Adaptation in the filmmaking industry

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)

Adaptation is a huge part of the film industry, and makes up a high number of its profits. Film adaptations range from novels to comic books to plays to short stories, and all make up an important part of the film industry and a great venue for audiences to enjoy various films. Some of the most infamous titles in the film industry are adaptations: The Godfather, The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Twilight, Jurassic Park, etc. These are some of the biggest names in the film industry, and all where financial and commercial successes in their genres and times. The process of adapting a film from written text is a specific process, and differs from the usual workflow of creating an ' original' film. One of the major factors that make adaptation interesting to me is the fact that it provides a base to build on for the project, a predestined setting, characters, and plot. It is not the process of creating something out of nothing, but rather improving and creating something from an already existent context, and this is a process I am highly interested in. The ability to be able to put my own imagination and vision into a project that interests me and has a base for me to build on.

Through the use of literature from industry professionals, the project will look to discuss and perhaps answer certain questions and dilemmas regarding the field of adaptation, as well as provide an example of adaptation through the forming of a short adaptation film. Mostly focusing on camera work and color, and the aspect of fidelity and its conception. While I have learned a lot in my past two year of studying film, adaptation is the one factor I believe we did not come into enough contact with; therefore, this project will serve as a further path to understanding the field of filmmaking.

Objectives

The first and most important objective of the project was for a short story to be picked for the process of adapting it into a short film. While there are many options out there, I relied on one author and his short stories, Jeffery Archer. He is the author of both novels and a collection of short stories, which include the book titled " A Quiver Full of Arrows", from which I picked out one story.

Based upon this story, a screenplay would be constructed, which was the second objective. Now another factor that was researched was the difference between a script and a screenplay, and which would be a better choice to construct. The first thing I encountered was the fact that the two terms are in some cases interchangeable, while in others they may mean separate things. The fact of the matter being that a screenplay is a written component which would be shown on the screen as a film or TV show, and while a script may also be written for these components, it may also be written for a play, video game, or radio program. Even though in some cases the two terminologies may be considered the same thing, I chose to write a screenplay for the purpose of having a correct written component for the production phase, and because a screenplay would help me write up not only the dialogue and actions of the actors, but also the locations, props, costumes, shots, and scene transitions, which would all help me to better communicate my ideas with the crew and be able to see problems within the writing.

The next objective of the project was to gather a cast and crew, and shoot and edit the project. This phase was split into two parts: gathering the crew,

and casting the actors. The casting was done first, and the way it functioned was this: each actor/actress who applied for the casting was sent the full screenplay of the project, given an explanation on the story and its characters, and was organized to come at a specific time and place for the casting (all actors and actresses had the possibility to ask any further questions and discuss the screenplay and characters with me prior and post casting). After the casting was done and the picking processes for the actors was underway, the crew was assembled. The crew was a small one, and consisted solely of colleagues and friends who studied film and/or sound on SAE Institute; thus gathering the crew took no time at all, yet the size of the crew was problematic.

The final objective was to construct the film in post-production. This was key to the project because only in the editing phase would the structure and feasibility of the project truly become physically visible. It was the phase which would show me how affective the adaptation of the story ended up to be, and if it was relevant. Considering the question of fidelity and whether or not adaptations are always successful, this was the key moment or the realization of the project, and where the true end results would arise.

The Fundamentals of Adaptation

Adaptation has been around almost as early as film itself, and the theory and practice of adapting novels, comic books, video games, short stories, etc. has since flourished and is still a major part of the film industry. Some of the oldest recorded adaptations date as far back as 1996 when the short story Rip Van Winkle, written by Washington Irving, was adapted into a set of short

films. That same year, a novel by the name of Trilby was also adapted for the screen and was titled Trilby and Little Billee; unfortunately, there is no surviving footage of this film, and hence may be disreguarded when saying it is the first adaptation. Apart from these titles, The Death of Nancy Stykes (1897) and Cinderella (1898), are also considered to be among the first adaptations for the screen. Although evidence of some titles may be lost, it could be said that the beginning of adaptation within the film industry started in the late 1890s.

Adaptation is the altering and/or modifying of one text into another, and possibly through differentiating media fields such as films, novels, plays, video games, etc. A great advantage of this is that texts can be translated through various media and may even thrive in those different medias in ways they could not in the previous one. An example being the adaptation of a novel into a film; while the novel is words and descriptions of a story, a film may put this story into a wider context through imagery, sound and music, acting, color, design, and editing.

