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Mise-En-Page

An Introduction To Screenplay Style & Form

Table of Content

Introduction	3
i. Purpose and disposition of essay	3
ii. Theory & Method	4
iii. A Note on The Sample of Screenplays	4
A Brief History of The Academic Research on The Screenplay	5
iv. The Screenplay and Issues of Authorship	5
v. The Screenplay as Literature	8
vi. The Blueprint Metaphor	11
vii. Politique des Collaborateurs.....	17
viii. The Screenplay As Text	20
ix. Image Building and the Screenplay	23
x. Pasolini and The Screenplay	23
xi. Introducing The Proto-Camera.....	25
xii. Mise-en-page & Mise-en-scène.....	27
Analysis	30
xiii. Lighting & Colour	30
xiv. Colour	33
xv. Décour	36
xvi. Props	42
xvii. Costume.....	50
xviii. Action and Performance	52
xix. Space	56
xx. Anticipating The Camera	57
xxi. Anticipating The Editing Room	66
xxii. Projecting Atmosphere and Mood.....	72
xxiii. The Final Broadcast	78
Conclusion.....	85
Bibliography.....	88
Appendix	90

Introduction

This essay sets to investigate the style and form of the screenplay. Not many scholars (relatively speaking) have attempted this task before, and it is not until recent years that a considerable amount of in-depth studies of the screenplay have surfaced in the world of academia. There are many reasons for this, some which have no room here, and some of which I suspect the reader is already aware of or can already suspect, especially so the reader who is a scholar or student of film. But we shall not waste time by bringing up the academic issues at this stage as they will be discussed more thoroughly soon enough.

As a written narrative, the screenplay deserves to be examined as such. However, this narrative is in its very nature dependent, or rather its existence is indebted to, on another narrative; that of the film. And since the two seem stylistically and conceptually so far apart from each others, the screenplay has thus been left behind for the focus on the film; used only occasionally perhaps for historical reasons. While attempts have been made to read the screenplay either independently or as literature, none of these accounts seem to hold much weight. That is why I seek to emphasize the connection to film, and try to establish it not only as something pertaining to film studies in general, but more specifically so to the study of film style. By analyzing the style of screenplays, we can learn much about the interplay between director and screenplay, and the nature of how visual imagery can be evoked.

Purpose and disposition of essay

The purpose of this essay is to establish the screenplay as an object of interest to the field of film studies. I shall attempt to do so by first attempting to conceptualize it in such terms that make it relevant for film studies, and further point out its inherent cinematic style. In order to establish screenplay style as a distinctly cinematic one, I shall introduce the reader to the concept of mise-en-page; the close reading of everything that is written on the page, and how these elements of the page in turn try to evoke film style.

I will introduce the reader to a brief historical overview of the research done previously on the subject of screenplays and screenplay style by following a ‘hybrid’ disposition of two authors who wrote in a very similar fashion: Steven Price’s *The Screenplay – Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (2010) and Steven Maras’ *Screenwriting – History, Theory and Practice* (2009). This overview will take the shape of a ‘literature review’ of sorts; depicting what has been said and done within this field.

For my analysis, as mise-en-page follows along the lines of mise-en-scène, I will follow a similar disposition to that of John Gibbs in *Mise-En-Scène – Film Style and Interpretation* by describing the elements of mise-en-page and their interaction and how this interaction specifically appeals to mise-en-scène.

Theory & Method

A more detailed account of theory will be revealed through the brief historical overview of the academic research done on screenplays and screenplay style. This is done specifically so the reader can him or herself follow my lines of reasoning to see where I go and from where I derive. That said, a broader bite-sized explanation is in order:

I define the screenplay as ‘text’ according to the Barthesian notion of the word. This in turn because it allows for both the poetic and industrial aspects of the screenplay to be included and co-exist at the same time, and to account for the screenplay’s fluid form and complicated relationship to the concept of authorship.

Then, I proceed by arguing that the act of reading a screenplay is based on the concept of reading as image building; the active collaborative process of transforming written words into images. Further, by appealing to Pasolini’s theory about the screenplay as a structure that wants to be another structure, I thus argue that this image building process manifests in a distinctive cinematic way with the conventions of film style in mind.

While I will be using a of film stylistic analysis in lines with mise-en-scène in my analysis, I can already here say that as I discuss mise-en-page, influences of semiotic theory, cognitivistic theory, and linguistics will be somewhat prevalent as well. Although I will try my best to refrain from overemphasizing any over ther other.

A Note on The Sample of Screenplays

None of the screenplays I will come to use have been produced; either they are currently in development now, or they have been abandoned all together. As many of them will be mentioned as “black list” screenplays, it bears explaining what this means:

The Black List started out originally in the year 2005 as a survey done to list the favourite unproduced screenplays which producers and executives working in Hollywood had read the previous year. It has now essentially become a marker of quality for screenwriters. Notable examples include screenplays such as *Juno* (Jason Reitman, 2007) and *The Social Network* (David Fincher, 2010). For more information, see: <http://bleklst.com/>

A Brief History of The Academic Research on The Screenplay

The Screenplay and Issues of Authorship

Traditionally the director has been seen as the ‘author’, of a film. This has not always been the case, and the notion of the director as the ‘creative genius’ of the film didn’t rise to prominence until the 1950s when the French film journalists from *Cahiers du Cinéma* advanced their *politique des auteurs*, or more commonly known as ‘the auteur theory’. Explained in very broad and simple terms, the auteur theory postulates the director as the single ‘auteur’ of a film (rejecting the term ‘author’). The auteur in turn can be seen as the single creative driving force of the film; it is the director’s vision which ultimately comes through in the end. The auteur theory was introduced at a time when the ‘studio system’ (commonly likened to assembly line production) was the governing method of film production, and the people involved were seen as cogs in the machine. André Bazin and his fellow *Cahiers* collaborators thus managed to put forward a theory of film criticism which in the long run helped situate film as a form of art of its own, separate from literature, which would also be criticized on its own specific (audiovisual) merits, and helped to situate the director as ‘the artist’ of film.¹

But the auteur theory has been met with much resistance, specifically from the screenwriting community. Many screenwriters feel that the auteur theory derives them of what Maras calls “symbolic capital” within the industry.² This frustration is bluntly exemplified by Australian screenwriter Ian David:

Calling yourself an auteur in film, the most communal of art forms, is so vain it’s almost a clinical condition ... Auterism at its narrowest is a miserable, one-dimensional way of looking at the creative process of filmmaking and yet auteur theorists would have us believe it is the only way that works of value come into existence ... In fact, apportioning all the creative responsibility and credit to the director is a symptom of our increasing desire to simplify complex processes of collaboration and collective responsibility down to bite size.³

¹ For a more detailed overview of the auteur theory, see for instance *Theories of Authorship* (1981), edited by John Caughie, and *Sign and Meaning in The Cinema* (1972, 2nd edition) by Peter Wollen.

² Steven Maras, *Screenwriting – History, Theory and Practice*, London: Wallflower Press (2009) p.99

³ Maras p.99f

This claim should not be easily dismissed as mere signs of frustration and resentment, for within this statement lie seeds of truth. It is not that farfetched to believe that the insistence to frame a singular originator in film is symptomatic of a desire to liken film to the other ‘established arts’ that have singular originators: behind a book stands *one* author, and behind a painting stands *one* artist. In fact, this has not gone unnoticed by scholars interested in screenwriting. And much of the criticism toward screenwriters as filmmakers, or even as literary authors, is directed towards the fact that the screenplay exists within an industrial context. It does not come as a surprise then that screenwriters have a hard time asserting themselves as filmmakers (or auteurs) as they are hardly even recognized as (creative) authors.

Part of the criticism against the screenwriter as an author is rooted in romanticist ideology. Romanticism was opposed to so called “systematic thought”, and rejected so called externally imposed ‘rules’ deriving from Aristotelian dramaturgic theory and classicism. In short, romanticism can be said to oppose strict formalized theories of criticism.^{4 5} Therefore, the screenplay stands in direct ideological opposition to the romantic notion of a ‘literary work’, as the screenplay is bound to its form (and to some measure: an universal standardized structure) on account of partly being an industrial document. The screenplay is thus in essence a product of ‘systematic thought’: subject of revision by demands of a system, and not truly an expression of a singular author.⁶ And as the screenplay itself is bound to such a system (both industrially and in form and structure), so is the screenwriter himself, or herself, part of a system as an ‘employee’, while the true romantic writer on the other hand is “beyond the constraints of commerce entirely”.⁷ Yet recent research on romanticism has revealed that the romantic authors didn’t quite practice what their ideology preached. Specifically on the subject of multiple authorship and textual revision, research has revealed that the romantic author was not always ‘the solitary genius’ the ideology promotes. Quite the contrary, the romantic author, stretching even to today’s author, constantly engaged in collaboration with other authors or editors and actively revised their texts.^{8 9}

⁴ Steven Price, *The Screenplay – Authorship, Theory and Criticism*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan (2010) p.9

⁵ For a more detailed overview of Romanticism, see for instance *An Introduction to Modern European Literature – From Romanticism to Postmodernism* (1998) by Martin Travers.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Price p.9ff

⁹ For more information on the subject, see for instance *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (1991) by Jack Stillinger, and *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (1996) by Zachary Leader.

Even so, the notion of the ‘solitary genius’ still persists and is universally acknowledged, and this is in part because of the pragmatic convenience it brings, which David was hinting at.¹⁰ It is thus interesting to see that scholars are not willing to extend the same courtesy to screenwriters. As Price notes, part of this is the fact that the industrial reality of the screenplay is so salient:

What distinguishes the screenwriter from the novelist or poet in this respect is partly the extent of the collaboration and revision. Equally significant, however, is that, even when the sole writer of an ‘original’ script, the screenwriter will engage with producers and directors, leaving a visible paper trail of meetings and textual changes that allows for a relatively precise and detailed reconstruction of collaborative development and composition. These processes, which cause the screenplay to be widely dismissed as a corporately authored and infinitely malleable commercial product, in fact merely eliminate the masking procedures that produce the effect of spontaneous individual inspiration in more ‘literary’ texts. The novel, for instance, which is almost invariably single-authored, ordinarily introduces no comparable industrial process that would routinely demand the submission of working copy for corporate consultation and revision. The private discussions with the publisher and literary agent, the uncredited assistance from fellow writers, the various drafts that disappear forever at the touch of a computer keyboard, and the process of editing, previewing, marketing, and so on, are obscured, because the literary author is the owner of the work; the screenwriter is not.¹¹

Along with the issues of multiple authorship, textual revisions, and industry (and public) credit attribution, the issue of ownership seems to be one of the biggest hindrances to the attribution of authorship to screenwriters. Sceptic scholars might agree to call them ‘writers’, but since they do not own their work, they cannot be called authors.^{12 13} A telling example of this lies within the arguments against the attempts to liken the screenwriter to the playwright: while a play can be used over and over again, a screenplay metaphorically ceases to exist as soon as the film is completed, never to be used again.¹⁴ This has absolutely nothing to do with the ‘artistic practices’ of screenwriting, but is rather simply a legal consequence of film

¹⁰ Price p.10

¹¹ Price p.12

¹² Price p.18

¹³ See Price p.18ff for a more detailed discussion on the subject and how it is related to Michel Foucault’s discussion on the four characteristics of the ‘discourse containing the author function’.

¹⁴ Maras p.58

existing within an industrial context; it is not that the screenplay can never be used again in other productions because it wishes to be bound to and consumed by just one, it is because it is simply *legally* not allowed to do so.¹⁵

So if the screenwriter is not an author, but rather ‘only a writer’, in the same way a periodical writer or instruction pamphlet/manual writer is a ‘non-author writer’, then what exactly is the screenplay? In the following section, we shall have a quick overview of the various attempts by scholars and screenwriters to situate the screenplay as either literature, poetry, or maybe even something in-between.

The Screenplay as Literature

If the screenwriter is not an author, then, it follows that, the text he, or she, produces can not be a literary ‘work’. This argument then obviously also works the other way around; if the screenplay is not a literary work, then the screenwriter by definition can not be an author. As we have seen, even though it could be said that literary writers themselves technically don’t fulfil the criteria of being ‘authors’, the romantic notion of the solitary genius still persists and stands as an obstacle for the screenwriters. This is why advocates of screenwriting have in the past tried to argue for the screenwriters’ position by legitimizing the screenplay by referring it to as a ‘new form’ of literature.

The notion of the screenplay having literary value has been traditionally ascribed by scholars to the rise of the sound film. Because of the advent of sound, which gave rise to the prominent role of dialogue in film, the screenwriter now has a more important role in film production.¹⁶ Several attempts by scholars such as Ernest Betts and John Gassner, and others, have been made, noting the striking similarities of screenwriting to that of playwriting in theatre and highlighting specific screenplays that supposedly had literary value.¹⁷ However, none of these attempts managed to produce any real impact. One possible explanation according to Price is that the community of scholars, and others, interested in the subject of screenwriting and reading screenplays outside of the film industry, is simply too small to make any impact or to generate new ideas amongst it.¹⁸ Gassner, however, has a more aggressive stance, and maintains that scholarly research on screenwriting has been neglected

¹⁵ In fact, it is not hard to imagine how this would have also been the case for the world of theatre if the financial situation was similar and likewise driven by corporations as Hollywood cinema is. Corporate owned theatres could very well own theatre chains and copyright laws could be instilled so to prohibit rival chains from performing corporate produced plays.

¹⁶ Price p.27f, Maras p.59

¹⁷ Price p.24ff

¹⁸ Price p.26

because of “simple snobbishness”, noting that multiple collaborations, and the screenwriter’s low authorial status in copyright and publishing is the cause of this academic neglect.¹⁹

Together with Dudley Nichols they present a collection of screenplays in *Twenty Best Film Plays* (1943) and highlight their literary merits. However, the problem is that they did so by editing out all the technical jargon from the screenplays for the sake of the readers’ easement, thus actually *adapting* the screenplay into novels, ignoring the specifics of the form of the screenplay.²⁰

The form of the screenplay has also been pointed out to be the very thing which separates it from literature. Douglas Garret Winston, for instance, wrote that screenplays have ‘impoverished vocabularies’, ‘elliptical sentence structures’, and that they were not intended for publication and were rarely regarded highly by writers who have also written in other genres.²¹ They were also only intended to represent an initial *stage* in film production, as, if screenplays were ‘art proper’, so to speak, then there would be no need to film them as they would be sufficient works to read on their own.²² Winston instead argued that screenwriters should concern themselves with what ultimately amounts to a skeleton structure of a film; lay out functions and meanings, but not actual texture or depth.²³ This type of reasoning, not only argued by Winston alone, has been criticized as being banal and paying no attention to nuances of textual expression.²⁴ However, as we have hinted at previously and will return to again in later sections of this essay, the fact that the screenplay exists as an industrial document as a specific stage of film production serves as a great obstacle for the screenplay to be regarded as ‘proper’ literature.

One of the most influential scholarly work on screenwriting was written by Claudia Sternberg in 1997. In her book, *Written For The Screen: The American Motion-Picture Screenplay as Text*, she argues that just as film sits in a ‘hybrid position’ between theatre and prose, so does the screenplay share a similar position as a hybrid text; unique, but still similar to other types of text.²⁵ What distinguishes Sternberg’s work from her predecessors’ is that her work was of a *filmic* bent in nature, rather than literary, as it focuses on the distinct textual qualities of the screenplay and how it serves as a blueprint for film,

¹⁹Price p.27

²⁰ Price p.28

²¹ Price p.29

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Price p.32f

making it more a contribution to film studies than to literary studies.²⁶ The problem, according to Price, is that while Sternberg's work offers a model of clarity, the screenplay is presented as too literary to be cinematic, and too cinematic to be literature.²⁷

This does point to a certain uniqueness regarding the screenplay, though. However, advocates of screenwriting who try to appeal to the 'specificity thesis' – the appeal to features and qualities that are specific to a certain medium or artform thus making it unique and something of its own – are bound to fall in a theoretical trap: the unique elements of the screenplay (such as sluglines) have no literary value as they are purely functional, and are thus unique to the screenplay. However, the same elements also serve as references to another medium; reminders that the screenplay will eventually be superseded by 'the film'.²⁸

While appeals to literature have traditionally risked either denying the screenplay of its cinematic value for the sake of its literary value, and the other way around, some of the boldest attempts to situate the screenplay as a form of literature comes in the attempt to liken the screenplay to poetry. One such advocate, screenwriter Abraham Polonsky, wrote:

The literary form I have in mind for the screenplay is the poem. I am using the terms *poetry* and *poem* to characterise a screenplay which instead of conventional camera angles would guide the attention through concrete images (as in metaphor); which instead of stage directing the action would express it; which instead of summarizing character and motive would actually present them as data; which instead of dialogue that carries meaning where the film image fails, would be the meaning that completes the film image.²⁹

Several scholars have indeed found similarities between poetry and screenwriting, most notably so in imagist poetry: Gary David notes that the screenwriting guru Syd Field's definition of a screenplay as "a story told with pictures" would be more accurate as "a story told with word-pictures" instead, and compares the screenplay to imagist poems such as Wallace Stevens' *Peter Quince at the Clavier* (1915) and William Carlos Williams' *The Red Wheelbarrow* (1923) and concludes that the formal concerns of contemporary literature are "fully realized, perhaps more fully than anywhere else, in the form of the screenplay".³⁰ More

²⁶ Price p.30f

²⁷ Price p.31

²⁸ Price p.32

²⁹ Price p.33

³⁰ Price p.34

recently, Kevin Boone abstracted seven principles which he regarded as foundational to imagist poetry and applied them to screenplays such as *Salt of The Earth* (wr. Michael Biberman & Michael Wilson, 1953), where he recasts a few lines from the opening sequence of the screenplay and presents them in the form of poetry, and also recasts a few lines from Carlos' Williams' *The Young Housewife* (1916) in screenplay form and compares the two to argue that a connection to literature exists and that "[t]he only rhetorical distinctions between the two are context and layout".³¹ Boone also analysed screenplays such as *Total Recall* (wr. Ronald Shusett, Steven Pressfield & Gary Goldman, 1990) and *Fargo* (wr. Joel & Ethan Coen, 1996), noting the striking similarities in the opening sequences of these screenplays in the way they present "concrete images without overt narration" and that these are qualities found both in imagist poetry and screenwriting.³² From two of the "Imagist principles", Boone also ascribed a modernist prose style to screenplays due to their "focus on common speech" and "establishing new rhythms", similar to authors such as Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, James M. Cain, Dashiell Hammet, and Raymond Chandler, to which Price means the film noir genre was heavily influenced from.³³ However, as Price notes, the problem is that rather than being a 'literary device' with textual value, this is actually a widespread practice in screenwriting which you can find in almost any screenplay.^{34 35}

The proponents of the screenplay as literature have done right in pointing out the form's literary, as well as imagistic, qualities. But as we have seen, difficulties still exist in situating the screenplay as a new form of literature. To filmscholars, however, this should be of no concern, as we shall see in a later section. But before we go on, we shall first discuss another conceptualization of the screenplay in the blueprint metaphor, which fully embraces the industrial aspects of screenwriting.

