

SEEING DOUBLE: THE PROCESS OF SCRIPT ADAPTATION BETWEEN THEATRE AND FILM

BY

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Abstract

This thesis examines the adaptation of stage plays to cinema, and of films to theatre.

The creative component of the thesis consists of my full-length play script *Hamlet Dies At The End*, and the script of its feature film adaptation (*Song's End*), plus material from my film script *Roy Jiminton* and the script of its adaptation to theatre.

The critical component of this thesis examines seven stage-to-film adaptations and four film-to-stage adaptations, in order to illustrate the distinctions between writing for the two different mediums and to suggest principles to aid scriptwriters in adapting material between theatre and film.

The thesis concludes with discussion of the decisions I made when adapting my own scripts.

This thesis argues that to successfully adapt play or film scripts from one medium to the other, the adaptor must be willing to incorporate significant change in order to effectively 'adapt'. Adaptations that merely transpose from the stage onto the screen, or vice versa, fail to engage with their new medium.

This thesis also proposes a set of adaptation principles for script adaptors.

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INTRODUCTION

As a working practitioner, I was commissioned in 2007 by Radio New Zealand to adapt a my stage play, *Stand Up Love*, into a radio play. This was both an enlightening and challenging experience that prompted me to become interested in the process of adaptation in general, but particularly in adaptation between the two main areas of my own writing – film and theatre. As a scriptwriter who writes for both film and stage, I was aware how significant the differences between the two mediums are, and I began to think about how these differences are or might be resolved in the process of adapting theatre to film or film to theatre.

That initial interest led to me undertaking this PhD in Creative Writing. My research, and this thesis, reflects a 60/40 split between creative work (the full-length film and theatre scripts I have written) and a critical component. The creative and critical components were written in parallel during my PhD study, enabling each to inform the development of the other.

The scripts written during my PhD and contained in this thesis comprise a full length stage play entitled *Hamlet Dies at the End* and a feature film adaptation of that play entitled *Song's End*. There are also excerpts of my feature film script entitled *Roy Jiminton* (written some years prior to beginning my PhD) matched with excerpts from two separate theatre adaptations of that film script (entitled *Roy* and *This Town That Roy Lives In*) which were written as part of my PhD research. These excerpts are presented as appendices to Part 3.2 of this thesis. It was decided not to include the full scripts of *Roy Jiminton*, *Roy* or *This Town That Roy Lives In* as this would have increased the length of the thesis to well beyond the 100,000 word limit.

Adaptations have been central to the world of cinema since its very beginning, with works constantly being adapted from other mediums into film. Theatre has always been one of these mediums and in recent years alone film adaptations of Peter Morgan's *Frost/Nixon*, John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt*, and Beau Willimon's *Farragut North* have met with great critical and box office success. Increasingly there is adaptation in the opposite direction as well, with successful film-to-play adaptations such as Terry Johnson's *The Graduate*, Owen O'Neil's and Dave Johns's *The Shawshank Redemption* and Tim Firth's *Calendar Girls*.

There are of course many modes of cinema and theatre, but my interests lie with the type of films and plays mentioned above. It is therefore necessary to define what this thesis means by 'film' and 'theatre'. In this thesis, 'film' refers to movies that generally employ a conventional narrative approach, which are written and acted in English, and which achieved general release. Essentially, the films which are discussed here are the types of movies which come and go from the local multiplex and are likely to be seen in competition in the main categories of the Academy Awards. Similarly, 'theatre' within the scope of this thesis refers to drama written in English which one could expect to see produced at mainstream professional theatres and in contention for major theatre awards.

It is also important to define what constitutes a 'successful' adaptation within the bounds of this thesis. 'Success' is not judged only by box office receipts, awards or positive response from critics. An adaptation is assessed here according to how its adaptor has altered and transformed its source material in order to work effectively in its new medium. 'Success' in this thesis is based on how thoroughly the adaptation embraces the fundamentals of its new medium, while staying true to the heart of the story.

This thesis focuses on the scriptwriting process, it does not seek to examine production differences between theatre and film, only the way an adaptor has changed or not changed the material for the new medium. The goal of this thesis is to create a document

which is of use to both playwrights and screenwriters. As there is very little existing literature which discusses adaptation between the two mediums, my intention is to illuminate the differences between writing for film and writing for theatre, to analyse ways in which a selection of existing professional adaptations have succeeded or failed, and to write adaptations of my own work. It is hoped that this thesis will help future theatre to film or film to theatre adaptors to interrogate their source material, to consider its strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities presented in adapting the story to its new medium.

While the focus of this thesis is on the process of script adaptation, looking to understand the scriptwriting methods that result in effective and ineffective adaptations between the two mediums, some brief discussion about why adaptations occur is warranted.

Undoubtedly there are often large commercial factors at work. Movie producers and studios have more confidence spending millions on established properties which have already proved successful in one medium. Award winning plays, bestselling novels or comic books which have legions of fans are seen as having name recognition and it is believed there is already a considerable audience for a potential movie or stage version.

But there is more to why adaptation occurs than simply monetary reasons. Sometimes it can be to give the material an 'update'. Stories that continually receive film adaptations over the years also speaks to how society changes, how our cultural view is altered by the time we live in and what we see as important. Current adaptations might highlight or shape the material to discuss issues of today's world, for example, themes such as the environment or social media, whereas the same story adapted during the seventies might have been structured to reflect the impact caused by the Vietnam war or the sense of paranoia following the ramifications of Watergate. The times we live in affect the tone of the original material and influence adaptations.

For the adaptor there may be entirely different reasons. If they are adapting their own story they may be excited by the opportunity to further expand the material. An

adaptation might allow the writer to answer a question they were unable to come to grips with when they wrote the original or it may allow them to further expand on the themes.

There is also the desire of the writer to bring a story to a new audience. Even widely celebrated novels such as the Harry Potter series reach a much larger audience when they are adapted to film. Clearly while aiming for a highly commercial film it is understandable that there is also the desire to entice people to read the novels or see the play that otherwise would not have if not for the film adaptation. Writers may be wishing to honour the source material but also to potentially give the original a new wave of popularity.

There is also the opportunity to transform the material for the different medium, rich prose in a novel can become delightful, poetic dialogue in a play, whereas a powerful monologue on stage can become told entirely with visual images on screen. It is this chance to pay homage to a story and yet be allowed to make it one's own that makes adaptation so enticing. Linda Hutcheon writes 'whatever the motive, from the adapter's perspective, adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new' (Hutcheon, 2006, p.20)

This thesis has chosen to look at modern plays and film adaptations. There are a number of reasons for this. As a practitioner this is the area I wanted to explore. With my own work as a scriptwriter and the study I have undertaken to develop my craft as a writer, these were the types of plays and films that felt closer to my experience. This familiarity would help me to fully explore and highlight the scriptwriting aspects of adaptation that were occurring in each case study.

As outlined above there was an intention from early on in the study to focus on adaptations which would often be found playing at the local cineplex or in large professional theatres. The major reason behind this is that these tend to commercial, narrative-driven stories. As a scriptwriter it was important to determine the types of 'stories' I was looking at. Initial attempts to look at material with a highly experimental

nature caused considerable difficulty as it was hard to determine the qualities of adaptations which at best had a loose story. Stories that had characters with wants and desires who were trying to achieve something, became important elements to examine with an eye on how the adaptation worked to serve these dynamics.

Other factors also were at work in selecting the boundaries of the case studies. It was important for me that the material had originally been in English, the reason for this was that I did not want the thesis to become caught up in the detail of explaining the vastly different field of translation and the effect this has on an adaptation. This can also be reflected in why the novels of *The Graduate* and *Misery* are rarely discussed in each respective case study. The focus of the thesis is always on scriptwriting between the two mediums not comparing an entirely different medium to another. It was the differences between stage and film (two mediums which are seen by many as very similar) that I wanted to investigate.

Musicals were not considered as they are a very different form of entertainment to traditional stage plays. Discussing the merits of the songs in comparison to the film version seemed to be somewhat redundant and not keeping with the rest of the thesis.

As film to theatre adaptations are somewhat in their infancy, my hands were tied regarding the number of available adaptations. Despite reaching out in a variety of ways for the script to the stage play of *The Shawshank Redemption*, I was refused access to it and unfortunately, as a result, I could not use it as a case study.

Establishing the boundaries was a process of understanding what the thesis was trying to achieve. I spent a considerable amount of time in analysing and writing case studies that became apparent would be ill-fitting with the other naturalistic and traditional narrative pieces. *The Producers* and *Fool for Love* are two examples of this. To develop the principals that this thesis puts forward it was important to be specific about the types of material that it studied.

The methodology employed in this PhD study consists of four parts.

- Part 1 Literature review. There is a considerable gap in the literature on the subject of adapting from stage to film, and in fact nothing could be identified on the subject of adapting from film to stage. As a result, my primary sources are various scriptwriting 'how to' books on writing effectively for stage or screen, which also outline the key fundamentals for each medium. Through consulting a range of these books, various principles about what works best for each medium have been explored and developed.
- Part 2 Analysis. Eleven case studies were carried out for this thesis: seven stage-to-film and four film-to-stage. The principles derived from the literature review were employed to examine each case study. These case studies highlight mechanisms and systems of adaptation and the successes or drawbacks of the approach adaptors have taken with the material when transferring it to the new medium.
- Part 3 Two script adaptations by the author. To engage practically with the adaptation process I wrote my play script, *Hamlet Dies at the End*, and then adapted it into a screenplay, *Song's End*. I then performed this process in reverse: adapting my screenplay (*Roy Jiminton*) into a stage play (in fact two separate stage play scripts using different adaptation methods, one entitled *Roy*, the other *This Town That Roy Lives In.*)
- Part 4 Reflection. In the last part of this thesis I reflect on the experience of writing my own adaptations – their successes, limitations, the decision-making processes involved – and potential next steps for both scripts.

The experience of writing the critical component of this thesis has been extremely informative for me. In particular, the lessons I learnt from the case studies generated growth in both my own writing and my work as a dramaturge. As a practitioner I have gained a new appreciation of those involved in adapting works between the mediums. For example, when I viewed Terry Johnson's stage adaptation of *The Graduate* years ago, I had no idea of the effort involved and how successfully he had adapted it to the stage.

Most importantly, my understanding of how theatre and film function has greatly increased. Through writing my own adaptations I have come to realise the complexity and challenges involved in taking something that is firmly set in one medium and moving it into another. I was particularly surprised to find that adapting my own work from film to stage posed a number of difficulties that I had not considered. However, in overcoming those difficulties and moving the story from the scope of film to the intimacy of theatre I gained further insight into how narrative operates differently in the two mediums and how the 'show' of film and the 'tell' of theatre necessitate significant changes to how a story unfolds.

PART 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

PART 1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Theatrical works have been finding their way onto the silver screen since virtually the beginning of the film medium, and a number have made a significant contribution to the history of motion pictures. Films such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Kazan, 1951), *12 Angry Men* (Lumet, 1957), and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (Nichols, 1966) were remarkably successful adaptations and have had a lasting cultural and artistic impact.

More recently, play adaptations such as *Driving Miss Daisy* (Uhry, 1987), *Doubt* (Shanley, 2008), and *Frost/Nixon* (R. Howard, 2009) have been nominated for Academy Awards, with *Driving Miss Daisy* winning the Oscar for Best Picture in 1989. *Driving Miss Daisy* has undoubtedly become a part of popular culture, constantly being referenced in television shows and films. It is difficult to imagine this would be the case had it remained a theatre piece.

While adaptation of stage plays to film has been a relatively common occurrence, there has been much less traffic in the opposite direction. Although there has been a history of films adapted into stage musicals – e.g. *The Apartment* (Wilder, 1960), *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994) and even *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori, 1995) - dramatic stage plays adapted from film are rare. *Misery* (Moore, 1992) and *Rain Man* (Gordon, 2009) are two examples of this comparatively narrow field.

The literature that examines adaptations between the two mediums is sparse, but there are two key books which provided some useful information on play-to-film adaptation. The first is *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation* by Phyllis Zatlin. Despite the title, this book contains only limited discussion regarding adaptation from stage to film, instead focusing on the translation of stage plays from one language to another. However, it does present insightful theorisation outlining three different categories of adaptations. Firstly, there are 'transposition' adaptations, in which the source text is carried across almost verbatim into the new medium; secondly, 'transformation'

adaptations, where the material has been altered for the adaptation but essentially remains loyal to the original source; and thirdly, 'analogy' adaptations, in which the material is changed extensively for the new medium. These three categories provide a valuable starting point for my examination of the case studies in Parts 2.1 and 2.2.

The second key book consulted was *Adaptations: A Guide To Adapting Literature to Film* by Denise Faithfull and Brian Hannant. This text devotes considerable attention to theatre-to-film adaptations, in particular the *Lantana* (Lawrence, 2001) adaptation, and also analyses the impact that the cinematic dimension has on material converted to screen.

Due to the lack of specific literature on my topic, I consulted numerous 'how to write for the screen' or 'how to write for the stage' books. This allowed me to compare and contrast the factors the authors of these texts consider important in writing for their respective mediums. These authors include Linda Seger who has written a wide range of books on screenwriting and has been employed as a script consultant for a number of major production companies; Academy Award winning screenwriter Ronald Harwood who has worked extensively in the field of adaptation, including adapting his own play *Taking Sides* (Harwood, 1995); Kenneth Portnoy, a professor of screenwriting at Northridge in California who has over eighteen years experience of teaching scriptwriting; accomplished film director and film editor Edward Dmytryk (*The Caine Munity*, 1954); and Michael Wright, a playwright who teaches screenwriting and playwriting at The University of Tulsa.

Other sources of research were reviews of the films and plays that I selected as case studies, and articles and interviews about their writing and production. These provided enlightening observations and comments from writers, directors and actors. DVD commentaries were also found to be useful. For example in his commentary on *The Shape of Things*, Neil La Bute states his intention to bring his play to the screen changing as little as possible and Steven Soderbergh and Mike Nichols in their commentary on

Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? outline what film directors, as opposed to writers, consider problematic for movie audiences when watching play-to-film adaptations.

Also consulted was a doctoral thesis by Sonya Yvette Alvarado (Alvarado, 1997) titled *Dark Visions of America: David Mamet's Adaptation of Novels and Plays for the Screen*, which examines the relative success and failure of two of Mamet's adaptations from stage to screen.

Lastly, I attended a workshop run by the New Zealand Film Commission in April 2009. The workshop was entitled *Playwrights Writing for the Big Screen* and was led by Rob Ritchie, a UK screenwriting teacher and development consultant. The aim of the workshop was to encourage playwrights to consider writing for film. This workshop was extremely useful and timely, and a key aspect I took away from the sessions was the importance of having a clearly distinguishable main protagonist in film (as outlined in Part 2.1 in relation to *The History Boys*).

I was unable to identify any primary texts about film-to-theatre adaptation, and substantially fewer other resources than on play-to-film adaptations. This perhaps reflects the smaller number of adaptations in this direction. Consequently, reviews of the films and the stage productions are my principal sources, along with relevant sections of 'how to' scriptwriting manuals.

My review of the literature proved particularly useful when I came to undertake my own adaptations. Studying the different characteristics of the two mediums informed my decision making by giving me a deeper insight into the types of stories that work most effectively on stage and on film. This will be discussed in depth in Parts 2.1 and 2.1.

A wide range of film and play scripts were read, in particular the corresponding stage and screen versions of *Doubt*, *The History Boys*, *Frost/Nixon*, *Speaking In Tongues*, *Lantana*, *Rain Man*, *Calendar Girls*, *The Graduate* and *Misery*.

In order to gain a better understanding of the differences between the mediums of theatre and film, and the challenges inherent in the adaptation process, I found it helpful to consider four separate elements of each:

- Narrative form
- Character
- Dialogue
- Audience

Narrative Form

In mainstream theatre the narrative generally unfolds in long tightly contained scenes set in only a handful of locations, as in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (Albee, 1962) for example. This is identified as perhaps the most fundamental challenge when adapting a play to cinema, and in the literature on the subject is usually the first aspect addressed. The play must be 'opened up', a term used by Kenneth Portnoy amongst others (Portnoy, 1998, p. 115). 'Opening up' refers to the technique of breaking up long theatrical scenes and setting them in a much greater range of locations.

Steven Soderbergh, an Academy Award-winning director who has also worked in theatre, stresses the need to 'open up' on the DVD commentary to *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*,

Physiologically you go to the theatre, there's an understanding of the parameters of seeing something on stage, you don't have the option to leave [a naturalistic stage set] . . . we have all seen some pretty elaborate shows which do a pretty good job of transporting you but that's different to an audience sitting down to watch a movie and they know subconsciously that you can go anywhere in a movie so [they are thinking] why are you trapping me? (Nichols, 2006)

Film embraces its ability to teleport its audience. As anyone who has seen a James Bond film can testify, cinema stories can move quickly through contrasting environments, for example in *Casino Royale* (Campbell, 2006) a scene at an isolated army outpost jumps

quickly to an urban area where hundreds of people are betting on the outcome of a cobra fighting a mongoose. Theatre tends to engage the viewer in an entirely different manner, gaining its power by concentrating action into long set-piece scenes. This basic difference in narrative form creates challenges when adapting from the theatre medium into film. 'Opening up' is seen as a solution to these challenges, by taking the stagebound play and greatly increasing the number of scenes and locations while radically shortening scenes and/or redistributing the dramatic action into a larger number of shorter scenes in different locations. These locations are carefully chosen not only to add variety but to introduce a more scenic and cinematic dimension to the adaptation.

In addition, further scenes may be added to the film that are only suggested in the play. Movie audiences expect to 'see' the story. In theatre, dialogue is often employed to set up what has gone before. For example, in the play version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* two of the salesmen angrily discuss the predicament they are in with management having decided to introduce a 'contest' in which the bottom place salesman will be fired, whereas in the film we see the moment the rules of this 'contest' are revealed. This is also an example of 'opening up', taking the narrative elements that are alluded to in the play and showing them on the screen. Richard Krevolin sums this up in his book *How To Adapt Anything Into A Screenplay*, 'You can, owing to the constraints of the stage, sometimes TELL INSTEAD OF SHOW! But you can never do this in screenwriting. As a filmic writer, you must always expand the story, always make it big enough to fill the screen' (Krevolin, 2003, p. 148).

'Opening up' is often seen as vital to an adaptation's chance of success on the big screen. Sonya Alvarado discusses how Mamet was able to maintain the tight, claustrophobic feel in *Glengarry Glen Ross* by being strategic about how he 'opened' the play up. In the theatre version there are only two locations and no incidental characters. In the film a number of scenes take place beyond the play's two locations – most notably scenes which show the character Shelley Levene desperately trying to close a deal - and there are additional characters. In Alvarado's view, the addition of these new scenes and

characters makes the adaptation richer, taking us deeper into the world of the real estate salesmen and building the drama around Levene's story arc.

These scenes allow the audience to sympathize with the character in a way not possible in the play where Levene makes no sales calls. (Alvarado, 1997, p. 125)

The screenplay also 'opens up' the setting by using the weather to evoke sympathy for the characters, particularly Levene who is thoroughly drenched in a seemingly eternal downpour of rain.

Steve Gooch, in his book *Writing a Play*, points out that the technique of 'opening up' can be a double-edged sword, and that plays adapted into films can suffer from being 'opened up' too much.

A visual image may be powerful for three seconds and it may indeed do the work of ten minutes of dialogue, but it can also be incongruous when juxtaposed with the techniques of more sustained storytelling. Where the purpose of the play is to draw us into the lives of the characters, an audience will need time for this interest to register. It is as though a natural time span of assimilation is necessary for certain qualities in a story to register (and the precise timing of this can often rest finally with the actor's performance). Too short and the play becomes a comic-strip, too long and it becomes pedestrian and obvious (Gooch, 2004, pp. 131–132)

Furthermore, the physical dynamic of theatre, with actors locked into a confined space, is often central to the rising conflict. When this limited space is 'opened up' on film, it can be problematic. As Kenneth Portnoy observes,

Because of the physical nature of a theater, there is a degree of compactness in a play that is missing from a screenplay [creating] more tension and conflict between characters, because the characters, unlike in film, literally cannot escape each other (Portnoy, 1998, p. 106).

This helps to explain how some theatre-to-film adaptations can seem to strain credibility at times. Why would two people in heated conflict with each other continue to share that space? We've seen what's beyond that door so why stay there? Why not leave?

In response to similar concerns, the authors of *Adaptations: From Other Works into Films* (Harwood & Wilkinson, 2007) introduce a new term: 'opening in'. In their view, play adaptations have often suffered through trying to 'open up', to embrace film's possibilities and expectations at the cost of the material rather than 'opening in', by which they mean going deeper into the play (or book) to see what there is that can be expressed visually. Harwood and Wilkinson point out the danger of the adaptor thinking that he/she must move the screenplay out of the confines of the theatre play's locations by setting scenes in picturesque and more cinematic places, despite the negative impact this might have on the tone and nature of the drama. For this reason they propose shifting focus to 'mining' the theatrical source material for deeper dramatic and thematic possibilities which can be represented powerfully and cinematically. They advocate not the empty spectacle of a kaleidoscope of different locations, but an intensification of drama through showing us more of the characters' internal emotional lives.

However, it is evident that theatre and film require different skills from their writers, and it can be precisely this cinematic 'show don't tell' ethos that proves most challenging for a theatre writer attempting to adapt their own work to film. Dmytryk (1985) makes the point that while a playwright might be masterful at creating tension and character through dialogue, he/she may struggle when asked to dramatise his/her story through action and reaction. Not being conditioned to think in the visual style that cinema demands is often a playwright's downfall according to Dmytryk (1985, p. ix). Neil Simon, in his autobiography, confesses that his early screen works were little more than photographed stage plays instead of films. He had not been able to move from his dialogue-based method of scriptwriting into one that embraced and used the visual qualities of film to tell his stories (N. Simon, 1998).

Conversely, Wright in his book *Playwriting in Process: Thinking and Working Theatrically* (2009) outlines the difficulties he has with teaching playwriting in a film-dominated culture. He finds he is dealing with students who do not think 'theatrically', but rather in terms of television and film. When he receives yet another one-act play from a student that has a cast of dozens and numerous locations, he is forced to conclude that many young playwrights are lacking in a basic understanding of the realities and potential of the stage (Wright, 2009, p. 1).

As mentioned earlier, while adaptations from play to film are relatively common, until recently it has been rare to find movies adapted to the stage – and this may be the reason there are no books or critical writings devoted to the subject. Therefore theatre reviews are the major source of critical discussion in this section. The reviews of two film-to-stage adaptations have been drawn upon for this examination of narrative form: *The Graduate* (Johnson, 2000) and *The Shawshank Redemption* (O'Neil & Johns, 2008) (which were originally a novel and novella respectively).

While it is expected that plays may be considerably changed to meet the needs of the cinematic medium, reviews of the above film-to-stage adaptations often bemoan the fact that the plays are not more like the films they follow. Laurie Atkinson of the *Dominion Post* in his review of *The Graduate* notes that,

When you are watching any adaptation of a work on screen or stage you are always seeing double: what's in front of you and what you remember of the original. Sometimes the adaptation takes over, and sometimes it leaves you with blurred vision. (Atkinson, 2007)

Plays may be praised when they use aspects key to theatre such as calling upon the imagination of the audience to assist the story telling, for example Tom Rogers of *The New Yorker* speaks of his admiration of the way a suspended tyre is used in the course of the play version of *Trainspotting* to represent a bed, toilet, grave, restaurant table, and 'possibly most stunning of all, a heart' (Rogers, 2007). Praise also follows *Trainspotting's* theatrical use of 'doubling'. *The British Theatre Guide* states '[the cast of five are] called

upon to play a variety of roles apart from the main characters and they make a great job of it' (Lathan, 2006). Equally, the 'liveness' of theatre may be seen as a draw card. Other than occasional praise for the actors' performance, the only positive comment about the play version of *The Shawshank Redemption* theatrical experience comes from the *Telegraph's* Charles Spencer, who cites 'the warm feeling of community as an audience roots for the live actors on stage, that neither celluloid nor DVD can match' (Spencer, 2009a). These are aspects where the theatrical nature of the shows is observed and appreciated.

However, reviewers also take film-to-stage adaptations to task for their inability to go beyond their limited settings. The *Observer's* Kate Kellaway writes of *The Shawshank Redemption* that 'the play is certainly more claustrophobic than the film. In the film, there are sightings of the outside world. In the play, all the action takes place inside the jail' (Kellaway, 2009). *The Telegraph's* Charles Spencer writes,

In almost every respect, however, the stage version is inferior to the movie [...] we get none of the scenes set outside the jail, in particular the superb film noir-style opening in which the wealthy banker, Andy Dufresne, sets off to murder his wife and her lover before finding himself in court on a double murder rap (Spencer, 2009a).

The *Guardian's* Michael Billington sums it all up: 'lacking the movie's excursions into the outside world...the play, in the end, is *The Shawshank Reduction*' (Billington, 2009). This raises the question: Why is a play about incarceration in prison being criticised for not going beyond this setting? Especially when you consider how many acknowledged theatre classics are chamber pieces?

However film-to-play adaptations at times invite this negative comparison by strongly mimicking aspects of the film versions. Morgan Freeman was a surprising casting decision for *The Shawshank Redemption* considering that the part he was chosen for was that of an Irishman called Red in Stephen King's novella. Clearly trying to mirror the film, the theatrical production of *The Shawshank Redemption* casts an African-American in the

role, despite ostensibly being an adaptation of the novella and not the film. This strongly suggests that film to stage adaptations often look to profit from their more high profile filmic counterparts. The theatre version of *The Graduate* also refers extensively to the film in a number of details. *Curtain Up* writes in their review,

Am I being unfair criticising the play for differing from the film? Maybe, but as the play uses so much that is evocative of the film – the same music from Simon and Garfunkel . . . the same kiss while holding in cigarette smoke – the comparison is inevitable (“*The Graduate*, a *CurtainUp* review,” 2003).

In film-to-theatre adaptations this is often the price paid for trading upon the audience’s memory of and fondness for the film. Matthew Murray of *Talkin’ Broadway* declares in his review of *The Shawshank Redemption* that ‘The story, robbed of its nuances and subtext never lives onstage’ (Murray, 2002). The *New York Times*’ Ben Brantley states, ‘The show relies heavily on associative triggers that stir memories of the movie and let you fill in the blanks’ (Brantley, 2002). Phil and Andrew of *West End Whingers* observe ‘putting it on stage added nothing . . . and took away quite a lot’ (“Review, The Shawshank...,” 2009). Mark Shenton effectively sums up the critical response: ‘this efficiently crafted, but cynical and arbitrarily different exercise in offering theatregoers a live version of something they already know from a superior film, has always struck me as an entirely pointless affair, adding nothing to the experience of that film at all – so why not simply rent the movie?’ (Shenton, 2001).

The above quote shows clearly that where adaptation is not done thoughtfully, and particularly when it does not add anything to the experience of seeing the film, it will fail. A film story placed on stage may also be subject to questions or criticisms around theme or character which say much about different story expectations in the theatre milieu. Billington’s review of *The Shawshank Redemption* bemoans the fact that ‘the play never questions the morality of Andy, who uses his financial expertise to gain the favour of the warden and make his own life in the slammer more tolerable’ (Billington, 2009), something that the film does not address either. Theatre often deals with more complex

ethical questions and character dilemmas than film does. Consequently, when film stories are translated straight to stage they can be judged as failing to sufficiently examine the internal conflict of their characters.

Character

In the introduction to her book *The Art of Adaptation*, Linda Seger encourages film writers adapting novels or plays to simplify, clarify and spell out story lines, and to make sure -

That characters are not ambiguous. Novels and plays are more able to encompass ambiguities. Their story lines can meander off on tangents before coming back to the main focus. We may follow several characters and get involved in several individual lives. But film audiences can get confused if they don't know whom to root for or are unsure as to who is the main character. (Seger, 1992, p. 7)

Key to Seger's 'formula' is for a film to often have one sympathetic central character whose journey we follow (Seger, 1992, p. 128). Comparing the screen version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* to the original play, it's clear that in the film Levene's character and story have been given prominence, as will be discussed in Part 2.1. As Alvarado observes, the intention and effect of adding new scenes was to 'make the movie more Levene's story and not an ensemble piece like the play' (Alvarado, 1997, p. 125). It also seems evident that Levene has been chosen for this 'main character' role as he is the one most likely to engender audience empathy.

This may imply that adaptors of film to theatre should not only look to expand the focus from a filmic main character to increased emphasis on other characters, but also to 'mine' these characters for deeper and more 'ambiguous' levels of moral complexity. In other words to do what Billington felt the stage version of *The Shawshank Redemption* failed to do in regard to Andy Dufresne's morally compromised position in aiding the prison warden.

Dialogue

While theatre often depends on dialogue to convey its message, film is primarily a visual medium. Literature on screenwriting constantly urges film writers to 'show' and not 'tell'. Linda Seger in her book *Advanced Screenwriting* (2003) has a chapter entitled 'Show, Don't Tell', in which she writes,

A great screenwriter is a visual thinker who sets out to create searing, powerful images that audiences will remember. Images make the invisible word of emotions, thoughts and feelings visible. They *show* us a film's theme, set its style and tone, and create visual metaphors. If a writer doesn't create images, the director has nothing to work with except characters talking in restaurants, driving through streets, and appearing in nice close-ups. (Seger, 2003, p. 125)

It is a generally held belief that dialogue must be heavily reduced in order for a play to successfully work as a screenplay. Alfred Uhry in Seger's *Art of Adaptation* states that a good actor in a film has to say a third of what a good actor has to say on stage (Seger, 1992, p. 45).

The nature of the cinematic form and the tools which it employs requires the adaptor to re-examine and re-think the dialogue which served the stage version so faithfully. One reason for this is that the camera – and in particular the close-up shot - allows an intimate glimpse into the protagonist's world and makes expressive non-verbal communication more possible. For example, in the climactic scene of the film of *The Graduate* the close-up of Benjamin banging wildly on the glass window in an attempt to stop Elaine's wedding makes his feelings abundantly clear. In the corresponding scene in the play Benjamin has to explain himself with lines such as 'Elaine, I love you' (Johnson 92). An emotion that was expressed visually in the film has had to become verbally communicated in the play. The camera is also able to give us the character's point-of-view perspective; consequently, since we are directed to see what they see, there is not the same need to state it. The relative sparseness of film dialogue allows other layers of

information to be presented to the audience (sound effects, images, special effects, cutting between scenes) and also tends to throw more focus onto the 'authenticity' of each line spoken. In Gooch's view, the close up places the character under the microscope which 'makes it more difficult for stylised language to seem convincing as it emerges from present day lips on which you can see the saliva' (Gooch, 2004, p. 51).

Conversely, in moving from film to stage it seems evident that the amount of dialogue should increase as the story is adapted from a visual into a verbal form.¹ This could easily lead to flat and banal stage dialogue unless the adaptor places emphasis on creating new, expressive and theatrical dialogue which in its way is as powerful and effective as the original unspoken and visual film moments.

Audience

It is interesting to consider how audiences respond differently to plays and films. In the words of LaBute, the theatre audience is active, the film audience passive; 'the [theatre] audience isn't there to sit back and be entertained. They play a part as important as anyone else involved in the production – they complete the triangle as it were . . . it can never be the same at the cinema. An audience may enjoy what they see, but the outcome on screen is inevitably the same.' (Labute, 2004).

In film we are directed through the story. The camera allows us to see in close-up or bird's eye view exactly what the director wants us to look at, we can also even be 'placed' into the point of view of a character, most likely the protagonist as often we experience the world as they do. Theatre is not able to do this; the audience, as Portnoy (1998) notes, is restricted to a 'medium to wide shot' view of the entire play.

Film audiences generally demand reality; no matter how fantasy-based the movie is it must appear real and authentic in its detail at all times. When the facade of that reality gives way - for example, due to sub-standard special effects- a film audience is snapped

¹ A comparison between *The Graduate* screenplay and the script of the adapted stage play shows that the number of words of dialogue has increased by an estimated 47%.

out of the illusion of the story they are watching. Faithfull and Hannant write, 'in the cinema, the audience has a high expectation that what they see will be approaching reality' (2007, p. 14). Theatre audiences, by contrast, are quite content for a bar stool to represent a spaceship.

Because theatre requires that the viewer use their imagination - in *Doubt* for example we must visualize the children that Father Flynn coaches basketball to - such participation gives rise to a creative and active audience. Film, on the other hand, makes us witness to one key individual's imagination thereby producing a passive audience. The theatre version of *The Elephant Man* (Pomerance, 1977) requires no more than the audience to *imagine* that one of the actors is hideously deformed. The film version requires detailed make-up and prosthetics - otherwise the audience would be wondering 'Why isn't he ugly?'

This implies that in adapting a play to film, aspects that relied on the theatre audience's imagination should become more overt and attention should be given to making the story feel 'real' to its new cinema audience. On the other hand, an adaptor of film to theatre might give thought to losing some of this filmic 'realism' in order to explore and exploit the story's potential for theatrical artifice.

Conclusion

A comparison of film and theatre shows that film:

- uses more scenes and locations.
- employs a strong visual language.
- tends towards having a main central character.
- demands a sense of 'reality'.
- prefers clear moral definition of a character that the audience can empathise with
 - as opposed to 'ambiguity'.

Whereas theatre:

- uses fewer scenes and locations.
- employs a strong verbal language.
- tends towards focusing on more than one main character.
- embraces imagination.
- examines complex ethical questions through morally shaded characters.

While the existing literature contains discussion of these differences, and observations on the relative merits of specific play-to-film or film-to-play adaptations, what is not currently available is a clear focus on the artistic and craft-based techniques for effectively bridging these two mediums via adaptation.

The aim of this thesis is to fill the current gap in the literature by putting in place guidelines for adaptation in this largely overlooked area.

In Part 2 I examine selected adaptation case studies from theatre to film and film to theatre as a means of extrapolating these guidelines.

PART 2: ANALYSIS

PART 2 ANALYSIS

2.1 STAGE TO FILM

Cinema was born towards the close of the 19th century whereas theatre origins predate the 6th century BCE. Over the relatively short lifetime of cinema, adaptations from theatre to film have been produced with regularity, some of which have been recognised with cinema's highest prize, the Academy Award. Thirteen films that have won the Best Picture Oscar had their beginnings in theatre² and sixteen that have won the best Adapted Screenplay Oscar were originally stage plays.³ While the key components of stage plays and screenplays are fundamentally the same – a story brought to life by actors – adapting material from the theatre into film has often proved to be difficult for scriptwriters to successfully manage.

Novels arguably contain a cinematic 'voice': 'what novels and films more strikingly have in common is the potential and the propensity for narrative. And narrative, at certain levels, is undeniably . . . the chief transferable element' (McFarlane, 1996, p. 12). Unlike adapting a novel, with its ability to instantly change time, environment or have a cast of hundreds, all of which is achievable in film, adapting theatre poses considerable challenges to the adaptor, not the least of which is relocating a narrative from a very fixed form (limited sets, scenes and characters) and often with a heavy dependence upon the spoken word into the very different, visual-based world of film. This section examines several play-to-film adaptations which showcase the significant problems and ingenious solutions adaptors have called upon when writing for the new medium.

² The Academy Award Best Picture winners with theatrical backgrounds are *Grand Hotel* (1931/32) – the play itself was based on a novel – *Cavalcade* (1932/33), *You Can't Take It With You* (1938), *Casablanca* (1942), *Hamlet* (1948), *West Side Story* (1961), *My Fair Lady* (1964), *The Sound Of Music* (1965), *A Man For All Seasons* (1966), *Oliver!* (1968), *Amadeus* (1984), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), and *Chicago* (2002). Five of these were musicals and *Casablanca/Everybody Comes to Rick's* was at the time of filming yet to receive a staged production.

³ The Academy Award winners for Best Screenplay Adaptation are *Seventh Heaven* (1927/28), *The Patriot* (1928/29) – this was in fact an adaptation of three different plays – *The Bad Girl* – based on a novel – (1931/32), *Pygmalion* (1938), *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941), *Casablanca* (1943), *A Place In The Sun* (1951) – based on a novel – *The Country Girl* (1954), *Becket* (1964), *A Man For All Seasons* (1966), *The Lion In Winter* (1968), *On Golden Pond* (1981), *Amadeus* (1984), *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988), and *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989).

In examining play-to-film adaptations, Zatlin suggests there are three different approaches:

Transposition (the equivalent to a literal translation that carries over the source text, more or less verbatim) . . . *Transformation* (the equivalent of semantic translation that more aggressively converts verbal texts into visual screen language while remaining loyal to the source) [and] *Analogy* (a kind of free, communicative translation that rearranges material and even changes tone as it more or less completely adapts the source to the requirements of a different genre). (Zatlin, 2005, p. 198; my emphasis)

Another study by Faithfull and Hannant, *Adaptations A Guide to Adapting Literature to Film*, proposes a different formulation with four categories of Intersection, Variation, Appropriation and Faithful to determine the approach the adaptor has taken with the source material. However, I found that the difference between Intersection and Variation was somewhat negligible for my purposes and would cause more confusion than it was worth. Rather, I chose to use Zatlin's categories as when tested against some of my case studies, they offered me a clear lens through which to examine and determine the methods the various adaptors had taken. Instead of spending a sizable amount of each case study discussing what type of adaptation they were and why, Zatlin's terms allowed me to quickly distinguish where the various case studies resided (i.e. whether they were transpositional, transformative or analogical in nature). This then allowed me to focus on the various aspects of each case study and the decisions each adaptor had made with the source material and the resulting effect of this on the adaptation.

In this section I use Zatlin's categories to examine what I consider to be examples of transposition (*The Shape of Things*, *Doubt*, *The History Boys*), transformation (*Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Frost/Nixon*, *Good*) and analogy (*Lantana*) to highlight the different aspects of these varying approaches. Given the above definition, I argue that my first example, *The Shape of Things*, should be considered as a transposition adaptation.

Transposition

The Shape of Things: A Loss of Emotional Impact

The Shape of Things began life on stage in 2001 at London's Almeida Theatre directed and written by the American playwright Neil LaBute. It is a play about two young couples, Adam and Evelyn and Phillip and Jenny. What first appears to be a theatre piece centred around relationships, fidelity and the characters' differing political views reveals itself to be more profound when Evelyn's agenda is made clear. The action of the play occurs over a few months, during which Evelyn has persuaded Adam to make drastic changes to his appearance; a nose job, weight loss, and changing from glasses to contact lenses. The cosmetic transformations Adam has chosen to undergo are ultimately the source material for Evelyn's graduate thesis. It becomes clear that rather than being her boyfriend, Adam has instead become her human 'sculpture'.

The film version of *The Shape of Things* (2003a), also written and directed by LaBute, is a strong example of a transpositional approach to adaptation. Directly following the play's two seasons, first in London and then in New York, LaBute went into production on the film version with the same cast, and with no intention of changing the script for the screen. At the time he stated:

Normally when someone adapts a play they open it up, they put in a bunch of scenes where you see them just driving cars. We took it and did exactly the same scenes on film as we did in the theatre, so it was as theatrical a film as it could be. ("Neil LaBute Q&A - Film4," n.d.)

LaBute's resistance to 'opening up', a device the majority of stage-to-film adaptors usually employ, reflects his desire for the film to resemble as closely as possible the theatrical experience. While LaBute's film credit reads 'written for the screen by' it is apparent that his intention was to carry his play across to the cinema verbatim:

The heart of the thing is obviously theatrical and I couldn't be happier with that. It's a film by virtue of being on film. (quoted in Foley, n.d.)

LaBute's comment illustrates that *The Shape of Things* is only a film in the sense that it has been filmed and packaged as such. In every other way it is identical to the stage play. LaBute's stated goal of keeping steadfastly to the stage version and his decision to not alter the material for the new medium demonstrates why his adaptation should be considered transpositional in nature.

However, LaBute did find it necessary to make one significant alteration. In theatre, due to the need for actors to change costumes and collect props, and the need for set changes, there is often a pause between scenes. In his stage productions of *The Shape of Things* LaBute covered scene changes with loud music by The Smashing Pumpkins. Ben Brantley of the *New York Times* wrote:

The music, selections by Smashing Pumpkins played at full volume, comes at you like a raging lawn mower . . . the songs are loud enough to pre-empt any attempt at conversation or, for that matter, thought. (Brantley, 2001)

In the film adaptation The Smashing Pumpkins music has been replaced with the more mellow tunes of Elvis Costello. There are two possible reasons for this change. Firstly, film of course has the ability to instantly begin the next scene and there are no 'pauses' between scenes. LaBute no longer has this 'gap' to contend with. Secondly, with an instantaneous scene change, the film audience is not waiting in darkness for the narrative to continue. They already have new information to process as the characters are in a new environment with different clothing. This poses questions for the audience: Where are we now? How much time has passed? What is the significance of the visual cues we are being given? Loud Smashing Pumpkins music would be a distraction to, and get in the way of, this 'catching up' process. LaBute comments on the change:

The fury of it [the Smashing Pumpkin's music] just washed over the audience, and didn't give them a moment to contemplate [the pause

between scenes]. And I liked that on stage. Whereas, on film, you can do the next scene, and not have that bridge. So I really needed something that was the antithesis of what I had on stage, which was Elvis Costello . . . because of the craft of editing, I needed something that was different from what I used before. (quoted in Foley, n.d.)

When LaBute speaks about the 'craft of editing', it could be reasoned that he is talking about the different ways film and theatre audiences engage with the material. With the film there was no need to 'blast' the audience and instead a different type of music was required. Loud Smashing Pumpkins wouldn't seem appropriate or suit the mood as we cut to characters in casual conversation at a coffee shop in a film.

Discussing how the 'moment' between scenes is handled leads us to a significant distinction between the two mediums – the differing scope and scale of theatre and film scenes. Generally speaking, film has a large number of scenes, sometimes over a hundred, whereas theatre usually only has a handful. It is apparent that the two mediums employ scenes in very different ways. Noted scriptwriter J. Michael Straczynski remarks that

In film . . . the importance [is in] 'opening up' the script visually, to include a variety of scenes in order to make the action interesting. In playwriting, you have to do just the opposite and 'close down' the universe of your play to just the absolute essentials. (Straczynski, 1996, p. 297)

Film is about forward momentum. As Linda Seger states, 'a [screen] story has to move. It has to go somewhere. It advances towards its climax' (Seger, 2003, p. 38) – the emphasis is on constantly moving things forward. In contrast, Buzz McLaughlin believes theatre's preference is for long scenes: 'keep the story simple and direct. Go right to the heart of it and stay there' (McLaughlin, 1997, p. 19).

Where films gain a great deal of their momentum through a succession of quick scenes, theatre is very much the opposite. Long immersive scenes make for effective theatre. Constant scene-changing usually slows the play down, affects the tempo, and can even try the patience of the audience. The 'ins and outs' of the scenes are also very different. In film, the pace of the film is always seen as paramount, illustrated by the 'enter late, exit early' mantra found in many screenwriting manuals: 'you must start the scene at the latest possible moment' (Kenning, 2006, p. 33).

Acclaimed Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and Academy Award-nominated screenwriter David Mamet states that 'to get into the scene late and to get out early is to demonstrate respect for your audience' (Mamet, 1992, p. 64). Often theatre is about building to a moment, whereas film generally speaking is predominantly about changing the moment. If you were to compare the two mediums to a tennis match, film scenes are all about the serve, whereas theatre is all about the rally. Such a difference in operation requires a major rethinking when adapting between the two. Therefore when LaBute decided to adapt his play verbatim to film, the same material prompts vastly different responses from those encountering it in each medium. The stage production of *The Shape of Things* was seen by theatre reviewer Anna Chin as 'smart, tight, exciting' (Chinn, 2006), whereas for film critic Kimberly Jones the same script appears drawn-out onscreen:

Why was I checking my watch every few minutes? Because *The Shape of Things* is . . . stilted, awkward . . . excessively talky . . . zero complexity here: What you see is what you get and what you get is incredibly dull. (Jones, 2003)

This rather brutal (but in my opinion understandable) review reflects issues resulting from LaBute's desire to replicate the play in virtually all aspects in a medium which operates by a different set of rules.

