

# **The Screenplay Business:**

## **Managing creativity in script development in the contemporary British independent film industry**

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**(a submission for a PhD by Publication)**

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**Month and year of final submission: June 2014**

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## Abstract:

A screenplay is sometimes said to be a blueprint for a film, and its genesis and development is therefore important to our understanding of how films are created. Film business studies has traditionally avoided close study of the screenplay development process, perhaps as a result of the film studies emphasis on analysing the text of the completed film, and the auteur theory emphasis on the importance of the director; both of which may have marginalised the study of development and the creativity of development practitioners.

Professional screenplay development is a team activity, with creative collaboration between screenwriters, producers, development executives, financiers, and directors. So how does power and creative control shift between members of this team, especially as people arrive or leave? And how does this multiple authorship affect the *auteur theory* idea that the director is the creative author of the film?

This research sets out to open debates around the process and nature of the business of script development, and consider how development practitioners experience, collaborate and participate in the process of screenplay development in the UK today.

It uses original interviews, observation and hermeneutic reflection; and asks how cross-disciplinary ideas around creativity, managing creative people, motivation, organisational culture, and team theory could be used to consider how the creative team of writer, producer, director and development executive can work effectively together.

It proposes new theories, including defining the independent film value chain and the commitment matrix, analysing changing power relationships during development, and establishing new typologies around film categories and their relationship to funding.

The core of this PhD by Prior Publication is the book *The Screenplay Business: managing creativity and script development in the film industry*. The supporting paper explores the contexts of film industry studies; the film value chain; *auteurship* and screenplay studies.

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## **Attached:**

- three copies of an abstract of the thesis, not exceeding 300 words, in a form suitable for publication.
- list of the publications on which the assessment for the degree is to be based
- a certificate from the School or Institute that any required taught courses have been satisfactorily completed.
- a completed British Library Doctoral Thesis Agreement Form and a separate copy of the title and contents page(s) of the thesis.

## Introduction:

The core of this PhD by Prior Publication is my book for Routledge called *The Screenplay Business: managing creativity and script development in the film industry*. It was commissioned and written as an academic book aimed at a practitioner audience as well as students and researchers, to help influence industrial practice and self-reflection. It was researched over a four year period. My twenty five years of creative work in the industry as a screenwriter and as a film business consultant, specialising in raising and spending screenplay development funding, has had a direct impact on the research methodology and analysis.

I believe that the book and this accompanying paper fulfil the UEA guidelines for a PhD by Prior Publication by being “a significant contribution to the development of understanding.” This paper will show that there is a comparative lack of analysis and research into the creative process of screenplay development, and will argue that my contribution starts to redress that balance and encourages a deeper understanding of the team-based nature of cinematic authorship, especially during development.

It also fulfils other PhD guidelines, which refer to “the discovery of new knowledge” (it provides a synthesis of original interviews and desk research from cross-disciplinary fields); “the connection of previously unrelated facts” (it brings to the study of film business a variety of theories on creativity, psychology, motivation, value chains, organisational culture, and MBA business and leadership theories); “the development of new theories” (it defines the independent film value chain, the commitment matrix, and proposes typologies around film categories and changing power relationships during development); and “the revision of older views” (for example it adapts the value chains of Porter (1985), Eliashberg et al. (2006), Kung (2008), Vickery and Hawkins (2008); Sternberg’s (2006) and Boden’s (2004) ideas of levels of creativity; and Handy’s (1985) views on power and influence).

The book’s title *The Screenplay Business: managing creativity and script development in the film industry*, intentionally puts together the words screenplay and business. This identifies a core argument that the process of professional screenplay development is a business that is

capable of management and is set against the context of an industrial and financial system. This is different to the film studies approach of studying a completed film as an artform or text; or the study of a screenplay either as a blueprint for a film, or as a text to be studied in its own right. Instead this is rooting the study of the process of screenplay development in the world of management, business, entrepreneurship and creativity. This may have ramifications for the concept of the authorial voice in film studies.

The following paper is divided into four sections: research questions, academic contexts (especially the contexts not covered in the book), methodology, and book outline.

## **Acknowledgments**

In addition to all those who helped in the research and creation of the book, I would especially like to thank the following for their support and encouragement during the writing of this PhD dissertation: Mark Jancovich, Brett Mills, Mark Rimmer, Su Holmes, Jane Greenwood, Angus Finney, Giles Foden, Deborah Martin-King and Leon Hunt.

## Section 1: Research Questions

The development of a film screenplay is a long and complex process, beginning with the initial story concept, and continuing through drafting and financing, to the start of the shoot. Development is usually said to be over on the first day of principal photography, although the screenplay continues to be changed, interpreted, and adapted during the shoot and post-production. A screenplay is sometimes said to be a blueprint for a film,<sup>1</sup> and its genesis and development is therefore important to our overall understanding of how films are created. Although there is often one writer's name on the front of the screenplay, in fact professional screenplay development is usually a team activity, with on-going creative collaboration between screenwriters, producers, development executives, financiers, and directors.

This research set out to open debates around the process and nature of the business of script development today, and considered the following questions:

- How do development practitioners experience and participate in the process of screenplay development in the UK today? How do they experience the working relationship between the writer, producer, development executive and director?
- What are the shifts in power and influence between writer, producer and director during individual projects? (For example, how is the arrival of a director on a project handled by producers and executives?)
- What does examining the team development process suggest about the nature of film authorship and directorial *auteurship*?
- How can current business management theories about managing creative people, organisation culture, and team theory be used to help explore these issues; and consider how the creative team of the writer, producer, director and development executive can work effectively together?

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<sup>1</sup> Sternberg, 1997, p.50, cited by MacDonald, 2011, p.112 and p.137.

These research questions ran through the research and drafting of the book. It was a book aimed at practitioners as well as academics, and as a result of editorial and commercial pressures the questions posed in the book were drafted more simply. The book was also asked to make clear recommendations about good practice and the “best” processes and environments for developing stories and concepts for film, which meant that some of the book’s recommendations were less nuanced than usual for academic writing.

## Section 2: Contexts....

The contexts section firstly looks at the wider macro context of media industry studies and film industry studies, and proposes a revised definition of film industry studies; secondly it looks at the micro context of other books about screenplays (particularly the work of Ian MacDonald), and debates around auteurship / authorship; and finally it looks at recent research into the film value chain, and the place of development within it.

### 2.1: Context: Media industry studies and film industry studies

This research was set in the field of *management studies*, *media industry studies* (especially *production studies*) and *film industry studies*. Management studies has been said to be “the examination of how individuals construct organizational structures, processes, and practices and how these, in turn, shape social relations and create institutions that ultimately influence people” (Clegg and Bailey (2008)). The context of management studies and creativity studies is described in the book as follows:

- Creativity and managing creative people: pp.131-137, pp.142-172, and pp. 304-315.
- Organisational culture: pp.200-201, 215-220, pp.316-318
- Team theory: pp.200-204, pp. 211-214, pp.316-317.
- Power and influence: pp.92-93, pp.303-304

The media industry studies and film industry studies context will now be described here.

#### 2.1.1: Media industry studies

This section is going to look briefly at screenplay development in the context of cultural and media industry studies and production studies, including debates around power and control; individual creativity versus commerce; and the context of taste and value.

Academic study of the cultural industries has been a growth area in recent decades. The diagram on the next page shows the conventionally accepted definitions of which products and disciplines are included in the overlapping fields of cultural industry studies, creative industry studies and media industry studies. Film industry studies are traditionally accepted to be a sub-division of media industry studies, however I shall argue later that it also has a distinct tradition and context.

The introduction to Holt and Perren's book *Media Industries: history, theory and method* makes a clear argument for the existence and expansion of the distinct field of *Media Industry Studies* (2009, pp.1-15), as a sub-section of Media Studies. They suggest it covers the study of media texts, markets, economies, artistic traditions, business models, cultural policies, technologies, regulations and creative expression; and taking into account discourses in academic publications, trade press, popular press, digital communities and the blogosphere. To get a holistic view this media industries perspective can then be combined with further analysis using the conventional media studies techniques of analysing media texts, audiences, histories, and culture. The academic schools that carry out this research can range across film and TV studies, communication studies, law, public policy, business studies, economics, journalism, and sociology. As a result of the influence of regulation and government policy over the media industry landscape, Toby Miller also adds the empirical social science techniques of critical cultural policy studies (Miller 2009, p. 184-199). Media industry studies therefore embraces a wide number of academic techniques and disciplines, and studies a wide range of business activities and texts.

Media industry studies and its context within creative industry studies has in the last decade been successfully interrogated by monographs by Howkins (2001); Hesmondhalgh (2002, 2006, 2007, 2013); Bilton (2006); Deuze (2007); Jenkins (2008); McIntyre (2012) and Davies and Sigthorsson (2013). As well as the work of key journals, there are also important essay collections by Lampel *et al.* (2006); Hesmondhalgh and Toynbee (2008); Holt and Perren (2009); and Deuze (2011). These writers are examining the process of production, the culture of the media production workplace, social theory, political theory, and the interaction between industry economics and creativity, marketplace and personal expression; especially in terms of how media businesses are organised as capitalist commercial organisations. Arguably most influential are Hesmondhalgh's studies of the cultural industries (2002, 2006, 2007, 2013) from the multiple perspectives of historical change and continuity; theories of

<b>The art and economics of the fields below:</b>	<b>Film Industry Studies</b>	<b>Media Industry Studies</b>	<b>Creative industry studies</b>	<b>Cultural industry studies</b>
Primarily film product, with showings or secondary products within television, digital media, advertising.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Products for television, radio, digital media, advertising, music, publishing, telecommunications.	✗	✓	✓	✓
Architecture, art and design, performing arts, designer fashion, and computer software	✗	✗	✓	✓
Museums, art institutions, libraries	✗	✗	✗	✓
Live performance and sport.	✗	✗	✗	✓

**Above: Diagram 1: What is included in media industry studies, cultural industry studies and creative industry studies? Adapted from Holt and Perren (2009, p.2), with the addition of a column on film industry studies.** (For more discussion on definitions of cultural industries versus creative industries see Hesmondhalgh (2007, pp.11-25); Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, pp. 3-10); Howkins (2001, pp.82-118), and Florida (2002, pp. 44-85)).

cultural production, labour and the workplace; political economy; organizational sociology; public policy and regulation; internalisation and cultural imperialism; diversity and social justice issues; and legal and new technology frameworks.

Some of these writers approach media industry studies from the perspective of *production studies*, which incorporates sociology and the observation of workplace culture, and has been defined as the study of “how specific production sites, actors, or activities tell us larger lessons about workers, their practices, and the role of their labours in relation to politics, economics, and culture” (Mayer 2009, p. 15)). As a result there is a strong body of work examining workplace culture during production; interrogating that culture from an ethnographical perspective and sometimes using a post-Marxist framework to examine how those media businesses are organised as commercial entities operating in a capitalist system (for example Caldwell 2008, Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell (2009); Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Like this project they often include interviews with practitioners and observations of behaviour as part of their research methodology. It is worth noting in passing that screenplay development is not studied in any detail in the work of the above academics. For example Caldwell’s work on production culture allows only 34 pages out of 432 to examine development (2008, pp.197-231), and even that discussion is primarily to consider corporate control of creativity and brand identity.

A Marxist approach (and later neo-Marxism) has often been an important part of the critical toolkit of many writers in media studies and cultural studies, from the origin of *critical culture industry studies* at the German Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in the 1920s and 1930s (Mills and Barlow, 2012, p. 86-7); through the British cultural studies movement of the 1960s and 1970s, especially the influential Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, with its emphasis on the British class system. As Kellner (2009) argues, those two schools and their followers combined the cultural studies analysis of cultural texts and audience reception of those texts, with the *political economy* context of their production within a capitalistic system, driven by commodification and capital accumulation:

“It is essential to stress the importance of analyzing the products of media industries’ texts within their system of production and distribution, often referred to as “political economy”. The term political economy calls attention to the fact that the production, distribution, and reception of culture takes place within a specific economic and

political system, constituted by relations between the state, the economy, social institutions and practices, culture, and organisations such as the media.” (Kellner, 2009, p. 101)

My research questions accepted this underlying capitalist framework, and the research and analysis did not set out to critique it or take issue with the theory. The research issue here was not how the companies make profit and operate commercially within that capitalist framework; or the industrial and organisational structures and economic contexts of cultural work (and how that may enforce relations of domination and hierarchical control, or the role of the media as part of a perceived ideological power apparatus). The research focus here was on how individuals collaborate within the value chain to add value to the creative process, and how creativity was either encouraged or hindered by the producer and other collaborators. This focus was partly driven by the fact that most of the participants studied were working for small entrepreneurial independent production companies, rather than the commercialised product made by the Hollywood studio conglomerates, which were the focus of political economy writers, from Frankfurt’s Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) onwards.

This does not mean that issues of power and control were not important, but that in my work such power relationships were more about inter-personal power and influence, and therefore fell less within post-Marxist media studies concepts of power and representation, and more within management studies concepts of power, such as competition for resource, the role of leadership, team roles and team culture, and theories of exchange; especially the work of Homans (1961), French and Raven (1968), Belbin (1981), and Handy (1985). For example, power was capable of shifting from the entrepreneur capitalist leader (the producer) to the writer and director (employees) and back again, as part of the dynamic collaborative process of development and production. Therefore the purpose of the interviews and research was to look at *how* these individuals and organisations work, and how power shifted, rather than critique their economic models or wider commercial capitalist frameworks. This was part of understanding the creative and authorial process, and I leave it to others to evaluate whether these ways of working (and the operations of capitalist entrepreneurs and organisations) are appropriate within the current socio-political framework.

### 2.1.2: The media industry and creativity

Another key issue in media industry studies is that of creativity. Film is one of a series of creative industries in which creativity is managed in an industrial context (Howkins 2001, Bilton 2006), and this fits into the cultural industry studies debate about the conflict between commerce and creativity. Negus and Pickering (2004, p. 46) suggest that this philosophical antithesis goes back to the Romantic creative poet / artist response to the capitalist industrialisation of England (take for example William Blake's complaints about "those dark satanic mills"). Seen from a Marxist perspective this is the idea that the artistic desire for freedom and autonomy is inherently in conflict with the capitalist drive for profit-maximisation and commodification. This is what Davis and Scase (2000) identified as the "tension" within creative organisations between the needs of the company and its marketplace (commerce), and the motivation of the personal creative to have their own vision protected and transmitted (autonomous creativity), resulting in many creative organisations being a place of perpetual negotiation, mutual adjustment and compromise; resulting in:

"the ambiguities of the work process within creative organisations and the attempts to solve the paradox of control and creativity" (Davis and Scase, 2000, pp.51-52).

These issues have been thoroughly interrogated over the last twenty years, from the groundbreaking work of Paul DiMaggio (1977); to the more recent work of Lampel *et al.* (2006); Caldwell (2008); and Hesmondhalgh (2002, 2007, 2013). It is simplistic to suggest that large capitalist organisations automatically suppress creativity. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) point out that not all small independent companies are producing creative challenging work, and they also cite *The Beatles* at EMI and *The Simpsons* at Fox as examples of innovative cultural work within large organisations (*ibid.*, 2011, p.82). They go on to argue that because cultural industries are dependant on artistic expression, they therefore cannot control and prevent it solely in the name of accumulation of profit – they need it to make those profits. This is in keeping with Davis and Scase (2004), who extrapolated from their interviews of media workers that:

"the design of work embodies strategies for developing personal and professional identity as well as expressing an organizational purpose." (Davis & Scase, 2004, p. 52).

Hesmondhalgh and Baker's interviews with media workers identified expressions of anxiety around their autonomy; as well as the push to achieve results, the pressure of marketing and efficiency, the attacks on public service broadcasting, increased micro-management at public service broadcasters, and the pressure to network. Incidentally Hesmondhalgh and Baker follow Blauner (1964) in making an argument for personal autonomy (as the opposite of Marxist *powerlessness*) as a key indicator of a good workplace and personal satisfaction. In a cross-disciplinary way this is similar to the emphasis on the importance of autonomy by a number of writers on managing creativity (Adair, 1990; Barron and Harrington, 1981; Csíkszentmihályi, 1996); especially through the encouraging of intrinsic motivation as a key predictor of higher levels of creativity (Amabile, 1983, 1996, 1998, 2008).

