



PALGRAVE STUDIES IN
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Authors and Adaptation

Writing Across Media in
the Nineteenth and
Early Twentieth Centuries

Annie Nissen

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Palgrave Studies in Adaptation and Visual Culture

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This series addresses how adaptation functions as a principal mode of text production in visual culture. What makes the series distinctive is its focus on visual culture as both targets and sources for adaptations, and a vision to include media forms beyond film and television such as videogames, mobile applications, interactive fiction and film, print and nonprint media, and the avant-garde. As such, the series will contribute to an expansive understanding of adaptation as a central, but only one, form of a larger phenomenon within visual culture. Adaptations are texts that are not singular but complexly multiple, connecting them to other pervasive plural forms: sequels, series, genres, trilogies, authorial oeuvres, appropriations, remakes, reboots, cycles and franchises. This series especially welcomes studies that, in some form, treat the connection between adaptation and these other forms of multiplicity. We also welcome proposals that focus on aspects of theory that are relevant to the importance of adaptation as connected to various forms of visual culture.

Annie Nissen

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Writing Across Media in the Nineteenth and Early
Twentieth Centuries

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For Mum and Papa

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Introduction

In 1946, aged 90 and four years before his death in 1950, celebrated playwright and critic George Bernard Shaw declared, “Do not treat my printed text with blindly superstitious reverence. It must always be adapted intelligently to the studio, the screen, the stage, or whatever the physical conditions of performance may be” (1988, 780). Shaw’s insistence that his writing “must always be adapted intelligently” to other media demonstrates an openness to changing his writing for other media. Yet the attitude Shaw displayed here was by no means representative of his views a decade earlier; the process of adapting his work to another medium produced this change, reshaping not only his outlook on adaptation to other media, but also his writing more generally.¹

Authors and Adaptation: Writing Across Media in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries studies these and other reactions to adaptation by popular British writers who were still alive when their work was adapted to nineteenth-century theatre and early twentieth-century film, demonstrating that living authors informed and shaped not only relations between literature, theatre, and film, but also adaptation practices between them. In so doing, it investigates some of the media, critical, theoretical, social, and cultural contexts that informed and shaped this engagement, tracing authors’ variable involvement with adaptations of their work, considering

¹ See Chap. 6.

their critical, reflective, and autobiographical writings about the process of adaptation, their responses to seeing their work adapted to different media, and in some cases, their writing of these adaptations. It finds, moreover, that for some, setting their writing in dialogue with a different medium shaped and developed their writing in their ‘home medium’.

My book newly informs intermedial relations and adaptation in part by engaging with literature, theatre, and film over a longer historical period than most prior studies. Setting three media in dialogue across the period brings new insight to bear on their relations, sometimes challenging prevailing theories of intermedial relations. A great deal of intermedial information has been lost by academic and industry conventions that have addressed literature, theatre, and film separately or set them in binary hierarchies or in dyadic rivalries. Going beyond the usual binary discourses of novel to theatre or theatre/novel to film studies, my research examines continuities and divergences between all three. Such a long and multimedial study, however, requires a focus: mine rests on perspectives of living authors writing about and writing adaptations in media, industry, cultural, economic, historical, and social contexts.

Although disciplinary and media divides continue to persist in universities, schools, and single discipline journals, as well as within public and industry discourses, adaptation studies has become increasingly pluralist and diverse, contributing significantly to interdisciplinary discourses since the field’s widespread turn to postmodernism in the late twentieth century (see Elliott 2020, 139–162). More recently, transmedia adaptation studies spanning a wide variety of media forms have flourished, and increased attention has been paid to historical transmedia practices.

Some studies treat subject matters similar to mine and have informed mine. For example, addressing early twentieth-century transmedia story worlds, Matthew Freeman (2016) also engages with living authors, although his case studies treat American rather than British authors, and this is only one aspect of his larger focus on the transmedia industry more broadly. Even so, Freeman’s case study of Edgar Rice Burroughs illuminates our shared questions about authorship, as he traces the rise of a heightened author-function via corporate authorship practices emerging in the 1920s and 1930s. Concomitantly, although I also focus on industry practices and processes, these form only part of my larger study of authorship and writing across media.