LaBute's transpositional goal of replicating the play on film also highlights another major difference between theatre and film. Towards the end of *The Shape of Things* in both mediums, Evelyn's character gives a presentation. This is the climax of the story and a

shocking development in which she reveals that the subject of her thesis has actually been the manipulation of her 'boyfriend' by making Adam change his physical appearance. This scene is almost identical in both play and film but the effect on the audience is very different. In the play, the three other characters take (reserved) seats within the audience for Evelyn's presentation, breaking the 'fourth wall' and thereby 'casting' the audience as part of the drama and making them complicit. The connection between actor and audience in the theatre production is personal and the emotional impact of the scene is strong. Paul Rudd, who played Adam, Evelyn's unwitting human sculpture, talks of his experience performing the scene in the theatre:

The people sitting next to me never looked at me . . . they just pulled away. Their discomfort was so strong that they couldn't even look at me. It was wild to see how much you can manipulate people. ("Fascinating Neil LaBute Interview," 2010)

This depth of emotion is lost in the film version, when we are simply watching these characters watch a presentation. Rather than become part of the experiment as the theatre audiences did when Evelyn's character directly addressed them, we remain spectators. What had worked so well in the theatre – a scene which drew upon the power of direct address between character and audience – could not be approached in the same way, despite LaBute's best efforts.

There was a strange kineticism between the audience and her [in the theatre] . . . there was no real way to capture that [on film] . . . she's not looking at us, she's not going to make eye contact, she's not really there. (LaBute, 2003b)

LaBute describes how filming this scene prompted a realisation that despite his desire to transpose the play on screen, there were certain aspects which simply could not be replicated.

We'll never have that experience of what it was like to be in the theatre with her . . . I thought how can I capture that and I really couldn't . . . there was a theatrical quality that was so great that I just couldn't capture. (LaBute, 2003b)

This observation by LaBute speaks volumes about the different strengths of theatre and film. Some of the most engaging and challenging theatre occurs when the fourth wall between audience and actor is broken, such as in *Our Town* (T. Wilder, 1965). Film struggles with this constantly. Some filmmakers do 'break the fourth wall' successfully with characters addressing the camera directly as if to speak to the film audience, such as Woody Allen's character does in the highly acclaimed *Annie Hall* (Allen, 1977).

Often, however, films which take this approach are not well received. The film *Kuffs* (Evans, 1992) employed this device and was not looked upon favourably by Richard Harrington of the *Washington Post*: 'the filmmakers have further saddled him [Christian Slater] with the hoariest of tricks: Slater talks to the camera, wisecracking, explaining plot loopholes and finessing loopy plot-holes' (Harrington, 1992). Harrington was far from alone in taking issue with this approach, with the film's 'direct-to-camera monologues in which our hero comments on the action' being called 'as useful as Elmer Fudd analysing a Bugs Bunny escapade, but less funny' ("Kuffs," n.d.). Similarly, the attempt to break the fourth wall in the play-to-film adaptation of *Shirley Valentine* (Gilbert, 1989) is considered highly troublesome by film reviewer David Nusair:

The scripter compensates for the cinematic setting by having Shirley talk directly to the viewer (within the context of talking to her wall). It's a ridiculous choice that immediately sets the viewer on edge, with Shirley's relentless chatter establishing an atmosphere of pervasive artificiality that only grows more and more problematic as time progresses. (Nusair, 2011).

Breaking the 'fourth wall' in film often comes across as unnatural or gimmicky for cinema audiences painfully aware the person 'engaging' with them is not 'really there'. Unlike theatre, which gains from the immediacy of the person breaking the fourth wall being in

the theatre with you, film usually suffers when it attempts to do this. This is largely due to the false conceit of someone who tries to act as if they are having a real, personal exchange with you when clearly it is anything but.

In mainstream cinema there is generally an unstated contract between the movie and its audience that the film will do its utmost to keep the illusion of reality going throughout. In theatre the 'deal' is the opposite; there is an understanding that you are here to see a show in which the cast will pause for your laughter to subside, and in which the actor killed onstage will return to take a bow at the show's end. In my view, LaBute made a major misstep with his 'adaptation' when he included a scene verbatim that had generated so much of its strength and power from its theatrical quality. LaBute explains,

[Evelyn] couldn't talk to the camera in the same way as an auditorium full of people. In the theatre she looks up at the audience and says, 'if you believe that, then great, if you don't then fuck you!' and she flips off the audience. So in the movie when she does that she looks right into the camera and then goes back to what she'd been doing. I wanted to give just a taste of what it was like to do that, but I couldn't simulate that experience. ("Neil LaBute Q&A - Film4," n.d.)

Rachel Weisz as Evelyn giving the finger directly to the camera could never generate the feeling that LaBute was after. In the theatre, her direct gesture is considerably more personal – she is physically present, giving it to you. In the film version, the immediacy of the gesture is simply not possible. Also, how LaBute chose to film the moment further waters down the power of the act. Evelyn suddenly looks directly into the camera for the first and only time in the film and delivers the finger. Rather than the viewer being shocked, they are confused by this sudden change of delivery in the storytelling.

The fundamental differences between the two forms mean that just as a film could not be expected to become a successful stage play without major modifications, neither can a piece of theatre become a successful film without significant alterations. In hindsight, LaBute realised that his transpositional approach has serious dramatic limitations and as

a consequence *The Shape of Things* illustrates the challenges and inherent dangers of transposing a source text verbatim from theatre to film.

While *The Shape of Things* is an obvious example of a transposition adaptation, there are others which, despite appearances to the contrary, adopt an approach which is not far removed from that employed by LaBute. Although it received an Academy Award nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay, John Patrick Shanley's film of *Doubt* shows itself, when placed under the microscope, to fit within the transposition category as opposed to the transformation or analogy categories. This adaptation struggles to move past its stage roots, and additions to the story such as new characters only highlight its inability to embrace and truly adapt to the new medium.

Doubt: Paying Lip Service to Adaptation

John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt* began life as an off-Broadway play directed by Doug Hughes in late 2004. Its subsequent success saw it transfer to Broadway, and Shanley would go on to be awarded both a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony award for Best Play. *Doubt* is set in a Catholic church and school in the Bronx during 1964 and deals with what happens when the school's principal, rigid and old-fashioned Sister Aloysius, believes the progressive and popular priest Father Flynn is sexually abusing Donald, one of the parish's children.

Shanley is also an experienced screenwriter. His work includes *Moonstruck* (Jewison, 1987) for which he won an Academy Award in 1987 for Best Screenplay and the less well-received *Joe versus the Volcano* (Shanley, 1990), which he also directed. While Shanley had adapted two novels before – *Alive* (Marshall, 1993) and *Congo* (Marshall, 1995) – this was his first attempt at adapting both his own work and a stage play.

Shanley has stated that he found the process of adapting *Doubt* to be the most difficult screenplay he has written. He struggled with the writing until he realised that one of Father Flynn's sermons could be visually 'opened up' in the film version. In the play, Flynn relates a story during a sermon about a woman cutting open a pillow – the spilling feathers of which are a metaphor for gossip. In the film, however, we see, as Flynn

speaks, the woman perform this action on top of a high building, the feathers scattered everywhere by the wind.

I got to page 50 and I hated every page that I wrote . . . Then I wrote this scene with the woman cutting open the pillow and the feathers and I thought, that's cinematic, and suddenly there was hope. (Saito, 2008)

Where LaBute wanted to keep *The Shape of Things* as closely bound to its theatrical roots as possible, Shanley's delight in realising how Flynn's sermon could be more cinematic clearly shows us that he wanted to take a different approach with his adaptation. In addition to his 'cinematic' concerns, Shanley also thought it necessary to change another aspect of his play, one that LaBute was untroubled by in his own adaptation – the number of characters. Both LaBute's and Shanley's plays contain only four characters. Shanley considered this a significant shortcoming when adapting the play to film. Interestingly, he felt that modern plays were harder to adapt for this reason, believing in some respects that plays from the 1930s or 1940s would be easier to adapt than *Doubt*.

There are many, many characters and a feeling of real space [in these plays] and you could exploit that as a film, whereas this was four characters and a couple of locations. (Saito, 2008)

Shanley feels the often small cast-size of modern plays is a reaction to the economic pressures of today, which corral writers into telling complicated stories with limited numbers of characters, a situation that he claims is 'highly artificial' (A. Simon & Keefe, 2008). In adapting the play for film, Shanley felt 'it was only natural to show the kids, the congregation, and the nuns in their convent' (A. Simon & Keefe, 2008) in order to open up the play for the screen. This further illustrates the different mindsets LaBute and Shanley brought to their respective adaptations. Shanley aimed to open up the play, to add characters in order to move beyond the 'artificiality' of the stage and to work visually where possible. By engaging with the necessity of adapting the material for the new medium, Shanley takes an opposite approach to that of LaBute in *The Shape of Things*.

Another area in which Shanley differs from LaBute is in seeking to exploit the visual possibilities that film offers. He uses Father Flynn's opening sermon to set Flynn and Sister Aloysius on a collision course. Realising the strength of simultaneously setting up these two characters in opposition to each other, Shanley observes that

I decided to introduce her [Sister Aloysius] during the sermon, and that would make it cinematic. Because then there would be her major entrance, which was non-verbal, up against his major entrance, which was verbal. And then the cutaway shots would have real significance, rather than just busying it up by trying to put various reaction shots and such. (A. Simon & Keefe, 2008)

Unlike LaBute, Shanley is mindful of the impact the camera can have on his adaptation. The entrance of Sister Aloysius is geared around this contrast. Aloysius as the quiet 'guardian' works in the shadows, contrasting with the outspoken Flynn, and the visual elements work in conjunction with the dialogue.

However, despite Shanley's appreciation of the differences between the two mediums, there are a number of reasons why in my opinion his adaptation still remains in the transpositional category. While Shanley has attempted to open the play up, to add additional characters and look for cinematic opportunities, these initiatives are hampered by the fact that these changes are superficial. In some respects the changes have actually created new problems or highlighted how little has actually been altered from the stage version.

An examination of the scripts of both the play and the film illuminates how little the play has changed in adaptation. Firstly the play version of *Doubt* (Shanley, 2004) has nine scenes, whereas the film adaptation has 33. This may sound like a considerable change but 33 is a very low number of scenes for a feature film. By comparison, another play-to-film adaptation, *Speaking in Tongues* (Bovell, 2003) went from nine scenes to 95 for the movie version *Lantana* (Lawrence, 2001).

By studying the new characters it is also notable how small their roles actually are. The four new characters with the largest presence in the film outside the four original characters in the stage version of *Doubt* are all students: Jimmy Hurley, who has 17 lines; Donald Miller, who has 14; William London, who has 9; and Tommy Conroy, who has 7 (his prominent action is listening to his transistor radio in class). Their combined line total comes to just 47 lines. In comparison, Mrs Miller (Donald's mother), who is the least present of the four characters in the stage version and is in just two scenes, has 62 lines. These totals go some way to showing that Shanley's 'opening up' is fairly cosmetic.

Shanley, in his belief that it would be artificial to not include the children or not have them present on screen, does not seem to take into account how unnatural their fleeting presence is in the film. Including the boys as on-screen characters creates new expectations for the viewer. In the play, Donald Miller, the source of the conflict between Sister Aloysius and Father Flynn Donald, is simply a character talked about; the audience doesn't ask why he is never talked to or questioned because they know he is not part of the 'world' of the play. In the film, with Donald now present, the situation is completely different. Why does Sister Aloysius never speak to Donald? Donald is the subject of the conflict between the two lead characters, but there is no interaction between Donald and Aloysius. By having Donald speak only 14 lines and disappear for virtually the last half hour of the film (he appears towards the end sitting apart from his mother at Father Flynn's farewell sermon), Shanley does the film a disservice. David Edelstein's review highlights the problems which arise from introducing a new character only for their presence to seem like an afterthought.

In adapting his play, Shanley makes one serious mistake: Having introduced Donald as a character, he should have written a new scene in which the boy is questioned – especially since Joseph Foster makes such a deep impression in his few moments on-camera, with waves of neediness coming out of that small frame. (Edelstein, 2008)

This is a common occurrence where adaptors, feeling the need to expand the story when crossing into the film medium, add characters or scenes without considering the wide-reaching consequences of their inclusion. A similar fault can be seen in the adaptation of Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Proof* (Auburn, 2001). In the film (Madden, 2005), the adaptors – playwright David Auburn and Rebecca Miller – decided to add a scene where Catherine is bluntly outspoken at the funeral of her father, a mathematical genius who has died following many years of mental illness.

[Catherine:] Wow. I can't believe how many people are here. I never knew he had this many friends. Where have you all been for the last five years? I guess to you guys he was already dead, right? I mean, what's a great man without his greatness? Just some old guy. So you probably wanna catch up on what you missed out on . . . I'm glad he's dead. (Madden, 2005)

This scene is then followed by a party where people from the funeral gather at Catherine's house and have a good time. After Catherine's abusive eulogy it is hard to accept this occurring, and what further pushes the incredulity is that not one person remarks on Catherine's actions at the funeral. The adaptors clearly saw the possibility of an electric moment for the film that was not in the stage version. That this new event is then followed directly by the same scene as in the play, with no acknowledgement of what has just occurred is problematic.

Adaptors may recognise the possibilities of film and new potential moments, scenes or characters that can be added but there is a danger in such additions. If subsequent material fails to acknowledge the new developments and instead reverts back to how the play originally was, it creates a sense of artificiality or even lack of credibility for the viewer.

Shanley includes Donald as a limited on-screen character but he seems to be at pains not to add anything to the film adaptation that will sway the weight of evidence in one direction or another. This could be because uncertainty over Father Flynn's actions is at the core of the story – did he or did he not touch Donald inappropriately? Donald's

presence in the film does not add to the success of the adaptation – in fact it does the opposite. For example, we hear from Donald’s mother that Donald is physically abused by his father, but we do not see this despite being taken into other children’s homes. Seeing Donald suffer this abuse from his father could have given a different spin on the viewer’s interpretation of Flynn’s affections. This seems an obvious point at which the film story could have been allowed to go down a different path to the play. Tellingly, Faithfull and Hannant write,

It is often necessary, particularly when adapting stage plays, to create new characters. Their primary purpose may be functional, but they should also have a dramatic purpose, offering us a new and different perspective on the concerns of the story. (Faithfull & Hannant, 2007, p. 162)

Shanley may have opened the play out with the addition of new characters but they fail to offer a new perspective on the story and are generally seen but not heard. This does not make for a dramatically successful adaptation to the screen.

Another way in which the adaptation fails to move beyond its transpositional nature is its strong reliance on the spoken word. Films in general are visually driven – Shanley himself remarks that ‘when plays are turned into films, people stop listening’ (Horn, 2008). Despite this, *Doubt* is almost word for word the same as the stage play. No subplots are added, Flynn’s interaction with the children is kept almost as one-sided as it was in the play, where Flynn had monologues in which he would educate the (unseen) boys. There are no extra moments of connection added between the three principal characters and, as already stated, the new characters add nothing of significance to the original structure of the play. In contrast, plays such as *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Mamet, 1984) and *Speaking in Tongues* (Bovell, 2003) have gone through substantial changes in their move into film, including new prominent characters, reduced principals, and new scenes. All of these changes are not simply a reaction to the freedom to go beyond one or two specific locations – they create scenes which add substantial new dimensions to the story.

How Shanley chooses to use the camera in his film is also informative. In the DVD commentary Shanley often talks about the need to justify camera movement, particularly since the film script calls for static, lengthy scenes in fixed locations. To compensate for this Shanley employs new actions in these scenes which create impetus for the camera to move. These actions include characters opening or closing blinds or responding to ringing telephones. Rather than addressing the significant issue that the play has long scenes which do not work well on screen and should be broken up for this reason, Shanley aims to keep these scenes fresh by creating reasons to get the characters to move. Rather than rethinking the scenes from the ground up, Shanley instead appears to have incorporated the smallest amount of change necessary for them to be more 'visual'.

Overall, when Shanley's adaptation is examined, it becomes clear that only changes on a surface level have occurred. *Doubt's* failure to embrace its new medium through its dependence on fixed locations, lengthy scenes, and a failure to incorporate new characters beyond being simply a name and a face, combined with an unwavering devotion to the original text, leads to the conclusion that despite cosmetic changes, *Doubt* cannot be regarded as anything other than a transpositional adaptation.

While *Doubt* and *The Shape of Things* both suffer as adaptations due to their desire to remain 'true' to their play versions, one aspect which serves the two film adaptations well is that each has a key protagonist (Adam and Sister Aloysius, respectively). *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett differs in this respect and highlights the difficulties the lack of a clear protagonist can create when one takes a transposition approach to adaptation.

The History Boys: The Need for a Clear Point of View

Between 2004 and 2006 there were few things harder to get than a ticket to *The History Boys*. Alan Bennett's play achieved huge success and fanfare on both sides of the Atlantic, and won both Laurence Olivier (Best New Play 2004) and Tony awards (Best Play 2005). The ensemble play follows eight high school students in their final term of school, all of whom are determined to gain entry to the prestigious universities Oxford and

Cambridge. The boys are faced with two very different teachers: their regular teacher Hector, a man who is focused on 'inspiring' the students, and the incredibly pragmatic Irwin whom the school brings in to 'prepare' the students to pass the university entrance exams. The film adaptation (Hytner, 2006) encounters a number of problems – the lack of immediate dramatic events and a desire to replicate the stage play throughout, but particularly the difficulty of adapting ensemble-based material into the film medium which generally favours a main protagonist approach.

During the play's season on the West End, director Nicholas Hytner, who has also achieved success as a film director, told Bennett that if they were going to do a film version of *The History Boys* they would have to move quickly. Hytner's reasoning for this was that there was only a short window over the summer vacation period when they would be able to secure a school as a location; the stage show was also about to leave on an extensive tour. This came as rather a surprise to Bennett as he had 'never thought of it as a film really' (M&C News, 2006). More than likely Bennett saw the material, a play which is very dialogue-heavy and that unfolds in a series of classrooms and offices, as not particularly filmic.

Bennett describes the process of writing the screenplay: 'there wasn't much writing to do, it was mostly cutting and Nick was as good at that as I was. He's as responsible for the script as I am' ("Close-Up Film Interview," 2009). Bennett's comment tells us much about the way he and Hytner approached the adaptation. Rather than alterations, merging characters, or developing new material for the film, they instead looked to pare back the play. The interesting thing is that despite the 'cuts', the theatrical cast and creative team were all kept on board: 'We already had a cast that we thought unimprovable, and whose ownership of their roles after a year on stage was absolute' (Bennett & Hytner, 2006, p. viii).

Despite Hytner's urging Bennett to adapt *The History Boys*, he seems to have been quite aware of the elements of the play that made it an unlikely starter for a film:

We knew our show's strengths, and though they included neither a driving narrative nor any whiff of the picturesque, there seemed to be no point in trying to parachute into the material cinematic attributes it had no interest in possessing. If there was ever to be a *History Boys* film, the point of it would surely be that it would allow us to intensify what was exciting about the play. Maybe it could bring us closer to the protagonists, get under their skin and see behind their eyes. Maybe it could capture their speed of thought and the glitter of their intellects. (Bennett & Hytner, 2006, p. viii)

Hytner cites *The Front Page* (Milestone, 1931), *The Philadelphia Story* (Cukor, 1940) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Kazan, 1951) as existing precedents of successful adaptations from stage to film that didn't stray from the centre of their drama: 'their energy springs from the dynamic exploration of small worlds that are fully inhabited by large spirits' (Hytner, 2006). However, compared to *The History Boys*, the three source plays he cites all deal with vital, immediate events. For example, in *The Front Page* two journalists try to prove a prisoner on death row innocent before his imminent execution. *History Boys* does not have this type of dramatic intensity that benefits from being constrained within 'small worlds'.

History Boys is instead about eight students preparing for examinations that will determine whether they gain entry to the prestigious Oxbridge universities. As part of this process the boys are opened up to new ways of thinking by their prep master Irwin whose approach contrasts with that of their regular teacher Hector. Essentially it is not a dramatic story like the ones Hytner cites. While it does include inappropriate touching, important exams, and unrequited love, none of these are treated as particularly significant or even dramatic. The thrust of the story focuses on the different teaching styles employed by Hector and Irwin and the reality that Hector's style of teaching no longer (regretfully) has a place in today's world.

The exams are essentially a 'MacGuffin', a device which enables Bennett to tell the type of story he wants to by contrasting teaching styles and exploring different thoughts on

education. There is no dialogue or imagery to highlight the importance or influence that the outcome of these exams could have over the students' respective futures: 'it's even a matter of indifference that the kids get into Oxford or Cambridge' (LaSalle, 2006). As a result, the news at the end of the film that two of the students have gained scholarships has little to no impact because we the audience have not been told anything about their respective backgrounds, or reliance on obtaining a scholarship at all. Will the scholarships effectively change the course of their lives? We don't know.

The reviews for the *History Boys* film were split down the middle. There are those who love the intelligence, the sparkling dialogue, the issues the film addresses, overlooking the lingering aspects of its theatrical roots. Harvey Karten is particularly taken by the dialogue on offer: 'the language is so sharp, so requiring of audience attention, that we forgive whatever claustrophobic feeling the story has on us in our seats' (Karten, 2006). Joe Morgenstern of the *Wall Street Journal* embraces the ideas and the discussion about education:

A thrillingly smart and immensely enjoyable screen version of Alan Bennett's celebrated play . . . the question that's routinely asked of film plays is whether they've been sufficiently opened up into real films, but it's the wrong question here. The screen, like the stage, can barely contain this marvellous play of intelligence. (Morgenstern, 2006)

But even those who are full of praise for the film concede that it presents a watered-down version of the play: 'the film version of *The History Boys* is a lesser thing, more fixed in space and time . . . yet the ideas and feelings of the piece remain so rich that it almost doesn't matter' (Foundas, 2006).

However, other reviewers feel that the film is inherently problematic and ultimately a story which does not belong on screen. Stephanie Zacharek observes that for the audience it's like receiving a postcard about a fantastic holiday, rather than getting to go on the vacation yourself:

Watching the film version of Alan Bennett's hit play *The History Boys* . . . is like being in the wrong place at the wrong time . . . its vibrancy feels far off and muted, like a firework display going off in a neighboring town. (Zacharek, 2006)

Maryann Johanson goes further, saying the story ultimately fails as a film because it fails to engage with the medium:

It's too stagey, and yet it lacks the vital energy of the stage production . . . the problem with the film though, is that it doesn't use the medium to bring us into an intimate space we can share with the characters, one that the stage couldn't give us . . . it's trying to be a film, but it's nowhere near cinematic enough to succeed on the emotional level it clearly wants to. (Johanson, 2006)

Mick LaSalle of the *San Francisco Chronicle* posits a reason for the film's lack of emotional connection with its audience,

The movie can't seem to latch onto a satisfactory story line or find an emotional thread . . . *The History Boys* is hit-and-miss with each scene. There's no through line, in the sense that the audience never really is made to care about the things the characters care about. (LaSalle, 2006)

This last aspect is crucial when considering the success of the move from stage to screen. The fundamental problem with the adaptation is that it fails to ensure the audience is able to relate and connect to the characters, to experience their 'journey'. Jennifer Kenning states in her book *How to Be Your Own Script Doctor* that a film requires 'a clear hero or heroine . . . a clear character goal, a clear character motivation – a need for attaining the goal' (Kenning, 2006, p. 44). *The History Boys* does not follow this formula. Instead the characters are kept at a frustrating distance and it is unclear on whom (which character) the viewer should focus as the major protagonist. The opening scene provides a good example. The focus on Posner riding his bicycle sets the viewer up to assume that he is the lead character – an assumption that is quickly dashed as the film remains faithful to the play, skipping from character to character, creating an unsettling rippling

effect of viewer attachment and detachment that the film never recovers from. While there are successful movies such as *Magnolia* (Anderson, 2000) or *The Big Chill* (Kasdan, 1983) which have eight or more multiple protagonists, unlike those films *The History Boys* fails to emotionally connect us with its characters. There are significant factors at work in this adaptation which make this connection difficult.

One of these factors is, as LaSalle (2006) has pointed out, that there doesn't seem to be any importance or significance attached to what happens to these characters. A key reason for this is that the way the audience receives information has not altered from the play. Rather than Posner telling nearly every character how much he loves Dakin, the writer could have shown the audience Posner as he watches Dakin, as he scribbles in his notebook about Dakin, or let them witness Posner head home to listen to depressing music after seeing Dakin with his girlfriend. Bennett and Hytner do not appear to have considered the significant possibilities film offers, most importantly the new storytelling opportunities the camera presents. As Faithfull and Hannant (2007, p. 119) note,

The camera is ubiquitous, peripatetic and intimate. It is also omniscient: it can force us to see the world from its own, as well as from any character's point of view, thus encouraging us to identify with that character.

Had Bennett and Hytner embraced the camera and its ability to bring one within the character's world this would have given the audience the chance to connect emotionally to Posner. Instead Posner's feelings are over-explained, resulting in the viewers' detachment. Bennett and Hytner appear determined not to upset the apple cart of their stage production and thereby fail to access the filmic storytelling devices of powerful visuals. Why are there no scenes where characters are by themselves? So much information can be relayed to the viewers through visuals that there is a good deal of story that didn't need to be 'told' to us through conversations. If Posner was not so outspoken about his love for Dakin, this would make Dakin's hug at the end all the more expressive of how much more experienced and knowledgeable Dakin is than the other

boys. It would also more create a more emotional moment as Posner realises that his love has been recognised by Dakin all along.

This determination to keep the boys together at all times prevents us being able to distinguish between them, let alone really know them. Audiences need to know the characters; their hopes, dreams, fears and beliefs are what crucially connect the viewer to the personalities on the screen.

Identification . . . we need to have some empathy for them [the characters] they must engage us . . . For an adaptor, this usually means focusing the drama around one or two major characters and revealing the story primarily from their point of view so that the audience is encouraged to become deeply involved with these 'people' throughout the course of the film. (Faithfull & Hannant, 2007, pp. 119–120)

Bennett's commitment to carrying the same number of ensemble characters from the stage version into the film results in the viewer being unable to forge the same bond that they would with a smaller cast and tighter focus. Different aspects of their personalities could have been highlighted in individual scenes of boys away from the group, apart from their peers. The result of this not happening is that we don't know what Oxford or Cambridge means to any of them. They all seem to be on the same emotional journey. Rudge is the only one who expresses any disinterest in attending the Oxbridge schools and this only comes towards the end of the film. Could this not have been something interesting to explore throughout the entire film?

The play does not have a driving narrative, contrasting with Kenning's (2006) belief that a film needs characters with clear goals and motivations (page 44). The result of transposing this less-than-dynamic narrative into film is that entire scenes could be rearranged with little impact on the narrative. There is no sense that the characters are continuously moving towards their goal. The film begins with eight boys wanting to gain acceptance to their chosen universities and that is exactly what happens, other than the introduction of Irwin to the school and the resulting fallout from Hector being observed touching the

boys inappropriately. There are no changes, no doubts raised, no conflict between the boys or their teachers. This contrasts with the tenets of many screenwriting gurus, such as Michael Halperin, who states,

We reveal moment-by-moment, the anxieties, needs, wants, and desires of the protagonists and antagonists. The story evolves as the plot takes our characters into dead ends; as they face dilemmas; as they come face to face with their own failings and shortcomings; and as they encounter their own demons and angels. (Halperin, 2000, p. 42)

Mainstream films are about surmounting obstacles and difficulties in order to obtain something vital to the major character: there must be stakes, challenges and hardships for the character(s) to endure in order to achieve their goal. As Robert McKee observes, 'the truly passive protagonist is a regrettably common mistake [by scriptwriters]. A story cannot be told about a protagonist who doesn't want anything, who cannot make decisions, whose actions effect no change at any level' (McKee, 1997, p. 138). With the exception of Dakin, none of the characters make any active decisions, declare what they truly wish to have in life, or take steps towards achieving this.

A film audience expects to be brought into the mindset of key characters, to experience the story through their point of view. By not adjusting the scope of the story to address this fundamental shift in expectation Bennett and Hytner limit the possibility of *The History Boys* successfully moving across mediums.

Had the film adaptation made Posner the lead protagonist, for example, it could have addressed all of these problems. The importance of the exams to Posner could have been highlighted and his difficulties with them put forward, and more could have been made of his futile love of Dakin and his appreciation of Hector, all amounting to an interesting journey as Posner goes from wanting to gain acceptance to Oxford to needing something of even greater to his development as a maturing adolescent. This would also have allowed the audience to connect emotionally with the character, providing a more satisfying cinematic experience.

The film of *The History Boys* was a success at the box office, but in my view (for the reasons stated above) falls well short of being a successful play-to-film adaptation.

As *The Shape of Things*, *Doubt* and *The History Boys* illustrate, there are significant shortcomings with the transpositional approach to adaptation. All three films struggle to be cinematic; they are bogged down with lengthy dialogue-heavy scenes and none of them appear to give much thought to the importance of the camera and how it fundamentally changes the way an audience receives information about the story and characters. There was a reluctance to change the material in every case, and all three film scripts are virtually the same as their play counterparts, despite the scope and scale film offers. Where there have been changes, such as *Doubt's* addition of Donald Miller as an on-screen character, these are alterations which are not fully thought through, or represent shallow attempts to adjust the material for film.

Like *The History Boys*, the play *Glengarry Glen Ross* is ensemble in nature. The film version however is not, because playwright David Mamet made a significant series of changes for the screen version. Unlike Bennett, Mamet decided to break from the ensemble approach and turned the character of Shelly Levene into the major protagonist of the story. This sharpening of focus and direction for the film adaptation (plus a number of other key alterations) makes it clear that Mamet's adaptation is one that belongs within the transformation category.

Transformation

Glengarry Glen Ross: A Reflective Approach

Glengarry Glen Ross (1984) is arguably David Mamet's finest moment as a playwright. The theatre piece focuses on the rat race run by four desperate salesmen whose livelihoods are placed in jeopardy when management informs them that the two salesmen with the least sales at the end of the month will be fired. It is perhaps significant that Mamet brought more screenwriting experience to his adaptation than any of the other adaptors examined in this section. Before his adaptation of *Glengarry*

Glen Ross, Mamet had already been nominated for an Academy Award for *The Verdict* (Lumet, 1982), had 13 scripts produced (the majority of which were feature films), and had directed three films.

For a Pulitzer Prize-winning play, David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* took a considerable amount of time to reach the big screen. It first hit the boards at London's National Theatre in 1983 (directed by Bill Bryden), but the film version was not released until 1992 (adapted by Mamet and directed by James Foley). Despite the play's immense success it was difficult for the film to secure funding as film studios had a lack of belief in the project because 'the script did not follow the traditional who-done-it formula and did not readily fit into any traditional film genre category' (Alvarado, 1997, p. 98). These considerations are far less applicable in the less rigidly genre-bound theatre environment.

This lengthy gap, unlike the short play-to-film turnaround experienced by *The Shape of Things* and *The History Boys*, could explain why Mamet's adaptation is so well thought-out. Brandon Valentine states that 'Rarely do you find a film – inspired by a stage drama – that is executed so excellently' (Valentine, 2007). For Christopher Null, it moves beyond being simply an excellent adaptation: 'The film is an utter masterpiece' (Null, 1992). These statements might suggest that sweeping changes had been made in order to adapt *Glengarry Glen Ross* to film, but this was not the case, rather the changes made were few but very effective.

The stage play takes place entirely in a Chinese Restaurant (Act One) and a real estate office (Act Two). The film does not substantially add to these settings; a phone booth in the rain, a parking lot, a parked car, and a house where Levene attempts to make a sale are the only additional locations. However, unlike the film version of *Doubt*, these new scenes are employed adroitly to add cinematic and dramatic depth to the story.

One example of this is Mamet's use of weather to add layers of meaning. The first half of the film, set at night, takes place during a constant downpour of rain.

These many scenes of Levene [who unlike the other salesmen constantly faces the torrid weather] out in the torrential waters suggests that he is being professionally and emotionally washed away and washed-up. Mamet heightens the contrast between Ricky Roma and Levene by having Roma remain in the restaurant dry and secure throughout the first act. (Alvarado, 1997, p. 109)

This use of weather also adds to the general atmosphere of the story and shows that Mamet is actively thinking about the wider scope that film allows for telling a story. As he told Fred Topel (2004), 'It would seem that you could do almost anything on film, but that's part of the wonderful fascination of filmmaking. You say, well, okay, you can do anything you want. Now, what are you going to do?'

For Mamet, that flexibility includes adding another character, Blake, in order to build tension in the adaptation. In the play it is only alluded to that the jobs of the principal characters are on the line, whereas the film includes a lengthy scene where Levene, Aaronow and Moss are informed in a confrontational, direct and brutal way that their livelihood is in jeopardy. In this seven-minute scene, written solely for the movie, Blake (played by Alec Baldwin) delivers a monologue that has a significant impact on the story. This speech is mentioned in all the reviews of the film, for example 'In adapting his play, Mr. Mamet has introduced a vital new character who sets the scene for everything that comes after' (Canby, 1992) and '[Blake] comes down to the office to give everyone a wake-up call and the stakes get much higher, pushing several of our protagonists over the edge' ("Movie Review...", 2010).

In crossing between the mediums Mamet creates a scene which shows exactly what is at stake for the characters. As Raymond Frensham remarks, when trying to determine whether something is appropriate for adaptation to the screen, one should ask:

Does it have an *intention* which seeks a *goal*, which can be made dramatic, and expressed visually on the screen? Are the needs strong and clear enough and do they drive to a final climax? (Frensham, 1997, p. 219; emphasis in original)

Mamet ticks all of the boxes with this new scene. The characters' needs are shown clearly. Although the scene is entirely dialogue-driven, there is a strong visual component: Blake uses the whiteboard to illustrate the company's new policy and how expendable the salesmen are, and he also holds up a pair of brass balls to insult the men's masculinity.

As mentioned earlier, the key change that Mamet made for his adaptation was the move from the ensemble structure of the stage play to focusing on a main protagonist for the film.

Mamet adds several scenes to the film that present Shelly Levene alone trying to make a sale. These scenes allow the audience to sympathize with this character in a way not possible in the play where Levene makes no sales calls. These scenes also make the movie more Levene's story and not an ensemble piece like the play. (Alvarado, 1997, p. 125)

In doing so Mamet follows film's natural tendency towards a single main protagonist, providing the audiences with a focal point. As David Howard, an experienced screenwriter, comments,

A group can't possibly be the protagonist of a story. There are going to be as many variations on the approach to the dilemma – the goal and its obstacles – as there are people. If we try to make all of them protagonists, what results is a mishmash of conflicting perspectives that ultimately diminishes and probably destroys the story. So usually there will be one perspective that we take as 'our own.' (D. Howard, 2006)

The problems *The History Boys* adaptation encountered in this regard show the importance of supplying the audience with a key protagonist to focus upon. The question then of course is which character should you 'promote' to filmic protagonist?

Why did Mamet choose to focus on Levene's character? Alvarado (1997, p. 133) concludes in her examination of the film that '*Glengarry Glen Ross* is the ultimate death

march for the lowly salesperson in corporate America.' Of all the characters, Levene best reflects this. Roma is not at risk of losing his job, being the agency's star salesman; Moses and Aaronow are outraged at the way they have been treated, but neither seems particularly perturbed about the future as both have time on their side. In contrast, Levene is past middle age, a salesman whose glory days are long behind him. He has an ailing daughter and is struggling to pay for petrol. Essentially Levene is the man in the worst possible position when Blake announces that the last two salesmen in the sales 'contest' will be fired.

If we accept that 'The hero must have something at stake! Heroes must not be in a position where they can shrug their shoulders and walk away from the problem' (Hunter, 2004, p. 76), then Levene clearly answers that description of a hero. He doesn't seem to have any opportunities on the horizon. Unlike the other characters, in Levene we gain an insight into the importance of his pay check: his daughter is in hospital and has medical bills that must be paid for. He clearly is in a desperate predicament.

Furthermore, Levene is an active character who undergoes a momentous change through the course of the story and as a result is the character who offers the most dramatic potential as a protagonist. Films thrive on these types of characters because the 'hero must be active. He must seize control of the action, his problem or his destiny . . . a hero who is not active will never engage the audience' (Akers, 2008, p. 18). Upon being faced with dismissal Levene unsuccessfully begs his boss Williamson for the sale leads. He then attempts to bribe Williamson. Unlike the other salesmen Levene goes on to make increasingly desperate efforts to produce a sale and ultimately ends up robbing the real estate office where he works. Whereas the other characters appear to remain static, Levene's journey takes him from salesman to thief. As a result of his own actions, the man who at the beginning of the film had the most to lose ends up losing much more than was originally at stake.

Overall, I believe that with *Glengarry Glen Ross* Mamet has achieved a very successful and satisfying transformative adaptation. His inclusion of Blake's character, the

momentous scene where the salesmen are told to 'put up or shut up', and the shift from an ensemble to a key protagonist in Levene were all instrumental in transforming the play into a compelling piece of cinema.

Like *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Frost/Nixon* (R. Howard, 2009) is a transformative adaptation, one which moves beyond being a direct stage-to-screen transplant. However, even more than *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Frost/Nixon* is a play centred around lengthy conversations (in this case interviews) between talk show host David Frost and former President Richard Nixon, creating major challenges for its creator Peter Morgan in transforming the material to film.

Frost/Nixon: Challenging the Rules and Breaking Free

Peter Morgan's play *Frost/Nixon* (2006) deals with an unusual moment in television history. In 1977 former President Richard Nixon who had vanished from the public eye following his Watergate disgrace was lured out of hiding by a large financial offer to be interviewed by 'tabloid' talk-show host David Frost. During the series of interviews, Frost managed to draw from a Nixon a statement which was the closest he ever came to an admission of wrongdoing and a public apology. Morgan's play focuses on the struggles behind the scenes to make the interviews possible as well as the verbal duel between Frost and Nixon who both have their careers and reputations at stake.

The idea of adapting into film a play which is essentially about two men sitting down talking could not have been easy to sell. Whereas films are more likely to have visually dynamic climaxes, the fact that the climactic moment of *Frost/Nixon* is no more than an unguarded moment in an interview makes that film a very rare beast to enter the multiplex.

Morgan's *Frost/Nixon* began onstage in London in 2006, moving to Broadway in 2007 (both seasons directed by Michael Grandage) where it was seen by Academy Award-winning director Ron Howard (*A Beautiful Mind*, 2002) who immediately wanted to be involved with a film adaptation. Unlike many play-to-film adaptors (but similar to David Mamet), Morgan already had an extensive background in television and film. *Frost/Nixon*

was in fact his first stage play, written while waiting for *The Queen* (Frears, 2006) to enter production. Opting to take a risk Morgan decided to write the play, based on an idea he said had been gestating for over 10 years, and to write it 'in a way that breaks every single rule of screenwriting' (Gold, 2008). For Morgan this meant keeping 'All those uncinematic elements . . . two narrators, aides to the title characters [who speak] directly to the audience [and] a plotline, wholly dependent on the progress of the interviews themselves, that developed largely in a single room. And the story's climax — the wished-for admission from Nixon that yes, he had "let the American people down" — came with the two antagonists immobilized in matching easy chairs' (Gold, 2008).

While it would have been understandable if the film adaptation had been unsuccessful, Morgan's screenwriting experience allowed him to break the 'rules' successfully. He employs a variety of methods in his adaptation, one of the most interesting being the inclusion in the film of a documentary being made about the events surrounding the interviews. The essential monologues of the play are thereby sustained naturally in the film by allowing the characters to divulge vital information through talking to the camera (the documentary film-makers).

This documentary device also allows Morgan to increase the narrators from two to a multitude. The effect this had on the adaptation is dramatic, as a number of different viewpoints are now provided to the viewer directly. It also affords Morgan's characters the opportunity to reflect upon how the interviews between Frost and Nixon are going. That is vital as it allows the audience to better understand the dynamics throughout, including the histories of Frost and Nixon, the immensity of the issues, and pressures involved and why these events were ground-breaking.

Morgan also takes advantage of the documentary device to seed forthcoming events, build tension, deliver exposition, and break up the body of the film. It is difficult to imagine how he would have been able to approach the adaptation without this invention.

Frost/Nixon is a clever and very thoughtful adaptation. Unlike *Doubt*, it incorporates significant changes which contribute to its cinematic impact. Ron Howard remarks on the director's commentary that David Frost's jet-setting lifestyle provided a useful device for opening the play out. The glamorous aspects of his life are often used as a backdrop to keep things interesting. We see Frost in London and Sydney, presenting a television show, on boats, on planes, and being interviewed by the media at a movie premiere.

The film also does a smart job breaking up individual locations, rather than pinning the viewer 'to the spot' as in *Doubt*. For example, in the flight scene where we first encounter Caroline Cushing, they begin their conversation in first class, then Frost and Caroline move to the bar area of the plane before returning to first class as the plane readies for landing. This breaks up what would otherwise have felt like a very long scene and refreshes the audience, while visually supporting what is happening in the scene, i.e. Frost trying to pick Caroline up.

The film successfully breaks up lengthy scenes from the play in this manner several times, adding a change of location or another element to the scene. Another example is when, following a group planning session for the Nixon interviews, the telephone rings. Frost, on hearing that it is Nixon's aide, picks up the phone and goes outside onto the balcony. This works on a number of levels. Firstly, it creates another location for the continuation of the scene. Secondly, it shows the audience that this is a problem which Frost must deal with on his own. Indeed, the majority of the tension in this film revolves around the many problems thrown at Frost. Portraying him alone on the phone as opposed to standing in the room with his team reinforces that essentially it is his 'battle' and he is the one with everything to lose. Thirdly, Caroline's obvious concern upon seeing that the phone call has not gone well works to build her character and create more interest in her romantic relationship with Frost.

The development of Caroline Cushing's character as a romantic love interest for Frost was another significant change made in adapting *Frost/Nixon* to film. In the play, Caroline's character only appears four times; and in one scene she has no dialogue at all.

In the film she appears ten times and becomes a character through whom we gain insights into Frost's personality that would not be possible otherwise. Every other relationship Frost has in the film is a professional working one, and therefore it is only in Frost's romantic relationship with Caroline that his personal side and vulnerabilities can be shown.⁴

Another device used by Morgan is the expansion of dramatic obstacles that were only alluded to in the play. While the play touches upon the fact that Frost encountered significant difficulty in getting the interviews broadcast on television, the film shows us all the knife-edge tension in seeking the support of a broadcaster. The difficulty of this search is used to increase the pressure on Frost who, with no television network willing to be involved with the Nixon interview, decides to financially support the project himself. From that point Frost has it all on the line: his career, his ego, and his financial security. These are aspects that Karl Iglesias believes are important for an effective story:

Something important must be at risk for someone. It's an even more interesting story if the characters are desperate to get something and really afraid of not getting it. (Iglesias, 2001, p. 134)

From something not present on stage in the play Morgan creates a significant subplot for the film. Frost's attention is split as he tries to secure a deal with a television network for the interviews. As we watch Frost fail to land deal after deal with the networks we can feel both the tension and the dramatic stakes rise. It becomes more and more important that the interviews are a success.

Another significant change from the play to the film is that Frost is made to be more active in his 'victory' over Nixon. This is perhaps in response to the idea that film requires a strongly proactive protagonist, particularly in the final moment which determines their success or failure. As Iglesias argues:

⁴ Interestingly, in the screenplay she is only meant to appear eight times, however in the finished film she appears in another two scenes, albeit silently.

Because the second act often ends on a low point, Act III must start with the hero's recovery, so that he can participate in the final showdown . . . don't be tempted to use a 'Deus Ex Machina' solution to save your hero . . . the hero's recovery often indicates the end of your character's arc, meaning that this is where your hero grows and resolves his inner-flaws. (Iglesias, 2011, p. 120)

Morgan's adaptation of his play shows this key principle in action. Early on in the film version, one of Frost's team, Jim Reston, approaches Frost saying he might be able to uncover something useful for the interviews if he is able to go to the Federal Courthouse Library. Frost initially denies Reston's request. However, following a verbal challenge from Nixon to lift his game for the last and final interview, Frost reconsiders and contacts Reston asking him to go to the library to try to unearth a surprise for the last interview. In the play however, it is Reston who of his own accord delivers Frost the winning hand for the final interview:

It had happened almost by accident. Back seeing my family over Easter, on the Sunday afternoon, I hadn't been able to resist taking a final look . . . something caught my eye. The transcript of a meeting with Charles Colson, Nixon's darkest henchman. I flicked my eyes over it – then, when I realised what I was reading, I sat down. (Morgan, 2007)

Such an ending could appear an anti-climactic 'deus ex machina'⁵ in a film where we are emotionally and dramatically invested in the lead protagonist taking responsibility for his ultimate success or failure in the moment of truth.