My research was a contribution to this media studies work on creativity versus commerce, in that it examined creativity within screenplay development and the pressures of the industry insiders on the writing process. The research revealed that the writer's creativity is not being managed and influenced by a single organisation or its brand, for which the writer is working and dependant for his income. This simplistic approach is perhaps historically based on the studio system criticised by early cultural industry theorists like Adorno and Horkheimer (1944), even if it survives in the Hollywood TV and film studio system today (Caldwell 2008). At least in the independent film sector my research showed that the writer was receiving creative feedback and management from *a variety of sources*, including entrepreneurial producers, professional dramaturgists, artistic collaborators (directors and actors), and cultural public remit financiers (such as the UK Film Council); *as well as* the conventionally capitalistic financiers, media organisations, and broadcasters. This resulted in an even more complex tension between the creativity of the individual and the influence of multiple sources, some driven by capitalistic desires to control creativity and manage their brand, but others driven by ego or the personal need to express their own creativity.

Sometimes it was the job of the producer and development executive to filter this feedback to protect the screen idea, and in this way the producer could be seen as a *protector* of creative vision and autonomy, rather than always the manager and controller of it. Sometimes it was the job of the writer to make sense of it, and my interview with writer Simon Beaufoy showed that the writer had to learn to negotiate and broker creativity, to protect his own vision. I argue that as a result my research into development gives us deeper insight into the

complexity of the old creativity versus commerce debate, at least in the multi-financier world of independent film.

Finally, issues in media studies and cultural studies around personal taste and the professional / social context of taste are also relevant to development, especially if we are to fully understand the process of evaluation and validation of film proposals and screenplays by readers, development executives, producers and financiers. It could be argued that some form of industrially influenced aesthetic is at play here, which is formally unacknowledged (although influenced by the typologies promulgated by the more popular screenwriting manuals), but understood and communicated by and between development executives and script readers, so that certain conventional styles of screenplay writing successfully get into in development. However issues of taste and reception, and the sociological study of cultural production and aesthetics, have been well debated from the work of Bourdieu onwards<sup>2</sup>, and the work of MacDonald (2003) has also looked at what industry script readers they look for when they evaluate screen ideas. Therefore my research intentionally avoided issues of taste, aesthetics, and critical judgment of screenplays, and no questions were asked of development practitioners about how they chose between different screenplays, because it fell outside of the scope of my research questions. However it is potentially a huge future area for study and research into development. Related to issues of taste, is the issue of *quality* of product and its effect on the worker's perception of their own labour, especially in terms of providing a sense of meaning or *value* (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p.181-2; and Keat, 2009, 2012). In my research the concept of value was considered more in the context of the business value chain (Porter 1985), and the economics of the film industry (Vogel 2007, Ulin 2009, Epstein 2010).

It is now time to consider the context of film industry studies itself, to see how my research fitted into the existing work in this field.

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<sup>2</sup> See Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984), *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and *The Rules of Art* (1996), and for a brief overview of Bourdieu see Grenfell (2008)

### 2.1.3: Film industry studies: origins and definitions

Some media industry studies books contain essays that cover the film industry (for example five out of nineteen of the essays in Mayer *et al.* 2009). However it can be argued that film industry studies is an established and distinct subsection of media industry studies (Schatz 2009), with its own history and intellectual background. I shall now describe a brief overview of film industry studies, to establish how it went out of fashion and faded from academic focus, before re-emerging in recent years. I will then try to establish a new working definition, as part of the context for this research.

Film emerged from the fairground tradition of spectacle and entrepreneurship, so there has often been a need to entertain the general public and a commercial imperative to recoup the costs of production and make money by getting the public to pay for the experience. From the early days this has given the film business a clear entrepreneurial and industrial slant, compared to the fine arts of music, art, and literature, which all initially flourished through either popular folk craft traditions or systems of patronage (where wealthy ecclesiastical, aristocratic or mercantile patrons were seeking reputation by association). In this way film is more akin to the entrepreneurial outbreak of storytelling in Elizabethan theatre, which also needed box office funding and the commodification of star performers and script properties to support its mixture of spectacle, entertainment, and dramatic performance. The industrialisation of film and the commodification of its stars began at the start of the twentieth century in an obscure suburb of Los Angeles.<sup>3</sup> This was due to the benefits of cheap land, cheap labour (the proximity of Mexico), and virtually all-year-round sunshine. The latter was the key natural resource needed to produce film in the days before faster film stock and effective electric lighting. So the location of the nascent industry in Hollywood was everything to do with natural resources and industrial advantages, and less to do with the requirements of creativity. Over time the growing social network of peers and experts attracted other practitioners and companies.

Perhaps reflecting the business origins of film, many of the earliest books about film were about the film industry, rather than about films as artefacts or artforms. The first books had an avowedly economic and management approach, such as Benjamin B. Hampton's book *A*

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<sup>3</sup> For a clear description of the difference between commodification and industrialisation, and the background of these terms, see Hesmondhalgh 2013, pp.68-71.

*History of the Movies* (1931); Howard Lewis' *The Motion Picture Industry* (1933); and Mae Huettig's *Economic Control of the Motion Picture Industry* (1944). Therefore by the time of the birth of cultural industry studies in Frankfurt in the 1930s, film industry studies as a discipline was already underway and entirely separate. A more ethnographic perspective to film industry studies arrived in the 1940s with Leo Rosten's *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, the Movie Makers* (1941) and Hortense Powdermaker's *Hollywood, the Dream Factory* (1950). My research fits into the context of these original business and ethnographic studies of the film business.

Apart from the practical work of early regional film schools, *Film studies* as a clear worldwide academic discipline emerged in the fifties and sixties, and the emerging emphasis on the authorial voice of the director caused a shift away from studying business and towards analysing the films and their directors (Truffaut 1954, Bazin 1957, Sarris, 1962). *Auteur theory* also had the effect of reducing the emphasis on the creative contribution of producers and writers, as we will see later. From this point on, the study of film as art and film as business diverged. Initially this was to the detriment of film industry studies, as the pendulum of academic interest swung towards the film-makers, and as a result there are few books about the business of film in the sixties and seventies. This may be one explanation why film industry studies has taken so long to be identified, defined, and interrogated as an academic field in its own right. There are occasional exceptions, such as the economist Michael Conant's 1960 book *Antitrust in the motion picture industry*: a classic of film industry studies, and the first to attempt to develop tools for analysing the industry. Conant's book approached the industry from an economic model of price discrimination, in order to examine the effect of the late 1940s anti-trust legislation at restoring freer markets and product rivalry with the aim of public benefit. It stands as one of the most thorough analyses of the ability of regulation to control the behaviour of integrated monopolistic conglomerates in the media.

In the eighties and early nineties film business texts re-emerged, but they didn't come from the academic community - these were mainstream published anecdotal autobiographies by senior practitioners, with the emphasis on blowing the lid on Hollywood financial scandals and mismanagement. Examples include screenwriter William Goldman's *Adventures in the Screen Trade* (1983); Steven Bach's *Final Cut: Art, Money and Ego in the Making of "Heaven's Gate", the Film That Sank United Artists*, (1985); David Puttnam's *Enigma: the story so far* (1988) and *Movies and Money* (2000); Eberts and Illot's *My Indecision Is Final: The Spectacular Rise and Fall of Goldcrest Films* (1990); and Julia Phillips' *You'll Never Eat*

*Lunch in This Town Again* (1991). More recent examples include Robert Evans' *The Kid Stays In The Picture* (1994) and Roger Corman's *How I Made A Hundred Movies In Hollywood* (1998). This perhaps reflects the film industry's commonly-held belief that it is only people who have worked in the industry who can tell it like it really is; and a resulting suspicion of academic film business researchers.

It was the journalism and research of film historian Peter Biskind in the 1990s and 2000s that consistently brought the stories of the modern Hollywood business fully to light through more impartial eyes, with his books *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (1998), *Down and Dirty Pictures* (2005), and *Gods and Monsters* (2005). The rise of the low budget film and digital production in the late nineties and the 2000s encouraged many "how-to-produce-a-film" manuals (Shreibman, 2001; Jones and Jolliffe, 2007; Lee and Gillen, 2010). The last decade has finally seen a growth in academic consideration of the film business, now from a specifically cultural studies perspective, for example in chapters within cultural studies books (Howkins, 2001; Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Bilton, 2006; Lampel et al., 2006); and production studies (Caldwell, 2008). There have also been a few film business books that are less from the cultural studies perspective, both in America (Squire, 2006; Ulin, 2009), and in the UK (McDonald and Wasko, 2008; Finney 2010a; and now this research: Bloore 2012).

So what could be a clear definition of what is included in film industry studies? The term was first formally coined by Douglas Gomery in 1976 in the first edition of the *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, where he states: "one accepted sub-branch of film history is the examination of the production, distribution and exhibition of films." This is a clear enough definition, however in keeping with most commentators Gomery is leaving out development as a separate activity, and conflating it with production (a result of the ongoing dominance of the Hollywood studio model). I argue that development is a separate business that spends considerable resource and activity on the optioning, development and financing of script material, regardless of whether production is ultimately achieved (indeed many writers make a very good living regardless of production).

Gomery went on to complain at the lack of established first principles for approaching study of the film business, and the absence of a "well developed theory of the structure and conduct of the film industry," (Gomery, 1976, p. 100). He suggested that many studies of the film business fail because they are unable to properly analyse the data they have gathered, due to

the lack of a systemised approach to film industry studies.<sup>4</sup> I would suggest that this problem is fundamentally unaltered in the thirty seven years since 1976, with the majority of film business writers reporting on either the current situation or the historical background, rather than trying to establish typologies and tools for better longitudinal analysis. A good current example of this is the lack of a clear definition of the independent film business value chain. A number of analysts and academics refer to the relevance of the value chain concept for analysing the feature film industry, and yet attempts to codify what was actually *meant* by the film value chain are few and far between (see section 2.3 for a detailed discussion of film value chain theories). This study is part of an attempt to now establish a well-developed understanding and typology of the value chain and specifically how development fits into it.

Anecdotally amongst industry practitioners the most widely read film business book is economist and Merrill Lynch consultant Howard L. Vogel's *Entertainment Industry Economics* (from the first edition in 1986, to the seventh edition in 2007). This set film in the context of other entertainment industries which are competing for the leisure time expenditure of the American people, such as music, broadcasting, theatre, publishing, theme parks, sports, and gambling. Vogel made no attempt to define film industry studies *per se*, but argued that film-making is inherently entrepreneurial and that benefits are often more art-based than industrial, as he put it:

“Ego gratification rather than money may often be the only return on an investment in film. As in other endeavours, what you see is not always what you get. In fact, of any ten major theatrical films produced, on the average, six or seven may be broadly characterized as unprofitable and one might break even... it is often a triumph of hope over reality, where defeat can easily be snatched from the jaws of victory.” (Vogel, 2007, p.65.)

This is in keeping with the view that the media studies post-Marxist perspective is of limited use in analysing film business. Vogel's economic analysis of the studios and the complexity of their accounting procedures and library valuations was very influential on the work of later film economists like Ulin (2009) and Epstein (2010).

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<sup>4</sup> To be fair, the four books he is reviewing in the article are not really all film industry studies books - three of them are more film history. One is a reference book about MGM and 145 of its film stars; one is a history of American B-movie producers in the 1930s to 1950s; one is a social and cultural film history of 60s Britain, with only some reference to business and producers; and one is a practical handbook about movie contracts, not an attempt at analysis of the industry.

The only recent academic that I have identified attempting to codify what is meant by film industry studies as an independent discipline is Thomas Schatz. As a film historian he studied the development of Hollywood and the American industry from the 1920s and 1930s studio system (Schatz 1988) to oligarchic conglomeration (Schatz 2008).<sup>5</sup> In his 2009 essay “Film Industry Studies and Hollywood History” he argued that studying the film industry is:

“fundamental and necessary to the analysis of American films and film-making - more so now than ever, perhaps, considering the role of Hollywood-produced movies in today’s global entertainment arena, as well as the growing rift between the studio’s blockbuster output and the robust independent film movement.” (Schatz (2009), p.45)

He argued that only by understanding the industrial context of development and production can we fully study the completed film itself. He went on to propose a tri-partite approach to film industry studies: *mode of production*, *authorship*, and *film style*. The *mode of production* was the widest viewpoint, covering the macro-industrial level (the ownership of conglomerates and the trends towards oligopoly, integration and distribution control, government policy and regulation, adjacent industries and new technologies, and film industry economics, such as the impact of TV and home entertainment); and also the micro-industrial level (the study of the work of individual production companies, market sectors and different categories of producers). The film-making process was addressed by *authorship* (which he said covered the creation of individual films and the study of the production process of the individual film, including where relevant auteur theory and the role of director and other key collaborators). Finally *film style* examined the completed artefact and other films of that period in history, via narrative, thematic and formal-aesthetic norms, and characteristics that distinguish individual films or groups of films by the same film-maker or in the same field, including the trends and product cycles of a particular historical period. This meant that he is approaching the study of films partly as a result of a process of construction in a period of history and an industrial / creative context (he is following what Bordwell calls the historical poetics of film style (Bordwell 2007)).

There are a number of problematic issues here. Overall his headings of *authorship* and *film style* could be said to largely fit within existing film theory and film history, rather than as a sub-section of film *industry* studies. Also both words are influenced by associations with

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<sup>5</sup> For other overviews of the development of Hollywood and its conglomeration see Hesmondhalgh 2013 pp. 71-77 (and internationalisation on pp.293-295); Balio (1993); Thomson (2004); Epstein (2006). For European cinema’s recent responses to Hollywood’s dominance see Elsaesser (2005).

Sarris' work on auteur theory (see section 2.2.3). Further I argue that what he called the *mode of production* category is not really *mode* of production, but simply the macro and micro *context* of production business. Mode is a relatively complex word with multiple meanings, and conflicts unhelpfully with Bordwell and Thompson's use of the same phrase *modes of production* (where they took it to mean budget type, covering the three headings large scale production; exploitation, independent, DIY production; and small scale production (Bordwell and Thompson (1979)). The word *context* would be simpler and more clearly understood. Furthermore Schatz' categories also do not sufficiently include the production workplace studies of authors like Caldwell (2008) and Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2009).

#### **2.1.4: Towards a new definition of film industry studies**

Given these issues I now propose a new model to approach film industry studies, where a new definition is:

*the study of the creative and industrial process of film development, production and distribution, within the environment of the media and leisure industries; and to propose and test typologies to inform practitioners, educate newcomers, and add to academic literature; and to help interpret film artefacts by understanding the context of their creation and dissemination.*

My research was specifically targeted to fulfil this definition of film industry studies, especially increasing practical understanding of the macro and micro business context in relation to the under-studied area of the screenplay development process, and the impact of business and inter-personal power relationships on creativity during that process. Note that in response to Gomery's complaints about a lack of intellectual structure in film industry studies, this definition is specifically setting out to encourage the proposition and testing of typologies and theories, which may be of on-going value in understanding the industry and how it changes.

I shall now break this definition down further, and include examples of key writers to show they have already been areas of scholarly exploration. It is divided into the *film business context*; *film workplace*; and then film as *project*, which can be studied both as process and as final artefact. This acts as a survey of existing film business writing, and also a test of the typology.

