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## The Write moves: An autoethnographic examination of the media industry

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THE WRITE MOVES: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC  
EXAMINATION OF THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

by

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Bachelor of Arts  
Villanova University  
2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the

**Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies  
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies**

**Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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ABSTRACT

**The Write Moves: An Autoethnographic Examination  
of the Media Industry**

by

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This thesis examines the current media environment through the use of adaptation theory, political economy theory, and media ecology theory. More specifically, this thesis is an autoethnography of this author's attempts to release content into the mass-media.

This thesis expects to find that in the current conglomerate controlled media environment content that has multi-media potential is preferred. Vertical integration is the standard in these massive media corporations. Consequently, the adaptation of content into multiple media is no longer an afterthought to creation, it is forethought.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Hit Me: Background on the Book .....	11
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	17
Media Ecology .....	22
Adaptation .....	30
Critical Cultural Theory/ Political Economy of Media .....	41
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	46
Adaptation Theory .....	47
Hit Me - An Autoethnographic Case Study .....	49
Critical/Cultural Political Economy of Media Methodology .....	57
Media Ecology Methodology .....	58
"My Story" .....	60
Chapter Conclusion.....	72
CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS.....	75
Autoethnography .....	76
Political Economy of Media Analysis .....	81
Media Ecology Analysis .....	107
Adaptation Analysis .....	117
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION.....	122
APPENDIX A - <i>Hit Me</i> Proposal.....	136
APPENDIX B - News Articles.....	208
APPENDIX C - Agent Contract.....	218
APPENDIX D - <i>Hit Me</i> Short Preview.....	222
REFERENCES.....	225
VITA.....	236

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

"It wasn't like that in the book" (Geraghty, 2008, p1)

Adaptation studies once revolved around a comparison of the source text, or novel, to the film that was created from it.

"More specifically, studies of adaptation tend[ed] to privilege literature over film in two ways. By organizing themselves around canonical authors, they establish a presumptive criterion for each adaptation. And by arranging adaptations as spokes around a hub of such a strong authorial figure, they establish literature as proximate cause of adaptation that makes fidelity to the source text central to the field" (Leitch, 2007,p.3).

Consequently, these studies would place the novel/source text on a pedestal and then base their comparison of the film around how accurately it portrayed the book. This form of analysis is known as "fidelity-based criticism" (McFarlane, 1991, p.222). However, in recent years, adaptation studies have taken a new turn and are moving

away from studies that focus on "fidelity" (Cutchins, Raw, Welch, 2010). Adaptation is now being seen as both a "creative and critical act" (Cutchins, Raw, Welch 2010, p.1). These newer adaptation principals hold that there is no need for an adaptation to remain true to the source text and as such there is no need for a study to judge the adaptation in accordance with this criterion. Adaptation has thus become a creative process of its own and can be viewed with no boundaries and judgments, based on fidelity to a source text, which can't account for creative adaptations.

Prior to this creative orientation to adaptation, one of the practices that compounded the problem of the earlier very narrow focus on fidelity was the popular practice of applying adaptation theory on a case by case basis. The only way that this kind of study could be accomplished, was to have fidelity as its focus and it had its consequences. According to Thomas Leitch(2003), the author of *Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory*, "the fact that studies of particular literary texts and their cinematic adaptations greatly outnumber more general considerations

of what is at stake in adapting a text from one medium", has led to the "operation of adaptation studies on a severe economy of theoretical principals which have ossified into a series of fallacious bromides". Or as adaptation theorist, James Naremore (1973) puts it, adaptation studies have descended into studies which focus on a deconstruction of "literature versus cinema, high culture versus mass culture, original versus copy". There is a consequence to this approach; it tends to create a cultural hierarchy between the different media, which has added to the stagnation of the adaptation field (Murray, 2008).

This overall approach has failed to propel this field forward because, according to the adaptation scholar Simone Murray, fidelity based adaptation studies neglect how content is produced (Murray, 2008, p.9). To be more specific, there are many factors, such as; literary agents, publishers, producers, and film studios, to name a few, that effect how content is produced and delivered to an audience (Murray, 2008). Shifting the focus of adaptation studies to incorporate these factors will, according to Murray, "take account of adaptation's role as the driving



force in contemporary multiplatform media" (Murray, 2008, p.14).

Adaptation studies have always sat on the edge of literature studies or film studies, but really "...traces its decent more directly from literary studies" (Leitch, 2007, p.3). It is now moving into the broader field of mass media thanks to such scholars as Simone Murray. Murray has advocated a new approach that "would seek to replicate this commercial centrality by according adaptation an equivalently central role in theorizations of twenty-first-century culture" (Murray, 2008, p.14). The twenty-first-century media environment is now owned by big media conglomerates which means that one company, for example Time Warner, owns publishing houses, television stations, film studios, Internet sites, video games, and various periodicals. Consequently, it is likely that these large companies will seek to traffic the content that they own through multiple media. Thus, the adaptation field provides the perfect window in which to examine the flow of content through the different channels of the media

environment; and as such makes a study of adaptation a compelling approach to communication studies.

The following paper will use adaptation as a window through which to view the current media environment. It will further this study through an examination of this author's own work, a book proposal titled, *Hit Me*. Consequently, it will amount to an autoethnographic case study of sorts. This adaptation study will differ from all others in the sense that the full 'adaptation' has not taken place yet. However, the content that is *Hit Me* has been written and re-written multiple times and as such has taken many forms. And, it is this nature of the birthing process of *Hit Me* that has brought me to the study of adaptation. As stated earlier, *Hit Me* is not yet a book and thus has not yet been adapted to a movie. So, how will a study of adaptation apply to *Hit Me*? Well, as previously indicated, adaptation studies are evolving and currently moving into a new frontier. They are beginning to take into consideration political economy issues; that is to say, they are beginning to consider how the content came to be produced. And, this is how I intend to apply adaptation

studies to *Hit Me*. From this I hope to answer the following questions; what are the industrial factors that affect the release of content in one media or another and how do these factors directly affect content? Also, does this inhibit creative freedom for the author?

If these "behind the scene" factors really do exist and have influence over the evolution of a book to a film or a film to a book, is content just some intangible product that can be poured into any media channel? Well, I don't think so and noted author and screenwriter, John Irving, seems to agree. More specifically, he writes, "Over and over again, the limitation imposed on the length of a movie has consequences. The novel of *The Cider House Rules* is more than 800 manuscript pages long- it's more than 500 book pages, "The finished screenplay was a mere 136 manuscript pages" (Irving, 1999, p.11). This limitation brings with it a slew of other consequences. For example, there is less time for character expansion in a film, developing sympathy becomes more difficult and showing the passage of time is also problematic (Irving, 1999).

Therefore, content cannot just be poured into any media, it must be actively transformed from one channel of transmission to another. However, according to Murray (2008), adaptation studies once operated under a fallacious historicist conception of media development in which new media are seen to supplant earlier communication technologies. Instead, "the reality of twentieth-century media environments has been that newer media do cannibalize the content of older media, but mediums do continue to exist contemporaneously, rearranging themselves into patterns of usage and mutual dependence" (Murray, 2008, p.9). This has created a synergistic media environment in which various media support one another for the greater good of all or, in other words, to make the most money for those involved. Therefore, through the lens of adaptation studies and the application of adaptation based theories to the *Hit Me* content, I suspect to find that the production factors will strategically decide the path of content in order to generate the maximum return on investment. And also that content will adapt to each media it is applied to.

Furthermore, I suspect to find that each medium will synergistically work toward the spread of the content in as many media channels as possible, while also being careful not to sabotage itself in the process. This practice becomes most evident when examining the use of the Internet by media conglomerates. According to the article, "Business as Usual" (2010), on May 19<sup>th</sup>, after the regularly scheduled broadcast of *American Idol*, Fox network aired a preview of their upcoming series *Glee*. As soon as the episode aired it was released on the Internet on a variety of websites owned by Time Warner, Fox's parent company. This multi-medium release allowed ***Glee*** to reach the maximum amount of viewers. However, I also expect to find that in order for maximum results to be achieved, the benefits and characteristics of each medium must be taken advantage of. For instance, different media platforms often compete with one another, so it is important for these media conglomerates to be careful not to over saturate the media environment with related content. For example, a major source of steady income for many of these media conglomerates is cable television and when cable shows are

aired online at no cost, it competes with cable subscriptions (Perren, 2010). Consequently, these conglomerates have begun to require online viewers to prove that they subscribe to cable television before they are allowed access to view these Internet streamed versions (Perren, 2010). Another example of strategic release planning can be seen in the film industry's preference for turning best-selling novels into films (Miller, 2006). According to the literary and film manager, Peter Miller (2006), "motion picture and television deals today emphasize the package", and often a main component of "the package" is a bestselling author. As a result, publishers show a predilection for novels that have Hollywood potential. As previously stated, content is not just some intangible ingredient that can be passed from one medium to another; so what is it that gives content multi-medium potential? And, how do these medium factors affect content?

In summary, through the application of various adaptation based theories to the intellectual property *Hit Me*, I expect to discover that industrial factors do

influence the creation and dissemination of content. In order to do this, I will employ the critical/cultural communication theory of the political economy of media to examine these industrial factors. Furthermore, I also expect to find that these media conglomerates strategically choose content that has potential for multi-medium release and as such, medium affects content. In order to examine the role of medium on content, I will use communication's media ecology theory to examine how content is affected by medium.

This study will enable me to gain an academic understanding of the business I am currently involved in and it will provide the reader with a practical application of an otherwise abstract concept. In other words, this thesis will create a bridge between the abstract academic world and the business of the book and film industries. More specifically, it will meticulously examine the industrial factors and medium factors that allow for the release of content into the mass media sphere. Furthermore, through the employment of an autoethnographic approach, I will examine how these factors affect the creation of

specific content, from a personal level, and what this means to the creative process of content formation.

However, before I can begin this study, it is important to understand exactly what *Hit Me* is and where I am with the development of the *Hit Me* content.

### ***Hit Me: Background on the Book***

*Hit Me* is basically an intellectual property that my father and I own. My father is Dennis Gomes and this is the story of his career. He began his association with gaming in 1971 as a law enforcement agent, an accountant-cop, with the title of Chief of Special Investigations and Audit with the Nevada Gaming Control Board (G.C.B.). This was at the height of the mob's infiltration and control of Nevada's gaming industry. He was given his position by the newly elected governor who wanted to clean the mob out of the casinos so that the State of Nevada would be assured of receiving its fair share of gaming revenues. Once he received the new governor's mandate, Dennis completely changed the G.C.B.'s operational functions. He built a new team, created intelligence functions, began investigating



mob hidden ownerships, changed the way casino surveillance was being conducted, and began raiding count rooms. The culmination of his investigative efforts resulted in his discovery of the Argent Corporation's massive skimming operation that was masterminded by the mob's front man, an individual by the name of Frank Rosenthal. In fact, this single investigation is the basis for the movie *Casino*.

In 1978, Dennis was hired by the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement to create a Special Investigations Bureau in New Jersey and to conduct the investigation of Atlantic City's first casino, Resorts International. What Dennis discovered during this investigation shocked and disgusted him and to this day remains hidden from public scrutiny. Just to give you a hint of the corruption in New Jersey... Dennis and his team discovered that Resort's was actually an operation of the Mary Carter Paint Company, headquartered in the Bahamas. The Mary Carter Paint Company was a mob operation. So Dennis, without the authorization of his superiors, made his way into the Bahamas with nine other agents, all under assumed names and

false identities. Once there, they raided Resorts casino operation on Nassau Island. During this raid they discovered and obtained documentation that indicated that not only was Resorts a mob operation, but the gaming referendum, legalizing gambling in New Jersey, was bought and paid for by the mob. When Dennis returned to New Jersey he was not met with praise. Rather, his superiors began slandering him in the press, there were numerous attempts to "frame" him, and he was stripped of his authority over the Special Investigations Unit but left in charge of the Resorts investigation. Later, when he still refused to stop the political phase of the investigation, he was threatened with dire consequences if this information was to surface. In essence, after one year, he was run out of New Jersey.

In 1979, he returned to Las Vegas out of work and completely and utterly disillusioned with government. Not too long after returning, he received an odd offer from a casino owner by the name of Major Riddle. Dennis was offered the position of Vice President at the Silver Bird Hotel and Casino. Major Riddle knew of Dennis's gaming

regulatory and law enforcement experience and wanted Dennis to help him clean up the operations of his casinos. Dennis didn't know what to make of this offer initially, but unemployed and with a family to support, he took the job.

As a result, Major's operating results improved dramatically and Dennis quickly made a name for himself. Ultimately, he was able to play a major role in legitimizing this essentially crooked industry from the inside, something he had spent the last ten years trying to do from the outside. He began incorporating his operational talent with his creativity and quickly developed a penchant for making money. He went on to run the companies of many of the majors in the gaming industry, Hilton, Wynn, and Trump to name a few. He helped turn the gaming industry into what it is today, and he has a wealth of stories to tell.

In 2007, Dennis was asked by the FBI and federal prosecutors to assist them with one of their investigations and to later testify in the federal "Family Secrets" Trial, the biggest organized crime trial in the history of the United States. It took place in Chicago, where five top

Chicago Mafia bosses were tried on 18 counts of murder and racketeering spanning several decades. As a result of the trial, all of these individuals were convicted on every charge. Dennis' testimony centered on the mob's motives for several of the murders that had taken place during his investigation of the Argent case and as a result, he was finally able to settle a 30 year old score.

That was a very brief overview of the intellectual property that we own through the copy right laws of the United States of America. The very first form that it took was that of a screenplay written by me for a graduate screenwriting class. From there, it was adapted into a film 'treatment' and, most recently, into two separate book proposals. It is our content and it is powerful. However, there are practical limitations regarding the pure power of content in the world of publishing and film production. As previously stated, there are industrial factors that determine the release of content, and that is the stage that we are involved with at the moment. I recently provided *Hit Me* to some very talented and award winning writers and film makers and received great input from them.

Later, through their influence, I had the great fortune of signing with one of the top literary agents in the country, who specializes in the management of "intellectual property". So, through an autoethnographic study of the media environment, and the application of adaptation, political economy, and media ecology theories to *Hit Me*, this paper will explore the flow of content into the mass media sphere and how it is influenced by industrial substructures and medium. However, before this study can begin, an understanding of the adaptation field must be established.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

"Cinematic adaptation is as old as cinema itself"

(Leitch, 2008, p. 22).

A study of film adaptations cannot be undertaken without a basic understanding of the history of the movie industry. Consequently, this literature review will begin there. In the late 1800s the focus of many inventors was to bring a moving image to the screen. In 1872, Eadweard Muybridge began conducting motion studies with multiple cameras; his most famous was of a galloping horse (Dixon and Foster, 2008). He would place up to forty cameras on trip wires and would project these still photographs, in rapid succession onto a screen, thus creating the first motion picture. Several years later, in 1890 to be exact, Louis Aime Augustin Le Prince, perfected a projection device that was capable of showing short films. Just before the official unveiling of his new projector, he gave a sneak preview to the Paris Opera. However, Le Prince and his invention disappeared after he boarded a train to Paris where he was going to visit his brother to show him his new device. No one ever saw him get off the train. Le Prince and his invention disappeared, and to this day his

disappearance remains a mystery. Five years later, the Lumiere brothers developed a camera and projector combination and began, on December 28, 1895, showing short films at the Grand Cafe in Paris. Even though each film was only about a minute in length, the public was eager to take in these short but new and amazing moving pictures. And, while the Lumiere brothers were busy in Paris, Thomas Edison was busy creating similar short films in America. Other eager film makers began creating longer and longer films. By 1903 most of these films were about 12 minutes in length. Many of the very first films were adaptations because they required their audience to have some familiarity with the story because of the initial constraints of the medium (Leitch, 2007). For example, most of the films consisted of adaptations of stage plays such as Edison's *The May Irwin Kiss*. This film represented the climax of J. McNally's musical comedy *The Widow Jones*. In 1904, Alice Guy, a French, female film maker adapted Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* in her film *La Esmeralda*. By 1907, Nickelodeons (a five-cent theater running continuous movies) had roughly two million views daily (Dixon and Foster, 2008). And, by 1908 cinema had become a form of mass communication (Leitch, 2007). Films were rapidly advancing as both a commercial medium and an art form

(Dixon & Foster, 2008). In 1924, Erich von Stroheim attempted a literal adaptation of Frank Norris's novel, *McTeague*, with his film *Greed*. However, the film theorist, Thomas K. Dean, would later argue that it was not a literal adaptation (Dean, 1990). The fact remains that, in its original form, the film *Greed* was 16 hours long. The studio eventually took control and edited it down to two hours. This was one of the initial examples of the many problems that would be encountered in the attempt to adapt novels for the screen. Thus, it was learned, in the very early stages of film making, that the adaptation process was not as simple as just translating content from one medium to another. These problems eventually generated the field of adaptation studies which has since become a topic of interest to many academics.

The origin of this field of study is largely attributed to George Bluestone and his book, *Novels into Film*, written in 1957. The adaptation theorist, Thomas Leitch (2007) writes, "The most influential general account of cinema's relation to literature continues to be George Bluestone's, *Novels into Film*". Adaptation scholar Simone Murray described it as, "Adaptation studies' founding critical text". In short, his examination is widely recognized as the point of origin of adaptation studies.



In fact, the discussions of Bluestone's "manifesto" are so numerous that some adaptation scholars, such as Christine Geraghty (2008), in *"Now a Major Motion Picture"*, completely bypass an examination of his text and instead rely on these existing discussions to provide the foundation for their own studies. However, a comprehensive assessment of adaptation studies and its history could not be completed without at least touching on Bluestone's text that literally created this field of analysis. As such, this review of Adaptation theory will begin with a brief look at *Novels into Film*.

Bluestone published this comprehensive examination in 1957 with the purpose of "gauging some of these [film's] characteristics in reference to one of the traditional arts [literature]; more specifically to make this assessment by careful attention to a particular genre - the filmed novel - where both media apparently overlap" (Bluestone, 1957, p. vi). He was interested in studying film as a new art through its comparison to an older established art, literature.

Bluestone accomplished this task through the examination of six different novel-to-film adaptations. The films that he studied represented the period between 1935 and 1949. However, the greatest contribution of his

text is not the individual case studies but rather the connections and separations he established between the novel and the film. What is similar about the novel and film is the goal of the author and director to "make you see" (Bluestone, 1957, p. 1). Although, it is the nature of seeing that also separates the two. For a film the audience sees visually and for a book the audience sees imaginatively through the mind (Bluestone, 1957, p. 1). This is the core difference between the two media and really places them on polar opposite ends of message reception and from there all other differences emanate.

So the difference, then, lies in the nature of each medium. As such, an understanding of medium theory would be very beneficial to the study of book to film adaptations. In fact, Simone Murray (2008), in *Materializing Adaptation Theory*, advocates incorporating medium theories into adaptation studies. More specifically, he states "the complementarity of communication formats was noted in communication studies as early as Marshall McLuhan, and has since been regularly elaborated upon by medium theorists" (Murray, 2008, p. 9). He further advocates incorporating medium theories into adaptation studies in order to advance adaptation studies. However, before this thesis begins to investigate the direction that adaptation studies is

moving, medium theory will first be explored. Moreover, medium theories will eventually form the foundation for this study's approach to adaptation.

### **Media Ecology**

According to noted media ecology theorist Joshua Meyrowitz, "Most of the questions that engage media researchers and popular observers of the media, focus on one dimension of our media environment: the content of media messages" (ed. Crowley and Mitchell, 1992, p.50). According to many communication scholars, the study of content should have a much higher priority than it does. Lombard, a noted scholar of medium theory, stated it best when he said, "Given that content analysis is fundamental to communication research (and thus theory), it would be logical to expect researchers in communication to be among the most, if not the most, proficient and rigorous in their use of this method" (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, year, p. 587). However, diametrically opposite to this content based analytical approach is another facet of media studies that has been explored by only a handful of scholars (ed. Cowley and Mitchell, 50). This is, media ecology which is the study of the "nature and capacities of each medium itself" (ed. Nabi and Oliver, 518). For the media

ecologist William Kaizen (2008), "media ecology puts on display the ways in which formats limit communication, exposing how the techno-social context of communication is as relevant as any content".

Ecology is the study of living organisms and their reactions within an environment. Ecology was first identified as a science during the nineteenth century with the work of the naturalist Ernst Haeckel and others (Kaizen, 2008). In the middle of the twentieth century, through cybernetics and the work of Gregory Bateson, ecological systems came to be understood as not only natural but also social and technological. Consequently, when McLuhan began viewing communication media as sociological systems created by the technological mediums, media ecology was born. Thus, the environments these technological media systems created were being studied in addition to the content they carried. Furthermore, these contrarian scholars felt that the role of medium in the analysis of a particular text was often underplayed. Media ecologists viewed various communication mediums as extensions of the human experience (Grosswiler, 1998). According to them, each media has its own set of capabilities and develops to fill a need created by an early medium. Consequently, each new media form affects

content and society in a new and different way, it creates a new environment of interaction.

An example of the sort of environments that media create can be found in the article, "No(rth Jersey) Sense of Place: The Cultural Geography (and Media Ecology) of *The Sopranos*" by Lance Strate (Laverly (Ed.), 2002). In this article Strate acknowledges the environment *The Sopranos* television series has created in New Jersey. More specifically, North Jersey has become "Sopranoland" (Laverly (Ed.) 2002). Strate examines different locations and businesses that have been affected by the T.V. show, like the sports store, Ramsey Outdoor; this store closed on the show and as a consequence the real life store had to run a special marketing campaign to tell their customers they were still open. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Sopranoland (North Jerseyans) have come to see themselves as insiders. Thus, *The Sopranos* has created a new environment within New Jersey, Sopranoland where only New Jersey natives and *The Sopranos* viewers can inhabit. More specifically North Jersey television viewers of *The Sopranos* have created another reality that is sometimes confused with the real life reality of living in North Jersey. Consequently, different media and the environments

they create are a justifiable line of inquiry for communication academics.

These medium advocates seem to have a point and consequently it appears obvious that it would be beneficial for adaptation studies to incorporate medium theory in their studies. According to Meyrowitz, a key question to ask when approaching media studies, from a media ecology perspective, is: "How do the characteristics of each medium differ from those of other means of communication?" (ed. Nabi and Oliver, 2009, p.518). For example, "How does content change when it is adapted from a book to a film?" This medium based approach does not suggest that a medium can have influence without content. Rather, it attempts to explore the features that distinguish one medium from another with the presumption that same or similar content can have different effects in different media (ed. Nabi and Oliver 518). Correspondingly, if content can have different effects in different media, then it stands to reason that the content must conform to the constraints of its medium of transmission. According to John Irving (1999), the author of the book and screenwriter of the film *Cider House Rules*, there are many differences between the book medium and the film medium and content must be adapted to fit its medium. For example, "there is less time for

character development in a film than in a novel; a character's eccentricities can too easily become the character" (Irving, 1998, p. 9). Consequently, it is essential to consider the restrictions of a medium when creating content for it.

To further justify the need for incorporating medium based approaches to communication studies, in Joshua Meyrowitz's (1997) article "Us vs. Them", he states, "medium theory' is of potentially great significance because it outlines how media, rather than functioning simply as channels for conveying information between two or more social environments, are themselves social contexts that foster certain forms of interaction and social identities." (p.59). This framing gives the medium an active role in the communication process and further justifies the need for medium based approaches to communication studies and more specifically adaptation studies.

Furthermore, according to Bluestone, as a result of a medium's role in social contexts and because of the differences in media, they attract different audiences. The two audiences he defines are the reading public, which is a relatively small group that books appeal to; and the mass public, which is a large group that medium of film and

screen appeals to (Bluestone, 1957). It is this point at which "[T]he two arts turn in opposite directions...overtly compatible, secretly hostile" (Bluestone, 1957, p. 2). This to Bluestone is where the relationship between the novel and the film rests. Although at first glance, they appear to go hand in hand, under a closer examination, core differences are evident. The audience is not all that important to adaptation studies, other than it reflects a difference between the two media. Both media channels can tell a story. However, scholars have often made the assumption that the literary avenue is intellectually superior. As a result, adaptation studies inevitably became studies of literature through films. According to Leitch, this practice is reflective of the "institutional matrix of adaptation study -- the fact that movies are so often used in courses like "Shakespeare and Film" as heuristic intertexts, the spoonful of sugar that helps the Bard's text go down" (Leitch, 2003, p.1). Leitch further explains in his book, *Film Adaptation and its Discontents* that "studies of adaptation tend to privilege literature over film in two ways" (Leitch, 2007, p. 3). First, the studies of adaptation tend to organize themselves around canonical authors and this allows for the establishment of a presumptive criterion for each new adaptation (Leitch,



2007). Secondly, these studies arrange each adaptation “as spokes around the hub of such a strong authorial figure” (Leitch, 2007, p. 2). This practice “establishes literature as a proximate cause of adaptation that makes fidelity to a source text central to the field” (Leitch, 2007, p. 2).

Further adding to this reliance on fidelity based approaches in adaptation studies is a chronological view of the origins of books and films. According to Marshall McLuhan, one of the founders of Media ecology theory, when a new technology or medium is introduced into a culture and usurps the function of an older technology/medium, either the older technology/medium will undergo some radical transformation and survive, or it will obsolesce and be preserved as an art form (McLuhan, 1964, p. 8). Adaptation theorist Simone Murray further develops this concept when he adds, “the reality of twentieth century media environments has been that new media do cannibalize the content of older media, but mediums continue to exist contemporaneously, rearranging themselves into new patterns of mutual dependence” (Murray, 2008, p. 9). This view of mutual dependence is central to this thesis. In this media age, production costs and revenues far outweigh most other factors and the synergy between multiple media channels to

drive profit is a major influence on the medium of choice. However, many adaptation scholars have settled on the view of the novel as the old medium and the film as the new medium for telling a story, and this view of old and new media is a difficult approach to break. This formula has given precedence to the book and judges the film accordingly. The methodology is known as fidelity and it is this very approach to adaptation studies that has prevented the field from developing and growing over the past 50 years (Leitch, 2003). According to the adaptation scholar, Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, "fidelity criticism is limited to hierarchical thinking, placing the novel before the film", this is a "concept which is still lingering in many adaptation discussions" (Leavenworth, 2010, p. 504). Thus, even though many adaptation scholars disagree with this approach, it is still used and must be addressed before this thesis can venture into a discussion of the direction that adaptation studies is headed and how it relates to the broader field of communication studies.

## **Adaptation**

Another problem that adaptation theorists have, with a strict fidelity based approach is that it involves a single reading of the source text which presumes that there is only one correct way to read such a manuscript. However, in actuality there can never be only one right way to read a particular text as no two people will read it in the same way. Furthermore, according to the adaptation scholar Brian McFarlane (2000), fidelity based approaches innately acknowledge the accolades of the novel and tend to neglect any achievement a film may make (p. 164). His dissatisfaction with this approach does not stem from "the idea of enjoying a particular novel more than its film version" as it would be unusual if one did not have a preference one way or the other (McFarlane, 2000, p. 165). Rather, his dissatisfaction "grows from a failure to distinguish between what one might reasonably expect to find transferable from one medium of display to another" (McFarlane, 2000, p. 165). McFarlane is an adaptation scholar with roots in the literary field. However, he clearly advocates for a more medium based approach to this field in order to gain a greater understanding of the industry as a whole.

Even the more modern critical fidelity approaches, such as "The Walking Shadow: Welles's Expressionist Macbeth", by James Naremore and Yvette K. Khoury's article, "The Taming of the (Arab-Islamic) Shrew: Fatin 'Abdel Wahab Re-frames Shakespeare's Comedy for the Egyptian Screen", which will be discussed shortly, fail to teach us much about the adaptation industry as a whole. However, they are certainly valuable approaches, do garner new knowledge, and are supported by many adaptation scholars. The commonality between these two adaptations is that although they evaluate the text based on its source text, they do not judge it on this basis. This is consistent with the current and more modern and acceptable thinking about the subject. Unlike these two "hybrid" approaches, the more "traditional" Fidelity methods tend to judge an adaptation based solely on the source text. Because such strict and "outdated" fidelity based approaches are so renounced by adaptation scholars, there is no need for this thesis to explore them further.

Richard J. Hand, in his article, "It Must All Change Now", suggests the need for locating the "Five Creative Strategies of Adaptation: Omission, Addition, Marginalization, Expansion, and Alteration" (Cutchins, Raw, & Welsh, 2010, p. 17). This provides a sturdy groundwork

for a study; it provides an answer regarding what has happened in an adaptation and how it has been done so that the researcher can speculate about why it has occurred (Cutchins, Raw, & Welsh, 2010). This method allows for a more critical approach which is able to separate the adaptation from the source text.

According to the adaptation academic, Richard Berger, "Adaptation studies as a discipline has opened up texts to critical examination, based on relationships of exchange between source and target texts" (Cutchins, Raw, & Welch, 2010, p. 31). Furthermore, even though there is a substantial catalog of methodologies, "the fidelity approach still seems the dominant discourse when appraising adaptations" (Cutchins, Raw, Welch, 2010, p. 31). This dominance of the fidelity approach to adaptation studies is not without strong advocates and supporters. Some adaptation scholars feel that it is important for adaptations to be experienced as adaptations and thus in comparison to their source text (Cutchins, Raw, & Welch, 2010, p. 31). There is no denying that knowledge can be gained from this sort of approach; although, it is a very specific knowledge, such as insight into a particular writer, director or even a theme.

As referenced earlier, one of the earliest examples of the more modern fidelity examination of an adaptation is the article, "The Walking Shadow: Welles's Expressionist *Macbeth*", by James Naremore. In this article, Naremore compares Orson Welles's film *Macbeth* to Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. This is a fidelity based approach because he compares Welles's *Macbeth* to its source text, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In this comparison he points out the lines, speeches, and whole scenes that have been cut. He also points out the stylistic changes. For example, Welles's *Macbeth* is much darker and barbaric and the vestiges of the Renaissance no longer exist (Naremore, 1973, p. 362). Although, Naremore does not refer to Hand's "Five Creative Strategies of Adaptation", he does acknowledge them all. From this comparison, Naremore deduces that Welles is an expressionist filmmaker. From there he is able to draw on Welles's other films to conclude that Welles is a very complex man, who believes in "Christian law and order" but finds the complex human play between a desire for power and a need for order, to be more interesting (Naremore, 1973, p. 365). As can be seen, this approach has allowed Naremore to gain a great deal of insight into Orson Welles and his art. However, it fails to garner any insight into the broader aspects of adaptation.

