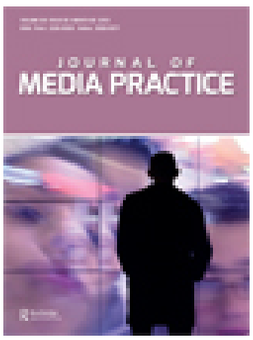

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Disentangling the screen idea

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Abstract

This paper takes the concept of the screen idea (as outlined by Philip Parker 1998) and uses it to mean 'any notion of a potential screenwork held by one or more people, whether or not it is possible to describe it on paper or by other means', and whether or not that notion has a conventional shape. This concept leads towards a clearer understanding of the process of screenwriting, which in turn helps consideration of what is being evaluated when looking at the products of that practice. The screen idea is the essence of the future screenwork that is discussed and negotiated by those involved in reading and developing the screenplay and associated documents; it is shared, clarified and changed through a collective process. This concept of the screen idea is developed with reference to the work of Roland Barthes in order to clarify the influence of norms and assumptions used during that process that may otherwise be hidden or unacknowledged. The process of script development has been explored in the CILECT conference 'Triangle 2' (Ross 2001), and this article takes two of these projects to examine how the screen idea is 'rewritten' by the collective process. In these examples it is not possible to attribute single authorship in the face of this dynamic and complex process of creating meaning. The underlying normative drive for a readerly text is made according to assumed, though often unacknowledged and unquestioned criteria.

Keywords

screenwriting
film theory
Barthes
script development
screen idea

> In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be *disentangled*, nothing *deciphered*....
>
> Roland Barthes (1977: 147, original emphases)

The screenplay and the screen idea

The screen idea is a term that has been used to describe the start of a screenplay's development (Parker 1998: 57).[1] I use it here to refer to the core idea of anything intended to become a screenwork.[2] It should therefore be the essence of the screenplay. Can we accurately define the screenplay? There are some things it clearly is; it is the record of an idea for a screenwork, written in a highly stylized form. It is constrained by the rules of its form on the page, and it is the subject of industrial norms and conventions. In what it can show and do in relation to the screenwork, it is partial; for example, with dialogue it is quite clear to the untrained eye, but with other aural components (such as music) there are injunctions against specification. The visual is only approximated, not completely specified. The architecture of the page is important in identifying key visual elements, and how the visual interacts with time. Clearly this is a form that requires training (and/or experience) to use it. It has been

1 See also Lucy Scher on 'shaping ideas and a story for the screen' in 'Finding the story in your idea', ScriptWriter, 13 November 2003, pp. 6-10.

2 'screenwork', meaning the completed film, TV drama, etc. A term also from Parker (1998: 10).

described as a 'blueprint';[3] as 'less than a blueprint and more than a libretto' (Corliss 1975: xv); (in a phrase attributed to Eisenstein) a 'hint fixed on paper' (S.M. Eisenstein, in Mehring 1990: 7); and 'a reverse pyramid ... a platform you wear on your shoulders that a talented director can stand on and perform' (S. Stern in Mehring 1990: 7). However, the screenplay is not the whole story:

> Bergman finds that the screenplay is an inadequate medium for clearly indicating the visual qualities of his films, especially the way in which they are to be edited and the relationship between shots; in short it is impossible for Bergman to indicate in the screenplay how a film will breathe and pulsate.
>
> (Winston 1973: 115)

It is its general nature, in outlining dramatic structure, which makes the screenplay an approximation. It may be that this generality is its strength, and is the reason for its centrality in the process of production.

There are some things the screenplay is not: it is not a finished piece of work (in relation to the screenwork - the finished film). It is not normally, by the start of shooting, the work of only one person, despite what it says on the cover. It is not (ever) complete, as a description of all the aspects of the screenwork. It is not image-based (surprisingly), and despite being text-based it does not appear literary in a traditional sense, except possibly in parts. There is never a definitive version of the screenplay of a film; by definition it must relate to the screenwork, but also by definition it cannot, as more work must precede the final outcome. At no point in its development can the screenplay be said to truly reflect the final screenwork. As a discarded piece of work, can it be considered except in relation to what it *might* have become? Given that the screenwork does not exist during preproduction, can we say that the *potential* screenwork exists? And does it exist in the text of the screenplay, or in the minds of those involved in production, or both?