The Blueprint Metaphor

As we have seen, an issue emerges when advocates have tried to argue for the screenplay as a new form of literature or when trying to invoke the specificity-thesis; the issue of the screenplay's intimate and necessary relation to (the) film. As this has traditionally failed, a counter argument has been proposed which likens the screenplay to that of a blueprint for film: a plan of structure and rhythm from which the director 'builds' the film upon. Some

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Price p.35

³⁴ Price p.35f

³⁵ For a more detailed overview of Price's criticism against the screenplay as imagist poetry, see Price p.34ff.

advocates of screenwriting embrace and support this metaphor for its at first hand empowering implications for the screenwriter. Other advocates, however, reject this metaphor for the more subtle implications on the grand scheme of things the metaphor brings with it.³⁶³⁷

One of the advantages of the blueprint metaphor according to Maras is that it situates the screenplay as a part of the (film) production context instead of an autonomous entity and works against the argument that the screenplay is a form of literature.³⁸ While the problems of the specificity-thesis are still in effect, and even more so than it would if we would argue that the screenplay is an autonomous entity which stands on its own, at the very least we are taking a step towards situating the screenplay as a subject of interest to filmstudies. There are still legitimate grounds for appreciating the screenplay for its artistic merits and its ability to evoke image and sound. However, the problem as Maras sees it is that such focus risks putting aside the broader collaborative aspects, and more technical and mechanical aspects of visualisation, in favour of “highly individualised act[s] of creative, personal imagination”.³⁹

Second, the blueprint metaphor focuses our attention to the composition or “design dimension” of cinema, and also that of ‘language’ in film. This is positive, according to Maras, because this in turn goes against the “visual bias of film theory” and the focus on the end product itself and turns attention to the processes of realisation of a film.⁴⁰ This, however, comes of somewhat as an exaggeration: one needs not invoke anything resembling the blueprint metaphor to justify studies of non-visual aspects of film. In fact, it is not uncommon at all for filmscholars to bring up discussions regarding methods of production to complement textual analyses of films. Graham Roberts study in *The Man With The Movie Camera* (2000) regarding the Soviet silent film with the same name directed by Dziga Vertov (1929), for instance, has a heavy focus on the historical context and the reception of the film along with a visual textual analysis of the film itself. However, Maras is indeed correct in pointing out that through the blueprint metaphor, a focus on language and other elements otherwise neglected because of “visual bias” become more salient.⁴¹

³⁶ For a more detailed historical overview of the blueprint metaphor’s conception and what type of industrial context it first arose in, see Maras p.117ff, and Price p. 44f

³⁷ Carl Foreman, writer of *High Noon* (1952, Fred Zinnemann), noted regarding the blueprint metaphor that “This kudos writers have received many times ... and have then wondered why the architects were barred from the building site.” Price p. 47

³⁸ Maras p.120f

³⁹ Maras p.121

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

Finally, the blueprint metaphor highlights the industrial scale of film production, specifically so in Hollywood as, supposedly, accounts of filmmaking as being analogous to house building are pretty common.⁴² However, not all filmmakers work in such a grand scale, nor do they see the analogy to be apt as they prefer to speak of filmmaking in ‘artisanal’ terms rather than architectural. Even so, the artisan analogy could be seen as merely an extension of the architect analogy, for just as house building requires resources and a team of construction workers, so does the Hollywood blockbuster require a vast amount of resources and specialized teams working on it. And, as some might be tempted to say, just as commercial house building can be fairly ‘impersonal’, so can the production of a Hollywood blockbuster also be seen as more commercial and impersonal. Meanwhile, the artisan works on a much smaller scale, has less, and needs less, resources at hand, and does most of the work himself, trying to imprint his or her own personal stamp on his or her work. This quite accurately reflects the general attitude regarding independent or art-house film production and the comparison thus seems very ‘auteur friendly’. Likewise, as the architect and the construction builders might follow the blueprint with more rigour, the artisan can enjoy more creative freedom and does not need to stick to his notes when commencing his craft.

Still, the blueprint metaphor itself undoubtedly favours a studio system context with its implied structural preciseness and implied assembly line logic. While Maras can find positive qualities within the blueprint metaphor, Price sees nothing positive about it, going so far as stating that “The blueprint metaphor compromises the aesthetic and thematic seriousness of the text, because it ascribes to the screenwriter a bathetic non-
imagination[...]”⁴³ But despite the positive features that Maras can find in the blueprint metaphor, he notes that it also causes certain misconceptions.

The first misconception Maras brings up is the above mentioned notion that film production is a form of assembly where everything goes according to plan. This is simply not true, and screenplays can, and have been, revised during every stage of filmmaking, even during production itself. And the reasons for this can vary from pragmatic decisions to creative disagreements.⁴⁴⁴⁵ It is thus safe to say that the chance of a screenplay being finalized and ready to be ‘shot as written’, is very minimal.

⁴² Maras p.121f

⁴³ Price p.46

⁴⁴ Maras p.123

⁴⁵ Two notable examples are the productions of *Gone With Wind* (1939, Victor Fleming, George Cukor & Sam Wood), where producer David O. Selznick would hire and fire a handful directors and screenwriters during the production of the film, and *Blade Runner* (1982, Ridley Scott) where the production was essentially hijacked

Second, the blueprint metaphor brings a misconception regarding the nature and the role of the screenplay. While it is true that one of the positive aspects of the blueprint metaphor is that it highlights the industrial context the screenplay resides in, at the same time the implications the metaphor invites are *too* industrial and neglect the creative aspect of screenwriting. Screenplays are not written after mathematical formulas with intricate details on camera positions, set details or the likes. Such over detailed practices are neither appreciated nor encouraged in screenwriting.⁴⁶ As Price notes, screenplays are often in reality actually purposely vague in such matters: “Exactly how big is the ‘coffee shop somewhere in New Mexico’ that is the first location in Quentin Tarantino’s screenplay *Natural Born Killers*? It is a question that probably a director, and certainly a set designer or location manager, would ask – but not a reader, and probably not a writer either.”⁴⁷

One might still feel tempted to note the emphasis put on structure in a majority of screenwriting manuals, and thus conclude that while screenplays are not formulaic in a mathematical sense, they are still formulaic in a structural sense. However, narrative structure in film should rather be seen as convention than anything resembling technical imperatives on how to construct a narrative. And as such, as Maras points out, the modern screenplay is more than just an industrial document; it is also part poetic text. Understanding the screenplay as a poetic object is useful since “Poetic writing draws on a different idea of precision that can be described as ‘crystalline’. By describing images with poetic clarity and intensity a script can enable other film workers to build on this structure and take the process of crystallisation further.”⁴⁸ This is important to note, and we will return to this point in a later section when detailing the purpose of mise-en-page. Furthermore, Maras points out that this insight is essential for anyone who wishes to read and or evaluate a screenplay for its creative merits, as even the act of reading a screenplay is, in a sense, also a creative exercise.⁴⁹

The third misconception Maras points out is that it minimizes the creative input of other collaborators and factors in the production process by binding it so strictly to the writer. Also, the metaphor marginalizes alternative forms or models of screenwriting which wish to deviate from the standard Hollywood format (such as, for instance, a documentary script).⁵⁰

from producer/screenwriter Hampton Fancher and saw a total screenplay rewrite from screenwriter David Webb Peoples.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Price p.46

⁴⁸ Maras p. 124

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

This leads Maras to propose an alternative conception of the process of 'scripting' (which for Maras is essentially the process of story development as traditionally written down on page⁵¹) to that of 'notation'.⁵² While the traditional idea of 'scripting' is bound to the (written) page and risks downplaying the collaborative nature of story development, the idea of 'notation' enables us to think beyond the standardized form of screenwriting and include other alternative forms of screenplays which implement alternative means to tell a story beyond traditional screenplay prose. Put shortly, for Maras, the desire to record affects, images, and thoughts, is essentially notation that takes on the form of 'scripting' in screenplays as we have come to know them. The simple point is that a screenplay can look, and be 'written', differently depending on the nature of the project and which creative forces (people) are behind it and in what type of industrial or cultural context they are in. This is fitting as it also addresses how come some screenplays are more or less 'communicative' than others. For instance, a screenwriter intent on directing his or her own film might be less inclined to follow the formalities of 'traditional screenwriting', so to speak, and instead writes down information only relevant or decipherable to him or her, which might come off as puzzling or confusing to a third party reader. Meanwhile, the screenwriter writing for spec and hoping to get his or her script sold to a producer has more reasons to abide to the formalities of screenwriting to communicate his or her story in order to sell it.

However, Maras' idea of notation is not sufficient for the purposes of this study. The reason for this is that he seems more interested in the collaborative aspects of screenwriting in relation to filmmaking in general, rather than the aesthetics of the screenplay itself. This could explain how come Price raises another objection against the blueprint metaphor which Maras seems not to have mentioned:

Although it is only the metaphorical usage of the blueprint figure that can properly be applied to the screenplay, the insidious connotations of the literal meaning have proven persistently damaging. It implies that the screenplay is of value only as a set of practical guidelines to be followed by others who will make the finished product; that it is, in effect, erased in the creation of the film, remaining of value thereafter only as a record of planning; that it can only be a model of structure rather than a work of aesthetic interest; and that

⁵¹ See Maras p. 2ff for a short overview over his idea of 'scripting' and how that has come to affect the look of the screenplay.

⁵² Maras p. 124 - 129

the screenwriter is[...] essentially a drawer-up of recondite documents rather than an artist in his or her own right.⁵³

This is a very compelling argument for why the blueprint metaphor is not an appropriate conception for film scholars interested in the aesthetics of the screenplay. And while Maras' alternative might be more appealing than the blueprint metaphor, neither does it serve us in our endeavours. This is not to say that Maras is 'wrong', it is just that his priorities lie elsewhere. As a matter of fact, Maras does not criticize the standardized screenplay, he is just concerned that a particularist discourse around the screenplay limits and frames understanding of creative processes involved in film making:

In defence of the page-bound and formatted script, it should be noted that these forms support quantification, evaluation, and record-keeping in extremely effective ways[...] By linking 'reading' to 'visualisation' page-bound forms offer a relatively low-cost means for pre-imagining a project, and offer one way of placing interpretation in the service of the filmmaking process. These benefits of the page-bound script do not, however, necessarily cancel out the significance of alternative forms of scripting, which invite a broader understanding of the 'creative process', and the multiple forms of scripting (with bodies, improvisations, machines, light, storyboards, notes, scribbles, gestures) that can support production. In other words, alternative forms of scripting can provide different ways of thinking about production, especially collaboration, beyond the blueprint.⁵⁴

We should, however, not be so quick to dismiss the ideas presented here; the blueprint metaphor correctly highlights the industrial context the screenplay is situated in, and there is no denying that in more lucrative industries such as Hollywood or Bollywood, the script development procedures have evolved from proven methods which are very precise. This is very important to remember if one is to study style and form in screenplays as one also has to be able to account from what context this form or style has evolved from. But Maras is also right in pointing out that a particularist approach to studying screenplays risks not only to undermine alternative forms of scripting, it also sets screenwriting apart as a distinct separate stage before what would 'creatively' constitute as 'film making'. We will discuss this issue further in the next section, as we return briefly to the issue of auteur theory and authorship.

⁵³Price p. 46

⁵⁴Maras p.129

Politique des Collaborateurs

As has been previously mentioned, there is a common belief among the screenwriting community that the auteur theory deprives them of credit they feel they rightfully deserve. But is this actually the case? Must the auteur theory be viewed in such an antagonistic manner? Maras actually suggests that advocates of screenwriting and the original advocates of the auteur theory share common ground.⁵⁵

According to Maras, at the heart of both the auteur theory and the 'screenwriting lobby' lies the desire to break the separation of 'conception' and 'execution'.⁵⁶ Maras writes that in a system "[w]here there is no separation, conception can change in the doing of the thing; the exact plan or shape of the project is not foreclosed. Where a separation exists, however, conception is fixed in a process of design, and execution becomes the implementation of that design."⁵⁷ In short, 'conception', which can be understood as (script) development or pre-production, and 'execution', which can be understood as production/shooting, have become separated as distinct *creative* stages in film production throughout the course of history. This has framed the debates over creative control to, misguidedly, focusing on which stage creative attribution should be put.⁵⁸ While the effects of the separation of conception and execution is the essential concern in common for both screenwriters and the original advocates of the auteur theory, it is expressed differently:

For screenwriters, this is expressed by the anxiety that not seldom comes with the process of 'handing over' a screenplay for production; the symbolic act of handing over creative control of the screenplay to another agent. This is intimately tied to the issue of the separation of conception and execution, and one screenwriter who advocated against this division was Dudley Nichols, who in his 1943 essay 'The Writer and the Film' writes about his concern of the subdivision of arts and crafts into 'specialized functions', such as writing, directing, composing music, and so on. Nichols saw this subdivision as detrimental to attempts to situate film as an art form, and argued instead for reintroducing a sense of 'integrated creation' back in to the industry.⁵⁹

Truffaut, on the other hand, argues in his 1954 article 'A Certain Tendency in the French Cinema, that (among other things) cinema should not be reduced to a visual form of adaptation of literature, where the director, or more specifically the 'metteur-en-scène', is

⁵⁵Maras p. 98

⁵⁶Maras p. 101ff

⁵⁷Maras p. 101

⁵⁸ For more information regarding the problem of the separation of conception and execution, see Maras p. 101ff,

⁵⁹ Maras p. 104f

nothing but a contracted worker who simply 'adds pictures' to the story, and argued that cinema is an expressive medium itself. Truffaut's article addresses the notion that 'execution' is merely a stage where the screenplay is 'illustrated', and thus posits a more important role for the director, but not necessarily at the expense of the screenwriter.⁶⁰

Despite their differences, Truffaut and Nichols shared three things in common: First, they both wanted to posit film as a means of expression on its own. Second, they were both championing original material over the, at the time, common recycling practice of adapting literature. And finally, they both argued for the notion of individual creative 'signatures' in film. And on this last point, both Truffaut, and surprisingly enough, Nichols agreed that the director was essential.⁶¹ However, the auteur theory would not go uncontested for long.

In his 1974 book, *Talking Pictures: Screenwriters in the American Cinema, 1927 – 1973*, Richard Corliss attempts to introduce another a rival notion to 'standard' auteur theory; a *politique des collaborateurs*; which allowed the possibility of an 'auteur-writer'. However, 'dethroning' the director was never Corliss' intention, rather, as the name of the *politique* implies, Corliss wanted to establish a theory which emphasized creative collaboration across the medium. And since for Corliss, auteur theory is essentially a form of theme criticism, it comes naturally to begin with the screenwriters since film is “[a] dramatic medium; and the screenwriters are the medium's dramatists”⁶² Focusing on the careers of 36 screenwriters, Corliss develops a framework in which he looks at the work of the screenwriters in terms of dominant theme, style, plot, and 'mood' – some more typical traits of film authorship. However, even though the focus lies currently on screenwriting, what Corliss was ultimately hoping to achieve was a more complex account of auteur theory where the creative inputs from a range of crafts within the film making process would be examined and mesh into a “giant matrix of coordinated talents”⁶³ Essentially, Corliss was not out to establish a 'writer's auteur theory', but rather a larger more complex version which allows for the idea of the 'multiple auteur'.⁶⁴ The problem with Corliss' study however, according to Price, is that the focus on the actual screenplays is minimal. Meanwhile the heavy focus on 'theme' is an unconvincing marker of 'authorial personality', as it is translatable from source work to screenplay to film. Furthermore, to argue that screenwriters are more responsible for theme

⁶⁰ Maras p. 106

⁶¹ Maras p. 106ff

⁶² Maras p 111

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Maras p. 100,110f

than directors is thin considering directors can be responsible for their own visual thematic expressions.⁶⁵ One could also probably note from a more 'conservative' auteur theoretical approach that the insistence to frame multiple auteurs is counter-productive to the theory itself as it risks to devalue the term 'auteur' and thus making it redundant.

Returning to the issue of the screenwriters' undefined creative standing, it seems as if while the insistence to frame the screenwriter as an 'auteur' might be appealing, ultimately, one has to ask if it actually serves any purpose, as the meaning of the word risks to wear out eventually. However, advocates of screenwriting who attempt to attribute individualised creative signatures to screenwriters are skipping over the essential step of first establishing the screenplay as a valid medium or means of such creative expressions. Doing so would establish the screenplay's writerly qualities in general and thus validate the search for detailed signifiers of an individual writer's style.⁶⁶ Since only the former is the aim of this paper, the question of whether the screenwriter is an auteur or not will not be answered in this essay as it is essentially not necessary.

Even so, while not being necessary to this essay, the question still remains highly relevant here. I propose that we maintain the 'heart' of Corliss' intention; to posit the screenwriter as a *creative collaborator* in film, but skip any ties leading to the auteur theory. This for theoretical and pragmatic reasons both, so that we set aside any unnecessary cohering theoretical implications of the term 'auteur'. Further, the sample chosen in this essay consists of yet to be produced screenplays, thus it is hard to speak of any real 'collaboration' between screenwriters and other agents at this stage.

For advocates of 'screenwriter auteurs', however, the appeal to the notion Maras presented of bridging the gap between 'conception' and 'execution' will be essential. Thus for such an endeavor, adopting the notion of scriptwriting as 'notation' is of necessity in order to frame the contributions of both the screenwriter as an agent and the screenplay as an entity within the context of film making, without reducing either to mere functions of an assembly line.

Perhaps this retreat of discourse could benefit the field of film studies all together, but that is an undertaking for other people interested in the subject. For now, we

⁶⁵ Price p. 30

⁶⁶ Ibid

return to the topic at hand; that of the screenplay itself, and we shall finally come to a proper account of it fit for the purpose of this essay.⁶⁷

The Screenplay As Text

As has been noted, accounts of the screenplay as either literature, poetry, or a form of ‘hybrid literature’ are problematic. However, as Price notes, they all point to the need of looking at the screenplay in a more critical academic view. Instead of literature, Price invites us to view the screenplay as ‘text’ as according to Barthesian notion of the word. This move will in turn sidestep the question of literary evaluation that comes with the term ‘literature’. Second, this will broaden our scope to include any written (or non-written) material which we deem fit for the purposes of studying screenplays.⁶⁸ And indeed, this should account for the fluid form of the screenplay; everything from the Hollywood standard format to more alternative forms⁶⁹.

