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Working with movies and plays: A hands-on study of film, theatre, and adaptations

Abstract

To gain increased ability in working with movies, two films were made, one of which was an adaptation of a novel. An adaptation of that adaptation was also made in the form of a play, in an effort to gain greater theatrical skill. Using the experience of working on a similar story in the form of both a movie and a play, the similarities and differences of the two mediums were compared and contrasted. These projects were also used, along with some research, to gain increased theoretical and practical knowledge of what goes into making a good adaptation. It was determined that, for movies and plays, neither one is essentially better than the other overall, but that there are certain areas where each one does excel. As for adaptations, key areas were identified as being likely to cause an adaptations success or failure, both for faithful and loose adaptations.

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ABSTRACT

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WORKING WITH MOVIES AND PLAYS:

A HANDS-ON STUDY OF FILM, THEATRE, AND ADAPTATIONS

by

Matt Balke

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With Honors in Electronic Media and Film Studies & Theatre Arts

Approved at Ypsilanti, Michigan on this date

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Introduction

As an Electronic Media and Film major, much of my coursework has involved studying movies and their methodologies. My plan has been to obtain a degree that will allow me to go into production work, writing and directing my own movies. Although I understand how important knowing research skills and film theories are for writers and directors, it is arguably more important for them to have an understanding of writing and production skills, as a person can make a movie, even if only one of low quality, without a firm understanding of film theory, but not without understanding production methods. That being the case, I came to believe that I would benefit more from working on a thesis project that, while containing some research, was more focused on the more hands-on and creative aspects of moviemaking, particularly those that I did not have the opportunity to attempt in my regular coursework. Since I also chose to seek departmental honors in my minor, however, I decided that it would serve me well to undergo a thesis project that connected both to Electronic Media and Film as well as to Theatre Arts, and in some way explore the relationship between them, again, focusing on the hands-on, creative aspects. This paper, then, is more of a compendium to the projects completed as part of the thesis, describing the initial conception of the projects involved, providing some research into adaptations between novels, movies, and the theatre, documenting the development and final creation of the projects, and containing my own theories, developed from an analysis of what was learned from the creative process and end products. Although the projects to be described were largely conducted as a group effort, this paper is written from my own prospective, and will focus primarily on those portions of the project that I handled directly.

Initial Conception of the Thesis Project

A few weeks prior to the end of the winter 2005 semester, Sarah Sterchele, a fellow Electronic Media and Film student, approached me with an idea she had for an independent study project. Since most of the TV and movie work done in our major is either digital, or live-to-tape, Sterchele wanted to get at least some experience, prior to graduation, working with film. Her initial idea was to make a short movie using a film camera, and to edit it using the razor-and-tape method; her goal being less focused on the movie and its story, and more on learning how to work with film as a medium. She asked Doug Kolbicz, another Electronic Media and Film student, and myself if we would be interested in working on the project with her so that we might also benefit from the experience, and so that she would have help completing it. Intrigued by the idea, Kolbicz and I agreed, and planning for the project went underway.

Sterchele, Kolbicz, and I had determined that, with three of us, we might be able to do two films. The first would be a shorter practice film we would make before we moving into the second, where we would put a larger amount of our focus, and use what we learned from making the first film. For that reason, then, we decided that we could take the first film to do something more whimsical, allowing us to experiment with a few ideas. After getting an idea for how the equipment works, and seeing what techniques work better than others, we would then make the second film, which would be more serious.

As an added element, the three of us also decided to make both films as silent movies, allowing us to experiment with a format that we had all seen, but had never attempted ourselves. This meant that we would not have to worry about microphone

placement, audio quality, or ambient sound. We would, however, have to place extra emphasis on character expression and movement, shot composition, and editing.

It was around this point during the initial planning stages that it occurred to me how this project could be used to develop an honor thesis that could apply toward both my major and minor. With the similarities in their goals, but the differences in their methods, I had come to the conclusion that a good focus for my thesis would be one that explored the relationship between movies and the theatre. I asked Sterchele and Kolbicz if they would have any problems with my using our project in my thesis. They consented, however I also agreed to not hijack the project and force them to do things a certain way because it world work better in the thesis. After considering some possibilities, and discussing options with advisors, a workable idea emerged: take one of the films, adapt it as a play, and direct it in the play direction class I intended to take in fall 2005.

As a group, Sterchele, Kolbicz, and I had decided that, for our first movie, we would do something based around stealth. This developed into a story about paparazzi that were also skilled ninjas. For the second movie, our group had decided to make a story using Stephen King's The Gunslinger for inspiration. Between these, the film that I chose to adapt was the second one. It was the primary film our group was making, and, since it was to be inspired by The Gunslinger, it would essentially make the play an adaptation of the film, which was an adaptation of the book, adding an extra dimension to the thesis: a focus on adaptations. This new focus, I decided, warranted including in the thesis research into adaptations.

Having figured out the details of my thesis, the coarse that it was to follow was as such: Over the course of the summer, our group would do some more work together to flesh out the story of both movies. It would then be my job to write the scripts. This was

decided because it was thought that it would be easiest to have one person write the scripts, and, since Sterchele and Kolbicz wanted to put more of their focus on the technical aspects, and I was going to adapt one of the films into a play, it made the most sense for me to be the one to write them. I would also do my research into adaptations to give myself a better handle on what others have tried, and what may or may not work for us. That being done, our group would begin to do the necessary work to make our films, and I would write the script for my stage play adaptation. Following, at the end of the play direction class, I would direct and stage the play. Our group would then finish our movies, and do any necessary postproduction work. As a final step, I would write this paper, including at the end an analysis of what I learned from the thesis, and what theories I have adopted and developed through its completion.

Research into Adaptations

In attempting to delve into the theories about how a person can and should go about adapting an artistic work from one medium to another, a question that is often brought to the forefront of this is if a person even should attempt such an adaptation. In Literature through Film, Robert Stam discusses the 1963 film adaptation of Tom Jones. In his analysis, Stam mentions how "generally, the narrator in the film is subordinated to the story/diegesis; he does not expatiate on philosophy or literature, for example. Thus we are deprived, to a certain extent, of the double plot of the novel…" (112). This can be expanded into the broader idea that certain elements from the source material cannot be transferred over in the adaptation, causing the adaptation to be lacking and incomplete. There also exists the idea that an audience "will not always find *his* film, since what he has before him in the actual film is now somebody else's phantasy" (Metz 12).

Conversely, however, Brian McFarlane states in Novel To Film that "as to audiences, whatever their complaints about this or that violation of the original, they have continued to want to see what the books 'look like'. Constantly creating their own mental images of the world of a novel and its people, they are interested in comparing their images with those created by the film-maker" (7). Stam also points out how other more notable individuals, such as André Bazin and François Truffaut, have written series of articles in defense of the adaptation of literature, during which they point out that, while care must be taken to ensure that the spirit of the original is not lost, if done properly, a well-made adaptation can be beneficial to the source material, such as by making it accessible to an audience that may have otherwise overlooked it (255-257).

From these arguments, adaptations would seem to be a valid, and even requested form of entertainment, but only if the person making the adaptation can keep the story at least somewhat faithful to its original source. Keeping with the spirit of a piece of literary work can be a challenging aspect, however, particularly when taking a novel, which is based upon the written word, and transforming it into a silent movie, which relies on pictures. This dilemma forces the filmmaker to consider not only what elements have to be cut, as is usually necessary when turning a novel into a movie, and what elements, if any, need to be altered to better fit a movie, but also, in the case of silent movies, how to go about telling a story not being able to use spoken dialogue, even though characters from novels do typically speak. Even the use of intertitles to provide dialogue for the characters is brought into question. "Purists from the earliest days of film to the present have exalted the pinnacle of filmic representation as one entirely free from verbal language" (Elliott 88). In this context, "verbal language" is meant to include the intertitles, whether they are used for dialogue or scene descriptions.

One way to determine what makes an effective adaptation is to look at already existing adaptations, and to consider what they did, and how well it worked. The Grapes or Wrath, for example, is considered both a classic novel, and a classic movie. As a movie, however, it goes through some significant changes, particularly in the level of emphasis that is places upon the Joad family. While the Joads are the central characters in the novel, they are used to illustrate the broader issues of political, economic, and social concerns that John Steinbeck wanted to point out, and spent a considerable amount of time discussing in his book. The movie, on the other hand, though it does touch on those issues, largely sets them aside in favor of focusing on the Joads, and how the events of their lives relate specifically to them. At least one reason for this change can be attributed

to the nature of the two mediums. Even though movies are capable of handling both aspects, they are more adept at dealing with the specifics of place and character than with more abstract and intangible issues, which novels can handle with a greater degree of ease (Sobchack 115-116).

Part of what led to the success of The Grapes of Wrath as a movie were the artistic choices made by its director, John Ford. He made use of static shots, non-dynamic editing, and imagery reminiscent of the depression, done in such a way as to set a tone that would help to portray a depression era family. The resulting tone caries with it a similar feeling to that of the sections of Steinbeck's book that deal with the Joad family, though it is also somewhat unique from the movie in how it shows a family trying to maintain its life together, as opposed to how the book uses the Joads as an example of but one of many families trying to survive the harsh conditions of the time (Sobchack 123).

While the relationship to the source material is important, something to be considered when discussing adaptations is how other factors can effect how well the adaptation is received. Whether fair or not, among these factors can be included things such as how a person feels about the director and his or her other movies. The Grapes of Wrath has been criticized as not being "pure" Ford, because it was an adaptation of a novel, even though, over the course of his career, Ford used ten different books to make movies from (Sobchack 113).