Within the mind of a screenwriter there surely is, possibly only half-formed or ill defined, a potential screenwork which he or she has to attempt to convey to those that will produce it. Before pen is set to paper, this idea has some form or basis. A professional screenwriter will identify its suitability and give it shape, based on the norms of the screen industries, and it becomes a 'screen idea'. Parker describes this as adding 'genre ... style and ... dramatic structure' to a basic dramatic idea (Parker 1998: 57-58). I propose to use the term 'screen idea' to mean 'any notion of a potential screenwork held by one or more people, whether or not it is possible to describe it on paper or by other means'. I use it therefore as a theoretical term, meaning a singular concept (however complex), which may have conventional shape or not, intended to become a screenwork. The value of this term is that it allows us to refer to an essence, the idea that (in all probability) the writer has had from the start and which is discussed within, and then outside, the screenplay document.[4] The screenplay is intended to convey (or at least record) the screen idea, but the idea itself is formed in the minds of all those involved in its production. Therefore, this essence is an idea shared with others, the readers of the screenplay (script

3 A common term, for example used by Professor Henry Breitrose, as quoted by Professor Dick Ross (notes to the author, 2000).

4 During the production process the screen idea will change but there will be a limit, a point where someone (perhaps the writer) may identify (a) change(s) that signifies the limit of that screen idea and the start of a new one. What that limit is may not be important, only that the change is regarded as profound enough to refer to it as a new 'screen idea'.

editor, producer, director, and others) particularly during development, where the shared idea is discussed, made clear and changed. The screenplay is a record of the shared screen idea, redrafted in stages as the collaboration proceeds. But it is still a partial description of that shared idea, a framework within which others will work. The screen idea remains both within and around the screenplay.

To focus on the screenplay alone as the source for the screenwork therefore seems unsatisfactory. A clearer focus might be on the shared screen idea itself, if we could see it. This might be difficult, but we can observe the process of development of the screen idea. Collaboration involves reading and rereading, notes, discussion and redrafting, creating and recreating something that represents a common understanding. The reader(s) of the screenplay and other documents inevitably construct a version of the screen idea in their heads which (unlike readers of novels) they then have to contribute to. There is an imperative towards consensus, otherwise the screenwork will not get made. It also helps if everyone has a similar conception of what they are working towards.[5]

Theory, Barthes and the process of development

Literary and screen theory have for several decades debated the place of author and reader and the production of meaning. However, the location within one person of a particular way of presenting a story is clearly still important. 'Authorship is the principle of specificity in the world of texts' (Burke 1998: 202); retracing the work back to the author equates to working back to its historical, cultural and political embeddedness. In literary theory, Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' (1968)[6] had attempted to remove the idea of the author from textual production, on the basis of a wider view that language creates the work, and the writer writes it rather than 'authors' it. 'Nothing comes out of nothing', as true for literary creation as for organic nature, said Barthes (in Burke 1998: 23); and the source is not the power of a single transcendental imagination to generate ideas from nowhere, but the coming together in the writer of the discourses that arise from language. Despite Burke's view, the convenience of 'one author/one text' does not address the complexity of how meaning is generated in a work of art (Thompson and Burns, 1990, referred to by Kohn 2000: 494), particularly in relation to the development of the screen idea into a screenwork. As Kohn points out,

> ... in Barthes's (1974) terms, screenplays are model 'writerly texts' - open to being rewritten - as opposed to closed 'readerly texts' which 'can be read but not written ... classic text[s]'
>
> (p. 4). (Kohn 2000: 495)

I suggest that while this is true, it is not just the screenplay that represents the 'text' here, but all the forms in which the screen idea is expressed; from chance remark through logline and treatment to screenplay and cutting continuity and the final screenwork.

Barthes's work (in particular 'The Death of the Author' and 'S/Z') includes a number of points that might be useful to the analysis of screen-

5 This is most clearly seen when people vary in their understanding of the goals. For example, at the 'Triangle 2' conference on the creative relationship between writer, director and producer, it was noted that US professionals showed greater concern for the role of the audience in relation to the impact of the narrative than did European professionals (Ross 2001: 5). They were also quicker in their responses to development problems, suggesting a clearer idea of a basic general film narrative framework in the US context (Ross 2001:76, 77).