Adopting the Barthesian notion of ‘text’ to the study of screenplays has several advantages over adopting the notion of ‘work’ from literature study according to Price:⁷⁰

1. The ‘work’ is a finite and a complete *material* object, such as a book. The ‘text’, on the other hand, is not bound by any prior ‘physical existence’, in the sense of a need to have been printed and published. Since the objection goes that the screenplay is not a fixed entity, and always subject to rewrites and other type of revisions, this move to looking at the screenplay as ‘text’ allows us to ignore this objection as a ‘text’ needs not be published, nor be ‘physical’ in any sense of the word, nor does the narrative need to be ‘set’ and ‘finished’. Furthermore, this also allows us to include alternative forms of screenplays which aren't 'page-bound'.
2. When studying ‘text’ we need not concern ourselves with evaluative statements such as whether the object of our study is ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Thus material usually excluded from classic literary analysis is within our reach. Simply put, whether or not a given screenplay (or screenplays in general) is good or not is of no necessary concern to us

⁶⁷ Furthermore, the discussion regarding conception and execution begs the highly controversial question of creation and interpretation: is the director a ‘creator’, or merely an ‘interpretator’? By closing the gap between conception and execution, we should elude this question. However, for those interested in this debate, see Maras p. 111 - 116

⁶⁸ Price p. 37f

⁶⁹ Which is even now under change as the spec-market is currently becoming more in favor of writers trying to ‘package’ their works with concept art to show that they have a proper ‘movie’, and not just a good story on paper [see appendix]

⁷⁰ Price p. 38ff

now. This, however, might beg the question of what is 'left to analyse' in a screenplay:

3. A 'text', while not definitely closed to one interpretation or another, still offers us many possible interpretations which are at the same time 'conclusive' in the sense that one can make a range of connected assumptions and still be 'satisfied'. Simply put: screenplays are vague *on purpose* and evoke, or even invite, a multitude of interpretations for different readers. Thus, even though we abandon the mathematical precision of the blueprint metaphor, we are still able to speak of the poetic 'crystalline' precision Maras spoke of.
4. The 'text' is plural, intertextual. That is, the text is a self-referencing entity; as much a product of its own time and culture as it is an enforcer of it. It is also plural in the sense that it speaks in (at least) two different sign-languages that clash together: that of the industrial (scene heads, sluglines, camera shots, etc) which reveal it as an industrial document, and also that of a literary (or poetic) and filmic, which give it the characteristics of a narrative. Simply put: screenplays are narratives which reveal themselves to the reader by reminding him or her that he or she is reading one.
5. As then follows from point 4., 'texts' don't have any necessarily clear relation to the issue of authorship, since 'texts' are in a sense as much intentionally produced expressions of a culture as they are symptomatic reflections of it. Put another way, a 'text' can be read without the "inscriptions of the Father"⁷¹. Price notes that this describes the role of the screenwriter quite precisely when it comes to authorship in film.
6. While the 'work' is an object of *consumption* of 'taste' and 'quality', the 'text' however, invites us to disregard the difference between 'reading' and 'writing' and instead envisions us to enjoin them as a single signifying practice. This, Price means, reflects very well the mentality around directing being seen as an extension of writing.⁷²

⁷¹ Price p. 40

⁷² And likewise, the opposite could also be said, that writing serves as pre-planning for directing.

7. Finally, the 'work' is not only finite in the physical sense of the word, as in being bound to a physical form; from cover to cover, herein lies 'the book'. It is also finite in the sense that 'the book' is sealed within its own narrative. For just as there was, literally, nothing before the book of Genesis, and the story of mankind ends with the book of Revelation, so can we situate 'the work' within chronologically 'definitive' boundaries. The 'text', meanwhile, encourages 'consumers' and 'producers' both to further extrapolate on its content. Since the text serves as an autonomous entity which may be separated from its creator, no version of it can truly a priori be stated as 'definitive'. If we look at how the industry actually works, we can see that this in turn is exactly the situation of the ontology of the screenplay: always subject to rewrites by other agents in every stage of film production (some collaborative, some not). However, it is not unreasonable to state that 'final (or shooting) drafts', while hardly definitive, still appear to be the closest we can come to a 'conclusive' screenplay draft by virtue of it 'surviving' the transition from pre-production/development to production. This is in one sense true, however, this type of objection misses the point. The 'final draft' is not the equivalent to the completed 'work', and it does not make previous drafts obsolete. For the purposes of studying general conventions and style in screenplays, this is practically a non-issue whether a draft is dated as the first or the fifth considering draft updates are hardly ever style-oriented. For the scholar who wishes to study screenplays for the purpose of investigating the collaborative process between writer and director (or perhaps producer), however, the inclusion of different drafts is not only beneficial, it should be an absolutely essential practice.⁷³⁷⁴

Needless to say, this move to place the screenplay within the realm of existing as 'text' is not perfect. But then again, neither is the very form and idea of the 'text' set in stone. This move should however sufficiently justify an analytical approach to screenplay form and style. However, further elaboration on how to analyse screenplays is required, which brings us to the next section where we discuss the act of reading as image building.

⁷³Two notable examples can be referred to the reader interested in such studies:

1. Price's study of the collaboration between Hitchcock and screenwriter Evan Hunter on *Birds*, p. 74 – 93
 2. Andrew Spicer' study of the failed production of the film adaption of George Shipway's *The Chilean Club* (1971), and producer Michael Klinger's collaboration with different screenwriters during the development phase, which can be found in "An Impossible Task? Scripting *The Chilean Club*" in *Analyzing The Screenplay* (2011), edited by Jill Neldes.

⁷⁴ For the reader interested in the issue of different drafts and their significance, I refer to the discussions held by Price in p.69ff, 94 - 111

Image Building and the Screenplay

Intrinsically woven in to the question of how to analyse a screenplay is the question of how to ‘properly’ read a screenplay from a scholarly perspective. On one side, attempts to situate the screenplay as a form of ‘literature’ begets a form of reading focusing on structural and literary aspects of the screenplay, while at the same time not accounting for its technical nature. On the other side, a more ‘production oriented’ reading, along the lines of the blueprint metaphor, overemphasize the technicalities of the screenplay to the detriment of its more literary qualities. Neither is ‘wrong’; these dimension do exist within the screenplay, and they need not be seen as mutually exclusive. However, an account of ‘reading’ appropriate for the film scholar must to include an audiovisual dimension; screenwriting is, after all, writing *for* the screen.

Thus, I propose that we look at the process of reading a screenplay as ‘image building’: the process of reading as intimately tied with the process of visualising the text to construct an image of it.⁷⁵⁶ This does not mean that the text constructs the image *for* us, rather, image building becomes more a *mutual* act of interpretation. This fits in very well with how, as mentioned earlier, Maras describes the screenplay having a poetic clarity to it that is more crystalline than technically precise, and that the act of reading itself is a form of creative exercise. And like, also mentioned before, Price wrote, screenplays are written vaguely on purpose as to allow further elaboration for other creative agents. It seems then – which will also attempt to argue – that screenplays are written specifically with the intention to facilitate readers to build an image around its narrative.

Of course, the screenplay *is* actively trying to steer our visualisation of it towards a specific goal; to that of the film. One who wrote extensively on this, using a more semiotic approach, was director Pier Paolo Pasolini, who envisioned the screenplay as a structure that wants to become another structure.

Pasolini and The Screenplay

What interested Pasolini about the screenplay is the moment in which it could be considered an autonomous technique; “*a work complete and finished in itself.*” [emphasis original]⁷⁷ He

⁷⁵ Maras p.70

⁷⁶ This is, of course, a very simplified account of the process of reading as image building. For a more detailed account, see *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978) by Wolfgang Iser

⁷⁷ Piero Paolo Pasolini, “The Screenplay as a ”Structure That Wants To Be Another Structure” in *Heretical Empiricism* (original title: *Empirismo Eretico*), 2nd English edition, ed. Louise K. Barnett, translated by Ben Lawton & Louise K. Barnett, Washington DC: New Academia Publishing 2005 (1972) p.187

asks the reader to consider the case of a screenplay that is neither meant to be an adaption of a novel, nor has it been ‘translated’ into a film (in essence, Pasolini is here describing the spec script); how should we come to evaluate such a thing? If we consider it in the restrictive terms of pertaining it to be a product of ‘some type of writing’, then it must be judged as a type of literary ‘genre’. But in doing so, we are framing the screenplay as mere pretext, no longer a cinematic technique. For “If there isn’t the *continuous allusion to a developing cinematographic work*, it is no longer a technique[...][emphasis original].”⁷⁸ For Pasolini, this conscious allusion to a potential cinematographic work is the primary structural element which marks the (or rather; a) screenplay as an autonomous technique.⁷⁹ And specifically, the screenplay’s elaborate coordination of visual aspects is precisely what marks this technique as ‘cinematic’ rather than literary.⁸⁰

Pasolini envisioned the screenplay as a bilingual ‘sign’; consisting of the oral (phoneme), the written (grapheme), and the visual (kineme); which, in a sense, spoke both the ‘languages’ of literature and cinema which, in a simultaneous and converging manner, travels two paths which in effect forwards the addressee (the reader) to another sign; that of the potential film.⁸¹ Thus, the (word of the) screenplay is: “*contemporaneously, the sign of two different structures,[...]and belongs to two languages characterized by different structures[...]*in formulating the definition in the wider and more objective field of language the sign of the screenplay-text is presented as the sign that expresses *meanings of a “structure in movement,” that is, of “a structure endowed with the will to become another structure.”* [emphasis original]⁸²

In line with the ideas discussed previously regarding reading as imagine building, for Pasolini the act of reading a screenplay is simultaneously an act of collaboration from the reader’s part; as the screenplay is asking him or her to fill in a “visual completeness” which it does not have, but hints at.⁸³ Thus, in essence, the screenplay is requesting for a collaboration from the reader, in which he, or she, is tasked to ‘see the kineme in the grapheme’ (extracting visuality from the written), to think in images and reconstruct the film

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Pasolini p.187f

⁸⁰ Pasolini p.190

⁸¹ Pasolini p.188f

⁸² Pasolini p.103

⁸³ Pasolini p.189

to which the screenplay is alluding to.⁸⁴ This creative process on the reader's part, Pasolini believed, is mechanically much higher and more intense than that of reading a novel.⁸⁵

Pasolini was, furthermore, very sceptical of any type of stylistic criticism in the analysis of screenplays, as such endeavors presuppose a series of requirements on the 'code' (the screenplay) that it had not anticipated, and will always miss an internal element that is not there: the desire for form.⁸⁶

Luckily for us, however, we are not concerned with *criticism*. Looking at it from the perspective of a 'text' (which, admittedly, Pasolini also does), I believe we can speak more in terms of how a *general* desire for form is expressed in screenplays, and how it relates to the *general* form of cinema, without speaking of whether such practice is 'good' or 'bad'.

This, I believe, requires further elaboration, as I wish not to confine the study of screenplay style to semiotics only. It is my hope that the following endeavour of developing an analytical underframe to the analysis of screenplay style and form will serve as a satisfactory account for the field of *film studies* in particular, but also generally as to allow the various 'sub-schools' of this field. Or at least, be sufficient enough as a 'staging ground' for further development.

Introducing The Proto-Camera

Before going further, I feel the pioneer work of Claudia Sternberg within this field deserves to be briefly mentioned; if only to at the very least explain why I will not be following her model.

At the very core of her work, it is a treatise primarily on *the format* of the screenplay.⁸⁷ That is, detailing the functions and meanings of screenwriter's own technical jargons such as 'Int' standing for 'Interior Scene' and so on. More to the point, however, is that her account of the 'scene text' and the 'three modes', does not fulfill the purposes of this essay.

The 'scene text' can essentially be defined as *everything* within the screenplay except for the dialogue and everything pertaining to it such as indications of voice-overs and the likes, to which she separates as a different kind of 'text'.⁸⁸ When discussing the prose narrative within the scene text, and thus discussing *style*, she distinguishes between three

⁸⁴ Pasolini p.192

⁸⁵ Pasolini p.189

⁸⁶ Pasolini p.188

⁸⁷ Price p.112f

⁸⁸ Ibid

different ‘modes’ in the prose narration: ‘Description’ (detailed sections about production design), ‘Report’ (events and their temporal sequence), and ‘Comment’ (which “explains, interprets, or adds to the clearly visible and audible elements”)⁸⁹

The problems arise as, for instance, upon further inspection we realise that the distinctions between the modes is very thin: for is not action that is reported also action that is described? However, even *absence* of such modifiers can serve as a style of description.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Sternberg’s version of a ‘close reading’ essentially amounts to revealing, according to Price, the screenplay as “a text that must constantly refer outside itself (to the film) and, in a kind of reflexive recoil, bring the film back into the verbal text as a reminder of that text’s inadequacies.”⁹¹ More to the point, however, is that while Sternberg seems concerned with finding explicit ‘indicators’ of cinematography and mise-en-scène within the screenplay, Price notes that such indicator or not needed: “Spatio-temporal change is easily indicated without specifying the precise technical means of transition (cuts or dissolves, for example) by the simple juxtapositioning of images or scenes to create stylistic, narrational, or functional effects”⁹²

Some of the screenplays we will discuss do indeed utilise explicit camera directions such as ‘close-up/on’, ‘hold’ and so on. This on its own hardly constitutes an elaborate ‘cinematic language’ from which any ‘crystalline’ cinematic imagery and style can be extracted from. Focusing on such practice would rather betray the screenplay merely as an annotated industry document in similar veins as the blueprint metaphor does. Further, looking for such explicit camera directives will prove fruitless for the scholar wishing to discuss cinematic style in screenplays, as such practice of camera directives is used sparingly and only out of perceived necessity to convey specific images. And yet, it seems as if this is exactly what some scholars interested in screenplays have been focusing on. This is an erraneous endeavour, and I believe it springs from a misconception regarding the screenplay’s relation to the (future) camera. I believe the issue is that these scholars have envisioned screenplay style in a very technical sense and have attempted to draw attention to it by using the discourse similar to that of a cinematographer *speaking* in a cinematographic tounge using terms such as ‘close in on’, ‘zoom out, etc; missing the point that the screenplay does not try

⁸⁹ Price p.114

⁹⁰ Price p. 115

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Price p.116

to assert control of the camera or attempt to direct it. Instead, the screenplay *anticipates* the camera, and tries to make room for it. It *encourages* the camera.⁹³

While certainly, a screenplay can sometimes be seen as favouring a certain set up with more specific detail, this should be seen rather as *cinematic suggestions* – some perhaps more adamant than others – than any authoritative attempt to direct the film. If the latter truly was the case, then every screenplay would look like a shooting draft with annotated camera directives. Thus, following from the principles of reading as image building and those laid forth by Pasolini, I propose that we think of the screenwriter as a creative collaborator who writes with a ‘proto-camera’ in mind; with a desire to prove the inherent cinematic qualities of the text. The proto-camera, can be explained as our more or less elaborate attempt to visually construct and transform the written word into a somewhat coherent cinematic image for our mind’s eye to perceive. This image can sometimes be rough, and in the end perhaps even prove to be non-realizable when it comes to actually shooting the script. However, yet again it must be said that if the screenplay detailed precise information on how to realise it, it would not be a ‘screenplay’ anymore; it would be a collection of notes. And indeed, for Pasolini, this impression of ‘coarseness’ and ‘incompleteness’ is not only apparent, they are stylistic elements.⁹⁴

From where does this – I admit – quasi-cognitive device manifest from? In the spirit of Pasolini, I suggest from the ‘kineme’ inherent in the ‘grapheme’. But instead of calling it such, we shall call it *mise-en-page*.

Mise-en-page & Mise-en-scène

The first use of the term ‘mise-en-page’ – to my knowledge – is seen in John Ellis’ article “What Does a Script Do?”, where he vaguely suggests that it is different from mise-en-scène (which we shall discuss in short), but does not exactly say how or why, or even what mise-en-page is specifically supposed to be.⁹⁵ Seeing as the term is derived from mise-en-scène, however, it is not hard to guess what Ellis intended.

Mise-en-page, translated from French, literally means ‘to put on page’. Thus, as we are analyzing the mise-en-page of a screenplay, we are literally, looking at everything that exists within it: words (their meaning, their denotations), sentences (their length, their effect, their structure), punctuation (their impact, their frequency), grammar (or even the lack of),

⁹³ Of course, ‘technical jargon’ should not be *ignored* – we have already discussed where that has led to in the past. I am merely suggesting that we should not *focus* on them.

⁹⁴ Pasolini p.189

⁹⁵ John Ellis, “What Does The Script Do?”, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 1990:20 p.61

written audibles and written visuals; implicit as explicit – Anything and everything (non-)written, that exists on the page. Even details *omitted* from the page shall be considered.

Using these ‘micro-elements’, we will look at the thickness of the paragraphs, the pacing and the tempo of the narrative, the level of attention given to descriptions and their ‘texture’, dialogue – basically every conceivable way the grapheme evokes, triggers, or begets, the kineme. Put differently, we will look at how the (compositions of the) written word of the screenplay tries to evoke spatiotemporal cinematic imagery (the ‘proto-camera’) that is filled with colour, sound, tempo, and in what way it tries to connect and structure these images into a bigger whole that will essentially become ‘the film’. Or more in style of Pasolini: we shall decipher through which means the structure that is the screenplay seeks to become the structure that is the film. Suffice to say, I will be using the term ‘mise-en-page’ in practice as a synonym for ‘the writing’. Obviously, a more detailed taxonomy will be needed to more clearly distinguish the elements and describe their correlation and interactivity, but that is a future task. This ‘looser’ definition should be sufficient enough to at the very least express the intent of this essay.

So far we have only talked about the *framing* of *an* image; but this image desires form, and more specifically, content. This is why it is useful, perhaps even necessary, to think of the mise-en-page as to be alluding not only to cinematography, but also mise-en-scène.

Mise-en-scène, meaning ‘to put on stage’ (as it originally derives from theater), is a term used in film studies to discuss visual style. John Gibbs defines it as “the contents of the frame and the way they are organised”⁹⁶ As such, the contents of mise-en-scène includes in essence everything projected on screen, or put differently; everything captured by the camera. The contents, or elements, of mise-en-scène are thus, lighting, costume, colour, décor, props, actors – any item that is physically manifested or captured in the frame.⁹⁷⁹⁸ The ‘organisation’ of these contents refers to the active arranging or manipulation of these elements in order to create visually stylistic effects; such as acting and performance, framing, spacing (or physical placement), camera movement and elaborate camera positioning.⁹⁹

When discussing mise-en-scène, it is important to also consider two things, which should also be relevant and applicable to studies of mise-en-page as well:

⁹⁶ John Gibbs, *Mise-En-Scène – Film Style and Interpretation*, London: Wallflower Press 2002, p.5

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ It might also be argued that the screenplay itself acts as an element of mise-en-scène.

⁹⁹ Ibid

First, we need to recognise that more often than not, it is the *interaction* of elements which produce meaning.¹⁰⁰ As the reader will come to notice, on account of both *mise-en-page* and *mise-en-scène*, rarely will we discuss a single element without involving (the interplay with) another.

Second, we must consider an even bigger picture and factor in contents of the *mise-en-scène* and the context in which it can be observed, and look at whether the interplay of elements are coherent with each other, or with, for instance, the subject matter of film. Simply put, when we make a claim about some stylistic effect expressing a theme, or perhaps that certain elements or concepts are somehow linked with each other, we have to ask ourselves: is this a reasonable assumption? Does it give further meaning to other features of the *mise-en-scène*? Does this corroborate the overall theme of the film or the meaning of this specific (cinematographic) device, or does it contradict it?¹⁰¹

In the same sense, we must be equally cautious whenever we make any assumptions regarding *mise-en-page*. However, I will not designate this ‘criteria’ a topic of its own, but instead try to weave it in to the analysis. Furthermore, it can be added that specifically for *mise-en-page*, there is also a third criteria: the constant allusion to the visual structures of cinema.¹⁰² Before we begin the analysis, three important points need to be laid out:

First, I am taking the liberty of adopting a less ‘strict’ account of *mise-en-scène* which allows for discussion of editing and sound. In part because it fits the disposition of the analysis beginning with the contents of the frame, then moving on to discussing the composition of the frame itself, until finally then discuss the *movement* of this frame. But also because the purpose of this essay is after all to discuss the screenplay alluding to *general* film style.¹⁰³

Second, it should be noted that the sample of screenplays picked for this analysis are all intended for the American film industry, and as such, the reader should be aware that the *mise-en-page* of these screenplays all allude to a, more or less, ‘specific style’ used in contemporary Hollywood films.