In the case of A Streetcar Named Desire, Elia Kazan chose to go the route of making his movie a very faithful adaptation of the play. He initially brought on a man by the name of Oscar Saul to adapt the play to be more fitting as a movie, but Saul was found to be a less skilled writer than was hoped, so his script was dropped in favor of having Tennessee Williams, the original playwright of A Streetcar Named Desire, write

another script that was more similar to the play. Williams took up the job, though his lack of experience as a screenwriter caused him to also write some scenes at times that were less than perfect (Staggs 142-146).

Not all of the changes in the script can be attributed to Williams' and Kazan's choices, however. Like many movies, A Streetcar Named Desire was subject to the mercy of the censors, who required several changes to be made. At first, Kazan was asked to cut the rape scene from the movie altogether, and it was only after he said that, in that case, he would rather not make the film at all that an agreement was reached, wherein the rape would only be suggested, and it would have to be strongly intimated that Stella would leave Stanly because of his raping Blanche. It was also decided that Blanche's astrological sign of Virgo, the virgin, had to be changed, and that Stanly could only slap Stella on the hip, and not the butt. Non-sexually related elements were also changed over legal concerns, such as changing the Kowalski's address to one that no one in real life actually lived at, and removing a set of lines where Blanche threatens to start screaming "fire," because it might cause the audience to stampede from the theatre in a dangerous manner (Staggs 230-232).

These same difficulties did not exist when it came to set design. There were two candidates being considered, both of whom had done set design on Broadway, but had little to no experience working on movies. Unlike the choice of writers, however, a third person, Richard Day, was picked up for his skill and experience in working with movies. After gathering hundreds of photos of New Orleans, Day set about designing a very realistic set, with elements that may be difficult, if not impossible in some cases, to incorporate into a play's set design. Pipes were built into the walls to help them perspire and mold, helping to give the feeling of the location, both to the audience and to the

actors. Sections of the walls were also built to be moveable, allowing the set to be

periodically shrunken, to help make things more intimate, and add to the feeling of

claustrophobia (Staggs 153-156).

This downsizing of an already small acting space also had a large impact on shot

composition. Both to work within the constricted space, and to echo Day's attempts at

forcing intimacy, Harry Stradling, the cinematographer for A Streetcar Named Desire,

made large use of two-shots and close-up. To make sure shots did not become too similar

and monotonous as the movie progressed, Stradling also varied the lighting style that was

used from one sequence to the next (Staggs 157).

Although A Streetcar Named Desire is a play that was adapted into a movie, the

information researched about it can be taken into account when adapting a movie into a

play. Similarly, information researched about adapting a play into a silent movie can also

be considered in reverse. The idea of adapting plays into movies is almost as old as

movies themselves. Early on in the development of filmmaking, around 1908, the popular

format for movies was a one-reel film drama of about fourteen minutes in length. Since

these movies were so short, scripts were thought of as unnecessary. The stories for these

movies were usually conceived of and stored mentally by the director. After only a few

years, however, as the demand for movies increased, directors had trouble thinking up

stories fast enough, so a call went out for others to begin submitting story ideas, one

common type of which was the play adaptation (Chenoweth 97-99).

Actors were placed at something of a disadvantage in early films. Having no

scripts to study and develop their characters off of, actors were solely instructed verbally

by the director, which caused them to give simplistic performances and interpretations of

their characters (Chenoweth 97). By 1912, however, movies began to have written

scripts, and the play adaptation was becoming more common. In the cases of these adaptations, there was a tendency to use the actual stars from the stage versions. This had the benefit of using actors who were already acquainted with the plays and their characters, but these actors, who were usually unfamiliar with the methods of silent film, had to reinterpret their characters in a way that allowed them to be portrayed silently, which proved more successful for the highly physical plays than for the plays based around content and character development (Chenoweth 105). Using the plays original actors also had the effect of their using the actual dialogue from the play during filming, unlike the bit players who, unfamiliar with the play, improvised their lines. This was not always a good thing for the stars, however, as they often said things that were cut when the director condensed the play's dialogue for the intertitles. As the viewing audience began to become observant of the discrepancy between the intertitles and what the actors appeared to be saying, the actors had to replace what they already knew with the simple dialogue that began to be included in movies' scripts (Chenoweth 108-109).

After a while, actors began citing what they though of as the trouble spots in attempting to transition between the stage and the screen. Beyond the restriction of being unable to communicate verbally in silent movies, these problems included negative feelings an actor could possible have towards working in films and the studio environment, having to rely on the director as the only audience and judge of quality, and the disruption of shooting brief scenes, out of order, with little to no prep time (Chenoweth 172).

Development of Projects Contained in the Thesis

The summer of 2005 came, and with it our group met to further develop our movies. Although we could only effectively handle the production work of one movie at a time, we could develop the stories of both early on, allowing us the opportunity to plan for what we would need, and for me to start work on my play.

Over the course of our meeting, we discussed several options for what we could do, and I took notes of the elements we liked (See appendix A). These notes were designed to contain the general idea and flow of the movies. They lacked some specifics, but we decided that we were satisfied with what we had from the meeting, and I was left to plan the rest as I wrote the scripts.

Although I had written before for other classes, these scripts proved to be somewhat unique from those experiences, in that these movies were to be silent. Our group had even decided not to use any intertitles, not because we agreed with the idea of them being bad, but rather to see if we could successfully tell our stories without them. This meant that I would have to change the way I wrote the scripts. To this end, I chose to format the scripts similarly to overly-long script treatments, adding extra scene and action description to supplant the dialogue that would be in a normal script (See Appendix B). Upon completion, I sent the scripts on to the rest of my group for approval.

The scripts also went to Dr. John Cooper, the professor that had agreed to facilitate our independent study projects, and the film side of my honors thesis. He asked our group to come to his office so that he could give us some minor suggestions about the scripts, and also so that he could show us the 16mm film camera he had pulled from storage. We knew then that filming these two movies was going to be interesting, as the

camera was entirely mechanical, using no electronic components. Before each shot, the camera had to be wound, and would last for about twenty-four seconds, depending on the frame rate the camera was set to. We were shown how to run the camera, how to load and unload the film, and how to manually adjust all the components, including the focus, the speed, and the iris. To know how open the iris had to be to let in the appropriate amount of light, we were also shown how to use the light meter we were given.

With finished scripts now in hand, and a camera we could use, our group set out planning how to accomplish our preproduction work. Putting the second film on the back burner, our concentration moved to our first movie, which we had given the working title of <u>Ninja Paparazzi</u>. Many things had to be done, such as storyboarding, location scouting, equipment gathering, scheduling and auditioning. To accomplish all of this, we began dividing the jobs among the three of us, but also made sure we checked in on each other often to find out how far along the others were, and if they needed help.

The first job I had was storyboarding. While Sterchele and Kolbicz set out to both scout locations and gather equipment, I began laying out the movie on paper (See Appendix C). After completing the first three scenes, I set them aside to show the rest of the group, which I did when Sterchele showed me the tri-pod and film she got for the camera, and told me what she had so far for locations.

At this point, we were nearly ready to begin filming, but we still lacked one vital element: actors. Although we were unable to pay people for their assistance in this area, we were fortunate in that there are a large number of people willing to volunteer for projects like this just for the fun of it, or to help someone out. To draw from this potential pool, fliers were posted around campus, announcing that auditions for our films were going to be held. For our own convenience, our group decided that it would be best to use

these auditions to cast people for both of our movies, which would save us the trouble of having another set of auditions later on, and would allow us to give the actors of our second movie more advanced notification.

The auditions were held during two different times, so that people who could not attend one might be able to attend the other. At the auditions, people were asked to fill out a form requesting their name, contact information, and availability. A digital camera was used to record the auditions themselves, allowing us to review them later. Sterchele and Kolbicz watched the tapes and chose people who they thought would be good for certain parts. I agreed with their choices, and began contacting the actors to let them know what parts they had, and to begin scheduling.

The time came to decide who would take on what roles during production. Although everyone in our group was capable of handling any of the positions, and did at one point or another, we thought it would work best to decide who would predominately handle what aspects of production. Sterchele wanted to direct the films. Although it may have worked better for my thesis for me to direct, since I had agreed not to use my thesis to take over the project, and since Sterchele had spearheaded this endeavor, I consented to let her direct. I handed over my storyboards to her, and took on the roll of assistant director, which, I decided, along with having written the scripts, would give me enough of a look into the differences and similarities between movies and the theatre that my thesis would not suffer. Kolbicz acquired the role of cameraman.

As the director, it became Sterchele's job to finish the storyboards, schedule filming days, times, and locations, and call out directions while on set. Since Kolbicz was the cameraman, it became his job to suggest shot compositions, lighting, and set design that he thought would work best. My job, as the assistant director, became to coordinate

our schedule with the actors, make sure the necessary props and costumes had been gathered, and assist where necessary on set.

With everything finally ready, filming for <u>Ninja Paparazzi</u> began. Sterchele revealed to Kolbicz and myself the scene she wanted to do first, and the location she had in mind for it, to which we approved. The three of us then discussed shooting times that would work for us, and I presented the options to our actors to find one we could all do. We all met at the appointed place and time and shot the first scene, following the roles we had agreed upon earlier.

It was here that we got our first experience with running the camera, and where we had our first major problems occur. We found out, after we had the film developed, that television we wanted to have on in the scene would not work for us, because it ran at a different frame rate than the camera. This caused scroll bars to appear on its screen. We were also given the wrong lens for the camera, which no one knew until we finished filming a second scene. This caused everything we shot for those two scenes to be out of focus.

When we later found out what had happened, the dilemma of having shot two scenes out of focus resulted in us asking ourselves if we could re-shoot the scenes. The problem with doing so was that it would take extra time that we were not planning on, and would also cost more, due to having to use more film. Being limited on both time and money, we decided to keep the second scene we shot, because, although out of focus, it was clear enough that people could tell what was going on. The other scene, however, we re-shot, because it was just too blurry. Re-shooting that scene also allowed us to re-plan it in a way that did not have a television in it.

There were other problems that came up during filming, which was to be expected. Several times, we had to change elements between the script and the actual movie, due to having to work with what was available. In the City Street scene, for example, we were not able to gather many extras to go with us, so we had to ask people that were on-location if they would mind being in our film. This resulted in the scene having the same effect as it was interned to from the script, but the specifics were almost completely different. Other elements we also later changed from the script before filming, because we thought they would work better.

Ninja Paparazzi was not the only movie undergoing changes at this time, however. Although we never re-wrote the script for Ninja Paparazzi, we did re-write our second movie, which we had started calling The Gunslinger. Now that filming was underway, I was getting ready to write my play, when our group started discussing changing the story. We still wanted to base it off of Stephen King's The Gunslinger, but we also wanted to avoid any copyright problems that might potentially occur. To this end, we began changing elements like making the story more modern, and adding a second character. Using the script I had originally written, Sterchele then wrote a new version of the movie, changing the elements we had discussed.

The copyright issue put aside, I took the new script and began preparing for my play. For a while, I had been considering how to go about writing the play, but I was having some difficulty with this task. To work the play into my play direction class, while most students were, for the final scene they were to direct in the class, choosing a scene from an already existing play, I was writing my own scene. However, I still had to work within certain parameters: an approximately seven minute, realistic scene between two characters, presentable in the small black box theatre we were using for our class.

The movie the play was to be adapted from was to be approximately fifteen minutes, take place over several locations, have multiple characters, and include a gunfight scene at the end.

The solution I came up with was to choose a single scene from the movie and expand on it, rather than adapt the whole movie. The scene I chose for this was the desert night scene with the campfire. Although originally a one-person scene, the new version of the movie now had two people. This scene was also an important part of the movie, telling the back-stories of the characters and their reasons for going on their journey.

Expanding the length of the scene was necessary, as the scene in the movie was only going to be about three to four minutes in length. Coming up with ways to fill in the rest of the time proved not to be as challenging as I thought it would, however, as there were many elements that I had decided would have to be added to the scene. Pulling the scene out of the context of the more abstract and ambiguous movie, I found it necessary to explain why the characters are walking through the desert on foot, and how they met up. Their back-stories, described via dialogue in the play, rather than in dream sequences, also needed to be filled in more. Finally, I needed to explain why the characters have decided to now tell each other about themselves, and why they had not before, even though they have apparently been traveling together for a while.

Knowing how I was going to round everything out, I was able to write the play (See Appendix D). Upon its completion, I presented it to Professor Wallace Bridges, the instructor for the play direction class, for his approval. During the process of preparing the play, Sterchele, Kolbicz, and I had been continuing to film scenes for Ninja Paparazzi, and, while I waited to hear back from Professor Bridges, the three of us were able to finish shooting the last bit of our movie.

Once the play was approved, I began preparing what I would need to present the scene. For my actors, Jus Buckingham, who had already agreed to be in the movie, agreed to retain his role for the play as well. Crystal Woolard agreed to on take the other role. Although it was necessary to plan a costume for Woolard, Buckingham was able to use the same costume he was to use in the movie. Many of the necessary props for the play could also be transferred over from the movie. Lighting, something students had to plan, but usually could not use in the play direction class, were given to me as an option, because of my using the scene for my thesis, and so had to be set up. That left the remaining preparatory homework normally assigned to the class (See Appendix E). After completing the necessary planning, rehearsals were conducted, and the scene was performed and recorded, allowing it to later be reviewed and compared to the movie (See Appendix F).

With the play done, I could now put the rest of my concentration into the movies. At this point, Ninja Shot!, the final title we gave our first movie, was now in postproduction. Sterchele and Kolbicz had gotten the film developed, so we could begin editing. Although editing was nothing new to the three of us, this was our first experience editing film. We borrowed the equipment we needed from Dr. Cooper, and began by practicing on shots that did not turn out right. Once we had a handle on what we were doing, we put the movie together, and sent it off to be transferred to a digital medium, which would allow us to do some touch-up work on a computer, and distribute the movie in DVDs.

Once we got the digital copy, Sterchele began the touch-up work using Final Cut Pro. Most of the edits had been successfully made already, but transitions, such as fades, we were unable to do during the razor-and-tape process, so they were done here. Over the

course of filming, Sterchele said she had found a story about a man who actually attempts to take paparazzi photographs using stealthy measures, so, along with the lower thirds, credits, and title page, she decided to add into the movie that it is based on a true story. Lastly, a music bed was added.

Everything at last done for the first movie, it was burned onto a DVD, along with the audition footage of the actors we used, and some behind-the-scenes footage that was shot during filming (See Appendix F). Copies of the disc were then distributed to everyone who participated and wanted one, including Dr. Cooper. Now at the end of the fall semester, our group decided to take the holidays off.

At the beginning of winter 2006, Sterchele, Kolbicz, and I met up again. Having spoken to Dr. Cooper, who had relatively few criticisms about Ninja Shot!, we began preparations for our next movie. Despite being two different movies, the preproduction work that had to be done was much the same for The Gunslinger as it was for Ninja Shot!. Much of it, however, was already done. Many of the locations had already been picked during the scouting for Ninja Shot!, most of the roles had already been cast, and the equipment that was to be used was essentially the same. Sterchele and Kolbicz worked on gathering the remaining props and costumes we would need, and I called up the actors to find out their schedules, and to make sure they were still able to be in our movie.

Preproduction was suddenly interrupted, however, when Sterchele purposed changing the script again. She told Kolbicz and myself that she had just learned about a potential opportunity in the form of the Dollar Baby movies, which she described as movies where, for one dollar, students had purchased the rights to make non-commercial adaptations of some of Stephen King's stories. By doing this ourselves, this meant that

we could make our movie a more direct adaptation of the book, and not have to worry about copyright issues. We then began discussing ideas, and planned how we were going to rewrite the script one last time. Changing it made me concerned that my play would become too lose of an adaptation, since the play could not be changed now that it had already been performed, and the play direction class completed, but when I discussed the issue with Dr. Cooper and Professor Bridges, they told me that it would not be a problem. Everything in order, I wrote the final draft of our movie, which we had now officially titled The Gunslinger (See Appendix B).

Taking on the positions we had in the first movie, we commenced with production work. Sterchele handled storyboarding and directing, Kolbicz handled the camera work, and I assisted with the directing and handled scheduling, this time consulting with both the actors and a businessman by the name of Randy Bahlau, who was kind enough to allow us to use his western-themed resort, Stagecoach Stop, as the location for some of our scenes. Production went much smoother for The Gunslinger, now having had the experience of doing Ninja Shot!. We had a better feel for how to adequately plan for what we would need to film each scene, we rarely had to retake shots, and we never had to go back to re-shoot parts.

That is not to say that there were no difficulties. Not having to re-shoot scenes was important, as we were on a tight schedule, both in terms of everyone's' availability, and how late in the semester we had to start shooting. A large part of why we had to start late was due to the weather. All of the scenes were either shot outdoors, or in a small building that had no heat or insulation, making it too cold and snowy the first couple months of the semester. Extras were still difficult to gather, though we were able to get

enough to get by. There was also the occasional technical error, such as not being able to obtain real squibs, and failing to get the homemade ones to work.

Overall, the shooting of <u>The Gunslinger</u> did go successfully. We entered into postproduction, which, like the other phases, when more smoothly. The bulk of the editing was again done with the film before sending it in to be converted to digital. In final cut, a music bed and title screens were added, along with special effects to provide gun smoke and replace the failed squibs. DVDs containing the movie, along with the behind-the-scenes and audition footage, and the recording of my play, were then burned and distributed (See Appendix F).

Final Analyses and Theories

Looking back on the projects, I have some theories about why certain things happened the way they did, and how things should be handled in the future. One such element was the writing of the scripts. While I can understand why early silent movies were not written down, being that they were so short and had no dialogue, to follow that practice would have been a mistake. Having written scripts serves many useful purposes, even for short silent movies. They help to make sure that the story it thought out and compete, and that everyone is on the same page with what is being done, what still needs to be done, and what as been done already. The scripts are useful in helping to make sure that all the necessary props, costumes, locations, and actors have been gathered, and they also help speed up the process by allowing multiple people to easily find out what needs to be gathered without them all having to go to a single person for a lengthy description. Time will also be saved during production and postproduction, since the cast and crew can, and should be shown the scripts in advance, giving them time to plan things out, as opposed to having to explain and plan everything in the moment, and the editor will have a guide to follow when putting the shots together.

The fact that the scripts kept changing, like the importance of having scripts to begin with, came as little surprise. It seems fairly self evident that, the longer we had to work on a script, the more it would change, as we had more time to think of ideas on how to improve it. Many of the changes made to <u>Ninja Shot!</u> were done because of having to work within certain constraints, such as not being able to use the television the way we wanted to in the drug scene, while only had a few changes were suggested to improve the story, since we get started on making it right away. <u>The Gunslinger</u>, however, went

through many more changes, since we started the production work for it so much later. Many of the changes were never written down, though, because we know that it was not likely to be long before another change was suggested.

The times that we did rewrite the script for <u>The Gunslinger</u> were special cases where the changes being made to the script were the most drastic. These were the cases where the copyright on Stephen King's original story was brought into play. The resulting effect of these rewrites taught me an important lesson in how careful someone has to be when using another person's copyrighted work. After we finished making <u>The Gunslinger</u>, Sterchele informed Kolbicz and myself that our request to have our movie included as a Dollar Baby picture was denied, resulting in a heavy limitation on what we can do with out movie, such as showing it a film festivals and posting it online.

Copyright issues are not the only concerns when it comes to adaptations, however. What the adaptation should look like, how loose should it be, and what needs to be added, cut or changed also needs to be considered. The answer to these problems depends on what the people who are making the adaptation are trying to accomplish. In the case of our final rewrite of <u>The Gunslinger</u>, we wanted to capture as much of the book as we could in the short timeframe in which we had to work. The result of this was a loose adaptation that shared a similar dark tone, kept the two main characters, and had elements that appeared in different sections of the book, but which also had to have some original material that held everything together. The previous rewrite, on the other hand, was meant to be inspired by Stephen King's book, but also to be different enough that we would not have to worry about copyright issues. The result of that rewrite was a story that was still to have a similar tone to the book, but as much looser adaptation with added

characters, a somewhat altered reason for the main character's quest, and scenes that were not in the book.

Ford's The Grapes of Wrath is no different, in that how was made was subject to what Ford wanted to accomplish. From what we get from the movie, he wanted to capture a similar tone to that of the book, but he also wanted to focus more on the Joad family as people, and not on how they illustrated the population at large. To that end that is exactly what the viewing audience gets. How well liked it is is then up to the individual.

Aside from having to stand up to all the regular criteria a movie has to face, such as how good the acting and cinematography are, the biggest determining factor when judging how good an adaptation is seems to be how closely it relates to the original source material. I know that this is usually high up on my list when sighting what was good or bad about a given adaptation, and I have gotten the same when talking about adaptations with other people over the years. In the case of Ford's adaptation of The Grapes of Wrath, this judgment factor works okay, as the movie is meant to be a somewhat faithful adaptation of the book. Loose adaptations, however, should probably be judged by a different standard.

The field of loose adaptations, and what their goal can be, is much broader than faithful adaptations. Some possible options for loose adaptations include taking a set of characters from the original source and put them in another story that happens at an earlier or later time than the original, creating an all new cast with a story that somehow relates to the original, or mixing a few character and events from the original into a set of all new characters and events. It is on how well these goals are achieved, rather than how closely the adaptation resembles the original story, that loose adaptations should be

judged. Our adaptation of <u>The Gunslinger</u> should be judged on how well it met the goal of trying to relate as much of the book as it could within the short period of time in which it had to work.

Something that can get moviemakers into trouble, though, is when they use different standards when making adaptations from those that the viewing audience uses when reviewing those adaptations. Some people have told Sterchele, Kolbicz, and myself that they think that, given the length of the movie, we did well to make to it as similar to the book as we did. Sterchele informed me, however, that she spoke with a couple people she showed our movie to, and that they said that they did not care for it, because it was too different from the book. When judging <u>The Gunslinger</u> simply on how closely it resembles the book, it is no wonder that some people will find fault with it, since it is not a faithful adaptation. If a person tempers their judgment by acknowledging this, however, then the movie comes out in a better light. Moviemakers cannot necessarily trust that people will be forgiving like that, though, so they need to consider how people will judge their ideas when considering how to make their adaptations.

People's criticisms can be even harsher and more demanding when going between the screen and the stage, since the two mediums are so much more alike than movies and books. The same rules largely apply, however – consider what the goal of the adaptation is, consider what will need to be changed when going between the two mediums, and consider how the audience will receive it. These things will always need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Depending on what is being adapted, and whether it is being changed from a play to a movie or the other way around needs to be considered in the adaptation process, and should be considered when judging the merits of a finished adaptation.

A Streetcar Named Desire was well done as a movie. It did suffer through its problems, such as having to be filtered through a censor, an effect of being adapted from a play to a movie, but there were a number of things that were very well done. The sets were very realistic, and employed techniques that not all theatres could. The dialogue, events, and especially the tone of the movie matched the play very well. Overall, the marks that A Streetcar Named Desire needed to hit were found quite accurately – it was well done as a movie, it made up for things that had to be changed in moving from one medium to another, such as trying to keep things intimate, even though people are watching a recording and not a live performance, and it attempted to remain as faithful to the play as it could, which it did. By being successful in these areas, A Streetcar Named Desire hit the most important point: being well received by audiences.

My stage adaptation of The Gunslinger requires people to be a bit more forgiving. While the play could have been done as a fairly faithful adaptation of the movie, silence and all, the constraints of the play direction class required that I experiment with doing a much looser adaptation. What I decided to shoot for was a play that expanded on a single scene from our movie, telling that part of the story in greater detail, using dialogue instead a series of images. The adaptation later became even looser than I meant it to be, though, when The Gunslinger was rewritten its final time. Despite this, however, the play can still be judged at how successful it was at achieving what it set out to do.

Writing and directing a variation of the same story for both film and the stage did help to show the similarities and the differences mediums. I will not attempt to argue which one is better, as I do not believe that either one is flat out superior to the other. Both would have been able to tell the same story. The Gunslinger could have been taken, scene for scene, and done as a play, complete with the gunfight, the back-story being told

in a dream sequence, and the whole thing being performed in pantomime with a music bed. The adaptation that was performed essentially told the same story of the first half of an earlier version of <u>The Gunslinger</u>, just by condensing several scenes into a dialogue that takes place between the two characters. The play did not have to be done this way, outside the restrictions of the class, but the flexibility between the two mediums gives people the option to do such an adaptation, if they wish.

Many of the preparations and requirements for both theatre and movies are also the same. Both have a script, actors, a set, lighting, a director, and a crew. The actors usually need to be prepared, through rehearsals and descriptions of the scene. The set and lighting have to be designed and prepared in advance.

There are certain differences in how these requirements are met, however. A play's set needs to be designed with the sightlines of the audiences, and the necessary acting space in mind, and it has to provide the location, and relate the necessary tone, but also be useable within the space available in the theatre. Movies do not usually need to worry as much about acting space or sightlines, because the camera can be moved to compensate for these things. Since the camera can get so much closer in on a movie's set, however, the set needs to have an even greater attention to detail than does a play's set, or the camera will pick up the flaws.

The acting and rehearsal requirements are also different for each medium. For the theatre, actors need to memorize all of their lines for the play. They need to rehearse until they have all of their actions down, and are able to run through the entire performance from beginning to end. Movie actors, on the other hand, only need to have their actions and lines memorized until a scene is finished, and then they can forget them. Rehearsals then become much shorter, as the scene is rehearsed and then shot, and there is a great

frequency of rehearsals throughout the shooting process, as opposed to having a long series of rehearsals before a play's opening performance, with rehearsals scattered throughout the run of the play to make sure that the whole thing is still running smoothly.

Acting styles do not necessarily change much between movies and plays. There are some differences, such as a stage actor needing to project more and use broader gestures, but the type of performance being done, such as a silent movie compared to drama with dialogue, has a much bigger impact. Sterchele, Kolbicz, and I used many stage actors in our movies, and none of them had any difficulty in transitioning from performing a full play before a live audience to performing a short scene before a camera. An actor's capability in moving between the two mediums would seem to be, then, more based on if each individual is able to cope with the different production styles of each medium.

There are a couple key things that movies and plays have over each other that each one is more capable at. Movies are sometimes able to do things that plays just cannot do. During my play, a campfire is supposed to be lit on stage, but, unlike how we were able to actually use a fire in the movie, we could not actually set a fire in the theatre, so an orange light had to be used to suggest it instead. From the way that movies are constructed, movies can often move from one scene or location to another more quickly and easily, the mise-en-scene can be adjusted from one shot to the next to be exactly what the moviemakers want it to be, and there is often the option of redoing a shot if it does not turn out right. These things often allow movies to take on more fantastic stories than plays sometimes can, and can allow for a level of realism that plays cannot always achieve.

Despite these things, plays do have their own elements that movies cannot capture. There is something of an intangible electricity, both as an audience member and as either cast or crew, about watching a performance unfold live before your eyes in the same room. Perhaps it could best be described as an adrenalin serge, at least for the cast and crew, in trying to give a good performance, knowing that something could go wrong at any moment, and getting a particular thrill about either getting through it flawlessly, or skillfully covering up mistakes that do happen. For the audience, there is also an excitement in watching people pull off a live performance, but on top of that, being in the same room as live performers often makes plays more intimate than movies. Special effects that are successfully done in plays often seem more spectacular as well, since they are usually harder to do in live performances than they are in movies.

Whereas I do not wish to make a claim about which is better, movies or plays, now that I have made two movies using film, I am prepared to state that I believe digital video to be the superior format, for a number of reasons. First, digital video saves time and money. A single DV tape costs less than what Sterchele and Kolbicz spent on the amount of film necessary to shoot for an equivalent length of time. Once that film has been exposed, it cannot be used again, whereas a DV tape can be used to record multiple time, if needed. Once a scene has been shot digitally, it can be immediately reviewed to check for quality, avoiding the nasty surprise of finding out later that the shots did not turn out well, forcing later, unplanned re-shoots. DV Tapes can also be loaded and unloaded faster than film, which must be taken to a dark area to avoid accidental exposure, an action that would be particularly bad if the film had already been used to record scenes for the movie.

A number of other things are more easily done digitally, as opposed to using film. Editing can be performed more quickly using programs like Final Cut Pro, rather than using a razor and tape. If mistakes are made editing digitally, they can usually be undone quickly and easily, and the physical copy of the movie is not damaged. Special effects, transitions, such as cross fades, and other things that need to be added or removed in postproduction, such as wires used in stunts, are more easily done digitally. The reason all of these things are easier when done digitally is because they are all done on computers, where copies of the shot are being worked on, where things can be changed if people make mistake or change their minds, where there is no risk of accidentally damaging the original copies, and where many of the special effects are created.

Once a movie has been released for home viewing, it will need to be put out digitally anyway so that people can watch it on a DVD. Two hours of film will take up significantly more physical space than a two-hour movie on DVD, and the DVD often has many bonus features, such as making-of documentaries, subtitles, and multiple languages. DVDs are also more rugged than film is, and will subsequently last longer.

That is not to say that there is nothing that film has over digital video. If people are observant when watching a digital movie, they can see that some colors blend together that should not, and, particularly in cases of very dark shots, jagged edged can sometimes be seen between two shades of a color. Even movies that are shot on film and then transferred to digital, such as our movies, suffer through this misrepresentation and loss of colors. Digital movies are like digital music in this regard. Some people claim that vinyl records are better than CDs, because digital music cuts out some of the audio range, while vinyl records do not. Digital video does the same thing with colors.

Though I do acknowledge this superior aspect of film, I also believe that the ability to use it to claim that film is better than digital will be short lived. Most people I have spoken to tell me that they do not notice any loss in audio quality with CDs, and I know that I do not notice it either. It is only a matter of time before the same happens with digital video, where the cameras and computers are improved to the point where they are able to capture and represent enough colors that, while it may not be the entire color spectrum, our eyes will be incapable of telling the difference, and those blending colors and jagged lines will disappear.

Conclusion

The initial goal of doing these film projects was to learn how to use film as a medium. While that goal was met, with how superior I found digital video to be, and considering how everyone I talk to about it mentions how the industry as a whole is shifting to the route of digital, I question now how valuable knowing how to work with film is. I did, however, gain much valuable experience in a number of other areas that were included as parts of this thesis.

The making of the movies themselves gave me an exposure to things that I may have otherwise missed out on. I now have experience at writing and creating silent movies. These movies were also the first projects that I underwent where I involved storyboarding. On a broader level, just the general experience of having made complete movies, and seeing what worked and what did not is valuable experience that I can use in the future.

Through my research and efforts in this thesis, I now have a much better idea of how to look at and make adaptations. Much of the research I found echoed ideas that I already had about faithful adaptations, but prior to doing these projects, I was typically untrusting of loose adaptations. Being forced into a position where both the movie adaptation of the book, and the play adaptation of the movie had to be loose, however, gave me a much better idea of the kind of flexibility that loose adaptations can have, and how they can relate to their original source material and still be their own story.

With having done both a movie and a play, trying to use the same story for each, I got a pretty good idea of the kinds of similarities and differences there are between the two mediums. For all of their differences, their goals, and many of their methods, are the

same. While not every story can be told in both mediums, for those that can, it seems to largely just be personal preference which one an individual would prefer to make or see it in.

Appendix A – Pre-Script Notes

[Note: These are the notes for <u>Ninja Shot!,</u> followed by the notes for <u>The Gunslinger</u>. To make them easier to read, the original handwritten notes have been retyped, and any spelling errors have been corrected.]

Ninja Photographer

In bedroom – click, click, click
       people look around – see no one
       see paper

In people's faces on street, they don't notice

Something else

Takes picture in class – as does rival
       start fight
       knock stuff over
              papers
              chairs
              desks
       roll along front row, knocking into people
              they don't notice
              keep taking notes
       knock over professor
       battle w/ cameras – one gets smashed
       black & white/ man & woman→↓
         ↓   pulls off mask, shakes out flowing hair
       CU of wide-eyed expression, pulls off mask
       become involved
       make out, unnoticed, in inappropriate area
            – &/or – taking photos as a team

x presents→ over black
a y film-----→↑
actor name(s) – over desert

MiB flees, Roland follows
title & opening credits as gunslinger follows
        w/ close up of Roland's face?
Roland builds fire
        Checks gun – is dear
        Has picture – Mother or Girlfriend

Continues to follow – comes to church
        sees piece of clothing on bush
        sees Jake & asks about
                flashback of MiB losing clothing

Enters church
        Psycho preacher lady has people attack
        Roland kills everybody
                People kill Jake

Roland exits & sees MiB in distance
        MiB flees
        Roland follows

Appendix B – Movie Scripts

[Note: This appendix contains three scripts. The first is the script that was used

for <u>Ninja Shot!</u>. The second is the first version of the script for <u>The Gunslinger</u>. The third

is the final version of the script for <u>The Gunslinger</u>.]

<u>NINJA PAPARAZZI</u>

Matthew Balke 2-7-05

<u>ACT ONE</u>

INT. DARK LIVING ROOM

A MAN sits on a couch, his TV the only light source in the
room. In front of him is a coffee table, on top of which
are a bag of white powder, a mirror, and a razor blade. The
man finishes chopping a small amount of the powder on the
mirror, then rolls a dollar and leans down to snuff the
powder. Suddenly, there is a bright flash and the sound of
a camera. The man looks around, surprised, but sees no one.

I'M NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT TO DO HERE FOR A SLUG LINE, OR
EVEN IF THERE SHOULD BE ONE

The front page of a newspaper spins clockwise as the camera
zooms in on it, until it nearly fills the screen. The
newspaper stops, making visible the headline, which reads
"MOVIE STAR TAKES COKE – CHOOSES COMMERCIALS OVER JAIL."
The corresponding picture is that of the man sitting on his
couch, dollar bill in hand, looking into the camera with
surprise.

INT. DIMLY LIT BEDROOM

A HUSBAND finishes pouring two glasses of champagne, taking them over to his WIFE who sits on a bed. They each take a sip, then set the glasses on the night table. The husband sits behind the wife and starts to give her a massage. She takes a moment to enjoy the massage, before she gets off the bed, turns to face her husband, and begins to pull her shirt off. Taking the cue, he pulls off his shirt as well. The two people climb into the bed, but before they can get anymore intimate, there is a series of bright flashes and the sounds of a camera. They look around, but find nothing. A black figure quickly exits through the door.

I'M NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT TO DO HERE FOR A SLUG LINE, OR EVEN IF THERE SHOULD BE ONE

A second newspaper comes onto the screen. This time, the headline reads "ROCK STAR GOES ON HONEYMOON – OTHER WIFE DOESN'T APPROVE," and the corresponding picture is that of the two people lying in bed, looking at the camera in surprise.

EXT. CITY STREET – DAY

A BLACK NINJA is running around the street, taking pictures of people. He is getting distance shots, profiles, close-ups, and extreme close-ups, getting right up in people faces. He jumps around the street franticly, taking many pictures, and no one notices.

I'M NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT TO DO HERE FOR A SLUG LINE, OR EVEN IF THERE SHOULD BE ONE

Another newspaper, this time with the headline "NINJA PHOTOGRAPHS EVERYBODY – NO ONE NOTICES," and a corresponding picture of a crowded street with a number of people lacking expression, and looking in the general direction of, but not directly at the camera.

ACT TWO

INT. LECTURE HALL

The hall is half full with students, most of which are
taking notes, and a couple of which are asleep. The
instructor is in the front, writing n the chalkboard. He
has an overhead projector on, and books and papers on his
desk. The Black Ninja is in the front row, off to the side.
He pulls out his camera to take a picture, when he sees the
WHITE NINJA pull out a camera on the other side of the hall.
The White Ninja almost immediately notices the Black Ninja,
and the two jump up and race at each other. They meet near
the middle of the front of the room, where a fight ensues.
As the two trade blows, they begin taking apart the room,
knocking the books and papers of the desk and barreling over
the projector. They knock over the instructor, who just
gets right back up and continues to lecture. Then, making
their way to the front of the class, they begin to roll
along the front row as they fight, rolling over people, and
knocking about books, papers, and writing supplies. The
students ignore what is happening, continuing to take their
notes. Those who have lost their writing supplies continue
to take notes without them. One person who was asleep gets
woken up by the commotion, but is immediately hit in the
face and knocked unconscious. The White Ninja pins the
Black Ninja, but is soon thrown off. The Black Ninja then
rushes for his camera, and wields it like a sword. The
White Ninja does the same. Their fight continues until the
White Ninja is disarmed, his camera sent flying through the
air and smashing on the ground. As the White Ninja kneels
in defeat, he is unmasked by the Black Ninja, and revealed
to be a beautiful woman. The Black Ninja stares, wide-eyed,
then pulls off his mask and helps the White Ninja to her
feet. The two look at each other for a moment, then
embrace.

ACT THREE

EXT. OPEN COURTYARD

The Black Ninja is walking around the courtyard, taking
pictures of a man and a woman kissing, a juggler performing,
and a man holding people up. At the same time, the White
Ninja, using a new camera, is getting the same pictures from
another angle. The two ninjas stop to stare at each other
for a moment, then drop their cameras around their necks
and, without taking their masks off, begin to make out,
leaving the robber to continue holding people up.

TITLE

Matthew Balke 28-6-05

<u>TEASER</u>

EXT. DESERT – EVENING

A barren desert landscape stretches out in all directions.
In the distance, a dark figure dressed in black runs away.
The Gunslinger.

<u>ACT ONE</u>

EXT. DESERT – NIGHT

The Gunslinger finishes gathering materials for a fire. He
places them in a stone ring, lights them, and unrolls a
sleeping bag. As the fire burns, the Gunslinger stares at a
lightly crumpled picture he holds in his hand. It is of a
woman who was special to him. As he stares, he absent-
mindedly strokes his gun, which he removed from his holster.
He places the picture in his breast pocket and holds up his
gun. He checks it to make sure that it is loaded, then
stares at it for a moment before placing it under his travel
pillow and going to sleep.

EXT. DESERT – DAY

The Gunslinger continues his journey through the desert.
After a while, he spots a camp ground in the distance, and
the Man in Black's trail goes straight through it.

EXT. CAMPGROUNDS - DAY

There are tents, burnt out fire pits, and other
miscellaneous items strewn about. One of the tents is
larger than the others, and is adorned with a holy symbol.
The Gunslinger looks around and sees no one, but finds a
piece of torn cloth on a dried bush. He begins searching
the tents, finding them to be vacant.

INT. TENT

The Gunslinger enters a tent to discover there are children
inside it. Two of the children appear strangely mutated and
deformed in appearance, but the third, Jake, appears normal.
The Gunslinger approaches Jake and asks him about the cloth
and the mutants.

EXT. CAMPGROUNDS FLAHBACK - EVENING

The Man in Black crosses through the campgrounds, a piece of
his clothing catching on a bush and tearing. After the Man
in Black's visit, the tribe begins to change, taking on a
grotesque appearance of their former selves.

EXT. CAMPGROUNGS - DAY

Jake and the Gunslinger are standing outside the tent,
talking. Jake points over to the church, and the two head
in that direction, entering it upon arrival.

INT. CHURCH

The bulk of the camp's population is in the church, all as
mutated as the two children. A woman stands at the front,
giving a sermon. She notices the Gunslinger and points to
him. The tribe rises and attacks the Gunslinger, who pulls
out his gun and fights back. Jake pick up a weapon and
fights as well, but is killed during the battle. By the
time it is over, everyone is dead except the Gunslinger. He
checks Jakes body, but finds there is nothing that can be
done.

EXT. CAMPGROUNDS - EVENING

The Gunslinger exits the church and looks around. Off in
the distance, the Man in Black is watching. The two men
stare at each other for a moment before the Man in Black
turns and resumes his flight across the desert. The
Gunslinger follows.

THE GUNSLINGER

Matt Balke 28-6-05
Sarah Sterchele 17-2-06
Matt Balke 14-4-06

EXT. DESERT – SCORCHING HOT DAY

A barren desert landscape stretches out in all directions. A
dark figure – the GUNSLINGER – is traveling across them.
Though exhausted, he continues his journey, forced to
continue on toward some unknown goal. It is clear he has
been walking for days, even months. Off in the distance, a
MAN IN BLACK looks down towards The Gunslinger for a moment,
and then runs off.

EXT. DESERT – NIGHT

A campfire lights the night sky. Nearby sits the
Gunslinger, who is checking and cleaning his gun, working as
methodically as though it were a nightly ritual. Resting on
his knee is a picture of a WOMAN who was special to him.
After finishing with his weapon, the Gunslinger picks up the
picture and begins to stare at it. After a moment, he sets
both the gun and picture down next to him, lies down and
goes to sleep.

EXT. GRASSY KNOLL – DAY

The Gunslinger, sans hat and weapons, stands confused in a
field of flowers. He looks around, before noticing a tree
at the top of a hill. Sitting under the tree is the Man in
Black. After the Gunslinger approaches him, the Man in
Black raises his cape to reveal the Woman from the picture.
Betrayed, the Gunslinger, suddenly on another hill, pulls
his gun and points it at the Woman, who is kneeling next to
him, struggling. Several flashes of happy moments between
the two go by before the Gunslinger fires, and the Woman
collapses.

EXT. DESERT – DAY

The Gunslinger continues his journey through the desert. He stops and notices footprints in the sand – those of the Man In Black. The Gunslinger continues to follow them to the edge of a hill, where there is a sudden drop. He looks off to the distance to see where they go, before starting down the drop himself.

EXT. GHOST TOWN – DAY

A seemingly abandoned town, the Gunslinger enters and begins to explore. Walking down stretches of road, peering through dirt stained windows, and looking all through the town, all he finds are old, empty buildings, and decaying vestiges of human life. After looking through one window, the Gunslinger walks away from the building, not seeing the figure run past the window on the inside. The Gunslinger continues to explore until he hears a gunshot hit a nearby wash pan. Drawing his weapons, the he looks around to find a TOWN'S PERSON standing a short distance away. The Town's Person is dirty and scared, keeping a shaky rifle trained on the Gunslinger. Seeing how tense the situation is, the Gunslinger holsters his weapons and approaches the Town's Person, his empty hands raised in front of him. Trusting that the Gunslinger means him no harm, the Town's Person leads him to a church.

INT. CHURCH

What is left of the town's population is in the church. A
PRIEST stands at the front, giving a feverous sermon,
spitting hellfire as he furiously speaks. After a moment,
he notices the Gunslinger standing in the doorway and points
to him. The TOWN'S FOLK turn around, revealing themselves
to have been mutated, as if by some ravenous plague. The
first of them stands and begins lumbering toward the
doorway, carrying a shovel. Before he can get far, however,
he is shot down by the Gunslinger. The Priest then gives
the command to kill the Gunslinger, causing the rest of the
Town's Folk to rise to their feet. In their mutated state,
they are harder to kill than normal humans, but being slow
and carrying only tools for manual labor, the Gunslinger and
the Town's Person are able to kill the Town's Folk before
they reach the doorway. During the fight, however, the Man
in Black sneaks up behind the Town's Person and kills him as
well. The Gunslinger sees the Town's Person fall, but there
is nothing he can do about it, as even the Priest decides to
approach, still raging forth his sermon. He walks right up
to the Gunslinger's gun before being shot in the head. The
Gunslinger holsters his weapon and turns to leave.

EXT. GHOST TOWN - DAY

The Gunslinger walks away from the church, leaving the
Priest and the Town's Person lying dead in the doorway. Not
too far off in the distance, the Man in Black is watching.
The two men stare at each other for a moment before the Man
in Black turns and resumes his flight across the desert.
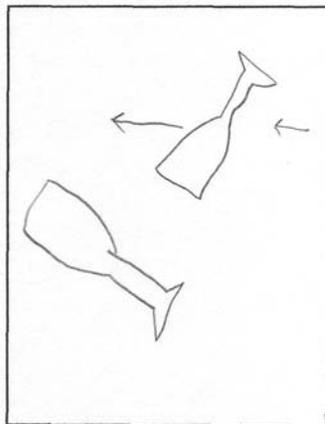The Gunslinger drops his head, then turns to follow.

Appendix C – Storyboards

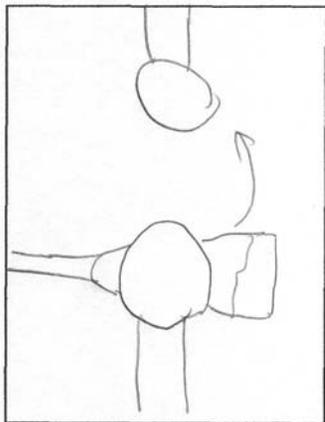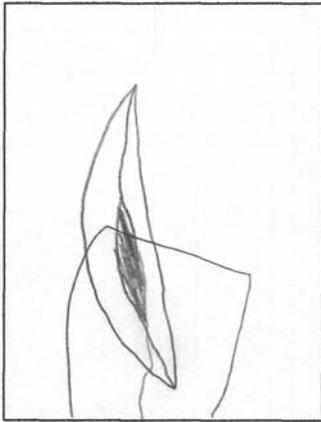[Note: These storyboards were used for the affair scene in <u>Ninja Shot!</u>.]

Balke 44
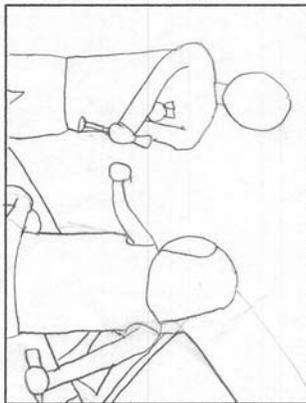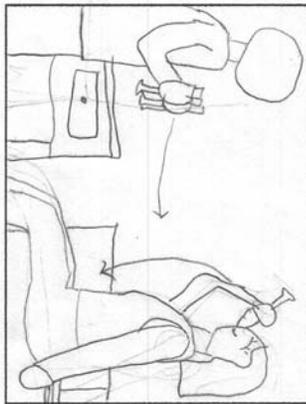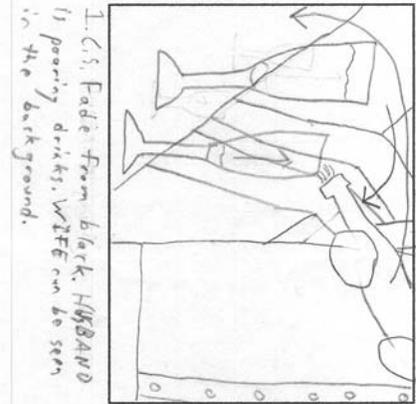
5. C.S. HUSBAND, with an expression of smug satisfaction, falls to the bed.
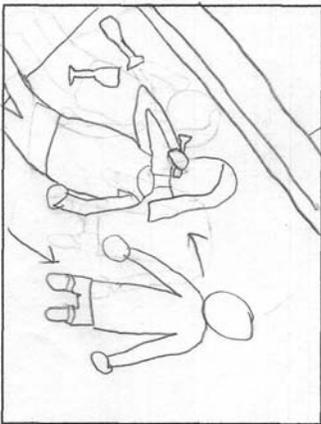looks down at WIFE.

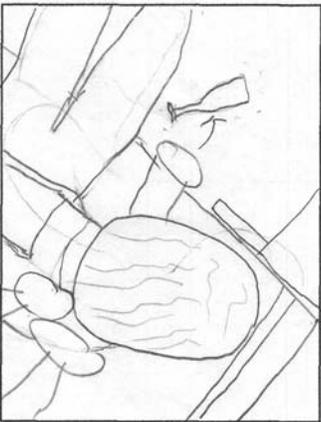6. C.S. The second glass falls to the bed.
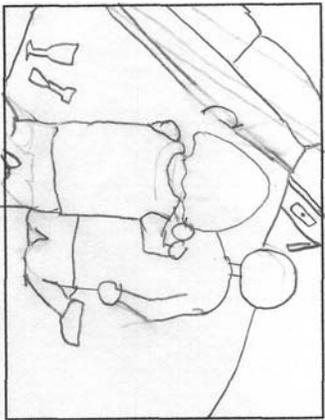
7. C.S. HUSBAND hands a third glass to WIFE.

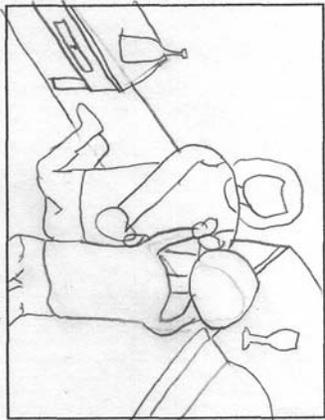8. E.C.S. WIFE brings the third glass to her lips and begins to drink.

9. M.S. As WIFE finishes the third glass, HUSBAND, without the fourth glass, climbs onto the bed and moves behind her.
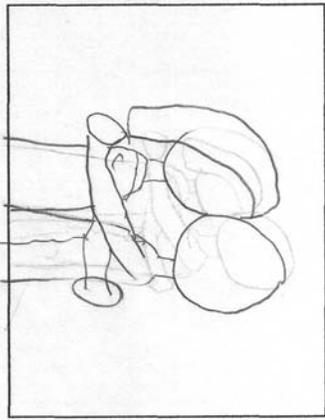
10. C.S. HUSBANDS hands, can be seen massaging WIFES back. WIFE relaxes and lets the third glass tumble to the floor.
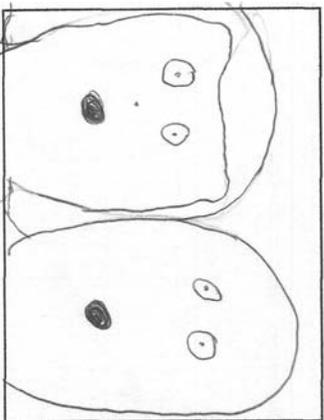
11. M.S. Wife turns around and begins to unbutton HUSBAND's shirt.

12. M.S. A) WIFE continues to unbutton HUSBAND's shirt, he reaches up to undo her's as well. The fourth glass and the empty champagin bottle are on the tables.

13b. C.S. There are a couple bright flashes, and HUSBAND and WIFE look at the camera in surprise.

13. M.S. Slowly zoom closer and closer to a C.S. shirts open, HUSBAND and WIFE embrace and begin to passionately kiss as they rub their hands up and down each others backs.
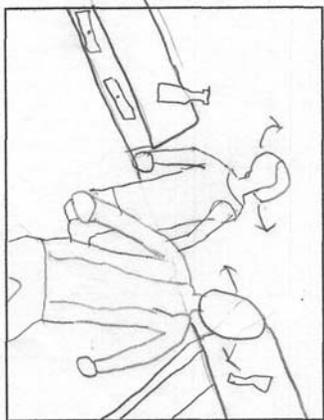
14. M.S. There are a couple more flashes as HUSBAND and WIFE look around. Just before the shot ends, they both look right, away from the door.
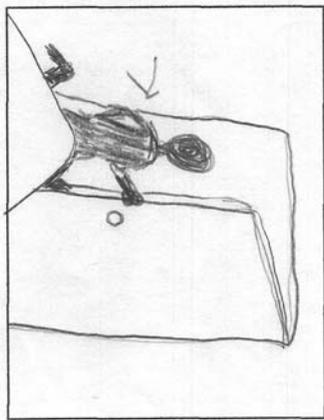
15. L.S. BLACK NINJA, with a camera, runs to the door, opens it, jumps through, and quickly shuts it behind him. The corner of the bed is still in the frame, and light streams in through the door when it is open. Fade to black.

Appendix D – Script for Play

[Note: The play was titled while the still unnamed movie it was based on was only to be inspired by <u>The Gunslinger,</u> and not an adaptation of it.]

<u>One Chapter of an Incessant Journey</u>

The setting is a desert in the Middle East in mid-fall 1993. U. is the base of a rocky cliff, rising at a steep slant. Small boulders, sand, and rocks of all sizes in between are scattered about the cliff's foot, spanning it's width and extending up to a couple of feet away. A few more rocks are thinly scattered across the sand-filled terrain, mostly small with a larger one that can be sat on just R. of C. A couple dried shrubs rest R. Opposite at L. is a palm tree. A few small plants are scattered about its base. At C. is an open area where a fire ring is to be built.

John and Kris Enter. John is a tall man with a dark complexion, approximately thirty years old. His clothes, along with the rest of him, are getting worn through his travels. He looks almost like a cowboy, complete with a neck bandana, leather hat and gun belt, though the rest of his clothes are more modern. Kris is in her mid-twenties, and has a well-toned body, which she got from the U.S. Army, along with the pants, boots and the white tank top she is wearing. Although she can hold her own is just about any given situation, she is still human, and, unlike John, still has the emotional needs that most people do. Each of them are carrying a backpack with supplies.

Kris: Well?

John: The information was good. He's been through here.

Kris: Well that's something.

John: It's getting dark. We should camp here tonight. Let's start building a fire
       ring.

Kris: You know, I just wish you hadn't traded our car to that guy for the intel.

John: You wanted to keep following him, didn't you? That was the only thing the
       guy would take. Don't forget I also got some food.

Kris: Which we now have to carry ourselves.

John: Would you rather not eat?

Kris: No, I would prefer to eat. It's just going to be a lot harder to keep up with
       him now.

John: I know, but that guy was the only lead we had, and if we didn't find out
       from him where the Man In Black had gone, then we wouldn't have been
       able to keep moving. We had no choice.

Kris: Fine. I'm going to see if I can find something to make a fire with.

Kris Exits

*John finishes setting up the fire ring and sits next to it. He pulls out a revolver
and checks it. After polishing it for a moment, he sets it down, and begins to
stare at a picture he pulls from his pocket.*

Kris Enters

Kris: So who is that?

John: I don't want to talk about it.

Kris: You never want to talk about it.

John: That's right.

Kris: Look, we've been chasing this guy together for almost half a year, and
        other than knowing that you have some reason you want to get this guy, I
        have no idea why you're doing this. I think it's about time you tell me, and
        I'm guessing it has something to do with that picture.

John: I don't want to talk about it.

Kris: No, but I want to talk about it.

John: Well that's your problem.

Kris: Just tell me who's in the picture.

John: No!

Kris: Fine. For a month I asked you who's in the picture and why you're after the
        Man In Black. Finally, I gave up, figuring that after a while, you would
        finally talk about it with me…

John: Oh, hell…

Kris: But this has gone on too long. I was searching on my own for over two
        years before we linked up. I thought when we started working together

that I might have someone to talk to. Instead, we've gone in virtual silence for almost six months, except for when we've stopped to ask other people questions. Now I can't spend God knows how long walking through a desert trying to catch a man we may never find…

John: Will you shut up already…

Kris: without at least knowing why you want him dead.

John and Kris stare at each other for a moment before looking away. They sit next to the fire ring in silence.

Kris: Before the Gulf War started, I was stationed in a base in the states. That's where I met my fiancé.

John: Don't…

Kris: We were very much in love, like one of those true love stories you see in movies.

John: I would really rather you didn't.

Kris: Well that's your problem. I need to talk about it. Just after the war began, we were reassigned to Kuwait. Things were going just fine. Dan's unit met with victory after victory as it pushed further and further north. I had to stay in southern Kuwait in an intelligence and medical base, because women aren't allowed in combat. One day a piece of intelligence came through our camp, courtesy of a man who appeared to be American and was dressed in all black. He came out of the desert and approached my husband's platoon with information regarding weapons sites and enemy bases, and offered to help guide them there. Of course everyone was

cautious, but after some satellite imagery, a surveillance and recon mission was authorized. A detachment of men was led to the coordinates offered by the Man In Black, where they were ambushed. Only four men made it out of there, and one of them died on the way back to their base. My fiancé was one of the ones who died. I never even saw his body again. The survivors said that as soon as they arrived and the fighting began, the Man In Black disappeared behind enemy lines. A couple weeks later, a full-scale assault was made on the enemy base. It was taken successfully, but the Man In Black wasn't located. Shortly thereafter, I began to hear rumors of a Man In Black causing trouble in other areas. I tried to talk somebody into doing something, but nobody would do anything. After I was denied leave to try to investigate myself, I went AWOL. I couldn't let that bastard get off, and I couldn't think of another way to try to find him than to just look for him myself. After two years of gathering information, following leads, and avoiding the MP, I ran into you.

There is another period of silence as John lets the information sink in.

John: Had you set a wedding date?

Kris: No. Before the war began, we had set one, but then things went all to hell and we never had the chance to reschedule.

John: I'm sorry.

Kris: So am I.

There is another uncomfortable silence.

John: The woman in the picture was my wife.

Kris: Your wife!?

John: Yes.

Kris: You never struck me as the kind of person who would get married.

John: I was never very close to anyone. As a child, I always did things by
       myself. As I grew up, I decided I wanted to go after the bad guys, but
       again, I wanted to do things on my own. The methods I preferred were
       too unorthodox for something like the police anyway. So I became a
       bounty hunter. I met my wife during one of my hunts. She was also a
       bounty hunter looking for the same guy. When we started running out of
       leads, the two of us decided to work together. I was surprised at how
       good of a team we seemed to make. Once we finally caught the guy, we
       decided to keep working together. Eventually, we got married.

Kris: So what happened?

John: She had an affair. I found out she had slept with someone else, and I
       killed her.

Kris: What!?

John: She told me about what happened, and described the Man In Black. Then
       I killed her.

Kris: Oh God…

John: I started hunting the Man In Black. I wanted to kill him for what he had
       done to me. It became my only goal. The more I hunted him, the more I

heard about the kind of things he had done. I came to learn that it wasn't that my wife was weak. The Man In Black has ways of getting what he wants. He's a deceiver, and all he's after is chaos. He gets his pleasure by throwing things into disarray and ruining people's lives. Unfortunately, I figured it out after it was long too late. I eventually forgave my wife, and started hunting the Man In Black for what he had done to both of us.

Kris: I can't believe you killed her.

John: At that point, catching him became the only thing that's been important to me ever since. I have to kill him, for what he did to me, and to my wife. If I fail to do that, then I'll have failed us both.

Kris: So why did you agree to work with me?

John: When I met you, I was surprised when you mentioned you were looking for someone, and described the Man In Black. I had already been looking for so long. I thought you might prove useful.

Kris: Like the way you met your wife.

John: That's part of why I didn't want to open up to you.

Kris: I'm sorry. I didn't know.

An uncomfortable silence permeates the air.

Kris: How long have you been looking?

John: Huh?

Kris: For the Man In Black?

John: Since before I met you? Four years.

Kris: And what about the revolver?

John: What about it?

Kris: You always have it with you. You're always cleaning it. You even sleep
       with it under your pillow, when you have one.

John: It was my wife's wedding present to me. It's the gun I intend to kill the
       Man In Black with.

Kris: So what will you do if you don't find him?

John: The same thing you will: keep looking. Look, do you mind if we not talk
       about this anymore tonight? I would just prefer we get some sleep.

Kris: Sure. I have a feeling we've got a long journey ahead of us. We should
       get some rest. Have a good night John. I'll see you in the morning.

John: Good night Kris.

Kris looks over at John in surprise, having never heard that from him before.

Appendix E – Homework for Play

[Note: Some sections of the homework have been omitted, or may be unclear, as they reference handwritten notations that could not be included.]

Homework for One Chapter of an Incessant Journey

I. Given Circumstances

    A. Environmental Facts

        1. Geographical Location: Middle Eastern desert, mildly hot and dry.

        2. Date: Fall 1993, at sundown.

        3. Economic Environment: Neither John, nor Kris, has money or a job. They own only what they have with them now.

        4. Political Environment: John is the leader. Through most of his time working with Kris, once he has made a decision, he lets nothing stop him from completing his objective. Kris can offer her advice, but once John had made up his mind, usually all she can do is follow him, help him, leave him, or be caught in his wake.

        5. Social Environment: This is a point of conflict between John and Kris, because their social habits and attitudes differ so. Kris likes to know the people she works with. She can be closed off and professional if she needs to be, but she generally does not have a problem showing her true feelings about something. John, however, prefers emotional detachment and distance. He primarily values completing his goals and not letting anything stop him.

6. Religious Environment: Religion is not a strong point in the play. Kris still has at least some faith in people, as after all she had been through, she still wanted someone to be able to talk to. John, however, lives by the gun, and trusts it to get him through his difficult times.

B. Previous Action: John was always a loner. After deciding he wanted to hunt bad guys, he became a bounty hunter. During one hunt, he met his wife to be. They became a team, and then married. John received an antique revolver as a wedding present from his wife. After the Man in Black seduced her, however, John killed her and started hunting the Man in Black. He searched for four years before meeting Kris. Kris was in the army, where she met her fiancé. Before they could marry, however, they had to go to the Middle East for the Gulf War, where the Man in Black led the fiancé's platoon into a trap. Kris asked for something to be done about the Man in Black, but no one acted, so she went AWOL. After two years of searching on her own, she met John. For nearly six months, the two have searched as a team. During this time, little conversation has occurred between the two, John particularly avoiding questions about his past and the identity of the person in the picture he carries with him. John has just traded their car away for food and information necessary for keeping them on the Man in Black's trail.

C. Polar Attitudes of the Principle Characters

Beginning

John: John prefers solitude. He does not care to interact with others. His wife, one of he few people he opened up to, he felt for a while had betrayed him, deepening his desire to keep closed off from

others, especially Kris, who he met in much the same way as he did his

wife.

Kris: Kris likes to be able to socialize and talk with people. She is

frustrated by the solitude that comes out of their Journey, and is upset

with John about how he could socialize at least a little with her, but

actively avoids doing so.

Ending

John: He still prefers not to open up to people, including Kris, but

feels sympathy towards why Kris is after the Man in Black, and that

she may be someone he will be capable of opening up to more.

Kris: She now understands more about why John is the way he is,

and is less frustrated with him and their situation.

D. Significance of the Facts: Of the environmental facts, the most significant is

the social environment. This directly feeds into the polar attitudes, and it is primarily

these two things that cause John and Kris to act the way they do. The previous actions

hold some sway over why the two act the way the do, but they primarily serve to

bring the story up to where it stands currently. The latest previous action, however, in

conjunction with the economic environment, does bring about the first conflict of the

play.

II. Dialogue

A. Choice of Words: John and Kris usually have little trouble coming up with

words to describe their situation or express what they want to say, which suggests at

least a basic education. The also feel comfortable around each other to not worry

about censuring themselves too much.

B. Choice of Phrases and Sentence Structures: Both John and Kris can put together fairly cohesive sentences most of the time, which again suggests at least some education.

C. Choice of Images: There is much description of previous action, but otherwise there is really no imagery, descriptions or metaphors.

D. Choice of Peculiar Characteristics: Kris pulls from her military background as she uses abbreviations, such as AWOL, MP, and words like intelligence shortened to intel.

E. The Sound of the Dialogue: The dialogue gets a little sappy at times, but is otherwise not too unrealistic in its content or flow.

F. Structure of lines and Speeches: The longer lines belong to Kris earlier on, indicating that John does not particularly get involved in the conversation. Kris does, however, which is why John's lines are a bit shorter, as Kris breaks into John's lines to ask questions.

IV. Characters

John

A. Desire: To catch the Man in Black and keep as many walls up as he can between himself and others.

B. Will: It seems relatively high, as he has been looking for the Man on Black for over four years and has not given up, and how he keeps himself closed off from most other, as he did from Kris for nearly six months.

C. Moral Stance: He cares little for the feelings of others, stopping at nothing to find the Man in Black. He will only go so far in keeping himself blocked off from others, however.

D. Decorum: John carries himself, and looks like a person who is beginning to get worn through travel. He does not concern himself with etiquette.

E. Summary List of Adjectives: Rough, brash, insensitive, determined, forceful

F. Initial Character-Mood-Intensity

    1. Heartbeat: normal

    2. Perspiration: medium

    3. Stomach Condition: fine

    4. Muscle Tension: low

    5. Breathing: normal rate, semi-deep breaths

Kris

A. Desire: To catch the man in Black and to get John to open up to her.

B. Will: It appears to be more mid-range, as she has been looking for the Man in Black over two years, and had tried a few times over the past few months to get John to open up, but has so far been unsuccessful at either attempt.

C. Moral Stance: She tries not to break the rules, and to take others' feelings into consideration but will only be denied something she thinks of as important and fair for so long before taking matters into her own hands.

D. Decorum: She carries herself less like a lady and more like a soldier, dressing for the weather as she sees appropriate.

E. Summary List of Adjectives: Confident, frustrated

F. Initial Character-Mood-Intensity

    1. Heartbeat: slightly above normal

    2. Perspiration: low medium

    3. Stomach Condition: a little empty

    4. Muscle Tension: medium low

    5. Breathing: normal rate, semi-deep breaths

V. Idea: If a person lets out the really heavy weights and emotions he or she is carrying, then they will become easier to handle.

  A. Meaning of the Title: This is a very long journey they are in the middle of. It has gone on for a long time since before the scene, and it will continue a long time after. This is one series of events that transgresses during the journey.

  B. Philosophical Statements in the Play

    John: "It's getting dark. We should camp here tonight."

    Kris: "Before the war began, we had set one, but then things all went to hell and we never had the chance to reschedule."

    Kris: "I have a feeling we've got a long journey ahead of us."

  C. How the Action Leads Directly to the Idea: The tensions in John and Kris's partnership from the restrictions in their conversations have been mounting for months. When it finally hits the boiling point for Kris, she begins to unload herself. This at first increases the tension, but then causes John to unload his weight. The effect of this becomes very draining on the two, but allows them to carry the weight together, and begin to form a relationship beyond that of mere travel companions.

  D. Scene's Purpose and Use in the Play: The scene is the play in this case. In terms of the larger story, it reveals why John and Kris are on their quest, and the moment at which they start to open up to each other.

VI. Mood

    Unit 1

        A. Sight: Footprints; Smell: A distinctive odor

        B. Like a bloodhound on the hunt.

    Unit 2

        A. Sight: An incomplete map; Taste: A food other than what you were

    expecting; Touch: A particularly large bump in the road.

        B. Like being given the wrong directions.

    Unit 3

        A. Sight: A tennis match; Sound: A mine detector

        B. Like two ping-pong players getting closer to each other.

    Unit 4

        A. Sight: Red; Sound: Tea pot; Taste: A dry mouth; Touch: Steam

        B. Like a pot boiling over onto the stove.

    Unit 5

        A. Sight: Black; Smell: Funeral parlor

        B. Like a sadness brought by Death.

    Unit 6

        A. Sight: Barren landscape; Sound: Plugged ears; Smell: Nothing; Touch:

    Empty space

        B. Like the creation of a sudden empty void.

    Unit 7

        A. Sight: Playground; Sound: Children; Smell: Fresh air; Taste: Cool

    water; Touch: Recently cut grass

B. Like innocent school children at recess.

Unit 8

   A. Sight: Torn husband/wife photo; Sound: Silence; Touch: Slow

heartbeat

   B. The confession of a doomed man.

Unit 9

   A. Sight: Picture of a long lost loved one; Sound: Grandma's music box;

Smell: Dead wife's perfume

   B. Like coming across the look-alike of a beloved relative who passed

away.

Unit 10

   A. Sight: The grave of a long gone friend; Sound: A sad question

   B. Like a first date with someone who just suffered a personal tragedy.

Unit 11

   A. Sight: Stars; Sound: Owl; Smell: Sleeping Bag; Touch: Cot

   B. The sandman just paid a visit.

IX. Tone: A little shocked, a little saddened, but hopeful.

Appendix F – DVDs

[Note: The two DVDs provided with the thesis contain the movies and bonus features. The recording of <u>One Chapter of an Incessant Journey</u> is included in the DVD of <u>The Gunslinger</u>.]

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