

EDITORIAL

IAN W. MACDONALD

Co-Editor

This seems to be the first peer-reviewed academic journal devoted to screenwriting in the world. Good grief! you say, are you sure? After more than a century of screenwriting? Well, not quite, I reply, though the lack of any reference to such a publication in researches so far is a strong indicator. I await a flurry of postcards from those who know better than I do...

Although in the 1980s there was an occasional series of papers published in Brussels under the title *Cahiers du Scénario* (still accessible at <http://www.uee.be>), collections of scholarly articles on screenwriting have usually turned up as occasional special numbers of film and media periodicals like *Cinémas*, *Film History*, the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* and *Scan: Journal of Media Arts Culture* (see also Maras 2009: 187–88). The remarkable absence – until now – of a regular scholarly journal is probably due to film academics frying bigger fish, focusing on New Waves, semiotics and male gazes, and only intermittently recognizing a need to consider the formation of the idea for a screenwork as something of interest.

An awkward and peripheral subject then, sidelined because of its problematic relationship to the apparently more concrete final ‘text’ of the film. Considered as rough sketches or the ‘blueprint’, or as incomplete or transitional, who would not look at the screenplay in its various forms as somehow inferior? More recent scholars have, however, begun to think of screenwriting as a practice involving more than writing a screenplay; and of the process of conceptualizing the screenwork as something more than merely part of production, or just a written text.

Screenwriting is now a broader academic subject than the industrial process of the same name, and its analysis involves approaches ranging from the sociological to the psychological. But the realization that there is more to the screen idea than scriptwriting has caused its own problems for academics, scattering potential publishing outlets right across media and cultural studies.

Finally, there is now a small corner of the academic universe reserved for such work, and we all owe a debt of thanks in particular to Jill Nelmes and to Intellect for creating this space. Jill's success in starting this journal has also coincided with a series of annual conferences, the first of which was held at the University of Leeds in September 2008 and which resulted in the setting up of the Screenwriting Research Network (join up at <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk>). The second conference takes place at the University of Art and Design, Helsinki, in September 2009.

In this issue we present a few of the issues facing screenwriting scholars at the present time, some of which surfaced at our first Leeds conference. We look at the appropriateness of current industrial practice, at theorizing labour practices, at understanding how they operate, and at how re-thinking screenwriting can change industrial thinking. We ask how mainstream screenwriting might deal with the challenges of terminological vagueness, and of interactive storytelling. The common assumption that the director is auteur is challenged in three articles which focus on the involvement of the writer in collaboration, and we discuss the methods adopted by those in the independent sector in the United States to get round the limitations of orthodox craft skills.

Kathryn Millard questions whether 'Courier 12 point' typescript (and by implication a range of other practices) is the 'natural' way of presenting a screen idea, or is due for a complete re-think. Bridget Conor presents her investigation into theorizing screenwriting as a creative labour process, and I suggest it is time to consider screenwriting as the product of the Screen Idea Work Group, a common industrial grouping of key creative workers (and others). Eva Novrup Redvall provides a historical analysis that connects the Danish film industry's adoption of new screenwriting practices with pioneering work around screenwriting at the National Film School of Denmark over the last 30 years. Patrick Cattrysse and Jasmina Kallay talk of mainstream industrial practice; Patrick on improving our understanding and use of key terms in script development, and Jasmina on assessing the merits (and difficulties) of using Aristotle's *Poetics* as the basis for an interactive screenwriting poetics. Riikka Pelo, Isabelle Gourdin-Sanguard and Rosamund Davies all present studies of how renowned film directors worked with their often less well-known screenwriters. Despite being revered as 'the greatest Italian screenwriter', Andrei Tarkovsky's and Michelangelo Antonioni's collaborator Tonino Guerra is still a 'footnote' says Riikka Pelo. Isabelle Gourdin-Sanguard carries forward the discussion begun by Charles Drazin in the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* (2008) on the collaboration between Lindsay Anderson

and his screenwriter David Sherwin; and Rosamund Davies offers some insights into the way that the experienced and respected writer Marguerite Duras approached her first screenplay for Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959). J. J. Murphy starts with Gus van Sant's observation that the screenplay does not leave a lot of room for 'the fun stuff', and explains how US independent film has negotiated its way around (or without) the script.

I hope it is clear from this range of contributions that our definition of screenwriting is a very wide one. It is not restricted to the written word, and is unconstrained by industrial demarcation. We are interested, in fact, in redefining the research and study of screenwriting in ways suggested by our contributors and our readership over succeeding issues. We now have the opportunity for a regular and sustained debate around screenwriting, a focus point for scholars who until now have been somewhat isolated. It is a great opportunity for us to think seriously about this neglected area, and to do something about grounding and cultivating it.

It is with much appreciation of and grateful thanks to my colleagues Jill Nelmes and Jule Selbo, to Alanna Donaldson and Ravi Butalia at Intellect, to our hard-working contributors, and to the anonymous peer reviewers without whom this process is impossible, that I admit to being delighted and proud to have had the opportunity to start the ball rolling, as Co-Editor of this first issue.

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Ian W. Macdonald is the research director of the Louis Le Prince Research Centre for Cinema, Photography and Television, in the Institute of Communication Studies at the University of Leeds. His own research work has concentrated on aspects of screenwriting, a subject he has taught since 1993, both during and after his time as head of the Northern Film School at Leeds Metropolitan University (1992–2001). Most recently he has investigated the changing and establishing practices of early British screenwriters during

the silent era. He is also Convenor of the Screenwriting Research Network, and encourages anyone interested in screenwriting research to log on to www.jiscmail.ac.uk and join up!

Contact: University of Leeds, LS2 9JT.
Phone: +44 113 343 5816 (incl. voicemail)
E-mail: i.w.macdonald@leeds.ac.uk