¹⁰⁰ Gibbs p.26

¹⁰¹ This is a more complex issue than presented here. Thus, I refer the reader to a more detailed discussion of this matter in Gibbs p.39 - 54

¹⁰² Furthermore, for the reader not familiar with *mise-en-scène*, it is worth to note that it is indeed through the visual focus of *mise-en-scène* that critics and scholars have asserted the director as the auteur in cinema. For more regarding this, and the history of *mise-en-scène* in general, see Gibbs p.55 - 66

¹⁰³ For more on the discussion of whether these elements should be included, see Gibbs p.64f

Finally – and this I can not stress enough – the aim of the analysis is not to reduce mise-en-scène to mise-en-page or to devalue the contributions of the director in any way. Quite the contrary, the aim is to show how mise-en-page *wishes to become* mise-en-scène; how the screenplay’s ‘desire’ into becoming a film is expressed by it specifically alluding to mise-en-scène.

Analysis

Lighting & Colour

In his discussion of lighting as an element of mise-en-scène, Gibbs mentions a shot from the beginning of *Notorious* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1946), where Hitchcock has framed the set so that a mysterious silhouette of a figure (whom Gibbs assumes is the male lead of the film; Carey Grant) sits in the foreground of the picture as a silent observer of Ingrid Bergman’s soirée. His presence is acknowledged by Bergman, but he never speaks himself; he sits there and only observes, and perhaps also judges.¹⁰⁴ Gibbs reading of this darkened silhouette as an observer akin to a cinemagoer sitting right in front of us in the cinema relies mostly on the way Hitchcock has staged the lighting in order to create this effect silhouette effect on Grant – if it indeed is him.

The Ends of The Earth (Chris Terrio, draft dated 25/09/09) is based on the true story of Lydie and Ernest Marland, adopted daughter and adoptive father, who would end up getting married. Together, they ran the successful oil company Marland Oil, and were among the first to institute aid programs for their workers: medical care, educational programs, and so on. Their empire comes to an end as their main rival, Standard Oil, manages to buy up the company and assemble it into their own. The screenplay begins in a hotel room in 1976, where we follow an old maid in her 70s cleaning up during a vigil in form of a cocktail party where the guests are watching the televised speech of president Gerald Ford. This maid is in actuality Lydie Marland, but the readers does not yet know at this stage. As she finishes her shift, she calls the elevator, but does not enter as she notices that the man riding it seems to recognise her. The man begins following her, calling for her, but the maid tries to hide from him in a supply closet:

¹⁰⁴ Gibbs p.6

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET - NIGHT

Locks the door. It's dark in here. Stacks of white towels, small shampoo bottles, soap. The Maid is catching her breath.

RAP. She's startled by a firm knocking on the closet door.

MAN (O.S.)
Hello? Hello.

She's trying not to breathe. More knocking.

MAN (O.S.)
(quieter)
Can you open the door?

Then the knocking stops. He's gone away?

No. A note, scrawled on a piece of Mariott paper, slips under the door. The Maid looks down at it.

It says: **IS YOUR NAME LYDIE?**

Now she's shaking. She lowers herself to the ground, in the darkness.

Hold there.

What follows is an off screen voice calling out Lydie's name, but as we cut to the next scene, we have located ourselves to 1906; and we find out that the the voice belongs to a train conductor who is addressing Lydie Marland, now five years old. And it is from this point we follow her relationship with her soon to be adoptive father.

While not explicitly stated, the mise-en-page certainly suggests in the matter of editing; the use of darkness and off-screen dialogue which overlaps in to the next scene is meant to facilitate the transition to the next narrative, and the echoing of the name 'Lydie' serves to connect the maid and the little girl the train conductor is speaking to, suggesting that they are one and the same. This method is used again later on when we cut back to this moment, although this time with more specific camera and editing directions, in the third act, after which the same scene is replayed again:

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET - NIGHT

A REPLAY of a scene we saw earlier. The sound of knocking stops.

Then: a note, scrawled on a piece of Marriott paper, slips under the door. The woman we knew as the Maid looks down at it.

It says: **IS YOUR NAME LYDIE?**

ON Lydie. She looks down at the note, lowers herself to the floor.

The omission of darkness in the later replay of the same scene suggests that it might also serve as a more expressive end. As we begin reading the screenplay, we have no idea of who this maid is, nor do we have any understanding of why she is running away. So as she lowers herself in to the darkness, she hides not just from the man (who we later recognise as Clay, a servant who worked for Ernest and Lydie Marland in the past), but also from the world. This is enforced by the mise-en-page within the scene that triggers the transition back to the present. With her husband dead, their fortune gone and their company bankrupt, Lydie escapes:

INT. HIGHWAY 24 MOTEL, INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI - NIGHT

Brown curtains and an auto-garage calendar on the wall.

A 50-ish MOTEL WOMAN is glancing through an issue of Look Magazine ("House Beautiful With Mrs. Jameson"). A fan blowing her hair.

Motel Woman looks up when she hears a car outside and she's lit momentarily by headlights through the window. The car parks. Sleigh-bells on the door ring when it opens.

A woman dressed in black clothes with uncombed hair enters.

MOTEL WOMAN
Just yourself?

Lydie nods.

MOTEL WOMAN
Three dollars.

Lydie takes the money out of her pocketbook, places it on Look Magazine.

MOTEL WOMAN
Sign your name here for me.

Motel Woman slides the guest book across the desk.

Lydie takes the pen-on-a-string in her hand and writes: MISS JEAN ROBERTS.

The Motel Woman slides Lydie a key.

MOTEL WOMAN
Warm tonight.

Lydie nods. She turns and disappears out the door.

THEN, A SLOW
FADE TO BLACK.

WHERE WE HOLD FOR A MOMENT IN THE DARK.

Dressed in black and using her mother's name as a pseudonym – who earlier vanished from Lydie's life by leaving in the middle of night, never to be heard from again – Lydie now disguises herself within the darkness. But as we return to the supply closet scene, we do so with the full knowledge of who she is and what has happened to her; thus the shroud of mystery surrounding her, so to speak, is now gone.

Colour

Although Jill Nelmes sets out to discuss the screenplay strictly from the point of view of dialogue in "Realism and screenplay dialogue", in one of her discussions of the screenplay of *Sideways* (2003), the discourse used to analyze a particular scene resembles very closely to that of mise-en-page.

Miles is a snobbish wine connoisseur and a would-be writer who is eagerly waiting for his publisher to call him back on whether his novel has been accepted or not. However, he tells his friend Jack, who is an inveterate liar, that he is tired with this "waiting game" and seemingly feigns acceptance of this position. Yet, in a later scene, it is revealed that Miles is actually very keen to hear from his publisher. But Miles still decides to live within his half-truths, even willingly so, which is revealed in a scene where he is asked to try different samples of a wedding cake; one white, one dark. Pressured in to continuing a lie Jack started about Miles being published, Miles discusses whether his book is fiction or non-fiction, which Nelmes means also ironically undercuts Miles authority as a writer:¹⁰⁵

MR ERGANIAN
What subject is your book? Non-fiction?

MILES
No, it's a novel. Fiction. Although
there's a lot from my life, so I guess
technically some of it is non-fiction.

MR ERGANIAN
Good, I like non-fiction. There is so much
to know about the world that I think
reading a story someone just invented is
kind of a waste of time.

The scene then concludes, with Christine asking about which type of cake he prefers, but Miles' reply seemingly answers more than just a banal question of taste:

¹⁰⁵ Transcribed from Jill Nelmes, "Realism and Screenplay Dialogue", in *Analysing The Screenplay*, ed. Jill Nelmes, New York: Routledge (2011), p.230f

CHRISTINE
So which one do you like better?

MILES
I like them both, but if pressed, I'd have
to say I prefer the dark.

Nelmes thus writes: "The seemingly innocuous dialogue rounds off the scene by suggesting that Miles is a prevaricator and a diplomatic and not quite truthful himself and, therefore, a much more vivid and believable character. But also there is the sense that he has been forced by Christine to make a choice – to take a path and he has chosen the dark side."¹⁰⁶

This reading of Miles 'choosing a path' relies on a common scheme of western colour symbolism; the white cake symbolising the 'high road' and the black cake the 'low road' respectively. George M. Wilson's reading of Jim's (James Dean) red jacket in *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955) being a symbol of rebellion likewise is based on a western conceptual colour scheme where red is often portrayed as the colour of rebellion.¹⁰⁷

Of course, what colour is supposed to metaphorically represent, depends on context; red is just as much the colour of passion, love, or anger, as it is the colour of rebellion (although admittedly, all these pretty much go hand in hand). Red in the form taken of blood, can also be used to mark sin or corruption, as is the case in *Easy Money* (Noah D. Oppenheim, 17/08/2010 draft).

Easy Money (Noah D. Oppenheim, draft dated 17/08/2010) a 2010 Blacklist ranked screenplay, is based on, and intended to be a remake of *Snabba Cash* (Daniel Espinosa, 2010), and follows the original film's story very closely: a crime/thriller which depicts the lives of three men from different social, and ethnical, backgrounds who's lives intertwine in the criminal underworld of New York city. One of the leading characters is J.P; a young white business school graduate who spends his time in exclusive clubs and around the social elites of New York. He looks like them, acts like them, and seemingly is willing to spend outrageous amounts of money just like them, but this appearance is merely a facade: in reality, J.P comes from a working class family outside of New York, and has a massive student loan to pay off. In order to finance his expensive life style, he works as an illegal gipsy cab driver for a latino crime organisation. Eventually, he manages to rise within this organisation and become an accountant or money launderer of sorts as they start a massive drug operation. But as J.P delves deeper in to the depths of the criminal underworld, it

¹⁰⁶ Nelmes p.131

¹⁰⁷ Gibbs p. 8

becomes more apparent that he truly is a fish out of water. As he is on his way to dinner with his girlfriend Sophie and her parents, the pawn shop the latinos use as a front is attacked by a rival gang. They manage to fend off the attackers, And Alberto, the boss, assembles a small crew, including the reluctant J.P, and set off to punish a member in their organisation who they deduce must have informed the rival gang as he wasn't present during the attack. What follows is a brutal beatdown of this traitor, Eddie, in his apartment, right in front of his wife and children. J.P not being used to this kind of brutal violence, is in a state of shock, and pleads for Alberto and his men to stop. As they leave Eddie's apartment, Alberto confronts J.P:

INT. OUTSIDE EDDIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ALBERTO and LUIS are waiting for JP in the hallway. ALBERTO steps close to JP.

ALBERTO
This is how it works. Eddie knows
that. And now you do, too.

ALBERTO steps back, looks at his own shirt splattered with blood, and back at JP.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)
(unhinged)
You didn't even mess up your hair.
Let's go. We'll drop you off at
the restaurant.

As far as Alberto is concerned, the blood, and thus guilt, is on him, not J.P. The difference between them however, is that J.P' conscience says otherwise: As he meets up with Sophie and her parents at a restaurant, still affected by the shocking violence he recently witnessed, his head not really in the banality of the conversation at hand, he discovers something:

JP looks down at his shirt sleeve, and for the first time, notices a tiny speck of BLOOD on his cuff. He quickly tries to rub it away. Blocks everything else out. Scrapes at it with his thumb.

As his distraction is noticed, J.P. excuses himself from his company and goes to bathroom:

INT. BATHROOM - SCALINATELLA RESTUARANT - CONTINUOUS

JP closes the bathroom door behind him and locks it. He puts his sleeve in the sink and starts running the water, trying desperately to wipe out the blood. It's not working.

JP leans against the wall of the bathroom, and slowly slides the floor, his head in his hands. It seems like he's about to break. But, he takes a deep breath, stands up, and splashes his face with cold water. Blots his sleeve dry, and rolls them both up. Heads back to the dining room...

J.P engages in a futile attempt of cleansing himself of his sin; figuratively, and also quite literally speaking, he has blood on his hands that won't come off. This time he doesn't feign ignorance, however, but instead tries to hide his guilt, which turns out, is just as futile.

Décour

In his article 'Moments of Choice', V.F. Perkins describes the role that *décour* has in Jean Renoir's *La Règle du Jeu* (1939). The scene is set in the chateau's entrance hall and the *décour* is arranged by doors, pillars, and open space. Along with the specific placement of actors and the camera, Perkins writes that Renoir thus turns the *décour* in to a sort of theatrical arena, as the main characters take 'center stage' on the floor with the guests taking on the roles of a theatre audience. This theatrical theme is further stressed by the actions and the layout of the *décour*, as Perkins writes: "The sense of Christine's performance as one governed by strict rules[...] emerges from another parallel that the decor permits: the camera sees the floor, with Christine and André moving across its black-and-white marble tiles, as a chess-board."¹⁰⁸ Further, the power of the scene derives from "[t]he tension between Christine's awkward sincerity and the demand implied by the theatre/chess-game image for the precise execution of a delicate manoeuvre."¹⁰⁹ Thus, character action and *décour* share a symbiotic relationship as they both create meaning for each other. This meaning however is dependent on a close reading of the details of the *décour*. Such detailed architectural precision may be beyond the screenwriter's authority, but through simplicity of economical and figurative writing, the screenwriter may as well give meaning to *décour* in broad terms; sometimes, even explained in one single sentence. The following scene from *Ends of The Earth* takes place after the Marlands begin their corporate responsibility program to ensure a better life for their workers. Their main competitor, Standard Oil, owned by oil mogul Rockefeller, discuss their course of action:

¹⁰⁸ Gibbs p. 11

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

INT. BOARD ROOM, STANDARD OIL COMPANY - DAY

Various SUITS sit around a plush board room. Gilded Age, robber-baron architecture in dark wood.

SUIT 1

This one's from the Kansas City Star.

(reading from a newspaper)

"Since the market crash, we must all acknowledge that there is more to industry than the making of money. We are going to pay dividends in happiness to the community."*

SUIT 2

And the roads in Ponca City are made of chocolate with candy-cane trees.

Shaking of heads, a chuckle or two.

SUIT 1

It gets much, much better.

(another newspaper)

(MORE)

SUIT 1 (cont'd)

"We must seize the chance in this country for a more enlightened form of capitalism. I can no longer conceive toward what ends we should permit those who earn extremely large dividends to give no share of the earnings to the employees whose intelligence and honesty have made these large earnings possible."*

(*Ernest Marland, interviews with Kansas City Star, 1931).

SUIT 3

He's Red as a fire engine.

Beat. Then the boss speaks. JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER JR, 50s.

ROCKEFELLER

Pursue it. The fields are solid earners. But make sure his little utopia doesn't rally around him in the press. Dig and find something. Discredit him.

Now Wilcox speaks up.

WILCOX

We don't have to dig, sir. Don't forget -- he's married to his daughter.

A “Robber-baron” is defined by Merriam-Webster’s internet dictionary as “an American capitalist of the latter part of the 19th century who became wealthy through exploitation (as of natural resources, governmental influence, or low wage scales)” and “a business owner or executive who acquires wealth through ethically questionable tactics”.¹¹⁰ Indeed, a quite fitting description, but also vague enough to facilitate different visual interpretations in terms of how to get across this image through both *décour* and props. But however the actual realisation of this imagery, the *mise-en-page* of the screenplay purposely evokes the image of an environment of opportunism. Also note the simple characterisation of the board members: devoid of any actual character description, it still manages to sufficiently clue in readers on not only the men’s appearances and characteristics, but also their moral fibre, by simply referring to them, rather unpoetically, as ‘SUITS’; slang often used in derogatory purposes to describe bureaucrats. The simple descriptions of the *décour*, coupled with the thin, but still telling, descriptions of the characters involved in the scene, together serve to steer the reader’s attention to the iconography of bureaucracy in mind.

Tripoli (William Monahan, 02/08/02 draft) takes place in 1804 in northern Africa, during the Berbery war between the United States and the Berbery state of Tripolitania (in present day Libya). The screenplay is based on the exploits of William Eaton, an American military officer and consul to Tunis, who on hearing that a US frigate in the area has been attacked and its crew taken captive by Tripolitan soldiers, decides to leave his post and travel to the city of Tripoli to try and negotiate the release of the captured American troops. Tripolitania, presented as a gruesome and barbaric state, is ruled by a monarch called ‘The Bashaw’, based on Yusuf Karamanli of the Karamanli dynasty (1711 – 1835). When first introduced to the The Bashaw and his palace, the reader is met with this image:

INT. BASHAW'S THRONE ROOM. CONTINUOUS

It is a pillared Moorish room. It has nothing of "oriental splendor". It is a dark, grim, place, torchlit. RETAINERS of the Bashaw stand about the walls, as do the FOREIGN MINISTERS of every seafaring nation. SOLDIERS stand guard nearby over the BOXES OF TREASURE which are customarily never out of the Bashaw's sight. The BASHAW'S MINISTER stands nearby.

THE BASHAW, Yusuf Karamanli, fat, silky, and corrupt, is seated on a dais, in a jeweled throne, which he murdered his father to possess. He is the absolute ruler of Tripoli. He is staring, kohl-eyed, at -

¹¹⁰ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/robber%20baron> (17/08/2012)

Note how the mise-en-page presents the image of a throne room that is unlike what is expected in the 19th century, but rather a throne room that can only be described as medieval; a dark dungeon-like atmosphere where a fat corrupt monarch sits on a jeweled throne atop a dais, clearly signifying his superior position. He is surrounded by soldiers who stand guard over his treasure boxes, symbols of his greed which – as within this ‘throne room’ hangs a cage where a mutilated, but still alive, Spanish sailor is being kept as punishment for an unknown crime (his presence not revealed until later) – reveal his draconic nature (not exclusively limited to a figurative appeal to the ancient Greek statesman, as it can also pertain to that of a literal dragon). What follows the above passage is that The Bashaw punishes an American merchant, already heavily tortured before being sentenced, for firing (in self defense) at Tripolitanian vessels, by gouging out his eyes. While the mention of The Bashaw’s rise to the throne by murdering his father might at first glance seem out of place, considering it is an ‘unfilmable’, this little detail can be useful to remember later on, when Eaton is granted an audience with The Bashaw:

INT. THE PALACE

EATON, having come under guard, is escorted quickly along a passage. This is not a grand passage: the mosaics are stained, the troops sitting along the hall are filthy. EATON is terrified and resolute. The EUNUCH is explaining protocol.

The mere position of the filthy troops – who serve as extension of The Bashaw regime – within this passage, with mosaics most likely older than The Bashaw himself, suggests quite convincingly the bloody nature of this usurpation.

After his audience with The Bashaw, Eaton becomes imprisoned, but manages to escape with the help of fellow American soldiers also being held captive. They retreat to another American frigate docked outside Tripoli. There he meets a naval officer who tells him he has full authority to either pursue war or try and negotiate a peace treaty. Eaton learned earlier that The Bashaw has a brother, Hamet Karamanli, who is the rightful heir to the throne but was exiled to Egypt after The Bashaw’s coupe. With this information, he convinces the naval officer to pursue war, and to grant him resources and men, so he can find Hamet and reinstate him as the rightful monarch of Tripoli. With the approval of the naval officer, Eaton sets out to locate Hamet, and finds him in a villa situated near the Nile, described as such:

[See next page]

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE VILLA. MOMENTS LATER

The villa is a gorgeous place, at the edge of the great desert. It looks like some parts of it could originally have been Roman. Date-palms sway in the breeze. SERVANTS come out onto the colonnade, as EATON comes up. VEILED WOMEN and some CHILDREN stand in the palm-garden, watching. EATON dismounts: noticing that Hamet's exile is not uncomfortable.

Unlike his brother, Hamet surrounds himself not with soldiers (they are camped outside the villa), but with women, children, and servants. The mise-en-page here suggests a type of *décour* that is harmonious, in direct contrast to the *décour* of The Bashaw which seeks to evoke a sense of dread. The Roman elements, a detail worth remembering, of the villa also brings with it a foreshadowing element which pays off later. Eaton enters the villa, and finds who he first believes is Hamet:

INT. COURTYARD OF HAMET'S VILLA. CONTINUOUS

EATON steps into the courtyard. WOMEN run off through a doorway. We hear falling water. EATON walks into the shade of a latticed area. SLAVES batting fans look up boredly. EATON stares, his eyes adjusting to the dark. He looks somewhat disappointed.

