

Screenplay as Visual Literature

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Abstract

Researchers, journalists, and critics of the Classical Hollywood cinema period worked a lot on the hunt against communists in Hollywood and on the literary value of a screenplay. However, some fundamental questions remain still partially open: firstly, besides the guaranteed lavish studio salaries, what led the best writers in the American literary scene to enter and remain in the field of cinema, which they had harshly criticized? Secondly, what drove the US government to see in Hollywood screenwriters (indeed, it should be remembered that in the List of the “Hollywood Ten”, nine of them were screenwriters) a ramification of the Communist Party dangerous to the American society? Thirdly, given the unprecedented presence of talented writers in the film industry during Classical Hollywood cinema, can we affirm that the discipline of screenwriting improved its status in visual literature?

This article will try to answer the above-mentioned questions – which as we will see are deeply intertwined – and aims to reopen the issue of whether screenwriting can be accounted for visual literature, as most cinema employers and many academics judge it as a technical blueprint.

Keywords: Visual literature, Cinema, Hollywood, Novel Writers, Policy

Introduction

The question the present article addresses is whether screenwriting can be considered visual literature. To argue how screenwriting can be featured by a literary value, this article takes into account “Classical Hollywood”, a historical period in which the presence of novelists working in Hollywood was substantial. Screenwriting never experienced an improvement in its status of being. If anything, it was relegated to being considered a draft with no literary and even no cinematic value. Such negative consideration occurred because screenwriting was judged not to have any style worth mentioning and its existence would cease the moment staging begins. By the time cinematic production would hit movie theatres, screenplays would be forgotten and non-existing. Classical Hollywood with the presence of the best West Coast novel writers can be used as a proving example to demonstrate how a living literary value of screenwriting does exist,

although this was a period punctuated by the House Un-American Activities Committee's investigations (HUAC) against communists who allegedly manipulated texts and movies to be shown (Navasky). The present article will consider the political correlation between screenwriting and politics (Navasky) to contextualize the social-historical aspect of screenwriting, the relationship of screenwriters to producers (Alonge, Cole, Valenza), film production during the Second World War (Kuisel, Jones), the development of the union that was supposed to protect screenwriters (Swett), and the potential role of visual literature played by screenwriting (Geerts, Morsberger, Nuvoli, Snyder). Focusing on the work of writers and screenwriters John Fante, the present article will be concluded by asserting how a revision of studies on the value of a screenplay is necessary to strengthen the process of reevaluation of the subject in question. Such re-evaluation would enable screenwriting to obtain that literary recognition that would lead it to embody a fundamental point in the process of film production and academic studies.

Methods

Understanding the relationship between screenwriting and literature in Classical Hollywood cinema is not simply a matter of looking at screen credits or referring to legends of a "writer in chains". Rather, it is necessary to analyze the politics of Hollywood industry at the time (Navasky) and interpret the role it played in the already difficult relationship between screenwriters and producers (Alonge, Cole, Valenza).

The comparative methodology of this article is thus based on a historical-geographical explanation of classical narrative cinema until the arrival of sound in film industry, the latter of which changed the perception of writing. The article will then move on to the analysis of the relationship between screenwriters and producers through a mere critique of film history (Alonge) and use the example of John Fante, who was both a writer and screenwriter, to delve into the relationship that has linked writers with the Hollywood industry. Film production during the Second World War (Kuisel, Jones), and right in the period of the greatest success of Classical Hollywood cinema, as well as the restructuring operation of the SWG (Swett) and during the 1934 California election, which would have negative consequences for Hollywood employees, will be contextualized. In this election, Upton Sinclair (Democratic party) was targeted by negative campaigns financially supported by the film industry.

All of this sets the stage for the role of a screenplay and a screenwriter, seen merely as technicians assigned to writing a manual, who instead, shall merit a place in visual literature thanks to the message and values they intend to communicate (Geerts, Morsberger, Nuvoli, Snyder). Through this comparative methodology, the present article intends to reopen the academic discussion on the re-evaluation of the status of a screenplay. As visible from the evidence brought in this regard in the article, it is necessary to reinterpret the motivations that damaged screenwriting because of the "screenwriter-producer" relationship in Classical Hollywood and the political aspects that led to the birth of the union. A reinterpretation is all the more necessary because the vast majority of

screenwriters, with the example of John Fante, who worked in the film industry represented the best class of West Coast writers at the pinnacle of intellectual society.

