SMASHED TYPEWRITERS AND SOUR SMOKE:
A HISTORICAL POETICS OF THE SCREENPLAY

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ABSTRACT

Screenplays typically provide the starting point for film development and production. They also draw on a rich history of literary conventions and aesthetic traditions that well exceed their technical "blueprint" function, as emergent attention being given to screenplays as reading matter by both casual and scholarly readers suggests. This dissertation proposes a historical poetics of screenwriting as a way of working through these conflicting ideas about the screenplay: what it is, how to read it, and how these concepts have evolved over time. It pursues an intensive analysis—from the silent era scenario to the present-day master-scene script—through several frames, including the historical implications of discourse for the screenplay concept, the linkages between screenwriting and earlier forms of lens-based prose, narrative voice and the rhetoric of the possible performance, and the "closet", made-to-read screenplay as a class of literary fiction. Engaging theoretical traditions of narratology, authorship, and adaptation studies, the research illuminates how to read a screenplay aesthetically, invoking the fictional blueprint metaphor as a new interpretive strategy that views the script as independent and complete, outside any actual production reality.

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INTRODUCTION: THE SCREENPLAYERS

There is a noteworthy scene from Michael Tolkin's script for *The Player* (1988), based on Tolkin's novel about Griffin Mill, a movie executive receiving death threats from a disgruntled writer. At a producer's meeting, a colleague of Mill's named Larry Levy proposes that the studio start cutting back work for screenwriters by crafting its own pitches ripped from headline stories. He hands a newspaper to Marty Grossman, vice-president of marketing:

> **Marty:** Larry, this really isn't my field.
> **Levy:** Marty, come on, just give it a shot, you can't lose here.
> **Marty:** How about… "Mud Slide Kills Sixty-four in Slums of Chile"?
> **Levy:** That's good. Triumph over tragedy. Sounds like a John Boorman picture. Slap a happy ending on it, the script will write itself.[1]

If there is a lesson that screenplay studies can take from the Hollywood novel (a form that American literary critic Leslie Fiedler once christened "the great literary invention of the Thirties"), it is that screenwriters are finicky, expendable creatures whose contributions to the art of cinema are tenuous at best.[2] Attacking the studio writer's worth and moral fabric is a common trope—we come across it in the corrupted figure of screenwriter Claude Estee, the undeserving little man with more wealth than taste in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* (1939); in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941), which pits a striving

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[1] Michael Tolkin, *The Player, The Rapture, The New Age: Three Screenplays* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 40.
[2] Leslie Fiedler, "The End of the Thirties: Artificial Paradises and Real Hells" in *Waiting for the End* (New York: Stein and Day, 1964), 56.

young production chief, boy-wonder Monroe Stahr, against his herd of underling writers; in Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* (1948), which follows Sir Francis Hinsley, once an acclaimed novelist, as he gets demoted as chief scriptwriter at Megalopolitan Pictures and subsequently hangs himself; in Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1941), about a copyboy, Sammy Glick, who claws his way to the top of the screenwriting profession by backstabbing others.

Screenwriters, as these quirky L.A. stories depict them, are ambivalent characters, simultaneously vital to and disempowered by the industry which gives rise to their kind. Over time, the writer's indeterminate and questionable role in the art-making process comes to be reflected in the critical ambivalence that persists toward the screenplay. Film historian Marc Norman documents this trend in *What Happens Next?: A History of Hollywood Screenwriting* (2007), where he affirms that studio era producers saw writers as "the Other of the movie business," nothing more than "skilled specialists, typecastable, comedy, action, historical writers and even finer distinctions, young-girls-in-love writers, bad-guy writers, writers of goofy best friends, the equivalent of overcalled line workers, this one good at fenders, that with windshields."[3] Tom Stempel, another influential voice in the field of screenwriting history, shines a spotlight on the 1930s migration of intellectual East Coast writers to Hollywood in *FrameWork* (2000). The book defends his claim that for those who considered writing for film to be a form of literary slumming, the movies offered "critical anonymity" even if "such anonymity had its price, since it went hand in hand with the alienation the screenwriters felt from the product they were creating."[4] In *Script Girls* (1994), one more compendium of the professional hazards for screenwriters (favouring this

[3] Marc Norman, *What Happens Next?: A History of Hollywood Screenwriting* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 99; 137.
[4] Tom Stempel, *FrameWork: A History of Screenwriting in the American Film* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 64.

time the woman's perspective), Lizzie Francke underscores the career of famed female scenarist Frances Marion who, woefully, had come to accept that studio writers held no power over their creative process or its results. The collaborative and industrial nature of Hollywood filmmaking had bred an environment where screenwriting was, in Marion's words, "like writing on sand with the wind blowing."[5]

It was precisely these conditions of composition that moved Samuel Goldwyn to form Eminent Authors inc. in 1919, a select group of "serious" writers (which included novelist Rex Beach and playwrights Charles Kenyon, Elmer Rice and Thomas Buchanan) who sold their stories exclusively to Goldwyn, to guarantee that "all Goldwyn pictures are built upon a strong foundation of intelligence and refinement."[6] The experiment flopped, however, because, more than likely, these eminent authors struggled with integrating a filmic viewpoint in their writing. Whatever the actual circumstances, this was further proof in the eyes of studio executives that screenwriting was a honed skill, not a given talent. Hollywood's mode of production may have inadvertently yielded a new literary strain in the genre of the screenplay, but its origins as a rigid form of creative labour, with unapologetically commercial ambitions, would persuade critics to paint it as un-artistic and non-literary for many more decades to come.[7] For a variety of reasons explored over the course of subsequent chapters, the film script has yet to fully materialize as an autonomous, literary text. Instead, it retains stubbornly the property of a "blueprint" for

[5] Lizzie Francke, *Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood* (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 41.
[6] Goldwyn's publicist, Howard Dietz, ran the message as part of a full-page ad in *The Saturday Evening Post.* A similar advert was published in *The Movie Mirror*, declaring: "the motion picture will now rank with the drama and the novel." Quoted in Norman, *What Happens Next?*, 63.
[7] Apart from a few early and scattered attempts to "academize" film composition, like Columbia University's "Photoplay Composition" course (1917-1930s) and Harvard's School of Business where film was cast as a commercial product, but one with aesthetic value, the study of screenwriting was essentially touted as a way for Hollywood outsiders to gain entry into the glossy world of film production.

picture-shooting, while screenplay studies continues to develop mainly around practical methods for writing (and selling) screenplays.

Not until the late 1970s, following the publication of several books on screenwriters including Bruce Cook's *Dalton Trumbo* (1977), Doug Fetherling's *The Five Lives of Ben Hecht* (1977), Richard Meryman's *Mank: The Wit, World, and Life of Herman Mankiewicz* (1978) and Tom Stempel's *Screenwriter: The Life and Times of Nunnally Johnson* (1979), did academics really begin to find screenwriting an acceptable object of study. Before that, Hollywood's historiography was driven by popular trends in film criticism, namely Andrew Sarris' version of the French auteur theory, which consisted of analysing film history in terms of directors and the values they bring to their films. With the growing number of screenwriter-focused biographies drawing public and scholarly attention to the writer's work, the prevailing winds began to shift slowly away from popular discussions of the director as the sole cinematic author, and towards the efforts of writers and their unique contributions to film.

Looking at academic life outside the Hollywood fishbowl, Stempel observes that non-American scholars "could take the very un-American approach of studying screenwriting in more depth than was done in the United States."[8] He attributes this to the fact that while considered somewhat unfashionable by the inner circle, outsiders viewed critical dialogue about scripts and screenwriters as being necessary for globalizing (or simply rounding out) the field of cinema studies. To this end, 11 issues of *Les Cahiers du scénario*, an academic journal aimed at reclaiming the screenplay's status in the filmmaking process, were published in Brussels between 1986 and 1991 (catering to the French-speaking scholars who

[8] Tom Stempel, "Filling up the glass: A look at the historiography of screenwriting" in *Journal of Screenwriting* 5.2 (2014), 194.

had begun to take an interest in writers as well as directors), followed by the first international conference to deal exclusively with the screenplay, *Le Scénario*, held in Montréal in 1992 and hosted by the now-defunct Association québécoise des études cinématographiques (AQÉC). That being said, the streams of academic research originating from countries like Belgium, Canada, Germany, Austria, France, England and Australia really only began to flow and collect together around the 1990s, age of the Internet, with the collaboration of a critical mass of scholars and other supporters forming online communities, and using them to facilitate theoretical exchanges. Even so, one of the obstacles still facing the field of screenplay studies was the existing volume of "how-to" guides already on bookshelves—screenwriting manuals imparting craft skills in lieu of true critical theory. As Ian Macdonald, co-organizer of the Screenwriting Research Network and senior lecturer in screen studies at Leeds Metropolitan University, confessed in 2009: "I am reasonably comfortable teaching in this way, but I am uncomfortable with this methodology when it comes to, say, research and innovation, because it is makeshift and uncritical."[9] Without question, more sustained and diversified theorization was needed.

SCREENPLAY STUDIES AT A GLANCE

From this need for a robust, critical language in the domain of script-focused studies, several important books were penned, five of which stand out for their meaningful contributions to the mapping of theoretical debates, past and current, concerning the nature and function of the film script. Steven Maras' *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (2009), which traces how ideas about screenwriting come to assume a dominant

[9] Ian W. Macdonald, "Manuals are not Enough: Relating Screenwriting Practice to Theories" in *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 12.1 (2009), 260.

position with certain industrial and cultural shifts (e.g. technological advances, changes in screenplay format, the emergence of auteurism), convinced me to include a chapter on the discourse history of the screenplay. Maras insists (unjustly, I believe) that screenwriting faces an "object" problem in research—"the difficulty of both defining screenwriting as an object, and identifying an object for screenwriting."[10] His brash conclusion that screenwriting is an industrial practice, transitional and variable in form, but not amenable to literary treatment based on this functional definition, provides ample reasons to explore the screenplay's alternate, aesthetic functions. For instance, why do unproduced, published screenplays exist if not to be regarded and evaluated apart from their execution? Rising to this very challenge, Ted Nannicelli's *A Philosophy of the Screenplay* (2013) offers a particularly compelling ontological argument for the screenplay-as-art and as a standalone work. Building from the premise that a script is a kind of artefact—an object made with intention, to serve a given purpose—he holds that writers and readers, collectively and historically, determine the screenplay's ontology, and that judging by our current collective and appreciative practices, at least some screenplays count as literature. My fourth chapter on the "closet", made-to-read screenplay explores this landscape in greater detail, covering perspectives on screenplay literature both as a genre and as a mode of reception. Whether we think of screenplays as having been intentionally designed to realize certain aesthetically relevant features, or appreciate them as incidental art works whose reading is worthwhile for its own sake, the proliferation of such practices are useful to consider for what they reveal about the expanding definition of what a screenplay can be.

Originally submitted as a German-language PhD thesis, Claudia Sternberg's *Written for the Screen: The American Motion-Picture Screenplay as Text* (1997) is one of the first book-

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[10] Steven Maras, *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (London: Wallflower, 2009), 11.

length studies to confirm the screenplay's literary status. The volume follows the unique conditions of screenplay production and reception, highlighting the generic qualities and aesthetic potential of this hybrid text-type, sitting somewhere between dramatic notation and prose narrative. Essential to this dissertation (Chapter 3, in particular) are two concepts she introduces, whose origins are traceable to literary criticism: the hidden director as implied author of the screenplay (in narratological terms, the directorial agency a reader infers from the scene text) and the distribution of modes of presentation, which underscores the stylistic options available to writers, in spite of the limits imposed by the standardized format. Together, these concepts draw support from literary theory to establish the range and versatility of aesthetic functions that screenwriting can demonstrate, steering us further and further away from the notion that a script, by necessity, foreshadows or "blueprints" an actual film.

Steven Price's book *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (2010) makes a complimentary case for the artistic screenplay, using authorship as his guiding rubric. In contrast to Sternberg's study, which pays smaller tribute to a wider range of screenplay elements amenable to textual analysis (characterization, narration, set design, colour, lighting and mise-en-scène), Price focuses more narrowly on form, structure and dialogue as criteria underlying the fair assignment of film authorship to screenwriters. First, he points to how "'intention' in literary studies seems to presuppose an individual subject that does the intending," then relates this to the collaborative nature of filmmaking as contexts mutually informing the script's theoretical neglect.[11] Although he acknowledges the myriad ways that film production troubles Romantic notions of authorship, Price ultimately views authorial intent as an insurmountable barrier to understanding screenplays as works of

[11] Steven Price, *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 48

literature. I argue instead that neither the wayward search for the author, nor the question of authorial intent, logically precludes the script from being aesthetically independent; a screenplay is always written with the intention that it be read, even if it simultaneously functions in the creation of some film.

Historicizing the emergence of the master scene format after the fall of the studio system, Kevin Alexander Boon, author of *Script Culture and the American Screenplay* (2008), claims that the screenplay entered the realm of art when writing practices were lightened of their technical load, and evolved "from the simplicity of practical necessity."[12] But, somewhere along the way, its two distinct iterations—the first, a shot-by-shot list with specific instructions for the filmmaker; the second, a more fluid performance plan free from jargon—became interchangeable "blueprint" descriptors, despite its neat progression towards readability, coherence, and literary quality. Thus, the concept of "screenplay" that would satisfy our sense of aesthetic completeness would not be the silent film continuity, a format "too limited by its focus on plot to be read as a fully realized literary piece".[13] According to Boon, the master scene script feels comparatively much more readable and cohesive even if, for him, it remains "bound by function and intimately linked to the filmed performance."[14] His book also includes a chapter on the adapted screenplay, over the course of which the author argues that some film scripts (Boon cites David Koepp's *Stir of Echoes* and Stanley Kubrick and Diane Johnson's *The Shining* as examples) surpass their source novels in quality, artistry and impact. Chapter 2 of this dissertation features a section on adaptation theory that extends Boon's discussion. It tries to reconcile screenwriting's aesthetic impulse with the alleged ontological gap between novels and

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[12] Kevin Alexander Boon, *Script Culture and the American Screenplay: Contemporary Approaches to Film and Television* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 11.
[13] Ibid., 8.
[14] Ibid., 4.

films, which literary critic George Bluestone famously likened to "two ways of seeing… overtly compatible, secretly hostile."[15] Whether written language is manipulated into a novel, or into a structure we call "screenplay", Boon's point (and mine) is that "good" screenwriting destabilizes the critical bias that treats novels rather than scripts as the paradigm for cinematic adaptation. I argue that between the novel and the film lies the crucial influence of a screenwriting tradition that mediates this relation. This is a fact largely ignored by the field of adaptation studies, but highly revealing of the problematic history of the word/image divide.

RESEARCHING THE SCREENPLAY: METHOD

This project was initially developed to attend to questions concerning the appreciation of screenplays as reading material. Beyond the sense of what makes "good" reading (a matter of personal taste), my research probes the reasons why, generally speaking, screenplays are not considered on par with other literary works such as novels, short stories, essays, poems, or theatrical plays.

One rapid-fire answer is that scripts are written to be filmed, and therefore bear the marks of that awaited transformation. Coincidentally, most screenwriting manuals adopt a prescriptive approach tailored to the industry's requirements, like insisting that writers use tight, terse prose to ensure that their stylistic input remains subservient to a director's. Then again, what the screenplay leaves to the imagination, for professionals and casual readers alike, is precisely what gives it its unique character and allure. By way of an

[15] George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 1.

example I revisit again in Chapter 4, in his foreword to Harold Pinter's *The Proust Screenplay* (1977), Michael Wood crystallizes how screenplays, despite their conventional limits, can be conceived as poetic compositions:

> Much of what we see in imagination as we read Pinter's text is quite wordless. This is, in view of the movie to be made, an invitation to the director to do his or her stuff. But on the page it is an invitation to us to do our own mental directing, a fictional space which has been carefully constructed but also carefully emptied.[16]

This notion of a "fictional space" meticulously created by the script, addressing the reader as the unspoken director who controls the film performance, encapsulates my dissertation's goal of devising a strategy that regards the screenplay as disengaged from any production reality—a work of fiction that effectively points nowhere but to itself—to counter the typical "blueprint" metaphor that over-identifies the screenplay with the specific film to which it (supposedly) refers.

The difference between these two strategies is best circumscribed using the concept of voice. In the case of unproduced screenplays, where comparisons to an existing film cannot be drawn, it is much easier to construe how the text addresses the reader as imagined practitioner, and invites them to collaborate with the author to stage a hypothetical film. This is because screenplays are often composed in grammatical constructions that instruct: "Here's how you should produce the film." The infinitive or passive voice is an important interpretive marker; it is the starting point for inferring the range of possible interpretations, concurrent with the range of production choices available to the reader.

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[16] Michael Wood, "Foreword" in Harold Pinter's *The Proust Screenplay* (New York: Random House, 1977), viii.

Studying the screenplay through the framework of narratology in Chapter 3 allows us to see that screenplay discourse functions at 3 structural levels: as a fictional storyworld, as the projection of an actualized film, and as an instructional guide for the film crew. Accordingly, my "fictional blueprint" approach theorizes the question: "How do these framing devices gel into a story about how to make this film?" To borrow Woods' phrasing, I believe that a screenplay's "invitation to direct" effectively narrates its own production, imaginatively describing a possible performance as a condition of its intelligibility.

From fictional possible worlds to the possible epistemological worlds that research opens, I return to the 3 succinct questions that roused my thinking during the project's nascent stages: *Does the screenplay constitute a literary genre? Does it have autonomy as a text type? What are its merits as an art form?* As I quickly discovered, these were not new questions, but they went to the heart of a tradition of inquiry within the field that would orient me to the search for how to read (versus how to write) screenplays. My specific treatment of these questions bears on two new research aspects, splitting the dissertation in equal halves. The first part of the study (Chapters 1 and 2) is primarily concerned with the word/image divide in art criticism, together with the shaky foundation that was laid for screenplay research by an interdisciplinary discourse that sent mixed messages about literature's connections and enmity to film. Having demonstrated the aesthetic and cultural biases that have kept the screenplay down, the second part (Chapters 3 and 4) tackles screenwriting head-on, looking at the evolution of screenplay narration, and tracing how the script has internalized the rhetoric of film-as-storyteller through a wide range of examples. My methodology borrows from David Bordwell's reading technique as outlined in his book *Poetics of the Cinema* (2007). Regarding film texts, he entertains two broad questions, one analytical, one historical: 1-what are the principles according to which films are constructed and by means of which they achieve particular effects?; 2-how and why

have these principles arisen and changed in particular empirical circumstances?[17] In a like-minded manner, my research emphasizes the constructional principles and effects of screenplays, as well as their function, purpose and historical manifestations. It advances knowledge about screenwriting practice using a more critical approach than we are likely to see in the instructional literature; asking why screenwriters confront creative situations the way they do, in relation to what particular aesthetic goals, and how that process can be reconstructed through mindful screenplay analysis. Further insights into those practices will hopefully bolster the screenplay's popularity as an object of study, and help solidify its place in the canon of "real" literature.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This dissertation champions the literary art status of film scripts, and explores their potential as standalone works outside of their production. As such, Chapter 1 presents a punctuated (that is, selective) history of the discourses that have shaped the current screenplay concept into what it is, in order to establish a basis from which to understand why the first century of moving pictures did not much invest in critical investigations of the screenplay.[18] I trace the main lines of thinking about the film script as found in the

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[17] David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 23.

[18] A "complete" history (if such a thing exists) would take into account questions of authorship, which have been the primary focus of screenplay research to date, and which Claudia Sternberg's *Written for the Screen: The American Motion Picture Screenplay as Text* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997) addresses very adequately. In my humble opinion, this leaves under-scrutinized the other significant pathways and obstacles to screenplay studies that I argue are inscribed in our critical language. More time could also be spent examining the "object" problem named by Maras, particularly in conjunction with the tendency of scholarship to privilege "authoritative" texts (films, theatrical scripts) over "intermediate" art forms (storyboards, screenplays), although these lines of inquiry, along with authorship issues, are attended to elsewhere, in subsequent chapters. Additionally, there are general disciplinary biases to consider, which produce different understandings of scripting practices depending on the dominant methodological points of origin. However, these have been broadly identified and linked through other central topics like the unproduced screenplay (a film studies bias), the screenplay as a production source text (an adaptation studies bias), and narratology (a literary studies bias).

early and classical film theory books of Hugo Münsterberg, Rudolf Arnheim, Erwin Panofsky, Siegfried Kracauer, Andrei Tarkovsky, Victor Freeburg, Belá Balázs and André Bazin, through to contemporary discussions from scholars including Kamilla Elliott, Ted Nannicelli, Janet Staiger, Claudia Sternberg, Steven Price, Kevin Alexander Boon, Steven Maras, Andrew Ganz and Ian Macdonald. The chapter organizes them according to 3 central themes: the ontological assumptions embedded in our appreciative practices regarding the screenplay; the influence and significance of the medium specificity thesis for critical screenplay discourse; and the industrial separation of conception and execution, which created a hierarchy out of craft contributions. The interweavement and interdependence of these discourses, as this section claims, establish some of the key reasons for the lack of a reading tradition outside the production context. They also form the specific background and context for any expanded study of the screenplay as "text," particularly as "artistic text".

Despite the number of historical objections against the screenplay as reading material, Chapter 2 sets out to prove that it does have an aesthetic tradition, one extending out of what Adam Ganz terms "lens-based writing", and typified by the techniques of scientific and travel writing, as well as the early English novel. Focusing on the rhetoric of seeing in literature and how certain writing practices shifted in response to the lens (more generally) and to cinema's influence (more specifically), I come up against George Bluestone's adaptation theory as the theoretical framework that revived the word/image debate considered in Chapter 1. Bluestone's claim that there are two ways of "seeing" (the visual image and the mental picture), and that these effects make literature and film intrinsically incompatible, unravels the very nature of screenwriting as the medium that combines them. Challenging the "problem" of word's adaptability to image, this section explores the

aesthetic impulse of the screenplay's scene text by way of comparison to the Imagist movement in poetry. I argue that the so-called cinematic effect of visual writing is a textual feature spanning several literary genres, and that reading screenwriting aesthetically gives us a better grasp of the long-standing traditions that feed those practices.

Moving from the rhetoric of seeing to the rhetoric of narrative, Chapter 3 observes the shift in the standardized screenplay format, from an instructional "blueprint" to a master scene script with an improved design to accommodate film's increasingly complex narrative techniques. When the cinema found its voice with the implementation of sync sound in the late 1920s, it also phased out the use of inter-titles as a narrative tool and, thus, became more dramatic. The screenplay, in turn, inherited a narrator, in the form of additional layers of commentary within the scene text; comments that frame the action described by instructing how it should be filmed, and alluding to the desired effect. After demonstrating that screenplays engage in a form of theatrical narration, the chapter subsequently tackles the topic of narrativity from several directions. First it asks questions of a generic nature: what kind of narrative text is the screenplay, and how have practitioners determined its narrational role? But in order to classify something as narrative, one also needs to know who is doing the narrating. Therefore, 3 additional sections are dedicated respectively to voice, to the notion of a hidden director as the implied author, and to the "figure" of the camera as a textual stand-in for the ideal spectator. The final section offers the fictional blueprint metaphor as an interpretive method for reading screenplays, declaring that screenplay narration always fictionalizes the process of its production, and accounts only for the possible world of a film.

Lastly, Chapter 4 investigates the screenplay both as a class of literary fiction and as a mode of reception. It draws on evidence from 4 case studies of published, unproduced screenplays to demonstrate the process of critical analysis using the fictional blueprint approach. This section is conceived as a response to those who claim that only industry professionals, those with a highly trained and skilled eye for lifting the script off the page, can read screenplays with much reward. It argues that inexperience with reading screenplays takes nothing from their aesthetic value or autonomy if we have a critical vocabulary with which to discuss their ambiguous nature more precisely. To address this topic duly, I introduce the "closet" screenplay—a theatrical term referring to the tradition of reading dramas aloud instead of performing them—to describe a category of film scripts in book form addressed, whether by design or by default, to an audience of casual readers. The screenplays under analysis include two intentionally closeted works—Marilyn Hoder-Salmon's *Edna* (1992) and Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence* (1948)—and two *de facto* closet scripts—Harold Pinter's *The Proust Screenplay* (1977) and James Baldwin's *One Day When I Was Lost* (1972). The investigation determines that although these particular screenplays do not always share the same formal properties (formatting conventions, graphic devices, paratextual materials, etc.), they represent categories that variously define the relationship between writer and audience. Each one is a reflection of a distinctive authorial purpose and context, but together they invite inquiry into the specific and unique features of the "closet" kind as a whole.

Although some critics working within the sister disciplines of literature and film think pessimistically about the study of screenwriting in its current state, "the glass is filling up,"

in Stempel's words, because of the continuing contributions of scholars whose names grace the documents that both challenged and inspired this dissertation.[19]

Over the next 200-odd pages, this scholar pours *her* thoughts into this glass, and stirs.

[19] Stempel, *Filling up the glass*, 195.

CHAPTER 1: "THE MOST ORDINARY WORD…"*
***A PUNCTUATED HISTORY OF "SCREENPLAY" AS DISCOURSE**

"The most ordinary word, when put into place, suddenly acquires brilliance. That is the brilliance with which your images must shine."

-Robert Bresson[1]

"Now and then one of our cherished goats wanders from its own fireside at the call of someone who says that pictures are not literature, but we call it back, because we're careful of our goats and don't let them associate with such persons."

-Epes Winthrop Sargent[2]

"The screenplay is a tiny pitless and pitiful acorn from which, most times, nothing grows. A thin, slippery creature, three holes, two brads, impossible to read in the tub."

-Nathaniel Kohn[3]

"Screenplay," in a semantic sense, is a portmanteau: a word blend that packs two distinct nouns together to create a hybrid with a new mingled meaning. The evolution of this term "portmanteau"—a word that once referred to a large leather suitcase which opens in half into two hinged compartments—was first introduced by Lewis Carroll in his novel *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871). Alice asks Humpty Dumpty to explain parts of the madcap "Jabberwocky" poem, and so the clever egg says: "Well, 'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy'. 'Mimsy' is 'flimsy and miserable' (there's another *portmanteau* for you.)"[4] Portmanteaus, then, describe things with mixed qualities or features, and when we look closely at the etymology of the screenplay—figuratively, a screened play—we begin to

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[1] Quoted in J. Griffin, *Notes on Cinematography* (New York: Urizen Books, 1975), 13.
[2] E.W. Sargent, Jeanie Macpherson and Lloyd Lonergan, "A Screenwriting Sampler from the 'Moving Picture World'" in *Film History* 9.3 (1997), 269.
[3] Nathaniel Kohn, "Disappearing Authors: A Postmodern Perspective on the Practice of Writing for the Screen" in *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 44.3 (1999), 443.
[4] My italics. Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (London: Macmillan, 1871), 246-7.

scratch at the surface of what has been a consistent attempt, throughout film's history, to contain its mongrel aspects (namely, word and image) using nomenclature. In cinema's early days, "screenplay" (known then as a "photoplay," or photographed play) referred to the visual event of the finished film. Eventually, it came to describe the written text that guides a film's production. "In the process," observes literary scholar Kamilla Elliott, "the whole was reduced to a part."[5] Analogy became synecdoche. And with that, filmmaking writ large denoted the triumph of cinematography over screenwriting.

The purpose of this chapter, a review of the major theoretical literature that has framed the discursive practices fueling the battle among current and competing views of the screenplay, is primarily to reclaim the script as a proper object, in its own right, of film and literary criticism. This project and the framework it advances therefore calls for identifying and confronting certain historical assumptions; established beliefs about the bonds of image and word, literature and film, art and industry, and what has arguably been their divisive impact on the screenplay's essential role, both within academia, and across the broader cultural spectrum of literary and performing arts.

Dismayed by the trajectory of film studies into the 1990s, a discipline then very much undersupplied by serious considerations of the screenplay, historian William Horne turned to his colleagues in the academy and declared: "there will be no substantive study of the script, until and unless it is afforded its own legitimate aesthetic existence—not merely as a set of interim production notes or as a substitute film—but as a separate work."[6] Indeed,

[5] Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.
[6] William Horne, "See Shooting Script: Reflections on the Ontology of the Screenplay" in *Literary/Film Quarterly* 20.1 (1992), 53. Horne was not the first academic to advance a literary approach to screenplays. Douglas Winston published his book *The Screenplay as Literature* nearly 20 years prior, and both Yaakov Malkin (1980) and Jacqueline Viswanathan (1986) submitted essays to the French journal *Cahiers du scénario* focusing on the same theme. However, Horne's article remains the more widely referenced.

many have since risen to the challenge (Sternberg 1997, Boon 2008, Maras 2009, Price 2010/2013, Nannicelli 2013), nurturing and expanding the field of screenplay studies by leaps and bounds. Yet, even with these contributions, the scholarship buckles under the weight of best-selling scriptwriting manuals (the kinds that instruct how to "write for the plot") and the biases produced by its sister disciplines, which perpetuate the idea that a script is a throwaway item to be disposed of once the film is complete. In addition, popular and critical discourses often count on casual readers finding the screenplay form perplexing, with its unusual hotchpotch of slug lines, parentheticals, transitions, and other technical instructions, all of which bears on our appreciation of screenplays as readable literature.

Beyond issues of formatting or readability, ontological objections to the screenplay's art/literary status stem from the differing valuations given to script and film texts. The condition of film's textuality can be seen as a by-product of 1960s literary theory, which coincided with emerging notions of the audience's active role in textual identification and interpretation. As Roland Barthes memorably declared in his 1967 essay "Death of the Author," "it is language which speaks, not the author." [7] This was the critical attitude that anticipated the shift in disciplinary attention from art as mediation of reality, to art (in this case, film) as metaphorical language.

Silent era filmmakers were also attuned to film's exciting meaning-making potential rather early on, albeit for a different reason: if cinema could transcend the limits of natural language, then it could literally be "read" by anyone. Thus, nearly from the beginning, film discourse organized itself around the idea of the motion picture as the authoritative "Text",

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[7] Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author" in *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 143.

first by concentrating on the realized film, and then by isolating it from the practical conditions of its composition (i.e. the written draft). The screenplay, in turn, continues to occupy a tenuous aesthetic position, somewhere between textual and visual form. Its literary status only depreciates further when we press the analogy to the architectural blueprint.

The matter of a script's art status (specifically, its *literary* art status) has been inextricably linked with the art historian's concept of autonomy. This begs the question: can the screenplay ever act or exist outside the context of its production? "Photoplay form," said film critic E.W. Sargent in 1913, "is merely the means to an end and not the end in itself."[8] Such was the popular opinion about screenplays during cinema's silent years. Now, over a century later, this outlook not only lingers within film studies, it effectively naturalizes the impulse to evaluate scripts on the basis of their directorial execution. By shifting our thinking away from this notion of the screenplay as filmic blueprint—as the hammer and nails that exist only to build the eventual picture house—I believe we can also shift the discourse about screenwriting towards that of a distinct and definitive literary technique.

Discussions about the screenplay typically settle across 3 recurring themes, which this chapter will assess in a systematic and integrative way. The first of these themes is the influence of appreciative practices on our essential definition(s) of the screenplay. To paraphrase film theorist Edward Branigan, a problem that arises when theory poses a general question about an object (i.e. *what is a screenplay?*) is that the range of functions that object serves in one or more contexts, to different people, or to the same person on

[8] E.W. Sargent, *The Technique of the Photoplay* (New York City: The Moving Picture World, 1913), 66.

different occasions, is not given adequate importance in defining the object more broadly.[9] In thinking about the nature of a screenplay, we should keep in mind that it is not solely defined by its intrinsic properties (material and form), but also by its position within various material contexts (production, publishing), as well as its relationship to other art forms (literature, cinema).[10]

The second theme raises the issue of medium specificity, an aesthetic principle often applied to film (particularly silent film) that considers dialogue and printed text as spoiling the purity of the image. Given the decades-long neglect of film words supported by classical theory, the screenplay's early history and subsequent development have been slow to merge with mainstream scholarship. There is also the measure of the screenplay kind's own aesthetic purity, and the difficulty with which medium-specificity is doomed to contend in its search for the "screenplay-ness" of film scripts.

The final area under examination is the separation of conception (writing) and execution (directing), a discourse that typically views screenwriting as a "blueprint" or draft document, in service of the more legitimate artistic task of filmmaking. Amongst the many reasons for challenging this hierarchy of craft contributions, the most germane to my dissertation are: the consequences to the screenplay's aesthetic independence, the prizing of the realized film as the authoritative text, and the devaluing of screenwriting as a literary practice in its own right.

While the viewpoints presented in this chapter summarize in bulk the implications of theoretical discourse for our current screenplay concept, the complex relationship of

[9] Edward Branigan, *Projecting a Camera: Language-Games in Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 92.
[10] Branigan, *Projecting a Camera*, 65.

writing to film should also be set against the backdrop of 18th century comparisons between poetry and painting. Elliott conceives of these old word/image wars as a paradox: at the same time as the two media are deemed irreducible and untranslatable, they are also found (often by the very same critics) to be formally and historically connected.[11] While Elliott's research speculates on the effects of this paradox on theories of novels and films, particularly within the context of cinematic adaptations, I propose to incorporate it differently, knitting it with a revisionist history of the screenplay instead.

ON APPRECIATIVE PRACTICES: AUTONOMY

Philosophical theories abound about how we come to define, even essentialize things. However, the correctness of those definitions cannot be determined simply with an appeal to standard usage. For instance, what we still commonly refer to as a filmic "blueprint" actually characterizes a bygone era of centralized movie production and management, an age when the script served only as a technical and budgetary aid for the producer's convenience. Thomas Ince, a Hollywood studio pioneer, began coordinating and standardizing his film productions in the 1910s. One of his proudest achievements—the aptly named continuity script—was designed to prevent costly continuity problems by meticulously organizing shots within scenes, "with the action of each described, and camera positions noted."[12] But those industrial and economic forces have since changed, and screenwriting technique has evolved towards a markedly more literary style. Boon attributes these aesthetic changes to the "screenplay's shaking off of the influence of staged

[11] Kamilla Elliott, "Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars" in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandro Raengo (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 1.
[12] Quoted in Brian Taves, *Thomas Ince: Hollywood's Independent Pioneer* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 45.

theater that shaped the early years of film."[13] Janet Staiger proposes an alternative theory, alleging it was the fall of the studio system, and the emergence of a "package-unit" system of production, that gave the screenplay its literary polish.[14] Whichever explanation we accept, the best objection to autonomy is that literariness is not a necessary condition for the screenplay, while it would be reasonable to suggest that something is a screenplay by virtue of its role as blueprint.

But this is only because we have a tendency to define the screenplay functionally.

> It may seem uncontroversial to suppose that the function of a screenplay is, generally, to serve as a sort of outline or blueprint from which a film can be made. That is, it might be thought that a screenplay is a kind of tool for making films, and, as such, can be defined insofar as it fulfills its function as a tool. However, even if this was commonly accurate, function, alone, could not be sufficient for something to be a screenplay; it could not constitute the essence of a screenplay.[15]

The above quote summarizes Nannicelli's intentional-historical conception of art. He considers something to be art when it is intentionally related to established art practices that are recognized as such. Given that the blueprint metaphor is tied to one of our earliest screenplay concepts—the continuity—and that screenwriting practices were developed primarily around economic necessity, it is easy to see why function is commonly

[13] Kevin Alexander Boon, *Script Culture and the American Screenplay: Contemporary Approaches to Film and Television* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 24.
[14] See: Janet Staiger, "'Tame' Authors and the Corporate Laboratory: Stories, Writers, and Scenarios in Hollywood" in *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* (1983), 33-45. The "package-unit" system replaced the studio era's "producer-unit" system. It describes a labour practice where freelance producers "package" their own human resources and documents to secure financing and distribution deals.
[15] Ted Nannicelli, *A Philosophy of the Screenplay* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 14.

considered the essence of a screenplay.[16] That being said, when Noël Carroll wrote *Theorizing the Moving Image* (1996) in search of what cinema is, he found that film was irreducible to a single essence or function, and defined instead "the class of things—moving images—to which film belongs."[17] This critical maneuver made it possible to theorize about the nature of cinema, without having to deliberate on what functions film may or may not serve. If we apply similar thinking to our analysis of the screenplay, we could say that it is art if it belongs to a class of things like the theatrical script, or that it is literature because it uses words and employs literary devices. But the more persuasive argument for abandoning the blueprint concept tips from current appreciative practices; how different readers, from industry professionals to casual readers, approach the script differently.

When the film industry became decentralized, shifting over to independent production, the continuity script shifted right along with it, parting itself into "two functional iterations: the master scene script and the shooting script."[18] According to Andrew Gay, in the first iteration, the script is evaluated for its potential as a marketable story; in the second, it serves as a production tool for the director and film crew. But Sternberg makes the case for a third ontological "stage" in the life cycle of a screenplay. She claims that after the "property" and "blueprint" phases (her terms for the master scene and shooting scripts) comes the final "reading material" stage where, having outlived (or failed to achieve) its

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[16] For students of philosophy, particularly followers of Aristotle, the notion of essence (*essentia*) is closely tied to that of definition (*horismos*), and often serves as a conceptual framework for determining the forms and identity conditions of artifacts. Nannicelli provides just such an assessment of the possible variations of a functional definition for the film script. Unfortunately, his analysis concludes that "we would do better to explore other possibilities because there seems to be no function or set of functions that is specific to all and only screenplays." (*A Philosophy of the Screenplay,* 4)
[17] Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 49.
[18] Andrew Gay, "Screenplay function and readability." (www.screenplayology.com/content-sections/screenplay-style-use/1-2/)

usefulness as a production guide, the script joins the ranks of casual readership, to be enjoyed or analyzed as a work of literature.

Of course, many would argue that screenplays are not popular enough as reading matter to constitute their own criterion. Moreover, Carroll reasons that most people will seek out screenplays not for their own sake, but "because the films in question are thought to be aesthetically important."[19] Certainly, many screenplays find their way onto bookshelves in the form of illustrated film transcripts, usually featuring storyboards, on-set photos, and other relevant production artifacts. However, this trend makes it even more difficult to conceive of the screenplay as an integrated work, let alone a work that can be read in the absence of an accompanying film, because it casts a shadow over the actual process of screenwriting, and conflates the director's vision for the script with the writer's. [20]

Given that screenplays can exist simultaneously in various versions, from master scenes to shooting scripts to published transcripts, Sternberg recommends that we look to Jack Stillinger's "theory of versions" as a basis for the literary study of screenplays.[21] One advantage of this approach is that it legitimates the screenplay's development at each relevant phase; thus, every version represents an authoritative text worthy of the critic's attention, as authoritative as even the "final" filmed version. One disadvantage of Stillinger's method relates to the challenge of retrieving the various versions for a comparative analysis. The task is clearly prohibitive in most cases, and does not conform to

[19] Noël Carroll, *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 214.
[20] Final draft master scene scripts also exist in print, but this is not the publisher's usual practice. Additionally, both Crown Publishers and Faber & Faber—important publishers of "quality," award-winning film scripts—have been criticized for using incorrect formatting. In Crown's case, the screenplays are printed in a 2-column per page format, while Faber & Faber follow the theatrical play format.
[21] See Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge & Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

our standard modes of readership. We would not, for instance, watch a film with a sideways glance to the writer's draft without some intrinsic form of motivation. We might, however, watch a staged performance (say, Shakespeare) with an ear towards the theatrical script. But unlike theatrical scripts, which have aesthetic independence apart from their execution, Carroll argues that we do not consider screenplays in the same degree of autonomy. "We can and should read a play-text as we read a novel," he says. "But in the world of motion pictures, as we know it, scenarios are not read like plays and novels." [22]

Even if, as Carroll suggests, "our appreciative practices indicate, *prima facie*, that screenplays are not artworks on the order of theatrical scripts," Nannicelli's position is that this does not preclude screenplays from being artworks.[23] For Carroll, the ontologies of theatre and film differ on the grounds of performance. That is, whereas theatrical performances offer unique, live interpretations of their scripts, film screenings never change. This implies that although screenplays can be read like theatrical plays, film is not a two-tiered art form (a written composition plus a performance), and therefore the script is indivisible from the film text proper. On the other hand, we could argue that a screenplay would never generate the same film twice.[24] If it is possible, likely even, that a screenplay might inspire several unique interpretations, then it is also possible it is the kind of thing that can be considered autonomous.