- **Business: The film business context:**
  - **The macro film and media industrial context.** This covers current and historical macro trends including economics, the wider capitalist framework, convergence, competition and integration (this is where the work of Vogel, 2007; Finney, 2010a; Epstein, 2006, 2010; Aris and Bughin, 2006, 2013; Blume, 2006; Baillieu and Goodchild, 2002; MacDonald and Wasko, 2008; Cones, 1992, 2009; Kochberg, 2007; Ulin, 2009; Schatz, 1989; Balio, 1993; and Squire, 2006, fits in). This includes value chain theories (such as the work of Kung, 2008; Finney, 2010b; Vickery and Hawkins, 2008). A further sub-section involves analysing changing business models, resulting from new technology (for example Tapscot, 1996; Yoffie, 1997; Evans and Wurster, 2000; Anderson, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Iordanova and Cunningham, 2012; Elberse, 2008; Levine, 2011. Some of these authors include film business but would not consider themselves to be engaged in film industry studies, but in new technology as a whole). Some work also fits in from the wider cultural studies framework (such as Lampel *et al.*, 2006; Hesmondhalgh, 2013); including themes around creativity versus commerce (such as Bilton, 2006, 2011; Howkins, 2002; and Davis and Scase, 2000).
  - **Practical “how to” books on the film industry**, using professional advice and individual case studies to describe how to be a producer / screenwriter, etc. (This is where Davies and Wistreich, 2007; Jones and Jolliffe, 2007; and Lee and Gillen, 2010; fit in, plus many screenwriting manuals described in the next chapter). These are chiefly instructive, rather than analytical, but can still provide an insightful snapshot of current practice.
- **Workplace:** Film industry as media workplace - the culture of production: workplace norms and conventions in that period, behaviour, taken-for-granted modes of behaviour. (This is where the work of Caldwell, 2008; Mayer *et al.*, 2008; Deuze, 2007; Born, 2002, 2004; and Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, fits in.) It may be argued that the workplace is intrinsically linked to the above macro industrial context, especially regarding the capitalist framework of work and exploitation; however the research methods and approaches can be distinctly different.

- **Film project: (context, process, artefact)**
  - **The micro business context** (production company and financier context including ownership, distribution networks, output deals, networks of business collaborations, ongoing value chain relationships, immediate competitors) and its impact on creative process and product. (This is where individual film case studies fit in (like those in Finney, 2010a); or books about the work and output of a film producer or company (Finney, 1996a; Biskind, 2004; Kuhn, 2003; Eberts and Illot, 1990).
  - **Film project as process:** Following individual projects from development to distribution.
    - the business process (packaging and financing, and the individual film project value chain)
    - the creative process (including the authorial input of different collaborators and the industry at different stages; Genetic criticism to study different screenplay drafts, script notes, emails, storyboards or other design notes; influence of other existing films and cultural products (books, TV programmes, music etc.); and analysis of the film production culture of that particular film.).
    - Film project distribution and exploitation (marketing, release plans, the role of new media in promoting the film project. There has been an upsurge of books here recently, as digital technology has radically altered distribution and marketing techniques, including Kerrigan, 2010; Reiss, 2011; Marich, 2013; all of which are also practical “how to” books. The promotional materials can also be viewed as cultural artefacts suitable for textual analysis).
  - **Film project as completed artefact / text or groups of artefacts** (the traditional emphasis of film studies, seeking for meaning and social-ideological values by analysing the completed artefact / text, using approaches such as apparatus theory, formalism, auteur theory, feminism, genre studies, Marxism, narratology, reception studies and structuralism. However this could

be said to be film studies and therefore not film business studies, apart from where the latter can provide additional insight).

This proposed definition and scope covers all the current fields of film business studies; allows overlap with film studies and other cultural studies fields; and shows where existing commentators fit in. Perhaps more monographs on individual films or film-makers will take on board a film industry studies context as part of their overall methodology, alongside film studies approaches.

One final proviso to any approach to studying the film industry is that it does not exist in a single unified way, in that there are multiple industries and operators in film and media business all over the world, all of whom are operating in diverse ways. There is no single industrial identity or formal mouthpiece, especially in the indie sector, outside the more hegemonic Hollywood studio system (Caldwell 2008, pp.7-8). However the term “the film industry” is a useful convention in the trade press, mainstream journalism, and books on film, and therefore a convenient rhetorical device, even if inexact and contestable.

### **2.1.5: The value of management studies for studying the independent film business**

Hollywood dominates film business internationally, and perhaps as a result film business studies (at least in the English language) has been dominated by the history of the American studio system and the discussion of studio-relevant issues around convergence, media hegemony, ownership, and domination, and new technology (Squire, 2006; Epstein, 2006, 2010; McDonald and Wasko, 2008; Cones, 2009; Ulin, 2009); and related media studies post-Marxist themes of power, commodification, representation and diversity. This means that the key themes of the practice of the *independent* film business have sometimes been overlooked. Production finance is assembled on a case-by-case basis, mainly by individual entrepreneurs rather than conglomerates; development finance and production finance are provided by multiple sources; and films are acquired, marketed and distributed by different distributors in different territories. This is a collaborating system of entrepreneurial businesses, where the producer operates within a disintegrated multi-player value chain production and distribution model, rather than the integrated control model of the studios (see the book’s Chapters 2 and 12). In order to fully study this independent sector I suggest that film industry studies also needs to consider issues around independent finance, value chain studies, entrepreneurship,

small business management, and the role of professional social networks – all fields which traditionally have found little voice in film studies or media business studies, but *are* regularly found in conventional business schools and business management studies, especially around start-ups. Film industry studies now needs to also adopt the latter management approach when looking at power and control between players (as *The Screenplay Business*' Chapter Five will do); as well as retaining the traditional media studies approach to power when considering the role of the studios, broadcasters, and other dominant media players. Looking at film industry studies through management studies is cross-disciplinary and opens the study of film business to a whole series of different writers and research areas. This principle was central to my own research approach.

The only other recent film industry studies works which have looked at film from a management perspective in detail (from a scholarly position rather than a “how to” position) have been Finney's 2010 book *The International Film Business: a market guide beyond Hollywood* (2010, and a revised edition in preparation for 2014); and Lee and Gillen's 2010 book *The Producer's Business handbook* (which covers the US independent sector but not the UK).

There is an interesting parallel in the academic study of the music industry. It too is dominated by a small number of international conglomerates (many of the major record labels are owned by the same parent companies as the film studios, such as Warner Brothers); but augmented by a strong independent record label sector. These indies are run by entrepreneurial leaders with low overheads and a focus on identifying and promoting new creative talent, which talent is then often “acquired” by the major labels in the same way that actors and directors are attracted to Hollywood studios. The bigger music indie labels and the studios often have a strong symbiotic relationship, including licensing deals and distribution deals. However the academic study of these independent record companies is more advanced than that on independent film production. For example dating back to the late 1990s there is a body of academic work on these independent labels and their symbiotic relationship with the majors, including Burnett's book *The Global Jukebox* (1996); Hesmondhalgh's papers: “The British Dance Music Industry: A Case Study of Independent Cultural Production” (1998) and “Indie” (1999); Negus' book *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (1999), and finally McRobbie's book *In the Culture Society: Art, Fashion, and Popular Music* (1999). This interest has continued to the end of the next decade (Strachan, 2007; Negus, 2011; Galuszka, 2012); augmented by a body of work about the effect of new technology on the music value

chain (Küng, 2008; Aris and Bughin, 2006, 2013; Levine, 2011). Following this example, it is perhaps time that film industry studies looked in more detail at the independent players and their competitive / parasitic / symbiotic relationship with the studios.

## **2.2: Context: Screenplay Studies and Authorship**

### **2.2.1: Existing academic study of screenplays and the development process**

I have now established how my research fitted into media business studies; its place within the history and definition of film business studies; and the value of management studies as an extra approach to the independent sector. I will now look more closely at how my work fits into the existing body of research into screenplays and the concept of cinematic authorship.

In 2008 the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* declared in its special edition on screenwriting that “discussion of screenwriting is a notable blind spot in both British cinema and television studies” (Cook and Spicer, 2008, p.213). As we shall now see, the screenplay development process is indeed generally academically under-researched. This may be influenced by the following three practical factors. Firstly, comparatively small figures of money are invested in development compared to production, which means it attracts less attention (a professional development budget can be between £30,000 and £100,000 in the UK, whereas production is usually £3million and up). Secondly, the long timescale involved in studying development. The average film takes 5 to 8 years to be developed, and even then may not get made, and therefore for academics to study it effectively there is a need for expensive long term longitudinal research studies of several films. Finally, development is comparatively invisible in the body of self-reflexive texts and marketing materials generated by film companies (in the form of “behind-the-scenes” documentaries and books, DVD bonus material, statements in the trade press, and reports in the conventional media). The script development workplace is not included probably because it is less glamorous (the public do not normally recognise the names of the writer, script editor, or producer); and ultimately more cerebral and less visual (therefore it does not make good documentary material). Most writing takes places in the writer’s head and on his computer screen, and documentary footage of a script writer and development executive talking together is not as visually interesting as footage “behind-the-scenes” on the film set, or interviews with

celebrity actors. The exception to this is animation, where companies such as Pixar and DreamWorks often include in their DVD bonus materials stories of the development of plots and characters, in part because they are able to illustrate their progress with visual material, such as storyboards and sketches. However this only highlights how rare this material is in conventional film DVD bonus materials and other promotional material. To conclude, as a result of these factors it seems that conventional script development and its workplace culture is more elusive of the public gaze and academic interest. This research therefore aimed in part to raise academic awareness of the importance of the development process and those involved in it.

So what are the academic studies of screenplays that are available at the moment? There have been a few books of interviews with writers about their work, but these concentrate on how they were personally inspired to write individual films, not the process of collaboration and development, and producers or executives are rarely mentioned. Examples include Patrick McGilligan's *Backstory: Interviews with Screenwriters* (a series of books chiefly from a film history point of view, and concentrating on the US); and Alistair Owen's *Story and Character: Interviews with British Screenwriters* (2004).

Steven Maras' 2009 book *Screenwriting: history, theory and practice* provides a detailed account of the history and evolution of screenwriting practice and academic discourses about screenwriting, especially in America; but places its emphasis on history, textual analysis, and auteur theory, rather than observing contemporary practice or studying the management of the process.

There have been two UK Film Council-funded business reports on the state of development in Britain: Royal Holloway's Susan Rogers' *Writing British Films - who writes British films and how they are recruited:* (2007) and management consultancy Attentional's *A Study of Feature Film Development* (2007). Both were analyzing the current state of the industry and gathering statistics, rather than testing techniques for improving the process. They run to about fifty pages, are drafted as management reports, and are not published as books.

The only book on film development across Europe is Angus Finney's 1996 book *Developing Feature Films in Europe – A Practical Guide*. This is more of a survey of development funding sources in the late eighties and early nineties throughout Europe (and excludes the American context). There is little reference to the process of development, apart from a nine page introductory chapter which defines job roles. A useful book at the time, it is now out of

print and increasingly out of date (many of the finance sources referred to no longer exist). In Finney's *The International Film Business* (2010) only one chapter out of twenty specifically refers to development, because development is only a small part of the wider picture of film finance that the book is addressing. So what about the role of the producer in managing development? There are a number of practical handbooks on how to be a film producer, although most are American rather than British (there were over 40 on sale in the UK at the start of 2010). They all concentrate on contracts, financing and distribution, rather than managing creatives and development. For example Shreibman's *Indie Producer's Handbook* (2001) does not even refer to development; the *Guerrilla Filmmakers Handbook* (2006) by Jones and Jolliffe spends only 10 pages of 622 on development (1.6% of the book); and *The Film Finance Handbook* (2007) by Davies and Wistreich has three pages on development and four pages of interview with a writer / director (1.4 % of the book).

Another section of books about development are "How-to" script-writing manuals. These have been in existence since the 1920s, with Stannard's book *Writing Screenplays* published in 1920, and Margrave's book *Successful Film Writing* published in 1936. The real explosion of screenplay manuals came in the 1980s, and by the start of 2010 there were at least 106 books in print on this subject. The market leaders are authors like Syd Field (1987); Robert McKee (1999); Michael Haugh (1991); and Christopher Vogler (1996). These books are for writers, about writing, and present an image of the writer as a God-like visionary, who has the original idea and carries out all the drafts in autonomous creative control. They spend little or no time talking about the development process, such as collaboration with producers and financiers, or the expectations of working on commission. These books may be the reason why some writers come into the industry with expectations of power and control, but instead find they have to respond to notes, interact with executives, do endless rewrites, possibly work with co-writers, and be an active part of a large industry of people involved in preparing projects for production. Since my research is about the creative / industrial process and the management of collaboration, I shall avoid critiquing individual how-to-write manuals, and their different approaches on how to write the "ideal" screenplay.

The academic field of *Screenplay Studies* has generally concentrated on the analysis of the screenplay as a standalone text in its own right: a literary form with its own merits, capable of analysis and study. One of the earliest proponents of this view was Douglas Winston in his book *The Screenplay as Literature* (1973); and more recently Malkin (1980) and Viswanathan (1986) in the French journal *Les cahiers du Scenario*, and Claudia Sternberg's

book *Written for the screen: the American Motion-Picture Screenplay as text* (1997). They argue that the screenplay is a form of literature that can be read and analysed without the need for performance or study of the completed film, in the same way that Shakespeare can be studied in the text rather than by watching it in the theatre. It is accepted that every performance of Shakespeare is another re-interpretation, so it can also be said that every film is only an adaptation / interpretation of the source screenplay.

This “screenplay as literary text approach” was questioned by Ian Macdonald (2004, 2011); who argued that whilst it has been useful to raise the importance of the screenplay as a text worthy of study, this approach can result in an *over*-reliance on analysing the text, even privileging that text as the only object of study. He argues that it goes too far in promoting the screenplay writer as auteur, and obscures collaboration with industry participants, such as script editors and producers. MacDonald’s own definition of screenwriting describes a text that is not a standalone text in its own right, but that is specifically trying to achieve a subjective industrially-conditioned response. He states that the task of successful screenwriting is:

“...to produce a positive response to a narrative in the mind of the reader of the script (or listener to the pitch), which will correspond to what that reader / listener is seeking. The reader / listener is seeking something which conforms to their understanding of the field of fiction film production and their own sense of judgement; and these incorporate everything ranging from the first screenwork they ever saw, to their current brief.”  
(MacDonald, p.262)

Screenplay as “text in relation to other texts” is developed further in the field of adaptation studies, which examines the source text of the screenplay (often literature or a classic such as Austen or Shakespeare) and compares it to the adapted screenplay and / or the completed media artefact. This field has its own journal (*Adaptation*, published by Oxford University Press), and focuses mainly on issues such as the fidelity of the adaptation to its source-text; the complexity and subjectivity of value judgments about different versions; the nature of appropriation, interpretation, inter-textuality, and authorship; and the relative cultural and historical contextualization of the various texts. Overall the field avoids issues around the industrial pressures on adaptation choices made by the development team; and non-literary or non-fictional source-texts are under-examined (even though they are now being increasingly used for film screenplays), probably due to the literary studies emphasis on the source text.

To conclude, to date there are no books available on the process and business of contemporary script development, and this complex collaborative field is marginalised by the emphasis of existing academic approaches such as “studying screenplay as completed text,” adaptation studies, and even screenplay writing manuals.

### **2.2.2: The context of MacDonald and the Screen Idea**

However one academic who has reflected on the screenplay development process is Ian MacDonald of Leeds University. So far his work has resulted in individual chapters and papers, but his forthcoming book *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea* (2014) for Palgrave Macmillan will be a further contribution to screenplay studies. I will now look at his existing work in detail, since my own research fits within the context of his work into the relationship between the industry and the screenplay form (MacDonald, 2004, which is relevant to my chapters four and five on power in development); and his work on the role of script readers (Macdonald, 2003, which is relevant to my chapter six on the role of script editors and development executives).

One useful concept highlighted by MacDonald is that of the *screen idea*.<sup>6</sup> It is defined in his 2004 paper “Disentangling the screen idea” as:

“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 any other means” (MacDonald, 2004, p.90).

This is the core idea for a film, which can encompass the concept, key themes, and even the overall mood and feel of the film and its story. It may be different in the minds of different collaborators on the film, because each individual may have a different conception and interpretation of the idea, although ideally everyone has a similar view. The screen idea(s) may not even be fully realised in the completed film, such is the complex multi-player nature of film production.