Another more current example of a fidelity based approach is, Yvette K. Khoury's article, "The Taming of the (Arab-Islamic) Shrew: Fatin 'Abdel Wahab Re-frames Shakespeare's Comedy for the Egyptian Screen". In this article, Khoury compares one of the five Egyptian adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Fatin 'Abdel Wahab's *Ah Min Hawwa (Beware of Eve)* released in 1962. Khoury chooses this film to study, because it is very reflective of 1960's Egyptian socio-political environment. *Ah Min Hawwa* is a "Shakespearean derivative" a metaphoric adaptation, of an indirect relation; as opposed to metonymic, directly sourced adaptations (Khoury, 2010 pg. 147). Khoury begins her article by first establishing all the ways that this adaptation is different from Shakespeare's *Shrew*. For example, the language is modernized, the plot is slimmed, an entire sub-plot is removed, and character's names are changed (Khoury, 2010 p. 147). From here, Khoury is able to explore the film and how it is a reflection of 1960's Egypt. Thus, she is able, through the comparison of this adaptation to its source text, to gain an understanding of the Egyptian Arab socio-political environment of the 1960's. According to Khoury, "*Ah Min Hawwa* depicts a clash of civilizations where Shakespeare's comedy must be cut, tailored, and re-sewn to

"fit" and Arab-Islamic framework" (Khoury, 2010, p.157). Thus, Shakespeare's core message is successfully adapted to a different framework. The knowledge gained from this examination is again very valuable but also still specific to this article.

The two articles previously discussed are very liberal examples of fidelity criticism and teeter on the brink of being more complex readings of their respective texts. However, at their core they rely on fidelity. A more widely accepted approach to adaptation studies can be found in Maria Lindgren Leavenworth's article, "'A Life as Potent and Dangerous as Literature Itself': Intermediated Moves from *Mrs. Dalloway* to *The Hours*". In this article, Leavenworth proposes taking an intertextual approach, which does not place the novel before the film (Leavenworth, 2010, p. 504). Furthermore, she suggests that any novel can generate an infinite number of readings and thus an infinite number of adaptations (Leavenworth, 2010, p. 504). In this article, she examines Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, Michael Cunningham's 1992 novel *The Hours*, and Stephen Daldry's 2002 film adaptation *The Hours*. She uses this examination to question the use of traditional fidelity criticism and "to point to postmodern strategies of rewriting and adapting a source" (Leavenworth, 2010, p.



504). In order to stay true to her primary focus, Leavenworth concentrates her study on themes central to each adaptation. She comes to the conclusion that postmodern texts are so rich with intertextual meanings, that are capable of working both visually and literally, that media-specific modes of narration "must be taken into account to understand the different processes and strategies of reading" (Leavenworth, 2010, p. 521).

To be more specific, she touches on the necessity of including the medium in an adaptation study. This was not a new concept but it was an approach that had been a somewhat problematic concept for adaptation scholars (Cardwell, 2003, p. 82). Nevertheless, there are a handful of adaptation scholars that are enthusiasts of a media specific approach, known as the medium specificity. According to Noel Carroll, an adaptation scholar and an expert on medium specificity, "a medium-specific thesis relies upon two components: the internal component [that] considers what a medium does best of all, and the comparative component [that] considers what a medium does best compared to other media" (Carroll 1996, p. 30). In Sarah Cardwell's article, "About Time: Theorizing Adaptation, Temporality, and Tense", she takes a medium specific approach to the study of Vladimir Nabokov's book

*Lolita* and Adrian Lyne's film *Lolita*. In particular, she examines the book medium's ability to convey tense and temporality (a word she uses to indicate "a film's relationship(s) with other kinds of "time"" (Cardwell, 2003, p. 82) and the film medium's ability to do the same. She writes her critique in response to a claim that George Bluestone makes in his book *Novels into Film*. Bluestone claims that "The novel has three tenses; but ... film has only one [the present]" (Bluestone, 1957, p. 48). According to Cardwell, this is a claim that is counter intuitive but has nevertheless remained a part of adaptation studies. To be specific, through a thorough examination of tense and temporality in relation to medium-specificity and an application of these theories to the comparison of the book and film versions of *Lolita*, she is able to conclude that "though his [Bluestone] contribution to our understanding of literature-film temporality has been significant, his assertion of film's inherent "presentness" has been perpetuated too long. It is, in fact, the tenselessness of the film image that, in combination with sound, guarantees the possibility of film's fluidity and flexibility of tense" (Cardwell, 2003, p. 90).

As a result, Cardwell's study is not so much about the adaptation of Lolita but the ability of the film medium and book medium to present tense and temporality. Thus, this article, which focuses on the importance of medium, has contributed to a greater understanding of the adaptation field as a whole.

However, a closer look at medium based approaches to adaptation indicates that it also neglects some important components that should be considered with respect to this area of study. These issues can be studied by examining the article that was the impetus behind this writer's current thesis, "Materializing Adaptation Theory: The Adaptation Industry" by Simone Murray. In this article, Murray claims that the adaptation field is suffering from "intellectual dolours" (Murray, 2008, p. 4). Furthermore, even adaptation scholars question the established adaptation paradigms in order to attempt to comprehend what has been taking place in this area of examination. Simply stated, this field "appears to be deeply conflicted: the right discipline, at the right time, lumbered with an obsolete methodology" (Murray, 2008, p. 4). This discipline consists of an "endless stream of comparative case-studies" and a new methodology is much needed (Murray, 2008, p. 4).

From the perspective of a relatively new participant in this field of study, current adaptation studies appear to lack some very important components. First, they seem to be deficient in any consideration of a production perspective. To be more specific, from the earliest stage of book creation, a complex literary economy governs the production and dissemination of its initial phases (Murray, 2008, p. 4). Potential marketability of authors and the probability of their work being optioned for other media are key considerations in the signing of authors, in particular first-time authors. Adaptation studies take none of these issues into consideration.

Secondly, (as previously touched upon) Murray believes that adaptation studies lack a proper consideration of medium (Murray, 2008, p. 9). For instance, they do not take into account the reciprocal relationship between different media formats. More to the point, they fail to consider the possibility that content may be released in one medium while already intended for release in another medium in order to garner the greatest financial return.

Thirdly, according to Murray, adaptation studies lack the ability to understand the current state of book content dematerialization from the book format through digital technology (Murray, 2008, p. 11). For example, what has

the Amazon Kindle and the iPad done to the book industry? Following from that, what have these devices done to the adaptation industry?

Finally, Murray outlines a new model that maps the relationship between six stakeholders in the adaptation industry: "author societies and the construct of the celebrity author; literary agents; editors and publishers; literary prize judging committees; screenwriters; and film/television producers" (Murray, 2008, p. 12). Murray acknowledges that this is a "bookish" model and that "adaptation traffics content across all media formats" (Murray, 2008, p. 12). For this thesis this book to screen model is most appropriate; and for Murray this model is justifiable due to the lack of a production-oriented stream of adaptation studies (Murray, 2008, pg. 12).

Murray believes that conceptualizing the industrial substructures of adaptation will provide new understandings as to why texts take the shapes they do (Murray, 2008). This thesis will attempt to put Murray's theories to test. This will be accomplished through the employment of the communication critical cultural theory and the political economy of media. However, I fully expect to find that Murray is correct in his basic assumption that there are many industrial factors that contribute to the

dissemination of content and its subsequent adaptation in another format.

### **Critical Cultural Theory/Political Economy of Media**

Through this theory, I will study the business behind my experience with *Hit Me* and the degree to which it has affected the content I am trying to release. The basic notion of the political economy theory, according to Stephen Littlejohn the communication academic, holds that "in capitalistic systems, profit drives production and therefore dominates labor" (Littlejohn, 2002, p.210). Furthermore, this theoretical approach contends that these dominant systems are able to control and oppress the working groups (Littlejohn, 2002, p.210). This theory finds its roots in Marxism. However, it has evolved significantly from these roots and is still thriving today.

It has evolved into a theory that is quite appropriate for examining the business of the cultural industries. According to Herbert Schiller, author of *Culture Inc.*, (1989) "Included in the cultural industries are publishing, the press, film, radio, television, photography, recording, advertising, sports, and, most recently, the many components that now make up the information industry (data-based creation, production of

software)" and "The common characteristics of cultural products today are the utilization of paid labor, the private appropriation of labor's creative product, and its sale for profit" (Schiller, 1989, p.31). Thus, the product of creativity is now controlled by the market place and as such the political economy of media theories can be applied to examine different aspects of the cultural industries.

However, in order to conduct a political economy analysis of *Hit Me*, a thorough understanding of the current state of the media environment must first be expanded on. According to Robert McChesney (1999, p.17) "the U.S. media system is an integral part of the capitalist political economy". However, this system does not exist because of popular will (McChesney, 1999). For McChesney (1999, p.17), "the media system exists as it does because powerful interests have constructed it so that citizens will not be involved in the key policy decisions that have shaped it". This is a very Marxist criticism and one that I am not sure I completely agree with. Nevertheless, this massive conglomeration of the media did occur due to capitalism. In that regard, either way you look at it, the media environment is controlled by a few behemoth companies. So how did the media environment become a global conglomerated industry?

According to Lyn Gorman and David McLean, the authors of *Media and Society into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the development of the film industry is what formed the basis for a global mass culture with the United States at its center (Gorman & McLean, 2009). Film and mass-circulation newspapers began at the same time. "Both film and the mass-press catered to the need for cheap entertainment for the vast audiences created by urbanization" (Gorman & McLean, 2009, p.27). However, film was not bound by the same cultural or national boundaries that controlled circulated newspapers (Gorman & McLean, 2009). Thus, film was able to cross national and international borders in order to reach and affect the global population. Consequently, it is no wonder that the film medium became wildly popular and influential. And, with this sort of reach, it is not surprising that industrial corporations took control of the film industry. However, they did not stop there. These media industries now control all of the cultural industries. As of 2009, the largest media conglomerate, in terms of revenue, is General Electric Company. Walt Disney is second, and News Corporation is third (<http://www.freepress.net/ownership/chart/main>, 2009). Furthermore, according to the political economy theory, these globalized media conglomerates have created a



commercial environment that favors the multi-purposing of media content to benefit cross-platform corporations (Murray, 2008). Therefore, adaptations are now prime media and consequently content is being developed with the intention of being adapted into multi-media; or, as Simone Murray puts it, "Clearly this is adaptation operating under another name", and is an appropriate theory to further the understanding of adaptation studies (Murray, 2008).

This practice is partly due to the vertical integration of media firms (McChesney, 1999). According to the political economist, Robert McChesney (1999) vertical integration is the practice of producing and distributing content. For decades U.S. laws and regulations prohibited film studios from owning movie theaters or T.V. stations from producing their own entertainment programs, because this would prevent newcomers from entering the film or television industries (McChesney, 1999). These rules no longer apply. One instance of this practice can be seen in the *X-Files* phenomenon. News Corp. produced the show aired it on its Fox network and aired reruns on its other T.V. and cable stations. News Corp. also published a few *X-Files* books and generated a great deal of merchandise. Then in 1998, Twentieth Century Fox (owned by News Corp.) released *The X-Files* movie, and in 2008 release *X-Files: I*

*Want to Believe* film. However, these vertical integrated media conglomerates do not have strict exclusive arrangements. For example, they do not require that their studios only produce film adaptations of their novels; according to McChesney, "the largest conglomerates are increasingly interdependent, competing in some markets, while they are customers for each other in other markets" (McChesney, 1999, p. 21). Although, as evidenced by the *X-Files*, when the opportunity to traffic content on one's own channels is present, these media conglomerates will do just that. McChesney (1999) further observes that these large media firms are no longer just making, books, or movies, or television series, they are making brands. This means that these capitalist companies will only invest in the spread of content that they believe will bring in large dividends for them and not end in just one book or one film. So how does one create sellable content?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

"The best thing commercially, which is the worst artistically, by and large, is the most successful."

- Orson Wells (thinkexist.com)

As the potential writer of a book, one of the aspects of adaptation that interests me is the series of events that takes place before the adaptation - the production phase of the process. In order to study this aspect of adaptation, I am going to examine this process through a case study of the book proposal, *Hit Me*, and my experiences with literary agents, book publishers, other writers, producers, and financial investors. I will use adaptation studies as a starting point because adaptation has provided the current conglomerate dominated media environment the formula for the multi-purposing of content. I will use media ecology because media ecology acknowledges the different attributes and effects of different media channels. Finally, I will employ critical/cultural studies, specifically political economy of media, in order to create a framework of the economic components that make up the media environment. I will apply these theories through autoethnography to my own work and experience.

From this I intend to show the extent to which outside factors contribute to the process of adaptation and argue for the inclusion of these factors in adaptation studies.

### **Adaptation Theory**

As previously established, most adaptation theorists have accepted the fact that adaptation is an interpretive and creative process and that in order for a movie to be adapted from a novel, things must change. In the article, "The Impossibility of Filming Jane Austen" Brian McFarlane states that "whatever a filmmaker tackling *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, comes up with, it won't be Jane Austen" (McFarlane, 2010). This view acknowledges that there are things that a novel can do that a film can't and vice versa (McFarlane, 2010, p.24). Furthermore, according to McFarlane, it is this nature that makes comparing a film to its source novel futile (McFarlane, 2010). For an adaptation to be successful it is much more important for the film maker to find the voice or the theme of the source text they are adapting and then apply their own creative voice to their work (McFarlane, 2010). Or as Orson Welles puts it, "if a filmmaker has nothing new to say about a literary text he'd best leave it alone" (thinkexist.com). Thus most adaptation scholars would agree that it is

acceptable to use the source text in order to uncover the original thoughts and how they were developed into the content. However, what if the original content was developed with the intention of a multi-medium release? Wouldn't this make the basic adaptation approach futile and consequently make adaptation studies that incorporate examinations of the production elements, all that more appropriate.

Furthermore, as previously established, adaptation as a field of study has always sat on the edge of either film studies or literature studies; however when critical/cultural theories such as political economy and medium theory are incorporated into adaptation studies, the field is propelled into the center of communication studies. This approach also allows for an ideal window through which the current multi-platform media conglomerates can be studied. Thus, adaptation studies can provide the perfect starting point through which to examine "big-business" media.

The adaptation analysis of this thesis will explore the role of adaptation in the current conglomerate dominated media environment. This study will accomplish this task by positioning adaptation within the context of

the political economy factors and the media ecology environments.

### ***Hit Me - An Autoethnographic Case Study***

Before this study can go any further, the basic approach, and a clear definition of what is being studied, must be identified. This thesis is a study of my experience both writing and attempting to get a book published and adapted into other medium. Thus, this is an autoethnographic examination. What is an autoethnographic study? Well, according to the autoethnography academics, Mary and Kenneth Gergen, "the process of ethnographic research places the ethnographer into a matrix of significant relationships" (Gergen and Gergen, 2002, p.12) and places the self at the center of this matrix of relationships. According to Nicholas Holt, an autoethnographic academic, it is a study in which "authors use their own experiences in a culture reflexively to look more deeply at self-other interaction" (Holt, 2003). Autoethnographers question how a person and culture interact and at what consequence (Yarborough & Lowe, 2007). And, they use their own highly personalized accounts to develop understanding of a particular discipline or culture (Holt, 2003). An autoethnographic approach allows the

researchers to use themselves to understand and examine a culture (Wall, 2006).

Autoethnography is, according to the qualitative researcher Jan du Preez (2008), a variant of ethnography. Ethnography is (according to the University of Pennsylvania Anthropology Department) the fundamental research methodology of cultural anthropology which seeks to examine "the ways of life of living human beings" ([www.sas.upenn.edu/anthro/anthro/](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthro/anthro/)). In other words, ethnography explores the culture and behaviors of particular societies. According to the philosopher and anthropologist Mark Risjord (2000), "At the turn of the twentieth century, comparative studies of human culture (ethnology) gave way to the studies of the details of individual societies (ethnography)"; thus ethnography is the study of a particular society (p.29). However, anthropologists are not the only researchers that use the ethnographic method. Ethnography has come to encompass any study that looks at the specific details within social and cultural contexts (Reed-Danahay, 2009). Furthermore, according to the autoethnographer Deborah Reed-Danahay (2009):

Anthropologists have been writing reflexively and using autobiography in their work for a long time, but that trend

has intensified since the 1990's. A reader can find a wealth of published material now that incorporates autobiography into ethnography- which is for many people synonymous with the term "autoethnography" (p.29).

Another label that Reed-Danahay (2009) identifies for those who perform studies that blend ethnography with autobiography is "native anthropologists"; this term captures the nature of the self in the writing of the author/researcher and "calls into question the easy dualism of insider/outsider status". Reed-Danahay (2009) goes on to acknowledge the far reaching applications of autoethnography and for the sake of clarity provides the following definition of the term:

This umbrella term for autoethnography can, I suggest, include not only autobiographical narratives about the doing of ethnography or being an ethnographer, but can also refer to an anthropologist doing ethnography in their own society (the so-called "native anthropologist"), and the work of people without anthropological training or people in other fields like literature who write with an ethnographic sensibility about their own cultural milieu (p. 31).

This thesis is operating under Reed-Danahay's definition in that it is the study of an individual "without anthropological training" who writes "with an ethnographic



sensibility" about "their own cultural milieu". In order to do this, I am going to study the culture of the current media market and how I, as a writer attempting to release content into the market, fit in.

Before examining my fit into this milieu, however, I feel compelled to point out that an autoethnographic approach is a major departure from the traditional scientific approach. According to the autoethnographer Sarah Wall (2006), the traditional approaches "require researchers to minimize their selves, viewing self as a contaminant and attempting to transcend and deny it". However, regardless of the method of research used, the researcher will still have to interpret their data. Or, as Wall (2006) puts it "the studied world can be captured only from the perspective of the researcher"(p.2). Consequently, the researcher's "self" is a part of their research regardless of the method they employ. The postmodern movement has allowed researchers to acknowledge their "self" in their research, through the support of the belief that there "are many ways of knowing and inquiring [that] are legitimate and that no one way should be privileged" (Wall, 2006, p.2). Furthermore, when a researcher distances themselves from their research they distance the reader as well (Bochner & Ellis (Ed.), 2002).

The main criticism of the autoethnographic approach is that it is too self-indulgent and too narcissistic (Coffey, 1999). However, I believe that this approach allows for a practical application of a theoretical framework and can generate a relatable study. Furthermore, in autoethnographic research, the writer does not try to disguise the data as anything other than their experience and thus allows the reader a choice regarding how to perceive their work.

Countless studies in a multitude of academic fields value and employ the autoethnographic method of research. For example, Nicholas Holt (2003) conducted an autoethnographic study of the process of conducting research. Holt (2003) refers to his study as a writing story because it is intended to give guidance to those wishing to create "evocative writing accounts". In this article, Holt writes about his experience getting an autoethnographic manuscript published. To accomplish this, Holt relied on the comments of different reviewers of his manuscript in order to "highlight problematic issues relating to: (a) the use of verification strategies in autoethnographic studies; and (b) the use of the self as the only data source" (Holt, 2003, p.5). Holt takes the comments of seven reviewers and divides them into two

categories; (a) those that support autoethnography and (b) those that are suspicious of the scientific merit of this approach. Holt then creates a fictitious conversation between Reviewer A, Reviewer B, and himself. Through this process, Holt finds himself stuck between the need for autoethnography to draw on emotion and human experience and thus be judged based on a different set of criteria, and the various reviewers who demanded 'traditional' verification criteria (Holt, 2003). Holt was also forced to confront the fact that many reviewers were not comfortable with the inclusion of the self as a research tool. Holt comes to the conclusion that even if reviewers do not trust the use of the self, autoethnography should not be dismissed. Furthermore, individual experiences are social experiences and autoethnography should continue to challenge the dominant paradigm.

Another, very different example of an autoethnographic approach is the article, "Unlocking Foreclosed Beliefs: An Autoethnographic Story about a Family Business Leadership Drama", by James Preston Yarborough and Kevin Lowe. This article is about Yarborough's decision to succeed his father as president of their family business. Yarborough's story traces his experience with a career counselor and how he helped Yarborough to become more self-aware and to

identify his goals. Through this process he came to the awareness that he was not required to remain a part of the family business and that it would be more fruitful to pursue his own interests.

Another example of an autoethnographic study is the article, "Easier Said than Done", which consists of Sarah Wall's experiences adopting a child. Yet another example by Sarah Wall is the article, "An Autoethnography on Learning about Autoethnography", which is the story of how Sarah learned about and came to appreciate autoethnography as a research method. A final example of an autoethnography is the article, "Anthropologist, Education, and Autoethnography" by Deborah Reed-Danahay. This article compares four different autoethnographic books, their approaches, and their individual constructions of autoethnographers.

Autoethnography has been greatly influenced by social psychologists, such as Kenneth and Mary Gergen that focus on understanding the self through self-narratives (Esders, 2000). As evidenced by the brief survey of autoethnographies, the possibilities for an autoethnographic approach are endless. However, the one thing that all autoethnographies have in common is a respect and appreciation for the way that the individual

experiences society. Autoethnographies welcome the self into the research forum.

The autoethnography in this thesis will be the story of my experiences, good and bad, in attempting to release the *Hit Me* content into the media world. Thus, through this approach I will be attempting to examine the role of the media industry, in the development of content in different media, through my own experience with *Hit Me*. By relying on an autoethnographic methodology I will be able to conduct an academic analysis concurrent with my attempts to get published in the media environment. This will differ from other media studies because I will be actively studying the media environment and its effects on my content while I am vigorously developing my content in the media. This will allow me to gain a unique perspective into the media, a perspective that is part that of the academic and part that of the participant.

The data for this study will, for the most part, be pulled straight from my memory. My attempts to get published are current and on-going; and as such the memories are fresh. However, I have also relied on notes, emails, and conversations with my father to refresh some of my memories that provide the data for this study.

### **Critical/Cultural: Political Economy of Media Methodology**

In order to employ the political economy of media in this study, I will examine each industrial factor that I have encountered in this process and how it has affected each decision that I have made along the way. According to Herbert Schiller (1989), market control of creativity and symbolic production has developed since the beginning of capitalism, and it has affected the way creative content enters the market place. More specifically, "the amount of money (capital) required to enter a specific cultural industry has worked either as a constraint-if the amount is considerable-or as an encouragement-if the investment was minimal" (Schiller, 1989, p.32). Consequently, the process of viewing the media environment through this lens or as Murray (2008) puts it, the "materialist conceptualization of contemporary media industries", will allow me to identify how this system has affected the choices I have made. More specifically, once again through autoethnography, I will examine every decision that I have made and every person or entity that has played a part in this process in order to first determine whether or not these decisions or these entities were results of the capitalist nature of this industry. Once I have established the role of capitalism in the production of my

content, I will be able to examine how these factors have affected the content and the creative formation of it. More specifically, I will examine how the *Hit Me* content has developed within the current media environment.

### **Media Ecology Methodology**

As previously established, the current media environment favors content that has potential in multi-medium platforms. Furthermore, also as previously recognized, there are things a novel can do that a film can't and vice versa. According to the theory of media ecology and the academic Lance Strate (2007), "media ecologists often understand media to be technologies and techniques" and each mode of communication has its own symbols and systems that creates an environment. Thus, each communication medium creates a unique environment. Consequently, content cannot simply be poured from one medium into another. It must change to accommodate each medium of transmission. Furthermore, according to Edmund Carpenter, a media ecology scholar, "Each medium, if its bias is properly exploited, communicates a unique aspect of reality, of truth. Each offers a different perspective, a way of seeing an otherwise hidden dimension of reality" (Carpenter, 1960). Accordingly, each medium has its own

role in society, its own power. Furthermore, according to the communication scholar Lance Strate (2007), "media ecologists also understand media to constitute environments, in one sense webs that we create, inhabit, and find ourselves imprisoned by" (p. 222). Hence, when creating content for a particular medium, the constraints of the intended medium and the intended goal for the content, must be considered.

So, how do I intend to study the medium and the role of medium on content? According to the medium theorist, Paul Heyer, a medium theory analysis "begins with a consideration of the properties embodied in the carriers of that content and the influence those properties have on production, transmission, and reception" (Heyer, 2008). Thus, in the next chapter, I will compare the film medium to the printed word, which will allow me to uncover how "my" content will have to change in order to accomplish a book to film adaptation. More specifically, I will examine the constraints of the film medium and the novel on the content of *Hit Me*. Furthermore, I will examine the effects each medium has in society. Autoethnography will provide the route to accomplish this goal. More specifically, I will use medium ecology theory in order to identify what "my" content is capable of doing in each medium and how



each medium will affect "my" content and the creative choice I must make. Once the political economy analysis and the medium ecology analysis are concluded I will be able to determine what gives content multi-medium appeal (or prime material for adaptation) and thus makes creative content more marketable in the capitalist media environment.

### **"My Story"**

The next logical step is to relate my experience with *Hit Me*, so that I can later apply the established theories. *Hit Me* was initially a screenplay written for a graduate screenwriting class. It was titled *The Natural Nine*. However, I guess you could say that the writing of this story really began on May 27, 1980 (the day I was born). You see this story is really my family's history, more or less how we came to be. It's about my dad, his career, how he met my mom, and the events that brought us to where we are today. I'd be the first one to admit that anyone who reads the current book proposal would probably not guess that's what the story means to me. The average reader would read this narrative about Dennis Gomes and feel that it's about his experience as an ideological "accountant cop", battling a corrupt mob-owned gaming industry and the

crooked politicians that ruled the land in the 1970's. But my perspective is far different than that.

I grew up listening to my dad tell his stories, I learned about life through his experiences. I learned that the worst thing in the world to be was "dirty". As a child, I was never afraid of the bogeyman or monsters in my closet; I was afraid of the mob. I did not want to get my head flattened like Jay Vandermark's son; that was a very frightening prospect for a daughter. But my dad was able to use the "mob's code" to finally convince me that the mob only hurt those involved in their business and they would not bother me. Then he showed me the "Thriller" video and I was able to replace my fear of the mob with a healthy aversion to werewolves. So you can see my dad's stories affected me. I grew up with them. And once I was older, I began to notice how much everyone else loved hearing his stories; so much so that they would ask him to tell his stories over and over again, to their friends, their wives and their children. He did not always want to tell these stories because some of the memories still bothered him. But it didn't matter; we made him tell them anyway. And the audience didn't matter, who ever happened to be listening to one of his stories was fascinated.

My dad's stories were always part of me but that was all they were until I took a screenwriting class. When I was in graduate school studying communications with a focus in film and it came time to choose an outside course, I chose screenwriting. I'm not really sure what possessed me to take that class. I had no experience in screenwriting or creative writing of any kind. Nevertheless, the class welcomed me with opened arms and as a result, I felt comfortable enough to be myself. Then, when it came time to pitch and write my screenplay, I figured that my dad's stories would be the perfect ingredients to cook up a delicious script. Well, as it turned out, the ingredients were spot on, however a few things went wrong in the cooking process and what came out of the oven was not so delicious and possibly not even edible. But that didn't matter, the class was there to give me pointers, different temperature settings to explore and explore I did. My dad's stories were no longer just a part of me. They became something that I did. I used them to create and I loved it! This class ended up being extremely formative in the development of my career goals. Well, career may be the wrong word, because it was not something I thought I would do to make money; passion might be a better term, or

maybe obsession would represent the most accurate description.

The story has since undergone multiple rewrites and revisions, all based upon comments received from, first, the screenwriting class, then different writers, agents, publicists, potential producers, and potential investors. Ok, so I am able to put this process into one simple sentence. However, it was anything, but simple. After I revised the original screenplay I turned it into a film treatment, but it was still far from edible. From here some very talented writers read the work and gave me their input (I'm still slightly embarrassed that anyone read this version but I did learn a lot from the comments I received). The first response I got was from the writer, Terence Winter. He gave me some incredible advice, like focusing more on character development. He also, told me to think about what medium I was writing for and to write accordingly. The second major response I got was from the writer and director Brad Gann. He even tried to get involved in the project, but for one reason or another it did not work out. However, he was unbelievably nice and always made time for my annoying questions. When I was faced with the talents and experiences of these writers, I had to weigh my strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately,

the scales were not tipped in the direction of strength. So, I knew that if I wanted to keep this "thing of mine" going I would have to alter my approach. From here, I decided that I would completely change things around. I knew I did not know how to write a great script or book, and whether or not I truly have the talent to do it is still to be determined. Since I obtained all of my practical experience from writing academic, factually based papers for college and graduate school, I eventually decided that I would write my dad's story as clearly and accurately as possible.

Ok, before I continue, I have to tell you that at times I did get discouraged and I would file the story away and try not to think about it. But for one reason or another, I would take it out and work on it again and again. The last time, it was my uncle's soon to be stepson who caused me to take it out of hibernation. My Uncle Stephen knew that I had been working on this story for quite some time and it just so happened that his future relative happened to be a writer with a published children's book and had been a ghost writer for a celebrity's children's book. He encouraged us to pay him a small fee to turn the story into a book proposal and to help us find an agent. So, we figured, why not, it

certainly wouldn't hurt. And, he turned out to be a talented writer and he did a great job. However, he put his own spin on the story, one that was very different from my vision. He turned the story into a memoir with noirish undertones and both my father and I felt that if this was to be turned into a book, we wanted it to read more like a novel. What I mean is, we wanted the plot to be character rich and I really wanted to write the story in the third person because I felt that telling the story this way would allow the reader an enhanced perspective. One final although important point - the "ghost writer/almost relative", only included one half of my dad's story. All in all I felt that this "relative" did a great job writing, but what he wrote was not my vision (which is to be expected). More importantly, during this process I learned how to write a book proposal. Our "almost relative" started to send his proposal around and it generated some interest. At this point I was tired of waiting for something to happen and not ready to file the story away again. So, I decided to re-write the law enforcement/organized crime related proposal and write a second proposal. That became part II of my dad's story about his unusual and often bizarre experiences managing casinos. Re-writing his proposal allowed me to change the

things I was uncomfortable with and I thought a two-book deal might be more appealing. At any rate, it gave me something to write. Are you still following? Good, because this is when things start to get complicated.