Results

Classical Hollywood cinema started at the beginning of the 20th Century (1910) and lasted until the beginning of the Sixties. Mainly, it was characterized by the arrival of sound and by the fact that studios hired the most famous novel writers, who had initially decided to lend their skills to the film industry to make the Hollywood brand stronger and to grow financially. During the writers' recruitment and at the end of the Second World War:

«(...) the motion picture industry had been dominated by five major companies – Warner Bros, Loew's (which owned MGM), Paramount, RKO, and the Twentieth Century Fox – which collectively accounted for nearly 70 percent of the box-office receipts in three thousands of theatres (...) across the nation» (Navasky, 145: 1980).

These majors possessed monopoly on the film market and were trying to get the best writers under contract by offering them enormous salaries. The goal was to have them under contract before other production companies and therefore, to be able to insert them in their credits (Alonge, 30: 2012). However, the result of this competition to hire writers had also negative consequences, since the writers under contract could have nothing to do for days and the most important thing for the studios was only to have them on their teams (Alonge 30: 2012). It was a system that risked degeneration because, as in the case of famous film critic Frank Nugent, critics also became potential employees of the majors. Nugent was hired by Twentieth Century Fox, whilst before had been a long-term film critic for the "New York Times". Twentieth Century Fox decided to hire him so that he would stop tearing apart Hollywood productions (Alonge, 31: 2012). On this matter, Nugent asserted that Zanuck told him that the studio would save money if he criticized the films before they were made (Alonge, 31: 2012). Hollywood was at its best and the year 1946 was the peak of major success. "Variety" magazine wrote that every night was "Saturday Night", which was the moment people wanted to go out carefree and enjoy the cinema. The numbers speak for themselves: at that time, between eighty and ninety million filmgoers paid about five hundred million dollars for this habit every week. In reference to those numbers, Warner Bros., MGM, Paramount, RKO, and Twentieth Century Fox were responsible «for 75% of the top-billed features each year» (Navasky, 144-145: 1980).

Recruitment of writers in Hollywood cinema, in addition to the symbolic value of having the best authors in one's studio, had the functional value of cultural elevation (Alonge 29: 2012). This was because, as Ben Hecht stated, until then Hollywood had entered the lives of people who had nothing to do after «washing dishes» (Alonge 68: 2012), and therefore there was a need to recover intellectuality through cinema, which otherwise risked being sucked away in those B-Movie stories. Hecht's statement is well founded, since the effects of the crisis of 1929 and the political tensions of World War II worried American

society, which saw in cinema a reason to detach itself from the efforts of the day and the difficulties that the individual has to face. People did not care about the art, the message, or the structure of a film, what mattered was the fun and enjoyment of the product. "B-Movie" was a production that allowed the vast majority of citizens to enjoy films with a modest cognitive impact: western-themed films, spy stories, gangster films, and adventures (Kuisel, 119-134: 2000).

The great success of cinema, however, had opened up a new kind of market: think of the effect that a Hollywood film readaptation could have in literature and in the selling of a book already published, which did not match success among the public. Furthermore, during Classical Hollywood cinema, we can also observe a new kind of production, which was colliding with politics (Jones, 17: 1945). In this context, Hollywood became a spokesperson for propaganda to calm American citizens during the Second World War. Indeed, in the war period between 1942 and 1944, 1313 films were produced in Hollywood, of which about 30% focused on World War II (Jones, 17: 1945). However, this new way to utilize cinema made American institutions aware of how Hollywood could be a valuable tool for spreading ideas also after the war. Therefore, it is not a surprise, as we shall see later, that the motion picture industry finished under investigation when communist ideals spread in Hollywood.