Furthermore the screen idea is not necessarily fully captured on paper, either by the screenplay or by other documents or storyboards. MacDonald suggests that the screenplay is

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<sup>6</sup> MacDonald cites Philip Parker’s 1998 screenwriting manual *The art & science of screenwriting* as the originator of the screen idea expression (Parker, 1998, p.57), although Parker does not imbue it with as much importance as MacDonald does. Parker does not really separate it from the screenplay itself.

only ever a partial description or approximation of the screen idea, for four reasons. Firstly, the conventional limitations of the screenplay form. Secondly, because the screenplay is only one writer's interpretation of the idea, which is why different writers end up producing very different drafts of the same concept or source material, and also why producers sometimes replace writers who are not producing drafts that are close enough to their own conception of the elusive screen idea. Thirdly, because each draft is only a "snapshot of a moment in the development of the screenwork" (MacDonald, 2011, p.130). And finally, because the screen idea exists in the mind of all the creative collaborators, not just the writer and producer. These collaborators start with the development team and financiers (via script feedback notes), but eventually include all the people working on the film during production, as they read and interpret the script in their own way, all of whom may have a different reading of the screenplay and interpretation of the underlying idea, and all contribute in their own way to the transformation of the *screen idea* into the completed film. MacDonald proposes that development readers (script editors, producers, etc.) are active collaborators and "de facto writers," expected to contribute further text for other readers in a dynamic process of continual refinement (MacDonald, 2004, p.92).

"The reader(s) of the screenplay and other documents inevitably construct a version of the screen idea in their heads which 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." (MacDonald, 2004, p.91, my italics)

The issue of 'similar conception' is one that I have expanded on in Chapters 4 and 5. My research interviews with writers and producers continually stressed that it was very important (rather than just "helpful") that everyone was working towards the same conception of the film idea; and this led to the proposal of the *creative triangle* concept in the book: where the vision of the idea is strengthened by having agreement between the three key creative drivers of producer, writer and director. As producer David Puttnam puts it:

"The first thing is to know what the story is; what it really is. The producer has to know, and the director and writer have to know, and then the audience will know too."  
(Howkins, 2001, p.160)

MacDonald makes several points about the nature of collaboration during the development process; he accepts the development group dynamic and hints at a creative power struggle involving ownership and leadership, within norms of professional behaviour; but then states that:

“the external relationships that apply to this process (power, status, norms, negotiations and so on) are perhaps less well acknowledged.” (MacDonald, *ibid.*, p. 94).

I took MacDonald’s point further by arguing that power, status, norms and negotiations are not only related to what he calls ‘external relationships,’ but are an inherent aspect of the screenplay development process (see the dynamic power model on page 103 (fig 5.3) and the role of development executives on page 121 (fig 6.4)). The screenplay writer is engaged in a permanent process of negotiation as part of a group of conflicting agendas and allegiances operating in an insecure and high-anxiety environment. Furthermore external relationships often become internal members of the team (such as when a financier starts to fund development and expects creative influence). Nor are these power relationships static, because the centre of power and influence shifts regularly between team members during the process, which introduces a higher level of complexity and ambivalence than MacDonald admits.

There is also the issue of the genesis of the screen idea. Macdonald implicitly assumes the screen idea *originates* with the writer, as he refers to “the idea that (in all probability) the writer has had from the start.” (*ibid.*, p.90), and that it is shaped and tested for suitability *by the writer*. This misleading generalisation is promulgated by most screenplay writing manuals, and is also picked up by Jill Nelmes in her paper “Some thoughts on analyzing the screenplay,” where she states:

“The creative idea is triggered off in some way by the need within the writer to tell a story or work through an idea that he or she believes has the potential to be a powerful story.” (Nelmes, 2007, p.110).

Whilst this is sometimes true, in practice most professional writers are working to an idea generated by the producer; or else have been brought onto a project as a replacement writer, working on a previous writer’s original idea; or are working on an adaptation of an

underlying work or true story. To illustrate this, adaptations currently account for around 50% of development projects in Hollywood and 40%-50% of development projects at the BBC and Film4 (Bloore, 2012, p.11). Adaptation is therefore too large an area to ignore, however MacDonald does not cover adaptation in any detail and it would be interesting to consider how the adaptation of an existing book or play potentially strengthens the coherence of the screen idea, and the likelihood that all the collaborators will have a similarly shared sense of the idea. This is because the collaborators have a reading of the screenplay *plus* the reading of the pre-existing novel or play, which may communicate more about the tone, mood, setting and character development (see my chapter one, p.12). Alternatively if the screenplay is a major departure from the novel a creative tug-of-war could develop between those creative workers on the film who are following the vision and tone of the screenplay, and those following the original work. For example, adaptations sometimes diverge radically from the source material at the start of development and then later return towards it, such as when new writers or a director are brought on board and they go back to the source material for inspiration. All of these issues may have an influence on MacDonald's screen idea concept, and may be future directions for consideration.

MacDonald argues that the final interpreters of the screen idea are the cinema audience. The film presents elements of the screen idea in a revised non-literary form: a succession of concrete images, sound, and performance, from which the viewer must construct their own interpretation of the screen idea:

“an opportunity for the viewer to continue to work at the meaning, significance and narrative possibilities of what is on the screen.” (MacDonald, 2011, p.132)

### 2.2.3: Film studies and Andrew Sarris: “in search of an author”

I have now identified a shortage of research material and academic consideration of development, however this does not automatically mean development *should* be studied. If development is only a stepping-stone towards the creation of the final film, what do we *gain* from studying it? The answer I suggest lies in the issue of authorship. The nature of cinematic authorship is a central recurring debate in film studies, and I propose that we may be able to learn more about the reality of film authorship from studying the development process than we do from studying the shoot process.

During the shoot the director is generally thought to be in overall control of the creative process, and other collaborators are co-operating with his or her overall vision and control; however during development the different creative inputs of writer, producer, director, development executives and financiers are more complex, and also regularly changing in terms of power and influence. I propose that to understand the collaborative authorship of film it is important that we study this development process in more detail. My research is therefore a contribution to authorship studies, as well as to screenplay studies and film industry studies. I will now look at the context of auteur theory within film studies, and its relationship to the screenwriter; starting with the history of auteur theory and its importance in allowing film to be taken seriously as an art form; then looking at its effect in marginalising the creative input of the producer and the screenwriter; and finally looking at how authorial collaboration is emphasised by my proposed creative triangle of development and the development typology of changing power and influence.

So what is Film Studies, and why is auteur theory so crucial to it? Film studies encompasses the history, business, cultural and sociological effect of film (including ideological interpretation, audience reception, and consumption). It is perhaps most influenced by literary studies, with the resulting emphasis on critical analysis of the completed *film-text* (which according to Metz (1977) includes the components of image, music, sound, words, noise and writing); plus genre studies; psychoanalysis and semiotics; adaptation studies; gender studies; narrative analysis<sup>7</sup>; and perhaps above all *auteur theory*, which advocates the primacy of a single creative author of the film: the director. This authorial emphasis started in the French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the 1950s and was formulated into a detailed theory by American critic Andrew Sarris in his paper “Notes on the Auteur Theory” (1962) and his

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<sup>7</sup> (Chatman (1978), Bordwell (1985), Scholes and Kellogg (1966), Genette (1980))

book *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions* (1968). In fact auteur theory was vital to the origin of film studies, because it was the argument that there *was* a single artistic vision that enabled film to be taken seriously as an artistic medium, because of its resulting similarity with traditional artforms and their Romantic emphasis on the figure of the creator genius. This countered the view that cinema was merely low culture - a commodified mass-produced form of entertainment which by its very industrial nature prevented an artist from significant personal creative expression because of the technological complexity of production, the compromising nature of multi-player collaboration, the need to satisfy audiences to recoup substantial investment, and the resulting control or influence of executives and the industry.

Therefore auteur theory (as it has become understood) argues for the artistic legitimacy of film by claiming that some films *are* created by an artist and therefore reward similar scrutiny to literature or art. This enables films to be interpreted by their visual style (*mise-en-scène*) as well as their narrative; and enables the identification of director's coherent vision (visual or thematic) across a whole corpus of work (Watson 2007b); and that all of these artistic activities transcend the limitations of its industrial form.

However it must be understood the auteur theory was not a single static construct. It started in France against a backdrop of 1950s left wing politics, in revolution against the prevailing orthodoxy of French cinema, in part to embrace the appeal of some mainstream American film-making. Truffaut himself argued that "auteur theory was merely a polemical weapon for a given time and a given place" (Sarris, 1962, p.561). It has been re-interpreted and re-formed by different critics and changed over time to reflect prevailing historical and critical concerns and theories (including new criticism, structuralism, and post-structuralism, all of which questioned the role of the author in other artforms as well); and has also changed to reflect the film cultures and preconceptions in different countries.<sup>8</sup>

The problem is that over the years auteur theory's emphasis on the primacy of the director has resulted in academic commentators paying less attention to the roles of the producer and screenwriter as creative collaborators in the development and production of screenplays. In particular the auteur emphasis on visual *mise-en-scène* helped to marginalise the contribution of the writer and producer. This goes back to Sarris' original paper in 1962, where he argues that the three "criteria of value" or premises of auteur theory (which he pictured as concentric

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<sup>8</sup> For a good survey of changing interpretations of auteur theory see Cook (1985).

circles) are firstly the “technical competence” of the director; secondly the “the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value” (which he defines as “certain recurrent characteristics of style, which serve as his signature”, especially in his visual work); and finally *interior meaning*:

“the ultimate glory of the cinema as an art. Interior meaning is extrapolated from the tension between a director’s personality and his material.” (Sarris, 1962, p.562).

Rather than the script helping the director, this last line of Sarris’ identifies the script material as part of a tension that potentially prevents the realisation of a director’s personal vision, so the director defines himself in opposition to his script:

“Because so much of the America cinema is commissioned, a director is forced to express his personality through the visual treatment of material rather than through the literary content of the material” (Sarris, 1962, p.562).

However this view had its opponents from the start. New York film critic Pauline Kael launched a famous attack on Sarris’ theory, and saved some of her strongest arguments for this idea of *interior meaning*. Kael poked fun by saying that according to Sarris’ theory the worse the script, the greater the opportunity for the director to display his interior conflict with the material. For auteur theorists, she suggests scathingly:

“their ideal auteur is the man who signs a long term contract, directs any script that’s handed to him, and expresses himself by shoving bits of style up the crevasses of the plots. If his “style” is in conflict with the storyline or subject matter, so much the better – more chance for tension.... Subject matter is irrelevant (so long as it isn’t treated sensibly – which is bad) and will quickly be disposed of by auteur critics who know that the smart director isn’t responsible for that anyway; they’ll get onto the important subject – his *mis-en-scène*.” (Kael, 1963, p.17)

Kael goes on to say that Sarris’ theory disqualifies writer-directors from ever being auteurs at all, because they have written their own material so logically there is no struggle against it:

“They can’t arrive at that “interior meaning, the ultimate glory of the cinema” because a writer-director has no tension between his personality and his material, so there’s nothing for the auteur critic to extrapolate from.” (Kael, 1963, p.18)

Kael identified a further problem with Sarris' theory, which is his implication that the director has no *choice* over the material he uses. In practice directors have considerable choice over which projects to choose to direct, and this has increased since the growth in power of the Hollywood agent.

The debate continued over many years, but what this critical spat importantly shows is that from the outset the writer and the screenplay was being demeaned by some auteur theorists, in favour of the visual work of the director. In 1968 Sarris did refine his negative emphasis on screenwriters, and saw them as victims of the studio system saying: "the vaunted vulgarity of movie moguls worked in favour of the director at the expense of the writer. A producer was more likely to tamper with a story line than with a visual style" (Sarris, 1968, p.31). But even then he dismissed equal collaboration by stating: "the strong director imposes his own personality on a film; the weak director allows the personalities of others to run rampant" (Sarris, 1968, p.30).

However some auteur theorists did emphasise the value of the writer and director working well together. For example, François Truffaut's original 1954 essay *A certain tendency of the French Cinema*, (which first coined the word auteur in the film studies sense) is in part an attack on the power of the writer (especially Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost); but ends up celebrating the value of a close relationship between writer and director, arguing that the best auteur directors are either writing their own screenplays or are collaborating closely with the writer:

"I'm thinking, for example, of Renoir, Bresson, Jean Cocteau, Jacques Becker, Abel Gance, Max Ophals, Jacques Tati and Roger Leenhardt. And yet they are French film-makers, and it so happens - by a curious coincidence - that they are auteurs who often write their own dialogue and in some cases think up the stories they direct." (Truffaut, 1954)

Later auteur theory writers increasingly left behind Sarris' emphasis on the director working against the script, but the main problem with auteur theory is that it placed critical emphasis on the role of the director for such a long time; as critic David Thompson eloquently put it:

"It is a disaster that the theory and practice of production have been so wilfully avoided in American film studies. In concentrating on directors, we have inflated

most of those reputations and demeaned those other artistic careers thought worthy of academia... Minor directors have books written about them, and yet the great producers are ignored.” (Thomson, 1982, pp.34-35).

My research work here may contribute to the redressing of that balance and it considers in detail the collaborative development process of the team of producer, writer *and* director. So what about the producer as auteur?

#### **2.2.4: The auteur producer**

Early proponents of auteur theory accepted the industrial context of most film-making (for example Truffaut 1954, Bazin 1957, Chabrol and Rohmer 1957); and many writers have commented on the collaborative paradox of film-making as an artform (Wollen, 1973; Corliss 1972, 1974; Watson 2007b, pp.92-94;), leading to the suggestion of *multi-authorship* (Gaut 1997, p.150). Truffaut and Bazin celebrated the fact that certain directors (including Hitchcock, Ford, and Hawks) succeeded in creating bodies of work with consistent signatorial patterns of narrative, thematic, cinematic and aesthetic expression, *despite* the economic and commercial constraints of the studio system. Hitchcock is an unusual case study because he created his body of work by working not just as a director for hire, but also by operating as a quasi-producer, developing material. Many of the 1940s to 1960s Hitchcock films that are most lauded by Truffaut involved Hitchcock optioning and developing stories, working with writers, and exercising control over budget expenditure and marketing strategies – more the activity of a producer than a normal director of that period. This is clearly demonstrated in Truffaut’s interviews with Hitchcock (1967, 1984), and well documented in the work of Robert Kapsis (1992) detailing his artistic reputation; studies of the development and production of individual films like *Vertigo* (Auiler 1999a) and *Psycho* (Rebello 1990); and analysis of Hitchcock’s personal notebooks and script drafts (Auiler 1999b).

So why was it that a producer often used to have more creative control than the director? The powerful creative role of the US studio producer during the so-called golden era of the 1930s has been well documented, with producers or teams of producers often having more influence over completed films than directors (Bordwell et al. 1985, p. 320-9; Balio, 1993; Gomery, 1986; Lampel 2006). It has been shown that individual studios were so closely associated with particular genres, story themes, casting, and a particular style of cinematography, design

and editing, that the studio itself was in effect an auteur, overriding the identity of the director (see Schatz' 1988 book *The genius of the system*). The same auteur-like consistency is visible today in the work of animation companies like Dreamworks, Disney and Pixar, regardless of the director of the individual film. Searle Kochberg's paper "The industrial contexts of film production" uses the example of Warner Brothers in the 1930s, where the whole process was sometimes so controlled by the studio boss / producer that there was little collaboration even between directors and writers, or directors and editors – the only common creative thread through the development and production process was the producer (Kochberg, 2007, pp.30-35). This studio producer-based creative control continued through the forties after the loss of the cinema chains, into the 1950s (Powdermaker, 1950); however the loss of the studio owned cinema chains, the growth of television (as part of the studio focus) and the rise of the independent producer saw the shift of power increasingly move towards the director. The timing of the *Cahiers du Cinema* promotion of auteur theory in Europe in the 1950s coincided with this shift of power.