Production and Results

During the pre-production phase of the project, the focus was to read through part of the literature and form an understanding on what adaptation is and how it functions, as well as to pick a short story which would be adapted to the short film and begin preparations. Some of the literature was still being read during production and even post-production, and this was done in order to manage the project better and develop an understanding of it through an extended period of time instead of a compressed one, which I

believe allowed me to have an objective view on certain aspects. Preparations included the following: writing a screenplay for the short story, writing up a shot list and drawing a storyboard, organizing the locations and crew, and organizing the timeframe for the shoot. The task of writing and drawing the screenplay, shot list, and storyboard was done in a timely manner, and the needed material for the film were available to the crew when needed. The problem that was apparent was with the organizing of all the other smaller parts for the production, i. e. the locations, the crew, catering, equipment, etc. Due to the fact that the project operated without a budget, limited the possibility of hiring the proper personnel to take care of the mentioned tasks, and in term added further responsibilities for me to take care of. This limited my focus on directing and caused problems for the overall production.

Aspects such as locations and equipment were at times even organized during the shooting itself. While this proved to be very stressful and complicated to control during the pre-production, there is a positive note, which is the fact that I was for the first time exposed to the side of the producer within a project. The time and effort I had to put into producing and organizing multiple aspects of the project helped me understand the process and workflow of the producer. Through the understanding of the role of the producer, I do believe that I will be able to better communicate with future colleagues who undertake this role and understand their needs and the efforts that they put into the project.

Once the equipment was booked, the main locations, cast, and crew were organized, and a final version of the screenplay was written, the production and shooting of the film was to take place. From the beginning there was a very limited timeframe in which the project would have to be completed. This was due to a multitude of factors, mainly with the limited availability of the cast, crew, and locations. The shooting lasted for three days, from the 7th of July to the 9th, and production took place at 6 locations and had a crew of twelve people, including cast and excluding extras. The limited timeframe and crew size made it very complex for the entire project to be done properly and even at all. The shooting on most locations was partially rushed and in all instances multiple problems arose which took away added time and energy from the project and crew.

During the shooting certain shots could not be filmed, the script was changed and edited multiple times, and the number of takes that were available per shot were drastically low. With that being said, both the cast and crew were able to put out the best of themselves and provided enough energy and hard work for the project to have enough material in order to function as a whole. The biggest mistake within this phase of the projects realization was the lack organization and crew, and that is something I will take from this project with great care, and try to improve upon for future projects.

Although the production phase had to be so compressed and was very stressful, I do believe that with all the varying factors and limitations considered, the final outcome is an acceptable one, and one that could be

called a success. On another positive note, from all the challenges that arose and mistakes that were made, a great deal was learned and I believe my knowledge, understanding, and respect of the field of filmmaking and adaptation has flourished.

Post-production was highly demanding, and required a great deal of focus and time in order to function properly. A plan was drawn up for the process of editing the film and a structure was set for the written component. The editing would be split into two parts. The first part was to review, edit, and finalize all the smaller and shorter scenes of the film. This was done in order for my colleagues from the sound department to have enough time to edit and design the sound for that part of the film. The smaller and shorter scenes could be edited one by one and then one by one be sent to the sound department for them to edit them. This workflow saved both time in the editing process and the sound design process, because every time one scene was finished the next could be immediately worked on. I had help in the editing process from one of my colleagues and together we were able to edit the shorter scenes on time, and then focus on the one big scene which proved to be very problematic.

The editing of the bigger scene was then also split into multiple parts in order fro the same workflow between video and sound to function, but although this was helpful it was still time consuming and the editing was also compressed. The editing of the video and sound had to be done in this manner for there to be time for consultations and the work on color of the film. During the time of editing, the work on the written component was

taking place simultaneously. Although the structure for it was fixed in pre-production, the actual writing of it started after production and lasted the entirety of post-production.

Focus on Camera and Color

From the beginning of the project the goal was to focus mainly on the camera work and color of it, because these are the aspects that are most related to the visual field, and since the original text is a written component these would be the most relevant to focus on due to the fact that the project is a visual adaptation.

In terms of camera work and shoots, the idea was to not over saturate the visual component with varying and overly dynamic shoots and editing because the story is also one of minimal dynamic variety, and so the shoots that were taken enough to form a structured story but did not go too far from their element.

