no clock visible in the room thus rendering it a sound-effect rather than a diegetic sound.

Time period. Apart from modern syntax and language (although these need not necessarily have been restrictive, they might have been suggestive), *The Box* screenplay could easily have been adapted to many different time periods whether the 1980s, the 1680s, or but it was not. Four of the five films are definitely set in the present: furniture and actor's clothing denotes the 21st century if not more specifically the 2010s. Oey's version is more difficult to place in a particular time period. There are no clothing fashions to pinpoint an era nor is there any furniture to suggest a decade. The puppets are somewhat randomly dressed with Isadora clad in a rather extravagant fake-fur collar piece and Stanley wearing only blue shorts. Apart from the beach huts in the distant background of the final shot of Oey's *The Box*, there is nothing to use to date the film which means that it *could* be set in the present as there is nothing that proves it is not. The net curtains and faded furniture of Smith's script could bring to mind a slightly neglected décor or simply one that has fallen out of fashion or it could suggest a pensioner's abode, but none of this is bound by a specific time period. With

no clear indicators of what time period it is set in, Smith's screenplay (and I believe any similar screenplay) can be assumed to be set in or around the present day by its reader and to 'change' this assumption can therefore be perceived as an adaptation. If Oey's film is assumed to be set in the present, then none of the films is set the future or a recognisable past. One of the ideas Smith and I had about what the box could be was a refrigerator box with the idea being that a couple or siblings were contemplating how their lives would change once they plugged in their first refrigerator in the 1930s or 40s, for example.

The box. Whilst Smith and I postulated that avoiding mention of the size of the box or even how it opens (lift off top, hinged, fold-out) could allow the box to be interpreted as anything from a ring box to a refrigerator box, four of the five films chose a box that could be considered a keepsake or jewellery box – a size easily able to be hand-held. This is a potentially a practical choice in that it is easy to film and easy to source. Freimuth's film features two boxes and it becomes clear quite quickly that the second box is as important as and also related to the first. This pregnancy test box is a departure from the keep-sake box style of the other films' boxes and along with the shipping crate one of the two the stand-out 'different' boxes. It seems plausible that the similar choice of boxes is an indication that three of the directors read the box in Smith's screenplay as a MacGuffin. If this is the case, they saw the interaction between Adam and Eve as the real focus and heart of the story with the box being somewhat superfluous or secondary. Therefore, choosing a box that is unremarkable in size or appearance is sensible in that it does not distract from the interaction between Adam and Eve. It is less likely that Payne and Oey interpreted the box as a MacGuffin. The former makes the box and its contents an integral aspect of her story, particularly its denouement. Oey does the same as the box is literally encompassing Stanley and Isadora for 90% of the film and therefore visually present throughout until the escape.

Race/ethnicity. Three of the films have cast White actors, one has cast puppets that appear to be White, and Tease's *The Box* casts Eve as Black with no mention of Adam's ethnicity. Again, as Smith's screenplay was meant to be open to interpretation in that it avoided writing in restrictive descriptions, race was subject to individual readings of the story. This is interesting when compared with gender and raises the question of how influential a decision it was to give the characters one typically male and one typically female name. Race, by comparison, is not indicated – although it is

perhaps suggested by the naming of the characters – and has been subject to interpretation where gender has not.

Kneeling. Smith's script, while avoiding describing the size or dimensions of the box, does say that it is on the floor when Adam and then Eve kneel next to it. In three of the five films the box in question is on the floor. Philipson's box seems to have been recently removed from a very secure hiding place *under* fixed floorboards, Payne's box is on the floor along with many of the other contents of the flat that has been overturned searching for the box, but is unseen until the pivotal moment when Adam decides they must open it. The shipping container in Oey's film sits on the floor in the middle of an empty theatre stage throughout the film until the final beach scene, the first and only scene in which the box is absent. The latter is the only box with radically different dimensions from the others. As the characters are, in this case, inside the box they are contemplating opening, they are unable to kneel next to it as the script dictates.

Music and sound. Three of the five films have included non-diegetic music. Scoring a film is a choice and an adaptation to the screenplay despite mention of any non-diegetic music being highly unlikely in a screenplay as previously discussed in my introduction and second chapter. Payne employs sound effects in her film that are like brief musical cues that sound other worldly and her music plays only over the final credits. The latter serves to continue the drama as the credits run and perpetuate the feeling of unease created by the unexpected ending to the film. Freimuth and Oey both open their films with music, include snippets of music throughout, and Oey also closes the film with music. Freimuth's film derives much of its mood from the piano that undulates throughout Eve's drama: Adam has died and so the music is a bit sad and contemplative. Oey's chosen music is orchestral and upbeat which works with the visual of the puppets and juxtaposes with the arguably darker theme. The use of music in these three films gives them an additional identifiable distinction from one another and the two un-scored films. One need only call to mind the Indiana Jones theme music from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*⁸ as an example to register the impact a score can have in defining a film and therefore how significant this type of adaptation can be.

⁸ The Raiders of the Lost Ark, dir by Steven Spielberg, (Paramount, 1981). Music composed by John Williams.

Ghosts. Both Philipson and Freimuth have made Adam's character into a ghost. There is nothing that I can identify in the screenplay that gives any hint that any of the characters is a ghost, yet two directors independently had this same reading of the story. Each director addresses Adam's 'state' visually, but quite differently. Freimuth has Adam sitting next to Eve one moment and gone the next without ever showing him 'leaving' the scene. Philipson keeps Adam present throughout, but his initial appearance is abrupt and somewhat suspect. Both directors choose for their audience to hear Adam before seeing him: a disembodied voice delivers his first line in both films. Philipson opts to have Adam 'appear out of no where': the hall outside the bedroom where Eve is sitting is shown to be empty and then moments later, Adam appears from this same hallway his footsteps and voice faintly echoing at first. Initially only a sliver of his left side is revealed, his face not visible, and he stands just behind Eve. Despite his unexpected arrival, Eve is far from nonplussed, she does not even turn her head. She seems to have expected this, for whatever reason.



Figure 2. Stephen Philipson's *The Box*: Adam's Entrance

Freimuth also gives Adam's off-screen voice a slight echo to signal that something is off or unusual. Eve initially responds to Adam's urging without taking her eyes from the apples she is rinsing and then turns her head, snapping her response into the middle distance. Upset, she starts to leave her flat, their conversation continuing in her head: her mouth does not move, yet she is speaking and there is no sign of Adam. She looks to the front window of the house before descending the stairs and out the front door to walk down the street. As she walks away, Adam appears in the same front window, watching her. Adam then inexplicably appears across the street from where Eve is

standing, but a bus passes between them and he is gone before the bus has. Eve arrives at and sits on an empty park bench.



Figure 3. Tania Freimuth's *Burrows Road*: Eve Alone on Park Bench

The shot changes from a wide, front-facing shot to a medium close-up profile shot and Adam leans forward into the frame. Freimuth uses blocking throughout *Burrows Road* to add and remove Adam from scenes never showing him fading in and out or popping in and out in full view.

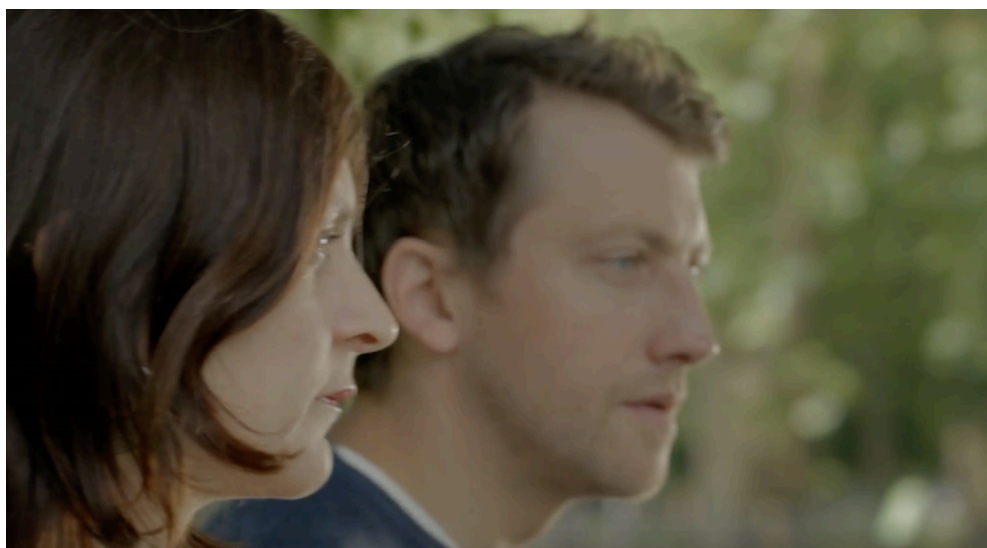


Figure 4. Tania Freimuth's *Burrows Road*: Eve with Adam on Park Bench

Freimuth's and Philipson's stories both portray Adam as a ghost but the story being told in each is different. In *Burrows Road* Adam is recently departed. As Eve seems concerned about pregnancy and who the father is, Adam cannot have been dead for

long. In Philipson's *The Box*, however, Eve is nearer to the end of her life and seems to have some regrets that the mysterious contents of the box may be able to rectify. Presumably if Eve opens the box, a decision young ghostly Adam seems fervently in favour of, they will somehow be together. Considering that Adam is appearing to Eve as a much younger man, it would seem that opening the box will act as some sort of time machine taking Eve back to her 20s so that she can choose Adam and find out what a life lived with him would be like. Having already lived a quite long life, she must have to first be willing to let go of everything and everyone she presently knows. While the choice to make Adam's character a ghost is a similarity between these two versions, the details of each situation are quite different.

Genre. While Steve Neale notes that 'the short' is not usually 'described or defined as a genre' (51), this group heading is the most appropriate place to note that all of the five films were made as short films. This was likely heavily influenced by the two-page length of the screenplay and budget. The longest of the films, TP's, is however an example of how multiple shots can be added and locations changed while still remaining 'true' to the screenplay. It is conceivable that one of the productions *could* have made similar additions but (further) stretched the overall length of their film out beyond what would be considered a 'short film'.

Throughout Philipson's film there is a ghostly presence and it becomes clear that the box must be supernatural in some way. Similarly, in Payne's version the final scene appears to be sci-fi/fantasy/supernatural. The presence of the supernatural is a convention of science-fiction and there is therefore a possibility of arguing that these two versions belong, at least as a hybrid, to this genre as well as drama. Philipson and Freimuth's films both include ghost characters and can be categorised as ghost films but also, again, as dramas.

Box contents. Despite the different sizes of the boxes in Oey's and Payne's films, both contain the films' characters at some point in the film. The former physically contains/restrains Stanley and Isadora and the latter apparently contains them metaphysically. In neither film is the inside of the box considered to be a desirable place to be for Adam/Stamley and Eve/Isadora. It would seem that in both cases the characters find themselves, though in radically different situations, 'trapped' in the box. Smith's living room is also a box – one which the character's in the screenplay do not leave and one which I have previously described as somewhat claustrophobic – so

perhaps this aspect of the screenplay spoke more directly to/literally to Payne and Oey to be developed into a key component of both these adaptations.

CGI. Two films used computer generated images or effects, Payne's and Philipson's. The former used a green screen for the final shots in the film where the contents of the box are revealed and the latter used a green screen effect to manipulate the wedding photo of young Eve and her husband as well as to show the hole in the floor that Eve has retrieved the box from⁹. Smith's screenplay was written to be 'easy' to film, as I've previously discussed. As such it was purposeful that the story did not include spaceships or car crashes that would be likely beyond the budget of the filmmakers participating *or* demand expensive effects work in post-production. Of course the access that each filmmaker had to colleagues who could help with CGI was unique to each film. The filmmakers were all aware at the onset of this project that *for the purposes of the project* it would be entirely acceptable to use a phone camera or other non-professional recording device, should they choose to. The concept of shooting guerrilla style or composing the entire film in a single take were potential choices and a multitude of other ways in which the filmmakers could have experimented with style or format particularly if they wanted to keep costs to a minimum. To my knowledge, no one received payment for their work on any of these five films. The choice to use post-production effects is, on a low/no budget film, in my opinion, worth making note of as arguably a more significant adaptation choice than it might be on a budgeted film.

Words. Smith's dialogue is adhered to quite closely in four of the five films. Minor changes are made, most of which have been discussed in the previous section but, overall, few additions or deletions are made in this regard. The majority of the changes point to subtle meanings in the finished films that are not in the original screenplay or are not specific in the original. Tease's dialogue is the exception as Eve has some extra lines unique to this adaptation, speaks in Zulu, and also has most of Adam's lines incorporated with her own. Despite these changes, the dialogue does still communicate the same information as it does in the screenplay. Because of the screenplay's short duration, however, ostensibly any further significant changes in dialogue could have rapidly transformed the film into something *not* recognisably made from the screenplay Smith wrote.