Another new Hollywood milestone was the arrival of the sound system and, therefore, greater possibilities for the readaptation of certain texts. In fact, in 1927, the first sound film was made: "The Jazz Singer" (under the Warner Bros. production company) directed by Alan Crosland. The sound system changed the literary perception, specifically that of writing of screenwriters who from that moment on could not ignore the sound characteristics to be added to the visual component when they tried to create a story. With increasing competition among productions and therefore requesting new ideas and writing quality, to write screenplays that could be of interest to the public – it did not matter if they were B-Movie or propaganda screenplays – it was still necessary to hire the best writers available. In his critique of the correlation between literature and screenplay, Nuvoli speaks of the screenwriter's gift of being able to make a transition from the imaginary to the visual (Nuvoli, 26: 2005). To carry out this operation, writers had to refer to the four stages that lead to the creation of a screenplay: first, the dramatic idea, which was the story concept, second the subject, third the schedule and fourth the adaptation (Valenza, 4: 2008). These four elements were no guarantee for screenwriters to work freely in writing of a screenplay because a producer had the last word on any line of the screenplay.

The relationship between screenwriters and Hollywood producers was, depending on the major, of constant trouble. The first reason was precisely the judgement on screenwriters' way of working that led to a lack of development in the field of screenwriting for many years (Morsberger, 46: 1975). The second reason was the legislative indefiniteness concerning screenwriting in the credits: if we think of Fitzgerald and Faulkner, we should remember that they had sometimes received no mention in the credits (Morsberger, 51: 1975). In Classical Hollywood cinema, producers had *carte blanche* on the names to be

included in the credits, having therefore the opportunity to perpetrate injustices (Alonge, 42: 2012), which began to be reduced after SWG was officially recognized by majors in 1939. The major that has been most recognized for its support to screenwriters is certainly Twentieth Century Fox. There, as reported by Philippe Dunne, screenwriters were the stars because their deputy director Darryl Zanuck had a background as a screenwriter and tended to take screenwriters' defence during a film production (Alonge, 36. 2012). However, the attitude of Twentieth Century Fox in collaborating with screenwriters was uncommon, as the working relationship between screenwriter and producer in Hollywood was often hostile.

Once the final draft of a screenplay was handed in, screenwriters were usually excluded from the later stages of the making of the film, as their presence was not considered necessary. There were exceptions to the presence of a screenwriter on stage in case the director needed their cooperation (Alonge: 36, 2012). Specifically, the previous sentence is confirmed by Lewis Cole's thesis if applied to the cinema of Classical Hollywood: speaking of a screenplay as a «collaborative exercise», Cole states that the more a screenplay moves into the process of production, the less control a screenwriters have over their screenplays during film making (Cole, 563: 1991). One interpretation of Cole's statement is that producers thought of their positions as a privilege in the film industry, therefore phasing out screenwriters from the film process. This behaviour could happen because screenwriters could endanger producer's position through their knowledge. Indeed, in Classical Hollywood cinema, we can observe that producers found themselves competing with screenwriters, who represented the elite of American literature like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nathanael West, Ben Hecht and John Fante. Literally speaking, the aforementioned screenwriters had an unreachable intellectual background for producers.

Because of producers' supremacy during Classical Hollywood cinema, the myth of the "writer in chains" was created. This definition comes from Ian Hamilton (Alonge, 33: 2012). The "writers in chains" were talented authors hired to write a screenplay and perpetually attacked and humiliated by producers, so much so that they would suffer from depression, preoccupations and mortification for having accepted the cinema offer. Such depression derived from authors' inability to adapt themselves to the pragmatic logic of that work field, which differed enormously from writing of novels. As reported by critics, in Classical Hollywood cinema, working as a screenwriter meant working as a company employee: that meant arriving on time at the major and sitting in writers' building office for hours (Alonge, 33: 2012). Here, the days could last with no assignments or no projects to work on. Fante describes a day of Bandini's work in the studios in his novel "Dreams from Bunker Hill" and comparing it with the definition of the "writer in chains", it can be affirmed it suited the reality:

«The work Harry Schindler had assigned me was an impenetrable mystery. I spent my days reading his screenplays, dozens of them, one a day, and none that interested me. He specialized in gangster movies. (...) on the door of every office was the nameplate of every celebrity: Ben Hecht, Tess Slesinger, Dalton Trumbo, Nat West, Horace McCoy (...) they all looked the same to me.

(...) They won't let me write. Schindler won't give me anything to do. I'm going crazy» (Fante, 619-621: 1982).