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[22] Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 68-69.
[23] Ted Nannicelli, "Why Can't Screenplays be Artworks?" in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69.4 (2011), 4.
[24] Chris Moore's documentary TV series/reality contest *The Chair* (2014), which follows two up-and-coming directors as they each make a movie from the same source, sets out to prove just that.

ON APPRECIATIVE PRACTICES: LITERARINESS

So the modern-day screenplay can delight in an identity apart from film, but is it literary? Nannicelli resolves that the script's status as a verbal object gives it at least the potential to be a work of literature, and he devotes an entire chapter in his book *A Philosophy of the Screenplay* (2013) to the appreciation of screenplays-as-literature. First, using the formalist method, he hones in on certain internal aspects of the script to determine what kind of verbal object the screenplay is:

> x is a screenplay if and only if x is a verbal object intended to repeat, modify, or repudiate the ways in which plot, character, dialogue, shots, edits, sound effects, and/or other features have historically been suggested as constitutive elements of a film by prior screenplay(s) or screenwriting practice (in accordance with recognizable and live purposes of that practice.[25]

With a working definition in place, he sets out to determine if the verbal object we identify as "screenplay" meets the criteria that many of the competing classifications of literature claim fundamental. From Peter Lamarque's institutional definition, which specifies that literary works are not "natural kinds" but institutional entities upheld by social norms, to Robert Howell's aesthetic definition, which conceives of literature as any verbal work with "a sufficient set of aesthetically relevant features," Nannicelli finds nothing sufficiently determinate that would exclude the screenplay outright. Even so, screenplay analysts persistently turn to authorship attribution and stylistic criticism—two predominant evaluative methods—to assign literary value to *particular* scripts, when what the discipline desperately needs is an account of screenplays-as-literature with evaluative criteria built

[25] Nannicelli, *A Philosophy of the Screenplay*, 31.

into it: e.g., *fine writing that conjures mental imagery of some future cinematic work, with creative instructions for its ideal execution.*

Screenplay scholar Steven Price certainly lends the authorship bias considerable influence in *The Plays, Screenplays and Films of David Mamet* (2008). Dubbing Mamet "one of the two most important American playwrights of his generation" (the other: Sam Shepard), and praising his successful (if surprising) transition from theater stage to Hollywood studio, Price finds critical footing in the cultural construct of the screenwriter as auteur, and relies on an auteur-structuralist reading of Mamet's work to emphasize the stylistic continuity between his plays and commercial scripts.[26] Price's more recent contribution to the field of screenplay scholarship, a history of screenplay composition in America and Europe, presents another case for script-based auteur criticism that draws upon stylistic experiments with different screenplay formats, like the '"screen poetry" of Carl Mayer and Ingmar Bergman's creative diaries. Ultimately, though, Price's search for literariness in the screenplay lurches using this approach, stumbling on the tensions that inevitably arise when one author's words are adapted for the screen by another individual. As Temenuga Trifonova argues, for Price, "style is not a matter of the textual elements internal to the screenplay but is, rather, externally determined by the production context."[27]

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[26] Steven Price, *The Plays, Screenplays and Films of David Mamet* (New York Palgrave, 2008), 41. Price also comments on the high esteem placed on Mamet's adaptation of *The Verdict* (novel by Barry Reed) in several books on screenwriting (William Goldman's *Adventures in the Screen Trade*, Paul Lucey's *Story Sense*, Thomas Pope's *Good Scripts, Bad Scripts*), with Mamet having elegantly absorbed (says Price) Joseph Campbell's monomyth into his Hollywood imagination. Campbell's monomyth outlines the classic sequence of actions ("the Hero's Journey") that underpins most of Western storytelling in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949), a mythic narrative from which Christopher Vogler derives the 3-act Hollywood script structure he presents in his seminal screenwriting manual *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* (Studio City, CA: M. Wiese Productions, 1992).
[27] Temenuga, "Medium Specificity and Authorship: The Writer's Screenplay and the Writer-Director's Screenplay" in *Journal of Screenwriting* 6.3 (2015).

By placing screenwriting practice within the context of aesthetic modernism, Boon arguably mounts a better defense for the screenplay's literary worth. His approach locates the specificity of screenwriting's aesthetic pleasure in the early 20th century Imagist movement in poetry, and reveals that the distinct mode of appreciating these poems as art also characterizes the aesthetic aspects of some screenplays. Still, what makes literature distinctive as an art form remains a bit of a moving target for these critics. Price, for instance, understands screenplays as structures of words with "imminent meaning"; poetic usage is therefore not an end in itself, but instead acquires aesthetic significance when assigned a function in the production process.[28] Boon finds that screenwriters sometimes do pursue imagery for its own sake, and believes that what is salient is not the screenplay's intrinsic textual properties, but whether its aesthetic features invite appreciation. Consider this brief excerpt from Shane Black's neo-noir script for *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (1995):

FADE IN:

It's snowing in southwestern Ohio. Before us, nestled in the rolling hills: a postcard slice of suburbia. Super the legend:

UPPER SANDUSKY, OHIO.
Three Weeks Earlier.

Peaceful. Serene. It's the town in the glass bubble, the one God shakes to watch it snow…[29]

At face value, the scene spills us out onto a snow-crusted Midwestern town, charming in all of its cookie-cutter glory. But the description also leans toward the un-seeable, emotional truth of the situation: that someone's glass-encased world is about to be flustered. Sternberg calls this the "literary" mode of presentation in a screenplay, commentary that

[28] Steven Price, *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory, and Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 175.
[29] Shane Black, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, revised February 24, 1995, 3.

depicts non-filmable imagery.[30] Price sees it simply as a rhetorical device—a form of ekphrasis that inevitably gets eclipsed by the production process—yet this is precisely what, for Boon, gives the poetic mode of Imagism its characteristic dimension. The difference is one of inherent style vs. style-by-proxy. Boon regards screenwriting's aesthetic pleasure as being derived from poetic diction and syntax (e.g. common speech, compression), same as modernist poetry. Price, on the other hand, considers this effect symptomatic of its industrial function; if anything, the screenplay form is *meta*literary, in that it includes annotations that make clarifications about the creative process. Generously speaking, it is always possible to evaluate screenplay rhetoric in a literary manner.[31] But is there an aesthetic mode intrinsic to the genre?

If a screenplay is the sum total of how the writer imagines a film and how they need the audience to see it, then screenwriting must rely on framing and point of view. What distinguishes screenwriting from other writing practices is the presence of a picturing eye; in Maras' words, "the photoplay has a language of its own. The language of the camera."[32] For Adam Ganz, screenwriting finds its ontological extension in what he terms a "lens-based" tradition, one that privileges a highly precise description of phenomena, viewed through a lens, for an audience unable to see what is described. He traces its lineage back to the rise of the novel in the 18th century (more pointedly, to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*), to the medical journals of John Locke, through to Galileo's observations of the moon by telescope in 1610. His investigation reveals that the introduction of the lens created a paradigm shift in literary practices, piggybacking on the tradition of empiricism.

[30] Other modes include the descriptive (instructions for production design), the report (on-screen action) and speech (dialogue cues), the mutual balance of which determines the style of the scene text. See: Sternberg's *Written for the Screen: the American Motion-Picture Screenplay as Text* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997).
[31] In his volume on *Literary Theory*, Terry Eagleton quips, "anything can be literature" or "can cease to be literature" depending upon the prevailing doctrine (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1983, 10).
[32] Steven Maras, *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (London: Wallflower, 2009), 144.

Screenwriting, although it characterizes a kind of lens-based writing, in fact represents its inverse: "Screenwriting describes something imagined that will be recorded and projected through a lens, to be eventually seen by a film audience. Lens-based writing records something that has already been framed and viewed to be imagined by a subsequent reader."[33] Ganz intimates that, perhaps, it is temporality that is peculiar to screenwriting as a literary entity; whereas novelistic discourse remembers (looks backwards), screenplay discourse recalls for future recording, an attribute I shall explore in greater depth in Chapter 3.

In 2013, motion-picture industry entrepreneur and self-described "book producer" James West launched Script Lit, a company that licenses optioned but otherwise untouched scripts, and turns them into e-novellas.[34] This venture is a thought-provoking one, particularly for adaptation studies, since the screenplay has, up to now, been conceived primarily as a mediating force between literature and film, but rarely, even under the best of circumstances, as a literary source text in its own right. In his book *Authorship in Film Adaptation* (2008), Jack Boozer lists some of the common reasons for discounting the screenplay in adaptation research: "the multiple revisions a script undergoes during development (at times by different hands), Hollywood's traditional low regard for the screenwriter generally, and a resistance to any sort of transposition of esteemed canonic literature (the "hallowed word") to another medium."[35] In response to the first concern, the previously mentioned "theory of versions" offers a critical model that legitimizes the

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[33] Adam Ganz, "To Make You See: Screenwriting, description and the 'lens-based' tradition" in *Journal of Screenwriting* 4.1 (2013), 23-24.
[34] Craig Manning, "Indie Groundbreaking Publisher: Script Lit eBooks" (http://www.independentpublisher.com/article.php?page=1692). SL eBooks (www.slebooks.com) touts Script Lit as "the new literary genre for savvy readers." Their website currently features two downloadable titles for purchase: Denise Pischinger's *Mom of the Year* and Brian Sieve's *Ambrose Fountain* (with Rich Farrell's *The Enders* in development). Although Script Lit books do away with screenplay formatting, West's business model hinges on the market value of screenplays as works with literary merit.
[35] Jack Boozer, *Authorship in Film Adaptation* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2008), 2.

inherent fluctuations in a screenplay text, from one draft composition to another. Rather than think of the screenplay as an incomplete film (like Carroll does), or as novel's inferior (following the trend in adaptation studies), Sternberg believes that accepting multiple versions sheds invaluable light on the various stages of literary adaptation. As well, Boozer maintains that "it is the screenplay, not the source text, that is the most direct foundation and fulcrum for any adapted film," underscoring the degree to which the process of adaptation alters the originating novel, and leaves it a weak point of reference from which to evaluate the film's true fidelity.[36] These are sentiments echoed by François Jost, who also laments our thinking about adaptation in these narrow, hierarchical terms: "to the extent that filmic adaptations are much more frequent than novelistic adaptations of films (commonly called "novelizations"), scholars tend to reflect more on the transformation of written texts into images than on the converse transformation."[37] Somewhere between novelizations and Script Lit, two artistic practices that productively redefine the cinema-literature relation by challenging novels and films' usual standing within the hierarchy, the screenplay emerges as an autonomous form ripe for literary adaptation.

ON SPECIFICITY: FILM ART

When the movies were silent, it was easy to rebel against the printed word. Early film theorists were quick to attach importance to cinema's inimitable qualities like montage, the moving frame, and the close-up. They identified and emphasized aspects that were unique to its nature, and studied the possibilities it presented for formal play with material reality. They also wasted little time in seizing on the screenplay (then, the "scenario") as an

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[36] Ibid.
[37] François Jost, "The Look: From Film to Novel" in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, 71.

element extraneous and confounding to the moving image. But this rivalry between screenwriting and film is much older than either screenwriting or film, Elliott claims. It originates with two specific branches of the 18th century debate on poetry and painting:

> One branch categorically differentiates poetry and painting along word and image lines, classifying the two arts as separate species, as in Lessing's famous distinction between poetry as temporal and painting as spatial. The other identifies them as sister arts, setting up rhetorical family resemblances through interart analogies, as in Simonides of Ceos' frequently cited analogy: "Poetry is a speaking picture; painting is a mute poem."[38]

Of course, the underlying dispute has to do with whether to approach literature and the visual arts from the same direction, given their respective representational "limits". Obsessed with clear categories, Lessing thought they ought to be treated as separate domains.[39] His purist attitude, Elliott maintains, eventually "won out" against the analogical rhetoric of intermediality, and became one of the aesthetic principles guiding film criticism in its early days.[40]

Although classical film theory mainly preoccupied itself with ontological questions—what is the essence of film, and how should it be classified?—it was also heavily invested in promoting film as an art. In the very first book of film theory, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916), Hugo Münsterberg, a clinical psychologist, marveled at the equivalences between human cognition and the silent screen. He was particularly impressed with the way film could reflect back to us our method of organizing experience:

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[38] Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate,* 1.

[39] Lessing rests his interart critique on a very ancient dispute that centers on a classical marble sculpture dating from the 1st century BC depicting Laocoön, the Trojan priest of Apollo, being attacked by two giant serpents. He insists that the sculpture fails to match the intellectual impulse of Virgil's written account of the same story, because pictorial arts appear to have more difficulty narrating. See: *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, [1766] 1962).

[40] Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, 10.

"the photoplay tells us the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world—namely space, time, and causality—and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely attention, memory, imagination and emotion."[41] At the same time, he downplayed the scenario's role in prescribing this very effect:

> But such help by the writing on the wall is, after all, extraneous to the original character of the photoplay. As long as we have the psychological effect of the moving pictures themselves, we must concentrate our inquiry on the moving pictures as such and not on that which the playwright does for the interpretation of the pictures.[42]

That Münsterberg would have the leaders—the title cards that precede a pictorial shot—trail so far behind the images in terms of their expressiveness, speaks volumes about the sacrificing of words at the altar of silent film art. Münsterberg even refers to film words as "linguistic crutches", coolly condemning their use as "an esthetic failure in the new art."[43] This brash attitude towards screenwriting would continue to reverberate strongly in the film scholarship to follow.

Rudolf Arnheim, too, was a silent cinema purist, despite the remarkable advances in sound and colour that were being marketed to moviegoers by the 1950s. Arnheim's approach to Gestalt psychology, which he eventually synthesized with 1920s film theory, led him to reflect on screenwriting in similar terms as Münsterberg, even decades later. *Film als Kunst* (1932), his first treatise on film art, describes the technique of the screenplay as a "hostile principle," naming synchronized dialogue a "fundamental defect" that "paralyzes the

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[41] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study. The Silent Photoplay in 1916* (New York: Dover Publications, [1916] 1970), 74.
[42] Ibid., 34.
[43] Ibid., 86.

action," even though it had become the standard for talking pictures by the mid-1920s.[44] Arnheim claimed that photography (in the sense of a mechanical recording) was always most expressive when it engaged us in a detailed scrutiny of the image itself; not of its subject, but of its conscious elicitation of a perspective. Attentive to the outer shape of content, and to how the human mind organizes the plastic properties of an artwork into meaningful order (both in this book and in more popular volume *Art and Visual Perception* [1954], in which he surveys a much wider range of visual art practices), Arnheim looked to film as a kind of funhouse mirror, reflecting reality back through creative distortions. Thus, in the way of the vanguard Soviet filmmakers, he endorses a stylized, exaggerated and surprising approach to pictorial composition, one that cements the medium of film as viably artistic. Reliance on language, either in the form of inter-titles, dialogue or narration, should be restricted: "not only does speech limit the motion picture to an art of dramatic portraiture, it also interferes with the expression of the image."[45]

Underpinning classical film theory was the belief that relying on other art forms—namely, theater and the 19th century novel—would condemn the cinema as an inferior medium, keeping it out of the pantheon of art. Another important voice in the cultural legitimation of cinema is that of art historian Erwin Panofsky, who in 1936 was charged with a prominent role as a member of the advisory committee at the Museum of Modern Art in establishing their film department. This duty was bestowed upon him following a tour of spirited lectures and presentations across the country, where he shared his views on the new art of cinematography. One such lecture was published as "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures" (1934), likely Panofsky's most reprinted work. It issued an explicit attack on literary approaches to film, and defended the "principle of co-expressibility" as an ideal

[44] Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (London: Faber and Faber, [1958] 1983), 187.
[45] Ibid.

that prioritizes visible movement over the soundtrack. Fixing the origin and imperatives of film in popular art, Panofsky reminisces in this paper on cinema's early days, when "the enjoyment of moving pictures was not an objective interest in a specific subject matter, much less an aesthetic interest in the formal presentation of subject matter, but the sheer delight in the fact that things seemed to move, no matter what they were."[46]

Although Panofsky's iconographic project makes him an exponent of the realist camp, placing him in theoretical opposition to Arnheim's ideas about film style, both men agree on film's mechanical basis and therefore privilege the medium's innate ability to manipulate images above its capacity to articulate ideas. In the context of silent cinema, Panofsky singles out certain "primordial archetypes", including "success or retribution, sentiment, sensation, pornography, and crude humour," elements that, for him, reflect the folk art mentality that defines film as a popular medium, "not by an artificial injection of literary values but by the exploitation of the unique and specific possibilities of the new medium."[47] As for screenwriting, which is also subject to the co-expressibility principle, Panofsky contends that a good script is one that does not attempt to convey in words any more than what can be expressed visually on-screen. Bolstering his argument with anthropological observation, he adds: "the living language, which is always right, has endorsed this sensible choice when it still speaks of a 'moving picture' or, simply, a 'picture,' instead of accepting the pretentious and fundamentally erroneous 'screen play.'[48]

All key classical theories considered, the materialist aesthetics which Siegfried Kracauer introduces in his *Theory of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960) most deftly nails the coffin shut on the threat of screenwriting by asserting the unique value of film's

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[46] Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures" in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 7th edition, ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 247.
[47] Ibid., 249.
[48] Ibid., 248.

indexicality as a means of preserving lived experience. Setting his work apart from the more common, widespread inquiries rendered in formalist strokes, Kracauer fuses the art concept with the photographic reproduction of the visible world, which "leaves its raw material more or less intact."[49] This critical move springs from his belief that, through film, the material world can be "redeemed" and allowed to speak on its own terms, a faith of conviction that has two important and lasting consequences for the screenplay. First, if film's ontology is to be justified as the medium of the moving image, then it should "cling to the surface of things" instead of depending on verbal statements that "focus directly on inward life, ideology, and spiritual concerns."[50] Second, if mechanical reproduction is, in fact, the very essence and redemptive feature of cinema, then "it must gravitate toward the expanses of outer reality—an open-ended, limitless world which bears little resemblance to the finite and ordered cosmos set by tragedy."[51] To recapitulate, for Kracauer, narrative and, in most cases, speech, run counter to the brilliant promise and capacities of the medium.[52] This obliges him to conceive a disharmony between word and image, and conclude that film and literature ultimately "embrace different worlds."[53]

With repeat exposure to the moralizing thrust of classical film theory, and to the notion of specificity as the "good" of the film experience, the script—thought to belong to a different

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[49] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), i.
[50] Ibid., x-xi.
[51] Ibid., i.
[52] In exceptional cases where the material qualities of speech might compliment the visual events, Kracauer endorses the suitable intrusion of dialogue. He lists Eliza's cockney intonations in *Pygmalion* (1938), the echo scene in Luis Buñuel's *Robinson Crusoe* (1953) and "the lumps of conversation tossed to and fro" in Jacques Tati's *Mr. Hulot's Holiday* (1953). See his chapter on "Dialogue and Sound", 109.
[53] Kracauer calls the world of the film "the material continuum," differentiating it from "the mental continuum" of the novel (*Theory of Film*, 234). In his own words: "the novel too is frequently engrossed in physical existence—faces, objects, landscapes and all. But this is only part of the world at its command. A composition in words, it is able and therefore disposed, directly to name and penetrate inner-life events that range from emotions to ideas, from psychological conflicts to intellectual disputes. Practically all novels lean toward internal developments or states of being. The world of the novel is primarily a mental continuum." (237)

semiotic world—was suddenly met with peculiar silence by scholars.[54] If film were to be critically championed as "the new literature," it would have to unravel its aesthetic ties to screenwriting.

Somewhat perplexingly, as Elliott points out, the categorical distinctions that Kracauer and others (as will be shown in the subsequent chapter) maintain exist between novels and films in order to press their purity, are simultaneously challenged (often by those very same critics) whenever the need is felt to situate film form, content or style within the broader history of aesthetics.[55] In search of a pedigree for his Soviet montage technique, Eisenstein praised the cinematographic quality of Charles Dickens' prose. "Dickens' nearness to the characteristics of cinema in method, style, and especially in viewpoint and exposition, is indeed amazing."[56] Out of the blue, making a film becomes synonymous with the act of writing a novel, or, as Elliott puts it, "filmic visuals are hailed as cinematic and as analogical purveyors of great 'literature'."[57] By way of another example, in his book *Film Hieroglyphs* (1991), Tom Conley considers French film critic Alexandre Astruc's auteur theory, which centers on a formulation of the camera as pen. He ruminates: "His reflections showed that movies could be read in order to be seen, and that, in the wake of Proust and Sartre, all literature could be seen as montage or, it can be added, an extended hieroglyph of moving letters." He continues: "The viewing of a film can be an act of reading

[54] Fatefully, film theory took up permanent residence in academia in the 1960s and began importing concepts from structural linguistics and semiotics to legitimate its status. Largely through the work of French theorist Christian Metz, who in 1966 developed a theoretical model known as the "grande syntagmatique," narrative cinema became the grammar and meaning system exclusive to film images, and the film "text" came to be regarded as source material for the literary critic. See: Metz, "La grande syntagmatique du film narratif" in *Communications* 8 (1966).
[55] Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, 81.
[56] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, inc., 1949), 206.
[57] Elliott, "Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars", 12.

and, more cursively, writing."[58] And, finally: "Implicit in the concept of the caméra-stylo is a film hieroglyph, a writing that unites and divides word and image."[59]

As productive as these rhetorical extensions can be for scholars seeking to analyze film from the purview of more established disciplines, at a certain point this analogical approach begins to unravel. Kracauer, for instance, interprets Proust differently than Astruc, offering Proust's novel *The Captive* (1923) as an example of the absolute irreconcilability of image and word.[60] Following suit, on the subject of title cards, Arnheim stigmatizes film words to smooth out the discontinuity of parallel editing:

> If two sequences of the action are to be understood as occurring at the same time they may simply be shown one after the other, in which case, however, it must be obvious from the content that simultaneity is intended. The most primitive way of giving this information in a silent film is by way of printed titles.[61]

For Arnheim, when combined with the vivacity of motion pictures, it is the crudeness and redundancy of inter-titles that becomes highlighted, not their eloquence. Ironically enough, whereas written language alternately frees and limits film's expressive functions (depending on the critic's whim), the screenplay is consistently characterized in terms of the visuality it lacks. Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini summarizes it this way: "the author of a screenplay asks his addressee for a particular collaboration: that is, of lending the text

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[58] Tom Conley, *Film Hieroglyphs: Ruptures in Classical Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) ix.

[59] Ibid, x. Vachel Lindsay, too, leaps at the chance to tether cinema to the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph: "The invention of the photoplay is as great a step as was the beginning of picture-writing in the stone-age." See: *The Art of the Moving Picture* (Norwood, Mass.: The MacMillan Company, 1915), 171. See also Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[60] "He exchanges the world of the cinema for dimensions alien to it. The novel, then, is not a cinematic literary form." (*Theory of Film*, 239)

[61] Arnheim crafts his own example: "While Elise was hovering between life and death, Edward was boarding the liner at San Francisco." See *Film as Art,* 28.

a 'visual' completeness which it does not have, but at which it hints."[62] These shifting metaphors, what Elliott calls "interart analogies" (e.g. the hieroglyphic discourse about cinema, the "visual turn" in literature) certainly benefit film, and the novel sometimes, but frequently run counter to the screenplay's legitimation as an autonomous work of art. Often, the analogical rhetoric that claims literary or pictorial territory for the script becomes too literal, outsourcing the script's interchangeable traits, thus promoting a kind of anti-definition of itself.

Writing in the 1980s, Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky considered some of the formal problems of adaptation—that is, of finding filmic equivalents to literary images—as they concerned both the screenwriter and the director in terms of process and technique. In the course of this, he leans heavily on the blueprint concept of the screenplay and its crucial role in mitigating the different "aesthetic starting-points" of the written narrative and the future film work.[63] As a rule, the screenplay can emulate the novel's literary technique, but never at the cost of its usefulness as a production plan. "If a scenario is a brilliant piece of literature," says Tarkovsky, "then it is far better that it should remain as prose. If a director still wants to make a film from it, then the first thing to be done is to turn it into a screenplay which can be a valid basis for his work."[64] Unlike the shooting script, which outlines very plainly what is going to be filmed and how it should be done, the literary screenplay—with its flourishes and ornaments—holds little value if the objective is to accommodate the aesthetic demands of cinema. At the same time, Tarkovsky recognizes that highly prescriptive writing weakens the screenplay's claims to artistic autonomy, a consequence which he appears to accept as the inherent outcome of adaptation: "I should

[62] Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The Screenplay as a 'Structure That Wants to be Another Structure'" in *American Journal of Semiotics*. 41/3 (1986), 55.
[63] Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 18.
[64] Ibid., 126.

say at once that I do not look on scenario as a literary genre. Indeed, the more cinematic a script, the less can it claim literary status in its own right, in the way that a play so often can."[65]

Epitomizing the paradox which Elliott observes within art critical discourse, Victor Freeburg, America's first screenwriting professor, shuttles between reciprocity and specificity when he moves from characterizing film composition as "drawing screen pictures… on the typewriter" to consenting that words represent "the scenario writer's handicap."[66] *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen* (1923), his second major work of film aesthetics, also regards the scenario as the film's blueprint, although Freeburg confesses that screenwriters are ill equipped to impress the viewer pictorially:

> Of course, even the most intelligent scenario writers, even those who have the most accurate knowledge of pictorial values on the screen and the keenest power of visualizing their story as it will appear… are always handicapped by working in the medium of language. Words are not motion-photographs, any more than they are paint or marble.[67]

Whereas Tarkovsky is inclined to challenge a script's literary caliber on the basis that it obfuscates the aesthetic and practical issues already embroiled in adapting a "genuine" work of literature for the screen, Freeburg has a tendency to underrate screenwriting's influence over the cinematography. In his own words, "a man can no more write those pictures than he can write a row of paintings on a wall," thus validating the limitations he imposes upon the scenario writer, who merely supplies suitable subject matter.[68] As a

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Victor Freeburg, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923), 22-23.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 5.

result of the paradoxical forces that see word and image as being diametrically opposed, yet integrally related, the screenplay always betrays, at one and the same time, its linguistic roots in literature, and its visual complement in film.

ON SPECIFICITY: FILM PURITY

For all the classical critics' efforts to hype the expressive potential of silent cinema as the new, universal language—what Mattias Frey dubs the "artistic Esperanto"—they had difficulty imagining how film, "neither truly universal, nor technically a language," could be systematically developed, much less practiced in solidarity on an international scale.[69] Film's art status, originally linked to the medium's formal properties such as pictorial composition and motion, was now being subjected to questions of intelligibility. Counter-intuitively, film words were considered a threat to film's overall coherence. A motion picture, interrupted by title cards in the interest of narrative clarity, was not just "robbed of pictorial continuity"[70]; it was invaded by an "alien element," creating a "disconcerting coincidence of two voices" and killing "one of the most basic artistic impulses… to escape the disturbing multiplicity of nature."[71]

Objections to screenwriting came in all shapes and sizes. For Freeburg, film education had an ethical dimension, insofar as it cultivated an appreciation for better photoplays, first from the filmmakers, and eventually from the viewers at large. He believed that in order to improve upon the movies, film "composers" (as he affectionately called them) had to be

[69] Mattias Frey, "Cultural problems of classical film theory: Béla Balázs, 'universal language' and the birth of national cinema" in *Screen* 51:4 (2010), 324.
[70] Freeburg, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen*, 173.
[71] Belá Balázs, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art* (London: Dobson, 1952), 224; Arnheim, *Film as Art,* 164; 166.

positioned as arbiters of cinematic taste. Thus, over the course of his admittedly brief career as an instructor at Columbia (he enlisted in the army at the outbreak of WW1), Freeburg developed an author-centered curriculum that played to the viewer's keen expectations and sensibility to what constitutes "good" composition:

> Words in the form of titles, subtitles, dialogue, comments, etc., are rarely in place on the screen. If they are admitted for the purpose of telling or explaining a part of the story, they come as a slur on the art of the motion picture, and often as an insult to the intelligence of the spectator.[72]

The curious bit about Freeburg's method is that it favours pictorial unity over narrative continuity, despite his personal motives to secure film as a moral and social force. Film words that could advance film literacy, even act as a medium of criticism (by captioning otherwise unintelligible action captured by the producer) are instead held in contempt, and treated as disruptive to the overall visual effect.

One would think that the arrival of the talking picture, which rid film of those pesky title cards, would quash notions of screenwriting as an assault on the viewer. In fact, dialogue, when it finally appeared, was deemed just as intrusive. From the eye to the ear, sound films presented a double face: one, the articulate voice of language; the other, a symbolic intonation made up of gestures and looks. Suddenly, film theorists influenced by Gestalt psychology longed for the visual purity of the silent photoplay. According to Béla Balázs, writing in 1952:

> This art of expression was virtually killed by the talkie, because a mouth that speaks intelligibly to the ear, can no longer remain intelligible to the eye. It is no longer a spontaneous vehicle of

[72] Freeburg, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen*, 173.

> expression, like the other features of the face—it has become a sound-producing instrument.[73]

More conservative than Balázs, who understood that the silent film was simply a bygone ideal, Arnheim continued to reject the sound film as an aesthetic drawback well into the era of CinemaScope.[74] From his *materialtheorie* of 1958:

> The introduction of sound film must be considered as the imposition of a technical novelty that did not lie on the path the best film artists were pursuing. They were engaged in working out an explicit and pure style of silent film, using its restrictions to transform the peep show into an art.[75]

Here Arnheim defends and celebrates the silent photoplay, not just as a genuine aesthetic point of view, but also as the perfect expression of medium purity; what movies can and ought to be. Like his idealization of the black-and-white film, which temporarily interrupts or challenges the conventions of visual logic, soundless pictures cut themselves loose from anchorage in the perceptual world.

In an essay titled "In Defense of Mixed Media" (1967), André Bazin extends the discourse concerning the impurity of words to a study of adaptation, likening (to a degree) the disgrace of filmed novels to the critical reputation of screenplays. His paper suggests that the Arnheims of classical film theory are merely wrestling with the old problem of the reciprocal influence of the arts: that even a sublime, pure cinema cannot exist independently from its artistic predecessors. But, coming to Arnheim's defense, Bazin

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[73] Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, 68.

[74] Whereas Balázs historicizes the bias against captions, describing it as a "legitimate" attempt to differentiate film at a time when it could not yet compete, on equal terms, with the cultural respectability of its sister arts, Arnheims's resistance to film words, however unreasonable, is grounded in the conviction that film is solely a visual medium.

[75] Arnheim, *Film as Art*, 129.

characterizes film's aesthetic history as unique, describing it as a "paradoxical evolution", by which he means that silent film arose under very special sociological conditions. Unlike other arts, the cinema did not initially borrow from older forms:

> Doubtless what misleads us about the cinema is that, in contrast to what usually happens in the evolutionary cycle of an art, adaptation, borrowing, and imitation did not appear in the early stages. On the contrary, the autonomy of the means of expression, and the originality of the subject matter, have never been greater than they were in the first twenty or thirty years of the cinema.[76]

Compared to film's prodigious beginnings, screenwriting—which had formal ties both to playwriting and the Victorian novel—was deemed old-fashioned and backwards looking.[77] More to the point, critics worried that the mere presence of words or speech in a film would complicate the already complex set of relations that entwined the cinema as a signifying system. Today, we know this not to be true, and art historian W.J.T. Mitchell enlists Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous image game of the duck-rabbit (figure 1) to illustrate why.[78]

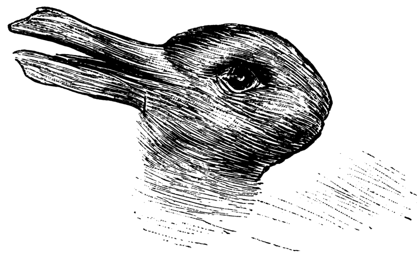

Fig. 1

[76] André Bazin, "In Defense of Mixed Media" in *What is Cinema?* trans. Hugh Gray (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 57.
[77] Also, because the screenplay was born of a practical urge (to keep up with the sheer scope and expense of another medium's expressive potential), standards of evaluation for film scripts tended to focus on the economics of structure, rather than on style or technique. Thus, objections to the early scenario as literature are understandable; these screenplays were written in synopsis form, were rarely longer than a paragraph, and undermined the essential qualities of film as a moving image medium.
[78] Joseph Jastrow, Duck-rabbit figure from "The Mind's eye" in *Popular Science Monthly* 54 (1899), 312.

Although words are often considered a powerful rival to the image, Mitchell claims that language is what constructs the perceptual experience. Our ability to see both a duck and a rabbit, to name both as individual objects, and to shift back and forth between them, proves that we are, in fact, quite capable of reconciling pictures and words, the visual and the verbal.[79] Learning from history, the best practice for the advancement of screenplay studies is to replace categorical models of film criticism with models that embrace this word/image dialectic. The interdependence of words and images is, after all, how the cinema found its legs.

ON CONCEPTION AND EXECUTION: SCRIPTING

A popular maxim amongst poetry writers is that form follows function. This means that metrical discourse —the length of the lines, the system of rhymes, the repetitions—helps the poet's desired effect find its rightful shape. At the same time, the poem's physical structure is also a significant measure of its general aesthetic appeal. Hollywood screenwriting obeys a similar rule—the 1-page per minute formula—assuming that the page has been formatted to conventional industry standards. This is because screenplay form has stabilized over the years, alongside the rise and fall of the studio system, and evolved to include certain prescribed conventions, such as the use of the present tense (to denote the immediate physical action), the centering of character names (to distinguish dialogue from scene description), and abstention from too many technical instructions (which are more at home in the shooting script).

[79] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Word and Image" in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 52.

It is easy to see why the screenplay has long been defined by its technical function as a filmic blueprint; the old continuity script definitely supports the analogy. However, when the less jargon-laden master scene format emerged as the new standard for writer's drafts in the 1960s, its authority over the execution of production was considerably diminished. With that, the screenplay became much more readable, serving the needs of independent producers and the "package-unit" system. Because the director's shooting script now replaces the writer's draft as the production blueprint, the master scene script becomes inessential to the production once filming is under way.[80] In the interest of steering screenwriting research away from narrow, text-based definitions, Maras turns to "scripting" as a means of broadening notions of filmic composition into cinematography (writing with light), performance (writing with bodies), and so on. Insofar as this provides an alternative to plot-based approaches (e.g. the Robert McKee school of screenwriting), this is a useful metaphor. The problem with Maras' method is that it re-imagines screenwriting "beyond the container of the page," ultimately casting the screenplay text in the shadow of more properly "cinematic" (i.e. visual) forms of writing.[81] Consequently, we lose sight of the screenplay's role outside production, as a standalone literary work.

Like the *nouvelle vague* filmmakers who broke with Hollywood convention by "writing" with handheld cameras on the fly, Maras' call for "an extended theory of scripting" is driven by the belief that the separation of conception and execution need not be maintained.[82] Implicit in both strategies is the importance of unity of vision—the notion that true artistic creation cannot be parceled out into different assignments. But by positing movie

[80] This is not to imply that the master scene script is inherently non-essential. I simply mean that the shift in standardized practice towards developing a more "readable" property in order to attract financing—one subject to further revisions and new formatting conventions at the shooting stage—has turned the writer's draft into one of several, often temporary, material instances of what Ian Macdonald calls the "screen idea". See: *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 19.
[81] Maras, *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice*, 2.
[82] Ibid.

production as inextricable from composition, while linking the master scene script to "a narrow conception of the possibilities of the medium", Maras seems to be endorsing a return to the sort of directorial improvisation that characterized cinema's early days.[83] Another strange irony to do with Maras' fearing drift towards an autonomous activity of screenwriting is his worry that this will change what it means to make film. Why should it be presumed that reading a script as a literary work somehow weakens its contribution to the production process?

As Maras himself acknowledges, current film-planning practices go well beyond the limited functions of the text-based film script to include many image-based options for visualizing the finished film (like storyboards and digital animations). This means that the standard screenplay has, in a sense, been freed to offer more selective, stylistic contributions, mainly through its increased literariness. Why Maras feels the need to resist the industrial opposition between conception and execution is, I believe, not so much to do with the screenplay form as such, but with the homogenization of screenwriting practice that has occurred as a result of this divide. Without a doubt, the redundancy of the theories promoted in the instructional literature is a testament to the systematization of story structure, character goals, and stylistic conventions of scriptwriting. But the claim that some screenplays are art works is certainly no threat to the art of motion picture production.

[83] Ibid., 4.

ON CONCEPTION AND EXECUTION: THE GENESIS MYTH

Ian Macdonald's "screen idea", a concept that bridges the formal distance between the page-based document and the screen-based text, arguably advances a more serviceable metaphor than Maras' "scripting" because it leaves the screenplay's autonomy intact. Rather than pull focus from the screenplay document, as Maras does, to entertain a kind of genesis myth of the film sprung fully formed—literally, written "*with* or *on* the screen"—we should keep in mind that the notion of a page-based composition remains essential to the sort of practice that intends to produce a literary work.[84] Although "scripting", in Maras' sense of the word, is technically a more inclusive and malleable concept, bringing screenwriting into experimental arenas and away from the hegemony of the 3-act screenplay, it is a term that pledges allegiance to cinema (more pointedly, to the execution of a film in the absence of a script), and not to screenplays as potential literary works.

In partial response to Maras who, reluctant to define the screenplay in a way that uproots it from production, misconstrues how readers usually engage with film scripts, Nannicelli develops a set of interrelated questions that scholars should be able and eager to answer: 1-*is the screenplay ontologically incomplete, and therefore existentially dependent upon the film? 2-does the screenplay's literary status hinge on its ontological nature? 3-do our actual creative and appreciative practices regarding the screenplay outweigh its ontological features in terms of the way we theorize about it?*[85] Nannicelli argues that although some of the major players (Macdonald, Maras, Price) yielding to trends in recent scholarship would likely answer "yes" to all three, answering "yes" to question 3 requires us to answer "no" to

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[84] Maras, *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice,* 2.
[85] Ted Nannicelli, "The Ontology and Literary Status of the Screenplay: The Case of 'Scriptfic'" in *Journal of Literary Theory* 7.1/2 (2013), 138.

questions 1 and 2. He restates his position:

> Another way of putting it is that our theories, especially our theories about the ontology of the fundamental nature of cultural practices and the products thereof, ought to be able to handle counterexamples posed by our actual practices. In particular, theorists who claim the screenplay is not literature because of the kind of thing it is need to account for or explain away the fact that some screenplays indeed seem to be created and read as if they were literary works. Well-known examples of such screenplays that are commonly appreciated as literature and seem to have been created with the relevant sorts of artistic intention include Samuel Beckett's "Film" screenplay, Carl Mayer's screenplay for *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927), Marguerite Duras's screenplay for *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), and Harold Pinter's "Proust Screenplay". Thus far, theorists who have suggested the screenplay's ontology indicates it is not literature have yet to account for such examples.[86]

This category of screenplays that aspire to literary status or, at the very least, are written with literary aesthetics in mind, are studied more diligently in Chapter 4. But the point to be seized here is that, for many critics, the "blueprint" definition of the screenplay helps to stabilize the choppy ontological waters on which so much of screenplay scholarship stands. Thus, one of the aims of this dissertation moving forward will be to rock the boat, so to speak, by theorizing the evidence supplied by those aspects of practice that have a tendency to get explained away.