Trying to get an agent is extremely difficult. For an unpublished writer, it's like trying to get into Harvard with a D- average. PMA Literary Agency receives about 500 new query letters a week, so it is virtually impossible to devote much time to each submission (Miller 2006). This process of searching for an agent turned out to be much more difficult than I anticipated and not surprisingly, I did not get results. So, once again, I filed the story away and waited, still hoping that my uncle's stepson would come through. But, again, after a strange turn of events, a publicist became interested in the story. This time, I didn't wait long to get the story back out of hibernation. One of my dad's friends had just published a book, (he's currently involved in a lawsuit with the publisher so things did not go as planned) but he had a publicist that he connected us to. She read both proposals and loved the story and wanted to help us find an agent. So she sent the proposals around to a few agents that she had worked with in the past. And, I waited again. However, just as soon as I began what I felt was going to be a long wait, another

one of my dad's acquaintances told him about a real estate developer and investor who wanted to break into the movie business. So, I sent him both proposals and, again, resumed my waiting. Around that same time, the publicist's first choice for my agent responded that he liked both proposals and would like to meet with me. Concurrently with this event, the investor also loved the story and had connections to a prolific Hollywood screen writer and well-known producer, Jim Hart. Mr. Hart loved the story and wanted to be involved. So, it became the investor's job to raise the money to get the project going. Hart also advised us to develop a book while we were simultaneously working on the screenplay so that things would move more quickly. I told you things would get a little complicated here but bear with me and I'll try to clear it up. The first agent, who we were courting through the publicist, wasn't so sure this was the way to go, as it is typical to get a book deal and then get a studio to option the book for a movie. At this point I wasn't sure what to do, so I began asking around. I once again relied on the kindness and advice of one of the first writers I came across, Brad Gann. I have no idea why he takes my calls or answers my emails, he must just be one of the most considerate people around, or he feels bad for me. I may never know. Anyway,



he told me that Jim Hart was extremely well respected and had the power and reputation to make things happened. He also told me that he had never heard of the agent we were talking to and that it was important to have a good agent. Consequently, I researched the agent and found that he definitely had good credentials. However, the agency he worked for specialized in technical and self-help books. When we asked, Hart what he thought about the agent and his advice, he told us he would try to help us get an agent he was familiar with. This would allow us to work more fruitfully to develop the book while we were trying to raise funds to get the screenplay completed. Since my father and I were more drawn to the screen writer, his plan, and his enthusiasm, than the publicist's agent, we tended to take his advice.

Hart told me to write an introduction letter about the proposals, so I did. Then he told me to add more spice. I wasn't sure what this meant but I guessed and tried a few things that did not exactly hit the mark regarding what Hart had in mind. This process continued, until I finally figured out what "spice" was (and that was probably the most important thing that I have learned about writing). "Spice" is the voice that your story is told from. A story has characters who are in the story but the writing itself

has to be a character that fits in that story as well. For example, the voice you are identifying with now is my voice and thus I am part of this story. If I was writing a detective story or true-crime novel and say I wanted to give it a noir voice, I would adopt that language so that it almost became another character. For example, I'd use words like "copper" instead of "police officer", "crook" instead of "criminal" and maybe "yellow-belly no-good snitch" instead of "an individual that plays both sides". If you think about it, the nature of the writing is the vehicle that enables the reader to identify with a story so it needs to fit in with the environment. Well, at any rate, once this letter of introduction was perfected and it had a voice that fit, Hart sent it to one of the top literary managers and agents in the country, Peter Miller. So, now with the help of a well known and recognized Hollywood screen writer, this former D- student, who was blindly overconfident enough to try to get into Harvard, suddenly has perfect SAT scores, is an Olympic athlete, and knows a major supporter of the school.

Hart introduced us to Peter Miller, the "Literary Lion" a major literary manager. From the moment I first spoke to Peter, he was enthusiastic, he never made any wild promises, he was very approachable, not the least bit

arrogant, and always reachable. Everything felt right and more importantly, he loved the story. Peter introduced us to two writers that he represented. One of these writers, who had great credentials, also loved the story but declined to get involved because he felt that if he were to work on our story his life and his family's lives could be in danger. My father and I thought this was slightly overdramatic but it didn't matter because we loved the second writer, Jay Bonansinga. Jay not only loved the story, he was passionate about it. He was particularly attracted to it because of the "spice". He liked that it was not told in the first-person, as most of this genre of stories are. His vision of the book and mine fit together perfectly. We were a great match. It is important to mention here that we paid Jay a small amount of money so that he could devote the time needed to help me create a marketable proposal. If the book is later picked up by a publisher this money would be paid back out of the advance. It was an investment we felt very comfortable making and I learned so much from Jay that it was almost like taking a college class (Jay also happens to teach creative writing at Northwestern University).

We easily agreed to all the terms, partnered with Jay Bonansinga, signed with Peter Miller and this is how *Hit Me*

(the book proposal) came to be. Thus, in its current state, *Hit Me* is a book proposal but it has been and intends again to be told through multiple media. The book proposal was just completed (in the summer of 2010) and Peter Miller has just started trying to sell it to publishers. He is also working with the Hollywood writer, Jim Hart who brought us to him in the first place. The best part of having a manager is that we now have an expert to guide us through this extremely complicated world. However, truth be told, being blindly led through this complex space is not a comfortable feeling. Thus, when provided the opportunity to write a thesis, a study of this world seemed like a perfect opportunity to gain some much needed insight. In order to do this, I chose the political economy theory in order to learn about this industry and medium theory in order to learn about the role of medium on the release of content.

However, before I can go any further, I must tell you how difficult this approach is for me. I am not comfortable talking about what I am doing, expressing my insecurities, or naming names; which is a must when using this approach. Further adding to my discomfort with this approach is the fact that I feel unqualified, undeserving, untrained, unprepared, and unskilled as a writer (I could

keep going but I'm sure you get the point). All I have is a story to tell. Consequently, writing about my experience as a writer drastically amplifies these "hidden" feelings. However despite my own insecurities, there is a justification for this method. By approaching this study on such a personal level, I am able to break down the social complexity of the media all the way down to its smallest component, the individual. Thus, allowing this thesis to have the potential to generate very relatable knowledge on the topic of creating content for the media. Also, slightly (ok totally) more selfishly, this thesis will allow me to gain some much needed insight into this complicated world. So, I guess you could say my ulterior motives for conducting this study is to make me feel a little more qualified, deserving, trained, prepared, and skilled to be in this media world.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

So what does this mean to someone, like me, a "working-class" potential writer who is trying to release content into the mass-media environment? And, how has it affected the choices I have made? Or, in more academic terms, to what degree do the corporations control or influence the release of content? Is one medium preferred

over another medium? And in particular, what role does this aspect play in the adaptation industry? These are the questions I hope to answer with this analysis. In order to accomplish this, in the following chapter, I will examine these various media conglomerates and how each player (agent, publisher, investor, etc) operates under this umbrella. I will also examine how this system has affected the different choices that I have made in order to try to achieve the successful and widespread release of "my" content in a particular medium using autoethnographic methods.

In summary this thesis will employ an autoethnographic method to explore my role as a writer with publishing and adaptation dreams in the social context of the media world. In order to examine my attempts to release content into the media market I will rely on the political economy of media theories that will focus on the industrial factors, such as: the media corporations, the editors, and the agents. As previously established, I hope to adapt the *Hit Me* content from a novel into a film. Therefore, in order to examine the affects of medium on content I will employ the theories of media ecology to examine how my content will change in order to be adapted. Finally, I will use

adaptation studies to examine how adaptation fits into the current media environment.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

In order to begin this analysis in a meaningful way, an exact description of what is being studied must be outlined. As previously established, this is an autoethnographic study of my experience creating the content for *Hit Me* and trying to get it released into the media. In this context, the first thing that is necessary is to define the term "content". Well, content is one of those things that everyone seems to understand, but when it comes to trying to define it, things are not always so clear. According to the Webster's dictionary (1990), content can be defined as, "that which is contained". Or, as the philosopher, Jose Luis Bermudez (2007) defines mental content, "the notion of content is standardly applied to states of systems whose workings depend upon representing certain features of the distal environment. The *content* of such a state is how it represents the environment" (p.56). *Hit Me* is all of these things, but a close look at them reveal that they are still just ideas. These definitions of content still do not offer a workable concrete conception of what the content of *Hit Me* really is. Perhaps a better and more definitive term for the content that makes up *Hit Me* is intellectual property.



According to the "World Intellectual Property" Organization, "intellectual property refers to creations of the mind: inventions, literary and artistic works, and symbols, names, images, and designs used in commerce" (<http://www.wipo.int/about-ip/en/>, 2010). Thus, *Hit Me* is a commodity. The next section will explore how the *Hit Me* content became a commodity through the autoethnographic analysis. Following the autoethnographic analysis is the Political Economy of Media analysis which will examine the role of *Hit Me* as a commodity in the media industry. Once *Hit Me's* role as a commodity is explained, this analysis will move onto the Media Ecology examination which will explore how content is affected by the various media. And, finally this analysis will examine how the adaptation industry functions within the current media environment.

### **Autoethnography**

"For autoethnographers, we would lace our accounts with glimpses into our particular motives, desires, and fears."

-Autoethnographers, Mary and Kenneth Gergen (2002, p.11)

This thesis is essentially a study of my experience trying to get *Hit Me* published. Thus, it is an autoethnography and each phase of analysis will be conducted through an autoethnographic approach. As this

chapter just established, by trying to get my dad's story published, I have turned the content for *Hit Me* into a commodity. In order to begin the analysis of *Hit Me*, this autoethnography will first examine how this transformation into a commodity has affected the creative process, through the following questions: What does the current formulation of *Hit Me* mean to a potential writer like me and how has it affected the creative choices I have made? Has any of this inhibited creative freedom? And, how has all of this affected the creative process? However, before I answer these questions, the ethics of this approach must be addressed.

According to Douglas Flemons, autoethnographer and qualitative researcher, the ethics of writing autoethnography needs to be addressed when conducting an autoethnographic study (Flemons and Green, 2002). In particular, the following questions need to be addressed:

"When you write a story of yourself, you accept an assumption about yourself that then determines in part how you understand yourself, and if you publish this account, then you are defining yourself not only personally but also professionally. To what degree will the reputation that gets stirred up with that make it more difficult for your story to transform your understanding of yourself in the future?" (Flemons & Green, 2002, p. 90)

Simply put, by writing a story about yourself, are you eternally committing yourself to that definition of you? So, who am I in this thesis? Well, I am an insecure, slightly obsessed, want-to-be published author. This certainly is not a conception of my "self" that I would want to eternally commit to. However, it is what I am at the moment and as such will always be part of who I am. At this particular moment what I am committing to is; yes, I do want to tell my dad's story, yes I am obsessed with doing this, and yes I am not an industry insider, which makes me nervous and insecure. Consequently, this thesis is the study of an outsider, someone who wants to be published but is not yet there. Thus, I cannot claim to be uncovering any insights as to how one is to go about getting published. I am writing about what I have done in my attempt to get published; the answer to whether or not it will work will have to wait; which would be an interesting continuation on this current study. Therefore, by doing an autoethnography, I am not committing myself to perpetually being "an insecure, slightly obsessed, want-to-be published author"; I am committing myself to being this at this moment in time. However, through the very act of writing this thesis, I am a student of the media and I am working towards the creation of knowledge. Thus, I am

actively working to change the "insecure want-to-be published author". And, with time, work, and prayer I hope that this will completely change to published author.

So, now that we have addressed the ethics of autoethnography and I have eternally committed to being (which will hopefully change to "have been") a want-to-be published author; we can move on to answering the questions posed at the beginning of this section: What does the current formulation of *Hit Me* as commodity mean to me and how has it affected the choices I have made? How has it affected the creative choices that I have made? And, how has all of this affected the creative process?

As stated throughout this thesis, I originally intended for *Hit Me* to be a movie and I changed that based on the suggestions of industry insiders. Does this mean that I have compromised my artistic integrity? Well, as much as I would love to consider myself an artist, I can't; I can't because my original goal in taking graduate screenwriting was to find out how to tell my dad's story. Consequently, my goal, before *Hit Me* was conceptualized in any format, was to tell my dad's story in any media possible. Consequently, by adjusting *Hit Me* to fit into the market demands I am staying true to my initial intention. Furthermore, through formulating *Hit Me* to fit

into the media market it has become a commodity. So, has this affected the creative choices I have made? Yes, every time I rewrite *Hit Me*, either by myself or with Jay, it is a creative process and as such creative choices are made; and, some of these choices were made based on the market and the medium. However, the integrity of the story has never been compromised; that is, I have told things differently, I have focused on different aspects of the story at different times, but it has always been my dad's story. Therefore, this process thus far has affected the creative choices that I have made but it has not compromised the story. However, *Hit Me* has not yet been published, so whether or not the publishing (and ideally the adaptation) process threatens the integrity of the story is still unknown. Nevertheless, I can claim with 99% accuracy that I would not sacrifice the integrity of the story for the sake of getting published and adapted because that would corrupt my original intention of telling my dad's story. Thus, the media market has affected the creative choices that I have made, but it has not corrupted the integrity of the story. However, a further understanding of this market is necessary in order to understand how *Hit Me* as a commodity functions within the media industry. The following section will look closely at

how *Hit Me* has become a commodity and the role of this industry on my ultimate goal, "telling my dad's story".

### **Political Economy of Media Analysis**

"A hallmark of Capitalism is constant and revolutionary change" (Lipschutz, 2010, p.139)

As the previous section established, by trying to place *Hit Me* in the media market I have had to make certain creative choices and I have also turned this content into a commodity. And, it is this transition of content to commodity that brings this thesis into its second stage of analysis, the political economy phase. To begin, for the sake of clarity and cohesiveness, I will reiterate the questions that I will attempt to answer through a political economy analysis: How is content produced, or more specifically, how does it come to be a commodity? Do industrial factors affect the production of content, and if so how? To what degree do the media conglomerates influence or control the release of content?

In order to facilitate this analysis, the first line of inquiry will be the media conglomerates and then it will work its way down to the individual. There are six main media companies. They are:

- General Electric, which controls NBC and Telemundo, Universal Pictures, Focus Features, 26 television stations in the United States and cable networks MSNBC, Bravo and the Sci Fi Channel. GE also owns 80 percent of NBC Universal.
- Walt Disney, which owns the ABC Television Network, cable networks including ESPN, the Disney Channel, SOAPnet, A&E and Lifetime, 277 radio stations, music and book publishing companies, production companies Touchstone, Miramax and Walt Disney Pictures, Pixar Animation Studios, the cellular service Disney Mobile, and theme parks around the world.
- News Corporation owns the Fox Broadcasting Company; television and cable networks such as Fox, Fox Business Channel, National Geographic and FX, print publications including the Wall Street Journal, the New York Post and TVGuide, the magazines Barron's and SmartMoney, book publisher HarperCollins, film production companies 20th Century Fox, Fox Searchlight Pictures and Blue Sky Studios, numerous websites including MarketWatch.com, and the National Rugby League.
- Time Warner which controls CNN, the CW (a joint venture with CBS), HBO, Cinemax, Cartoon Network, TBS,

TNT, America Online, MapQuest, Moviefone, Warner Bros. Pictures, Castle Rock and New Line Cinema, and more than 150 magazines including Time, Sports Illustrated, Fortune, Marie Claire and People.

- Viacom which owns MTV, Nickelodeon/Nick-at-Nite, VH1, BET, Comedy Central, Paramount Pictures, Paramount Home Entertainment, Atom Entertainment, and music game developer Harmonix. Viacom 18 is a joint venture with the Indian media company Global Broadcast news.
- CBS Corporation owns the CBS Television Network, CBS Television Distribution Group, the CW (a joint venture with Time Warner), Showtime, book publisher Simon & Schuster, 30 television stations, and CBS Radio, Inc, which has 130 stations. CBS is now the leading supplier of video to Google's new Video Marketplace ([www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net)).

Together these companies are worth roughly \$275 billion. They are the companies that control the media environment on a major level and as such they control the trafficking of content through their various media channels. Just under the "Big Six Media Conglomerates" are a second tier of massive corporations; Liberty Media, Sony Entertainment, and Bertelsmann (McChesney, 2008). These



smaller corporations are still billion dollar companies with a great deal of control and could be considered behemoths, as well. However, "the big six" media conglomerates are widely recognized as the major conglomerates that control the media, even though the three second-tier companies are gigantic as well. According to the media economist, Robert McChesney (2008) "The logic guiding media firms in all of this was clear, get very big very quickly, or get swallowed up by someone else" (p.316). These nine companies, own all of the major U.S. film studios, the U.S. television networks, 80-85 percent of the global music market, the majority of satellite broadcasting systems, the majority of cable broadcasting systems, a large percentage of book and commercial magazine publishing, and most of the commercial cable television channels in the U.S. and worldwide (McChesney, 2008). Is it a problem to have the majority of media controlled by only nine companies? Probably however, the reality for me is that if I want to distribute my content to the masses in the form of a book and possibly a movie, then I must accept this arrangement and operate within its parameters and rules. Thus, the ethics of this arrangement are not relevant to this thesis (but this would certainly provide an interesting expansion of my study).

Moving forward, within these nine corporations is a massive structure of organizations that control the media environment. Currently, I am most actively pursuing the release of *Hit Me* as a book. Therefore, I will begin the political economy phase of the analysis with the publishing industry. However, according to the media scholar Simone Murray (2007), "the rich potential of media studies as a disciplinary base for publishing research has, curiously, remained largely a lost opportunity, as media studies textbooks have repeatedly defined the field so as to include emergent media industries such as public relations and computer gaming, but to exclude the oldest media format [the book]" (p.12). Ironically, this systematic disciplinary exclusion of book publishing, from the media studies field, occurred simultaneously with "book publishing's subsumption into global corporate media via a wave of vast takeovers and mergers" (Murray, 2007, p12). Murray advocates an inclusion of publishing studies as an interdependent component of all media. According to Murray (2007) this will take "book history's often dolorous account of the book's fall from high cultural grace to examine instead a vibrant content economy in which books constitute source material for screen adaptations, formats for repackaging electronic media content (e.g.

novelizations) as well as simultaneous, parallel formats in overarching brand franchising operations" (p.12). Murray does not view the corporate takeover of publishing as a negative; however there are some media scholars who do just that. Regardless of one's opinion concerning the current publishing trade, the fact remains; according to Coser, Kadushin, and Powell the authors of *Books: The Culture and Commerce of Publishing* (1982) "The relations between creators of ideas and their public are typically mediated through a variety of social mechanisms that provide institutional channels for the flow of ideas". Consequently, when these channels are owned by nine massive corporations, these nine companies have control over the flow of ideas.

According to the media commentator, Mark Crispin Miller, "America's trade publishers today [1997] belong to eight gigantic media corporations" (Miller, 1997, p.107). As of 2010, thirteen years later, these eight controlling media giants had shrunk to six. For Miller, "Of all the stories that might be told to show what's finally happened to the media, this one [publishing] tells the saddest story" (Miller, 1997,107). As of 1997, there were only two major independent publishers W.W. Norton and Houghton Mifflin (Houghton Mifflin is no longer independently

owned), some university presses, and minor independent publishers (Miller, 1997). Miller uses the example of the publisher Little, Brown to elucidate the harmful effects of media conglomeration on the publishing industry. Little, Brown was established in 1887 and in 1968 it was purchased by Time, Inc. and now mainly sells the product of Time Warner. Mark Crispin Miller provides a long list of the books Little, Brown released in the Spring of 1996, all of which, in one way or another, benefitted Time Warner (Miller, 1997). For example, they published books written by individuals who worked either directly or indirectly for Time Warner, like *Joan Lunden's Healthy Cooking* (Joan Lunden worked for ABC). They also published books that coincided with film releases, like *Inside the Titanic* (a Fox/Paramount movie). Consequently, Little, Brown was already seeking out content that would benefit the entire company, not just the publisher.

The necessity of multi-media reliance in publishing started early. In 1957 Art Linkletter, had the show "Kids Say the Darndest Things", and he also had a book which he promoted weekly on the show that was a best-seller for over a year (Miller, 1997). The period of conglomerate dominated book publishing is recognized as beginning in the late 1960's (Murray, 2007). According to Simone Murray

(2007), this has created an industry with "inescapable commercial imperatives". However, those commercial imperatives have now been expanded to include the larger media companies rather than just the publishing companies. Consequently, this desire to find content that can be multi-purposed begins even before the book. According to Peter Miller (2006), one of the top literary agents in the country (and my agent and manager), "Publishers are looking for authors that are more of a sure thing". This means that publishers seek out authors with a platform (Miller, 2006). A *platform* means that the potential author already has a media presence (Miller, 2006). Therefore, in order to release content into the media, it is a big advantage to already have content in the media.

What does this mean for me? And, where do I stand within this view of "corporate publishing". I am more closely aligned with Simone Murray's view of the publishing industry. I do not believe that conglomeration has ruined the publishing industry; however I do think that it has affected the way I have to package the *Hit Me* content. For example, I currently have no content in the mass media environment. Will this prevent me from being able to get *Hit Me* published as a book? I hope not. However, I have added certain elements to the book proposal in order to try

to give it a bit of a platform. I added quite a few of the best news articles written about my dad to the book proposal in order to show that he has a media presence. In order to emphasize that Dennis Gomes has a current and ongoing media presence I chose to include a large selection of the most current news articles written about him<sup>1</sup>. These articles all focus on Dennis's current business ventures and many of them are front-page stories, which emphasizes the importance of the story. Slightly more complicated is creating the perceived potential of vast multi-media commerciality that publishers desire. How I will create, or if I have already created, multi-media commerciality in the *Hit Me* proposal is one of the main questions this thesis hopes to answer. However, more analysis is required in order to accomplish this. To begin such analysis, a primary question must first be answered - who in the publishing industry decides what potential books possess these qualities?

This task falls in the hands of editors - acquisition editors to be exact. According to Peter Miller (2006), most publishers use the committee system. This means that the various acquisition editors will have a weekly meeting

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<sup>1</sup> A collection of the news articles included in the *Hit Me* proposal can be found in Appendix B, or a full collection of press can be viewed by accessing the following webpage: <http://gomesgaming.com/news/index.php>

where they will present their selections of book proposals to the board; they will discuss them, and ultimately vote to either publish or reject the proposal (Miller, 2006). According to Hilde Lindemann (2006), scholar and past editor of *Hypatia Journal*, "Editors are the people who sign rejection letters and are so universally hated" (p.235). The ability to reject an author's hard work in a single letter is a signifier of the power editor's possess within the publishing world. If the editors are those who decide which proposals to publish and which to reject, it would make sense for an author trying to get published to cozy up to the editors. However, this is nearly impossible without an agent; but before this analysis moves into the agent phase there is more to examine on the role of editors and my involvement with acquisition editors will also be briefly described.

According to the former editor of Penguin Books Australia and publishing scholar, John Curtain (1997), the traditional publishing roles involved "editing, gate keeping, selecting, and promoting". An editor's job can be vast and varied or very specific, depending on the publisher and size of the publisher they work for. If the editor works for a small publisher they may be responsible for everything from acquiring books to developing the

content and proofreading their acquired books. Whereas, at large publishing companies, they may employ specific acquisition editors, managing editors, associate editors, assistant editors, and proofreaders to share in these tasks. Editors are clearly essential to the publishing business. So what has been my experience thus far with an editor? Not much. Currently we have the proposal out to ten different editors; and as much as it pains me to write this, we have received two rejection letters. Receiving rejection letters SUCKS! I could probably come up with a more academic response, but I won't. Don't get me wrong, I am not angry since I did expect this. Not everyone is going to like what you are doing or want to get involved. The two rejection letters came within two weeks of Miller's submission to the various editors. The letters were not addressed to me and they were actually emails sent to Miller, who then forwarded them to me. Miller did not seem concerned and he just forwarded them to me very nonchalantly... "F.Y.I" here you go. I read the letters, they were both basically the same, short and to the point, "enjoyed reading but not sure how to market this" or "enjoyed reading but I think the Vegas mob has been done", "blah, blah, blah, good luck". I know I sound a little bitter, but I'm not; I read the emails one time and deleted



them. I didn't mention anything about them to anyone for a few weeks. Some authors like Stephen King would save all of their rejection letters and pin them all around their writing desk. I didn't do that (not that I am in any way comparing myself to Stephen King). I don't know why I reacted to the rejection letters (emails) in the way I did, but I guess I figured that I still had hope in the remaining eight editors so I could bury these two in the back of my mind. Nevertheless, reading a rejection letter is not a fun thing to do. However, this has been my only contact with editors thus far (hopefully things will change soon and we will receive an acceptance letter). Our agent has completely handled all interaction with the omnipotent editor. Clearly, editors, as the representatives of the "big-six" corporations, do affect content, from the pure standpoint that they choose what content to release. Furthermore, as representatives of these massive corporations they are given the task of deciding which content will benefit the company in the greatest way possible. As such, editors are not only the gate keepers but also the catalysts that take content from the development phase to the production phase. It is, also, during this stage that content truly becomes a commodity; once an editor acquires the rights to publish the content

it becomes a commodity. Therefore, *Hit Me* is not yet an official commodity. However, because I have not had that much interaction with editors concerning *Hit Me*, this is as far as the analysis of the role editor's play on the content of *Hit Me* can go. Although, if I ever have the opportunity to work with an editor, I could certainly expand on this thesis through tracking how content entered the editor's hands and how it left.

The next logical avenue of analysis would be the agent. Agents do not directly work in the media creation industry; however they inhabit an essential position in the development and dissemination of content. If the editor is the gatekeeper then the agent is the filter. The first literary agent can be traced back to 1874 to a British man by the name of Stefan Poles (Hepburn, 2009). However, the first truly notable agent was another Brit, A.P. Watt who achieved recognition in 1881 (Hepburn, 2009) and the first really successful literary agent in America was Paul Revere Reynolds (Cotugno, 2009).

The literary agent was not initially received with open arms. Marianne Cotugno's (2009) article, "A Benevolent Conspiracy" sites an 1895 *New York Times* article that accuses the agent of being "an unpleasant excrescence on literature, and one who is doing incalculable harm"

(p.265). However, their ill repute did not last long; they were quickly recognized for the beneficial service they could provide to both the author and the publisher. Cutogno (2009) cites another *New York Times* article from 1898, "the literary agent has made authorship a vastly more peaceful and profitable calling than it could have been without him" (p.265). According to Cutogno (2009), "Agents had to establish a delicate balance between their responsibilities to the authors who were their clients and their responsibilities to the publishers with whom they worked on behalf of other authors" (p.266). According to the literary scholar, James Hepburn (2009), the agent is a friend to both the author and the publisher; but today is more a friend to the publisher. Cutogno's (2009) research regarding previously referenced, Paul Revere Reynolds, a founding American literary agent, found that an agent should possess, "the editorial ability of a good editor, good business judgment plus the qualities of a good salesman, infinite tact and patience, and a certain amount of charm" (p.267). They serve publishers as finders of manuscripts or proposals that they believe are good and they make sure they are in proper format. By doing this well, the agent forms relationships with various editors. For the author; the agent handles the business, gets the

author the most money, and handles the sales of any foreign or motion picture rights. Consequently, the agent does a lot even though they are not directly a part of the creation and dissemination of content. However, finding an agent to represent an author's work can be difficult.

If an author desires to get published, it is pretty much a necessity to have an agent. In order to secure an agent the author must agree to pay the agent 10% to 15% (usually 15%) of everything the author receives from the sales of the content and the related rights. I chose my literary agent, Peter Miller because his agency specializes in developing its authors' content in multiple media (Miller, 2006). Because of this operating model, Miller seeks out material that demonstrates this type of potential. As such, my contract with Peter Miller is slightly different than a contract with a typical literary agent. Miller will receive 15% on the sales of the book; however, if the content is to be developed in another media such as film or television, Miller will become a producer and no longer receive the 15% from our end<sup>2</sup>. Miller agreed to represent us, because he liked the raw content, he liked the story. Furthermore, he saw potential for the release in

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<sup>2</sup> A copy of the contract can be found in Appendix C.

multiple media. We did have other options for representation, but Miller was by far the most successful.