EATON'S POV:

A GROSSLY FAT MAN is sleeping on a couch, snoring. He is dressed in Turkish finery, and snoring. EATON stands in the archway, silhouetted against the glare. He looks disappointed -- aesthetically, as much as anything else.

EATON

Hamet Bashaw?

THE FAT MAN wakes, and stares wildly: first at EATON...but then past him. EATON realizes slowly that there is someone behind him. He slowly turns, and we see...

HAMET. He stands silhouetted in the doorway, a PISTOL in his hand. He is no Arab dandy. He is an intelligent man in plain - almost jesuitical -- black European clothing (Hamet never dresses as a Berber). He is unlike his brother. He is an educated, philosophical, man. EATON steps forward and stands staring at him.

HAMET inspects EATON. He puts the PISTOL aside.

HAMET

I am Hamet. That is the man who brings me my pension for not being king.

The mise-en-page, although perhaps quite crude (“no Arab dandy”), serves to present Hamet here as an intelligent and sophisticated man, the direct ideological opposite to his fat barbaric brother Yusuf. However, it isn’t until a page later that we learn through the mise-en-page what really separates the brothers apart. As Eaton presents his proposal to Hamet:

EATON
(continuing)
I have a treaty here that secures
you American support if you will
make an attempt on Tripoli and I am
empowered to sign it as Naval Agent
to the Barbary States.

EATON, nervously, takes the treaty out of his coat. HAMET does not move to take it. The sound of falling water; distant cries. HAMET turns, exhales, and looks out across his gardens. He glances aside at his table of SCIENTIFIC instruments. He looks broken in some way; and panicked; but not when he turns to face EATON: he is composed.

HAMET
What is your name?

EATON
William Eaton, Bashaw.

HAMET, abandoning the attempt to be polite, stares again across his gardens.

HAMET'S POV:

HIS WIVES AND CHILDREN are chasing around the garden.

Contrast the mise-en-page from that of The Bashaw’s introduction: Yusuf sits on a jeweled throne, his treasure(boxes) never out of his sight. The mise-en-page here, on the other hand, suggests that unlike his brother, Hamet’s ‘treasure’ consist not of material wealth (a point also later stressed as Hamet tells Eaton that the ‘riches’ the throne offers has no value to him), but instead of conceptual ends in themselves; wisdom and enlightenment, as exemplified by his “scientific instruments”, the tranquil sounds and sights of nature, and the joy of his family. And unlike his brother, he needs not take any paranoid draconian measures to guarantee their safety. As Hamet contemplates Eaton’s proposal, it is not the fear of going up against his brother that worries him, instead the mise-en-page suggests that Hamet comes to realise that in order to free his people from the brutal regime of his brother, he must forsake his state of eudamonia.

Props

In one way, *décor* can essentially be seen as the collection of props; pieces which combine in to a stylistic whole. Props can serve as objects of which themes or symbolic subtext can be expressed non-verbally. When discussing the *mise-en-scène* in *Late Spring* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1949), Andrew Klevan writes that the particular household objects in the film “collect meaning through repeated usage, and develop associations through the narrative”.¹¹¹ More specifically, he writes of how a chair is used to first reflect one character's confinement, and then to reflect this character's absence in the end as another character sits on it.¹¹²

This kind of symbolic use of props is definitely not out of the screenwriter's reach. The following scene from *Ends of The Earth* takes place right after Lydie Marland, upon taking her horse to the veterinary, discovers that the families of the workers of Marland Oil are so poor they can't even afford to take their sick children to a hospital, but instead have to rely on the generosity of the veterinary to help them. Much like the Buddha, Lydie discovers that outside her palace exists suffering. But instead of ascetic self-exile, Lydie decides to take action and bring the suffering back home to the palace:

INT. THE PALACE, DINING ROOM - DAY

Heads turn as Lydie, covered in dirt and sweat, stands holding the Redheaded Boy in her arms.

In this room of gold-plated silverware and floral arrangements and impeccable suits, her entrance is like Medea in the last act wandering onto the stage of a comedy of manners.

LYDIE
I found him dying!

ERNEST
(standing, bewildered)
My God, Lydie. What's --?

LYDIE
This is how Marland Oil treats the children of our workers! Cared for by a horse doctor because he can't afford a real one!

[continued on next page]

¹¹¹ Gibbs p. 9

¹¹² Gibbs p.9f

Lydie seizes a crystal glass of water from a place setting in front of an EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER, pours some on a silk napkin, places it on the child's forehead.

ERNEST

Lydie, you need to calm down.

Ernest approaches her, but she pulls away.

LYDIE

Us living here in all this,
children dying under our noses!
They should guillotine us, all of
us...

Clay pokes his head into the room, nodding at Lydie. The doctor has arrived. Lydie turns around and leaves. The room, in a quiet state of shock.

The symbolic implications, and the foreshadowing of events yet to come, come across very clearly through the mise-en-page in this scene: To alleviate the child's suffering, Lydie takes the crystal glass of water, obviously originally intended to be consumed by the board member, and pours it on a silk napkin and places it on the child's forehead; a Robin Hood'esque act of redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor. The crystal glass, conveniently being placed in front of a board member, serves as symbolical replacement of the Marland wealth. And as water is as much a natural resource as the oil which their wealth is based on, and perhaps the implication is that as such, it belongs to the workers as much as it does to the capitalists. The symbolic interaction of the silk napkin and the water is also of importance, but is something that is not properly contextualized until later. For now, it still serves as a symbol of wealth, and the act of using that symbol to help the child speaks loudly. The child being described as "redheaded" should also not escape the attention of the reader, considering the proverbs regarding "redheaded stepchildren", it fits as an appropriate signifier for the working class as a whole.¹¹³

Following this scene, Lydie manages to convince her husband Ernest to instate what would historically be the first extensive corporate responsibility program in the United States: medical care for workers, educational programs, reduced bank interest, universal wage raises, even the grand courtyard and land of the Marland's would be open to the public on certain days. However, this initiative does not impress everyone: an influential methodist pastor, by the name of James Engell, is sceptic of this initiative as it clashes with his religious

¹¹³ And as a consequence, paternalistic readings are not unwarranted: a point is made later on during the screenplay that perhaps Lydie is going to far in her corporate responsibility program by treating the workers as her children. Lydie denounces these claims, however it is very apparent that she, on some level, is overcompensating for her husband's desire to not have children of their own.

beliefs about paradise being obtained after death through moral integrity. Naturally, he butts heads with Lydie on this matter. And yet again, the mise-en-page, though shrewd use of props, evokes meaning to Lydie's actions:

INT. BENNETT'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - EVENING

The fifteen guests are taking their seats at a long dinner table. Someone pulls out a chair for Lydie.

CUT TO:

ERNEST

Lydie and I have decided that Mr. Horatio Alger's stories are fairy tales unless ambition is backed by education.

The dessert course. Shaw, pouring Ernest more wine. He's already had a lot.

ERNEST

The clinics are only the beginning of what we intend to do. The next thing is going to be a school for the field workers. So they don't always have to be field workers.

Shaw, his tipsy avuncular self, claps Engell on the shoulder.

SHAW

Seems to me they're filling the gap where the Church should be, Reverend! They're upstaging you, my man!

Engell responds quietly.

ENGELL

The Lord tells us that material success will not come to all of us in this lifetime. I think we risk pride to think that we can eradicate suffering by worldly means alone.

ON Lydie.

ERNEST

(with good humor)
Well, we can't eliminate it, Reverend, but we can certainly do our part to alleviate it.

[Continued on next page]

ENGELL
(smiling, but emphatic)
A paternalistic stance on the part
of employers discourages
independence, Mr. Marland. It
creates a society of deadbeats with
outstretched palms.

Then, a voice from the end of the table.

LYDIE
What is your first memory, Reverend
Engell?

ENGELL
I can't say I recall, Mrs. Marland.

LYDIE
Mine is rooting through the trash
for food.

Uncomfortable silence at the table. Even Ernest has never
heard this. Mrs. Bennett, bravely, offers--

MRS. BENNETT
Perhaps the ladies wish to retire
for cake?

Lydie doesn't flinch.

LYDIE
(to Engell)
My mother wasn't a deadbeat.
(MORE)

[page break]

LYDIE (cont'd)
She worked in a factory that made
leather undersoles for shoes.

She takes off her high-heeled shoe and puts it on the table,
indicating the undersole.

LYDIE
God didn't make this. A person had
to make this.

Bennett averts his eyes, studies the tablecloth. At a loss.

[Continued on next page]

LYDIE

My mother made some mistakes. But when you're poor you have to do everything right. So she had no second chance. She sent me away and fell down and never got up again.

She takes a red-wine stained napkin from the Guest next to her.

LYDIE

But, you see, *this* is the east coast, where my mother lived.
(that is, the napkin)
Layer upon layer of history and misery and the old way of doing things.

Now she takes her own napkin from her lap. It's unstained.
Perfect white.

LYDIE

This is Oklahoma.
(a beat)
Things can be different here. We can give people a chance in hell of succeeding by providing them with dignity and security so that if they fall they can stand up again. Here. In *this* world.

She puts the napkins down on the table.

LYDIE

That's what we intend to do.
(then, smiling to Mrs. Bennett)
Can you pass the sugar, please?

When Lydie takes off her shoe and shows the soles to Engell, it is not just merely the product of her mother's labour she shows; she is exposing the very foundation of which the upper class, both figuratively and literally, stands on. Her use of the napkin also connects back to the mise-en-page of the previous scene, and we understand now that the napkin is not only a symbol of the Marland's wealth, but also that of the Marland legacy. It is also not a coincidence that the 'misery' of the east coast is presented through the use of stains from red wine stains, a preferred drink of the aristocracy. The use of the napkins here through the mise-en-page suggests a lot regarding the differences between the Marlands contra their east coast competitors (represented through Standard Oil): Lydie uses her napkin to ease the suffering of those in need, while their competitors, she implies, use it merely to wipe off the gluttonous remains off their lips.

The Marlands' dream, however, inevitably comes to an end: To ensure the survival of the corporate responsibility programs, Ernest must seek out external funding and loans. He sells stock to, what he believes, is an independent company. But as Lydie finds out, too late, this company and the people representing it are nothing but fronts for Standard Oil, who in turn become the majority stock holders of Marland Oil. To handle the assimilation of the company, Standard Oil sends Wilcox, a former employee of Marland Oil who was chased away by Ernest once he discovered that he was trying to court Lydie (before Ernest and Lydie consummate their love), who now returns with a vengeance. Analogous to how the use of one specific chair by different characters brings meaning in Klevan's analysis of *Late Spring*, we now see the all too familiar seat, formerly used by Ernest, with the power it signifies, being perverted by Wilcox: [continued on next page]

INT. MARLAND OIL BOARD ROOM - DAY

The eleven board members are standing around getting coffee and settling in.

The Receptionist leaves as Wilcox enters the room with a briefcase. Bennett goes to him.

BENNETT

(shakes his hand)

My friend. Ernest will be happy to see you back in the Outlet again.

WILCOX

Mr. Marland hasn't been asked to attend today.

Wilcox sits in Ernest's seat, begins to remove documents from a briefcase.

WILCOX (V.O.)

(pre-lap)

The first item for discussion on your list will be the management changes.

CUT TO:

A moment later. He's passing around papers.

WILCOX

Standard has a responsibility to maintain its aura of respectability to its shareholders. There are aspects of Mr. Marland's personal life that are not well regarded in the press and we no longer wish to have him as the public face of the company.

BOSKIRK

His name is the name of the company. How can he not be the public face?

WILCOX

We will also be phasing out the use of the name Marland Oil.

The Board members look at each other.

WILCOX

I'd like to jump right in to our evaluation of the expenditures report.

He picks up a copy of the papers he's been passing.

WILCOX

Line items to be eliminated are flagged in the right column and include but are not limited to: Subsidized home loans. Employee medical benefits. The operation of Marland Industrial School. Stock grants, life and accident insurance for employees.

(amused at this one)

Free golf and equestrian lessons.

(turning a page)

Moving on to page two...

Nottingham (draft dated at 11/03/06), written by Ethan Reiff & Cyrus Voris, a screenplay retelling the legend of Robin Hood but from the Sheriff's (named Robert Tornham) perspective, utilizes 'props' in a more visceral way in its mise-en-page. During a traditional stag hunt, prince John (the same as we know him from the tales) foolishly rushes in on his own to kill his prey which has retreated in to an oak cave, only to discover that this 'helpless' prey is a wild boar now pouncing toward him. Tornham rushes in and impales the boar with his spear, but the wild animal does not stop and charges for the prince again, until finally, the boar is killed by an arrow launched by the lady Marian herself (also the same as we know her from the tales). Prince John, humbled and ashamed, collects himself and wishes to express his gratitude:

[see next page]

Prince John SUDDENLY DRAWS HIS SWORD AND HACKS AWAY at the dead boar, splattering himself with blood. He wipes his face, sheathes his sword and RAISES UP THE BOAR'S DECAPITATED HEAD --

PRINCE JOHN
A fine trophy indeed --
(to Marian)
-- for you, milady.

MARIAN
That's... very kind of you, Your Grace --
but I couldn't, really. The walls of my
father's home are already crowded with
too many of its like.

PRINCE JOHN
(holding the head out to
Tornham)
(MORE)

[page break]

PRINCE JOHN (cont'd)
Then you, Sir Robert -- a freshly-
butchered beast for a freshly-
appointed sheriff. What could be
more fitting?

Tornham stands there uncomfortably for a long moment, all eyes on him -- then decides to "go with the flow of blood" so to speak, takes the head from Prince John's bloody hands, smiles humbly and bows --

TORNHAM
I can't think of a thing, Your
Grace.

This is a key scene which only reveals itself after a complete reading of the screenplay. Tornham starts out in *Nottingham* first as the sheriff of Cyprus, but is repositioned to Nottingham as king Richard has sold the island to fund his war. This, of course, was orchestrated by prince John himself (or so he wishes Tornham to believe). And knowing the legend, we of course know of prince John's corrupt nature and his desire to overthrow his brother, king Richard; the story here not being an exception to this incarnation of the legend; for as soon as news of Richard being captured and held ransom in Austria, prince John seizes the opportunity to proclaim himself as the new monarch of England. Thus, we recognize the meaning of his *bloody gift* to Tornham, which he offers with his *bloody hands*; a corrupt 'gift' from a corrupt man. It is also interesting that lady Marian declines his gift on account of her father's walls being "already crowded with too many of its like". Perhaps suggesting something about the relationship between her father, a Norman noble, and prince John.

Costume

Another form of props is costume and/clothing. As the proverb goes: the clothes make the man. This is ironically pretty much the contention of George M. Wilson's analysis of the final scene in *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955), when he discusses the symbolic meaning of Jim zipping up Plato's jacket (formerly Jim's) in a manner resembling that of a parent, while he himself is being covered by his own father's jacket: "[...]With the red jacket born away on Plato and with the adult jacket now worn by Jim, an exchange of 'uniforms' has been effected. The jacket of rebellion is gone, and, as Jim returns to Judy's side, he wears the token of his new and more acceptable status."¹¹⁴

We have technically already discussed how costume, along with props and décor, serves to create meaning through the contrast between Hamet and his brother in *Tripoli*, and how the simple naming of 'Suits' denotes a specific type of mannerism and behaviour in *Ends of The Earth*, for instance. But costume has a more profilic role later on in *Tripoli*, and as Wilson hinted; a change of wardrobe can really change the man:

EXT. THE VILLAGE. MORNING

THE dust-storm is at full force. Berbers are pulling cloth over the eyes of their horses. The sound of wind and the slashing of sand is very loud. The sky has gone violet. Marines and sailors are huddled in the lees of buildings. The bodies of Tuaregs are being covered in dust.

EXT. THE VILLAGE. MORNING

PARKER is directing the cleaning of the guns. He notices:

HAMET coming out of the house where he has slept.

CHILDREN run up to him and kneel. Some OLD PEOPLE stare from doorways. HAMET does not move. Then, as if he is touching flame, he puts his hand on the head of a BOY.

HAMET

We must see how much food is left,
and how it may be apportioned.

(not wanting to ask)

Do you know who I am?

BOY

You are the king.

HAMET turns, and looks at PARKER. He nods at him.

PARKER nods back, gravely.

¹¹⁴ Gibbs p.7f

EXT. VILLAGE WELLS. LATER

EATON is sitting brokenly on the stones. HAMET comes up to him. HAMET, for the first time in the film, is dressed in Berber clothing and wears a sword. EATON stares at him.

HAMET

My brother's army is coming. We are going to die. Probably like Rais Mohamed. But we will go as far as we can and do as much as we can before we do.

This is right before Hamet and Eaton, together with Berber rebels and American troops liberate the town of Derna. As can obviously be read from this passage, Hamet finally dressing up in Berber clothing signifies his acceptance of his role as king of Tripolitania, and his identity as a Berber. But the sudden wardrobe change also bears with it a deeper meaning: As Hamet touches the head of the child, it is very much in the manner of a king laying his hand on his loyal subject, but note how the mise-en-page evokes the inner struggle of Hamet's decision; "as if he is touching flame". Hamet not only embraces his role as king; here he also comes to turn with his inevitable death. For as he predicted, he does not survive the rebellion; The Bashaw has managed to negotiate a peace treaty with the United States, and as such, Eaton and his troops are ordered to retreat from Derna, leaving Hamet to fend off The Bashaw's troops for himself. Hamet only truly comes full circle, as he not only submits himself to his role, but also submits himself to his people, as he physically does so once the Bashaw's troops engage:

EXT. A STREET IN DERNA. DAY

HAMET walks down the steps from the walls. The townspeople stare at him. HAMET takes a step...and is struck on the head by a stone. He walks on. He is struck by another stone. HAMET looks towards

His BERBERS. Two men look back at him.

HAMET

(nods)

Go.

He stands where he is, and drops his pistols. The CROWD converges, and seizes him violently.

Action and Performance

As the old screenwriting proverb goes; action speak louder than words. This is certainly true in film and for mise-en-scène as well. The symbolical transfer of the ‘jacket of rebellion’ to Plato, and the symbolical demasculinisation of Jim in *Rebel Without a Cause*, ultimately gains its power from the *actions* performed by James Dean. Likewise, in *The Ends of The Earth*, it is Lydie’s active manipulation of the props along with the content of her speech which gives them meaning. The subtle details of acting and performance, can thus give meaning to a scene that other elements might not achieve on their own. V.F. Perkins, for instance, notes how Barbara Bel Gedde’s specific performance in Max Ophuls’ *Caught* (1949) evokes that of a satiric strip tease or ‘flashing’; as Curt Bois approaches Gedde and asks her to ‘show the linings’ of her new coat, she is aware of his true intentions and opens one side of the coat at the time, pulling the material with a rapid movement of her forehand then waits a beat before doing the same on the other side, ending with her body exposed. She stares Bois in the eyes, and challenges him to meet her gaze instead of looking at her body.¹¹⁵

Screenwriting, however, can not always always detail such expressive clarity that actual screenacting can; this for reasons both pragmatic (to facilitate the reading) and ‘political’ (the screenwriter is not supposed to ‘direct’ in a script). However, in his or her power lies the the screenwriter’s ability to instead suggest and *encourage* such extrapolation in performance and meaning.