By opening out his play through introducing the idea of the documentary within the film, by realising the cinematic potential of Frost's extravagant lifestyle, by building on Caroline's character, and by breaking up scenes so that action and movement occurs within them, Morgan has created an adaptation which steps beyond its theatre roots and

⁵ Deus Ex Machina 'God from the machine' an ending that seems to have come from nowhere, in order to assist the writer who has trapped themselves in a corner.

works compellingly on the screen to create filmic tension and momentum despite the story's limited palette of events and heavy dependence on the spoken word.

Both *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Frost/Nixon* are cases of thoughtful transformative adaptations. Their adaptors maintained the key aspects that made the stage plays successful and were able to bring these attributes into the film versions while embracing the changes required for the stories to effectively work on screen. However, going well beyond a transpositional approach does not necessarily result in an effective film adaptation, as demonstrated by John Wrathall's adaptation of C. P. Taylor's 1981 play *Good*.

Good: Clash of Mediums

Good was first staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company at London's Donmar Warehouse Theatre in 1981, just three months before Taylor passed away. The play has been revived numerous times and is considered the most successful of C. P. Taylor's 81 plays. The film adaptation was written by John Wrathall and released in 2009.

Taylor's play *Good* focuses on a central character who is slowly but inexorably corrupted by the opportunities provided by the rise to power of the Nazi Party. The protagonist, Halder, is a professor of literature whose everyday life is made difficult by his demanding and gravely ill mother and his manic-depressive wife. When Halder begins an affair with a student and is courted by members of the Nazi Party, who respond favourably to a book he has written that is pro-euthanasia, he finds his life changing for the better. Ultimately however, his choices and actions (or lack of them) create a moral crisis for his character.

Potentially, the backdrop of World War Two and Nazi Party politics coupled with the story of a man's descent from goodness to responsibility for horrible acts seems ideal material to make for a gripping screenplay, but many movie reviewers found the film adaptation of *Good* boring. The *New York Post* called it 'a Holocaust parable that barely registers a pulse' (K. Smith, 2008), while David Nusair felt that it was 'difficult to label *Good* as anything more than a well-intentioned misfire' (Nusair, 2008). Ella Taylor of the

Village Voice pulled no punches and declared *Good* to be 'a really terrible movie based on what I imagine was a far more interesting 1981 play' (Taylor, 2008).

E. Taylor's comment would appear to be accurate, given the play is held in high esteem and appears on the National Theatre's list of last century's best 100 plays (National Theatre, n.d.). How could reaction vary so greatly between the film and stage versions? *Good*, unlike the previous plays examined, is experimental in nature and takes a stream of consciousness approach to its storytelling, comprising a play and a musical which run in conjunction, expressing what the main character is thinking and feeling. This non-naturalistic internal narrative is what many critics regarded as the play's strongest quality.

The play could have been numbingly schematic. Instead it bubbles with restless energy, brims with wry but pointed observations. There are sudden switches of time and place, abrupt shifts from monologue to dialogue and, less happily, from song to speech. But the forward thrust is unstoppable. (Nightingale, 1999)

This non-naturalistic approach highlights the theatrical nature of *Good* and also creates major challenges in adapting the play to film, especially since the non-naturalistic interplay of the characters featured in the theatre version is rare if not non-existent in cinema. No doubt aware of that, the adaptor opted to create a more naturalistic narrative in the film version. However, sizeable changes were required to make a more 'commercial' product from the experimental original, and the move to a more naturalistic style revealed that the unique way in which the play had dealt with what were otherwise fundamentally 'everyday' events was also how it built its energy and power. With the playwright's stylised method of approaching the events of the story removed, the film struggles to be compelling.

There's little doubt that the viewer quickly grows antsy for something (anything) of interest to occur . . . John Wrathall's screenplay, generally places the emphasis on the minutiae of Halder's day-to-day activities, which though effective in

fleshing out the character – imbues a palpable vibe of uneventfulness into the proceedings that's ultimately impossible to overlook. (Nusair, 2008)

Another aspect of the film adaptation that causes difficulty for engagement is the opening of the film. Wrathall places upfront the dramatic event of Halder being summoned into the chancellery of the Nazi Party, regarding a novel Halder has written. As the film then jumps back four years in time, it strongly implies that the following movie is about how this novel came to be written. When this does not prove to be the case, it jars for the viewer as the opening highlights the importance of the novel, which then subsequently disappears from the movie, almost altogether. Wrathall's emphasis on the novel in the opening scene is unwarranted and problematic, and ignores Akers's warning: 'the first ten pages, and what you do with them, will make or break your script' (Akers, 2008, p. 210).

Ironically, despite the many changes made for the film adaptation, a number of critics take aim at the film for being too stage-bound. Tellingly many also mention they have never seen the stage play. This is largely because the scenes in the film have a habit of jumping straight from one conversation to another immediately; the play has a number of conversations happening simultaneously due to its experimental style, and in fact the entire play consists of only one continuous scene which is broken up by an act break. The separating out of these theatrically interwoven conversations in order to create more standard filmic scenes of interaction, which are then lined up one after the other, inevitably makes the film feel 'talky' – ignoring the general rule of thumb in mainstream cinema that 'you want as little dialogue as possible' (Iglesias, 2011, p. 171).

What makes these scenes even more problematic is that for the majority of the first half of the film, the conversations appear shallow and meaningless. There is little to no conflict between characters or dramatic tension: Halder engages in an affair with only slight concern, leaves his wife with barely a hint of difficulty, removes his ill mother from the family home to be cared for by a nurse (whom we never meet), and joins the Nazi Party without a second thought. While these are all potentially dramatic events, when

there is no resistance to them taking place they are robbed of their dramatic potential. As one reviewer states, 'Mortensen's character [Halder] drifts along on the winds of genocide, but never develops or even seems fully aware of what's going on' (K. Smith, 2008).

While this is a story highlighting the immorality of fence-sitting, this absence of thought or action by the lead protagonist, the lack of conflict and of heated passions or outward signs of a troubled conscience go a long way to explaining why critics were not moved: 'the dithering protagonist . . . wanders stiffly around . . . it's like a vision of C-3PO in hell' (K. Smith, 2008). Unlike Levene, the very active and engaging protagonist in the film of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Halder seems passive, a character pushed along by events rather than the instigator of his own destiny. In contrast, the play takes place within Halder's psyche and conscience, allowing the audience access to his internal life. In leaving this theatrical 'interiority' behind, the film is not able to replace it with any other form of access to Halder's thoughts and emotions.

Another reason why 'the film never transcends its stagey origins' (Edwards, 2009) is that it fails to significantly open up the story. The film certainly changes a great deal of the play's narrative – the mother dies, the wife's father is included as a new character who engages in a heated discussion with Halder in one of the film's more cinematic moments, and we witness Halder's participation in *The Night of Long Knives* – but the film overall continues to be dialogue-driven. Events are not shown to the audience, they are reported in conversation between the characters. For example, rather than witnessing Halder's mother's death, Halder and his ex-wife discuss it while walking through a graveyard. Halder's marriage to his lover Anna is only referred to, we do not see the wedding. The visual component of the film has not been properly developed. Hunter imparts sound screenwriting wisdom in this regard: 'Talking heads are for the stage. You are writing screenplays, where the world is your oyster and canvas. The world is yours; use it grandly' (Hunter, 2004, p. 22).

One of the most interesting aspects of the stage play is that a band plays live on stage throughout, their music usually underlining difficult moments for Halder as the character is plagued by a mental condition that, in stressful situations, causes him to hear music. One theatre critic called this 'the play's most potent device' (Spencer, 1999); another stated that it added greatly to the play's unusual narrative approach: 'Aided by a soundtrack prompted by Halder himself. He hears music on every occasion. It is used as a comical device and as a tool for adding emotional or poignant meaning' (Walters, n.d.).

In the film version of *Good* the writer never seems certain how to handle this musical aspect. It is incorporated in what could have been a very clever and cinematic way, yet the film never explains Halder's condition or provides any context for it. Halder hears the music and then sees that rubbish collectors or people rounded up during The Night of the Long Knives are mouthing along to the song playing in his head. In contrast, in the play Halder describes his condition as being present since childhood but escalating in this more troublesome time. The result is that the music in the film causes confusion rather than working as an effective narrative device, or helping the audience to understand Halder's emotional state. The filmmakers' lack of commitment to this device also contributes to the film's uncertain tone, as demonstrated by Smith's review: 'a couple of surreal elements that come in out of nowhere add to the general senselessness of the film' (K. Smith, 2008).

Overall, the adaptation's over-emphasis on conversation and dialogue, its failure to provide the audience with visual access to key events, and its haphazard approach to the musical element, combined with a lack of insight into what Halder actually thinks and feels, results in a film that pushes its audience away rather than embraces it. Had the film-makers allowed themselves the opportunity to take from the play what 'worked' (especially in the sense of building emotion and getting 'inside the head' of Halder), and built on that for the movie version, the concerns and issues that the critics had with the film might never have eventuated and the moral downfall of a good man may have resonated as strongly with the film audience as it did in the theatre.

While Wrathall's adaptation of *Good* demonstrates the pitfalls of 'transforming' a play without a firm grasp on the factors that power its dramatic intensity, the adaptation by Andrew Bovell of his 1996 play *Speaking In Tongues* into the film *Lantana* (Lawrence, 2001) shows how effective a stage-to-film adaptation can be when it is comprehensively re-envisioned for the new medium. Bovell completely reworks the play from the ground up, making fundamental changes but all the while ensuring that the tone of the play is kept throughout. Due to the depth and vision of his approach, Bovell's adaptation can be considered to fit in the analogy category.

Analogy

Lantana: A Lesson in Simplicity

Andrew Bovell's play *Speaking in Tongues* began life as two short plays *Like Whiskey on the Breath of a Drunk You Love* (1992) and *Distant Lights from Dark Places* (1994). When Bovell was asked to create a third short play in order to complement a season of *Whiskey* and *Distant Lights* he instead proposed the idea of writing a full-length play which would combine the two. *Speaking in Tongues* was first performed at Sydney's Stables Theatre in 1996. The play deals with the importance of truth within four partnerships and the resulting fallout from infidelity.

In adapting *Speaking in Tongues* into *Lantana* (Lawrence, 2001), Bovell fundamentally alters the source material. The film version features new characters, greatly reduced ones (one of whom even changes gender), alterations to the timeline of the narrative, and shifts from being ensemble in nature to having a key protagonist.

Lantana is a very successful cinematic adaptation in my opinion – a direct result of the open-minded approach Bovell brought to the challenge of adapting his play. In an interview, Bovell stated,

I wanted to reinvent it, discover new aspects and follow new threads. So I was very free with the adaptation. I followed my instincts. I felt that if I could make it fresh and compelling for myself, I had a good chance of doing so for the audience. (Grode, 2001)

The adaptation so successfully crosses into film that only small elements hint at its history as a play. Yet throughout the film Bovell maintains the exploratory tone that caused the stage play to be so well received.

Whereas films such as *Doubt*, *History Boys* and *The Shape of Things* arguably remain over-committed to their beginnings as stage plays, Bovell approached his adaptation realising that *Speaking in Tongues* in its theatrical form would not connect with a wide movie-going audience. As Bovell remarks in the same interview, 'using some of the devices of the play would have marginalized it to being more of an art film' (Grode, 2001). Such self-conscious devices include a scene in the play where two couples are about to embark on adulterous sex, at the precise moment their unknowing spouses are doing the exact same thing. Reviewing the play Charles Spencer of the *Telegraph* states,

Bovell likes playing theatrical games . . . the opening scene in which two couples repair to sleazy hotels for adulterous sex . . . seems contrived, as different characters speak identical dialogue in unison. It's clever all right, in a show-offy kind of way, but it is also alienating. (Spencer, 2009b)

No such scene occurs in the film as Bovell seems to have realised such an encounter would work against the naturalistic feel he was aiming for in *Lantana*.

Though largely well-received, the fact that *Speaking in Tongues* was comprised of two earlier short plays threaded together with additional material was seen as troublesome by some reviewers.

In its engrossing first half we see two couples enacting the routines of adultery; their deceptions are synchronised and overlap in a manner at once amusing and

creepily erotic. Then in its second, the cast expands to a total of nine characters, and the connections between these nine are revealed. But precise satire gives way to anecdotal rambling, and as the links are explicitly articulated mystery dissolves into a mixture of the prosaic and the improbable. (Hitchings, 2009)

With the exception of perhaps a David Lynch film, few movies could successfully sustain such a change to their storytelling and successfully reach the large audiences that Bovell wanted. No doubt aware of this, Bovell at the beginning of *Lantana* ensures that all the characters are introduced swiftly and that the element which connects all the stories is clearly established in the film's strongly cinematic opening image – that of a dead woman's body amongst lantana bushes.

The film version of *Good* begins with a scene that actually comes much later in the play, that of Halder becoming involved with the Nazi Party, and *Lantana* opts to take a similar approach. Whereas *Good* was unsuccessful with its opening scene, lacking focus about what is key to the film's narrative and with heavy and unwarranted emphasis placed on a novel Halder has written, *Lantana's* opening image gives a powerful jolt to the viewer.

The first thing we see is a dead woman's body lying face down in the brush, with the wedding ring on her finger prominently displayed. As the story's various characters are then introduced, we naturally wonder if any of the wives will be the victim, or if any of the players might be the murderer. It's a good ploy to make one pay attention to what the characters say and do as we try to pick up clues that might allow us to solve the mystery. Yet, the film is less a classic whodunit than an absorbing portrayal of what sustains and destroys marriages. ("Screen It! Artistic Review: *Lantana*", 2002)

With this precise and deliberate image, Bovell's adaptation begins strongly, effectively creating the atmosphere of a murder mystery and prompting viewers to search for clues in the ensuing story as to who the dead woman might be and who could be responsible.

The film begins as a thriller, whereas the play starts as a cerebrally playful exercise about two couples embarking (or not embarking) on an affair. Despite the completely different atmospheres, Bovell is able to maintain the tone of *Speaking in Tongues* in his movie adaptation:

The plot of *Lantana* organizes itself around a police investigation into a woman's disappearance. But the movie's true area of investigation is what it's like to be in one's 40s—the strains, the challenges, the philosophical anxieties. (LaSalle, 2002)

The new opening scene invented for the film uses a mystery/thriller trope to enter the territory Bovell really wants to explore, and as a result most reviewers have lauded it for going beyond the normal realms of a murder mystery. For example, one reviewer writes that 'even the element that might have made it seem obvious or arbitrary – that a police investigation ties all the characters together – turns out to be a virtue' ("Screen It! Artistic Review: *Lantana*", 2002).

Much like *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the *Lantana* adaptation changes focus from an ensemble story to that of a main protagonist. Leon, a police officer involved in an affair and suffering from a midlife crisis becomes Bovell's focal point: 'I allowed Leon's journey to become the spine of the story. It could have been any number of other characters but I liked Leon and felt that he had the furthest to fall' (Bovell, 2001). Like Levene in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Leon's character gives Bovell the most dramatic potential to play with. Leon is the most active character; he cheats on his wife, is the lead police investigator in the case of the missing woman, discovers his wife has been seeing a therapist, and steals the recordings of the sessions. Leon also has the most to lose and his behaviour is reckless and increasingly out of control for a police officer.

With his marriage at risk, his family life placed in jeopardy, and struggling with the fact that he is growing older, Leon is impulsive and angry, in contrast to the play where his character is generally more measured in his behaviour. Leon is the first character we encounter following the image of the dead woman. Comparing the opening and closing

scenes of the film shows clearly the journey that Leon goes through in the course of the film. In the opening of the film he has just cheated on his wife and states, 'I really enjoyed that' (Bovell, 2001, p. 2), whereas the final scene shows him dancing with his wife, desperate to continue that relationship and connection.

Texts on scriptwriting usually underline that the protagonist needs to undertake a journey and change over the course of the film. Raymond Frensham in his book *Teach Yourself Screenwriting* states that change is pivotal to having an effective story that will connect with the viewer: 'your protagonist needs a powerful transformational arc to emotionally grip your audience and hold your story together' (Frensham, 1997, p. 83). Leon's character in *Lantana* undoubtedly goes through such a transformational arc, and to a greater degree than any other character in the film.

There is one other major character alteration that Bovell makes in his adaptation, which is changing the character of Sarah into Patrick. In *Speaking in Tongues*, Sarah is a patient of Valerie's, whom Valerie suspects is having an affair with her husband. Bovell decided to switch the gender of this character because he felt that the theme of infidelity was already present in the film and he wanted to add additional layers to the relationship between therapist Valerie and her husband John. While keeping the actions and personality of Patrick's character quite similar to that of the original Sarah, Bovell reveals a great deal more about the emotional state of Valerie. In the play Valerie begins to suspect that the affair Sarah is telling her about is actually with her husband John and at the end of the play, after Valerie has gone missing, we discover that she was right. In the film however Valerie's suspicions that her husband is having an affair with Patrick are later proven incorrect, telling us much more about Valerie's emotional frame of mind and her trust issues. Bovell explains how this change to the adaptation only came after a number of drafts:

At some point between draft X and Y it felt that we were tiring of the marital infidelity scenario. It is explored elsewhere in the film, so I sought to complicate it further in the John-Valerie relationship. So Sarah became Patrick and Valerie

misreads his motives and wrongly concludes that there is a relationship between client and husband. This was a substantial change as an actual threat became a perceived threat. It fundamentally changed the nature of the character of Valerie. (Bovell, 2001, p. 10)

While one character has changed gender in the film, elsewhere others have been greatly reduced. The characters of Pete (Jane's ex-husband) and Neil (Sarah's ex-boyfriend) have small roles when compared to the play script. Bovell attempted to keep Neil as a sizable character in the context of the story, but as Neil was Sarah's estranged partner in the play, once Sarah became Patrick in the film it made little sense to keep him as a major character: 'the plot was already complex. Removing Neil from the story liberated it from being unnecessarily so' (Bovell, 2001, p. 11). Unlike other adaptations such as *The History Boys* which feel an obligation to retain all the characters of a large cast, Bovell realised that some were simply getting in the way of telling the story as simply and as clearly as possible.

Another significant alteration is that whereas *Speaking in Tongues* ends on an ambiguous note – the audience and the characters are left in the dark about what has happened to Valerie, whether she will come home again or even if she is alive or dead – *Lantana* concludes with clear-cut answers. The play, as Bovell himself acknowledges, ended suddenly and cryptically, leaving the audience uncertain about what happened to Valerie and whether she returns or not. In contrast the film spells out in detail what happened to Valerie, her death and the circumstances surrounding it. Bovell in his introduction to his published screenplay of *Lantana* asks 'Why one medium demands an open ending and the other demands closure is a question I'm still pondering' (Bovell, 2001, p. 11). In the specific case of *Lantana* it is significant that Bovell chose to begin the film with questions: Who is this woman lying dead in the bushes and how did she get here? Bovell clearly realised that he could not engage his audience's interest in these questions and then fail to answer them. At least not without that audience feeling frustrated and disappointed that the narrative contract he had made with them had been broken. Bovell is also aware

that the narrative 'mystery' thread in *Lantana* is replacing theatrical storytelling and audience-involvement devices not available to film.

In the play, I tried to make an asset of the fact that we were only working with four actors. So part of the pleasure was to see the same actors inhabit different characters, different stories. This then further informed the structure and shape of the play. (Grode, 2001)

Without the 'pleasure' of watching actors transform into different characters, Bovell has had to concentrate more on how narrative can become the prime means of catching and holding the audience's attention and involvement.

Bovell's adaptation is successful because he demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the different strengths film and theatre have, and perhaps most importantly of the different demands and expectations audiences have as a result.

Bovell's script for *Lantana* is not without its critics, with some reviewers taking issue with the coincidences which occur throughout, namely that all the characters turn out to be interconnected. For example, while jogging Leon runs headfirst into a stranger, who is later revealed as a romantic interest for Leon's police partner Claudi. One reviewer argues that '*Lantana* betrays its theatrical roots . . . with the unfortunate incestuousness of its small cast of characters' (Chaw, 2001).

While it is true that *Lantana* relies on coincidence and a closed net of characters it seems unfair to ascribe this to its origins as a theatrical work. Similar network-of-characters films such as *Magnolia* (Anderson, 2000), *Beautiful People* (Dizdar, 1999), *Go* (Liman, 1999), *Amores Perros* (Iñárritu, 2000) also rely on coincidence to keep their narratives moving forward. It could be said that plot coincidences are less an artefact of adaptation from the stage than a staple of the network-of-characters subgenre film.

Notwithstanding the above quote from Walter Chaw, very few critics mention *Lantana*'s theatrical background, which in itself points towards its success as an adaptation. In other reviews of play-to-film adaptations, remarks such as the following are

commonplace: Schwartz writes of the *Hurlyburly* (Drazan, 1998) adaptation that 'taking away some its staginess would have suited me just fine' (Schwartz, 1999); *Proof* (Madden, 2005) was described as 'unimaginative down to the schematic laying of shots. Timid staging + faithful adaptation = no cinema' (Croce, 2005). A review of the film *Closer* (Nichols, 2004) noted that 'What seems trenchant and perfectly pitched in the theater can come off as arch even when skillfully transferred to film' (McCarthy, 2004). In contrast, when reviews of *Lantana* do mention its theatrical roots, they are often complimentary, such as Rhodes's comment that 'nothing feels stagy about it' (Rhodes, n.d.).

The film was very well received, selling to many major international markets and sweeping the Australian Film Industry awards, winning all seven major categories (George, 2001). *Lantana* represents a rare instance of a film adaptation seeming to critically and creatively surpass the stage version it was based upon. Veronica Lee, reviewing a London revival of the play, wrote:

With its interlocking stories and a wealth of filmic images described in the text . . . one doesn't wonder that *Speaking in Tongues* was made into such compelling cinema. What a shame, then, that someone thought it was time to revisit the original. . . . Here's a tip: watch *Lantana* on DVD instead. (Lee, 2009)

While clearly a successful play, *Speaking in Tongues* has received a mixed reception at times, with some critics feeling disconnected from the characters and the story ('oddly empty, and about as touching as a crossword puzzle' [Szalwinska, 2009]) perhaps because it lacks the unifying device clearly set up at the beginning of the film. However, Bovell also talks about how *Lantana* afforded him the opportunity to tell his story in a more straightforward and accessible manner:

The film allowed me to peel away the theatrical devices —i.e., the split scenes, simultaneous language, lateral narrative movement—and just tell the story simply and truthfully. (Bovell, 2001)

By reducing the complexity of the stage version and streamlining the story, Bovell was able to create an adaptation which many see as superior to the original play.

With this adaptation Bovell shows the value of approaching the material as something new, something that needs to be re-thought and re-envisioned from the ground up in order to make a compelling leap between mediums. The move towards a main protagonist, the altering of a character's gender, and the striking and intriguing opening image all work towards making this a solid and thoughtful adaptation which accomplishes the goal of feeling original and fresh, while retaining the integrity of its theme and original intent.

Conclusion

Through the examination of these seven stage-to-film adaptations, certain inferences can be drawn and guidelines extrapolated for successful play-to-film adaptation.

Don't Transpose – Transform

Adaptations such as *The Shape of Things* and *The History Boys* illustrate that lengthy scenes driven primarily by dialogue become problematic on screen. Writers who employ a transformation or analogy approach, reducing dialogue and breaking up scenes into different locations, create material that moves smoothly to the screen, as can be seen in the adaptations *Glengarry Glen Ross* or *Lantana*.

Pick a Protagonist

If a play has an ensemble structure (particularly with a large cast), the adaptation to film can be strengthened by focusing on one strong character, usually the one who changes most throughout the story. Where *The History Boys* was limited in its effectiveness as a film due to the lack of one key character, *Lantana* gained momentum and drive by altering the original material to emphasise Leon's journey.

Raise the Stakes

Glengarry Glen Ross and *Frost/Nixon* effectively raised the dramatic stakes. Shelley Levene, a desperate salesman with a sick daughter, is told bluntly his job is on the line while David Frost has to juggle his time between securing a broadcaster for the interviews and preparing for his encounters with Nixon. These two films employ higher stakes than their play counterparts, whereas *The Shape of Things*, *Doubt* and *The History Boys* adaptations did not raise the stakes and as a result are the ones that most closely resemble their stage versions.

Show Don't Tell

Posner, in *The History Boys*, continually informs others of his love for Dakin, rather than the adaptors finding cinematic ways of showing us this; *Glengarry Glen Ross* on the other hand shows Levene out in the pouring rain, making phone calls and knocking on doors trying to make a sale, which is considerably more effective than if we were only to hear about this through dialogue.

Open Up

Explore the cinematic possibilities that film offers, *Frost/Nixon* had scenes occurring on boats, on planes and in airports, making the most of Frost's jet-setter lifestyle. *Glengarry Glen Ross* had Levene knocking on doors, trying to make a sale in the midst of a heavy downpour of rain. Both of these adaptations explore the further possibilities of the world of their characters, whereas the adaptation of *Doubt* confines the vast majority of the story to the locations that the play occurred in.

Start Effectively

Lantana opens up with the image of a dead woman tangled in a pile of bushes; a body that will connect all the characters, create intrigue, suspense and tension. The revealing of how this body got to be there is the dramatic climax of the film. *Good* on the other hand begins with Halder summoned to Nazis headquarters to talk to a high-ranking

official about a novel he has written. The film then jumps back in time four years, with questions about the nature of this novel and what propelled Halder to write it paramount in the audience's mind. However, the film then moves entirely away from the novel, which overall creates an ineffective beginning to the film adaptation. It does not start with a question that the rest of the film works towards answering.

Make Bold Changes

A transpositional adaptation which simply sets out to replicate the play on screen – e.g. *The Shape of Things* or *Doubt* – will usually not be effective as a film. Adaptors who are prepared to substantially re-envision the story, altering characters, relationships, and narrative timeline, as well as adding new and cinematic material, are more likely to create satisfyingly effective transformative adaptations such as *Glengarry Glen Ross*, or even better, completely re-imagined analogy adaptations such as *Lantana*.

These guidelines may not be applicable in every case, but I believe they provide a solid foundation for any adaptor approaching a play-to-film adaptation.

2.2 FILM TO STAGE

While theatre has been adapted to film almost since the beginning of cinema, the adaptation of films into dramatic stage plays is quite a recent development. Over the years there have been a number of films adapted into musicals, such as *Promises, Promises* (Bacharach, David, & Simon, 1969) which was based on the Academy Award-winning film *The Apartment* (B. Wilder, 1960), *Sunset Boulevard* (Caddick et al., 2007) and *Lion King* (Rice, John, & Allers, 1997). However, since the extraordinary success of the musical *The Producers* (Brooks & Meehan, 2001), the number of musicals based on films has increased dramatically. *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Yazbek & Lane, 2004), *Billy Elliot* (Hall & John, 2005), *Legally Blonde* (O'Keefe, Benjamin, & Hach, 2007), *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Elliot & Scott, 2009), *Sister Act* (Slater, Menken, Steinkellner, & Steinkellner, 2009), *Ghost* (Rubin, Stewart, & Ballard, 2011) and *Little Miss Sunshine* (Finn & Lapine, 2011) are only the tip of the iceberg. Theatre producers, seeing this development and the commercial potential of properties with name recognition, have explored what other dramatic or comic films could be brought to the stage. *Calendar Girls* (Firth, 2010), *The Shawshank Redemption* (O'Neil & Johns, 2008) and *Rain Man* (Gordon, 2009) are dramatic stage plays that have been adapted from their celluloid counterparts in recent times. With theatre now following Hollywood's practice of adapting properties which already have brand awareness and built-in fan support, this appears to be a trend that will grow significantly.

The adaptation categories introduced in Part 2.1 – transposition, transformation and analogy – are also useful in considering film-to-theatre adaptations. However, the first of them – transposition – requires some re-definition in this context due to the fact that it is virtually impossible to take a mainstream film and place it on a theatre stage without significant alteration. In the previous section, transposition meant essentially to take material from one medium to the other with only superficial change at most occurring. In

this section, as detailed, there is already significant change occurring simply due to the act of taking a film onto the stage. 'Transposition' in this section refers to adaptations whose plots unfold in a very similar way to the original film and that do not look to embrace the qualities of the theatre medium and often have removed the visual element of the film without substituting a new element/dimension to replace this. Therefore, 'transposition' here does not refer to an adaptation which has not undergone change, but rather to one that has simply made cuts to the material rather than altering the story to adjust for the dynamic of live performance.

'Transformation' in this section continues to describe adaptations that have made changes to adjust for the new medium but ultimately still remain similar to their original versions. The third category – analogy – does not appear in this section as I have not been able to find an example of film-to-play adaptation that I believe radically transmutes its source material to the degree that *Lantana* (for example) achieved.

As discussed in Part 2.1, when moving from theatre to film the key question for the adaptor is how to transform the play so that it becomes filmic. When adapting from film to theatre, the question becomes: How can a filmic story become one that works effectively for the stage? Central to answering this question is understanding where the strength of the theatre medium lies. Obviously there are many types of theatre but underpinning all plays are two fundamental principles relevant to my argument in this section: liveness and intimacy.

The greatest strength of theatre, which will always separate it from film, is its *liveness* – it occurs live before an audience.

When audiences enter a theatre, they give themselves over to involvement in this special world. They take part in an exchange of energy that happens among the actors, and between the actors and the audience. (Seger, 1992, p. 35)

Theatre audiences enjoy the spectacle and skill of live performance, for example witnessing an actor morph from one character to another in front of their eyes. Theatre-

to-film adaptors are wise to recognise and make the most of this 'live' connection, altering moments or events to tailor them to the dynamic of live performance.

With regard to *intimacy*, theatre does not usually have the scope or scale of film production – instead it gains power from characters 'trapped' in intense interaction. Consequently film-to-theatre adaptations generally need to employ the strategy of 'closing in' (reducing the number of locations and characters so that the story can be told within limited physical space and ideally with as few sets and scene changes as possible – the opposite of 'opening up' discussed in Part 2.1). Closing in may also relate to a closer examination of a specific aspect or theme of the story, or a more intimate concentration on relationship drama which shifts the focus from a filmic single-protagonist point-of-view story. A technique often used in closing in is reportage, where events occur offstage and are subsequently reported to the audience.

For the writer facing the challenge of translating a film to the theatre, there are significant decisions to make and obstacles to overcome. In this section I examine four case studies, *Rain Man*, *Calendar Girls*, *The Graduate* and *Misery*. These case studies have been selected as they highlight various film-to-theatre adaptation strategies.

The first case study, *Rain Man*, is in my opinion a transpositional adaptation which overuses reportage to replace action and fails to exploit its potential for liveness.

Rain Man: Being There – or Not

Rain Man (Levinson, 1988) is a pivotal film of the 1980s. It was a critical sensation, winning four Oscars: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Original Screenplay (by Ronald Bass and Barrow Morrow). The film deals with the relationship between two brothers, Charlie and Raymond Babbitt. After the death of his father, Charlie is shocked to learn that the three million dollar inheritance has been left to an unknown brother. Charlie's brother, Raymond, is autistic and has lived at Walbrook Institute since Charlie was a baby. When Charlie essentially kidnaps his brother from Walbrook with the intention of forcing adjustments to his father's will, it is the beginning of a long and

unexpected journey for the two brothers. The journey is physical, with a long road trip involved, and also emotional, as self-centred egotistical Charlie learns to love and care for his deeply dependent brother.

The film was adapted for the stage in 2009 by Dan Gordon, a highly successful screenwriter with a number of feature film credits including *Passenger 57* (Hooks, 1992) and *The Hurricane* (Jewison, 2000). *Rain Man* is a curious choice to adapt for the stage as it is a road movie. An important component of this cinematic genre is the ever-shifting visual landscape. Road movies usually involve major transformations to the main protagonist(s) which occur through the sense of discovery derived from being out on the open road.

Generally the road movie is about mobility and freedom, about journeying in the form of a 'moral discourse, a tale of personal development and as a reflection of society itself'. (Murphy, Venkatasawmy, Simpson, & Visosevic, 2001, p. 75)

In response to the challenge of adapting *Rain Man*, with its continuous movement, rich ever-changing landscape, and cascade of events on the road, Gordon employs the technique of reportage. Rather than attempting to show the road trip, the play is set in a series of motel rooms and relies on reportage to convey many of the events of the journey:

CHARLIE: And I'm supposed to be in LA because my business is going into the fucking toilet Ray. 'Cept I'm not in LA, I'm not even close to LA. Cos not only do we not fly but we don't drive in the rain do we? . . . Everything I worked for is turning to shit and we're stuck in the goddammed Honeymoon Haven Motel for sixteen hours watching JEOPARDY and the fucking Cartoon Network. Cos we don't go out when it rains. (Gordon, 2009, p. 59)

While the reportage device can be useful in small doses, Gordon's extensive application of it ultimately affects the emotional impact of the story. This approach means that the physical, challenging journey which so impacts on Charlie's character in the film is never

shown, thereby making it hard to appreciate the amount of stress Charlie has been through. This is a considerable problem with the stage adaptation as the physical journey goes hand in hand with the character arc, as highlighted in reviews such as this by a BBC entertainment reviewer:

This production's biggest problem though, is the way it is forced to eradicate the road trip aspect that was so pivotal in its celluloid predecessor. Most of the action takes place in the various motel rooms Charlie and Raymond take refuge in during their cross-country odyssey, giving the piece a claustrophobic and repetitive feel. It also makes Hartnett's [playing Charlie] transformation from opportunistic hustler to reformed altruist seem abrupt and unconvincing. (N. Smith, 2008)

There is a strong sense that Gordon's adaptation is geared towards those who have already seen the film rather than newcomers to the material. Pivotal moments from the film have been reduced to the characters talking about them as they have transpired between scenes in the stage adaptation.

One effect of this use of reportage is that the dramatic nature of some of these events is never made clear to the audience. An example of this is the adaptation of a scene in the film in which Raymond has an outburst due to a smoke alarm going off. The scene is highly dramatic, showing Raymond's vulnerable and self-destructive nature as he puts himself at risk of injury. In the play Charlie reports Raymond's reaction to the smoke alarm going off: 'this morning the smoke alarm went off and he got a little nervous but he's fine' (Gordon, 2009, p. 99). As Charlie is relaying this information to a doctor who will determine whether Raymond will stay with his brother or return to Walbrook Institute, it is understandable why Charlie downplays Raymond's outburst. But as the audience has not witnessed the scene, it's difficult for them to comprehend the significance of Charlie's comment. This may seem a minor issue, but in fact the original screenwriter Barry Morrow considers Raymond's breakdown a very important moment and pivotal to the film's success, as it ensures the audience would accept the conclusion of the story in which Raymond returns to Walbrook Institute. As Morrow states,

How he went back and whether he really could go back is in my mind all dependent on and key to a scene coming up where Raymond tries to make something in a toaster. It doesn't go well. Not only does it not go well and he's freaking out and the smoke alarm goes off and it's panic time [but] there's a door and it's locked with a latch and the door's got a glass window and that's what he chooses to bang his head on. We realise in an instant that no matter what Charlie's intentions are to care for his brother that Raymond's going to be vulnerable and we don't want him getting hurt, I mean of all things his safety is premier, so if the alternative is to have to go back to Walbrook, people would accept it. If you take that scene out of there, you have him, see him dancing or listening to music instead or just being in his own little world or room, I think there would be such a dissatisfaction with Raymond leaving at the end, and Charlie not going to the end of the line with him, that the movie would have fallen. (Levinson, 2000)

This scene which motivates the resolution of the story, and which Morrow places so much importance on, is not in the stage play. The play omits this haunting and powerful moment that proves, despite his brother's best efforts, that Raymond cannot function in Charlie's world. As a result there is not the same sense of drama or fear for Raymond on the part of the audience and no compelling reason why the brothers can't be together. Gordon may have had practical or artistic reasons for not including the scene, but if this was the case he needed to invent a moment of similar emotional intensity to give the stage version the same power and persuasiveness as the film.

As David Benedict observes in his review in *Variety*, it is this failure to replace deleted action that is the real problem.

The movie balanced the brothers' developing relationship with elaborate set-pieces built around key plot moments. These included the action sequence where Charlie kidnaps Raymond from his care-community home, the tension-fuelled casino section and the explosive scene where Raymond starts a fire. These scenes

are all absent from the stage version but not, alas, because Gordon has come up with a new, more theatrical scenario. Instead, those crucial sequences are retrospectively and lamely handled in reported speech. (Benedict, 2008)

There is another moment from the film, not included in the stage version, where Charlie reaches his limit with Raymond. Raymond insists they drive back miles to Cincinnati to buy boxer shorts from a specific K-Mart. This sends Charlie over the edge and results in a scene where Charlie stops in a small town and takes Raymond to the doctor. This scene contributes a great deal to the audience's understanding of the two major characters and sets up for the character/relationship journey ahead. It shows Charlie driven to the brink of his patience, which is important to illustrate how far he has come by the end of the story when he is fighting to keep his brother with him. It also allows Raymond to show off his genius as the doctor, aware of and curious about autism, decides to put Raymond through his paces. The scene allows the audience to feel empathy for Charlie, and then compassion and admiration for Raymond. Consequently, the loss of this scene in the play means that the theatre audience do not experience these important emotional steps. Nor does Gordon replace them with theatrical moments of equal insight and emotion. These arguably crucial character/relationship beats simply go missing in translation.

These scene omissions and the reportage of offstage action seem to be predicated on the assumption that it is impossible to stage a road trip. In fact road trips have been portrayed successfully in plays such as *The Cape* (Plumb, 2008) or *Have Car Will Travel* (Thomas, 2011). The difference is that the authors of those plays were prepared to go beyond a purely naturalistic stage presentation to evoke cars and car journeys, while Gordon seems reluctant to embrace the full range of these theatrical possibilities.

While the road movie genre of the *Rain Man* adaptation, coupled with this determination to limit the presentation of the story to naturalism, clearly created problems for the stage adaptation, there is one aspect of the source material which seems almost tailor-made for the liveness of the theatre – the character of Raymond Babbitt. The role works brilliantly on stage because it demands a heightened performance. Raymond's autism,

his bizarre physicality and his fixated behaviour, creates a character and performance that is praised in reviews of the play, for example 'Morrissey is sublime as the obsessive savant, mastering each nuance and mannerism to perfection' (Burbridge, 2009) and 'Adam Godley is absolutely incredible as Raymond Babbitt . . . giving a tremendously gripping and emotional performance' (Coloured Lights, 2008). This highlights an important aspect for adaptors to consider, namely what qualities of the characters will potentially translate well to the stage.

Gordon's adaptation of *Rain Man* must be considered a transpositional one. He has not attempted to change the story to work more effectively for the new medium, rather he has tried to stay as close to the film version as possible and minimise the difficulty of this by having a considerable amount of the action occur offstage. Gordon's habit of relaying the information to the audience rather than showing it in action results in drama that is less dramatic and engaging than it could be.

Charlie's growth from self-centred hustler to someone who cares so deeply for his brother that he's prepared to fight tooth and nail to keep him is difficult to accept when we are excluded from the moments that truly challenge him.

Gordon's method is anchored to a naturalistic presentation, and therefore he avoids theatrical choices such as the relatively simple device of actors miming driving a vehicle. One reviewer lamented that Gordon overlooks the possibilities of theatre: 'so little use is made of that hallowed [theatre] space' (Syke, 2010). If Gordon had been more open to theatricality, he could have created new versions of the original's landmark scenes. Most importantly, rather than depend so heavily on using reportage to convey key moments of the story, Gordon could have given the audience the chance to relive them, but in the uniquely intimate setting of the theatre.

Adaptation requires reinvention. In most successful adaptations the story must change to accommodate the new medium. As shown in Part 2.1, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Frost/Nixon* and *Lantana* underwent significant alterations and the adaptations benefited greatly as a result. Gordon's reluctance to re-imagine and re-invent has resulted in a play which

reviewers repeatedly identify as failing to produce an effective theatricalised version of the film.

What works in their favour is the script: not Gordon's I hasten to add, for he's done nothing, it seems to me, but wrap himself in the glorious celluloid flag hoisted by Morrow, Bass and Levinson. (Syke, 2010)

In contrast, Tim Firth, using a transformational approach to his adaptation of *Calendar Girls*, showcases the possibilities for the adaptor who is prepared to rework the material for the stage and to retain the key dramatic moments of the film without resorting to excessive reportage. *Calendar Girls* is also an example of successful use of closing in and liveness.

Calendar Girls: Moments That Resonate

The film *Calendar Girls* (Cole, 2003), starring Helen Mirren and Julie Walters, was released in 2003 to commercial success. The co-writer of the feature film, Tim Firth, adapted it for the stage eight years later (Firth, 2010), and it has since been continuously in production in Britain and been staged internationally (including in New Zealand). *Calendar Girls* is based on a real-life event, in which mature women from a Women's Institute in Yorkshire decided to disrobe for a fundraising calendar for leukaemia research. Their calendar was the inspiration behind the motion picture and now stage play phenomenon. The stage version has been described in press releases as 'the most successful play to ever tour the UK' (Savage, 2013). Like the film, the play is a crowd-pleaser which resonates with audiences, not only because of the inspirational events behind the actions of the women but also due to the humour it employs while dealing with issues such as illness, ageing and death. Firth's adaptation demonstrates how powerful moments from the film were able to grow in power and impact when writing to the strengths of theatre.

While the film was commercially successful, a number of critics felt it was a poor screenplay that was saved by the actors, especially Mirren and Walters.

It's a gentle little movie that lets a group of older British actresses shine, even when the screenplay fails them. (Macdonald, 2003)

Criticisms principally addressed the film's lack of dramatic tension.

This is a film that has little dramatic tension and relies on small moments to make it work . . . it even feels contrived and convenient. (Nechak, 2003)

In the film, issues or difficulties which arise are swiftly dealt with or resolved. The dramatic conflict is provided through key events in the narrative: in convincing the women to pose for the calendar; gaining the support of the Women's Institute; getting sponsorship; the fallout between best friends Chris, who first has the idea for the calendar, and Annie, whose husband John's death from cancer is the inspiration for the idea. In the film all these conflicts are resolved almost instantly, and at no point are the characters or their objectives in any true jeopardy.

For other critics, the third act becomes problematic when the women are whisked off to Los Angeles to star on the Jay Leno talk show and to film a television commercial. Despite this happening in real life, it was disruptive and jarring in the film, and in fact drastically altered its tone. This act of the movie feels like a different film, as the women suddenly and unexpectedly leave their small village to go to Hollywood.

Ideally the Hollywood sequence should have felt like a natural part of the story but the conflict in the third act feels 'bolted on', as this reviewer indicates:

The movie begins to run out of steam during the Hollywood scenes. We're supposed to see the women as out of their element but the whole movie feels more comfortable in Yorkshire than on the Sunset Strip. (Lane, 2004)

The screenwriters' inability to craft a satisfying climax resulted in Firth having to adapt a piece of work with inherent problems. Unsurprisingly, a number of criticisms of the play are to do with issues that were carried across from the film version. Firth however resolves this particular shortcoming of the film by making a substantial change in the stage version. No longer do the women visit Hollywood. Instead, Firth's adaptation

employs the concept of closing in by adapting the real-life trip to Hollywood into a new scenario where a television commercial is filmed in the women's Yorkshire village. This alteration fits the overall story better, and ironically provides greater dramatic possibility because it is happening on the characters' own turf.

Filming the commercial adds further tension as Chris chooses to be in the commercial rather than assist her husband Rod, who desperately needs her help that day to aid the family's struggling business. Chris's decision also causes tension between her and Annie. Because Annie recently lost her husband to cancer, she takes issue with Chris choosing the spotlight rather than helping Rod.