9 These details are confirmed in the production journals. See Appendix B.

DIFFERENCES

Length. Smith's screenplay is exactly two pages in length. The industry general rule-of-thumb is that one page of written script equals one minute on screen. This can vary, but is a reliable way of gauging the likely length a film from a 30 to 90+ page script will be because the aspects that vary generally cancel one another out over the course of the film. With a script of only two pages, it is more likely that the final films will have a more noticeable discrepancy in length. For example, the longest film is more than twice as long as the shortest which would be unlikely with a 30 to 90+ page script.

The films for this project vary in length as below:

Director	Film Length Without Credits	Film Length With Credits
Steve Philipson	3 min 0s	3 min 25 s
Martin Tease	2 min 45s	2 min 51 s
Emily Payne	2 min 49s	3 min 32 s
Jennifer Oey	1 min 45s	2 min 15 s
Tania Freimuth	5 min 22s	5 min 40 s

Oey's and Tease's films come closest to the expected length of two pages filmed. The former made few changes to the screenplay as regards dialogue, and none of these were significant enough to alter the length of overall dialogue. The latter removed a character entirely between page and screen, but retained some of this character's dialogue and also included additional dialogue.

While Oey changed the location significantly from what Smith described, the only additional 'action' is the final beach shot at the end. The containing of the action within a large box prevented any additional 'business' by the characters: no props for them to fondle or need for time to allow them to walk across a room, for example. As such, this location change impacted the potential for extra business and the film arrived at its credits in the shortest amount of time of each of the films. Tease entirely removed a character which, ostensibly, cut down on the possibility of extra business as well but Eve's added dialogue and moments of solitary reflection seem to have made up for this potential loss.

Payne, as already noted, added a scene at the beginning and another at the end of her version. The car racing to the scene opens her film and time is taken over Adam's arrival at the dishevelled house. Payne also lets the audience see what is in

the box and lingers on this reveal. Whilst Oey also reveals what is in the box, this occurs at the beginning of the film and therefore does not agree with the tension in Smith's script which is centred on the opening of the box at the *end* of the story. Payne follows the screenplay more closely in this sense: there is a closed box that is discussed with urgency and the two characters, after agonising, decide to open it together at the end. But, Payne reveals its contents, a deviation from Smith's screenplay. Payne's 'new' action (which is one of her most significant adaptations) takes more space than dialogue, and incidentally, Payne keeps most of the dialogue true to Smith's screenplay.

Philipson's version of *The Box* keeps both dialogue and action very close to Smith's screenplay: it begins and ends on the same beats with visual changes to the story that imbue it with different meaning. For example, Eve is white haired and Adam in his 20s or 30s and seems to represent a figure from her past. This 'extra' story does not add to the length of the film, only the speed of dialogue delivery and business – going to curtains etcetera – does.

Freimuth's film is the longest by a significant margin and while the dialogue is almost identical to Smith's screenplay, there is a change of location, an extra character appears on screen, and there are scene-setting/atmospheric shots included as well.

Genre. Despite there being some overlap, the five films could all be argued to be hybridised genres where either genres overlap or blur boundaries. I include this group in this section on differences, because it was conceivable that each director would interpret the screenplay as the same genre and make a film that reflected this. As this did not occur and the films are not all of the same genre, it seems reasonable to list this as a difference as well as a similarity. While some of the films can be grouped together as having similar genre trails or hybridised genres, they are not all the same genre.

Type of box. A pregnancy box and a keepsake box, a shiny Union Jack (gift?) box, a shipping crate, and two ornate or inlaid wood boxes.

Contents of the box. Freimuth's boxes contain keepsake items and a pregnancy test respectively. Payne's and Oey's boxes contain their characters, though the former apparently contains a copy or other supernatural version of her characters. Philipson's box contains some sort of time travel device, probably. Tease's box contents are not revealed.

Age and race/ethnicity. The characters vary in age from Philipson's Eve who appears to be in her 60s or 70s and Adam who appears to be in his 20s; to the 20-somethings in Payne's film, the 30-somethings in Freimuth's film, to a 20-something Eve in Tease's film, to a couple of puppets with no particular indicators of age.

In summary, there are numerous and diverse adaptations that have taken place between screenplay and film which are challenging to organise for presentation because of the broad permeations of each adaptation. The blueprint each director worked from was key to their process and features strongly in the finished film and as such, the results of this study betray the common ancestor each of these films shares. Despite the numerous 'differences' in the adaptations made to each version of the film, each is recognisably made from Smith's screenplay. This suggests that the scope for both the number of and type of adaptations from script to screen is significant. Additionally, it would seem it is to be expected that five films, for all their different adaptations of the screenplay, can have a significant set of similarities not all of which will be directly attributable to the screenplay.

Conclusion

This study has explored the relationship between the original screenplay and its film by making multiple films, simultaneously, from the same screenplay and analysing/exploring the results utilising a dual written/filmed method. Upon reflection, how successful has this study been in meeting the initial aims? This work has allowed for an examination of *what actually happens* when a screenplay is made into a film by providing artefacts for a comparative analysis. While previous attempts have been made at comparing ‘source’ to ‘film’ in adaptation studies, evaluation of potential adaptations across the five films in my study has definitively demonstrated that multiple and diverse adaptations *can* (and did) occur from script to screen. By singling out this particular stage of adaptation and separating it out from the broader and more common novel-to-film discussion, my results show that adaptation does occur during this specific phase and therefore suggests that there is merit in being precise in the examination of novel (or other source) to script adaptations and script to film adaptations. This illumination of the potential for adaptation in what might be broadly considered one of two distinct phases – which could be further broken down into production and post-production – has applications to both existing and forthcoming adaptation studies.

Fundamental to this research has been: Intimate engagement with practice, which created the research data and forms half of the final thesis submission, and inclusion of published practitioner accounts of their own work, such as Clare Foster’s or Anthony Minghella’s, and my reflections as researcher and practitioner. It is arguable that the method employed here is especial in its ability to address the research question posed. I am unaware of any previous adaptation studies method that involves the production of films for the express purpose of analysing the relationship of screenplay to film nor am I familiar with any film project undertaken with the express purpose of making multiple productions from the same screenplay each with entirely different production teams. As discussed in Chapter 1, David Bordwell raises the idea of multiple films being made from a single screenplay as a thought experiment. To better understand the nature of the relationship between screenplay and film and to find out what might *actually happen* in such a situation, it was necessary to put the idea *into practice*. It is only possible to explore and examine the particulars of a relationship such as this if one has a reasonable basis for comparison. With these five films as research materials it became possible

to examine specific additions, deletions, and similarities between one script and its five films.

My involvement as director of one of *The Box* films had a crucial critical function in its own right as well. While there are acknowledged limitations of my involvement as both director/filmmaker and researcher to follow, my experience of making my own version of *The Box* involved making my own adaptations to Smith's screenplay which is, in itself, my own *comment on* adaptation and the adaptive process of turning a screenplay into a film. While I find it difficult to attempt to break down my creative process into a logical written explanation, I do know that my interpretation of Smith's story was very much a type of 'gut reaction'. I did not think through several possibilities for how I thought my version should unfold: I just knew. It took two readings of the script (in the mind-set of a potential director), and on the second, I imagined puppets in a box and I was unable – and, eventually, unwilling – to dismiss the idea or to come up with anything else. This particular structure or adaptation that I pursued was both a visual notion and a story idea because I 'saw' puppets inside a box when I read the screenplay because my interpretation of the story was two characters who were trapped by circumstance/society and were teetering on the verge of making a huge leap of faith in giving up everything they knew for the unknown. This process that I underwent is undeniably, as I can see in retrospect, a statement on what I as researcher and filmmaker believe the process of making a screenplay into a film is. The significance of this comment is, potentially, of similar importance to the written or filmed thesis components that are the culmination of this film and the others made alongside it.

Aspects of Adaptation Studies Addressed

Several key and enduring aspects of adaptation studies are addressed, challenged, and contributed to by my findings. Firstly, in general, adaptation studies address the novel-to-film to the exclusion of other types of adaptations (Bluestone, Aragay, McFarlane, Cartmell & Whelehan, Welsh & Lev). Via literary studies, the former is what lay the foundation for this field of study and it is unsurprising that this specific form of adaptation still dominates the field.

Secondly, film academics and critics tend to focus heavily on textual analyses that compare the literary 'source' to the film 'copy' often excluding practitioner accounts. These textual analyses closely compare book to film often excluding the scriptwriting stage where it is possible a significant level of adaptation may occur before the production has gone to camera. Work like MacDonald's 'Disentangling the Screen Idea' can have a positive impact in adaptation studies. Phrases such as 'go to camera' are incidentally rarely found in textual analyses because the academic standpoint often gives little attention to the specific processes involved in a film's production and therefore may suffer from a compromised starting point for such

analyses. My contribution is an illumination and clarification of one specific stage of adaptation.

Thirdly, and finally, the fidelity debate and discussion of medium specificity tend inevitably to factor into comparative analysis or textual analysis (Kranz, for example). These are contentious topics and involve assessment of value whereby historically the canonical literature is by default discussed as the original and the film as the (inferior) copy. While more recent trends have attempted to rectify the use of negative language in discussing the 'copy' or eliminate fidelity studies entirely (Leitch, Raw), these discussions persist. My study utilises a new fidelity in conjunction with medium-specificity to frame analysis without lionising either written or filmed creative work.

Limitations of This Study

There are several limitations to my study that I will acknowledge here so that my conclusions, which will follow, are received with a judicious degree of awareness.

Five short films made from a two-page screenplay is a reasonable scale of production work for a thesis of this nature, but the relative brevity of the screenplay limits the volume of material available for analysis and therefore extent of any wider – i.e. beyond the scope of this thesis – conclusions that can be drawn with a degree of certainty. For example, to use my findings to draw conclusions regarding gender or social background and adaptation would be thwarted by the small sample group and would require further study. However, I hope that my findings do provoke thought about such avenues that have yet to be explored using a similar method.

The directors chosen for the study are all professionals with whom I have worked previously or had a pre-existing academic relationship with. I chose not to approach filmmakers I did not know personally for reasons of time and also with the hope that filmmakers who know me personally as a colleague and scholar would be particularly motivated to complete their films and do so within the timescale I required. As such, each director involved is at what might be described as early to mid career, as this is who I had access to and were able to commit to the project. Several directors I approached who are currently making feature-length films were unable to commit to my study due to these long-term prior commitments. In short, the scope of the career level of the directors involved is limited in that it does not include anyone in the later stages of their career or with a significant international profile. The absence of this profile from the group may have restricted the scope of potential adaptations or it may have widened it. As a researcher, I am therefore left wondering whether a director with decades of experience might have had a conspicuously different approach than the early to mid-career directors.

My dual role as director of one of *The Box* films and researcher put me in a distinct position of having a more intimate understanding of the potential outcomes of the study than the other directors. This was an unavoidable consideration to bear in mind when analysing the films and the adaptations each film exhibited: my acute awareness of the boundaries of the study inevitably had an affect on my own adaptive choices. Additionally, my instruction to the four directors – my choice of language and my degree of openness to discussing their potential queries – will have influenced their adaptations. And, of course, the directors may have each interpreted my instructions differently. Whilst determination of how significant, or not, a particular adaptation might be is subjective, I consider my choice to put the characters inside a box to be a relatively significant adaptation (and possibly encouraged or enabled by my dual involvement, as already noted) but I also consider eliminating Adam, or making him a ghost, a significant adaptation. This suggests to me that my adaptations were not significantly more extensive than those made by the other four directors.

Working creatively as one of the directors, I purposefully did not give much thought to what my particular adaptations were beyond the instruction I'd given to the other directors. I instructed the directors that, as long as they felt it justified to include 'Screenplay by Alexander Gordon Smith' in the credits of their version of *The Box*, they were within the parameterse of the study. I felt my choices fell within this purview. I also felt the other directors' various choices did as well. However, I acknowledge that the other directors were perhaps overall more restrained in their versions of the screenplay. I speculate that there are a number of possible explanations for this. I chose directors with whom I had a personal relationship with the expectation that they would actually deliver a finished film to me by the deadline in order to keep our relationship in good stead: this may have been a factor in keeping some of their ideas for adaptation in check for fear that it would negatively impact my study if they were too 'loose' in their interpretation of the screenplay. I also suspect that some of the directors were interested in using their version of *The Box* as a part of their creative reel and, as such, refrained from freely experimenting in order to try to ensure their film a 'successful' endeavour. Following along from this logic, as each director/production team was self-financed, there was added incentive to make it a successful endeavour to justify the time and money spent on the production.