However, before we begin to explore the affect our agent, Peter Miller, has had on *Hit Me*; I need to examine how we even came to the book route. Some of this story will sound familiar, as I touched upon it in the methodology chapter; however in this section I am examining "my story" in order to explore how the various components have affected our goal of getting *Hit Me* published. So, how did we end up deciding to pursue this literary avenue? And, how did we settle on what Miller considers a sellable proposal? As previously stated, we (my dad and I) always envisioned *Hit Me* as a film. Then, through talking to various people, publicists, writers, and anyone who would listen, we came to the conclusion that it was less expensive to create a book proposal and was a more realistic path. Once we began pursuing that avenue, we came in contact with the real estate investor, Jerry Krystoff. Ironically, Jerry wanted to get into the movie business and loved the *Hit Me* story so we were back to the movie medium. Jerry knew a few people in Hollywood, one of which was Jim Hart. Hart became interested and wanted to work on a movie that would focus on the law enforcement portion of *Hit Me*. So, it became Jerry's job to find the

financing. In the meantime, Hart suggested that we work on developing a massive book that would include all of the *Hit Me* content and ideally the book and the movie would be released concurrently. The massive book was a new conceptualization of the story; just as I learned when I first took graduate screenwriting, I had to cut down my dad's story in order to format it into the film medium. Consequently, from that point on, I had always conceptualized and formatted the whole story into two separate parts, and now Hart was suggesting that we change that. While all of this was going on, we were also talking to a literary agent (not Miller). This agent, David Nelson from Waterside Productions, suggested that we focus on the book first that would include both parts, and then, if the opportunity presented itself, sell the movie rights to Hollywood. At this point, I combined everything into one proposal. I had my doubts as to whether one large book was the way to go, because I thought it would just be too long. Nevertheless, I kept the proposal non-media specific and very straightforward. I did this in order to keep all of our options open because we just weren't sure what we wanted to do with the content. It was a sort of naïve approach because we didn't know the specifics of how the industry worked. However, the fluidity of the original

proposal has worked in our favor and allowed us to transition into the current media market more easily. What I mean, is that it has allowed us to find an agent and then it was a tremendous help for Jay (my co-author) and me when we were writing the *Hit Me* book proposal. This open proposal allowed us to have my dad's story literally at our fingertips once we decided that we wanted to transform it into a book proposal. And, it also gave me something that I could let others (such as Jim Hart) read. At the time I was sending this proposal out, I didn't realize as the research for this thesis has uncovered, that multi-media potential seems to be an essential component of published media. Simone Murray emphasizes this in his article "Brand Loyalties" (2005), "Content has come to be conceptualized in a disembodied, almost Platonic, form: any media brand which successfully gains consumer loyalty can be translated across formats to create a raft of interrelated products" (p.417). Thus, this naive undecided approach ended up working in our favor; but now to get back to the story and how we ended up pursuing a book with our agent, Peter Miller. Hart was not familiar with David, the agent we had been talking to, so he offered to introduce us to Miller who he knew as a very successful literary agent with close ties to Hollywood. Furthermore, David had an impressive

resume in the publishing world as an editor; however, he had just become an agent and the books that Waterside represented were mostly instructional and self-help non-fictions, which made my father and me a little nervous. As it became evident that Jerry (the investor) might not be able to come through on his end of the deal, we decided the best thing to do would be to focus on the book, so we decided to take Hart up on his offer and sign with the agent he was familiar with. As I have said a million times, finding an agent was very frustrating, I can't repeat this enough. However, it wasn't frustrating because *Hit Me* was getting rejected by agents; it was frustrating because I couldn't get any agents to read it. Only two agents other than Peter Miller read the proposal; one agent was David Nelson and the other agent (I can't remember her name) didn't want to represent *Hit Me* because it was a genre she didn't work with. Needless to say, I was grateful for Hart's offer to help us find an agent and I hoped that his opinion would at least help us to get our content in front of an agent. Before Hart would contact an agent he knew, he asked me to write a short two to three page synopsis of the story that he could email to Miller<sup>3</sup>. The next day I emailed him my first attempt, which he responded

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of this synopsis can be found in Appendix D.



to by stating that it needed "more spice". The following day I resent the reworked synopsis and it was better, but still needed a little pizzazz. On my third attempt, he liked what he saw. He added a few words to give it a stronger "voice" (I finally realized what pizzazz and spice meant) and he emailed it to Peter Miller. Miller was traveling at the time, but he liked what he read and he felt that he knew how to market the story. Jim Hart had me send an email to Peter Miller's assistant and we set up a time to talk via cell phone. It just so happened that I was at my sister's graduation from the University of Pennsylvania, but I excitedly excused myself from the celebrations to call Peter Miller. I had been counting down the minutes all day and I hoped that my nerves would not jumble my words as they were leaving my mouth. I was so nervous about speaking to him, because finding a good agent had been difficult. And honestly, (this is to stay between me and you, wink, wink) I imagined a successful literary agent to be - oh what's a good way to put this - intellectually snobby, and I was afraid that I would come off as ignorant, flat out dumb, or worst of all he would perceive me as an outsider talking to the very person whose job was to keep the unworthy outsider...OUT. The phone call was set for 4:30 pm E.S.T. and at about 4:15, I began

checking the time on my phone about every minute. At 4:27, I walked outside of the restaurant dining room and found a quiet seat in the bar looking out of a huge picture window. I don't remember what I was looking at, probably because I spent those few long minutes staring solely at my phone. Exactly at 4:30, I called Peter Miller and his assistant immediately connected me. I can't really remember what we initially talked about - I would guess that we talked about the story. The first few minutes of our conversation are a blur, but I do distinctly remember being struck by Miller's voice. It wasn't the haughty precise tone I expected, it was gravelly and he spoke fast. I really can't remember anything that we talked about until he said "it's refreshing to talk to a young enthusiastic person and I have a good feeling about this". I was either too nervous to focus or too taken by the difference in the tone of his voice. First, I was glad he perceived me as young, and second, I was glad that I was sounding enthusiastic and not jumbled. At any rate, my mind cleared and he quickly changed topics and told me about his best friend (Alfred), a doctor that lives in Atlantic City, the same place that I live. Peter grew up in Atlantic City and he and Alfred have been best friends since the second grade. After his brief foray about Alfred and his childhood, he returned to

the *Hit Me* story. He made it very clear that he could not promise anything, but he was very confident in his ability to market the story to the right people in the right context. He also told me that he knew of a couple writers who could help to develop a very sellable proposal. Miller ended the conversation by telling me that he would email me a standard contract to look over along with the links to the authors he felt would fit well with the style of *Hit Me*. He also said that he would be in Atlantic City for the Fourth of July Weekend and he would love to get together. Relieved and happy, I hung up, returned to my sister's celebration, and did not look at my phone again the entire dinner. I liked Miller and my father and I were impressed with his work.

That night I received an email from Miller with the names of the two authors he had mentioned, one was Jay Bonansinga and the other was M. William Phelps. That night I sent both authors an email with the short synopsis, and they both responded with interest. Jay wanted to read everything we had, so I sent him everything. Phelps was interested, but I didn't hear from him again for a while. In the meantime, Jay and I spoke a few times. I really liked Jay. He was completely enthralled with the story. One of the reasons that Jay was so interested in it was

that I did not write the story in the standard memoire format, the first person. Jay and I got along really well. In the meantime, Phelps sent me an email that he was worried that if he were to write this story, his life and the lives of his family members, would be in danger. Needless to say, things worked out perfectly and Jay agreed to work with us.

As previously stated, we were introduced to Miller by Jim Hart. Even though Hart has been so supportive in my quest to publish, we have never actually met him in person. Thanks to the Internet and conference calls, he has become very familiar with my dad's story and our goal. Hart is a successful screenwriter and is interested in working on the film or television development of *Hit Me*. Consequently, because of the strong interest of Hart, Miller most likely perceived multi-media potential and, thus, was that much more inclined to manage our content. Miller also told us that Jay was a brilliant strategist and had written both novels and films so he would be great at situating *Hit Me* in a place that would allow for further development into other media. As soon as we told Miller that Jay was perfect and we couldn't wait to work with him, Miller emailed us a formal contract. Attached to the email with the contract was an invitation to a party that PMA (Peter

Miller Agency) was hosting. We looked over the contract and found it fair, signed it, then went to Miller's party (this really went that fast and that simply). Well (I lied) the drive from Atlantic City to New York City for the party took two hours.

Jay and I immediately got to work and began refining the raw content. What I mean is that it was basically just the stories but not really in any particular format. Consequently, it was not sellable and we needed Jay to help us properly format our content. As I first learned when I took the graduate screenwriting class, in order to tell a story to the masses, it has to be structured in a certain way. This was the agent's first point of impact on the content of *Hit Me*; Miller affected it by instructing and guiding us in creating a sellable proposal. Why did we decide to go with him? We chose him because initially we pictured *Hit Me* as a film and it wasn't until very recently that we decided to try and publish *Hit Me* as a book. It was our belief that Miller would be the most capable manager and the person who would help us develop *Hit Me* in the most marketable way possible.

Jay, my father, and I would have weekly or bi-weekly conference calls and Jay and I would correspond by email daily. I found Jay to be a compelling writer, and also a

great strategist. Once we filled Jay in on the history of *Hit Me* and he read all of the content, we decided together that we would write the book proposal in a way that would translate easily into film; that is we kept it short. In order to do this, we divided the *Hit Me* content into two distinct parts (as it had originally been). By doing this, we could also potentially have two books. These would all be sellable factors to an editor. The bottom line is Jay helped us to figure out how we could get the most money out of our intellectual property. Making money was never my goal in this whole process. However, the more ways content can be used, the more money it can make the media corporations that release it; and the goal of a corporation is to make money. Therefore, it certainly seems that the key to creating sellable content is to approach this process with all options available; more specifically, to try to create content with the intention of multi-media release. According to Simone Murray (2005), "the potential for any particular content package to be leveraged across multiple media platforms has ceased to be merely a desirable product asset. Rather, it has emerged as the indispensable characteristic of blockbuster media content" (p.416). Consequently, corporations do have a tremendous effect on the production and release of content and we

accordingly developed the *Hit Me* content with the express intention of creating the greatest possible amount of potential spin-offs in order to appeal to the big media corporations' commitment to increasing the bottom line.

Therefore, according to the political economy analysis, corporations do affect and control the production and release of creative content by seeking out content that can be multi-purposed in order to garner the greatest return on their investment. Furthermore, the relationship between the Editor and agent; and author and agent has created a mutually beneficial relationship that allows for these media conglomerates to efficiently seek out and find new material. However, it has also created a situation where the individual is held at a distance; that is until their content is optioned by a media corporation. Thus, it can be concluded that these large media corporations have affected the *Hit Me* content by forcing us to establish a media presence and showing the potential for a multi-media release. However, the obvious question that this conclusion engenders is what are the specific qualities that create content like this? In order to answer this question, we will use the media ecology analysis.

## **Media Ecology Analysis**

"Instead of a narrative retreat into a verbal hideout, there to linger as an endangered species, the novel capitalizes on its technological belatedness or anachronism to claim and reclaim new vistas of representation"

-Michael Wutz author of *Enduring Words* (Wutz, 2009, p.5).

This thesis has already established that there are differences between the format of the written word and the film, but what role these differences play in the creation and dissemination of content in the mass media still needs to be examined. More specifically, this analysis will attempt to answer the following questions: What are the industrial factors that influence the release of content in one media or another? Do the media corporations prefer one medium over another? And, does the medium directly affect content?

This first question is simple to answer. The industrial factors that have influenced our attempt to release *Hit Me* as a novel over any other format are: first economic investment - it is less expensive to develop a novel than any other structured mass media format; secondly, our agent suggested that we approach the process first with a novel because it leaves the most options open



for a multi-media release; and thirdly, the media corporation has affected the *Hit Me* content by the sheer fact that we have attempted to make our content appealing to the corporate model. Furthermore, the political economy analysis has also answered the second medium specific question: Is there a preferred medium? No, the media corporations do not prefer one medium over another; rather they prefer them all over one. The final medium specific question requires further analysis. Does medium affect content?

Again, because I am most actively pursuing the literary medium, the analysis will begin there. As the quote that opened this section indicated, the medium of the written word is undergoing many changes due to emergent technology. As previously touched on, according to Marshall McLuhan one of the founding fathers of Media Ecology Theory, "when a new technology/medium is introduced into a culture and usurps the function of an older technology/medium, either the older technology/medium will undergo some radical transformation and survive, or it will obsolesce and be preserved as an art form" (McLuhan, 1964, p.p. 8). As part of the *Hit Me* book proposal we added a new component to the standard formulaic supplemental material. What is supplemental material for a novel? With

the invention of the Kindle and online novel streaming, novels will soon have a webpage dedicated to supplemental material that the reader will be able to access through a link attached to the downloaded novel. As part of the *Hit Me* proposal, we included old pictures and clips of news articles; if *Hit Me* is to get published we would add even more to this<sup>4</sup>. This is one example of how the medium of the novel is changing to accommodate the new media environment. However, many media theorists call the change of the book medium, the "death of literature"; according to the media ecology academic, Michael Wutz "a familiar refrain in the history and theory of narrative: the death of literature, and of the novel more specifically, in a world dominated by the assemblage of (post)modern communications technologies" (Wutz, 2009, p.2). Thus, according to this view, the novel has been usurped by the newer media technologies. However, other media academics use the changing media ecology of the novel as a new way to conceptualize media studies. According to Simone Murray (2007) this has allowed the contemporary book to be conceptualized as a mass medium; by "situating publishing within such an analytic framework allows understanding of the book as one of an array of

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<sup>4</sup> A preview of the pictures that were included in the proposal as potential supplemental material can be viewed by accessing the following webpage:  
<http://www.facebook.com/#!/album.php?aid=147249&id=323809109862>

communications media, all of them digitally enabled and co-dependent in sustaining complex content flows" (p.12).

This framework supports the political economy analysis in which all media work together to traffic content. But what happens to content that is trafficked across different media, how does it change? This brings us back to the question, does a medium affect content? The following analysis will uncover how the *Hit Me* content will have to change to be adapted from a book to a film.

In order to accomplish such an analysis, this thesis will employ a micro-level medium analysis of the book and film media. This type of analysis seeks to uncover the reasons a particular medium was chosen for a specific message (Nabi & Oliver, 2009, p. 523). According to Paul Heyer (Heyer 2008), medium theory begins with a consideration of the properties embodied in the carriers of that content and the influence those properties have on production, transmission, and reception" (Heyer, 2008, pp.593).

The intended media for *Hit Me* was a book and then a film. As established by the political economy analysis, releasing *Hit Me* as a novel first is economically more feasible (it's cheaper) and it also allows for the spread into other platforms. Furthermore, a popular book has an

established fan base. Consequently, if a media corporation makes the investment for the creation of a film, already having a fan base is an added plus. Therefore, if *Hit Me* becomes a popular book it will have a better chance of being adapted into a film. If, *Hit Me* is adapted from a book to a film, what will have to change? Moving forward this analysis will compare the “properties embodied in the carriers” of the book medium to the film medium.

Both novels and films are media that tell stories, and as such they are able to create alternative realities for the receiver. However, how they accomplish this task is different. According to the writer, John Irving (1999), “Storytelling in screenplays follows a much more ruthless course than in novels” (p.108). In books, there is much more time to develop characters and story. In films, “you’re always fighting the constraints of time” (Irving, 1999, p.108). Thus the film is a concise medium. To be more specific, according to the Internet Movie Data Base film length project (2008), the average length of movies in this decade is about 129 minutes (<http://www.slashfilm.com/2009/07/16/by-the-numbers-the-length-of-feature-films/>). Therefore, a complete message must be delivered, on average, in about 2 hours. Whereas, novels have no time limit; the author can take as long as

he or she desires to develop the story. Furthering film's ability to be concise is the fact that film leaves little room for imagination. Or in other words, you see precisely what the message creator wants you to see. James Monaco puts it this way, "The artist's [message creator's] choice in cinema is without limit; the artist's choice in literature is circumscribed while the reverse is true for the observer: the great thing about literature is that you can imagine; the great thing about film is that you can't" (Monaco, 2009, p.p. 177). For the *Hit Me* book proposal Jay and I have included many stories from Dennis' childhood and past in order to develop his character, we consciously made a decision to focus on Dennis' character. The following excerpt is from the book proposal and it is indicative of the level of detail we included pertaining Dennis's childhood:

"In spite of this modest blue-collar environment, however, Gomes never thought of his family as poor. A pair of corduroy pants for school, maybe some Levis and a couple of pairs of shoes, and Gomes felt rich. When the pants inevitably wore out, Gomes saw the patches as a fashion statement. When those patches wore out, there would be little patches on the big patches - a natty look for the boy.

Shoes would get resoled again and again... until each step the boy took would make a clapping noise as he sauntered down the sidewalk. At one point, the neighbor kids grew so impressed by Dennis Gomes's *so-what* attitude - and his trademark *WHAP-WHAP-WHAP* sound as he strutted down the street -- that they started cutting the front soles of their *own* expensive shoes so they too would clap."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The full book proposal for *Hit Me* can be found in Appendix A.

However, we also decided to cut the full content in half so that the book's storyline could easily transfer to film. Consequently, the medium has already affected the content and the decisions we have made while creating the book proposal for *Hit Me*.

As previously alluded to, a second major difference between the film and the novel is the visual accompaniment to the film. This helps to offset the limitations placed on the film by the time constraints, because it allows for a greater amount of detail. Film provides the viewer with more to see. According to film theorist James Monaco, "Novels are told by the author. We hear and see only what he wants us to see and hear. Films are more or less told by their authors, too, but we see and hear a great deal more than a director necessarily intends. It would be an absurd task for a novelist to try to describe a scene in as much detail as it is conveyed in cinema" (Monaco, 2009, p.54). Consequently, in a novel the entire story is told to the audience; whereas in a film, much of the story is seen. John Irving (1999) simply puts it like this, "in the movies, what people look like truly matters" (p.122).

However, for *Hit Me*, because it is non-fiction there is a consequence to adapting the story from a novel to a film. When a message becomes a film it must forsake some

of its ties to the absolute truth. For example, if *Hit Me* is turned into a movie, the main character Dennis Gomes would be portrayed by an actor and every other aspect in the story would be recreated to appear realistic when it is anything but real. However, my initial desire was to make *Hit Me a Movie* because of the power of the visual image. According to Paul Messaris, author of *Visual Literacy, Image, Mind, and Reality*, "Since the earliest days of analytical thinking about movies, writers (many of them film makers themselves) have noted the compelling illusion of a whole reality that can be summoned up by some forms of editing and framing" (Messaris, 1994, p.2). Thus, the ability of movies to create a different reality, through the use of images, has been noted since the inception of this medium. Movies possess the ability to provide visual information along with aural information. According to Donis A. Dondis, a visual literacy theorist, "A bias towards visual information is not difficult to find in human behavior. We seek visual reinforcement of our knowledge for many reasons, but primary among them is the directness of the information, the closeness to the real experience" (Dondis, 1973, p.2). We live in a visual world and when a medium is able to communicate with images, we are more likely to relate to what we are most familiar

with; or, as Dondis says, "seeing is a direct experience and the use of visual data to report information is the closest we can get to the true nature of the reality" (Dondis, 1974, p.2). Furthermore, movies provide humans with the closest experience to the physical action of seeing, but they don't stop there (Dondis, 1974, p.175). According to Dondis, "They can carry information and deliver it in the most realistic manner. It can tell stories, collapsing time into a convention of its own" (Dondis, 1974, p.175). Therefore, the message creator/movie maker is able to employ various techniques to create a reality and illicit different responses out of the viewer/receiver, that are so compelling that the message becomes ingrained in this created reality. Thus, if we are able to examine the different techniques used to create this reality, we can peel back its layers to look at the message; which, according to Messaris, gives us "the ability to see through the manipulative uses and ideological implications of visual images" (Messaris, 1995, p. 165).

Therefore, the difference between a novel and a film is that a book allows the audience to see what they want whereas a movie through various visual techniques shows the audience everything they need to see; or as George



Bluestone puts it (1958), "A film is not thought, it is perceived". I believe that it is this component that has made book to movie adaptations so successful. The reader of a book is also, partially, the message creator; that is, the reader must create the reality of what they are reading. Consequently, there is always this sense of doubt as a result of creating the reality of the author's story and the reader is always a little curious as to what the author's reality of the story truly is. Thus, when a film is created it allows the reader to compare their reality to the other. As previously established, even though a film (specifically a film based on non-fiction) forsakes actual truth, the visual image is more powerful and as such holds more weight with the audience. Consequently, even though I did not initially intend *Hit Me* to be a book, due to the reasons established in the political economy section, and the benefit or rather necessity of adapting content in different media; the most suitable approach for me to take was the book first approach. So, back to the question, does a medium affect content? Yes, it not only affects the content but also how the content is received.

As previously established, the current conglomerate controlled media environment prefers content with multi-media potential; and the medium affects the content and how

the content is received. But, what gives content multi-media potential? As previously mentioned, before content is considered for release, a media platform needs to be established; thus public awareness of the content or content creator could be considered an attribute of multi-media potential. As far as what gives *Hit Me* multi-media potential, other than establishing a media presence, is a story to be told. The story is a common media characteristic; films, books, periodicals, and television are all media channels that are often used to tell a story. Consequently, multi-media potential is more a political economy factor than a medium factor. That is, if popularity can be established, media corporations will exploit their content to the greatest degree possible. They will adapt their content into as many media formats as possible.

### **Adaptation Analysis**

To return to the main thrust and basis of this thesis, adaptation theory; what role does this play in the adaptation industry? Besides being economically advantageous for media corporations; as previously touched upon, book to film adaptations may be popular because the reader/viewer would like to see if their perception of the

author's reality is true to the creator's conception. However this often results in the response, "it wasn't like that in the book", or "the book was better", or as an academic associate of the adaptation scholar Brian McFarlane (2000) put it, "of course it's not as nearly complex or subtle as the book". This, I believe, is partially due to the audience preferring their own conception over the filmmaker's and partially due to the required adaptation to the constraints of the individual medium. However, it seems that more and more movies are being released that follow their novel counterparts almost exactly. *Shutter Island* and *The Twilight Saga* are examples of this formula, which leads me to question if the content for these films was created as novels intended on being easily transferred to film. As the previous, media ecology analysis suggests, there are things a film can do that a novel can't and vice versa. However, if a novel is written to be a film it can be done in such a way that it will transfer easily and accurately from a novel to a film - like, what we have tried to do with *Hit Me*. However, there is no way to know what the intention of the content was unless it is tracked from its inception, like this thesis is doing with *Hit Me*. Although media academics are starting to note this illusive quality that content seems

to possess. According to Simone Murray (2005), "at the core of contemporary media branding lies the abstraction of content from the constraints of any specific analogue media format" (p.417). Furthermore, "given the dominance of film divisions within global media conglomerates, the content package driving this process is frequently a feature film" (Murray, 2005, p.417). Consequently, due to the political economy of the media environment, it would make sense for media conglomerates to develop content, test the market with a book, turn a profit with the book, and then adapt that popular book to a film; or, if these media conglomerates desire to transform a popular novel into a popular film it is less about creative interpretation and more about creating the film version of the novel. And, if it turns into a popular brand, like the *Twilight* brand, create graphic novels, toys, clothes, and any other product that might sell. Therefore, adaptation cannot be approached as it traditionally has been, rather, it should be questioned from a political economy stance, because, in the current media environment, the conglomerate controls the development of content. This is what makes this thesis so different from other adaptation studies and the fact that it is literally following the development of the *Hit Me* content from its inception. Consequently, this thesis is

the beginning of a new approach to adaptation studies. Adaptation studies have always focused on studies of content that was created for a particular medium and then adapted into a different media with new media capabilities and constraints. However, as the political economy analysis has indicated, content is now created with the intention of being released in as many media channels as possible. I have made it clear as the creator of *Hit Me* that my intention is to have it adapted from a book to a film and Jay and I have approached nearly every decision with this framework in mind. Consequently, if *Hit Me* does get published, then adapted to film, this thesis will provide a unique insight into the current media environment which favors multi-purposing of content. However, even if it does not get published and adapted, this thesis had made a case for incorporating political economy and media ecology into current adaptation studies. If I have created the *Hit Me* content with the intention of being adapted based on the current market formula, then other content must be going through this same developmental process, also according to this market formula. Thus, we now know that the media environment has affected content and the adaptation industry; but, has the requirements of the

current media conglomerate dominated environment affected the creation of the *Hit Me* content?

I previously alluded to the fact that I am an outsider. I have never been published and I have never worked in the media industry and thus, by definition, I am an outsider. Unfortunately, as established by the political economy analysis, the media industry keeps the outsider/individual at a distance. Consequently, in my attempts to tell my dad's story I have had to play by the industry rules; I have had to get an agent and I have had to package *Hit Me* in a way that would result in the greatest potential for making money. Therefore, in my experience, everything has boiled down to creating a sellable package. Ahh, the million dollar question... What creates a sellable package? This will be addressed in the following chapter, the conclusion to this thesis..

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

"Adaptation is a profound process. Means you figure out how to thrive in the world." From the film *Adaptation* 2002

When content is adapted within this current media environment, that means it is selling and therefore thriving. However, before content can sell, a media company must decide that it is worth investing in because they think the public will desire it. As established by this thesis, media companies seek out content that will make them the most money possible and the public invests in content that will entertain them. Consequently, media conglomerates seek out content that they believe will entertain the masses and thus motivate the masses to buy. However, if anyone knew exactly what the formula was to make this happen, there would be no more flops at the box office or book stores. Therefore, there is no concrete right or wrong answer to the question, "what creates sellable content?" Consequently, media companies are forced to guess at what the public wants; and these companies have figured out ways to strategically seek out content with selling potential.

As the political economy analysis uncovered, media companies covet content that already has a media platform,

which means the public is already interested. Furthermore, media conglomerates also tactically traffic content through various media channels to increase the bottom line. As established in the media ecology analysis, the film and book media are each capable of telling a story; however how they do that is very different - each medium has different capabilities and affects. However, film sales bring in a huge amount of money for the media companies and as such are often the pillars of their sales strategies. According to the Motion Picture Association of America's Theatrical Statistics Report (2009), worldwide box office sales for all films reached \$29.9 billion in 2009, up 7.6% over 2008's total" (<http://www.mpa.org/Resources/091af5d6-faf7-4f58-9a8e-405466c1c5e5.pdf>). Whereas, according to the American Association of Publishers Industry Statistics Report (2009), total book sales for 2009 totaled \$23.9 billion down 1.8% from 2008 (<http://www.publishers.org/main/IndustryStats/documents/S12009Final.pdf>). Therefore, American movie sales brought in \$7 billion more than American book sales did in 2009 and have managed to continually increase even during bad economic times. Thus, media companies will expect the greatest return from their film sales and therefore invest the greatest amount of money in that area. However, as the political economy



analysis discovered, in the current media environment where huge corporations traffic content across their various channels of revenue, content is being developed with the intention of multi-media release. Political economy strands of media studies began to remark on the increasingly liquid nature of media content as early as 1977 (Murray, 2005). This was done in order to garner the greatest return on investment, where the strategy for release was often centered on the film industry. According to Simone Murray (2007), "the bottom line is that there is a bottom line". As established by the political economy analysis, a relatively small number of media companies control the film studios, the television networks, the global music market, satellite broadcasting, cable broadcasting, book publishing, commercial magazine publishing, and commercial cable television stations. Consequently, the content they deliver through these various media channels is their commodity of trade. The more of this commodity they can sell to the public, the more money they can make; and their profits are further increased if they are able to sell this commodity over multiple media channels. The adaptation field has afforded media conglomerates the perfect formula to follow. However, adaptation studies are built on the supposition that adaptation is an afterthought of creation.

Media companies are circumventing the adaptation field by desiring content that has been created with adaptation as forethought. Media companies do this by seeking out content that they believe will garner the greatest amount of investment from the public. Consequently, these media corporations look for content that shows evidence of public interest and potential for sales in as many media channels as possible. Therefore, sellable content must be content that has established public interest and that has potential for release in various media channels. Thus, these media corporations must offer the public the content they desire. However, the market for media content is controlled by these corporations and thus influences the public's related demand. Consequently, there is a cyclical relationship between the media corporations providing content and the public setting the market demands. Who ends up with the power in the end is constantly up for debate. However, some media critics, such as Mark Crispin Miller, feel that the media conglomerates' end up with the power and their control of content is unethical and detrimental to our society. It certainly seems that since these corporations control the content that is offered to the public, the power tips in their favor. This debate would provide a valuable extension on this thesis.

A consequence of the current media environment is the affect it has had on the individual that is trying to release content. When such a small number of corporations control the media world, there is far less competition for new content than if there were hundreds of companies all vying for this content. In conclusion, I as an individual have done all that I can in my attempt to get published. I am playing by the corporations rules because I want to tell my dad's story through the book and film media channels. I have tried to create content that has an existing media platform. I have tried to create content with multi-media potential. And, I have signed with an agent to try to break into this complex industry. I believe that I have done everything I possibly can in order to accomplish my goal. As of November 2010, our agent has the *Hit Me* book proposal in the hands of eight publishing editors and I am waiting for them to either allow me to enter their world or reject my attempts. It is impossible to guess where things will go from here, but I hope that I receive a phone call or email from Miller that tells me, "[so and so] wants to publish *Hit Me*, it's time for you and Jay to finish the book, so GET TO WORK".

This thesis began as a survey of the adaptation industry. I was interested in the adaptation field because

I am trying to get a story published and then adapted to the big screen. However, the true adaptation started the moment I began writing my father's story. I have adapted my dad's life to the printed page. According to the author and biographer, Melba Joyce Boyd (2008), "A legacy is not static. It is not suspended in a time frame... it imparts to each person who encounters it an affirmation, a confrontation, or an indulgence" (p.12). Thus, a biography or life story means something different to every person that encounters it. Consequently, by my choice to adapt my father's story to the written page, I have put a piece of myself into the story. When someone's story is told, the writer can't possibly include every single detail of their subject's experience. Consequently, the writer must choose the important details to include and build the story around those. Initially, I envisioned my dad's story as a movie, took a graduate screenwriting class, and ended up with a script that needed a lot of work (to say the least). As part of the re-writing process, I did a significant amount of research; which provided me with an immense amount of detail. Consequently, I was put in the position of deciding what I found to be interesting and significant and then trimming the excess detail. Thus, "I" entered the story. Adaptation of any sort inevitably involves the

reformatting of content, and the person adapting the material decides what to include. Consequently, I wanted to know as much as possible about the adaptation process, so that I would be able to successfully adapt *Hit Me* in various media.

When I began this thesis, I initially thought that the medium/media ecology analysis would be the most beneficial to my overall goal for *Hit Me*. However, I learned, through the political economy analysis, that what matters most is creating a media presence and leaving content in a sort of open ended format; that is content that shows potential for multi-medium adaptation. Different media formats have different effects in society. As the media ecology analysis demonstrated, according to the film and media theorist James Monaco (2009) "the great thing about literature is that you can imagine; the great thing about film is that you can't". Thus, novels allow the readers to create their own view of the message whereas films provide the viewer with the precise intended message. According to the media ecologist, Brian Donohue (2002/2003), "the human capacity to gain insights into our lives through introspection and narrative is being replaced by the superficiality of an "electric imagination"" (p.388). Thus, the introspection the printed page once provided is being replaced by

electronic media, which is further exacerbated by the conglomeration of the media. In this current media environment, the individual formats have linked together through the conglomeration of the media in order to synergistically spread content<sup>6</sup>. This means that the introspective narrative world that the printed page creates is now often accompanied by multiple Internet links, sometimes a movie, and if sales are high enough, the narrative web can expand to encompass even more. According to Simone Murray (2005), the media conglomerates have vertically integrated the different media channels - "any media brand which successfully gains consumer loyalty can be translated across formats to create a raft of interrelated products" (p.417). Consequently, the individual sociological effects have been lessened through the sharing of a common goal. Books and movies both tell stories, but it is easier and more advantageous to exploit the printed word first. Thus, corporate strategizing is now in control of content and medium is another spoke in the commerce wheel of the media industry.