Alexis Weedon’s 2021 study *The Origins of Transmedia Storytelling in Early Twentieth Century Adaptation* is closer to my own, going beyond

the usual media pairings to examine writers' roles in and influence on transmedia storytelling across film, television, and radio (in contrast to my focus on prose, theatre, and film).² Even so, her study corroborates one of my findings that authors who engaged with other media displayed innovative and experimental writing. Where we differ is that her four case studies span a short period in the 1920s and 1930s,³ whereas mine traces a longer chronology and treats around 15 popular prose fiction and dramatic writers closely whilst also referencing countless other writers across prose fiction, theatre, and film. By addressing more authors writing across media and examining authors writing about adaptation as well as writing adaptations, my study offers a longer historical arc and treats more aspects of writers' relations to intermedial adaptations.

Lisette Lopez Szwydky's study on *Transmedia Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century* (2020) uses a methodology similar to mine in this regard. Covering an expansive range of cultural, artistic, industrial, and commercial aspects and interrelations to address transmedia adaptation, Szwydky similarly shuns a single author/text focus, instead treating numerous English, American, and French writers and engaging a wide interdisciplinary range of discourses that are synthesised across her chapters to create a larger, transhistorical study of transmedia adaptation in the nineteenth century. Her second chapter in particular follows trajectories similar to mine by examining dialogues between popular prose fiction authors and dramatists who produced (unauthorised) adaptations of their work, though with a different emphasis to mine. Her study focuses on how transmedia adaptation created celebrity artists, both writers and actors; mine places more emphasis on writers battling copyright law, extending these debates and discourses to film adaptation and copyright in the twentieth century. Carrying debates beyond the nineteenth century into the twentieth century enables new insights and arguments not only about copyright but also about other aspects of authorship and adaptation.

Bridging studies of adaptation from nineteenth-century theatre to early twentieth-century synchronised sound film, my study provides a longer historical arc spanning periods that are usually divided from each other by

²Radio adaptation constitutes an often neglected and forgotten area within adaptation studies. Richard J. Hand laments that it has been "eclipsed by the inventions that sandwich it—cinema and television," arguing for its importance to adaptation studies (2017, 340).

³Championing their need to be reassessed, Weedon discusses writers who were novelists and/or playwrights: Clemence Dane, GB Stern, Hugh Walpole, and A.E.W. Mason.

periodisation conventions in the disciplines of literary, theatre, and film studies. Adaptation has similarly been influenced by these historical divisions, with most period studies of early twentieth-century adaptation focusing on the cultural and historical contexts of Classical Hollywood era sound adaptations combining a general introduction with chapter case studies (Cartmell 2015; DeBona 2010), separated from studies of silent film adaptation which tend to be localised via case studies of particular literary authors or texts and published as essays within edited collections (Buchanan 2014; Widdowson 2005). Recent periodised literary studies of Victorian adaptation across media tend to focus on social and cultural contexts of specific writers or texts and/or on the theatre or film industries modes of production and reception (for example, Pearson 2015; Primorac 2017).

Critical adaptation studies that bridge historical or disciplinary gaps tend to be textual studies of individual texts or canonical authors adapted by many adapters (for example, Hammond 2015; Hanson 2011). Crossing the nineteenth/twentieth-century divide in *The Art of Adapting Victorian Literature, 1848–1920* (2015), Karen E. Laird fruitfully addresses both theatre and silent film adaptations of three celebrated texts by canonical authors,⁴ focusing on melodramatic storytelling across the media and highlighting the influence of Victorian playwright adapters on early narrative cinema. My study builds on these and other arguments⁵ that identify narrative continuities and cultural exchanges between nineteenth-century theatre and early film to argue that nineteenth-century dramatic adaptation discourses and practices shaped early film discourses and practices of adaptation. By setting multiple writers, canonical and non-canonical, from different backgrounds variably writing prose fiction, drama, and film

⁴Laird focuses on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849–50), and Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859–60). Both Dickens' and Collins' engagement with adaptations of their work are also addressed within my own study, see Chaps. 2 and 3.

⁵This recognition of interart exchange can also be seen, for example, in the decision to change the *Nineteenth Century Theatre* journal to the *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* journal in 2002 (see Weltman 2015; Mayer 2002). Michael Ingham (2017) provides a wider historical overview of the intermediality between theatre and film. Other interart exchange between prose fiction and early film have also been discussed: for example, relations between illustrated novels and intertitled silent films (see Elliott 2003, 16–19) and between modernist writers and early cinema (Marcus 2007; Shail 2012); Christine Gledhill (2003) addresses the interchange between film, theatre, literature, and visual culture to illuminate the storytelling techniques of British cinema between 1918 and 1928.