While I did take into consideration gender and ethnicity of the directors, I was not rigorous in my approach. I aimed to keep some sort of balance by not having all directors belonging to the same ethnicity and/or gender, but this was a loose consideration. As a result, there are three female directors and two male directors. There is one Black director, one Mixed-race director, and three White directors. Within a group of five, and with production bases in the UK and Canada, I believe this is a reasonable mix. It would have been beyond the scope of this

thesis to ensure all groups were recognised.

In focusing on *whether* adaptations occurred and *what* these were, my study did not require a close examination of practitioner experience throughout each stage of production. Instead I requested production journals to accompany the finished films. These were utilised to refine and illuminate my findings. They also lent insight that influenced the filmed portion of my thesis. Invaluable to me and for my process, these journals are not by any means a thorough investigation of the *process* of adaptation from script to screen – nor were they meant to be – and should not be taken as such. With the above caveats made plain, I will proceed with my conclusions.

An overarching finding of my study is that the screenplay serves as a *guide* for filmmakers and that this applies to the director, the musician, the art department, indeed everyone involved in the production of the film. This demonstrates that adaptation *does* occur between screenplay and film and, within the parameters of my study, shows that the original screenplay is treated, whether consciously or not, as a potentially flexible entity. There are various terms used to describe the function of the screenplay. Blueprint, a long-standing and popular term, I believe, has been shown to be adequate but can benefit from scrutiny when it is employed. The screenplay is a plan or a model or a template, however the scope with which each production in my study ventured beyond the ‘blueprint’ suggests the breadth of creative work conducted should be accurately represented or acknowledged for the individual situation at hand.

Summary of Observed Adaptations

The adaptations made to a screenplay may include changing dialogue, location, age or appearance of characters, props, or diegetic music, for example, all of which are often explicit in the screenplay and may be directly compared with the final film.

They may also include the addition of non-diegetic music, for example, which is rarely included in a screenplay. What is of most interest here, I think, is that this is explicitly expected as an adaptation. It is rare, particularly for a feature-length film, not to include non-diegetic music: most films have a score. Therefore, this particular adaptation is unique in that it is *presumed*. Unlike within the novel-to-film debate, that which is written in a screenplay (as opposed to that which is written in a novel) is *intended* to be ‘transferrable’ to the screen, so unless in the case of a very inexperienced scriptwriter, the adaptations made are not simply due to medium change but instead for ‘other’ reasons and this is one key reason. There are aspects of a film that are not meant to be included in the screenplay.

Elements that are sometimes, but not always, included in the screenplay including but

not limited to the physical appearance of a character, costume, and location are possible adaptations. The degree to which a character is described in a screenplay can vary wildly – more prominent characters are sometimes described in more detail than those who appear fleetingly on screen – as can the detail given about costume or location. For example, a character might be ‘wearing a dress’ or she might be ‘wearing a brocade dress, belted at the waist, and better suited to a woman twice her age’. It can therefore be observed that some adaptations are ‘required’ more so than others. ‘A dress’ could have thousands of interpretations each of which would convey something about the character wearing it, whereas there are more limited interpretations of ‘a brocade dress, belted at the waist’. However, faced with the latter, a production team might choose to clothe their actress in a 70’s striped tunic instead. The findings of my study suggest that this latter adaptation is entirely possible and perhaps even likely. Whether the latter is a different *type* of adaptation than a ‘presumed’ adaptation is a matter potentially worth pursuing.

What do these adaptations, and lack of adaptations, mean overall? That which is similar to the screenplay is, accumulatively, that which justifies the film credit ‘Screenplay by’, but this varies in specific content widely between individual films, yet also unites them as generally recognisable as made from the same screenplay.

Implications of this Study

Implications of this study include the indication that there is potential in examining why specific adaptations occur from script to screen and where this suggests the balance of creativity lies on a film set and/or in post-production. Such work could contribute both to adaptation studies and work on creativity, such as Conor’s, as it can be applied to further elucidate the role of the screenplay and the ways in which one screenplay has been shown to be altered or kept the same in the production process.

Audience reception scholars might pursue an examination of how adaptation functions in film reception when multiple films are made from the same screenplay. As Geraghty and others have noted, an adaptation is only an adaptation if the audience is aware of the original. What if the audience is aware that the films they are viewing were made from the same original, but, as the original is a screenplay, they are *not familiar* with the original? My study examines this, but it is unavoidable that in watching *each* of the five films, four of the films will be viewed with knowledge of the first. These initial findings might be applicable to work such as Barker and Brooks’ audience work on *Judge Dread*¹ or be of interest regarding John O. Thompson’s *Screen*

¹ Barker and Brooks.

*Acting and the Commutation Test*² which examines audience reception of stars and the idea of a star's impact on the part they portray. What differences are seen when comparing audience reception to a known versus unknown 'original'?

One potentially important finding of my research is that none of the production teams changed or switched-up the gender of the two characters from what they are in the screenplay. Further research in this area is needed to determine whether this was an anomaly of this project or whether this is perhaps an area that is less often adapted during pre-production and why this might be. The screenplay was written with the intention that the behaviour of each character remained broadly gender neutral in that there was no dialogue or action that could only belong to a particular gender i.e. giving birth. Is it possible that character gender is an area where production teams feel they are (more) restricted to following the letter of the screenplay? If so, why might this be? Or were the production teams particularly influenced by the gendered names given in Smith's screenplay? I suspect the latter and would be interested to test this.

When I began this project, much as Howard S. Becker suggests in his introduction to *Art Worlds*³, I focused on what I did not know as a launching point. I did, however, have a strong hunch (grounded by my experience as a filmmaker) which, as it turned out, was echoed by Bordwell in his thought experiment which I unearthed along the way. I was fairly certain that if given the same screenplay, five different production teams would produce five quite different films. What intrigued me and provided me with the fervour to pursue the study was a fascination with *how* the films would be different. I believe the findings of this study would be of interest to sociologists interested in individuality and perception of individuality. Each of the directors involved in this project was raised in the West. Would the findings have been different if the study had been conducted in a society that places less value on the individual? I would be interested to find out. Perhaps another incentive for me was the questions that would remain unanswered at the end of my study leaving various branches yet unexplored.

Within the realm of adaptation studies, my findings suggest the screenplay is an important stage in the novel-to-film arena. While I would not be so bold or reductive as to suggest re-naming this as novel-to-screenplay-to-film, I do think there is room for a re-examination of how to compare book (or graphic novel or poem etcetera) to film and the way in which adaptations are accounted for. Does the scriptwriter adapting the novel make a particular set of adaptations that can be examined and how might these be understood when compared to the set of adaptations made in the production phase? Additionally, the fidelity debate rarely

² Thompson.

³ Howard Saul Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2008), p.xi.

makes a clear distinction, even when casting blame, regarding whether 'changes' to the novel happen from page to page, page to screen, or both.

Within medium specificity I would suggest that my findings are able to illuminate what types of adaptations can occur when transferred from the page (where the page is written specifically to be filmed) to the screen which would provide an interesting point of comparison for the types of adaptations that happen from novel-page to screen.

The films made for this study have a number of potential audiences. They would suit a multi-screen gallery installation where an audience could physically move from viewing one film to another. Additionally, there would be merit in projecting all five at the same time on the same screen using multiple projectors such that an audience could compare them visually. The filmed component of the thesis could potentially also screen in concert with the five short films. Each film is also a discrete artefact and could find an audience screened separately from the other films – and therefore be viewed outside of the adaptation framework present in this thesis – either in a gallery space, at a film festival, or as a part of a short films program on television.

In conclusion, I have attempted to give voice to both film academics and filmmakers in this study in part because it was the best practice to undertake in pursuit of my research questions, but also to make inroads in dispelling what I perceive to be a dichotomy between these two voices that is divisive when it could instead be symbiotic, bolstered by a spirit of generosity of knowledge and experience.

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Appendix A

***The Box* Film Credits**

The Box

Woman
Man
Director
Producer
Co-Producer
Associate Producer
Writer
Cinematographer
Production Designer
Editor
Sound Recordist
Grip
Digital Imaging Technician/Colourist
Very Special Thanks to

Funded in Part by

Kate Lynch
Ben Lewis
Stephen Philipson
Neon Panther
Jennifer Oey
Nathanial Smith
Alexander Gordon Smith
James Poremba
Kendra Terpenning
Cory Augustyn
Paolo Di Teodoro
Manton Harding
Joshua Jinchereau
the Norris Family, Kristin Philipson, and
Rosedale United Church
The University of East Anglia

The Box

Screenplay
Co-Producer
Eve
Director & Creative Producer
Camera & Sound
Cinematography & Editing

Alexander Gordon Smith
Jennifer Oey
Glynnis Masuku
Martin Tease
Chao-Jian Zhang (Chao)
Siavash Manesh

The Box

Directed by
Eve
Adam
Director of Photography
Sound Recordist
Camera Assistant
Composer
Edited by
Executive Producer
Written by
Art Department/Script Adaptation
Thanks to

Produced by

Emily Payne
Ty Glaser
Stu Mansell
Tom Lee
Paul Malpas
Mathieu Treacy
Eric Payne
Emily Payne
Jennifer Oey
Alexander Gordon Smith
Samantha Patterson
Rana Darwish
Mark Nutkins
Alexandra Medeville
Rick Palin
Emily Payne

The Box

Directed, Produced, & Edited by
Screenplay by
Isadora Voiced by
Stanley Voiced by
Puppeteers

Director of Photography
B Camera Beach Footage
Sound Recording
Sound Edit & Mix
Music Composed by
Thank-you to

Jennifer Oey
Alexander Gordon Smith
Katy Carr
Ian Nettleton
Matthew Knight
Jennifer Oey
Christopher Sharman
Jennifer Oey
Jonathan Blagrove
Guy Martin
Eric Payne
Ian Woods &
the Norwich Puppet Theatre Staff
Matthew Knight
The UEA for funding J Oey's PhD
Richard Payment for all the support in '01
&'02

Burrows Road

Director
Editor
Producer
Co-Producer
Executive Producers
Script Writer
Composer
Adam
Eve
Luke
Sound Recordist
Sound Design
Art Director
Colourist

Tania Freimuth
Claire Proudfoot
Heather Robinson
Jennifer Oey
The University of East Anglia
Alexander Gordon Smith
Andrea Possee
James Thorne
Debra Penny
Julian Miller
Kurt Howard
Guy Fixsen
Lara Lodato
Eoghan Synnott

Appendix B

**An Interview with
Alexander Gordon Smith**

An Interview with Alexander Gordon Smith
Scriptwriter, *The Box*

What about this project interested you?

There were several aspects of the project that interested me. Jennifer's initial pitch sounded both interesting and innovative. I hadn't heard of anybody commissioning several films from a single screenplay before, and as a writer and filmmaker I was curious what the results might be.

I have always been fascinated by the role the reader or viewer plays in the creative process. I primarily write books for children and teenagers, and the sheer number of responses from readers over the years has made me realise just how much the interpretation of my books differs from person to person. I am lucky enough to receive hundreds of emails and letters every year, many of which contain fan art inspired by my books, or fan fiction set in the world of the books, or questions about the characters and the world. Every interpretation of the world I created is different, sometimes strikingly so. I always think that the reader does the hard work when it comes to imagining the world of the story. The author might lay the foundations, but as soon as the story is out in the world our role is over. We truly are dead. From the same text, each and every reader conjures a unique world based on their own interpretation and their own experience. They are as much a part of the creative process as I am.

Although the process is slightly different with screenplays – there is far less information in a script, for one – the same questions of authorship still arise, because each person involved in the process will interpret the script in a different way. From my own experience, again, responses to the screenplays I have written have differed markedly, with different people seeing very different things in the same written 'instructions'.

So this project was really a way for me to further explore the idea of authorship, and to see just how much a reader contributes to the creative process.

Can you discuss how you approached writing the script for this PhD study and how it might have been different from other writing/scriptwriting projects including any

specific challenges you faced.

It was always going to be a difficult project to get right, from a writer's point of view. The main challenge was steering a course between writing something that was overly prescriptive and something that was too vague. For the project to work we needed a script that set some firm rules. This way it wouldn't be too open to interpretation – something that would undermine the purpose of the experiment. A script along the lines of "Two people are in a room, they speak to each other" would be ridiculously vague. At the same time, I didn't want to make the script too rigid, because this too would limit the usefulness of the project. Stipulating every prop and movement would inevitably lead to five near identical films. So creating a screenplay that reined in filmmakers whilst giving them sufficient room to play was the first, and biggest, challenge.