Bandini, who is Fante's main protagonist, is paid lavishly and sits in the office waiting for a project that most of the time would never have been completed and produced into a film: the legend of the "writer in chains" deserves further focus; talking about chains may seem an exaggeration.

Indeed, we can speak more of a golden prison with a free exit, a term with which this article interprets that period for writers in Hollywood. A new phrase which is based on two motivations: the first is the propagation of the myth of the writer in chains, which was widely spread by Edmund Wilson, a friend of Francis Scott Fitzgerald. Wilson, who had a philosophical background as a writer and tried in every way to become famous and respected in Hollywood as a screenwriter. He did not have an easy life, so much so that in those three years he received only mortification. Successively to his time in the motion picture industry, he decided to publish a pamphlet: "The Boys in the Back Room, Notes on California Novelists" (Alonge, 34: 2012). In this text, Wilson attacked writers and producers of motion cinema industry. The former were for him guilty of selling themselves to Hollywood, and the latter accused of wasting the writers' talent as happened to the two great American authors: Fitzgerald and Nathanael West (Alonge, 34: 2012). Wilson seemed to have made it more a personal than categorical matter, using Fitzgerald and West to speak for all writers, including himself. The truth is still in the middle, because other writers managed to work successfully in cinema, and John Fante is an example of this. The second reason was the arbitrary choice to enter the motion picture industry. In this case, Wilson's thesis does not seem to hold up. In fact, a writer was not "chained" in Hollywood, but had the right to resign at any moment, or not to collaborate with the majors. It is undeniable that producers put great pressure on screenwriters and it is also true that they were the least paid in the film industry, but it is important to point out that the salaries of screenwriters, even if lower than those of actors and producers, were significant. In 1937, Faulkner had a salary of one thousand dollars a week at Twentieth Century Fox to work on the "Drums Along the Mohawk" project (Gleeson-White, 10-11: 2017). Of course, some screenwriters earned much less, but we are still talking about high numbers. Furthermore, it should be noted that novel writers were not forced by anyone to work for the film studio, so it was always possible to refuse the rules of the system by not taking part. When Wilson asserted that writers had sold themselves to Hollywood, he was wrong in his approach to the subject. Writers had not sold themselves but offered themselves to the majors in order to demonstrate they could use their talent and at the same time achieve financial stability. They were aware that it was a job with a relationship of subordination, different from the freedom of a novelist; therefore, their choice was made in full understating of the possible negative consequences.

During that time, defending the rights of screenwriters was responsibility of the SWG. Although the revitalization process of the SWG in 1933 – in fact, the screenwriters' union project seemed to be "abandoned" (Swett, 1: nd) – was intended to establish principles regarding "screen credits" for writers who had

produced or contributed to a screenplay, the role of the SWG was officially recognized by the film producers in March 1939, regardless the fact that it had already been certified by the NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) in 1938 as an exclusive bargaining agency. The decision in 1938 was taken after a vote in which writers chose the Guild and rejected the “Screen Playwrights”, founded by the film studios with the task of facing the Guild (Swett, 1: nd). For instance, screenwriters, who were also the most recognized and talented writers on the West Coast, were undergoing a new step of politicization. Whereas before, we had distinguished a film policy with the unique purpose to defend America during the Second World War, already in the Thirties we observe an internal division within the film industry. In 1933, ten writers, namely Kubec Glasmon, Courtney Terrett, Brian Marlow, Lester Cole, Samson Raphaelson, John Howard Lawson, Edwin Justus Mayer, Lewis Weitzenkorn, John Bright and Bertram Bloch, had begun the process of revitalizing the Guild. Only one year later, in 1934, the first political event that was going to unite cinema and politics took place: Upton Sinclair was campaigning to become governor of California. Sinclair, an old-fashioned socialist, had managed to win the Democratic nomination and had immediately made his idea of government in California through his election slogan clear: «End Poverty in California» (Alonge, 84: 2012). Instead, this slogan made the Republicans of California shudder. It seemed clear, suddenly, that the wealth many had managed to achieve in California, which was a land of dreams and work, could have been jeopardized by a socialist, who was primarily concerned with bringing greater social equality.

