

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN BOYNE

How involved have you been in the process of adapting your novel for the screen?

The film adaptation actually began before the book was published, when the book was in proof form, in late 2005. There were two separate approaches actually, Mark Herman – who is the writer and director of the film – that had read a proofed copy. He got in touch through my agent and we met up and discussed the book; he said he'd really like to adapt it and he had various ideas for it. At the same time David Heyman – who's the producer – had also read it and he got in touch and I met him and he also had, of course, his own ideas. So you know, I was talking to both of them and then they talked to each other and came together on it and between them they bought the rights and started the process. Over the course of the last couple of years, while this has been happening in the pre-production and in the production of the film, they've been very generous to me I think as the author, to involve me all the way through. Mark sent me all the drafts as he wrote them and I would send back my notes and he would take some of my notes on board and use them.

Right from the start I felt he was approaching it correctly. He had the sense of the book - he had the story – he was adding some things, he was taking some things out which weren't going to be necessarily useful on screen. So when I read the first draft he wrote nervously. You know I got to the end of it and I was just incredibly relieved and very proud of it really, even though I hadn't written the screenplay. So it's been a very exciting journey I suppose it would be crazy to say it hasn't been exciting. Being on set in Budapest watching these scenes that I'd written take place, meeting the actors playing the characters and, of course, I've spent the last couple of years talking about these characters to audiences. So, to see somebody in costume delivering those lines has been surreal at times but incredibly exciting.

Film is a creative process that involves many contributors. How does this compare to working on a novel?

One of the major differences between the experiences of the novel and the film has been writing. A novel is a very solitary endeavour. I was at home in a room with a computer just writing it and even promoting it or talking about it – it's always just me. So, going onto the set and meeting all these different people who all have different roles, make-up or costumes or cinematography and each of them have read the book and each of them have designed their own particular skill based on their reading of the book was totally different and a totally unusual experience for me, and now as the film is being released, to go places and to talk about it with other people, with the director, with the producer where I'm so used to doing things alone. I suppose it's like the difference between a singer and being in a band. And I have to say it's so much more fun being in a band and not being responsible for everything.

THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS



Do you see the film as a moving image version of your novel, or do you view it as a separate entity?

I kind of think of it as just another translation. There are all these different languages and this is another language of cinema. It's obviously going to reach more people I suppose than some of the books have, but to me it's just another way of presenting the book. You know, of course, to the filmmakers you know the film is what they do but I'm a novelist so to me it's another way of bringing the book to people. But I think it's a very beautiful film you know; I think it's very moving even as a separate entity entirely. So I hope people who have both read the book and haven't read the book can approach it on its own terms and appreciate it for what it is.