I spent a long time trying to work out a way to find this balance, and it was only when Jennifer and I hit upon the idea of a box that the screenplay started to take shape. I realised that if we used a prop in the script – a prop which was only described by name and given no other properties – then this would drastically change the way each filmmaker viewed the story. There were a number of possible objects that could have been used – a weapon, a piece of jewellery, a vehicle, even just an 'object' – but the box was by far the strongest and most interesting. A box could be as small as a matchbox and as large as a coffin. It was relevant to every genre because it could contain anything – a weapon, a bomb, a dead body, an engagement ring, some cereal, or even the characters themselves. Once I knew that the box was going to be the focal point of the screenplay, the rest was relatively easy. I decided on a room, on two characters and the possibility of a third, and some dialogue. The end result was, I hope, a screenplay that was rigid in terms of character and setting and dialogue, but which still left a huge amount of room for interpretation.

The other difficulty I faced was the length of the screenplay – or rather lack of. Jennifer wanted something that was around two minutes long, which is an extremely short space in which to tell a story. Ultimately, though, a short screenplay was beneficial because it focused each filmmaker's process on this specific moment, which is what the project called for. A longer piece would, I think, have been detrimental to the project.

When you set out to write the first draft of the screenplay, did you have a mental picture of the characters or other details you didn't include in the script in mind as you were writing? Or a genre that you were writing to?

I had a very strong mental image of the room, which I think comes across in the screenplay. I wanted it to be a room that felt familiar to the reader / viewer, which is why I went for a living room. At the same time, I wanted a space that didn't feel quite at home, a space that, after the first glance, wasn't quite right – which is why the air is dusty and there is an almost sinister ticking clock. I wanted it to be a self-contained space, with no real view out of the window, and no real sense of where it was located.

As for the characters, I decided on a man and a woman purely because I thought it would make for the most interesting dynamic. I didn't have a clear sense of who they were, no, but then I often don't have a clear sense of a character when I first start writing. It usually takes a while for them to come into focus, which of course was impossible here given the short timeframe of the script. I deliberately didn't stipulate an age or a physical description because this was one of the elements of the story I wanted to leave open. In my head, though, they were in their late twenties / early thirties. I think she was blonde and he had dark hair, but other than that I can't tell you much about them! As for the third person, I was imagining an older man, but again it was very nebulous in my imagination.

The question of genre is a fascinating one. I am a horror writer, so I was definitely approaching this from a horror point of view – even though I was trying extremely hard not to. This kind of set-up is perfect for horror, and even though I was attempting to write in as 'genre-neutral' a fashion as possible I kept leaning toward the grotesque. In my head, the box was just about big enough to keep a severed head in... I was very careful not to steer the reader toward horror, however, so when I was writing the script I made an effort to think about it from a number of different genres. I saw the box as a ring box, as a coffin, even a chest belonging to a loved one. I saw it as a container for a bomb, a weapon, a disease, even a Big Mac. By making sure that the script worked with every genre I could think of, I hope I was allowing a reader's interpretation to be as free and unguided as possible.

Do you remember going back to write a second draft and removing any details to make the characters or setting more neutral? If so, do you remember why you did so or can you give an example?

The first draft of the script was definitely a little longer. I made an attempt to describe the characters in more detail, and there were more items inside the room – photographs on the walls, some old ornaments, and a television. I also described the weather – sunshine streaming through the net curtains. I took these out because I felt we already had enough to set the scene, and because stipulating weather can be a filmmaker’s nightmare as it is so hard to control (not to mention irrelevant in this story). The dialogue is pretty much the same as when I first wrote the screenplay. There were originally a few more lines of speech from both characters, but only reiterating what they had already said (there were a few more lines like “What are you scared of?” and “I don’t want to do it!”). These were removed partly because they made the script too long, and partly because I felt they were repetitive.

Some edits I made while writing were directions or speech that drove the story towards one particular genre. Several lines of dialogue were edited because they were recognisable tropes from horror movies. There were also edits in the other direction – lines that might have been too romantic, or funny, which I pulled back towards a neutral place. But there weren’t very many of these.

Really, though, very few changes were made. I had spent so much time focusing on making the screenplay rigid but open to interpretation, and also walking the fine line between the genres, that by the time I started to write I knew precisely what I wanted to say. As a result, the final draft is almost identical to the first.

Appendix C

The Production Journals

Stephen Philipson's journal
The making of "The Box"

April 13, 2013: signed on to direct "The Box." Not really sure how or when I'm going to do this, but Tina Fey said the secret to success is to say yes to everything then work out how you're going to accomplish it. Interestingly, I was just thinking about how I should start to transition more into directing by doing a few shorts when Jen got in touch, so it seems fortuitous.

June 4, 2013: had the idea of partnering with a young, up-and-coming producer who might be looking for shorts to do. Immediately thought of Kristin Waterson, who assisted me on a feature then left post production to start a company called Neon Panther. They seem to like the script.

June 10, 2013: Met with Kristin. Her first instinct is to try something different with casting--how about elderly actors? I really like that idea. That could bring an interesting dimension to the script.

We agreed to meet soon to discuss casting and locations.

June 19, 2013: Had to prep for the first production meeting. Read through the script, had a think, and scribbled the following notes:

REGRET.

Many years a woman made a decision to live a life that she didn't want. Adam is offering her a chance to erase that life and wipe the slate clean, but doing so will destroy 50 years of life and all those she touched in that 50 years. Can she do it?

I'm thinking maybe Eve made a "safe" choice and married someone stable but less interesting, instead of her true love. But opening the box would give her the chance to see what life could have been like had she made a different decision, the only thing is, it will erase her current life. It's a strong dilemma that the actors can play with and I think the theme of REGRET could really work.

Later, I met with Kristin and her partner Kyle--they seem very keen and have the connections to get crew and actors--feeling very good about the collaboration! I pitched them the idea of making it about regret and they liked it. They suggested using a younger male actor--not sure exactly how that will work, but it's an intriguing idea. Scribbled the following notes:

Ideas-location=bedroom. Establish a woman's life in pictures around the room. Woman is old, but man is young and dressed as if he's from the past.

Box is hidden under floor boards--woman must pry them up.

Man appears in room like a ghost.

Two ideas: either woman wakes up on bed as if she's dying or ill. OR woman breaks into room wearing mask--reveal she's old.

We brainstormed some locations for them to look into. I think the bedroom needs to look boring and stuffy and old. It represents the life she chose--safe, but not ugly. Maybe just more classic without too much modern flair. I emailed them some reference images off the web and we discussed the possibilities. Sounds like they have some leads.

July 22, 2013: Finally met again with the Neon Panther crew. It does not look like we will be able to shoot before I leave for BC since they are busy shooting their web series. Also, none of the location leads they had panned out. I will have to think about who has a suitable bedroom.

BUT we have a crew. And it sounds like they have some good leads on casting. We thought more about using a younger male actor, as if the male actor was still in the time period that the woman made her decision. Like he's a ghost, or that no time has passed. I like the dynamic of a younger man with an older woman. And they promised that they have some good choices available.

August 16, 2013: Talked on the phone with Kristin and Kyle. They sent me demos for three actors who would work really well for the male. I'm a little worried about our female lead but they seem confident. We went back and forth on some possibilities for shoot days and it looks like their crew is available September 7th. Quite late, but it'll have to do. And I'll have to think about a location.

August 19, 2013: Had the idea of asking my wife's boss the Reverend Doug Norris if we can shoot in his house, a beautiful old home in Rosedale (The Rosedale United Church rectory). As I recall, it has an older Victorian period look with lots of old wood trim and plaster walls. There has to be a perfect bedroom in there somewhere.

I selected the male lead Ben Lewis, but we're still back and forth on women. I suggested Diana Leblanc who was in an NFB project I worked on recently.

August 22, 2013: Diana isn't available on the Saturday but the crew isn't available on the Sunday. Arg! They're trying to arrange a casting session when I get back. This makes me a bit nervous. Also, Kristin no longer works for Red Lab, so I have no idea what we're going to do about post.

August 30, 2013: I visited Doug's house--it's perfect! I found a bedroom with a great old oak bed, windows for some natural light, and a door to a sunroom that gives us lots of potential for blocking. I walked around a bit to start to think about how to do this. I like the idea of the camera starting in the hall and

finding her in the room, so we feel like she's hiding from something. Also, we can dolly over a photo of her and her current husband to establish her back story. And Adam can appear over her shoulder almost like a ghost from the hall. Very inspired--I drew up a shot list and some storyboards (attached). I like overhead shots to show the hole in the floorboards that she made to pull out the box. Thought about the idea of starting with her lying on the bed, like she's at the end of her life, and then gets up to get the box, but maybe that's too much business. We can reveal the woman off a picture of her with her boring husband.

September 3, 2013: I met the DP James Poremba and he seems talented and easy to work with. We did a location scout and I went over the boards--he seemed to get everything and had some good suggestions. We decided that the window can create pools of light that the actors can hide from, sticking to the shadows. We discussed references and I showed him stills from *Beginners*, *Tree of Life*, and *Revolution Road*. We decided on a vaguely classic, period look with warm soft retro colours. But we can get contrast from hot light coming in from the harsh outside world, but not a lot of light in the room, so there's shadows to hide in. I realise I love contradictions--harsh but soft, bright but dark! Contrast. James seems to get what I was saying.

Unfortunately, we still don't have an actress--the women who responded to our casting call, in my opinion don't read "elderly," which doesn't work for our concept. Kyle wanted to cast her and use use make-up, but I just don't see how it could work without professional aging make-up, which we can't afford. We're down to one final possibility, or else we'll have to delay for Diana Leblanc. Not sure when we'd be able to find a date where everyone is available, so really hoping this works out.

My friend Naz is unavailable to Art Direct, but Neon Panther hooked me up with Kendra Terpenning, who seems really nice. We've been texting pictures of potential props back and forth. We talked about a very ornate and vintage look for the box, Victorian period feel, but like something precious is inside. She couldn't find anything perfect at the the thrift store, but I had some old boxes from my Granny, so I agreed to bring them all to set and decide on the day. We also decided to place vintage suitcases throughout the frame. Like she's packed everything up. Kendra scoured the thrift shops for appropriate art and will bring some items for wardrobe. I told her the man should look as if he's stepped out of the fifties.

September 5th, 2013: After a lengthy back and forth trying to nail one of three new possibilities for the woman, we cast Kate Lynch. Weird casting her without seeing her, but it's our only hope for getting this done on time. Maybe we should have held out for Diana Leblanc, but we have no time.

Spoke to Kendra about Kate's hair, which looks short and quite modern--fitting a wig at this late hour isn't possible, so we'll have to work with it on the day.

Kendra found two matching locket for the characters to wear, which is cute and seems to say they've always loved each other. We instructed the actors to bring several vintage clothing options so we can decide on the day. We also told her to bring a photo of herself at a younger age with a man.

September 7th, 2013: Shooting! Forgot how much I love directing. We got all the shots on my list. I wish we had wider lenses. I realised later we never saw the beautiful windows I wanted to include but I don't think it's worth going overtime just to get them. The actors had fun together. Kate brought a beautiful photo of herself with a young guy, except we do not have permission to show the guy (they're divorced) and he looks too exciting anyway. So we shot the picture frame with a green oval in it and composite in a picture. Hopefully.

September 22: Finished a rough cut. The biggest challenge is making the man appear in a ghost-like fashion without it seeming cheesy. We played around with making the man see-through using visual effects, but it's a bit confusing and we don't really have the elements to make it work. I wish I'd filmed her taking the box out of the hole in the floorboards, since I'm not sure if it really sells that she took it out of the floor. I got a picture of my boring-looking friend, which Cory combined with the picture of Kate and layered it over the picture frame, but I'm not sure it tells us anything. Hopefully, you get something from it.

Also, should we use a shot at the end to show that the man was never there? Discussed these issues with Neon Panther. We decided not to do the "he was never there" thing (it would seem like too much of a cheat.) We can use sound to make the man sound ghost-like at first. We laid in a ticking clock to make you feel time passing. It's definitely moody, but does it say any of the things we wanted it to?

September 27, 2013: Locked picture. I'm definitely happy with it overall, but I think there's a lot I could have done to make the regret theme hit harder.

