The Ridge and the River: Adapting a novel set in World War Two into a screenplay for a contemporary Australian film audience

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Abstract
This two-part thesis argues that academic studies of adaptation from novel to film disregard the importance to the screenwriter of industrial and commercial pressures. The first part has a brief overview of adaptation studies, and the art of screenwriting which links to a final chapter about adapting a specific novel into a screenplay, some concerns of screenplay structure and a personal review of tasks ahead. The second part is the creative work of a feature length screenplay.

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Since a transcription of a novel into film is impossible, even holding up a goal of “accuracy” is absurd. Others argue that what a film adaptation does is change to fit (literally, adapt), and the film must be accurate to the effect (aesthetics), the theme, or the message of a novel and that the filmmaker must introduce changes, if necessary, to fit the demands of time and to maximize faithfulness along one of those axes. Filmmakers’ test screenings found that Vonnegut’s style of music confused audiences and detracted from narrative comprehension. Films based on toys include the Transformers franchise and the G.I. Joe films; there is a longer history of animated television series being created simultaneous to toy lines as a marketing tool. Suddenly, panic sets in. “What was I thinking? How the devil am I going to convert this 400-page novel to a 110-page screenplay?” The answer is: “The same way you transport six elephants in a Hyundai three in the front seat and three in the back!” Old and very bad jokes aside, how does one pour ten gallons of story into a one-gallon jug? Figuring one page of a screenplay equals one minute of film, a 120-page screenplay translates into a two-hour motion picture. Much longer than that and exhibitors lose a showing, which translates to fewer six-cent boxes of popcorn sold for $5.99 at the refreshment stand. It took the author of your source material 400 pages to tell the story. How can you possibly tell the same story in 110 pages, the ideal length for a screenplay by today’s industry standards?