Media ecology has always viewed the different communication media as extensions of the human experience.

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<sup>6</sup> An example of this practice is The *Harry Potter* franchise which includes: novels, films, video games, computer games, digital downloads, merchandise, and theme parks.

However, through the political economy of the conglomeration of the media industries and the Internet, I am proposing a new conceptualization of the media industry. According to Simone Murray (2005), digital technology recognizes all content as binary code therefore allowing previously incompatible media formats to exist contemporaneously in one computer in one house; consequently, all of the different media channels are now almost instantaneously accessible in a huge portion of America's homes. Now, instead of viewing the different media as distinct extensions of the human experience, imagine media as a human body, each appendage is a different medium but they are all linked together and work toward the survival of the whole body. In the fidelity oriented view of adaptation studies, adaptation may have been a bridge between the separate media environments. However, in the political economy view of the adaptation industry where each system supports the other, adaptation is more like an internal organ. It could be the liver or a kidney; it's not required for every bodily function but it is a requirement for the survival of the body. The novel may be the head, the Internet may at times be an ear or at times an arm depending on how you use it, and film could be the neck. The point is the use of the media decides its

function. I will let you decide which appendage belongs to which medium, and if you tend to follow Freud this could be an interesting exercise. But, moving on, we can imagine food and drink to be the content that feeds the body. And, every store, that sells the food to eat or drink in order to nourish this body, is a corporation; consequently these bodies are controlled by and dependent on these corporations. Furthermore, as human beings, as soon as we begin to participate in the human experience of communicating, we accept this second body onto our own and the two become one. In this conception, each medium has its own function, but they all share in a common goal and they are all essential to the human experience; and the fuel required for the survival of these bodies is controlled by the corporate media. Thus, the corporations control these bodies by deciding what they will place in their markets, although these bodies are able to decide what they will buy so that does return a great deal of power to the body. However, since the corporations control the markets, they ultimately do have almost complete control over content. The point I am trying to make with this analogy is that the media are essential to the human experience (at least the American human experience) and through the conglomeration of the media industry and the invasion of the Internet; the



media industry as a whole has become a daily component of the human experience. As this analogy suggests, I believe that the media enable us to exist as we do; it is a body that exists seamlessly with our human bodies and further allows us to be a society of more cognizant human beings. Furthermore, evidence of the media's ability to reach the "media-beings" that this analogy alludes to, can be found in Robert McChesney's book *The Political Economy of Media*. In this book, McChesney (2008) illuminates the global media as the "necessary transmission belt for business to market their wares across the world"; thus the media are what connects businesses to the individual. As of 2008, according to McChesney (2008), "a whopping three-quarters of global spending on advertising ends up in the pockets of a mere twenty media companies"; consequently, if you have a message to tell the world, these massive media conglomerations are the ideal "transmission belt".

Accordingly, the current media environment has not killed the creative process, but has surely affected it. This thesis is not about the ethics of the impact that media conglomeration or capitalism has on the artist or content creator. I am trying to enter this big-business-dominated industry and as such I am accepting the rules that govern it. To do otherwise would be hypocritical, and

self-defeating. If I were to write about all that I have done in order to get published and then complain about the industry, it would certainly be insincere. Consequently, I accept the business driven formula for the creative process that I have employed for the development of *Hit Me*.

This thesis leaves plenty of options for the expansion of this study. The most obvious would be to continue following *Hit Me*, either into publication (hopefully) or the bookshelf in my office. If this study were to follow a successful book proposal into the mass media, the qualities that made *Hit Me* successful could be identified and analyzed. And, if this study were to build on an unsuccessful book proposal the bad decisions that I made could be analyzed as a sort of "this is what not to do" study. Furthermore, if my wildest dreams were to come true and *Hit Me* was ultimately turned into a film, the adaptation could be studied from its true root. Thus this thesis adds to the field of adaptation studies in that it applies communication theories to an adaptation approach while it is in the active phase of development. It is this quality that makes this thesis different from other communication studies; it is an academic analysis of a media artifact that was conducted while the artifact was active in the media environment. However, it is also this

quality that may open this thesis up to criticism. More specifically, it is just my experience, and thus may be meaningless to anyone else. Also, as the artifact of study is of my own creation; my analysis of that artifact could be considered tainted because of a lack of an objective viewpoint. Furthermore, since I am not an industry expert or accomplished writer or filmmaker, I may not be able to offer advice on the inside workings of the media industry. Another potential criticism of this study is the autoethnographic methodology. As indicated previously herein, according to the autoethnographer, Sarah Wall (2006), "traditional scientific approaches..., require researchers to minimize their selves, viewing self as a contaminant and attempting to transcend and deny it" (p.2). Autoethnography is centered on the self; consequently in the traditional scientific view the entire study is thus corrupted. Furthermore, according to the article "Representation, Legitimation, and Autoethnography" by Nicholas Holt (2003), "the use of the self as the only data source in autoethnography has been questioned. Accordingly, autoethnographies have been criticized for being too self-indulgent." (p.3). However, this thesis is a study of my experience, as an outsider, trying to invade this fortress of sellable and sold content; consequently some may find it

self-indulgent. Nevertheless, there are far more individuals who want to publish<sup>7</sup> than either experts in the field, or academics analyzing the industry; and thus, I believe that a study from the perspective of this group is a beneficial addition to the knowledge of our society. I hope that this thesis may be able to help others to enter this world. Although, in retrospect, I have to say that this thesis has helped me greatly in my quest to enter the mass media industry. Trying to break into this world has not been an easy process and I have been working at it for a long, long time; although now I know much more about the motivations of the gatekeepers of this industry. Whether or not this will help me achieve my goal, I don't yet know. I, along with you, dear reader, will just have to wait to see what happens. Please feel free to cross your fingers, pray, or just send good vibes my way.

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<sup>7</sup> PMA Literary Agency receives around 500 query letters a week from writers that want to publish (Miller, 2006).

APPENDIX A  
HIT ME PROPOSAL

HIT ME:  
FIGHTING THE LAS VEGAS MOB BY THE NUMBERS

A PROPOSAL  
FOR  
A NON-FICTION NARRATIVE  
By  
Danielle Gomes and Jay Bonansinga

(FINAL PROPOSAL DRAFT)

## INTRODUCTION/PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Quick... close your eyes and picture an accountant. What do you see? A wizened old coot in a visor and sleeve-garters? A corporate drone hunched over a cluttered desk, pecking at a calculator?

Or perhaps you see the mousey little revenue agent played by Charles Martin Smith in the film THE UNTOUCHABLES, dogging Al Capone like an ink-stained weevil, clutching an incriminating ledger to his sunken chest like a security blanket.

Meet Dennis Gomes - the real life version of this archetypal accountant-cop - a man who shatters all stereotypes of the nerdy numbers-cruncher. Born in 1944 and bred in the dirt-poor orchards of Northern California, this scrappy, movie-star handsome kid was shaped by the no-nonsense nuns at Catholic school, as well as immigrant parents with deep-rooted notions of right and wrong. Weaned on the mythic icons of the lonely sheriff

standing tall against the town bullies, Dennis Gomes would choose accounting in college as a mere vehicle.

Accounting would become a doorway for Gomes, through which he would pursue a childhood dream: To become a righteous, incorruptible federal agent - a righter of wrongs, a bringer of justice.

But fate - and the state of Nevada - had even *loftier* goals for Dennis Gomes. In 1971, recruited fresh out of graduate school, Gomes would appear before the newly-elected governor, Michael O'Callaghan, who had an offer Gomes could not refuse: to be the youngest man ever to hold the position of Division Chief with the Nevada Gaming Control Board, a state law enforcement agency, and to ultimately launch a Quixotic crusade to eradicate organized crime from the casinos.

HIT ME: FIGHTING THE LAS VEGAS MOB BY THE NUMBERS tells the twisting, tumultuous, true-life tale of this fearless young peace officer and his suicide mission amidst the neon and corruption of a city renowned for sin. Through the course of this amazing saga there are enough action-packed tableaux to fill a dozen Scorsese films. There are midnight raids, heart-rending romances with showgirls, deadly double-crosses, and plot twists galore.

From 1971 to 1978 -- a golden age of crime and corruption in Glitter Gulch -- Dennis Gomes single-handedly revolutionized investigative techniques that are still used in the gaming industry today. On more than one occasion he came within a hair's breadth of death himself. His tenure culminated with the highly publicized bust of the Stardust skim (portrayed in the book and movie CASINO).

But no matter how much irrefutable evidence Gomes uncovered, no matter how many witnesses and informants were

beaten or murdered, Gomes was swept aside by the politicians. He was betrayed and sacrificed by a system that was dirty to its core.

Dennis Gomes, however, would never give up. It took nearly three decades - and a winding road of career changes - for the chickens to finally come home to *roast*. In 2007, Gomes made history. A completely unexpected turn of events, a new generation of federal prosecutors, and a notorious mob assassin deciding to find Jesus - all of these events and more -- would lead Gomes into the eye of a perfect legal storm.

In a hot Chicago courtroom on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007, Gomes finally settled all scores.

The story of how Dennis Gomes ended up on that witness stand, untold until now, forms the basis of HIT ME: FIGHTING THE LAS VEGAS MOB BY THE NUMBERS. Told in a novelistic style, brimming with sensory detail, the book is much more than a mere crime-fighting memoir. Gomes's story is the story of America - a tale of human behavior *in extremis* - rife with violence and tenderness, greed and heroism, hatred and hope.

The cast of characters that Gomes brushes up against reads like a roll call of gangster lore: Anthony 'The Ant' Spilotro, Allen Glick, Frank 'Lefty' Rosenthal, George Jay Vandermark, and Joey 'The Clown' Lombardo. The setting is a vivid, cinematic ground-zero of American crime mythology. From the garish pleasure pits of the Strip... to the smoke-filled backrooms... to the vast barrens of the high desert where all the bodies eventually get buried... it's all here. In this book. In Dennis Gomes's memories. What follows is a trio of sections.



In the first section, *Sample Chapters*, the reader will get a taste of the style and tone of the book - as well as an introduction to Dennis Gomes and his background.

In the second section, *Chapter Outline*, the structure and arc of the entire story will be revealed.

Finally, the third section, *Marketing Background*, will discuss the differentiators here - how the book measures up to the competition, the features and benefits, and the bios of the authors.

So, without further ado, HIT ME...

I .  
SAMPLE CHAPTERS

## PROLOGUE:

### DON'T LOOK AWAY

"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."

- Amos 5.24

One day, late in 2004, Dennis Gomes had just returned to his muted, earth-toned office at the Tropicana Hotel in Atlantic City -- after one of his regular lunchtime workouts -- when his long time secretary, an efficient and loyal woman named Jean Price, appeared in the doorway with some unexpected news.

"Dennis, you got a call from an FBI agent while you were out."

"What does he want?"

"He didn't say. Just said he wanted to talk to you. He was calling from Chicago."

"Did he tell you his name?"

Price looked at the message slip. "'Special Agent Andrew Hickey'?"

Gomes shrugged: never heard of the man. "Okay, Jean, thanks. I'll follow up on it."

Price left the call slip on the circular table in the center of the office, and then whisked away - vanishing back into the labyrinth of corridors and the myriad tasks facing the Administrative Assistant to the General Manager of one of the nation's busiest casino chains.

Gomes settled down behind the table to clear his head. The office - designed with Gomes's management style in mind - had no hard corners, no imposing desk, none of the typical accoutrements of the alpha executive. The soft pastels, calming abstract art, family pictures, and welcoming flow gave off the air of a Japanese garden... more of a place of meditation than high-level corporate management... a place in keeping with Gomes's Taoist philosophies.

A compact, well-groomed man - still fit at 61, his face chiseled but still boyish - Gomes sat back in his chair, pondering the purpose of a call from the Bureau. *Probably purely routine*, he thought to himself, *probably checking up on some applicant*. Still dressed in the loose-fitting white tunic of a trained martial artist, Gomes hadn't had time to change out of his "Gi" that day, but he also knew the outfit would faze no one at the office. His co-workers were accustomed to seeing the head honcho - a fifth-degree black belt at Tang Soo Do, and a second-degree black belt at Hopkido - haunting the hallways in his white garb. On some level, the uniform of the practitioner of Korean self defense served as a metaphor for the rough and tumble world of casino management.

Gomes punched the 3-1-2 area code into his phone, followed by the number for the Windy City field Office. A moment later, a steady, businesslike baritone crackled over the line: "Mr. Gomes?"

"Yeah?"

"My name's Agent Andy Hickey, and I'm working on a big organized crime case in Chicago."

"Okay." At this point, almost imperceptively, Dennis Gomes straightened in his chair a little. This was not at all what he had expected.

"The prosecutors asked me to call you," the voice went on, "to see if you might be able to help us out with the case." "Sure... whatever I can do to help," Gomes replied, the faintest tingling sensation burrowing into the base of his spine -- a purely involuntary reaction. The unexpected import of this call had just begun to register in the back of Gomes's mind, rattling the cage of unfinished business and old battles that Gomes had locked away for years. "Can you tell me about the case?"

Whether or not the caller sensed the sudden gravity in Gomes's voice would never be known, especially since the Fed on the other end of the line spoke with the flat, uninflected deadpan of an archetypal government man. The starched collar and off-the-rack suit practically vibrated through the wires. "Well basically," Hickey began, "we're putting together what will probably turn out to be the biggest organized crime case in the history of the United States."

"That sounds good to me," Dennis Gomes remarked, because he could think of no other response at that point.

"And with your background, Sir - your history in Nevada -- you would be invaluable to us. As a matter of fact, we've always been impressed by how forward-thinking you were back then. Your investigations were really ahead of their time."

"I appreciate that," Gomes said, and then paused. "But I thought this stuff was all tried at one point by the federal government."

"Yeah... but they didn't really accomplish what we're going to accomplish."

Over the space of an instant Dennis Gomes put the pieces together. He remembered the first time the feds had gone

after the criminal power structure in the gaming industry. He remembered what a mess it had been - the hubris of the federal prosecutors, their refusal to tap the treasure trove of data that Gomes had collected over the years, the clash of egos, the missed opportunities.

"We have a mob guy who's flipped," Agent Hickey said then, "and he's admitted to several murders, one of them tied to the Outfit's activities in Vegas."

"Okay."

"We'd like your help with some of the facts.. and most importantly we want to ask you if you'd be willing to testify in Chicago when the case finally comes to trial. Basically you'd be a key witness providing the motive for one of the murders that this guy committed."

"May I ask the victim?"

"Jay Vandermark."

In the real world, second chances do not come along very often. Opportunities to set the record straight are rare. Ordinarily the best-laid plans of well-intentioned people - even those of extraordinary individuals on death-defying crusades - will drift away into the currents of history unresolved, forgotten, relegated to footnotes. But on that winter day, toward the end of 2004, when Dennis Gomes heard the name Jay Vandermark, and all the memories of Gomes's years as Chief of Audit and Special Investigations with the Nevada Gaming Control Board came flooding back, he did not hesitate.

He did not pause.

In the early 1970s Gomes had been one of the principle architects of then Nevada governor Michael O'Callaghan's plan to eradicate organized crime from the casinos. Driven by a relentless determination and an almost preternatural sense of justice, Gomes had spearheaded numerous high-profile raids on skimming operations and back-door larceny. He personally supervised the infamous Argent Corporation case - which became the basis for the 1995 Martin Scorsese movie, CASINO, starring Robert DeNiro. Gomes revolutionized the way casinos are operated - guidelines that are still on the books today. But when it came to beating the mob in an escalating, deadly game of chess... Gomes had narrowly escaped with his sanity - not to mention his life -- running up against a stalemate of systematic corruption.

It had been a stone in his shoe for over three decades, an epic tale that had laid in the pit of his stomach, gnawing at him.

Which was why, on that gray morning in 2004, when confronted with the opportunity to tell the sordid tale of George Jay Vandermark, as well as the rogues gallery of evil populating the back rooms of sin city, he did not hesitate one scintilla of a second. He did not give one thought to the dangers of testifying in front of a star chamber of wise guys. Potential retribution did not cross Dennis Gomes's mind. He did not feel a single twinge of reluctance before responding to Special Agent Andrew Hickey's request with an unqualified, unconditional, unadulterated *yes... of course.*

Of course he would help.

Once and for all, after more than thirty years, in front of God and man, he would set the record straight.

The Gomes family, at the time of Agent Hickey's initial call, lived in a stately three-story Colonial in the piney woods north of Atlantic City.

That night, Dennis Gomes came home and broke the news to his wife, Barbara, as carefully and gently as possible. Gomes was not sure how she would feel about the prospects of opening these old wounds. But Barbara Gomes -- a willowy former dancer, and the spitting image of Audrey Hepburn -- reacted with the kind of steely spine that can only come from being married to a former lawman for thirty-plus years: She thought it was pretty terrific.

Barbara Gomes knew how exciting it was to finally put all the lost pieces of the puzzle together. She remembered well the time when they were young, and Dennis was fighting the good fight. Barbara remembered the frustration, the agonizing close calls, and maybe most of all, the implacable sense of justice that made her fall for this upright, bare fisted truth seeker in the first place. She knew that this was important, this was *just* -- and maybe even inevitable.

All of which was good... because there would be plenty of waiting.

A case this far-reaching and historic takes months and months to prepare. Sometimes years. In the back of his mind, Dennis Gomes was vaguely aware of the hurry-up-and-wait nature of such endeavors. Still, he did not fully comprehend the scope of this case until the days and months passed from 2005 into 2006; and several additional



telephone conversations, followed by a visit to his home by key prosecutors, ultimately revealed the true epochal nature of these proceedings.

The case would come to be known worldwide as "The Family Secrets Trail" - the biggest indictment of organized crime in U.S. history. Under the auspices of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO for short), the feds were putting a "hit" - as one wag on the prosecution team put it - on the mob. The case featured fourteen defendants, eighteen murders, and nearly forty years of various and sundry activities such as bookmaking, loan sharking, extortion, torture, intimidation, and - there is no better phrase for it -- domestic terrorism. What made this case different - among other things - was the doorway through which prosecutors were coming at the mob. In the past, the government would *begin* with instances of "thuggery," and then would ask jurors to connect the acts with orders handed down from on-high. The Family Secrets approach would be to start with the *bosses* - to literally prove that the organizational hierarchy existed -- and then show that the crimes were committed in service of these bosses.

Among the fourteen defendants indicted, several were top bosses who figured prominently in Dennis Gomes's personal history in Las Vegas. One these bosses had allegedly signed off on the murder of George Jay Vandermark - the mob's slot machine man at the Stardust -- whom Gomes, in the mid 1970s, had worked diligently to flip. Vandermark was on the verge of cooperating with Gomes right before vanishing on a so-called Mexican vacation. Although the crime was never solved, authorities pieced together foul

play by talking to other informants, many of whom also ended up taking sudden and long lasting "vacations." But the thorn in Dennis Gomes's side all these years was that Vandermark had held the key to the skimming going on at four major casinos on Gomes's investigative docket. Now, these long-buried memories were being dredged up by a team of crew-cut, straight-arrow prosecutors, who showed up on Gomes's doorstep in mid-2005 to seal the deal in person. Andy Hickey was there. Also present was the lead prosecutor in the case, Mitchell Mars of the U.S. Attorney's Office, who impressed Gomes with his no-nonsense, friendly manner. There was none of pomposity that Gomes had encountered over the years with other federal prosecutors.

*This feels like a fraternity,* Gomes thought as he sat down with the feds in his spacious living room for coffee and 'Q & A.' They asked Gomes a slew of questions about his investigations in the seventies, and they explained that Gomes's role in trial would be as a sort of historian, providing the whys and wherefores for certain assassinations and disappearances.

"What you did in Las Vegas was a major accomplishment," Mars said to Gomes at one point, referring to all the years Gomes had spent turning over rugs in casinos and revealing the corruption slithering underneath.

Sadly, back in 1970s, very few of Gomes's masters - from the Governor's office to the upper echelons of Nevada's gaming regulators - had seemed particularly grateful to Gomes for his revolutionary investigative work.

"I would think this trial would be a golden opportunity for you to finally make things right," Mars ventured finally,

summing things up like the consummate litigator. "It'll make all that good work you did mean something."

Was the prosecutor blowing smoke? Was he stroking Gomes simply to bolster his commitment to testify? Or was it a sincere reaching-out from one branch of law to another? Probably all of the above. But regardless of the motivation, Gomes appreciated the sentiment.

He also appreciated the fact that the government was prepared to officially subpoena him. He thought that was a good idea, especially since he was not a cop anymore. Gomes did not want anybody - especially wise guys - to think he was simply *volunteering* to testify: doing it because it felt good. The appearance of a court order - not that it would change anything for Gomes - was more of a practical matter, a veneer of protection for his family. The peace of mind was helpful... especially after the feds said their goodbyes and returned to Chicago... and the waiting began.

As the months drew nearer and nearer to his court date, Dennis Gomes started getting nervous. But not for the reasons one might guess. Not because of fears of mob reprisals -- no matter how appropriate those fears might be in such a high-level case. And not because of the exposure of residing in an isolated grove of pines that creaked and whispered late at night, providing shadowy egress for all manner of potential stalkers. On the contrary, Gomes got nervous for a far more prosaic reason.

He hated public speaking.

In Catholic grammar school Gomes had suffered from reading problems. He struggled with class recitations and detested the moments he had to read aloud from that thick door-stop of a book known as *The Early Reader*. In second grade, one particularly mean-spirited nun would scream at the eight year old Gomes as he slogged through his stammering recitals. *Sister Mary Vincenzo*. To this day, Gomes still remembers that dreaded name. One time, the yelling proved too much for little Dennis and he started to cry. But the nun was relentless, yelling even louder and making him complete the task regardless of his tears.

Humiliations like these stick with a person. Despite the fact that Dennis Gomes would grow up to be a force of nature in law enforcement -- often finding himself at the public podium -- he never much liked to talk in front of people. And now he realized the biggest organized crime trial of this new century would bring him before not only the lidded gazes of gangsters, but also the glare of the klieg lights.

As July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007, loomed on the calendar, Gomes began to make arrangements for the trip to the Windy City.

Normally, whenever he traveled, he liked to have his family in tow. But he didn't feel right bringing his wife and daughters along to the trial. He didn't want them hearing or seeing the things that would invariably be exhumed on the witness stand. The Gomes girls, however, insisted on coming along, and being there for their dad.

The truth of the matter was, despite his reticence, Gomes felt relieved that they were coming. He was happy to have the moral support.

So he and Barbara decided to turn the journey into a quasi-vacation, culminating with a trip to their daughter Mary's home in Iowa...

...after a quick detour to a courtroom in Chicago.

\* \* \*

From its days as a gas-lit abattoir of stockyards and reaper works, Chicago has always been a city that works. Planted like a stubborn weed on the swampy threshold of the Great Lakes, this teeming, bustling city is a place of blue collar legend - from the Haymarket riots to the rough and tumble days of the Daley political machine. Its history was written by the blistered hands of stevedores, train yard workers, meatpackers, and foundry men. But the invisible grease beneath the city's industry always came from crime.

No single icon of Chicago looms larger than Al Capone. For most of the twentieth century - until Michael Jordan bumped him off the cultural radar -- Capone represented the Roaring Twenties and the *rat-a-tat-tat* of tommy guns (which foreigners still mime today as an international symbol of the town). But Capone's legacy goes deeper than posters in pizza parlors and punch lines for bad burlesque.

Al Capone single handedly consolidated organized crime in Chicago. Unlike the warring factions of *La Cosa Nostra* on the east coast, the Chicago version of the mob flourished throughout the second half of the twentieth century as a monolithic criminal enterprise. Known as 'The Outfit,' the organization reached its zenith in the 1970s, with its tentacles reaching into everything from high interest

"juice" loans to pornography... from gambling parlors to vending machines. The Outfit owned cops, politicians, and vast amounts of real estate. It was only logical that they would spread their influence across the country into Glitter Gulch.

The Chicago in which Dennis Gomes and Family arrived on that hot, blustery afternoon in July, 2007, no longer thrummed with submachine guns... or sputtered with gas lights. This Chicago was a gleaming Cathedral of glass spires, the skyline reflecting off the opal reaches of Lake Michigan. The old speakeasies and bootleg temples west of town were now vast patchworks of tree-lined suburbs, corporate parks, and endless corridors of strip malls. But the influence of The Outfit still clung to the place like ghosts. In fact, on this very day -- as Dennis and Company were gathering their luggage at O'Hare, and hunting down their rental car - Federal prosecutors were preparing to perform an exorcism.

The Gomeses drove into the city and found their hotel - The 'W' City Center - just two blocks from the Dirksen Federal Building. They checked in, and while Barbara and Danielle explored the neighborhood, Dennis Gomes walked the two blocks over to the courthouse for a meeting with Mars and Agent Hickey.

After methodically going over each and every question they were going to ask, Mars went on to add one last piece of assurance: "We're really going to emphasize your law enforcement training here, Dennis... mostly to impress upon these wise guys that you were a *real cop*, not just some regulator. To these guys, once you're a cop, you're always a cop. They're not going to question your expertise."

Gomes gave him a nod and took a deep breath. "I appreciate that, Mitch."

On his way back to the hotel, walking through the lakeshore breezes, Gomes felt better than good. He felt almost giddy with confidence. He felt protected. He felt the trial was under the control of steady hands. In fact, he felt comfortable enough to go out to dinner that night for a pleasant evening with Barbara and Danielle and a couple of old high school friends. They drank wine and talked about the old days, and all the good cheer took Gomes's mind off his pending performance.

That night, before bed, the Gomeses gazed out their window at a Hollywood film crew shooting a scene from *Batman Begins* - a make-believe mob perpetrating make-believe evil - and Gomes finally turned in. He slept soundly. Clear-headed. Relaxed. At peace with his destiny, and his Taoist mindset: Going with the flow.

The next morning, after breakfast, Dennis and family walked to the courthouse together. The Dirksen Federal Building is a thirty-story black edifice of steel and glass facing the lake - as sedate and innocuous as it is imposing - like a monastic tower planted amidst a futuristic landscape. Agent Hickey met the family at the entrance, and ushered them up to the twenty-fifth floor.

After well-wishes from the family, Gomes was taken to the witness room.

The Spartan, institutional waiting area could have easily been a side-room at the Department of Motor Vehicles: no burnished wainscoting or American flags, just chairs and tension as thick as bouillabaisse. Two other hearty souls already occupied the waiting room - somebody's former girlfriend and an ex-cop - but Gomes kept his

thoughts and his eyes mostly to himself. He didn't know these people - they could be anybody - and besides, Gomes was too keyed-up and excited to chat about the ninety-degree weather or the latest Cubs game.

Gomes had experienced similar moments in kick-boxing tournaments: that buzz of adrenaline right before a match. He just wanted to get in there and start fighting. He just wanted to get it done.

But the clock seemed to be slowing down. Tick... tick... *tiiiiiiiiiiiiick...*

\* \* \*

While Dennis Gomes waited in the purgatory of the witness room, his wife Barbara, and daughters Danielle and Gabrielle, all sat in the courtroom gallery, within clear view of the mob royalty lined up at the defense table, only a few feet away, looking like deposed dictators: Anthony "Twan" Doyle, Paul "The German" Schiro, James "Jimmy Light" Marcello, Frank "The Breeze" Calabrese, and Joey "The Clown" Lombardo.

In the awkward silence following a listing off of horrifying charges, including everything from throat-slitting to dumping bodies in lime pits, Barbara Gomes heard a voice in her ear.

"You see that gentleman over there?" the voice whispered. It was Agent Hickey, sitting next to Barbara, discreetly pointing out one of the mobsters. "At one point, he had people waiting for your husband in Mexico... and if Dennis had crossed the border, he never would have come back."



Then Hickey turned and whispered to Danielle Gomes, "You have no idea how close your dad came to dying."

All at once Barbara Gomes felt the fear pressing down on her, trickling coldly down her spine, constricting her throat. Right then she decided that maybe being here was not such a terrific idea after all; maybe staying home would have been more prudent.

At that moment, in a side chamber adjacent to the courtroom, Barbara's husband was reaching a different conclusion: It was time to face the crowd.

Memories of standing before his second grade class, petrified, reciting Dick and Jane, getting his knuckles rapped by the nun's ruler, percolated in the back of his mind. Gomes knew the courtroom would be packed. He knew that all faces would turn and fix their unwavering gazes on him as he made his entrance.

There would be no crying today. No nuns. No Dick and Jane readers.

Earlier that morning, back at the hotel, after sprucing himself up and getting into his dignified black suit, Gomes had looked at himself in the mirror. The reflection of a cop stared back at him.

Once a cop, always a cop.

"Mr. Gomes?" the voice of the bailiff came from across the waiting room at precisely 10:19 a.m. Central Standard Time. Gomes stood, brushed himself off, and followed the court official through the inner door.

The first impression Gomes got as he entered the courtroom was a vague sense of light and dark - dark suits, bright diffuse light from high ceiling fixtures, dark burnished wood, and the bright mosaic of the crowd, all the faces, all shapes and ages, turning toward *him*. Even a sketch artist, seated near the front, paused and studied the new subject entering the courtroom. No cameras were allowed in the room, which only added to the tense, ceremonial atmosphere.

Then Gomes saw, in the front row of the spectator section, sitting side by side as though waiting in a pew for a church service to begin, the smiling faces of his family: the Gomes girls.

This reassuring vision gave Gomes a shot of encouragement and strength... and maybe even pride. But then, as he followed the bailiff past the gallery to the witness stand, Gomes turned and looked straight ahead.

And his stomach clenched.

As he walked past the jury box, past the judge's dais and the watchful gaze of the Honorable James B. Zagel, and then past the crowded prosecution table, Gomes's gaze fixed on the row of tables dead ahead of him, against the far wall. His solar plexus went cold.

There are moments in life when the passage of time slows down. Car accidents. Marriage proposals. Battlefield action. These are those rare flashpoint moments from which everything from that point on will be measured, and every prior event will be marked as '*before*.'