The creative role of the post-studio era independent creative producer has recently been under closer scrutiny and appreciation by a number of writers (Illott and Eberts 1990; Finney, 1996a, 2010; Epstein, 2006, 2010; Cones, 2009; and especially Alejandro Pardo's very thorough 2010 paper "The Film Producer as Creative Force"). Recent research into the studio workplace in film and television production has led John Caldwell to suggest the re-emergence of the studio auteur – or what he calls *industrial auteur theory*. He cites the increase of writing by committee in TV drama, and the control of long running dramas through the studio-employed show-runner (rather than the individual episode's writer or director), reducing directorial control by using very detailed pre-production planning and short shoots. Industrial auteur theory is also seen in the increased importance of notes given by senior executives, where "a note is in fact a corporate communiqué based on some artistic economic ideal about how film / television should work" (Caldwell, 2008, p.217); and in the use of media and press releases to build public-facing and internal aesthetic status metaphors around the characters of the show-runners; and in public disputes between companies stealing or adapting other companies' ideas. Caldwell suggests that:

"authorship in Hollywood cannot be separated from pre-emptive legal constraints on copyright and the excessively porous ways that creative ideas are vetted and circulated among the creative populace (Caldwell, 2008, p.210)."

Caldwell argues that the writing-team's method of collaborative creativity and disposable authorship has now moved from TV to film, and cites the creation of the 2000 film *Charlie's Angels* as an example (2008, p.213). This idea of industrial auteur theory then feeds into Caldwell's idea of *Industrial Identity Theory*, where media organisations increasingly brand themselves and confirm their identities and cultures by association with the shows they create (reinforcing the need to control the creative process of those shows).

#### **2.2.4: The auteur screenwriter and the development team:**

Now that we have seen the history of the producer as auteur, what about the screenwriter? Sarris and other auteur theorists emphasised that consistent thematic patterns could be traced across the work of director – auteurs; however the same consistency was proved to occur across the work of screenwriters, as shown in detail by Richard Corliss in the pages of the journal *Film Comment* (which he edited) and his books *The Hollywood Screenwriters* (1972) and *Talking Pictures* (1974). As well as leading the backlash in favour of the scriptwriter as auteur, he argued that film criticism should include assessing the relative creative contributions of the writer, producer, director, actors, cinematographer, designer, and actors. More recent campaigns in favour of the screenwriter's elevation to auteur status include David Kipen's *The Schreiber Theory* (2006); Joe Eszterhas' *The Devil's Guide to Hollywood: The Screenwriter as God!* (2006); and Sellors' paper "Collective authorship in film" (2007). All three argued that the director is in effect the interpretive adaptor of the screenplay, and that it is the screenplay writer who establishes intellectual themes, not the director. Writer David Mamet echoed this view when he became a director on the film *House of Games*, and stated that the work of the director was really just an extension of the work of the writer (Price, 2010, pp. ix-x).

So how about the writer as part of a development *team*? Steven Price's 2010 book *The screenplay: authorship, theory and criticism* considers screenplays as texts and as part of a collaborative process. He suggests that the screenplay has been "made to disappear, within the fields of both literary and film studies" (Price, 2010, p.xi), because of the instability of the text (as it goes through the process of continual transformation through collaborative revision and adaptation, both in development and production); and because the screenplay tends to disappear as a specific entity as a result of the metaphors and rhetorical strategies used by film-makers and film studies writers in discussing film. Using the case study of Hitchcock's *The Birds* Steven Price analyses drafts and correspondence that illustrate the collaborative

process, and concludes that development generates multiple versions of the idea, no one of which necessarily corresponds entirely with the final cut, but many of which may have different influences upon it (Price, 2010, pp.74-93). Some of the images and *mis-en-scene* that Hitchcock used in the film were a direct result of working through themes which were unresolved in the final draft script, but that had been discussed and had been sources of disagreement between Hitchcock and his scriptwriter Evan Hunter (such as the relationship between the actions of individuals and the reason for the birds attacking). This resulted in changes right into production, post-production and the final ending.

This provides an insight into the way that the process of the writer and director working *together* on the screenplay idea (for example the characterisation and themes discussed along the way) are as important as what makes it into the final written draft of the screenplay. The director may not need to have written in stage directions what he intends to explore visually on set, especially if it interferes with the readability of the “selling-document” that is the screenplay. The famous saying repeated by producer Robert Evans is: “if it’s not on the page, it’s not on the screen” (Evans, 1994, p.122); however Price’s argument suggests that some thematic ideas will reach the screen by circumventing the page, through the director’s expression of their shared development experience.

Academic Paul Watson also places the emphasis on collaboration between the writer and director, and argues that the whole concept of the single creator is actively unhelpful:

“Instead of searching for the intangible evidence of a film’s unifying figure, it is perhaps useful to think of creativity as constitutive at every level of cinematic activity. To put it another way, the question of cinematic authorship can be posed on a range of labour, creative and commercial levels.” (Watson, 2007b, p. 104)

He goes on to make the argument for the inclusion of a whole range of creative personnel, agencies, and even the corporations who fund the making of the films, and concludes by drawing in commercial imperatives as an intrinsic part of the mix, bringing media industry studies into the equation, and defining cinematic authorship as two simultaneous practices:

“1). The particular creative, expressive and artistic activities of the personnel who collaborate in varying degrees to make a film and whose respective individual agencies determine in complex ways film style; and 2). the socio-cultural practices of contemporary media culture, which construct the auteur as a commodity, a logo so to

...speak, which stands not behind the text as in Romantic notions of authorship, but rather in front of it precisely to explicate, expand and legitimise the marks of individuality, expression, and style in a film.” (Watson, 2007b, p. 107)

This leads us to the idea that having a single auteur figure is actually *useful* in the financing and marketing of the film or show-runner lead TV series, regardless of the collaborative reality. This view is supported by film business writer Angus Finney, who argues that the director is really a marketable commodity, exploited by producers for the purposes of packaging, financing and distributing films (Finney 2010). The relationship is not purely exploitative but symbiotic and two-way: the business may try to influence the film-maker’s creativity, but the director’s romantic aura of personal creativity helps get the film made, so neither can thrive without the other. This is supported by my own research, and producers and development executives were clear in their interviews that it is the attachment of the director (and the cast they can attract) that gets the film financed, not the script alone. I argue that whatever the academic debates about its veracity the auteur director concept is a useful device for the producer and for the Hollywood studio (Bloore, 2012, p. 73, and illustrated on the next page in diagram 2).

Next page: **[Diagram 2: Why different industry players find it convenient for the director to retain cult power and auteur status....](#)** (from Bloore 2012, [adapted from Epstein 2006, pp. 271-274, and the quote from p. 274.](#))

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<i>Player</i>	<i>Reason for supporting director power</i>
For the Hollywood studios	For the studios it is convenient for the director to have credit, even if they have legal ownership of authorial status and distribution rights. A helpful buffer between the stars and the studio – and a ‘scapegoat’ if it all goes wrong. Adds an aura of artistic endeavour.
For the producer	For the producer the director is central to attracting cast. Auteurism gives further credence to the director’s track record and persuades investors to commit. The director engenders trust. Less questioning about the identity of the rest of the team.
For the talent agencies in Hollywood	Agents can use director clients to build packages with other clients: stars, literary properties, writers, etc.
For film reviewers, critics and academics	Directors provide a focus for their commentary and criticism.
For the director	Auteur status ensures the director gets good fees; high status (including DVD commentary, film festival and awards appearances, etc.) and artistic status; it also helps support the director’s leadership and engineer the consent of cast and crew.
For the writer	On the plus side, the director helps the writer get the film made and get paid. On the downside, writers stand more to lose than many other players: directors are a challenge to authorial status, potentially able to derail their vision, and sometimes the source of the irritating ‘a film by’ credit. And the director gets paid more for less time on the job.

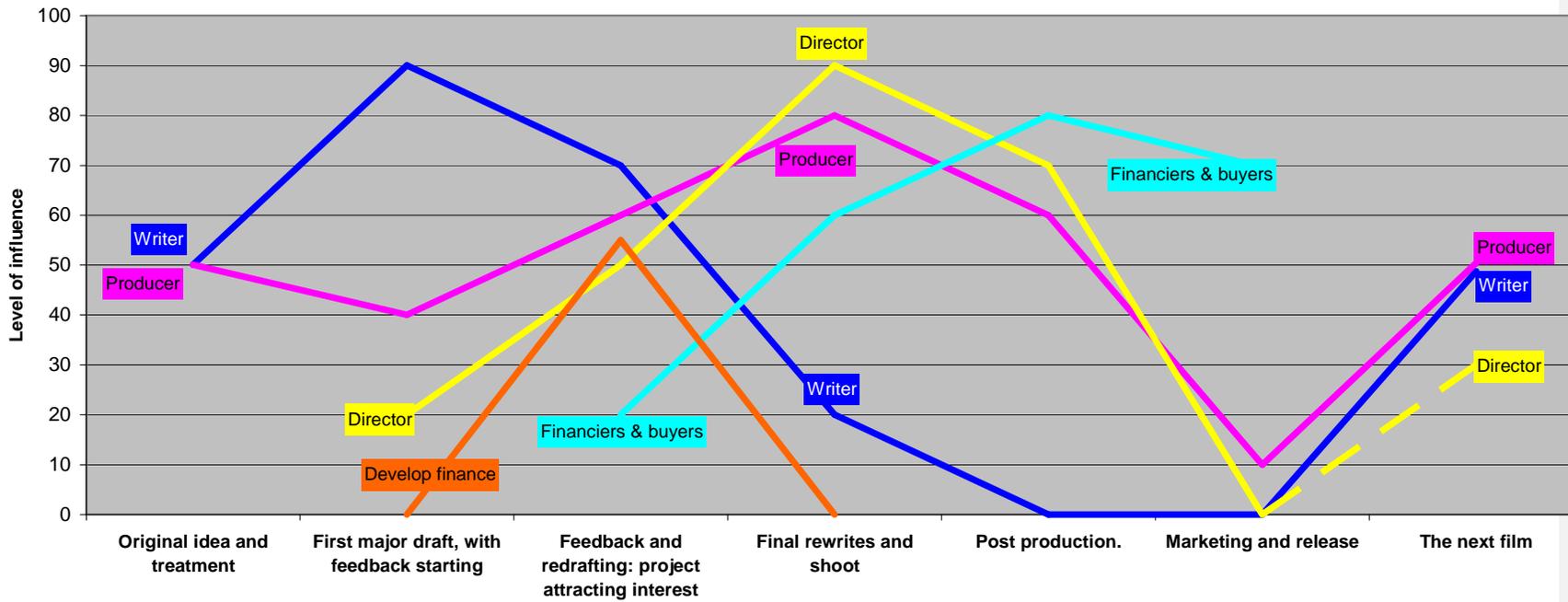
At almost every turn, inside and outside the community, they work to lend an aura of aesthetic dignity to the community’s own perception of itself.  
(Edward J. Epstein)

John Caldwell concludes: “negotiated and collective authorship is an almost unavoidable and determining reality in contemporary film / television.” (Caldwell, 2008, p.199). My work concurs with this academic move towards accepting collaborative authorship, concealed behind the useful “logo” of the director. My research looked at development as a team process, with different members bringing different skills; similar to the team theories of the management writer Meredith Belbin (1981), who categorised different attributes of individuals in successful high performing teams. My research considered in detail the collaborative development process in the team of producer, writer and director; and then the

interaction of that team with other professionals (script editors and development executives) and other organisations (broadcasters, financiers, distributors, and sales agents). It showed that the idea the director (or any individual) maintained creative control of the entire exercise was over-simplistic, especially in the multi-player world of the independent film value chain. The director often arrived late during development (apart from writer-directors), after the themes of the story were developed in detail by the writer, producer and development executive / script editor. It showed that the director is engaged in a symbiotic relationship with the screen idea and screenplay, not Sarris' simplistic conflict with the material. It also discovered (through interviews) how producers and development executives prepare the writer for the arrival of the director. Many interviewees said that it is more important for the right director to be chosen to match the script, and the vision or screen idea that they share for it, than for the script to be radically changed to match the incoming vision of the director. This has a direct bearing on the concept of auteurship, especially the importance of the choice of the producer and financiers in hiring the right director for the material. In keeping with the views of Corliss (1974) and Watson (2007b), I argue in Chapter 5 of the book that the director should be viewed as one player in a collaborative and changing team; his power rising and falling during the development, production and distribution stages, as the typology of changing power and creative influence makes clear (diagram 3 on the next page). Therefore his level of auteurship and creative control is mediated and vacillating, rather than constant.

**Following page: Diagram 3: A typology of changing power and approximate creative influence of various players in independent film, from development to distribution (Bloore, 2012, p.103). See the enclosed book for more description and analysis of what is shown.**

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Furthermore, the book's typological concept of the creative triangle of producer, writer and director (see chapter 3) challenges the simplistic Sarris auteur theory position, by placing importance on the combined vision of all those creative collaborators during development. The producer is specifically placed at the top of the triangle, on the principle that the majority of films today start development as a result of the producer's work (optioning an underlying work or developing an idea). Even those that do originate with a writer are facilitated by the influence of the producer (optioning a screenplay, paying for drafts, attaching the director and raising production finance). However the producer is shown theoretically at the top of the triangle only for the development process, and diagram 3 clearly shows the director in a higher position of power during the shoot, even if falling in power during post. The creative triangle concept emphasises that if the visions of producer, writer and director are in alignment then a coherent film becomes more likely; and this is in keeping with MacDonald's emphasis on the consistent and shared screen idea. This is empirically difficult to prove, although films where there are differences in vision between writers, directors, producers and financiers often provide case studies about what can go wrong in development and production. For example see Eberts and Illot on the films of Goldcrest (1990), Bach on *Heaven's Gate* (1985), Salamon on *The Bonfire of the vanities* (1992), Puttnam on his time at Universal (2000), and Finney on various case studies including the un-produced *Vapor* (Finney 2010, pp.162-169).

To conclude, Roland Barthes may have declared the death of the author back in 1968, but the auteur concept in film studies has survived and evolved over the decades to be seen as one of a number of useful analytical approaches. However over the years auteur status has also been argued for the producer and writer, as well as the director; and as shown by my own research the reality behind the auteur concept is a more collaborative team activity, concealed behind the 'logo' of the director which provides a convenient figurehead for the financing and marketing stages of the business.

## 2.3 Context: Existing work on defining the film value chain:

In recent years a number of industry analysts and academics have referred to the usefulness of the value chain concept for analysing the feature film industry, including Zerdick et al. (2000); Eliashberg et al. (2006); Lampel et al. (2006); Aris and Bughin (2006); Vogel (2007); Vickery and Hawkins (2008); and Küng (2008). The film value chain was also referred to in academic curricula and marketing literature in the UK (for example Cass Business School 2006, Bournemouth University 2008, University of East Anglia 2010, Exeter University 2013). This interest in the value chain is partly a result of the industry being forced to re-examine its business models as a result of digital technology altering the production and distribution part of the chain (digitising the shoot to screen process), and the internet impacting on distribution, marketing and piracy (Crissey 2010, pp.3-4). I will now examine the origins of the value chain concept; its application to date to the film industry; and the absence and need for a model of the independent film value chain; and for the purposes of my research it is important that the chain properly includes and considers the development function.

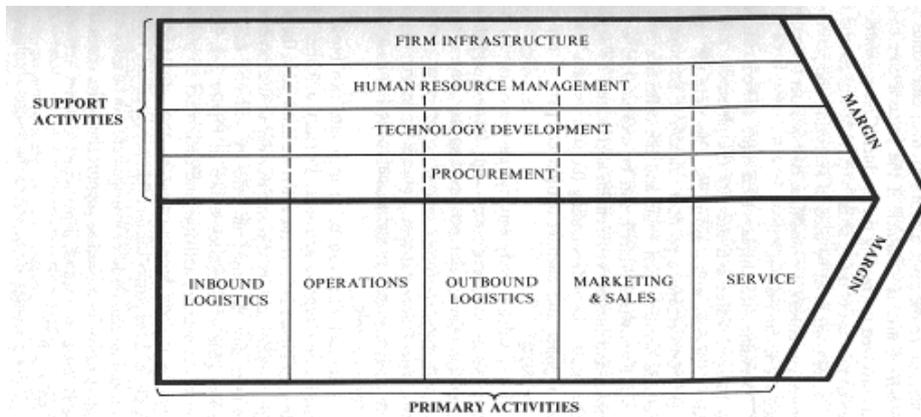
The term “value chain” was codified in 1985 by Michael Porter, in his book *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*.<sup>9</sup> He subsequently summarised the value chain as “the set of activities through which a product or service is created and delivered to customers” (Porter 2001, p. 74). Within Porter’s definitions the value chain refers to the activities within a single company, as shown in diagram 4 on the next page.