These conflicts arise naturally out of the characterisations, in contrast to the events in the film where Chris chooses to follow the women to Hollywood despite issues at home with her teenage son Jem. Jem has been playing up, caught by the police attempting to smoke cannabis and being truant from school. Chris is caught between trying to be a good mother and her desire to go to Hollywood with the women to be part of the talk show. With Firth's move away from the Hollywood trip for the stage adaptation the conflict is now clear and simple. Chris has to make a choice between duty to her husband and the struggling family business. This day in particular is crucial both for the business and for the commercial, making the stakes high and immediate for Chris.

In the film, it seems possible that Rod could deal with Jem or Chris could have a serious conversation with him when she returns from America. Firth's change for the stage version is a smart, simple and effective alteration and an improvement on the original. This is a good example of closing in. By placing the commercial in Yorkshire, the stakes increase: the commercial has a far greater potential impact as it will play on local television. As a direct result of keeping the story within the same environment, the new scenario more dramatically impacts on Chris's relationship with Rod and adds a new point of tension with Annie.

Closing in can refer not just to fewer locations and characters, but also to a tighter focus on the emotional heart of the story. By setting the climax of the story in the village rather than Hollywood, Firth has found an effective way to that heart.

However there is at least one point where the stage adaptation suffers from Firth's attempts to streamline the material. In the film, a sequence of events plants the seed for the nude calendar idea in Chris's mind. While tidying her son's room, Chris comes across a pornographic magazine. Bemused, she leafs through it. Later, when members of the Institute discuss what should be in the calendar, Chris jokes that George Clooney should be in it. It is decided that the calendar will feature local churches. This is immediately followed by Chris joking with John in the hospital about the calendar. John humorously offers to be a model. His porter Lawrence, an amateur photographer, remarks that the only real expense is the models. Later, Chris sees a calendar of naked women at a garage and asks the surprised mechanic if she can borrow it. Although the calendar features young women, their 'private' areas are obscured by tools and other items. By now, the audience knows exactly what idea Chris will propose to her friends. Film's ability to have a number of short succinct scenes allows the audience to see where Chris's idea for the calendar comes from.

The stage play however fails to provide this context for Chris's idea. There is no careful build-up to this moment as in the film. Rather, Chris unexpectedly presents a collection of provocative calendars to the group, informing them that 'flesh sells'. Without the set-up, the suggestion seems more titillating than logical and it is difficult to comprehend why the idea would appeal to any of the women. As a result the suggestion in the play lacks the innocent charm created in the film, and appears to come from nowhere. Firth's attempt to close in has overlooked the need to build towards Chris's idea for the calendar. While Firth reduces the number of scenes for the play, he fails to ensure that Chris's suggestion is dramatically motivated. The result is that, instead of resonating in the stage play, this crucial moment jars.

One of the strongest elements of Firth's stage adaptation is his willingness to alter specific scenes or moments so that they take advantage of the live nature of theatre. There are two key theatrical moments which are ingeniously staged and are often singled out in reviews as the strongest parts of the play. The first of these moments is the death of Annie's husband, John, who dies from cancer during the play. John's death is the inspiration behind the women's actions, so Firth had to engineer a theatrical way to make John's passing resonate with the audience. Early in the play, John is asked to give a talk at the Women's Institute, a speech he becomes aware he won't be alive to give, and instead he reads part of his prepared speech.

Annie wheels John to a position where he reads his speech to the girls off the paper bag which contains the sunflower seeds.

John: (reading) "The flowers of Yorkshire are like the women of Yorkshire. Every stage of their growth has its own beauty."

The women listen.

"But the last phase is always the most glorious."

Seeing what we're seeing, we'd have to agree.

"Then, very quickly, they all go to seed."

There is gentle laughter amongst the women in the room.

"Which makes it . . ."

He stops. Get gets up out of his wheelchair and puts the speech down where he sat. And walks out through the girls. (Firth, 2010, p. 24)

John is never seen again in the play, as his abrupt exit symbolises his death. The women then try to continue reading his speech but Annie then Chris find it too painful to get through. John's stopping mid-speech, then stepping out of his wheelchair and leaving the stage is poignant and affecting, and the scene shows Firth's flair for adapting specific

moments so they resonate on stage. Firth plays against the literal nature of film by finding a symbolic theatrical device to convey the impact of John's death. What might seem unrealistic and contrived on film works wonderfully on the stage. Reviewers commented favourably on Firth's handling of John's passing.

The simplicity and silence of this scene makes it more powerful and emotional.
(Moss, 2011)

The second key theatrical moment is the calendar photo shoot. In the film, the photo shoot is a collection of separate moments, depicting the 'model' and the photographer. In the play, this is a continuous sequence in which each woman is photographed in turn. This is unquestionably the highlight of the play, and the reviews reflect this:

There are moments of delightful stage-craft here, the sheer exuberance of the calendar shoot draws the whole audience into a world of conspiracy and support.
(Pearce, 2011)

Firth realises the potential of the scene to be both funny and highly physical, involving all of the women. The decision to stage the calendar shoot as fast physical comedy is not naturalistic, yet it delights the audience and makes the most of theatre's liveness, inviting the audience to appreciate the skill of the actors in performing the tightly choreographed lightning-fast photo shoot while concealing their nakedness with strategically placed props such as a piece of knitting. As Pearce (2001) has remarked, this is a scene which generates its power from the relationship between performer and the live audience.

Firth's transformative adaptation of his screenplay demonstrates the importance of rewriting specifically for the stage. Whereas Gordon in *Rain Man* chose to have characters relay pivotal moments through reportage, Firth finds theatrical ways of staging them. Rather than seeing the 'calendar girl' photo shoot as a problem, Firth uses the opportunity for a highly theatrical sequence. In writing a stylised death for John, Firth uses theatre's ability to provoke the audience into using their imagination. Finally, Firth's

decision to remove the women's trip to Hollywood and replace it with filming a commercial in their town is an effective application of the closing in technique.

Terry Johnson's adaptation of the motion picture classic *The Graduate* further illustrates the dramatic advantages of closing in, and the importance of reworking cinematic material to take advantage of the liveness of theatre.

The Graduate: Innovation and Restraint

Mike Nichols's film *The Graduate* (Nichols, 1967) was adapted by Calder Willingham and Buck Henry from Charles Webb's 1963 novel (Webb, 2002). The protagonist is Benjamin Braddock: young, naive, recently graduated from college and uncertain about his future. After initially rejecting Mrs Robinson's advances Benjamin changes his mind and enters into an affair with an older woman, the wife of his father's best friend and business partner. This relationship becomes all the more treacherous when Benjamin falls for her daughter Elaine, and Mrs Robinson becomes set upon doing anything to destroy this relationship. *The Graduate* is seen as a definitive film of its era. A box office sensation which struck a chord and continues to be held in very high regard, in 1998 it was selected to be preserved by the United States National Film Registry and is ranked highly in the American Film Institute's top 100 films. When adjusted for inflation, it sits twenty-first on the list of highest-earning movies (Bezanon, n.d.). Terry Johnson, an established British playwright, adapted *The Graduate* for the stage. First staged at the Gielgud Theatre in London in March 2000, it has since been performed around the world. Johnson's adaptation, despite being based on both the novel and the screenplay, has a great deal in common with the movie.

A key difference between the film and the play however is the use of visual motifs. As noted screenwriting expert Linda Seger details in her book *Making a Good Script Great*, a motif is 'a recurring image . . . that is used throughout the film to deepen and dimensionalize the storyline and add texture to the theme' (Seger, 1994, pp. 108–109).

Motifs are also used to convey meaning to the audience and establish or show the mood of characters.

The film version of *The Graduate* makes strong use of one key visual motif – water. In the film, water (in particular the swimming pool at his parents' house) is used to illustrate Benjamin's psychological state, reflecting both his sexuality and anxieties about adulthood. For example, the scene immediately following Benjamin and Mrs Robinson first sleeping together shows Benjamin sunning himself on an inflatable raft in his parent's swimming pool, a pool he apparently lounges in for weeks on end. Throughout the affair with Mrs Robinson, Benjamin is seen either sleeping in the pool, running out to the pool, or floating on a raft in the pool. There is even a moment where Benjamin goes to jump onto the raft which then cuts to him landing on Mrs Robinson in bed.

The swimming pool is also used to signal major attitude shifts for Benjamin. Early in the film, much against his will, Benjamin is made to parade the diving suit he has received for his 21st birthday in front of his parents' friends at a large barbeque get together. Benjamin, clad in the diving suit, begs his father to not make him do this but his father is insistent. Benjamin dives into the pool and surfaces only to be pushed back down twice by his father. This humiliation by his parents shows how Benjamin is still perceived as a child rather than as a man. It is immediately following this scene that Benjamin makes a half-hearted attempt to take back some control by calling Mrs Robinson to meet at a hotel.

As it would be highly impractical to have a pool on stage which would only be used briefly, a method other than visual motif is needed to suggest Benjamin's psychological state and his change of mind about becoming involved with Mrs Robinson. Johnson's adaptation does this in an effective, highly comic and theatrical way. Johnson turns to the novel rather the film to create a conversation between Benjamin and his father that evokes Benjamin's desire to escape adolescence. At the end of the first scene in the play, having just rejected Mrs Robinson's advances, Benjamin announces that he wants to go see the real world, not the world that his parents and their friends inhabit:

I'm heading out. Across the country. If I can get the papers, the passport, the whatever you need. I'll go right around the world . . . I'm gonna work. I'm gonna meet interesting people. I'm through with all of this. (Johnson, 2000, p. 24)

Benjamin leaves home at the end of the scene saying 'maybe five years. Maybe ten. I don't know' (Johnson, 2000, p. 23).

The following scene in the play begins with Benjamin back from his trip, nine days later. Benjamin's father is eager to hear details of something he clearly wishes he had done in his youth. What follows is a blackly comic speech during which Benjamin describes fighting fires, seeing Indians, hitchhiking, fighting off homosexuals, and having sex with a prostitute in the middle of an ice-covered cow pasture. Unlike Gordon's reportage of specific events in *Rain Man* that are pivotal to the story, this is a hilarious tale which tells us that Benjamin did not find what he was looking for out there in the 'real world' and has been forced to return, humiliated and resentful, to the gilded cage of his parents' house. A long speech such as this would not be nearly as effective on screen, but in the theatre it serves as an effective way of getting Benjamin to the same point of disillusionment as in the film version. Benjamin hoped to see 'real people', to be gone for many years and travel the world, yet he only got as far as a nearby town and remains desperate to transform from the boy he feels he is into a 'man'. As in the film, his next action is to contact Mrs Robinson to take her up on her offer. The two different approaches highlight the use of visual images in film and of language and storytelling in theatre. In both the film and the play the writers demonstrate the skills of effectively adapting the same story for different mediums.

In order to complete the transformation from film to play, Johnson also uses the technique of closing in. He limits the locations used in the story, opting to place as much action within as few environments as possible. An example occurs early in the play when Mrs Robinson's seduction takes place in Benjamin's bedroom as opposed to her house. One reviewer felt this change weakened the narrative:

the famous seduction scene . . . takes place, nonsensically, with his parents and numerous guests downstairs . . . this scene severely undercuts Mrs. Robinson's determination and craftiness later; it wasn't enough for Johnson to give her a first name, he had to make her stupid, too? (Murray, 2002)

In my opinion, this change is not nonsensical and in fact contributes both to the drama of the attempted seduction and to our understanding of Mrs Robinson's character. Nor has Johnson made this change simply in order to reduce the number of scene locations – though it is effective in this regard. In the film this sequence takes place across three locations: Benjamin's bedroom, his car as he drives Mrs Robinson home, and Mrs Robinson's house. Johnson's decision to omit the driving scene and to avoid the challenge of having two different bedrooms represented on stage allows the scene to flow smoothly.

But more importantly, this decision greatly raises the dramatic stakes. There is a party on downstairs, Benjamin's parents are pleading for him to come down, and Mr Robinson enters wanting to discuss the possibility of 'plastics' for Benjamin's future. The drama of Mrs Robinson's attempted seduction of Benjamin is heightened by the danger in this environment. Ultimately, her seduction is cut short by Mr Robinson calling for his wife outside Benjamin's room, creating further tension as she rushes into Benjamin's en suite to cover herself. Arguably Mrs Robinson's actions at this point in the play do not make her 'stupid', rather they give us an insight into what would drive such risk-taking behaviour. While in the film Mrs Robinson is portrayed as bored and unsatisfied, her seduction of Benjamin in his room in the play shows a woman who has reached the point of desperation and who must escape from her mundane reality. Johnson's skilful closing in of the story not only solves staging challenges and adds to the dramatic intensity, but also tells us more about the character of Mrs Robinson.

Johnson's adaptation of the climax of the story further demonstrates his skill at exploiting the live performance dynamic. In the film, Benjamin and Elaine flee from the church after she has just married another man, Carl. The movie ends on an ambivalent

note as they rush onto a nearby bus, their smiles fading as they realise the enormity of their actions and their uncertain futures. Johnson approaches the scene very differently. As one reviewer notes, he 'daringly omits most of the climactic church abduction, an iconic scene in Mike Nichols' celebrated film' (Cohen, 2000). Johnson reworks the material to ensure a climax which better serves the new medium.

In Johnson's adaptation the final scene now consists of a battle of wills between Benjamin and Mrs Robinson, who tries to convince Elaine to marry Carl, while Benjamin argues that Elaine should be with him. While this is being fought out verbally Mr Robinson is outside the room attempting to break down the door with an axe. This scene illustrates both the theatrical power of closing in and the visceral nature of live performance. Mr Robinson's attack on the door offers theatre audiences an immediate surge of adrenalin, as the door is violently cut down. By limiting the climax to one location instead of the several used in the film, Johnson allows the dramatic tension to escalate towards the climax without interruption. The scene blends comedy, drama and spectacle. Perhaps most importantly, whereas in the film Elaine's decision to run away with Benjamin is impulsive, the climax of the play is a verbal showdown between Benjamin and his major antagonist, Mrs Robinson – a showdown which Benjamin apparently loses. Elaine decides to go through with the wedding to Carl, only to return for her corsage and overhear her mother say to Benjamin:

I've waited twenty years to see if she developed any personality of her own, but no, she's ten per cent me and ninety per cent him. I'm the curiosity, and the eye. He's the dreary diligence and the enduring dullness. Beyond that, Benjamin, there *is* no Elaine. (Johnson, 2000, p. 99)

It is these words which drive Elaine to Benjamin. Johnson uses this scene to not only provide a thrillingly theatrical climax, but also to extend the character development of Elaine, creating a more satisfying resolution for her than in the film. Unlike the scene between Benjamin and his father that Johnson took from the novel, this new climactic scene is all Johnson's creation. This scene works effectively on the stage because Johnson

has adapted the material so it works to theatre's strengths by closing in, by limiting the events to one enclosed room, and by exploiting the liveness of theatre as Mr Robinson attacks the door with an axe while Benjamin and Mrs Robinson are locked in a verbal duel over Elaine.

Simon Moore's adaptation of *Misery* goes even further in terms of closing in and is prepared to alter the story even to the extent of having a significantly different ending.

Misery: A Story in a Box

Stephen King's work has been adapted for the screen on numerous occasions. Some adaptations have been hailed as classics such as *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980) and *The Shawshank Redemption* (Darabont, 1994). Others, including *The Dark Half* (Romero, 1993) and *Riding the Bullet* (Garris, 2005) failed to make an impression. There have been only three stage versions of King's work: *The Shawshank Redemption* (O'Neil & Johns, 2008), the infamous *Carrie* (Pitchford, Gore, & Cohen, 1988)(a Broadway musical which only lasted five performances) and *Misery* (Moore, 1992), which had previously been adapted into a film (Reiner, 1990).

Misery was a successful movie penned by screenwriting icon William Goldman.⁶ It won Kathy Bates the Academy Award for Best Actress. Two years later the play version, a two hander written by Simon Moore, made its debut in London. *Misery* is the story of a famous writer, Paul Sheldon, who is celebrated for his successful line of novels set in the 19th century featuring his romantic heroine Misery. Sheldon is involved in a terrible car accident during a snowstorm and is saved by Annie Wilkes (played by Bates in the film) who nurses him back to health. She happens to be his 'biggest' fan, as well as having a mental health condition that manifests in an explosive and violent temperament.

The story of *Misery* is a natural fit for the stage. A plot which hinges on isolation and focuses on two characters in a small location clearly suits theatre's tendencies towards intimacy and closing in. Apart from two book-end scenes, the action of the play occurs

⁶ Goldman has won two Academy Awards, had over 20 screenplays produced, and received three lifetime awards.

entirely in Wilkes's house and between Sheldon and Wilkes. The stage version derives tremendous energy from the locked-down nature of the story. Any outside events would dissipate this intensity and seem superfluous to the action on stage.

Conversely, in adapting the novel for film, Goldman's screenwriting experience told him this level of claustrophobia would be difficult for film audiences and that he needed to open up and shift from the house whenever possible:

You're trying to get out of that room. You're trying to get out of that house, because it could be so claustrophobic. And all of this stuff we have here is basically important to the story, etc., etc., But this is a great breath, getting out. (Goldman, 2003)

This need to open up also explains the significant amount of the movie's running time that is given to Buster's investigation of Sheldon's disappearance. Buster is the local sheriff and at various points the movie shifts from Wilkes's house to Buster's investigation of what has happened to Sheldon. Not only did Goldman feel the need to open up the story by adding a plotline outside the house, he also opted to introduce further plot within the house. In a scene not in the original novel (and which also would not occur in the later adapted stage play), Sheldon attempts to drug Wilkes during a romantic dinner, with the painkillers he has stockpiled. Both this scene and Buster's investigation involve considerable set-up.

Interestingly, Goldman talks about these two events as 'misdirection' – especially the amount of time spent on Buster's investigation. When commenting on Sheldon's stockpiling a supply of Novil tablets, Goldman remarks,

It's another piece of misdirection. Remember when you're doing a movie like this . . . you've just got these two people and you've got try and make it . . . keep it going. (Reiner, 2003)

Whereas Moore builds steadily to only one outcome, the ultimate confrontation between Wilkes and Sheldon, Goldman engineers as many different events or potential

outcomes as possible in order to keep the viewer on the edge of their seat. For example, as Buster grows closer to discovering what has happened to Sheldon, will the sheriff be able to save him? These scenes give the film pace and tempo but would have the opposite effect if included in the play, interrupting and distracting from the steady build of tension between Sheldon and Wilkes.

The other aspect in which Moore closes in the story is that he opts to give equal focus to the characters of Sheldon and Wilkes. It is this dynamic relationship that the play explores whereas the film remains centred on Sheldon's story, in keeping with the often-cited requirement for a film to concentrate on one character's journey:

Every movie, even ensemble pieces . . . has to have a lead character. It has to be *about* someone. (Snyder, 2005, p. 48)

Rather than inventing new plot round Sheldon's attempts to escape, Moore in his theatre adaptation chooses to go deeper into the co-dependent relationship of Sheldon and Wilkes and the psychological/emotional impact they have on each other. Moore does not fight against the static nature of a story about two characters in a house, one of them bedridden; he uses this as the engine of his drama. Moore plays up Sheldon's reliance on Wilkes for pain relief and ratchets up the tension as she withholds it. With the emphasis placed on the relationship, what becomes most important is the characters' impact on each other – and this is clearly shown in another crucial difference between film and play.

The most extreme moment of King's *Misery* comes when Wilkes immobilises Sheldon to punish him for snooping around the house. In the film she breaks both his ankles with a sledgehammer, in the play Wilkes chops off one of Sheldon's feet. This difference reflects contrasting journeys mapped out for Sheldon's character by Goldman and Moore. In Goldman's *Misery* it is necessary that Sheldon can heal (i.e. from broken bones). In the film Sheldon not only survives but becomes a better writer and a better person as a result of his experience with Wilkes. He is no longer interested in recognition or awards,

as this screen direction states: 'There is a genuine sense of peace about him. He has been through the fire and survived.'⁷

Goldman's Sheldon is a winner, a survivor. In contrast, Moore's Sheldon is left forever hobbled, addicted to painkillers and finished as a writer:

Paul: After the sales of *Misery's Return* I never need to write again, and to be quite honest, I'm not sure I will. (Moore, 1992, p. 54)

Misery's Return is the novel that Sheldon is forced to write by Wilkes. The contrasting ways it is used in play and film (in particular the fate of the manuscript) are also central to the difference between the filmic 'hero's journey' spine of the film and the relationship-based theatrical drama.

In the film version, the novel is reduced to a pile of ashes. In the play, it is not destroyed and goes on to become Sheldon's biggest seller. Moore at times uses the novel as Goldman used *Buster*, to defuse tension. Sheldon reads aloud lengthy passages of the novel to Wilkes with accompanying sound effects played in conjunction. In these scenes, Moore is able to develop the relationship between Sheldon and Wilkes, as well as entertainingly satirising romance novels (*Misery's Return* is extremely overblown and dramatic) and allowing us to marvel at Sheldon's ability to invent despite his circumstances. In contrast, Goldman does not focus on *Misery's Return*, as lengthy scenes involving Sheldon reading his work aloud would not make for effective cinema.

However, *Misery's Return* is crucial for both writers in the crisis and resolution of Sheldon's journey. In the play the success of *Misery's Return* is the final blow by Wilkes against Sheldon. The novel is published and is very successful, to the point where Sheldon no longer needs, nor desires, to write again. The success of the novel that Wilkes forced Sheldon to write proves to be the death of him as a writer and represents Wilkes's final devastating blow.

⁷ Taken from an unofficial screenplay of *Misery* at <http://www.script-o-rama.com>, p. 91. This is an accurate description of what occurs at this moment in the film.

In contrast, Goldman's Sheldon sets ablaze the only copy of *Misery Returns*, using it as bait to spark the physical confrontation with Wilkes. In the very last scene of the film, Sheldon's agent informs him that his new work, *The Higher Education of J. Phillip Stone*, a semi-autobiographical piece, is bound for critical success. Goldman's Sheldon has become the writer he always aspired to be, whereas Moore's Sheldon is broken by the colossal success of *Misery Returns*. Just as Wilkes took Sheldon's foot away, she has taken away his dream of being the writer he wanted to be. Moore's Sheldon is left a defeated drug addict with no aspirations to do anything anymore.

This basic difference in the two stories is due, I believe, to Moore closing in on the theatrical strength of a physically contained relationship story which by its nature requires greater physical, psychological and emotional impact on Sheldon than in the film version. The effect of these two characters on each other is the drama of the play, as opposed to the 'will he escape?' plot tension and twists of the film.

Fundamentally, the same story is told in both film and play. Yet, because of the different conventions and possibilities of each medium, each adaptation incorporates significant changes to plot, character and the evolution or demise of Sheldon as a writer. Both Goldman and Moore clearly understand the principles of their mediums and how to effectively adapt the original *Misery* to their intended form.

Conclusion

Through the examination of these four film-to-stage adaptations certain conclusions can be drawn with regards to strategies for successful film-to-play adaptation.

Close In

Unlike film, which often benefits from a larger canvas, theatre gains momentum, energy and dramatic intensity from closing in. Reducing characters to only a key few, and moving from a wide number of locations to just a handful of few specific places are effective ways of closing in. Closing in also refers to the story: the stage adaptation of *Misery* gains

from closing in and exploring the systematic destruction of Sheldon's character as opposed to exploring the various ways he may be able to escape from this torture.

Build Liveness

When shifting the material from film to the stage, it pays to think of the performance element. The photo shoot scene in Firth's stage adaptation of *Calendar Girls* becomes the highlight of the play as Firth has looked to make the most of this live quality. Adaptations that consider that these are scenes that will occur in front of a live audience and alter the scenes/events accordingly embrace a vital part of the theatre medium.

Use Reportage Sparingly and Dramatically

In the theatre dialogue is often employed to convey important factors of the story. Terry Johnson's stage adaptation of *The Graduate* effectively employs reportage when Benjamin details to his bewildered father the highly comical and intriguing aspects of his failed attempt to 'see the world'. The reportage in Dan Gordon's *Rain Man* by contrast fails to engage as it dramatically robs the audience of seeing the moment, the event in action, as rather than seeing Raymond beat the casino we instead simply hear Charlie congratulate Raymond after the event: 'Look at this, Ray. See all these chips? You won them all, Raymond. You did it' (Gordon, 2009, p. 77). Charlie tells Raymond something that he already knows, for the benefit of the audience, who did not get to see the moment transpire.

Grow a Relationship

Adapting a single-protagonist film to the stage is problematic; there is not the same sense of seeing the world through the characters on stage as there is in film. The stage adaptation of *Misery* demonstrates that rather than have one predominant character there are benefits to making a relationship between two characters (or more) as the primary drama of the story.

As always there are exceptions to these guidelines but for the majority of film-to-stage adaptations these are principles to strongly consider in order to effectively adapt for the different medium.

PART 3: SCRIPT ADAPTATIONS

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3.1 STAGE PLAY: *HAMLET DIES AT THE END*

WRITTEN BY GAVIN MCGIBBON

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Characters

Douglas	Fifties, a hard rocking drummer in a covers band. He has a rather "easy going" nature.
Patricia	Forties, oblivious, in a world of her own. A world where she is the greatest thing since bread. Not just sliced bread but actual bread.
Rhonda	Forties, a bus driver, lovely smile but is not someone you would ever win an argument with.
Charlie	Ninety one years old, a world war two veteran who is in good condition for his age.
Jimmy	Nineteen years old, very withdrawn and quiet.
Becker	Fifties, drama teacher, plagued with self-loathing but tries his best (or as much as he's prepared to) with others.

HAMLET DIES AT THE END

The set consists of three areas. Stage right is a "kitchen" - a bench, with a built in sink, cabinets and a set of drawers.

Stage left is "outside" - a plastic outdoor table with two chairs and a barbecue.

In the middle is a "hall" with a raised stage at the far end. There is a curtain which can be pulled across. It's currently open.

The lights come up on four people seated in a circle - Patricia, Rhonda, Charlie and Jimmy (who faces away from the others with his hoodie up over his head).

They are watching Becker who is on the stage "performing."

BECKER

I'm lying there. Blood, blood is everywhere. I'm covered in it. First I think it's red paint, it must be, but it's not. Whose is it? And this switch just flicks over in my head. It's mine, it really happened and my juices, my life juices are ebbing. Ebbing away. From me. But I should start at the beginning. I was thirty three, gambling a lot, losing hundreds, thousands of dollars and it didn't matter. I was selling drugs, I was selling drugs for a cop, now when you have the law on your side and he's providing drugs for next to nothing well...it was easy, too easy because I had to have some kind've rush and so I'm gambling more and more, then it gets to the point it never should've. I can't pay. I got these guys threatening to break my legs and I have no way of...then it comes to me, I can't believe what I'm thinking at first, it's madness but that thought just lingers and lingers till I realise it's the only thing I can do. He's a cop, there's no way he can be depositing this money, so I know it's in there, in his house. I break in, find it and I'm outta there.

(MORE)

He finds me the next day, I'm sitting on a park bench, dealing the drugs, I see him coming, think "play it cool", he comes right up to me and the fury in his eyes, I can't do anything, I'm trying to say sorry, to reason with him when -

Suddenly in walks Douglas, he's mid fifties, long hair, big stomach, his T-shirt a faded tie-dye number. He's wearing headphones, banging away to the music on his thighs.

His entrance has completely wrecked the moment.

DOUGLAS

Hey guys, my bad, sorry I'm late but time is like so relative y'know.

Becker is not happy.

BECKER

You are aware what you've done aren't you?

Douglas shrugs.

BECKER

You have ruined, destroyed the moment.

DOUGLAS

(easy going)

I'm sure there'll be other ones.

BECKER

Excuse me?

DOUGLAS

Moments man, they keep on happening.

There's a painful silence.

DOUGLAS

Like this is another one. A moment.

BECKER

Why don't you take a seat, Paul isn't it?

DOUGLAS

Oh na, I'm Douglas, he couldn't make it so I took his spot.

BECKER

Delightful.

Becker gestures for Douglas to hurry up and sit down.

Becker returns to his performance.

BECKER

So I'm looking at him and he's...

The moment can't be recaptured, it's totally gone.

Becker stands there defeated.

Patricia seeing this, begins clapping, encouraging others to do the same.

Becker sighs.

BECKER

How about we go round in a circle,
introduce ourselves and say one thing
we'd like to get out of this week.

Becker indicates for Patricia to start.

PATRICIA

I'm Patricia and this is my tenth year
doing this.

She smiles broadly at Becker. Becker manages a tight grin.

PATRICIA

You could even say Mr Becker and I are a
team, couldn't you?

Becker, humouring, nods grimly.

PATRICIA

And what I hope to achieve is to take my
talents, my craft to an even higher
plane. If that's possible.

Becker smiles his thanks, gestures for Charlie to have his turn.

CHARLIE

Hello. I am Charlie, I am ninety one
years of age and before you were born I
was fighting in something you refer to as
the big one.

Charlie looks over at Jimmy who remains facing away from the others.

CHARLIE

WW Two.

BECKER

And your hopes for the week Charlie?

CHARLIE

...they are considerable.

This throws Becker somewhat.

BECKER

Good, that's good.

Becker signals for Douglas to go.

DOUGLAS

First I should get this outta the way.
I've seen the little looks you've been
giving each other and yeah I am. I'm from
the Thrashing Disciples.

No one has any idea what he's on about.

RHONDA

Is that some kinda S&M thing?

DOUGLAS

Um, if you call amazing fucking music
that then yeah.

Again nothing.

DOUGLAS

I'm in the band. The Thrashing Disciples.
Do all the clubs around here. Covers and
shit.

Nope. Nothing once more.

Douglas is stunned.

DOUGLAS

I'm the drummer. I'm like a piranha on
speed on those things.

BECKER

...and what do you hope to get out of
this Douglas?

Douglas still can't get over no one knowing him or his
band.

DOUGLAS
(to the group)
Seriously? Really?

Douglas looks at Jimmy, he must have heard of the band.
Jimmy just looks away.

DOUGLAS
This is some Twilight Zone shit right
here.

Becker moves things along to Rhonda.

RHONDA
Rhonda.

Silence follows.

PATRICIA
Any more to add?

Patricia laughs away to herself.

Rhonda gives her a sideways look.

RHONDA
Drive a bus.

BECKER
Ah, interesting.

RHONDA
Not really. You just drive round in a
circle, over and over again. Like a
bloody goldfish.

BECKER
So what uh, hopes do you have for this?

RHONDA
Not many really, wasn't my first choice,
too late for the art class they have
so...

PATRICIA
This is your second choice?

RHONDA
Or thereabouts.
(to Douglas)
Who'd think the pottery class would fill
up?

BECKER

Well it's nice to have you Rhonda. Think of this Shakespeare workshop as a pottery of the mind.

Patricia beams at this. The others have no idea what that even means.

Becker throws his attention to Jimmy who faces out from the others.

BECKER

Hello there.

Nothing from Jimmy.

BECKER

Jimmy, I expect you to make an effort. Your mother didn't sign you up for this to just... Would you like me to do it?

No movement, nothing.

BECKER

This is Jimmy. Jimmy's here because his mother thought it would be a good idea.

Jimmy's clearly agitated by this.

BECKER

You don't agree?

JIMMY

I...

BECKER

Jimmy's come to this workshop from a rather different direction, wouldn't you say?

Patricia's clearly intrigued.

JIMMY

Look I...

BECKER

Jimmy has unusual concepts of behaviour, don't you Jimmy?

Again nothing.

PATRICIA

What is it?

JIMMY
(quiet, quick)
Not relevant.

Becker's had enough, he begins to move towards Jimmy.

BECKER
You're going to be part of this whether
you like it or not.

Becker grabs Jimmy's chair, turning it into the group.

Again nothing from Jimmy.

BECKER
I do not have mimes in my workshops.

Still nothing.

BECKER
What have you got to say for yourself?

JIMMY
I set fire to the cat okay!

Everybody is horrified. Jimmy, seeing their reaction,
instantly regrets saying it.

PATRICIA
Excuse me?

JIMMY
I...yeah...set fire to them.

RHONDA
Them? It was more than one cat?

JIMMY
I...no, just one cat.

DOUGLAS
Shit, that's something, that it was just
one.

BECKER
(calmly to the group)
His mother assures me it was just one.

Charlie walks over to Jimmy.

CHARLIE

I have fought Nazis, arthritis, diabetes
and hippies, and you? You make me sick.
Reason why the SPCA should be given guns.

DOUGLAS

Hey, ease up man.

CHARLIE

(to Jimmy)

I've had people shoot at me who I've
respected more.

Silence.

CHARLIE

If my wife Barb was here she'd...

PATRICIA

Oh. Did she pass away?

Charlie looks at Patricia bewildered.

CHARLIE

No. She's not here, in the room is she?

PATRICIA

Oh you're asking me? No, she's not.

CHARLIE

The hell you talking about?

PATRICIA

Your wife. She's not here.

CHARLIE

I bloody well know that.

PATRICIA

(to Becker)

That's a positive.

BECKER

Can we just...focus. We have the little
matter of a production to consider.

RHONDA

Production?

BECKER

Oh yes, come the end of the week this community will bear witness to some of the most glorious scenes Hamlet has ever known.

DOUGLAS

Hamlet man, that's some full on shit.

BECKER

Quite.

JIMMY

We don't have to do it right?

BECKER

Pardon me? Pardon me? My ears hear something of which they couldn't.

Becker comes over to Jimmy.

BECKER

Yes Jimmy you do. It's an honour.

Jimmy's far from happy about this.

PATRICIA

Why just scenes? We should do the entire play because-

BECKER

-a collection of scenes will be quite enough for us to-

PATRICIA

-maybe for them, but for people like myself it's... Mr. Becker we should probably have a discussion about where the bar should be placed because a collection of scenes for me it's... it's like using a spaceship to fly to Australia.

JIMMY

Look she can do my part as well I don't-

Becker's about to react to this but -

PATRICIA

For someone who harms animals, that's very smart thinking.

BECKER

No. No one's doing someone else's parts.

PATRICIA

May want to rethink that, I'm looking around and I'm not seeing any Brando's or Ryan Seacrest's here.

RHONDA

Excuse me?

PATRICIA

Sorry. Or Meryl Streeps.

RHONDA

And what have you done?

PATRICIA

Juliet.

Rhonda and everyone else can't help but be impressed,

PATRICIA

...the understudy.

Rhonda smiles.

PATRICIA

Same thing essentially.

RHONDA

Um no. One involves doing it. The other not.

PATRICIA

...I was mouthing the words every performance. People would hush me but it couldn't be helped.

RHONDA

I bet you get that a lot.

Douglas laughs loudly.

DOUGLAS

(to Patricia)

Whoa. Owned. She owned you with that.

PATRICIA

(to Becker)

I don't even understand what he's...

BECKER

Let's put some ground rules down. We're a team. With a mutual goal to work towards, one that isn't too far away. Okay? Everyone fine with that? If we leave the Meryl Streeps and the gun toting SPCA behind us.

Time lapse via lighting.

Charlie is on stage.

He's silent.

Becker stares at him annoyed.

The silence continues.

BECKER

A moment of silence on stage can be a great thing, wondrous, but more than that? It's acting for the deaf, thoughtful, but they don't come to the theatre. I am, I want, I need, I feel. It's a simple exercise.

CHARLIE

I am, I want, I-

BECKER

No! I am something, I want something, I need something, I feel something.

Charlie just stares at Becker.

BECKER

Don't think about it, just say it. DO IT.

CHARLIE

...I am on stage, I want to be off it, I- these things I don't get, they come easy to other people and I-

BECKER

-again.

CHARLIE

I am in front of people, I want, I want things to be how they were. I need...do you think an old dog can learn new tricks?

What? BECKER

Do you? CHARLIE

Go again. BECKER

I am aware that my better days may be behind me. CHARLIE

(loud whisper to Jimmy)
May? DOUGLAS

I want to, to do something I've never done before. I need to do that, I feel I need to be different. CHARLIE

Excellent. Take a seat Charlie. Jimmy. BECKER

Becker gestures for Jimmy to go on stage.

Jimmy remains firmly in his seat.

Jimmy. BECKER

Nope, he's not moving.

Jimmy. BECKER

No thanks. JIMMY

I'm not offering you something. Get up there. BECKER

No. JIMMY

No? BECKER

Rather not. JIMMY

BECKER

I'd rather not my whole life. Get up there, want me talking to your mother?

Jimmy gets up from his chair. We see he's reluctant to leave his bag.

BECKER

Just leave it there.

Jimmy gets on the stage. He stares out at the group.

BECKER

We're waiting.

Jimmy takes a deep breath, then turns, heading off stage.

BECKER

Stop right there.

He does.

Jimmy stands there defiant.

BECKER

This is how you want to begin things? A week's a long time, you want me pissed off at you for an entire week?

Jimmy reluctantly heads back to the centre of the stage.

JIMMY

I am here, I want to not be, I need to be at home, I feel like...like...

BECKER

You feel like what?

JIMMY

That no one's gonna get me alright?

BECKER

Go again.

JIMMY

What?

BECKER

Go again.

JIMMY

I am Jimmy, I want to be in a log cabin.
I need to, just not be here anymore. I
feel...drowning.

BECKER

Again.

JIMMY

I am Jimmy. I want you to leave me alone.
I need to just-

BECKER

-what?

JIMMY

-be okay, feel alright.

BECKER

Again.

JIMMY

I am different. I feel, not like anyone
else. I want to be similar, understand
things.

BECKER

Again.

JIMMY

I am alone. I want to not be angry
anymore. I need to think different to how
I do. I feel my Mum wishes she hadn't had
me.

Jimmy is fighting back the tears now.

BECKER

Go again.

JIMMY

I am, there's things wrong with me. I
wish I could fix them. I feel broken.

BECKER

Once more.

DOUGLAS

No. I don't think so.

BECKER

Excuse me?

DOUGLAS
You got what you wanted, what you
asked for, way more.

BECKER
You telling me how to run this?

DOUGLAS
Just telling you how to be a better human
being.

Becker is slightly taken aback by that.

BECKER
You want to hold back this kid's
development?

DOUGLAS
No, kinda keen on holding off his
execution though.

They stare at each other.

BECKER
You going to be Hamlet?

DOUGLAS
What?

BECKER
I need a Hamlet, thought it was going to
be him.

Becker gestures at Jimmy. The very thought terrifies
Jimmy.

DOUGLAS
Could I have some drums or sumthin' up
there?

BECKER
Drums?

DOUGLAS
Yeah.

BECKER
You can't have drums. Hamlet does not,
can not, have drums.

Douglas seems defeated by this and backs down a little.

BECKER
Go again Jimmy.

JIMMY
I...I am...I am...

BECKER
Do it!

DOUGLAS
Alright, alright, I'll play your fucking
Hamlet.

Becker gestures that Jimmy can go sit down now.

DOUGLAS
Fuck's your problem man?

BECKER
I don't know, you probably should ask my
ex-wife that. Rhonda your turn.

Rhonda gets up and walks onto the stage.

BECKER
Alright, go for it.

RHONDA
I am not to be messed with. I want you to
know that. I need you to know that. I
feel it's in your best interests to know
that.

BECKER
...time for lunch.

Jimmy moves across to the Kitchen, everybody else moves
to the Outside area.

SCENE TWO. KITCHEN.

Jimmy is sitting.

Douglas enters.

DOUGLAS
Man that dude did a number on you.

JIMMY
No.

DOUGLAS
Total number.

JIMMY
He didn't.

DOUGLAS
You were weeping and shit.

JIMMY
...do you have to swear all the time?

DOUGLAS
I was- fuck you, you're like an animal
arsonist, know what people would do to
you in prison?

Jimmy's curious.

DOUGLAS
Like at the gym, when you're pumping
weights...they wouldn't spot you.

They sit there in silence.

DOUGLAS
So what, the next step for you, setting
fire to a zoo?

Silence.

DOUGLAS
Cos if you're gonna set a fire, might as
well make it a good one.

Silence.

DOUGLAS
You're not easy to talk to, you know
that?

Silence.

DOUGLAS
Look, you're angry, I get ya, but that
cat, helpless as a horse just been born,
you ever seen one of them try to walk?

Jimmy looks at Douglas puzzled.

Douglas acts out a baby horse trying to walk.

DOUGLAS

You should join a band or- hell come see us, I'll get you in the door free of charge.

JIMMY

Does it cost a lot to see you?

DOUGLAS

Putting a price on things it's just perverse. Five bucks. And you get a free drink.

JIMMY

How much are drinks?

DOUGLAS

Do you ever get out?...five bucks.

JIMMY

So really, you just have to buy a drink to see you? Which you would at a pub anyway.

DOUGLAS

...people on the whole twelve steps, alkies, they come to see us.

JIMMY

Alcoholics are coming to a bar to see you play?

Douglas nods away.

JIMMY

Guys must be pretty good.

DOUGLAS

We are, they usually get shitfaced though.

Charlie enters.

CHARLIE

Why if it isn't the cat burner.

Jimmy gets up and exits, crosses into the hall and sits down.

DOUGLAS

I respect my elders and cos you're right up there, means I really respect you but could you just, with him, ease up?

CHARLIE

I didn't fight wars to win the right to tiptoe around someone like that.

DOUGLAS

Can you stop playing the war card. I'm totally pacifist in nature so it's like real unfair to me man.

CHARLIE

Excuse me?

DOUGLAS

War? No one gets laid. Peace time? Everybody's doing it, you gotta step over the orgy just to get out the door.

Douglas turns and leaves, passing Rhonda who's entering. Douglas crosses to the hall.

CHARLIE

(to Rhonda)

What did he say his Thrashing Disciples was all about?

Becker is outside trying to sneak a smoke when Patricia appears.

PATRICIA

That's not what I think it is, is it?

Becker's almost apologetic about it, putting it out.

PATRICIA

You said you were going to quit.

BECKER

And I am...eventually.

PATRICIA

Druggies say the exact same thing and then they're found down by the train tracks, dead, needles in their arms.

Silence.

PATRICIA

A diverse group, don't you think?

Nothing from Becker.

PATRICIA

I suspect the burden of carrying the show rests on these once more.

Patricia indicates her shoulders.

PATRICIA

Little matter, they are broad shoulders are they not?

Patricia stares at him, he has little choice but to nod.

PATRICIA

Goodness, a year since we've last... You should do these workshops every month.

Patricia laughs heartily, feeling exposed.

BECKER

I think one a year is all I can...manage.

PATRICIA

And so, how's the year been? Any exciting projects? Things coming up?

BECKER

...I painted my coffee table.

Patricia's clearly disappointed but tries to hide it by being overly enthusiastic.

BECKER

The marks from where Nancy used to put her coffee wouldn't rub out so... I painted it. She married the neighbour a few months ago.

PATRICIA

Oh that's...

BECKER

Even after three years, her mail still comes to our place. I guess, what with being next door, she doesn't think it's worth changing.

PATRICIA

...I bet the coffee table looks nice.

SCENE THREE. HALL.

On the stage are five glasses of water.

Everyone is sitting in a circle, Becker is standing, he looks slightly outraged.

BECKER
(to Douglas)
Why are you even here?

DOUGLAS
It was just what you guys call, an offer.

BECKER
So instead of us doing Hamlet, what everyone here has paid to do, your 'offer' is we instead have a concert by your band?

DOUGLAS
Just throwing it out there. Cat among the pigeons.

PATRICIA
(to Becker)
Can you just make him stop?

DOUGLAS
Just, thing 'bout opening your mind to stuff it's wow, there's heaps of shit out there man and it's-

BECKER
With three days to go, how about we open our minds to the prospect of moving on huh Douglas?

There's a slight face off between Becker and Douglas.

Douglas fires Becker a thumbs up.

BECKER
Okay everybody up on stage.

All bar Becker get up there.

BECKER
What is life about?

Silence.

BECKER
What is it about?

PATRICIA

It's about realising you can't fly but learning how to anyway.

Patricia is delighted with her answer.

BECKER

Anyone else?

RHONDA

It's about getting through the day.

BECKER

What kind of life are you living?

(to Jimmy)

Jimmy, thoughts?

Jimmy shakes his head.

BECKER

Course not.

CHARLIE

Life is, it's this gift you're not sure you want but soon as anyone starts trying to take it away, like the Nazis, you want it more than anything.

BECKER

So you're talking about death there aren't you Charlie? And what is death?

DOUGLAS

Can't we just focus on the good vibe shit? Death it's pretty...

BECKER

Pretty what?