*This* moment - in this hushed, crowded, ceremonial room in the Everett M. Dirksen U.S. Courthouse - was one of those moments for Dennis Gomes.

As he approached the witness chair, he found himself staring directly - at eye level - into the baleful gazes of Chicago's underworld kingpins.

Lombardo, Marcello, Calabrese - positioned behind the witness box -- each watched Dennis Gomes approach with the inscrutable, languid, impassive stare of a rattlesnake. No barriers. No Italian-style enclosures separating the accused. Only about twenty feet of air between the death-dealers and the truth-teller.

The dusty floor of the OK corral could not have offered a more dramatic showdown.

*I'm not looking away*, Gomes found himself thinking before taking his seat. *I'm not going to look away like some scared rabbit... not until I make that turn.*

It only took a few more seconds for Gomes to reach the witness chair and turn to settle in, facing judge and jury. Only a miniscule blip of time... maybe two or three seconds. But that brief instant -- as his gaze met and held the stares of hard-core killers - would turn out to be a defining moment for Gomes.

Very few people present that day even noticed it. Maybe Barbara did. Danielle and Gabrielle might have caught it. But for Dennis Gomes, those three seconds touched on something deeper than mere courtroom *machismo*. That fleeting instant of iron-willed resolve spoke of a career - a lifetime -- of *not looking away*.

On that muggy July day, in that hushed courtroom, for the next forty-five minutes or so, Gomes would lay a foundation of history, motive, and opportunity that would become one of the linchpins of the government's case against The Outfit. His testimony would give onlookers a teasing glimpse into an amazing story...

...the story of Dennis Gomes and his systematic attack on corruption in Las Vegas.

This is his story.

The true story of a man who was born and bred *not* to look away.

PART ONE  
BULLETS AND PENCILS

"And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple."

-- Mark 11:15

CHAPTER ONE  
CARDBOARD WINGS

*Look him right in the eye,* the thirteen-year-old Dennis Gomes was thinking at that moment, almost instinctively, almost without being aware of his own thoughts, as he stood on the edge of the playground adjacent to old St. Clare's school, clenching his fists.

The other kids, who had been playing a game of four-squares, now backed off into the shade of the eucalyptus trees to watch from a safe distance.

Across the cracked cement, maybe ten feet away, an eighth-grade bully had just knocked down a weaker boy. The kid on the ground, a mild-mannered seventh-grader named Robert Hays, struggled to keep the waterworks from flowing, but it was a losing battle. The kid choked back a sob, his face already smudged and livid.

Sadly, the Hays boy had grown accustomed over the years to being called cruel names - on one level this was just another day at the office. The bully, a big portly kid with ham-hock arms and almost no neck, paused mid-assault at the sound of a sharp cry from across the playground.

"I said leave him alone!" Dennis Gomes shouted a second time, fists clenching harder. Physically he was not exactly an imposing figure - gangly, thin, baby faced, with the masculine cleft-chin of his father looking out of place

on his face, as though waiting for the rest of his body to catch up - but there was something *substantial* about the kid. Something approaching *gravitas*... even at this age.

The fat boy turned, put his hands on his hips, and shot a baleful glance at Dennis Gomes. "Who's gonna make me?" the big kid wanted to know.

Gomes's throat was dry, but he spoke as clearly as possible, almost calmly. "*I'm gonna make you.*"

*Fight or flight* was the term, as Dennis Gomes would find out later. The phrase referred to this feeling of hair bristling on the nape and muscles contracting around the midsection. He ignored the feeling and kept balling his fists. The secret, he knew in some distant compartment of his mind, was to *keep looking the bully right in the eyes, and never stop, never ever look away, no matter what.*

Now a wicked sort of smirk tugged at the corners of the heavy-set kid's lips, as he lumbered menacingly over to the Gomes boy. The big kid came to within inches of Gomes's face. "You and who else?"

*Don't stop looking him in the eyes; the look is everything, it's everything.*

"Just me," Dennis Gomes said, wishing he knew a wittier, more acerbic comeback.

The bully chortled at that one, and shook his head with amusement.

Then the big kid went back to where poor little Robert Hays was struggling to his feet, wiping the snot off his face. The bully shoved the weaker kid back to the ground, almost as if demonstrating his dismissive attitude toward big-talkers like the Gomes boy.

"I told you to leave him alone!" Dennis Gomes was approaching, his fingernails digging into his palms, his

gaze unnaturally locked on the eyes of the overweight kid.

"Now leave him alone!"

Nose to nose, the boys stared at each other.

"What are you gonna do about it?" the big kid finally inquired.

"I'm going to beat the shit out of you if you touch him again."

"Oh?"

The fat boy turned and gave the Hays kid one more push for good measure.

Gomes jumped on the bully.

Like all schoolyard tussles, the fight was sudden, sloppy, and melodramatic. Dennis Gomes landed very few punches -- it was like trying to ring a bell made out of meat - but he must have caused *some* damage because the big kid started sputtering and stumbling backward. The fight seemed to go on forever. The bully was so huge he wouldn't go down. But finally, in a flurry of blows, the smaller boy drove the freckled Goliath to the ground.

And that was when Dennis Gomes learned his first hard lesson in group-dynamics.

Now on top of the fat boy, still pummeling wildly like an engine that was revving out of control, Gomes started sensing the strangest change in the air: Onlookers were now rushing past the battling boys, as though the fight had become some kind of group activity or schoolyard game, like Red Rover or Kick Ball. But stranger still, was the fact that they were throwing things at *Gomes*. Throwing things at the *rescuer* -- not at the bad guy. They were turning on the *good guy!*

They were putting wads of gum in Gomes's hair, and tossing candy wrappers at him, and just generally expressing their



disapproval, as though they resented his brazen disregard for the balance of power.

It took Gomes a long time to figure out why they were mad at him.

He didn't know it then, but fate had already begun to steer his destiny.

And during the course of his life, he would learn, again and again, the cost of justice.

Born in 1944, in San Jose, California, Gomes had a twin brother who died shortly after birth. To this day, Gomes thinks about that lost twin.

As one of the middle siblings in a family of four boys, Gomes spent his early childhood in the small bedroom community of Sunnyvale, California - just west of Santa Clara - in the wooded area that would one day become known as Silicon Valley. When he was four, Dennis and his family moved to Santa Clara, occupying a cozy little cottage smack-dab in the middle of an orchard.

Gomes's dad, Stephen, was a second-generation Portuguese construction laborer, an avid boxer, whose parents had settled in Hawaii years earlier to work in the sugarcane fields. A tall, lanky man with a strong jaw and receding hairline, Steve Gomes had seen action in the Pacific as a sailor in World War II. But despite his tough exterior, he was a gentle man who instilled a rock-solid sense of right and wrong in his boys.

Gomes's mother, Mildred, was a petite, olive-skinned woman with a quick smile and a love of books and knowledge. She

made the most of her husband's scant salary, but struggled to make ends meet each month.

In spite of this modest blue-collar environment, however, Gomes never thought of his family as poor. A pair of corduroy pants for school, maybe some Levis and a couple of pairs of shoes, and Gomes felt rich. When the pants inevitably wore out, Gomes saw the patches as a fashion statement. When those patches wore out, there would be little patches on the big patches - a natty look for the boy.

Shoes would get resoled again and again... until each step the boy took would make a clapping noise as he sauntered down the sidewalk. At one point, the neighbor kids grew so impressed by Dennis Gomes's *so-what* attitude - and his trademark *WHAP-WHAP-WHAP* sound as he strutted down the street -- that they started cutting the front soles of their own expensive shoes so they too would clap.

As young as age six, Gomes had an uncanny sense of social justice. On one occasion he overheard a neighbor lady mumbling under her breath, after glaring at a Portuguese family pattering around in their front yard, "Look at that -- these Portugese are ruining the neighborhood." Gomes didn't say anything to the lady, but he did think to himself, *That's really stupid... that lady doesn't know what's she talking about.*

At St. Clare's, one of California's oldest Catholic grammar schools, Gomes wasn't a natural student - perhaps suffering from a touch of dyslexia. He got into more than his fair share of mischief. But he also got along well with most of the nuns. He enjoyed the spirited talks that many of the Sisters would encourage in class.

As little Dennis grew, he explored the miles and miles of fruit orchards with his pals - a wonderland of hills and switchbacks and train tracks -- which instilled a sense of freedom in the boy. He would jump trains and interact with hobos and started dreaming of travel and adventures beyond the patchwork quilt of trees circling his world.

One time, the young Gomes led his friends on a wild goose chase along a dry creek bed that snaked through the wilderness. It was an arduous journey, and they biked for hours, until Dennis spotted a paved road. They took the macadam for a while, until, out of nowhere, a small single engine plane swooped down toward them, close enough for the pilot to wave.

The kids thought this was pretty swell, waving back at the aviator and pretending to return imaginary gunfire, when all at once a squadron of airport vehicles and trucks came out of nowhere, lights spinning. The boys were immediately surrounded. It turned out they had inadvertently ridden onto one of the main runways of the San Jose Airport, preventing the approach of scores of planes.

The cops came. They loaded the bikes onto paddy wagons and hauled the kids home. Gomes got his hide tanned that day. But maybe it was worth it. The experience was Gomes's first up-close encounter with lawmen. They made an impression on the young boy, with their spit-shine uniforms and .38s on their belts. Did he imagine himself carrying iron some day? Did he feel the hook sink into him as the boys in blue escorted him home?

Or did such influences shape the boy into becoming a playground vigilante?

There would be many other schoolyard confrontations over the next few years. As a teenager Gomes got the reputation

for being one of the toughest kids at Bellarmine College Preparatory School in San Jose - but something deeper than fisticuffs was starting to fuel his imagination. His brother, Steve Jr., had gotten accepted into the rigorous program at Bellarmine two years earlier, and Dennis' 130 IQ put him in the top tier academically. Juggling late nights at the neighboring all-girls school, while ripping through religious studies and science classes, Dennis Gomes found himself starting to think about his future.

By this point, Stephen, Sr., had worked his way up from laborer to carpenter to superintendent in the construction field, and now was working for a builder making inroads into the exploding real estate market in Nevada. In 1960, the Gomes family moved to Las Vegas. Unbeknown to Dennis, still raging with teenage hormones, this move would ultimately seal his fate.

Established as a desert outpost in the early Twentieth Century, Las Vegas did not leave the launch pad as a city until Bugsy Siegel and Meyer Lansky showed up in the mid-1940s with a boatload of dirty money and a neon-lit dream. Over the next decade and a half, this arid oasis-town blasted off into the gambling stratosphere. By the time the Gomes family arrived, in early 1960, the place had reached the apogee of cool - a heyday of a certain kind that may never be reached again. The Rat Pack had just set up housekeeping at the Sands, and Elvis had just started shaking his pelvis with Ann Margaret in "Viva Las Vegas," and the big casinos such as The Sahara, The Riviera, The

Dunes, The Stardust, and The Tropicana were just hitting their strides. But like all Great Company Towns - Detroit and Los Angeles among them - Las Vegas was a lot more than just its core industry.

The town had the blood of honest working people running through it, from croupiers to caterers... from cab drivers to construction workers. Nellis Air Force Base employed thousands of civilians, as did the growing mining industry. Homes and apartment complexes were sprouting faster than prickly pears, and communities such as Spring Valley to the south, Spanish Hills to the west, and Summerlin to the north began to proliferate.

As Stephen Gomes settled into his new role as a developer for these burgeoning suburbs, churning out dream homes for a city specializing in dreams, seventeen year old Dennis transferred to Bishop Gorman High School, a Catholic institution on the east side of town, in the shadows of the red-tinged Spring Mountains. Gomes loved the new school - especially the girls - and his grades slipped a little. One day, shortly after starting at Bishop Gorman, Gomes was strolling down the noisy central corridor with a friend, when he noticed an attractive girl coming in the opposite direction. "Who in the world's that?" Gomes marveled under his breath. This young lady was a stunner - a flaxen-haired beauty, a shoe-in for that year's homecoming queen honors.

"Oh, that's Linda Layman," the friend informed him.

"Wow."

"Don't get too excited, Tiger, everybody wants to date her and she won't go out with anyone."

Gomes watched the girl make a turn down a side corridor and vanish into a classroom.

"Everybody on the football team has taken a crack, and she's been a no-go," the other boy added. "So you might as well forget it... because if *they* can't get anywhere with her, *you're* not going to be able to get any place with her."

But what Gomes's young friend and advisor did *not* know is that Dennis Gomes was a young man who *gravitated* toward lost causes and impossible dreams. '*Don't ever dare Denny to do something,*' Gomes's mother, Mildred, once said to Gomes's best friend Bobby Schmidt. '*Because no matter how stupid it is, and no matter how dangerous it is, he'll do it... so never challenge him!*'

One time, back in middle school, Gomes was told that he couldn't fly. A physical impossibility, his friends assured him. No way, no how... you can't do it. So Gomes proceeded to blithely build a pair of cardboard wings. He worked on them a long time, too, and they were splendid. So beautifully designed and aerodynamic they would have made Leonardo DeVinci green with jealousy. Then Gomes proceeded to jump out a second-story window. Of course, the wings immediately folded up and he narrowly avoided serious injury - or death - when he landed in a soft pile of dirt.

Needless to say, in those early weeks at Bishop Gorman, Gomes launched an all-stops-out campaign to woo the lovely Linda Layman...

...and eventually he broke down her defenses. The twosome started going steady - much to the amazement of the Bishop Gorman student body - and as sometimes happens with young hormonal romantics, one thing led to another, and the couple got serious.

Things started happening quickly for Gomes. Within a few years he and Linda were engaged, and Gomes found himself staring down the barrel of college. He started thinking seriously about careers.

Early on, as a kid in Santa Clara, he dreamed of being a fighter pilot. But as he grew, almost unconsciously, Gomes started imagining himself as something else - something that had probably infiltrated his boyhood imaginings from the moment he stopped that bully from beating up on poor little Robert Hays - *the righteous, incorruptible, ice-water-in-his-veins, professional lawman.*

The notion had been brewing for some time, stirred by the hardships of his blue-collar background.

For instance, Gomes would never forget the time his father Steve tried to start a private firm. Here was a man who had worked his whole life - back-breaking manual labor, mostly - to build a nest egg. And finally Steve had found a moneyman to finance a small door company (the plan was to build custom doors for homes and warehouses). But the money guy turned out to be a con man, absconding with all the revenue.

The IRS hounded Steve and Mildred for years... and Dennis Gomes remembered being incensed that this "piece of shit" money guy had gotten away with such a crime. The urge to track down people like this - to see justice done, to right the wrongs done to innocent people - began to smolder like an ember inside young Dennis Gomes.

Fanning the flames of this secret desire was a profession that operated on an almost mythological plane in the America of the 1950s and 60s. These were the days before J. Edgar Hoover was outed as a ruthless, reactionary cross-dresser... the days before Nixonian enemy lists and Jim Crow

conflicts in the south... before all the counter-culture stereotypes of FBI agents as tools of the fascist state. This was a time when the myths of The Untouchables, Elliot Ness, and Melvin Purvis were still burning in the collective unconscious. The image of the FBI agent as a dapper, gallant, educated paladin of truth and justice reflected the new white-collar society.

Dennis Gomes had read somewhere that there are two basic paths to becoming a G-man: law or accounting. And he simply could not see himself as a lawyer.

Gomes ended up at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. It wasn't the most prestigious home of higher learning in the country, but it had a liberal admissions policy; and with a C-plus grade point average, Gomes could not be choosy. But it would still be an uphill battle.

His new wife, now pregnant with Gomes's first child, was adamantly opposed to being married to a college boy. She fought hard against Gomes's master plan of becoming an accountant, before ultimately becoming a fed. She saw starvation in their future, foreclosure, bankruptcy, homelessness, and poverty straight out Charles Dickens. She threatened to divorce Gomes. She begged him, she cajoled.

"What is wrong with you?" Gomes asked her flat-out one evening in their modest little one-bedroom apartment near the campus.

"You're never going to be able to pull this off," she said, sobbing.



"I don't care what you say, I'm doing this," Gomes retorted. "I'm going to work forty hours a week, and you don't have to work at all."

"But how many classes will you be taking?"

"I'm going to take a full load. I want to graduate in four years."

"That's impossible!" She sobbed harder. "Don't you realize that's *impossible?!?*"

Little did Linda Layman know: She was inadvertently sealing her own fate. She was double-dog-daring her husband to build some more cardboard wings.

This time, the wings would be engineered much differently. One of the single most important influences on Gomes's future was an accounting teacher at UNLV named Reuben Newman. A tough little bald guy, a former paratrooper, Professor Newman saw a diamond in the rough in Gomes.

"You're one of the best accounting students I ever had," Newman said to Gomes at one point. "I'm gonna keep my eye on you, and if you ever - ever - get a grade below a 'B' I'm going to kick your ass."

At first, Gomes was skeptical. He wasn't sure he was as brilliant as Newman claimed, but he did not want to let Newmann down. Plus, Gomes learned soon enough that the professor was tracking every one of Gomes's grades.

Newmann would make little comments about each grade, just to make sure Gomes knew Big Brother was watching. Little by little, though, Gomes started thinking that he might be, at least, as smart as the rest of the students. And by the

time he was nearing graduation, now at the top of his class, he realized that perhaps Reuben Newman was right. It did not, however, come easy.

Life at home with Linda was getting more and more tumultuous. With a baby now to support, and a grueling work schedule, Gomes would study at night, sacrificing sleep and sanity for grades.

On more than one occasion, Linda would storm into Gomes's workspace and dramatically tear his papers out of his textbooks, wadding them up and throwing them away. But it was like an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. Gomes would merely retrieve the crumpled pages, calmly smooth them back out, tape them back into his textbook and go back to work without comment.

Divorce seemed imminent.

After getting his BS in Accounting, Gomes landed a job -- with Professor Newman's help -- at one of the largest international accounting firms in the world: Peat, Marwick, Mitchell.

Now he was one step closer to the dream of being a federal agent: FBI agents who come from the accounting world are required to have a CPA, a license attainable only after two years of work experience. For the first time in his life, Gomes saw the lofty goal of being a fearless Feeb clearly visible on the horizon.

Peat, Marwick, Mitchell sent Gomes to Hawaii. By this time, Linda had given birth to the Gomeses' second child, but the marriage was crumbling. Crying herself to sleep at night, Linda felt lost in Honolulu, a displaced, tortured soul. Gomes struggled to help her, yearned to make her happy. It was a losing battle.

At the same time, Dennis Gomes was proving himself a natural at the accounting game on the island. With his Portuguese roots, and his Hawaiian family background, Gomes was trusted by the locals, considered more than just some mainland *Hali* (Hawaiian slang for foreigner). Gomes's career grew as a result of his success. He even started ferreting out fraud here and there - getting practice at the investigative side of the business.

By 1969 he was ready for his CPA exam. He passed it with flying colors, although some of his answers were more the result of MacGuyver-like improvisation than general knowledge. One question asked applicants to "*discuss the writing off of research and development costs through the use of probability analysis.*" Gomes was nonplussed, had never heard of anything remotely like this, and proceeded to compose a five page response of what he would later term "pure bullshit." Examiners were impressed. They gave Gomes a hundred percent on the answer.

By this point, Gomes had risen at Peat, Marwick to the position of Supervising Senior Accountant in the Audit Division. He decided to parlay his achievements by going to graduate school for an MBA in Finance. But unbeknown to his supervisors at Peat, Marwick, he wasn't doing this to be a better accountant. He was doing it to be the best FBI agent the Bureau had ever seen.

He got accepted at the University of Washington and worked as a professor's assistant while he completed the program. Calculus, quantitative method, programming, the Stanford approach - all the business classes held little interest for Gomes when compared with the study of human behavior. Gomes loved reading the works of Aubrey Daniels, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and William James. Gomes didn't know

it then, but he would be a student of human nature for the rest of his life.

After receiving his masters, Gomes left Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, and joined Coopers and Lybrand as a management consultant. But now his sights were fixed with laser intensity on a career with the FBI. By early 1971, Gomes was visiting field offices, and raising eyebrows among Bureau recruiters: Here was a perfect specimen - born and bred to be a field agent - and in no time offers were being put on tables.

Gomes was bound for Quantico - the elite FBI training academy in the wooded wetlands of Virginia - when fate, as it often does, interceded.

The phone call that changed the course of Dennis Gomes's life came into Seattle almost at the same moment Gomes was filling out the last of the application materials for the FBI. The caller was Gomes's dad, Stephen.

"Look, Denny, I know you want to be in law enforcement, and you're dead set on joining the FBI," the voice on the other end of line crackled. "But I heard about a job opening down here you should know about."

"Oh yeah?" Gomes's ears perked up. His dad was the no-nonsense type. The man would never call with some trivial piece of fluff. "What is it, Dad?"

"You know about the new governor, right?"

"Sure, O'Callaghan, right?" Gomes knew the broad strokes of story. He knew that Nevada's government had always been controlled by the gambling industry, but the

1970 election had been a game-changer. Dark horse candidate Michael O'Callaghan -- a bare-knuckle-tough war hero and crony of LBJ, with no ties to the industry -- had slipped into office on a restless fervor for change. And now the new guy wanted to clean house. He wanted to get back all that lost tax revenue that was hemorrhaging out of the casinos due to the sticky fingers of the mob.

"That's the guy," Steve Gomes replied. "I understand he's really hot to beef up the Gaming Control Board."

Another thing Dennis Gomes knew was that his dad worked for a good friend of Michael O'Callaghan, and whatever inside information Steve Gomes had, it was probably reliable. "Okay, Dad, so what does this have to do with me?"

"They got this division, Audit and Special Investigations, and I guess they're looking for somebody to run the thing, to whip it into shape."

"That's a law enforcement agency, isn't it?" Gomes asked his dad.

"Yeah, I guess it is."

"There's just one problem, Dad. I'm an accountant. I don't have any law enforcement experience."

After a long pause, during which time Gomes could almost hear his dad smiling, the voice replied, "No experience, huh? That never stopped you in the past."

The meeting took place at Michael O'Callaghan's mansion in Carson City, and both Gomes and his brother Steve Jr. were present. The older Gomes boy, a left-leaning intellectual,

who by this time had earned a PhD, was being considered for a job in the welfare sector. Also present were Phil Hannifin, Chairman of the Gaming Board, and George Miller, head of the Nevada welfare system.

At the outset of the meeting, much to Dennis Gomes's chagrin, his elder brother launched into an angry diatribe about systemic abuse in the Nevada welfare system - specifically a series of sex scandals at a local all-girl's reformatory. Not the best way to start a job interview. Attentions were quickly shifted toward the younger Gomes boy.

For several minutes Dennis Gomes talked about law enforcement and the tools in his arsenal as an accountant. He was lucid, focused, and articulate. The other gentlemen listened closely to what he had to say. At last, the governor spoke up.

"Look, Dennis, I'll be straight with you. I want to clean out organized crime in Las Vegas."

Gomes nodded, remaining silent.

"They basically control everything in Vegas," O'Callaghan went on. "But I didn't take one penny of campaign money from these people. Most of that money went to the other guy. I got in a fluke. The people elected me. So I'm going to go after these mob guys."

Gomes liked what he was hearing, but still remained silent. He just kept listening.

The governor continued: "This job we're talking to you about is basically to run the department that detects organized crime infiltration into the casinos. The department also investigates alleged 'skimming' - which is the exploitation of hidden interests in these gaming establishments. Do you follow me?"

"I do," Gomes said with a confident nod.

"If you were to accept this position, Dennis, you would carry a gun. You would officially become a peace officer. And you would go to peace officer training school, which is a lot like a police academy. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

There was a brief pause, and from the body language - each of three officials were sitting forward in their chairs, their eyes practically twinkling - Dennis Gomes could tell that he had this thing in the bag.

"Well, Dennis?" The governor looked at him. "You interested?"

Gomes tried hard not to look like a little boy who just discovered a pony under the Christmas tree.

It took less than a month for the governor's office to make a decision.

Dennis Gomes, at twenty-six, would become one of the youngest people ever to head up a department of this magnitude -- a law enforcement agency charged with one of the most daunting missions imaginable: to extract the mob from Las Vegas. Gomes was so young, in fact, that government press releases at the time conveniently added a few years to his age. It didn't matter.

Gomes's dream was coming true.

In those weeks leading up to his first day on the job, Gomes was ecstatic. He lay awake at night visualizing the dream coming true. He envisioned walking into the Department of Audit and Special Investigations for the

first time - Elliott Ness greeting his hard-bitten minions, a young Patton meeting the Third Army at *Bastogne*. In his imagination Gomes saw the bustling office in which he would be working like something straight out of the TV shows of his childhood: *Dragnet*, *Naked City*, *The Untouchables*, *Manhunt*, *The Defenders*. In his mind's eye he saw himself walking into that high-stakes, high-adrenaline world on that first day to find a room full of Untouchables - fearless, lantern-jawed, eagle-eyed accountant cops - as handy with their handguns as they were with their adding machines. He pictured a super modern facility crackling with activity, hundreds of individuals pouring over evidence of skimming and mob influence, and yet, all of it choreographed and organized with military precision. As the day approached, Gomes could barely contain his excitement. He looked forward to all the lessons he would receive from these seasoned, street-wise, brave investigators. He could hardly wait. What an honor: to join such an amazing team of super-sleuths!

When the morning of his first day on the job arrived, he spent an inordinate amount of time at the mirror. He wanted to look sharp, slick, and professional for his colleagues. Announcements had gone out that week that the new Division Chief was arriving today, and Gomes didn't want to come off as some earnest, inexperienced, wet-behind-the-ears youngster playing cops and robbers - even though he felt on some level that's exactly what he was. He drove over to the government building in downtown Las Vegas buzzing with excitement.

The place was a non-descript office building just off Fremont Street that could have housed anything from the county dogcatcher to a bunch of self-storage lockers. He



went in and told the receptionist who he was and why he was there, and she told him where to find his department. Gomes went up to ASI, and paused outside the door for a brief instant, mentally preparing himself for the next great chapter of his life.

He went in.

He paused.

Did he have the wrong room? The place was a large, non-descript office scattered with boxes and empty desks and unidentified stacks of paper. Stranger still: There was a grand total of six warm bodies in the room - mostly older gentlemen - most of whom looked as though they were approaching retirement age and would be better off on a shuffleboard court.

After realizing he was indeed in the right place, Gomes took it all in, marveling at what he was seeing.

In one corner, an old geezer was sitting in his cubicle, alternating between doing tax returns and reading the newspaper. Gomes would later find out that this guy was moonlighting, doing tax work on the side, spending most of his workdays clipping coupons from *The Sun*.

The geezer looked up and noticed Gomes staring with disbelief. "Hey, kid," the old man said with a nod. "What do you want?"

"What do I *want*?" Gomes shook his head. "I'm Dennis Gomes, the new division chief."

The old man pursed his lips, covertly slipping his newspaper back into his drawer. "No kiddin'... well, welcome aboard."

The emotions flowing through Dennis Gomes at that moment can hardly be enumerated. On the surface, there were sudden twinges of disillusionment, outrage, and confusion -

the emotions one would expect when confronted with such a surreal SNAFU - and it occurred to him right then that he should simply turn around and leave.

But on a deeper level Gomes felt a faint buzz of determination.

Was it the old, stubborn, self-possessed kid bubbling to the surface? Was it the inborn persistence that causes a boy to go after a bully, to juggle impossible workloads, to win the hearts of homecoming queens? He would not fully come to terms with this until years later, but right then, Dennis Gomes decided what he truly wanted.. and he would go after it with all the vigor he could muster.

At that point another so-called "agent" - seated down the aisle - suddenly sprang to his feet to greet the new boss. Gomes went over to say hello, and the younger man, who looked as though a strong breeze would knock him over, started trembling as though afflicted with palsy. A cross between Barney Fife and a scared rabbit, the man could barely get out the words, "Welcome to the division, Sir." Gomes was numb. He looked around and found a third guy who appeared to be in charge.. *sort of*. A grouchy, curmudgeony old gent named Sam Rosenberg, this guy had been an investigator, Gomes found out later, in New York, during the Morgenthau era, working corruption cases against dirty IRS accountants.

After a few minutes of awkward small talk, Gomes asked Rosenberg to pull all the "investigation files" so that Gomes could get the lay of the land.

"What investigations?" Rosenberg asked incredulously, as though Gomes had just requested to see their drawer full of leprechauns.

With a sigh Gomes said, "Let me see your investigative work papers."

Rosenberg stared blankly. "We don't do investigations."

"Well... what do you do here exactly?"

"We do audits."

"Audits of what?"

Rosenberg shrugged. "Casinos... basically. We make sure they're paying their taxes."

Gomes tried to control his anger. "Alright, then let me see your audit work papers."

"Work papers?"

"For God's sake show me the paperwork from the last audit you did."

It took nearly half an hour.

As though he were an overworked clerk at an Ace Hardware store looking for a discontinued left-handed wrench, the old man reluctantly rifled through pile after pile of papers. Finally the old codger produced a handful of loose pages and handed them over.

Dennis Gomes -- a man trained at the top accounting firms in the world; a man who was, even at the tender age of twenty-six, accustomed to orderly binders, fully indexed and cross-referenced, with glossaries and tables of contents and footnotes - held the loose pages as though holding a dead cat.

Gomes let out a pained sigh and set the stack of garbage down on the desk.

One thing was certain: It was time to dust off those cardboard wings.

II.  
CHAPTER OUTLINE

THE STORY CONTINUES  
CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER

CHAPTER TWO: GUNSMOKE

Like a forensic version of THE DIRTY DOZEN, Dennis Gomes starts transforming his ragtag crew of pencil pushers and senior citizens into a crack investigative unit. Phase one: Diagnosing the problem...

Opening all the old intelligence files, Gomes is stunned to find rampant corruption at the highest levels poisoning the casinos -- all manner of *Mafioso* muddying the waters, skimming, buying hidden interests. Gomes demands more bodies, more resources, more respect.

Phase Two: Training accountants to hunt bad guys. Gomes and his motley crew go to the "POST" school (Peace Officer and Standards and Training). A darkly comic series of vignettes follow: Accountants on the shooting range, getting ridiculed by cops, struggling to prove themselves. Nobody believes in these guys. Nobody wants a bunch of accountants running around with guns, shooting their feet off.