(sometimes all three), as well as their autobiographical, periodical, and letter writing about adaptation in dialogue across an extended period, I locate dynamics and arguments that would not otherwise have emerged had I been focused on a single period, fewer narrative media forms, a smaller number of authors/texts, or types of discourses about adaptation.

Longstanding disciplinary, media, and periodisation divides have led to neglect not only writing and writers in film (see Price 2010; Maras 2009), but also of writing across disciplines and media in adaptation, inhibiting a wider understanding of adaptation, film, and literary practices and studies. Nineteenth-century studies are increasingly attempting to remedy the disregard given to dramatic adapters and their writing (see Bratton 2015; Norwood 2015; Laird 2015; Szwydky 2020); film scholars have also worked to redress the neglect of the screenplay and to restore the screenwriter to the history and theory of cinema generally.⁶

Despite the centrality of the screenwriter and the screenplay in the history and theory of adaptation studies (see Murray 2012),⁷ most scholarly and popular critics have overlooked writers, instead favouring comparative textual studies of adapted and adapting works that marginalise or occlude any consideration of writers and writing. The theoretical gap in studying screenplays is particularly perplexing, as it could have been used as a middle ground between prose and film narrative, particularly in narratological and formal adaptation studies. Only lately have efforts been made to redress this neglect of the screenplay, for example, by Jamie Sherry, editor of a special issue on adaptation from the *Journal of Screenwriting* (2016), and Alexis Krasilovsky (2017), whose study foregrounds writing as a process of adaptation from a cross-cultural, global perspective. Steven Price (2013) and Simon Passmore (2020) address the role of writing as an essential part of film practices, productions, and processes generally.

My study not only considers writers, screenplays and other intermedial texts, but also highlights discourses on writing for media by attending, amongst others, to playwrighting and screenwriting manuals of the period,

⁶ See, for example, Stephen Price (2010, 2013); Kevin Alexander Boon (2008); Jill Nelmes (2011); Steven Maras (2009); Andrew Horton and Julian Hoxter, eds. (2014). Further attention has been given to screenwriters and screenwriting in view of British film history too: see Ian W. Macdonald (2010, 2011, 2014) for studies on the silent era; see Jill Nelmes (2014) from 1930s onward.

⁷ Simone Murray appoints the screenwriter as the figure who most closely links the literary and filmic spheres, and the screenplay as a fundamental textual link between novel and screened film, rather than as ‘forgotten intertext’ (2012, 133; 153).

discovering fascinating insights into the advice given with regards to adaptation, whilst also engaging with and challenging historic notions of medium specificity. It also examines authors writing in response to the contexts of writing adaptations, such as letters, essays, and articles about intermedial adaptation copyright laws. In doing so, it foregrounds practices and processes of making adaptations over analysis of finished adaptation products and their contexts, as scholars have recommended for decades (for example, Murray 2012; Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins 2010, 11–22; Cardwell 2002, 9–29).

My focus on living writers writing (about) adaptations in their lifetime works, moreover, to restore the biographical author to studies of literary adaptation following decades of neglect in the wake of W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's "intentional fallacy" (1946), Roland Barthes's "death of the author" (1968), Michel Foucault's reduction of the biographical author to an "author function" (1969), and similar dismissals by both structuralist and poststructuralist theorists. It thereby departs from predominant foci on the texts of adaptation under New Critical and narratological theories of adaptations.

Yet rather than restoring authorial intent as the cardinal factor in interpreting writing (far from it), this book examines living literary writers to understand cultural discourses and practices of media and adaptation that have shaped our understanding of and approach to adaptation today, revealing dynamics that have not yet been observed because of prevailing theories within adaptation studies and the humanities more generally. My research finds, for example, that authors' understanding of film as a medium and of early literary film adaptation practices derived largely from earlier discourses and practices of theatre and theatrical adaptation, not directly from the novel, as so many critics have argued.⁸ It also shows hitherto unidentified ways in which writing across media shaped literary writing by examining the impact of other media and adaptation of their writings to those media on authorial development and, more broadly, on the development and interrelations of all three media through authors writing of and about intermedial adaptation. It equally documents the limits of other media industries on their writing, as author experiments with hybrid modes of writings across media was restricted by industry conventions, leading one to wonder what was lost by oppositions to

⁸ One of the earliest to propose these ideas was Sergei Eisenstein, discussed in Chap. 6.

hybridity and insistences on medium specificity.⁹ Author involvement in adaptation furthermore intensifies aesthetic and legal debates over authorial ownership of adaptations, discussed in Chap. 6.

The role of the living writer involved in shaping adaptations of their work remains an understudied area within adaptation studies. This omission is surprising, as interest in author engagements with and opinions on adaptations were prevalent in nineteenth century periodicals and was particularly heightened in the early decades of film via advertisements and media promotions, as Chap. 4 shows. Even so, researching authors writing on adaptations has been challenging because accounts of it are scattered across many texts: often mentioned parenthetically in academic publications, biographies, interviews, and autobiographies. This is similarly the case within adaptation studies, where authorial discourses on adaptations of their work appear briefly as part of larger textual adaptation studies (see Cartmell and Whelehan 2010, 41–56; Laird 2015). Fuller accounts of author involvement in adaptation appear in biographies, but are limited in their interdisciplinarity; biographical accounts have the additional limitation of being framed individually within a single author's life and not set in dialogue with earlier or later instances or in dialogue with other contemporary writers' writing about adaptation (Niemeyer 2003; Boswell 2007). Although there are some exceptions to the former, for example, Vincent L. Barnett and Alexis Weedon's study of Elinor Glyn's writing across media (2014), the focus here remains on the individual author.

My study, by contrast, sets authors of different standings and backgrounds in dialogue with one another, providing cross-authorial perspectives. It finds that writers became involved in adaptations for a variety of reasons: economic, legal, and/or reputational and were involved in a variety of ways, from commenting on adaptations to writing adaptations themselves. Their attitudes to adaptation were equally diverse, ranging from furious condemnation of adaptations, to bitter rivalry with adapters, to fruitful collaborations and agreements with adapters, to attempts to adapt their writing in other media, with varying results. Whilst some inter-medial collaborations between writers have been documented widely, such as the writing partnership between Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens

⁹ See Chaps. 5 and 6.

(Nayder 2010; Pearson 2015, 124–48),¹⁰ other connections are buried within biographies or highly selective edited letter collections, where adaptation is not necessarily a priority and locating specific exchanges on writing across media requires extensive research. In addition to these direct interactions, my study *creates* dialogues between writers and some of the economic, industry, legal and theoretical contexts of their writings of and about adaptations.¹¹

METHODOLOGY AND SUMMARY

The book spans adaptation discourses by living writers from nineteenth-century prose fiction and theatre to early twentieth-century synchronised sound film. Studying adaptation processes across media and centuries allows for continuities and changes to be traced, revealing practices and discourses that would not be visible in shorter periods or discussions of fewer disciplines. By delineating different kinds and degrees of author involvement in adaptations of their writing to the stage and/or film, it further reveals how social, technological, legal, and cultural changes influenced and reflected how and what authors wrote about adaptations within and across historical periods, genres, media, industries, and disciplines.

My methodology is analytical, inductive, and dialogical: it both analyses a wide range of discourses and sets them in dialogue with each other. It traces continuities and departures across disciplines, over centuries, and within particular economic, class, industry, and cultural contexts. Although my study is indubitably formed by contemporary theories of adaptation and discourses on writing, media, and authorship (Foucault 1969; Elliott 2003, 2020; Hutcheon 2006; Murray 2012; Leitch 2017), this is not the primary lens through which I study the materials. Rather than explicitly applying later theories and movements to historical materials and subject them to one unifying theory or ideology, my discursive, inductive methodology brings critics contemporaneous with the authors addressed to bear on their writing, critics such as Rudolf Arnheim (1932), Béla Balázs (1924/1930), Adrian Brunel (1933) and Allardyce Nicoll (1925, 1936).

¹⁰ Alexis Weedon includes a chapter on Clemence Dane and Hugh Walpole's collaboration on a radio serial in her recent study (2021, 175–196).

¹¹ The formal and regulatory challenges for writers, both prose fiction and dramatic, in the period under discussion have been widely discussed in other studies that have informed my own (see, for example, Stephens 1992; Waller 2006; Salmon 2013).

Creating this dialogue, which recuperates neglected or seldom read discourses, has been instrumental in generating new arguments and bringing perspectives that I would not have discovered had I taken the progressivist view that recent theories have superseded earlier ones and that the task of scholars is chiefly to apply new theories to historical works. I take the position that theories are simply discourses to be set on an equal footing with other kinds of discourses and, since my interest lies in historical research, these are more illuminating. Moreover, re-visiting aesthetic theories within their historical contexts has produced new contributions to contemporary scholarship, not least through their challenges to prevailing theories of intermediality and adaptation, as Chap. 5 details. Inevitably, as a twenty-first-century interdisciplinary critic myself, I will be levying contemporary perspectives upon older aesthetic theories and contexts, which also brings new insights to bear. Indeed, most adaptation theorists have found that this kind of methodology of moving between old and new is the only viable way to do adaptation studies and the call to look back at older theories in order to approach adaptation anew has been issued repeatedly in the past, by theorists such as Dudley Andrew (1976), Timothy Corrigan (1999, 1–11), and Kamilla Elliott (2020, 162–166).

Drawing on a wide and varied range of texts from the period under discussion, my research material includes novels, plays, screenplays, (auto)-biographies, play- and screenwriting manuals, newspapers, interviews, letters, diaries, and theoretical texts and criticism, and considers various points of views: those of writers (prose fiction writers, playwrights, and screenwriters), theatre and film practitioners, reviewers, theorists, critics, and sometimes audience members. Searching for materials attesting to living authors writing adaptations of their own work has proven difficult, due both to past theoretical tendencies, overemphases, and omissions, and the neglect of this area in prior adaptation studies, theatre studies, and film and cultural history. One finds very little written with a two-way interdisciplinary view or that considers the historical and cultural contexts in which authors wrote; when found, these tend to be descriptive, hagiographical biographies evincing contempt for the other medium. Although it has been a challenging task to focus and organise this immense range of historical material, it has enabled me to construct a polyvocal dialogue and multifaceted study, whose main purpose is not to favour one medium or discourse over the other, but to contribute to the fields of film, literary, and adaptation studies alike through interdisciplinary, interhistorical, and intertextual analysis.

This study originated in 2011 as part of my doctoral thesis “To Adapt or Not to Adapt?—Writers and Writing across Prose Fiction, Theatre, and Film 1823–1938” (2018). Since then, I have been simultaneously expanding my research, whilst trying to focus its questions in order to fit the parameters of a monograph. Although my long chronology and discursive methodology have enabled a fuller historical and interdisciplinary purview, gaps and omissions are inevitable (though with potential to be filled later or by other scholars). I focus formal, cultural, social, economic, industrial, critical, media, and disciplinary issues, texts, and contexts through the lens of writers writing about and writing adaptations of their work. Industry aspects are generally focused around their impact on writing and the writer, rather than include entire processes from production to reception, as championed by Simone Murray (2012). While the longer historical arc and focus on three media does reduce what can be covered, this methodology does provide knowledge of intermedial practices, writings across media, and intermedial relations, revealing processes, practices, ideas, and discourses in these areas that would not be visible in shorter periods or discussions of fewer disciplines.

The breadth and length of this study has also necessitated choices of which writers to address. The writers and adaptations addressed were chosen from a much larger research pool to illuminate a variety of writing and adaptation practices in the period and to inform various topics. The first choice I made was to limit my study to popular British writers.¹² Notwithstanding this restriction, British writers’ transatlantic publishing and engagement with American as well as British film companies means that the study is not limited to Britain.¹³

The chronologically ordered case studies begin with the first novel-to-stage adaptation of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in 1823 and end with the

¹²It needs to be noted that this boundary can also be flawed, with many writers identifying themselves via a different nationality to their birth or via multiple nationalities. My study addresses the difficulties this poses for copyright in the case of British born Frances Hodgson Burnett, who migrated to America, see Chap. 2.