DOUGLAS

Full on.

BECKER

Any true production, an actor must face the very concept of death. Every single show builds to this "death" and what does that mean, what should this "death" be?

PATRICIA

It should be like a swan going over a waterfall.

BECKER
...death is the final word. Do you want
people covering their faces in
embarrassment at your final statement? Or
shedding tears?

DOUGLAS
I want 'em crying their ring out.

BECKER
It wasn't that type of question.

Douglas smiles, giving Becker a thumbs up.

BECKER
As you see, there's five glasses of
water.

CHARLIE
There's no jug.

BECKER
What?

CHARLIE
Out the back. For coffee. Thought someone
should know.

BECKER
Right, is there anything else? A fire
extinguisher not up to code?

CHARLIE
I haven't checked that.

BECKER
We'll wait on that shall we? Now, I want
you all to take turns drinking the water.
As you do, you realise it's poisoned and
you then die. But I want the beauty of
the last dance, the drink, the
realisation, the moment and then no more.
Patricia.

Patricia walks towards the glasses.

PATRICIA
Oh thirst from whence did you come, your
arrival is so immediate. I shall seek to
aid your departure, with this glass,
filled with water of which to quench.

Becker gestures for her to get on with it.

She takes a glass, drinks from it.

PATRICIA

Goodbye thirst, from whence you came you shall now return... but what's this? Bubbles on my throat most foul. This feels most strange.

She begins to stumble around.

PATRICIA

This, this feels like a return to the great beyond, mehaps it is I who is going from whence they came and not the dire thirst. Oh what will await me? I, I feel the darkness creeping beside my eyes like the cat around the fridge come dinner time. Oh darkness stay away but it won't. Oh, it won't.

She dies suddenly, falling to the floor, her limbs twitching away but then-

PATRICIA

My life, it just flashed before my eyes and there was much, there was much.

She then dies, her head snapping to the side.

Everyone stands there silent.

Charlie breaks out into applause.

Patricia sits up, dabbing at her eyes.

CHARLIE

I felt like I should ring an ambulance.

RHONDA

Had the exact same feeling.

Charlie sees Patricia, somewhat distraught.

CHARLIE

Are you okay?

PATRICIA

It's emotional, to put oneself through that.

RHONDA

And putting others through it too.

Jimmy actually laughs.

This angers Patricia.

PATRICIA

(to Jimmy)

Excuse me, have you finally got something to say?

Jimmy casts his gaze downwards.

PATRICIA

Big surprise.

Charlie glares at Jimmy.

Patricia brings her attention to Becker.

PATRICIA

So what did you think?

BECKER

It was like an...execution.

PATRICIA

You felt the gravity of it?

BECKER

I've seen someone die in real life and this felt very similar.

PATRICIA

It's all about keeping it grounded.

Happy, she steps back to the group.

PATRICIA

Not fair on who goes next but what can you do?

BECKER

Jimmy, you're up.

Jimmy goes and grabs a glass, drinks it, then sits down.

Jimmy and Becker stare at each other.

BECKER

Are you dead?

Jimmy nods.

BECKER

Did you sit down too quickly? Your spinal column shoot up through your brain?

Jimmy shrugs his shoulders.

BECKER

Get up and die again.

Jimmy slowly gets to his feet.

JIMMY

Do you want me to drink the water?

BECKER

It's the poison isn't it? Now this time emote, give me something.

Jimmy drinks the water.

JIMMY

Oh. Gosh.

He then sits down again. Seeing Becker staring daggers at him, Jimmy proceeds to let his head flop back.

BECKER

So that's it? That's what it's like when your time comes?

Jimmy shrugs his shoulders.

BECKER

Did you shrug your shoulders again?

JIMMY

Maybe.

BECKER

The human body speaks a language like no other and you reduce it to that? To dribble?! Get up. Die again.

Jimmy drags himself to his feet.

BECKER

Do you feel anything?

Becker pushes Jimmy in the chest.

BECKER

That switched on?

Jimmy shrugs his shoulders.

Becker is clearly trying to restrain himself.

BECKER

Do you love anybody? Have dreams? Because you are dying, every single thing that makes you, you, is going away. Forever. There's more emotion when someone lowers themselves into a hot bath. Do it again Jimmy and I want you to think that this is it, the end. No more. What that means.

Becker signals for Jimmy to drink the water.

Jimmy does so, a smile slowly forms on his face. He then lies down on the stage, the smile remaining as he "dies".

Becker doesn't know what to make of this.

BECKER

Good, um, good Jimmy.

Jimmy continues to lie there.

BECKER

You can get up now.

Nothing.

BECKER

Alright Jimmy.

Again, no movement.

DOUGLAS

Think the little dude's in character man.

BECKER

We need to move things along, would you please get up?

Jimmy stares at Becker blankly.

Becker motions for him to stand.

Jimmy just lies there staring.

PATRICIA

I think he has what I had. Emotional exhaustion.

Douglas bends down to Jimmy. Jimmy looks up at him.

Douglas extends his hand.

DOUGLAS
C'mon little dude.

Jimmy slowly takes it. Douglas helps him up.

BECKER
Okay. Finally. Douglas, drink up.

DOUGLAS
I got some enquiries.
Like what kinda poison is it? Cos if it's
acid, that's a whole other type'a death
than some poison that's got no taste,
know what I mean?

BECKER
It's just regular poison.

DOUGLAS
And what's that? Just, I wanna do this
right y'know.

BECKER
It's not acid, it's just this other type
of poison okay? You realise it's
poisoned, you know you're dying and
therefore can do this exercise.

DOUGLAS
Got'cha teach.

Douglas starts for the glass, stopping.

DOUGLAS
Is it okay if I make like I've just done
a gig?

BECKER
What?

DOUGLAS
Rocked out, played the gig of my life,
need a drink and bang it's poison.

BECKER
Whatever helps you.

Douglas struts over to the glass.

DOUGLAS
(to the crowd)
No, thank you, thank you! ROCK AND ROLL
WILL NEVER DIE.

He takes a drink.

Instantly he begins to stumble.

DOUGLAS
There's something wrong.

He stumbles further.

DOUGLAS
I've been poisoned. Not acid, this
other...kinda poison and...

Douglas falls down. Getting back up.

DOUGLAS
How does this happen...it must have been
some jealous band cos...

Douglas begins to stumble over the chairs.

DOUGLAS
Where are my drums, let me hit the skins
one last-

Douglas "crashes" to the ground.

BECKER
Douglas, get up.

He does so, thrilled with his efforts, with his fingers
he flips the horns to Jimmy.

BECKER
What was that?

DOUGLAS
Biblical shit, a first class cry your
face off death thing.

BECKER
No it wasn't.

DOUGLAS
Beg to differ.

BECKER
I'm the teacher, I'm telling you
something.

DOUGLAS
This might just be one of those 'who's
really the teacher' type moments.

Becker sighs deeply.

BECKER
(under his breath)
If I didn't have to...
(to Douglas)
You're what, in your fifties?

Douglas nods.

BECKER
You're closer to the end than the
beginning now.

DOUGLAS
That's debatable.

BECKER
What is death to you?

DOUGLAS
It's not good.

BECKER
Why not?

DOUGLAS
Just isn't.

BECKER
You're playing Hamlet, Hamlet dies so-

DOUGLAS
-I had some ideas about that.
Alterations, if you will.

BECKER
Drop the facade.

DOUGLAS
I...what you mean?

BECKER
You? This? Do you think I can't see through it?

DOUGLAS
You're high man.

BECKER
Just answer the question, what does it mean to you?

DOUGLAS
Leave it alright.

BECKER
Clearly this is touching a nerve, I'm-

DOUGLAS
-it's not touching shit.

BECKER
You're not prepared to talk about what death means to you? Can't grant us, the team, that?

Douglas looks at the others.

DOUGLAS
Look, when I think about it...it gets tight 'cross here.

Douglas motions to his chest.

DOUGLAS
And I...Movies show it all the time and the news, and they're just, soundbites about death, not what it's really...

Douglas is finding it hard to speak.

DOUGLAS
...fuck this shit.

He gets off the stage heading towards the door.

BECKER
You go out that door, don't come back.

This stops Douglas in his tracks.

BECKER
You're not going to be professional, I don't want you in here.

DOUGLAS
Fuck man, don't do this.

BECKER
Get up on the stage then.

DOUGLAS
Let someone else have a go.

BECKER
No.

DOUGLAS
You're a fucking Hitler.

PATRICIA
Can we just get on with it, we've only
got a few days and-

BECKER
-zip it.
(to Douglas)
You do it or you leave. Simple as that.

Douglas paces back and forth.

JIMMY
(plead)
Just do it.

Everyone surprised, looks at Jimmy.

Douglas stares at Jimmy long and hard.

DOUGLAS
(to Becker)
Know what? I'm going with the fuck you
option.

Douglas thrusts his "horns" into the air, storming off.

BECKER
Well...now where were we? Oh yes. Charlie
would you like to?

Becker gestures to the glasses.

CHARLIE
Can I ask a question?

Becker nods.

CHARLIE
Could it be as if I'm in the army and
someone's poisoned my canteen?

BECKER
That would be fine.

Lights down.

SCENE FOUR. NEXT MORNING.

Charlie enters, he's carrying a box in a shopping bag.

Rhonda arrives. They nod at each other.

They stand there awkwardly.

RHONDA
Nice being early for once.

Charlie laughs.

RHONDA
What?

CHARLIE
Figures, a bus driver saying that.

RHONDA
Today Billy, that's my husband, took
care of the kids so..

CHARLIE
Just be aware kids can turn on you.

Rhonda stares at Charlie bewildered.

CHARLIE
Two daughters. We don't talk much
anymore.

Charlie spots a chair out of place, corrects it.

CHARLIE
They took their mother's side.

RHONDA
You're divorced?

CHARLIE
Separated. I'm a ninety one year old
bachelor.

There's a painful silence.

RHONDA
Must be things you can do now, you
couldn't before.

CHARLIE
I'm an old man.

Rhonda just smiles, wanting this moment over.

CHARLIE
She left me three months ago. Would have
been our sixtieth anniversary next month.

RHONDA
Not many people make it to that one.

He just stares at her.

RHONDA
How about we just sit in silence?

They try it but to no avail.

CHARLIE
I'm just making pleasant conversation.

RHONDA
...wouldn't it be best the less we know
about each other, for the acting?

They sit there in silence.

Then Charlie starts to cry.

Rhonda sits there, pretending not to notice.

Charlie then begins sobbing.

Rhonda mouths to herself "fuck me".

She goes and sits next to him, patting him on the back.

CHARLIE
I'm okay....I'm doing just...fine.

She rubs his back in a soothing way.

CHARLIE
If...she was dead...that'd be better but
this... war has nothing on this.

RHONDA

It's early days that's all. Before you know it, you'll be over her.

CHARLIE

Who leaves their husband at this age? Okay so you made a mistake, at this point you might as well see it through.

He sobs harder.

Patricia walks in.

She sees Charlie.

PATRICIA

That's fantastic. Clearly needs work, but it's a good start Charlie.

Charlie looks up, wiping his eyes.

He holds up the plastic bag.

CHARLIE

I got us a jug.

Charlie gets up, crossing to the kitchen, jug in hand.

PATRICIA

He wasn't acting?

Rhonda shakes her head.

PATRICIA

Blast, thought I finally had some talent to work with.

Rhonda's phone receives a txt.

She looks at it, whatever it says makes her delighted.

PATRICIA

I just wish Mr. Becker would act with me.

RHONDA

Have you seen him in anything?

PATRICIA

He doesn't act anymore. In fact the only reason he does this is because his case worker makes him.

RHONDA

Case worker?

PATRICIA

Mr. Becker's what you call "on the dole".

Rhonda gets another txt. She smiles broadly reading it.

PATRICIA

You know that's quite distracting.

Rhonda looks up, mind in other world.

RHONDA

So you were saying Mr. Becker doesn't act anymore?

PATRICIA

He said he realised the world was a horrible, horrible place and he wasn't sharing his talents with it anymore.

Jimmy enters, dragging his bag along the ground.

He takes a seat.

PATRICIA

(bright and happy)

Hello.

Jimmy stares at her blankly.

RHONDA

You could smile y'know, never killed anyone.

JIMMY

I don't want to be here.

RHONDA

Then why are you?

JIMMY

This is my punishment.

PATRICIA

Your punishment?

JIMMY

After the cat my Mum said I had creative energies I had to get out.

PATRICIA

But that doesn't make any sense. This is a gift.

Jimmy stares dead eyed at her "it's no gift to him".

RHONDA

What kinda mother do you have? If my kids did what you had...

Jimmy settles his gaze on the ground.

PATRICIA

It's sickening. Mr. Becker having to put up with a criminal like you. You're not even serious about the art, the craft.

JIMMY

Isn't it enough I have to see you act?

PATRICIA

What do you mean by that?!

Charlie comes back in, still wiping his eyes.

CHARLIE

I've got the jug going so people can...there's tea and sugar and...

He breaks down crying.

This old man stands there weeping. Everyone sits there painfully.

Patricia gestures to Rhonda "if only" re: Charlie.

Becker comes in enthusiastically.

BECKER

Alright people let's get-

He sees Charlie crying.

BECKER

Charlie, are you okay?

CHARLIE

The jug...

He can't speak any more, he's sobbing too much.

BECKER

God give me strength, I'll bring one tomorrow.

Jimmy takes a lighter out of his pocket, he starts to flick it now and then.

CHARLIE

...do you hurt Mr. Becker?

BECKER

Over jugs? Surprisingly not.

PATRICIA

(to Becker)

So obviously I'm playing Hamlet now.

Becker's not too sure about that.

PATRICIA

Jimmy's nothing more than a criminal. Rhonda's clearly out of her depth and Charlie? He could very well be playing the ghost before the production if you know what I mean.

Rhonda's phone receives another txt. She's instantly on her mobile to see what it says.

BECKER

Patricia, a show comes together very organically and-

PATRICIA

-we don't even have a Hamlet.

BECKER

I'm not troubled.

PATRICIA

You are aware what the play's called?

Becker smiles tightly at her.

Patricia, annoyed, takes it out on Rhonda who's txting away.

PATRICIA

You know that's a really insincere, hollow way to communicate with your family.

RHONDA
It's not my family.

PATRICIA
Oh.

Rhonda looks up at Patricia. There's something to this.

CHARLIE
(to Becker, struggling)
You think, you might want a hot cup?

Patricia then notices Jimmy flicking his lighter.

PATRICIA
Mr. Becker! Mr. Becker! Jimmy has a
lighter.

Becker turns to see Jimmy trying to hide it away.

Becker heads straight over to Jimmy.

BECKER
Give it.

JIMMY
I'm not going to do anything with it.

Becker sticks his hand out for the lighter.

CHARLIE
I bought a jug and hot drinks are a nice
way to start the day ain't they?

BECKER
(to Jimmy)
Planning to move onto humans?

Jimmy's not about to hand it over.

Becker decides to grab Jimmy's bag instead.

JIMMY
NO!

Becker is surprised by the weight of Jimmy's bag.

BECKER
Give me the lighter then.

Jimmy quickly hands over the lighter, grabbing his bag
back as he does so.

CHARLIE
COULD SOMEBODY PLEASE TELL ME THEY WANT A
CUP OF TEA! Or coffee.

Becker turns, seeing the need in Charlie.

BECKER
(tender)
Coffee. Two sugars.

Charlie nods and heads off to the kitchen again.

BECKER
Okay people, on your feet. We're doing a
warm up exercise.

They stand up.

BECKER
Patricia, you know this one, I'm going to
clap my hands, ask a question, which you
answer then clap your hands moving it
along. When we've gone round the person
to the left of me asks the next question
and so on.

Becker bangs his hands together.

BECKER
Beatles or Rolling Stones.

RHONDA
Rolling Stones.

BECKER
You need to clap your hands after.

RHONDA
Oh. Rolling Stones.

Rhonda claps.

PATRICIA
Gees, I don't know that's such a-

BECKER
-answer the question.

PATRICIA
Beatles.

She claps.

JIMMY

Pass.

BECKER

No. You don't pass.

JIMMY

Beatles.

Becker glares at him. Jimmy eventually claps.

BECKER

Okay, how 'bout we start again. Favourite person and why.

RHONDA

David Bowie. Way he keeps changing himself.

Clap.

PATRICIA

My uncle. Says I'm Madonna crossed with Judy Bailey.

Clap.

JIMMY

Don Adams.

This stops the group in their tracks.

BECKER

The actor? Maxwell Smart?

Jimmy just nods.

Then realises he hasn't clapped, does so.

PATRICIA

He's your favourite person?

JIMMY

What? Am I meant to say Lady Gaga?

PATRICIA

(to Becker)

The hell is he talking about? The way she dresses, I said my Uncle, I'm taking this seriously and he's...

RHONDA

Maybe he likes him.

JIMMY
Maybe I'm right here.

PATRICIA
(to Rhonda)
Like you can talk, saying David Bowie,
not your husband or kids.

This shocks Rhonda, she hadn't thought of them.

RHONDA
I didn't...

PATRICIA
Mr. Becker let's just cut the riffraff -
you, me, do the show? The entire play.
Tickets will go crazy on Trade Me.

RHONDA
Do you know why you're always an
understudy?

Patricia stares, wanting to know the answer.

RHONDA
It's so the actors will get off even
their deathbeds to save audiences from
you.

Clap.

PATRICIA
(to Becker)
...I want her out. Fired. Gone.

Patricia then gives three quick claps.

BECKER
Can we just...please. Jimmy would you
have your turn?

JIMMY
Anyone else think this is a bunch of
bullshit?

He claps his hands.

RHONDA
He's got a good point.

Clap.

PATRICIA

See? You should just fire them.

Patricia then claps.

Charlie enters, carrying Becker's coffee.

The sight of this old man, carrying the coffee stops everyone in their tracks.

Becker heads over to collect it from him.

BECKER

Thank you.

Charlie smiles.

Becker takes a drink, it's clearly the worst coffee ever made. Charlie stares at Becker, puppy eyed.

CHARLIE

Do you like it? I would make Barbara it every day.

BECKER

It's quite...exotic.

The group move over to the chairs, about to sit down.

BECKER

What are you doing? Did I say you could sit down? That was the worst - [exercise]

Becker puts his coffee down.

CHARLIE

Are you not going to finish it?

BECKER

It's so good I'm wanting to save it. For later.

CHARLIE

You're so like Barbara, she'd do the same thing.

BECKER

Let's not project your wife on to me okay?

Becker brings his attention to the others.

BECKER

We are a team, you're all nervous about the show, want to be rehearsing it? Well we're not doing that until we work together. Everybody seen Whose Line Is It Anyway?

They have.

PATRICIA

It's not really acting though is it? There's a reason it's called theatre sports and not theatre theatre.

Becker smiles mindlessly at her.

BECKER

Everybody on stage. Charlie you in the middle, everybody else there.

Becker gestures to the right of the stage.

They get up there and assemble in their positions.

BECKER

Charlie you are hosting a party.

CHARLIE

Why?

BECKER

Please. Just bear with me. And your guests are going to have traits they will be acting out, and you will have to guess what they are.

Becker writes on three pieces of paper, he hands one to Patricia. She's disappointed.

PATRICIA

I was thinking something with more - like maybe someone with cerebral palsy who's cured cancer.

Becker ignores Patricia, handing one to Rhonda.

He then comes to Jimmy.

BECKER

You should be happy with this.

Jimmy reads it and looks at Becker somewhat troubled.

BECKER
Unless there's a problem?

There's a face off between the two before Jimmy joins the ladies.

BECKER
Okay, let's get this party started.

Charlie just stands there.

BECKER
It's a party, you're rushing around, getting things ready.

CHARLIE
No. Everything is ready because I planned ahead.

BECKER
Course you did. DING-DONG.

They all just stare at him.

BECKER
That's the door bell.

Patricia goes to go on stage. Becker stops her.

BECKER
Rhonda, you go first.

Rhonda gloats to a disappointed Patricia. Rhonda enters the "party".

CHARLIE
Hello. Welcome to my party.

RHONDA
I wouldn't be happy if I was you.

Rhonda then acts out measuring things.

RHONDA
Not sure you're up to code.

Rhonda, now no idea what to do, just stands there. Silence follows.

Charlie stands there, out of his depth.

BECKER
Offer her dip, something.

CHARLIE
Would you like a dip?

Patricia barges on stage.

PATRICIA
Dip is the leading cause of cold sores.

Patricia stands there, happy with her comment.

Charlie's realised something. Delighted he turns to Becker.

CHARLIE
She didn't use the doorbell. Is she a burglar?

Becker shakes her head.

RHONDA
No, she just has to break into other people's scenes.

PATRICIA
Least when I do, I have something to offer.

RHONDA
People like you just make-

Rhonda pretends to gag.

PATRICIA
People like you, tourists, just-

Patricia now pretends to gag obviously more over the top.

RHONDA
Tourists?

PATRICIA
You have no love of the stage, the craft, why are you even here?

RHONDA
I just need some time away from-

PATRICIA
-from what?

RHONDA

Because I can't stand my fucking kids and
my husband okay?

Rhonda realises what she has just said. She's stunned by
it. Everyone is silent.

BECKER

How about we just move on huh? I think
it's best if we-

JIMMY

Ding dong.

This shocks everybody. Charlie looks to Becker for
instruction. Becker motions for Charlie to let Jimmy in.

CHARLIE

Hello, thanks for coming-

Jimmy walks right in, turns to inspect the "door"

Jimmy then launches into the most amazing impersonation
of Maxwell Smart.

JIMMY

Just the one lock? Does the Chief know?

CHARLIE

What?

JIMMY

Every agent's door. Four lock minimum. I
have seven. Here's the keys to prove it.

Jimmy fails to produce them, searching his pockets.

JIMMY

Would you believe I had them a minute
ago.

RHONDA

(realising who Jimmy is)
That's bloody good.

Becker is clearly impressed.

CHARLIE

I don't really need to worry about locks,
I was in the army and -

JIMMY
(to Rhonda)
Y'know Ninety Nine I've got my concerns.

BECKER
(to Charlie)
Ready to start guessing?

RHONDA
I can tell you what Patricia is, she's
fucking ridiculous.

PATRICIA
You're a party goer, you're not entitled
to guess.

CHARLIE
Are they playing two people who don't get
along?

Becker shakes his head.

Jimmy takes his shoe off, putting it to his ear.

JIMMY
Chief I think we have a problem. This
party has chaos written all over it.

CHARLIE
He's mad?

JIMMY
Missed it by that much.

BECKER
He's Maxwell Smart.

CHARLIE
Hey, that's rather good.

BECKER
Surprisingly so.

RHONDA
I loved it.

Jimmy just gives a half smile, he's embarrassed by all
this.

PATRICIA
That's fine and all but we have a
problem.

(MORE)

It's either the bus driver or me. And might I remind you, she has enough on her plate with "family issues".

RHONDA

You have delusion issues. My family however doesn't have any issues.

PATRICIA

Um, the you can't "fucking stand them" issue?

RHONDA

You little bitch.

The two glare at each other when suddenly the sound of drumming can be heard.

The noise builds in volume. Douglas enters wearing a drumset with cymbals attached.

He's banging out "we will rock you".

Stopping, he grins at Becker.

DOUGLAS

I was thinking, it doesn't have to be a big arse drum set, this'll do.

BECKER

For what?

DOUGLAS

For Hamlet. For me playing Hamlet.

BECKER

...what?

DOUGLAS

I went and put myself in your mindset - of course he don't want big drums, taking up all the space, but these? Perfect.

BECKER

First off, there's no drums in Hamlet.

DOUGLAS

See again - doing the whole mindset thing - it's like, Hamlet is about so much. Drums? It's natural, totally a part o'the thing.

BECKER

The second thing. You quit.

DOUGLAS

Misunderstandings happen man, I say one thing, you hear another. We went outside, looked at the clouds? We'd see totally different things and yet -

BECKER

I think you said you'd "go with the fuck me option".

DOUGLAS

The whole cloud thing man, think about it.

BECKER

You called me Hitler.

DOUGLAS

Guy achieved a lot.

BECKER

Get out. There's serious people here, you're taking up their time.

DOUGLAS

I'm serious. Serious fucking as.

BECKER

Bye Douglas.

DOUGLAS

Please.

BECKER

No. Get out.

Douglas is struggling here, caught between wanting to leave and sticking it out.

Becker sees Douglas hasn't moved.

BECKER

Thirdly. You didn't even pay to do this. You took someone else's spot.

DOUGLAS

This is important to me.

BECKER

I doubt it.

DOUGLAS

It was going to be my son who did this
okay.

BECKER

And what? He couldn't be bothered so Dad
had to replace him?

DOUGLAS

He's dead.

This hits the room, there's a long moment of silence.

BECKER

...I'm sorry to hear that. But this, this
isn't the place for you to be. We're
doing a show which is very demanding and-

DOUGLAS

-please.

Douglas begins to take the drums off.

DOUGLAS

They pinch a little.

Douglas walks over to Becker.

DOUGLAS

Do you think this is easy for me to be
here?

BECKER

That's another reason why you shouldn't
be here. This is art, not therapy.

Douglas sees this is going nowhere with Becker. He turns
to the others.

DOUGLAS

Charlie man, you're the eldest here, some
cultures what you say goes, say
something, do something for me. Please.

Nothing. Douglas is desperate. He's looking at the others
for any show of support. None is forthcoming.

Jimmy gets up and looks like he's leaving.

DOUGLAS

Come on little dude, fuck, don't just-

Jimmy walks away.

Douglas comes back to Becker more desperate than ever.

DOUGLAS
You got to, please. I have to do this.

BECKER
I'm sorry. No.

Suddenly there is the sound of drumming.

Jimmy is hitting the drums in support of Douglas.

BECKER
It's a nice gesture Jimmy but please stop
it's not going to change anything.

Jimmy stops.

Then he resumes, harder and faster.

DOUGLAS
You hear that? That's the sound of the
people man.

BECKER
No. That's a mixed up kid.

PATRICIA
Douglas. I'm sorry. Certain things aren't
meant for certain people. You're holding
us up, we have a lot to do. I'm carrying
this thing, so I'd appreciate it if you
could just leave.

Rhonda goes and begins hitting a drum in support.

DOUGLAS
(to Becker)
Come on.

Becker just shakes his head.

Douglas runs over to Charlie.

DOUGLAS
Isn't there anything you ever wanted to
do and people stopped you? You had
something important taken from you, and
people wouldn't let you get that piece
you needed? What's that like to live
with? You want to put someone else
through that?

Charlie stands.

PATRICIA

Oh Charlie please don't.

DOUGLAS

Hit the drums Charlie, hit the drums. Not just for me, but for yourself, for that piece that they wouldn't let you get back.

This has won him over, Charlie heads over, starts hitting the cymbal.

DOUGLAS

Right on old man. Right on.

Douglas walks over to Becker victorious.

BECKER

I don't know what you think you have proven.

DOUGLAS

It's three to two. Four if you count me.

BECKER

This isn't a democracy. I'm the teacher.

Becker looks at the drummers, who stare back.

BECKER

And Patricia has paid her money and I'm sorry, she doesn't want you here.

Douglas turns to Patricia.

DOUGLAS

Look into your heart. Come on.

Nope, nothing happening there.

BECKER

You can stop your drumming folks.

DOUGLAS

(to Patricia)

Look at Charlie, he can't keep this up, he's gonna keel over any second.

PATRICIA

That's God's will.

BECKER

This is over. Patricia's not going to hit the drum, we are not going to have some special magic moment.

Patricia sits up at this.

BECKER

Give it up people.

Becker notices Patricia walking over to the drums.

BECKER

What are you-

Patricia begins to hit the remaining drum. The drumming builds to a crescendo.

Douglas is thrilled.

DOUGLAS

Looks like you got yourself a hard rocking Hamlet.

Becker smiles tightly.

End of ACT ONE

ACT TWO.

SCENE FIVE. OUTSIDE.

Everyone bar Jimmy is there, they are hanging around the bbq drinking beers. Charlie is cooking, everybody else is listening to -

DOUGLAS

So I'm sitting, banging away, the band staring in awe, my arms are like... lightning. Then I see my hands, my arms, are these two swordfish, which smile at me, they start telling me the meaning of life, everything, but then they say, cos they've told me, they gotta kill me and I'm screaming, I mean my swordfish hands are gonna kill me. And Pete, he was the bassist, he goes "why you screaming?" And it's like my mind came back to my body, the band was staring at me cos they wanted me to count 'em in. Fucking freaky, they blamed the drugs but I'm not convinced.

BECKER

...so you've been playing for a while then?

DOUGLAS

Hell man, I was whaling away in the uterus.

BECKER

Your Mother must have enjoyed that.

DOUGLAS

Look, you wanna...

Douglas gestures they should go into the hall to talk.

Becker agrees. They leave the others.

PATRICIA

It was so nice of Mr. Becker to go and buy everything huh? He doesn't have much money, what with the dole and all.

RHONDA

Why are you talking to me like I'm your friend?

PATRICIA

Oh, what happens on stage, stays on stage. I'm a professional. So who is it that's been txting you?

Rhonda doesn't want to answer.

PATRICIA

It's clearly someone special.

RHONDA

It's just someone from work.

PATRICIA

Another bus driver?

RHONDA

I don't want to...

Patricia stares at Rhonda.

PATRICIA

I think you do.

Rhonda's not sold on it.

PATRICIA

Is he cute?

RHONDA

I don't go for cute...but yes, he is.

Patricia claps her hands together.

PATRICIA

And how did you two meet?

RHONDA

It wasn't anything special.

PATRICIA

I'll be the judge of that.

RHONDA

He was in the staff room, I came in, was about to sit down and he said "I wouldn't do that if I was you".

PATRICIA

Why?

RHONDA

Cos there was chewing gum on the chair. He could have just not said anything, I probably wouldn't have. And he smiled at me.

PATRICIA

I suppose it isn't that special is it.

RHONDA

We talked a little but it wasn't anything, turns out he's on my route so we drive past each other nearly every half hour and it's...first we waved, then we started to do a little toot, we're not meant to, but we do. And last week, we were stuck in traffic, right next to each other, we both had our windows down and he touched my arm.

PATRICIA

Held it?

RHONDA

Just touched it, but the way he did it, I just, felt bumps.

PATRICIA

Wow.

RHONDA

All I do now is look to see if his bus is coming towards mine.

Charlie who hasn't heard a word steps away from the bbq.

CHARLIE

My wife and I, we had barbecues all the time. I've still got the barbecue, guess not many wives take those. I was standing here cooking and...why do you think she left me?

This stops Rhonda and Patricia in their tracks.

PATRICIA
She probably just stopped loving you.
That's all.

Charlie's stunned by this, sits down.

PATRICIA
I wouldn't worry, it would have been a
long time ago. She just would have been
seeing if she could stick it out with
you, but she couldn't.

Charlie thinks on this for a moment.

CHARLIE
It's our sixtieth anniversary next month.

PATRICIA
(to Charlie)
Oh that's just a number.
(to Rhonda)
What are you and your husband up to?

RHONDA
...fourteenth.

PATRICIA
(to Charlie)
See and that sounds like that'll be their
last one.

Our focus is drawn to the hall where Douglas and Becker
are talking.

DOUGLAS
I had to go to his flat, clear out his
room. I didn't even know where his flat
was, what's that say?

BECKER
Kids move around a lot so I wouldn't-

DOUGLAS
-it was his first flat. In his room, stuck to
his mirror was this piece of paper, receipt
for this. It was important to him... I gotta
do it for him. I'm gonna be good alright, toe
the line. Got my word.

Becker nods his gratitude.

DOUGLAS
So what, you do this Shakespeare stuff
all round the country?

BECKER
No only this one and I wouldn't if I
didn't have to.

DOUGLAS
Why you got to?

BECKER
Certain pressures is all. Because I
refused to cross particular lines,
aspects of my career didn't materialize.

DOUGLAS
Like what? An Oscar?

BECKER
Look it was all choice and don't think it
wasn't hard. I came this close to selling
out, doing Shortland Street.

DOUGLAS
Fuck man that show's alright.

BECKER
I almost joined that meat market before I
had a change of heart. I was in line to
play, portray the love interest of one of
the doctors. Four call backs. Then they
decided to make her a lesbian.

DOUGLAS
Oh.

BECKER
With the flick of a pen, the character's
name was changed from Michael to Michelle
and that was that.

They stand there in silence.

DOUGLAS
It um, doesn't sound like you decided
against selling out, sounds more like
they didn't want you.

Becker stares at Douglas for a long moment.

BECKER

...I should see how Charlie is getting on.

Becker heads "outside". Douglas goes and sits on the stage.

Our attention is drawn to Patricia and Rhonda. Patricia sees Becker, it's painfully obvious to Rhonda that Patricia would rather talk to him. Rhonda encourage her to go do so.

Patricia heads over to Becker.

PATRICIA

Quite the "shakespearians" this year.

Becker just smiles slightly.

PATRICIA

They are lucky to have you. We all are ...you have such power. Poise. You should be Sir Becker.

He laughs a little.

BECKER

I'm a long way from that.

There's a sadness there. Patricia nods slightly.

PATRICIA

Don't worry about the library chasing you up anymore about that missing book.

Becker looks at her.

PATRICIA

My work was going to call in the debt collectors. Libraries have to be incredibly protective. People draw penises in our books.

BECKER

It's fifty four dollars.

Patricia places her hand on his arm.

PATRICIA

And you don't have to worry. I deleted the information. The library will never remember who lost "Detroit: The Rise and Fall of a Drug Dealer".

Becker's grateful.

PATRICIA

It's not right you having to worry about something like that. Your big break can't be that far away.

She smiles sweetly at him. Becker looks a little rocked.

We shift our attention to Douglas, who's standing on the stage.

DOUGLAS

To be or not to be that is the question.

Douglas is enjoying himself.

DOUGLAS

(putting on Darth Vader's voice)

I am your father Luke and I owe your mother shit loads in child support.

Douglas laughs to himself then he hears something from behind the curtain. Pulling it back, he discovers Jimmy.

DOUGLAS

Shit, Jimmy, wondered where you were. Actually I just flat out forgot about you but...the hell you doing?

Jimmy caught off guard gestures to the roof.

JIMMY

I was looking at-

He suddenly stops himself.

JIMMY

I was just thinking.

DOUGLAS

Heavy thoughts huh? Jenny Craig in nature?

JIMMY

...guess.

DOUGLAS

Lay it on me.

Douglas nods his encouragement.

JIMMY
Global warming.

DOUGLAS
Don't worry about that, it's the polar bears that are gonna be fucked. We'll be sweet.

JIMMY
See, I don't mind it.

DOUGLAS
Dead polar bears?

JIMMY
Global warming.

DOUGLAS
Cos it'll get warmer? Beaches will be closer?

JIMMY
Just, doesn't it seem right? That everything should stop. The world. Everything.

Douglas is unsure how to respond.

JIMMY
Does it matter to you?

DOUGLAS
The end of shit?

Jimmy nods.

DOUGLAS
Course it matters.

JIMMY
It doesn't to me.

DOUGLAS
You don't mean that.

JIMMY
I do.

DOUGLAS
Fuck kinda attitude is that?

JIMMY
I don't know, I'm just saying.

DOUGLAS
Shit, you sound just like...

Douglas doesn't like where this conversation is taking him.

DOUGLAS
Don't you wanna talk to me about chicks and shit? I'm in a band, the stuff I can tell ya? Downright illegal in nature.

JIMMY
...what happened to your kid?

DOUGLAS
An accident.

Jimmy nods his head nervously.

DOUGLAS
Crashed off a bridge alright? Shit man, did I ask to hear 'bout global warming and starving polar bears? Nah man, I didn't.

JIMMY
I'm sorry, I just wanted...

DOUGLAS
Well I told'cha, it was an accident, car went off a bridge.

JIMMY
...that's horrible.

DOUGLAS
Yeah. Yeah it is.

JIMMY
...I heard you and Mr. Becker.

DOUGLAS
You did?

Jimmy nods.

DOUGLAS
...he was flatting and it's...I kept paying the rent even with...I just didn't want to go there, clear it out, but I had to cos I couldn't keep paying it and Jill, that's his mum- bands, marriages, they don't work- she just couldn't do it.

I went there to his flat and it's, I was tidying the room up, shit was everywhere and the kids he was living with, they were interviewing people for the room that day. Bad timing, I guess. And people are coming in, looking at this room, my...kid's room, talking about it "it's a decent size, good closet" and I wanted to kill them. I never wanted to hurt anybody so bad in my whole life.

Jimmy and Douglas sit there in silence a long moment.

DOUGLAS

His room, things all...like he was gonna walk right back into it. Stuff everywhere.

SCENE SIX. HALL.

Charlie is on stage, a shovel in one hand, the script in the other.

CHARLIE

Here lies the water - good. Here stands the man - good. If the man go to this water and drowns himself, it is, will he, nill he?

BECKER

Killed himself.

CHARLIE

Oh right...he goes; mark you that. But if the water comes to him and drown him, he drowns not himself.

Charlie looks up from his script.

CHARLIE

This is like the time with Robbie. Robbie blew himself up with a grenade. There was a whole debate that went round the base, whether he'd done himself in. Anyhow this supply corporal said he heard Robbie say "fuck me" right before it went off so we realised it couldn't have been suicide.

DOUGLAS

Fuckers just wanna jump to conclusions.

BECKER

Douglas please.

CHARLIE
Why am I the grave digger? Is this
typecasting?

BECKER
You've never acted before, how can I
typecast you?

CHARLIE
I'm not trying to be difficult. It's just
important I do something different to me.

BECKER
...let's put you in the chair huh?

Charlie's confused.

BECKER
Come gravedigger, take a seat down here.

Charlie exits the stage and is directed to a chair by
Becker.

BECKER
Now, we call this the hot seat. When
you're in that chair, we ask you
questions and you answer them.

Charlie nods.

BECKER
What is it like to dig a grave?

CHARLIE
It's...things happen, unexpected things,
guns go off and you...

Charlie looks up to see the puzzled faces.

CHARLIE
(horrified)
You meant in character didn't you?

BECKER
Yes.

CHARLIE
Oh.

BECKER
... are you sad to be digging a grave for
Ophelia?

CHARLIE

I don't like it when things end...must be hard for people, her family to understand.

BECKER

So she's different to who you normally dig a grave for?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I'd say you go into that place where she lived and it's different now. An emptiness. Hollow.

RHONDA

What did you mean before - "unexpected things and guns"...?

BECKER

This is a character exercise not a-

RHONDA

-you don't wanna know?

Becker clearly does but is about to move things along when -

CHARLIE

-it's the reason I've given my life to the army. Everything. I owed them.

The room goes silent.

CHARLIE

...can I get off this chair?

Becker nods of course, but Charlie stays on it.

CHARLIE

We were in the desert, I was the scout and somehow I had become far ahead of the others, I'm not sure how it happened, whether it was due to dehydration or...but suddenly I was out there alone and... I was lost and scared, truly was. Then I spotted some water, beside it, this camel, I remember running to it, sure it must be a mirage. But it wasn't. How I wish it had been.

DOUGLAS

What happened?

CHARLIE

I...I went down to the water and it was there, I drank and drank. The camel just stood there. I was so happy I went to pat it. It suddenly spat at me, I was so shocked and how I fell, my gun went off. Hitting the camel, and it just folded in like a house of cards...I went and held this poor creature, for an hour, maybe more, it didn't want to die, its eyes kept closing but it'd force them open again and again but they started closing for longer and longer, and there I was with all this sand around me and I...sobbed. The rest of my unit turned up, they wanted to know what had happened, I said, some Nazis had been here and I saw them shoot this camel, I didn't know how to say I had done it and... they were furious, they were going to get these Nazi scumbags for this, they asked me which way they had gone, I didn't know what...so I pointed over my back somewhere. Went to join them but my captain said no, stay, give the animal a proper burial. So there I am burying this camel in the desert that I killed, while my friends go off hunting the imaginary Nazis who I said did it, and as I'm trying to bury this poor creature this brutal storm comes in. I have to use the camel to shield me. After it passes the entire desert looks different. I worry about my mates. Days later I'm found by the rest of the army coming through, the men from my unit? All ten of 'em? Gone, never seen again and I... I have a lot to make up for.

There's silence as the room absorbs his story.

CHARLIE

I've never told that before, to anyone. I even ended up having to eat some of that camel.

BECKER

You can get out of the chair if you'd like Charlie.

CHARLIE

I think I should.

Charlie stands, walking over to his chair. Total silence follows.

DOUGLAS

...what does camel taste like?

CHARLIE

Dirty. But that's perhaps unfair as there was a considerable amount of sand in my teeth.

RHONDA

And none of them, was ever seen again?

Charlie just sits there silent.

PATRICIA

How very Shakespearian.

BECKER

How about you go in the seat Rhonda? Or should I say Gertrude?

Rhonda goes and takes the "seat".

BECKER

What's it like being the Queen of Denmark?

RHONDA

It's alright.

BECKER

Why did you get married again so quickly?

RHONDA

Figured why not.

BECKER

This helps if you expand on your answers. So why do you think?

RHONDA

Maybe I thought I'd made a mistake with the first one.

PATRICIA

In character Rhonda.

RHONDA

I am.

PATRICIA

Oh. Sorry.

RHONDA

Wouldn't make much of a play if she didn't, would it?

BECKER

What's your relationship like with your son?

RHONDA

Hamlet? He's a pain in the arse.

DOUGLAS

Thanks a lot.

RHONDA

You are.

BECKER

Why is he?

RHONDA

Respect a woman's decision. I moved on, get over it.

DOUGLAS

But he killed my Dad.

RHONDA

Shit back then, there wasn't any internet dating, you couldn't be too picky. And Hamlet? Hamlet is a moany little kid.

DOUGLAS

My dude is crafty, he's not moany.

RHONDA

He's like the first emo kid ever.

DOUGLAS

Take that back. Hamlet is not emo. I'm not playing an emo. No way.

RHONDA

Shit I should know, one of my kids is. God they're so... Try living my life, then you can be bloody emo.

BECKER

Gertrude's life?

RHONDA

No I was talking about...screw this.

Rhonda gets up and returns to her original seat.

PATRICIA

Why don't you like your life?

RHONDA

I'm not on the chair anymore.

PATRICIA

The chair is just a state of mind.

DOUGLAS

(to Becker)

Hey, I can't play no emo.

PATRICIA

(to Rhonda)

Are you projecting your kids onto Hamlet?

Rhonda pulls a face.

DOUGLAS

(to Becker)

I got my reputation to consider.

CHARLIE

Why would he be playing an emu?

RHONDA

Why don't you get on the hot seat
Patricia.

CHARLIE

Why is he some emu and I'm a grave
digger?

PATRICIA

(to Rhonda)

Remember, the hot seat's just a state of
mind.

JIMMY

E-mo.

Jimmy pulls out a new lighter, begins to flick it.

DOUGLAS

(to Becker)

If the guys saw me playing an emo ...
you heard the term armageddon?

RHONDA
(to Patricia)
Okay then, I've got some questions for you.

CHARLIE
What is a e-mo?

RHONDA
(to Patricia)
When you look up 'deluded' in the dictionary is there a picture of you?

Becker notices Jimmy flicking the lighter.

DOUGLAS
(to Becker)
It's like asking Jesus to play the Godfather.

CHARLIE
Could somebody please tell me!

Jimmy and Becker make eye contact.

PATRICIA
(to Rhonda)
I don't have pictures in my dictionary. I have the adult edition thank you very much.

Becker snatches the lighter from Jimmy's hand and then BANG he kicks over the Hot Seat!

BECKER
Can you all just shut up! Shut up! Shut up! We're supposed to open tomorrow and you know what I envision, what image I see when I think of our production? A train full of orphans and nuns that's crashed into a mountain. Twisted mangled nuns and orphans is what I think of.

Becker lets this sit a moment.

BECKER
Go home.

They all look at him.

BECKER
Go home! This isn't working.

PATRICIA
...that would be your fault then
wouldn't it?

Becker glares at Patricia.

PATRICIA
You're in charge and if this isn't
working, who else can be responsible?

DOUGLAS
She's got a point man.

Becker shoots daggers at Douglas before directing himself
to Patricia.