While until then the motion picture industry may have ensured, generally speaking, a kind of unique propaganda in favor of the USA, for the first time the motion picture industry was brought up for one American state: in fact, the role played by the film industry in Sinclair's election result was fundamental. One of the opponents of Sinclair's policy was the Republican leader Louis B. Mayer (also manager of MGM). To assist Mayer, film producers and majors provided their support. Indeed, they financed the Republican campaign: the critics asserted that employees of the film studio, *i.e.* directors, writers and actors, were solicited to make donations to the "Stop Sinclair Fund" (Alonge, 84: 2012). Such an effort against a candidate could only lead to one result, namely the defeat of Sinclair against the Republican Frank Merriam. When that happened, many employees and screenwriters began to sympathize with Sinclair's ideas (Alonge, 84: 2012), since they had seen the media pillory machine hurling, supported by the conservatives, at him in an unprecedented way. The very behavior of majors and film producers led to a shift of Hollywood employees to the democratic left wing.

Screenwriters, directors and actors, and thus many Guild members, officially endured investigations by the HUAC in 1940 for political positions that leaned toward the Communist Party. While initially there had been support for political idea of the New Deal, many Hollywood employees had placed their political trust in communism by the end of the 1930s, so much so that many of them joined the party and were active members by attending meetings (as in the case of Edward Dmytryk). Sadly, as we shall see, registration of Hollywood employees in the Communist Party caused them a lot of trouble. Indeed, they

were accused of espionage for Russia and of activities to promote communism in the USA during McCarthyism; a period known for the witch-hunt against those who were, or had been, members of the Communist Party or its supporters. The accusations turned out to be unfounded because there was never any propaganda or attempt at manipulation; what should be noted is the presence of intellectuals in Hollywood who had placed their trust in that ideology, without committing any crime. However, in the course of the investigations and trials, there were many censored screenwriters, including Dalton Trumbo, who were condemned and had to write under pseudonyms. Furthermore, what was observed was the implosion of the category of screenwriters and directors, who could no longer trust their colleagues and speak freely, as the risk was that someone would name a colleague to escape the allegations of the investigations. Once named, you in turn had to defend yourself from the accusation of support of communist ideology. This means that the screenwriters' category was not united in pursuit of a common interest for the union battles and to improve its prestige; rather, individuals were striving to survive and protect themselves from the HUAC.

During Classical Hollywood cinema period, not only politics affected screenwriters. Indeed, the relationship between screenwriters and producers had also negatively influenced progress and studies carried out in the field of screenwriting, hiding a potential link between “visual literature” and “screenplay”. Almost always referred to as the first technical part of film production, in recent years the discipline of screenwriting seemed to have gained more consideration from film critics. Indeed, critics have begun to think about new hypotheses that could link screenplay and visual literature: among the most interesting is certainly the one reported by Giuliana Nuvoli, who thinks that screenplay is the literary form of a story that will be told through images, and constitutes the project of a film (Nuvoli, 25: 2005). Seemingly, a film is divided into two parts, a screenplay and a production, creating a status of independence in the existence of a screenplay from the production aspect. By representing “the project”, it can be said that a screenplay is the condition *sine qua non* of the entire process that leads to the making of a film. If we think about it, the theory that analyzes a screenplay as a draft of a living text until the production of a film, after which it could be trashed, has been subverted. Indeed, splitting the two processes and attributing to each one its independence, namely screenwriting and production, showed that there could be a purpose, specifically a final message in scripts. It is legit to assert that, during Classical Hollywood cinema in which there was a cultural circle of screenwriters who included the best writers of 20th century American literature, such message of the script was expressed through a literary form considering style, vocabulary and the public.

Superficially, film industry insiders think that a screenplay is the first phase of film production, in which it is only a matter of drafting down a story, a set and a dialogue. It would not seem possible to find a literary value in a text that would later be modified by producers and therefore no longer has any purpose (Valenza, 2: 2008). However, a pen or in this case a typewriter, if given to a good writer can become a sword in the Machiavellian sense, which is a tool for one to ideologically free themselves from the chains of a producer: this is an

interpretation of Ronald Geerts' thought stating that screenplays are more than just a draft based on indications, as screenplays can depend upon evocative language and be interpreted because they are containers of messages (Geerts, 127: 2014).