The Imitation Game (Graham Moore, undated draft), which is the top ranked screenplay in the 2011 Blacklist, depicts the real story of Alan Turing; the famous mathematician and cryptologist and grandfather of the electrical computer, and his instrumental part in cracking the German Enigma code during the second world war. Turing is presented as an arrogant genius who is enlisted by Brittish intelligence to lead a secret group of linguists and cryptologists in order to crack the Enigma code. He is briefly sent to America as a Brittish liason in order to discuss Enigma (and lie about the Brittish progress). Once there, he calls Joan, a fellow member of his group, and also his wife in a sham marriage arranged so that she can stay and work with them. However, Joan does not know that Alan is homosexual (a punishable offence at the time), and the following scene on the next page details his conversation with her about his visit to America, and Greenwich Village in particular:

¹¹⁵ Gibbs p. 12ff

JOAN CLARKE
Tell me about America. Tell me
everything.

ALSO INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - NIGHT - EARLIER

Alan roams the streets of New York, watching people.

ALAN TURING
It's such a strange place. Everyone
is shockingly rude. They're deathly
afraid of silences, did you know
that? If Americans have nothing to
say, rather than simply stay quiet
with their thoughts for a moment
they'll make these funny little
noises. "Hmm," "well now," "huh."
It's frightful.

Alan walks downtown to the rumored and just-forming gay mecca
that is Greenwich Village.

JOAN CLARKE
Is it everything they say? Decadent
and dirty and beautiful?

ALAN TURING
I went exploring a bit. Down to the
Village. It was frightening.

He sees MEN FLIRTING on the streets, TOUCHING EACH OTHER'S
HANDS.

JOAN CLARKE
Do tell.

ALAN TURING
I went into a pub.

Alan approaches the Julius Bar. MEN are smoking outside in
small packs.

JOAN CLARKE
You did? I can barely get you to go
to the Bull & Butcher back home.

ALAN TURING
I wanted to see for myself what
they'd be like. In America.

Inside, Alan stands awkwardly at the bar, trying to order a drink. Around him, MERRIMENT IS KING.

A few men even KISS in the corner.

JOAN CLARKE

And?

ALAN TURING

The people were dressed in garish costumes. Everyone was loud. And they laughed. Laughed at everything that came out of their mouths, but I didn't understand any of it.

JOAN CLARKE

Aww, did you try to make friends with the locals?

A YOUNG MAN starts hitting on Alan. Flirting.

ALAN TURING

I did.

JOAN CLARKE

Without too much success, it seems?

Alan tries to flirt back, but it doesn't really work. This place, these people, feel horribly foreign and strange to him.

ALAN TURING

Their chattering, the conversation... It was completely inane. It was as if nothing was truly important to any of them. As if nothing mattered in the world.

JOAN CLARKE

You tried to talk about math, didn't you?

ALAN TURING

Well what else was I supposed to talk about?

Upset, Alan leaves the bar.

Outside the bar, he holds his coat tight against the cold.

JOAN CLARKE

And this is why I love you, Alan. Wherever you go, you're always you.

Playing the trope of ‘misunderstood genius’, throughout the screenplay Alan is presented as out of touch with humanity, a theme specifically exemplified in this scene. That the Village is described as a ‘gay mecca’ is quite fitting seeing as this trip for purposes and intents is his pilgrimage; an elaborate attempt to connect with (his) society, (his) humanity, and his sexuality.

The action lines – or using Steinbergian terminology; the report mode of the scene – juxtaposed with Alan’s conversation with Joan constructs a rather oblique whole: The objective third-person narration typical for screenwriting details the events as they occur, but these ‘facts’ are vaguely described. Meanwhile, Alan’s subjective experiences of these events are revealed through his half-truths told to Joan. But Alan, while a master of deciphering mathematical codes, has trouble deciphering human social norms and ‘codes’, and thus in this case he might be lying to himself just as much as he is lying to Joan.

This vagueness of the mise-en-page thus rather than dictating action, instead invites for further extrapolation and interpretation in terms of the actions of performed: how exactly is this ‘merriment’ among the men supposed to be expressed? In what way does Alan try to ‘flirt back’? The reporting of this action even seem to conflict with Alan’s own conception of the event as the narration implies that he is attempting contact at ‘their’ terms, physically, out of his own comfort zone.

While the details may not be present here, and certainly the screenplay for *The Imitation Game* is more verbose than ‘action driven’, the overarching theme of Alan not being able to connect with people on a very basic human level, without math riddles and computers, certainly does suggest an awkwardness to his presence among men who lead very physical (and in a sense; ‘carnal’) lives. Contrast this with, for instance, the mise-en-page of J.P.’s breakdown in *Easy Money*, which has, in relation, more precise directions in performance and action.

Instead of being precisely written, and risking an eventual rewrite if the scene has been decided to be remade during production, the vague, but yet still crystalline mise-en-page in *The Imitation Game* invites the filmmaker to make it his or her own.

Space

Physical space might in itself not mean much. However, when considering space when discussing the arrangement of actors, props or other mise-en-page/scène elements, it might support a given theme or even create meaning in itself. The ideological difference between Lydie and the reverend Engell in *The Ends of The Earth*, for instance, is further underlined as they sit at opposite ends of the dinner table. However, without clear directions regarding scene arrangements, it is more or less difficult to discuss space in screenplays than it is to discuss them in films. Regarding *The Lusty Men* (Nicholas Ray, 1952), Douglas Pye draws attention to how the struggle of one character's allegiances to two others is represented by how she in the background of the frame stands 'in between' these two characters situated in the foreground of the frame sit facing each other.¹¹⁶

Still, the mise-en-page in a screenplay can certainly be aware aware of such practices in arrangement, and can even encourage it, perhaps though to a lesser extent: In *Easy Money*, J.P first meets Sophie at the VIP-section of an exclusive hotel club (in which he only was let in because he knew someone on the guest list). As she and her friends go to the dance floor on the outdoor terrace of the club, J.P, already being smitten, decides shortly after to follow her.

INT. THE STANDARD HOTEL – BOOM BOOM ROOM

JP, looking for Sophie, approaches the floor-to-ceiling windows and notices that one is actually a GLASS WALL, revealing an OUTDOOR TERRACE. Stops.

JP's POV... through the glass, SOPHIE and AMY dancing amidst a crowd of other rooftop revelers. A beat to take it in.

A *glass wall* stands between J.P and Sophie; the implications couldn't be clearer. While Sophie is the focus of J.P's attention, being his – using the Mulvey-esque term of – 'object of desire', she dances amidst a crowd of other upper class patrons, the demographic which in turn forms his entire circle of friends. Thus, as J.P's persona is merely a facade; the son of a working class family pretending to be rich; he'll never truly be one of the privileged upper class, one of 'them'. Even as J.P eventually finds his way out, his company has already left by that time.

¹¹⁶ Gibbs p.17f

While certainly, the *mise-en-page* attempts to draw attention to the possibility of framing this event through a POV-shot in order to drive the point of J.P.'s desire to the reader and future audience, the framing of this event also opens up for the possibility to visually represent the figurative distance between J.P. and Sophie by connecting it to physical distance; perhaps instead of initially opening up the scene with two separate shots, the distance could be enhanced by a tracking shot either to, or from, J.P. Either way, the *mise-en-page* draws attention to some form of expressive means to convey J.P.'s solitude.

Anticipating The Camera

In the end, *mise-en-scène*, it can be said, comes down to where you put the camera, which direction it is facing and from what angle. Gibbs exemplifies with a hypothetical scenario:

[t]he position of the camera governs our access to the action. How we experience a given set of events is going to be profoundly affected by the nature of the view, or views, with which we are presented. Take, as a hypothetical example, a scene involving two figures talking as they walk along a river bank. It would be possible to film the event in long shot, perhaps from the other side of the river. This would literally, and perhaps emotionally, hold the audience at a certain distance. Or, one could track along in front of the characters giving the spectator an intimate and equal view of each. Or, one could have the camera tracking slightly to one side, thus favouring one of the characters because we are closer to the actor and can study her or his facial expressions with greater ease. Or, one could shoot the sequence in a series of shots which alternate between a view of a character looking offscreen and a series of shots representing her optical point of view. [...] The point here is that the position of the camera is going to determine our understanding of the scene.¹¹⁷

With the understanding of the 'proto-camera' at hand which we discussed earlier, we can see that it is well within the screenwriters power to convey his or her vision in accordance with the paradigmatic conventions, or language, of the camera by first anticipating it with the proto-camera. The following scene from *Nottingham* takes place in the beginning of the screenplay, where Tornham is defending castle Marcappus, located in Cyprus, under siege by a Cypriot army:

¹¹⁷ Gibbs p. 19

EXT. CASTLE UNDER SIEGE - NIGHT

The same CATAPULT CREW loads up another BOULDER and the same Crewman YELLS UP to the walls:

CYPRIOT CREWMAN
<<OPEN YOUR MOUTHS FOR DESSERT, YOU
ENGLISH BASTARDS!>>

The Crewman goes to fire the catapult -- but before he can make a move he's run through with a SWORD!

Robert Tornham yanks his blade from the Crewman's chest then leads his SCREAMING, BLOODY AND HALF-NAKED TUNNEL SOLDIERS OUT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CYPRIOT SIEGE MINE in a MERCILESS SURPRISE ATTACK ON THE ENTIRE CYPRIOT ARMY!

The scene is formatted in such a way as to first present the image of the crewman, keeping him as the focus, or the subject of the camera. The mise-en-page then stays with this subject until a new object enters 'the frame', from which our attention then diverts to Tornham as he takes center stage of the frame and becomes the new subject of interest for the camera. This scene could be realised in a multitude of ways: For instance, the camera can be placed so as to mimic the crewman's point of view; putting him and the catapult in the focus of the frame either through a longer tracking shot, or a variation of shots (close up on the crewman's face as he taunts the English, then step back and frame him moving towards the catapult's ignition), where we keep Tornham and his advance on the siege line omitted from both audience and crewman until the moment he strikes, and then reveal the English charging in. Or, the camera can be set up in such a way to achieve an effect of dramatic irony: we see Tornham sneaking up on the crewman, who is face front towards the camera, and thus can not see, as we do, Tornham advancing on him. Then again, even though the mise-en-page suggests Tornham *entering* the frame, there is nothing stopping the hypothetical director to instead position the camera as to emulate Tornham's point of view, so that we move with him in his surprise attack.

In *The Disciple Program* (Tyler Marceca, draft dated 02/02/12), an action/thriller about a man who discovers a 'sleeper agent' conspiracy after his wife's death, we see a similar awareness of the camera, and can identify a very keen and observant knowledge of film style and conventions through the mise-en-page. The following scenes take place after Jocelyn, the above mentioned wife and a psychiatrist at a correctional facility, has been assaulted by an inmate, and comes home from the hospital:

INT. KITCHEN - EBERLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Roger and Jocelyn eat dinner, the silence at the table punctuated by clinking silverware and masticating jaws.

Jocelyn absently picks at her food. She looks down, finds PLATO, her Scottish terrier, scratching at his collar.

Jocelyn reaches down, reels Plato close, holding him as if he were a talisman to ward off evil.

INT. BEDROOM - EBERLE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Jocelyn occupies her side of the bed, curled up in a fetal bundle, facing away from Roger.

Roger lies awake on his back, contemplative.

ROGER
What happened Joce?

[page break]

JOCELYN
Something I said... must have set
him off somehow. Provoked him --

ROGER
(cutting her off)
I'm not talking about yesterday.
You've gone cold these past months.
I tell myself a wife doesn't just
wake up one morning and look at her
husband like he's a stranger who's
walked in off the streets without
having her reasons. I just want to
know what they are.

Jocelyn's eyes crystallize, lips quivering, about to lay herself bare -- but refrains, locked in tortured silence.

Roger lets out a dispirited sigh at Jocelyn's withholding. He shuffles onto his side, puts his back to Jocelyn.

This sample serves as a great example for how the screenwriter deliberately writes with a proto-camera in mind which he or she uses in accordance with the conventions of continuity editing that has come to characterise the Hollywood paradigm of filmmaking. As Roger cuts off Jocelyn in a confronting manner, we cut back to Jocelyn, as is typical in back-and-forth banter in film, in anticipation of her answer. Instead, the mise-en-page suggests a close-up on her face to detail her non-verbal response. This close-up is achieved not by simple indication of a camera cut (CLOSE ON, etc), but is instead suggested through the use of clever 'camera

beats' which come in the form of contained paragraphs which detail action and also frames it spatially by use of sentence structure and specific 'micro-descriptions', and an assumption that the reader is familiar with the conventions of cinema; as we move to the next paragraph, we anticipate a new 'shot'. This paragraph begins detailing the frame's subject of interest; Jocelyn; and continues to suggest the borders of the frame by describing details such as her eyes and her lips, and perhaps also, it can be said, the very omission of other bodily action (hands clenching her legs, and so on) helps in this framing of her face.

In the same sense as Gibbs means extra 'screen time' given to an actor/character facilitates the audience's empathising with that actor/character,¹¹⁸ so does extra (or perhaps more intimate) 'page time' or 'page space' facilitate such an effect on the reader. The intimate depiction of Jocelyn's reactions serves to clue in the reader on the fact that she is hiding something (later on we find out she was murdered because she also discovered this conspiracy), and that it is not simple marital issues which haunt her. Even so, this interpretation does not hold any conclusive force when it comes down to how this will come to be realised during production. In fact, a director might instead wish to frame the solely event from Roger's perspective, omitting Jocelyn's reaction to create a distancing effect to her, only to later (as Roger for instance learns of his wife's own investigation) perhaps reveal it in a flashback replay of this scene detailing her reaction and in essence 'redeem' Jocelyn in the eyes of the audience. Perhaps not an elegant solution as such, but still a viable one.

In the Blacklist 2009 ranked *Mix Tape* (Stacey Menear, draft dated 14/08/09), a coming of age story about a young girl named Beverly who seeks to recreate a damaged mix tape left behind by her dead parents by tracking down all the individual songs on the list in order to learn more about her deceased parent, we encounter a more brazen type of mise-en-page in the very first two pages of the screenplay:

¹¹⁸ Ibid

NIGHT SKY

The winter stars, impossibly big and bright, fill the sky. We gaze on these ancient beacons of hope and inspiration; the same stars that stood witness to the birth of kings, inspired poets, gave hope to the hopeless. Then we trace a silver string of starlight down through the too-huge universe, to where this inspirational, ancient and magical light comes to rest on...

Beer cans. Milwaukee's Best, to be specific.

The beer cans are frozen in a kiddie pool. Next to a broken trampoline. In a yard with a rusted pick-up truck. Surrounded by many other yards decorated in much the same manner and all of it covered in a layer of snow.

Welcome to winter in SPOKANE, WASHINGTON - a city comprised of churches and strip bars equally - who's chief export seems to be its endless supply of footage for the Cops TV series.

SOMEWHERE IN THE DISTANCE

A bottle rocket traces a green path across the star-filled sky and then--

POP! It explodes in a shower of green sparks. A chorus of barking dogs calls out--

INT. BEVERLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The muffled sound of dogs barking outside--

In the dark, a massive tangle of hair rises from the pillow. The light flicks on. Beside the lamp a little framed PICTURE OF A YOUNG COUPLE, we don't get a good look at it yet--

By the light of the lamp we can see the girl beneath the bed-head. BEVERLY MOODY (13), chubby, caught fully in those "awkward years". She reaches up and tries her best to regain some control over the mess she calls hair.

OUT THE FROSTED-OVER WINDOW

All we can see is the blurred glow of light spreading and then getting dimmer like some kind of mysterious magic as another bottle rocket explodes. Beverly climbs out of bed. Opens her window and sticks her head out.

BEVERLY'S POV:

[page break]

From some far house, a red streak races up to the stars
and POP! Explodes in a beautiful bloom of sparks
reflected in the snow below so that the ground looks like
a million red jewels dancing in the cruddy backyards.

INSIDE

Beverly pulls a chair to the window and watches another
burst of color shower the dark houses below. Another
chorus of dogs howl in the distance in some kind of
mysterious dog applause...

MORNING

And Beverly's passed out in the same spot, head resting
on the frame of the open window.

A KNOCK at the door--

Beverly jolts awake - CRACKS her head against the window--

BEVERLY

Crap!

There are two things of interest within this passage:

First, other than perhaps the use of the phrasing of “we see”, there are no discernable camera directions or any other type of technical jargon which reveals the opening as a tracking shot from the sky to the ground. Instead, our visualisation of this passage is solely the consequence of the metonymic narration which guides us from the sky to the ground.

Second, while this opening might come off as superfluous from a structuralist perspective, as it in screenwriter terms does not ‘push forward the plot’ or reveal any important information regarding the plot, it stylistically serves an intricate purpose to the story:

Beverly is the child of a pair of teenage misfits who died in an accident while she was still a baby. Her grandmother, on the mother’s side, raised Beverly but would barely speak of her parents, as she apparently left off with her daughter in a bad way before her untimely death, and thus can’t bear to talk about it as it pains her. As Beverly one day finds an old home made mix tape, compiled by her mother and dedicated to her father, which she accidentally destroys by putting it into an old broken walkman, she embarks on a journey to recreate the mix tape by tracking down the songs as they are listed on the cover. For Beverly,

this journey to recreate the mix tape means more than just learning about her parents; it is also a way for her to learn about herself. However her journey is not without obstacles; some of the songs on the list are so obscure that she can not find them in any conventional record store, and a few of them are not even listed by title or artist, but instead by unclear messages such as “the song that reminds me of that day in the park”. But with the help of newly acquired friends, who introduce her to the highly convenient services of iTunes, and an old music fanatic who owns an alternative record store, she manages to track down most of the songs on the list. Around the end of her journey, she once again sees the same fireworks in the sky, and believing it is a sign from her parents, decides to find where the fireworks are coming from. What she discovers is an obnoxious drunk man in his boxers lighting up fireworks in to the sky out of spite and arguing with his wife. Still thinking it is a sign from her parents, albeit not the one she was hoping for (previous to this she finds out that her parents were drug addicts and ‘low life trash’), Beverly gives up hope on re-assembling the mix tape as she comes to the disappointing conclusion that her parents were losers. Her friends eventually manage to rekindle her spirit and help her track down the remaining songs. But it isn’t until her grandmother, who in a reconciling act, plays the last song on the list, titled “The Parental Unit’s Song”, and explains its’ meaning for Beverly, that she finally learns who her parents were, and that the two of them can finally find peace.

While even a more pious structuralist might agree that the opening sequence does indeed fill some structural function (justifying Beverly’s change of heart as the transition in to the third act), the reader familiar with the conventions of mise-en-scène and cinematography can identify the symbolic meaning within the opening sequence: For just as – awkward as this comparison may seem – Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of The Will* (1935) begins with a long sequence from inside an airplane flying over Germany, finally ‘landing’ in Nüremberg where a crowd, looking up to the sky, are anticipating the Führer – sent from the heavens above as a gift to the German people – to speak from a grand podium,¹¹⁹ so we recognise that the mise-en-page, or the proto-camera, in *Mix Tape* is symbolically delivering a message from the skies; a both literal and figurative wake up call to Beverly. The connection between Beverly, her parents, and fireworks is finally confirmed, in an almost undeniable fashion (at the expense of using explicit camera directives, however), at the end of the screenplay as we cut from Beverly’s birthday party, transitioning through exploding

¹¹⁹ Eric Barnouw, *Documentary – A History of The Non-fiction Film*, 2nd revised edition, New York: Oxford University Press 1993 (1974), p.104

fireworks, to a flashback scene of her parents' own celebration, many years back:

BACKYARD - NIGHT

A perfect clear night.