6 Burke (1998: 211) notes that this essay was first written in 1967 for an American magazine *Aspen* Nos. 5 and 6, and then republished in 1968 as 'Le mort d'auteur' (a title which in French echoes more clearly, and wittily, that of the legendary tale 'Mort d'Arthur') in *Manteia V*. The version quoted here is reprinted in Burke (1995).

writing and the screen idea. Firstly, the notion that the text is a 'tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture' (Barthes 1977: 146), that is, that there is no single theological meaning (the message from an 'Author-God'). If meaning is cultural, and plural, then it resides (in the first instance) in the reader, not the writer, because it is the reader that creates the meaning of the text from what is written. The surface meaning of a text may be suffused with resonances or nuance (normally described in terms of the author's power of evocation); but it is the reader that finds that resonance from his own cultural experience, from comprehending (even unconsciously) the extent of that resonance from his own point of view. The writer does not figure here, as he/she is not creating or describing a universal essential truth (says Barthes); 'his only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others' (1977: 146). The shock of Barthes's denial of the writer as creator is great, and difficult to accept, but it does place the writer firmly in a context that connects with others.

Barthes is referring to the individual writer (although he also referred with approval to the surrealist practice of collective writing),[7] but in screenwriting the process is multiplied by the collective involvement of many in the process of development, despite screenwriters and others emphasizing authorial possession of aspects of 'their' work. Barthes's assertion that the author of a book is plural is demonstrated more clearly with a screenwork, as an overtly collaborative process. This brings us back to the part played by the screen reader (that is, anyone who reads and contributes) in the construction of the screen idea.

Secondly, Barthes goes on to say that 'once the Author is removed the claim to decipher a text [that is, to find its true meaning] becomes quite futile' (1977: 147). Barthes talks of 'disentangling' rather than deciphering the text, where (in a famous metaphor) the text is like an onion whose layers are peeled away to reveal yet more layers until finally nothing is revealed (Barthes 1977: 147). The idea that the locus of meaning is the text alone (as in the screenplay, for example) becomes problematic if the only place where the multiplicity of meanings is focused is the reader. This would also be true of screenwriting, made more complex because there is no definitive written text, and more than one reader involved. Deciphering the screenplay would therefore mean both establishing a coherent set of meanings by (and for) the individual reader, and agreeing a coherent set of meanings for the group of readers. Rereading a text is a process Barthes referred to in 'S/Z' (1974: 15-16) as important in the disentanglement of the structure, the way of deconstructing the text's unity and 'naturalness', making possible the discovery of the text's plurality (Olsen 1990: 186). However, what Barthes refers to in 'S/Z' is the rereading of a fixed text, *Sarrasine*; how much more complex, then, is the process in screenplay development, where readers are also de facto writers, expected to contribute further text for other readers, in a dynamic process of continual 'refinement'? Development of the screen idea is a process of reconstruction that along the way creates several new 'writers' and readers in a collaboration. It is not a process of analysis alone, in an attempt to construct meaning from a (series of) fixed text(s); it is a process where the screen idea is disentangled and collectively reconstructed according to normative

7 In 'The Death of the Author' (in Burke 1995: 127).

practices of screenwork production, within constraints and conventions. The screen idea - the essence of the screenwork - therefore exists properly in the consciousness of the writers and readers who produce the screenwork; the written text is only a (partial) record of it.

Thirdly, Barthes's work in rethinking the place of the reader as a passive consumer has strong parallels in the actual industrial requirements placed on the professional reader of screen ideas. In trying to bring together the notions of reading and writing in 'S/Z', Barthes is describing a silent and unobservable process that occurs (he asserts) between a single writer and a single reader, but in doing so he has also described the same (and more overt) process that occurs between writer(s) and readers who collaborate over the screen idea. Could the screen idea readers be seen collectively, as a 'self' made up of multiples? It is possible, if one were to reseparate the notions of writer and reader, to describe the process of screen idea development and production as a writer and a reader interacting on many different occasions, in different roles. In that way, there could be said to be a collective character to this 'reader' who is constructing the text. It may be clearer to conceive of this as a second level of readership, a multiple 'collective reader' at a level above the individual one (which is itself composed of multiple and constantly developing elements). This second level of complexity has one main difference from the primary individual level - that its operation is overt. It may be observed in action, even as it contributes the development of the written text. Unlike Barthes's work on *Sarrasine*, where the fixed nature of the word on the published page allowed Barthes to identify codes at work, the second level of readership in screen idea development (the 'collective reader') can be observed at work, in the process of de- and reconstructing that screen idea. However, three significant problems remain; that the primary (individual) level is still also operating and is less (or in-)visible, that the observer is also reading and constructing the screen idea, and that when production is complete, the viewer will also construct the text.