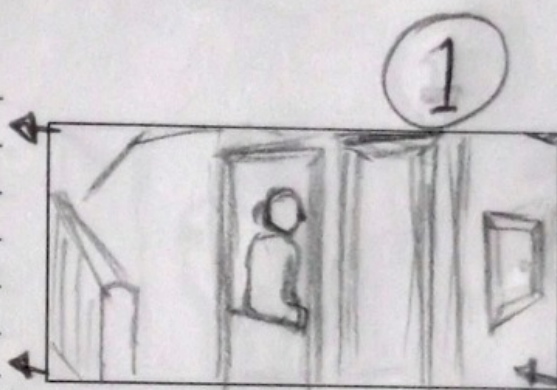
I wish I had more time to cast someone who really felt more like she was at the end of her life. And I needed more details to establish the backstory. And I think it would have been more powerful to see her pull the box out of the floorboards at the beginning--that would have made a nice reveal. Also, I wish I'd used wider lenses to see a bit more of the room, including the beautiful window that I loved, but never shot! Live and learn!

THE BOX - storyboards
By Stephen Philipson
September 13, 2013

SHOT 1

WS FROM HALL INTO
ROOM

SLIDE TO REVEAL EVE
ON BED (FROM BEHIND)



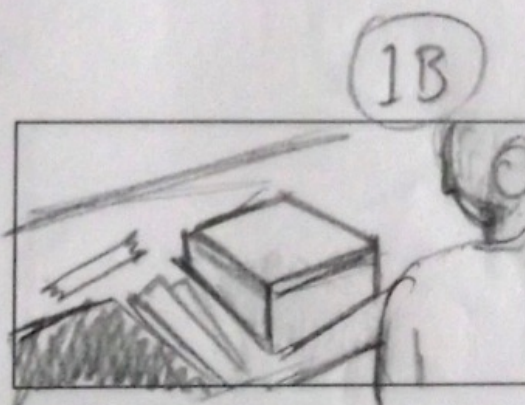
SHOT 1A

MS PICTURE, SLIDE TO
REVEAL EVE SITTING
ON BED.



SHOT 1B

MS BOX, HIGH-ANGLE
OVER EVE'S SHOULDER



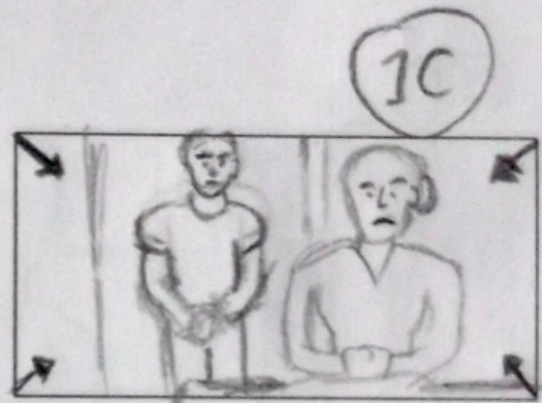
THE BOX - storyboards
By Stephen Philipson
September 13, 2013

SHOT 1C

MS COVERAGE EVE
(ADAM IN BG)

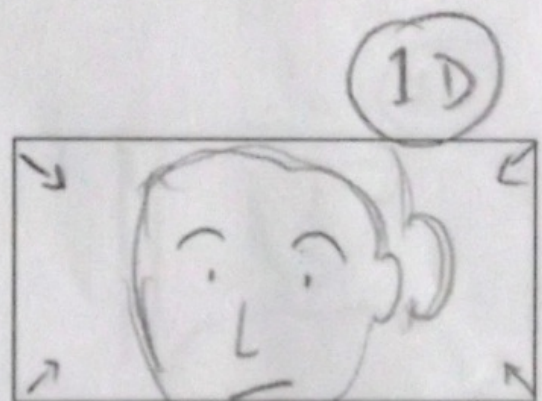
MS ADAM/EVE ON BED
SLOW PUSH IN

MS EVE OVER ADAM (END)



SHOT 1D

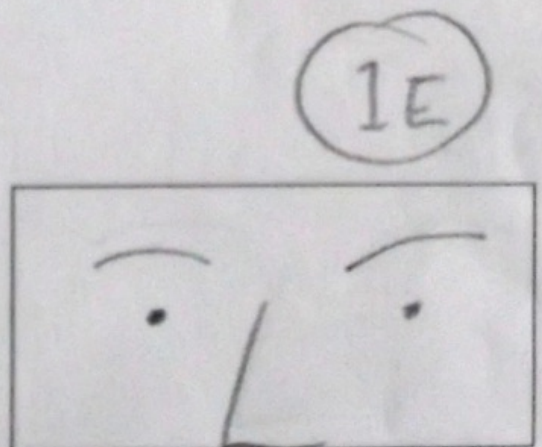
CU EVE OVER ADAM
(FOR END)



SHOT 1E

ECU EVE'S EYES (END)

(-RELEASE, EYES CLOSE)



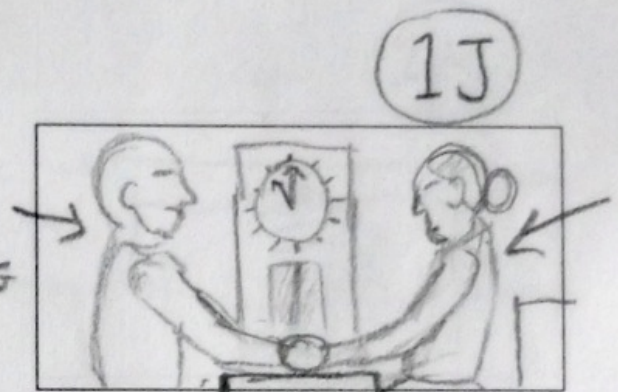
THE BOX - storyboards
By Stephen Philipson
September 13, 2013

SHOT 1J

MS PROFILE

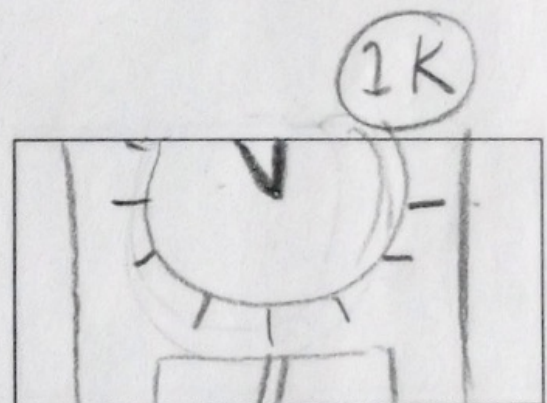
BOX IN FG, CLOCK IN BG

THEY SIT INTO FRAME.



SHOT 1K

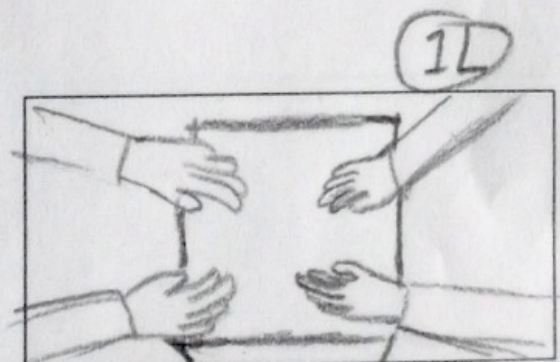
CU CLOCK



SHOT 1L

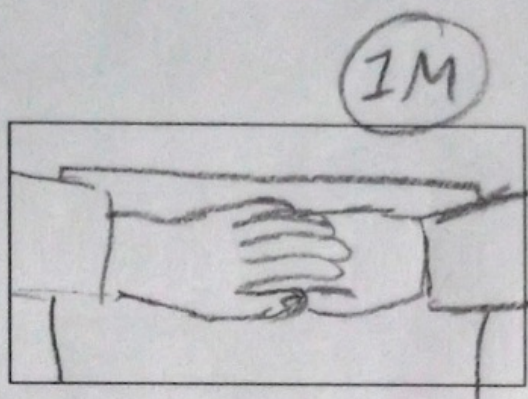
MCU BOX

OVERHEAD

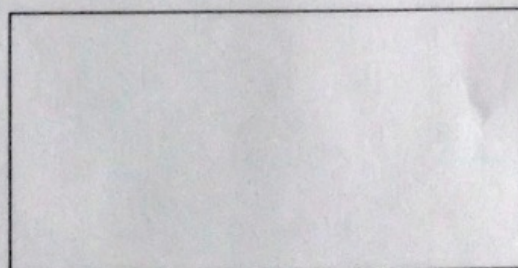
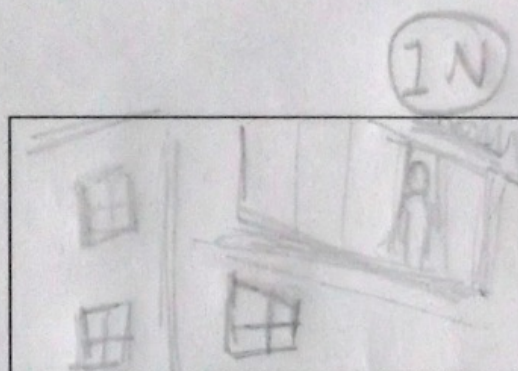


THE BOX - storyboards
By Stephen Philipson
September 13, 2013

SHOT 1M
CU HANDS CLASP
- BOX OPEN



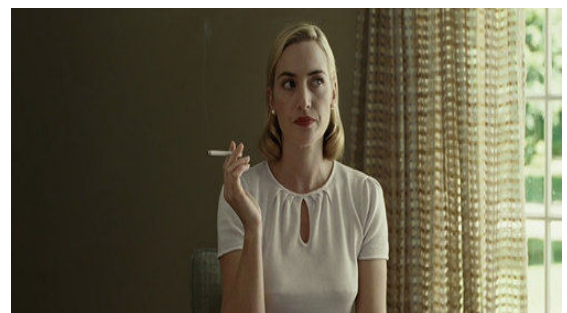
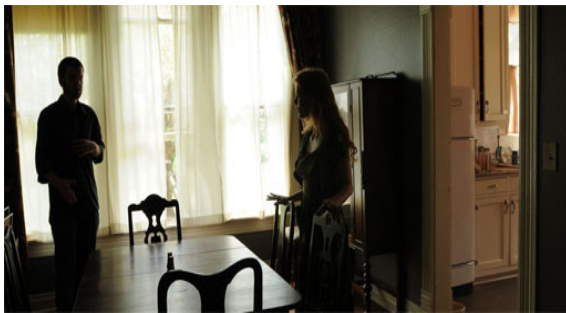
SHOT 1N
WS EXT ADAM
LOOKING OUT
WINDOW.



Bedroom Reference Images



Colour Timing References



The Box
By
Alexander Gordon Smith
Jennifer Oey

Production Notes and Diary
Martin L. Tease

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Introduction:

The purpose of creating this project was to originate an idea that resembled my PhD research project exploring the model creators and producers of Black Film use to make their movies. My PhD topic is looking at the black filmmaking process and how black film aesthetics are applied within it (self reflection, imagery and dual consciousness). In predevelopment, the primary goal was to create a narrative that explored how blackness could be presented on screen without the focus being presented solely on the character's ethnicity. Each shot was to focus on the action being taken by our protagonist. I wanted to do something along the lines of two people preferably male using the scripted words to convey the ending or beginning of their relationship. The other scenario based on a true story would focus on two people using the script for a scene where they are sealing the contents of a box someone has left behind and does not want others to find out what is in there.

Both of these scenarios would expand the initial concept as I was hoping to create a twenty to twenty-five minute short based along the idea of the script. The initial idea was to film a scene in one or two days as I have no money and needed to pull in favours or find people who want to create a reel, move the next level, etc.

Production Journal

May/June: Development

upon receiving the script for the producer, I began phoning and emailing several production contacts in Los Angeles to gather support, ideas and mentorship on how I should film several concepts I had in mind.

- Idea #1. Two black men (preferably gay) are deciding whether to open the box which represented their relationship moving to the next level of commitment. One was assured he was ready, the other not so based on what the level of commitment would mean. (Appendix 1: revised script)
- Idea #2. Two friends are in a rush to conceal contents that are being placed in box as they are trying to hide from the person coming into the room, what they are doing. The box in this scenario was a means of hiding unmentionable items. (no script revisions but the process was about improvising the scene)
- Idea #3. Consisted of our lead girl being surrounded by friends who questioned why she was afraid to open the box. This scenario was filmed with two male characters voicing the Adam character and a female character playing the role of Eve. (no script revision needed)
- Idea #4 this scenario consisted of one character handling all the lines of script as a means to observe her contemplating why they should or should not, open the box. (no script revision needed)

With these ideas in mind, I sent out an email to various friends who were casting producers to find several actors who might be interested in playing one of the parts.