The first reflection that comes after Geerts' theory is therefore where to place the discipline of screenplay. This article agrees with Dallas J. Baker's theory, according to which a screenplay is to be attributed to creative writing (Baker, 11: 2013). It is important to note that creative writing is not only to be read with a literary spirit but also interdisciplinarily. When we talk about creative writing, we not only mean novels and poems but also screenplays, which also fall into the category of literature. The first two may fall into the category of literature, if they are worthy of recognition, while a screenplay has never been allowed to aspire to such a goal. The debate concerning the relationship between visual literature and screenplay is therefore bound to its recognition within creative arts; this is because, in addition to the already discussed technical language of screenwriting, there is a problem regarding screenplay authorship. Indeed, screenplays – although some critics claim their independence as a text from the production of a film – have always been a text that is always subject to changes and with a commercial purpose. Therefore, screenplays do not seem to have a unique author, as other members of staff (with credentials) can make changes during film production (Al Subahi, 7: 2012). However, a novel, as well as a poetry, albeit with the presence of agents, publishers and people in charge of corrections, can be attributed only to one author, who is identified by critics and the public as the text writer and who is in full control of the text.

Another reason not to consider screenplays as visual literature is that screenplays, existing as a constantly evolving text, would not have a clear origin from which to extract the message and the meaning they intend to communicate, while in a novel the two previously mentioned points are never changed by the editing process. However, it is unfair to compare a text, and its development, of a novel writer with a screenwriter to determine the value of writing, because the latter explicitly develops a text which is going to evolve due to the hierarchical structure of the motion picture industry. In this case, to demonstrate how the previous comparison can be misleading, it is important to underline Pasolini's theory on the screenplay present in *The Screenplay as a "Structure that Wants to Be Another Structure"*: according to Pasolini, it is a morphologically moving structure (Nuvoli, 37: 2005). This means screenplay is multiform in its facets and its phases. Screenplays are a moving structure that not only have advantages, such as the evolution of a text in film production which is certainly planned on the basis of improvement of a text for success in cinemas, but also disadvantages because the evolution of a text is the result of its modifications and makes the intellectual property of the screenplay not easy to trace. However, when Pasolini affirmed screenplay as a moving structure, this also means we should think about a metamorphosis of a screenplay such as a "structure" that is provided with the intent to become "another structure". Starting from Pasolini's theory, screenplay is also analyzed as the transformation of a liminal text into a performance (Geerts, 135: 2014). A truthful consideration because this transformation takes

place in the changes done by producers and in the different editing phases preceding the shooting of actors and then the film at cinemas. However, it can be considered that there is a limit not to be underestimated in the transformation mentioned above: it is an interpretation that takes into consideration the value of a screenplay (*i.e.* the message) and the modalities of narration (*i.e.* the communicative expression that screenwriter uses) both combined to the context of film industry, as it was in Classical Hollywood cinema. Indeed, during text revision process, the transformation of a text and the moving structure can distort the message and the communication present in the original text. Distortions could happen because of the political ideas within scripts, censorship, difficult relationships between a screenwriter and a producer or the trends followed by the public.

More detailed to the literary profile of screenplay is the statement theorizing that it consists in the passage from a literary stage to a cinematographic stage (Nuvoli, 37: 2005). Such a statement can be interpreted as the Pasolinian evolutionary character of screenplay and the metamorphosis that occurs when film production starts. The previous sentence also demonstrates the literary value of a screenplay: it is a transformation that passes from a literary stage to a performance. Although most of the time the technical form of language of screenplays has always worked as a reason to prove its distance from literature, screenwriting in Classical Hollywood cinema, due to the presence of talented professional writers, has always referred to the Aristotelian dictates of Poetics and its three units: action, place and time. However, the part regarding technical language with *découpage* seems not to be true, according to Alonge: indeed, the idea that a model of detailed script writing, known as "technical," had predominated in this discipline during the period of Classical Hollywood cinema is wrong. In fact, it was always believed that in 1930s and 1940s screenwriters were required to submit scripts containing not only the structure of a story with dialogue, but also a *découpage*, filming angles, editing methods, and mark the time of the use of specific technical equipment. However, this was not the practice, because the first drafts written by a screenwriter contained the story, dialogues and setting, and only in the final drafts also the indications on the shots, which, however, may have been discussed with the director (Alonge 135: 2012).