Fourthly, according to Sheila Johnston, in 'S/Z' Barthes developed his arguments away from his previous attempts to present a single hypothetical model that could be applied to any narrative, towards the idea that each narrative is itself unique, its own model. As Johnston points out, citing Derrida, 'each work of literature *differs*, obviously, from other works; equally, however, it *defers* to them, i.e. relies on them for its distinctive meaning' (Johnston 1985: 240, original emphases). This notion therefore locates a text (and its structure) within and against other social and cultural discourses. 'A work of art, then, should be seen not mechanistically, as a closed system, a completed, inert object which will always remain the same, but dynamically, as an endless process of rereading and rewriting.' (Johnston 1985: 240). Johnston is referring, of course, to the completed work, of which the physical presence is virtually unchanging,[8] and not to the uncompleted work which is the screenplay. How much more complex does this render the development of the screen idea? The awareness of the reader as a focal point in creating meaning within a given context, and the collaborative attempt at a shared system of meanings that operates in development, also creates a dynamic process which functions in a complex

8 Of course, a completed film may actually change (through deterioration of film stock or videotape for example) and it may take different forms (such as 35mm, VHS or DVD) that could affect meaning.

way. There is an oscillation between people and between meanings that appears to resemble the endless process of rereading and rewriting a work of art, with the difference that there is also at play a group dynamic (even a power struggle) within norms of professional behaviour which involves roles, 'ownership' and leadership.[9] The intertextuality that is fundamental to Barthes's concept of literary meaning is, in this process, influenced (perhaps driven) by cultural concepts of film, TV, genre, the audio-visual industry and the audience. The process of script development of the realist text (the screenwork) is ostensibly to ensure, to confirm, the internal logic or intratextual economy (as Johnston puts it) of that text, but the external relationships that apply to this process (power, status, norms, negotiations and so on) are perhaps less well acknowledged.

Fifthly, Barthes's distinctions (1974: 3-6) between readerly (*lisible*) and writerly (*scriptible*) texts appear to be usefully applicable to screenworks, particularly when considered as 'notional extremes of a spectrum' rather than as global categories (Johnston 1985: 239). 'The readerly is what we know how to read and thus has a certain transparency; the writerly is self-conscious and resistant to reading' (Culler 2002: 22). This was a distinction that Barthes applied between classic realism and modernist reflexive literature, but can be considered as a distinction between works that claim to depict things as they are, 'naturally', and those that point up or create their own narrative construction, such as hypertexts.[10] In screenwriting the conventional approach outlined by screenwriting manuals appears typically realist, in that it

> ... pretends to be an innocent representation, a mimesis, a reality ... controlled by the principle of non-contradiction ... with a narrative structure which makes us read horizontally from start to finish, revealing a single unified meaning. It employs rhetorical devices which tie together the writer and reader in the production of meaning.
>
> (Olsen 1990: 184)

That this approach appears often to be taken as 'natural' is something that Barthes fought against, and indeed this surface 'unity' is still held up by manual writers as a goal to be aimed at by screenwriters.[11] 'But ... it makes the reader an inert consumer of the author's production, [and] is always assigned an origin (an author, a character, a culture)...' (Olsen 1990: 184).

This might seem to apply to a viewer and a mainstream screenwork, but the professional reader is not an inert consumer; s/he is producing meaning from both the written text and other references. The writerly text requires the reader to produce meaning from a 'galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds' (Barthes 1974: 5). This is a more 'difficult' process for the reader, one in which plurality is clearer.[12] The process is more writerly (Kohn 2000: 495 *passim*), even if the screenwork itself is (or is intended to be) readerly. For example, a writerly text

> ...is not a finished product ready for consumption. Such [writerly] texts invite the reader to 'join in', and offer us some kind of 'co-authorship'...

9 Even where the work is genuinely collaborative, roles and responsibilities are qualified in practice. Producer Mark Shivas says that a film 'starts off as the producer's film ...[when s/he] has to have a certain amount of arrogance...(Ross 1997: 36). Then it becomes the director's film, when the producer 'needs to have a certain amount of humility' (Ross 1997: 37), and 'if the director is able to take everyone else along with him or her, then it will be everybody's film' (Ross 1997: 35).

10 George Landow's work on hypertext, *Hypertext 2.0* (1997) is referred to by Elsaesser and Buckland (2002); Landow is described as the first person who realized that Barthes' work in S/Z could be applied to hypertexts: '...Barthes describes an ideal textuality that precisely matches ...hypertext - text composed of blocks of words (or images) linked electronically by multiple paths, chains or trails in an open-ended perpetually unfinished textuality described by the terms *link, node, network, web and path*' (Landow 1997: 3 in Elsaesser 2002: 161-62).