In Hegelian terms, art always moves beyond abstraction towards something concrete. This viewpoint certainly informs Maras' low opinion of screenwriting, who says that the script gets "burnt up" in the production process, dematerializing in the wake of the realized film.[87] But filmic execution does a few other things, too: it alters our relationship to the

[86] Ibid.
[87] Maras, *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice*, 58.

screenplay, by supplying a companion guide of tangible audiovisual features (and, in all likelihood, many editorial changes), and, in reciprocal fashion, is also transformed by it (e.g., through a “special features” section on the DVD that may cite from the original screenplay, or by way of a published script that re-incorporates production stills and other “behind-the-scenes” details). The “screen idea” anticipates precisely this unpredictable and dynamic environment so characteristic of film development. As Macdonald explains, “it is a way of talking about a potential screenwork, not a concrete screenwork. The screen idea is invisible, but it is possible to focus on its appearance at different ‘moments’.”[88] Thus, it can live in the skin of the script, or it can shape-shift as (be “adapted” into) a television program, film or webisode. This view leaves the screenplay’s autonomy intact, while pulling focus away from the film as the predetermined, final stage of execution.

The separation of conception and execution, one of the more important outcomes of the central producer system of production established in the 1910s, is sustained by contemporary film theoretical discussions because it provides an intelligible way of doing aesthetics. Cinema studies first took root in the academy at a time when the movies were silent—above all, a moving image art. Therefore, one aspect of film composition (scenario writing) had to accept the priority of another (directing). As Freeburg instructed to beginning students: “it would be unfair to say that a writer could not in some way lend a hand in the making of a motion picture, we merely insist that the finished picture should not be judged as writing.”[89]

Tarkovsky illustrates the point with some practical views on screenplay aesthetics: “For me, a real screenplay is one that is not intended of itself to affect the reader in any complete

[88] Macdonald, *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea*, 162.
[89] Freeburg, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen*, 5-6.

and final way, but is designed entirely to be transformed into a film and only thus to acquire its finished form."[90] In his opinion, not only is the screenplay merely an incidental step on the film's way to becoming an intentional work, it does not even meet the criteria to be appreciable as art.

In similar terms, Münsterberg likens a film's execution to one of triumphant completion: "The work which the scenario writer creates is in itself still imperfect and becomes a complete work of art only through the action of the producer."[91] Münsterberg then draws an analogy to staged theater, asserting that scenario writers are to stage managers what playwrights are to directors. He says that because drama relies much more heavily on spoken action (in the form of dialogue and the discourse of the characters) than mise-en-scène, the written play already supplies the conditions and ingredients for the performance. Where the silent photoplay is concerned, the emphasis is less on speech than on the picture. Therefore, the director (whom Münsterberg refers to as the producing artist) must pick up where the writer left off, and essentially "compose" the film anew, using the plastics of his craft. In turn, the writer's job is to supply the director with "original literature of real power and significance, in which every thought is generated by the idea of the screen."[92] In other words, the scenario may espouse an aesthetic point of view, but it is the film that ultimately provides the aesthetic gratification.

Cautioning against the supposition that literary scripts produce better quality films, Soviet filmmaker Vsevolod Pudovkin insists that any emphasis on screenplay style creates unfavourable conditions for the faithful execution of the film. "The more detailed a script is

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[90] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 74-75.
[91] Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study*, xiv.
[92] Ibid., 83.

technically," he says, "the more chance there is that the scriptwriter will see his message precisely translated into screen images."[93] Still, if there is an art to producing what he calls a "technically accomplished" script so "precisely calculated" in its deployment of camera positions and technical devices that it manages to "create the coherence of style that is the hallmark of a work of art," Pudovkin does not appear to distinguish it as a literary one.[94] From his perspective, screenplay form represents a balancing act between technical convention and a self-disciplined use of style, just enough to invoke a visual performance in the reader's imagination. Sequences, as they are laid out on paper, should never aspire to literariness because in the event of the film's execution, any effects achieved through figurative language will be lost. Like the playwright who uses the falling curtain at the end of an act as a specific device, the screenwriter should acquire a feel for the film's final working form. The script exists purely to guide others in that process, so that they, too, will picture the same film as they leaf through its pages.

Of all the theorists presently under consideration, only Balázs allows himself to imagine a future in which the film script ranks as high as its theatrical counterpart. He bases his prediction on the historic trajectories of other art forms (e.g. sculpture, the short story) whose success also derived from their apparent limitations. Glancing backwards to cinema's early days, he admits that "when the film began, there was no script; the director improvised each scene on the set, telling each actor what to do during the next shot. The sub-titles were written and cut in later."[95] As silent films found their voice and began turning inward, Balázs argues, they gave way to increasingly complex and psychologically motivated narratives, while the screenplay, too, came to express itself more artistically.

[93] Vsevolod Pudovkin, *Vsevolod Pudovkin: Selected Essays*, ed. Richard Taylor, trans. Richard Taylor and Evgeni Filipov (New York: Seagull Books, 2006), 35.
[94] Ibid., 45; 45; 34.
[95] Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, 247.

Even in the midst of prevailing winds fiercely thrusting it toward the blueprint concept, Balázs champions the script as a work of literature, but only insofar as it remains an unrealized film:

> That public opinion distinguishes more easily between play and stage performance than between script and screened film is due to the fact that a play can be performed in many ways in many theatres, thus demonstrating that the play has an existence of its own apart from the performance. The film on the contrary mostly absorbs the script completely so that it is not preserved as an independent object which could be used again for a different film production.[96]

Balázs' crystal ball could not possibly have accounted for Script Lit or similar recourses to the screenplay as a recyclable source text, but his reluctance to confer autonomy onto the script strengthens the point that the separation of conception and execution continues to serve the popular agenda. That directorial authorship has become so central to both our critical and everyday engagement with films is a strong indication that screenwriting still plays an insignificant role in film evaluation, interpretation, and stylistic attribution.

NEW ANALOGIES

As it has been presented here, the discourse history of the screenplay mostly brands it an intermediate stage in the creation of a film. But for those scripts designed, from the outset, to be understood and perceived aesthetically, even in the absence of a film, our discipline has yet to propose a theoretical framework to accommodate the diversity of what may be envisioned by different readers as they engage with a script. Although conventional forms

[96] Ibid., 246-7.

of wisdom in film and literature studies often insist upon "the absolutely different semiotic systems of film and language," we are simultaneously told that they refract and echo one another. This contradiction is explored in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.[97] Screenplay-centric criticism, because it treads the shoreline of film and literature—sometimes afloat in the visual seas, sometimes moored to the solid bedrock of language—cannot cling to dust-addled metaphors that poorly reflect the myriad relationships that films and screenplays can cultivate. As I have tried to argue, these changing characterizations of, and assumptions about, the script as a literary work, aesthetic object, and autonomous text, insist upon new analogies for screenplay research. And what better place to start than at the very beginning?

I opened this chapter by mentioning Carroll's novel *Through the Looking-Glass* as a bridge to discuss the etymology of "screenplay" as a hybrid film/literary text. Coincidentally, Elliott takes inspiration from the same book for her critical model of novel-to-film adaptation studies, proposing the richly evocative metaphor of the looking glass as a solution to the stalemate of word and image. Under this paradigm, adaptation is understood as being mutual and reciprocal, as opposed to unfolding in a linear fashion. The verbal and the visual, positioned on either side of the mirrored surface, "contain and invert the otherness of each other… rather than being divided from each other by their otherness."[98] The model I recommend is similar to Elliott's but customized to the needs of screenplay analysis. In the chapters that follow, my fictional blueprint approach promises to provide new vantage points from which to examine and reevaluate these old word/image debates.

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[97] Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, 1.
[98] Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, 212.

CHAPTER 2: THE WORD, THE LENS, AND THE CINEMATIC EFFECT

The kinoks (a diminutive of "kino-oki," meaning *cinema eyes*) were a motley crew of Soviet cameramen, editors, technicians and animators who consolidated in the 1920s, one decade after the October Revolution, and appointed the humble movie an instrument of liberation. Led by Dziga Vertov, who was a zealot for the newly liberated working class, they were united in their thinking that humanity could sync up with the whirligig chaos of modern life simply through "closer kinship with machines."[1] What follows is an extract from Vertov's *Provisional Instructions to Kino-Eye Groups* (1926):

> Our eyes see very poorly and very badly—and so men conceived of the microscope in order to see invisible phenomena; and they discovered the telescope in order to see and explore distant, unknown worlds. The movie camera was also invented in order to penetrate deeper into the visible world, to explore and record visual phenomena, so that we do not forget what happens and what the future must take into account.[2]

Vertov was an artist-engineer who often rhapsodized about the revelatory powers of the lens. He wrote voluminously about the camera's ability to pierce through surfaces like an X-ray beam, and its capacity to reveal hidden truths otherwise indiscernible to the naked eye. Building, in some ways, on the collective works of Kepler, Descartes, Locke and Newton before him, luminaries who took the darkened room of the *camera obscura* and made it the privileged metaphor for objectivity, Vertov often spoke about cinematography as a means of unpacking the modern visual landscape. For him, the film screen was a

[1] Dziga Vertov, "We: Variant of a Manifesto," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O'Brien (Los Angeles: University of California Press, [1926] 2015), 7-8.
[2] Ibid., 67.

"platform" onto which "Soviet reality" was projected; a mirror that reflected a "communist decoding of the world."[3] Throughout his life, he searched for and experimented with what he considered to be the techniques that most closely expressed the mechanical-eye's perspective, thinking these devices would give us a better world with more perceptive people in it.

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze once compared Vertov to the post-Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne, noting the conceptual closeness of their individual aims to see through the eye of the medium in order to transcend the corporeal self. Deleuze, too, shared the belief that art, particularly film, expresses an essential nature that can only be accessed indirectly, which was for Cézanne precisely the point of painting at close range: to channel the "iridescent chaos" of the various landscapes he contemplated.[4] "The cinema is not simply the camera," Deleuze writes, "it is montage. And if from the point of view of the human eye, montage is undoubtedly a construction, from the point of view of another eye, it ceases to be one."[5] Trusting in a kind of metaphysical, pure opticality that exists in matter itself, this was another way of saying that behind the eye of the universe, the world appears as one giant picture-machine, and that the flow of cinematic images constituted by montage roughly simulates this perspective. But what is most striking about Deleuze's description (beyond his inspired ontological proposal that life unfolds like a film), which is the same relevant feature that stands out in the Vertov passage quoted above, is a style of criticism that uses the word "camera" the same way a screenwriter does; not to refer to a real piece of equipment, not even a physical object, but to an artificial mode of perception that transcends the limits of experience—a surrogate eye. It marks for them a phase of

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[3] Ibid., 50.
[4] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Continuum, 1986), 81.
[5] Ibid.

thought that distinguishes between what we see and think on the one hand, and what can be objectively verified on the other. Likewise, screenplays utilize a language that deconstructs what the lens (*l'objectif*) sees, and in so doing, acknowledge our perceptual limits in the absence of some form of mediation. In both cases, "camera" acts as a metaphorical window, or a bridge between light and language, that compensates for what the reader, as a viewing subject, lacks.

Having distilled the discourse history of the screenplay in Chapter 1, and addressed some of the persisting ontological objections to the screenplay's art/literary status, this section puts on ice the external oppositions between writing and filmmaking, to consider the formal techniques implicated in bringing those acts together. Of special interest is the representational use of the lens—of the "camera-eye" that operates like an intermedial figure in writing—and its aesthetic implications for a historical poetics of the screenplay. This particular line of inquiry is inspired by Ganz's closing comments in "To Make You See," an article tracing screenwriting's lineage back to 17th century practices, namely scientific and travel writing and the early English novel. His remark that screenplay research ought to concentrate less "on structural questions or on the relationship between the script and the finished film", and more on how the writing "strives to suggest the complicated phenomenological pleasures and particularities of a cinematic experience", although certainly thought provoking, invites further inquiry.[6] For instance, how does cinema make us see and experience events from a unique perspective, and how can a screenplay mediate that sense? What distinguishes writing and the camera lens as mediated forms of seeing? In what ways did early film theory and scripting practices invest in camera-eye notions as a guiding and projective concept?

[6] Adam Ganz, "To Make You See: Screenwriting, description and the 'lens-based' tradition" in *Journal of Screenwriting* 4.1 (2013), 28.

In *Techniques of the Observer* (1990), an essay on visual culture in the 19th century, art historian Jonathan Crary notes how "for nearly two hundred years the camera stood as a sovereign metaphor for describing the status of an observer and as a model, in both rationalist and empiricist thought, of how observation leads to truthful inferences about the world."[7] As metaphors go, this implies that the eye is like a camera—an optical device with guaranteed access to an objective reality. But when Johann Wolfgang von Goethe sealed up the hole in the *camera obscura* and discovered the phenomenon of human colour perception, he severed the physical alignment between vision and machine.[8] What persisted, however, was the camera-eye's figurative alignment with an aesthetic experience through the correlation of (visual) senses and (conceptual) meaning. This recourse to a lens as a metaphorical frame to express a moment of visual consciousness indicates that screenwriting, like the camera-eye concept, has never been the sole province of cinema. Instead, as I will argue, when viewed within the broader context of modernism, the screenplay acquires greater aesthetic importance, and emerges as more than the sum of film technological innovations and industry changes.

VERTOV'S "FILM-EYE" PRACTICE AS SCREENPLAY POETICS

Vertov was an advocate for the un-scripted, newsreel-style film, both because he idealized the camera's perceptiveness as a social microscope, and considered the genre of narrative cinema to be irreversibly bourgeois. Armed with his revolutionary agenda, he

[7] Jonathan Crary, "Techniques of the Observer" in *October* 45 (1988), 3.
[8] The realization in the 19th century that you could blind yourself by looking at the sun, or observe a dancing spectacle of coloured lights by electrifying the optic nerve, meant that external reality was losing its ontological privilege. Here Goethe describes one of these experiments with the *camera obscura*: "Let the observer look steadfastly on a small colored object and let it be taken away after a time while his eyes remain unmoved; the spectrum of another color will then be visible on the white plane… it arises from an image which now *belongs to the eye*." (Crary's emphasis added). Quoted in *Techniques of the Observer*, 21.

supplemented his own artistic practice with a series of manifestoes, and invented a new aesthetic vocabulary for the act and mechanisms of filmmaking. In a 1925 article titled "The Basis of 'Film-Eye' [*Kino Glaz*]", Vertov presents two foundational principles of his technique: it is devised as a means of observing "life as it is" by recording candid events ("life facts") and it relies on editing to produce new structures ("film-things") capturing all the splendor and speed of the modern world.[9] Scripted scenes were notoriously anathema to Vertov, and he insisted that this "film-eye" method only applied to cinema (he called literature and theatre "surrogates of life"), yet he often referred to himself as a "film poet" (one who happens to write "on film"), which suggests that he did consider film a modernized form of literary composition.[10]

The question of whether Vertov would draw a line in the sand between screenwriting as a "surrogate" technique and a critical language (reflected in his manifestos) that "sees better" into film is perhaps better posed in terms of how early scripting practices prefigured a movie. According to Price, it is more appropriate to speak of the "design" rather than the "scenario" of early films, because many of those "screenplays" were loosely organized, hybrid collections of notes and sketches quite different from today's standardized and definable text-type. "While a complex sequence of events may require careful preparation," says Price, "it does not follow that the plans will be translated into textual form."[11] By labeling early screenplay aesthetics as "designerly," Price challenges two common misconceptions about the early development of film writing: 1-that screenwriting always takes the form of a stable blueprint, and 2-that all films pass from a concept to a written outline, before moving into more properly "visual" phases of production. Vertov's kino-eye

[9] The thinking behind heavy editing is that it calibrates technology to the apparent unruliness of life. Vertov reasons in his scenario for *Man With a Movie Camera* that through editing, "life's chaos gradually becomes clear… Nothing is accidental. Everything is explicable and governed by law." See: Vertov, *Kino-Eye*, 287.
[10] Vertov, *Kino-Eye*, 199.
[11] Steven Price, *A History of the Screenplay* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 24.

method is a perfect case in point; it designates both a theoretical language and a practical tool for extending human sight with a lens, but it is not what any of us would call a scenario. In other words, the history of the screenplay is not only the history of a particular kind of document, but also the history of the merger and subsequent separation of process and production.

Thus far, the direction of screenplay studies—from the “low theory” approaches of screenwriting manuals (Field 1994; McKee 1997; Vogler 2007) to inquiries about how the screenplay concept operates in cultural contexts (MacDonald 2004; Maras 2009), including its history and ontology (Price 2010; Nannicelli 2013)—has usually proceeded from the assumption that screenwriting was conceived to control film production. But what happens when we lift the screenplay outside its production context, redirect the questions, and generate discourse about screenwriting from a literary purview? By way of example, a screenplay poetics arguably emerges from the delineation of concepts in Vertov’s theoretical papers, concepts that later become the qualities that we see in his filmmaking practice. Given that Vertov renounced scripted performances, these essays were obviously not intended to act as performance plans, however they do invoke a screenplay technique in the sense that the writing coincides with a lens. Vertov’s use for screenwriting may not be so much to fashion filmic blueprints as to simulate a cinematic style that contrives film language until it becomes just as expressive as poetry.

The crux of Vertov’s film practice is the camera as witnessing eye. In anticipation of making *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929), Vertov infused his critical papers with rhetoric that filtered human experience through a viewfinder. Once the film was made— a lively

montage of frenetic workers, chugging streetcars and other tokens of industrialized Soviet society—Vertov chose to add a prefatory title card, which reads:

THE MAN WITH THE MOVIE CAMERA
A REPORT IN SIX REELS
PRODUCED BY VUFKU, 1929
(FRAGMENTS FROM THE DIARY OF A CAMERAMAN)[12]

This small parenthetical presents the viewer with a peculiar interpretive frame: this is how the cinema-eye (cinematography plus editing) observes and records everyday life. Granted Vertov puts this mechanical eye in the hands of a flesh-and-blood cinematographer, but that is precisely the point of it: only by seeing the world through a film-eye can the natural eye exceed the limits of human vision.

On the use of screenwriting to mediate between description and observation, Ganz argues that the screenwriter also aims to capture an aesthetic experience of camera-like vision using mediated prose. One of the most significant features of this lens-based practice is that it tries to reproduce "a very specific kind of prosthetic visual perception" out of "a simultaneous act of looking and framing."[13] Viewed in this light, what Vertov's kino-writings amount to is an experimental form of the screenplay:

> I am eye. I am mechanical eye.
> I, a machine, am showing you a world, the likes of which only I can see.
> I free myself today and forever from human immobility, I am in constant movement, I approach and draw away from objects, I crawl under them, I move alongside the mouth of a running horse, I cut into a crowd at full speed, I run in front of

[12] *Man With a Movie Camera*, dir. by Dziga Vertov (1929; Kino International Corporation, 1997), DVD.
[13] Ganz, "To Make You See", 2; 8.

> running soldiers, I turn on my back, I rise with an airplane, I fall
> and soar together with falling and rising bodies…[14]

The first-person narration (camera-I) substitutes for the technical instructions commonly found in screenplays, like directions for tracking shots ("I move alongside"), dollies ("I run in front") and transitions ("I cut into"), selecting and framing specific details just as a camera would. In her book *The Address of the Eye* (1992), film phenomenologist Vivian Sobchack likens Vertov to a Soviet Walt Whitman, noting how much Vertov's embodied camera—the seeing subject produced through the merger of human eye and optical instrument—seems inflected with Whitman's "I", who speaks on behalf of the universal "I". To highlight her comparison, here is a sliver of Whitman's free verse:

> I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
> And what I assume you shall assume
> For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.[15]

Vertov learned from Whitman how to align rhetoric with social observation by studying the structure and repetition of poems like "Song of Myself" (1892), a meditation on the themes of equality, democracy and scenes of American folk life.[16] Seduced by its rhythmic refrains, inventive juxtapositions and emotional sermons, Vertov began to see documentary as a new poetic form that reconciles technology with socialism. Whitman spoke of poetry as being "indispensable to fuse and express the modern political and scientific creations", but film presented Vertov with an even more powerful oratory tool:

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[14] Dziga Vertov, *Film Makers on Film Making*, ed. Harry M. Geduld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 86-87.
[15] The opening lines from "Song of Myself" in *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Bantam Books, [1892] 1997) 39, 1-3.
[16] Vertov's brother and cinematographer, Mikhail Kaufman, confirmed in a 1976 interview that Vertov's inter-titles, most obviously those from *One Sixth of the World* (1926), were directly influenced by Whitman's first-person form. See: Ben Singer, "Connoisseurs of Chaos: Whitman, Vertov and the 'Poetic Survey'" in *Literature/Film Quarterly* 15.4 (1987), 248.

the kino-eye, who speaks (through inter-titles) and sees (through montage) on behalf of the collective "we".[17] It is in this sense that Sobchack invites a comparison between their respective poetics of embodiment: art is never understood "as some objective mechanism like a water heater," she says, but rather comes "into being in significant relation to the objects it intentionally takes up and expresses in embodied vision."[18] For Vertov, this signifies an embodiment relation of filmmaker and camera; for Whitman, it exists between the poet and the collective unconscious. But what can it mean for the screenwriter?

As yet another site where embodied meaning (seeing through) and conceptual meaning (seeing as) intersect, the screenplay further complicates matters by hinting at a third perceptual act: the projection of a finished movie. This renders the tension between the other two acts of "seeing"—observing and imagining—more acute because screenwriting always points to the creation and display of a specific film, not some boundless imagined reality the way novels do. The sections that follow will explore this paradox of the simultaneous scope and limits of camera-like seeing, as it has been constructed within various forms of visual writing, including literary adaptations, the Victorian novel, modern poetry, hieroglyphic language and, naturally, the screenplay.

ADAPTATION AND THE MATERIALITY OF THE IMAGE

In 1957, George Bluestone published his seminal study of the film-literature field *Novels into Film*, which famously states: "between the percept of the visual image and the concept

[17] Singer, "Connoiseurs of Chaos", 247.
[18] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 171.

of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media."[19] Following G.E. Lessing's lead in the crusade to prove that art finds autonomy by cultivating its medium's unique properties, Bluestone wanted to demystify the "mysterious alchemy" that occurs when great works of literature (e.g. *Moby Dick*, *Wuthering Heights*, *War and Peace*) are adapted for the screen.[20] "It is insufficiently recognized," he cautions in his opening chapter, "that the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera, as different from each other as ballet is from architecture."[21] But if pointe shoes are as useful to the contractor as a set of blueprints is to the prima ballerina, how can they be expected to dance? This is precisely the problem for Bluestone, for whom the premise of adaptation is inherently illogical. Like Balázs before him, he speculates that the movement from one media to another morphs the raw material into something entirely new: in Bluestone's words, "the film becomes a different *thing*."[22] By putting emphasis on the salient distinctions between novels and their adaptations—on fundamental ideas about their different "ways of seeing," material content, origins, conventions and audiences—rather than any compatible "surface borrowings",[23] he declares there can never be a perfect marriage of written language and visual expression.

What is striking about Bluestone's book is not just how it managed to revive a nearly 200-year old debate about the irresolvable ontological gap between linguistic and visual institutions, but that its method of aesthetic formalism has so fiercely dominated the field of adaptation studies ever since. It builds from tautological thinking that novels and films

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[19] George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 1.
[20] George Bluestone, "Word and Image: The Problem of the Filmed Novel" in *The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television* 11.2 (1956), 171.
[21] Bluestone, *Novels into Film*. 5. A metaphor later echoed by Norman Mailer, who said in an interview: "Film and literature are as far apart as, say, cave painting and a song." See: Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975), 28.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid, vii.

are incompatible because prose and image are incompatible, which is really to say that they give rise to incompatible aesthetic experiences. In his introduction "The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of Film", a title patterned after Lessing's *Laocoön*, Bluestone summarizes the thesis succinctly: novels are "conceptual, linguistic, discursive, symbolic," while films are "perceptual, visual, presentational, literal."[24] To bolster his claim, he weighs D.W. Griffith against Joseph Conrad, two authors working worlds apart yet sharing the mission statement "to make you see".[25] Bluestone remarks how the pronoun "you" and the verb "to see" bespeak different audiences—mass viewership for Griffith, intellectual readership for Conrad—who are called to different perceptual tasks—to observe in Griffith's case, to imagine in Conrad's.

As a counterpoint, about one decade earlier, Sergei Eisenstein published his now well-known essay "Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today," drawing on literature's cultural legitimacy and pedigree, and deploying the kind of rhetoric Elliott says "claims verbal territory for film."[26] Like Bluestone's book, it represents a well-rehearsed, oft-cited account of the cinema's unique reconfiguration of novel narratives, but does so with an eye to their similarities as opposed to their differences. Eisenstein positions Charles Dickens' novels as the "connecting link" between the future American cinema (as conceived by D.W. Griffith's frame compositions, parallel editing, and close-ups) and the old melodramatic conventions of the British stage.[27] "From Dickens," writes Eisenstein, "from the Victorian novel, stem

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[24] Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11.
[25] Conrad makes the remark in the preface to his 1897 novel *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*: "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the powers of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see." (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 5). Sixteen years later, at the height of his career, D.W. Griffith made a near identical declaration: "The task I am trying to achieve is above all to make you see." Quoted in Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), 119.
[26] Kamilla Elliott, "Novels, Films and the Word/Image Wars" in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandro Raengo (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 5.
[27] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form,* 224.

the first shoots of American film esthetic."[28] Through a selection of lengthy comparisons, he styles the novel/film relation in terms of their intertextuality, noting the "Dickens-esque sharpness and clarity" of Griffith's editing, and elsewhere the "cinematic 'optical quality'" of Dickens' prose.[29]

Elliott writes of a paradox within film/literature studies that "simultaneously opposes and connects novels and films", an anomaly reflected here in the competing views held by Bluestone and Eisenstein.[30] She believes this paradox grows out of interdisciplinary discourse that tends to "represent the formal oppositions between novels and films as more fundamental than their cultural, intertextual, and social interchanges and affinities," even "against the evidence of aesthetic practice."[31] This began, Elliott argues, with popular reviews of the Victorian novel that encouraged prose/painting comparisons, analogies that became so permeating that they eventually purged adult novels of book illustrations.[32] It follows that Bluestone's assertion that novels and films are "overtly compatible, secretly hostile" reflects his fetishizing the literature at the source more than it serves critical inquiry into adaptation, just as Eisenstein's insistence that Dickens was cinematic turns film into the glorious fulfillment of what the Dickensian novel could only promise.

The evidence that claims the Victorian novel as a filmic ancestor provided enough material to produce two book-length studies in the late 1970s, both designating the techniques of writers from Gustave Flaubert to James Joyce as "cinematic". The central claim

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[28] Ibid., 232.
[29] Ibid., 213.
[30] Elliott, "Novels, Films and the Word/Image Wars", 17.
[31] Ibid., 5; 14.
[32] This critical agenda also recalls the attempts made by classical film theorists to "purify" film by condemning narration and inter-titles, despite simultaneous efforts to validate its art status by pronouncing it a new, universal language. Their comparison of film to language is analogical rather than literal, usually followed by the disclaimer that silent images speak for themselves and that the actual use of words (in the form of explanatory inter-titles or dialogue) ought to be avoided.

underpinning Keith Cohen's *Film and Fiction* (1979) is that modern fiction depends for what it is on a cinematic way of seeing, an aesthetic argument that hinges in part on the analogy between editing and the "perpetual shifting of point of view" in the novels of Conrad and Joyce.[33] This approach takes after that of Alan Spiegel's *Fiction and the Camera Eye* (1976), a book whose stated purpose is to examine "the common body of thought and feeling that unites film form with the modern novel" under the rubric of concretized form—literary traits that produce novelistic modes of presentation redolent of film language.[34] Both volumes perform fluent and scrupulous analyses of the literary techniques we today might call cinematographic, but their historical poetics trace the methods back to such obscure lengths—Cohen keeps to 20th century writers, but Spiegel takes Gustave Flaubert as his point of departure—as to render the term "cinematic" meaningless as a precise marker. Spiegel even admits his doubts outright concerning the value of such comparisons by other literary critics:

> I could never tell from what they said whether Joyce was actually influenced by film or whether the alliance was simply (or not simply) metaphorical... Did one really need film, then, to account for the technique of Joyce or, for that matter, of any novelist?[35]

What if neither Joyce nor Conrad looked to the cinema for inspiration at all? What if their intentions were merely to make the reader see (or hear, or smell, or touch...) by embroidering the story with plenty of vivid and realistic details? The inclination to see writing through or as film, Spiegel confesses, might simply be part of the zeitgeist in which the practice had grown up:

[33] Keith Cohen, *Fiction and Film: The Dynamics of Exchange* (London: Yale University Press, 1979), 280.
[34] Alan Spiegel, *Fiction and the Camera Eye: Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), xiii.
[35] Ibid., xi.

> One could learn about camera angles from the ads on billboards and in magazines; or all about dolly shots and tracking from the window of a moving car; or all about montage by simply trying to keep up with what was happening all around one during rush hour in any major international city. Any artist could be influenced by film and know all about it simply by being alive and visually alert in the modern world.[36]

Here it appears that Spiegel acknowledges the historical conditions that prompt the kinds of intellectual assumptions he himself makes (and subsequently re-examines) in *Fiction and the Camera Eye*; assumptions which, over time and if they are argued ably enough, tend to harden into truths discouraging new investigations of literature's potential influences on film's aesthetic history. For Eisenstein to envision cinema as the afterlife of the Victorian novel during a period when cinema's art status was still being debated, or for Bluestone to reject the medial similarities between novels and films while the field of adaptation was being erected upon fidelity theory, parallels the efforts of Cohen and Spiegel to "cinematize" the novel while film takes up residence in academia as the stepchild of literary studies. All three practice a kind of film criticism that entertains anachronistic field myths (such as the notion that Flaubert is "cinematic"), while keeping other media (like the screenplay) cordoned off by aesthetic formalism and its categorical divides. Bazin, too, warned against the logical trappings of rethinking literature (particularly American literature) in light of film: "even if one admits that the novel has been somewhat shaped by the gravitational pull of the cinema, this influence of a new art has unquestionably not been greater than that of the theater or literature during the last century."[37] It is not as if film superseded the sun as the center of attraction around which the other arts revolved; like a new moon, every now and again, it simply slinks into alignment with the other stars.

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[36] Ibid., xiii.
[37] André Bazin, "In Defense of Mixed Media" in *What is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 61.

Because vision and visuality were so integral to modernity, it is easy to see why critics might be tempted to put the cinematic cart before the literary horse, even when it overlooks the fact that modern fiction's influence has been pervasive, along with painting and theater. While it is important to acknowledge film's heritage in Victorian fiction, between the novel and the film also lies the crucial influence of a screenwriting tradition that mediates this relation, a fact which has been unduly repressed by claims that screenplays are not literary, and that film words are un-cinematic. What follows delves more deeply into the alleged "cinematic" effects of Victorian literature, in an attempt to question what distinguishes visual prose from screenwriting as forms of mediated perception. Are the visual propensities in screenplays readily traceable to the Victorian novel? If so, how are they derived?

VICTORIAN FICTION AND THE PROJECTED LENS

In the 5th volume of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, the narrator listens to a sonata by the fictitious composer Vinteuil for the first time. He finds himself transported by the music, not to a physical place, but to the "lost country" of the composer's making.[38] "The only true voyage of discovery," writes Proust, "the only fountain of Eternal Youth, would be not to visit strange lands, but to possess other eyes… with a Vinteuil; with men like these we do really fly from star to star."[39] It may well be that the metaphorical eyes that Proust would have us borrow to behold the universe, in all its diversity and richness, turn out to be different eyes than the ones against which a movie flickers when we read a screenplay.

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[38] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time* (formerly *Remembrance of Things Past*). *Vol. 5 The Captive*. trans. C.K. Scott-Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Modern Library, 1923), 343.
[39] Ibid.

But what is certain is that it is the specific qualitative character of the writing that gives us license to "see" what we do. To this end, Ganz poses the question: what is the nature of the difference between writing and the lens as mediated forms of seeing? Or, how do the perceptual limits of the medium—for film, what can be observed and recorded through a lens; for the novel, what can be precisely describe in words—specify the sort of mental image we project?

Like Eisenstein, whose goal was to establish the interrelation of cinema and literary modernism by emphasizing how montage underpins them both, Ganz hones in on one particular screenplay aspect—scene description—and carves out a pseudo-revisionist history of screenwriting that links it to a long-standing tradition of "lens-based writing", "from Galileo's observations of the moon in 1610 to Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* in 1845."[40] Evoking Maras' analogy for screenplay technique as "the language of the camera," Ganz assumes that all lenses—from binoculars to telescopes—produce a similar effect; they frame, focus and modify the world in a way that is both proximate to and remote from what they show.[41] Additionally, they carry a burden of proof insofar as their inherent objectivity makes them natural eyewitnesses. At one time associated with black magic—lenses were believed to deceive the eye with respect to reality rather than aid in apprehending it—new scientific applications transformed them into instruments of empirical truth.[42] But even as they made the unseen world knowable to the eye, lenses also problematized this knowing.

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[40] Ganz, "To Make You See", 2.
[41] Steven Maras, *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (London: Wallflower, 2009), 144.
[42] Ganz culls examples from myriad sources. For instance, by looking through a magnifying glass, scientists were able to determine that in a wind, bees do not use tiny pebbles for stability (as it had long been explained in apicultural lore before B.G. Whitfield's discovery), and by peering through the eye of a telescope, could see that the lunar surface was not uniformly smooth or spherical, but more like our own imperfect Earth, riddled with deep craters (Galileo called them "ancient spots") resembling volcanoes. ("To Make You See", 10-12)

In one respect, "the previously familiar could no longer be taken for granted," signaling a paradigm shift that would eventually lead to cultural modernism's obsession with the act of seeing, Ganz argues. In another, a new writing style was needed to "separate pure observation from deduction and analysis" and to communicate what was seen, in vivid detail, for an audience unable to see it.[43] Thus, for Ganz, the most significant feature of lens-based writing is how it simultaneously combines the acts of looking and framing, which is the very force at the heart of the modern novel's visuality, and the future screenplay's aesthetic impulse.

It would be fair to say that since the mass diffusion of cinema, the writer's imagination has become indebted to film. But in all likelihood, the trained, observing eye to which literary modernism adheres did not stem from any direct contact with that particular piece of technology. The novel's new orientation to the environment—to the visual exposition of facts from a free-moving field of vision, divorced from the overtly subjective impressions of a narrator—was arguably more symptomatic of "the preoccupation with the visible, recordable world on the part of many Victorians," says Kate Flint, a clear index of "the tension that existed between the different valuations given to outward and inward seeing; to observation, on the one hand, and the life of the imagination on the other."[44] "Camera-eye" or not, the modern English novel developed a language that linked poetic description to a precise and dispassionate viewpoint. Prose style became a manner of seeing—of anatomizing the world by taking the stance of an onlooker, or multiplying perspectives to "think" simultaneously, like Proust, through different eyes. This, in turn, called for a plainer, more direct vernacular, to allow the reader to distinguish between visual

[43] Ganz, "To Make You See", 13; 11.
[44] Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2. This coincides with one of Siegfried Kracauer's illustrious (and erroneous) claims that the history of film signals the victory of documentary realism over effects-based formalism. See: *Theory of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

information directed outwards (as in perception), and conceptual information directed inwards (as in reflection).

One unique and rather famous example of an illustrated novel whose prose rivals the pictorial effect of its printed drawings is William Harrison Ainsworth's *Rookwood* (1834), written 60 years prior to cinema's invention. The "Ride to York" passage quoted below depicts Dick Turpin, a legendary highway robber, escaping London on horseback:

> The whole neighbourhood was alarmed by the cries and by the tramp of horses; the men of Hornsey rushed into the road to seize the fugitive; and women held up their babies to catch a glimpse of the flying cavalcade, which seemed to gain number and animation as it advanced. Suddenly, three horsemen appear in the road; they bear the uproar and the din. "A highwayman, a highwayman!" cry the voices: "stop him, stop him!" But it is no such easy matter. His fierce looks, his furious steed, the impetus with which he pressed forward, bore down all before him. The horsemen gave way, and only served to swell the list of his pursuers.[45]

Before text and image came to be seen as ideologically incompatible in the second half of the 19th century, resulting in a harsh decline in the volume of illustrated fiction published in the early 20th century, *Rookwood* captured the excitement of watching modern Victorian life unfold. Adopting the factual and impartial viewpoint of the onlookers, and not, as a typical Gothic romance novel would have, the mode of psychological, sentimental narration, Ainsworth's dramatic report of the flying highwayman reads like a journalistic account, collapsing the distinction between fiction and everyday life. Without overstating it as a proto-cinematic piece of prose, "Ride to York" handles narration much like screenwriting does. Ainsworth lays the scene out in its temporal sequence by centering on

[45] William Harrison Ainsworth, *Rookwood: A Romance* (New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1878), 299.

acting characters (the alarmed neighbours, the rushing men, the flying cavalcade), and even "acting" objects (the furious steed), told by means of a reporting commentary that slips into the present tense ("suddenly, three horsemen appear"). The author in no way foretells cinematographic technique (as Eisenstein generously argues Dickens' novels do), but it would be fair to say that Ainsworth models a style of active writing which is almost pure exteriority. This is a technique that would prove immeasurably useful to screenwriters faced with the challenge of emulating film's mimetic mode of presentation.

Upon reading *Rookwood*, the English journalist George Augustus Sala enthusiastically declared it "a piece of word-painting rarely, if ever, surpassed in the prose of the Victorian era."[46] The hyphenate term not only alludes to the marvelously descriptive way in which Ainsworth dramatizes a high-speed chase, but also to a specific editorial technique to which Sala himself aspired. Acquainted with Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *Tableau de Paris* of 1776-88—a series of eye-witness accounts of Parisian cafés, fluctuating fashions, live street performances and so on—Sala contributed similar kinds of sociological sketches of London city life in the pages of *Household Words*, an English weekly edited by Dickens in the 1850s. It was there that he honed Mercier's method of "verbal drawing as a discursive form capturing contemporary metropolitan mores" and produced, like Ainsworth, visually oriented descriptions of modern urban society, grounded in the spectator's viewpoint.[47] In "The Key of the Street," his first such city-sketch, Sala achieves what might be called a cinematic effect by labouring over the temporal progression of the vagabond narrator's late-night stroll, with the sequence of events locked to particular locations:

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[46] Quoted in Peter Blake, *George Augustus Sala and the Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press: The Personal Style of a Public Writer* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 24.
[47] Martina Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth-Century: European Journalism and its Physiologies* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 144.

> I watch, with a species of lazy curiosity, the whole process of closing the 'Original Burton Ale House,' from the sudden shooting up of the shutters, through the area grating, like gigantic Jacks-in-a-box, to the final adjustment of screws and iron nuts. Then I bend my steps westward, and at the corner of Wellington Street stop to contemplate a cab-stand.[48]

Afterwards, he heads over to Covent Garden Theatre "to watch the departing equipages," and later pauses out front of the delicatessen at the corner of Bow Street to take in the performance of "crowds of customers, hot and hungry from the Lyceum or Drury Lane, and clamorous for sandwiches."[49] On the whole, Sala's journalistic inquiry—a dizzying pavement tour of Victorian society at gaslight—reads a bit like Vertov's scenario for the making of that most celebrated film:

> The man with the movie camera manages to go everywhere. He is present at military parades, at congresses. He penetrates workers' flats. He stands watch at a savings bank, visits a dispensary and train stations. He surveys harbors and airports.[50]

A correlation materializes between Ainsworth's novel, Sala's city-sketch and Vertov's screenplay in terms of the way each renders a lively urban landscape narrative with the spectating eye at its center. However, it would be wrong to collapse them as visual procedures analogous to film. For one thing, film provides a more immediate visual experience; the camera simultaneously looks and records what it sees, therefore point of view is already suggested. Writing, on the other hand, must always announce its perspective apart from what it "shows". Analogies to a lens may be implied by the specific mode of narration—a type of personal "I" or impersonal "eye" through which the story is

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[48] George Augustus Sala, "The Key of the Street" in *Household Words* 3 (1851), 566.
[49] Ibid., 567.
[50] Vertov, *Kino-Eye*, 287.

communicated—but words do not mediate cinema's effects; they are simply perceptual enablers.