The company value chain is used to help analyse that company’s competitive advantage and strategy within the marketplace (in combination with *Porter’s Five Forces*, as defined in his earlier book *Competitive Strategy* (1980)). In a later article on the growing power of the internet he summed up the value chain as follows:

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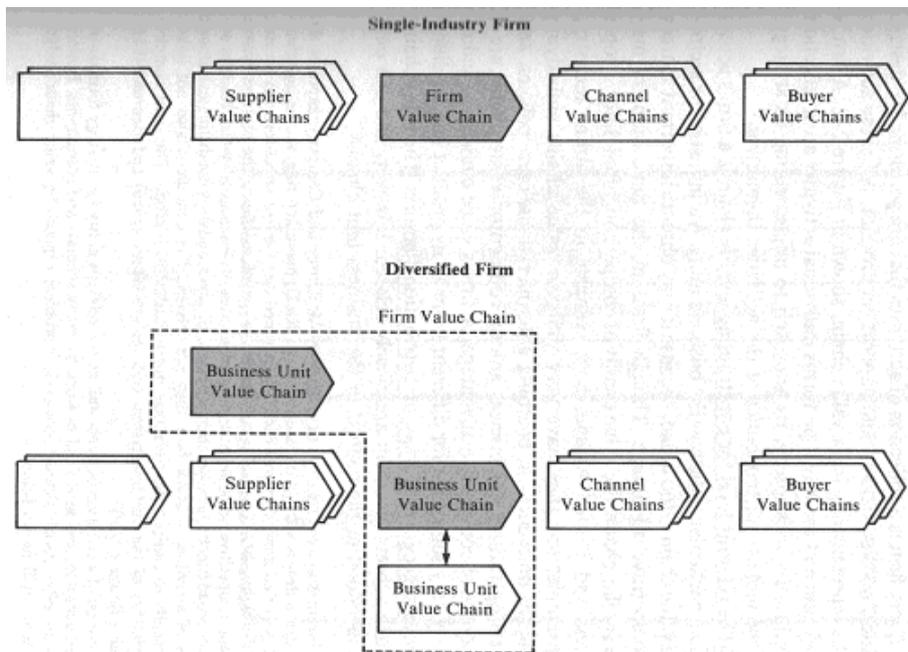
<sup>9</sup> It was developed from existing concepts of business systems being used by the consultants McKinsey and co., and writers like Gluck (1980), Bauron (1981) and Bower (1973); as cited by Porter 1985, pg 36).

**Diagram 4: The Value Chain (Porter 1985, p. 37)**



“When a company competes in any industry, it performs a number of discrete but interconnected value-creating activities, such as operating a sales force, fabricating a component, or delivering products, and these activities have points of connection with the activities of suppliers, channels, and customers. The value chain is a framework for identifying all these activities and analyzing how they affect both a company's costs and the value delivered to buyers.” (Porter 2001 p. 74)

However some products are not created and delivered to the end user by a single company, and to accommodate this Porter created the concept of the “value system”, which includes the individual value chains of all the separate companies or players who are co-operating within an industry to deliver a final product. As shown in diagram 5 on the next page, this could include the suppliers of raw materials, the manufacturers, the distributors (or channels) and the end buyers.



**Above: Diagram 5: The Value System (Porter 1985, p.35)**

It is important to note that the value chain concept does not in any way attempt to represent the flow of revenue back through the chain from the exploitation of the product. It is only concerned with value addition during production and distribution. Porter subsequently observed the effects on the value chain of information technology (Porter and Millar 1985) and the internet (Porter 2001), and foresaw the contraction and integration of the value chain and the value system:

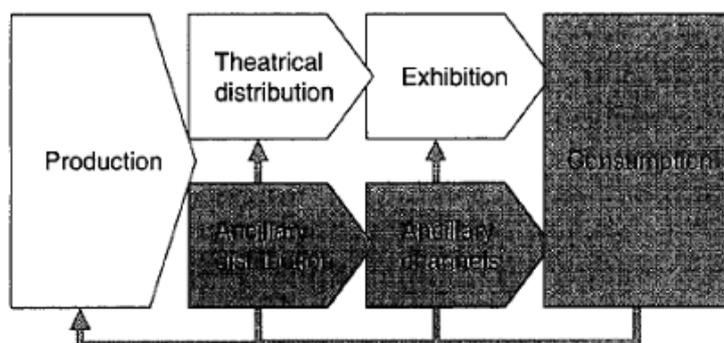
“SCM (supply chain management) and CRM (customer relationship management) are starting to merge, as end-to-end applications involving customers, channels, and suppliers link orders to, for example, manufacturing, procurement, and service delivery. Soon to be integrated is product development, which has been largely separate.”  
(Porter 2001, p.74.)

Perhaps reflecting that integration, academics in the media sector have dispensed with the distinction between the value chain and the value system, and refer to them both as the value

chain (encompassing all stages of value addition, whether within one company or several. I have followed this convention). This is confirmed by one of the more influential recent books on media strategy, written by Lucy Küng:

“The value chain has been a tool of preference for analysing convergence in the media industry for practitioners, consultants and academics (see for example Tapscott, 1996; Yoffie, 1997; Downes and Mui, 1998). However in the majority of examples it is not used in the “pure form” described above – where individual firm activities are disaggregated and analysed – but rather at industry level as a shorthand means of depicting graphically the various stages by which media products are created and delivered to the end consumer.” (Küng, 2008, p. 20)

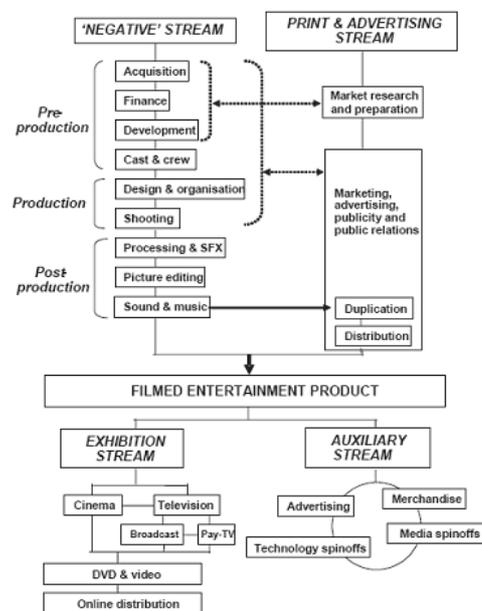
The film value chain models described to date are predominantly concerned with American studio films rather than independent films, and avoid discussion of the position of development within the chain. For example, illustrated below is the value chain posited by Eliashberg *et al.* (2006), which follows the studio model by putting development, financing, and production all into one segment called production, and dispensing with international sales altogether.



Above: **Diagram 6: The Film Value Chain for Motion Pictures (Eliashberg *et al.*, 2006, p.638)**

In the independent sector, the production segment alone involves a large number of intermediary companies and freelancers, all adding financial and artistic value at different stages, from development financiers to international collection agencies. Furthermore some of those players are taking fees or commissions off the revenue, so failure to illustrate them does not reflect the complexity of recoupment. There is also a question mark over why Eliashberg *et al.* have chosen to show consumption feeding back into ancillary markets which help feed exhibition (at least in the case of independent films ancillary rights or revenue would be unlikely to financially support exhibition or theatrical distribution). The Eliashberg *et al.* paper also dedicates a lot of time to blockbuster marketing, “star power”, sequels, franchises, product placement finance, and spin off merchandising; which are not key issues for the majority of independent films.

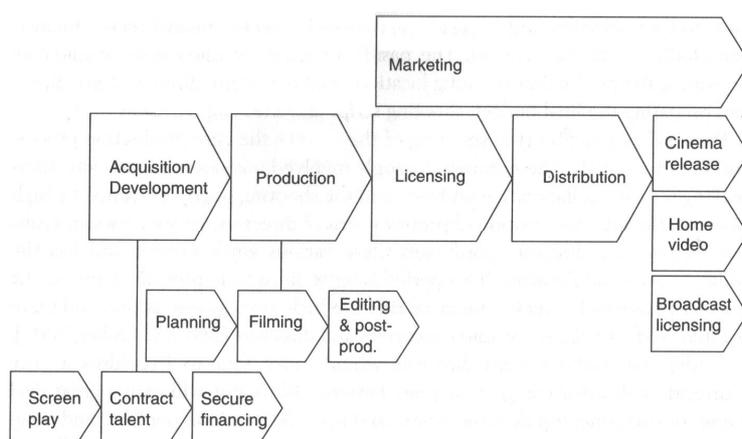
However Vickery and Hawkins (2008) embrace the complexity of the film value chain, “both in terms of the quantity and diversity of its various segments and in terms of the nature or character of many of these segments.” They accordingly propose a more complicated Value Chain diagram (based on a TV value chain created by Zerdick et al. (2000)), which does break the production process down further.



Above: Diagram 7: Film Value Chain (Vickery and Hawkins, 2008).

However again this diagram is dominated by the studio model. It shows market research taking place at the development and finance stage, and shows prints and advertising spend being incurred at the same time as production. This is more applicable to studios (with in-house marketing departments and subsidiary distribution companies) than independent companies. Furthermore their textual emphasis on film as a “core intermediate product” to be supplemented by merchandising and other secondary products is again more representative of Hollywood blockbusters.

Lucy Küng (2008, pp. 70-73) comes closer to the independent model (see the illustration below), especially by breaking down development and production; but it still oversimplifies the process and the number and complexity of the players, especially by avoiding the financing stage in diagram 8 below. However her added distinction between licensing (sales) and actual distribution is a valuable one.



**Above: Diagram 8: Value Chain – The Film Industry (Küng et al. 2008, pg 143; and Küng 2008, pg 71).**

Finally, Aris and Bughin (2006) explore the value chain in other media sectors, however did not explore or define the value chain as it applied to film. Whilst mentioning the wider media sector, it is worth noting that the advent of new business models have also increased the complexity of the value chain, giving rise to concepts like the fragmentation or “unbundling” of the chain (Evans and Wurster 2000). This is a result of a media product or company having multiple suppliers, subsidiary or supportive products, and delivery methods (boosted

by convergence, the internet, new mobile media and multi channel television). However this “unbundling” is less applicable to the film value chain, because film still relies on a centrally created single product, albeit distributed in a variety of ways (apart from the separate issue of spin-off merchandising products). It is also worth noting that none of the above film value chain models pay attention to the role of libraries in returning value to the producer and financier, and the second cycle of exploitation that can result from them (especially considering the potential of *Long Tail Theory*, as posited by *Wired*’s Chris Anderson in 2006).

Given these issues regarding existing film value chain models, there was a clear need for a new model of the independent film value chain, which set out to illustrate the complexity of the independent film sector in more detail; especially by adding individual players within the segments. Importantly for this research, it also needed to incorporate development as a separate distinct section of activity, rather than following the studio chain model of bundling it with production. This would enable us to understand the various players in development and their interaction with the wider chain. Chapter Two of *The Screenplay Business* provided such a model and explained its application. It is shown on the next page.

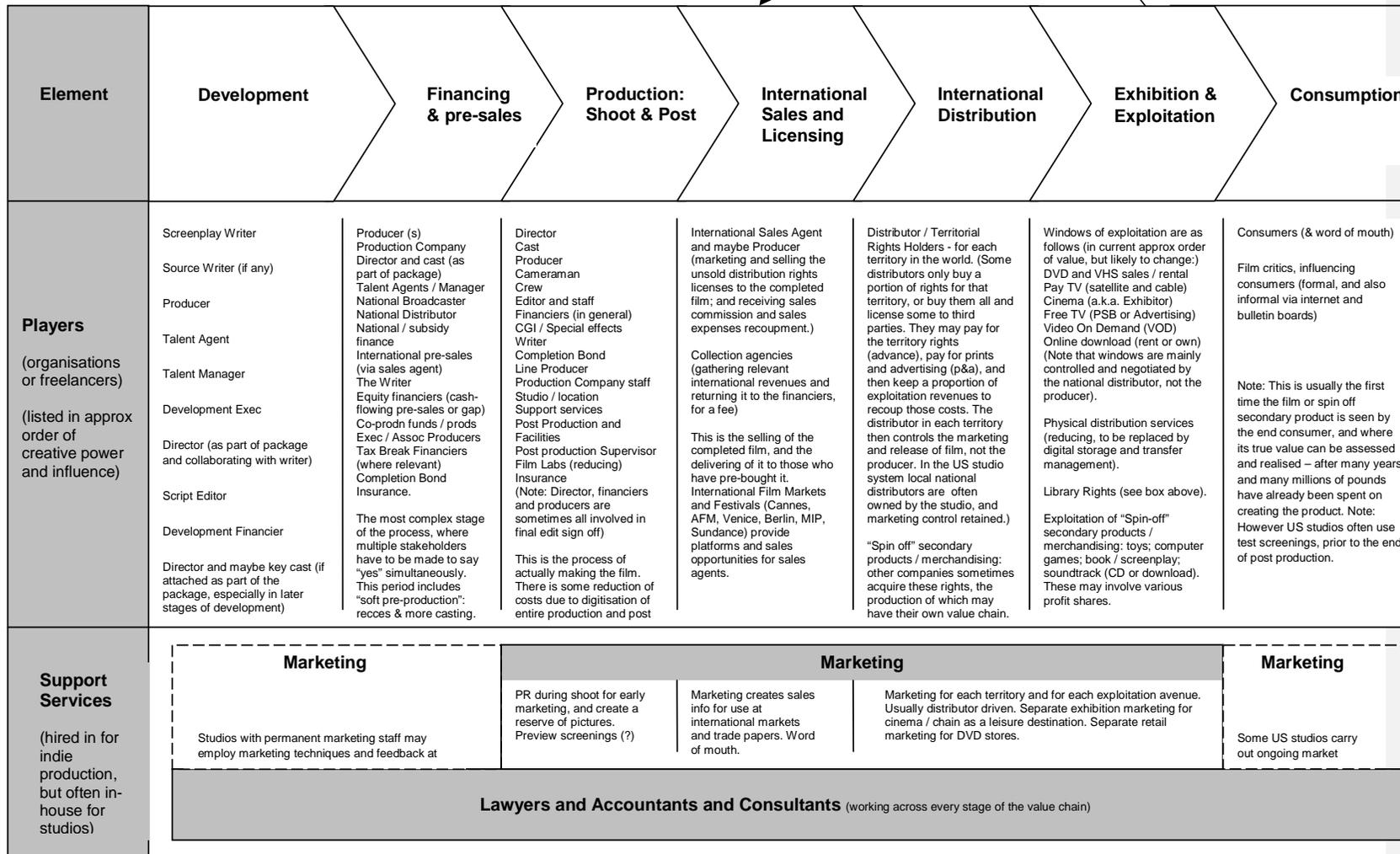
**Next page: Diagram 9: The Independent Film Project Value Chain (Bloore 2009, 2012).**

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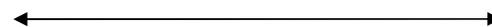
# The Independent Film Project Value Chain

By activity. Conventional European or US independent non-studio film, with multiple financiers and distributors. © Peter Bloore 2009/ revised 2012.

**Library ("long tail")**  
 Distributor: reissues during first license  
 Producer: sells new license after reversion  
 Producer: remake / sequel (back to start)



Potentially higher risk investment, long period to return



Potentially lower risk investment, closer to consumer

Since publication, various papers refer to my independent film value chain model, including the chapter “Internet-enabled dissemination: managing uncertainty in the Film Value Chain” by Michael Franklin in the book *Digital Disruption: Cinema Moves On-line* (Jordanova and Cunningham, 2012). Franklin cites my work and describes it as “one of the most useful analytical tools to address and frame ... the interrelations between new technology, new business models and current business interests.” (ibid., p.102). However he overstretches its application when he suggests it assists “the management of uncertainty” and “negative and positive attributes of uncertainty – what traditionally might be labelled risk and reward – over the life cycle of a film.” I would argue that the value chain can identify areas of risk by identifying the multiplicity of collaborators and fee earners, but cannot assist in managing it in any detail, only by identifying that the earlier in the process the investor is involved the longer the period to potential recoupment.