BECKER
I have tried. Really tried. I never want
to do these things but I do them because
I have to and I try to make things work.
Because while I hate this, I care, I do,
it actually matters, so for you to sit
there and say that. If I had money? I'd
hire a hitman to shoot me dead right now.
Actually why me? Why not you?

PATRICIA
Is this about you being jealous about my
talents again?

BECKER
Excuse me?

PATRICIA
It's human Mr. Becker but I expected more
from you.

BECKER
Do you know what I do when you're on
stage "acting"? I picture a penguin in
my head. And I picture their head, their
little penguin head being crushed in a
vice. And their screams? Their screams
are relaxing compared to what you're
doing up there.

PATRICIA
You are upsetting me.

BECKER
Oh no, can't have that. The truth? No,
let's not have that.

PATRICIA

Why are you doing this?

BECKER

There must be splinters in your mouth
from chewing the scenery.

PATRICIA

We don't have any scenery.

BECKER

I know. Because it refused to work with
you.

Patricia's had enough. She gets up and leaves. Crossing
to outside.

The group sits there quiet a long moment.

RHONDA

You know something? You must be a real
jerk cos you've got me feeling sorry for
her.

Becker takes a deep exasperated breath.

BECKER

How about me? You're killing me! Killing
me!

DOUGLAS

That's not exactly positive man.

BECKER

Positive? I'm positive about this. You're
not a teenager "man". You are what we in
the "industry" call a joke. A horrible
washed up, clinging to what isn't there
anymore i.e. your youth, joke.

RHONDA

You need to watch how you're speaking to
us.

BECKER

You ever think your husband and kids
might be the ones grateful for the space?
I've known you four days and I'd be
begging for it.

Charlie goes to speak but Becker's instantly on to him.

BECKER

And you? Your coffee, it was like a hate
crime in my mouth, disgusting and cruel.
If you gave it to that camel? It'd be
grateful to be shot.

Becker sees Jimmy.

BECKER

Jimmy, dear, wonderful, burnt cat got
your tongue Jimmy. Ooooh, let's be
morose.

Becker hangs his head down impersonating Jimmy. Becker
grabs the hot seat, dragging it back and forth along the
ground before throwing into the wall with force.

Becker then sits down. He's joyful almost, the weight of
the world has been lifted off his shoulders. He's free
now.

They all sit there in silence a long moment.

DOUGLAS

...so we gonna get back into it?

BECKER

What?

DOUGLAS

Doing the lines and shit. For the show.

BECKER

There's no show. It's gone. Ashes to
ashes.

DOUGLAS

Can't do that, this was important to my
kid...and people said that...

Douglas finds it hard to continue.

RHONDA

(tender)

What?

DOUGLAS

He crashed off a bridge, there were no
brake marks so they said he must've...no
way that's true and he was gonna do this,
so there's no way. This is important. So
this show? It's happening.

BECKER

No. It's not.

DOUGLAS

That's just your opinion.

BECKER

No Douglas, it's actual solid fact.

CHARLIE

(re: show)

Are you sure? I was hoping to - My wife was going to be here, it might have...

Becker shakes his head.

BECKER

It's over.

RHONDA

...that's a shame.

Becker looks at Rhonda.

RHONDA

Because I understand Work and Income have a hard time understanding people who turn down paid employment.

This has Becker's full attention.

RHONDA

Obviously we would be getting a full refund.

BECKER

But I've paid for the hall.

RHONDA

The hall's honoured its agreement.

BECKER

How do you even know about my situation?

RHONDA

Patricia told me.

Becker pulls a face.

RHONDA

No worries, I'm sure WINZ enjoys supporting an actor.
(to Douglas)

RHONDA

I had a friend who pissed them off. Ended up having to clean out crematoriums.

BECKER

I don't care.

Becker gets up and gets ready to leave.

RHONDA

Said he didn't mind it. 'Cept the ash, even with goggles little pieces stuck to his eyes.

DOUGLAS

Dude from the band got made to work with broken septic tanks.

RHONDA

My friend said even now when he sneezes, no idea what's coming out. Or who.

Becker stops, he's heard enough.

BECKER

...look Jimmy doesn't want to do it.

All eyes are on Jimmy.

DOUGLAS

I'll buy you a new cat.

JIMMY

The cat didn't actually die, it just got its fur singed.

DOUGLAS

Jimmy?

Jimmy shrugs his shoulders.

DOUGLAS

A shrug's as good as a yes.

Becker's on the back foot but still isn't convinced.

BECKER

...Patricia won't want to do it anymore.

DOUGLAS

Yeah cos you broke her fucking heart.

BECKER

I wouldn't go that far.

RHONDA
She thinks the world of you.

BECKER
Why?

RHONDA
I have no idea.

Becker actually feels bad.

RHONDA
You talked her out of here, you talk her
back in here.

Becker considers this, then heads off to talk to
Patricia.

DOUGLAS
Right on!

Douglas, Charlie and Rhonda celebrate.

Becker finds Patricia sitting outside.

BECKER
(fake happy)
Patricia!

She is crying.

Becker feels dreadful.

BECKER
Patricia, there's clearly been some
misunderstanding.

Patricia looks at him.

BECKER
It was an exercise. Perhaps that got a
little unclear when I mentioned the
penguins screaming.

Patricia's not saying anything.

BECKER
And what type of show would it be without
you? It'd be lacking...magic...chemistry.

Patricia stands up.

PATRICIA

I should go.

She begins moving towards the exit. This cuts through to Becker, she's going, really going.

BECKER

...wait. Please. Patricia.

She stops. To Becker's surprise he finds-

BECKER

I don't - I can't actually believe I'm saying this but...if I have to do this, I don't want to do it without you. I really don't. You've been the one constant in my life for...I don't even know how long. Other people have come and gone but you...

She turns to look at him.

BECKER

...what can I do?

Patricia looks at him long and hard.

PATRICIA

I feel sorry for you.

BECKER

You do?

Patricia nods.

PATRICIA

That your judgement is impaired. That you don't know talent. That because you haven't made it, you have a sickening need to destroy true stars.

BECKER

I...ok.

PATRICIA

I think you'd really feel better if you admitted those things.

BECKER

I...those things that you just said.

PATRICIA

Which were?

BECKER

I...my judgement is impaired. I don't know talent. I have a sickening need to destroy true stars.

Rhonda and Charlie, curious about how it's going, cross over to outside.

PATRICIA

And that I'm a rose of the theatre, and you have been a jealous gardener.

BECKER

I...have been a gardener.

PATRICIA

A jealous gardener.

BECKER

...a jealous gardener.

PATRICIA

Good, now that's sorted we need to think about scenery for the show, you mentioned it and-

BECKER

-there's no money for that.

PATRICIA

Well see I feel so insecure about my acting after everything you said-

BECKER

-but I apologised.

PATRICIA

And I feel insecure nonetheless. I really need an environment up there to help me now. And I'm sick of the cheap looking productions we put on.

Becker's still not sold on it.

PATRICIA

(to Rhonda)

-I'm not sure if I feel I can do this.

Rhonda and Charlie glare at Becker.

BECKER

Okay, okay. There'll be a set.

PATRICIA
Probably need to start rounding up things
now huh?

Becker nods, defeated.

CHARLIE
I'll help.

Becker is about to leave but stops.

BECKER
(to Patricia)
Have you been following me?

PATRICIA
I may have on a time or two, gone in the
exact same direction as you.

Becker shakes his head.

Becker and Charlie cross over to the hall.

CHARLIE
(to the guys)
We're off to get the set!

Douglas flips Charlie the horns.

Charlie and Becker leave through the exit.

Our attention remains on Jimmy and Douglas.

JIMMY
...does it matter?

Douglas looks over at Jimmy.

JIMMY
How your kid...if the accident was...?

DOUGLAS
Course it matters. Cos of one tiny thing,
no brake marks, and there's all kinda
reasons why they might not be there, they
say it was deliberate. Deliberate, they
even know what that word means.

JIMMY
But even if he did-

DOUGLAS

-shut up, you're just a dumb little kid,
don't know the fuck you're talking about.

Our focus shifts to Rhonda and Patricia.

RHONDA

Nice work with Becker.

PATRICIA

He had it coming. He's right though.

Rhonda's confused.

PATRICIA

There are aspects I need to work on.

Rhonda's relieved to hear this. Patricia sees this.

PATRICIA

I'm easily the best here though. Is your
friend coming tomorrow?

RHONDA

I hadn't...

PATRICIA

Be awkward wouldn't it? Your husband and
kids being here as well.

RHONDA

I doubt they even know. Mentioned it
but...

PATRICIA

So just the sexy bus driver then huh?
What will happen with your kids?

RHONDA

What?

PATRICIA

If you buy a lifetripper to be on this
man's bus?

Patricia laughs to herself.

RHONDA

I...I love them but, I'm just so tired.

PATRICIA

Go to bed earlier.

RHONDA

Not like that.

PATRICIA

Sleep in?

RHONDA

You don't understand.

PATRICIA

Could be a vitamin deficiency.

RHONDA

My life hasn't been how I wanted it since...I don't even know when. I feel like I've made one mistake after another and now it's, all I've got is the mistake.

Rhonda's clearly unhappy, Patricia sees this.

PATRICIA

This is all I have to look forward to. Every year. This week. And it's nearly over again.

Patricia's now a little sad too. Realising this she tries to boost the pair.

PATRICIA

Look, tomorrow? That's going to be great, fun, you'll enjoy it. All those eyes.

RHONDA

What?

PATRICIA

Every year, the place is packed out.

RHONDA

What? Why?!

PATRICIA

I'm a librarian, I wipe people's fines if they come. Always a big turn out.

Rhonda is alarmed.

PATRICIA

You're going to love it. All those people, watching you. I can't wait!

Patricia crosses to the hall leaving behind a very anxious Rhonda.

SCENE SEVEN. NEW DAY.

The lights fade up on Charlie, he's been there overnight, putting together the set.

With the last couple of pieces he puts out, it dawns on us that it's basically an army outpost.

Patricia enters, seeing the set.

PATRICIA
What? What is that?

Charlie looks over from his work.

CHARLIE
Doesn't it look marvelous?

PATRICIA
Um, no, no it doesn't. Where was Becker?
He was sorting the set.

CHARLIE
Do you understand the trouble I've gone
to so-

PATRICIA
-so we can have Afghanistan?
BECKER! BECKER!

CHARLIE
He's not here, he said he wasn't feeling
too "bothered" so I could do it.

PATRICIA
Take it down. Take it down now.

CHARLIE
...no.

PATRICIA
I'm not dying on that, people will think
I'm storming Normandy rather than
drowning myself.

Rhonda enters the hall, she is not feeling too well.

She walks over and takes a seat oblivious to the set.

Patricia crosses to her.

PATRICIA

Do you see this?

Rhonda puts her hand over her mouth as if she's going to be sick.

CHARLIE

I was thinking with the psychology of the play that-

PATRICIA

-no you just like army things so you decided, let's have a bloody base.

She's got him there.

PATRICIA

"The psychology".

Rhonda gets up and runs into the kitchen, hovering over the sink as if she may throw up.

RHONDA

Just take a deep breath and...

Rhonda's alarmed and suddenly runs off stage.

We hear her vomit offstage.

Douglas enters the hall, seeing the set.

DOUGLAS

The holy fucking Private Ryan is that?

CHARLIE

Don't you like it either?

DOUGLAS

Hey man, it's banging, I just thought Hamlet was castles and shit.

CHARLIE

I was going for the-

PATRICIA

-do not say it.

DOUGLAS

Ghosts of war, I got'cha. Deep man, deep.

Patricia is pacing back and forth.

Jimmy walks in carrying his bag. He does a double take at the set and takes a seat, pulling his hoodie up as usual.

Patricia's had enough, begins pulling at the set.

CHARLIE

What are you doing?

PATRICIA

Ending the war.

Charlie grabs at the sandbag Patricia is holding. They are fighting over it when -

Rhonda vomits.

This time it's heard. Charlie and Patricia stop in their tracks.

CHARLIE

Was that...?

They pause for a moment before Patricia tries to yank the sandbag away again. They are battling when in walks Becker, which stops everything.

Becker stares at the set long and hard.

He then begins to clap. Patricia's stunned.

CHARLIE

You like it?

BECKER

This is...tremendous.

PATRICIA

Are you mad?

BECKER

This, this encapsulates the battle, the very, the very...

CHARLIE

Psychology?

BECKER

No, not that, not that at all. This is about the battle between everybody over love. Hamlet, he wants to fuck his mother.

DOUGLAS

He does?

BECKER

Who doesn't? This set, it's perfect. Plus it's too late to go changing it now. People gather around.

Everybody forms a circle.

BECKER

Where's Rhonda?

PATRICIA

She's...preparing.

Becker's slightly bemused by this but continues on.

BECKER

We go up at two o'clock. From then to now, I want your character breathing inside of you. What are your characters going through?

Becker looks at Charlie.

CHARLIE

I'm simply digging a hole.

BECKER

Just a hole?

CHARLIE

Nuts and bolts of it, yeah.

BECKER

It's no hole, it's a space for life. Think about your life, put your life into that speech, make it sing, make it roar. Charlie? Do whatever you have to do to make it yours.

CHARLIE

Really? Whatever I need to?

Becker nods. Charlie moves off.

BECKER

Patricia. Have fun out there.

PATRICIA

...what? That's all you've got to say?

Becker grabs her by the shoulders. He smiles warmly.

BECKER

If there's no fun here, how can there be fun there?

He indicates where the audience will be sitting.

PATRICIA

They will be truly lucky people.

BECKER

Jimmy, how you feeling?

JIMMY

Good.

He does, he seems the most at ease we've seen him.

BECKER

Oh. Good. How are you looking at approaching things out there?

JIMMY

I was thinking about playing it like I was Don Adams.

BECKER

What?

JIMMY

I'm joking, I'm a ghost, I'm just going to pretend I'm not there.

Becker looks at Jimmy blankly, no idea what to say.

JIMMY

Don't worry about me.

Jimmy moves off. Becker turns to Douglas.

BECKER

Alright, whatever reasons you've got for being here, you embrace them up there today. I want to see Douglas dropping his guard.

DOUGLAS

I don't have no guard.

Becker stares at him. Douglas knows Becker has a point.

BECKER

I want to see Douglas playing, being Hamlet up there. Understand me?

Douglas nods and moves off.

BECKER

(to Patricia)

Well...I'm feeling surprisingly optimistic.

In walks Rhonda, the front of her top covered with water. She looks at death's door.

RHONDA

I'm not going on.

Patricia rolls her eyes.

PATRICIA

(to Becker)

You must get so sick of prima donnas.

Becker can't believe Patricia saying that. He gestures for her to leave them.

BECKER

Not feeling too good huh?

Rhonda shakes her head.

RHONDA

Something I ate. Not my fault, I just can't go on.

BECKER

Let me tell you a story.

Rhonda's not keen but Becker's not taking a no.

BECKER

There was this guy I worked with, nearly worked with I should say, because just before we were about to go on, he came down with what you have. So we had to cancel the show and it's funny, normally there's compassion, shows have been cancelled before, they will be again, but everybody, everybody just thought what a waste of space that guy was. All that time, effort and he was scared to do the show.

(MORE)

You're actually a great actress Rhonda, you play this big, tough, bold person, when really you're not. The moment's here and you're so frightened it's... You should go back to your little life with its tiny stage and leave these types of moments to courageous people like oh... Patricia.

With that Rhonda's head flicks up from between her legs.

The lights dim on an infuriated Rhonda.

SCENE EIGHT.

The lights come up, Rhonda is on stage.

A sound effect of people clapping is heard. This is the "real deal".

Rhonda is timid, she's avoiding eye contact with the audience.

RHONDA

One woe doth tread upon another's heel.
So fast they follow. Your sister's
drowned, Laertes.

Becker is standing beside the stage.

BECKER

Drowned! O, where?

Rhonda now sees the audience. She is instantly struck with fear. Through the next passage it's as if she may throw up.

RHONDA

In the glassy stream: therewith fantastic
garlands did she make of crowflowers,
nettles, daisies and long purples-

Rhonda stops. She stands there, hand over her mouth. Then she recognises someone in the crowd. She waves to them. After a moment she smiles broadly and continues on, now calm, in charge and powerful.

RHONDA

Her clothes spread wide, and mermaidlike
till her garments, heavy with their
drink, pulled the poor wretch from her
melodious lay to muddy death.

BECKER
Alas, then she is drowned?

RHONDA
Drowned, drowned.

The lights dip, coming straight up on Charlie who is now on stage, shovel in hand.

Charlie's clearly panicked, struggling with his words.

CHARLIE
Here. Lies the. Water. It's here, water,
it's, it's not land but the other thing
and...

Becker is standing in the same spot as before.

BECKER
(whisper)
Take a deep breath, start again.

CHARLIE
(to Becker)
Is it not going well?

BECKER
(whisper)
Fine. But start again.

CHARLIE
(to Becker)
Even if it's going well?

Becker nods.

Charlie now looks up for the first time to see the audience.

CHARLIE
Hello Barbara. I'm glad you could-

BECKER
(whisper)
-stop doing that.

CHARLIE
Doing what?

BECKER
(whisper)
Talking to the audience.

CHARLIE
Isn't that what I'm meant to be doing?

BECKER
(whisper)
Just do the lines.

CHARLIE
Here lies the water - good. Here stands
the man... your man Barbara. I'm, I'm
being a gravedigger. For you Barb, I, I'm
doing this for you. As you know this is
out of my "comfort zone".

Charlie realises the "war" set he's on.

CHARLIE
Oh this, this is just for psychological
purposes. I've changed honey, I have.

Charlie gesture with his shovel "I'm a grave digger."

BECKER
(whisper)
Lines.

CHARLIE
It's, I'm different. I want you back. I,
I can be what you need me to be. I'm an
old man and I don't have long. But you? I
had you and I, I'll do anything to have
you back.

There's no response.

Charlie stands there waiting but nothing is coming. He
pulls something from his pocket.

CHARLIE
Anything.

It's a grenade.

CHARLIE
I've got a grenade and, if you won't come
back I'll use it. Way I see it I don't
have much to lose...So it's your choice
Barbara.

BECKER
Charlie, please don't do this.

CHARLIE

Better to go out with a bang than-

Charlie accidentally drops the grenade to the ground.

Becker ducks, fearing an explosion.

Charlie looks annoyed more than anything.

Out of nowhere comes Jimmy, diving onto the grenade.

Jimmy lies on it for a few seconds. Nothing happens.

Charlie bends down to Jimmy.

CHARLIE

It's not real, I was trying to trick her
into coming back to me.

Jimmy looks up, almost disappointed.

CHARLIE

You're brave, kid. I pegged you wrong.

Charlie stands up, stares out at the audience defeated.

Becker comes on stage to usher him off.

BECKER

Back in a moment folks.

Lights dim, onto the stage comes Patricia. She directs
her monologue to Becker.

PATRICIA

O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown.
And I, of ladies most deject and
wretched, that sucked the honey of his
musicked vows. Now see that noble and
most sovereign reason. O woe is me,
t'have seen what I have seen, see what I
see.

It's actually lovely, heartfelt. Becker's touched.
However -

PATRICIA

(in a deep voice)

Then the King enters.

Becker's shocked, this isn't part of the show.

PATRICIA

(as King)

Love? His affections do not that way
tend, nor what he spake, though it lacked
form a little, was not like madness.
There's something in his soul o'er which
his melancholy sits.

It's dreadful, over the top and painful.

PATRICIA

And then Polonius enters.

Becker jumps on stage tackling Patricia.

BECKER

There's no time for this.

As Becker carries Patricia off stage.

PATRICIA

Time, oh wretched time waits on no man
and has no mother.

BECKER

(whispering)

The fuck does that even mean?

PATRICIA

I'm in the moment.

Lights dim, coming up on Jimmy who is covered by a sheet.

JIMMY

Mark me. My hour is almost come, when I
to sulf'rous and tormenting flames must
render up myself. I am thy Father's
spirit. Doomed for a certain term to walk
the night, and for the day confined to
fast in the fires. List, list, o'list if
thou didst ever they dear Father love-

Bang, bang.

Onto the stage walks Douglas with his drums.

DOUGLAS

O'God!

Bang, bang.

JIMMY
Revenge his foul and most unnatural
murder.

DOUGLAS
Murder?

Bang, bang.

JIMMY
Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
but this most foul, strange, and unusual.

DOUGLAS
Haste me to know't.

Bang, bang.

DOUGLAS
That I, with wings as swift as
meditation.

Bang, bang.

DOUGLAS
Or the thoughts of love.

Bang.

DOUGLAS
May sweep to my revenge.

Bang, bang, bang.

Jimmy's sheet accidentally falls away from his face.
Jimmy's caught between wanting to pick it up and
continuing on. He continues on.

JIMMY
Thus was I sleeping, of life, of Queen at
once dispatched, cut off even in the
blossoms of my sin. O, horrible! Most
horrible! If thou hast nature in thee,
bear it not. Fare thee well at once. The
glowworm shows the morning to be near and
'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.
Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me Douglas.

This has cut through to Douglas and he's actually
fighting back the tears.

DOUGLAS

O all you host of heaven. O Earth, what else? And shall I couple hell? Hold, hold, my heart, and you...grow not instant old, remember thee? Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat in this head. "Adieu, adieu, remember me", I have sworn't.

Douglas is crying now.

SCENE NINE.

The group is all assembled in the kitchen. Everyone bar Jimmy.

BECKER

Before the show I was praying for a swarm of killer bees or someone to have a seizure and you know what? I'm glad that didn't happen. You guys weren't half bad.

Becker lets this sit for a moment.

BECKER

(heartfelt)

It was a good show, great.

DOUGLAS

You gonna let Jimmy know, he was awesome.

PATRICIA

He was.

BECKER

He's off with his mum and her boyfriend, I will let him know.

Becker looks at Rhonda.

BECKER

How you feeling now?

RHONDA

You're a prick Becker but a helpful one. Being up there was just...

BECKER

That moment when you stopped I got a little...

RHONDA

...I saw my family sitting there and realised how lucky I am.

(to Patricia)

I can see why you're nuts about it, I just felt like me up there.

PATRICIA

That defeats the whole purpose then.

RHONDA

(to Becker)

I like having this to myself, my own little thing. I'm thinking about getting into musical theatre...

DOUGLAS

My drums huh? Totally my drums.

Becker smiles at Rhonda.

BECKER

Patricia, less is always more.

PATRICIA

I was going to be less with my third character but you stopped me. The audience? As if a crime had been committed.

BECKER

Patricia.

PATRICIA

Yes?

BECKER

I'm lucky to know you.

PATRICIA

You are?

BECKER

I am.

Becker walks over and suddenly kisses her passionately.

Then as if nothing has happened, Becker brings his attention to Charlie.

BECKER

Charlie. I can't help but think it's only a matter of time before the police arrive.

Charlie just nods.

DOUGLAS

I'm totally thinking the side exit's the way to go my man.

CHARLIE

...good idea.

Douglas begins to lead Charlie away when -

Becker looks to Douglas.

BECKER

I think your son would be proud of you today.

Douglas smiles.

BECKER

Alright, well done everybody, let's never work together again okay? Go on, get out of here, there'll be people waiting to talk to you out there. Oh Rhonda, a guy called Jake wanted you to know he was outside waiting.

RHONDA

Could you tell him, I'm busy with my husband and kids please.

Becker nods.

Everybody bar Becker exits off stage. Patricia suddenly reappears.

PATRICIA

What was that Mr. Becker?

BECKER

Stanley.

She stares at him wanting an answer.

BECKER

You've never stopped believing in me have you?

She shakes her head. He steps forward kissing her.

BECKER

I've always been thinking about what I've lost. Not what I could have. You've got a good heart. Never thought you would hit the drum, let Douglas back in and you did. I wonder if you might like to see my coffee table or something sometime.

Patricia is so thrilled. She bear hugs him.

She breaks from the hug.

PATRICIA

I...I only hit the drum for Douglas because I considered it the most dramatic option available to me at the time.

BECKER

Oh.

They stand there silent for a moment.

BECKER

Good theatrical instincts.

She smiles and kisses him.

SCENE TEN.

Much later, Jimmy enters the hall carrying his bag. No one is around.

Everything that follows is thought out and methodical.

Jimmy places his bag down on the ground and takes out a long rope.

He flings it over a beam. He pulls over a chair, gets up on it, tying a noose in the rope. He places his head in it and is about to jump when -

- Douglas comes walking in.

Douglas and Jimmy see each other.

DOUGLAS

I, I forgot my drums.

JIMMY

Oh.

DOUGLAS

Yeah. Silly me.

Douglas is trying to get his head around the situation.

DOUGLAS

Y'know...I think that Hamlet guy was emo.

Jimmy stands there silent.

DOUGLAS

I'm just glad the band didn't pick up on it.

JIMMY

They were here?

DOUGLAS

Nah. Your mum like it?

Jimmy nods.

JIMMY

She's with her boyfriend right now.

DOUGLAS

I got'cha, he alright?

JIMMY

Okay I guess.

DOUGLAS

...guess I better get my drums.

Douglas walks a few steps, stopping -

DOUGLAS

Why you wanna do that? Know what that means? What it really means? Means no more, nothing, that's it, no hope of a better day, no ice cream in the sun.

JIMMY

I don't like ice cream.

DOUGLAS

Shit, jump off the chair then.

They're silent for a long moment.

DOUGLAS

...I lied to you. My son...when I went to pack up his stuff, it was already in boxes.

JIMMY

(not following)
Someone else had done it?

DOUGLAS

He'd done it. Him. It's funny how if you gotta lie to yourself, you can do it, and if you need the lie to be true, then you -
(taps his chest)
- you make it that way. Even with the boxes and everything else I still thought, nah he didn't, didn't do it but now...I know he did.

Jimmy removes his head from the noose.

JIMMY

I'm sorry.

DOUGLAS

I wish someone could'a said that to my kid. There's no certainties in life, 'cept what you were gonna do. Death, that's the only thing. Now people say it's death and taxes, but nobody in the Disciples have paid 'em in years. It's just...if that's-

He points to the noose.

DOUGLAS

-gonna lead you to the one thing you know is gonna happen, don't that seem a waste then? It's just how do you know, really know, whatever problems you got, that they're gonna stick around?

Jimmy clearly doubts him.

DOUGLAS

Okay, alright, one other thing you might be overlooking then.

Douglas lets this linger.

DOUGLAS

Pussy.

JIMMY

That's your advice? Hang in there for pussy?

DOUGLAS

It's a start.

There's a long silence.

DOUGLAS

Look Jimmy, I'm a washed up bum. I work in a school cleaning toilets, got a failed marriage and a kid who's not here anymore, that's my day to day. I ain't got it in me to say what you need to hear cos even with all'a that I still can't understand why you would wanna...

JIMMY

I just don't want to hurt anymore.

DOUGLAS

Fuck man, can't help you with that. But don't you like those moments, when you get those charges? Today you were fucking brilliant.

JIMMY

But that's just because I knew I was gonna do this.

DOUGLAS

Alright, alright, but let's take that out of the equation, let's just say you did what you did on stage today just because.

JIMMY

The hell does that even mean?

DOUGLAS

Y'gotta work with me here. I'm saying you had that today. A victory.

JIMMY

I guess.

DOUGLAS

A fucking big as shit victory. Charlie went on stage and threatened to blow his old lady up. You shat all over that guy.

Jimmy laughs a little.

DOUGLAS

Don't go chasing the one thing you know
the outcome of. You're too smart for
that, open up to the possibilities life
offers you.

Jimmy's clearly thinking this over.

DOUGLAS

Open yourself up to pussy.

Jimmy laughs again.

DOUGLAS

Shit man or bums, I don't know, you
might be gay, that's all good with me.

JIMMY

I'm not gay.

DOUGLAS

Shit man, I don't care.

JIMMY

I'm not alright.

DOUGLAS

Live in denial.

Jimmy stares at Douglas. Douglas can't help but laugh.

Jimmy smiles.

Douglas grabs him and hugs him tightly.

He releases him.

DOUGLAS

We're doing a tour soon, going to Huntly,
can't find a good roadie. You know any?

JIMMY

What's a roadie do?

DOUGLAS

All the shit work we don't wanna.

JIMMY

Oh wow, way to sell it.

DOUGLAS
Wouldn't pay either. Have to sleep in the van. Move all our gear. Drive all the time.

JIMMY
(sarcastic)
Sounds awesome.

DOUGLAS
Oh there's some drawbacks. You gotta make sure Frankie doesn't choke on his vomit, and that can mean getting your hands right in there, pulling it out. That guy sleeps through everything.

Douglas laughs to himself.

DOUGLAS
You haven't lived till you've done that. So you ready to live life, be treated like a slave? Taken total advantage of?

Jimmy pulls the rope down from the beam onto the ground.

JIMMY
...why not?

Douglas pats Jimmy on the back. Jimmy leaves his bag where it is.

Jimmy and Douglas head to the door.

DOUGLAS
You'll have to chip in for gas too.

Jimmy laughs.

Lights down.

THE END

3.2 SCREENPLAY: *SONG'S END* (*Restricted content*)

WRITTEN BY GAVIN MCGIBBON

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PART 4: REFLECTION

PART 4 REFLECTION

4.1 ADAPTING *HAMLET DIES AT THE END* INTO *SONG'S END*

A major component of this thesis and investigation into the process of adaptation is an examination of my own adaptations, discussing why I made the changes I did and the difficulties I encountered.

This section will detail the steps I took with my own adaptation of *Hamlet Dies at the End* to *Song's End*. Starting with my intentions in writing *Hamlet Dies at the End*, I will detail the various stages I have gone through with the adaptation from play to film, the challenges along the way and lastly how I anticipate developing the scripts further.

I decided early on that it was vital that the play I adapted to film was one that could not be viewed as having one foot already in another medium. A criticism that has been levelled at another of my plays, *Holding On*, is that it is too filmic in its sensibilities:

I cannot help but think it would all work so much better on film where the intimacy and emotional truth could be to the fore. (Smythe, 2012)

I believe I do have a natural inclination to write filmic plays, as I often don't consider the movement involved on stage but rather think in filmic 'cuts'. This obviously posed a problem in examining the differences between stage and screen through my own writing. Consequently I approached the writing of *Hamlet Dies at the End* with a determination to craft something that was fundamentally a piece of theatre through and through. The more *Hamlet Dies at the End* was bound to the stage, the more informative would be the process of adapting it for film. This influenced the story ideas I pursued and I eventually settled on the concept of a play set at a Shakespeare workshop, which allowed me to gather a group of different characters who would be stuck with each other within a confined space. I also felt that the dramatic construct of a group working towards staging their own performance (a collection of scenes from *Hamlet*) was principally something that would work best on stage.

There were a number of elements I developed in the script that I felt would play to the strengths of theatre. Firstly I thought about how I could create moments that would work well with the dynamic of a live audience. Sections such as the 'death' scene, where the characters are made to act out their own 'deaths' by Becker, were moments where I looked to play to the largeness and 'liveness' of theatre. These moments of heightened performance proved to work well with a theatre audience, but would clearly feel much too large and 'broad' if they were simply transposed to film.

Overall the comedy aspects were pitched considerably higher than in previous plays of mine. One adaptation I studied in depth was the theatrical version of *The Producers* and it was clear that the humour in that show was often a direct result of the heightened elements of the characters. In writing *Hamlet Dies at the End* I wanted to create a similarly heightened cast of comic characters whose 'larger than life' aspects a theatre audience would enjoy in the same way as *The Producers*.

In experimenting with 'liveness', one key element of *Hamlet Dies at the End* I really enjoyed was how the audience becomes the in-play audience for the characters' performance of scenes from *Hamlet*. As seen in the theatre version of *The Shape of Things*, LaBute makes the audience part of the scene when Evelyn delivers the findings of her thesis, directly addressing and making eye contact with the audience. I also looked to do this in *Hamlet Dies at the End*.

In the play, all of the action and drama occurs within the venue of the workshop. I did not try to follow the characters home. For me, the drama and intensity occurred through these characters being forced together in a small environment where they cannot escape each other. I also intended, by writing such a 'closed in' stage play (with only three locations in one setting of a local hall) to give myself real challenges when I came to adapting it into a film.

The play was ensemble in nature. This was something that seemed to evolve instinctively. It felt important to explore why each character was there at the workshop and what deeper

motivations could be behind this. The comedic nature of the play also seemed to push me towards giving each character their own comic persona and equal stage time.

That said, a central reason I wrote the play was to explore the healing relationship between Douglas and Jimmy, two characters who are battling grief and despair. I knew from the early stages that these two characters would save each other, and significant time was spent in developing this relationship as it was pivotal to exploring the themes of the play. The significance of this relationship may not become apparent to the audience until the last scene, but to me the interaction between Douglas and Jimmy has always formed the spine of the play.

The play went through various drafts as I tried to mine the material for comedy and to ensure that the script was constantly engaging. After a process of reworking and rewriting the material, I approached a director and we pitched it successfully to Bats Theatre. In June of 2011 the play was staged.

As with every production there were challenging moments. One moment of frustration occurred when the director and the set designer decided that all the action should occur within the community hall that the workshop took place in. This meant that the 'outside' and 'break room' scenes I had written would now take place within the hall as well. Their line of thinking was that with having such a small staging area there was no room for the additional sets that these two locations would require. This caused a lot of anxiety and concern for me. These scenes were written with two principal intentions. Firstly, to break up the monotony of audiences being locked in the hall for the entire two hours (the draft included within this thesis is a post-production draft and 16 pages shorter). This may not be a problem for plays such as *Misery* which has high dramatic stakes but I felt it would be an issue for my comedy. The second concern and to me the most important, was that I needed to be able to separate the characters. As there are moments of deep confession, I was alarmed that those moments could be jeopardised because of the staging of the production. What two people are willing to talk about or share is very different if there are others within earshot. I discussed these concerns with the director who at first felt it would not be an issue. However, after a few rehearsals, she began to rehearse the play in its original three

locations and to my relief that is how it remained. The director's initial response underlines the drive in theatre to 'close in' as much as possible. Due to staging constraints, the director was drawn to the possibility of having only one set in order to maximise the space for the actors.

However, I still believe that the director's impulse to further 'close in' the locations of the play would have adversely affected the drama and believability of the 'outside' and 'break room' scenes. The three locations written proved to be the bare minimum possible for effectively staging the play. More locations would not have added to the drama, but less would have subtracted from it. Later this would serve as a reminder that it is this precise balance that a successful film-to-play adaptation should also be aiming at.

Reviews of *Hamlet Dies at the End* were for the most part positive, there was praise for the humour and the 'death scene' received particular notice from the *Capital Times* 'the "death scenes" are classic' (Freeman, 2011) . While the play was warmly received, the *Capital Times* felt that the play was longer than it needed to be 'at two hours, this is too long to sustain the story, and it's very slow to get going' (Freeman, 2011). This was a comment I came to regard as accurate and it informed the next stage of development for the play as I realised I could remove much of the material of the opening scene and begin the play at a later 'point of attack'.

Once the play had been staged I wrote a post-production draft, taking into account reviews, advice from people who had seen the production and my own observation of how an audience engaged with the show. This post-production draft made a number of cuts, as mentioned above the beginning of the play occurs later, with Becker already 'running' the group, giving his dramatic monologue about being gunned down, which Douglas interrupts with his late arrival to the workshop. I also reworked certain scenes, for example a discussion between Patricia and Charlie was transformed into Becker talking about how he continues to receive his ex-wife's mail. I learnt the importance of economy and ensuring that every single moment is working towards the ending for each character. A moment of lightness between Patricia and Charlie, while comically amusing, was not an effective use of time in the play as it did not push the story forward. I also discovered the joy of working with

a large cast of characters and how the audience can develop a sense of solidarity with the group as a whole.

Once the post production draft was complete, my concentration shifted to adapting the play into a film.

The theatre to film adaptation presented a number of challenges. Firstly, the play was so fixed in its medium, particularly in the performative aspects of the characters acting their Shakespeare speeches. For this reason I decided against using a transposition approach to the adaptation, as through my examinations of play-to-film adaptations *The Shape of Things*, *Doubt* and *The History Boys*, I felt this would produce a 'stagey', talky and uninspiring film. It was clear to me that *Hamlet Dies at the End* would have to change significantly in order to become an effective film. But in what way?

Douglas's character was the first element that came to me when *Hamlet Dies at the End* started to form and his character was also the aspect I felt was most vital to the adaptation. The play reflects a middle aged man who still acts like a teenager but finally grows up through stepping into his dead son's shoes. This to me was the heart of the story and offered the most dramatic potential going forward. As with other adaptations, such as *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Lantana*, I felt there had to be a move towards one major protagonist. Who that major protagonist should be was obvious. As with Leon in *Lantana* and Shelley Levene in *Glengarry Glen Ross* it is Douglas's character who has the most to lose and the biggest transformation to experience. Once the choice was made to focus the film on Douglas it became a matter of working out what would best suit his journey.

Setting the film at an Outward Bound camp seemed to me a strong choice for the story. It offered more dynamic environments than the fixed location of the hall in the play. It allowed me to bring a greater physical dimension and move away from the dialogue heavy play. Successful film adaptations use visuals to tell the story rather than an over-reliance on words. Moving from the hall (where there is little to do but talk) into the great outdoors opened up a much larger visual and action dynamic to utilize. But most importantly, I believe it allowed for a greater exploration of the play's theme of growing as a person through

overcoming grief and despair. Surrounding Douglas with troubled teenagers seemed to provide the perfect environment to push his character, a middle aged adolescent who needs to grow up, to the limit and truly highlight the growth he undergoes. Looking at examples from *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Frost/Nixon* I realised the importance of opening the world up but staying true to the central drama of the story. I felt that by placing the bulk of the story at the camp, I was doing this.

Some of the changes felt instinctive. From the very first draft of the film it began with Jimmy's suicide. As in *Lantana*, which opened with the image of a woman's body in the bushes, I knew I needed to have a striking beginning because it took some time for Douglas to reach the camp where the central drama of the film would take place. It also felt important to create sympathy for Douglas's character, as the bond between an audience and the major protagonist is often vital in determining a film's success. As I had learnt from my case study examination of *Good*, if you do not effectively use those first few minutes it can have a lasting impact on your story. The death of Douglas's son is the reason this story unfolds and the trauma that rocks Douglas to his core. By opening the film with Jimmy jumping into the freezing water I hope to hook the audience and provoke questions about who this is, why they are behaving in this way and what has just happened. I believe it provides an effective start to the film and one that plays a vital role in the narrative of the film.

Whereas in the play Douglas's revelation that his son has died felt like an important 'card' to play later (end of act one), in the film this wasn't the case. I didn't feel the need to have Douglas state this in the film as we the audience have experienced this sense of loss with him. It was my belief that there was greater dramatic possibility in Douglas trying to suppress this secret than have him openly declare it. There is not the same sense of drama if the character is willing to talk about something that we already know deeply troubles him. Instead, I attempted to add as much dramatic irony as possible to the film, taking advantage of the audience's knowledge of Douglas' situation. This is why I introduced the idea of Douglas needing to pose as Jimmy at the camp, which in turn gave rise to scenes featuring the clay footprint and the therapeutic conversations between Douglas and Jasmine. These

were all elements I used to put Douglas under pressure. The difference between the two approaches relates I believe to the different nature of the mediums. Film strongly depends on a major protagonist who drives the action. Therefore the audience is usually 'in bed' with this character. We are with the main character throughout, we see every nook and cranny of their existence, we can see how the character prepares in the morning, what their bedroom is like, their house, their job. With the shift to Douglas as central protagonist in the film it felt only logical to bring the audience in on his 'secret' and actually use that to propel the drama through the first half of the camp story.

The shift towards one key protagonist meant more and more changes needed to be made to the story. Some of these changes only became apparent after a couple of drafts. Where the play was about the community of the characters, their battle to stage their *Hamlet*, and the effect on each character of doing that, the further I went in adapting the work the more I found that anything that wasn't fuel for Douglas's own story seemed to only slow the story down. Early on I felt it was important to set up an issue/problem with each of the campers that Douglas would be instrumental in helping them to overcome. While I was able to use this in early drafts to create further tension between Douglas and Rupert (Douglas helping the troubled teens to conquer their problems, Rupert's approach with the teens not working) it actually was moving the story away from what it needed to be about - Douglas's journey. Douglas helping the teenagers was a distraction; it also made Douglas seem too certain, too sure about things. If he can help them, why can't he help himself? For the film version I worked hard at showing how poorly Douglas was doing in life, that his life needed to change in a big way. While hopefully every character feels rounded and true, essentially each of them is significant only in how they interact with Douglas and the impact they have on his life. There is a sub-plot with Jasmine and Rupert but that also feeds into and impacts on Douglas's journey. For me this was one of the significant discoveries of writing the adaptation; although I had initially spent a considerable amount of time giving each of the teenage campers their own issue which Douglas solved ingeniously, this was actually a misstep. The story is not about Douglas and the other campers, it is about Douglas's relationship with himself.

There was another significant departure from the stage version that only emerged after a number of drafts. At first Victor was the suicidal character that Douglas would save. Much like Douglas stopping Jimmy from taking his life in *Hamlet Dies at the End*, my intention was that Douglas would save one of the other campers. Slowly I came to realise it was too obvious if it was Victor. The plot point of Douglas atoning for failing his son by saving Victor was too easy to see coming in the screenplay. And it was not the most interesting direction to go in. Initially Rupert seemed such an unlikely person to need saving, but with the camp failing and his relationship with his wife seemingly in its death throes, Douglas's arrival could in fact be the tipping point for Rupert. This development excited me as a writer as suddenly other elements came into focus. There is a bitter irony that Rupert's brutal treatment of Douglas actually means Rupert has prepared Douglas for being able to save him later on. Rupert's suicide attempt also provokes the crisis in Douglas's journey. Successfully climbing the mountain by himself, injured and in adverse weather, is the action that shows how far Douglas has come.

As a writer there are certain moments that rightly or wrongly you want to keep. In *Hamlet Dies at the End* I felt a particularly effective moment was when Douglas talks about his visit to his deceased son's flat to collect his things, only to find his son's flatmates interviewing people for the room. This felt like a moment that really connected with the audience in the production of the show and quite frankly as a writer I was proud of it. I felt the moment earned its keep in the new version as it allowed me to do a number of things:

- Establish that Douglas didn't even know where his son lived
- Put Douglas through the surreal experience of collecting Jimmy's belongings while his friends are clearly going on with their lives
- Establish the fact that Jimmy packed his things before taking his life
- Have Douglas see the pier and realise that's where Jimmy took his life
- Set up the Outward Bound letter which is in the box with Jimmy's things

In contrast to the theatre version the majority of these plot points and character moments are communicated without dialogue. It also felt important that this scene occurred in the here and now. I did not believe it would have the same impact if, for example, Douglas relayed the story via reportage to Jasmine later in the film.

Once I allowed myself to embrace the larger scope of film, I felt that I started to build in things that added another layer. One advantage of writing for film is that I could introduce incidental characters, for example the young woman who measures out Jimmy's room by taking large steps. This was a poignant and disturbing moment for Douglas which I don't think would have been possible in the theatre due to constraints on the number of actors.

It was also important to investigate new areas and allow myself to expand the environment. Placing Rupert in the sick-bay is an example of this. Seeing him having to sleep in such a cramped and sterile room gives us a deeper insight into his character and serves as an apt visual metaphor for his deteriorating marriage.

In *Hamlet Dies at the End* the group battle through a unique public presentation of *Hamlet* whereas in *Song's End* Douglas, suffering serious injuries and afraid of heights, battles up a mountain to save a man who has made his life a living hell. This reflects the change from an ensemble-based multi-narrative to a single protagonist filmic story – but is also in response to the need for the story to become both cinematic and more action based. The stakes are higher, there is a sense of life and death that is played out visually via the main character's struggle up an imposing mountain in horrendous weather. Importantly it also dramatises Douglas's journey as a character, giving him physical obstacles to overcome. This is significantly different to the verbal climax of the play where Douglas talks Jimmy out of taking his life. The climactic sequence of the film is focused completely on Douglas and is much more dependent on physical action as opposed to a verbal exchange.