One of the problems with the appeal to cinematic technique, particularly *ex post facto*, to account for historical shifts in literary production (like the marked preoccupation with vision in Victorian fiction) is that the concept becomes too amorphous a guide for a poetics of screenwriting. If the objective is to explore the screenplay's trace in earlier forms of descriptive writing, ones affected by the mediatization that came with new technologies of spectatorship, then literature—not film—should stay the central focus. Concerning Spiegel's inquiry into the genuine impact of cinema on Joyce's work (and vice-versa), it is worth reevaluating his proposal that what the modern novel offered pioneering directors like Edwin S. Porter and D.W. Griffith were not verbal exemplars of close-ups or parallel editing, but instead the Flaubertian technique Spiegel calls concretized form. Spiegel defines this term as "a way of transcribing the narrative, not as a story that is told, but as an action that is portrayed and presented that seems to reveal itself to the reader apart from the overt mediations of the author."[51] This manner of embracing dramatization over authorial commentary—what narratologists commonly label as the distinction between showing and telling—involves the involuntary, but significant, impression that the actions are unfolding "cinematically", or, independently of some narrating agency.[52] By demonstrating how literary fiction is prone to elicit visual images wherever the description presents visual details in an unbroken stream and without pause for reflection, Spiegel accounts for the professed "cinematic" effect in the works of novelists, like Flaubert, whose lives never properly overlapped with film. He also, inadvertently, maps a historical

[51] Spiegel, *Fiction and the Camera Eye*, 6.
[52] Although Linda Hutcheon, looking to subvert the familiar showing-versus-telling binary in novel-to-film adaptation studies, debunks the belief that this is anything more than an impression. See: *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38-46.

continuum from literary modernism to silent film narratives that establishes a context for rethinking early screenwriting conventions (present tense narration, for example) not so much as developing naturally alongside film language, as having been shaped by novel writing and concretized form.

CINE-POETRY AND THE RHETORICALLY BASED MONTAGE

Just as the discourse of adaptation theory distinguishes between two ways of seeing—an echo of the mutually informing relationship between the observable and the imaginable in the Victorian-era novel—the Soviet montagists had some concerns about the double language of film, particularly the dangers of projecting literary phenomena onto cinematographic design. Specifically, they feared that once cemented by sound technology, words would alter the course of "pure cinematics" forever, as they had for the classical Hollywood narrative.[53] Like so many early film theorists who mourned for the golden age of the pre-sound picture, Pudovkin believed that "an abundance of conversational scenes, purely theatrical monologues, in which the story replaces the showing typical of cinema, creates a slowness and heaviness so alien to the most dynamic of the arts—cinema."[54] Long gone were the days of documentary newsreels and civil agit films; by the 1930s, the photographed play was truly living up to its name.

There is an important point to be made here about the Soviet approach to screenplay poetics with the advent of sound. Anke Hennig observes that while scenario-focused

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[53] Anke Hennig, "Cinematicity of Speech and Visibility of Literature: The Poetics of Soviet Film Scripts of the Early Sound Film Era" in *Cinematicity in Media History,* ed. Jeffrey Geiger and Karin Littau (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 120.

[54] Ibid. This is the author's translation of Pudovkin's original text *Osnovnye zadachi kinoiskusstva*, 1934, Sobranie sochineny v trekh tomakh (Moscow: Iskusstvo [1934] 1975), 160.

criticism was part of film-theoretical discourse in the 1920s, it changed course during the 1930s and became an issue for literary historians. "The view that the film script is a fourth genre of literature—a view affirmed by the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress—inscribes the question of narrating and showing within a context of literariness," she says, invoking Bakhtin's attitude towards literariness as something that concerns the very identity of literary theory as a discipline. "This raises two attendant questions: What could a literary text without narration be? How does showing stand in relation to the literariness of the film script?"[55] If at one end of the critical spectrum, film and literature are opposed as two distinct "ways of seeing", at the other end they are connected as equivalent "ways of telling" in the sense that film becomes heir to the novel's narrative dimensions. Hennig claims that the attempt to rid Soviet cinema of words had less to do with establishing a hierarchy in which the visual trumped the verbal than with maintaining the illusion that narration in film was un-cinematic. Whether in the form of inter-titles, spoken dialogue or voice-over, it was thought that narration competed with film's language of montage, and that montage, in turn, made verbal language superfluous. Despite Soviet aestheticians' concerns about the intrusion of literariness into the domain of film, they saw value in orienting the script towards literature because this enhanced the visuality already identified in the Victorian novel. This worked to their advantage since, in Elliott's words, it "makes film the glorious fulfillment of what is only a seed of promise in the novel" instead of the "feeble offspring of a more potent narrative parent."[56] Moreover, screenplays made it easier to detect the distinctive marks of cinema in literariness (simultaneity, point of view, etc.), and, thus, to confirm film's status as a linguistic discourse.

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Kamilla Elliott, "Cinematic Dickens and Uncinematic Words" in *Dickens on Screen*, ed. John Glavin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 115.

In spite of Soviet film aesthetics declaring film incompatible with the novel on the basis that "real" cinema creates stories without recourse to verbal narration, dialectical graphic/text combinations, like the verbal/visual dynamics that underpin certain kinds of montage, were considered a vital component of their art. As previously mentioned, Vertov's cinematographic technique is better understood against the backdrop of a modern poetic tradition that inspired him to capture the effect of reading the works of Whitman in another medium. Text-image relations in silent cinema typically revolve around the use of spoken or filmed words to elaborate a narrative, however the style of the titles in Vertov's films of the 1920s reveals a different application, one heavily indebted to the oratorical characteristics of Whitman's poems. For example, in the opening titles of *Man With a Movie Camera,* Vertov states his intent to "create a true international pure language of cinema" as part of the greater utopian project of the socialist revolution. This is not an allusion to some kind of hermetic, cinematic world of vision and movement, but a shade of the idea that inter-titles, if utilized, should add to the sense of cinema as oratory; as a call to engagement with the film. Vertov sees himself as contributing both to the reform of Soviet society by expanding and sharpening perception through the kino-eye, and to the reconfiguration of film as a silent orator. "We know that in staged films the impact on the audience is provided by various dramatic devices," writes literary critic Viktor Pertsov, "however, in unstaged film journalism, the impact is provided by the rules of rhetoric. It is not a coincidence therefore that Vertov conceives his films on an oratorical principle."[57] Like the candid images captured and projected through the mechanical-eye's perspective, speech seems to spring up naturally and immediately from experience. For Vertov, this is

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[57] Viktor Pertsov, "'Play' and Demonstration" ["Igra" i demonstratsiia], *Novyi LEF* 11.12, 35-42. Translation quoted in Vlada Petrić, *Constructivism in Film – A Cinematic Analysis: The Man With the Movie Camera* (New York: Cambridge University Press, [1927] 1987), 19.

precisely what aligns Whitman's poetry with the cinematic recording of reality; it does not refer to a remembered past, but speaks to the audience from a living present.

To this end, Vertov opened his film work to a range of formal experiments with on-screen words, from the spinning, sculptural word graphics developed for the *Kino-Pravda* newsreel series (1922-1925) to the Whitmanesque patterns of cataloguing and repetition featured in the titling for *A Sixth Part of the World*. Resisting the Hollywood method of treating the scenario as a narrativizing tool, and dispensing with "the romance, the poison" of the old-school psychological novel, Vertov's artistic doctrine was conditioned by political and technological factors that urged a break from literary culture, and yet, narrowly speaking, it grew out of his fondness for poetry.[58] All his life, Vertov wrote poems which, by and large, emulated the styles of Whitman (thanks to readily available Russian translations) and the Russian futurists (especially Vladimir Mayakovsky), a detail that not only adds to our knowledge of this particular filmmaker but, more importantly, suggests that the status of title-cards in early Soviet films was not as consistently defined as some critics have pronounced it. Simply by writing five minutes' worth of titles for *A Sixth Part of the World*, a movie celebrating the people and the industry of the USSR, film historian Yuri Tsivian reveals just how prominent the poetic impulse, "the pantheist touch reminiscent of Whitman" is in some of Vertov's work:

> In the land of capital / I see / the golden chain of capital / the foxtrot / the machines / and you / and you / I see you / and you / and you / and you / it is you I see / in the service of capital / more machines / more / and more / but no less hard is it for the worker / no less… / hard / I see / the colonies / the capital / the colonies / the slaves / the capital / the slaves / from the negroes / for the fun of it / it makes "The Chocolate Kiddies" / capital / the toys / the guns / hatred / cramps / on

[58] Vertov, *Kino-Eye*, 7.

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the verge of its historical perishing / capital / is
having fun[59]
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The increasingly polarizing question in 1920s film criticism of whether films needed inter-titles meant that Vertov would eventually abandon this technique of poetic titling which, by 1926, had become very much his own. With the release of *Man With a Movie Camera* three years later, he took an intriguing step in the opposite direction by executing a film "without the aid of inter-titles" and "without the aid of a scenario", an aesthetic project more consistent with the filmmaking style to which the kinoks subscribed. This leap from what some might describe as an overuse of impassioned titles in *A Sixth Part of the World*, to absolute silence in later projects, is curious to say the least, but Vertov bent to critical currents asking to keep film "pure", and adapted the fundamentals of Whitman's verse to his cine-poems by using montage in place of political-poetical rhetoric. The analogy of poetry to cinema was not dropped with this ritualistic cleanse, but attempts to think, as Vertov had, of titles as poetry in multimedia terms certainly became fewer and far between.

It is often said that film language was born with the very first cut. As cutting techniques such as parallel action and continuity editing steered the cinema of attractions into the province of narrative, the scenario was created to provide rough characters and skeletal plotlines. Rarely do we credit screenwriting with shaping film aesthetics early on because, generally speaking, titles were seen as crutches for bad filmmaking. Film words gave the appearance of being an after-thought—an editor's trick used in post-production for coherence's sake. But, on the contrary, Elliott argues that montage techniques were originally developed as "hybrid verbal-visual sentences governed by syntax."[60] These

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[59] Yuri Tsivian, "*Man With a Movie Camera* – Lines of Resistance" in *Masterpieces of Modernist Cinema*, ed. Ted Perry (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 89.
[60] Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, 93.

"rhetorically based" modes of editing put pressure on the prevalent theory that close-ups alleviated the need to rely on titles, particularly for the purposes of revealing important narrative details. "Far from freeing film from words," Elliott writes, "these forms of montage are based in them."[61] This is evident from the editing between inter-titles and scenes in Herbert Wilcox's *The Only Way* (1926), an adaptation of *A Tale of Two Cities*:

> *Intertitle*: Then, sixteen years…
> *Long shot: Marquis and the guests feasting*
> *Intertitle:*... Years that to Evrémonde recorded only the passing of Time
> *Midshot: Marquis and guests*
> *Intertitle:* Years that so changed another, that even, freed from the Bastille, the twilight of his mind held him prisoner
> *Midshot: Manette holds a shoe, stares vacantly at the camera, then lowers his eyes.*
> *Long shot: a concerned Defarge, Lorry, and Lucie standing near Manette*
> *Intertitle:* Years that burned the hatred of a decadent aristocracy into one having reason to hate
> *Midshot: Defarge speaks.*[62]

Elliott transcribes this sequence from the film as a shining example of the deliberate use of titles as punctuation for visual film "language" during the late silent period. In an interesting twist and reversal of roles, the intervening shots act as "rhetorical spacers" between the words, and the editing follows the lead of the written captions.[63]

Closely related to this notion of rhetorical spacing is Eisenstein's montage phrase, an editing method that follows the rhythms of natural speech but does not explicitly verbalize by means of title cards. Just as Vertov's early title work seems more imitative of Whitman's or Mayakovsky's poetic style than of any classical Hollywood screenplay, Eisenstein's

[61] Ibid., 96.
[62] Ibid., 95.
[63] Ibid.

technique developed out of a deep fascination with the equivalences he observed between the shots or "cells" of the montage phrase, and the logograms of more ancient forms of symbolic expression. The same way that Japanese hieroglyphs operate as a visual writing system—as images guided by verbal syntax and tied to the sounds of language—montage, too, comprises for Eisenstein a hybrid spoken-pictured phrase; not in the sense of "cells" substituting for incomplete lines of dialogue (as in *The Only Way*, where the scenes act as speech spacers), but as the visual collision of unrelated images spurring the audience to finish the thought. "Scholars tell us montage created a new kind of language, a visual syntax that freed film from dependence on verbal narration," writes Elliott. "And montage, they insist, derived from scenic and visual shifts in the Victorian novel."[64] Indeed, communicating meaning without narration or inter-titles, simply through the juxtaposition of shots, points to montage practices (whether in film, or proto-cinematically, in the novel) drawing on techniques filtered through the ancestral arts like painting and theater. Then again, the planning and organization involved in productively rendering montage as a language suggests that the Soviet editing style, both in its silent and talking stages, has always relied on verbal syntax to intercut between shots and scenes.

In the introduction to their translation of Eisenstein's scenario for *Ivan the Terrible* (1944), Ivor Montagu and Herbert Marshall highlight the contrast between the narrative conventions of the Hollywood continuity script and Eisenstein's approach to montage design, revealing the pivotal role the hieroglyphic principle plays even at the scripting stage. They maintain that Eisenstein "goes much further" than the standard detailed line-

[64] Elliott, "Cinematic Dickens and Uncinematic Words", 114.

by-line continuity, using an open form of poetry as a kind of rhetorical spacer between the montage outlined on paper and the edited film:[65]

> Not only does each "scene" (the "scene" sometimes later being a single shot, sometimes an edited group of shots) appear as a separate paragraph, but the paragraphs themselves are scrupulously divided into lines, almost in the manner of free verse, and the order of the words within each line also has a deliberate significance. All this meticulous arrangement was designed to convey not only action and mood but even the future graphic style—to give the reader an inkling of the succession in which the various elements of the described action or scene must be apprehended by the spectator from the future visual composition in order that the dramatic development should fall exactly into place.[66]

Irrespective of the critical discourse that denigrates words as un-cinematic and those that stigmatize screenplays as non-aesthetic, Eisenstein's formatting style gives a compositional sense of his film editing patterns, and delivers them in a way that highlights a consistency between montage construction and poetic structure. As a talking film, *Ivan the Terrible* naturally relies more heavily on narration as a principle for scene cutting than his earlier silent films like *Strike* (1925) and *October* (1928), but the screenplay for his 1944 bio-pic nonetheless emphasizes the way Eisenstein "sets" the film to metered verse. Far from being replaced or outstripped by montage as a means of eliciting an emotional response, the following scene in which the mercenary protecting the tsar foils the serf's assassination attempt, shows Eisenstein applying to screenwriting the dynamics of the Japanese poem:

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Like one crazed, Fedka tries to fling himself at
the Tsar.

The path to the latter
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[65] Sergei Eisenstein, *S.M. Eisenstein's Screenplay: Ivan the Terrible*, ed. Ivor Montagu (London: Secker & Warburg, 1963), 9.
[66] Ibid., 8.

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in a bound.
Staden has barred.

He plunges his knife into Fyodor.

The hunched figure of Ivan slumps on his throne:
So—now the Basmanovs have ceased to be…

Fyodor lies motionless.
With a glassy stare, upwards
at the crowns of the forty martyrs
looks the dying man.

A solitary tear
down the gray beard
of Tsar Ivan rolls…
At the end of the beard it hangs,
as though made out of graveside sobbing.
Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me…[67]
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Eisenstein takes great pains to anatomize the action, using line breaks that penetrate the conflict in stages, with closer and closer views: a crazed Fedka; his bounding feet; Staden's knife; the dejected Tsar; his tear-stained beard. Although it is typical to find Eisenstein pursuing the connections of film to older artistic traditions, in the kind of reverse motion Marshall McLuhan meant by rear-view mirrorism, his recourse to Eastern aesthetics, specifically to the Japanese poem, seems to genuinely give root and essence to his screenplay technique.[68] Here we have a script that bears all the markings of an artist devoted to the task of connecting visual expressions and signs, to the mental processes and moods he hopes to evoke. As in a Japanese haiku, the use of cutting words in the screenplay—words that, similar to English punctuation marks, designate a break in thought—empowers Eisenstein to verbally project the future montage arrangement within the bounds of ink and paper. Each paragraph radiates that sense of oneness that all good haiku impart, and every line of text acts as a visual hinge, swinging the reader from one

[67] Ibid., 257.

[68] Eisenstein called the haiku "the most laconic form of poetry" and describing it as a "concentrated impressionist sketch." What intrigues him about this short form poem is how it mates the linguistic signifier with the denotative image, and presents them simultaneously. See: *Film Form*, 30; 31. See also: McLuhan, "The Playboy Interview: Marshall McLuhan", *Playboy Magazine,* March 1969. Reprinted in *Essential McLuhan* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 233-269.

thought-image to the next. If literary techniques were allegedly rejected to allow Soviet filmmakers to construct new, modernist artifacts freed from verbal language, the scripting practices of Vertov and Eisenstein show instead two very clear illustrations of montage being intertwined with poetry.

THE CAMERA-EYE, THE HIEROGLYPH, AND THE BIRTH OF SCREENPLAY STUDIES

Both abroad and closer to home, poetry and the hieroglyphic principle remained powerful and persuasive components of early film aesthetics and practice. This was largely due to silent cinema discourse being dominated by a rhetoric that privileged the "universal", figurative language of film. America's first cine-theorist Vachel Lindsay understood very little about Egyptology or the ancient Japanese alphabet and yet, like Eisenstein, he used every opportunity to exploit the hieroglyphic idea and its possible applications for cinema.[69] In *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915), one of the first serious works of American film theory and criticism, Lindsay outlines what he perceives to be a "surprising parallelism" between the silent movies and the pictorial language of ancient Egypt.[70] The thesis of the book, grounded in interart discourse that pairs cinematic genres with the plastic arts of sculpture ("the action picture"), painting ("the intimate picture") and architecture ("the splendor picture"), contends that cinema is the modern American hieroglyphics; the culmination of a civilization saturated by picture-words appearing on streetcars, in cartoons and splashed across newspapers. In one crucial respect, it is a theoretical formulation of film as (visual) script—a kind of screenwriting shorthand that

[69] He says of the Egyptians: "they had the most intense pictorial minds of any human beings who ever lived, and breathed, not excepting the Japanese, and right now I am nearer at home with a page of the Book of the Dead than I am with a page of Mr. Shakespeare or Marlowe." (*The Art of the Moving Picture*, 135)
[70] Lindsay was stirred to write the book upon watching a New York City screening of Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* in early 1915. See: *The Art of the Moving Picture*, 75-6.

sees symbols as the key to the art of the silent photoplay. In another regard, it lends verbal characteristics to filmed scenes and strips inter-titles of any such function. "Moving objects, not moving lips," says Lindsay, "make the words of the photoplay."[71] As this chapter's discussion now turns towards the pioneering efforts to academize cinema studies, and to the "disciplining" of silent film aesthetics via screenwriting instruction, I present the case that this fascination with the hieroglyphic gelled with they camera-eye concept to act as starting points for the critical elaboration of an American screenplay poetics.

Besides offering up a whole new universe of signs from which to expand the rhetoric of the camera-eye into the poetry of filmmaking, the cinematograph represents for Lindsay, as it did for the Soviets, an opportunity to champion film as a vehicle for social change. However, the appeals he makes in *The Art of the Moving Picture* do not maintain an active relationship with the film world at large—not to the community of practitioners, as do Eisenstein's essays on film form, nor to the casual cinemagoer, as do Vertov's manifestos. The book's underlying tenet of bringing discipline and restraint to the movies targets instead the cultural educators, consistent with his view that the photoplay would be in more capable hands with museums and art institutes "where sculpture, architecture and painting are now constantly on circuit" than if it were left to the private studios to manufacture and exhibit:[72]

> The art museums of America should rule the universities, and the photoplay studios as well. In the art museums should be set the final standards of civic life, rather than in any musty libraries or routine classrooms. And the great weapon of the art museums of all the land should be the hieroglyphic of the future, the truly artistic photoplay.[73]

[71] Ibid., 161.
[72] Ibid., 28.
[73] Ibid.

Naïve about the long road that would precede the museum archive's recognition of cinema as a major art worth preserving, Lindsay imagined film way beyond the circumstances of its upstart novelty. He envisioned it as an ambitious cultural form developing in chorus with a new America and, with this, a chance to inform and assimilate (largely immigrant) audiences by turning aspects of traditional American values (democracy, freedom) into a hieroglyphic system (the war-bonnet, the winged book) that would serve as cinema's building blocks. Embracing what he had learned from his mentor, the American impressionist painter William Merrit Chase, Lindsay followed "traditions of education in the visual arts, not in syntax or narration".[74] Thus, his screenplay poetics was conceived as an extension of pictorial composition in painting, approaching the stills from a moving picture like the pictures displayed in a gallery collection.

Freeburg, too, taught photoplay theory by means of still photographs. Some of these pictures were donated by the Goldwyn Pictures Corporation—gifts made to the institution for intellectual cover or, perhaps, to promote the studio's artistic aspirations to the next foreseeable generation of masters—while others appear in the textbooks he wrote and included as part of his curriculum. Like Lindsay, Freeburg believed that the plastic arts were the raw material of film and therefore the basis for an aesthetics of the photoplay. "If you are a cinema composer at all," he writes in *The Art of Photoplay Making* (1918), "if you are endeavouring to compose a play in pictures instead of words, then you must conceive, see clearly… the pictures, that is, the materials, which constitute your play."[75] Coming from a theatre background—the subject of his doctoral dissertation was disguise plots in

[74] Kaveh Askari, *Making Movies into Art: Picture Craft from the Magic Lantern to Early Hollywood* (London: Palgrave, 2014), 54.
[75] Victor Freeburg, *The Art of Photoplay Making* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1918), 28.

Elizabethan drama—it seems strange that Freeburg would downplay the dramatic element of photoplay writing in lieu of discussions centering on theories of proportion, harmony and visual composition. But he was indeed a classicist who believed that films had to be universally beautiful in order to be pleasurable, and thus urged all would-be film writers to cater to the eye first.[76] Accordingly, his 1918 screenwriting manual (he published his second, titled *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen*, in 1923) marks one of the foundational efforts to challenge the equivalences between staged theatre and film, seeking to explore instead what Laura Marcus describes as "the interplay between mobility and fixity, 'movement' and 'moment', stasis and fluency" intrinsic to the medium of film.[77]

Although Freeburg was teaching at Columbia in and around the same time the use of the continuity script had become standard practice, his course did not exactly cater to the studios' needs for a regular output of fiction films, stories which they themselves usually adapted from popular literary and theatrical culture. *The Art of Photoplay Making* deliberately omits considerations of plot, narrative situations or character development to focus on what he lists as the principles of pictorial composition: "unity, emphasis, balance, and rhythm."[78] One such lesson instructs that fade-ins and fade-outs should be used readily as this "gives the eye time to adapt itself."[79] In another breath, Freeburg invokes Lindsay's analogy to sculpture, commenting on the way Rodin's *The Thinker* is like a film arrested in movement:

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[76] "The scenario writer must remember that it is his business to furnish good subject for the director," writes Freeburg, "and that both he and the director must conspire with the photographer to captivate the eye of the audience, because whatever other appeals a photoplay is to make, it must first appeal to the eye." (*The Art of Photoplay Making*, 13)
[77] Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 202.
[78] He does include the caveat that "all of these principles have reference to the lines, or shapes, the tones, the textures, and, of course, to the character, or significance, of the subjects," implying that although narrative form is not an immediate issue for him, the importance of unifying visual style and the narrative content should be stressed. See: *The Art of Photoplay Making*, 42.
[79] Freeburg, Victor, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923), 26.

> This silent man... is thoughtful with every part of his body; the eyebrows, the fists, the toes, the back—all reveal him as deeply thoughtful. Painters sometimes imitate the method of the sculptor by placing their subject beside a mirror, thus revealing the beholder an additional aspect in the reflected image... But the photoplay may go even farther than this; it may in a sense show sculpture in motion. It may present the subject at many distances and from many angles, physically and dramatically as well, emphasizing again and again the fundamental differentiating traits of the character until the audience is unforgettably impressed with the dramatic personality.[80]

Like the Cubists who flirted with faceting and multiple viewpoints to give still painting more dimension, Freeburg noted how photoplays tended to be most artistic and expressive when the director varied the camera's placement in relation to the thing pictured. Therefore, he developed his poetics not around drama, but around a kind of hieroglyphics of motion—a combination of camera positions, angles and editing—that heightens the dramatic element. This way of reading into motion, to cultivate spectatorship as a moving picture study, highlights a rule of photoplay composition that Freeburg and Lindsay are two of the first to endorse: that screenwriting is a visual discipline with the dual aim of guiding the making and appreciation of photoplays as art works. From Lindsay's formulation of silent cinema as consisting of beautiful objects that become significant hieroglyphs, to Freeburg's arguably less fanciful, more concretely elaborated aesthetics of motion and stillness in film, it would be fair to say that screenplay studies gained traction on the back of the hieroglyphic idea, propped up by the rhetoric, the exciting promise, of movie theatres becoming international picture galleries contributing to art education.

Just as museums often showcase canonical artworks with broad influence, Freeburg's scenario class drew on household literary names to elevate continuity writing to an

[80] Ibid., 198.

aesthetic register. "There is a rich opportunity for the new poet of pictures to develop an imaginative style which shall distinguish him from the commonplace continuity writers," writes Freeburg, "just as the styles of Byron and Keats distinguish them from Baedeker."[81] Although *The Art of Photoplay Making* offers little in the way of firm advice on prose style, it acknowledges the formal freedom being presented to those students ambitious enough to turn their amateur interest in cinema into professional identities as serious photoplaywrights. As already mentioned, Freeburg hoped to augment film's status by catering to what he perceived as the American audience's appetite for better graphic compositions, and his poetics often repeats the mantra that apprehending beauty in the photoplay is a crucial component in the development of film art.[82] Consequently, he relates screenwriting not just to the choice of subject or narrative situation, but to critical engagement with the specificity of film spectatorship; that is, to the way composition—even with marks on paper with a typewriter—always implicates a viewing subject. For this reason, Freeburg's screenwriting instruction orbits around the intensified nature of cinematic perception, precisely what Ganz laments the current craft focus on writing for the plot displaces.[83] The following excerpt from Freeburg's second volume, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen*, shows him combining practical instruction with aesthetic reflection on what composing with film sets before the eye:

> The pictorial beauty discussed in this book is really a kind of pictorial efficiency, and therefore must have practical, economic value. When a motion picture is well composed it pleases the

[81] Freeburg, *The Art of Photoplay Making*, 136.
[82] "Aesthetic appreciation of workmanship is the result not of impulse but of analysis; and the play must become established as a public favourite before these values are discovered and admired." (*The Art of Photoplay Making,* 20)
[83] In Ganz's own words: "What has been less explored is how the screenwriter can attempt to suggest that sense of film as something perceived, rather than thought, and represent the visual world and how we experience it in all its passion and intensity." ("To Make You See", 28)

> eye, its meaning is easily understood, and the emotion it contains is quickly and forcefully conveyed.[84]

The book's preface to readers is representative of a tendency in early film theorizations to privilege acts of attention, particularly as a means of acquainting spectators to the strange spaces, unique movements and characteristic psychology of the silver screen. We find similar rhetoric exercised in the writings of Lindsay, Münsterberg, Balázs and Arnheim, all of whom were keen to understand the correlate role cinema played to certain cognitive functions. Arnheim, for instance, sought to show how silent cinema intuitively translates some of the principles governing perceptual organization, while Münsterberg was one of the first scholars to interrogate the function of technical devices on attention, memory, imagination and emotion. In attempting to integrate the active skills of spectatorship with those of screenwriting technique, Freeburg devised an aesthetic approach that "deals with fixed and moving designs, the things which the spectator actually sees, the only forms which actually hold and present the contents of a photoplay."[85] Fatefully, this line of thinking often steers him back to the hieroglyph, which is apparent in his lauding Griffith's treatment of the symbolic image of a cradled baby in *Intolerance*: "just as a motif in music or a refrain in poetry takes on a new beauty with each new context in which it is presented, so a repeated picture in a photoplay should gain new meaning and beauty each time it is recalled in a succession of new pictures."[86] He further hints at an understanding of cinema as a hieroglyphic medium with a rapport to poetry when he says:

> In the language of poetry we often find that the words mean much more than they actually denote, that they are enveloped, as it were, in a rich atmosphere of suggestion… Cannot the

[84] Freeburg, *Pictorial Beauty on the Screen*, 10.
[85] Freeburg, *The Art of Photoplay Making*, 5.
[86] Ibid., 74.

> cinema composer, the new poet of pictures, and not of words, develop a similar power of connotation?[87]

For Freeburg, the analogy to poetry figures less as a bridge linking screenwriting to prosody or prose style (as is the case for Eisenstein and Vertov, respectively) than as a means of apprehending film's reach as a signifying practice, with the potential to resonate universally with spectators. More significant than his describing film composition as a poetic language, however, are his allusions to the writer as a composer and poet of the screen—that is, as the artist properly in charge of developing and propagating the ideal visual language film promises. Granted that Freeburg's work never truly manifests as a new model of screenwriting, it consistently emphasizes that a hieroglyphic screenplay poetics is critical to improving film as a synthetic seeing and writing, and that the scenario writer's role is that of a social reformer in the film appreciation movement. Had it been seen all the way through, this civic orientation of the strand of screenplay studies forged by Freeburg might have effected the wide dispersal of screenwriting as a teachable method for scrutinizing films and tutoring audiences. It may even have cemented screenplay language as a proper subject of film aesthetics and criticism from the scenario's inception.

A maverick poet by trade, Lindsay was far keener to ascertain the formal parallels underpinning photoplay composition and Imagist poetry than he was to demonstrate the writer's expertise in attending to film as a spectator's medium. Although not a self-styled Imagist, he lived their credo that art should be hard and dry, and he viewed their model of poetry as being conformable to the scenario writer's technique. Confident in his outlook of its diverse applications, Lindsay insisted that, "the Imagist pulse need not be confined to

[87] Ibid., 104.

verse… There is a clear parallelism between their point of view and the intimate and friendly photoplay."[88] He expands on this statement:

> Imagist photoplays would be Japanese prints taking on life, animated Japanese paintings, Pompeian mosaics in kaleidoscopic but logical succession, Beardsley drawings made into actors and scenery, Greek vase-paintings in motion…[89]

Lindsay had a loose way of engaging in aesthetic discourse, but his instincts were sharp. If the motion picture was the modern version of the ancient marriage of painting and writing (which the hieroglyph also embodies), then Imagism—the art of fixing the present moment, rendering it a still image through language—was laying the foundation for a future poetics of the screenplay.

This comparison of screenwriting to Imagist aesthetics presented an avenue for the motion picture, previously mistaken by critics for a sideshow novelty foregrounding an act of display instead of the modern syntax Lindsay understood it to be, to be certified as artistically significant. Working intuitively from his passion for "reading" movies, Lindsay sensed very early on that film composition points directly to semiotics—to the social and cultural meaning of signs and codes— and he trusted that screenwriting was the key to unlocking the deeper study of lens-based translations of linguistic tropes.

Imagism was intended to break poetry free from the overly subjective and verbose late Victorian style. Positioning itself as a movement that was aggressively modern, attuned to the wider importance of the intellectual statements poetry can make about the world, its

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[88] Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture*, 157.
[89] Ibid., 158.

disciples (Richard Aldington, Ezra Pound, F.S. Flint and, especially, Hilda "H.D." Doolittle, to name a few) pursued a new aesthetic criterion based not on the illusionary world of sentimental indulgence, but on the perceptual precision of writing itself. As such, they abided by the principle of writing without airs; a clipped down, unassuming style of poetry characterized by clear, sharp language and limited use of abstractions. A classic example is Pound's simplified, haiku-influenced "In a Station of the Metro" (1913), a single-image poem recounting his experience of the Paris underground:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
> Petals on a wet, black bough.[90]

The presentation equates, by means of visual spacing, the faces with petals and the crowd with a damp bough. It is the same poetic device that connects for Eisenstein the images in a filmic montage; two signifiers superimposed (or "mounted" upon one another) to make new associations, as in the above instance where Pound preserves a fleeting encounter with urbanization. Therefore, the Imagist's expression of "image" would be just like the screenwriter's, according to Lindsay. Unable to recreate for the eye the exact arrangements of figures, shapes and textures they envisioned, they would have to rely on word choice, structure and thoughtful punctuation to approximate the equivalent image in the reader's mind. "Experience is the controlling determinant," explains Boon in a more recent article comparing the similarities of structure and rhythm produced by modernist prose and screenplay formatting.[91] Turning to screenplays first, Boon observes that, "each written segment must be performable—that is, must be experiential enough to film. The characteristics that render fiction 'cinematic' are the same characteristics that are called for

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[90] Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose*, 11 vols. I, C76, 132-37 (London: Garland, 1991), 137.
[91] Kevin Alexander Boon, "The Screenplay, Imagism, and Modern Aesthetics" in *Literature/Film Quarterly* 36.4 (2008), 264.

in the literary aesthetics of Stein, Hemingway and other modernist writers…"[92] Aside from a few stylistic differences to do with the screenplay's ties to film production (most notably length, verb tense, dialogue markers and transitional devices), Boon and Lindsay are in agreement that the screenwriter's aesthetic agenda falls precisely in line with the Imagist poet's, both of whom Ganz would group under the common rubric of lens-based writing, "a form whose essence is to indicate a visual experience in prose."[93]

Putting Boon's argument to task, consider the compositional parallels between, on the left, *The Return* (1917), a free verse poem by Pound describing a party of browbeaten men wary about their return to the hunt and, on the right, Quentin Tarantino's draft script for *The Hateful Eight* (2013), about a group of bounty hunters in post-Civil war Wyoming. Although written almost a century apart, both works comparably reflect the elements of modernist aesthetics highlighted throughout Boon's article, including focused imagery, sharpness of mood, compression, connotation and word choice:

SEE, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!
See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind;
and half turn back;
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"
Inviolable.[94]

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70mm CU of The STAGECOACH DRIVER
O.B. (pronounced Obie) as he whips
the horses forward, keeps the
wheels on the road, and avoids the
rocks.

Then.......

....he sees something up ahead.

He pulls back on the reins.

CU HORSE MOUTH
as reins are pulled back.

Their HOOVES
slowing in the snow.

O.B.
still fighting the reins.
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[92] Ibid.
[93] Ganz, "To Make You See", 7.
[94] As reprinted in *Ezra Pound and Poetic Influence*, ed. Helen M. Dennis (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), 5.

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THE HORSES
still trying to stop their vigorous
glide. Snorting and coughing HOT
BREATH, the horses finally settle
to a stop.
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[95]

Critiques of Pound's poem frequently comment on his use of alliteration, like the "s" sound in "see" and "slow" and the repetition of "ee" in "see" and "feet". At the time it was written, this was considered a novel approach to poetic form in that it was deliberately audio-visual: the imagery of the hunter's tentative steps works in stride with (signifies, even) the cagey, wavering movement of the verses as they get broken up into deliberately clunky, successive speech stresses. If the imagist "impulse", as Boon understands it, is to depict crisp, concrete images using precise language and line breaks to rhythmic advantage, then Tarantino's versified scene description continues this tradition soundly. Like Pound, his screenwriting confronts the reader with detail and scale, and the textual features of Tarantino's vertical page design only further strengthens his concern with sharp imagery, intimated through close-ups of the driver, carriage wheels, the road, the horse's mouths, their hooves and, finally, their breath. Ellipses and line-breaks create suspense, much like the tentative "feet" characterized by Pound's prosody, while the stacking of rapid-fire cuts into visual montage creates urgency, forcing the eye quickly down the page. As for word choice, Tarantino opts for verbs and adjectives that capture the sight, sounds and motion of the snowy chase: the stagecoach "whips," the wheels "slide," and the "snorting, coughing" horses are visibly and audibly exhausted. On the whole, both the poem and the screenplay are hallmarked by a similar kind of versification, where the rhythmic and tonal aspects of language like pitch, stress patterns, and duration contribute to a more expressive reading of the text. Moreover, there is a sense in which the cinematic effect of the screenplay is neither exclusive nor

[95] Quentin Tarantino, *The Hateful Eight.* First draft December 12, 2013, 1-2.

inimitable, but follows from the modernist techniques that have gone before. Just as film, for Lindsay, restored the hieroglyph to life, screenwriting may simply be the most recent literary "movement" to join the alliance in the commitment to creating modernist art; an art that sees the world becoming increasingly industrialized and technological through the eye of the lens.

MODERNISM AND THE "SCREENPLAY EFFECT"

An unfortunate fact about the early institutional history of the screenplay is that it is never, except in rare instances of spontaneous solidarity between artists like the kinoks, or visionary daring on behalf of photoplay theorists like Eisenstein, Freeburg and Lindsay, allowed to step outside the path marked by the aesthetic discourse of classical film theory. And yet, as has been commented upon throughout this chapter, what some call the cinematic trace in writing—writing that strives for vividness of presentation, or builds up from the impersonal perspective of an illusory witness—has a longer lineage of use than the photoplay scripting process. It looms much larger than the experience of film itself, embracing a highly diverse range of aesthetic practices concerned with perceiving the world through a lens, from scientific inquiry to the overlapping currents of literary modernism. Thus, one incentive to reject the blueprint concept of the screenplay is to call into question the succession thesis, whereby commercial filmmaking compelled producers to "invent" a conventional form that would guide the making of a motion picture. If anything, screenwriting, in its most basic sense, is a discipline of concord between the verbal and the visual; it begins and ends with recording acts of perception by means of description—a "cinematic" technique that precedes cinema by at least a century. Another

compelling reason to discard the metaphor is that early scripting practices did not necessarily result in a pre-written scheme, therefore the usual distinctions between script and production did not exist. For Vertov, certainly, screenwriting was integral to both shooting and editing, but his notion of "screenplay"—the fairly elaborate set of critical-theoretical instructions expounded in his frequent essays—does not conform to our current definition. When the very idea of the script is in flux, it is because we ask different questions from the ones that have dominated critical reflection on film composition and inspired its creative practice before. Accordingly, the following chapter asks the unusual question "who speaks" in a screenplay, and other such provocative questions, within the framework of narratology.

CHAPTER 3: THE RHETORIC OF NARRATIVE IN THE SCREENPLAY

"The stress is everywhere on the unity of sound and image and the voice is the point of that unity: at once subservient to the images and entirely dominant in the dramatic space it opens in them—the film stops when the drama the voices carry in the images ends, when there are no more words, only 'The End'."

-Stephen Heath[1]

The cinema, our historians tell us, found its "voice" in the zingy, fast-paced era of the 1920s with the advent of the Vitaphone, a sound-on-disc system that was featured in the Warner Bros. musical hit *The Jazz Singer* (1927). "Talkies," as they became affectionately known, were touted as the next phase of radio and a stepping-stone to television, but for a certain segment of the audience who felt that the latest sound practices were being awkwardly implemented, talking pictures betrayed cinema's silent roots. Adjusting to these new advances meant that the formerly zestful, action-laden scenarios yielded to dialogue-heavy scripts, while technical constraints (like distortion and noise) and the shaky process of evolving stylistic conventions to match the rhythm of direct sound, fatefully made wordless cinematography appear all the more natural.

That being said, we know that film never really lacked a voice at all. In fact, the very principle of "voice" in the cinema derives from the nickelodeon era and the running commentary that was often provided by a lecturer who would stand beside the screen and entertain the audience while the movie unfolded. Originally, these vaudevillian performers were part of the overall attraction of the motion picture show, but their role eventually shifted to that of interpreters, and to the nuts-and-bolts task of explaining the increasingly

[1] Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space" in *Screen* 17.3 (1976), 100.

complex narratives provided by the studios.[2] But due to the added labour expense, the extradiegetic voice of the explicator was eventually phased out, yielding to what film historian Janet Staiger defines as "a cinema more self-contained and redundant… with intratextually supplied causality and character motivation."[3]

The choice to align silent narrative cinema with a mimetic voice—that is, with the more or less direct renderings of speech using titles containing character-"spoken" dialogue—predictably incentivized early screenplay predecessors to shift their approach to storytelling and to adapt a screenwriting paradigm through which, to quote Sargent, the story "seems to tell itself, rather than to be told… more like a happening than a narrative of past events."[4] As producers began to innovate the language of crosscutting, this provoked a shift in scripting practices to attend to the problem of visual coherence. Whereas the sparse scenario script did little more than "frame the narrative context for a scene," more complex narrative techniques introduced the need for a continuity script that not only described the action but also explained how it should be shot. In short, just as the diegetic impulse was being tempered by film narration, the screenplay embraced a return to the narrator's commentary with the addition of a "blueprint" discourse that intimated how the film should be made.