Another recent paper by John Crissey of Royal Holloway London includes my work as part of a review of four leading film value chain theorists: “each of these works is groundbreaking, exceeds the original aim of its authors and significantly advances commercial motion-picture scholarship” (Crissey, 2010, p.9). Crissey identifies that my film value chain model is the first to expand it from the studio system to include the independent sector, and goes on to say:

“Unique among the studies already discussed, Bloore’s work attempts to explore customer value by stimulating a new debate on the traditional description of a movie end-customer through the inclusion of critics as well as theatregoers and DVD / download consumers. In taking this approach, Bloore challenges long held perceptions of customer identity and inadvertently sets them within the context of today’s Web 2.0 environment where film bloggers, social networking and other movie opinion sites can either make or break a film.” (Crissey, 2010, page 9)

I argue my inclusion of reviews by bloggers and social networking sites is not inadvertent, but intentional and explicit. His review of the four recent value chain theories is reasonable, and he is right to state that they do not attempt to closely identify the competitive advantage of one company’s value chain over another. Instead of the value chain, Crissey argues in favour of a supply chain model (which does not need to assess customer value and the margin

between production cost and sale price), especially for assessing the low budget sector. However all the film value chain theorists have avoided the customer value and profit margin element of the original Porter model; in part because Porter himself does not place much emphasis on it (Porter 1985, p.38); in part because the price charged for the product is not in the hands of the production company (the cinema ticket price is set by the exhibitor, is comparable across all films in the cinema, and does not vary according to budget size); in part because added customer value is difficult to assess in film and other experiential products; and in part because film is consumed in multiple formats (cinema, DVD, TV, digital download, etc.) all with different price points, unlike most consumer products. The film value chain / system is being used more in the terms of describing the script-to-exploitation process and looking at value-added by different participants during the process, rather than competitive value to the final consumer.

Jim Barratt (previously head of research at the UK Film Council) also favourably reviews the independent value chain model on his influential Bigger Picture Research blog, saying:

“Bloore’s model has a number of unique characteristics. For one thing, he includes a list of ‘players’ to show the range of private and public organisations and freelance individuals involved’ at each stage. This enables the model to be read in terms of creative value and influences, as well as financial value and investment. It’s also a great primer for anyone unfamiliar with the roles and responsibilities of those involved at each stage.”

Interest in film value chain models is on-going, including James Lyon’s “The American Independent Producer and the Film Value Chain” in Spicer *et al.*’s forthcoming anthology *Beyond the Bottom-Line: The Producer in Film and Television Studies* (2014). This is incidentally also another indication of the rise of academic interest in the work of the producer.

This section has now shown the importance of the value chain in current film business studies, the need for a revised independent version, including development, and initial indications of its impact and contribution to the debate.

## Section 3: Methodology

### 3.1: The research approach

The aim was to create a snapshot of the practice, behaviour and team relationships of key players in the development process in the UK independent film sector between 2010 and 2012. This probably reflected the learnt and expected behaviour that was normal during the previous five years or so (commensurate with the second half of the operation of the UK Film Council (2000-2011)). The main focus was on practitioners developing primarily for the UK market, however a small number were interviewed who worked also within the Hollywood industry, especially on Anglo-Hollywood projects. It was not the aim of this study to look at the history of the film screenplay business, and changing methods and perceptions of work across different historical periods and regions.

First I undertook a literature review, which covered the cross-disciplinary fields of film business, screenplay development, creativity, psychology, managing creative people, organisational culture, and team theory. This was to facilitate the research question about how the creative team can work effectively together. Secondly I reviewed the literature around film studies and media studies, to look respectively at issues of authorship and creativity versus commerce.

The overall aim of the next two and a half years of formal research was to address the research questions around the experiences of development practitioners, and identify the shifts of power and influence between those practitioners during the development and production process. My methodological approach to this was *synthetic*, using data from three sources. These were semi-structured interviews with development practitioners and industry experts, including trade journalists and business consultants; personal unstructured observation of workplaces and development meetings in the workplace; and desk research of the film trade press and economic industrial analysis, including five unpublished keynote speeches. Practitioner interviews as a research method have been on the rise in film and TV studies (Cornea, 2008, p.117), coupled with academic discussion of their ethical and methodological usefulness (Mills, 2008; Mayer, 2008).

The interview questions and analysis were informed by my personal experience as a practitioner in the film development process over twenty-two years. This was a *hermeneutic approach*, which knowingly utilised my experience of working in and observing the industry, to help identify regularities and patterns in the research material; and using my understanding of the interviewees world of social rules, practices, intuitive game-playing and taken-for-granted patterns of behaviour to help me understand the social world in which they operate. The advantages and disadvantages of this hermeneutic approach will be covered in the next section.

This synthetic and hermeneutic approach does have clear academic precedents. It is similar to that used by John Caldwell for his book *Production Culture* (2008), although as well as interviews and observation and economic / industrial analysis, Caldwell also used textual analysis of trade press and worker artefacts. Caldwell accepts Geertz and Ricouer's (1974) approaches to hermeneutic self-reflexivity (Caldwell, 2008, p.5). My approach is also similar to the synthetic approach used by Georgina Born in her paper "Reflexivity and Ambivalence" (2002) and her book *Uncertain Vision* (2004) on management and culture at the BBC. A synthetic approach was also used by Davis and Scase (2000) in their influential work on managing creativity in creative organisations (with the help of ESRC funding they had a sample across a larger number of creative fields). Hesmondhalgh and Baker's research into media workers (2011) used a synthetic approach that mixed interviews and observation across a number of cultural industries, with worker's reports on their subjective experience of the quality of their working lives; and set this information against a background of research into the economic, political, organisational and cultural context of their work. They interpreted that information influenced by the perspective of Marxist thought (especially inequality of labour, exploitation and alienation), post-structuralism, liberal political thought (especially issues of freedom and autonomy), and social and political theory (especially concerning "good and bad work"); following Russell Keat's emphasis on justice and good or bad work (Keat 2000 and 2009), and his recent work on ethical concepts in the understanding and critical evaluation of cultural production (Keat 2012).

Whilst using a similar methodological approach to data gathering as the above authors, my analytical approach was looking for patterns of behaviour and practice, especially in the management of creativity, and extrapolating typologies of practice. As previously mentioned in section 2 above, my work was not critiquing the capitalist framework and context of that

workplace. I will now look in more detail at the advantages and complexities of the hermeneutic technique.

### **3.2: The value of the hermeneutics approach for this research project:**

Qualitative research is a widely used technique in management studies, in that it allows a combination of scholarship and practice, analysis of real situations (rather than laboratory tests), and an approach that embraces the complex reality of modern business. There are a variety of accepted ways of collecting and interpreting qualitative research interviews and conversations, and even multiple ways with which the same data can be interpreted (Gill and Johnson 2002, Denzin and Lincoln 2005, Perakyla 2005). Rather than using formal coding (thematic coding or quantitative content analysis) or linguistic approaches (such as semiotics, conversation analysis or discourse analysis), I instead chose to analyse this research from a qualitative hermeneutic perspective (post-Gadamer 1975), where my interpretation of the transcriptions of interviews sought to use my own experience to identify an underlying coherence, deciphering meaning that is consistent across all or many interviews.

Modern hermeneutics suggests that as individual qualitative researchers we *cannot* wholly escape our own preconceptions and context, especially when we have been working as part of the industrial context and workplace culture that is under research, so we are better putting it to use. As Bourdieu puts it:

“Objectivism erroneously adopts a mechanistic view of human conduct, ignoring the extent to which social life is a practical achievement by skilful actors” (Bourdieu, 1977 pp. 22-23)

We have to be aware of the role of our own preconceptions, which mitigate against purely objective analysis, and of the self-reflexivity of those we are studying. Man is unable to separate himself from the experience of being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1927), and indeed he is a self-interpreting animal trying to make sense of the world he is in and his situation in it (Taylor 1985, Smith 2004). Therefore we are inextricably part of the world that we are studying. As Gadamer (1975) argues, our consciousness is unavoidably affected by our own particular history and culture, so whenever we as individuals try to analyse knowledge (or in this case the qualitative research data of these interviews and their relationship to perceived

industrial norms) we are inevitably finding ways that the research data articulates with our own background and experience. Since our entire intellectual consciousness and judgment is embedded in our preconceptions and pre-understandings, Gadamer and his followers argue that there is no human understanding or sense of meaning that can be free of all prejudice, tradition, and context. In positivist social science approaches prejudice and preconception are seen as bias and problematic; however hermeneutic followers actually employ that bias, suggesting that understanding involves interpretation and therefore use of preconception, since nothing exists in an intellectual vacuum and there is no knowledge without foreknowledge (Diesing, 1991).

Therefore the emphasis on interpretation (or *interpretivism*) that hermeneutics provides seemed best suited to this work and material, and made use of my personal background and understanding of the industry. In addition hermeneutics is relevant to this subject because it is “an approach that lends itself to in-depth analyses of social and organisational situations in management and business” and has been successfully used for meaning analysis of qualitative research in various business disciplines (Myers 2009, p. 182).

The problem of interpretation in production studies is highlighted by Denise Mann (2009) when she points out the difficulty of getting production employees to talk candidly, without senior approval; the difference between real interviews and the pre-written quotations that appear in press packs; and the propensity of media practitioners to “pitch” and gloss their work:

“It becomes incumbent on the media scholar to intuit from the industry insider’s behaviour and comments whether or not he/she is succumbing to any of these self-imposed, disciplinary activities—i.e., if he/she is self-censoring certain information that may provide the scholar with meaningful insights into how the industry actually works.” (Mann, 2009, pp.104-5)

It is exactly this intuitive process that suits a hermeneutic approach, where the researcher’s background experience enables him or her to read between the lines, and understand what is really meant, or else what is avoiding being said. Caldwell expands this further in his 2009 paper “Both Sides of the Fence: Blurred Distinctions in Scholarship and Production” by interviewing three scholar-practitioners in film and TV studies, and arguing that intimate knowledge of the production sector enables them to gain privileged access and push “beyond

the sometime rudimentary questions that scholars with little direct knowledge of film/television raise” (Caldwell, 2009, p.216).

Hermeneutic insight is very helpful in a research field like the film industry, which places a high value on networks of personal relationships and corporate relationships (as evidenced by the independent multi-player film value chain); where many deals and relationships are started verbally rather than in writing (until later formal contractual negotiations); and where the whole creative concept of the film is a multi-owned vision which is only partially and sometimes inaccurately represented by the limitations of written text of the film screenplay (Macdonald 2003, 2011).

The *hermeneutic cycle* concept implies that there is no entirely neutral external standpoint from which to objectively measure the meanings of signs, symbols, actions, or texts; but that the cycle of interpretation takes the researcher from the industrial and social context of script development and the research questions (the *whole*) to the detail of the interviews with individuals (viewed in the context of the interviewer’s knowledge); then back to reflect on the insight the interviews provide into the whole. This process is repeated with every interview and builds up into a mosaic of interpretations, which may help reveal deeper truths or understandings about the complexity of the whole, which were not apparent to interviewer or interviewee at the start of the process. The hermeneutic cycle concept suggests that before we start we have an expectation of meaning from the context of past experience, but that research can add to that context and change our preconception to a deeper understanding, thus changing the context for the future.

These hermeneutic principles impacted on both the data *gathering* (the choice of what questions to put and how to respond to answers) and the data *analysis*, enabling questions to be changed according to previous answers. For example, more questions were asked about the arrival of the director, and the role of the writer on set, when it became apparent during research that these were key recurring issues.

Hermeneutics is particularly useful when there are contradictory views being expressed, in that the researcher can bring his own understanding and experience to bear on the material, as Myers explains:

“First, it is more interesting to use hermeneutics where there are disagreements or contradictory interpretations of the same phenomenon or event. This gives the

researcher something to interpret and explain. Second, prejudice, as used in the hermeneutic sense, is something to build upon rather than be avoided. My previous background and experience, along with my current research interests, were the starting point for this particular research project. In a hermeneutic study there is no need to appeal to false objectivity.” (Myers, 2009, p.193)

For example, in my case it became apparent from the interviews that producers embraced the work of development executives and thought that they were liked by writers; whereas the interviews with writers revealed frustrations that development executives got in the way of the relationship with the producer. Both views made sense to the people expressing them, when viewed from their own perspective, so my experience as both a screenwriter and a development executive / consultant in the industry enabled me to see these statements in the context and needs of the people making them.

So was there methodologically an issue around my simultaneous role of media practitioner and also observer? In keeping with hermeneutic research principles, it is not unusual in media industry studies to be a “scholar-practitioner”, as shown for example by the work of the three scholar-practitioners interviewed by John Caldwell: Paul Malcolm, Erin Hill, and Felicia Henderson (Caldwell 2009). This practitioner approach is also not unusual in film industry studies, for example the following film business writers all have practitioner backgrounds: Terry Illott worked as a film consultant; Angus Finney has been a journalist and a film financier (Managing Director of Renaissance Films); Michael Kuhn was head of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment and MD of Qwerty Films; Steven Bach was senior Vice President at United Artists; John Howkins is a business consultant (for clients including Time Warner) and executive chairman of Tornado Productions; and Adam Davies is a media lawyer who has also run the film financing consultancy Investrum.

It was important to consider the nature of self-reflexivity, both my own and that of the interviewees. This reflects recent debates in ethnography and the social sciences about the nature of reflexivity, both the researcher’s relationship to the object of study (partly in terms of post-Foucaultian concepts of power and knowledge production and control); and the interviewee’s consciousness of themselves (and their ability to manufacture views of themselves to reflect their self-image or the image they feel they should project to wider society, the immediate peer group, and the researcher); potentially resulting in a circular relationship of cause and effect between the observer and the object of observation.

Reflexivity is a complex and changing concept, which has occupied many sociologists and hermeneutic thinkers, and obsessed philosopher Pierre Bourdieu for most of his life (Deer 2008). Specifically in terms of media studies, Caldwell states that media practitioners are inherently self-reflexive and aware of their reputation in the social peer network:

“Because insider knowledge is always managed; because spin and narrative define and couch any industrial discourse; and because researcher-practitioner contacts are always marked by symbiotic tensions over authenticity and advantage, media studies must avoid limiting research to a clean menu of disconnected methods: textual analysis, reporting, interviewing, economic analysis, or ethnography.” (Caldwell, 2008, p.3)

This makes a good argument both for the synthetic approach that he and I adopted (to gain a multitude of viewpoints of the subject), and the importance of the hermeneutic approach to sift and interpret what people are saying.

### **3.3: The interviews: text and interpretation:**

A mixture of formal and informal interviews were used in the research. All twenty-seven formal interviews were recorded and took place without being overheard by third parties, either in an office or in a public social space with some degree of privacy from being overheard (the discrete corner of a café or a London member’s club). Informal interviews were not recorded, took place in a social setting, are not quoted and only formed general background to the research.

They were classic qualitative semi-structured interviews, using some pre-formulated questions, but without strict adherence to them (Myers 2009, p.124), so that new questions could be asked during the conversation and particular issues could be pursued, especially if previous answers had made some questions redundant; or if the interviewer identified value-laden responses that needed further interrogation or clarification. However there are some well-known limitations resulting from using formal and informal interviews as a method, as identified in the creative industries field by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (pp.15-17), including the drawbacks of potentially leading questions, and the problem of unconscious motivation in interviewer and interviewee. Caldwell and others have found access and interpretation problems between interviewing above-the-line and below-the-line production staff (Caldwell

2009, Mayer 2009), however this was not an issue in this research, since the interviewees were all operating in an above-the-line capacity.