The color was considered in more or less the same manner. The only difference was that the color was used in order to provide a dynamic feel within the visual component. This was done because the story is told in three different time periods, and the color is changed accordingly in order for the audience to differentiate between them and sense the difference in the mood.

These aspects will be further explained and focused on in the next chapter.

Discussion and Results

The colors for each scene were chosen to communicate a different state of the main character, where the realistic color pallet was used for the real-time state, a more yellowish hue was used for his remembrance of a certain scene from the past, and a blueish hue was used to represent the oldest and coldest state. Below is a diagram which shows the different colors and how certain films may manipulate them in order to express the films main idea. Not only was the color chosen as such for the characters state of mind, but also for the stories timeline. The story takes place in three separate time lines, and a different hue was chosen for each one in order for the audience to also know which reality they are in. This usage of color can be seen in many films, such as; " Intolerance" (1916), " Toy Story 3" (2010), Vertigo (1958), and perhaps the most essential example, " Moonlight" (2016). Moonlight being the essential example because the film also involves a character which we follow through three different time lines, and with that the color pallet is changed for each one in order for the audience to know we have jumped time and transitioned with the character.

From the beginning of the visualization of the project there were two shows that spawned inspiration for the color scheme of the film. The first being " The Americans". A show in which the two main settings are America and Russia, and the plot takes place in the cold war period. What is ingeniously done in this series, regarding color, is that whenever the series shows us the part of the story which takes place in America, the color is bright, clean and sharp, and well defined; in other words, a clear color spectrum could be seen and the color looks realistic.

On the contrary, when we are invited to view the part of the story that takes place in Russia, we are met with a very cold and blue screen of all scenes. A blueish hue is not only used to represent the much colder weather in Russia as many would think on first glance, but rather to express the hardship, depression, and control that the people of this place are experience during set time period. Once more, the blueish hue is not only used for this. It is also used to differentiate the two separate settings, and whenever the audience sees a blueish screen in any episode, they will immediately know that we are no longer in the worth and comfort of America.

In this same manner, I wanted to accomplish the differentiation between the jumping of time and setting within may film. What is an even better example of inspiration for this project would be the way the series " Fear the Walking Dead" uses its color pallet.

Once again, two separate color pallets are used in order to differentiate two settings, but what is different in " Fear the Walking Dead" is that this series uses the color change to represent a change in time, and this is precisely what I wanted to do in my film. The first setting was the real-time one, and had a more dark and grey, almost monochrome, look to it. Now although such a color pallet was not used in my film, the contrast between the next settings color pallet will help to convey what kind of transition I was going for.

The second setting was the past. This setting had a completely different color pallet; a yellowish, almost golden one.

I planned to use in the same manner this series used different color pallets to show two differentiating moods and time periods, but with my own color pallet.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Considering the limitation of budget, crew, time, and organization, the project is the best that it could have been. There are many things that could have gone better, been improved or organized, or done differently, but that is the case with every such project I believe. There is no such thing as an ideal project, and through my work and experience on this, I have understood that very well.

From my experience, the research I have done, and the knowledge I have obtained, I believe it is relevant to state that the field of adaptation is a very controversial one, provides audiences and filmmakers with a variety of views on story telling, and has to be seen from multiple perspectives. It is not enough to state that there is one right way to adapt a text into a film, but rather that every project has its own specific and unique structure and should be adapted accordingly. And while fidelity is a big question in this field, it is a factor that may vary in focus as well. The process should be to stick to the core of the original and build upon it a new or improved vision, and have that fit on screen.

Through my time working on this project I believe I have obtained knowledge that I did not possess before, I have made many mistakes, learned how each role of the production of such a project influences the outcome, and have

realized, more than ever, what it really means to be a director. The project faced many limitations, and with that I had many responsibilities and roles to fill. What could have been done more efficiently was the organization of the whole shooting, in terms of locations, crew, extras, equipment, etc. The project had a very limited timeframe of only three days of shooting due to lack of organization, and this was due to the fact that I had no one person to count on to organize such factors as the ones mentioned above, but instead had to organize them myself. While this did allow me to better understand some parts of the production of such a project, it also made my specific role as the director much harder to focus on, and in turn led to complications on set.

In reference to recommendations for future students, I can say that without a well organized crew and timeframe for the project, it will be close to impossible to realize the project.