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[2] This was sometimes to the producer's detriment, given that the explicator could easily misinterpret the scenes if the studio waived the use of instructive inter-titles, or if the film manufacturer failed to provide publicity materials containing a description of the scenario's plot along with the reel. The description from the Edison catalogue for Edwin S. Porter's *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903), for example, would have assisted the commentator in clarifying the durational continuity of the action both inside and out of the burning building, explaining the temporal overlap depicted between the two rescues. "We show the world in this film the every movement of the brave firemen and their perfectly trained horses from the moment the men leap from their beds in response to an alarm until the fire is extinguished and a woman and child are rescued after many fierce battles with flame and smoke. Below we give a description of each of the seven scenes which make up this most wonderful of all fire scenes, "Life of an American Fireman." (*Edison Films,* February 1903, 2-3.) https://tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T112/LifeOfAnAmericanFireman.html

[3] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 119.

[4] E. W. Sargent, *The Technique of the Photoplay* (New York: The Moving Picture World, 1913), 61.

What this moment means for a historical poetics of the screenplay is a more precise picture of when and how the script evolved from an instructional outline or blueprint, to a dramatic text explicitly designed with the rhetorical function of filmic narration in mind. Given that one of the crucial questions asked of film since it became an object of critical interest for narratologists has been one of narrative voice (borrowing from literary theory and its approach to analyzing novelistic discourse), it seems sensible that the same problem should be put before screenplay analysts: when it comes to the film script, *who speaks?* Provided that most recent narratological accounts conclude film bears no equal trace of the literary narrator, the screenplay, too, remains a special class of narrative text demanding its own unique methods and core concepts.

In his highly influential book *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985), Bordwell spends two chapters expanding upon the mimetic and diegetic theories of narration, what he identifies as twin trends in theoretical accounts of the narrational process of film. Leaning on evidence supplied by the popular 1937 screenwriting textbook *How to Write and Sell Film Stories*, he affirms: "Insofar as film theory before 1960 possesses a theory of narration, it is drawn from the mimetic tradition. In film, writes Frances Marion, the story is 'not told but *dramatized*.'"[5] Bordwell later contrasts mimesis—what Aristotle broadly defines as a spectacle-driven, narrator-less mode of theatrical presentation—with the description of narration supplied by Plato's *Republic*, which upholds "the conception that narration is fundamentally a linguistic activity" similar to explicator's role at the silent picture palace.[6] The mimetic concept presupposes a mode of presentation that positions an imaginary witness as the locus of perspective and narrative intelligibility, while the diegetic theory treats the camera and cinematic technique as an autonomous metalanguage that

[5] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 9.
[6] Ibid., 16.

comments upon the drama from a detached, discursive level. What Bordwell wants to illustrate is that neither of these theories (of the ideal observer, of the camera-narrator) can account for the viewer's active role in the creation of narrative meaning, nor do they consider the formal universe of the film beyond cinematography. Drawing on two key concepts from the Russian Formalist school—fabula (the chronological events contained in a story) and syuzhet (how those events are organized)—he convincingly argues that film's narrativity involves two principle formal systems, syuzhet and style, and that filmic narration is ultimately "the process whereby syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channeling the spectator's construction of the fabula."[7] Building from Bordwell's definition, the present chapter proposes a poetics of the screenplay that breaks down along two broad lines: how screenplay form and style function to narrative ends, and why those aspects have changed in the wake of particular historical circumstances.

Consistent with the intent to investigate the screenplay's narratorial principles and effects and their historical manifestations, I first asks questions of an ontological nature: *What kind of narrative text is the screenplay*, and *how has its narrativity been determined by practitioners?* Answering for the fact that different readers might focus on different constituent features of the script, my chosen interpretive strategy borrows from what Sternberg calls the "reading" phase of the script: a mode of reception that principally looks on the screenplay as literature, as opposed to a studio commodity (the "property" phase) or a production plan (the "blueprint" phase).[8] This move is aimed at countering objections to the screenplay as literary material, with its own traditions and appreciative practices, but I

[7] Ibid., 53.
[8] Claudia Sternberg, *Written for the Screen: The American Motion Picture Screenplay as Text* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997), 48.

believe that it also encourages critical evaluation of the screenplay beyond its film performance potential.

Literary theorist Mieke Bal claims that in order to classify something as narrative, it is important to know who is doing the narrating.[9] Returning to the concept of voice in film (noting its rejection by Bordwell as an "anthropomorphic fiction"), this chapter explores narratological approaches from both the disciplinary fields of literature and drama in an attempt to define the special character of screenplay narration.[10] Although the screenplay has, by and large, internalized the film-as-storyteller mode, it has done so under the sway of staged theater and novelistic discourse. In order to avoid some of the pitfalls encountered by narratologists (hasty, perhaps, in their quest to "figure film out" by analogizing linguistic concepts into cinematic models), the rather straightforward problem of narrative voice carries heavy consequences for screenplay studies as we begin to embrace more rigorous paradigms than the ones on offer in the instructional manual literature. Over the course of this chapter, I argue that screenplays are hierarchical texts containing discourse frames (story, production, projection) that act in a mutually supportive manner to achieve the desired effect. I also devote a section to the metaphor of the camera-in-the-text, and to how "camera" becomes a heuristic tool that cues the reader to visualize a performance. Lastly, I will examine in greater detail the stylistic elements and formal structures of the script that solicit narrative comprehension for the reader, using examples drawn from both the old-fashioned silent film scenarios and more conventional master scene scripts. Taking inspiration from the concept of fictionality in literary theory, and applying it to the interpretation of screenplays as imaginary films, Chapter 3 concludes by

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[9] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative.* 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 9.
[10] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 62.

contending that fictionality delineates the boundaries of the screenplay for the reader, so that what is referred to is not a recipe for a film (as proponents of the blueprint analogy suggest), but a fictional account of an indeterminate movie. Put another way, the rhetorical strategy of the screenplay relies on the reader's imagining a possible world of the film.

NARRATIVITY AND THE SCREENPLAY

Before sound cinema, Jean-Pierre Geuens observes, "the bulk of the writing concerned the actions of the characters: what the protagonists actually did in the shot. How they reacted to one another. It made their gazes clear, it spoke of their emotions."[11] To illustrate some of the conventions of the silent film scenario, the following is an excerpt from Anita Loos' continuity script for *The New York Hat* (1912):

```
Sub-title: A dying mother's strange trust
Room: Woman in bed; man and woman standing behind
    bed; man and girl standing alongside of bed.
Sub-title: The bequest
Room – minister's study
Letter: My Beloved Pastor: My husband worked me to
    death, but I have managed to save a little sum.
    Take it and from time to time buy my daughter
    the bits of finery she has always been denied.
    Let no one know. Mary Harding
Sub-title: Afterwards – "Daddy, can't I have a new
    hat?"
Man sitting at table – girl standing a short
    distance from him
Room: Girl looking in mirror
Room: Man sitting at table – girl talking to him
Room: Girl looking in mirror[12]
```

[11] Jean-Pierre Geuens, *Film Production Theory* (Albany: SUNY, 2000), 83.
[12] Transcribed from *The New York Hat* script [http://www.oocities.org/emruf1/nyhat.html]. Dated December 5, 1912, reissued by Biograph, November 6, 1916.

Included with the shot-by-shot details of Loos' scenario is another production document: a synopsis, written in prose form, describing the plight of a cheerless and impoverished New England girl who, upon mourning her mother's death, decides that she is entirely "dissatisfied with her small old black velvet hat that sits on her head like a small half-baked pancake."[13] As Geuens intimates above, the terse form of the scenario embraces expressive intertitles (indicated here as "Sub-title" and possibly "Letter"), scene text (which blocks the action within the scene), and shot specifications (signaling a shift in location or a change of set design). The synopsis, on the other hand, assigns further purpose, cause and motivation to the drama, adding a slight literary touch to what would otherwise be a basic laundry list of instructions to be executed by the producer. Somewhere between these two operations of the *New York Hat* script—the continuity's segmentation of actions into scenes to construct a film plot, and their meaningful retelling by an authorial narrator—the silent scenario emerges as a multivalent text, one that prompts us to examine the links that connect its two-tiered constellation of story and discourse.

"Show, don't tell" as the old screenwriting adage goes, is a technical truism that appears from the outset in how-to manuals on the structural and dramatic principles of photoplay composition. As early as 1913, Sargent suggested to his audience of would-be writers that film stories should appear to be "spontaneously told," with a minimum of narratorial intervention on the part of the author.[14] What becomes clear with reading *Technique of the Photoplay* (and is evoked in some way by most other screenplay manuals from the time) is that the modern opposition between showing and telling as modes of presentation has less to do with the aesthetic limitations of cinema (as determined by critics, not practitioners) and more to do with the industrial separation of conception and execution described in

[13] Ibid.
[14] Sargent, *The Technique of the Photoplay*, 61.

Chapter 1. In other words, although screenplays can aspire to higher levels of diegetic narrativity (i.e., what typically happens in prose fiction) than films can, the onus is on the director, not the screenwriter, to "make" storytelling happen:

> Your script is not to tell the director how to make a picture, but in what order the scenes that tell the play shall be shown upon the screen. You theoretically have nothing whatever to do with the making. You do not, in theory, recognize that the story must be made. You say in effect: "To get a good play, show upon the screen these pictures in the order indicated." You write the pictures in their order. Your work is done.[15]

As a point of comparison, screenwriting guru Syd Field gives similar advice in his book *Screenplay*, published almost 70 years later: "The writer's job is to tell the director what to shoot, not how to shoot it. If you specify how each scene should be shot, the director will probably throw it away. And justifiably so."[16] The distinction, whether conscious of its theoretical implications or not, aligns a poetics of the screenplay with what the ancient Greek philosophers called mimesis (where the actions are enacted and embodied) as opposed to diegesis (where the actions are narrated and reported). When screenwriters agreeably avoid the use of literary techniques and stage directions, their authorial presence is reduced, and the screenplay enters the mimetic territory of film: it gives an almost complete illusion of direct, unmediated representation. That is the gold standard to which the instructional literature aspires.

And yet, "printed plays not only present us with "acts of narration," Ryan Claycomb argues, "they in fact *narrate* those acts of narration" by including steps that ultimately determine

[15] Ibid., 136.
[16] Syd Field, *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting* (New York: Bantam Dell, 1979), 232.

how the performance could or should be staged.[17] That dramatic works like motion pictures and theatrical scripts typically remain "cordoned off" from the study of narrative is, according to him, a direct consequence of the classical opposition between modes of presentation, and it leaves un-theorized one crucial question: when it comes to the screenplay, what kind of narrative are we reading?

"Since the difference applies only to "mode" of imitation," states Bordwell, "either theory may be applied to any medium."[18] The remark serves as a helpful reminder that one can, for instance, hold a mimetic theory of the novel or a diegetic theory of cinema. By challenging the perspective from which blueprint judgments about the screenplay are made, it becomes easier to view the early film scenario as an example of telling, with the intertitles and synopsis projecting a narrative voice that makes interpretations, moral observations, and so on. Displaying a slightly more narratorial discourse than the continuity for *The New York Hat* given the formatting choices, this excerpt from the 1923 Australian silent film *The Dinkum Bloke* (distributed by Paramount) reinforces the screenplay's propensity for narrative through commentary, rather than actions conveyed by visual means:

```
1
Fade into a big scene of wharf laborers hard at toil
plainly showing the arduous nature of the work by
which the wharfies earn their living wage. Among
them is one big-hearted, honest, illiterate man
loved by all.

           BILL GARVAN.
           A Wharf-Laborer, whose head has not been
           filled with the learning of schools, but
           whose heart has passed with honors in the
           University of Life.[19]
```

[17] Ryan Claycomb, "Here's How You Produce This Play: Towards a Narratology of Dramatic Texts" in *Narrative* 21.2 (2013), 160.
[18] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 3.
[19] Raymond Longford and Lottie Lyell. Draft submitted as "The Bloke from Woolloomooloo" (1922) (http://www.oocities.org/emruf1/dinkum.html)

Written as a master-scene—what eventually became the benchmark of "good" screenwriting practice—this screenplay by Raymond Longford and Lottie Lyell reflects what Bordwell, Staiger, and Kristin Thompson call "a combination of theatrical and pre-sound film scripts, a variant of the continuity synopsis used in the 1920s."[20] From a narratological viewpoint, one of the format's major advantages is that it allows the writer to use the expanded scene text to further explain and verbally shape the imagery for the reader. The effect is unequivocally diegetic in both nature and function: the external narrator's commentary (an agent who does not figure in the fabula as an actor) sets not only the action (laborers hard at toil) and the location (the wharf), but also what screen theorist Colin MacCabe describes as, "the truth against which we can measure the discourses."[21] In *The Dinkum Bloke*, the framing discourse sequentially describes Bill's behaviour and the narrator's outlook on the scene as influenced by privileged details about the character's past. That Bill is a "big-hearted" and "honest" man is a *de facto* statement, reported using the diegetic mode (the scene text and the inter-title that reads: "whose heart has passed with honours") in place of the mimetic.

Given the degree of diegetic narrativity featured in the above examples, it becomes apparent that the mimetic model of narration promoted by technical guidebooks is poorly equipped to grasp the dynamics of narration that can be staged in a screenplay. What is required instead is a narrative theory that recognizes the value of diegetic elements such as

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[20] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985), 323.
[21] Starting from the claim that popular cinema inherited the forms and structures of the 19th century novel, MacCabe argues that narrative discourse in film—like 3rd person commentary in realist prose fiction—gives the impression of objectivity even while acknowledging that such "statements" must be expressing a view that comes from someone or somewhere. The camera, acting as an external narrator, can at times detach from the characters' subjective perspectives and pretend to show reality. See: "Realism in the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses" in *Theoretical Essays: Film, Linguistics, Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 37.

exposition, summarization, and description, instead of displacing them (directly or indirectly) as a barrier to the experience of something cinematic.

For illustrative purposes, the following is a mock script titled *The Price of Pride,* written by Sargent for *Technique of the Photoplay*:

```
Leader- Some days later. John recognizes the Count
as a chauffeur.

12. Street- Morton, Nell and Count coming toward
camera — John enters from camera- raises hat- Nell
and Count respond — Morton looks straight ahead—
they exit- John looks after them- puzzled- thinks-
dissolve in auto at curb- chauffeur bending over
machine- straightened up- shows face- it is the
Count- dissolve out- John smiles- exits up street.[22]
```

It is easy to see this as an effort to cut the amateur scenarist down to size; a modeling of Sargent's professional opinion that "florid expression in a plot is out of place," and that literary flair serves the film "only in the leaders."[23] Here, the title card is quite perfunctory, setting a timeline for the action and clarifying the character's thoughts, but the scene text follows the conventions of the continuity format and includes a simple list of scenes depicting the silent action, camera angles, and a few transitions. Juxtaposed against the imaginative descriptions offered by J. Edward Hungerford in his 1916 script for *Youth's Endearing Charm*, Sargent's ersatz script seems deliberately uninspired:

```
3   MARY, AN ORPHAN, BOUND OUT TO
    FARMER JENKINS TWO YEARS AGO

    Kitchen at Jenkins'. A big room, serving both as
    kitchen, dining-room and partial living-room.
    The place is replete with all necessities, and
```

[22] The plot of the made-up script relates the story of a man named John who cannot marry until he sells his invention and becomes as successful as his lover's father. See: Sargent, *The Technique of the Photoplay*, 44.
[23] Ibid., 5.

```
though kept in certain order, is anything but
neat, or inviting. Enter Mary, a young girl
about fifteen, slovenly dressed, awkward and
unsophisticated, but bearing evidence of beauty
and refinement through all disguise.[24]
```

In this example, the act of telling creates a space through the careful detailing of mise-en-scène, from the dedicated uses of the common area to the drab upkeep of the Jenkins' farmhouse. Of particular relevance to the plot is the contrast depicted between Mary's subtle elegance and her lackadaisical surroundings; a visual hint that the orphaned girl is at odds with her foster family, and destined for brighter days. Unlike *The Price of Pride,* which, in accordance with Sargent's teachings, keeps to the basic ordering of shots and the blocking of action within a scene, Hungerford's script is arguably a more literary product whose constituent features, while certainly pragmatic, are also narrative. By combining the dramatic mode of presentation (action) with the epic mode of narration (exposition, suggestion, and observation), even an early silent scenario like *Youth's Endearing Charm* can go beyond the plastics of cinema to assume the role of the filmic storyteller using literary means.

Thus far, the chapter has touched upon two concepts pertaining to the mechanics of narrative: story and plot. Exactly how the plot interacts with and distorts the "normal" storyline has long been a source of debate for narratologists, for whom the search for a kind of "grand unified theory of narrative" has been a major stimulating force for inquiry since the birth of the Russian Formalist school in the 1910s. But as it turns out, these conceptual tools are rather bound to the medium they were developed for; as the mother domain of literature sees its discipline expanding into a plurality of narratolog*ies* (from

[24] J. E. Hungerford, screenplay of "Youth's Endearing Charm" (1916), adapted from a novel by M. Heikes Justice. (http://www.simplyscripts.com/genre/silent-movie-scripts.html)

plot- and style-driven theories to narrative-communication models to reception- and cognitive-oriented approaches), scholars are compelled to accept that narrativity—the quality or condition of presenting a narrative—is always text-dependent.

When examining narrative systems, Bal insists that analysts should make a 3-layer distinction between story, fabula, and text.[25] She urges that although this model implies that the three layers can be studied separately, these layers are best understood as fitting one inside the other, like a tower of stacked cups. Events, characters, time and space comprise for her the materials of a fabula, which can then be slid into place to re-construct a story. The narrative text (the outer cup) is a finite, structured whole: "a story 'told,' conveyed to recipients, and this telling requires a medium". [26] Who "voices" these medium-bound signs is not a person exactly, but a function served by a narrating agent "which utters the (linguistic or other) signs which constitute the text."[27] In order to explain the kind of narrative text a screenplay is, Bal would argue, we must first ask who (or what) is narrating.

THE SCREENPLAY'S NARRATOR

Since the screenplay needs to assimilate the "identity" of the filmic narrator, the task of identifying the embedded signs of narration compels us to theorize another three-tiered distinction: the discursive layers of story, production, and projection. Like novels, the screenplays under consideration here are keen to transmit a story. One of their main

[25] Her use of the term "story" corresponds with the formalist concept of syuzhet. See: Bal, Narratology, 6.
[26] Ibid., 9.
[27] Ibid., 18.

objectives is to communicate a fictional storyworld to the reader, replete with actions, happenings, characters and settings. In its function as a printed text standing-in for a film performance, the script also poses a relationship between the reader and future spectator as a condition of its intelligibility. "As a result," explains Andrew Gay, "the reader of the screenplay is invited to imagine herself sitting in a theater, watching a projection of the final product on a screen."[28] Finally, the screenplay incorporates a list of technical steps to be followed by the crew in the making of a film. These may include specific instructions about the lens selection and camera placement, or stage directions intended for the actors.

While these 3 levels of discourse appear together, nested like a set of Chinese boxes, in any given work there is always one frame narrative that encloses the others. Precisely because they are embedded, the various layers that present us with individual acts of narration inevitably give way to a controlling frame that establishes the boundary of the text. In the screenplay, this outer shell is the production blueprint; only at the technical level of instructions do we get the fullest sense of reading towards a possible narrative performance. This is not to imply that the script's poetic function is subsumed by its industrial format, but rather to suggest that the concept of narration in a screenplay is necessarily represented by an invitation to direct (mentally or otherwise). Additionally, the story discourse is not the only narrative we read in a screenplay; using Manfred Jahn's method of performance-oriented textual analysis, I make the case that the tertiary text of stage directions is also a frame story that narrates its instructions for production, and that the blueprint mode is, in effect, a literary technique like any other.

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[28] Andrew Gay, "Story and Discourse in the Screenplay" (http://www.screenplayology.com/content-sections/paths-problems-in-screenplay-studies/3-3-narratology/)

For Seymour Chatman, whose structuralist studies remain influential within the field of film studies, “narrative’ is a text type that encompasses both diegetic and mimetic forms of presentation. He justifies: “Dramas written for performance differ from other narratives only in their actualization: that is, theatrical production… In that sense, drama is not a class that competes with narrative; rather it is simply one of the narrative kinds.”[29] Whereas description, as a discourse type, is like the verbal analog of painting, and argument relies on consequentiality, narrative types are unique in that they possess an internal time sequence—a “chrono-logic” that is tuned “to the ongoing march of story events.”[30] If we follow this line of thinking through to its logical conclusion, the narrator is not so much the one who speaks, but an agent who controls the exposition, decides what to tell, how to tell it, from whose point of view, and in what sequence.[31]

Pursuant to Jahn’s observations on the playscript mode—what he defines as a genre of printed performances including teleplays, radioscripts, and so forth—there are arguably two preconditions for understanding the screenplay as textual drama. First, it must be intelligible as a narrative discourse. Secondly, it must also be readable as a future projection of a filmed production. Consider, as an example, the opening scene and dialogue text from *The Birdman* script, a fictional Broadway adaptation of a short story by Raymond Carver:

```
INT. RIGGAN'S DRESSING ROOM - THEATER - DAY 1

Close on the brilliant colors of a middle eastern
rug, the center of what seems to be a makeshift
"meditation" space.
```

[29] Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: the Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 117.
[30] Ibid., 37.
[31] The implication for screenplay studies is that this blueprint function, typically thought to undermine the script’s literary potential, can instead be instructively seen to relate, project, stage and order the narrative discourse of the film, thus providing a rich new vein for narratological inquiry.

```
We slowly tilt up to discover the back of Riggan
Thomson (55). He is in the proper 'Lotus' position,
dressed only in tight white briefs and he appears to
be meditating deeply. And if all this seems a little
odd, it becomes all the more so when you notice that
he is levitating almost two feet above the floor.
His breath is calm and measured... in and out... in
and out.

              MAN (V.O.)
      How did we end up here?
              (Beat.)
      This place is a fucking dump.[32]
```

Of particular interest here is the writers' use of a narrating voice that speaks in the imperative by way of commands (polite requests, really) to "close on," "tilt up" and "notice." This is a stylistic choice that not only plays a crucial scene-setting role, but also emphasizes the hypothetical quality of the description. Interpreting this passage as a fictional storyworld is easy enough: the slug line offers the setting (a theater dressing room) and sets the time of day, while the scene text introduces character details about Riggan Thomson (whom we eventually learn is a faded film star hoping to re-awaken his career as a playwright) and gives an account of his actions (a show of his supposed telekinetic powers). The narrative also situates the reader as a potential spectator and performer. Both the mimetic representation of the man's speech (through voice-over) and the dramatization of his delusions of grandeur, coupled with camera instructions to "close on" and "tilt up," create structural relations between the script and its future performance. The reader is, in all ways, encouraged to perceive and construct the narrative discourse as a potential film using the textual markers of the second-person subject *you*, as if the script were indicating, "*You the camera man* close on…" or even, "And if all this seems a little odd *to you the spectator*…"

[32] Alejandro G. Iñárritu, Nicolás Giacobone, Alexander Dinelaris, Jr. and Armando Bo. *Birdman, or, the Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance* (Mini Script Book, 2013), 1.

In his narratological analysis of written drama, Claycomb swaps the blueprint analogy for a recipe metaphor, insisting that, "following a recipe is both a *performance* of another ideal scene of cooking, and *cooking itself*."[33] He continues:

> The dramatic text, like the recipe, is therefore a kind of narrative, often a second-person narrative that addresses the reader as a potential performer or director (just as a recipe addresses a potential cook), or perhaps narrates a possible director or performer who may be other than the reader. Implicit in this frame narrative are several different modes of address that vary by play, by playwright, by historical convention, and by conditions and purposes of publication. Of all the possibilities, perhaps the most pragmatic mode of address, implicit in reading a script, is, "Here's how you produce this play."[34]

Likewise, the fictional storyworld in the screenplay is best thought of as a nested narrative, embedded both in the projection discourse that invites us to "cook up" a possible film performance, and again at the blueprint level of the text which, like the self-reflexive plot of *Birdman*, narrates its own production. This blueprint discourse or controlling frame, says Claycomb, typically (though not exclusively) speaks to the reader in an implied second person role, an artificial mode with a natural aptitude for collapsing the narrator (either in the form of a screenwriter, implied author, or character) and narratee (who identifies either as a practitioner, a casual reader, or what Sternberg terms a "hidden director").[35] That being said, this implicit mode of address characteristic of the screenplay—"Here's how *you* execute this script"—shows a tendency to slip into the more direct first-person plural—

[33] Claycomb, "Here's How You Produce This Play", 161.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 162. According to Claudia Sternberg, the precision of technical detail introduced by the blueprint discourse comes from the screenwriter-as-commentator on the production, not from the narrating "agent" or source. She defines the latter as a textual construct and symbolic activity. The "hidden director" refers to the script's cinematic potential and directorial agency outside the context of its production. Like reception theory's implied author, it is grounded in the indexes perceived in the text, but is not a category specific to screenplay narration. See: *Written for the Screen: The American Motion Picture Screenplay as Text* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997), 231.

"Here's how *we* perceive the movie"—and it can even adopt the flat, camera-like objectivity of a third-person narrator—"Here's how *the camera* projects this film"—depending on the writer's personal tastes and the effect she hopes to achieve. What follows are case examples of some of the more illuminating uses of the second-person voice in its various configurations.

THE IMPERATIVE VOICE

To paraphrase Brian Richardson's argument in his essay "The Poetics and Politics of Second Person Narrative", not all "you's" are created equal.[36] True to this idiom, the non-regular second-person perspective, only seldom used in novels, is an impish, unruly voice, one that is "always conscious of its own unusual status and often disguises itself, playing on the boundaries of other narrative voices."[37] Arguably, its most conspicuous effect is its implication of the reader in the text, either as a protagonist (who is a "you," rather than "I," "she," or "he"), or as someone outside of the story receiving instructions (as in some advertisements and most self-help literature). It is hardly surprising, then, to find many studio-era screenwriters turning to this technique wherever the need is felt to offer some technical direction; after all, by its blueprint definition, the script exists mainly to guide the crew in the production of a future film.

With the release of *Sunset Boulevard* in 1951, Billy Wilder memorialized the Hollywood screenwriter's fate with the unforgettable image of Joe Gillis, a proper studio hack, floating

[36] Brian Richardson, "The Poetics and Politics of Second Person Narrative" in *Genre* 24 (1991), 309-330.
[37] Brian Richardson, "Drama and Narrative" in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative,* ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23.

in a demented movie star's swimming pool. Incidentally, the script (which Wilder co-wrote with Charles Brackett) also reads nostalgically, like a swan song to a by-gone era of screenwriting, before the rise of the spec script "killed" the old convention of specific shot-by-shot instructions. From the opening sequence:

> A-1 START the picture with the actual street sign: SUNSET BOULEVARD, stencilled on a curbstone. In the gutter lie dead leaves, scraps of paper, burnt matches and cigarette butts. It is early morning.[38]

The detail to notice is how the swift and immediate use of the imperative voice commands the way the opening shot should look. Straightaway, the reader is interpellated to a technical role; the implicit "you" (as in, "*You* start the picture") correlates with an extradiegetic function, and thus, we assume the task of reconstructing the text from this implied directorial subject-position.

FIRST-PERSON PLURAL

The first-person point of view is typically reserved for moments aimed at creating empathy or suspense, either by giving us the content of a character's perceptual experience, or by limiting the narration's scope. First-person plural, on the other hand, figures commonly across screenplays because it helps to establish a personal connection with the reader, without conflating the implied author (the author-image evoked by textual cues) and the character-narrator.

---

[38] Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett, *Sunset Boulevard*, March 21, 1949, 1.

American Psycho (2000), adapted from a 1991 Bret Easton Ellis novel, centers on a yuppie serial killer with an obsession for perfect, beautiful things. In the following boardroom scene, Patrick Bateman (the titular psycho) falls victim to an amusing display of one-upmanship:

```
Price pulls a card from an inside coat pocket and
holds it up for their inspection: "PAUL OWEN, PIERCE
& PIERCE,MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS." Bateman
swallows, speechless. The sound in the room dies
down and all we hear is a faint heartbeat as Bateman
stares at the magnificent card.

              BATEMAN (V.O.)
          Look at that subtle off-white
          coloring. The tasteful thickness
          of it. Oh my God, it even has a
          watermark...[39]
```

Like Bateman, who wears his own mask of sanity, the second-person register disguises itself here as the first-person plural "we". In this instance, the narration suggests, "we hear" does not refer to Price and his colleagues picking up on Bateman's quickening pulse, but to the imaginary audience and sound editors insinuated by the text that constitute "you," the script reader. Once again, the "you" of the imperative appears, but this time as an element of the off-screen commentary. The "you" implicit in Bateman's internal monologue ("*You* look…") not only empowers the character to "break the fourth wall," allowing him direct access to the audience through the aura of second-person voice, but in a cheeky twist, the implied author hands Bateman the reins to say, "Here's how you direct this scene."

[39] Mary Harron and Guinevere Turner, *American Psycho*, 4th draft, November 1998. Based on the novel by Bret Easton Ellis. (http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/American_Psycho_Harron_Turner.html)

THE CAMERA-NARRATOR

As already mentioned, the first-person perspective is usually earmarked for heightened moments of suspense. In many cases, writers will shift to a limited omniscience when it is preferred (in the interest of "good" storytelling)) or even required (for the sake of a plot twist) that the audience experience the fictional world through the eyes of a specific character.

More than other genres, contemporary horror frequently relies on point-of-view narration to elicit a physical reaction from its audience. As Linda Williams puts it, the subjective camera contributes to horror cinema's "filmic mode of stylistic and/or emotional excess" by putting what she calls "the phenomenon of the sensational" at the forefront of its narrative strategy.[40] *The Conjuring*, scripted by Chad and Carey Hayes, features quite a liberal use of this technique. The screenplay, about a young family who moves to a dilapidated farmhouse in 1970s Rhode Island, is charged with important decisions about camera placement, choices that eventually shape the sequencing of the suspense, emotional release, and range of narration in James Wan's 2013 film:

```
INT. BARN - DAY

The door opens. A column of outside light slides in,
barely stretching to the Chevy pickup in the back.
Roger comes in. As he reaches for a wall switch --

                                            CUT TO:

Camera's pov - over his shoulder toward the truck.
We'd swear there was the silhouette of a woman
sitting inside, seemingly looking at Roger, but the
```

[40] Precisely because they rely on the experience of some bodily sensation, Williams categorizes horror, melodrama and pornography under the rubric of "body genres". To summarize her argument, when done right, horror films bring on shudders, melodramas provoke tears, and pornography arouses. See: "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess" in *Film Quarterly* 44.4 (1991), 3.

```
second the light comes on, it illuminates a vacant
interior.[41]
```

Though the script assigns the "new" point-of-view to the camera, we know that is Roger's line of sight that critically frames the ghostly apparition in the truck. With a simple over-the-shoulder cut, the perspective moves fluidly from the objective to the subjective, and suddenly the "we" invoked by the scene description becomes a tripartite spectator/reader/character-narrator. Whatever decisions the director ultimately makes pertaining to placement, movement and cutting, "We'd swear" remains a specific directive from writer to reader about producing a scene that deceives the audience.

FREE INDIRECT SPEECH

The notion of equivalence between film and literature was the subject of lengthy analysis and debate in Chapter 2. From Vertov's experiments with film poetry as seen through the *kinoglaz*, to Lindsay's fascination with hieroglyphics as a universal language, the means by which the two arts can be practically united, as it turns out, lays much of the groundwork for a historical poetics of the screenplay. Yet, because of the long-standing clash of conception and execution, labour and creativity, many critics still come down firmly on a script's attempts at literary expression on the basis that what film cannot capture serves no directorial purpose. Alternatively, some theorists believe that screenplays, in their concision and economy, are simply not amenable to the same narrative methods as

[41] Chad and Carey Hayes, 2nd draft script, 56-7 (http://la-screenwriter.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-Conjuring.pdf)

novels.[42] This is where the second-person mode offers particularly rich territory for screenplay research.

Diegetic levels (story, projection, production) have been referenced throughout this discussion as a tool to describe the relations among the many narrators within a screenplay. More specifically, these levels denote the vertical relations between narrating instances, helping to identify who speaks (the character, the camera, the implied author) and to whom (the reader, the spectator, the film crew) at any given moment. As a quintessentially literary phenomenon, free indirect speech—a style of third-person narration that embeds a character's thoughts or utterances—is rarely found in screenplays.[43] Manuals preach getting around the need for voice-over commentary, while writers typically use point-of-view shifts to emphasize a change from surface description to internal exploration. *Sideways*, scripted in 2003 by Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, challenges this limitation by demonstrating how yielding the screenplay can be to free indirect discourse. In the following excerpt, the two protagonists, Miles and Jack, launch into their weeklong trip through California's wine country:

```
EXT. WINDMILL INN – DAY

The Saab pulls into the parking lot of this motel
with a "Danish" theme. And look – there's the
WINDMILL itself, its decorative blades motionless.[44]
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[42] Price, for instance, argues that free indirect speech (as a way of depicting character) is not available to the screenwriter except through substitute techniques like "the montage signifying a succession of thoughts, and the voice-over." See: Steven Price, "Character in the Screenplay Text" in *Analysing the Screenplay*, ed. Jill Nelmes (New York: Routledge, 2001), 204.
[43] For a poetics of free indirect discourse in film, see Pier Paolo Pasolini's "The Cinema of Poetry" in *Movies and Methods vol. 1*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 542-58.
[44] Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, *Sideways,* May 29, 2003, 31. Based on the novel by Rex Pickett.

Though brief, the above scene text shows just how nimbly the narrating voice can shift along diegetic levels and modes of address. “Look” not only calls a potential director to action in recognizing the motel’s kitsch, but the impassive mood, as it is exercised here, also blurs the boundaries between the narrator’s observations on setting and the characters’ first impressions of the locale. The ambiguity of the technique means that it can be construed either as a character response from inside the story world, or as the ironic voice of the implied author reporting from its margins.

Although Sternberg accords the presence of a second-person voice in screenplays with an authorial choice reflective of “the stylistic preferences of individual authors,” Claycomb challenges this, maintaining that all printed dramatic texts address their readers using second-person diegetic narration, regardless of personal style.[45] The concerns at stake in this debate are primarily those of the writers, for whom authorship is not typically cemented by the script’s performance. In Sternberg’s own words, “if we attribute literary value to the screenplay, our intention is not to establish a competition between dialogue text and drama or scene text and prose fiction. Rather, it is to draw attention to the stylistic design of the text as a performance blueprint.”[46] By showcasing some of the ways screenplay authors can express visual intent, within a relatively strict framework, using variants of the implied second-person role, I hope to convey that the precision of production-level details is not so much an effect of the blueprint form, but a deliberate appeal to the reader’s imagination using the narrative means at the writer’s disposal.

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[45] Sternberg does admit that lengthy scene descriptions show a general tendency to “narratize”. She argues that this is a consequence of the industrial shift towards master scene screenwriting, a format which makes distinguishing between the dramatic (pro-filmic) and the narrative (discourse) mode or voice much more difficult. (*Written for the Screen*, 231)
[46] Ibid., 232.

THE SCREENPLAY'S IMPLIED AUTHOR

> Few reject the distinction between real author and narrator, but some wonder why a third, seemingly "ghostly" being should be situated between the two. I believe that narratology—and text theory generally—needs the implied author (and its counterpart, the implied reader) to account for features that would otherwise remain unexplained, or unsatisfactorily explained. The implied author is… the locus of the work's *intent.*[47]

The implications of the implied author for literary theory have profoundly divided those scholars who, like Chatman quoted above, believe that readers construct a silent authorial "voice" as the nexus of norms and values within the text, from those who, like Gérard Genette, oppose the concept because it does not, properly speaking, pertain to narrative analysis.[48] First introduced into literary criticism by Wayne Booth in his seminal text *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), the implied author was born of a concern for the conventions associated with authorship and narrative comprehension. Specifically, Booth wanted to identify the authors (and readers) constructed through the reading process. What he found was that readers infer implied author/reader figures from the text on the basis of certain rhetorical features. Much theoretical discussion has revolved around his findings since. For example, in her description-oriented *Narratology,* Bal sets out to show that Booth's implied author can only be identified through interpretation, not by describing the text concerned:

> The term was introduced by Booth… in order to discuss and analyse the ideological and moral stances of a narrative text without having to refer directly to a biographical author. In Booth's use of the term, it denotes the totality of meanings that can be inferred from a text. Thus the *implied author* is the *result*

[47] Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 74 (his emphasis).
[48] As far as the field of narratology is concerned, Genette's position also excludes the real author from the discussion. As he puts it, "narratology has no need to go beyond the narrative situation, and the two agents 'implied author' and 'implied reader' are clearly situated in that 'beyond.'" See: *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 37.

> of the investigation of the meaning of a text, and not the source of that meaning. Only after interpreting the text on the basis of the text description can the implied author be inferred and discussed.[49]

Her position that narratology should support, not drive, textual interpretation clearly makes Booth's account of the implied author concept superfluous. Even more fruitless, she believes, is the need to divorce the real author from the ideologies of the text, a project that Booth, who was writing under the post-structuralist influence, would have pursued with great cause.[50]

Within the narratological framework, narration can be derived from semiotic and structural analysis (as in Booth's rhetorical approach), or it can be characterized as a communicative interaction between a sender and a receiver, where narration is treated like a discourse or speech act. Chatman unpacks the latter model as follows: "on the sending end are the real author, the implied author, and the narrator (if any); on the receiving end, the real audience (listener, reader, viewer), the implied audience, and the narratee".[51] Bordwell fervently denies the usefulness of the implied author as a sender for a model of cinematic narration, claiming this entity "is better understood as the organization of a set of cues for the construction of a story."[52] The theoretical choice on the table is whether or not to view the agent of storytelling—that is, the text in question—as being anthropomorphically authored or occurring as a system of narrational properties.

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[49] She adds to Genette's critique of the term as lying beyond the scope of narratology: "Moreover, the notion of an *implied author* is, in this sense, not limited to narrative texts, but is of application to any text. This is why the notion is not specific to narratology." (*Narratology*, 119-120)

[50] To avoid confusion, Bal thinks it better "to speak of the interpretation, or the overall meaning of the text" rather than to distinguish between the author's ideologies and those the work implies. See: "The Laughing Mice: Or, on Focalization" in *Poetics Today* 2.2 (1981), 209.

[51] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 28.

[52] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 62.

Moreover, if we decide the implied author indeed "exists," what benefit does it serve a poetics of the screenplay?

Whether an implied author "speaks" on behalf of the text (and of the real author) comes down, as Chatman says, to the slim difference between "-tion" and "-er".[53] Bordwell, whose reader-response theory sees no need for a narratorial figure inside the film text, might consider screenplay narration an act of construction on the reader's part. From the various cues streaming down the page, the reader would build the hypothetical film up out of the script's unique layering of setting, time, space, character, plot, camera placement, point of view, editing, and dialogue. On the other hand, Sternberg's approach, which highlights the screenplay's inherent directorial agency outside of its production context, relies on the anthropomorphic "-er" of the hidden director to justify the script's cinematic-technical voice. Like Chatman's formulation of the implied author, her hidden director represents the locus of the writer's visual intent for the film. But at what point does seeing get constructed as a narrational act on the part of some assignable, ghostly speaker? For cinema scholar Bruce Kawin, voice—perhaps more than pronouns or the concept of point of view—provides a useful narratological link between screenplays and films as discursive structures. He submits: "Words and film share the ability to personalize discourse, to give the impression that someone or some category of voice is telling, presenting, falsifying, arranging—in short, narrating—the text, regardless of what kind of text it is."[54] What the script's implied author (or hidden director, if we prefer) does is narrate the film as its imaginary maker and first spectator. Inevitably, this act of telling must also pass through the "mouth" of a lens.

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[53] Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 130.
[54] Bruce Kawin, "An Outline of Film Voices" in *Film Quarterly* 38.2 (1984), 40.

The classical assumption that films narrate in the third person originates with the camera, and with the lens as *objectif*. Embedded, as it is, in both the screened and script-based versions of an existing or potential film, the camera, critics often say, "speaks" using the impersonal or indefinite mode:

> An indefinite mode of speaking may be illustrated by the utterance, "it rains." I believe that the indefinite subject of this utterance (the "it" of raining) may also be applied to an *image* of rain. What is being said through *it* (the image) is that "it rains." The relationship of "rains" to 'it' is the same as 'it rains' to a camera-it that precipitates the meaning "rain."[55]

What Branigan describes is how our understanding of film springs organically from a language-game that the movie invites us to play. Diverging from Chatman's notion of a communicative model, in which a conversation takes place between the spectator and the filmmaker (implied or otherwise), this model imagines a fictitious, discursive camera "that drives how we think, discuss, and marvel about the films we see."[56] Unlike Bordwell, who refuses to indulge in the narrator-myth, Branigan is more open to the possibility that the camera's impersonal voice—"the 'thing', the entity… that we are naming with the word 'camera'"—may be interpreted as being physically and/or psychologically channeled.[57] The key is to reformulate the question, "what is a camera?" and ask how the word "camera" functions in the screenplay's language-game.

French film theorist Christian Metz says that the camera is always embedded in the text as a "purely cinematographic" signifier, and provides an interpretive schema for the viewer.[58]

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[55] Edward Branigan, *Projecting a Camera: Language-Games in Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.
[56] Ibid., xiv.
[57] Ibid., 10.
[58] Ibid., 88.

It does not stand-in for an absent observer so much as an imagined way of organizing how we view, modes that would include perceiving, recording, and processing filmic information. Branigan flips the script on Metz and recasts the camera as "a reading hypothesis or heuristic aimed at comprehending fictional space and time—a way of applying to a text various *labels* that are being generated by ongoing acts of interpretation…"[59] By focusing on the spectator's conscious use of the camera as an interpretive strategy rather than on how their experience has already been formed by the text, Branigan infers a multiplicity of cameras, each operating within its own rhetorical framework. Viewed in this light, "camera," as it occurs in a screenplay, functions less as a lens onto a potential film and more as a reference to the different analytic procedures the screenwriter imagines would motivate a viewer's interpretive behaviour. What follows are a few examples of camera-as-discourse in the screenplay.

THE MOTIVATED CAMERA

Branigan's empirical theory of narration foregrounds the idea that narrative motivation and camera movement go hand in hand. Since classical Hollywood typically embraces a continuity editing style that reduces the viewer's awareness of the camera's presence, anything counter to this will be motivated by the agent of storytelling. Branigan lists several functions of motivated camera movements, including "follows or discovers a glance," "establishes scenographic space" and, "reveals character subjectivity."[60] By contrast, unmotivated cameras, ones that do not correspond with actions, are usually thought to be the province of art house and experimental cinemas.

[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 26.

For the sake of readability, screenwriters will usually omit explicit, capitalized camera directions that are hard on the eyes and interrupt the narrative's flow. Instead, they favour a prose style that brings focus to people and things by way of implicit instructions. Then again, some writers are prepared to sacrifice readability for visual intent, stretching the conventions of the master scene script to make the desired effects (fast-cutting, hand-held cameras) as plain as possible without overtly directing them. Consider this section of scene text from Dan Gilroy's *Nightcrawler* script, about a petty thief named Louis Bloom who eventually turns to sabotaging crime scenes, selling the footage to a local news station:

```
DEAD OF NIGHT

LOU alone in his car, driving an L.A. FREEWAY ...
windows down ... clock blinking 3:44 AM ... ad on
the radio ... LOU sees an accident up ahead ...
passes

TWO HIGHWAY PATROLMEN

trying to pull an unconscious WOMAN from a BLAZING
CAR and

LOU
angles to the shoulder ... getting out to look as a
POLICE HELICOPTER SEARCHLIGHT stabs the dark ... LOU
drawn to the scene as a big panel VAN stops on the
shoulder and

TWO MEN

jump out ... one in charge, tough and indifferent
... the other an employee ... both wear shirts with
a logo that reads

                  MAYHEM VIDEO

The man in charge (JOE LODER) carrying a
professional camcorder and filming as the employee
yells

                    EMPLOYEE
          We're first!