It seems these guys are a joke to everybody but Gomes. He is relentless, accompanying his team through the rules of evidence, how to shoot, how to conduct surveillance. Everybody thinks it's a big joke until the day of the final firearm test: The accountants line up on the range, standing next to real cops, and the guns roar! When the smoke clears, the accountants have nailed their targets - trouncing their counterparts!

CHAPTER THREE: WHISPERS

All around town now people are talking about this new hot-shot kid at the Gaming Control Board. Some of the people doing the talking are doing it in back rooms, under their breaths, as they count illicit funds and chew on cigars.

Will this kid be a thorn in their sides? Thorns get quickly removed in this town, buried in the sand out in the desert. Will this kid become a problem?

Meanwhile Dennis Gomes has done a lot to generate this uneasiness among the corrupt and the compromised. He has begun to create self-contained investigative and intelligence units with all new investigative procedures and codes of conduct for staking out casinos.

And maybe most importantly, he is developing a rapidly growing network of snitches and informants.

All of which leads Gomes to his first big raid.

One of the Gaming Control Board's Enforcement Division agents, a guy assigned to slot cheats, starts hanging out with Gomes. The twosome become friends, and one day this guy asks Gomes for some advice. Apparently suspicious activities are taking place at a small Northern Nevada casino called Zimbas. To Dennis it sounds like the owner is skimming.

Dennis wants to take immediate action. This will be his first big chance to prove that accountants can be cops.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: THE COOKIE JAR

Dennis and his team nervously pose as casino customers. Nothing happens for excruciating hours. Is this a mistake? Then, all at once, the "drop boxes" are taken off the tables, and Gomes sees the casino owner - a tough-looking little Italian guy - slip into the count room.

Show time!

Gomes and his agents surround the owner and flash their badges. The owner is shocked and confused. Gomes and his agents follow him into the count room to monitor his procedures.

The owner makes lame attempts to stall and dissemble, right up until the moment Gomes finds a hidden ledger. Right there in black and white - with a brazen disregard for the

law -- is the discrepancy between actual count and reported counts.

Gomes has the owner by the balls. The owner is aghast: This is not how business is done in this state! The bust is clean and quick.

Back in Vegas, Gomes presents his report to the Gaming Control Board. Phil Hannifin is delighted, and calls the bust "revolutionary."

Later, Hannifin admits to Gomes in private that the other board members had been laying down their own secret bets: They'd given long odds to the probability of accountants succeeding as cops.

Although prosecution is sought against Zimbas owner, the authorities simply revoke his license and allow him to plead out, "considering his advanced age."

But Gomes has bigger fish to fry. He focuses now on his master plan: An assault on the big casinos in Vegas.

#### CHAPTER FIVE: HARD LESSONS

Right around this time -- May of 1972 - Gomes's wife Linda decides she wants a divorce. Gomes is devastated, because he knows she needs him. Scarred by a very difficult childhood, Linda Layman doesn't really have anybody else to rely on. Dennis feels responsible for her. Nevertheless, after repeated attempts to save the marriage, Gomes relents. The divorce is finalized in July of 1972.

Gomes immerses himself into his work.

He is tipped-off by a snitch that a large-scale skimming operation is going down at the Circus-Circus Casino on the Las Vegas Strip.

He proposes a raid on the cage and count room. The Board "strongly" suggests that Gomes bring along at least one agent from the G.C.B.'s Enforcement Division -- a so-called real cop. Gomes emphatically tells them that he can take care of it himself, but they insist.

A few hours before his scheduled raid, Gomes receives a frantic call from his coin-room snitch. The informant tells Gomes that word of pending raid has reached the casino owners.

All the skimming is now being terminated, buried, hidden, wiped off the books.

At this point, Gomes knows that the raid will be fruitless and he cancels his plans.

After some investigation, Gomes finds out that the Enforcement agent has leaked the details of the pending raid to the Las Vegas Metro police, who are on mob's pay roll.

Gomes learns a hard lesson: Trust nobody, and keep your business to yourself.

The frustrations at work are echoed in Gomes's personal life. After ten years of marriage, he's not adjusting well to being single. He hates not sleeping in the same house as his two children, Mary and Doug. He makes sure that he sees them every day.

Gomes's loneliness is exacerbated by the garish neon nights of the Strip, the empty laughter, the narcotic abandon of high rollers. An accountant - let alone an accountant-cop - is an anachronism in Las Vegas, a foreign antibody subject to attack by all manner of white blood cells. The ridicule, the taunts of "real" investigators, the behind-the-back jokes - all of it is starting to eat away at Gomes.

Perhaps this was why Dennis Gomes ended up on a blind date one night - a lark - a way to perhaps temporarily drive away some the loneliness.

He certainly didn't expect this date to change his life.

## PART TWO: BOLSHEVIK IN RESIDENCE

### CHAPTER SIX: THE GIRL WITH THE LEGS

One of the icons of Las Vegas is a theatrical show known as *The Folies Bergere*. Dating all the way back to Nineteenth



Century France, the *Folies* features stunning showgirls and dancers in spectacular costumes performing show-stopping musical numbers.

On that fateful night, in September of 1972, Dennis Gomes goes to the Tropicana with his buddy Jim, an honest guy from the enforcement division, to meet a couple of dancers from the *Folies*. But when Barbara Robertson emerges from the back of the lounge, and Gomes first lays eyes on this willowy, long-legged beauty in her show makeup, it's as though he is seeing a mirage, an oasis in the desert for a thirsty man.

Gomes is hooked. He immediately starts dating the good-natured dancer - who looks even better out of her show makeup. And over the course of the next four months, a major romance blossoms between the two.

"Whirlwind" hardly captures the passion and magnetism of this storybook courtship. The two Vegas "working stiff" form an indestructible bond - and by January of 1973, Gomes pops the question. Robertson accepts.

A good thing, too, because this new stability will fortify Gomes for the uphill battles at work.

#### CHAPTER SEVEN: RULES OF THE GAME

The rules of the game are becoming clear: The accountant cops are considered window-dressing by much of the town's upper echelon. And technically, the responsibilities of Gomes's Division restrict him to investigating casinos that already have licenses.

But Gomes is now seeing more and more evidence of corruption in the sale of casinos - such as the imminent changing-of-hands of the famous Aladdin Hotel -- so Gomes goes to his boss. Gomes asks Hannifin to allow him to create a new element to the gaming license application process, a "financial background investigation."

The other two divisions of the GCB furiously oppose Gomes's request, as this would represent a major change in the way the licensing investigative process has always been conducted. *Don't upset the apple cart*, is the message.

But in reality, the other divisions are really afraid that Gomes and his new-fangled investigators are slowly encroaching on their territory (and threatening to get better results).

Hannifin decides to go with his gut, and he gives Gomes the go-ahead.

Meanwhile, the Aladdin is losing a lot of money. A hail-Mary sale is orchestrated by the current owner in order to prevent the casino from closing. Nobody wants the thousands of jobs to go away, or all that juicy tax revenue to be lost. But when Gomes investigates the proposed purchasers, he finds out that the Aladdin is essentially being sold to the Detroit mob.

Gomes is torn. He knows this is bad news for everyone. But right is right. So makes his report to the board... and he is shocked by their response.

#### CHAPTER EIGHT: UNHOLY PACT

The Gaming Control Board doesn't care. They don't care that the mob now owns the Aladdin. Like the signers of some surreal Faustian pact, the board would rather be in business with the mob than see the state lose all those jobs and tax dollars.

Now Gomes is galvanized. He realizes he is alone. He realizes he works for a system dying of cancer. He knows that the skimmed funds from the Aladdin - and God-only-knows how many other casinos - will fund prostitution rings and drug empires and murderous crime syndicates.

Gomes will not sign that deal.

So he burrows into a more secretive, subtle approach to busting the bad guys. He continues his investigation of the Aladdin, only now he does it under the guise of an "audit" -- so as not to arouse suspicion from any quarter - and he decides to beef up his division in ways that raise more than a few eyebrows.

Right around this time, the movie SERPICO has just come out: The true story of an idealistic young cop -- played by the bearded, long-haired Al Pacino -- who fights a corrupt system against all odds...

Meanwhile, in Las Vegas, Dennis Gomes has become the real-life version of Frank Serpico. Consumed by his mission, he grows a beard, and lets his hair go, and begins changing his look with the casual frequency of the changing weather... so now he can repeatedly go undercover at the casinos to gather intelligence.

He begins to turn over the rocks, developing key suspects and targets for investigation.

By the time Gomes makes a key appearance before the state legislature in late 1974 (to ask for fifty-four more agents), his beleaguered and mildly embarrassed boss, Phil Hannifin, introduces Gomes as, "My Bolshevik-in-Residence" (referring to the beard and the hair, rather than Gomes's politics)...

Little do the politicians know, however, that their long-haired presenter is planning an unprecedented raid -- an elaborate, under-the-radar operation that will rock the town.

#### CHAPTER NINE: SLEDGE HAMMER

Gomes gathers his best agents, and he slips into the Aladdin one night under the guise of casual gamblers.

At the appointed hour, Gomes and his team pull their badges and barge into the count room. There they find notorious gangsters supervising the count. (Individuals with criminal records are prohibited by law from working in any casino, let alone in the count room.)

Gomes keeps this reconnaissance mission as quiet as possible. Further investigation leads to revelations of dozens of high-ranking mobsters living in the casino, getting everything from free drinks to free girls. Even the shift boss is a well-known bank robber.

The Aladdin doesn't even bother disguising their mob ties -  
- the arrogance is dumbfounding.

Gomes keeps the findings of his Aladdin investigation completely confidential. He hand-delivers his report to Hannifin.

In this report Gomes strongly suggests that the Commission should hold hearings on these findings and revoke the Aladdin's license... and Hannifin agrees.

A week later Hannifin calls Gomes to his office.

Bad news: The Commission has decided that the hearings would tarnish Vegas's reputation.

In strict confidentiality, Hannifin suggests that Gomes hand over his reports to the FBI and leak his findings to the press. All of which might force the Commission to act.

The FBI gladly accepts the report, and the L.A. Times happily breaks the story with eye-catching headlines:

### **“Nothing Short of a Sledge Hammer Will Stop the Arrogance of the Aladdin's Bosses”**

Under this pressure the Commission formally mandates that all mobsters in casino positions be fired. But of course, the Aladdin gets to keep its license.

Late that night, drowning his sorrows with his dancer bride, Gomes agonizes over the Catch 22 of fighting the mob when nobody wants to throw a punch. He wonders aloud if the key is finding a case big enough, shocking enough, to scare the Board into action.

Gomes has no idea right then - sitting in his and Barbara's modest little home overlooking the distant lights of the strip - that *just such a case* is looming on the horizon. In fact, this case would not only break big for Gomes, but it would get personal - the evil actually brushing up against his wife Barbara in an unexpected way.

CHAPTER TEN: CRASH COURSE

Gomes finds out that the venerable old Tropicana is approving exorbitant lines of credit for inappropriate individuals (mobsters) and allowing them to walk away with the cash.

Again to Gomes's surprise and dismay, the Gaming Control Board, the District Attorney, and the Attorney General, all show little interest in pursuing these credit fraud cases.

But rather than drop this case, Gomes decides to get tricky.

He knows that this credit fraud is most likely eating away at the casino's profit. So he hypothesizes -- based on the amount of money being given out, in proportion to the casino's take -- that the operating funds would be below the state mandated amount.

Every casino is required by law to keep enough money in their bankroll to pay off bets.

Gomes is right.

He tips off the Commission about the Trop's insufficient bankroll.

The Commission finally takes action: They require that the Tropicana find a million more dollars or they'll have to shutter their doors.

Gomes watches to see where the Trop finds the million dollars. Of course it comes straight from the mob. And, again, the Commission takes action. They require the Tropicana to return the loan and get the money elsewhere.

This is the first loan rescission in Nevada's history.

To get the needed money, the casino sells the *Follies Bergere* -- the very show that Barbara dances in -- to a Sicilian mob front-man, Joe Augusto (a front for Carlos Marcello and his Louisiana organized crime family).

Another hook is sunk into Gomes.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: IN THE RED

Stepping up his investigation of the Tropicana, burning with righteous rage now, Gomes catches Augusto running the casino and not just the show. So to get out of trouble, the mobster becomes a confidential snitch for Gomes - a linchpin in Gomes's expanding mission.

The individuals that eventually take over the Tropicana are known around town as honest, well-liked business men. So it appears - at least to the public and the Board -- that Gomes has run the bad guys out of the Tropicana.

However, through his informant, Gomes knows differently. So he doubles his surveillance. And it's not long before Gomes catches John Joseph Vitale -- head of the St. Louis organized crime family - in the casino's private executive lounge (employees only), getting cozy with several high-ranking casino officials.

Gomes brings evidence to the Commission proving that mobsters are still hanging around the Trop and approving lines of credit for each other. However, the Commission refuses to act now that everything appears to be legitimate - at least on the surface.

At this point, Gomes goes into a funk.

Frustrated at every level, trapped like a caged animal, Gomes's contempt for the mobsters is being replaced by his contempt for these crooked politicians.

He vows to himself to find a case that cannot be denied.

He finds it in the person of one Alan Glick, a man who has just applied for a gaming license for the purchase of the Stardust and three other casinos in Vegas.

Gomes, ever the bloodhound, latches onto Glick. It will become the most important investigation of Gomes's career...

## PART THREE: WOLVES IN THE HEN HOUSE

### CHAPTER TWELVE: A SHOT ACROSS THE BOW

Gomes discovers that the Teamster's Pension Fund is providing most of the money for Glick's deal. This immediately raises a red flag for Gomes, as the Teamster's Pension Fund is notoriously mobbed up.

Gomes also finds that some of the other money has trickled in from mysterious sources in Mexico.

A fateful choice: Gomes decides he has to go to Mexico to investigate these funds, but Hannifin denies this request and, instead, Hannifin goes to Mexico *himself* (with another Board member).

When Hannifin returns, he clears the Mexican funds and tells Gomes that he is no longer to be involved in applicant investigations. Hannifin tells Gomes that the whole process is causing too much turmoil between different divisions of the Gaming Control Board.

To add insult to injury, Gomes is told he has to send a few of his own agents to the Investigations Division. With this change, the commonplace discoveries (by Board agents of the mob's clandestine casino investment-attempts) stop cold.

Once again trapped, pushed against the wall, Gomes has no choice but to watch as Glick is licensed.

Notorious gangsters are hired to run the Stardust. These include Frank Rosenthal, a bookie from Chicago, as the General Manager. Rosenthal always has his buddy, Tony "The Ant" Spilatro, a sadistic enforcer, also from the Chicago faction, at his beck and call.

Rosenthal then hires a guy named George Jay Vandermark, a well-known slot cheat, to be the slot manager. The wolves are in the hen house now.

The arrogance and brazenness sinks a knife into Gomes.

This is a moment of truth for Dennis Gomes. He resolves to put everything he has into taking these guys down.

The war begins.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: TRUST NO ONE

Gomes goes to his best friend and trusted agent - a man with the unlikely name of Dick Law - to be his only confidante in this new investigation. Gomes and Law decide to go deep undercover and keep everything strictly confidential.

Gomes's snitches - who have been giving up invaluable intel - begin to drop like flies. Death is everywhere. One of the notable examples is Tamara Rand, a former real estate investor with Glick.

But the scarier things get, the more driven Gomes becomes.

A massive amount of money is being skimmed by the mob from the slot machines from all four of Glick's casinos. Skimmed money usually comes from table games, because it's all cash and it's much easier to inconspicuously take out of the casino.

Gomes theorizes how Rosenthal is skimming coin: Vandermark has special scales that under-weigh the coin by a set percentage, and then the skimmed coin is sold back to the casino through the use of a special bank -- which is how the cash used to purchase the skimmed coin can be removed.

Gomes begins to set his sights on a major raid of the Glick casinos -- but he wants to keep Glick in the dark. So, as a diversion, Gomes arranges for a series of surprise count-room raids to take place at most of the big casinos around town. No favorites. Glick's casinos are simply part of the whole.

Surprisingly, the raids on Glick's casinos yield nothing.

The bad guys, once again, have been tipped off about the raids.

Gomes is livid. He finds out that a powerful Gaming Control Board member is leaking information to Glick! Gomes also learns that a Senior Agent in the Enforcement Division is receiving expensive gifts from Jay Vandermark (in return for information).



Gomes is on a crash course with both sides of the law. He knows he cannot raid the Stardust without receiving Board approval first.

A moment of truth.

Gomes decides to play his best card.

#### CHAPTER FOURTEEN: LOOPHOLE

Acting with his own brand of brazenness, Gomes launches an unprecedented raid on the Stardust while all the members of the Gaming commission are out of town at a scheduled state meeting.

The raid is an overwhelming success.

Gomes uses trickery, bluffing, and intimidation to convince the casino employees to take him to the "special bank" - which Gomes drills open because no one but Vandermark, who cannot be located, has the key.

At this "special bank" Gomes finds a slew of \$1,000-dollar bills in skimmed cash, as well as piles of skimmed and "wrapped" coin waiting to be converted into cash. In the hard-count room Gomes locates a switch on the back of the scales that under-weighs the coin by a set percentage. The same set-up is found in every one of Glick's four casinos.

Gomes photographs and confiscates everything - a virtual banquet of evidence.

There's one problem: During the raid, Jay Vandermark manages to disappear.

Gomes knows that Vandermark is the one person who can tie Glick and Rosenthal to the mob. Vandermark is the key to everything. Gomes wants to grab Vandermark so badly he can taste it. His entire career - up to this point - has been building to this moment. But Gomes also knows that he's not the only one looking for Vandermark. The guy has a target on his back.

Gomes finds Vandermark's son. The young man has apparently been in touch with his father.

Gomes sweats the young man - ultimately convincing the son to contact his father. Gomes has an offer to make: immunity and witness-protection in return for testimony.

Vandermark's son manages to send the message. The father reluctantly agrees to the terms - he will accept the deal and return to Vegas.

Now the story heats up into a minute-by-minute account of this terrifying, deadly game of chess with the mob...

#### CHAPTER FIFTEEN: CAT AND MOUSE

Vandermark's son sets up a meeting with Gomes to give him the full details of his conversation with his dad. The clock begins ticking...

Vandermark's son is being followed. Someone corners the young man - only a few days before the meeting - and brutally assassinates him.

Gomes learns of this murder and decides to go after Jay Vandermark himself.

Meanwhile, somewhere in Mexico, George Jay Vandermark is packing to return to Vegas. He will flip and go into witness protection. But little does he know, his plans are also about to be scuttled in the most savage way imaginable...

Time continues to tick away.

Back in Vegas, Gomes packs for a journey south of the border, unaware that a mob enforcer is waiting for *him* as well.

At this moment, just across the border, an unnamed, anonymous hit man bides his time, waiting like a black widow spider... knowing it will be far easier to kill a cop down here than in the states.

In the meantime, Gomes is about to embark on this doomed journey, when suddenly Hannifin steps in. "You can't go, Dennis," Hannifin tells him.

"I don't care what you say, I'm going!" Gomes barks.

"Then you can turn in your badge!" Hannifin shouts.

Gomes faces a decision - unbeknown to him, the most important decision of his life - as the clock continues to tick.

Tick, tick, tick...

#### CHAPTER SIXTEEN: INTO THIN AIR

Life is not like the movies.

People vanish, never to be heard from again.

Other people - good people, heroic people - lose their battles and become bitter, hardened, and calloused.

Gomes decides to let Mexico go. Vandermark disappears on his way back to the states. He is never officially found. Years later, informants will hint that Vandermark was whacked and planted in the desert in an unmarked grave - simply one more casualty in this endless war.

Meanwhile, back in Vegas, the local DA has no interest in pursuing this case in any form. Stinging with bitterness and righteous rage, Gomes makes an attempt to get the Attorney General, Bob List, to convene a grand jury to try the Stardust Case, but the request is denied.

Gomes is numbed by the betrayal. To Gomes the state is now as guilty as the criminals he's chasing. In fact, one of Gomes's informants tells Gomes that Bob List, who later becomes Governor of Nevada, is often comped at the Stardust and treated to "the girl room."

By this point, Gomes is not shocked, not surprised, not even remotely taken aback.

The writing is on the wall.

Gomes has one last card to play.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: THIS IS HOW THE WORLD ENDS

Gomes's last act as an investigator concerns one Paul Lowden, a businessman who applies for a gaming license to purchase the Hacienda from Glick. Gomes knows that this sale is just a subterfuge (to make it look as though the mob has sold its interest in the Hacienda due to the heat being brought down on it by Gomes's skim discoveries).

Gomes investigation of Lowden turns up a great deal of illicit dealings.

The report is filed, and the Gaming Control Board denies Lowden a license in a 3-1 vote.

However, because the vote is not unanimous, the application is sent to the Gaming Commission for a second vote. In order for the original denial to be reversed, the five Commission members have to unanimously vote to reverse it.

Right before this final hearing is to take place, Phil Hannifin calls Gomes into his office. "I can't protect you any more, Dennis," Hannifin says gravely. "I'm resigning.. I can't take the bullshit anymore."

For Gomes, the dominoes have started to fall.

In the hearing, the newly appointed Commission Chairman, Harry Reid, tells Gomes (during a public meeting in front of television cameras): "This was the worst investigation I have ever seen -- my 5th grade civics class could do a better job." Interestingly, Mr. Reid is not able to explain why the investigation was so bad.

Paul Lowden gets his gaming license.

The last nail is driven into the coffin of Dennis Gomes's tenure at Audit and Special Investigations.

He has been hired to do a job that no one wants done.

He turns in his resignation.

He sends all his files to the FBI for them to worry about.

The current score is Bad Guys 1, Good Guys 0.

But the game is not over. It's never over...

#### CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: SCRAPBOOK

The last chapter is a sort of literary scrapbook, a series of snapshots of Dennis Gomes's Phoenix-like rise from the ashes of Las Vegas..

He goes to New Jersey, where he's hired to create a State Special Investigations Bureau from scratch. However, within just a matter of months, he learns that New Jersey is corrupt to its core.

Entirely disenchanted with the justice system, Dennis retires from law enforcement once and for all.

In subsequent years, he will become a casino operator, where he puts to good use his years of experience in the gambling business. He knows exactly what to watch out for.

As a casino operator, Dennis encounters more kooks, perverts and hit-men than he ever experienced as a cop. Through dogged determination, he is finally successful - on many levels -- in cleaning up the gaming industry; this time, from the *inside*.

But throughout his post-Vegas years, Gomes is haunted over the destruction of his ideals at the hands of wise guys, corrupt politicians, and crooked cops, who for the most part, have escaped the grasp of justice.

That is, until July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007, at exactly 10:29 a.m., when Dennis Gomes is sworn in at the "Family Secrets" trial...

#### EPILOGUE: SECRETS AND LIES

BACK TO FAMILY SECRETS TRIAL... AND WE LEARN ABOUT ALL THE SECRETS REVEALED IN GOMES'S TESTIMONY... AND THE CONVICTIONS THAT MAKE HISTORY. AFTER THE TRIAL, DENNIS GOMES GOES HOME TO BARABARA AND CONTENTMENT... HIS STORY FINALLY TOLD.

III.  
MARKETING BACKGROUND

## ACCESS

As the primary source for HIT ME: FIGHTING THE LAS VEGAS MOB BY THE NUMBERS, Dennis Gomes is the ideal subject. Friendly, open, honest, introspective, and available twenty-four-seven to the authors, Mr. Gomes has already proven himself a treasure trove of stories and reminiscences. He has the photographic memory of the life-long investigator. He remembers well the textures, sounds, smells, and sights that underpin these pulse-pounding raids and confrontations. He is lucid, articulate, and he knows his subject as well as anybody in the business. His resume reads like an evolving history of the gaming industry in the United States. After leaving Las Vegas, he headed up the investigative arm of the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement (DGE), revolutionizing the state's casino control regulations. In 1978, he left law enforcement and returned to Vegas to run the Thunderbird and Silver Nugget casinos. In 1980 he joined the Summa Corporation - owner of the Sands, Desert Inn, Frontier, Silver Slipper, Castaways, and Harold's Club - creating innovative new pit and slot marketing plans. This led Gomes to an Executive VP gig for the Frontier. While at the Frontier he increased casino profits by 230% -- and he did it honestly and cleanly -- without the aid of dirty money or corrupt politicians. In 1984 he moved over to the Hilton Corporation and transformed casino operations there as well. For the next decade, he took the reins at the Aladdin, the Dunes, and the Golden Nugget, and finally, returning to New Jersey in the early 1990s, he ran the Trump Taj Mahal.

In October of 1995, Gomes accepted the position of President and Chief Operating Officer for the Tropicana Casinos and Resorts Company.

In his ten years as head honcho at the "Trop" he goosed the company's stock price from four dollars a share to over forty dollars per. But it was his transparent, honest approach that truly drove his success. In 2005, he was just about to strike out on his own, when the call from Special Agent Andrew Hickey came in to settle those old scores.

Today Gomes runs his own Casino Management company, Gomes Gaming Inc., which assists individuals and companies in the development, licensing, and management of high-stakes gaming facilities. His competent, professional, no-nonsense approach to leadership rubs off on people. Gomes's legacy - to do it well, and do it right -- is woven through every project, every document, every decision. Once a cop always a cop.

There are other primary sources as well. Barbara Gomes -- she of the long legs and steely spine -- is delighted to be participating. Also: family, friends, and colleagues can easily be tapped. Gomes is not a bridge-burner. He is well liked and well respected; and other points of view will only add to the intimacy and profuse detail of the book.

#### MARKET NICHE

On one level, HIT ME: FIGHTING THE LAS VEGAS MOB BY THE NUMBERS is an insider's view of Sin City. The book will carve out a niche alongside such Vegas classics as CASINO



by Nicholas Pileggi, POSITIVELY FIFTH STREET by James McManus, BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE by Ben Mezrich, and even FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS by Hunter S. Thompson. But there's far more to this project than gambling.

The literary approach to this book - storytelling so detailed it takes on the feel of a non-fiction novel - will broaden the market appeal into many other categories. HIT ME will make shelf-space for itself alongside such mob chestnuts as DONNIE BRASCO by Joseph Pistone, WISEGUY by Nicholas Pileggi, and UNDERBOSS by Peter Maas. And the appeal will not be limited to mob aficionados. Fans of narrative non-fiction such as IN COLD BLOOD by Truman Capote, THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY by Erik Larson, and MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL by John Berendt, will find much to love in HIT ME. And no discussion of marketing territory would be complete without mentioning the movies. Many of the aforementioned books have been adapted into successful Hollywood films. HIT ME: FIGHTING THE LAS VEGAS MOB BY THE NUMBERS is already being developed into a screenplay - which should come as no surprise. All the raw materials for great cinema are here: a plot-driven memoir with an attractive, complex hero; a series of movie-moments in a glittery setting; and the gravitas of crime history underpinning every twist and turn.

#### EXTRAS

Not only is Dennis Gomes a revelation as a subject for a non-fiction book, he comes packing high-caliber bonus

materials that greatly enhance the project. This fascinating journey is well documented. The family photo album is brimming with juicy pictures from this era - which Dennis has made available to the project - depicting an illustrated chronicle of the central drama. From stunning glossies of Barbara in the *Folies Bergere*.. to the earnest, upright, wide-lapel-wearing Gomes as a *wunderkind* agent... it's all here in both Technicolor and noirish black and white. Plus, all of Gomes's cases are meticulously documented, transcribed, and filed away. These files will be opened - some of them for the first time ever - to the authors. And speaking of the authors...

#### BIOS

##### DANIELLE GOMES:

Danielle Gomes, Dennis Gomes's daughter, the middle child among four siblings, is a free-lance writer and filmmaker. She co-wrote and narrated a documentary short on America's homeless that won a Telly Award and a Videographer's Award of Excellence. She is a member of the Association of Writer's and Writer Programs. Danielle has a Bachelor's degree from Villanova University and is on track to receive her Master's degree with a focus in Journalism and Media Studies from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. At UNLV, Danielle enjoyed teaching Public Speaking to undergraduate students and will be finishing her studies in December of 2010. Danielle has been a student of the martial arts for twenty years, and has worked as a professional dancer for a short period of time between undergraduate and graduate school. Danielle currently resides in Margate, NJ with her

husband, Ben, and 2-year-old son, Jake. She has a wonderful family and is dedicated to sharing the love they have allowed her to know. "My dad is an extremely intense person," Danielle says with unequivocal admiration. "He doesn't do anything half-way - and he expects the same out of everyone else. But he's also a very loving and deep person. He has a strong moral code, born out of love: his love for his parents, his love for his family."

JAY BONANSINGA:

Award-winning author of twelve internationally acclaimed books - both fiction and non-fiction -- Jay Bonansinga has been called "one of the most imaginative writers of thrillers" by the Chicago Tribune. His novels -- which include PERFECT VICTIM (2008), TWISTED (2006), FROZEN (2005), and THE KILLER'S GAME (1997) -- have been translated into ten different languages. His 2007 novel SHATTERED was a finalist for an International Thriller Writer's Award for Best Paperback Original of the Year. His 2004 non-fiction debut THE SINKING OF THE EASTLAND was a Chicago Reader "Critics Choice Book," as well as the recipient of a Superior Achievement Award from the Illinois State Historical Society. His debut novel THE BLACK MARIAH was a finalist for a Bram Stoker award, and his numerous short tales and articles have appeared in such publications as THE WRITER, AMAZING STORIES, AMAZON SHORTS and CEMETERY DANCE. Jay is also a busy, produced screenwriter; in Hollywood he has worked with Will Smith's company (OVERBROOK ENTERTAINMENT), George Romero (NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD), and Dennis Haysbert (THE UNIT). Four of Jay's novels are in development as motion pictures at major

studios; and his 2009 feature, STASH, won best-of-festival awards at Queens, Iowa City, and Houston. In 2010, STASH appeared in fifty million households on ON-DEMAND. Jay is the holder of a master's degree in film from Columbia College Chicago, and currently resides in Evanston, Illinois, with his wife and two sons. He is also a visiting professor at Northwestern University in their Creative Writing for the Media program, as well as the Graduate Writing Program at DePaul University. He can be found on-line at [www.jaybonansinga.com](http://www.jaybonansinga.com).