¹³The growing dominance of American cinema in this period inevitably influenced not only British film, but also impacted British literary authors and film writing, see Chap. 4. Regrettably, the need to include American film practices has resulted in only limited attention paid to the early British film industry development. However, other studies have provided a more exclusive history of the British film industry, particularly in view of its early development, for example, Ernest Betts (1973), and Charles Allen Oakley (1964), as well as Bill Baillieu and John Goodchild (2002). For a longer history, see Sarah Street (2009).

play-to-film adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* in 1938. My research addresses a correlation between Mary Shelley's reaction to seeing her work adapted (unauthorised) and George Bernard Shaw's involvement with adapting his work to the screen: both writers, over a century apart, rewrote their original source text as a direct result of the adaptation.¹⁴ This is just one of many discoveries enabled by a wider media range and a longer historical arc. This book addresses not only adaptations of texts to other media and author responses to them but also the adaptation of media forms and industries to each other across this period, which made discourses of intermedial relations more contested and intense.

Similar to film in the early twentieth century, theatre's position during the nineteenth century was largely unstable due to reputational, social, cultural, aesthetic, economic, and legal issues (see, for example, Booth 1991; Davis 2007). My focus in this study lies on how such issues impacted writers responding to and creating intermedial adaptations of their work. Conflicts between prose fiction writers and dramatic writers were rife. The socioeconomic status of writing and writers was determined in part by the medium in which they wrote, informing and driving debates over adaptation, particularly regarding the legal ownership of literary texts and adaptations, which were fiercely debated in court cases and copyright reforms throughout this period. For theatre, one of the most important changes occurred with the Dramatic Copyright Act of 1833, a decade after the first *Frankenstein* play. Although this did provide greater economic protection for the dramatic writer generally, it did not improve rights for prose writers over intermedial adaptations of their work and unauthorised novel-to-play adaptations were staged far and wide. At this time, changes to industry publishing practices meant that prose fiction writers were increasingly better paid and more celebrated than dramatic adapters. As the century progressed, stage adaptations of prose fiction became more lucrative and, together with demand for original writing for the stage, distinctions between prose fiction writers and dramatic writers became less pronounced, resulting in better economic and cultural positions for dramatic writers. By the turn of the century, as film started to emerge, tensions between prose fiction and theatre had lessened and the focus turned to relations between theatre and film.

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, film had to contend with its status as new medium and all that this entailed (media rivalries,

¹⁴ See Chaps. 2 and 6 for further discussion.

interart debates, copyright changes, and so on). More pertinent to this study, as film histories attest, film adaptations grew out of and were, in many cases, filmed recordings of theatrical adaptations of prose fiction (Brewster and Jacobs 1997; Vardac 1968). As filmmakers and theorists sought to establish film aesthetically as an art form in its own right rather than a recording device for other arts, they worked to separate it from other arts through practices and theories of medium emphasising word/image dichotomies (Elliott 2003, Chap. 3). Even as silent filmmakers and theorists such as D.W. Griffith and Béla Balázs sought to diminish the importance of words in film or exercise them altogether, the introduction of synchronised sound created a new demand for writers from literary backgrounds in the film industry (see Fine 1985; Hamilton 1990). By the time *Pygmalion* was adapted in the late 1930s, film as a medium had established a more symbiotic relationship between writers and film. My analysis of Shaw's work on the film *Pygmalion* goes beyond prior studies to show just how tight that symbiosis was in some instances.

Many writers were not only involved in fictional writing across media,¹⁵ but were also critics of social, cultural, economic, industrial, and legal issues bearing on the practice and profession of writing. Protests against adverse conditions led them to band together, with the majority of writers discussed in this study members of the Society of Authors formed in 1884 to protect the rights and interests of authors (subsequent to the Dramatic Author's Society founded in 1833).¹⁶ Writers frequently engaged with one another through their writing too, both publicly and privately. Some writers corresponded extensively via letters that have been preserved, for example, G.B. Shaw and H.G. Wells (Smith 1995), and joint writing ventures took place, as when, for example, Arthur Conan Doyle helped J.M. Barrie write the opera *Jane Annie* in 1893.¹⁷ Tracing these dynamics between writers and media over time has offered new insights into wider issues of media relations and adaptations.

The majority of writers addressed in this study traverse the *fin de siècle* into the early twentieth century, a time of social, political, cultural, and

¹⁵ For example, J.M. Barrie, most celebrated as a playwright, also wrote prose fiction; concomitantly, Thomas Hardy, known foremost as a novelist, and secondarily as a poet, also wrote a play.