                    JOE LODER
          Got a view in the car!

The MEN film the COPS trying to free

THE WOMAN
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in the burning car as LOU looks inside their van and
SEES

A DOZEN SCANNERS

blinking and blaring EMERGENCY COM-CHATTER ... two
laptops set to GPS ... Los Angeles crime and tragedy
tracked on high- def screens and surround sound and
for

LOU

the effect is electrifying as

THE POLICE CHOPPER

banks low and

THE COPS

smash glass and

THE CAMERA GUYS

film as an

S.U.V.

skids to a stop and a MAN and WOMAN jump out and
film and
LOU

looks inside the S.U.V. and regards an array of
EMERGENCY SCANNERS and laptops and CUT TO

10 MINUTES LATER

and the two CAMERA CREWS have been shunted from the
wreck ... filming the departure of a wailing
ambulance ... action over, they head to their
vehicles ... LOU following JOE LODER ...

                    LOU
          Excuse me. This'll be on
          tv?[61]
```

In terms of format, Gilroy's script abstains from using master scene headings (e.g. "EXT. L.A. FREEWAY – NIGHT"), and opts instead for multiple secondary scene headings—mini-sluglines—typically reserved for naming specific areas ("LOU'S CAR") within the larger

[61] Dan Gilroy, *Nightcrawler*. Screenplay draft dated September 27, 2013, 4-6.

environment.[62] This is an unusual and heavily stylized formatting choice that privileges the reader's focus over the camera's precise placement. Although no camera is mentioned, its shifting glance is clearly projected with sentence fragments, ellipses and line breaks that punctuate the scene. As a feature buried just below the surface of the text, Gilroy's "camera" narrativizes largely by anticipating the character's movements (Lou, the cops, the camera guys), but the scene also contains other "cameras"—narrative agents that "see" the elements in the scene ("clock blinking 3:44 am… ad on the radio"), report on the temporal sequence of events ("10 minutes later and the two camera crews have been shunted from the wreck"), and even comment upon certain invisible aspects ("two men jump out… one in charge, tough and indifferent"). Thus, "camera" never acts as a single frame on the potential film, but more like a series of narrative voices—from story-level voices, like the brash Mayhem Video logo, to projection-level voices, like the helicopter's stabbing searchlight—telling the reader, "now, look here at this."

THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC CAMERA

Branigan also claims that continuity editing anthropomorphizes a camera; that we attribute human characteristics to a camera because continuity links its perspective with a "human" point of view. At the same time, he acknowledges there are moments when the technique subverts its own agenda, by accommodating "eccentric angles, swish pans, impossible camera positions… and impossible movements" that suggest a disembodied,

[62] A slugline, or master scene heading, is usually made up of three parts: the first section indicates whether the scene is set inside (interior/INT.) or outside (exterior/EXT.), or both. Section two states the location, and part three—separated by a hyphen—refers to the time of day the scene takes place. A mini-slug usually names the location only.

non-anthropomorphic camera.[63] This ambiguity persuades him to argue that the camera-in-the-text is not a "real, physical object moving around… in order to show the choices being made by an invisible observer," but that we instead "use the term 'camera' to tell ourselves a story."[64] Circling back to the implied author debate, Branigan's recourse to a language-game analogy emboldens the spectator to choose which concept of "camera" best guides their interpretive process. If readers find themselves constructing authorial figures and invisible observers as the locus of intent within their reading practice, then the implied author (or its equivalent, the anthropomorphic camera) is the narrator in every meaningful sense.

As an exercise in language-games, consider the following scene from Evan Hunter's screenplay for *The Birds*. Melanie Daniels has just purchased two lovebirds in town, and is carrying them by boat back to the lake house:

```
MED. SHOT — MELANIE

leaping ashore, tying up the boat, reaching down for
the cage. She climbs onto the dock and approaches the
CAMERA until she is in WAIST SHOT. The CAMERA STARTS
to RECEDE in front of her as she walks forward.
THE CAMERA MOVING TOWARD THE HOUSE AND BARN

The barn door closed, still no sign of Mitch.

WAIST SHOT - MELANIE

Coming off the dock and onto the lawn, the CAMERA
still RETREATING in front of her. She makes her way
carefully across the lawn, glancing toward the barn,
carrying the
bird cage.


FULL SHOT - CAMERA GETTING NEAR THE HOUSE AND BARN

WAIST SHOT - MELANIE
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[63] Branigan, *Projecting a Camera*, 39.
[64] Ibid., 88.

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crossing the lawn, the CAMERA RETREATING in front of
her.

FULL SHOT - CLOSER - CAMERA APPROACHING THE HOUSE
AND BARN

CLOSE SHOT - MELANIE - WALKING

CAMERA RETREATING in front of her: Excitement and
anticipation on her face. She wets her lips. The
CAMERA PANS WITH her as she goes to front door and
lets herself in.[65]
```

What is the camera? Is it a casual observer? A mediating viewpoint constructed out of spatial cues? An impersonal voice? An anonymous, voyeuristic participant? Just another character like Melanie? Branigan says that when we think of the physical camera as a feature embedded in the text, "camera" acquires the text's properties "much like a particular aspect of a design in a tapestry can be used to talk about the tapestry."[66] Hunter's camera is approached, it recedes, comes nearer, then retreats again. To recycle Branigan's metaphor, it weaves itself into the scene as though it were Melanie's shadow. Conversely, the technical aspects of "camera" (shot scales, "pans with") can turn against its "human" properties, pointing toward the blueprint function of the script and its narrativization of a production. In the latter case, the camera we project is more of a symbolic one; "merely an occasion, one of many, during which we consult, negotiate, and confabulate about a text."[67]

THE POINT-OF-VIEW CAMERA

Another popular use of "camera" in screenplays is the point-of-view camera, which stands in contrast to the impersonal voice that narrates in the third person. The term "point-of-

[65] Evan Hunter, *The Birds*. Final draft, 2nd revision. March 2, 1962, 26-27. Based on the novel *Birds* (1952) by Daphne Du Maurier. (http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/The_Birds.html)
[66] Branigan, *Projecting a Camera*, 25.
[67] Ibid., 201.

view" is, in itself, loose and imprecise; it can mean a point from which things are viewed—a place—or it can refer to a mental position, as in a belief, stance, mood, or attitude. Thus, one option is to analyze the camera's position in space as a site of perception, like Roger's point-of-view shot in the Hayes brothers' script for *The Conjuring*. The other possibility, according to Branigan, is to question the camera's power or authority, by asking whose point of view is embodied in the camera. Is it the author's or the character's? An ideal spectator's or an invisible observer's? "With the question of subjectivity, the nature of camera movement shifts," says Branigan, "from investigating 'motion,' 'motive,'… toward explicit notions of agency, intention, purpose, and the use of a suitable rhetoric designed to move a spectator."[68] It is to be determined exactly how screenwriting internalizes this subjective mode to stimulate the reader's attention. Accordingly, I now direct the focus to the readerly effect of the point-of-view camera in the screenplay.

In another deft presentation of free indirect speech, Ronald Bass' script for *My Best Friend's Wedding*, about a high-strung restaurant critic intent on winning back her old college flame, engages point of view at all the discourse levels: the technical (what the camera sees), the projected (what the reader pictures), and the diegetic (what the protagonist, Julianne, thinks). Of particular note is the smoothness of the shift between these narrative layers. The narration, although allocated to different agents, creates the effect that Julianne, the camera, and the implied author are one and the same.

```
INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - TWILIGHT

Julianne alone in his room, looking around
frantically. No worries about this guy making his
bed every day, stuff, clothes, strewn everywhere,
the bathroom looks like a cherry bomb just
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[68] Ibid., 40.

detonated. She's tramping through a bachelor's debris, wearing only her towel, looking, looking...

There it is. The corner of his LAPTOP sticking out from beneath a discarded bedspread. She SNATCHES it up, OPENS it, sets it on the cluttered desk, and...

... stops. There are wallet-sized SNAPSHOTS of Kimmy. Some alone. Some as a little girl. Some with Michael. And next to them...

... the plastic fold-out wallet inset. That he has not yet quite rearranged. So she picks it up. Leafs through, until she finds what she was praying would be there...

... Julianne grinning. Michael's arm around her. On the deck of a boat. They have drinks in their hands. Happiness in their eyes.

And she stares at it. **Jesus, God, how long has he carried this around?** She flips through further, all the rest have her in them. Maybe half a dozen. Her heart is throbbing. Her eyes are damp.

Back to the one on the boat. She slips it from the plastic window. Holds it. Then, gently...

... puts it back where it belongs. PUNCHES up **the goddamn laptop. This is it, girl! Do or die.**

JULIANNE
(murmurs)
You wouldn't change your password, would you? You never change anything.[69]

The bolded text (my emphasis) paints Bass' use of free indirect style, moments where, according to Genette, "the narrator takes on the speech of the character, or, if one prefers, the character speaks through the voice of the narrator, and the two instances then are *merged*."[70] This technique takes advantage of point-of-view narration's biggest asset—access to a character's interiority—and combines it with the reliability of the impersonal voice of the narrator. More to the point, it cinches "camera" in the role of the ideal

[69] Ronald Bass, *My Best Friend's Wedding*. First draft screenplay (1997), 61. (http://www.awesomefilm.com/script/mybestfriendswedding.txt)
[70] Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 174.

spectator, someone who shares the brain of both the implied author commenting on Julianne's intent, and Julianne herself who intimates her thoughts from inside the story.

Film narration, given the limits of the medium, at best can present events mimetically (it can show) and refigure them, at a second level (a form of telling), using lighting, colour, sound, visual effects, music, voice-over, and editing. "In its essential visual mode," Chatman claims, "film does not describe at all but merely presents; or better, it *depicts*, in the original etymological sense of that word: renders in pictorial form."[71] But here, Bass illustrates how verbal narratives, given the linguistic means at their disposal, can embed several voices—even identify an external narrator with an internal one—by describing subjectivity using the impersonal voice.

This introduces focalization, a purely narratological concept, as the textual function that restricts and selects the visual perspective through which the story is reflected. The difference between narration and focalization is often described as the distinction between who speaks and who sees, but it accounts for much more than a subject's field of vision.[72] In fact, it supplies the narration by giving the narrator something, an experience, to turn into words, like when Julianne balks at the state of Michael's bedroom, or flips through the stack of photos he carries of her in his billfold. Once again, the screenplay is unique in its ability to focalize from three vantage points: internally, at the level of the

[71] Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 128.
[72] For example, in "Focalisation in Film Narrative", Celestino Deleyto identifies focalization as providing narratologists with something "more precise and unambiguous than perspective or point of view," an essential narrative concept that "covers precisely the textual area that had been left empty by the restriction of the role of the narrator." (165) In other words, he challenges the traditional view that the camera narrates, proposing instead that film uses four main focalizing techniques (editing, framing, camera movement, and mise-en-scène) alongside more explicit modes of on-screen narration (voice-over commentary, inter-titles) working at the same textual level. Chatman, on the other hand, argues that characters (who have the privilege of seeing things from within the story) can focalize while narrators (whose comments are "not of the same order as a character's perceptions") cannot, rejecting Deleyto's claim that focalization and narration exist simultaneously in film. See: Deleyto, "Focalisation in Fim Narrative" in *Atlantis* 13.1/2, (1991), and Chatman's *Coming to Terms*, 145.

fictional storyworld, and externally at the levels of projection and technical commentary. Being able to shift the narrative distance so that we feel intimately connected to the characters' mental states, while retaining the objectivity necessary to approximate a motion picture's "narrator", lets the screenwriter multiply the perspectives from which the potential film can be interpreted. This, in turn, distributes "camera" amongst a chorus of voices, allowing the reader to identify as hidden director, ideal spectator or character, as the text sees fit.

TEMPORALITY AND TENSE

When Chatman says that films "depict" in the true sense, what he highlights is the difficulty with which cinema handles description:

> That the camera depicts but does not describe seems confirmed by a term often used by literary critics to characterize neutral, "non-narrated" Hemingwayesque fiction—the camera-eye style. The implication of "camera eye" is that no one recounts the events… they are just *revealed*…[73]

What the screenplay allegedly lacks in visual completeness, it makes up for in its descriptive control. Whereas story-time feels like it rolls on in a "depictive" film, a script can halt, stretch, and bend time, in any way that suits the narrative requirements. As a compromise, writers typically adhere to the screenwriting standard of evocative word choices and present tense verbs in order to emulate the effect of film's immediacy. Thus, even a piece of Hemingwayesque cinematic-style prose such as

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[73] Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 128.

> "The camera, hovering in the belly of a helicopter, now swung down at an empty street."[74]

from Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451,* gets changed into

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EXT. HELICOPTER VIEW OF THE CITY – DAY