The parents are relaxing and talking from their lawn chairs. All the kids are gathered around Anti who is standing over a giant stash of fireworks.

ELLEN

Come on, Anti. Let us fire off some.

ANTI

Um, excuse me, but did you ever assist Bon Jovi's pyrotechnic team in setting up the fireworks for their Steel Horse tour?

ELLEN

No.

ANTI

Exactly. And that's why Mrs. Moody requested that I be in charge of the birthday fireworks. Now if you'll all give me some room, I can make the magic happen.

Beverly sits down next to Gail.

The first firework takes to the sky - a red streak rising up into the darkness and then--

POP!

EXT. PARK - FLASHBACK

Close-up on Beverly as a baby followed by the sizzle and pop of fireworks.

Music plays in the background.

Beverly's Dad bends over to light another bottle rocket. Mom stands at a distance, holding infant Beverly.

MOM

I think she likes the fireworks.

[page break]

DAD
How do you know? Babies can't smile.

MOM
I just have the feeling she does. And
she's not crying.

More fireworks are set off. Beverly almost seems to be following the fireworks with her eyes.

Dad pulls two cans from a case of Rainier and hands one to Mom.

DAD
Let's make a toast.

MOM
To what?

DAD
(looking at Beverly)
To new beginnings.

They toast with their cans. And as another firework bursts in mid-air--

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The sky is lit up by a colorful series of explosions. Everyone "Ooohs" and "Aaaahs" as the sparks float back down to earth.

Gail puts her arm around Beverly.

GAIL
Happy birthday, Beverly.

Beverly puts her arm around Gail.

BEVERLY
Thank you, Grandma.

As another bottle rocket explodes in the sky...

Anticipating The Editing Room

As should be evident, we have now begun to drift away from the framing of an individual image and continued to discuss the more elaborate set up multiple images into a coherent whole.

Kitchen Sink (Oren Uziel, Black List draft), which made its way on to the 2010 Black List, is an outrageous sci-fi/fantasy comedy where a war between humans, vampires, and zombies have broken out, only to be interrupted by invading aliens who are killing them all in an indiscriminating fashion. The screenplay begins, in what certainly seems like an homage to the great zombiefilm director George Romero, with Dag (a human, later to be revealed as a werewolf) running away from the madness to a deserted house on a hill, only to find it occupied by zombies fighting vampires. The bloody free-for-all ends with only Dag, a vampire named Petra, and a zombie named Ned, standing. And as they are about to rumble, they get distracted by noise coming from the outside:¹²⁰

INT. LIVING ROOM

Bodies strewn everywhere, but Dag pays them no heed. He's focused on the BOOMS and SCREAMS and ZIPS and WHIRS that are emanating from outside the house.

Vampire girl arrives behind him and then zombie. All three approach the windows and look outside.

EXT. HILL AND BEYOND

Outside, illuminated by the light of the blazing barn and a half-dozen oak trees, are dozens and dozens of -- I shit you not --

Alien spaceships.

Spilling from the ships like ants from a hole, are thousands upon thousands of silver-hued ALIENS, shimmering in the firelight, like the molten polyalloy terminator from T-2.

Using translucent bowling ball sized orbs that materialize from their palms, the aliens are vaporizing everything in

¹²⁰ Transcribed from a pdf due to technical issues.

their path.

INT. FARM HOUSE

The trio stare in horror as each of their kind is cut down.

Humans evaporated.

DAG

Oh my god.

Vampires disintegrated.

VAMPIRE

Holy shit.

Zombies vaporized.

ZOMBIE

Uuurrrggggh.

Dag and the vampire look at each other, speechless. Zombie joins the lookfest, eyeing the vampire first, then Dag.

What the mise-en-page is suggesting here is to, by means of style, connect the characters, as they must now band together in order to stop the alien invasion. One possible way to realise this is to cut back and forth from the demise of each character's 'racial representants' to the individual character's reaction, and then, as the last paragraph might suggest, frame them all within the same image (say, by means of a medium shot taken from outside showing them looking out the window). Thus, as, for instance, POV shots reveal each character's subjective view and response, we end with an establishing shot showing them together, showing that they are all thinking the same thing. Another more cost-effective way would be to just jump ahead to the medium shot, hold there, and have the actors speak their lines and react on sound cues; the screams of humans being evaporated, the hissing sound of vampires disintegrating, and the groans of zombies getting vaporized. Either way, the characters are now depicted to be in the same boat, so to speak.

Cross-cutting between alternating close ups of characters can also effectively increase the tension within a scene and can dramatize interaction between characters by having the camera move closer and closer to the characters after each cut. Bordwell &

Thompson identify such practice in the scenes between Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster in *Silence of The Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991); the scenes typically begin in a conventional fashion with shots/reverse-shots, and as the scene progresses and the dialogue turns more intense and more intimate, the camera creeps in closer and closer to each actor.¹²¹ The mise-en-page in the opening scene to *The Disciple Program* effectively lends itself to such a practice. Conveniently, it also features a woman interrogating a psychotic criminal:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - PILGRIM CROSSING - DAY

A stark room with a stainless steel table situated in the center. Sitting on one side of the table --

-- JOCELYN EBERLE, one of the resident psychiatrists. Mid-thirties, pretty without pretense or solicitation. There's an opened file in front of Jocelyn. But her eyes are elsewhere, lost in thought, face pinched with distress.

The room's only door opens. A GUARD peeks his head in.

GUARD
Your patient's here Dr. Eberle.

Breaking Jocelyn from her reverie. Steeling herself --

JOCELYN
You can send him in.

Guard holds the door open for an imposing ORDERLY pushing --

-- EDMUND BOEDDEKER, both wrists handcuffed to the arms of a wheelchair, draped in a tear-resistant smock. Unassuming. But behind Edmund's eyes, a violent storm rages.

Orderly directs Edmund to the table, guiding both wheels of the wheelchair into designated grooves in the floor. Moving back to the door, Orderly waves his hand over a panel --

-- triggering clamps to spring out and fasten to the wheels, rooting Edmund firmly to the floor.

Orderly takes position at the closed door like a sentinel.

Jocelyn takes a moment to review Edmund's file. Stolen glimpses of crime-scene photos, the eviscerated bodies of young women unearthed from crude burial sites.

[page break]

¹²¹ David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, *Film Art. An Introduction*, 7th edition, Boston: McGraw-Hill 2004 (1979), p. 393

Pegging Jocelyn for a possible admirer --

EDMUND

You'll have to forgive me for the Nordlinger girl. That was a mess, I know. But it served as a great résumé builder.

Jocelyn closes the file, regarding Edmund for a beat.

JOCELYN

Edmund, my name's Dr. Jocelyn Eberle. I'm a psychiatrist here at Pilgrim Crossing. I know that you normally meet with Dr. Storetveit, but the administrations board felt you were making...

(pausing to frame it
delicately)

... limited progress under his purview.

EDMUND

That's funny. I felt Dr. Storetveit and I had struck up a nice rapport. I tried telling them too, but they insisted that I see you.

Ears pricking up --

JOCELYN

Who insisted Edmund?

Edmund's brow furrows, face knotted with discomfort.

EDMUND

I'm sorry Dr. Eberle. I'm having a difficult time concentrating.

Jocelyn nods to Orderly. Orderly moves to Edmund, unlocks his handcuffed left hand, setting a pad and pencil on the table.

Edmund scrutinizes the pencil's tip with a disapproving look.

EDMUND (CONT'D)

This is dull.

ORDERLY

It's sharp enough Rembrandt.

Orderly moves back to his post by the door.

[page break]

EDMUND

He always calls me Rembrandt. It must be the only painter he knows.

With his free hand, Edmund commits pencil to paper, drawing a circle with painstaking exactitude, an exercise that seems to have a calming effect on Edmund.

JOCELYN

(persisting)

You said you tried telling them that you wanted to stay under Dr. Storetveit's care Edmund. Who did you say this to?

Unable to derail Edmund's train of thought --

EDMUND

People often forget about Giotto, even though it's his work that has come to represent the advent of the Italian Renaissance.

RIP -- Edmund balls up his first effort, begins a new circle.

EDMUND (CONT'D)

Once word of Giotto's considerable talents began to spread, it's said the Pope himself sent one of his most trusted aesthetes to Florence to observe and ultimately determine whether or not Giotto's skills were worthy of the Vatican's commission.

RIP -- Edmund discards another failed attempt, starts over.

Jocelyn watches as the pencil meticulously orbits the paper, shaking from the exertion.

EDMUND (CONT'D)

And how did Giotto choose to demonstrate his craft to the Holy Father's emissary?

RIP -- unsatisfied.

EDMUND (CONT'D)

A fresco of the lamentation of Christ perhaps?

RIP -- another ball of paper added to the growing pile.

[page break]

EDMUND (CONT'D)
Or an altarpiece depicting The
Annunciation?

RIP -- Jocelyn watches the pencil quiver from the pressure,
the veins in Edmund's wrist engorged and pulsating.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
No. Giotto simply dipped his fine-
tipped brush in a bit of red paint
and drew a circle on canvas.

RIP -- and Edmund's pencil once again finds the thinning pad,
threatening to splinter in half from the effort.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
A perfect circle.

SNAP -- and the concentrated stress beheads the pencil, the
sheared-off graphite gouging out a divot of paper.

Edmund's face curdles, instantly sickened. He pitches left
and violently retches.

Jocelyn uprights. Orderly moves to help Edmund --

-- but Edmund, expression now full of grim determination,
reaches into his puddle of sick, finding a small carrier
tube. He flicks off the top --

-- *brandishing a serrated shiv.*

Note how the audible cues 'RIP' and then finally 'SNAP' rhythmically depict a pacing of the scene. More than that, they serve a function far more important than simply acting as sound effects; for as every RIP attracts the attention of the proto-camera, we are given information crucial to Edmund's act in regards of its intensity, and perhaps also of his (possibly) tone growing more sinister as his tale progresses and his confidence, or adrenaline, rises. Thus the mise-en-page here invites the potential director to replicate the cinematography in *Silence of The Lambs*. That is to say, if he or she should wish.

And while we are still on the topic of possible connections to *Silence of The Lambs*, it is also interesting to note that even here, at the stage of mise-en-page, we can detect what will essentially become the foundations of any feminist and/or psychoanalytical readings of this scene, if this film should ever be made.

There is a tradition within the aforementioned schools of film analysis to study films where male aggression and violence (often towards women) are seemingly connected to sex(uality) and gender (roles). Elsaesser & Buckland, for instance, in their book *Studying*

Contemporary American Film, just so happen to discuss, and exemplify, feminist film theory and its applications by using *Silence of The Lambs* as a case example.¹²²¹²³¹²⁴ As Edmund begins drawing his circles, he is metaphorically initiating a perverse act of masturbation in front of Jocelyn; he draws with his pen (a convenient phallos), hand gesturing in a monotonous circular fashion, the increased pressure making the pen quiver as his pulse rises (as indicated by the throbbing veins of his hands). Until finally the culmination comes in an act taking the form of ejaculation as he vomits on the table (the vomit fittingly being described as “his puddle of sick”); now he is ready to kill.

Projecting Atmosphere and Mood

Certain films, directors, and genres, are marked by their specific tone or individual traits, unique (more or less) only to them;¹²⁵ the hazy, almost dreamlike, atmosphere of *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976); the surrealist films of Luis Buñuel; the somber tone of film noirs, and so on. As the reader might already know, or suspect, these traits are of specifically visual nature. While certainly, content matter and plot, and other ‘writerly’ factors play a big part in shaping film noirs, a prominent staple of the genre is, for instance, the low key lighting which enhance (some might even say wholly produce) the somber atmosphere of films like *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946) and *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944).

Of course, as the screenplay is a structure *anticipating* a future filmic structure, it is certainly capable of demonstrating such a desire in tone. Admittedly, yes, sometimes by *explicitly* appealing to such structures or elements and imagery found in previous films.¹²⁶ But the form of the screenplay also allows to frame the narration in ‘written accordance’ with the desired, or anticipated, mood or atmosphere. We have already discussed how the form allows for cinematographic intent in the conjunction, and juxtaposing, paragraphs. The same form also allows the screenwriter to shape his or her narrative to evoke certain atmospheric effects or to imply moods. More to the point, screenwriters aware of the potentials of the form beyond the structuralist paradigm recognise this type of practice, and do utilize it. When

¹²² Thomas Elsaesser, Warren Buckland, *Studying Contemporary American Film – A Guide To Movie Analysis*, London; Arnold 2002, p. 249 - 261

¹²³ For the reader interested in feminist film theory and psychoanalytical film theory, see for instance *Film Theory – An Introduction* (2000), by Robert Stam

¹²⁴ The similarities between Edmund and Hannibal Lecter should not go unnoticed.

¹²⁵ Of course, other factors such as theme, style, iconography, and so on, also play a part. But in the end it still comes down to the (audio)visualisation of it.

¹²⁶ The ceiling of the ‘Great Room’ in *The Ends of The Earth*, for instance, is described as “like Charles Foster Kane’s Xanadu.”

asked what the greatest challenge was in writing the screenplay for the horror film *The Woman In Black* (James Watkins, 2012), Jane Goldman says:

One unique challenge was trying to ensure that it was scary! Writing descriptions of what are essentially visual beats, in a way that would convey their essence and my intentions clearly to a director, was a challenge because you need to be very specific. I'm used to writing action scenes, so conveying non-verbal beats wasn't new to me, but at the same time, this was very different – it really required a lot of focus and careful choice of words - even punctuation! - in order to transfer from my head to the page what were often intricately timed moments, and their intended emotional and visceral effects.¹²⁷

In one sequence in *The Final Broadcast* (Chris Hutton & Eddie O'Keefe, undated draft) we see such detail to conveying non-verbal beats as the mise-en-page presents an elaborate attempt in alluding to the style of the horror film:

EXT. SWIMMING PIER - LAKE LOMBARD - NIGHT

The sun has set. It is night. Black. A crescent moon above.

Brianna slowly awakes. The RADIO now plays fluctuating tones of static; the baseball game long over. She must have slipped into a nap somehow and now many hours have passed.

BRIANNA

Cass!

No response. Brianna takes off her sunglasses and tries to orient herself as quickly as she can. She stands up and Cass's necklace falls from her back into the inky water.

[page break]

¹²⁷ Carson Reeves (pseudonym), "Screenwriter Interview: Jane Goldman", from <http://scriptshadow.blogspot.se/2012/01/screenwriter-interview-jane-goldman.html> (2012-08-17)

She tries to retrieve it but she's too late. It sinks.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Shit.

Brianna becomes aware of the temperature. It's freezing. Panic rushes through her veins. She's scared. She's angry. She's alone.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Cass!

SILENCE.

Despite the cold, Brianna dives into the water and swims toward land. Each stroke the possibility of some --

lurking

underwater

threat

-- feels more and more real.

Miraculously, Brianna makes it to shore.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Cass!?

Nothing. Tears start streaming down her cheeks. Goosebumps cover her flesh.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LAKE LOMBARD - NIGHT

Brianna, shivering and soaking wet, checks the station wagon for her boyfriend. He isn't there. The trunk is wide open and the metronome BEEPING of the alert system punctuates the isolation around her.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. Panic. Panic. Panic.

An owl CRIES. A twig SNAPS. The wind HOWLS.

Brianna begins walking. Anywhere. Somewhere. Out of the forest. She's careful not to walk too fast though -- or God forbid run -- as to not fully admit to herself that something is wrong. Very wrong.

She begins bawling.

While the mise-en-page of *The Final Broadcast* is otherwise more verbose and slightly more 'literary' in a sense (we will discuss this shortly), in this sequence, the mise-en-page becomes more and more streamlined, the flow of the sentences becoming more abrupt, as to reflect

Brianna's increasing fright.¹²⁸ The meticulous approach reveals itself specifically in the segment where Brianna dives in to the water, as the narration in a short moment creeps forward in an ominous fashion by deconstructing the sentence into separate paragraphs, thus slowing down the reader's progression.¹²⁹

Such careful approach to evoke mood and tone through mise-en-page is not excluded to only genre-writing. For screenwriter F. Scott Frazier, such linguistic attention is part of his regular writing process:

Both mood and tone are very important to me regardless of the genre or script. When I set out on a new project I want the script to reflect the movie I see in my head. If there's a big surprise, I want to write it in such a way that the words jump off the page, with capital letters or underlines. If there's a little bit of tension, I want the reader to hold their breath with long run on sentences and a sprinkling of ellipsis...

I want the pace of the script to mirror the pace of the movie.

To me, a lot of this comes from word choice. I wanted *The Numbers Station* to feel impersonal and closed off. So I used words like "sterile" and "claustrophobic" to describe the locations. I knew that audio was going to be a big thematic undercurrent of this movie, and so describing sound and the way the sound interacted with the movie was just as important as the visuals. I didn't really want the action to be glorious or stylized, so I purposefully wrote it in a very matter-of-fact style. This happens. And then this happens. Again going back to the impersonality of the story.

I don't know if I accomplished it in every scene. But it was definitely a conscious decision to write the scenes and the movie as a whole in styles and structures that matched the emotions at any given moment.¹³⁰

In the Black List 2009 screenplay *Jimi* (Max Borenstein, draft dated 18/08/09), depicting the story of rock legend Jimi Hendrix, we find another example of how the form of the screenplay can be manipulated in order to suggest an atmosphere surrounding the events depicted.

¹²⁸ And perhaps to reflect her (un)conscious awareness of entering a horror film'esque sequence.

¹²⁹ Whether the mise-en-page is correct in suggesting such an approach for this sequence, or if this sequence is indeed even necessary, is an entirely different question.

¹³⁰ Carson Reeves (pseudonym), "F. Scott Frazier (*The Numbers Station*) Interview", from <http://scriptshadow.blogspot.se/2011/07/f-scott-frazier-numbers-station.html> (2012-08-17)

we begin in whiteness
a landscape of pure sound.
the sound of thirty-thousand human beings waiting in silence.
listening for the first whisper of music, a primordial rhythm
ch-chk-chick-chicka-chaka-chicka-chak-chk
a pick scratching muted strings
long brown fingers
against the white plastic sheen of a Fender electric guitar.
chick-chak-chicka-chak
the guttural rhythm rising
and then the voice
wah-wahwah-wahwahwah
not a human voice.
but the yearning cry of a man's soul
wah-wahwah-waah
It is the sound of Jimi Hendrix.

The song is Voodoo Child (Slight Return)

but it cuts short with an abrupt squawk of feedback. The buzz of distortion. Just a false start. And we are

EXT. WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL - BEFORE DAWN (1969)

A muddy expanse of farmland littered with refuse of the "Summer of Love": smoldering joints, sagging tents, soggy flower children stricken by heat, exhaustion, the bummers.

This is the portrait of a generation. But it is not the generation that concerns us. It is the man on stage. The black gypsy with a white guitar. Cigarette in his teeth. Drenched in sweat. Searching for something. Looking displeased. But focusing on the sound.

JIMI

If you just, uh, bear with me for a minute and a half while we tune up.

[page break]

He taps a harmonic triad. Nothing musical. But enough to elicit a boisterous scream from the crowd. It distracts him.

JIMI (CONT'D)

(wincing)

Yeah, baby, I love you, too. But if you don't mind, uh, little quiet.