Emails were sent to producer Fatima Washington, Jacquie Frisco Hapsburg, Joyce Washington, Paula Bolden and Directors Erik White, Jessie Torero, Nzinga Stewart, Jake Nava and Bryan Barber as I was interested in any ideas they might have or suggest

I use to make this short happen regardless of scenario chosen.

Project Specifications

Production Time: 5 months. About 10-20 hours a week of my time as producer, director, cinematographer, and researcher.

- All editing done with the help of two production assistants (chao and siavash) from August until completion. Rough estimate at six to seven hours per day.
- Equipment:
 - Canon DSLR Camera
 - G4 Mac Laptop with Final Cut Pro HD 4.5 and 1.5GB RAM (\$2100)
 - One external 200GB drive with 800 speed Fire wire port
 - Halogen 1000w mechanic light stand and
 - Two clip-on lights with Phillips Natural Light 150w bulbs and
 - Extension cords, duct tape, etc.
 - Wired Radio Shack lapel mic.
 - Fold out car window shade as bounce card
 - Thin 4'X2' white board as bounce card
 - MiniDV tapes, DVDs and CDs

Source Material

- 1 (2-page script).

July: Shooting

it was my goal that principle photography of this film would be done while home in the states. The reason being is that I have more contacts and access to film equipment. Prior to leaving, I began filming several scenarios listed above with local talent in the UK.

- I decide to use the interior of my house as a primary location. The setting and tone of this film was initially to recreate black film aesthetics that typically underscore black imagery, notions of black social consciousness and then a level of duality that juxtaposes one's blackness with a larger concept of self identity. With that in mind, I chose a local actress who personified the Eve character in our initial meeting. At this point, I had not been able to find a suitable male counterpart and I began deciding on how to play using her as the main character with the Adam character being played by two actors.
- For some of the cutaway shots that I wanted to include in the film, I had my cinematographer/cameraman film Eve at several events around the city. In doing this, I wanted to give the audience a full sense of her character and why this choice/decision to open the box was potentially hard for her.

- Several common mistakes are made such as not always white balancing, putting bounce cards in places that light wouldn't come from, having changing light from the sun/clouds that makes editing hard, etc. 200 stills are shot using a still camera on macro setting, mostly with sunlight at a 45-degree angle to keep from getting glare. We tried filming several scenes of her walking through the park as she went to a black festival, entering and exiting Cinema city as she attended a Black History Month Event, and her entering and exiting my home to provide establishing shots I wanted to use later to build her sense of community (this shot would aid in understanding how blackness for this character is exuded beyond her biological and physical skin characteristics).

(after speaking with Fatima/Paula I am not sure I can film the concept for scenario #1 due to time, location and availability of crew (appendix 2: email conversations)

August: Script and Filming revisions

I hit a wall after not being able to secure the crew, location I was hoping for and one of the actors I was considering got hired for a paid project that diminished his availability.

When returning to the UK, I am not able to find suitable male leads to play gay or one male lead to play opposite Eve. Another obstacle that keeps presenting me with a challenge relates to the notion of Black Film. Is this a Black Film because I say it is? Is it black because I am casting black talent? Will it be a black film based on the backstory I am trying to create?

As I struggle to decipher whether or not this is a “black film” based upon my own research, I have decided to go with film scenario #3 where Eve is played by a female and the Adam character is played by two non – black males. I am taking my inspiration from the American TV Show Scandal and Sleepy Hollow, where the lead females are Black but the main/supporting characters are diverse in ethnicity. I still use my house as the location which lends to the ethnic style decoration and set design. I play use to music to help set the tone and possibly enhance the mise-en-scene

I have asked two of the Make @UEA students who are excellent cameramen to help film the scene and to give their input. An initial problem with both students is their inability to go beyond what I am asking as I continue to have problems deciphering the “black film component” and trying to figure out specific shots and camera angles with three actors

and a film crew at my home location.

On this filming day, I feel lost amid the subject matter and I'm tired of watching it. As we are filming, my friend Jacquie reassures me that I'm not alone in having to adjust and readjust based on filming and shooting scenarios. She points out that I've made a common mistake of first time director film - I've started without a proper shooting script to guide me and a better producer to help reign me in. Another added problem is one of my talent has to leave and then tells me he can not be available until the beginning of September to film if we need to reshoot.

Although we do finish the last scene with him as Eve is reassured by both Adam's to open the box, I am already thinking of filming scenario #4 with just Eve. If not, I plan to reschedule a shoot where I will play one of the Adams rather than delete this shoot and pretend it never happened,

August: Reshoot

I'm reinvigorated and glad to be filming this scene with myself as one of the Adams. I feel that having my presence in the film helps with the "black" theme on a biological level (physical presence) and by my trying to play the character based on several traditions and technique that may be recognised or considered black (slang terminology, hand gestures, etc.). My other actor, who was Indian helps to provide a differing ethnic tone, primarily due to his speech and annunciation of words. I feel like his presence and demeanour helps add some comedy to the script as I had initially tried to do with the two male character idea.

****My additional actor is not able to make this filming day and one of my camera men is not able to come either****

With that in mind, I decide to try filming this scene between Eve and me. I want to mimic what has been done before with the two Adams but utilize a series of close ups and medium shots since the scenario is only two people.

One of my concerns with the previous scene was the inability of my cinematographer to experiment and capture footage that went beyond my limited grasp of angles, shooting and movement. Although I think he does good work, I needed him to really take charge of the filmed elements as I tried to direct the talent.

On this day of filming with me as one of the talent, I felt my acting ability was taking away from the scene as Eve had to play off me and my bad acting. As we were filming our scenes, I asked our camera operator to focus more on Eve as I began thinking of scenario #4 where Eve would be the sole character. The concept I was going with, was the conversation one may have with them self when faced or challenged with a major decision. Each shot would focus on Eve as she tried to figure out what she was going to do with the box.

September: Edit/Submission

As the September deadline approaches, I have Siavash and Chao help with the editing of the footage we have so far. In the review of what we have filmed and captured so far, I am not happy with the final footage. My editor feels it lacks drama and/or conflict. The funny stuff should be at the end, the beginning needs to follow the treatment summary and explain the relationships the Adams have with Eve. The initial problem here is the working style and understanding of my crew to the initial concept of the script. What I try to explain to them about this process is that it is not solely based on the written words but what I was trying to convey through the content of the film.

This dilemma throughout filming is about black representation in Film. The question that I want one to consider while I made this film and as others view it, is the nature of what Black Film is and what that means to them. While I am not happy with this scenario, what I wanted to do and make sure of, is that a black face or representation was presented in some kind of way on screen as I didn't think others would do so

Additional concerns I have is with music. I have access to songs that I can not get "clearance" on but I have verbal approvals to use. I am not sure if this is sufficient and endeavour to find other sources of music to fit in with this scenario. Upon hearing my plans to reshoot using Eve as the main character, I ask Chao and Siavash to help figure out how to film this using my house.

Working with Chao and Siavash on the edit, things are good but there are some things I don't like. The biggest thing I don't like is me as one of the actors. While they won't admit, I don't think either Chao or Siavash like my acting ability either. As we go back and forth on the edit, I am given more time by the producer and decide to use some of the edits and shots to being working on the idea for scenario #4. Eve is our primary focus.

For this shoot, I envision Eve wandering and pacing around the room. She is asking herself out loud whether she should open the box, close the box, what will happen, etc. I plan to use an overhead shot to potentially enhance the frenetic pace of the scene. I ask Siavash, who is filming, to think about how he can capture this and when editing, create a series of dissolves that show a progression of time.

Chao, my additional cameraman, does not understand the style of filming I am asking for, so I have to explain to him what I am asking for. This scene and scenario is something not custom to him or Siavash. What I trying to compose is a scene where this is Eve's conversation at home as she tries to figure out what to do. My visual reference for this scene was the video "Come to My Window" sung by Melissa Ethridge. As I had initially explained to Fatima, I also wanted to try some techniques by Woody Allen where he films scenes and then uses the editing process to connect the dots, not necessarily in a linear fashion.

As we complete the day of filming, I am torn about whether I should use music or not. At first, I was concerned with how the use of music would help enhance the mood of this piece, but now I am afraid of how it might detract from it. The goal of this scene was to play upon the emotions of the Eve character as we watch her ponder whether she should open the box. Each scene captures her mood as she transitions from frantic, reassured, comforted and then peace with her decision.

October: Unexpected Extension

As I am given an unexpected extension for this project, I decide not to use the version of the edit with me as talent. I personally do not think it looks great and my acting detracts from the scenes. Instead, I begin to look at the footage we have with Glynnis by herself as the sole character. As I go back to shows like Scandal and Sleepy Hollow that feature black female leads, I draw to their presence... how they show raw emotion, display coolness, warmth and inner strength resolve. In several of the scenes with Glynnis, I tried to capture those emotions with here as she looks in the mirror reciting her lines. I remember how I usually made her repeat them, again and again to get her upset, frustrated or forceful when I needed her to be.

In several scenes, especially when I have her looking in the mirror, she captures the mood I was looking for. I even have her speaking in Zulu, as she is South African, to play on the 'blackness' I was trying to create through music, setting and location. In her

scenes, I left the TV, which is prominent in the scene, on one of the African Channels as another means enhance the setting.

Final: Edit

Siavash has some time free and we go back into the avid to create a final edit with some minor graphics. He and Chao have been interested in the project as I've gone along, although he does not think I should use music, he helps me decide on the final transitions for the edit. He helps me to finish the edit and the project looks good. I show the draft to several people and we make a few adjustments based on dissolves and fades. I realise that I have moved away from the idea and content primarily used for Black Film. In large part, this final edit moves away from the initial concepts of black filmmaking solely based on essential criteria (subject, plot, theme based in a black surrounding) or biological definitions. However, I tried to look at this as a film that features a black talent who may possess traits and qualities similar to most people in her situation. The draft is not perfect at all, but showing it to people is a huge help because we see patterns emerge in their feedback. It becomes clear what changes should be made (stuff they all agree on), and what feedback should be ignored (personality dependent feelings or stuff we just don't want to do because of time). siavash makes the changes and a "final" DVD is made. We view the DVD and come up with just one more series of changes to be made. Unfortunately, my final deadline is approaching and I'd rather have it submitted then perfect. I view this as a final work in progress not necessarily a finished completed idea.

Lessons Learned

1. I needed a shooting script: Painful to do for sure, but not as painful as I found it was to not have one. They show you where to go, when you're lost, and what to cut.
2. The project was about two stories: One story was the about Black Film. And one was about the making of the film, which had its own naturally occurring drama and conflict.
3. Get help: There's a reason making movies has naturally evolved into a collaborative medium.
4. Show rough drafts to lots of people. Listen carefully, do not defend or make excuses other then being clear that it is a rough draft. I think I would have found this incredibly helpful, and it might have built more interest in the project by people in the local film community because we were willing to listen to them.
5. Smooth it out: Even if you have some edits or parts of the film you're not happy with, but deadlines are approaching, save time to smooth out the sound and flow of the film down to the pixel.
6. Get It Done: I found it vital that someone play the role of the producer. Producers produce - they get it done, keep control of costs, and then move on

to the next project. Remember, it may not be perfect, but it's not the only thing you are going to do. For a film to get done, you need this force to battle with the forces of the director and others who sometimes risk the entire project by wanting things to be too perfect. In other words, filmmakers make films.

Having written notes as I worked on random scraps of paper (in retrospect, probably not ideal), which I then shoved into a folder, I have re-created what I wrote here... written in the past tense.

Pre-Production

First reading of screenplay as a director (rather than PhD student) was interesting... in that it felt like reading it for the first time. Clearly I knew the story, but the pictures in my head were, for the first time, my own. Previously when reading the screenplay, I was trying to imagine potential adaptations. This time, they were my adaptations playing out. Upon a second reading, I immediately landed on the idea of puppets inside a box. As this isn't an idea Gordon Smith and I discussed – the characters being in the box, or puppets (we did discuss animation as a possibility) – I presume it is my own reading of the story.

I thought a lot about the screenplay over several days, but no other idea grabbed a hold of me the way the puppets did. And I couldn't stop thinking about them. I'd shot a music video for a friend's band at the Norwich Puppet Theatre about a year and a half previously and so was familiar with the puppets they have and with the theatre itself. The visuals just would not leave me alone, so I decided this was my film.