APPENDIX B  
NEWS ARTICLES

[GOMES GAMING](#) | [News](#) | Philadelphia Daily News - September 10, 2010

**Dennis Gomes relishes challenge of running Resorts**

By Chuck Darrow

IT'S LOGICAL to think Dennis Gomes and his partner, Morris Bailey, might have a brighter financial future investing in a uranium mine in Asbury Park or some similar harebrained scheme than by acquiring Resorts Atlantic City, among the casinos hardest hit by the double whammy of legal gambling in Pennsylvania and a sour economy.

News reports of the duo's impending purchase of Resorts have overwhelmingly contained positive feedback. Gaming industry analyst Michael Pollock told the Press of Atlantic City, "If anyone can [bring Resorts to profitability], Dennis Gomes can."

This makes sense, because no one of any standing in Atlantic City wants to publicly put on anything but a happy face, given the town's financial struggles. Privately however, there is some whispering among AyCee insiders that Gomes is on a mission that is at best "quixotic."

But Gomes, 65, who happily acknowledges the "doom-and-gloom sayers," would beg to differ. After all, he's been here before.

"When Donald Trump was trying to get me to go to the Taj Mahal [in the early 1990s], all of Wall Street was saying, 'Don't go, it's a white elephant, it can't [be saved],'" he recalled during a Wednesday afternoon chat in his Atlantic Avenue office a block or so from Resorts. "But I looked at it and saw something different. And we went from \$84 million in operating profit to \$148 million in 3 1/2 years."

As a matter of fact, he continued, it's exactly because his purchase of Resorts seems so irrational that he's convinced he will succeed. "Whenever I have an idea that everyone tells me is crazy, then I know I'm right," he said with a smile.

Crazy idea or not, Gomes has rolled the dice.

He and Bailey - an Atlantic City-born, New York-based real estate developer - recently purchased AyCee's oldest legal casino for a reported \$35 million, by far the lowest price ever paid for a New Jersey gambling den.

Now Gomes is moving forward to transform Resorts, the bulk of which is housed in a building that was the cat's meow when Prohibition-era crime czar Enoch Lewis "Nucky" Johnson ruled

the roost, into one of the town's hottest properties. That job, he said, will start with something more intangible than concrete.

Sure, he is planning some physical renovations and additions to Atlantic City's first legal casino. But, he promised, Job One for him and his team (which includes his 29-year-old son, Aaron) will be to juice the vibe inside the hotel-casino complex on the Boardwalk at North Carolina Avenue.

"It's all about energy," declared Gomes, who expects his deal to close in early December. "To me, [the success of a casino] is not about what I see, it's what I feel. And that's the energy level in a place. We're gonna blow the energy level out of sight."

He'll do that in part by livening up Resorts' public spaces, primarily with entertainers who, he believes, will give his property a palpable sense of excitement.

As for more tangible improvements, Gomes offered a number of thoughts, from recruiting Blanche Morro, the popular "Singing Bartender" he hired when he was running Tropicana Casino and Resort, to sprucing up the high-roller gaming areas, to changing the rather garish carpeting and installing flat-screen TVs in the casino's original hotel tower.

Most dramatically, Gomes is looking to open up a currently sealed-off second-level space of some 30,000 square feet. "This is a prime spot for doing a restaurant," he said, adding that he's already "looking at some of the top chefs in the country."

As for the casino's 1,400-seat Superstar Theatre, Gomes expects eclectic programming, from top headliners to community-oriented events. And, not surprisingly, he intends to keep Boogie Nights, the 1970s- and '80s-themed disco that, for the past few years, has been Resorts' most consistently successful marketing weapon.

During his stints running the Taj Mahal and later the Tropicana, Gomes succeeded with savvy marketing strategies that included having his properties host events and exhibitions that, on the surface, didn't seem to mesh with what the public expected from a casino. These included summerlong exhibits dedicated to the Titanic, President John Kennedy and the history of torture, and The Quarter, the Trop's game-changing retail and entertainment complex.

He also wasn't afraid to get downright goofy to attract new customers and publicity. Remember the Trop's tic-tac-toe-playing chicken? In case you're wondering, Gomes has ruled out bringing the chicken to Resorts, although he did suggest (apparently with tongue in cheek) he would consider a penguin.

While some might believe Resorts will wind up being "Gomes' Folly," there are those in Atlantic City who view him as the guy who will get the casino town back on the winning track. The pressure of being seen as a savior might be too much for some. But Gomes' philosophy is strictly "What? Me worry?"

"People who know me know I don't normally show I'm under pressure," he said. "And that's because I'm not."

Before he began his career in the gaming industry, Gomes was in law enforcement in Nevada. He led the efforts to cleanse Las Vegas casinos of organized crime (the story at the root of the Martin Scorsese mob classic, "Casino").

Compared with doing that, he said, running Resorts will a piece of cake.

The death threats made against him and his family during that period of his life led him to understand what is truly important, he said. "When you're alive and you're family's healthy, nothing counts after that. I don't feel the stress. All I feel is excitement. I love a challenge."

Chuck Darrow has been covering Atlantic City and casinos for more than 20 years.

[GOMES GAMING](#) | [News](#) | Philadelphia Daily News - September 10, 2010

### **Pair could enable new era for Atlantic City**

GAMING HISTORY

October 05, 2010 7:09 AM by Phil Hevener

Dennis Gomes and Kevin DeSanctis may play separate pivotal roles in a possible rebirth of interest in Atlantic City development.

But how did the longtime friends begin working their respective ways toward the moment that may see Gomes as the chief executive and owner of the old Resorts International property and DeSanctis in a similar role at the Revel resort where efforts continue to complete financing?

When Gomes arrived in New Jersey in the late 1970s as the head of special investigations for the Division of Gaming Enforcement, he landed squarely in the middle of the complicated licensing investigation that would eventually see Resorts International open in May 1978 as the city's first casino.

Gomes had been told he would be required to use state police personnel for the background checks of the company and its top officials, but the former Nevada Gaming Control Board agent who engineered the 1976 Las Vegas skimming probe that would eventually result in the movie "Casino," resisted that thinking. He had his own ideas about how to proceed.

They argued back and forth, Gomes eventually agreeing to use State Police IF they had accounting degrees. He wanted personnel who not only understood the law but could also follow financial details that would be part of the extensive investigation.

That takes care of that, he would later tell friends. No way would they come up with state cops who also had accounting degrees.

Gomes was surprised when he eventually got a call telling him a search of personnel files had resulted in five candidates with the necessary accounting degrees. They were assembled for interviews and Gomes quickly found his attention drawn to the young officer who slouched in a chair staring at the ceiling, giving the impression he would just as soon be anywhere except where he was. This was Kevin DeSanctis who had earned his accounting degree at Temple University.

The interviews progressed, Gomes quickly deciding that he definitely wanted DeSanctis on the DGE team.

The time came when a trip to the Bahamas was necessary. Gomes put together plans that had the look of an undercover operation. They did not want to broadcast their plans. The men and women participating in the raid on the Resorts casino there would travel as "tourists."

They dressed casually, Gomes says, sitting apart from each other during the plane trip, doing nothing to draw attention to the purpose of their trip.

Things progressed nicely and Gomes acquired information he figured would be vital to an eventual decision about the Resorts application.

But Gomes encountered a man whom he remembers as being part of some "internal police" force. They had a pointed discussion that included threats of Gomes being hauled off to local authorities. No way could that be allowed to happen, Gomes remembers, thinking the information he had acquired might suddenly become unavailable.

Was he unnecessarily paranoid? Who knows, but those were pioneering times in the gaming business.

Gomes argued that if he was arrested, the outcome might be an "international incident" that could end badly for both Gomes and the security official with whom he was having the pointed discussion. They might both lose their jobs, Gomes argued.

The man relented and Gomes went on his way, but instead of returning to his hotel or visiting local authorities, he headed for the airport.

"I was on a plane and out of there in about 20 minutes."

Back in New Jersey, the (expletive deleted) hit the fan, as Gomes tells it some 32 years later. He was not nearly as interested in the politics of the situation as he was in safeguarding information vital to the Resorts investigation.



There was a meeting of all involved, a discussion that included a heated exchange of conflicting views about what was or wasn't important. It was directed that Gomes's special investigations team would be dissolved even as the suitability investigation continued.

DeSanctis stepped into the middle of the argument with the observation that he was seeing an example of "politics" at its worst. DeSanctis said he had agreed to join the DGE team because he respected Gomes's approach to the job at hand and was learning from it.

New Jersey officials who maintained an appreciation for the importance of politics scowled at this reasoning.

As for Gomes, he could see the writing on the wall. It was time to leave. "I told Kevin that his career with the state police was in bad shape at that point and he should come back to Nevada with me."

Probably a good idea and DeSanctis agreed.

A senior police official growled, "You two are never going to work in this state again," a prediction that proved to be absolutely inaccurate.

Gomes returned to Nevada where he was hired to run the casinos of the late Major Riddle, a job that gave him the chance to install DeSanctis as the GM at one of the group's gambling halls. Over the next decade they worked together in the Hilton, Summa and Golden Nugget organizations before being separately hired to run two of Donald Trump's Atlantic City resorts.

[GOMES GAMING](#) | [News](#) | Las Vegas Review Journal - August 29, 2010

### **INSIDE GAMING: Optimistic spirit down on the Boardwalk**

By HOWARD STUTZ - INSIDE GAMING

Maybe they should anoint Dennis Gomes mayor of Atlantic City.

Clearly, Gomes has way too much exuberance and optimism to handle just the ownership of the city's oldest hotel-casino. The Boardwalk, he said, is poised for an epic turnaround.

Gomes, 65, acquired Resorts Casino Hotel last week through his privately held Gomes Gaming Inc.

Resorts ushered legalized gaming into Atlantic City more three decades ago. Colony Capital, Sun International and entertainer Merv Griffin owned the property over the years. Gomes believes he will soon control a 942-room hotel-casino that has a wealth of potential despite its age.

"The property is in good condition," Gomes said. "Not many people know that."

Atlantic City is in the grips of the recession and faces competition from neighboring states. Gaming revenues, which have fallen 23 straight months, declined 13.2 percent last year to \$3.9 billion, which equaled 1997 numbers. Resorts' 2009 gaming revenues of \$191.7 million declined almost 18 percent from 2008 and were the second-lowest figure among the city's 11 hotel-casinos.

Gomes isn't deterred.

Atlantic City, he said, is still the No. 2 gaming market in the United States behind the Strip. It offers a concentration of gaming properties along the Boardwalk that are superior to individual casinos spread out in Pennsylvania, and it has the ocean.

He also credits New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who has put forth a slew of ideas to revive the market.

"Right now, there is a lot of doom and gloom from Wall Street," Gomes said. "It comes in cycles. I really believe there is a tremendous amount of opportunity here."

Gomes has had a colorful gaming career. He served as a state gaming control agent in both Nevada and New Jersey. He operated the Hilton, Frontier, Aladdin, Dunes and Golden Nugget in Las Vegas before heading to Atlantic City, where he ran the Trump Taj Mahal and the Tropicana.

His employment was the subject of a 1991 legal tussle between Steve Wynn and Donald Trump.

A story Gomes told author Nicholas Pileggi about his dealings with a Japanese high roller when he managed the financially troubled Dunes became a memorable scene in the 1995 Martin Scorsese film, "Casino."

Now Gomes is back to save dying Atlantic City.

"This investment is a clear indication that there is a great deal of potential in this market," New Jersey Casino Control Commission Chairwoman Linda Kassekert said. "We are hopeful that this will not only revitalize Resorts, but all of Atlantic City."

Howard Stutz's Inside Gaming column appears Sundays.

[GOMES GAMING](#) | [News](#) | GamingToday.com - August 24, 2010

## **AC HOPE**

### **Gomes May Jump-Start Ailing City – by Phil Hevener**

This could be the start of something very big in Atlantic City. The plan of Dennis Gomes and his team to acquire Resorts Atlantic City appears to put them at the right time and place to touch off a chain reaction that could speed the return of this well-worn city on the ocean to good health.

Resorts International is where the "Atlantic City experiment" began in May of 1978, a time when gamblers lined up down the boardwalk just for the chance to get in the door. The casino generated revenue faster than it could be counted. Officials bagged the cash and threw it in a vault, paying whatever fines were associated with the delayed count.

Doing business in Atlantic City was a lot more interesting than watching paint dry.

Steve Wynn tells of flying into Atlantic City from Florida, going to Resorts and standing at the top step at the door to the casino. The mass of people before him was all the convincing he needed. He immediately began looking for the land on which he could put his own casino.

The bigger than life personalities of Wynn and Donald Trump and the early presence of Caesars Palace, a company that made success at the high end look easy, convinced the New York money markets that casinos and gambling represented an industry that merited their attention.

At the time Resorts opened in 1978, the Wall Street Journal covered Nevada gaming by sending its organized crime reporter on occasional swings through the state.

New Jersey was different. With a heavy-handed regulatory system that was slow to relax, the state's new industry got the instant respect skeptics were reluctant to give Nevada.

But the good times have been washed away as competition boomed and a recession loomed.

What Atlantic City has lacked until now is a catalyst – a set of circumstances that encourages investment and blows away the pessimism that has characterized so much of local thinking over the past couple years as local leaders complained about competition, sounding like the victims of a siege.

Gomes has increased revenue wherever he's been over 30-plus years, and in this case he can begin doing business just as soon as he gets approval from regulatory officials. He does not have to wait a year or two for something to be built.

Not that Resorts Atlantic City is the newest or the nicest of Atlantic City casinos. It is neither of those but it has a good location on the Boardwalk and a history that is easy to market.

Resorts was where the excitement of a renaissance was launched in 1978 and it could be where the excitement begins again.

What Gomes needs to do is define success with even modest goals and then meet them. He is not a Carl Icahn, an owner content to spend very little on any kind of rehab as he waits for someone to stop by and offer more than he paid.

The Trump casinos are out of bankruptcy again and in the hands of a new owner who looks toward the future with apprehension and the realization that he has a big challenge on his hands. Good luck to him.

As for Boyd at the Borgata and Harrah's at its several properties, they'll probably want to applaud the arrival of Gomes at Resorts and the new ownership at Trump. They will benefit from anyone who can jumpstart the kind of activity that encourages interest in Atlantic City.

Gomes at Resorts may provide the kind of interest that will bring new attention and new money to Atlantic City from the investment community. Gomes does not have to set records to create the kind of interest that may have developers and the sources of money turning up the fire under plans that have been sitting on the shelf.

We witnessed a similar kind of happening in Las Vegas several years ago as developers began bidding up the prices of real estate to levels that had supposedly hard-headed analysts shaking their hard heads.

I remember the disbelief in MGM Resorts International's (MGM) CEO Jim Murren's tone as he noted that the Las Vegas Tropicana was being sold for a price that put a value of more than \$30 million on each of its 34 acres. The Frontier property went for about \$1.2 billion.

The point being, it takes a very short time for a successful idea to be imitated in some form by companies and individuals who see themselves as major players in the gaming industry.

August 24, 2010 7:09 AM by Phil Hevener

TUESDAY  
AUGUST 24, 2010

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PressofAtlanticCity.com

## NEW OWNER FOR OLDEST CASINO

# GOMES TO BUY RESORTS

### Property 'has always had a special place in my heart'

By DONALD WITKOWSKI

Staff Writer

**ATLANTIC CITY** — Gaming executive Dennis Gomes announced Monday that he has agreed to buy Resorts Atlantic City, the town's oldest casino, for an undisclosed price just nine months after lenders took over the property when it defaulted on its mortgage.

The sale saves Resorts amid predictions that the aging and undersized Boardwalk property simply would not have survived much longer unless it came under new ownership. The announcement gives some lift to a gaming market stuck in a four-year economic slump and dealing with growing competition from rival casinos in surrounding states.

"We are hopeful that this will not only revitalize Resorts, but all of Atlantic City," said Linda M. Kassekert, chair of the New Jersey Casino Control Commission. "We have worked closely with Resorts to help stabilize that property for the benefit of the 2,100 employees whose jobs were at risk. This deal will preserve those jobs and hopefully create even more employment as the property improves."

Gomes settled on Resorts after spending the past three years unsuccessfully trying to acquire the Trump Entertainment Resorts Inc. casinos and Tropicana Casino and Resort. The 30-year veteran of the Atlantic City and Las Vegas markets had previously served as a senior executive at Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort and at Tropicana.

"I believe in this property," Gomes said of Resorts. "It heralded the beginning of casino gaming in the East and has always had a special place in my heart. It is an exciting place with a lot of history, and we are going to bring it back to life with even more energy and vitality than it possessed at its creation in 1978."

Resorts, which began Atlantic City's casino era when it opened May 26, 1978, has had a turbulent history of multiple bankruptcies, a succession of owners and promises of expansion plans that were never fulfilled.

The 942-room casino hotel had been on the market since lenders grabbed control in December after the casino defaulted on its \$360 million mortgage and faced possible foreclosure. Never before in Atlantic City had lenders become casino owners in that way.

Gomes, 65, is buying the property from RAC Atlantic City Holdings LLC, which is headed by Wells Fargo Bank, the trustee

□ See Resorts, A7

### The casino's history

See the key dates in the history of Resorts Atlantic City. A7



Resorts stood alone when it was the first casino to open in Atlantic City on May 26, 1978. Today the casino — the white building at the center — is struggling to survive amid a slumping gaming market and competition from other states. The unfinished Revel project is in the background.



Gamblers play roulette Monday at Resorts Atlantic City. The 942-room casino hotel has been on the market since lenders grabbed control of it in December after the casino defaulted on its \$360 million mortgage.

Staff photo by Vernon Ojrodnek

## Resorts latest challenge for 'visionary'

■ Credited with turning around the Taj and Tropicana, Dennis Gomes will soon have a casino of his own.

By DONALD WITKOWSKI

Staff Writer

**ATLANTIC CITY** — They call him an innovator, a visionary and a marketing genius.

Now, Dennis Gomes is ready to add a new title: casino owner. As the soon-to-be owner of Resorts Atlantic City, he is facing his biggest challenge ever — revitalizing an aging, undersized casino in a fractured economy.

"If anyone can do it, Dennis Gomes can," said Michael Pollock, managing director of Spectrum Gaming Group, a casino consulting firm based in Linwood.

"He's got a good track record as being a visionary and for carrying out plans, someone who can motivate the troops, someone who can target niches," Pollock added. "If you put all of those skills together, in this instance, there's no one better to do what needs to be done at that property."

Gomes, 65, of Margate, has



GOMES

established himself as a larger-than-life character in his 30-plus years in the Las Vegas and Atlantic City gaming markets. Early in his career, as a gaming investigator in Nevada, he exposed a money-skimming scam at the Stardust casino in Las Vegas that inspired the 1985 movie "Casino" starring Robert DeNiro.

His career in Atlantic City included turns as a senior executive at Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort and Tropicana Casino

□ See Gomes, A7



APPENDIX C

AGENT CONTRACT

May 20, 2010

Peter Miller, President  
PMA Literary and Film Management, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1817, Old Chelsea Station  
New York, NY 10113

Dear Mr. Miller:

We appoint you as of this day our exclusive literary manager for the marketing throughout the world of all rights in and to our untitled work, based on our original information, which we are collaborating with Jay Bonansinga (Bonansinga), tentatively entitled HIT ME, THE DENNIS GOMES STORY.

By your signature you accept the appointment and agree to advise me to the best of your ability and to collect and receive on our behalf all monies due us under agreements made during the term of this management agreement. For the services rendered by you, you shall be entitled to a commission of fifteen percent (15%) on all gross sums payable to us prior to deductions from or charges against such monies for any reason whatsoever under all contracts negotiated during the term of this agreement. The only exceptions to this rate of commission shall be a rate of twenty-five percent (25%) for the sale of foreign rights. This obligation to pay commission on the contracts arranged by you shall be extended to our heirs, administrators, executors and assigns. Sums received by you on our behalf, less commission and reasonable expenses incurred on our behalf (not to exceed \$250 without my prior written approval), are to be paid to us within ten days after receipt by you, except that sums received from the sale of foreign rights shall be paid within a reasonable time of receipt by you.

In that we are working with Mr. Bonansinga on the writing of this book, we authorize you to pay Mr. Bonansinga revenue derived from the sale of our untitled work in advances as follows; all book revenue, after deducting your 15% commission, will be split 1/3<sup>rd</sup> (33.3333%) to Mr. Bonansinga and 2/3rds (66 2/3%) to us. It is understood that Mr. Bonansinga will co-write the proposal for \$12,500 and the book for a \$20,000 advance to be recouped by us in sales and/or royalties for the book and media. Only after we recoup the full \$32,500 paid to Mr. Bonansinga will he begin to receive further ongoing royalties of 33.333% on future amounts. The book proposal will start from May 28, 2010 and finish within 3 months or less.

Mr. Bonansinga agrees that the copyright to our untitled work and any and all related materials will be in the name of Dennis Gomes and Danielle Gomes Chapman and held exclusively by us. I will ask Mr. Bonansinga to sign his agreement with this arrangement by executing a copy of this letter where indicated below. In so doing, Mr. Bonansinga agrees and acknowledges that he has no rights to the copyright in our untitled work, nor in any related materials and that he will execute any and all documents necessary to ensure that the copyright in such materials is owned exclusively by us. Mr.

Bonansinga further acknowledges that he is drafting the proposal as a work for hire and that any and all rights in and to the proposal are also owned exclusively by us.

Nevertheless, we agree to acknowledge Mr. Bonansinga for his contribution on our untitled work in the book's front cover credits as, "by Danielle Gomes and Jay Bonansinga". We agree to pay Mr. Bonansinga \$12,500 USD for a proposal for our untitled work which is understood and agreed will be approximately 50 pages which will include: a project prospectus, an annotated table of contents and approximately (3) sample chapters. We agree payment for the proposal will be disbursed as follows: \$5,000 USD on signing of this agreement to retain author services, \$3,750 USD upon delivery of a first draft proposal and \$3,750 USD upon acceptance of a polished draft as well as pitch letter. We understand that you will deduct your 15% domestic management commission from all advances and royalties paid. We agree payment for the book, with a publishing deal in place of at least a \$20,000 advance or a publishing deal that we approve, will be disbursed as follows: \$10,000 USD to retain author services, \$5000 USD upon delivery of first draft, and \$5000 USD on publication, or a similar distribution of monies that may be more favorable to Mr. Bonansinga.

In regard to the film and tv rights for our untitled work, all revenue from a motion picture or television sale will be split 75% in our favor and 25% in Mr. Bonansinga's favor, after your 15% commission is deducted. However, this split of film/tv rights is only applicable if a book is sold. In the event a book is not sold and a motion picture or television sale is made based on the proposal we develop with Mr. Bonansinga, we agree to pay him \$5,000 out of first monies received on any sale of those film rights as a flat fee for his work on developing the proposal. In the event no sale of the book or film is concluded, we will have no obligation to pay Mr. Bonansinga for his services beyond the aforementioned proposal fee of \$12,500.

In the event you procure a contract for the disposition of the motion picture or television film rights for the book, with an independent third party producer or studio, that we approve, you shall be entitled without further authority from us to negotiate on your own behalf for the position of Producer or Executive Producer of any such film or television program. In the event you become the Producer or Executive Producer, the compensation set forth above in this agreement for the motion picture or television film rights to shall be reduced from fifteen (15%) percent to ten (0%) percent of the gross proceeds from these rights. However, until such time that a film/tv series officially enters production, you shall receive fifteen (15%) percent of the gross proceeds from the sale of film or television rights, and at such time when you are actually paid to be the Producer or Executive Producer, you shall reimburse us said fifteen (15%) percent of the gross proceeds from the sale of these rights.

This agreement is effective from the date of your acceptance and shall continue until canceled by either of us by the giving to the other of at least ninety (90) days written notice. In the event of such cancellation, you are to continue to act as literary manager and to collect all the sums due us under contracts negotiated during the term of this agreement, and to deduct your commission and the above-specified expenses from such sums.



All mail addressed to us in your care may be opened by you and may be dealt with by you unless marked personal or unless it is obviously of a personal nature.

It is clearly understood that should PMA secure a publisher for us throughout the duration of this agreement, that PMA will have the exclusive rights to handle any of our future sales with said publisher for 5 years from the first publication of the first book sale made to that publisher by PMA. Furthermore, should PMA enter into a world licensing agreement with a publisher and said sub-licenses any of the owners works to foreign publishers, PMA will then have the exclusive right for 5 years from first publication of any foreign edition of the Work. It is clearly understood that aforementioned will remain in force as long as PMA is not in a material breach of any of its obligations to us, as is herein specified. I recognize that PMA's contacts in the publishing industry both domestically and globally are the most important asset that PMA has, and we agree to respect all such introductions to said publishers as highly confidential and the property of PMA.

We warrant that material submitted for publication will be our original work, that we control all rights to the work(s), and that we have the right to enter into contract(s) for publication of such work

We and Mr. Bonansinga agree to indemnify and hold harmless PMA Literary and Film Management, Inc., Peter Miller, Kelly Skillen, and/or Adrienne Rosado with respect to any third party legal action arising from the publication of any works described in this contract. Such indemnification shall include (but shall not be limited to) the payment by Authors of any legal fees incurred by PMA Literary and Film Management, Inc., Peter Miller, Kelly Skillen, and/or Adrienne Rosado in connection with defense of any action arising from publication of any works described in this contract.

This Agreement and any disputes arising thereunder shall be governed by and construed under the laws of the State of New York. Any controversy or claim between the parties arising out of, or in any way relating to this Agreement or its performance or breach and any claims of negligence, gross negligence, fraud, misrepresentation, tortious business interference, or breach of fiduciary duty, reasonable care or due diligence, related to it, shall be settled by binding arbitration in the County of New York, New York, in accordance with the Commercial Arbitration Rules of the American Arbitration Association; all issues of law will be settled by the arbitrator prior to hearing testimony as to the merits of any claim; and judgment entered upon the award by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof. The parties hereto agree that all legal proceedings relating to or arising out of the subject matter of this Agreement, including but not limited to the binding arbitration provision of this section, shall be maintained exclusively in the state courts sitting within the County of New York or the federal district court for the Southern District of New York in Manhattan. The parties hereby consent to and subject themselves to the personal jurisdiction of such courts and agree that jurisdiction and venue for any proceeding arising hereunder shall lie exclusively with such courts.

Sincerely,

Dennis Gomes

Sincerely,

---

Danielle Gomes Chapman

Sincerely,

---

Jay R. Bonansinga

Agreed and accepted to:

Peter Miller, President  
PMA Literary & Film  
Management Inc.  
P.O. Box 1817  
Old Chelsea Station  
New York, NY 10113  
212-929-1222

APPENDIX D

*HIT ME* SHORT PREVIEW

**Hit Me**

By Danielle Gomes

In 1971 the mob owned Vegas. Twenty-seven year old Dennis Gomes, a young, idealistic "cop accountant" was about to change that.

Dennis' dream of becoming a law enforcement agent had finally come true. The Nevada Gaming Control Board hired Dennis as Chief of a Division that was charged with the detection and investigation of organized crime in Nevada casinos. Once Dennis had his badge and gun, he could not wait to start bagging crooks and was certain he had what it took to get the job done.

Dennis turned out to be good at his job, too good in fact. He caught some very bad men and in the process had to deal with murder after murder. His investigations proved that Myer Lansky's closest lieutenant was funneling large sums of money into Caesars Palace; he found known mobsters in charge of the count room of the Aladdin Hotel and Casino and proved that the casino was being used as free "R&R" for many of the bosses and "soldiers" from the St. Louis and Detroit mob families; he caught John Joseph Vitale, the boss of the St. Louis mob, in a meeting in the Casino Executive's lounge of the Tropicana Hotel and Casino; he proved that Joseph Agosto, the new owner of the Tropicana's Follies Bergere (the show Dennis's wife danced in), was really fronting for Nick Civella, the boss of the Kansas City mob and was, in reality, running the Tropicana Casino; and he proved that the distributor who had the sole right to sell slot machines in Las Vegas for Bally Manufacturing Company, the largest slot machine company in the world, was nothing but a front for organized crime. However, none of these crooks were ever really busted, because Nevada's politicians were so afraid of tarnishing Vegas' image and

stopping the cash flow that they disregarded Dennis's findings. So, after his eight frustrating years of working for the "good-guys" at the Nevada Gaming Control Board, where Dennis encountered countless, complacent corrupt politicians, narrowly escaped his own death and lost friends, colleagues, informants, witnesses and their family members to ruthless mob henchmen, Dennis finally wised up. He had an epiphany. He had been hired to do a job that no one really wanted done. Dennis had been made the "Chief" of something that existed in name only, to quell the complaints of the public.

So, Dennis left the business. He turned all of his investigative files over to the FBI and left Vegas for New Jersey where he had been hired to create a state special investigations division from scratch. However, within just a matter of months, Dennis would learn that the mob and political corruption that had infiltrated Nevada's gaming industry was nothing compared to what he would encounter. New Jersey was corrupt to its core.

Entirely disenchanted with the justice system, Dennis retired from law enforcement once and for all. He would become a casino operator, where he could put to good use his ten years worth of experience in the gambling business. He thought he knew exactly what to watch out for. However, as a casino operator, Dennis would encounter more kooks, perverts and hit-men than he had ever experienced as a cop. Through dogged determination, Dennis was finally able to help clean up the gaming industry, this time, from the inside.

Although he went on to become quite successful in the business, Dennis was haunted over the destruction of his ideals at the hands of corrupt politicians and cops, who for the most part, had escaped the grasp of justice.

It was a banner day in the life of Dennis Gomes, when In 2007, the FBI called Dennis up to the plate. They brought Dennis Gomes in to assist in their case and testify as a key witness at the Chicago "Family Secrets Trial", one of the biggest organized crime trials in the history of the United States. Dennis'

original reports from the seventies, along with his expert testimony, proved to be instrumental in the conviction of five of the top Chicago mob bosses on seventeen counts of murder.

Miraculously, Dennis Gomes survived, and is now ready to tell his story.

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