The release forms (which were read and signed before interview) stated my intent to abide by the University's research ethics principles. The interviews were fully transcribed, and provided specific quotations and case studies, and also informed my overall thinking. Where they were quoted, I decided to let interviewees have the opportunity to read the selected text, to correct errors of fact, and have the option to anonymise themselves for certain quotes (Bloore 2012, p. xvii). The concept of informed consent does not require me to show interviewees the text or assume anonymity, but I felt it encouraged interviewees to commit to interview and be open with their information; encouraged the removal of factual inaccuracy; permitted the inclusion of material that interviewees may not wish to have personally attributed; and ensured that I did not misrepresent their views. I felt I had an ethical responsibility to the interviewees that was, if anything, even greater during the sifting, editing and presenting process, than it was during the interview itself; and that in terms of power and representation this restructured my relationship with them (this echoes the views of Mills (2008), who has carried out many TV practitioner interviews).

As well as addressing some practical and ethical concerns, I was utilising the hermeneutic principle of *autonomization*, where the verbal text becomes written formal text and takes on an autonomous, permanent, and finite representation of the interviewee's viewpoint (originally expressed in a fleeting spontaneous moment). The meaning also changes because of the distance of time and space (environment) between the making of the statement, and the reading of the statement in text form, either by the interviewee or by the eventual reader (known in hermeneutic theory as *distancion*). It has even been argued that for the reader it is impossible to fully get into the mind of the person making the statement, due to the twin de-contextualising effects of autonomization and distancion, where the text takes on a life of its own (Ricoeur, 1991, p.87); and that the text is ultimately appropriated and owned by the final individual reader, engaged in their own attempt to interpret and find meaning in the text (which reflects the subjectivist *post-modernist* position that there is no objective true final meaning of a text, whatever the intent of the interviewee or the researcher/author).

A further complication (if one were needed) is that we are inevitably unable to escape the limitations of our linguistic background and its influence on our thought processes. As a

researcher I was attempting to identify regularities in interview research material that was largely language-based; and in my representation and *re*-presentation of it in the book I was selecting excerpts and using my own choice of words to paraphrase language-based opinions and then to express my intellectual conclusions. The interviews were a discourse between myself and the interviewees, with a shared contextual awareness of industry culture, however that discourse was then interpreted, edited and re-presented in language, which is in itself complex and capable of multiple meanings and multiple interpretations.

### **3.4: Limitations and areas for future research:**

The limitations of my methodology are apparent. The interpretation of the results is solely my own, rather than a team of researchers who could potentially identify the unwanted effects of bias more effectively. Whilst hermeneutics embraces pre-understanding and pre-conception as a useful research tool, there are still problems of personal bias overlooking or misinterpreting useful findings. Secondly this is not a longitudinal study, following a series of projects over time, but a snapshot based on the interviewees in a single period, with all the limitations that presents. However the questions were devised specifically to try to draw out the interviewee's experience over several projects, rather than limiting their answers to an individual film or case study. Finally, the research sample focused mainly on interviews with producers, writers and development executives, but not as many directors (apart from three writer-directors, and informal interviews with two directors). This was partly due to limitations of time, access, and funding; and partly because the book commissioned by Routledge was primarily aimed at writers and producers working in development, and the research therefore needed to reflect the experiences and concerns of those practitioners. Ideally a further study should be carried out to interview more directors and explore their perception of their relationships with other development practitioners during development and production.

Furthermore the issue of how the executives and producers handled the arrival of the director was discovered from the interview accounts; but was not observed (which would have given more insight into whether practitioners really did pay as much attention to the writers as they said they would). The reason for this was that the original research question was about identifying the "shifts in power and influence between writer, producer and director during individual projects," and the importance of the arrival of a director (as an example of this

shift) only emerged during the research process, so was not identified in advance and was therefore not specifically covered in the methodology.

The research does not claim to be based on a wholly representative sample, and was partly dependant on existing contacts, referrals and recommendations, and influenced by the self-selection of those who agreed to be interviewed (most agreed, but a few did not, citing work pressures).

Overall the complexity of the development process could be studied more accurately by a future longitudinal study, across a variety of budget sizes and genres, including observation of those development meetings and analysis of correspondence / emails, to cross reference with interview accounts. This may be a good subject for a larger research grant application to the AHRC.

To conclude, the synthetic approach enabled me to examine issues from multiple viewpoints (interviews, observation of workplaces, desk research), and the hermeneutic approach enabled me to employ my own past experience of the industry as part of the methodology, to interpret and resolve apparent contradictions; to allow intuitive and logical construction of typologies and theorising (conventionalised sense-making); to facilitate the analysis and re-presentation of multiple texts; and permit the acceptance of complexity and ambiguity in the interviewee's responses. This seemed to be to be a valuable approach for the study of a complex multi-player global industrial creative process like film business and screenplay development.

## Section 4: Book Outline

The book is divided into two parts. Chapters one to seven and chapter twelve are a contribution to conceptual and theoretical frameworks, including debates about the nature and definition of screenplay development, its relationship with film financing, and the development team dynamic of the creative triangle. This contribution includes new interpretations of the independent film value chain and film categorisation for film finance analysis, a new typology of film power and influence, and a classification of the seven levels of creativity in creative industry products.

Chapters eight to thirteen are a cross-disciplinary application of current business theories around managing creative people, organisational culture, and team management. This is a contribution to debates about managing creativity, because those theories had not been specifically applied before to film development.

I will now look at each of the chapters of the book in turn. The introduction discusses film and the tradition of storytelling, including the latest neuroscience discoveries about mirror-neurons – possibly an explanation for how we respond to film stories. Chapter One starts by providing and justifying a practical new definition of the screenplay development process. This sets it in the context of industrial collaboration, adaptation, revision, and collaborative teamwork; and stresses the goal of raising relevant production finance for the completed film. This makes script development different to some other areas of creative work; firstly because other creative disciplines do not contain the goal of raising further funding to realise the project; and secondly because in screenplay writing the creative work is not the completed work, but a blueprint for a film, which will then be subject to further interpretation by the director and other collaborators. Chapter One continues with a brief survey of the history and context of development today, and the role of the creative producer.

Chapter Two looks at value chain theories, the difference between the studio and independent system, and proposes a new independent film value chain model, which specifically includes development. The chapter argues that this theoretical tool is a key contribution to our

understanding of the independent film business (as opposed to the studio model), and in the current climate of technological change and economic uncertainty it provides an insight into potential future business models (a theme picked up in Chapter Fourteen, Section 2: anticipating the future.)

Chapter Three looks at different categories of film. This chapter proposes a new typology of *The three types of British film and film funding* (specialist, conceptual, and Anglo-Hollywood), which departs from conventional genre classifications (which concentrate on subject matter and style) by concentrating on business elements, most particularly budget size, cinematic aspiration (art-house festivals and awards, or mainstream box office appeal), and target audience. It then analyses those typologies against their likely production and development funding sources and processes. Taken together, chapter two's value chain model and this chapter's three types of film typology are a contribution to debate about film finance, and the categorisation of film within film industry studies.

Chapter Four uses the original research interviews to propose the *development creative triangle* concept of producer, writer and director, and looks at the different typical character traits of these roles, including applying Belbin team roles (Belbin, 1981); various leadership theories (for example, Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Greenberg and Barn, 2003); and entrepreneurship research (Quinn, 1985; Peters, 2009; Burns, 2011). It then discusses the arrival of the director in the development process. Chapter five uses a cross disciplinary approach to look at the complex reality of development, and how the unstable creative triangle will come under pressure; both as power and influence shifts within the team during development and production, and as power and influence is exerted from the wider industrial financing network. To explain and analyse these shifts of power the chapter applies the management studies theories about power of French & Raven (1968) and Handy (1985); and then uses those findings to create two new diagrams: firstly a simplified typology of newcomers to the development team and creative triangle, represented as confrontational elements (figure 5.1 in the book); and secondly a *Typology of changing power and approximate creative influence*. This is a key contribution, because it aims to provide graphical representation of these vital shifts in power. It is representative rather than empirical, but after drafting it was shown to all interviewees and received positive feedback, including from Sam Lavender, head of development at Film4. The chapter concludes by applying cross-disciplinary ideas of commitment, contingency and ambivalence to an

executive's responses to a proposed film project via the *Project Commitment Matrix: analysing stakeholder support or opposition to a project greenlight*.

Chapter Six then introduces the different roles of the development executive and the script editor, which are traditionally under-considered in film industry studies, and suggests how they fit into the typology of changing power and influence during development. Taken together these three chapters (four, five and six) are a contribution to thinking about auteurship and the creative role of collaborators other than the director (the producer, writer, development executive and script editor).

Chapter Seven asks what *is* creativity; how are creative ideas are received in terms of products and process (reinterpreting and adapting the reception model of Abrams (1953) and Pope (2002)); and looks at existing thinking about levels of creativity (Kirton, 1987; Csíkszentmihályi, 1996; Ekvall, 1997; Boden, 2004; Bilton, 2006; Sternberg, 2006). It then proposes a new model of the *Seven levels of creativity and originality in creative industry products*, which is also applicable to TV programming, computer gaming and magazine publishing. This chapter is a contribution to our understanding of creativity in the creative industries as well as film business.

Chapter Eight introduces relevant cross-disciplinary theories about managing creative people and how to manage and motivate them (including Maslow, 1954; Adair, 1990; Young, 1960; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Amabile, 1996; Nickerson, 1999; Goffee and Jones, 2007). Chapter Nine looks at the role of creative leadership in film development and innovation (including the work of Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 1958; Aris and Bughin, 2006; Amabile, 2008; and Kirton, 1976). Chapter Ten applies these ideas to the all-important script meeting (which is where development practitioners most often interact, and sometimes fall out); as well as incorporating original interviews research and ideas from another academic field: the psychology of *motivational interviewing* (Rollnick and Miller, 2002; Rollnick *et al.*, 2006). Chapter Eleven then applies theories of leadership, organisational culture and teams to the development process (Schein, 1985; Adair, 1990; Tuckman, 1965); and then uses the theories to propose techniques for overcoming weak script development teams. It explores why a strong culture can be valuable for establishing and building a production company, and how the screenplay commissioning and production process is made more complex by the interaction between the organisational cultures of involved parties and the wider context of

national and international culture. Taken together chapters eight to eleven are a contribution to our understanding of managing creative people and script development - bringing together theories and concepts that have not been introduced to script development before.

Chapter Twelve looks at the relationship between British independent film-makers and the Hollywood studios, and then proposes a typology of five types of film distributed in America, in terms of target audience, cinematic aspiration and film style. This is building on the work of Schatz (2009) but correcting the fact that his categorisation failed to identify a clear slot for studio mainstream films that are not blockbusters, or to pay enough attention to the role of awards and festivals as drivers for the studio indie-divisions and independents, especially the importance to the studios of being *seen* to create art (Epstein 2006, 2010). Instead of Schatz's three tier system I suggest a five part distinction between Hollywood blockbuster; mainstream Hollywood; specialist Hollywood; specialist indie; and in distribution terms a further category for foreign acquisitions which play in specialist independent cinemas.

Chapter Thirteen uses the original interviews to synthesise the practical advice of screenwriters and executives on how to build a career as a screenwriter, and the role of negotiation, mediation and discussion in script meetings. Chapter Fourteen looks into the future, and again using the original interviews makes proposals for improving screenplay development. It also looks at current changes in the macro context of film business, especially around digital democratization of content, convergence and fragmentation of the value chain. It is hoped that this final chapter may influence debates around film policy and subsidy, including recommendations for different ways of encouraging and supporting development.

## **Appendix 1: a list of the publications on which the assessment for the degree is to be based**

Bloore, Peter (2012) *The Screenplay Business: Managing creativity and script development in the film industry*, Routledge, Oxford.

## **Appendix 2: Personal industry experience**

Peter Bloore (BA Hons., MVA distinct.) is Senior Lecturer in Creativity at UEA. He teaches creativity, film business, and script development to students on the MA in Film, Television and Creative Practice and other humanities students, including scriptwriters on the MA in Creative Writing. He also teaches film business and development to undergraduate students.

He was a UEA Visiting Fellow in Creativity and Media at the Centre for Creative and Performing Arts from September 2008. From 2009, Peter has been a Visiting Lecturer at the European Television and Media Academy (ETMA) in Strasbourg, teaching leadership and managing creative people on the Academy's MA/PG Dip in Media Management. He occasionally teaches some MA level credit-bearing short courses at Bournemouth University's Media School.

From 2006 to August 2009 Peter was a Senior Lecturer at Bournemouth University's Media School and a key part of the Media Management team in the HEFCE-endorsed "Centre for Excellence in Media Practice" (CEMP). From 2007 to March 2009 he was the Course Director on the UK's first Media MBA, delivered by Bournemouth University at Regent's College in London. He supervised relevant dissertations whilst developing and teaching several modules, including Leading and Managing Media Organisations, Film Business and Managing Creativity.

Prior to that he was the Associate Director of the Film Business Academy at Cass Business School, City University. His work for Cass (first as a consultant and then as Associate Director of the Film Business Academy) spanned three years in total and included academic research, curriculum advice, liaison with the film industry, commissioning teaching case studies, overseeing the origination of marketing materials, assessing MBA and MSc student applications, and advising on awarding scholarships. The Film Business Academy was funded by the UK Film Council and Skillset.

### **Writer and director**

Peter is a produced film screenwriter, and wrote the romantic comedy *The Truth About Love*, starring Jennifer Love Hewitt, Dougray Scott and Jimi Mistry. It was shot on a £4 million budget, distributed to cinemas in 2007 and sold by Lakeshore Entertainment to 22 international territories. It was directed by John Hay and produced with funding from the UK Film Council's New Cinema Fund and other sources.

Peter also wrote the screenplay for *The Accident*, which was adapted from a novel by Gilbert Adair and was developed by producer Rebecca O'Brien at Sixteen Films. He developed *The Scandal* for Scottish Screen, and his other developed screenplays include *Spring Heeled Jack* and *Nobody's Girl*. He is now working on his first novel and co-writing a coming-of-age screenplay and transmedia project.

In the eighties and nineties he worked as a writer and director for BBC Television and directed three acclaimed short films: *The Things We Do For Love* (35mm, distributed nationally by Warner Brothers), *The Black Crow* (Super 16mm, shortlisted for BAFTA), and *Faustus Reborn* (16mm).

### **Media Business Consultant**

Over the last twelve years Peter has worked as a film and media business consultant for organisations including the National Film and TV School, Media Xchange, Prescience Film Finance and a range of production companies including Rebecca O'Brien and Ken Loach's company Sixteen Films, Stephen Woolley and Elizabeth Karlsen's Number 9 Films, Sally Hibbin's Parallax Productions and Gail Egan and Simon Channing Williams' Potboiler Films / Thin Man Films.

For much of 2008 he worked with Katrina Wood of the Media Xchange, a leading global media consulting firm with offices in London and Los Angeles. Media Xchange's many clients include top-tier media companies in Europe and the United States including commercial and public television broadcasters, major international production companies, government agencies, trade associations and many leading freelance professionals. His work included strategic planning work for Media Xchange's future business directions.

Going further back, Peter's film business consultancy work for Michael Kuhn and Nik Powell at the National Film and Television School in 2003-2006 included drafting and coordinating successful applications for funding, including two new diplomas in Digital Post Production and Special Effects, and Screen Academy status.

Peter drafted and consulted on the Number 9 Films Development Slate application to the UK Film Council. It brought together Stephen Woolley (*Crying Game*, *Interview with a Vampire*), Elizabeth Karlsen (*Little Voice*), Asif Kapadia (*The Warrior*), Film Four, Tartan Films, The Irish Film Board, New York's Killer Films and Intandem Films. Also on film development he raised the funding for the Ken Loach development slate, which included *Ae Fond Kiss*, *These Times* and the Palm D'Or winning *The Wind That Shakes The Barley*.

As a founder member of the New Producers Alliance in 1992, he has had over twenty years' experience at teaching and educating in the film business including events and seminars at the Watershed Arts Centre Bristol, Goldsmith's College in South London, and film festivals including the Netherlands Film Festival and Cannes.

He was a board member of the New Producers Alliance from 1993 to 2001 and Chair of Trustees from 2001 to 2004. He has been a board member of the Director's Guild and BAFTA, and a member of the BAFTA Training and Education Committee. He was consultant editor at Cassell Film Books from 1994-1997 and a consultant advising the Arts Council on National Lottery funding from 1996-8.

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