We are flying over the city…
```
[75]

in François Truffaut's screenplay adaptation. The catch is that present-tense narratives are a logical impossibility. From a narratological standpoint, a temporal divide must exist between the story and the narrating instance in order for the events to become tellable. As a conceptual problem, the issue is partially solved if we accept, as do Richardson (1991), Claycomb (2013) and Monica Fludernik (1996), that the screenplay—a special category of second-person fictional text—"narrates 'as if' in the preterite, but does so in the present tense."[76] Put another way, by using *irrealis* verb forms like the imperative and the subjunctive—grammatical moods indicating that a certain situation or action is not known to have happened at the time of the telling—screenplays can claim a narrator who, in Fludernik's words, "exhorts the reader to imagine the fictional," or compels them to experience the events as a story, even if this style of narration, like a live sports broadcast, leans to the side of ongoing commentary.[77]

In conjunction with verb tense and temporal strategies, the screenplay has the added advantage of being able to position the act of narration spatially. This is perhaps most

[74] Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 141.
[75] François Truffaut and Jean-Louis Richard, *Fahrenheit 451*, draft dated December 23, 1965, 121.
[76] Monica Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 188.
[77] Ibid., 195.

markedly pronounced with the delineation of scene text and dialogue text along the page: the script's mimetic aspects are contained to a slim 3.3" column down the center (on a standard 8.5" x 11" page), while scene descriptions are spread across 6". This formatting convention for dialogue, indented as the titles used to be, evolved to showcase the actors' voices when synchronized sound became early cinema's main attraction. "From this point on, film continuity was redefined away from the shot," Geuens proclaims, "toward the nonstop rush of the dialogue, with only minimal description of actions and very few if any camera directions."[78]

Although the option to pad the scene text, or to limit the number of explicit technical instructions, seems today to be more a reflection of the writer's personal preference than a constraint imposed by formatting guidelines (as might have been the case in the 1930s), Geuens is justified in pointing out how certain practitioner-oriented decisions—from blocking the action in a scene to shot specifications—produce very different narrational effects. If a script advances mainly on the mimetic front, with dialogue-driven scenes that harness the purely dramatic aspects of the production, the screenplay will scan more quickly, thus shortening its duration for the reader. In the absence of substantial scene text (which, from a superficial viewpoint, largely distinguishes the look of a screenplay page from that of a stage play), a screenplay will then also mimic the effects of theater, rather than working towards projecting a film. Conversely, if the writer chooses a more generous approach to scene description, thickening up the commentary between speech acts by developing characters, setting the tone, or relating the space with respect to the action, then the screenplay will impart a more narrated feel.

[78] He goes on further to say this common writer's process has since filtered through to our reading practices, a trend led by professional script readers who "scan the dialogue lines with but a wink toward the rest of the information." See Geuens, *Film Production Theory*, 85.

Another means by which the script can spatialize narration is through the visual cues the writer includes within the scene text. It has already been mentioned that sluglines offer three pieces of relevant information that orient the reader in space and time, but these shorthand details—separated as they are from the longer descriptive passages—further indicate that the action to follow will be happening in real-time (i.e., the film's discourse-time). Harkening back to the 1-page-per-minute rule, the amount of space introduced between sluglines not only roughly determines the film's duration but, more importantly, it positions the narrator spatially with each passing scene.

On the subject of literary narratives, Brian Henderson observes how:

> the tense structure of language requires a narrator to situate himself temporally in relation to the story he tells—but not spatially. Narrators almost never describe the place where they are narrating; moreover, the narration itself, as opposed to the story, has no apparent duration.[79]

Henderson carves this distinction in order to emphasize that "cinema has no built-in tense system like language does," adding that, "one cannot write a sentence without indicating tense, but one can apparently make a shot, and therefore perhaps a film, without indicating tense."[80] This is not an opinion shared by all of Henderson's contemporaries, of course. André Gaudreault, for one, argues that an uncut film—the clearest example of what he calls cinema's monstrative force—always narrates in the present tense, but that editing inscribes film with "a true narrative past."[81] The topic is one that has also perplexed many

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[79] Brian Henderson, "Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film" in *Film Quarterly* 36.4 (1983), 14.
[80] Ibid., 6.
[81] Monstration for Gaudreault is the narrative mode of the theater, but here it refers to the cinema's ability to capture the viewer's attention using cinematographic means. It acts as a counterpoint to editing as a second level of narrativity (monstration would be the first level) that modifies our temporal relation to the images shown. See: "Narration and Monstration in the Cinema" in *Journal of Film and Video* 39.2 (1987), 32.

semioticians, including Barthes, who insists that photography's materiality imposes a feeling of 'always already past' onto whatever it captures.[82] Whether or not we believe film integrates a narrative past or a perpetual present, sluglines and camera directions in the screenplay allude to a narrating figure conscious of its relation to the story, in time and in space. These linguistic signs not only supply the evidence that screenplays narrate, but do so in a way that compels us to interpret technical discourse as filmic narration. Jahn names this feature the Filmic Composition Device—otherwise defined as the cinematic narrating agent concealed in the literary narration of the screenplay—and it compliments Claycomb's theory that the script's implicit mode of address is a possible performance, directed by "you" the reader, but typically voiced as "we".

FICTIONALITY AND THE POSSIBLE FILM

The previous section confirmed that any decisions pertaining to formatting or grammar ultimately reflect the profound narrational choices the writer has made. By studying these more rigorously, media scholarship can offer readers and practitioners alike important interpretive, literary and narratological insights into the unique features of the screenplay. Over the course of this chapter, I approached screenplay analysis from a literary critical perspective. My research delineated the boundaries of the screenplay object to limit any references to the narratives outlined by the scripts, not to the storyworld's genesis into a film. Supporting this project's overarching claim that a screenplay is an autonomous, literary work, able to be examined, interpreted and appreciated outside the context of its

[82] "The type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing… but an awareness of its *having-been-there*. What we have is a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction of the here-now and the there-then." See Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," reproduced in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 44.

production, I conclude the discussion on narratology with a few thoughts on fictionality, with the hope that this may inspire a richer field of inquiry into how screenwriting fictionalizes film.

In the late 1960s, the analytic philosopher David Lewis adopted a rather extravagant position. He claimed that every possibility—in the broadest sense of possibility—is represented by an alternative, possible world that exists objectively, truly, and actually, though it remains isolated from our lived experience. According to Lewis' logic, this would mean there is at least one possible world in which there are green cows, because our Earthly white cows and brown cows are just two of the many ways that cows can be. Literary critics warmed to the philosophical notion of possible worlds around the 1970s, when they realized the theory could explain the central paradox of fiction: while we understand a textual universe is an imaginary alternative to our system of reality, as we step into fiction (so to speak), we pretend as if the actual world of the story were *the* actual world for the time being. Now, if the possible worlds model were applied to a theory of the screenplay, could it account for the possible world "existing in a film" that so often clouds our vision of screenwriting as a literary genre explicitly designed to construct that fiction? Even when a film is produced from a script, screenplay analysis should never begin from the premise that *that* is the film to which the script refers. Instead, the screenplay should be understood as constructing a possible world for a film. Just as any film should not be judged on the basis of its fidelity to the production source text (the script, or any other pre-production plan), the script, in its corner, should not be judged by how accurately (or ambiguously) it predicts any resulting film. This distinction informs my injunction that screenplays not be conceived as "blueprints," but as "fictional blueprints".

In an attempt to describe a spectator's contact with fiction, Branigan trades on a platitude about Edwin S. Porter's *A Great Train Robbery* (1903):

> It is often asserted that at the close of the film "a fictitious robber fires a fictitious gun at actual spectators by pointing the gun at the camera." When the gun is thus "pointed," is it still a fictional gun or has it become real? Or is it neither? What is "the camera" as a thing to be "pointed at"? How must a spectator be looking to be frightened? I believe that this claim is near nonsense despite its common sense because it confuses multiple frames of reference instead of discriminating between types of causation and ways of looking. Though the sentence is grammatical, there is a deeper sense in which it is thoroughly ungrammatical, because… its words have been drawn from different regions of language or, more precisely, drawn from different languages.[83]

Like the relationship of the gun to the camera, the fiction in a screenplay effectively "points" nowhere. It cannot be assigned truth-values as a film because it does not refer to a film; rather, it constructs a world in which a "camera" establishes a fictional contract with a "viewer." The narrator's statements in a screenplay—the ones that seem to preface every statement with "you're watching, you're hearing, you're seeing…"—form the fundamental component of this agreement.

[83] Branigan, *Projecting a Camera*, 175.

CHAPTER 4: "THERE IS NO FILM." ON SCREENPLAY-AS-LITERATURE

"I am attempting to read this odd thing I can only call a "closet screenplay"—James Baldwin's written version of a film about Malcolm X never realized in the visual medium. The reading skills that literary studies offer this anomalous and necessarily politically charged bastard genre are limited given that there is no film, and therefore no film stills, to "read" for Baldwin's representation of the image of Malcolm X on the American consciousness. There are Baldwin's parenthetical narratives of shots and scenes, dialogues and narrator monologues, directorial notes for conjunctions of voice-overs and images, and succinct utilitarian descriptions of the actions of characters. In short, there are components of a narrative without the visual form to join them into a seamless story about the life of Malcolm X."

-Brian Norman[1]

That an absentee motion picture could turn out to be a chief obstacle to screenplay studies calls to mind the plot of one famous absurdist drama: Samuel Beckett's tramps waiting vainly by a leafless tree, for the arrival of someone named Godot. But the marked frustration exhibited by Brian Norman, an English professor who, as such, would be well versed in the practice of determining "text" as an inroad to analysis, confirms the methodological shortcomings of literary criticism when it comes to defining screenplays as something other than films-in-the-making. What Norman is really questioning is: if the script only exists as far as it directly refers to a potential film, can it stand by itself as a significant object worthy of analysis?

The preceding sections on the discursive history, visual rhetoric and narrativity of the screenplay have established the hardy and robust way in which its blueprint status has

[1] Brian Norman, "Reading a Closet Screenplay: Hollywood, James Baldwin's Malcolms and the Threat of Historical Irrelevance" in *African American Review* 39-1.2. (2005), 103.

been emphasized within classical frameworks, leaving the concept of the autonomous, self-enclosing screenplay under-theorized. Deemed an intermediate stage in the creative process and considered disposable once the film has been realized, the values attached to screenwriting have been attributed unevenly, with a clear bias towards practical instruction (with theories fashioned as "how-to" methods) and matters of authorship (particularly the hyphenate writer-director, following the rise of the auteur within popular criticism). Norman's obvious inexperience with "this odd thing" he chooses to name the closet screenplay—a term intended to align Baldwin's scenario in book form with the theatrical tradition of dramatic literature, designed to be read privately for its effect rather than acted out—hints at another incidental effect of the blueprint concept, which the present chapter plans to carry forward: the ambiguous nature of the "literary" screenplay, and its as yet unelaborated vocabulary of interpretation.

When a script winds up in print, it invariably engages a different type of reading strategy than the one used to measure the technical, blueprint type.[2] Within the framework of fiction, our attention is drawn to story elements like plot, character, narration and point of view; to the stylistic features of tone, syntax and diction; to sometimes hyperbolic or poetic speech; to the rhythms set by sentence length and sentence patterns; to tactfully phrased innuendos and lines purposely left unspoken; to telescoping metaphors that externalize values and interior worlds; to a blueprint for a performance which, in reality, points nowhere. We are more sensitive, in other words, to the sort of literary nuances that would seem immaterial or superfluous to someone reading a script as a non-fictional, executable production plan. With that said, the evaluation of screenplays-as-literature poses a bit of a

[2] This line of thinking complies with the iterations of the screenplay proposed by Claudia Sternberg. She writes: "Different types of readers are associated with the three functional text stages, property, blueprint and reading material." Accordingly, the screenplay is read for its saleability at the property phase, for instructions at the blueprint phase, and for pleasure at the reading material phase. See: *Written for the Screen: The American Motion Picture Screenplay as Text*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997), 48.

stumbling block for Norman, given that he construes scenarios as signposts to film analysis. For him, the silver screen rules the cinematic form; the written performance is only a bastard pretender to the filmic crown. In an effort to exalt the lowly, impoverished substance of the published script, Norman recasts Baldwin's "failed" film as a closet screenplay, using the lens of the closeted dramas popularized during the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages. Akin to the Shakespearean tradition of poetic drama—typically a tragic play composed almost entirely of blank verse—the closet play offers Norman a familiar, scholastically legitimate paradigm for the act of reading drama. It also identifies the particular reading strategy he adopts to unpack the image of Baldwin's Malcolm X "without the visual form."

James Baldwin, the grandson of a slave, broke new literary ground with his collected essays *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) and *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), both about the intricacies of race, sexuality and social issues in America, as they pertained particularly to the Black experience and to his growing up as a gay man in 1920s Harlem. By the 1960s, with many more plays, novels and works of poetry under his belt, Baldwin had become what Norman describes as, "*the* spokesman of the Negro race—for white America," a role firmly cemented following his appearance on a 1963 cover of *Times* magazine, which was accompanied by the article "Nation: the Root of the Negro Problem."[3] In a book he would later author, published under the title *No Name in the Street* (1972), Baldwin admits: "I was, in some way, in those days, without entirely realizing it, the Great Black Hope of the Great White Father."[4]

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[3] Norman, "Reading a Closet Screenplay", 104.
[4] James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street* (New York: Random House, 1972), 95.

When the threat of Black Power erupted in the wake of both the Harlem riot of 1964, and the murder of Malcolm X inside Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom, Hollywood sought a film project "that could offer consumers a palliative version of racism as a past historical era with the bribe of token inclusions in the pantheon of Hollywood heroes."[5] For this, producer Marvin Worth (who had acquired the rights to Alex Haley's 1965 *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* for Warner Bros. in 1967) turned to Baldwin, a man who had, arguably, made his notoriety on the back of his literary expertise, translating Black rage for White Americans. A screenplay was commissioned in 1968, with Baldwin working alongside screenwriter Arnold Perl to achieve it, but several setbacks (including Perl's death in 1971) resulted in the project being turned over to director Spike Lee, who re-drafted it from tip to toe.[6] Baldwin reflects on the experience in his book-length essay *The Devil Finds Work* (1973), confessing: "I think that I would rather be horsewhipped, or incarcerated in the forthright bedlam of Bellevue, than repeat the adventure."[7]

In time, Baldwin's script was circulated in book form, pure and unadulterated, under the title *One Day When I was Lost: A Scenario Based on Alex Haley's The Autiobiography of Malcolm X* (1973). Though the contents remain unchanged (besides being supplemented with some paratextual materials, like graphic illustrations of Malcolm X that divide the 3 acts), its aim has been re-conceptualized to secure a new audience. Today, it is more reminiscent of a subspecies of the closet drama that Catherine Burroughs labels "rejected plays": plays that were censored due to the restrictive management practices of London theatres at the time. She distinguishes this type from two other "closet" categories: disappointed authorship, or, "the practice of playwrights who have aspired to theatrical

[5] Norman, "Reading a Closet Screenplay", 104.
[6] On account of the extensive revisions made, Baldwin's family asked Worth to keep his name out of the credits. Consequently, *Malcolm X* (1992) credits only Perl and Lee as the film's authors.
[7] James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (New York: The Dial Press, 1983), 95.

success and failed—and who then published their work so that it might be assessed anew, perhaps even eventually performed", and closet dramas expressly composed to be read.[8] Authorial intent is the particular mark of difference between them.

Although the studio's rejection of Baldwin's screenplay on the basis of marketability seems for Norman to be "an index of America's failure to invest in Black history and artistic production," the closet form of the script, albeit circulated to a much smaller audience than Lee's film, "becomes a great asset in a text whose very title bespeaks an inability to fit Malcolm X into one narrative location."[9] In addition, by classifying it as an unperformed film in the accredited style of the closet drama, an aesthetic interpretation of Baldwin's work as literary is encouraged. Still, there is something duplicitous about Norman's defining the artifact as an *intentional* response to Hollywood, or its historical moment. After all, Baldwin meant for his Malcolm X to be seen and heard, not just read. To slot Norman's unproduced script, later published in novel form, in the same category of works that have been knowingly closeted, bypasses the issue of intent and obscures what Burroughs characterizes as the "fascinating tradition of deliberately crafting a play written for readers only." She elaborates:

> When playwrights telegraph that their dramas have been crafted for the closet (or for the stage), they not only acknowledge that certain formal traditions and generic expectations lie behind their choices but they also indicate a *willingness* to engage with the specific structural demands dictated by that choice. It is this consciousness that can trigger us to pay more attention to the discoverable formal features that may align particular playscripts

[8] Catherine Burroughs, "The Persistence of Closet Drama: Theory, History, Form" in *The Performing Century,* ed. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 217. She adds that rejected plays often result in disappointed authorship, with writers publishing their plays in the hope that they might eventually be staged.
[9] Norman, "Reading a Closet Screenplay", 103.

> with the closet—even as we are also spurred to look more carefully at the dramaturgical alignments with the stage.[10]

In reality, Baldwin's script qualifies as a *de facto* closet drama, a performance piece "closeted" and re-assigned as literature in light of what Norman alleges was the author's disenchantment with "the *politics* of the 'mainstream' markets, cross-over campaigns, and race relations at the salt point in American history where calls for integration recede and self-determination surfaces on a national scene increasingly dominated by visual culture."[11] Rife with audio-montages and related instances of voice-over narration that capitalize on the authoritative power of rhetoric and discourse in our lives, *One Day When I Was Lost* might bear some of the hallmarks of a play conceptualized for the page, but Baldwin's decision to publish after the fact makes a difference in how we read toward performance.

Given that both *de facto* closet screenplays and those intentionally composed outside of a production context are, by their common nature, pre-texts for a film, this chapter analyzes screenplay literature both as a genre and as a mode of reception. In the spirit of Norman's evaluation of Baldwin's work as a unique re-interpretation of Alex Haley's autobiography, I argue that we can choose to view the made-to-read screenplay as a genre of literary fiction (literature-in-screenplay-form), one that cues the reader to visualize an absent performance.[12] Alternatively, we can also invert the discussion to one of screenplay-as-literary-form, and propose the "closet" as an interpretive strategy that moves us away from seeing it as a failed film, but as a standalone work instead.

[10] Ibid., 218.
[11] Norman, "Reading a Closet Screenplay", 103.
[12] Ibid., 105.

It should not go unmentioned that the types of texts being considered for literary analysis represent an ever-expanding list, not a declining one. Making the case for the "literary" screenplay fifty years ago would have proven a difficult, even controversial task, but the fact that everything from comics and graphics novels to multi-media texts and interactive installations are infiltrating literature studies gives weight to the cause that screenplays will one day be accepted as canonical texts within the field. My dissertation has played its part in encouraging this change by suggesting several critical incursions that can be made into the current state of debate on the idea of film scripts as autonomous texts. In the present section, I resume the agenda by recommending a few interpretive labels for the literary screenplay. The purpose of these labels, presented here as a series of four case studies—the *abandoned* screenplay, the *interpretive* screenplay, the *rejected* screenplay, and the *satirical* screenplay—is to mark out some variations on the basic pattern of privileging the act of reading within screenplay analysis: as a means to evaluate the screenplay's aesthetic requirements; as a way to re-assess the reader's expectations and functions of the screenplay; to feature the elegance of screenplay style; and as an alternative to performance. These categories are not exhaustive, but will serve as a practical guide and framework for my discussion.

To the *abandoned* category, I designate Harold Pinter's *The Proust Screenplay* (1977), an adaptation of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, which Proust published in seven volumes, nearly 4000 pages' worth, between 1913 and 1927. This classification identifies any screenplay that has been deserted by its producers at the conception stage, due to overwhelming financial or logistical pressures (i.e. industrial factors). Once renegotiated for release by a publisher who, no doubt, sees in it a literary quality that would make it enjoyable to read, the screenplay appears in book form, accompanied by an

explanatory text (an introduction, usually) framing the script as the story of an un-makeable film.[13] Proust's treatise is legendary as the "unfilmable" novel, resistant to adaptation largely due to its length (it is the longest work of fiction in existence), its meditative style of narration, and the inimitability of the author's prose. Pinter overcame the novel's heft, and sculpted it down to a tidy 455-shot production. In doing so, he achieved something highly unusual for a screenwriter: he solidified his script as a source text in all future bids at this particular literary adaptation. Now in print, the book can either be construed as adaptive reading, as a desk-drawer draft from the author's archive, or, as I argue would be more likely for the category, a fictionalized retelling of what remains of that abandoned film.

Screenplays-as-literature can also serve as a methodological approach in research.[14] For instance, Marilyn Hoder-Salmon's 1992 screenplay adaptation of Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* (1899) self-identifies as an academic script purposely designed as an aesthetic theory of literature. In her own words, her study conforms to the genre of the closet "by illustrating that a critic or a student may adapt fiction, not to be made into a film, but to use the process of adaptation as a critical methodology itself, undertaking the adaptation as an interpretation of the original source."[15] This is a significant departure from Pinter's script, given that Hoder-Salmon's is theoretically driven, presented together with a 50-page section interpreting Chopin's literary effort, alongside her own critical ruminations. In

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[13] See also: Dylan Thomas' *The Doctor and the Devils* in *The Doctor and the Devils: and Other Scripts* (New York: New Directions, 1966) and William Faulkner's *The de Gaulle Story* in *Faulkner: the de Gaulle Story v. 3: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983).
[14] Another example of practice-led research in adaptation that uses the script-writing method is Janis Balodis' doctoral dissertation "The Practice of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Theatre" (2012). Although my interpretive category seems preferential toward adaptations, it is impartial in that it describes any screenplay, original or otherwise, purposely developed and deployed as a literary analytical tool.
[15] Marilyn Hoder-Salmon, *Kate Chopin's The Awakening: Screenplay as Interpretation (*Orlando: University Press of Florida, 1992), x.

sum, the *interpretive* category represents a new take on screenplay technique as criticism in its own right.

Baldwin's *One Day When I was Lost* typifies the *rejected* screenplay, a closet script that "announces itself as distributed in the incorrect form", and proudly so.[16] Repositioned by its author as an outlier to Hollywood's commercial standard—in Baldwin's case, to challenge common assumptions about his subject matter and the larger world to which Malcolm X forms part—this category redefines the relationship between screenwriter and audience by disputing the power relations implicated in the idea of film authorship as a directorial practice. Although not deliberately crafted for the closet, Baldwin's decision to publish his screenplay as reading material, for a niche audience of cultured, interested people, suggests a conscious decision to snub what Norman brands "a generation hypnotized by the white supremacist fantasies of D.W. Griffiths [*sic*] and John Wayne."[17] It is at once a living signifier of the authority and status of Hollywood productions over their screenplays, and a document that disputes production's claim over literary authorship.

The final category examines a novel's *satirical* use of screenplay form and technique to push the boundaries of theme and experiment with the ironic voice of the implied author behind the scenes.[18] Aldous Huxley's 1948 novel *Ape and Essence* is a work of dystopian fiction set in the aftermath of global warfare, featuring structural quirks that compliment the book's tongue-in-cheek character. Presented in two parts—"Tallis," which opens with

[16] Norman, "Reading a Closet Screenplay", 115; 109. As with the *abandoned* category, different screenplays might be rejected for a variety of reasons. The interpretive label, as I have deployed it here, refers to the screenwriter's strategic repositioning as literary author as an act of defiance against the control of and censorship by producers. See also: William S. Burroughs' *Blade Runner (a movie)*, a novella published in 1979 (Berkeley: Blue Wind Press) after an adaptation he was commissioned to write of an Alan E. Nourse novel never fully materialized.
[17] Ibid., 108.
[18] For another use of the *satirical* closet screenplay form, see William S. Burroughs' *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz: A Fiction in the form of a Film Script* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1970).

two movie producers who find a screenplay and embark on a journey to find its author, and "The Script," dedicated to the screenplay-within-the-novel—Huxley's frame narrative lampoons the fate of mankind (a strange, radioactive Los Angeles, circa 2107) at the hands of Hollywood using its own institutional form of textual production: the standardized movie script. Because works in this category integrate the performance blueprint with the genre of the novel, the reader's attention is intentionally drawn to the constructed nature of both kinds of texts.

"Closet," taken as a noun, allegorizes the site of reception—a performance that plays in the reader's imagination—whereas the adjective intimates a mode of screenwriting; a technique isolated from production by design. To make the distinction is to acknowledge the compositional variances among those screenplays written for, and those written in spite of, cinema. "There are sometimes significant dramaturgical differences between a play that has been 'unperformed'—for whatever reasons—and a play written solely to be read," suggests Burroughs, and we can come to understand them more precisely by being specific about the kind of closet to which the screenplay aspires.[19] Tracing the various artistic intentions and historical contexts that have come to shape and determine the literary screenplay concept, my intent for this chapter is to offer descriptive insight into the rising phenomenon of film scripts in the form of fiction, and to consider a few topics under-explored within the field of screenplay studies: the script as a private "theatre of education"; performance in relation to screenwriting; "mental" cinema as a production alternative; and the cinematic-technical competence of the reader. By continuing to feature more closet scripts that impose no obligation to make a finished film the definitive aim, the

[19] Burroughs, "The Persistence of Closet Drama", 215.

theoretical focus will hopefully break away from the blueprint concept, granting scripts the status of “real” writing in the eyes of literary critics.

THE CLOSET, THE SCREEN, AND THE CLASSROOM

Screenwriting studies and the closet tradition feature strikingly similar origin stories. Just as correspondence schools like the Palmer Institute made self-fashioning through instruction in photoplay composition its stock-in-trade, the closet drama gained popularity in connection with the revival of public speaking in the 18th century—in particular, with the importance placed upon rhetoric, clear enunciation, proper inflection, and so forth. Because noblewomen famously penned their own plays for the entertainment of guests in the privacy of their homes, closet dramas are often associated with the leisure habits of the aristocrats. These plays, however, were also instrumental in the polite education of young women, as part of an informal “theatre of education” recommending the reading of scripts (especially ones with religious overtones) for improved elocution, intellectual growth, and spiritual development.[20]

[20] Historian Karen Raber writes: “Whether it was meant for reading aloud within or by the extended family, or for performance by amateurs; whether for reading by individuals or within a coterie; whether produced as gifts for husbands, brothers, or patrons, most closet drama carries strong association with the environment—and the ideological function—of the aristocratic state.” See: *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama* (London: Associated University Press, 1995), 34. By way of example, Mary Sidney Wilton (the Countess of Pembroke) and Margaret Cavendish (the Duchess of Newcastle-upon-Tyne), both conceived their plays as meditations on public duty and the political nuances of a privileged woman’s position in the world. Burroughs lifts the term “theatre of education” from Elizabeth Subthorpe Pinchard, a children’s fiction writer. It appears in her *Dramatic Dialogues for the Use of Young Persons* (Boston, MA: W. Spotswood, 1798), a didactic work which, according to Burroughs, “very much captures the aims of late eighteenth-century instructional closet dramas in their desire for a private stage (perhaps the classroom or home study) and in their purpose of encouraging intellectual growth, rhetorical practice, elocutionary training, spiritual and moral development, and skills in translation.” See: Burroughs, “The Stages of Closet Drama” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre 1737-1832* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 447.

The practice of writing, reciting or studying dramatic pieces for oneself recalls Virginia Woolf's 1929 essay *A Room of One's Own*, where she explores the history of women writers by way of a provocative, quasi-fictional narrative on the social and material conditions for writing literature. The work's title springs from Woolf's argument for women's rights and for what female writers need: a space, both pragmatic ("five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door") and figural (within a field dominated by men), for literary production.[21] Arguably, this is the same kind of autonomy that the closet concept lends to screenplay criticism—a designated site for experimenting with the idea of film performance, without recourse to the standardized rules, methods, or politics of motion picture production. "The chance to sit alone and embody a text forth on one's imagined stage calls up the emblem of a theatre 'of one's own'," says Burroughs.[22] The page swallows it all up—from the lights and the cameras to the sets and the props—and the writer becomes the dramatist, the actor, the critic and the audience, all at the same time.

In the face of conventional discourses that consider the screenplay a more restricted form—just text on a page—next to the comparatively endless possibilities of cinematic technique, a paradox emerges with the incarnation of the closet: composed as a readable, fictionalized performance, the actual performance can often be what delimits the screenplay's creative potential (imaginatively speaking) as a literary work. In light of this distinction between the various, possible film worlds of a screenplay that flicker in the reader's mind, and the definitive, fixed film actualized by the cast and crew, literary criticism of un-filmed scripts takes on greater consequence as the gateway to engaging with the limits of possible (and impossible) film productions. The closet script becomes its own

[21] Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own" from Project Gutenberg (http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200791.txt)
[22] Burroughs, "The Stages of Closet Drama", 453.

intimate theatre of education, setting the stage for strange encounters, both with screenwriting and film performance.

THE PROUST SCREENPLAY

> Various eminent auteurs have toyed with the idea of bringing at least bits of *À la recherche* to the screen without quite working out how. François Truffaut turned down the chance to direct a version in 1964. René Clément tried but failed to get a Proust film off the ground, as did Visconti... Harold Pinter's screenplay (published by Faber in 1977) stands as a monument to the film that Losey never made.[23]

Somewhere between failed film and prestige literature falls Pinter's *Proust*, a reminder that an adaptation's reach can often exceed the medium's grasp. "For three months I read *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* every day," Pinter reminisces. "I took hundreds of notes while reading but was left at the end quite baffled as to how to approach a task of such magnitude."[24] The complicated history of the yet-to-be-produced film could fill the pages of its own book; Nicole Stéphane, the French actress turned producer who purchased the screen rights in 1962, never even lived to see the project realized. After sitting down with New Wave filmmakers Truffaut, then Alain Resnais, and later Jacques Rivette, all of whom met the proposal with lukewarm hospitality, she turned to Britain's Joseph Losey, who commissioned the film with a particular writer in mind for the job. Having worked with Pinter at several junctures, directing three well-acclaimed pictures based on his screenplays—*The Servant* (1963), *Accident* (1967), and *The Go-Between* (1971)—and thus

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[23] Geoffrey McNabb, "Proust: Time-Waster?" *The Independent*, Sept. 2, 1999 (http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/film-proust-time-waster-1115726.html)
[24] Harold Pinter, *The Proust Screenplay* (New York: Random House, 1977), ix.

launching a successful screenwriting career for the playwright, Losey felt justified in approaching his esteemed collaborator with the supreme undertaking of the many times abandoned Proustian screen adaptation. In January 1972, Pinter was hired, a contract was drawn, and Barbara Bray (Pinter's script editor at BBC Radio and, handily, a Proustian scholar) was recruited to assist.

The initial response to Pinter's script was positive, but it presented some inevitable hurdles. According to critic Matt Harle, "the script's length and bold literariness, coupled with the demands for complete artistic control from both Losey and Pinter, proved too difficult to appeal to film backers in what had become an austere landscape of film financing."[25] Speculating on the allegiance that readers share with fiction, Christopher Richards presents his take:

> In the end, Pinter's screenplay, as sophisticated and loyal as it is, encounters obstacles that have little to do with its quality and more to do with the way Proust's work affects us… Reading is always personal, but it may be that no other work is scored for the individual the way Proust's is.[26]

Whether the "bold literariness" of Pinter's translation or the "scored individuality" of the source novel are to blame, what remains of Losey's unrealized film continues to spark considerable interest, if not for the artifact of the published script itself, then for its meta-narrative as a cautionary tale about the pitfalls of abbreviating Proust. Accordingly, what follows probes at the tensions that arise in the act of reading a work that constitutes both a stable literary text with a life of its own, and a flicker of the film that never was. To keep the

[25] Matt Harle, "Cinema's first domestic epic": tracing The Proust Screenplay in Harold Pinter's Archive" in *Literature/Film Quarterly* 43.4 (2015), 39.
[26] Christopher Richards, "The Past is a Mist: Pinter's Proust" in *The Paris Review.* January 23, 2014 (http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2014/01/23/the-past-is-a-mist-pinters-proust/)

discussion framed in relation to the broader concept of screenplay narration analyzed in Chapter 3, the central inquiry targets issues of voice in *The Proust Screenplay* and poses two related questions: who (or what) is narrating in Pinter's screenplay, and how do the paratextual elements influence its reading as the fictional blueprint for an unfulfilled production?

Pinter is notorious for his authorial punctuation with pause and silence notes. Therefore, silence seems a good place to begin to weigh the function of voice in his screenwriting. More than thirty shots (35, to be precise) go by before anyone utters a word in *The Proust Screenplay*. By the time Dr. Percepied—the village physician at Combray—delivers the first line, Pinter has already taken the meat of Marcel's life, ground it up small, and served it as a compression of images for the reader to synthesize:

1. *Yellow screen. Sound of a garden gate bell.*
2. *Open countryside, a line of trees, seen from a railway carriage. The train is still. No sound. Quick fade out.*
3. *Momentary yellow screen.*
4. *The sea, seen from a high window, a towel hanging on a towel rack in foreground. No sound. Quick fade out.*
5. *Momentary yellow screen.*
6. *Venice. A window in a palazzo, seen from a gondola. No sound. Quick fade out.*
7. *Momentary yellow screen.*
8. *The dining room at Balbec. No sound. Empty.*
9. *EXT. THE HOUSE OF THE PRINCE DE GUERMANTES. PARIS. 1921. AFTERNOON.*
   In long shot a middle-aged man (Marcel) walks towards the PRINCE DE GUERMANTES's house.
   His posture is hunched, his demeanor one of defeat.
   Many carriages, a few cars, a crowd of chauffeurs.
   Realistic sound.
10. *INT. LIBRARY. THE PRINCE DE GUERMANTES'S HOUSE. 1921.*
    A waiter inadvertently knocks a spoon against a plate.
    Marcel, large in foreground, looks up.
11. *INT. DRAWING ROOM. THE PRINCE DE GUERMANTES'S HOUSE. 1921.*
    The drawing room door opens.
    The camera enters with Marcel, who hesitates.

Hundreds of faces, some of which turn towards him, grotesquely made up, grotesquely old.
A tumult of voices.

12. *The sea from the window. Silent.*[27]

Pinter wastes nothing. As the camera whisks us from countryside to seaside, railway car to gondola, coming to a stall in Balbec on the Normandy Coast, his montage collapses seven volumes worth of recollections into a minute or so of film. The puzzle assembles quickly, even the meaningless fragment of the pulsing yellow screen that, once snatched out of the flux, goes some way to explaining that Marcel's remembrances feed the work of art:

22. *The camera pulls back to discover that the yellow screen is actually a patch of yellow wall in a painting. The painting is Vermeer's* View of Delft.[28]

In Search of Lost Time refers to over a hundred artists by name, but Vermeer was Proust's favourite. One of the novel's better-known passages describes a scene where Bergotte, a writer, visits a Dutch art exhibit and collapses dead while examining a detail of *View of Delft*. Proust misremembered the painting—there is no little patch of yellow wall, several art critics have noted—but its identity as an image burned into memory, a fleeting moment fixed in art, supplies the novel's theme about time and provides the narrative frame for Pinter's screenplay. The abandoned-script-as-literary-form becomes a record, an arrest of Pinter's own experience of adapting Proust, because it thwarts anticipation of the fuller picture we will never see. "Much of what we see in imagination as we read Pinter's text is quite wordless," observes Michael Wood in his foreword to the book. "This is, in view of the movie to be made, an invitation to the director to do his or her stuff. But on the page it is an invitation to us to do our own mental directing, a fictional space which has been

[27] Pinter, *The Proust Screenplay*, 3-4.
[28] Ibid., 4-5.

carefully constructed but also carefully emptied."[29] As with all screenplays, Pinter's "camera" participates in the projection of an intangible film, yet it also generates a loud echo of the once-future production, now irretrievable.

The involuntarily dreamer who narrates Proust's novel is easily transported by specific tastes and smells. These sensations provoke spontaneous snapshots of richly textured moments from his past, like the famous encounter with the madeleine cake dipped in tea that precipitates so perfectly the journey of memory on which he goes. Pinter reveals the suggestion of involuntary memory by exercising restraint, specifically by letting the scene text "speak" on behalf of Proust's narrator, contriving the effect of subjectivity by exteriorizing the act of narration rather than giving it a real voice. Only on rare occasions is the voice-over technique used, and only for the purpose of layering the years of Marcel's life so that they seem to exist simultaneously, as they do for the character. The one exception appears on the final page of the script, when Marcel perforates the text and addresses us for the first time as storyteller: "It was time to begin," he says, bringing things full circle. Otherwise, and predictably for a screen adaptation, Pinter devises Marcel as a protagonist—a character visible like all the others—so that what supplies the relevant context to the reader is the camera's subtle manipulation rather than a central narrator figure. For example, when Marcel arrives at the Prince de Guermantes' house, the camera observes its subject from a distance, taking silent notice of the man who is, by this point, already "middle-aged and "hunched, his demeanor one of defeat." Inside the drawing room, the camera edges in closer, bearing witness to his involuntary memory in action. The "grotesquely made up, grotesquely old" faces of party guests cause Marcel to balk—he recalled younger, more glamorous people—so he retreats back to Balbec by the sea. "By the

[29] Michael Wood, "Foreword" in *The Proust Screenplay*, viii.

time he came to write *The Proust Screenplay*, Pinter had adapted five novels for cinema as well as two of his own plays," Martin Regal tallies. "From the way in which he structured *Accident*, *The Pumpkin Eater* and *The Go-Between*, it appears that he had already developed a method for removing narrative voice and replacing the sequence of the plot with a particular type of temporal perspective before he began work on the Proust novel."[30] It is true that Pinter distorts the novel's chronology (perhaps to elaborate on the theme of memory as retrospective fiction or, just maybe, for originality's sake), but to claim that narrative voice is altogether absent suggests that Regal misreads the conventions of screenplay narration. That Pinter sacrifices the novel's curtain-twitching narrator for a protagonist constrained to the plot's inner workings only means that narrative voice is delegated to some of the other players: an implied author, the camera, or even Pinter himself, that is, if the reader's interpretive strategy aligns him with the authorial voice that comments on the story of the (un)making of the Pinter-Losey film.

Suppose you pick up a copy of *The Proust Screenplay*. You crack open the spine and heel in for the first time, without any regard for the critical chatter surrounding it. Being the scrupulous reader that you are, you diligently attend to the explanatory elements that were put there to guide your reading in a certain direction: the cover (a textured beige, bedecked with a Stanley Kubrick blurb calling it "a work of genius… beautiful art"), the dedication ("To Joe and Barbara"), Wood's preface (extolling the virtues of abandoned screenplays as a literary genre well-represented by the likes of Vladimir Nabokov, Luis Buñuel and Harold Pinter) and, in due course, Pinter's prologue, signing off with the lingering phrase: "Up to this point, the film has not been made." After a breath you flip the page, plunging into the sumptuous Proustian universe of the haute bourgeoisie as glimpsed through Pinter's

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[30] Martin Regal, *Harold Pinter: A Question of Timing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 114.

binoculars except that, for you, the reader, the story has already started to assemble. In time, you finish the book, and you find that Pinter's final words still haunt the ears. You think to yourself: "Marcel takes a lifetime to predict the novel he'll eventually write, but Pinter foreshadows the end before the script even begins." The climax, in effect, was revealed to you from the outset, as if you'd been invited (paratextually instructed, even) to view the book's screenplay as the past-tense narration of what was once a possible future production.

Screenplays typically consist of three discursive tiers, as was discussed in the previous chapter. This metaphorical layer-cake of story, projection and production grows even taller in the case of published scripts because of the meta-textual tension built from the assured abandonment of the work as filmic blueprint. In the case of *The Proust Screenplay*, the controlling frame that establishes its boundaries is the paratext, which sets the reader up to enjoy an account of the Proust adaptation that never was. This interpretation also assumes that Pinter, like the Marcel from the novel, is essentially a meta-fictional narrator, perfectly situated to comment on the diegesis as the architect of the performance. Even Losey and Bray enter as members of the supporting cast of characters, and the whole of the abandoned Proust project gets subsumed under the banner of literature-as-screenplay, so that when we read:

> *126. EXT. RIVERBELLE. THE GARDEN.*
> *Night has not quite fallen. The lamps in the restaurant cause a pale green reflection in the windows. Impression of an aquarium.*[31]

[31] Pinter, *The Proust Screenplay*, 43.

we acknowledge their influence over the artifice of a scene staged to feel like the inside of a fishbowl so that Marcel who, while dining with his friend Robert de Saint-Loup and chatting about high society's cultivated ignorance, would be inclined to say: "You wonder when the people outside are going to break through the glass and devour the fish."[32] The French essayist Philippe Lejeune once described paratext as "a fringe… which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text." Read in isolation, the main text of *The Proust Screenplay* retains its status as a performance plan and the absence of a film is certainly felt, however the introduction provides a zone of transaction that gives the reader a choice of interpretive strategies. On the one hand, she can elect to evaluate it as a half-baked adaptation that proved too costly and complicated to produce. Or, she can step all the way inside, treat the book as if it were Pinter's fictionalized memoir, and let him narrate the making of the failed Proust film we know him to have already written.

EDNA

The custom of treating screenplays like works in limbo, indefinitely suspended in the contingent process of filmmaking, seems like a missed opportunity to expand the field of study, especially when we run across an inspired monograph like Marilyn Hoder-Salmon's *The Awakening*. Adaptation research often involves a comparative case-study analysis and provides a means of examining how a story conceived for one medium (literature, for instance) can be transferred to another one (say, cinema). While this is a perfectly reasonable method of interrogating the relationship between the source text and the resulting work, it overlooks the complex industrial and creative processes taking place in

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[32] Ibid.

the thick of adaptation. By combining literary criticism with screenwriting—that is, by using screenwriting as the medium of criticism—Hoder-Salmon exploits the form of the annotated screenplay to stage at the same time a theory of adaptation and a hypothetical film performance.

Kate Chopin's *The Awakening: Screenplay as Adaptation* (1992) is concentrated around *Edna*, a theoretical investigation of novel-to-film adaptations in the skin of a 3-act screenplay (named after Chopin's protagonist, Edna Pontellier). Hoder-Salmon bookends her slender 78-page script with two critical essays, the first presenting relevant factual and interpretive background on topics like women's literary tradition, feminist criticism, and the novel's particular history, and the second illuminating the choices and unique emphases she brings to her screen adaptation of *The Awakening*. As such, she not only expands the canon of early modern women's writing by increasing (however incrementally) the visibility and public recognition of Chopin's work, but also encourages us to think of interpretation in different terms by shifting the medium through which the novel is analyzed (from critical essay to screenplay). Moreover, she joins the coterie of women closet dramatists who gave the genre a definitive voice and impetus by insisting that Edna is not intended for production, but designed rather as "an intellectual and imaginative exercise… to bolster the idea that women's literary tradition is worthy of a cinematic heritage."[33]

It is not without some quirk of irony that Hoder-Salmon rebels against "the omission from the Hollywood cinema of classics of women's literature" from the security of the closet.[34] The parallels between published screenplays and feminist fiction as under-theorized genres

[33] Hoder-Salmon, *Kate Chopin's The Awakening*, xii; 8.
[34] Ibid, 18.

are all too easy to draw. However if adaptation's goal, as she understands it, is to gain "proximity to the mind and methods of the original author," then the closet drama does well to improvise a junction.[35] Chopin was raised in all-female household after her father's death by train accident (she lived with her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, all of whom were widows). As a result, she never completely accepted society's limitations on a woman's autonomy, which is why *The Awakening* is replete with references to taboo ideas (as far as 19th century readers were concerned) regarding sexual freedom, motherhood, infidelity, and female independence.

With her script and the interpretive essays that accompany it, Hoder-Salmon wades deep into the ocean of Chopin's controversial Southern novel, paying the author the great compliment of journeying along a similar mental quest to develop a language that adequately distills "the conflict within Edna as she seeks to resolve woman's struggle between the questioning self and the formidable restrictions of culture."[36] She begins, as her source does, by fleshing out the novel's setting—New Orleans, 1899, with its "pineapple vendors, lavender boys, and other characters and customs of the social milieu that provide an aura like the one Chopin knew"—and turns inward from there, developing Edna Pontellier and the supporting characters along a narrative line that draws from the author's themes and era.[37] As she drafts these scenes, Hoder-Salmon keeps detailed notes of her critical judgments of the novel's framework and the challenges it poses for a screen adaptation. What follows considers the aesthetics of the script at hand in light of its having been written instrumentally for the purposes of novel-to-film criticism. I argue that the critical essays supplementing the main text "Edna" transform the screenplay into what

[35] Ibid., 7; xii.
[36] Ibid., 117.
[37] Ibid., 149.

Joyce Hester describes as a manual of experience, "as writing that does what it says it is doing… uses the page to stage an experience," but also in the sense of being an archival document recording the full stretch of Hoder-Salmon's entanglement in the adaptation process.[38]

Edna's scene text contains exceptionally long passages written in prose form and delivered in a didactic style. A closer look at the distribution of modes of presentation easily confirms Hoder-Salmon's dependence on the comment mode as a guiding aesthetic principle, a mode that is conventionally used more sparingly by professional screenwriters.[39] Her reliance on literary commentary (which I note below in bold) is well illustrated with an excerpt from Act 3, Scene, 8 (Reverie: Winter. A walk and a visit). It forewarns, "This will be a long sequence…":

> …It begins with Edna on a **solitary** walk through the streets of the French Quarter's commercial district. The first shot is of a tiled street sign embedded in the sidewalk and a section of Edna's skirt at the edge of the screen [Guiraud, "Sylvia"]. She wears a long gray woolen cape. The day is overcast and chilly. The camera angle reverses to reveal Edna as she looks downward at the sign**. Now the shot changes.** The camera will follow Edna on a **steady** trajectory through these streets, **never losing sight of her** as the shots change in alternation with fragmented perspectives, distance shots, and frames of Edna that also concentrate on her immediate surroundings**. This series will communicate Edna's aimless path in contrast with her secure demeanor.** The streets are old and shabby, with **sudden** byways into arcades and side streets that are little more than alleys. Second-story apartments and offices all have ironwork balconies supported by posts to the sidewalk. These provide an overhang for pedestrians**, as well as a shadowy aspect.** The streets are crowded with people of every description: businessmen, dockworkers, servants on errands, and other indigenous inhabitants. There is a profusion of vendors in stalls, with portable carts, or with rustic boxes

[38] Joyce Hester, "Text and Performance: What does a screenplay do?" in *Journal of Screenwriting* 7.3 (2016), 253.
[39] These are the same modes as those identified by Claudia Sternberg in *Written for the Screen: The American Motion Picture Screenplay as Text* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997), and referenced in Chap. 1, footnote 27.

> filled with wares. These include the flower vendors, the praline sellers, the syrup-ice seller, the palmetto-root-broom man, and the rice-cake stall. **It quickly becomes clear that Edna is the only unescorted white woman in this business and market district.** The little streetcars lurch in the road, and bicyclists hug the curb to avoid the cumbersome carriages. Edna weaves her way through the scene **as a deliberate and curious observer. She is a stranger, but nevertheless comfortable in her milieu.**[40]

Besides the wordiness of the passage, which carries on for three more paragraphs, what likely strikes the experienced reader first is how little reporting there is of the events and actions, or of their temporal sequence—rather atypical for a screenplay. Action verbs—verbs that tell us what the subject of the scene is doing, physically or mentally—are scarcely used, and their reference in time and space is skewed by Hoder-Salmon's insistence upon "alternation with fragmented perspectives." She does, however, labour over the details of setting, evoking a clear, visual outline of the vibrant French Quarter and its multitude of attractions, from architectural features like the lacy wrought-iron trimmed balconies, to the authentic flavors of the food hawkers selling sno-balls and sweet rice fritters. This presses the importance of place, something that serves "a significant interpretive function for women's literature," she argues.[41] But the delicate dance of the description and comment modes is where screenwriting's interpretive potential truly gets exercised; Edna's surroundings not only reflect the characteristics of this period in New Orleans' history, they also hint at the suggestion of her inward journey: her longings, her fantasies, her solitude.

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[40] Hoder-Salmon, *Kate Chopin's The Awakening*, 90.

[41] Upholding Annis Pratt's claim that, "since women are alienated from time and space, their plots take on cyclical, rather than linear form," Hoder-Salmon lends more power to setting as a reflection of character than to straightforward narrative progression. Quoted in *Kate Chopin's The Awakening*, 118.

Two rivaling motives drive the construction of this scene, and they are effectually summarized in the last sentence quoted. The first is to establish Edna's character as being adrift, lost in the confusion of "the intricate street patterns... designed to accommodate the twisting contours of the Mississippi."[42] The second is to project the sense of poise her wandering occasions; as a woman of leisure, an urban explorer, she becomes a discreet connoisseur of the street. Whether this tension could be pronounced on film is difficult to measure—Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* shines as an example—but Hoder-Salmon leaves nothing to chance. The comment mode offers her certain assurances that what is seen will match the calculated psychological effect of Chopin's descriptions, and what might seem on the surface to be flowery, metaphorical elaboration actually strives to find the pulse of the novel, pare it down, and convert it into screenplay language. Instruction manuals routinely frown on scene text containing the comment mode because this breaks the convention of lens-based writing: that screenwriting ought to describe only what the camera can see. In *Written for the Screen*, Sternberg disputes this, reasoning that, "screenwriters rarely miss the opportunity to use the mode of comment. It is in this mode of presentation that ever newer forms of and designs of screenwriting shall be revealed."[43] This might be taken to mean that literary comments encourage the application of auteur theory to screenplays by inviting critical analysis of an individual writer's style. But of greater relevance, especially in the context of novel-to-film adaptations (where the screenplay replaces the novel as the production source text), is the degree to which comments in the scene text deepen our understanding of literary adaptation by shedding light on its complications, as the writer anticipates them.

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[42] Ibid., 124.

[43] Sternberg, *Written for the Screen*, 74.

Chopin approaches the canvas of fiction with impressionistic brushstrokes. She paints her characters' surroundings to reflect a particular mood, and mood, in turn, influences the compositional process of each individual scene. "The 'impressions' that Edna, foregrounded in nature, experiences as intuition and reason are directly linked to impressionism as a movement in visual art," writes Hoder-Salmon, referring to a technique she repeats throughout the screenplay to reinforce the motif in Chopin's novel.[44] Consider the following excerpt from her scene text:

> The image changes to her perspective of the intimate retreat beyond the gate. A wall of the old stone house fills the background; checkered curtains border the small windows; and flowering plants are arranged on the brick ledges. In the courtyard several tables are artfully placed between or under orange trees. Remnants of food are left on one table, and its chairs are awry. The effect is of age, and of coziness, and even of an undisturbed sanctuary.[45]

The nature imagery used to construct this sanctuary gently mediates between outside and inside—between the physical scene of the garden restaurant both Edna and the audience can see, and the one to which she loses herself in private thought. Interiority, what is often held to be the surpassing advantage of the novel over film, seems in *Edna* to be rendered in a visual, painterly form ("the image changes"). As the camera adopts Edna's point of view, a subtle difference in the atmosphere is suggested. The descriptive mode starts to fleck the page with aspects of the café that are familiar to her (the old stone wall, the flower boxes, the orange trees), while the annotations give these objects a more textured, emotional charge: "aging, cozy, undisturbed". Even with the camera cues omitted, the closely-focused, memory-filtered glimpses of the courtyard are vividly contoured; Hoder-Salmon modulates

