

A Conversation Beyond the Script

Deadline for abstracts: November 15, 2024; deadline for submissions: February 15, 2025.

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Since the last issue of *Illuminace* focused on screenwriting (4/2014), the field of writing for the screen and its academic reflection has undergone several changes. The biggest challenges for the screenwriting community (mainly in the USA but not only there) have been the financial remuneration of screenwriters, their job opportunities, and the rise of artificial intelligence. It resulted in another WGA strike, with which many regional screenwriting associations stood in solidarity. Screenwriting studies are responding to this with a gradual change of perspective. Alongside the continued interest in teaching screenwriting and narrative patterns, we are increasingly encountering case studies on regional approaches to writing, scripting for short formats and VR which can be understood as a tendency to broaden the field of interest and opportunities for screenwriters.

Issues affecting screenwriting are reflected each year at the annual Screenwriting Research Network Conference. In 2024 the conference will take place in the Czech Republic and its topic is “A Conversation Beyond the Script”. The aim of the conference is to reflect on the changes in formal aspects (especially dialogue and voice), the ways in which audiovisual works are developed and produced, and the changes in the craft of screenwriting.

We are calling for contributions that address the complex and multifaceted nature of dialogues and conversations in the screenwriting and audiovisual industry. This theme can be grasped in two ways: either as a reflection of dialogues in scripts and audiovisual art or as an insight into the filmmakers’ debates during the development and production phases or as ways of negotiating between screenwriters and production companies. Papers may reflect both traditional approaches to writing and new technologies such as AI and VR.

Neither of the meanings of ‘conversation’ is new to the literature. Film dialogue, although given less space than other elements of film form (such as framing, editing, and music), has been more researched in the last thirty years than it used to be. At the turn of the millennium, Sarah Kozloff rehabilitated dialogue as an object of inquiry (Kozloff, 2000). Paolo Braga pointed out that dialogue needs to be considered in the context of other formal aspects of film (Braga, 2015). Warren Buckland has shown how the tools of quantitative linguistics can be used to clarify what dialogue can tell us about film characters and authors (Buckland, 2019). Besides there are reflections on the realism of film dialogue (Nelmes, 2011) or research approaching dialogue as a side topic in texts on acting (Ganz and Price, 2020), or in a number of formal analyses and interpretive texts.

Dialogues in screenwriting are more than mere exchanges between characters; they are the lifeblood of storytelling, driving narratives and revealing the depths of characters’ emotions and motivations. This focus on dialogues and conversations recognizes their role in not just advancing the plot but also in creating a connection with the audience. Dialogues are where characters’ inner worlds are externalized and conflicts are brought to life.

Similarly, conversations among filmmakers during the creation process are crucial. These collaborative discussions shape the final output, blending diverse creative visions into a cohesive narrative. Understanding these conversations offers insights into the collaborative nature of filmmaking, highlighting how collective creativity and shared decision-making impact the storytelling process. Formal or informal conversations between filmmakers during the development and production of films is a topic that has been treated much more thoroughly from a scholarly perspective, as studies on production culture in audiovisual industries have shown (we are referring here primarily to studies following the tradition of sociological approaches to the development and production of film, building on authors such as Bourdieu, 1996; Caldwell, 2008; Macdonald, 2013; and others). Thus, we have new knowledge not only about final versions of scripts but also new insights into their development from the first simple idea, more broadly about the essence of screenwriter's job, their analog and digital instruments (used for communicating personal and shared visions), different kinds of multiple- and collaborative authorship, functions of writing departments and organizational structures of locally or media-specific dramaturgical systems, which altogether changing our understanding of what happens during the development of a screenplay (or any non/narrative content), and which presents screenwriting into considerable extent also as art of constant, ongoing discussions (usually democratic in nature) about each detail of future work/creative output (Price, 2010; Bloore, 2012; Macdonald, 2013; Tieber, 2014; Millard, 2014). However, the question arises whether and possibly to what extent our knowledge of the field will be relevant after the advent of artificial intelligence.

For the forthcoming issue, we invite authors to send us abstracts dealing with any of these possible (but not exclusive) topics:

- Dialogues and Discourse in Screenplays: Examining how character dialogues function within scripts to convey subtext, emotion, and narrative progression.
- Plurality of Voices and Polylogues: Analyzing scripts that feature multiple voices and complex conversational structures, reflecting the diversity of perspectives.
- Dissemination of Information: Investigating how information is shared through dialogue, affecting audience perception and engagement.
- Storytelling Through Conversation: Exploring the role of conversational dynamics in shaping narrative and character arcs.
- Collaborative Conversations in Filmmaking: Understanding the impact of dialogue between writers, directors, and other stakeholders on the creative process.
- Intercultural Dialogue in Film and Television: Studying how cross-cultural interactions are represented and negotiated through dialogue in screenplays.
- History and Theory of Screenwriting: Reflecting on the evolution of screenwriting practices and theoretical approaches.
- Teaching Screenwriting Techniques: Discussing pedagogical methods and strategies for teaching dialogue writing and screenplay construction.
- Narrative Strategies in Audiovisual Media: Examining innovative narrative techniques in film, television, and new media, focusing on the integration of dialogue.

Submission Guidelines

We invite scholars and practitioners to submit papers that engage with these topics, offering fresh perspectives and rigorous analysis. Submissions should be original, unpublished works that contribute to the academic discourse on screenwriting and filmmaking.

Please send an abstract (250 words) and a short bio (150 words) to lucie.cesalkova@nfa.cz, jan.trnka@nfa.cz and jan.cernik@upol.cz by **November 15, 2024**. The authors will be informed of the decision by December 15, 2024. The deadline for submitting the full article is February 15, 2025.

The detailed submission guidelines can be found on our journal's website.

Literature:

- Bloore, Peter. *The Screenplay Business: Managing Creativity and Script Development in the Film Industry* (London: Routledge, 2012).
- Braga, Paolo. *Words in Action: Forms and Techniques of Film Dialogue* (Peter Lang, 2015).
- Buckland, Warren. "Mind our mouths and beware our talk': Stylometric analysis of character dialogue in *The Darjeeling Limited*," *Journal of Screenwriting* 10, no. 2 (2019), 131–137.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
- Caldwell, John T. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
- Davies, Rosamund, Paolo Russo, and Claus Tieber, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Screenwriting Studies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).
- Ganz, Adam and Steven Price. *Robert de Niro at Work: From Screenplay to Screen Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).
- Kennedy, Andrew K. *Dramatic Dialogue: The Duologue of Personal Encounter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- Kozloff, Sarah. *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- Kozloff, Sarah. *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-over Narration in American Fiction Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- Macdonald, Ian W. *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
- Maras, Steven. *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2009).
- Millard, Kathryn. *Screenwriting in a Digital Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
- Nelmes, Jill, ed. *Analysing the Screenplay* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- Price, Steven. *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- Schatz, Thomas. *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).
- Tieber, Claus. "A story is not a story but a conference': Story conferences and the classical studio system," *Journal of Screenwriting* 5, no. 2 (2014), 225–237.