¹⁶ Addressed in Chaps. 2 and 3.

¹⁷ Doyle even documented the process of this "unfortunate venture" and relayed how Barrie afterward wrote a short parody entitled, "The Adventure of the Two Collaborators," which Doyle includes in his autobiography (2012, 102–5).

media change, including the advent of film, which generated highly charged debates over intermedial relations as convergences between media were both sought after and rejected by champions of separate media spheres. Writings, both public and private, display their writers' opinions on aesthetic, formal, technological, and cultural aspects of media as well as their experiences with different media, some bearing witness to how popular prose fiction writers responded to the theatre and the advent of film more generally as well as to adaptations of their work to these media.

The selected authors were all popular writers: their works were widely known, published, and circulated in their own lifetimes. Their status piqued public interest in the issues they addressed and their writings on intermedial adaptations raised issues that were not addressed by single-medium fiction writers, playwrights, or screenwriters. Despite their popularity, authorial control and influence over film adaptations, as my case studies show, was variable: some prose fiction authors and playwrights authoritatively dictated the ways in which adaptations of their writings were made, while others were dismissed or ignored when they attempted to influence the direction of the adaptation—even George Bernard Shaw, arguably the most famous writer involved in early film. Against prior critical claims, my study finds that the acceptance or non-acceptance of literary author input was not necessarily dependent on its quality and creative potential.¹⁸

Shaw was an obvious starting point for this study for several reasons. Celebrated for writing original plays, in contrast to earlier nineteenth-century playwrights, he was actively involved in the staging of his plays and, later, their adaptation to film. Although all writers discussed were born in the nineteenth century, Shaw's writing career, dating from the 1870s to 1950, spanned both centuries substantially; he was furthermore a prolific writer in many genres, including plays, fiction, criticism, screenplays, essays, interviews, and letters, containing comments theorising the relationship between prose fiction, theatre, and film.¹⁹ Charles Dickens was a second clear choice for my discussions of nineteenth-century prose-to-theatre adaptation, not least because of his fictional and nonfiction writings to and about the dramatic adapter William Thomas Moncrieff.

¹⁸ See Chaps. 5 and 6.

¹⁹ Many of these have been preserved in edited collections by Bernard F. Dukore (1980, 1997), and have been a valuable resource for this study since the primary sources have not always been accessible.

Dickens's standing at the time and the wealth of research material resulting from his canonicity furthermore richly inform intermedial adaptation issues such as author status across media and copyright law regarding unauthorised adaptations.

My author choices extend to female and noncanonical popular authors. However, there is a marked difference between the archival and the published material available for male canonical writers and for female and non-canonical writers. The lower status of dramatic adapters and screenwriters had meant that my study had to contend with pre-existing imbalances in research materials. Even so, other key authors addressed include Mary Shelley, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Marie Corelli, Thomas Hardy, Arthur Conan Doyle, J. M. Barrie, Somerset Maugham, Elinor Glyn, P. G. Wodehouse, and H. G. Wells.

For some writers the lack of prior critical engagement with their writings about adaptation meant that biographies had to be the main resource for this study.²⁰ This was particularly marked in my female case studies. Even biographies of male canonical authors were problematic: these are often hagiographical, with biographers tending to side with authors in their contests with adapters over adaptations of their work. Still worse for adaptation writing, biographies tend to denigrate adapters and adaptations of their works against the published writings of the authors they address and to value literature over other media, even when the authors themselves greatly valued other art forms.²¹

In spite of the imbalance between research materials preserved and published, my study creates a dialogue that enables lesser known writers to be read alongside those who are better known, thereby providing fresh insights into the issues addressed in this book. Although authors such as Marie Corelli and Mary Elizabeth Braddon have never been canonised and their works have not found lasting popularity, they were nevertheless amongst the most popular authors of their time and heavily involved in public discourses relating to their work and adaptations.

This opening chapter has provided a general introduction to the book, outlining its rationale, methodology, scope, and choices, and situating it in prior criticism. Subsequent chapters address more specific issues. Chapter

²⁰ Often primary material such as letters are preserved within biographies, but not published elsewhere.

²¹ See Chap. 3's discussion of Dickens and Chap. 5's study of J.M. Barrie.