[44] Hoder-Salmon, *Kate Chopin's The Awakening*, 116.
[45] Ibid., 100.

the mise-en-scène to convey the sensations these objects evoke in the protagonist. In *The Awakening*, Chopin explains that Edna "was seeing with different eyes and making the acquaintance of new conditions in herself that colored and changed her environment."[46] To simulate the novel's mood, Hoder-Salmon turns to views, angles and colours—objective signs that reveal a character's inner self—likely because voicing Edna's thoughts would render the scene too flatly. In this manner, the screenplay develops a language that both mimes the experience of watching these private, contemplative moments unfold on film, but also critically interprets impressionism as a controlling metaphor and important conduit of meaning in Chopin's book.

At the time it was published, *The Awakening*'s ending stirred some controversy because Chopin refused to give the novel over to predictable conventions. There remain today several competing interpretations of the final scene. Does Edna's suicidal swim symbolize her rebellion against Victorian domesticity and its grand patriarchal traditions, or does it represent her defeat in the face of so many cultural prejudices (against adulterers, the unmarried, the childless, etc.)? Some feminist examinations, including Sandra Gilbert's half-mocking essay "Second Coming of Aphrodite", question even the likelihood of Edna's drowning: "And how, after all, do we know that she ever dies? Even in the last sentences of Chopin's novel, then, Edna Pontellier is still swimming."[47] Hoder-Salmon elects to preserve the ambiguities of the incident at Grand Isle, stating that she believes Chopin "intended the scene to have multiple meanings in that Edna's suicide is both an ironic statement on women's limited choices and a symbolic act of regeneration."[48] Transposing this from a literary style to cinematic terms requires some finesse, so she turns to the motif of the sea

[46] Ibid., 113. Quoted in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (New York: Herbert S. Stone & Company, 1899), 102.
[47] Sandra Gilbert, "Second Coming of Aphrodite: Kate Chopin's Fantasy of Desire" in *The Kenyon Review* 5.3 (1983), 58. Quoted in Hoder-Salmon, *Kate Chopin's The Awakening*, 152.
[48] Hoder-Salmon, *Kate Chopin's The Awakening*, 152.

as a bridge-maker. Below are two versions of (roughly) the same scene comparing the book against the screenplay, respectively:

> The foamy wavelets curled up to her white feet, and coiled like serpents about her ankles. She walked out. The water was chill, but she walked on. The water was deep, but she lifted her white body and reached out with a long, sweeping stroke. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace.
>
> She went on and on. She remembered the night she swam far out, and recalled the terror that seized her at the fear of being unable to regain the shore. She did not look back now, but went on and on, thinking of the blue-grass meadow that she had traversed when a little child, believing that it had no beginning and no end...[49]

> The camera comes in very close; there is just Edna and the rolling waves that splash against her as she parts the water with flagging strokes. Then Edna lifts her face. She looks frightened, as though a bad memory had overtaken her. Edna regains her impassive expression, swims on, falters; her breath comes in winded gasps. Exhausted, she swims forward as the field of the image widens some. The tumult of the sea becomes more apparent on the screen. The camera dips to a lower angle, to a point where our view of Edna is lost in the depth of a wave. Then, as before, we see the sea from a slightly further distance. There is only the sea. This is held for a long moment before fading.[50]

Viewed side by side, these excerpts highlight the interconnections and distinctive features of prose and lens-based writing. Granted they are similar in length, Hoder-Salmon's scene design directs our attention through visual cues, using technical comments that pronounce the contrast between the diminutive Edna and the scaled-up image of the open water. Chopin's account also leads with the sea as a focal point, but the impetus is given to interiority; the narration pulls the reader to safety, retreating out of the waves and into the blue-grass meadow. In a way, the *Edna* screenplay makes its heroine's suicide irrefutable—

[49] Chopin, *The Awakening*, 137.
[50] Hoder-Salmon, *Kate Chopin's The Awakening*, 104.

the duration of the final shot insists she must have drowned—but, more significantly, it teaches that fiction-into-screenplay studies enhances our comprehension of both arts, while illustrating how screen adaptation can be used as a medium for creative, critical interpretation.

ONE DAY WHEN I WAS LOST

From reading screenwriting critically as an interpretive act to interpreting screenwriting as a critique of its own method, the present discussion returns to Baldwin's rejected screenplay in an attempt to reframe the published screenplay concept as a form of rescued authorship. This dissertation's opening chapter provided a review of the discursive practices that shape our current understanding of the screenplay, conscious of the authorship problem lingering in the air. Recognizing that film criticism's obsession (albeit manufactured) with the director's exclusive claim to a film's authorship has important repercussions for textual screenplay research is another crucial step towards legitimizing screenplays-as-literature.

Literary criticism matured, in a sense, when it moved beyond the question of the author as the interpretive key to a text, leaving intentionality and biographical context aside to explore the idea that textual meaning might be as much the reader's privilege as the creator's. Film studies, on the other hand, continues to be niggled by the principle of auteurism, both as a method of stylistic analysis and as a criterion of value (one that justifies the theoretical leap from cinema as legitimate art to director as the authorial lone wolf). Sternberg maintains that this apparent contradiction—between the persistence of

authorship attribution in film scholarship and criticism and the discipline's coinciding preoccupation with "the conditions of screenwriting as they exist in collaborative film production"—informs our standard working definition of the screenplay text and delimits the role of the screenwriter.[51] For various reasons, the search for (and attribution of) the screenplay author remains a crusade that has never fully materialized.

Spike Lee released his *Malcolm X* with characteristic hype in 1992, five years after Baldwin's death, and two decades after his scenario was reborn as a novel. Through all of the conversations that were sparked from the wide net cast by the film's mainstream distribution (which reached millions), Lee, unfairly or not, quickly established himself as the authority on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* while Baldwin's name has gone deafeningly unmentioned. We know, however, that Lee used the Baldwin-Perl script as a production source text because he admitted as much to *Cineaste:*

> I read 'em all—the David Mamet script, Charles Fuller's two drafts, Calder Willingham's script, and David Bradley's script—but the Baldwin/Perl script was the best… What was lacking, I felt, in the Baldwin/Perl script was the third act—what happens during the split between Malcolm and the Nation, between Malcolm and Elijah Muhammad…[52]

Among Lee's other complaints about their screen adaptation is that it creates a disorienting history because "Baldwin had stuff out of order" (alluding to speeches Malcolm gave in 1963 which had been pushed to the beginning of the script).[53] This, Lee felt, stunted "the growth of Malcolm's political mind."[54] Leveraging the dramatic demands of the biopic and his

[51] Sternberg, *Written for the Screen*, 7.
[52] Spike Lee, *Spike Lee: Interviews*, ed. by Cynthia Fuchs (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 66.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., p. 67

responsibilities, informally, as a Black documentarian, to present the man's life "in order" (both literally, in the sense of a timeline that marches chronologically from Malcolm's troubled childhood in Omaha to his assassination by Nation of Islam members, and figuratively, as a racial symbol), Lee probably guessed that the clear-cut story of an enlightened, self-made hero would better serve his intentions and sense of responsibility to the subject matter than the disorderly, divided Malcolm the Baldwin/Perl script proposes.[55] In a roundabout way, Lee affirms the conditional problems with Baldwin's authorship that are entangled with Hollywood as a market that invests only in certain kinds of narratives. Underneath Lee's cursory objections to some of Baldwin's decisions regarding plot lie a more potent statement about what constitutes a Hollywood-model script. The "problem" with Baldwin's adaptation is, in other words, construed as a medium-specific one; *One Day When I Was Lost* is written for the wrong medium.

Baldwin changed the course of his screenplay from a performance plan to literary fiction in order to recoup a broader audience than his unprinted scenario would have allowed. Instead of collecting dust in the Warner Bros. archives alongside other rejected titles, it now exists as a companion piece to his non-fiction—as already mentioned, Baldwin speaks at length about the challenges of adapting Haley in *The Devil Finds Work*—and adds to the multiple shadings of Malcolm's life already in print and on screen (such as *The Diary of Malcolm X*, a collection of the minister's personal papers, or the PBS documentary *Malcolm X: Make it Plain*). That Baldwin's hand is almost completely excised from Lee's movie, muting many of the old tapes that dog Malcolm's legacy of black unity and self-determination, only further solidifies Sternberg's paradox: performance collapses the

[55] In a flash of clairvoyance, Lee seemed to predict the Harlem rally held in August of 1991, where poet and playwright Amiri Baraka, a leader of the Black Liberation Movement, beseeched the crowd to pen letters warning the filmmaker "not to mess up Malcolm's life." See: David Ansen, "The Battle for Malcolm X" in *Newsweek*, August 25, 1991.(http://www.newsweek.com/battle-malcolm-x-203196)

collaborative aspects of film production and substantially changes the role of the authorial presence in the work. In publishing, the conditions for authorship are more sharply defined and screenwriters are made equivalent to authors for two reasons: 1) they are the sole originators of the *written* work; and 2) the script has been repackaged as a stand-alone text. It could be that Baldwin knew the value of his own stock in the literary critical market or, otherwise, he was aware of his limitations in a medium unfamiliar to him. Regardless of what prompted the book version of *One Day When I Was Lost*, its presence on bookshelves destabilizes its rejected status as a "closeted" Hollywood film, and reinstates Baldwin in his rank of author of the alternate Malcolm X film.

"If Malcolm X is to work as a racial symbol, it is best not to look at him too closely," quips historian Nell Irvin Painter.[56] When we use myths to explain the man, we replace the products of history with the products of ideology, but in doing so we get to decide which version of the story we want to be left with. Hollywood can be heavy-handed in its cultural constructions of American identity—particularly in its delivery of streamlined heroes who embody the classical ideals of equality, democracy, freedom and opportunity—so it is hardly surprising that a Hollywood film depicting the life of the icon of the urban black struggle in the twentieth century would end up dulling his militant black nationalist, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist politics so that his humanism might shine through. Retrofitted, as it were, for a post-civil rights era, multicultural 1990s audience confronting a racism framed by contemporaneous discourses and experiences, "Lee's film feeds nostalgia for Malcolm X and the radicalism he came to represent."[57] It seeks, in Norman's opinion,

[56] Nell Irvin Painter, "Malcolm X Across the Genres" in *American Historical Review* 98.2 (1994), 433.
[57] Brian Norman, "Bringing Malcolm X to Hollywood" in *The Cambridge Companion to Malcolm X*, ed. Robert E. Terrill, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 48.

"one resilient version of Malcolm that aspires to unity, be it black or global," which, although historically inaccurate, does not threaten his status as a racial symbol.

Diverging considerably from Lee's investment in Malcolm X's image as a tidy, mythic American hero, Baldwin's script exploits not only the fluctuating and competing identities (both political and personal) that Malcolm embraced over the course of his life, but also the audio-visual means by which to communicate their antagonisms and unruly complexity. He achieves this primarily through the use of voice-over narration, using audio cues pulled from various storylines: his father's murder in Omaha, his mother Louise's involuntary commitment to an asylum, the "Detroit Red" days with his pal Shorty selling drugs in New York City, his incarceration at Charlestown where he meets the Black Muslim Luther, his protégé Sidney's treachery and prison sentence, and so on. The following excerpt captures the turmoil of a man gripped by two battling obsessions that trace back to his childhood: pride for black people's struggle and shame for his own white blood:

> (Interior. Day. MALCOLM, naked in the shower, letting the water roll over him. Under the sound of the water, we hear voices.)
>
> LOUISE'S VOICE *Go stand in the sun and get some color, boy.*
>
> SHORTY'S VOICE *That's Homeboy. From Detroit.—Hold still now. This shit can burn a hole in your head.*
>
> LUTHER'S VOICE *—the man who raped your mother and murdered your father! And you got the nerve to call yourself a man!*
>
> SIDNEY'S VOICE *When you get us out of prison.*
>
> (The side-view mirror: the streets of Harlem. We stop before the Audubon Ballroom. MALCOLM nervously wipes his glasses, puts them on, enters the hall.)[58]

[58] James Baldwin, *One Day When I Was Lost: A Scenario Based on Alex Haley's The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Vintage International, 2007), 276.

On the day he is meant to deliver his speech to the Organization of Afro-American Unity, a venue that was packed with Blacks expecting to hear the Muslim separatist criticize Muhammad and blame Nation of Islam members for fire-bombing his home, Malcolm X is not thinking about the future of the civil rights movement. Instead, his head is flooded with voices from his past, voices that make him mindful of his vulnerability at the hands of his brothers, his anger at the Black Legion who terrorized his young parents, and his desperation to fit into white society. Between his mother Louise's insistence that he "get some colour" to distinguish his skin from "that white rapist's blood that's in my veins" and Malcolm's asking Shorty to straighten his hair with congolene (a corrosive mix of lye, eggs and potatoes) to get it "as wavy as that of any white movie star," these increasingly more severe auditory hallucinations produce the effect of a Malcolm coming undone, not a steady, unwavering figure of Black heroism.[59] If Lee's autobiography, like the Haley novel he adapted forthright, offers the promise of clarity and uncompromising order, Baldwin's screenplay unfurls Malcolm's historical legacy (and America's racism generally) into *dis*order.

In the process of writing the scenario for a film that ultimately does not bear his own name, Baldwin made sure to include all of Malcolm's different designations, to convey that lives and identities can be re-authored. As a counterpoint to Lee's stylized, mantra-like repetition of "I am Malcolm X" by schoolchildren from around the world, a jump-cut sequence that creates "a coda of global solidarity," *One Day When I Was Lost* refuses to tie the ribbon on this settled identity of Malcom X; for Baldwin, the project of "Malcolm X" is still a work in progress (as the "scenario" in the subtitle implies). By presenting several

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[59] Ibid., 15; 56.

versions of Malcolm simultaneously, the screenplay "makes a subtle but fundamental break from the *Autobiography* and Lee's film with regard to Malcolm's names," inducing a kind of temporal short-circuit that lets the reader to experience Malcolm's past erupting into the present:

> Baldwin envisioned the moving picture version of "Malcolm X" as a means of stirring things up: presenting disparate stages of Malcolm in *one shot*… In the *Autobiography* and in Lee's film, we learn Malcolm's given surname half way through—at the moment it is cast off. In stark opposition, in Baldwin's "scenario" all four of Malcolm's names exist together… Baldwin employs multi-media technologies to present—in one location—"Malcolm Little," "Malcolm X," "Omowale," and "El-Hajj Malik El Shabazz." While the audio track follows the replacement of Malcolm's X by the ceremonial name *Omowale* ("the son who has returned"), Baldwin simultaneously offers two more images of nominal inscription: *El Hajj Malik El Shabazz* in the Book of the Holy Register of True Muslims and *Malcolm Little* in a family Bible in 1925. Malcolm's story disrupts distinct stages of Black history; rather, Malcolm is a historical participant whose conflicting naming ceremonies navigate America's racist struggles.[60]

Haley's *Autobiography*, like the "I" of "I am Malcolm X," identifies the subject position voicing the story with the biographical "I" of a historical person. Norman suggests that the "I" of Baldwin's scenario is something else entirely: it is neither Malcolm nor Baldwin but "a subject space that negotiates between poles: between the reader/viewer and Malcolm X/American history."[61] This interpretation destabilizes the fixed authority of the narrator, implying that *One Day When I Was Lost* has many authorial voices. For Norman, this quality of the text is further heightened by the fact that Malcolm's unraveling identities "enact a self-questioning placement of the viewer within a not-settled—and never-to-be-

[60] Norman, "Reading a Closet Screenplay", 105.
[61] Ibid., 104.

settled—history that failed if it became a static binary or an easy teleology."[62] In effect, the implicit mode of address in the script is the characteristic "you" dressed as "we", which collapses Baldwin, the screenwriter who mentally exercises the steps necessary to stage the film performance, and the reader, who fills in the gaps left by the audio-visual markers in the scene text. Referring to the above block quote, the screenplay narrates like so: "We see the Book of the Holy Register of True Muslims" and "We see a family Bible and a black hand inscribing: *Malcolm Little, May 19, 1925*." The biographical "I" becomes fused with a universal reader who projects his own image of Malcolm X onto the empty subject space of the hypothetical movie screen. Viewed from this perspective, the screenplay biopic is partial, only half-authored by Baldwin; the other half lives in a perpetual state of willful rebellion against closing the book on Malcolm's legacy.

As a keystone of black gay literary history, Balwin has become a hallmark for queer scholarship in the academy. Even as his "normative", novel-style fiction succeeds brilliantly in re-imagining queer intersections of race and sexuality, his scenario goes one step further by queering both the reading practice involved in extracting the image and voice of Malcolm X from the screenplay (without the audio-visual form to supplement the impression), and the genre of the Hollywood biopic itself, moving it away from a neat historical trajectory to experiment with biographical narrative conventions such as the democratic, redemptive story arc, chronology and temporal perspective, and mode of address. Furthermore, it is implicit in the act of publishing the text exactly as it had been originally designed that Baldwin's authorship, like the Malcolm on the Hollywood screen, is self-determined, rescued from the comparatively obscure archive of pre-production documents where it would have been improperly buried, and put back on literary record to

[62] Ibid., 108.

join the other biographies in contributing and responding to the active history of Malcolm X.

APE AND ESSENCE

Spurred by queer studies, critics have been keen to investigate the closet drama not so much as a literary genre but as a mode of reception mainly because the two types of closet dramas—*de facto* screenplays written to be filmed (*The Proust Screenplay* and *One Day When I was Lost*) and intentional closet scripts written to be read (*Edna* and *Ape and Essence*)—do not necessarily share the same formal properties. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, partly responsible for these variances are the individual publishers' usual practices; for instance, Pinter's publisher Faber & Faber follows the theatrical play format, as does Baldwin's publisher Vintage Books, meaning that some of the nuances of standardized script formatting—secondary sluglines, the 1-page per minute rule, white space for readability—get lost. Also accountable are the author's personal writing style and, of course, their preliminary decision as to whether the screenplay should ultimately be performable, or not. That being said, some career novelists shift toward screenplay aesthetics because of how they disrupt and redirect the reader's habitual passage through a text. These writers consider the published screenplay a kind of sub-genre within the category of experimental literature. To paraphrase Burroughs's remarks about closet dramas, if we think of these documents not as critical or commercial failures (from a reception viewpoint), but as intentional (if unpopular) responses to their historical moment, we may come to understand more precisely the ways in which literature-in-

screenplay-form emerges, at different moments in history, to comment upon Hollywood industrial and stylistic conventions.[63]

It is impossible to read *Ape and Essence* without feeling a tinge of wry amusement. Huxley always felt a deep apprehension for humanity's blind march of scientific progress, but this particular book lends these concerns an exaggerated twist by using the novel as a frame story that prepares us for the chaotic and maladaptive but foreseeable future predicted by William Tallis, author of the central story's "Script". The novel opens on what should have been a grave day, the day that Gandhi was killed, "but on Calvary the sightseers were more interested in the contents of their picnic baskets than in the possible significance of the, after all, rather commonplace event they had turned out to witness."[64] Over lunch at Lou Lublin Productions, an apathetic, bubbled-in Hollywood studio environment, producer Bob Briggs prattles on about his next big movie idea to an unnamed narrator, who fades in and out of the conversation because he alone seems to recognize that violence in the newspaper headlines is "an allegory and a prophecy."[65] When the time comes to head back to the office, they cut through the courtyard behind the story department. A mammoth-sized delivery truck, carrying a load of rejected screenplays destined for the incinerator, practically runs them over. Half a dozen scripts spill out onto the road, including Tallis' treatment, bound in eye-catching green (not the studio's standard red). They pick it up and begin reading. By the following week, they manage to track down the man who wrote it. Tallis is already dead and buried at Cottonwood Ranch, the same address printed on the script's flyleaf. "The Script" is all that remains of "the reflections of his mind."[66]

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[63] Burroughs, "The Persistence of Closet Drama", 216.
[64] Aldous Huxley, *Ape and Essence* (London: Vintage Books, 1985), 1.
[65] Still lamenting the Indian independence leader's assassination, the narrator muses: "In that symbolic act, we who so longed for peace had rejected the only possible means of peace and had issued a warning to all who, in the future, might advocate any courses but those which lead inevitably to war." (*Ape and Essence*, 7)
[66] Ibid., 23.

Huxley had very poor eyesight, which prevented him from enlisting in WW1. In 1942, he published a book titled *The Art of Seeing*—an autobiography of sorts—in which he summarizes his success with the highly contentious Bates method, an alternative therapy claiming to improve vision naturally, without the use of corrective lenses. One of the controversial techniques recommended by Dr. William Bates (as far as the scientific research community was concerned) was visualization training believed to induce relaxation and enhance the patient's focus, using the body's own self-regenerating powers. This typically involved having the patient imagine perfect black letters and marks (like the ones on an eye chart), and adjusting their physical sight with these mental pictures serving as a guide. The decision to experiment with cinematic writing in *Ape and Essence* could be seen as an extension of Bates' theory, with the novel acting as a protracted exercise in the visualization of a film that is not there. Consider the following excerpt from "The Script", where a fleet of kiwi scientists comes to America on a recovery expedition to assess the aftermath of World War III:

> The Camera moves across the sky, and now the black serrated shape of a rocky island breaks the line of the horizon. Sailing past the island is a large, four-masted schooner. We approach, we see that the ship flies the flag of New Zealand and is named the *Canterbury*. Her captain and a group of passengers are at the rail, staring intently towards the east. We look through their binoculars and discover a line of barren coast. Then, almost suddenly, the sun comes up behind the silhouette of distant mountains.[67]

This particular sample of screenwriting is highly reminiscent of the lens-based aesthetic Ganz links to early travel writing—to the explorers tasked with recording what had been

[67] Ibid., 28.

seen, and to confirm the phenomena, with scientific precision, for those who would never make the journey themselves. From their remote position, these absent witnesses relied on the lens as a guarantor of truth, and just like travel writing, cinematic writing appeals to an instrument that frames and views on the reader's behalf from a prime vantage point. In the above instance, the use of the lens is twofold: first, the camera locks onto the horizon from an arbitrary spot in the water, and then we jump behind a pair of binoculars to a point-of-view shot between a sailor aboard the *Canterbury* and the rocky coastline. By choreographing the scene as a succession of views, Huxley exercises the reader's perceptual imagination and trains the (mind's) eye to be in two places at once.

Ape and Essence is most often understood as an example of experimental literature, but I want to ask if it might also be understood as a closet screenplay. If we temporarily cast aside the issue of intent to examine how the novel has been publicly received, it appears to have been slotted in amongst his other fictional works—books such as *Brave New World* (1932), *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) and *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939)— based on the professional identity of their shared UK publisher Chatto & Windus. Meanwhile, his Hollywood screenplays—*Pride and Prejudice* (1940), *Jane Eyre* (1943) and *A Woman's Vengeance* (1947)—represent their own clear-cut category because they are the intellectual blueprint property of their respective studios (MGM, 20th Century Fox, Universal). We know that Huxley carried ill will towards Hollywood following a string of rejected advances; his disenchantment with the world of the film studios is well documented in Virginia Clark's in-depth study *Huxley and Film* (1987) and David Dunaway's gossipy *Huxley in Hollywood* (1991). Even *Ape and Essence*'s own introduction by David Bradshaw confesses that "Huxley and Hollywood were not compatible," submitting, by way of

explanation, that “his natural bent was for the leisurely and allusive development of an idea” whereas “the movie moguls demanded pacey dialogue.”[68]

It is therefore safe to assume that Huxley probably devised the novel as an intentional response to the Golden Era’s culture industry and its constant churn of unsophisticated, sentimental products. In publishing his screenplay under the guise of another Hollywood novel like *After Many a Summer* (about a fading Beverly Hills billionaire trying to cheat death with dollars), the work retains the high literary appeal that production surely would have dampened, and Huxley is able to teach an alternative form of readability to his regular readers by exacting their cinematic-technical competence.

Screenplays are hierarchical texts comprising the three discursive levels of story, projection, and plot, but Huxley’s novel presents a unique case in that it contains a fourth narrative level: the “Tallis” frame, akin to the influence of the paratext in Pinter’s *Proust*. To wit, the escapist frill of Bob Briggs’s studio life is a far cry from the world of the screenplay, a world where intelligent baboons have chemically annihilated the human race and the only survivors are illiterate and radioactively deformed. The stark contrast between the comedic bite of the frame story and the more serious tone of the “The Script” that follows puts distance between the unnamed narrator and Tallis, the novel’s imaginary film writer, creating the impression that there are two distinct voices narrating *Ape and Essence*. Tallis therefore gets constructed as the assignable, ghostly speaker in Part II, recalling Chatman’s concept of the implied author as an anthropomorphic “-er”. As such, he functions as one of the text’s main interpretive strategies, like the camera-narrator to which the screenplay

[68] Finding the humour in the erudite Huxley’s wanting to write for the popular cinema, Bradshaw includes an anecdote: “Walt Disney’s widely reported rejection of Huxley’s synopsis of *Alice in Wonderland* on the grounds that he ‘could only understand every third word’ was symptomatic of Huxley’s problem.” (Ibid., xii)

sometimes alludes (see the above excerpt), and is one of several lenses through which the reader infers the ironic intent of the film:

> Titles, credits, and finally, to the accompaniment of trumpets and a chorus of triumphant angels, the name of the PRODUCER. The music changes its character, and if Debussy were alive to write it, how delicate it would be, how aristocratic, how flawlessly pure of all Wagnerian lubricity and bumptiousness, all Straussian vulgarity! For here on the screen, in something better than Technicolor, is the hour before sunrise…[69]

Here Huxley avails himself of all the pomp and circumstance of the classic 1940s Hollywood opening title sequence, complete with a wink to the politics of authorship that painted producers as the owners of the pictures. Even more significant, though, is the language-game (to borrow Branigan's term) crafted in the unexpected use of a type 2 conditional clause ("*if* Debussy were alive to write it, how delicate it would be…"), which shatters any illusion this is a production plan that could ever be actualized, and turns the impossibility of its making into an aesthetic choice: it is, unequivocally, a closet screenplay. Moreover, with Huxley (disguised as Tallis) all but flatly announcing that his screenplay is a caricature, not a celebration, of filmic technique in its conventional method (e.g. stale Wagnerian leitmotifs, Technicolor's oversaturated hues), the satire succeeds when we react against (distance ourselves from) the implied reader generated by the text—a reader who is, prospectively, just another self-righteous, self-romanticizing movie magnate like Bob Briggs. This feature of the work—that the implied reader is expected to take the screenplay at face value as a performance outline—makes it difficult to completely reject Chatman's view of the implied author as an essential interpretive strategy. Although never outwardly voiced, *Ape and Essence* relies on the authorial presence evoked by "The Script" to say:

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[69] Ibid., 24.

"Here's how you produce Tallis' play." Tallis' placement in both the frame and central stories further helps to disambiguate Claycomb's theory of implicit narration in the screenplay by attributing the narrating instance to an anthropomorphized, flesh-and-blood character.[70] Put another way, Tallis's existence, both actual (as the screenwriter behind "The Script") and virtual (as the cynical voice behind its construction as an impossible film production), collapses the narrator/implied author distinction whenever Huxley shifts modal registers, moving between discursive fictional prose and dramatic second-person hypothetical narration. Narratologists will do well to seek greater exposure to screenplay fiction, given how satirical closet forms like *Ape and Essence* challenge commonly held biases that contest the relevance and function of the implied author (or reader) concept. Screenplay narration not only provides avenues for practitioners to further experiment with the flexible limits of film writing conventions, but it also encourages critics to speculate on the implications of screenplay form for a theory of the implied author.

An important result of a project that features the emergence of screenplays as a viable literary commodity is that one accrues a respectable volume of resources, more than can be productively or cohesively incorporated back into the dissertation. As such, this chapter closes with some title recommendations for further analysis that might indicate new areas for research or additional closet subtypes to complement those already proposed: Dylan Thomas' *Rebecca's Daughters* (written in 1948, it sat unproduced for 44 years and holds the Guinness record for the longest interval between conception and execution); Ken Russell's *Dracula* (written in 1978 and published in 2009 by his biographer, Paul Sutton); Harold Pinter's 1965 screenplay *The Compartment* (planned as part of a triple-bill, only one of

[70] The fact that Tallis writes his own death into the screenplay (two scientists, Loola and Dr. Poole, discover his tombstone bearing the dates 1882-1948 in the desert north of Los Angeles) cleverly makes his film's promise of mankind's destruction a textual certainty.

which was produced, Pinter rewrote it for television as *The Basement*), *The Dreaming Child* (1997, as yet unproduced but published in his *Collected Screenplays, vol. 3*) and *Victory* (1982, as yet unproduced but published in his *Collected Screenplays, vol. 2*); Harlan Ellison's *I, Robot* (considered unfilmable based on the available technology and budget, it was serialized in *Asimov's Science Fiction* magazine in 1987, and published in book form as *I, Robot: The Illustrated Screenplay* in 1994); Tennessee Williams' *One Arm* (which began as a short story published in 1948, was adapted posthumously for the stage, but remains unproduced as a film); Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Saint Paul: A Screenplay* (1977, alternatively titled "Outline of a Screenplay for a Film About Saint-Paul in the Form of Notes for a Production Director"); Orson Welles' *The Cradle Will Rock* (published in 1994, it was written about his staging of the Marc Blitzstein opera of the same title in the 1930s; the film was never made); James Agee's *The Blue Hotel* and *Noa Noa* (both published in 1983 in *Agee on Film, vol. 2: Five Film Scripts*); Robert Anton Wilson's *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* (published in book form in 1997); Stanley Kubrick's *Napoleon* (a large-scale biographical script about the French emperor, published in 2011 with the added subtitle "The Greatest Movie Never Made"); Raymond Queneau's *The Flight of Icarus* (a 2009 novel translated from French and presented in the form of a script).

CONCLUSION: THE REALITY OF SCREENPLAY FICTION

My introductory chapter established both the scarcity of script-focused studies and the need for critical methodologies capable of attending to screenplay analysis outside of production. In response, I suggested that presuming fictionality (with regards to the film a reader infers) makes a strong claim for the script's aesthetic autonomy. Whereas a blueprint acts in service of another art form, a fictional blueprint puts its own rhetorical aims first; not to bring about a film necessarily, but to engage the imagination with its potential performance. My conclusion first reviews the findings of the research: the critical discourse influencing the appreciation of (particularly silent) film as an art, at the expense of the titling practices that supported it; the rise of cinematic writing and the tensions that developed between acts of description and observation with the introduction of the camera lens; the specific textual markers that cue readers to imaginatively "direct" screenplays as a condition of their narrative intelligibility; and, finally, some interpretive labels for literary film scripts reflective of the rising phenomenon of screenplay technique in fiction writing. Secondly, this section predicts some of the future implications of the proposed interpretive strategy as an intervention against the objections to the screenplay as reading material.

FINDINGS

Chapter 1: Film's visual language came at the expense of film's actual words

Coming to this matter from practice, I embarked upon this project by examining some of the vocational approaches to screenwriting—methods that go hand-in-hand with the popular screenwriting manuals of Robert McKee, Syd Field and Christopher Vogler—and scrutinizing them, as any researcher would. I noticed that under the pretence of 'theory', these prescriptive manuals perpetuate two interrelated discourses about the nature and function of screenwriting: 1-that film is the artwork to which the craft of screenwriting contributes; 2-because it outlines a film performance, a screenplay is a technical document, not reading material. Taken together, they imply that scripts are not literary entities, which is a prejudice embedded in classical film theory, as I came to realize, with even deeper roots in 18th-century comparisons of painting and poetry.

Because screenplay studies presently carries with it certain historical assumptions about its object's essential role—some formulated within academia, and some evolving from inside the film industry—I wanted to unravel them to find alternative starting points from which to battle the "blueprint" problem. My research efforts identified three recurring themes of screenplay discourse relevant to this issue: the reader's appreciative practice with respect to the screenplay as a literary work; the materiality of film as a moving image medium; and the artificial separation of conception (writing) from execution (directing). Amid these conversations that were, in effect, really about film's textuality being made up of images (and sound, sometimes), one question kept lurking in the background: what about film's literal words? My answer is three-fold, corresponding with the themes as they are outlined above:

1. Despite satisfying the conditions for being literary (because they use words and employ literary devices), screenplays are not considered on par with other literary works such as theatrical scripts and novels because screenwriting, as Carroll puts it, is "a contributing creative ingredient" to the artwork, not a full expression by itself. *Screenplays do not immediately invite aesthetic engagement because they are, ontologically, inseparable components of a film performance.*

2. Classical film theorists justified their harsh criticism of titling practices by grounding it in claims about the nature of the silent film medium. Bringing empirical investigations in the social sciences to bear on the study of cinema, they maintained that film did not simply record reality; it "pictured" the mind and revealed its inner workings by way of an aesthetic process. With the goal of legitimating film as an art that objectifies our psychology, these early critics urged filmmakers to channel the expressivity of film form, without any interference from verbal language. *It is in film's nature to model the structures of perception and cognition, which specifies a range of desired aesthetic effects that excludes words.*

3. The directorial execution of a screenplay fulfills its artistic promise. Once the film is made, the finished picture provides the aesthetic gratification, establishing a hierarchy in which the film eclipses the provisional (and only partially cinematic) script. *The separation of conception and execution differentiates screenwriting from other forms of dramatic writing (like playwriting) because the writer is not involved in an integrated creation.*

Upon closer inspection, the evidence that precludes the appreciation of screenplays as complete artworks, or as works of literature, is produced through analogical reasoning. For example, by comparing the screenplay to other two-tiered art forms such as theatre, dance, and music, that can be separated into two distinct works (the performance plan and the performance), Carroll concludes that the film script is ontologically bound to producing a particular film, whereas a performance plan's art status owes to the possibility of producing multiple interpretations. Similarly, early film aestheticians hinged their theories on the possibility of relating the mechanisms of perception to the cinematograph. Their preference for particular styles of filmmaking—styles that transformed the way we normally see the world, using properties and techniques unique to film (editing, camera angles, black and white photography, close-ups)—became confused with appeals to the nature of the medium. Film words were bad because they were unnatural and, therefore, undesirable, not just from an aesthetic viewpoint, but also from an intelligibility standard, despite the overwhelming evidence that silent films were rarely executed without inter-titles.[1] Finally, using the theatrical script (or any other time-honoured performance plan that already qualifies as art) as a baseline from which to determine the screenplay's non-eligibility as an art form, disregards the reality that both engage in the art of written composition. A play-text's status as a performance plan, whether theatrical or filmic, is irrelevant to its art status; what makes it art, Nannicelli argues, "is, quite simply, the fact that it is a literary work."[2]

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[1] Kamilla Elliott's investigation into the contradictory claims that Dickens' novels were cinematic but that words were not uncovers an interesting fact pertaining to the rise in use of title cards, subtitles, leaders and captions despite critics insisting that these practices were on the decline. She writes: "While some early and late silent films do indeed manage without intertitles and, while there is a temporary reduction in the length of intertitles between the early silent period (before 1908) and the middle silent period (1908-17), in the late silent period (1918-26), when the celebrated visual "language" (editing) is firmly established, in the majority of films, intertitles are far more prolix and appear much more frequently than before film "language" took root." See: "Cinematic Dickens and Uncinematic Words" in *Dickens on Screen*, ed. John Glavin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 115.
[2] Ted Nannicelli, *A Philosophy of the Screenplay* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 123.

Analogies can be persuasive and powerful tools, but they should be reciprocal and relational, not rivalrous or hierarchical. I presented Kamilla Elliott's looking-glass analogy as an example of just such an approach, a perspective on interart rhetoric and practice that "ensures an endless set of inversions and reversals rather than a one-sided usurpation."[3] Taking inspiration from her critical model for adaptation studies, I devised my own metaphor for screenplay studies: the fictional blueprint, which simultaneously contains and inverts the otherness of its technical and literary functions. By suggesting that these textual modes are connected instead of in binary opposition, the screenplay can coincidentally be seen as operating within the industrial and literary spheres, as both a performance guide and as reading material.

Chapter 2: Camera-eye notions aestheticize literature, but not the screenplay

Recognizing that the tensions with which the screenplay is fraught (as a film technique based in language) are descended from the same tensions that exist between novels and films (particularly in the context of screen adaptations), I wanted to frame the question of how screenwriting mediates a filmic image in relation to how other forms of writing invoke camera-like perception (and vice-versa). The camera-eye analogy has been so pervasive in the critical theorization and popular discussion of cinema since its inception, that it has become part of the fabric of our language to describe other arts (such as the third-person viewpoint in literature). For this reason, I traced this cinematic eye in writing through four narratives from the fields of Soviet cinema, literary adaptation, Victorian fiction, and early screenplay studies. These were areas I felt best highlighted how institutional discourses

[3] Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 212.

borrow their notions of imagery (in relation to picturing, imagining, or perceiving), while characterizing their art's sign or medium in opposition to what W.J.T Mitchell calls its "significant other".[4] This led me down a winding path to unfold a pattern of contrasting attitudes and practices that make literature "words" and film "images". Here I summarize the relevant narratives that encapsulate the categorical distinctions that persist between verbal novels and visual films, and account for the undue neglect of the crossbred screenplay's literary aspects:

1. Although open to the screenplay's literary status, the leading Soviet film theorists and practitioners challenged the ideological role of words in the form of narration. They thought narrative to be both an apolitical and antiquated expression, and chose to align screenwriting with imagery instead. *The rhetorical effect we would normally associate with the deliberate arrangement of words was attributed to montage—cinematography plus editing (the "kino-eye")—disguising the fact that montage was often dependent upon verbal discourse, and conceived as a linguistic link between filmmaking and writing.*

2. When George Bluestone determined that the novel's words and film's images gave rise to incompatible aesthetic experiences, he was looking at 20th century interart practices through the eyes of an 18th century philosopher. G.E. Lessing's 1776 influential essay on the neoclassical division between painting and poetry provided the critical backbone Bluestone needed, to elevate literary production above cinema and to declare adaptation a theoretical impossibility. On the other hand, those, like Sergei Eisenstein, who insisted upon the historical influence of "cinematic" novels on film, made

[4] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 47.

adaptation out to be the natural outcome of their comparison. *In either case, the assumption that a novel is a medium of words, and cinema a medium of images, painted the process of adaptation as one of the subordination of writing to camera work.*

3. The "cinematic" novel was a bizarre hybrid, born in the 20th century, out of interart theories stressing the kinship between literature and its sister arts. *Ut cinema poesis*, several critics proclaimed, publishing studies whose titles bore the insignia of their comparitist views. With *Fiction and the Camera-Eye*, Alan Spiegel outlined the "common body of thought and feeling" uniting filmic narration with that of the novel.[5] In *Film and Fiction*, Keith Cohen presented cinema in relation to a *zeitgeist*, one that answered for the "impact of movie sensibility on novel techniques."[6] *These correlative characteristics were aggressively pursued from both sides of the disciplinary divide, not because literature was intuitively analogous to film, but because links to film made Victorian fiction seem ultra-modern, while ties to the novel made cinematic realism all the more striking.*

4. Early attempts to "discipline" screenwriting often referred to composition as a dramatic technique imprinted, in a painterly manner, onto the screen. Victor Freeburg's aesthetics of film was crafted as a motion study—of mise-en-scène, camera positions, angles and arrangements—that stressed the intelligent application of pictorial principles to classify film among the arts. For Vachel Lindsay, the belief that poetic composition begins with a picture that lingers in the mind's eye charmed him to the symbolic dimension of the cinematic image. He thought that our civilization had

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[5] Alan Spiegel, *Fiction and the Camera-Eye: Visual Consciousness in Film and the Modern Novel* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), xiii.
[6] Keith Cohen, *Fiction and Film: The Dynamics of Exchange* (London: Yale University Press, 1979), 2.

culminated in film, having come full circle from its origins in the old writing system of hieroglyphic language. *The study of screenwriting was conceived as an education, as much for practitioners as for audiences, in how to communicate with moving pictures, portraying film as a non-verbal, symbolic language that could be read without any reference to words at all.*

The chapter closed with a section on Imagist poetry, to suggest that a historical poetics of the screenplay should give a sense of the continuing line of aesthetic development from "lens-based" traditions that use concrete imagery, a function that proves to be distinct from its blueprint function as a production document. Imagist techniques, which commit to the perceptual precision of writing, concise composition, and the rhythms of natural speech, gel with the art of the screenplay. This is because they commonly reflect, embody and shape the aesthetic revolution we associate with modernism, which is consistent, by circumstance, with the history of cinema. If film/literary theory can variously invest in camera-eye notions to "cinematize" literature, or to confer onto film linguistic manners, there is ample opportunity for screenplay studies to entertain both claims: that cinema is a discourse, and that words can emulate it.

Chapter 3: Films show, novels tell, and screenplays recount their own enactment

The conventional thinking that defines film along the lines of visualization (and novels along verbal ones) is cut from the same cloth that dichotomizes showing and telling. Film enacts, while novels recount. That a motion picture can also narrate, purely at the level of image, is a false analogy, naturalized by the common practice of according properties to

film that are conventionally associated with verbal texts. Likewise, the concept of voice in the early days of cinema—specifically, how voice contributes to narrative efficiency—came from film's imitating other art forms. Synchronized sound was modeled after the theater; film music after the opera and melodrama; and commentary after vaudeville and the magic lantern shows. The notion that film "speaks", even without the verbal counterpoints of dialogue, titles or lyrics, sustains the image/word hierarchy by exploiting the logical fallacy that film images simply narrate themselves. This thrusts into the background any acts of narration in a screenplay text, and clouds the conventions that have arisen to engineer the cinematic equivalent of a verbal narrator.

My goal was to give a more precise picture of the historical circumstances that enabled the script to graduate from its blueprint status as an instructional outline, to an autonomous text with a layered narrative discourse. I argued that as the cinema matured, both as an industry and an artistic medium, screenwriting presented with higher levels of diegetic narrativity to accommodate the profound changes in film style (such as cross-cutting and sync sound). It did so by assimilating drama's mimetic mode (direct representation) and literature's diegetic mode (report, description, commentary) through the storytelling frame I call fictional blueprint. Whereas the silent scenario was limited in its narrative capacity, offering little more than a plot synopsis, the continuity script made a clear distinction between story and discourse. Part technical manual, part performance plan, the continuity not only sectioned actions and dialogue into shots, it also indicated their dramatic significance. The format steadily evolved into the current standard—the master-scene script—as practitioners patented film's "narrator-effect" into a distinct literary practice unto itself. Two discursive layers (filmic projection, technical blueprint) were added, nested like a set of Chinese boxes atop the "story" layer, to assist in some aspect of cueing

the reader to a finite, possible world of the film. With these changes, the mimetic theory of screenwriting (operating by the adage "show, don't tell") became ill equipped to explain the dynamics of narration within the screenplay.

As the field of literary studies gives way to a plurality of narratolog*ies*, script-centered research can assert itself by developing a sense of the kind of narrative text a screenplay is. Naturally, the most fruitful line of investigation starts with the question *who speaks in a screenplay*? As it turns out, the initial distinction between enactment and narration is productive if we understand performance as a subcategory of narrative as opposed to its rival. For example, instead of defining the screenplay strictly as a performance plan, one that awaits its narrative fulfillment as a film, I prefer to accept that written dramatic texts are narratives about a performance. To paraphrase Claycomb, the script is not just the story it relates; it also narrates its own production. Like a recipe offers instructions for an ideal scene of cooking to a potential cook, the screenplay-as-fictional-blueprint addresses its reader using a second-person mode that shapes its reading as the story of the making of a film. Because drama usually remains cordoned off from the study of narrative, Claycomb's intervention involves a form of narrative analysis that "details the possible relationships between dramatic texts and the performances that derive from those texts," based on the reader's interpretation of certain grammatical clues.[7] I used this idea as a steppingstone to understand how the unique textual features of screenplay literature tell us how to read toward a possible film performance. My study identified four scenes of address specific to screenwriting, in the following configurations:

[7] Claycomb's findings reveal four subtypes of this relationship: 1) possible performances ('here's how you *could* produce this play'); 2) narrating the ideal performance ('here's how you *should* produce this play'); 3) unstageable narration ('here's how you *should, but cannot* produce this play'); 4) the past practitioner as protagonist ('here's how we *did* produce this play'). See: Ryan Claycomb, "Here's How You Produce This Play: Towards a Narratology of Dramatic Texts" in *Narrative*, 21.2 (2013), 160.

1. An imperative voice that interpellates the reader to a film technical role.
2. A first-person plural that speaks to the reader as a member of the film audience.
3. A camera-narrator who reveals events from outside the story world.
4. Free indirect speech that draws from the whole atmosphere of the fictional blueprint.

The overarching mode of address—"here's how you execute this film"—accommodates many variables. For instance, the narratee "you" can fluctuate, from an ideal spectator to the protagonist of the fictional blueprint frame story (either an actual practitioner or an imagined one, who exists in the mind of the casual reader), just as the narrative about "how to execute" can change, whether a person is reading the script for pleasure, with the intent to make a movie of it, or if an existing film offers something for comparison. What does not appear to vary across modern-day screenplays is the hypothetical form of the implicit second-person; an act of narration that recounts a story in the style of a guidebook. Therefore, I believe "who speaks" in a screenplay (besides the cast of characters contained within the storyworld, and, if any, extradiegetic voice-over) closely resembles Sternberg's notion of a hidden director—the implied author constructed by the writer (or reader) to be the source of commentary on the production. The value in divorcing the screenwriter from the cinematic-technical voice of the hidden director is that it transitions the script from a real production context into the realm of the fictional. This means that the narrator's perspective, which I link to different "camera" entities (including motivated, anthropomorphic and point-of-view cameras), is not to be identified with the reality or truth of any actual film, but instead works in service of the possible performance recounted from the impossible position occupied by the hidden director (as the imaginary architect/first spectator of the fictional blueprint).

Chapter 4: Made-to-read screenplays underscore the pretense of production

If you maintain, as many people do, that a screenplay's function is to serve as an outline or a blueprint for a film, then you also likely believe that unproduced screenplays represent failed films. Alternatively, if you recognize that different readers interact with screenplays differently, and that film scripts sometimes become reading material intentionally, then you acknowledge that production is not a reliable criterion for determining what is (and what is not) a failed screenplay. Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter was to claim common ground, for made-to-read screenplays and those otherwise reassigned as literature, as complimentary ways of destabilizing production as an aesthetic strategy. Given the blueprint concept's incidental effect of confining screenplay studies' interpretive vocabulary to practical needs, I wanted to expand on the roles of the fictional blueprint both as a genre (literature-in-screenplay-form) and as a mode of reception (screenplay-as-literary form). Studying the genre of the made-to-read screenplay involves treating it as a member of a broader category—as a certain type of published screenplay. It means identifying some of the shared structural, grammatical and stylistic markers that are used to cue a fictional film production in our minds as we read. Conversely, once it exists in print, whether the author had originally intended to publish or not, screenplay literature seems to authorize an interpretive strategy that flips the usual hierarchy that puts production above its blueprint. Instead, it suggests a reading practice that is primarily oriented towards understanding the blueprint as a fictional pretense to its production. What these closeted, made-to-read screenplays revealed was a subterranean world in which screenwriting, sheltered from the realities of motion-picture making, exposes obstacles to its own execution, interpretation and narration not otherwise considered, leading to questions not usually asked about a blueprint for a production. For instance,

does the text meet the minimal aesthetic requirements of fictional discourse? What are the signposts of fictionality in a screenplay? Is the narrative we read in a script an embedded one (the creator's imagined narrative plus the implied author's guide for its possible performance)? In what manner does the controlling frame narrative (the blueprint-for-production frame) drive us back toward reading, as opposed to performance? Does the presumption of fictionality remove or incite doubts that concern the real world of motion-picture production?

I presented four examples of literature-in-screenplay-form because each brought a unique emphasis to the different authorial motives and contextual factors that constitute the genre. They were, in no particular order:

1. The *abandoned* screenplay: a fictionalized re-telling of what remains of an abandoned film, accompanied by its instructions for production.
2. The *interpretive* screenplay: a theoretically driven exercise that relies on screenwriting technique as a literary analytical tool.
3. The *rejected* screenplay: a script renegotiated for publication as a reaction against production's claim over literary authorship.
4. The *satirical* screenplay: a novel that playfully integrates a production narrative for an unstageable film.

I chose Norman's closet screenplay concept because it made possible certain insights into how screenwriters can otherwise conceive of the relation between author and production, and why they might favour publication over performance. What I found to be consistent across the case studies, besides their conditional nature as production plans, was a

continuous border crossing between fictional and dramatic narrative modes, which amounted to two kinds of production impossibilities from the reader's perspective. The two closet scripts by design, *Ape and Essence* and *Edna*, employed immoderate forms of commentary that most would consider to be un-filmable, whereas the accidental novels, *The Proust Screenplay* and *One Day When I Was Lost*, framed their screenplays as rare literary accomplishments saved from their fate as discarded production artifacts. Together, these dramatic kinds of literature stand apart from technical blueprints mainly in the sort of interpretation they invite. Instead of being about the film guided by the actions of a hidden director, closet screenplays are, in my opinion, interpreted more meaningfully as idealized accounts of film performances at a remove from production.

I want to briefly revisit the section of Chapter 3 dedicated to the implied author, since it relates to why the hidden (or implied) director concept proves useful as a reading strategy, even in the medium of the novel. I concluded that section with the proposal that the implied author is a function of the screenwriter's intent for the script—an intuited, hidden director who guides the reader through the work, with instructions for its ideal execution. I also identified the 3 narrative vantage points in a master scene script that can play host to the author's constructive intention: the fictional storyworld, the imaginary movie screen, and the hypothetical film set. It follows that the process of interpreting a screenplay is wrapped up with the question of where to locate the writer's figurative voice in the text, a search largely determined, I believe, by what Sternberg calls the functional stages (or reading phases) of a script. At the property stage, the voice holds implications for the immediate appeal and marketplace potential of the storyworld level. At the blueprint stage, it suggests the degree of importance of production choices to the effect of the projected film. At the reading material stage, it can take a variety of stances in negotiation with

performance, consistent with the tone and grammar of the written work. Certainly, the ways in which a screenplay can be thought to narrate a film production will depend very much upon the reader's purpose and interest, but I would argue that even with made-to-read screenplays, the reader's search for coherency compels them to posit a hidden director in connection with certain spots of indeterminacy; the deliberate gaps and blanks within the text.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

One of the main points of discussion throughout this thesis has been that the screenplay should be acknowledged as a readable medium. It would be satisfying if the fictional blueprint concept could solve all the relevant problems for defending screenwriting as a distinct literary practice, in addition to opening doors to new interactions between screenplay literature and film production. However, even if the metaphor puts up certain obstacles to appreciating scripts this way, the benefits are tangible. For one thing, to regard the screenplay's status as fictional and deviated from any concrete production reality, always points playfully back to the writer's act of creative imagination. We entertain the possibility of a film as a fact of the script, irrespective of our experience or knowledge of some finished film made from it. Furthermore, unlike the original blueprint definition, which suggests that production is what motivates the interpretation of a script, its fictional counterpart offers itself up to a much wider set of interpretive, literary and narratological strategies. The lesson to remember is that, far from being incompatible with reading film scripts vis-à-vis their production context, considering them as standalone works simply allows us to see that literature and filmic blueprints are not mutually exclusive. I suspect

that a significant aspect of future screenplay research will consist of representing them as complementary positions in a methodological continuum.

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