I contacted Ian Woods at the NPT who was very accommodating particularly as my window for filming coincided with a weekend when the NPT was not yet booked. As they do weddings and events as well as puppet shows, I was really pleased they were willing to book me in asking only for a small donation to the theatre in lieu of their usual fee.

As I wanted to shoot HD, ideally with a Canon 7D, I contacted a friend who worked in sound – to ask him to record my sound (a guide track only) – and to recommend a cinematographer who might be available locally on the day. Chris Sharman agreed to lend both his time and equipment to the project without pay and thus, I had my crew!

Ian invited me to come choose my 'stars' and the puppets I chose were originally the leads in Hansel and Gretel. I re-named them Stanley and Isadora almost immediately.

They didn't look like an 'Adam' or 'Eve' to me. At this point I started trying to figure out how to make a box that they would fit into neatly. This took a lot of work: I tried eBay, Amazon, Freecycle... nothing was right. Eventually I went to B&Q and played around in the yard with wooden decking 'tiles' and enlisted my partner's handyman skills to roughly fasten them together so I could easily take them apart for filming. We settled on hinges for two corners and a 'false' fourth wall/front. I built a model out of cardboard and inserted pictures of the puppets to figure out my preferred camera angles prior to shooting as Chris and I had such busy schedules we had only enough time to email prior to shooting.

Chris turned out to be fantastically easy to work with and very accommodating. My partner and I were puppeteers, so it was a very small crew of four. The day went to plan, everyone enjoyed their sandwiches, crisps, and chocolate and we had time for a few impromptu shots suggested by Chris at the end of the day: two dolly shots of the crate (open and closed), one forward and one back and OTS shots of the puppets (clearly showing the slats of the box) all the way through their dialogue.

Editing Journal

Editing has been an uncomfortable process, as usual. I dislike editing and love editing and dislike it. The clip organisation and a rough cut was completed in December. Much time was taken up with transfer panel requirements which delayed the rough assembly and cut. Once this was done, I didn't return to it until May due to the same as well as two conferences that almost immediately followed re-submission.

As of May, the fine cut is coming into its own. Most of the film is as I imagined it and pre-planned it which is unsurprising particularly considering its length of (I think) under 2 minutes. The only significant difference at the moment is the use of a shot we devised on the day of Stanley sitting up and looking out of the crate. I can't recall whose idea it was but I remember thinking it could be my 'dog shot'. Instead I have used it to lend more or different meaning to Isadora's line, 'Don't!'. I like how it further cements their different opinions on The Daring Escape.

I've been thinking about music steadily since I shot in late October. I can't get the idea of either a piccolo or oboe out of my head. Yet, I'm stuck as to how they should be used. I'm looking forward to giving a locked cut to Eric so he can help! Very inspired by Peter and the Wolf dir. Suzie Templeton.

The Box Directed by Emily Payne

Production notes

Pre-production

After receiving 'The Box' script I read through it a couple of times. My initial idea was to make a comedy. To have the story play out in a living room. The female character Eve to be sat on the sofa watching TV. The male character Adam would be on the TV. The conversation they have between each other would be played out as an imaginary conversation that comes from Eve's head. You would only see the top of the box, which would be sat on a table in front of her. There would be a lot of low shots that would pull between the table and TV to reveal a penny. When they both decided to open the box you see it's a 'Deal or No Deal' red box with the number 23 on. Eve has managed to get her hands on the banker's own personal box. Eve is out for revenge as she went away with just a penny, so she is hoping that there will be a good sum of money in the banker's own personal box.

I discussed this idea with a friend Sam Patterson who came on board to help make changes to the script, and help with the production of the film. Together we came to the conclusion that to make this convincing we would need Noel Edmunds to play Adam. I thought it was worth a try to see if we could approach him, but with time constraints I thought it maybe best to think of another idea.

I discussed the film with Sam, and we decided to go for a more sci-fi fantasy film. Together we came up with the idea of a couple that had been on the run for 6 years. They had an artefact that some gangsters wanted to get their hands on. The only problem is Adam and Eve aren't sure what this artefact looks like, so they don't know what it is. Adam and Eve had managed to blend into society for the last three years. From the point we join them in the film, they're both working normal jobs, living a normal life. Till one day Eve returns home to find the house has been broken into. She asked Adam to come home quickly, as nothing had been taken. They know they have been found and that whatever these people are looking for is in their home. Eve realises what the object is. The gangsters were searching for something out of the ordinary that is maybe diamond encrusted. But it's actually a hand painted small green box. It's like Pandora's box. Once opened their whole lives and maybe others will be changed forever. The decision is now down to Adam and Eve to what they are going to do. They will have to face a life on the run or open the box, and change their lives in a way they can never imagine.

When looking into cast I immediately thought of an actress called Ty Glaser that I had previously worked with on Holby City. I thought she would be perfect for the role. I knew she was very busy, so I sent her an email with the script once it had been adapted, and asked her if she would like to play Eve. She replied within a couple of hours saying she loved the script and would really like to be involved. I rang Ty the next day to discuss the filming, and she asked if I had anyone in mind to play Adam. She pasted me on a couple of names to check out. Out of the names Ty gave me I emailed Stu Mansell, as I had previously worked with him before on a short film. He got back to me the next day, and said he would really like to be involved. By the end of the first few days into pre-production I had a meeting with my two cast members. A date was arranged for filming. Which was Sunday 3rd November 2013. The date was a bit further away than I planned, but was the only day both actors could do. In the meeting I found out that Ty and Stu were an actual couple in real life. I thought this was a good thing as would add to the chemistry on screen.

With filming date set I then looked into locations. I decided that it needed to be

in a house that looked like a couple with no children lived there. So a very minimal, but modern house that had been refurbished in the last few years. As it was a no budget project I asked my landlord if I could film in the house I'm currently renting. It was perfect, very minimal, with laminate flooring, and leather sofas. Which gave an impression a professional couple owned the house. The landlord said yes, and my current housemate was fine about it.

With location locked down I started looking into crew, when I got a phone call to do four weeks' work. The job finished a week before the filming date. Whilst working crazy film hours I managed to get emails out to Rana Darwish and Mat Treacey to see if they would be interested in being involved with the project. I asked Mat if he would like to be camera assistant/lighting assistant, and Rana if she would like to be Director of Photography. Mat was up for it, but sadly Rana's work schedule was quite heavy, so she had to decline. She did pass me onto Tom Lee, who works freelance with his own 5D. Tom was up for filming it, but had recently moved to Beccles. I had said that everyone on-board would get expenses and food, as I was unable to pay them. Tom and me managed to come to an arrangement regarding his expenses, so I now had my DOP and camera assistant. I had started looking into sound recordists and lighting kit, when Sam said she would sort them out. This was a weight off my mind as I was out of London filming.

The final week of pre-production was very chaotic, as Sam had not done what she said she would. I started looking into sound recordists at the start of the week, and must of spoken to fifty by Thursday. I decided that I needed a back up plan as it was looking like I wasn't going to get a sound recordist. I managed to borrow an H4N Zoom off my friend, so if worst came to worst I could still get decent sound. The Friday afternoon I had a rehearsal with Ty and Stu at their flat in London. I got stuck in traffic and ended up having to cancel the rehearsal. As I made my way home I had my car bumped into the back by a lorry, which drove off. Things had slowly started to go wrong. I checked the car when I got home, thankfully no major damage. Was a bit worried as it was being used as the action car in the film.

Sam rang me at 8 o'clock Saturday morning (day before filming) to say the lights had fallen through. I got straight on the phone to everyone and anyone I knew to see if they could help me out. A Focus Puller who I worked with a lot Mark Nutkins said that we could borrow his lighting kit for free. A total lifesaver. I collected the kit the Saturday evening and made my way back to mine to get the house and food prep for filming the next day. Still without sound recordist I had given up hope, until 11 o'clock Saturday night I get a message from a sound engineer called Paul Maplas, who I had spoken to earlier in the week. He hadn't done film and TV before, but would be interested in having ago. He had a couple of mics and his own H4N Zoom Mic. Told him call time was 9 o'clock Borehmwood and he said he would be there.

I'm still not sure how, but managed to get all the crew and cast I wanted all in time for filming. I think a bit of luck came into it.

Filming

I had an early start of 6am. I wanted to get lunch prepped so it could just be chucked in the oven. I did baked potatoes with fillings. This would save us time, so lunch would be ready when we broke. Everyone arrived at 9am. Got Ty and Stu into their costumes, they did their own make up. Whilst the crew set up for filming and had breakfast. I decided the exteriors shots would be best to do first, so the house could be trashed, and Tom could get ahead with where he would want lights to go. Everything was running smoothly till Paul found out his H4N Zoom mic wasn't working. Thankfully I had my friends one, so was all sorted.

We headed outside to get the exterior shots of the car pulling into the drive. The road we shot on is usually very quiet not many cars go up and down, apart from today. This became a bit of a nightmare for these shots as cars were constantly coming up and down the road. After nearly hitting one of my neighbors we managed to get all of the shots needed. My favorite shot from the exteriors was the close up of Stu's shoe when he was getting out of the car.

We finished the exteriors about 11:30. The house was trashed and ready to go. I started doing a Directors rehearsal with Ty and Stu whilst Mat and Tom got lights set up, till we had a power cut. I went around to the neighbors and they said the whole of Borehamwood was out. I decided to keep going with the setting up of the next scene as the power could be back on with in a few hours.

Whilst waiting for the power to return I did a rehearsal with Ty and Stu. We discussed a few ideas of what they should do in the scene, and then they played it out. It brought chills to me when I saw how well Ty had emotionally connected with Eve's character especially when she started crying. After watching a run through I knew I had the right actors for the film. They played so well off of each other, and connected really well together. It helped as well with what shots I would like to shoot.

It was 12:30 and the power hadn't come back on. We broke for lunch early and ended up going out and getting a cooked chicken. The power shortly came back on, so we cut lunch short. We turned over on the first shot of Stu walking into the house when the power went again. Thankfully it came back on half an hour later. We managed to get all of the shots for the scene in a good time. All thanks to Ty and Stu for delivering a great performance take after take.

The main part I had been worried about was the green screen shots for the end of the film. I had never done green screen before, so I was relying heavily on Tom to light it and shoot the shots that were needed. He didn't disappoint and managed to get extra shots, so I had a few options in the edit. We wrapped fifteen minutes early, to every one's joy. After packing up all of the gear and tidying the house up everyone managed to get away by seven.

Postproduction

After taking a day to rest I started on the edit. I managed to cut the exterior scenes when my laptop refused to do anymore. I rang up Sam (as she said she would like to help with the edit) to ask her if I might be able to borrow her laptop to edit on. I sat for 24 hours editing to get a rough cut done, after a little snooze I tweaked bits to have a cut I was happy with. I spoke to my Dad about doing the music, and sent him on an MP4 file of the rough cut. By the end of the second editing day I had an edit I was pleased with to an extent. I needed to look at the special effects for the ending and redo them, as they brought the film down. Sam took her laptop back at the end of the second day. I mentioned to her that we needed to shoot some pick up shots to sort out the ending. I spoke to Ty and Stu about doing 2 extra shots. They weren't available as Stu was in a play and Ty was rehearsing for one. It was mainly hand and box shorts, so it was easier if Sam and me doubled for the pick up shots. I had work come in, so was quiet busy for a few weeks, but arranged an evening to shoot the pick ups. The night came around and Sam hadn't been answering my calls. I ended up borrowing my friend Rana's 7D camera, and her hand to get the pick up shots done. With Sam not replying to me, I was unable to find someone else with the same programs on their computer to be able to finish the edit, the final edit got pushed further and further back.

The first week of January I managed to finally get hold of Sam. I was working at the time, so managed to arrange on my day off to get the edit finished, which she then said she couldn't do. After having to take a day off work I managed to get the final edit done. I explained that the final music just needed to go on, and we would have a finished

film.

I got the final music the next day off my Dad, and tried to call Sam again, but to no avail. She eventually later that day called me back, where we had a very heated discussion about the film and the editing, saying I had forced her into doing this. This came as a massive shock to me, so I left it at that. I managed to get the edit onto my friend Rana's laptop just to add the music.

The film was finally finished. It had taken longer than I had planned, but I am very pleased with it. As I put everything into this film to make it something special. I am glad I got some great actors on board, and a great crew to help me make it. I'm a little sad to have lost a friend through the making of it, but I am pleased at how well it has come out.

Tania F's Blog/Production Journal for *The Box*

4 June 2013 (Tuesday)

Blog

One night last week I was chatting with a colleague, and conversation drifted to blogs. I thought nothing of it until some time later when I was mulling over a short film that I will, for the first time, be directing. Amongst other things, like finding cast, crew and locations I have to document the process.