11 For example, Field 1994: 8-9.

12 The difficulty for the reader is not necessarily a guide to 'writerliness', as some screenplays could demonstrate an unfamiliar structure based nevertheless on a

> Barthes writes 'the networks are many and interact, without any of them being able to surpass the rest ... it has no beginning, it is reversible, we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively claimed to be the main one
>
> (*S/Z*, p. 5). (Olsen 1990: 185)

complication of classic realism (for example *Pulp Fiction, Magnolia*, or *Memento*). However, we are not concerned here with the final screenwork, but with the screenplay - whether the screenwork constitutes a 'readerly' or a 'writerly' text, does the same apply to the screenplay?

While many conventional screenplay texts clearly have beginnings, and follow a realist 'readerly' approach, the process of development of that text is indeed reversible, and readers gain access to the text through whatever 'entrance' seems appropriate - as director, producer, actor and so on. It is as if development and production, as a writerly process, has been grafted on to a readerly (or proto-readerly) text. If one accepts that there is no definitive written text for the screenwork, and that construction of meaning comes from the readers of the screenplay rather than from the screenplay itself, then what is signified becomes more obscure and more vague than the signifiers. The writerly text is not representational - it is intended to show its plurality rather than be mimetic ('advance pointing to your mask ...this is all Barthes finally asks of any system, any work of art or literature...' (Burke 1998: 52)). However, the basic intention of the process of development - to produce a screenwork - appears conventionally to move a screen idea towards a screenwork that can be consumed and accessed easily. It is an industrial process of shaping a writerly text into a readerly one, a screenwork that presents in some way a (fairly) seamless view of a world, if not the real world. Elsaesser and Buckland's comparison (2002: 146-67) of the readerly film with video-game logic concludes that 'the pre-determined structure of narratives excludes the possibility of interactivity - that is, that interactivity is incompatible with narrative structure. Narratives are inherently readerly - it is narrative that makes a text readerly' (2002: 167). This view therefore supports the notion that the interactive writerly process of development, the results of which are recorded in successive drafts of a screenplay, is necessarily directed towards the creation of the readerly.

Sixthly, Barthes' later ideas about pleasure and *jouissance* in the reading of the text - a development of his earlier distinctions of writerly and readerly (Culler 2002: 82) - and his concept of the influence of the body (replacing the mind), helps to understand how those involved in reading and judging the screen idea might react. *Plaisir* is a general pleasure that accompanies the readerly text, 'one we know how to read' (Culler 2002: 83) of euphoria, fulfilment and comfort; opposite this is *jouissance*, the pleasure that 'discomforts ... unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language' (Barthes 1975: 14). If one accepts that the purpose of the writer is to create an emotion in the reader, and conversely that the purpose of the reader is to create an emotion from (or with) the text, then one might propose that the reader's search for 'originality' (Macdonald 2003: 32 *passim*) is just that search for *jouissance*. What might explain the difficulties that readers express in their search for an original screen idea or an original 'voice' could be the problem that readers are seeking *plaisir* strongly at the same

time as wanting to see *jouissance* - something that is clearly problematic if (as Johnston (1985) suggests) readerly and writerly are to be viewed as opposite extremes of a spectrum. However, rather than pleasure being obtained from direct or clear meaning, *jouissance* comes from a lack of clarity, from an estrangement or shock value; the 'corporeal "grain of the voice"' (Culler 2002: 79). Given the drive towards the readerly in screenwork development, this suggests why it is sometimes difficult to find the writerly, and *jouissance*, in conventional screenworks; and possibly also why the complaint is still heard that there are no good screenplays around.[13]

The process of development and the screen idea

Can any of this be seen at work during the process of developing the screenplay? The CILECT conference 'Triangle 2', held at Terni, Italy in 1998, had as its purpose the demonstration, analysis and strengthening of the creative relationship between writer, director and producer (Ross 2001). Although the participants for each project comprise students and experienced professionals, and the tone is therefore instructional (in places at least), the transnational nature of the project groups and the serious intention to develop a professional proposal for each film provides an insight into the normative processes of screenplay development.[14]