For these people he is a god. For you he may be a legend. For others a cliché- that voice on the radio, face on a T-shirt.

For us he is only... JIMI. The aching hero of our story.

(Note: It is 1969. But no chyron tells us so. This is not a history lesson. This is the story of a young man.)

More in the shape of (imagist) poetic verse than prose; we begin with an euphonious compilation of colourful imagery and onomatopoeia; we are in Jimi's 'zone'; only to be jolted back to 'reality' by the abrupt sound of technical difficulties, becoming aware of our surroundings as a picture of 'clarity' presents itself; verse receding into standard screenplay form. The euphorically suggestive mise-en-page here is juxtaposed as we later enter the 'opposite' of Jimi's 'zone' – or whatever such an antonymous state may be described as:

INT. CATSKILL LODGE – DAY (ONE WEEK EARLIER)

A sprawling former hunting lodge. Taxidermy. Bohemian transplants. But we catch the milieu only in passing. We are tight on Jimi, guitar in hand, moving through the endless party, jostling, searching for a quiet place to play. But around every corner, through every door- more people.

JIMI

(forcing hospitality)

Yeah, groovy, baby- glad you could make it.

Jimi "knows" them all. None know him. Just bodies. Noise. Confusion. Closing in. No peace, no relief.

But amidst the bustle-

We see something Jimi does not. The blur of a woman dancing. A glimpse of those eyes. Kind eyes. Watching him.

(Note: This woman will continue to appear. Always dancing. Always fleeting. Visible only to Jimi. His angel.)

VOICES

Do Jimi! Read Jimi!

Hands snare him. Tugging him to-

A table scattered with tarot cards. A patchwork of images. Pictograms. Cups, swords, symbols... faces.

JIMI
Hm, me? Oh, no. Naw, man. I'm not-
I mean, I don't really go in for-

VOICES
Come on, Jimi! Pick a card!

Hands gather up the images... offering Jimi the deck. He
hesitates. But he is trapped.

While in the introductory scene the proto-camera is almost as if unleashed; free to roam wherever it wishes; here we are confined to a very physical (proto-)framing of Jimi as he navigates through a cacophonous sea of undecipherable voices and mere matter in the shape of human bodies. An effect cleverly utilized partly by the slight deviation from the standard practice of at least offering *some* form of denotation for minor character or extras.¹³¹

The Final Broadcast

While still pertaining to the discussion of the previous section, I believe it is fitting to end our analysis with a shorter, slightly more in-depth, examination of *The Final Broadcast*, as we shall find thematic undercurrents and elements within the mise-en-page that seem rather content with sealing itself within the boundaries of the written page.

The Final Broadcast is a drama/thriller which takes place in a quiet undecipherable fictional town located somewhere in the US; a place that only seems to be on the map because it happens to be located in an area where you will get the best view of an upcoming lunar eclipse that is to be the darkest one in 200 years. Our main character is Gary Glossup, a radio broadcaster of some local fame who used to be a prominent journalist, but who for some reason decided to retreat from the 'big scene' to the silent and uneventful fictional town of *The Final Broadcast*. One night the everyday monotony is broken by a gruesome murder of a teenage girl and the kidnapping of another; Teresa Carnegie, daughter of local TV-celebrity and cosmologist Henry Carnegie. The following day Gary reports the news on Teresa's disappearance and leaves the line open for incoming callers to leave any tip or information pertaining to the kidnapping. After a short while, a man with a cold voice and a sinister demeanor calls in, whom we later come to know by the name of Satchell Watts; leader of a doomsday cult, claiming to be the kidnapper. After proving his claim he details his agenda: the coming lunar eclipse brings with it the end of the world. Doomsday is coming and only the true believers will survive, as they shall transcend their physical forms and join with 'the

¹³¹ Recall the 'SUITS' from *The Ends of The Earth*, for instance.

gods' from a distant dimension who are coming to pick them up. In the meantime, more people will die and more people will be kidnapped as the dead bodies of unbelievers will serves as a guiding light, or smoke signals, for the gods to pinpoint their location. And as the local police force proves to be incompetent and unable to initiate a proper investigation, Gary takes it on himself to find Teresa and save her.

Before story begins we are introduced to a foreword:

The Final Broadcast is set in a small unnamed city -- a forgotten place like Terra Haute, Indiana or Cheyenne, Wyoming. A religious community where the image of Christ or a crucifix is never far away. The Final Broadcast takes place in an era neither here nor there. It could be 2012 as easily as 1952. It's a vacuum; an America that exists only in our collective unconscious. The kind of place Edward Hopper might have painted. A parallel universe where things are just a bit different; a bit odd. There's a sense of déjà vu that hangs over everything like a lonesome, bad dream. A lonesome, bad dream you just can't shake.

I specifically say foreword here, as rather than being a legend introducing certain relevant information or concepts (as in *Blade Runner*, for instance), the text seems to directly address *the reader*, not a future cinema audience. And most likely, the reader will not be a 'consumer' of sorts, but rather a producer, or director. Thus this foreword in a sense is already hinting in rather vaguely that we should (or perhaps, rather *shall*) view the coming mise-en-page through a specific lens. While certainly, it is not impossible for this foreword to appear in 'the film' proper', it would perhaps be rather redundant; the audience will *see* the style for themselves, they don't need it described. The reader, however, can infer multiple meanings from this, but the strongest one, I believe, is perhaps revealed by the mention of Edward Hopper, and the claim that it depicts "an America that exists only in our collective unconscious."

And indeed, the mise-en-page certainly does draw from the iconography of the Hollywood of old; the one which could only be filled by the likes of James Dean and Marlon Brando; but specifically, it also draws attention to its dated nature: “forgotten relic of yesteryear”, as a drive-in theater which plays the same (1950’s) retro alien sci-fi movie over and over again is described as; retro drive-in diners with rollerskating waitresses; UFO museums; an old tube television portraying Henry Carnegie standing amidst retro outfittings of a gaudy intergalactic spaceship in technicolor, speaking of the vast emptiness of universe. Not to mention, Gary himself works in an outdated institution located on a “barren plot of desert land”, advertised by art-deco lettering from the 1950’s and decorated in a fashion dated to the point of “retro-cool”. Even the diegetic music mentioned; Saul Bass, Patsy Cline, Hank Williams, etc; is very dated. The fictional town of *The Final Broadcast* is, in a more spiritual sense, trapped in a state of arrested development, forbidden to rejuvenate itself. The past defines this town, and likewise, it defines its inhabitants.

Gary Glossup, the main character, is introduced in this manner:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

From high-up above, we track a vintage BMW snaking through a desert road. Massive power lines BUZZ around the small sedan and recede forever toward the horizon -- the arteries of our modern world.

The rising sun and a Hank Williams SONG on the radio imbue the strange wasteland with an eerie forboding; a ghostly electricity.

INT. BMW - DAY

The driver of the vehicle, GARY GLOSSUP (40), chews a handful of sunflower seeds and spits the shells into an empty can of OLD MILWAUKEE.

He was once a very handsome twenty-five year old, however many years and many six-packs have softened his features a bit; softened everything but his old school heritage and sense of resolve. He’s a man cut from the same cloth as Newman or McQueen. The kind of guy they just don’t make anymore.

Note the specific appeal to his past, and that it consists of ‘un-filmables’; information which can not be expressed. Of course, it can be said that the mise-en-page can be expressed ‘somewhat’. For instance, Gary’s “softened features”, can indeed be translated into film by

portraying him a man out of shape. And that his “old school heritage and sense of resolve” can be demonstrated by the performance of the actor. Yet such visualisations would only pertain to the ‘now’, and would not speak of who the man once was, or how he came to become the way he is. This practice is repeated as we are introduced to Gary’s boss, Kirby, and then later again with his co-worker Mark:

Moments later, KIRBY LANGER (52) -- director of programming -- appears in the lobby. He pours himself a cup of coffee.

KIRBY
Glossup, we’re getting fined for
that little remark you made about
Cardinal Felsen and the alter boys
last night. Thank you very much.

Kirby is a no-nonsense, nine-to-five kind of guy. He married his high school sweetheart, drives an Infiniti and is home early every night for family dinner.

[...]

MARK (O.S.)
Dudes, check out these gorillas!

We pan to the opposite corner of the office and toward the voice of MARK FUNK (29), an ex-metalhead burnout who still exhibits the lingering effects of a few too many bad trips.

His long greasy hair reaches the back of his Toto shirt and he squints to see his laptop screen through his drugstore eye-glasses.

The past is thus the definitive element from which we obtain information about who these characters are, and what paths they have traveled. But while the town in itself is an inanimate object, or entity, and thus can not make any decisions for itself, the characters are active agents. Even so, even they are subjected to a deterministic cosmic order of sorts, which renders agency as futile. As the story begins, we are put in an undisclosed apartment, seemingly alone, forced to watch as Henry Carnegie’ TV-program “The Stars And You” is playing. And through his monologue [edited to only include dialogue for sake of readability] we come to learn the central existential conflict:

HENRY

What does it all add up to?
Consciousness? Happiness? Love? Why
is there something as opposed to
nothing? What does it mean to be
alive?

[...]

HENRY (V.O.)

The unknown. Us humans are obsessed
with the unknown. We're in awe of
it. We fear it. Is there life on
other planets? Will they ever make
contact? Does God exist? Is there a
heaven? Or . . . is this all there
is? Just us? Just us amid an
infinite sea of blackness.

[...]

HENRY (V.O.)

Imagine all the other planets out
there -- billions of light years
away -- orbiting around suns in
different galaxies for no one.

[...]

HENRY (V.O.)

A cosmic ballet with no audience
and no purpose. Intergalactic
clockwork measuring our mortality --
second by second, year by year --
until we are dead.

[...]

HENRY

And sorry folks, but the truth is
we're all going to die. You, me and
everyone that has ever been. And
when the time comes to greet the
unknown, all the good intentions --
all the could-ofs and would-ofs and
might have beens -- will be exactly
that. And the person you hoped you
would be someday; the person who
stayed with diets and read all the
books you said you'd read -- the
person who would love and live and
seize the day -- will be but a
distant mirage. It will be gone.
And the person you really are --
the one you thought you'd shed like
snakeskin -- is the person that
everyone will always remember you
as; the person that will be etched
forever into infinity.

[...]

HENRY (CONT'D)
Keep that in mind throughout the
next week. Because there is no
tomorrow. Not really. Not as far as
the cosmos are concerned.

This cosmic order of *The Final Broadcast* is thus one where it does not permit any rectification of the past. What you have done will remain with you in the present in the form of ‘could-ofs’, ‘would-ofs’, and ‘might have beens’ until the end of the world. Throughout the screenplay, we are hinted of Gary’s dark past, and at one point he finally reveals that he once had a wife and an eight year old daughter. One day, as he and his daughter walk down the piers of San Francisco, he leaves her by the railing and tells her that he is just going to the bar to use the bathroom. As he leaves the bathroom, he sees his daughter still standing there, and decides to order a drink. Mere seconds after this, he looks out to the pier again and sees that his daughter is missing, nowhere to be found. Two weeks later the police find her body in a sewage drain. His wife leaves him, and would later then get remarried. His daughter would have been the same age as Teresa if she had still been alive.

Thus for Gary, the search for Teresa simultaneously becomes a quest for redemption; a desire to break free and renew himself in the eyes of the cosmos; to shed the skin of sins past. This desire is also reflected by Satchell and his cult in a perverse way as they believe that this world has nothing to offer them but misery and inevitable death. But the very much so theological difference between them is that while Satchell believes that the human spirit has been compromised, and that the way to salvation, or redemption, lies in transcendence from this life to another by ritual suicide, Gary on the other hand believes that redemption can be achieved in this life, as it is “all we got”.

At the night of the lunar eclipse, Gary manages to free Teresa from the cult, but not before becoming exposed to some of the gas to which the cult used in their ritual sacrifice. As he begins feeling the effects of the gas, he slows down, but urges Teresa to continue without him. As he sees that she is gone, he can finally relax, and let the gas finish its work.

While the allusions to *mise-en-scène* perhaps show a more open ended take (is he hallucinating? Was Satchell right?), the echoing of *mise-en-page* corroborates that whatever is happening, he has achieved redemption, as he finally gets past all the could-ofs and would-ofs and might have beens:

[see next page]

Teresa heeds his advice. Gary watches as she disappears into the darkness.

She is safe.

Silence.

Then --

An electrical current seizes the atmosphere. Blue bolts of LIGHTNING spiderweb across the sky. Gary looks toward the plantation home. Dead BODIES rise from the shattered skylight and ascend into the storm clouds.

Gary can't believe his eyes.

The plantation crumbles -- brick by brick. Big Al's too. The adjacent highway implodes like an accordion. Asphalt juts out of the ground like jagged ice.

The wind HOWLS at hurricane speeds.

And then --

An otherworldly NOISE sounds from the sky. The sound of its drone is pervasive and depressed. Like television static or silence heard through a baby monitor. Like a giant, hidden sea mammal sobbing from the bottom of an ink black ocean.

[page break]

A BEAM of blinding white LIGHT shines upon Gary from the heavens.

God? Celestial lords? The age of the scorpion? Enlightenment.

All the could-ofs and would-ofs and might have beens are past Gary now. He basks in the light's strange, wonderful glow.

He smiles.

FADE TO WHITE.

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay has been to establish the screenplay as a valid, and relevant, object for study in the field of film studies in particular, in order to stimulate further research within the field and for a more prevalent inclusion of screenplays in the discourse of film studies. To do this, I have attempted to argue that accounts of the screenplay as either literature or blueprints, which stand in ideological opposition to each other, are lackluster as they overemphasize the virtues of their own side of the spectrum while at the same time undervaluing the other side; neither accounting for their own vices. More importantly however, neither account sufficiently emphasizes the cinematic qualities inherent in the screenplay. Instead, I have chosen to define the screenplay as a ‘text’, in order to suggest that it can be studied from multiple perspectives and for different ends.

But to emphasize the point that the screenplay is an object of high relevance to film studies, I have argued for the potential of discussing cinematic style within the screenplay. To do this, I have argued for the concept of reading as image building, which positions the screenplay as a type of text which triggers processes of constructing written narrative into visual images. To further argue that this visualisation process is cinematic in its nature, I have appealed to Pasolini’s account of the screenplay as a “structure that wants to become another structure”, this second structure thus being film.

Furthermore, I have attempted to elaborate on Pasolini’s thoughts, and suggest in which means the screenplay alludes to a cinematic structure. I have thus introduced the concept of the ‘proto-camera’, an alternative way of conceptualizing the process of reading as image building from semiotic terminology. Further, I have suggested that the structure which the screenplay seeks to allude to is the structure of *mise-en-scène*, admittedly, a more liberal account of *mise-en-scène* which leaves room for sound and editing. This structure I have termed as ‘*mise-en-page*’.

Mise-en-page can essentially be seen as, literally, anything that is on ‘the page’. I have loosely described the elements that comprise *mise-en-page* and described in which ways the interplay of these elements allude to the logic of *mise-en-scène* and cinematography.

I have also discussed the issues of authorship regarding screenwriting and film. On the topic of auteur theory, I have attempted to give an account for how come these two ‘factions’ have seemingly been on opposite sides historically, and also discussed how come attempts to situate the screenwriter as an ‘auteur’ have been problematic. And as it does not pertain to the aim of this essay, I have left the question of whether the screenwriter can, or

indeed even should, be seen as an auteur open. Instead, I have argued that the screenwriter is indeed a creative collaborator within film by arguing for how screenplay style and form can be accounted for.

Finally, this begs a few question: for what purpose? What does the field of film studies gain from analysing screenplays? I see two general advantages:

First, on the level pertaining whether screenplays should be recognised as objects of interest for the field, I believe an inclusion of screenplays in discussions of production context or industry context can prove to be very useful. Moreover, an indepth look at the history of screenplay style can perhaps reveal information regarding film style, or general dips and rises of quality of films throughout different eras of film history, that would otherwise be hidden.

Second, on the level of whether mise-en-page is a useful tool to consider or not, I believe it is actually highly relevant for the auteur school, for instance. When considering a director's oeuvre of films, is it not of interest to discuss films that, for whatever reasons, were never made? As in for instance Stanley Kubrick's *Napoleon*? If one is to discuss overall themes across a directors different works, then surely mise-en-page can contribute in the case of screenplays that were never made. Moreover, rarely, if ever, do more in-depth auteur studies stay within the boundaries of the film(s), but rather have a tendency to involve things such as the personal life of the director or circumstances around the production. With mise-en-page, we can thus attempt to discuss the stylistic evolution of a project, or more precisely discuss the collaborative processes between director/screenwriter/producer, using a distinctly filmic discourse.

Of course, a big practical problem which must be acknowledged is the issue of the availability of screenplays. Simply put, screenplays are hard to come by. While certainly, public online archives such as www.imsdb.com exist, these sites are under constant legal pressure from Hollywood, and in some cases, as it happened for www.mypdfscripts.com for instance, they are legally coerced to withdraw their screenplays from 'consumption'. While much can be said about the questionable motives of the studios for forcing these archives to take down screenplays that the general public is not even aware of or have ever shown any interest in, there is very little one can do about it. While certain agents such as the Black List or the esteemed Nichols Fellowship screenwriting competition may point to screenplays of interest, and in one sense add legitimacy these screenplays, the curious reader is forced to search the web on his or her own to find them. The sample used here in this study has been acquired through databanks (some no longer available) and personal contacts, and it is perhaps

also telling that this sample consists solely of American screenplays. While the Writers Guild of America does have a physical archive with over 17000 film, TV, and radio scripts which is open for the public, I am not aware of any European institution which offers equivalent services.

Another issue is thus that the study of screenplays is limited to the reader's own language proficiencies. While certainly it is not uncommon, in Europe at least, for screenplays to be translated due to the prevalence of international cooperations, one can note that the more subtle linguistic touches of the 'source work' might not survive the transition, as I hardly believe that the translations of screenplays are done with the same eye for linguistic detail as in the case of translating novels.

In the end, I still believe that this is a worthwhile endeavour as an increased understanding of screenplays ultimately leads to an increased understanding of film itself. Scholars should moreover not be intimidated by the fact that screenplays can be hard to come by; if more attention is given to the study of screenplays, then perhaps along the line we will see more channels opening up for acquisition of screenplays. This would not only be of great benefit to scholars, but also for aspiring screenwriters who wish to learn the craft. It is also my hope that a more specific awareness of style will help strengthen the screenwriters creative position within the industry, just as an awareness of *mise-en-scène* can prove useful to a director. It is often said within the industry that screenwriters should only concern themselves with structure and plot, yet at the same time it is also said that a screenplay has to show 'cinematic potential' and prove itself to be a film. How can this be achieved other than by alluding to film style? Certainly, it is not the screenwriter's 'job' to 'direct' the film, but as I hope I have convinced the reader, *mise-en-page* is not equivalent to 'directing' on the page. In fact I believe an approach with *mise-en-page* in mind should steer the screenwriter's imagination away from the explicit use of camera directives and in turn focus on a more reader friendly take which will make the reading of a screenplay a much more rewarding experience on its own merits.

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The Ends of The Earth (Chris Terrio, draft dated 25/09/09)

The Final Broadcast (Chris Hutton & Eddie O'Keefe, undated draft)

The Imitation Game (Graham Moore, undated draft)

Tripoli (William Monahan, draft dated 02/08/02)

Appendix

‘COVER ART’ FOR *THE FINAL BROADCAST*:

