Towards an archival study of screenplay versions: the role of screenwriting research for adaptation studies

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Where are screenplays in studies of film adaptation? Despite recent attempts to bring screenplays and adaptation studies together (e.g. Sherry, Hermansson), the overall neglect of screenwriting and script development in intermedial studies is striking. Not much seems to have changed in the last 20 years since Kamilla Elliott acknowledged the disregard of screenplays in studies of literary adaptations. As Laura Fryer (2017, 56) reminds us, “neglecting screenplays and the contribution of screenwriters to an adaptation risks losing insight into how and why a text is reworked and by whom.” The absence of research about screenwriting is even more paradoxical in view of adaptation studies’ move beyond the fidelity discourse and towards the recognition of collaborative authorship (Leitch, Cartmell/Whelehan, Elliott, Stam, Hutcheon, Geraghty and Murray). This article argues for the need to include screenplays in intermedial and adaptation studies. Providing empirical material for further theorizations of this “interim step” (Boozer, 2) or “liminal’ phase” (Sherry, 11), it also reaches out to the burgeoning field of screenwriting studies which most certainly will provide useful border zones for future interdisciplinary exchange.

Following up on efforts to bridge the gap between screenwriting studies and adaptation studies, this article makes the case for archival screenwriting research. This article follows Macdonald’s and Jacob’s suggestion to study screenplays as primary sources in their own right. Holding “information about the provenance and development of the screen idea that a film cannot provide” (Macdonald/Jacob, 161), screenplays help us to understand how the screen idea was developed (Roblin/Wells-Lassagne). As Jack Boozer reminds us,

…it is the screenplay, not the source text, that is the most direct foundation and fulcrum for any adapted film. As the film’s narrative springboard, it guides the
screen choices for story structure, characterization, motifs, themes, and genre. It indicates what will or will not be used from the source, including what is to be altered or invented, and in what settings and tonal register. (Boozer 4).

This is what makes screenplays invaluable sources for adaptation scholars. As Ian Macdonald (2008, 223) has pointed out, “reading a screenplay should not be seen as being of secondary importance in understanding a film; it is of primary importance in understanding what the film-makers were trying to achieve”. Archived screenplay versions allow us to study script development, of both original and adapted screenplays.

Rather than speaking of “the screenplay”, I posit screenplays as texts that are never fixed and stable. Constantly edited and revised, they are likely to be reworked even after the shooting of the film has started. Archival research allows us to trace which handwritten additions and changes were made by whom depending on whom the typewritten copy belonged to – the director, the lead actor, or the script supervisor. Scholars who merely study a single screenplay version, usually the one that has been published online or in a printed edition, might miss out on the opportunity to track these changes from version to version. Versions, in my definition, refer to a diachronic perspective from early drafts to the shooting script, whereas variants are characterized by a synchronic perspective on the material. Variants therefore refer to different copies of the same version, e.g. copies of the shooting script belonging to the lead actors, the director, the production manager, and the script supervisor. My approach challenges the essentialist notion of “the screenplay”. This perspective is informed by recent theorizations according to which Claudia Sternberg’s metaphor of the screenplay as a blueprint is gradually superseded by metaphors of “in-betweeness”. Rather than departing from the metaphor of the screenplay as a “blueprint” for the film adaptation, this article regards the screenplay as “a shifting, transitional, literary form in its own right” (Sherry 15), echoing Macdonald 2008, Maras and Price. While Sherry uses the notion of liminality to describe the screenplay as a mediator, Lundén and Hermansson mobilize the metaphor of migration in the screenwriting process. These are important contributions to further theorizing processes of transmediation, questions of authorship, and the role of the screenplay versions.

The study of screenplay versions and their paratexts, such as notes, drafts, or letters, enables researchers to study the collaborative process involved in screenplay development and to challenge notions of singular authorship. In the adaptation process, the screenwriter has been regarded as the “intermedial figure”, as Simone Murray states, in which “the literary and filmic spheres most demonstrably converge” (133). Such conceptualizations help us to understand adaptation as a “collaborative continuum” (Fryer 2018). Instead of looking at the transmediation of narratives or storyworlds, my focus lies on the process of script development, regarding screenplays as “fluid texts”, in the sense of John Bryant. This approach is echoed in Maras’ understanding of screenwriting as not being an “‘object’ in any straightforward sense: it is a practice, and as such it draws on a set of processes, techniques, and devices that get arranged differently at different times” (Maras, 11). Adaptation studies, despite having conceptualized adaptation as a dialogical process (Stam, Bruhn) or as a set of contingent connections (Schober), still tend to focus on the literary source text and its film adaptation. However, as Regina Schober (89) points out, “as soon as an adaptation has been created, it is automatically emancipated and disconnected from its source medium.” My understanding of screenplay development beyond the binary notions of
target medium and source medium has also been shaped by Anna Sofia Rossholm’s study of Ingmar Bergman’s notebooks, inspired by French genetic criticism. Yet, whereas Rossholm’s study has a distinct auteur perspective, I look at mainstream cinema’s mode of production. Setting out to bridge the gap between screenwriting studies and adaptation studies, this article understands screenwriting and screenplay development as a process, while at the same time stressing the importance of the materiality of archival findings, as suggested by Morris and Trnka.

The case study I am discussing in this article is an example of 1940s Swedish cinema culture, which is both typical and unique (Brunow 2018, 2020). It is typical for contemporary Swedish mainstream cinema’s screenplay development, but it is unique because it involves two famous women: the screenwriting process was a collaboration between the eminent journalist and war reporter Barbro Alving (1909-1987, also known as Bang) and the Swedish writer, journalist, suffragette, eco-critic and peace activist Elin Wägner (1882-1949). The 1946 film adaptation Åsa-Hanna (dir. Anders Henrikson) of Wägner’s 1918 novel of the same title is based on the screenplay versions which Alving wrote. Knowledge of neither the novel nor the film is required for my argument. On the contrary, not being familiar with Wägner’s novel or the film adaptation will allow the readers of this article to focus on the adaptation process as such, without comparing them to each other. In its mixed methodology of archival studies, film historical studies and the analysis of screenplay versions, this article draws attention to the transformation process which turns the screen idea into audio-visual narratives of moving images and sound. My archival findings reveal how actors have influenced the screenplay development, how the screenwriter and author have collaborated, how the screenplay versions help to target audiences, and what we can learn from the materiality of the archived screenplay. Linda Hutcheon’s question “‘Who’ is the adapter?” is further nuanced in view of the archival ephemera, including notes, letters, memos, film programs, and pressbooks.

Studying the archival holdings of the screenplay also activates a field that has long been neglected in adaptation studies: the film’s industrial context of production, distribution, and exhibition. I argue that the impact of the industrial context needs to be further recognized in adaptation studies, following the groundbreaking scholarship by James Naremore and Simone Murray. Drawing on Christine Geraghty’s suggestion to involve “both textual and contextual analysis” (9) when studying adaptations, Schober argues for the need “to acknowledge their complex textual environment, their cultural implications and their multi-layered processes of signification” (91). Jack Boozer was one of the first to point out how “fidelity criticism” (Boozer 2008, 9) tends to sideline the study of the film’s cultural and historical context, and I would add, its industrial context as well. As Boozer contends (2008, 10): “any preoccupation with fidelity to the literary original and its presumed superiority also tends to constrain the discussion of each film’s immersion in its own particular cultural and historical moment.” Over the past decade, scholars have been increasingly highlighting the impact of the film industrial production context on screenwriting (Murray, Szczepanik, Kerrigan/Batty). As Petr Szczepanik notes, “screenplay formats and other institutionalized conventions need to be understood as products of power relations, both at the level of the micropolitics of production communities and at the level of the macropolitical history of the film industry.” (96) Apart from a few exceptions, such as Szczepanik’s historical study of the Czech film industry, research has so far centered on more recent...
developments. My study contributes to global film historical research on screenplay development.

The aim of this article is twofold: first, to contribute to adaptation studies by highlighting the process of screenwriting in the process of transmediation. Second, to foreground the importance of the industrial context of production, distribution, and reception for adaptation studies. Taking Linda Hutcheon at her words (“If you think adaptation can be understood by using novels and films alone, you’re wrong” (xiii)), this article foregrounds both the importance of screenplay versions and the film industrial context by looking at the marketing strategies for the distribution and exhibition of the film. Moreover, with regard to studies on transmediation and intermediality (Elleström 2017, 2020; Bruhn/Schirrmacher), my case study provides an example which might further complicate notions of media borders, since it looks at transformations across media borders and between media types. Overall, it sets out to inspire more studies on historical screenplays in the context of transmediation, literary adaptation and intermedial studies (for a detailed discussion and theorization of the relation between these concepts, see Elleström 2017).

What archives can tell us about script development

Offering a hands-on example of how archival findings of unpublished script materials can help us to better understand the adaptation process, this study is indebted to the exceptionally generous archival situation in Sweden. The manuscript collection at the Swedish Film Institute (Stockholm) houses an almost complete collection of Swedish screenplays from over a century of cinema history. Here I found not only different versions of the screenplay, but also script variants, as well as PR material about the 1946 film adaptation of Åsa-Hanna. Apart from the screenplay collection at the Swedish Film Institute, I also had access to Wägner’s notebooks, drafts and letters at the Elin Wägner and Barbro Alving collections, archived in the women’s history collections KvinnSam (Kvinnohistoriska Samlingar) at the Gothenburg University Library. In both archives I found archival ephemera, such as notes and drafts of letters, at times heavily commented on and annotated, bearing witness to the collaborative screenwriting process. These include notes by Elin Wägner to Barbro Alving suggesting additions or changes to dialogues, parts of the correspondence between Wägner and the production company, as well as letters from the film director trying to persuade her to accept changes to the screenplay.

Studying the preserved script versions can reveal the changes and adjustments that have been made during the adaptation process. In contrast to screenplays published as a book or online, the archive can provide a plethora of traces. However, archival access to sources which help us to gain an insight into the collaborative adaptation process tends to be restricted. This is especially true for archival ephemera, such as screenplay drafts, notebooks, correspondence, and the production company’s internal documents. Often these are preserved, if at all, in the archives of the film studios, or the film’s production company, with limited access even for researchers. Also, reconstructing the collaborative process of screenwriting is never exhaustive and complete. Apart from being limited by archival access, researchers might need to address which sources have not been included into the archival collection or which might have been destroyed or discarded.
Archival studies can not only excavate different versions of a screenplay, but also different screenplay variants. Screenplay versions and their variants come to the archive from different sources, such as “screenwriters, directors, producers, actors and other members of the production team such as continuity supervisors, editors and costume designers” (Morris 198). This was also the case for Åsa-Hanna. In the archives I found several variants of the shooting script belonging to the director (Anders Henrikson), the lead actress (Aino Taube), the lead actor (Edvin Adolphson), the script supervisor (Birgit Edlund), or the production manager (Lennart Landheim), each of them containing handwritten notes. How they are archived and catalogued reflects on notions of authorship: in the Gothenburg based archive KvinnSam, versions of the Åsa-Hanna screenplay are to be found in either the Elin Wägner collection or in Barbro Alving’s collection. At the Swedish Film Institute in Stockholm, on the other hand, all the different versions are gathered in the screenplay collections organized by film title. Compared to the author-based approach at KvinnSam, this way of organizing the collections testifies to the idea of screenwriting as a collaborative process.

**Figure 1.** The materiality (wear and tear) of the screenplay.

Nathalie Morris reminds us that screenplays were usually “working documents, many of these are annotated or personalized in some way” (198). As opposed to a screenplay published online, a visit to the archive excavates and brings forth the materiality of such historical screenplays, in which the wear and tear is clearly visible (Fig. 1). In this early draft by Barbro Alving, we can see plenty of handwritten changes, presumably made by both Alving and Wägner. The page is partly torn, which makes it impossible to reconstruct all the changes being made. These involve dialogues, instructions, and the chronology of scenes.
Compared to online publications, the materiality of the archival holdings gives evidence of last-minute changes, omissions, additions, newly written dialogues, side notes, and drawings. The richest archival source for the Åsa-Hanna adaptation is the female script supervisor’s copy of the shooting script [Scriptans kopia] (Fig. 2 and 3). Densely annotated, with pencil drawings and comments, it allows us to track the changes and omissions that were made during the shooting of the film. It also specifies which planned location shootings were moved to the studio, which actors had been cast even after shooting had already started (testifying to the speed of the film production with the casting process not being finalized when the shooting script was typed, Fig. 4). The script supervisor’s copy indicates when the new female lead had to change her hairdo, how the table was laid in a festive scene, and how the camera was positioned in a specific scene.

Figure 2. Heavily annotated script supervisor’s copy with notes added in pencil, indicating camera positions and the placements of props.

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From “the screenplay” to screenplay versions

There is no such thing as “the screenplay”. Archival studies of screenplay versions show that such essentialist notions are highly misleading (Szczepanik). The notion of the blueprint has long prevented scholars from looking at the screenplay as an object of study in its own right, as Maras and Price have argued. Screenplay standards differ from country to country, depending on the industrial context and the time period. This makes them a highly diverse pool of sources. Screenplay versions encompass various screenplay drafts to the shooting script, which, in turn, also exists in different variants, such as copies belonging to the lead actors, the director or the script supervisor. However, none of these versions is final. Revisions are made before and during the shooting. For example, the script supervisor’s copy (Fig. 4) shows how new names of actors, who were cast after the shooting script had been typed, were added in pencil. The example shows that not even the shooting script is a final version as changes are constantly added in writing during the process of filming.
In the case of Åsa-Hanna, we can reconstruct changes by comparing the different screenplay versions and drafts preserved in the archives. The first version is the “Catalogue of the storyline” [Katalog över handlingen], which starts with the protagonist as a child. From this the “Suggested line-up” [“förslag till line-up”] was developed. According to the suggested line-up, the film should have started with the protagonist as an adult on her way to the parsonage. The tone in the document is still very narrative, and there are several instances in which there is more “telling” than “showing”. Therefore, further changes were made in the subsequent screenplay versions. For instance, in this revised version of the screenplay draft (Fig. 5) the opening sequence has been abridged. Shots 1-7, initially planned, have been deleted. Unlike the final shooting script, this version still includes the numbers 1-7 with a remark that these scenes have been deleted. The film now starts in the house of the rural dean. As illustrated by the dialogue list, a document that would be used during editing, the opening scene would be changed again during the process of script development. The example corresponds to the practice Boozer describes for Hollywood cinema, in which the “efficiency and clarity in story and characterization have been standard practice. The adapted screenplay usually pares down dialogue and avoids metaphorical style in description” (5). We can clearly see the tendency towards efficiency in this Swedish case as well, since neither Alving nor Wägner were newcomers to the film industry.
A war reporter who became famous for her coverage of the Spanish civil war, the Finnish Winter War and the Berlin Olympics, Barbro Alving (Bang) was indeed better known for her work as a journalist at the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* than for her screenplays. Still, Alving and the film’s director Anders Henrikson had collaborated on several film projects before *Åsa-Hanna*. Elin Wägner, too, was by no means a newcomer to the film business. Not only had she worked as a screenwriter herself since the silent film era, but several of her own literary works had been adapted for the cinema screen. The most famous adaptation is *Norrtullsligan* (1923), directed by Per Lindberg and based on Wägner’s debut novel *Norrtullsligan/Men and Other Misfortunes* (1908), the screenplay being written by Hjalmar Bergman. A sequel to *Norrtullsligan* entitled *Efterlyst* (1939), directed by Schamyl Baumann, was followed by the 1944 adaptation of Wägner’s novel *Vändkorset* (1935). Wägner was one of the first two recorded women screenwriters in the Swedish film industry, together with Anna Hofmann Uddgren, who was Sweden’s first female film director. She was also one of the few women screenwriters who survived the transition from silent cinema to sound film (Forsman/Sundstedt). By the 1940s, she could look back on several decades of experience within the Swedish film industry. Archival holdings testify to how distinctly aware Wägner was of cinema’s conventions. This can be seen both in her suggested changes to Alving’s screenplay and in her correspondence with producers and filmmakers.

**Who is the adapter? Studying screenwriting as a collaborative process**

Studying the screenwriting process in the archive further complicates discussions of authorship in adaptation studies. Kerrigan and Batty have described script development as a creative practice “in which ideas, emotions and personalities combine with the practicalities, policies and movements of the industry to create, refine and tell a story in the best way possible and under the circumstances at the time” (3). According to them, screenwriting today is a truly collaborative process, but
my case study shows that this was the case even in previous decades. Also, my archival findings indicate that Alving’s collaboration with Wägner lasted throughout the whole process of script development, and not only in the initial drafts.

**Figure 6. Early screenplay draft with handwritten changes.**

The drafts preserved in the archives contain handwritten changes which can give us insights into the process of script development. In this example (Fig. 6) we can see changes made in what looks like Elin Wägner’s handwriting. In scene 20, a new dialogue for the rural dean (prosten) is suggested (in pencil) before being developed and rewritten (in ink). Thanks to these archival findings, we can follow the intense collaboration between Elin Wägner and the film’s screenwriter Barbro Alving. The archival holdings reveal how the two writers exchanged ideas during the initial phase of the screenwriting process. In Elin Wägner’s archival collection, for instance, we find notes (Fig. 8) and the copy of a typewritten document from Wägner to Alving, with detailed suggestions for changes and newly written dialogues (Fig. 7). The copy also contains handwritten annotations which testify to Wägner’s own editing process before she sent the document to Alving. However, the collaboration between Alving and Wägner can only be partially reconstructed since only a few notes have survived, some of them in fragments, and usually undated.
Among the documents in the archival collections, I found a typewritten memo of several pages (Fig. 9) by lead actor Edvin Adolphson. Copies of the typescript, as the archival holdings testify, were circulated among the film director, the production company and the author of the screenplay, Barbro Alving, but it was also shared with Elin Wägner who, in return, commented on it. The memo contains detailed comments...
on the first screenplay draft, including suggestions for changes, omissions, and new dialogues. For instance, Adolphson notes that “there is quite too much knocking on the door going on”. He also strives for credibility, for instance about one of the characters, Snabben: "Page 112. Snabben has eight years left in prison. Impossible. It's not like he murdered anyone.” Many of Adolphson’s suggestions made it into the shooting script. Some were dismissed, others discussed and abridged.

Figure 9. Memo by lead actor Edvin Adolphson with suggestions for the script development.

According to the revised screenplay draft, the film would start with Hanna taking her father to the rural dean’s house. In his memo to the production company, Edvin Adolphson makes a different suggestion:

The pre-story with the priest and Hanna’s visit there is completely unnecessary. It is loosely embedded in the script and is of course a reminiscence of Hanna’s pre-history with the rural dean. I would suggest starting the film on page 11, where Magnus arrives at Ljungheda station and has his scene with Prinsen. A film like this requires the audience to get into the environment, and it would perhaps be fortunate if you started with this quiet scene and let the audience wonder what will come of it.

Adolphson’s idea did not make it into the shooting script. Overall, the lead actor suggested changes which had the clear aim to make his role more complex by giving his character more depth, which in turn fed into his star persona. In response to the actor’s memo, Elin Wägner made new suggestions for scene solutions and new dialogues. Faced with the impending deletion of the initially planned opening scene about the rural dean’s wife and the cook Martina, Elin Wägner offered an amendment: “Suppose the scene of Martina and the rural dean’s wife is omitted. It could also be set in a different way”, she suggested, and developed a new scene. The case shows how the
“Who” in Linda Hutcheon’s question “(‘Who is the main adaptor’?)” is a collective. Nonetheless, the notion of auteurism still haunts adaptation studies. Hutcheon’s answer to her question is that the screenwriter “seems the most obvious answer” (Hutcheon, 81), before examining the contribution of other members of the film team. Given the fact that scripts are changed, sometimes by other authors, then again in the editing room, the answer to the question of who is adapting is not so obvious. Hutcheon rules out music directors, composers, costume and set designers, but what about the actors? Not only are actors, as Hutcheon suggests, adaptors in terms of their performance, but they might also get involved in the screenwriting process, as my archival findings suggest.

The why and how of adaptation: cultural capital & the industrial context

22 Film adaptations often borrow the cultural capital of the literary works they are based on. By being a “deliberate, announced, and extended” revisitation of a prior work (Hutcheon, XIV), Åsa-Hanna is an adaptation that considers itself an adaptation (Leitch). The novel, published in 1918, is widely regarded as one of Wägner’s major literary works. The 1946 film is the only film adaptation so far of Åsa-Hanna, though its radio adaptation premiered in the same year, also written by Barbro Alving. Hutcheon’s question about the “why?” of adaptation can be answered by taking a closer look at the state of the Swedish film industry in the 1940s.

23 While Swedish cinema could look back onto a long tradition of literary adaptation since the early silent film era, most prominently with adaptations of Selma Lagerlöf’s novels, by the 1940s its standing needed to be improved. During the 1930s, the Swedish film industry experienced a reputational crisis after heavy attacks from critics who had been complaining about the lack of quality in contemporary cinema production, accusing it of being shallow and lacking intellectual depth. Eager to raise cinema’s low status, film producers borrowed the cultural capital of literary authors. In the 1940s, a novel by Elin Wägner was a suitable source for such an endeavour. Åsa-Hanna had already become a classic, printed in seven editions before it was made into a film. And not only had Wägner enjoyed a long-standing career as a novelist, but she was also a committee member of the prestigious literary association Samfundet De Nio. Most significantly, though, Wägner had been elected to the Swedish Academy in 1944, the second woman in history after Selma Lagerlöf.

24 Respected authors and writers such as Wägner and Alving promised to bring cultural capital to the project, which was mobilized by the production company to reach out to middle-class audiences. Therefore, the names of both Wägner and Alving are shown in the film’s title sequence, right after the film title, before the actors and the director are named. What Murray points out for today’s arthouse cinema also holds for a 1940s mainstream film such as Åsa-Hanna: “Either way, the market positioning, advertising, release strategy and awards campaigning for the arthouse literary adaptation commonly recruit author, publisher, screenwriter, director, stars and literary-award kudos, all tightly choreographed to construct an early-adopter audience for the film from amongst the book’s existing readership” (Murray 2012,158). Archival ephemera not only help us to better understand the collaborative process of screen development, but they also shed light on the industrial context of the film adaptation. These include...
PR material, such as pressbooks, providing background information and sharing positive reviews. By framing the production company’s launch of the film, this material was a way for production companies and distributors to frame the reception of the film and to build audiences.

**Figure 10. Film News / Filmnytt från Europafilm.**

The PR material to be found in the archival collections of Åsa-Hanna shows the marketing strategy of the production company, Europa Film. Fully integrated, Europa Film was not only responsible for the production, but also for the distribution of the film, and, partly, for its exhibition via the cinema chain it owned. It is also worth noting that Åsa Hanna was one of the first productions in Sweden to undergo audience testing, a practice that had become standard within Hollywood film production at the time, but which was not common in Sweden until the 1940s. The production company clearly worked on its marketing strategy. The pressbook “Filmnytt” (Film News from Europa Film) reveals how Europa Film tried to target middle-class audiences as part of their marketing strategy. The front matter of the pressbook for Åsa-Hanna (Fig. 11) features an advertisement for the prestigious department store Nordiska Kompaniet (NK), using a photograph of a female model wearing a fur coat. This PR strategy is seemingly paradoxical: placing an advertisement from a prestigious urban department store for a film with a rural setting. However, as my study of archival ephemera shows, the advertisement does not reflect the film’s topic and setting, but its intended middle-class audience.
In the pressbook, Elin Wägner is granted a lot of space to give her perspective on the adaptation process. This was a way of authorizing the film version and increasing its status. Still, the fact that the author also addresses her ambivalence about the new ending of the film is worth quoting in detail:

But I will tell you something about how it was when the book was being translated into a film script. Personally, I was so happy that this would happen and so certain that the dramatic line would hold, that I took the difficulties lightly. Not that they were so challenging in the beginning. The screenwriter Barbro Alving and I shared the opinion that part of the story around Hanna’s coming-of-age, quite funny in itself, had to be removed. Eventually, we agreed with director Anders Henrikson on having the film start when Hanna asks to have the banns published. After that, some supporting characters and their stories were deleted. High officials wondered if Mrs Wägner could not be kept ignorant of this fact. But it did not work and was not needed either, because she understood quite well that you had to keep the film plot tidy, even if you lost some funny and touching aspects. (my translation)

Signed by Wägner and accompanied with a publicity photo of her, the text is very likely to have been written by herself (and not commissioned from a member of Europa Film), as indicated by the characteristically ironical stance. Being aware of the requirements of the film industry, Wägner navigates her concerns as a novelist with her insight into the film business. Her text shows a critical awareness about the needs of film narration. She acknowledges the necessity to change the beginning of the film. The source of conflict, however, was the newly written ending.

But then we approached the crisis, the end. In the book, Åsa-Hanna’s husband Franse is a character - as the author herself admits - whose main function is to make Åsa-Hanna’s moral defeat as bitter and her victory as great as possible. [...] In the book, he is the same character until the end [...]. But when Aino Taube as Åsa-
Hanna played alongside a fellow actor such as Edvin Adolphson, you simply had to deal with a character you could not neglect. The logic of the film required an account of how it went for both of them. This is why the film had to take one step further than the book. Just one step, but it demanded more strength from the screenwriter, the director and me than the rest of the film put together.” [my translation]

The abridged ending was even included in the new edition of the novel, which was published on the occasion of the film premiere – with a still from the film on the dust jacket. The production company’s choice to include Wägner’s voice in the PR material is a strategic act with two goals. First, to further draw on the cultural capital her name brings to the production, and second, to defend the narrative and visual decisions taken during the process of adaptation in view of the expectations of critics and audiences who were familiar with the novel.

The cinema release was framed as a literary event. The film adaptation was not only reviewed in the press, but also in prestigious literary journals. The pressbook highlights the impact of both Elin Wägner and the director on the adaptation process: “The author herself has supported Barbro Alving in developing the screenplay and even director Anders Henrikson has played a major part in the ‘translation’ from novel to film” (my translation). For the marketing of the film, the collaborative process between screenwriter, author and director is obviously relevant. Therefore, the production company gave Elin Wägner space to describe the work process and to share her perspective on the final film. Although she authorized the film adaptation and considered most of its adjustments necessary, she did not hide her scepticism about some of the changes being made in the screenwriting process.

Script development and audience building

The archival holdings at the script collection reveal how the production company worked to target urban, female, middle-class audiences with the aim of diversifying the film-going public and raising ticket sales. Europa Film had achieved major audience successes with a series of popular rural comedies (the Edvard Persson films), and Åsa-Hanna, too, is set in the rural province of Småland. However, it might seem surprising how little the film adaptation reflects on the region, its dialect and its local color (see Brunow 2020). This lack of attention to regional specificities can be partly explained by the urge to raise the status of Swedish film productions. For the purposes of audience building, the production company needed to make sure that the film adaptation of Åsa-Hanna set itself apart from the popular rural Swedish cinema comedies which had been attacked for their lack of quality. Comparing the different screenplay versions reveals how the rural dimension was gradually reduced during the adaptation process. For example, during the shooting of the film, several location shots were moved to Europa Film’s studios or simply deleted for economic and dramaturgical reasons. These included scenes that were meant to add some local color to the film: camera shots of the rural landscape, farmhands harvesting, and a shot of a festive meal (see Brunow 2020).

The changes came about after the finalization of the shooting script and were documented in the script supervisor’s copy. As a result, the local color of the rural landscape was gradually diminished. The case of Åsa-Hanna underpins Jack Boozer’s observation that “the composition of an adapted screenplay takes place not only under
the shadow of myriad narrative expectations but in a complex environment of business, industrial, and artistic considerations” (Boozer 2008, 5). This is why we need to examine the industrial context of adaptations. Studying their specific historical media environment sheds light on the industrial factors that had repercussions on the screenplay development.

**Conclusion**

32 Drawing on its empirical case study, this article has demonstrated that the archival study of screenplay versions can provide valuable insights into the process of adaptation as the “most-well known example of transmediation within the artistic domain” (Elleström 2017, 512). My case has shown how the author of the literary source collaborated with the script writer throughout the entire screenwriting process. My archival findings indicate that both the author of the literary source text and the lead actor had a say in the development of the adapted screenplay. In addition, the archival ephemera allow us to gain insight into strategies of audience building, which can be traced retrospectively in the process of script development. This case also confirms arguments that adaptation studies need to move beyond the notion of the auteur, since the adaptation process is more collaborative than we might think. The notion of “the screenplay” as a final, fixed text is problematic, as different script versions bear witness to different stages in the adaptation process. Therefore, the notion of “the screenplay” needs to be abandoned in favor of a less essentialist and more precise concept of screenplay versions and variants. Overall, Macdonald and Jacob’s claim to consider screenplay versions as a primary source in their own right is substantiated by my archival findings.

33 This article has also shown how an archival study of screenplay versions can offer insights into the industrial context of the production, distribution, and exhibition of the film adaptation. My case study has shown how the production company targeted its audience by mobilizing the novelist’s cultural capital in the adaptation process. Pressbooks and other archival ephemera can be mobilized as historical sources for understanding film distribution and exhibition and the process of diversifying cinema audiences. From a transmedial perspective, we could regard the pressbook (and other paratexts) as another source medium for the adaptation. As a specific media product, it becomes part of the meaning making process around the adaptation. Hopefully, my findings contribute to further developing concepts of adaptation as a process, such as has been articulated in the notion of the fluid text (Bryant) or the role of notebooks (Rossholm) and different script versions for the screenwriting process. My research findings also support notions of adaptation as a dialogical process (Bruhn) and as a “set of contingent connections” (Schober). And, finally, it shows the importance of studying screenplay versions to further explore media borders and processes of transmediation in intermedial studies.
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Mots-clés: adaptation, scénario, écriture de scénario, études sur l’adaptation, Wägner (Elin), Åsa-Hanna, développement d’un scénario, archive, film, recherche sur l’écriture de scénario

Keywords: adaptation, screenplay, screenwriting, adaptation studies, Wägner (Elin), Åsa-Hanna, script development, archive, film, screenwriting research

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