I took two of the projects described in the report[15] and analysed the transcripts for common signs of method and progression. The process firstly took the form of question and answer, of establishing understanding of the proposal and of the 'world' it presented. Secondly (and shortly after the start of the process), the questioning referred to dramatic conventions and genre, so clearly placing the proposal into a framework that was taken as a given. Knowledge of this framework was assumed or explained (but not questioned) during the session. The process here was one of probing and testing, similar to defending a thesis, which then opened out into a shared discussion involving raising problems and solutions to those problems. The assessment criteria became overt during the conversation; the internal structure and argument (story) were being tested for consistency and internal logic, as well as against other criteria (dramatic, logistic, aesthetic, genre, market, examples of successful films). Discussion left the written text (shared before the session) behind, so that the only location for the screen idea was within the discussion, or (with subsequent sessions) in the initial introduction at the start of discussion. The general discourse was (in both cases) around the creation of a classic text, and on occasion it became clear what the professionals felt were the conventions:

> In movies, why do heroes find love and why do they end up doing the job? It's always because they don't want to do it. Sometimes a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do! ... [in movies] people are made to do things because that's drama! (screenwriter Neville Smith in Ross 2001: 36)

All participants made suggestions, with the professionals affirming or rejecting. The process, described by a student as 'being forced to constantly talk about the ideas, having to explain precisely what had actually changed in the last 24 hours' (Ross 2001: 76), was one which encouraged verbal encapsulation (such as a high-concept description), and using other

13 For example, Julian Friedmann in ScriptWriter, 11 July 2003, p. 5.

14 Each project involved a student producer, director and writer, talking with their 'tutors', a professional producer, director and writer. The imbalance in status between tutor and student was noticeable but not always so, and the workshops were intended to 'concentrate on the script/narrative development process' (Ross 2001: 7), as 'an opportunity to study the methodology of top [tutors/professionals] working in the field of story and script development' (Ross 2001: 5).

15 The Italian project and the British project (Ross 2001: 17-50, 51-78 respectively).

films as shorthand for ideas (such as 'going down the *Marnie* route'). The students' reaction to this process was initially shock at the 'violence' shown to their ideas (Ross 2001: 37), then appreciation (that they were being given suggestions) and wistfulness, when they realized that they were being led away from their original ideas - 'the most difficult thing to understand was when our tutors' tips were taking us further away from the idea we had of our own film' (Ross 2001: 37); 'this is not the film I wanted to make' (Ross 2001: 73). The process was one in which the screen idea was being shaped, altered and drawn towards what the professionals thought of as right, based on internalized experience and expressed as craft or lore.

Despite different roles, all participants contributed. The screen idea was 'rewritten', overtly and sometimes in the face of resistance from some, by the participants. Readers here were active participants, making meaning not just from a written text but from verbal discussion, sometimes in complex and even confusing ways as understanding and contribution oscillates between the participants. It is not possible to decide who was the 'author' of this screen idea, other than the collective character of the group and the norms and conventions that inform it. The underlying drive is towards making the shared idea 'readerly'; what was unacknowledged were the underlying criteria for this. The process, which appears to be writerly (in that it is essentially one in which writer and readers deconstruct and reconstruct the screen idea together), has a purpose that aims towards the readerly.

Conclusions

The conclusions I draw here are firstly that the screen idea (as a notion of a potential screenwork, held by one or more people, whether or not it is possible to describe it on paper or by other means) is a useful concept in understanding the process of development of the screenplay, and of the screenwork itself. Secondly, analysis of the development process using the concept of the screen idea makes more clear the influence of industrial and cultural norms and assumptions used within that process, that might otherwise be hidden or remain unacknowledged. In this sense I disagree with Kohn's quote from Deleuze and Guttari (1987) that the screen idea as a text has 'nothing to do with ideology' (2000: 504), as it seems clear that development is designed to shape or confirm a screen idea in a particular relationship to the field. Thirdly, that Barthes's emphasis on the reader in the analysis of literature is helpful in understanding the process of screenplay development, in several ways: in understanding the collaborative process that creates and shapes the screen idea; in locating the screen idea as a shared concept within that process (and regarding the screenplay as a partial record of that); in observing and considering the elements that make up that process of collaborative development; and in understanding that process as dynamic and complex during which meaning is explored, shared and created. The process of screenplay development is overt and thus observable, unlike the production of a novel, for example. Fourthly, Barthes's distinction between 'readerly' and 'writerly' texts is helpful in understanding the process of screenplay development as one in which

writerly activity is directed towards the production of a readerly text. Fifthly, Barthes's later distinctions between *plaisir* and *jouissance* seem also to be helpful in considering the screen reader's search for 'originality', but it is less clear how this fits with the reader's simultaneous desire for a readerly screen idea.

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