Wherever possible I tried to work visually. Effective screenwriting enables the audience to connect with a look or understand what the character is feeling through the use of visual metaphors or the importance given to key props. An example of this is the white paint that spills onto Douglas's jeans from the box of Jimmy's things. I wanted something that Douglas

could look at which instantly connects him with the feeling that he has let his son down. In early drafts I had Douglas repeatedly looking at the white paint stain on his jeans or scratching at it. It happened over and over and was undoubtedly a response to the fact that I didn't have the story operating as it needed to be. As the plot grew stronger and more detailed I whittled the repetition of this image down until now there is just the one moment where Douglas scratches at the white paint, which is after he has abandoned the camp and is driving home. I feel that this is effective screenwriting as I have set up the visual motif and it pays itself off here as it leads to the car crash and Douglas deciding to return to the camp because he realises he hasn't yet done right by his son.

In the play I needed to articulate strongly why Douglas returns to the Shakespeare workshop, which I did with a speech about his son's death which reveals his reasons for needing to do the workshop. In the film, if I have done my job right, everything that Douglas says in that speech is instead communicated through a simple action as Douglas wordlessly hacks at the white paint on his jeans.

With each draft of *Song's End* I tried to use less and less dialogue, following Seger's 'show don't tell' maxim. As a writer who enjoys characters talking and whose first film script (*Roy Jiminton*) suffered from too much dialogue, it was a battle to get the story working so that there wasn't the need for characters to be saying everything. But I felt a sense of pride as I flicked through the most recent draft of the script and saw pages without any dialogue at all.

This need to reduce dialogue was further brought home to me by my examination of *The History Boys*, which was an adaptation that suffered from its inability to move from a verbal based medium to a visually centered one. Clearly one of the strengths of *The History Boys* is the dialogue but it was also being used to convey information and exposition that would have been more interesting and more touching if we saw it rather than heard it. Posner's love of Dakin was so outspoken that personally it made me not care about it. This is why I tried to have Douglas not speak about what happened to his son until we get to the crucial scene where he is forced to reveal it. I felt that this would show how troubled Douglas is if he cannot bring himself to talk about it, and also make his admission more dramatically wrenching.

The History Boys also served as an example to me that it is vitally important to embrace the new medium and look at how you can use it to tell your story in different ways. While someone looking at the two versions might consider that *Song's End* is at best a very loose adaptation of *Hamlet Dies at the End*, to me it is very much the same story – but told using the method of analogy. The story elements are the same, an estranged father haunted and confused by his son's suicide takes his place in the course that his son was about to join. The courses are different but there are similar elements. In the play Douglas does not want to be on stage without his drums, he feels vulnerable and exposed without them. Douglas in the film has a fear of heights. Both versions of Douglas have a major problem with the person who teaches the course – Becker in the play, Rupert in the film. Douglas leaves the course in both cases but returns, begging to be allowed back in. Both stories have a character who attempts to take their life and who is dissuaded by Douglas. Despite the difference in the plot, it is fundamentally the same story told via an analogy approach of adaptation.

As LaBute did with *The Shape of Things* I could have transplanted the play straight into film but I thought there would be little to learn from a purely transpositional approach and the resulting film would be much less effective. I could have tried to open out *Hamlet Dies at the End* using a transformation method of adaptation, for example following the characters home, allowing the camera into other areas of their lives, but I did not feel there would be any value in doing that. The drama of the play is in the combustible atmosphere established in the workshop - moving away from that would only have deflated the tension and humour. The more I looked at it, the more I wanted to take the story to a place where I thought it could stand alone as a film. Bovell's analogy approach to his *Lantana* adaptation showed me there was tremendous value in stepping back from the material and challenging myself to write the story for the screen, and allow it to find a new voice for the different medium.

With my adaptation of *Song's End*, I have taken the thematic structure of the play and transferred that to film, reworking the exterior elements of the story to produce a screenplay that works as a stand alone film without signposting its theatre origins.

4.2 ADAPTING *ROY JIMINTON* FIRST INTO *ROY*, THEN INTO *THIS TOWN THAT ROY*

LIVES IN

Roy Jiminton is a feature length screenplay I wrote as my MA thesis in 2005. It is the story of Roy, a middle aged man who owns and runs an emporium in a small town in New Zealand. The town's economy has suffered dramatically in the wake of a motorway expansion, as travellers no longer stop on their way through. Roy's entire life revolves around his shop, which is also his way of not dealing with the fact that his wife Alexandra and son Mattie left him years ago. When Albert - one of Roy's customers – dies, Albert's niece Samantha arrives in town. Romance blossoms and Roy's life starts to open up, at which point Roy's wife and son unexpectedly return. Roy is torn between the chance to regain his old life and the new possibilities that Samantha and a wider world seem to offer.

Due to the word count limit and the fact that there are three significantly different versions of the *Roy Jiminton* stage play adaptation (two entitled *Roy* and the third entitled *This Town That Roy Lives In*) I have opted to include excerpts rather than the entire scripts. These excerpts have been included as appendices to this section. Each appendix matches an original scene or moment to its corresponding scene in one of the adaptations.

Surprisingly to me, adapting the film script of *Roy Jiminton* to the stage was more difficult and more problematic than the *Hamlet Dies at the End* adaptation.

I struggled greatly, firstly to tell the story of the film in a way that would actually work as a stage play, and secondly to effectively shift between the mediums in a way that took full account of the new theatrical form and had something fresh to say with the story.

One possible reason for this is that the *Roy Jiminton* film script was my first attempt to write a feature film and in retrospect seems very set-bound and overly reliant on dialogue. Ironically, the *Roy Jiminton* screenplay might have already been too much like a stage play for me to be able to feel I was transforming it in adapting it to the 'new' medium of theatre.

In approaching the adaptation I again rejected transposition as a method as I do not believe it to be effective. The majority of truly dramatic moments in the film-to-play adaptation of *Rain Man* occurred between scenes. These were then reported to the audience, something which I think denies the audience the opportunity to witness the most compelling version of a story.

As my study of film-to-theatre adaptations revealed there to be no examples of an analogy adaptation in this direction, I opted initially for a more tried and true transformation approach. I attempted to inject theatrical moments or dialogue to replace visual moments from the film. For example, in the film Roy cannot bring himself to ring his son Mattie, for fear he might have to talk to his ex-wife. While the moment of Roy struggling to ring his son could be played on stage, I decided instead to dramatise the event and have Roy and his 'therapist' Jane act out the call. (Both the film and play versions of the relevant scenes are contained in Appendices A1 and A2 at the end of this section)

My first draft of the *Roy* stage adaptation ran to over one hundred and seventy pages in length, despite setting myself the goal of one hundred pages, and undoubtedly it is scenes such as this therapy session which explain why the page count was so large. I have not previously written a script where the length has spiralled out of control in this way. I believe there are a number of reasons that led to this.

Although I 'closed in' the story, I did not 'close in' enough. Instead I tried to transfer the vast majority of the screenplay to the stage version. This was problematic as there are quite a number of plot strands in the film: a new store employee, another employee who is leaving, a nurse who is coerced into being a therapist to Roy, the death of Albert, a rival store in the neighbouring pharmacy which has started to sell Roy's 'items', the Roy/ Samantha romantic plotline, plus Roy's relationships with his estranged wife Alexandra and son Mattie.

By failing to 'close in' and instead trying to bring all of these story strands to the stage I made the play long winded and lacking a clear focus. Simon Moore with his stage adaptation of *Misery* shows the impact and economy of sticking to a few locations and concentrating on

the heart of the story. My original drafts of *Roy Jiminton* struggled to do this. In one draft the key characters of Alexandra and Mattie do not even enter the story until page eighty one.

I began to see that I needed to drastically cut back the story for the adaptation. In a further draft I 'closed in' further, cutting elements of the screenplay such as Murphy the rival retailer, Jane's ex-husband attacking Roy under the misconception that Roy was being unfaithful to Jane, and scenes featuring the bitter librarian Dolores. These were all elements and scenes that worked in themselves, but ultimately were not moving the story forward and therefore could be dispensed with.

Cuts such as this got me some of the way, the page count of the script was starting to shrink, but I also began to think about the structure of the narrative. Looking through the plays I had examined, there was a trend that came up a number of times, which was illuminated further when I studied the film-to-play adaptations. I noticed a tendency for the beginning of plays to occur significantly later in the narrative than their film counterparts. In the theatre version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* the play begins with the salesmen already knowing that their livelihoods are on the line; in the film of *Calendar Girls* we see Annie learn that her husband has a grave illness, whereas in the play Annie's best friend Chris already knows about the illness. Even in the play version of *Misery*, there is a sense of the story starting later than the film version. Within moments of Sheldon meeting the stage counterpart of Wilkes it's very apparent that she is mentally unhinged, which is significantly different from the movie which holds off this reveal. Observing how all these plays started their narrative later than their film counterparts, I felt this was a useful direction to pursue for my own film-to-play adaptation, and I began to think about how much later I could start the play of *Roy*.

A comparison of the opening of the film (Appendix B1) and the beginning of my second transformation draft of the play (Appendix B2) shows the changes I made in this regard.

Rather than having the set up of Richie being hired or even Albert coming into the shop, I begin the play with Roy rehearsing how he is going to fire Richie. Whereas the film begins with Roy hiring Richie, the play now quickly establishes that Roy has come to the end of his tether with Richie - which also creates an element of conflict to begin the play with. Albert is

already dead, which again is something that doesn't occur until much further into the film narrative.

By using this technique of 'starting later' I was able to achieve a play with a running time I was happy with (a hundred and four pages). 'Starting later' could be seen as a function of 'closing in', the stage versions of *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Calendar Girls* not only remove outside elements of the screenplay and keep the focus on the pivotal characters but also reduce the time-spans of their narratives by starting their stories at a later point than in the original film versions.

However, having achieved a play that 'started later', that 'closed in' and now had an acceptable running time, I still found myself dissatisfied with the script. Despite major advancements in adapting from the film, something felt flat about the play version. It was boring, I didn't feel 'alive' as a writer while working on it. The task seemed more like rearranging pieces on a board. It didn't 'speak' to me as my adaptation of *Song's End* had, I could not find something 'new' to say with the material, nor did I feel I was embracing the possibilities of the theatre in the excitingly creative way I had embraced film with *Song's End*.

In discussion with my supervisor Ken Duncum, he pointed out the fact that I had taken a naturalistic film and adapted it into a naturalistic play. While I was hopeful that I had been able to avoid the 'reportage' element of *Rain Man*, this made me aware that I had not pushed myself as I had done with the *Song's End* adaptation, which had used the analogy approach. It became clear to me that the 'liveness' on offer with *Roy* was not what I was hoping for. The 'stealing the cow' scene from this transformation draft of the stage adaptation highlights where I felt the play was going wrong. (see Appendix C2. Appendix C1 also contains the film version of this sequence.)

This theatrical scene has aspects of what I wanted to do with my stage version of *Roy Jiminton*. I wanted to play to the 'liveness' stage offers, and the three characters carrying a dead cow is something I thought would be a great physical action on stage. However if you look through the section this does not last long, the play quickly resumes its dialogue driven

and naturalistic approach. The scene is also forced to employ reportage, perhaps understandably when I am dealing with so many plot elements and trying to get information across within the constrictions of limited scenes, characters and even locations.

For these reasons, I began to consider taking a completely different approach to the play – in particular its method of presenting the story.

Conventional film usually takes a naturalistic approach, however mainstream theatre is far more accepting of different modes of story presentation. Besides the naturalistic 'fourth wall' approach in which the actors pretend the audience is not there, there are other modes where the presence of the audience can be acknowledged and even the fact that the performers are acting. This interested me greatly, especially as I studied the film to stage adaptations and noted the lack of an analogy adaptation amongst them. The plays had all adopted the naturalistic approach of their filmic source material. *Rain Man* appeared so determined to be as naturalistic as the film that the adaptor had presumably decided against having moments of the car trip performed, since Charlie suddenly pretending to 'drive' a car might have broken with the naturalistic approach of the rest of the story. There were actors in three of the four adaptations, who for economic necessity doubled as other characters, but this was never acknowledged and the moment of 'change' was never shown onstage. These were non-naturalistic theatrical possibilities I decided I wanted to embrace in a new analogy adaptation of *Roy Jiminton*.

In what would become *This Town That Roy Lives In* I looked for opportunities for a highly theatrical presentation. Stories that were only alluded to in the film became opportunities for actors to showcase their skill and magic. I was further encouraged to move in this direction by Andrew Bovell's play-to-film adaptation of *Lantana*. Bovell believed that the artistic devices he employed in the stageplay would cause difficulty in crossing to film. However, it was clear how much he enjoyed the theatrical devices he employed in *Speaking In Tongues*. If Bovell was prepared to completely alter the way he told his story for film, why could I not do the same in the opposite direction with my film to stage adaptation?

With my new version of the play I wanted to have the actors acknowledge the audience, even talk directly to them. I wanted doubling, actors swapping characters and gender, and I wanted the moment of 'morphing' between characters to be present and witnessed by the audience.

I think a strong example of how I approached this adaptation can be seen in how a very similar moment is presented in two very different ways.

In the film, when Roy attempts to deliver his eulogy for Albert, he instead finds himself defending his actions in regards to the death of Mrs Payne's pet bird. (see Appendix D1)

I always enjoyed the bird story but had not been able to find room for it in my earlier naturalistic stage version. However, in my new analogy adaptation there was suddenly an opportunity for it. I wrote a scene in which Roy discusses the issue of Patti (Samantha in the film), with his 'therapist' Jane, who allows her small child Benny to be in the room. (see Appendix D2)

What is a brief interchange in the film suddenly becomes its own little story in the play. Having a grown actor who is playing the part of a small child suddenly morph into a parrot which then flies into a fan, felt like a great moment to have on the stage. I realised this new approach allowed me great freedom, the fact that I could suddenly spend time with Mrs Osborne (Mrs Payne in the film version) and allow her to talk about what the death of Bird Henry had meant, was an exciting and intriguing direction for me.

Incidentally, as confusing as it may be for the reader of this thesis, changing the names of some characters (Samantha becoming Patti, Mrs Payne becoming Mrs Osborne) or indeed the titles of the scripts (from *Hamlet Dies at the End* to *Song's End*, *Roy Jiminton* to *Roy to This Town That Roy Lives In*) can be an important and necessary psychological step for the adaptor. A new name, whether of a character or story, frees the writer to take a new look at that character or story. Andrew Bovell has indicated that his first step in adapting *Speaking In Tongues* to film was to change the title to *Lantana* for precisely this reason, Bovell states in the introduction to the *Lantana* screenplay 'I decided early to find a new title . . . symbolically it gave me the sense of a new beginning' (Bovell, 2001, pp. 9–10).

As intended, I also incorporated direct address. The play now begins with Albert talking directly to the audience about his forthcoming death. (see Appendix B3) In addition to demonstrating the use of a character speaking directly to the audience, a comparison of this new opening for the play with the very different beginnings to both the film and my earlier transformation adaptation shows how valuable it is to have actors able to instantly morph into new characters in theatre. I rewrote the script for only three actors who play multiple characters. Firstly, this allowed me to have a wide range of characters, in the same way that a film may have a number of incidental characters. Secondly, it sped up the narrative to such a degree that in only six and a half pages I was able to set up Albert's death, the fact that Roy has been the long term mayor of this town, that his shop is struggling, that people are turning against him and also show how his marriage came to an end. With a more naturalistic presentation of the material, this would not be possible and it also would have relied on lengthy dialogue heavy in reportage.

Where screenwriters are often told they need to write visually, it is equally important for theatre adaptors to write for the actors, accentuating the 'liveness' and physicality of their performance. Having a boy turn into a bird and then disintegrating when 'hitting' a fan is a richer way of showing the moment than having it reported. Telling the story of *Roy Jiminton* with a non-naturalistic mode of presentation allowed me to avoid reportage and instead show the moment on stage. I began to appreciate that the cinematic directive to 'show not tell' may be just as key on stage as it is in film.

Another interesting development stemming from my abandonment of naturalism was the removal of Richie, Roy's nightmare employee. In both the film and earlier drafts of the stage adaptation this character was pivotal. Richie was funny, he was able to truly try Roy's patience, (constantly playing strip poker on the computer instead of working for example) and was both a comic foil for Roy and a sounding board. Richie is a type of character who tends to feature in my work. You could argue that Douglas in *Hamlet Dies at the End* and *Song's End* is quite similar in nature to Richie. I'm always aware of the need to include lighter characters, as often my scripts have dealt with heavy themes; suicide, grief, alcoholism, dysfunctional relationships. Richie also gives *Roy Jiminton* and *Roy* an energy boost since he

is a heightened comic character. However as I moved further into the analogy adaptation, I discovered I did not need him. The lightness Richie provided in the film was now available through the way I was telling the story. The fun of actors morphing instantly into very old or very young characters, and even changing gender, meant that the comic tone was embedded throughout the play, rather than needing a character to embody it.

I also attempted to write as much as possible for the 'liveness' of performance. I wanted spectacle and skill on the stage. The highpoint of *Calendar Girls* is undoubtedly the calendar shoot. That sequence highlights the skill of the actors and the immediacy of their performance, elements I wanted to ensure were also in my adaptation. An example of this is the dream sequence (see Appendix E) that requires the actors to display impressive dancing, fighting and mime skills. This sequence was also completely new material, not directly correlating to scenes in any earlier play or film version of the story.

By moving away from the naturalistic tone of the film and the transformation approach of *Roy* I now had a story that could also go considerably further in exploring the town's odd nature. New scenes include impromptu press conferences in Roy's shop, Patti suddenly declaring herself as running for mayor and the election for mayor occurring at Albert's funeral with the candidates using the eulogies as their final speeches before the polling booths opened (at the church directly after the funeral). What possibly would have seemed a step too far in the previous versions did not seem so out of place with a more heightened approach to the storytelling. Rather than struggle to place the film on stage I was now exploring how I could change the film to suit the new medium.

By taking this approach I felt I actually resolved some of the issues of the film script. The majority of the film occurred within Roy's store and there were considerable pacing issues with the film. By embracing an analogy approach, this seemed to go some way towards resolving these issues. New, dynamic events were occurring throughout and I could present dramatic flashback scenes from Roy's life such as Roy discovering his wife is cheating on him, or Roy not paying enough attention to his son.

Switching to an analogy adaptation gave me the freedom I needed. Stripping the play back to three actors works in terms of the film-to-play adaptation principles I developed in Part 2.2 of this thesis. It creates demanding physical challenges for the actors as they portray a wide range of characters and plays much more strongly to the 'liveness' and intimacy of theatre performance. The adaptation quickly began to take on a life of its own. Rather than trying to mirror the original, I found myself able to do what I had done with *Song's End* - tell a story that is specific to the medium as opposed to trying to hammer a square peg into a round hole. Stories told through dialogue in the earlier transformation adaptation, such as Patti's experience of staying with her Uncle Albert as a girl, are now able to be shown in ways that give the audience the pleasure of watching actors transform in front of them. (see Appendices F1 and F2)

These were the moments I was looking to discover for the stage adaptation, scenes that played to the performance aspect. I wanted the theatrical quality to be upfront rather than hidden away. In my examinations of the four film to stage adaptations I considered it a shame that no one had looked to embrace the new medium to the degree that Bovell had done with his stage to film adaptation of *Lantana*.

This Town That Roy Lives In remains a work in progress. While the analogy approach has resulted in extensive changes, I believe there are more to come due to further embracing this method in future drafts. Moving further into the mindset of analogy adaptation I am beginning to see how many options there are for transmuting Roy's inner world into rich active theatre scenes. I am now curious to see if I can move almost entirely away from scenes that have people sitting or standing around talking.

However, it is very clear to me that by adopting an analogy approach I have already been able to create a truly theatrical version of the story, which easily surpasses my previous attempts to adapt *Roy Jiminton* using the transformation method.

APPENDICES

Appendix A1: Excerpt from *Roy Jiminton* film script: Therapy Scene

EXT. JANE'S HOUSE. EARLY EVENING.

Roy's Honda Civic sits outside a modest house.

INT. HALLWAY. JANE'S HOUSE. EARLY EVENING.

Roy sits beside a door in your standard house hallway. The surroundings suggest lower middle class. Roy taps his foot and looks at his Casio watch.

An eight year old (ANDY) is popping his head repeatedly out from behind a corner.

They make eye contact, Andy gives Roy a smile, Roy instantly looks away, becoming "interested" in his watch.

Into the hallway steps JANE. She's in her mid thirties, brown hair with a freckled complexion. She is pulling off bright yellow dishwashing gloves.

JANE

I can see you now.

EXT. LIVING ROOM. JANE'S HOUSE. EARLY EVENING.

There's a big TV behind Jane, piled up in front of it are children's video tapes.

Jane and Roy sit facing each other.

JANE

So, how is it going?

ROY JIMINTON

The same, exactly the same. Today I was holding my hand in front of me, like an idiot, for my change. (despairing at the thought of it) I can't even do that right.

JANE

What have I been telling you here? You're the same person in and out of your store.

ROY JIMINTON

It doesn't feel that way.

JANE

Did you do what we talked about?

ROY JIMINTON

Haven't had the chance.

JANE

To make a phone call?

ROY JIMINTON

Things have been flat out. Glenn's leaving soon, hired a new guy today.

JANE

You said you would make that phone call.

ROY JIMINTON

And I will.

Roy shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

ROY JIMINTON

I just don't want to get her.

JANE

She's your wife.

ROY JIMINTON

Estranged.

JANE

You told me his eighteenth's a few days away. That's a big one you know.

ROY JIMINTON

Yes, yes, get off my back.

JANE

Don't put me there.

ROY JIMINTON

I don't pay you to treat me like some kid.

JANE

Excuse me? I do not do that. And I'm sorry if the expense of driving to the next town, and paying a proper psychologist is too much for you to bear.

She weighs up what she is going to say next.

JANE

When you say you're going to do something, you need to do it. The book I'm reading at the moment says I have to be firm on that.

ROY JIMINTON

I'm sorry, I will ring.

JANE

Good. Now I've been thinking of your whole "in the store you" and the "out of the store you". Is there anything you're particularly fond of from your store?

ROY JIMINTON

(instantly)

The lampshades.

JANE

Wh-why's that?

ROY JIMINTON

Cause they literally fell off a truck I was following. Tried to wave 'em down, but couldn't, so what could I do but sell 'em? 100 percent profit.

(beaming)

Like some great gift from out of nowhere.

JANE

I was thinking smaller, something you could carry with you, out of the store.

ROY JIMINTON

Okay.

JANE

And make that phone call.

INT. ROY'S CAR. EVENING.

Roy is driving along in his mid eighties Honda Civic.

EXT. MAIN STREET. EVENING.

Roy drives past a pay phone box. He then reverses and parks near it. He gets out and enters the phone box.

INT. PHONE BOX. EVENING.

Roy stares at the phone for a long moment, then pulls out his wallet. He unzips it and from behind a number of those plastic money bags he pulls out a folded piece of paper, it is very worn.

Roy unfolds it and we see a faded phone number. Roy picks up the phone, he's breathing heavily. He stands there, the phone in one hand, the number in the other. He slams down the phone and leaves the phone box.

Appendix A2: Excerpt from *Roy* play script (transformation adaptation): Therapy Scene

JANE'S LIVING ROOM.

Roy watches as Jane walks around picking up kids' toys off the floor.

ROY JIMINTON
Look don't worry about it
okay, please.

JANE
It's important. The books say
the environment is very
important. We need to treat
this area with respect.

Roy stands there put out.

Jane picks up another toy and swivels round to Roy.

JANE
It's important.

She throws the toys into a box and pushes it away with her foot. Satisfied she gestures for Roy to take a seat.

She pulls over another seat and sits down opposite.

They sit there staring at each other a long moment.

She suddenly gets up and moves her seat a couple of feet back.

JANE
Too close. Was confrontational.
Textbook mistake, sorry.

Roy shrugs his shoulders.

JANE
You couldn't feel that?
The animosity building?

ROY JIMINTON
I didn't think so.

JANE
(realising something)
Sorry, sorry.

She rushes over to put on a cd. It's whale music.

JANE
There we go. We are now ready
for discovery and realisation.

Roy just sits there.

JANE
So...how has your week been?

ROY JIMINTON
Look Jane, I don't want you going to
so much trouble.

Jane stares at Roy, wanting more.

ROY JIMINTON
Reading the books, this strange
music, it's-

JANE
-it's whales Roy.

ROY JIMINTON
That's what I'm talking about. I
don't want you turning this into
some big thing.

JANE
It is a big thing.

ROY JIMINTON
No, it's not.

JANE
You came to me Roy.

ROY JIMINTON
Not to hear bloody whale music I
didn't. And why whales?

JANE
Why not?

ROY JIMINTON

If they were more focused on the swimming, not on the singing, there'd be less of 'em getting stuck on the beaches wouldn't there?

JANE

Is the whale music stressing you out?

ROY JIMINTON

...no, it's fine.

They sit there in silence.

ROY JIMINTON

I did something today that I didn't expect to do.

Jane waits for more.

ROY JIMINTON

I hired someone.

JANE

Really?

He nods.

ROY JIMINTON

This, this guy who walked into my store. We were just talking and then he was, I'd hired him.

JANE

You haven't mentioned before you were looking for someone.

ROY JIMINTON

I wasn't. It just felt like a good idea.

JANE

What made you think it was a good idea?

ROY JIMINTON

The guy's not from around here.

JANE

Where's he from?

ROY JIMINTON

He uh, didn't really say.

JANE
Has he had much work in retail?

ROY JIMINTON
No. Law school though, seven years.

JANE
That's a long time for that isn't it?

ROY JIMINTON
...possibly.

JANE
So to recap, you've hired someone who has no experience, won't tell you where they're from and clearly has truth issues.

ROY JIMINTON
...possibly.

JANE
So why'd you do it? You're usually very caulated. Why did you hire this guy-

ROY JIMINTON
-Richie. Richie Gotti.

JANE
This way?

ROY JIMINTON
I...I don't know.

JANE
What were you doing before he came into the store?

ROY JIMINTON
Just regular store type stuff.

JANE
Which was?

ROY JIMINTON
...tidying up. Dusting.
I...there's these couple of cans
of pickles. I really like them but
nobody ever buys them. They've just
sat there on the shelf. For years
now.

JANE
Why don't you just eat them?

Roy looks at her like that's perverse.

ROY JIMINTON
I can't do that.

JANE
Why not?

ROY JIMINTON
That's stock. That's...I
couldn't do that. It'd be...

JANE
Yes?

ROY JIMINTON
It'd be like giving up. Giving up
on that sale. That something could
happen with those pickles.

JANE
So you're wiping down these jars.
These pickles that no one likes but
you, that have sat and sat on the
shelf for...?

ROY JIMINTON
Years.

JANE
I think these pickles make you feel
lonely.

ROY JIMINTON
What?

JANE
You feel like those pickles. How long since your wife left you?

ROY JIMINTON
Six years but I don't see what that's got to-

JANE
-I think you hired this Gotti because you needed to make a connection. A bond with someone else.

ROY JIMINTON
I was just dusting jars alright, you're not even a proper shrink, you're just some nurse who likes to read books.

JANE
Why do you think you hired him then?

ROY JIMINTON
I've got competition across the road. That Murphy, every day he's got something else. I heard he's going to get in Seinfeld DVDs. That show, that show's cutting edge. I hired Richie because I need someone on my side. I'm at war. I mean this town...it's not big enough for the-

JANE
-stop. Please stop. I don't deal in clichés, I deal in calming whale music and examination of people.

ROY JIMINTON
...do you really think it's to do with the pickles?

JANE
Why do you think you're here Roy?

ROY JIMINTON
Because I had that, that episode where I...

JANE

You're here because you need
someone to talk to, want someone to
talk to.

ROY JIMINTON

I can stop coming here if you want,
if I'm putting you out in any way I
can-

JANE

-are you listening to me? You've
had this, you, I, talking?

She gestures to the toys around, the clutter.

JANE

Seen what a full house is like
again. You realise you want more of
this. It makes complete sense you
hired this guy.

Roy looks lost in thought, then -

ROY JIMINTON

...you know someone someday just
said, yip this is whales singing.
But maybe it's not, maybe it's
whales in pain. Maybe this is them
in distress, off course, the whales
screaming to each other, turn back,
turn back, we're gonna crash onto
the beach.

Jane studies him.

JANE

...whatever it is, it sounds nice to
me.

ROY JIMINTON

I did not hire him because I was
lonely, because I want this.

Roy gestures to the house around him.

ROY JIMINTON

I have a kid and I...

JANE

Have you done it?

Roy goes into his shell.

JANE

You promised me last time you were going to do it. You looked me in the eyes and said, promised you were going to do it.

ROY JIMINTON

I don't want to get her.

JANE

Deal with it Jiminton. He's going to be eighteen soon. You told me it's been six years. Six years. I couldn't imagine not seeing my child for six weeks let alone not even talking to him for six years.

ROY JIMINTON

They left me.

JANE

No. She left you. He went with his Mum.

ROY JIMINTON

She'll answer the phone I know it.

JANE

Okay. We're going to act out the call.

ROY JIMINTON

What? Is this in one of those books?

JANE

...let's do it anyway.

ROY JIMINTON

And you're my wife?

She nods.

Roy pulls out his wallet. From it he removes a tatty, folded piece of paper.

She looks over, curious.

ROY JIMINTON

It's the number.

She nods.

ROY JIMINTON

Hello.

JANE

Oh no, you got to do the ringing noise.
We can't just go straight into it, that
wouldn't be right.

Roy sighs deeply.

ROY JIMINTON

Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring.

JANE

(as if to someone else)
I'll get it.

Roy rolls his eyes.

JANE

Hello, Samantha speaking.

ROY JIMINTON

Why did you leave me?

JANE

Roy I really think we should-

ROY JIMINTON

-Why? What did I do? I mean you
don't just leave someone. It's
thought out, measured. So you have
to have a reason, you have to, why?

JANE

People change.

ROY JIMINTON

No they don't. If they did people
would feel bad about putting people
in electric chairs.

JANE

We don't do that here.

ROY JIMINTON

I haven't changed. Nothing changes.
People just get older. Albert?
Albert's my best customer. He's
ninety something and two o'clock
everyday, he comes into the store,
asks me about my day. He's building
a deck now Samantha, did you know
that? How could you? Because you
left, you upped and went-

JANE

-I think we should just-

ROY JIMINTON

-do you know what I did when I got home, when I discovered you guys had gone? I took the dog's collar off and told it to go. I screamed at him, go on get out of here too. I guess you thought it was nice to leave me something, some company but I just yelled and yelled at it. It wouldn't move. And then... and then it died.

JANE

What?

ROY JIMINTON

Just keeled over, right there. Heart attack. So you didn't just leave me, you murdered our dog.

JANE

I don't think you can-

ROY JIMINTON

-Murdered him. He was a good dog too. Loyal. Now he's dead. You've killed him. You're a murderer. What do you have to say for yourself? Well, what do you?

JANE

...Roy.

Roy calms down and takes in his surroundings.

JANE

There's a few things there that we should talk about. We're out of time but it's a good place to start next week.

Roy nods meekly.

Appendix B1: Excerpt from *Roy Jiminton* film script: Opening Scenes

EXT. MOTORWAY. AFTERNOON.

We are traveling along a busy Motorway when we suddenly go up and over the guard rail.

EXT. FRITHTON. AFTERNOON.

We enter the small town of Frithton. A sign states "Frithton pop. 471".

Then we're on the main street. We see a faded signpost detailing the distances and directions to other places. Next to this is a large old two storey building. "Roy's Emporium" written in large faded yellow letters. We go inside.

INT. EMPORIUM: STORE FLOOR. AFTERNOON.

The store is very large, it's bursting at the seams with all manner of items; from dog food to sunglasses to a large, firm looking couch. If it's cheap in any way or off the beaten path, this place has it.

There is one sales counter, equipped with a very outdated computer, think late eighties.

Behind the counter stands GLENN early thirties, a striped shirt doing his expanding waistline no favours.

We head to the back of the store into the stockroom.

INT. EMPORIUM: STOCKROOM. AFTERNOON.

Three men are seated on the right hand side of a large table. GREG and THOMAS dressed similarly in dated suits, both appear nervous. RICHIE GOTTI; mid forties, in a bright Hawaiian shirt with a sixties Motown haircut is anything but, his hand preoccupied with the top of his mouth.

ROY JIMINTON walks into the room. Roy is in his early forties, well presented but his clothes have seen better days. His hair is short, nondescript, but it suits him.

ROY JIMINTON

Thanks for coming. Sorry about the unusual arrangement. (indicating the three of them at the one table). But this is sales and that's outselling the other guy. Let me have it.

Roy motions for Greg to speak.

GREG

Retail is what I do. Ten years I was deputy assistant trainee manager at the Warehouse.

ROY JIMINTON

Deputy assistant trainee manager, that's no cake walk, that's responsibility.

Roy gestures to Thomas.

THOMAS

I've worked in all areas from stock supervision to check outs.

ROY JIMINTON

Rounded, that's important. (bringing his attention to Richie) What about yourself?

Richie's hand is still working away in his mouth, he pulls it out.

RICHIE GOTTI

Richie.

Pause. An eager Roy signals for him to go on.

RICHIE GOTTI

Peanut butter, stuck there.

Roy spins his index fingers over each other.

ROY JIMINTON

You and retail, what do I wanna know?

RICHIE GOTTI

Done a bit of everything.

ROY JIMINTON

Tad general.

RICHIE GOTTI
All sorts really.

ROY JIMINTON
Clear communication, does it
every time. The siren song of
sales and he - (points to Richie)
- he can sing it.

INT. EMPORIUM: STORE FLOOR. AFTERNOON.

Glenn is behind the counter. Roy and the successful Richie
walk over.

ROY JIMINTON
Glenn, this is Richie. The man
who's gonna have to take up your
slack when you leave.

GLENN
(not pleasantly)
I've heard of you, from Earl.

RICHIE GOTTI
(taking in the store)
It's a big fucker huh?

Roy's eyes widen. Richie walks off to look around the store.

CUT TO:

Roy's serving a MAN IN BLUE OVERALLS who is buying large
bolts.

OVERALLS MAN
Are these weight bearing?

ROY JIMINTON
Absolutely.

As Roy is finishing up the sale -

GLENN
-Out of everyone in that room,
you hired Richie Gotti?

The blue overall man leaves.

GLENN
With what happened at Earl's
butchery?

ROY JIMINTON
Richie told me all about it,
misunderstanding is all.

An elderly customer, ALBERT enters. Albert is eighty
nine years old, doesn't look it and is as thin as a
rail.

ROY JIMINTON
There he is, my best customer.

ALBERT
Hi Roy, getting those pieces for
my deck.

ROY JIMINTON
Finally putting it on?

ALBERT
Not getting any younger.

Roy takes a step back, sizing him up.

ROY JIMINTON
You sure?

Albert laughs.

CUT TO:

Roy's ringing up the sale.

ALBERT
How you getting on with that
fella over there?

Albert throws a thumb over his shoulder indicating the
other side of the street.

ROY JIMINTON
Murphy? I know, things he's selling now!
Wallpaper! "Environment medicine" he
says.

ALBERT
Should see what he's got now.

ROY JIMINTON
You're going there over me?

ALBERT
Not selling my pills yet, are you?
Big thing, big metal shelving
number.

Roy's unhappy as he hands Albert the filled plastic bag.

ROY JIMINTON
See you next time Albert.

Albert smiles back and walks out of the store.

Appendix B2: Excerpt from *Roy* play script (transformation adaptation): Opening Scene

Roy Jiminton stands there, agitated. A clock reads 10.40am.

Annoyed, he paces, rehearsing to himself.

ROY

There is a standard in business and
when that standard is not reached.
Lacking. Things lack. The question
is Richie, do you want to be
someone who lacks or do you want to
be someone who...

Roy struggles to find a word.

ROY

Delivers, and not like a courier
but inspires? Third day on the job?
Late every time, Richie, I'm
sorry, you're fired.

Roy isn't happy to say it but then grows in confidence. He
did and could say it.

ROY

Fired. Pack your things. Hit the
road. It hasn't worked out so
there's the door.

Into the emporium strides Richie.

Before Roy even has a chance to speak.

RICHIE

Hey boss.

ROY

Oh, hey Richie, how are you?

RICHIE

What I miss?

ROY

Well um, work starts at seven like
always, catch the farmers that way.

RICHIE

Yeah, so, what I miss?

ROY
The start of work.

RICHIE
I had glide time built up.

ROY
This is your third day.

Richie doesn't understand Roy's point.

ROY
I think we need to have a
conversation.

Richie pulls a face.

ROY
There are certain expectations.

Richie nods.

ROY
I've been running this emporium for
seventeen years.

Richie looks around, clearly very unimpressed by that.

ROY
It's important. It's a service,
people count, rely on, need, like a
pharmacist.

Richie doesn't agree.

RICHIE
Those people have licenses. They're
degreed up. Why do you think they gets to
stand higher up than everyone else?

Richie mimes this, Roy's annoyed.

ROY
It's not about a higher education.

RICHIE
It is.

(indicates himself)
Law school seven years.

This throws Roy.

ROY
Seven?

RICHIE
Was going to be a judge, right out
of university.

ROY
What happened?

RICHIE
Downloaded some movies.

Something is not adding up here. Roy however just wants
things back on point.

ROY
Do you think things are working
well here. You, the job, all of
that?

RICHIE
Course I do, it's going great.

Not what Roy wanted to hear.

ROY
No issuesor ...concerns?

RICHIE
You getting at something?

ROY
...you've been late every day.

RICHIE
You're basing this on what?

ROY
Time.

RICHIE
Time's relative.

Roy stares, puzzled, wanting him to expand.

RICHIE
You don't think so good around

corners huh? A real straight arrow.

Roy nods.

RICHIE
You ever think about where that's
got you?

ROY
Excuse me?

RICHIE
I mean from what I hear, failed
marriage.

ROY
I'm still married.

RICHIE
But she left ya. What, six years
ago? With your kid.

ROY
I don't see what that's- and it was
five and a half years.

Richie rolls his eyes.

RICHIE
Shop's not doing so good.

ROY
Who are you hearing this from?

RICHIE
It's all around.

ROY
well... the whole town is...
repositioning itself since the motorway
expansion.

RICHIE
Y'mean since it became a ghost
town? Why do you think I'm hiding
out-

Richie stops himself.

Roy looks over, perplexed.

RICHIE

-having some "me time."

ROY
...we're talking about you being
late.

RICHIE
That's just how you see things.

Roy really doesn't know how to pursue this.

RICHIE
And if I am late. I've got a bloody
good reason.

Roy stares, awaiting it.

RICHIE
That guy, that old, ancient, I knew
Brutus before he was an asshole,
who's always in here, your
"favourite" customer.

ROY
Albert.

RICHIE
Dead.

ROY
What?

RICHIE
Dead as.

ROY
He was in here yesterday buying a hammer and
nails.

RICHIE
Oh.

ROY
Oh?

RICHIE
That's not good.

Roy grows more concerned.

RICHIE
That's how he died. He was building
his deck. Hammering, hammering and
then. Not hammering. Again. Ever.

Richie acts out a huge heart attack.

 RICHIE
Way I heard it, his heart exploded,
pieces of it all over his deck.

 ROY
He's...he's really...

 RICHIE
Hey, if his family try to take you
to court cos you sold him the shit
that killed him, I'll defend ya,
half my normal rate. A quarter off.
A tenth.

Roy is really cut up about the fact that Albert has died.

 ROY
He...he and I...

 RICHIE
I know, you two would talk, it must
be real...upsetting to ya...tell ya
what, why don't we shut the shop, a
sign of respect and all that.

Roy's in a daze.

 RICHIE
The weather's too good to be working anyway.

Appendix B3: Excerpt from *This Town That Roy Lives In* play script (analogy adaptation): Opening Scene

An elderly man hobbles out onto the stage.

He addresses the audience.

ALBERT
Don't mind me I'll be dead soon.

Albert shuffles to one side.

ALBERT
...it can't have been a surprise.
Look at me. Still it was a surprise
to me. Think that's how it works.

Albert mimics looking up at the sun.

ALBERT
I think it's an eclipse. No, no,
it's death. Bugger.

Albert takes in the surroundings of the set.

ALBERT
They say everyone has one perfect
love out there in the world. I did.
Beatrice. Hell of a woman. So kind.
And she made a pot roast to die
for. Well not really. It's just
food and nothing is worth dying
for. Especially food. You eat that
to keep going, so to die over it's
just... so, so, like everyone has
one perfect love, I think everyone
has one place they call home, that
is home, that radiates in their
bones. That's this place for me.
It's a special type of place.

Large letters are lowered from the ceiling, spelling out
the name of a town.

Albert sighs deeply, goes over to them and rearranges
the letters so they spell out another town.

He looks at them and smiles.

Roy walks out onto the stage.

Roy stands behind a counter.

Albert walks over, he mimes placing a number of items on the counter.

ROY
The deck huh?

ALBERT
It's time.

Albert addresses the audience.

ALBERT
It wasn't actually. I died
doing it.

ROY
Was wondering when you'd finish
it off.

ALBERT
Got to finish these things
before they finish you.

Albert turns to the audience, giving them a slight nod.

Albert takes the items and hobbles off stage. He instantly turns around and walks back gruff.

PHIL
Roy!

Roy looks over, annoyed to see this person.

PHIL
Tell me. Tell. Me. You're not doing
it. You're not running again.

ROY
I am.

PHIL
Oh Roy please. If you see something
hemorrhaging. You don't stand by.
You don't be idle.

ROY
Idol?

PHIL
Idel.

Phil sees that Roy has not got it.

PHIL
To stand still.

ROY
Oh.

PHIL
You're the worst mayor this town
has ever seen and when there is the
ray of light that your sixth term
is nearly over -

ROY
Seventh.

PHIL
Dear god. That there is the chance
of the hemorrhaging stopping. Of
there being hope for our town, and
people are saying you're going to
run again.

ROY
Which I am.

PHIL
Beg. I beg you to reconsider.

ROY
I'm not going to.

PHIL
Do you know what gangrene is? It's
when old blood keeps circulating
the body. Things get tired and they
get gangrene.

ROY
That's not how it works.

PHIL
Do you really want to dispute me on
this.

ROY
It's not how gangrene works.

PHIL
See, you've got old blood spinning
round your head and it's making
your thoughts, the very byproducts
of your head, be coloured by the
gangrene.

ROY
You don't have to vote for me.

Phil's insulted by this.

PHIL
...and what? I vote for the other
guy? He's a crook. A liar. You can
never get a straight answer out of
him.

Phil suddenly morphs into Kurt Curtis. He turns around as if
it's a public address; his face seems pained with regret.

KURT CURTIS
You ask me if I've done wrong? I
say that's a loaded question.
That's not the type of question you
come at someone with. First off who
am I? That's so subjective. I am
the son of my parents?
You could say of course I am, that's
exactly what I am but then that's not
really looking at things in the right
light now is it? Because my parents,
God rest their souls and if the
justice system had any justice my
father would have come out a long
time ago. I'd say no, I am not their
son in that did just they shape me?

He gestures to someone in the audience.

KURT CURTIS
Helen babysat every day after
school for six years. To ignore
that. To say I'm not a part of her?
That's like looking science in the
face and saying where were you when
there was flying lizards eating
gluten intolerant dinosaurs. So
your question of "have I done
wrong?" I can't answer it because
it's so insulting to so many people
who have shaped and molded me. I
won't get onto the issues with the
word wrong.

Kurt goes right back to being Phil.

PHIL
You think I'm going to vote for
that.

ROY
If I don't run, he'll get in, there
won't be anyone else.

PHIL
Now see that's what I said but-

Phil changes into Dolores.

Dolores is incredibly measured with each and every word.

DOLORES
Nature. It's an incredibly
curious thing. World. War. Two. A
lot of men died. Nature. It knew
this. It must have. The next year.
Fifty one percent baby boys were
born. The only time ever that the
quota was not balanced. Roy
doesn't run? Nature will find
someone to fill that void.

PHIL
See? You don't run, something else,
someone better will come along.

Roy obviously doesn't like this. Phil can sense
this.

PHIL
You have enough on your plate. Your
store's doing badly.

Roy goes to interject.

PHIL
Bad. Ly.

Roy can't argue that.

PHIL
Your failed marriage? Not a good
look.

Phil becomes Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA
It's not me leaving you, that's a
very pessimistic way to look at
it.

ROY
How else can I look at it?