It is, I think an interesting project. Five directors have been asked to shoot their interpretation of same script. I come to project 'Box' with a career as a Cinematographer, and possibly the only female in the group? That said I have no clue who the other four directors are, know nothing about their backgrounds, careers or for that matter where they are located. I believe I have been chosen to be one of five because the craft of Cinematography involves creating a visual narrative, which is integral to story telling in film and that is why I took this challenge.

So where am I up to, well after the initial shock and pleasure of being accepted to take part I over came my fear and read the script. My first reaction was 'is that it' followed by 'really' and so-on, a deep sulk and potential tantrum were lurking along with a variety self destructive criticism. Then I paused, had a long think about the in depth brief I had been given and read 'Box' once again. When I imagined the film set in a warehouse it became be the end/opening scene from an adventure film about lost treasure, in a laboratory a scene from a science fiction movie..... and what's in the box? I am concerned that my first re-action was automatically to follow what is written on the page, I accepted it and challenged nothing, and very relieved that I snapped out of it and got my brain working.

Currently I am considering three options for the films format, and putting the feelers out to find a producer willing to work with me a rookie director who has a deadline in September to deliver one short film.

7 June 2013 (Friday)

Progress

Yesterday I managed to talk with my leading lady and arrange to meet to discuss the project further. I have still to establish an actual shoot date but it looks like it will be in July which I now realise is coming up fast. The sooner I have a date, the sooner I can attempt to put into place my minimal crew, which is growing. The search for a producer is on going, however I am wondering if one is needed for a such a small production? And with those few words I suspect I risk falling into the trap of every rookie director facing rejection. Of course I need a producer, more to the point does a producer need me? Does she like the script or want to be part of the challenge? I hope so.

18 June 2013 (Tuesday)

Progress

It may be small but there is now a team making this film. The leading lady likes my take on the script, and thinks it will work. Phew! Thankfully she has also agreed to allow me to use her home for the films location, and we have dates pencilled. The next hurdle is co-ordinating those dates with the male lead who finally has a copy of the script. Up to this point in time I had thought I would keep his part off screen but having discussed the matter with the producer, yes I now have one of those also for which I am very grateful, it seems

prudent to shoot some scenes with him. The producer came on board yesterday, we met today to discuss the project and my interpretation of the script which she supports. Yay. On top of that she said she'd do a script break down, consider festival options and I have instructions to story board and list all that I wish to shoot as well as to keep mulling the script in case another way of shooting it comes to me. That concerns me, have I stopped short by going for what came to me first? Ought I to have disregarded the lack of resources and thought bigger? Am I missing a trick? I am starting to wonder what the others will do, how will mine compare to theirs. At this stage can I manage to open my mind to other options? I do find myself feeling that I am hanging on to my interpretation like a life raft which is understandable given that it is the only element I control, all else is subject to change. I see that working it through as instructed may allow me to take the idea to greater depths, if it also presents a new view all well and good. Thank goodness I have a producer.

19 June 2013 (Wednesday)

Aside

This morning the producer suggested I research Erwin Schrodinger, I think I am there already but I shall read on. Its interesting to learn what I have responded to intuitively and what within the script they have recognised intellectually. So far we have the temptation in the garden of eden, pandoras box and Mr Schrodinger. At least we are all on the same page. I am back to considering sharing one role between two actors, I just need to visualise what place that other person comes from. Mean while I have bought a pair of shoes, paper and pencils so I can begin story boarding, the only thing that stands in my way is the lack of a pencil sharpener. I have no clue where the shoes fit into the picture, but they are orange and rather lovely.

20 June 2013 (Thursday)

Aside

Further discussions have led to new possibilities, I was right I had closed my mind to other story options. Curiously there was also another reference to competition, yet there is no competition. When that point was raised, I was told that surely I wanted to do the best I could. Doesn't that go with out saying?

(second post)

for what now seems like a moment I had in my grasp an interpretation of the script that I was happy with. Reading tells me I ought not to settle with my first thoughts, discussion has led me to new concepts and also problem, making a decision. I now find myself wondering which idea is right? Which idea will stand up well against the other four films? My situation seems to have gone from pleasing myself to satisfying some one else, to complete an exercise, to understand and interpret the themes within the script, set by a tutor on which I will be judged. I feel like the project is spiralling out of my control.

21 June 2013 (Friday)

Aside

The cast and crew has swelled, the leading man I'd like to work with can make him self available on the same day as the sound recordist and the leading lady. Me thinks some scheduling needs to take place.

24 June 2013 (Monday)

Aside

After a weekend lighting and shooting a short film for some one else it is time to turn my attentions back to 'Box'. After todays very productive meet with the Producer, Heather Robinson, who is awesome re: themes, motivations, back story I think we both feel we have a film to shoot. We've assessed that on the day we have both actors we must limit our selves to shooting only the moments that they are seen together plus dialogue. I've lost my leading lady to fully paid work for a couple of the proposed shoot dates so those days will have to be

re-scheduled toward the end of the month. Generally speaking I think we are moving in the right direction, it is time to get down to some story boarding. Thank goodness my dinner date has cancelled.

26 June 2013 (Wednesday)

Aside

Some thing has been lost...or some thing has been added. its subtle but its there and I don't want it. My intention was to have the female character lead, dominate even. The adaptations seem to have turned into a kitchen sink drama....,

4 July 2013 (Thursday)

Downs and Ups

Since my absence the kitchen sink aspect of the film has been removed and a new thread has been introduced. We now have life and death woven into the script and it feels a little more three dimensional, certainly the actor feels she has some thing to work with. The producer has been useful as a sounding board but will not make it to day one of shooting until the day is pretty much over. I confess to feeling slightly let down, hurt even. Loosing one person won't change much, the pressure and responsibility to produce a result was always on my shoulders, however it has opened the doorway to self doubt. 24hrs before shooting this is not a good state of mind to be in.

(same day, new post)

Problem Solved

The gap created by the producer has been filled, and I now see her absence as a favour. My good friend Lara, also an art director, has agreed to fill the void. Bonus. We are back to being a crew of three plus the actors and every one will be pulling their weight.

(same day, new post)

So...

Having filled the gap made by the missing producer I am now in pursuit of a replacement sound recordist other wise I am faced with cancelling and loosing my cast for some time to come, or digging out a recorder and doing it myself. When I started this project I gained a new perspective on no budget short film making, it really is a tough thing to do. Like me everyone has their reasons, however unlike me very few people are willing to contribute their time and skills for nothing. That I can understand, I've worked in the business for some considerable amount of time. Understanding that people are unwilling to help in return for being helped is a stomach turner. I guess there is only one fool in this scenario, me. Fingers and toes crossed and a prayer to the powers that be that my departing recordist can find a willing replacement, please.

(same day, new post)

Aside

Once again order has been restored, a replacement sound recordist has been found. Thank goodness for kindred spirits, I am crying tears of joy and relief. The thought of cancelling was heart breaking clearly this project means more to me than I realised. Its taken me a very long time to get back to this point but finally I am doing the thing I have always wanted to do, make films. I'm terrified about tomorrow but I now have good people around me, and whilst the journey of making this film is far from over I sense we have a good beginning.

5 July 2013 (Friday)

Aside

No turning back, today is day one of 'The Box'. On the face of it there is little to do but as

always with film making that is very far from the truth. At this moment I think my biggest challenge is going to be working with the actors. To have a convincing performance from them is well, essential. May the force be with me!

6 July 2013 (Saturday)

I was literally to exhausted to write yesterday, what a day, and I am still processing the whole experience. Many thanks go out to all those who have provided the support that has got me to this point, and also to those without whom day one of filming would not have been possible. The question that looms large in my head is will my idea work? Certainly the performances were there from the actors, it was very interesting to watch their search for the right mood, and delivery of the very few lines they had to work with. At times I felt that there were not enough for them to work with, which surprised me. I had never felt that when reading the script from start to finish, but broken down into parts it was a different beast. Is it because of this that I wonder will the audience get it, and if they don't is there some thing else there for them there? I am in the fortunate position of being able to have a small review of the situation before day 2. No doubt I have made mistakes, I can think of at least one eye line horror, and having promised an end board did cut the camera many times with out getting the sync clap. These things will haunt me in the edit. Did I enjoy the day, yes very much. Although my time management is an issue the collaborative nature of the project pulled us through. Is there any thing that I would do different? Of course! I'd have head phones for dialogue, hearing their performance is as important as watching it, the producer on set. On this project the producer played a key role in the development, for me as director/shooter having that person there would have been a bonus. A make up person, that said its not essential. I'm sure there are other things, but right now it seems a small but efficient team can get the material to create a film. Its a no frills approach suitable for a no frills project.

8 July 2013 (Monday)

Aside

The editor has kindly agreed to an assembly edit of the footage thus far. Memory has a ready supply of mistakes that I have made with the direction, not instructing the cast to allow the lines to breath between lines is one! I'll find out just how bad it might be on Wednesday. In the mean time there are other things to think about, including day two of filming!

15 July 2013 (Monday)

Whoop!

Very excited to have just watched an assembly edit from day 1, it works and the performances are great. Hurrah. Thank goodness for Kurt, its sounds wonderful. I have few issues with my operating, and am hoping there is a wide that matches the light in the dialogue scene. Looking forward to day two, the flowers are wilting nicely in all this heat, and figuring out what B roll we need.

23 July 2013 (Tuesday)

Aside

After a weekend shooting B roll, I knew that grave yard would come in handy one day, and day two of shooting completed I am now logging rushes in an effort to help the editor. Instinct told me to do some extra coverage of the scenes with Deb, I just wish it had told me to some empty room shots. I'm going to cool my heels and count down the days until the editor returns from holiday, and we can start the rough cut.

30 July 2013 (Tuesday)

Aside

The logging process has been interesting, I am also starting to see how I am working. I have laid the foundations, the obvious stuff like covering the dialogue and the action. With that

out of the way it is time to start creating the film, day three is going to come in handy. When I started out on this project I had a lot of visual imagery, when it came to story boarding I found that I drafted only the action containing the actors. At the time this troubled me, where had all my visual imagery gone? Under stress had I gone to default mode like every other rookie director? It seemed I had. However with a film shoot planned over three days due to the shortness of their hours, it has proved there was some method in what I felt was a weakness. Day one and day two, the parts I had story boarded, focused entirely on shooting with the actors. Day three was to be allocated to shooting B roll, which for me is the film, and fortunately allows me to do a re-shoot a couple of shots. Its a relief that slowly but surely the imagery is coming back. Currently I have a mental jigsaw puzzle of images, all triggered by the messages in the film, that I am sifting through to find the right pieces to complete the picture. Its tricky, images float into my consciousness and when I try to capture them they vanish back into the recesses of my mind. Other times they reach up and grab me by the throat. Once selected the process becomes more like one of those square games where you have to shift the tiles around to complete the picture. Much desk time is needed.

8 October 2013 (Tuesday)

Post Production part one

I made a rookie mistake, I expected an editor working pro-bono to put in the hours with the rushes to craft the film. Naively I thought in giving that person free reign I was allowing for their artistic integrity to come to the fore. I suspect the action was viewed as me passing the buck, me knowing me unlikely. Maybe they knew me also, maybe they were kicking my butt. In the no budget film making game a thing that is essential is knowing your rushes, after all it is your voice and there will be plentiful points along the way that will, and rightfully challenged that voice. So I knuckled down and did the job of an edit assistant, no budget film making makes you every one's assistant, and logged the rushes. It was an excellent task. That done the editor and I were able to converse constructively about the order of shots and importantly I could assist in finding better takes or replacement shots. Time is money and if you ain't got money spend time. Also at the end of the day we did what I had always set out to achieve with this film, collaborate. That said never let too loose on the reigns! Personally there have been wonderful lessons to be learned at every turn, and they have made me smile. I heartily thank my collaborators for their indulgence, guidance and of course their collaboration, this has and continues to be an incredible experience. When the little voice in side shouted "I'll do it" I was shocked and surprised, it was news to me that I wanted to experience directing a film.

13 April 2014 (Sunday)

Burrows Road

After some considerable amount of time the post production on the short film is nearing an end, all that remains is to give it title in place of its working title 'box'. I feel the most amount of my time has been consumed with logistics, co-ordinating a film no matter what the length for zero pounds is a test of endurance. The technology and jargon that can be applied to film making has changed radically since I joined the business and the importance of understanding any of it is not to be underestimated. I am left with a desire to do it again, no I am not a masochist. The process of directing was a fulfilling experience I learnt a lot and, as brief as the moment on set was the singularity of the role allowed great depth of focus.