INTRODUCTION INTO SCREENWRITING STUDIES

Claus Tieber

Timetable

Lesson 1 (L1) Tuesday 10. 11.
14:00 - 15:50

L2 - Tuesday 10. 11.
16:00 - 17:50

L3 - Wednesday 11. 11.
10:00 - 11:50

L4 - Wednesday 11. 11.
12:00 - 13:50

L5 - Thursday 12. 11.
16:00 - 17:50

L6 - Thursday 12. 11.
18:00 - 19:50

Contents

- Screenwriting Studies: Definition, History, Theory and Methods

- Screenplay: Formats and History

- Modes of Production and Development

- Working Conditions and Unionization

- The Case of Hollywood: Studio System, Blacklisting etc

Aims

Film historiography
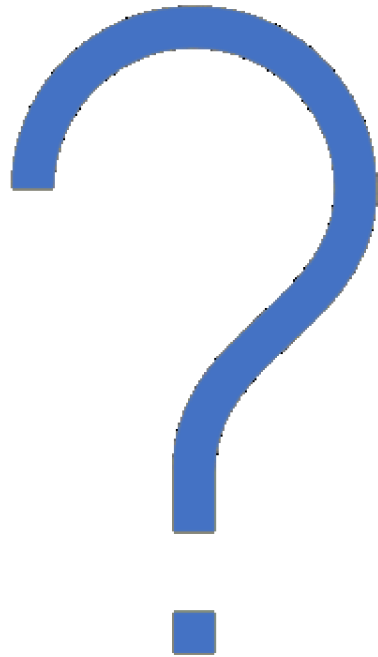
A new field in film and media studies

New approaches

History and presence

Archival material

YOUR EXPECTATIONS

GRADING

Ontology of the Screenplay

- **Literary value**
- **Intermedial status**
- **blueprint**
- **document**

SCREENPLAY: DEFINITIONS

The script of a movie, including acting instructions and scene directions.

Oxford Dictionaries

SCREENPLAY: DEFINITIONS

„The screenplay, which is sometimes known, also, as the scenario or film script, resembles the blueprint of the architect. It is the verbal design of the finished film."

SCREENPLAY: DEFINITIONS

The basic art of the motion picture is the screenplay; it is fundamental; without it there is nothing.

Raymond Chandler

a factory friendly document

David Thomson

SCREENPLAY: DEFINITIONS

A screenplay is the agreement of a group of filmmakers (SIWG) about what to shoot.

Screenwriting Studies

Narratology

Production Culture

Film History, Authorship

Practice Based Research

Text - Reception

Barthes:

– *Readerly*

audience can easily uncover the text's pre-determined meaning

– *Writerly*

requiring interpretive effort

Fiske:

– Producerly

popular and easy to read

different readers can easily read them in different ways

Screen Idea

Screen Idea

Screen Idea Working Group

Screen Idea Work Group (SIWG)

- A flexibly constructed group organized around the development and production of a screen idea

- All those who have some direct connection with the development of the screen idea

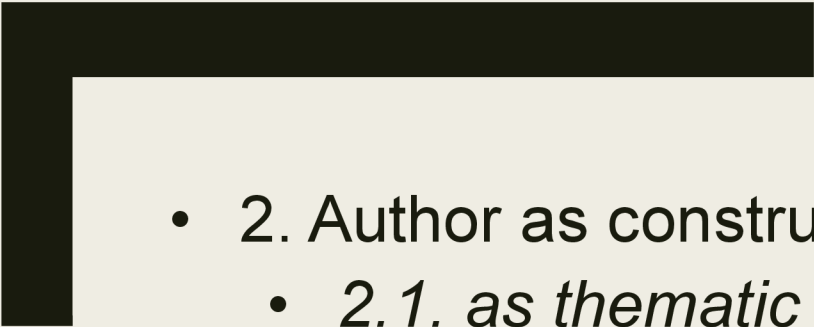Ian Macdonald

Screenwriting Studies
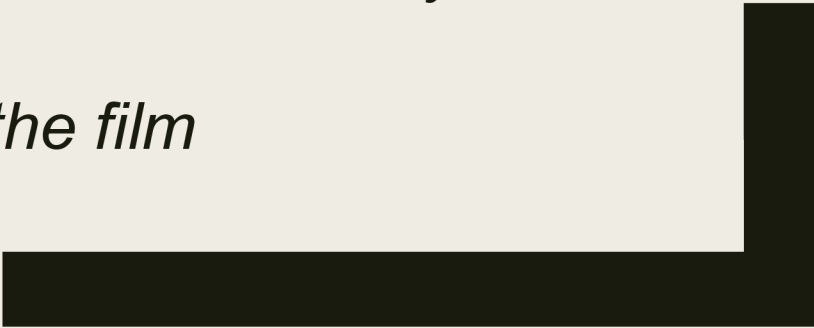
Screenplay as text