Not only is the presence of the Aristotelian units that determine the value of a screenplay, but also the virtuous meaning of a text. Such virtuous meaning is obtained through conformation to the ancient models that constitute a shared heritage of humanity, what the philosopher Carl Jung called «archetypes» (Voegler, 36: 1992). Moreover, the use of archetype was not the only *téchne* used by screenwriters, since the motion picture industry still required economic income, which coincided with a conspicuous attendance of spectators that needed to be surprised by a story and be an active part of the narrative. To get more spectators, we observe that in screenplays, and then after in films, there are symbols intending to express and highlight various aspects of a characters, a narrative and a plot (Truby, 15: 2007). A symbolism on which Truby dwelt in his criticism: according to him, in addition to claiming that in screenplays the symbols can be divided into two parts, which are "small" and "divine", it is

important to emphasize how he saw in them the power of magic, as they tend to reveal the secret of a movie narrative (Truby, 14-16: 2007). For example, John Fante makes abundant use of this symbolism in his films: from visible symbols such as wine that recalled Italy, a crucifix related to the religious concept of Nick's parents in the film "Full of Life", to the invisible ones such as music reminding of his Italian identity.

As for literature, a screenplay also has some literary peculiarities that can be referred to in the Greek tragedy but according to Pasolini, a screenplay has an element that also demonstrates its interdisciplinary uniqueness compared to a novel: the use of anaphora and iteration (Nuvoli, 30: 2005). Anaphora and iteration take place through the repetition of images or music and they do not have any negative impacts on the spectators. In Classical Hollywood cinema, screenwriters could not only be narrators, but also *super partes* employees thinking about the film as outsiders, since they also had to find the right setting for the story and, as we have seen before, could have been requested to report the details of a shooting, specifically the movements of the camera. Anaphora, iteration and *super partes* techniques seem to make writing of screenplays pretty technical, but if we think of a fusion of these elements, we conclude that these manuscripts and stories are written with characteristics that make them part of visual literature. In fact, it shows how a screenwriter must know also how to work with technical and rhetorical skills to bring imagination to life. Moreover, a screenwriter must also think with the imagination of the audience: indeed, the elements mentioned above must contain a narrative rhythm that determines not only the development of a story and a structure, but above all the suspense useful to make the audience participate.

As in the literature of novels, a screenplay – in accordance with the Aristotelian rules aforementioned – contains the character of a hero too. In screenplay manuals, *i.e.* for those who have decided to write a screenplay, the presence of a hero can be interpreted as an obligation (Snyder, 39: 2014). However, the focus of the thesis is not only on the mere presence of heroes, but on the role they play: if we look back, we understand how in Classical Hollywood cinema a hero also symbolized a social value, especially for films that had to keep the morale of the population high during the Second World War, or during McCarthyism when a hero was the one who destroyed communism or dismantled its theories by demonstrating the social necessity of liberalism in the plot.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although there are critics who are convinced that a screenplay is mainly a blueprint for the making of a film, there is a new part convinced that the text of a screenplay represents an «artefact that highlights creative writing practices (...) that allows the dissemination of knowledge» (Baker, 7: 2013). It is not the intention of this article to argue against film production or film producers, but it is fundamental to raise the level of attention on the potential civic importance that screenplays might embody, as they can represent a gap to educate society and young generations to respect diversity, minorities and different religions and traditions, being, therefore, a text with a

positive social value. Moreover, there is no factiousness towards the lack of analysis of a film production process of a film and a screenplay process, because there are no elements that can allow a scientific comparison between one and the other: precisely because of the concept of independence of the two disciplines we analyzed above. Thus, we can affirm that a screenplay is not only independent from a film but allows the film itself to exist while the production grants the movement element to the screenplay and generates its images. It is therefore essential that the academy and film criticism emphasize the existence of a screenplay regardless of the arrival of a film in a movie theatre so that the status of a screenplay, *i.e.* screenwriting, can be upgraded to that of visual literature. With this, a greater stylistic-rhetorical critique of a script document, a deeper analysis of the message to be communicated and the peculiarities that characters must convey to viewers would come, thus increasing the interest in this discipline too often unjustly relegated to the status of a simple draft to be forgotten.

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