ALEXANDRA
See. That's that narrow mindedness
we've talked about.

ROY
You're taking your things. You're
leaving me.

ALEXANDRA
Should I leave my things here?
Would that make you feel better? Be
selfish wouldn't it? Me, having to
leave my dresses, my make-ups, my
soaps here, simply so you don't
feel as bad?

ROY
Can we not talk about this?

ALEXANDRA
There's nothing you can say. And
I'd really rather not leave my
clothes here. It's not very
practical what you're proposing.
And it's a little creepy Roy.

ROY
I'm not asking you to do that.

ALEXANDRA
You're not?

ROY
I want you to stay here. We're
married, we've got a son together.

Alexandra goes to morph into Mattie the son.

But then pauses, looking around.

ALEXANDRA
He's not here right now.

ROY
I'm begging you to reconsider.

Suddenly Alexandra becomes Kurt Curtis.

KURT CURTIS
Begging is not an attractive
quality Roy.

ROY
Kurt Curtis, what are you doing
here?

Kurt turns to "Alexandra".

KURT CURTIS
You haven't told him?

Alexandra shakes her head sheepishly.

KURT CURTIS
Roy. I don't know what to say. This
is really...I'm almost embarrassed.
For you. But I'm not because that,
that would mean me subjecting you
to how I view the world because I
- I would be embarrassed right
now. Mortified in fact.
But for me to think you'd see this,
this here, what's happening, that
you'd see it in the same manner as
me? That would be incredibly arrogant
of me.

ROY
You're with Kurt Curtis?

Alexandra nods her head, she's not enjoying this at all.

ROY
Kurt Curtis? Even his name is
ridiculous.

KURT CURTIS
Now that's low Roy. You don't see
me taking any pot shots at you do
you?

ROY
You're sleeping with my wife.

KURT CURTIS
(to Alexandra)
I'll be in the car.

Kurt walks a few steps, he spins around and is Alexandra
again.

ROY
Him? Of all the people, him?

ALEXANDRA
Would you like me to leave that
blue dress you like here?

ROY
No. Take it and get out.

ALEXANDRA
You don't want to talk about this?

ROY
Of course I do.

Alexandra notices something outside.

ALEXANDRA
Oh. He's left the car running. It's a
Holden so...not good for the
environment if we... right now.

ROY
I suppose not.

ALEXANDRA
Knew you would understand.

Alexandra leaves.

Appendix C1: Excerpt from *Roy Jiminton* film script: Stealing The Cow sequence

EXT. MAIN STREET ALLEY. VERY EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING.

All three are crouched in the alley. Their breath coming out steam. Richie's drinking from a hipflask.

He hands it to Roy. Roy takes a big swig. He goes to hand it to Mattie but instead takes another swig.

ROY JIMINTON
So how are we getting in there?

RICHIE GOTTI
I made a copy of the key.

Richie pulls it from his pocket, it has soap flakes on it.

ROY JIMINTON
What's that?

RICHIE GOTTI
Soap. I made it.

MATTIE
That's cool.

A thought pops into Roy's head.

ROY JIMINTON
Do you have one for the Emporium?

RICHIE GOTTI
(avoiding the question)
Alright I really want beef, so
we're grabbing a cow, take all
three of us.

ROY JIMINTON
A cow?!

RICHIE GOTTI
Man's gotta get paid.

Mattie's a little nervous now.

ROY JIMINTON
Mattie, we don't have to do this.

MATTIE
(point to prove)
I want to.

RICHIE GOTTI
Jiminton meeting over?

Richie pulls out a balaclava and puts it on.

Roy does a double take at Richie wearing a balaclava.

Then Richie's gone, dashing over to the butchery's back door. Unlocking the door, he waves Mattie and Roy over.

Roy takes another swig and then slides the hipflask into the front of his pants.

They run across. Roy trying to look in every direction at once prolongs his trip.

INT. BUTCHERY FREEZER. VERY EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING.

The room is dark and cold. Meat's the order of the day from four carcasses hanging on a railing to a number of chops etc. in containers on the floor.

The three men are standing around inside.

ROY JIMINTON
Which one do you want?

RICHIE GOTTI
I don't know.

ROY JIMINTON
What's it feel like?

RICHIE GOTTI
Cold and hard. Like an Eskimo's
dick.

Mattie laughs.

Roy looks on, jealous.

RICHIE GOTTI
Got it!

The three move the carcass into position to carry it, before heading for the door.

In the process, Roy puts his left foot through a packet of meat and it becomes attached. He continues walking with the carcass, trying to shake the packet loose.

MATTIE
We're doing it.

RICHIE GOTTI
Man's gotta get paid.

MATTIE
Got to.

The annoyance of Mattie being in the Richie fan club is enough incentive for Roy to finally shake the packet loose.

EXT. MAIN STREET. ALLEY. VERY EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING.

Richie locks the back door.

RICHIE GOTTI
And we're out.

The three lift the carcass onto their bent backs. They head towards the main road, brightly lit by the street lights.

MATTIE
This is never gonna fit in Roy's car.

RICHIE GOTTI
Not like his car'd move if it did.

The two laugh.

ROY JIMINTON
What do you suggest then?

RICHIE GOTTI
My place isn't too far.

They begin heading away from the main street, towards a field. They all labour under the effort.

CUT TO:

They are further on, entering the field, when -

RICHIE GOTTI
Shit, the fuzz!

ROY JIMINTON
The Fuzz?!

Back on the main street a Police car drives along, turning off toward them.

Before you know it Richie's gone, running off into the field.

Roy and Mattie nervously look at each other. Both struggling under the weight of the cow.

ROY JIMINTON
Go Mattie, GO!

MATTIE
Come with me!

ROY JIMINTON
We dump this, they'll come looking for us. Someone has to stay.

The lights of the police car draw closer. Mattie drops his part of the carcass, walking backwards, looking at Roy.

ROY JIMINTON
GO!

Mattie runs off into the field.

Roy stands there a moment before collapsing under the weight. The police car stops, an OFFICER gets out.

Her flashlight illuminates Roy pinned beneath the carcass draining the last of the hipflask.

AppendixC2:Excerptfrom *Roy*playscript (transformation adaptation): Stealing The Cow Scene

The three men are incredibly strained, out of breath.
They walk with the carcass of a giant cow on their backs.

 RICHIE GOTTI
We gotta take a break.

 ROY JIMINTON
We can't take a break. Someone will
see us.

 RICHIE GOTTI
And what, there's no crime being
seen with a giant carcass.

 ROY JIMINTON
You don't think people will put two
and two together tomorrow when
Fred's talking about how he was
robbed? And what did he do to you
anyway?

 RICHIE GOTTI
He needs to learn a lesson.

 ROY JIMINTON
What about?

 RICHIE GOTTI
About...look...he

 ROY JIMINTON
Why did we steal this cow Richie?

 RICHIE GOTTI
We "took" this cow for a multitude
of reasons.

 ROY JIMINTON
Considering you've turned my kid
into a felon on the day he
becomes able to be tried as an
adult, think you could give me one
reason.

 RICHIE GOTTI
He annoyed me.

 ROY JIMINTON
What?

RICHIE GOTTI
He annoyed me.

ROY JIMINTON
That's not a reason.

RICHIE GOTTI
He...said things about my Mother.

ROY JIMINTON
Fred did?

RICHIE GOTTI
Hurtful, insidious things.

ROY JIMINTON
...even so.

Roy gestures they should take the cow back.

MATTIE
You a coward Roy?

ROY JIMINTON
...no I'm not.

RICHIE GOTTI
Objection overruled. You
are.

Roy shakes his head.

MATTIE
You are.

ROY JIMINTON
Because I think we shouldn't steal
from some guy?

MATTIE
Because your whole life.

RICHIE GOTTI
Excellent point.

ROY JIMINTON
Richie can you just... shut up.

RICHIE GOTTI
You want the court to find you in
contempt?

ROY JIMINTON
I'm a coward? Why didn't you finish law school?

RICHIE GOTTI
That's real... You know the belt?
Way below it that was.

ROY JIMINTON
Go on big talker, why didn't you
finish. Seven years. They built the
Empire State Building in half that
time.

This is a sore point and Richie's hurting.

RICHIE GOTTI
There were legal ramifications
that were unable to be resolved
and-

MATTIE
-leave him alone. He's out there,
trying new things. You, you don't
even... Mum left you, you've been
waiting eight years for her to come
back, that sound heroic to you?

ROY JIMINTON
Matt. Watch what you say.

MATTIE
Why? You going to be a Dad to me or
something?

ROY JIMINTON
I'm asking you to-

MATTIE
-look just shut up "Dad" and carry
this fucking cow.

Roy steps out from holding the cow. The cow, too heavy for
Richie and Mattie lands solidly on the ground.

MATTIE
Good one.

ROY JIMINTON
You're being a real little ... you
know there's things that you-

RICHIE GOTTI
-seven years in law school told me
you don't do this when you're
trying to make a get away.

ROY JIMINTON
It can wait.

RICHIE GOTTI
We're right in the open here and
I've got things that, let's just
pick it up and-

Richie starts trying to lift the cow by himself.

ROY JIMINTON
It can wait!

Richie, defeated, gives up and stands back.

MATTIE
What? What do you wanna say old
man?

ROY JIMINTON
It's you who's got something to
say. I'm a coward am I?

Mattie nods his head.

ROY JIMINTON
Was I meant to chase after you two?

Mattie's not sure how to respond.

RICHIE GOTTI
(re: cow)
You know it's losing value by being
left like that.

Roy and Mattie just ignore him.

ROY JIMINTON
C'mon, say something.

MATTIE
You were supposed to be different.

ROY JIMINTON
I am.

MATTIE
Yeah right. Still all about your
store. You still don't want to do
anything.

Mattie gestures to the cow as evidence.

ROY JIMINTON

(re: cow)

What the fuck is this even meant to mean?

RICHIE GOTTI

Hurtful things about my Mum. One after another. So uncalled for.

ROY JIMINTON

I don't know who you want me to be, but I can tell you, I'm not it. So you're angry, you gotta be back with your old man. And I'm not this, this Ivan.

MATTIE

No you're not. Nothing like him.

ROY JIMINTON

I don't know what to say to you. You were a kid when you went away and now you're, you're...someone I don't know anymore.

MATTIE

Whose fault's that?

ROY JIMINTON

Mine.

Richie is pacing by the cow.

RICHIE GOTTI

Can we get back to stealing please?

Mattie stares at his father, demanding he continues with their robbery.

As they go to lift it, the flash of police lights appears.

RICHIE GOTTI

Oh fuck.

Richie takes off like a mad man.

Roy and Mattie stand there, stunned mullets. The loud rev of an engine and screech of car tires.

They go to follow Richie but that way has been cut off.

ROY JIMINTON
Quick, the trees.

Roy and Mattie bolt over to some nearby trees.

A spotlight lands on the cow and then swings over towards the trees.

Murphy appears onstage with a loud speaker.

MURPHY
There's a fence ten meters high
behind that, so unless you got a
gold medal in jumping high, I'd say
come out with your hands up.

Roy and Mattie cower behind a tree.

MATTIE
...isn't that the guy who runs the
pharmacy?

ROY JIMINTON
Murphy. He's a volunteer police
officer.

MATTIE
Is that legal?

ROY JIMINTON
The proper cop drinks all the time
so...no one seems to have a problem
with it.

Murphy stands beside the cow.

MURPHY
You guys must be real sicko to do
this to a poor little cow. Clearly
been violated. In all my months on
the force I've never seen anything
like this.

MATTIE
What are we gonna do?

ROY JIMINTON
We'll wait him out. He'll...we'll
wait him out.

Murphy pulls out a giant novel and sits down on top of the cow.

He shines his flashlight on the book and begins reading. Mattie and Roy look at each other in panic. The lights change to suggest some time has passed. Murphy sits there diligently reading his book. Mattie stares at his Dad for guidance, advice, something, anything.

ROY JIMINTON
Something else will happen. He'll get called away.

MATTIE
What? Something else is going to happen here? In this town?

Mattie has Roy here.

ROY JIMINTON
Maybe he'll finish the book and get bored.

MATTIE
Do you see how big that book is?

ROY JIMINTON
He'll get hungry.

On that, Murphy (who can't hear them) pulls from his pocket a packet of peanuts.

MATTIE
What else?

Roy has nothing else, he sits there defeated.

The lights change again. More time has passed.

ROY JIMINTON
I don't understand how Leisure Studies can actually be something you do at university.

MATTIE
It is and that's what I'm going to do.

ROY JIMINTON
What? Do you study couches, how people sit on them?

MATTIE

You study things that make you feel good, things that people should be doing.

ROY JIMINTON

Leisure Studies? You're making it up.

MATTIE

I'm not. That's what I'm going to go do... provided everything is all good with Mum.

ROY JIMINTON

Why wouldn't it be?

MATTIE

You think she wanted to come back?

ROY JIMINTON

...I don't know.

MATTIE

She didn't.

ROY JIMINTON

Why did she then?

MATTIE

Because we didn't have no choice.

Roy stares at him wanting to know more.

MATTIE

It was all gone. Again.

ROY JIMINTON

What was?

MATTIE

The money. This time the house. Ivan. He, he's got a gambling problem. The first time he wiped Mum out.

ROY JIMINTON

The money from our house?

Mattie nods.

MATTIE

All of that. But then Ivan, he tried really hard and he got on top of it and Mum gave him another chance. He was a really nice guy. The gambling was just... then it happened again a couple of years later and this time, somehow he was able to mortgage the house without Mum knowing about it. She got this eviction notice and she just lost it. I, she was shaking and shit, I thought she was gonna just, fall apart. I told her, we had to leave, we had to come back to here.

Roy thinks this all over long and hard.

ROY JIMINTON

She lost everything?

MATTIE

She's poorer than me now.

ROY JIMINTON

Why'd she give this guy another chance?

MATTIE

Cos she loved him.

Something about this seems to bother Roy.

Murphy puts down his book.

MURPHY

Excuse me. People with stealing dead animal issues? I'd settle for one of you. One come out, the other gets off. You two talk it over.

Roy and Mattie stare at each other.

ROY JIMINTON

...you know I'm a pillar of the community. This town would have a...troubling time trying to console themselves with this if I happened to...

Mattie's not buying a word.

ROY JIMINTON

It's Murphy. Do you know who Murphy is?

MATTIE

I know who I am. Your kid.

ROY JIMINTON

Great, fantastic bloody timing to play that card. That's Murphy. He would never, ever let this go. He's my...you know how all those heroes have their like bad guys, their nemesis? He's mine.

MATTIE

What can I say. I'm sorry.

ROY JIMINTON

Wouldn't be anything if you went down to him, you're not even an adult.

MATTIE

Eighteen today, remember?

ROY JIMINTON

(hushed)
...fuck.

MATTIE

What's your problem with him?

ROY JIMINTON

He is not a nice man. In this town we're supposed to respect each others spaces. Frankie who runs the bakery and the hairdresser in the same shop. Always hair in the pies and sandwiches. Does anyone say? Do anything about it? No. No we just, we just hold the line.

MATTIE

The line?

ROY JIMINTON

We just try to keep things the same as much as we can and this guy, this freaking guy. He sells milk in a pharmacy, someone told me you can get those french stick things there now.

MATTIE
Maybe people want that?

Roy can't believe it.

ROY JIMINTON
I think I know what people want.

MATTIE
For you to just be talking about
things for years and never do them?
Maybe Murphy doesn't do that.

Roy's aghast.

MATTIE
Hell I remember you sitting at the
dinner table, these plans all
folded out on the table for this
drive in furniture shop.

ROY JIMINTON
That's still going to happen. These
things, they take time.

MATTIE
It's too late Roy. Too late. Like
you and me actually being Father
and Son, it's too late.

ROY JIMINTON
We can still...

MATTIE
Why?

ROY JIMINTON
Because we should, because we need
to.

MATTIE
Why do I need to? When I needed to,
where were you? Know what it's like
to have birthdays and all you want
is a phone call, something to show
that you're actually missed, that
you matter.

ROY JIMINTON
I tried to ring you. I did. So many
times.

MATTIE

And?

ROY JIMINTON

I...I didn't know what to say.

MATTIE

Happy Birthday woulda' been nice.

ROY JIMINTON

I'm sorry.

MATTIE

You going to look after her?

Roy looks at him blankly.

MATTIE

(snaps)

Mum.

ROY JIMINTON

There's something I need
to...I...things are...

Mattie stares daggers into his Father.

MURPHY

You know I have tear gas? I have to
fill something out if I use it so
that's why I...but if I get to the
end of the chapter and there's
no...you will know about it.

ROY JIMINTON

He's bluffing.

MATTIE

Why would he bluff? He, we, have
been out here for hours. Can you
just-

ROY JIMINTON

-it's Murphy.

Mattie starts to head out of the trees towards Murphy.

Roy grabs him and pulls him back.

ROY JIMINTON

Can't we just see how bad tear gas
actually is? It can't be too bad,
they wouldn't use it if it was.

MATTIE

You do know the Police also carry guns? So by your logic those can't be bad either?

ROY JIMINTON

Being tear gassed together? That could really bond us.

MATTIE

I'm going Roy.

Mattie goes to leave again.

ROY JIMINTON

Please don't. Just, give me a minute alright.

Roy gets down on his knees almost as if in prayer.

MATTIE

What are you doing?

ROY JIMINTON

Asking God to not be such a jerk.

Roy stands up.

ROY JIMINTON

Happy Birthday Mattie.

Roy then steps out of the trees and heads towards Murphy.

Murphy cannot believe his luck.

MURPHY

Jiminton. Roy Jiminton?

Roy doesn't want to give Murphy any satisfaction whatsoever.

MURPHY

Man. This is just. Wow. This is like a total Moby Dick moment. Aw man and to think I was going to leave.

ROY JIMINTON

What about the tear gas?

MURPHY

I couldn't do that. I'm not even really a cop.

Murphy then realises.

MURPHY

The fuck you steal a cow for?

Roy again doesn't want to give him anything.

MURPHY

Oh no. It's because of me isn't it?
I'm destroying your business. Oh
god Roy, are you going hungry
because of my superior business
skills?

ROY JIMINTON

No. I just. I just happened to want
to steal a cow today.

MURPHY

Roy I've put you in the poverty
line haven't I? It's almost me I
should be locking up. Course I
haven't done anything wrong, except
achieve the great dream whereas you
have failed. Failed badly.

Murphy studies the cow on the ground.

MURPHY

Failed woefully.

ROY JIMINTON

Could you just read me my rights?

MURPHY

Caveat emptor.

Murphy roars with laughter, then handcuffs Roy.

Appendix D1: Excerpt from *Roy Jiminton* film script: Eulogy Scene

(Albert's funeral)

MINISTER

Now unless anyone else has anything further to say...

Roy on shaky pins, stands up. Then he's frozen.

MINISTER

Roy?

Roy's hand goes to his pocket, pats the speech. It's all going to be fine. Roy heads to the stage.

He looks out at all the faces, basically the entire town. As he unfolds his speech he sees that all the type has smudged to one side and is totally unreadable!

Panic fills Roy, he takes a half step back as if to leave but feels the weight of the faces, the town, Samantha, upon him. He retracts that half step, looks down, then back up.

ROY JIMINTON

Albert was a man, who...was a man, who knew how to be...now don't get me wrong we all know how to be, but he also knew...how to be. Albert was...a good customer, a smart customer, he bought...wisely. That's not to say there are things in my store you wouldn't be wise to buy, it's just that he made...sure purchases, you don't always get that in retail.

Roy points to the ELDERLY ACCORDIONIST.

ROY JIMINTON

I mean Mrs. Payne, you I think it's fair to say are not always...totally sure when you're about to purchase something, that's not to say you're not a good shopper, just different to Albert and it's not like you haven't been happy with what you've bought. I can't think of anything you've returned.

MRS. PAYNE

I returned that birdcage.

Everything is silent. Mrs. Payne reads that as people wanting to know why.

MRS. PAYNE

The bird got out.

ROY JIMINTON

And I'm sorry about that, as I explained hinges are a complicated item to mass produce and things like that can happen.

MURPHY

The hinges are good at my place.

ROY JIMINTON

You're selling hinges now?

Roy feels the weight of the faces return.

AppendixD2: Excerpt from *This Town That Roy Lives In* playscript (analogy adaptation): Bird Henry Scene

(Roy in a therapy session with Jane. Her young son Benny is present)

JANE
You did kill her uncle.

Roy gets his back up at this.

JANE
In her eyes you did.

ROY
What? I'm supposed to stop selling
anything to everybody because it
might cause them to die?

JANE
Mrs. Osborne did have that
breakdown.

ROY
And I'm sorry about that.

JANE
She was very close to that bird.

ROY
And what happened was unfortunate
but I think the fingers have been
pointed a little unfairly at me.

JANE
You sold her a birdcage which
didn't close properly.

Benny morphs into the bird, flying out of the cage.

Jane becomes Mrs. Osborne and chases after the bird in a
panic.

MRS. OSBORNE
Henry! Henry! Henry!

She runs after the bird.

Her face turns to horror.

MRS. OSBORNE
NOOO! Get down, look out for the-

Henry the bird suddenly disintegrates.

ROY
I think having ceiling fans and a bird is not a good idea and her decision making with regards to that warranted further attention than it received.

JANE
It wouldn't have happened if you hadn't sold her a faulty cage.

BENNY
Mum, is he the man that killed that sad lady's bird?

Jane nods, then adds.

JANE
(to Benny)
She wasn't sad before that.

ROY
That's highly debatable. We don't know what else was going on in her life.

Benny quickly becomes the bird once more.

This time however he lies on the floor, a crumpled mess, one wing still trying to half flap.

Jane, as Mrs. Osborne struggles, to keep her emotions in check.

She stands solemnly beside her fallen bird, giving a eulogy.

MRS. OSBORNE
People would make fun of my mother for having a parrot that couldn't speak, they would think it was hilarious, what was the point of having a bird that could mimic speech if it couldn't? Those people didn't know you Bird Henry.

I think of my life and there is a line that follows all the way through and that's you Bird Henry. My mother and I, we were never close. I didn't understand her cruel ways, her constant judgment. I felt like I could do nothing but let her down. She always favoured my sister. I remember one Christmas, rushing through to the tree. There was only one present that year and it was for Barbara. Mother explained to us there wasn't enough to go around that year and as Barbara was the eldest she received the present for that year. I cried and cried, it seemed so unfair. Mother explained to me that the next Christmas I would be the one to receive the present. That Christmas went, our situation had improved and there were two presents for her and myself. I never knew what I could do to make my mother love me. My entire life, there was a wound in my side, Then there was you Bird Henry. Mother succumbed to bronchus. I sat there as the will was read out, everything to sister Barbara and her children. But you? When it was declared that you would be to live with me, that I was to care for you. It's as if someone had a wand and took the pain from my side away, the heaviness of my heart. I rushed you home. I smiled and smiled to have you there. It meant that my Mother cared, that she trusted me and all the love I had, all the love I could possibly ever have, I gave to you. I showered and showered you with it. Then you did something that...I had to sit down after. It was a bolt across the universe. You...spoke. Never, never with my Mother had you said anything, not with her years and years of trying but with me you spoke. You said-

BIRD HENRY

Trish-a.

MRS. OSBORNE

Trish-a. My name. I never felt a joy, a thrill, an utter pleasure like that. And I realised, you were my bird now, mine, that you, my Mother even had realised you were best with me. I went to the local store to get you the biggest cage, you and me, we were meant to be and I was going to make sure you were comfortable for a very long time.

She stares out at the audience. On the verge of a flood of tears.

Jane takes her seat.

ROY

I always thought it was a bit, a bit of an overreaction. It was just a bird.

JANE

I suppose.

They sit there, neither sure what to say.

Appendix E: Excerpt from *This Town That Roy Lives In* play script (analogy adaptation): Dream Sequence

Onto the stage comes Patti, the lights darken.

Hundreds of little stars appear in the sky.

Roy walks towards her.

She extends her arms, almost unnaturally. Roy takes them. They stand there a second, looking at each other lovingly.

Music suddenly begins and the two start dancing.

At first it's a waltz, the two moving together beautifully, gliding around the stage.

The music suddenly shifts to swing and without missing a beat they shift into a jitterbug dance.

It's as if these two people were meant to be together.

The music keeps changing and the pair keep adjusting as if it's the most natural thing in the world.

The Charleston.

Tap.

Hip-Hop.

Salsa.

And then the music slows and the two just quietly, softly dance with each other.

A shooting star flies across the sky.

PATTI

Oh Roy, I think my heart could just burst.

ROY
(re dancing)
I think mine just did.

He goes to kiss her.

Suddenly Albert slides onto the stage. This is far from natural. He glides, perfectly still, his legs not moving. He stops center stage.

Roy is shocked by Albert's appearance.

ALBERT
No. No. No. This isn't meant to happen.

ROY
No?

ALBERT
No. You're like me. You are me. You and I, we don't do this. We don't expose ourselves. We keep it under lock and key.

ROY
No. No I don't.

Albert changes into Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA
Roy, I was thinking, what if you closed the store for a couple of weeks? We go have that honeymoon we never did.

Patti suddenly becomes Roy.

Roy becomes a spectator, watching "himself" and Alexandra.

"ROY"
...better not.

ALEXANDRA
Roy please, it's important we do things. Vanuatu sounds nice this time of year.

"ROY"
I know someone who got food poisoning there once.

ALEXANDRA
Could be somewhere else then.

"ROY"
I think we have enough on our
plate.

Alexandra becomes Mattie.

MATTIE
Dad, there's a, there's going to be
try-outs for the school's rugby
team and I was, you think you could
give me some tips?

Roy's distracted, studying some papers.

MATTIE
Dad?

"ROY"
Sorry, what?

MATTIE
The rugby team at school's going to
have try outs and could you give
me some help, we go throw the ball
out back or...

"ROY"
Sure.

Mattie's delighted at this.

"ROY"
Not right now though. When's try
outs?

MATTIE
Tomorrow... could that wait
until then?

Mattie gestures to what Roy's doing.

"ROY"
Not really, it's the town's budget.

MATTIE
Oh.

Mattie dejected walks off stage.

After a few moments Roy walks off after him.

Roy comes back empty handed.

"ROY"

Alex? Alex? You see where Mattie
went to?

Alexandra appears from the other side of the stage.

ALEXANDRA

Went round to Dale's, apparently
his dad's helping them with
something.

Roy's saddened by this.

ALEXANDRA

Just down the road if you want to-

"ROY"

-it's okay.

Roy returns to the town's budget, then becomes Patti
again.

PATTI

(to the actual Roy)
Why are you like this?

Albert shuffles past.

ALBERT

Cos he's like me. He's meant to die
alone.

PATTI

At a funeral where no one turns up.

ALBERT

They might not even have the
funeral.

PATTI

True.

ROY

I've done things. Important things.

Albert and Patti stare at him blankly.

PATTI

Who have you touched Roy? What have
you given out into the world?

ROY
My shop. People find that useful.

ALBERT
You seriously overcharge

Albert's got Roy there.

ROY
(to Patti)
I can't do what you do. Your books.
Writing those.

PATTI
It's easy Roy. Find what's in your
heart and let it out.

Patti and Albert sit together.

PATTI
You kissed me, why did you do that?

Roy shrugs.

PATTI
Come on. People don't just do
things. Why do you think you kissed
me?

ROY
...you looked nice.

PATTI
If you could meet me in any way.
How would you do it?

ROY
Any way, any time?

PATTI
You write the Mills and Boon of us.

ROY
I don't know what that is.

PATTI
A romantic novel.

ROY
And it could be set in any time?

Patti nods.

Roy takes Patti, guides her to one side of the stage, starts to push her down.

She's a little thrown by this but goes along with it.

ROY
This, this is a cave.

Patti smiles, she can see he's getting into this.

Roy walks over to Albert and whispers something into his ear.

Albert looks a bit shocked.

Roy dashes into the cave.

PATTI
Who are you?

ROY
Be quiet!

Albert stomps past, he's a dinosaur, he roars near the cave.

PATTI
Oh my God.

ROY
I know.

PATTI
(hushed, awed whisper)
A dinosaur.

Albert sniffs near the cave.

Roy gestures for Patti to do something.

She half leaps into his arms.

Roy holds her tightly. He clearly struggles with the weight.

They both notice this but he makes a face like it's okay, continue on.

PATTI
What are we going to do. What are
we going to do? What are we going
to-

She's being too noisy, Roy has to do something.

So he kisses her.

PATTI
What was that?

Roy whispers into her ear.

PATTI
What? That's your fantasy? You
created the world's first ever
kiss?

Roy nods, quite proud of himself.

Patti thinking about it is quite impressed.

PATTI
But what about ...?

Patti gestures to the giant man eating dinosaur.

Roy smiles at her.

Then he "leaps" out of the cave.

The dinosaur attempts to bite Roy's head off.

Roy ducks.

Roy then punches the dinosaur. The dinosaur reels back in pain.

PATTI
C'mon, punching a dinosaur.

Roy nods at her point, she's right.

The two "reverse" back to before the dinosaur tried to eat Roy's head.

Roy again ducks out of the biting.

This time he rams a finger into the "eye" of the dinosaur.

He looks to Patti for approval. She nods.

He then walks over.

Patti however has a problem.

PATTI
...that would just make it angrier.

Roy and the "dinosaur" share a look, both are more than happy for that to be enough.

Patti however is not buying it.

She gestures for them to resume.

ROY
Hey, whose fantasy thing is this?

Nope that's not going to work.

PATTI
Hey, who just invented the kiss?

Roy and the "dinosaur" grudgingly line up how they were.

ROY
(to dinosaur)
Ready when you are.

The dinosaur goes for the bite.

Roy ducks it, jamming his finger into the beast's eye.

This causes the dinosaur to throw its arm out at Roy. It actually connects.

This brings everything to a halt.

ROY
No. That wouldn't happen.

Patti and the dinosaur need convincing.

Roy slides an arm back up its sleeve, so it's less than half its normal length.

ROY
Dinosaurs had short little arms.
Comical really.

Patti agrees.

The dinosaur tries to bite Roy.

Roy ducks, thrusting his finger into the creature's eye.

The dinosaur then tries to clobber Roy with a tiny arm.

Roy steps back, laughing at the attempt.

The dinosaur roars in anger.

Roy pushes off the wall leaping onto the back of the dinosaur.

Patti waves her hands in the air.

PATTI
What was that?

ROY
(re: wall)
That's a tree.

PATTI
And you just jump off a tree?

ROY
...I also invented that, leaping
off of heaps of things.

Patti stares at him confused.

DINOSAUR
Parkour.

PATTI
So you're on him, now what?

ROY
(as if it's obvious)
I ride him?

PATTI
What?

ROY
I ride him until he's so tired he
collapses into a heap and falls
asleep.

PATTI
You just ride him?

Roy nods.

The dinosaur motions he's getting a little strained from
carrying Roy.

Roy steps down off the dinosaur.

ROY
Yeah and some other cave people,
they see this and they draw a
picture of it in a cave and years
later, someone finds it and that's
where they get the idea of horse
racing from.

PATTI
So you're telling me you invented
kissing, Parka-

DINOSAUR
-Parkour.

PATTI
And horse racing all from
this one fight?

Roy nods.

She thinks for a second and then is clearly impressed.

Roy smiles at this.

PATTI
Roy. Roy? Roy?! ROY?!

Roy snaps out of his day dream, the lights shifting back to
the store lighting.

PATTI
Roy?

ROY
Oh Patti...Hi

Appendix F1: Excerpt from *Roy* play script (transformation adaptation): Patti's Story

(Roy and Patti in conversation at Albert's house)

She looks at him and smiles. The two not sure how to talk to each other.

Roy feels the weight to say something.

ROY
...were you two close?

PATTI
Not really. No.

ROY
You came up here pretty fast.

PATTI
It was good timing.

She worries about how that could be interpreted.

PATTI
Not him dying, it was good for me to get away from where I was.

Further pained silence.

PATTI
...used to come up here as a kid, stay with him.

ROY
Must have been nice.

PATTI
(not really)
You know Albert.

Roy doesn't. Not in a negative sense.

PATTI
How he... lived life on his terms. I mean as a kid you see things, don't understand 'em but then years later the pieces all come together. Know what I mean?

Now Roy gives a "serious" nod.

PATTI

He was a little bit scary for a kid but then looking back, I understood.

Roy doesn't.

PATTI

He was a hermit.

ROY

No, he wasn't.

PATTI

Um I think I know what a hermit is and he was a capital Hhermit. My dad, his own brother, one year I got dropped off by my parents, they were in a huge hurry to catch a plane, drove right off. Yes they were in a hurry, but I think it didn't hurt that they got to avoid that awkward conversation, the strange pauses. I stood there, on the other side from here.

She gestures to the front of the house.

PATTI

Knocked. Nothing. No one. Thought, this was weird, the door was open so I went inside, dumped my bags. Sat down, watched TV, Kept an eye out for Albert coming home. Hours passed. Next thing I know he just comes down the hallway, into the kitchen. Cooks some sausages and he wanders off.

ROY

I'm sure that there's-

PATTI

-didn't even know if he saw me..was going to say hi but I was creeped out so I just... sat there, listening to him. Thought "fucking hell". Then I saw on the table he'd left a plate with some sausages for me. He'd seen me, knew I was there but he...so when

I say hermit, I mean it.

Roy really doesn't know how to handle this type of conversation.

ROY
...were they good sausages?

Patti cracks up laughing.

Appendix F2: Excerpt from *This Town That Roy Lives In* play script (analogy adaptation): Patti's Story

PATTI

You're touchy aren't you? He wasn't happy. I know that because he never was. Maybe years ago but I'm talking before Maui whipped the sun and made it stay in the sky longer.

Roy has no idea what she's talking about.

PATTI

People in my family avoided Albert. My Dad, his own brother avoided him. I would get dropped off at Albert's for summer when I was a kid and looking back, it's amazing. I'd literally get dropped off, a handshake at the door and my parents were off on their trip.

ROY

Must have been nice, spending time with your Uncle.

PATTI

(not really)
You know Albert.

Roy doesn't. Not in a negative sense.

PATTI

He lived life on his terms. I mean as a kid you see things, don't really understand them until years later when the pieces begin to come together. Know what I mean?

Roy smiles his vague understanding.

PATTI

He was a little bit scary for a kid but then looking back, I understood.

Roy doesn't.

PATTI

He was a hermit.

ROY

No, he wasn't.

PATTI

I believe I know what a hermit is. Once I got dropped off, my parents were in a huge hurry to get to their flight, drove right off doing the horn honk thing. Yes they were in a hurry, but I think it didn't hurt that they got to avoid the awkward conversation, the strange pauses that being with Albert meant. I stood there, on the other side from here.

Things then change. Patti becomes the little girl in the story she narrates.

She moves to the front of the house. Her physicality changing to much younger - twelve, thirteen years of age. Her actions mimic exactly what she's saying.

PATTI

Knocked. Nothing. No one. Thought, this was weird, the door was open so I went inside, dumped my bags. Sat down, watched TV. Kept an eye out for Albert coming home. Hours passed.

Albert enters and just walks past his niece.

Next thing I know he just comes down the hallway from within the house, into the kitchen. Cooks some sausages and he wanders off.

ROY

I'm sure that there's-

PATTI

-didn't even know if he saw me..was going to say hi but I was creeped out so I just...sat there, listening to him. Thought "fucking hell". Then I saw on the table he'd left a plate with some sausages for me. He'd seen me, knew I was there but he...so when I say hermit. I mean it.

Roy really doesn't know how to handle this type of conversation.

ROY
...were they good sausages?

Patti cracks up laughing.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

As this thesis has illustrated, there are many factors to consider in writing successful adaptations between the mediums of film and theatre. Important decisions have to be made throughout, all of which have a major bearing on how effectively the story works in the new medium.

This thesis argues that there is limited value for an adaptor in using a transposition method. *The Shape of Things*, *Doubt*, *The History Boys* and *Rain Man* are all adaptations that failed to work effectively due to the adaptor attempting to replicate the original version in its new environment. A transposition approach is restricted in its thinking. The very act of adapting a story into a new medium necessitates radical change. Adaptors who look to make only minor alterations are ultimately selling the new version short and often creating major difficulties for their story in connecting with its potential audience.

Theatre and film, despite what they have in common, contain fundamental differences; for example, film is visually driven and able to employ multiple locations and actors, where theatre relies more on dialogue and must operate within constraints on the numbers of actors and locations. It is differences such as these that create the need for substantial changes to be made to the material when adapting. When LaBute, in his film version of *The Shape of Things*, simply transposes a moment which gained so much of its impact in the theatre due to that medium's live and immediate performance, it is inevitable that he will be left with a film scene that is only a pale imitation of the theatre original.

Transposition is not an approach that rewards the audience or preserves, let alone enhances, the story. LaBute's and Gordon's transposition adaptations show that what is powerful and potentially moving in one form can quickly become a weakness in the other medium. An example of this is the exhilarating scene of Raymond's success playing blackjack at the casino in the *Rain Man* film, a moment that Gordon unsuccessfully attempts to convey through reportage in his theatre version. It is clear to me from my research and my experience of writing the adaptations included in this thesis that I would

not consider using the transposition method in any future adaptation. Nor would I recommend it to any other adaptor. There is tremendous potential and opportunity for growth and change in taking stories from one form into the other, but transposition as a method closes the door on these possibilities.

The transformation method is more attractive, as it offers the adaptor the ability to expand the world of the story and to explore its themes in greater detail. However, it is important to have a firm grasp on what makes the material work. Moving from a non-naturalistic theatrical presentation of the story of *Good* to a naturalistic mode created significant problems for the film version. The play details a number of seemingly mundane events that were made dynamic through the unusual presentation of these moments via an experimental approach. In moving to naturalism, the film lost the aspect that many considered the strength of the stage version.

My research has shown that transformation as a method of adaptation has its place. *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Calendar Girls* were effective adaptations – and I would use this method in certain circumstances, for example, if I was adapting a well-known film and therefore recognisability was an important consideration. But I found in my own film-to-play adaptation of *Roy Jiminton* that the transformation approach has limitations. Where play-to-film adaptations are heavily encouraged to tell the story visually, film-to-play adaptations require the adaptor to write towards the live performance element of theatre, and this was something I found difficult to do when using a transformative approach. While the stage version of *Calendar Girls* has moments of live performance ‘magic’ (the calendar shoot and John’s death), the play is otherwise limited to a literal and naturalistic mode by its transformation method. Wanting my adaptation of *Roy Jiminton* to embrace ‘liveness’ throughout, I realised that a transformation adaptation would not allow me to do this. Therefore I opted to go further and attempt an analogy adaptation.

Analogy is an approach which offers the writer the possibility to add to the story by rethinking the manner in which it is told. Bovell’s *Speaking In Tongues* became a

fundamentally different story when it was adapted to the screen as *Lantana*. Even the change of title suggests Bovell did not want to simply replicate his stage play. Analogy allows the adaptor to find a new story within the material, it frees the writer to embrace the new medium. Analogy not only recognises the differences between the two art forms but encourages the new opportunities that these differences offer.

Ultimately, analogy was the approach I chose to take with both my adaptations, as this was the most exciting option for me as a writer. My adaptation of *Hamlet Dies at the End* grew in complexity as I allowed myself to focus on one principal character and to go deeper into that character's world. The end result was that a new story was born out of *Hamlet Dies at the End*. The theme is the same, there are clear connections between the two scripts, and yet each plays to the strengths of the medium it is written for.

I recognised the limitations of *Hamlet Dies at the End* with regard to becoming a film and aimed to address these in a more fundamental way than was done in many of the case studies I examined. Where *Doubt* opted to introduce actions such as closing of blinds or a phone ringing in order to inject change into an otherwise lengthy and static scene, I would choose to lose the scene altogether and construct a new one. For example, rather than repeating the static introduction of Douglas in the original staged version of *Hamlet Dies at the End*, in the film version when Douglas arrives at Outward Bound there is a bomb squad in full operation at the camp site, which ensures his introduction to the campers is dynamic.

In adapting the story to film I recognized the need to select Douglas as my major protagonist, to focus on his individual journey and shape the story round him so that his journey was both more difficult and more exciting. I shifted the storytelling away from the dialogue driven narrative of theatre and as much as possible told the story with images and visual metaphors.

I 'opened up' the world of the play in a wide range of ways, setting the story in many more locations, including exteriors which allowed for much more physical action than

had been possible in the play. I also started the film at an earlier point in the story than the play, allowing me to build audience empathy and connection with Douglas.

I feel I learnt valuable lessons from my play-to-film case study examinations which I was then able to apply in making bold changes. My adaptation of *Hamlet Dies at the End* into *Song's End* was the experience which really brought home to me the creative possibilities of analogy adaptation, and the desirability of also adopting this method in film-to-play adaptation.

Adaptation from film to theatre has been rare but appears to be growing in popularity. Much like stage to film adaptation, the material suffers when a transposition approach is taken. It is apparent that transformation adaptations such as *Calendar Girls*, which alter filmic material to embrace the dynamics of live theatre, have so far made the most successful film to play adaptations.

My initial attempts to adapt *Roy Jiminton* with a transformative approach were unsatisfying. Despite the changes I made to the material in order to suit the stage, the story wasn't finding its own identity in the new medium. It mirrored the film but why was it a play? In looking again at how Bovell made such fundamental changes to his play *Speaking In Tongues* in adapting it for the screen, I realised there were no analogy examples of adaptation from film to stage. Feeling strongly that, with *Roy Jiminton*, it was important to embrace the qualities of the theatre as opposed to trying to replicate the film on stage, I decided to move away from a naturalistic transformation adaptation and instead attempt a highly theatrical analogy adaptation.

Unlike play-to-film adaptations which require 'opening up' of the source material, film-to-theatre adaptations benefit from 'closing in'. Reducing the characters, the number of scenes, the locations and even the amount or complexity of narrative, offers significant benefits to the adaptor.

With the transformation adaptations of *Roy Jiminton*, characters were cut, locations were greatly reduced and significant elements of the plot were not pursued for the stage

version. These initial changes were necessary in order to create a play which did not have an excessive running time and that realistically could be staged. However, in moving towards a non-naturalistic analogy adaptation, I also closed in the number of actors used. Rather than the half-dozen required for my earlier transformation versions, I wrote the new adaptation for only three actors playing multiple characters. Where previously, with a naturalistic approach, I was limited in the number of locations and scenes I could employ, suddenly there were no (naturalistic) locations and one continuous ongoing scene.

Exclusive to theatre is the presence of a live audience. Adaptors from film to theatre need to examine the material and interrogate it for moments that can potentially be reworked in order to make the most of this unique and inherently powerful characteristic of the theatre.

In the stage version of *Roy Jiminton* I wanted to embrace the 'liveness' that theatre offers. I wanted to have characters with strong physical and dynamic actions, to capture performance moments such as *Calendar Girls* did with the photo shoot. Taking an analogy approach with *This Town That Roy Lives In* allowed for similarly dynamic performances such as Roy's dream sequence, or throughout the play actors morphing into different characters, different ages and genders (even a parrot).

The play now embraces 'liveness'. Rather than using uninspiring reportage, it now has vibrant scenes which allow the audience to experience information first hand. It also avoids the problem of limited locations by allowing a non-naturalistic representation of space on the stage. This new approach allowed me to work towards the strengths of the theatre as opposed to feeling constrained by theatre's inability to mimic film.

This thesis argues that substantial and thoughtful change is fundamental for successfully adapting between the mediums of theatre and film. The two mediums are considerably different and to cross over effectively these differences need to be acknowledged and embraced. Adaptation represents a new opportunity to tell the same story rather than simply to repeat it in a different form.

This thesis has explored an aspect of scriptwriting, adaptation between the specific mediums of theatre and film, that has had very little written about it. My research has taken what concepts are currently available in the literature and applied them practically, in order to test how successfully those concepts help writers in adapting scripts across these forms. My conclusion supports analogy as the most successful method of adaptation.

Principles for each type of adaptation have been proposed at the end of Parts 2.1 and 2.2. These principles have been extrapolated through examining eleven adaptations and writing my own adaptations. I found these principles to be of considerable assistance in writing my own adaptations and they will certainly guide any further work I do in this area.

It is my hope that other adaptors of scripts between the mediums of theatre and film will also find these principles, and the findings of this thesis, as valuable as I have done.

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