- *modular text (Price)*
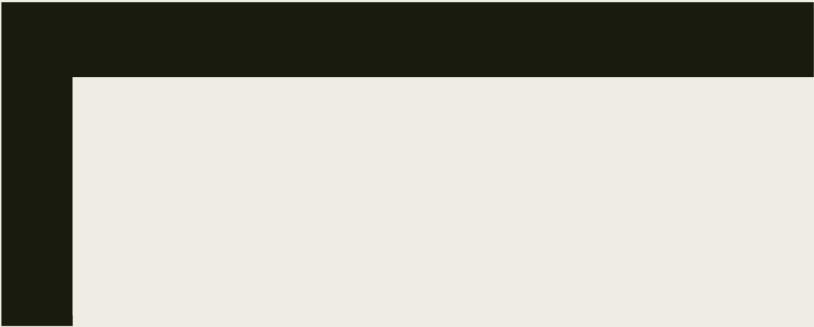- *Literature „in flux" (Sternberg)*

„Object Problem" (Maras)

Auteur-Theory

Stephen Crofts:

1. „ Author as expressive individual"

- 2. Author as constructed from film or films"
  - *2.1. as thematic or stylistic properties impressionistically and unproblematically read off from film to film*
  - *2.2. a set of structures identifiable within a body of films by the same author*
  - *2.3. as a subject position within the film*

- 3. Author as social and sexual subject

- 4. Author as author-name, as function of the circulation of the film or films

History of Screenwriting Studies

Claudia Sternberg:
*Written to be Read:
the Screenplay as
Text*

Janet Staiger:
*Blueprints for
Feature Films:
Hollywood's
Continuity Scripts*

Pauline Kael: *Citizen Kane Book*

Richard Corliss: *Talking Pictures*

History

- Tom Stempel: Framework

SRN

- Screenwriting Research Network
- Journal of Screenwriting
- Palgrave Studies in Screenwriting

Manuals

- 1910s
- 1970s until now
- Universality of narrative structures?

Screenwriting as process

Screen Idea

Production Culture
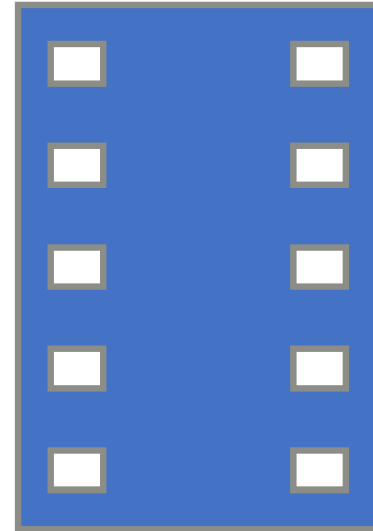
Doxa

Nobody knows anything?

Knowledge, believe, paradigms and conventions

Discourses about screenwriting

THE SCREENPLAY: ELEMENTS AND FORMATS,

Master Scene Script

- You just write: ‚master scene,', ‚cut to,' or ‚close shot' – which is very easy, just mix it up. The master shots and the individual shots were all shot the same way."

- Julius Epstein

Scene Headings/Slug-lines

Indicate setting and time, whether a scene is to be shot on an interior (INT.) or exterior (EXT.) set, the specific scripted location in all CAPS, and whether it takes place during the DAY or NIGHT (e.g. INT. ROOM – DAY).

Action

Generally reports on character actions but also contains scene descriptions, technical comments, and other relevant story details.

Transitions

Include each passage from one scene to another, always typed in CAPS (e.g. CUT TO:, DISSOLVE TO:, FADE OUT.). Because "cut to" is the default transition, it is generally omitted in contemporary screenplays.

Dialogue

- *Character Headings – Typed in CAPS and indicate the speaker of a line.*

- *Parenthetical Directions – Used primarily to modify the delivery of dialogue.*

- *Dialogue – All the spoken lines in the script.*

Literary Comment

illustrates the non-filmable imagery or emotional truth of a scene or character (e.g. "A tall scarecrow-of-a-man walks his long-haired dog down a dark street, the way a guard might walk his prisoner down the green mile." Literary Comment in italics.)

Technical Comment

offers instructions for the film crew and is usually capitalized (e.g. "CRANE UP to reveal a tall scarecrow-of-a-man walking his long-haired dog down a dark street. CLOSE on the dog. Somewhere a train blows its WHISTLE." Technical Comment in italics.)

Speech

consists of dialogue cues within the scene text (e.g. "A man walks his dog. Somewhere a train blows its WHISTLE, startling the animal, and the man tells his dog to heel." Speech in italics.)

The Apartment

INT. NINETEENTH FLOOR

Acres of gray steel desks, gray steel filing cabinets, and steel-gray faces under indirect light. One wall is lined with glass-enclosed cubicles for the supervisory personnel. It is all very neat, antiseptic, impersonal. The only human touch is supplied by a bank of IBM machines, clacking away cheerfully in the background.