Professional Script Reading

based on the Experience of Practitioners

SRN | Screenwriting Research Network
ZOOM | Friday | May 9 | 2025 | 5 p.m.

Gabriele C. Sindler
gcs@dfkfilms.com
www.dfkfilms.com

dfk films
better script – bigger success

Gabriele C. Sindler
born & raised in Austria | studied Political Sciences and Screenwriting & Story Editing |
based in in Berlin, Germany

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gcs@dfkfilms.com

COO DFK FILMS Ltd | dfk*script*service | Switzerland

specialized in the evaluation and improvement of scripts
Evaluation of scripts as well as concepts for documentaries and series with an international team in English, French and German.
Evaluated more than 3000 projects since 1989 that were looking for financing on the film markets.
Consulting and/or further training of
Scriptwriters | Producers | Editors / Story Editors | Film makers | Story and Script developers | Script analysts | Investors | Sponsors | Funders | Distributors | Program planers / Editors @ broadcasters or streamer | Decision makers in world sales companies... in Europe and Africa.

Board Screenwriters' Guild Germany (DDV – Deutscher Drehbuchverband)
jointly responsible for cinema, international collaborations, diversity, and excellence

Member of script- and film **funding juries**
– FFA (German Federal Film Board)
– Eurimages: European cultural support fund for co-productions

Teaching film professionals in Europe and Africa (Further training in Script Analysis | Script Writing)

Member of **juries** @ film festivals

Writer: Currently developing and writing a Nigerian-Austrian-feature-film together with an African European creative team.

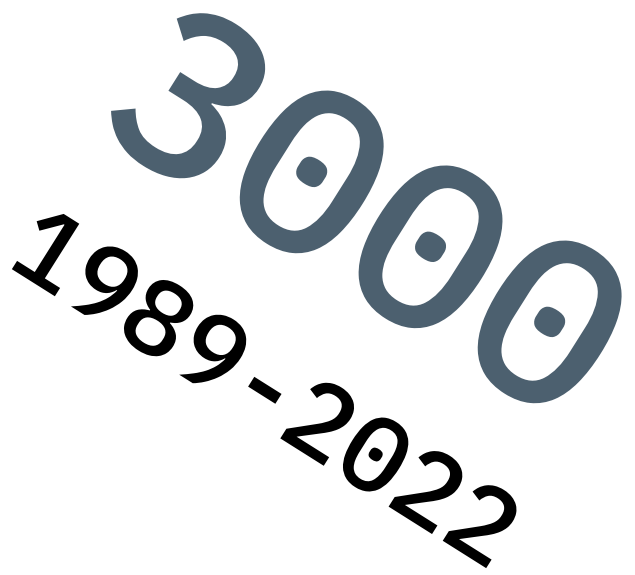
dfk script service

≈ 120 scripts / year

from all over the world

EN | FR | GER

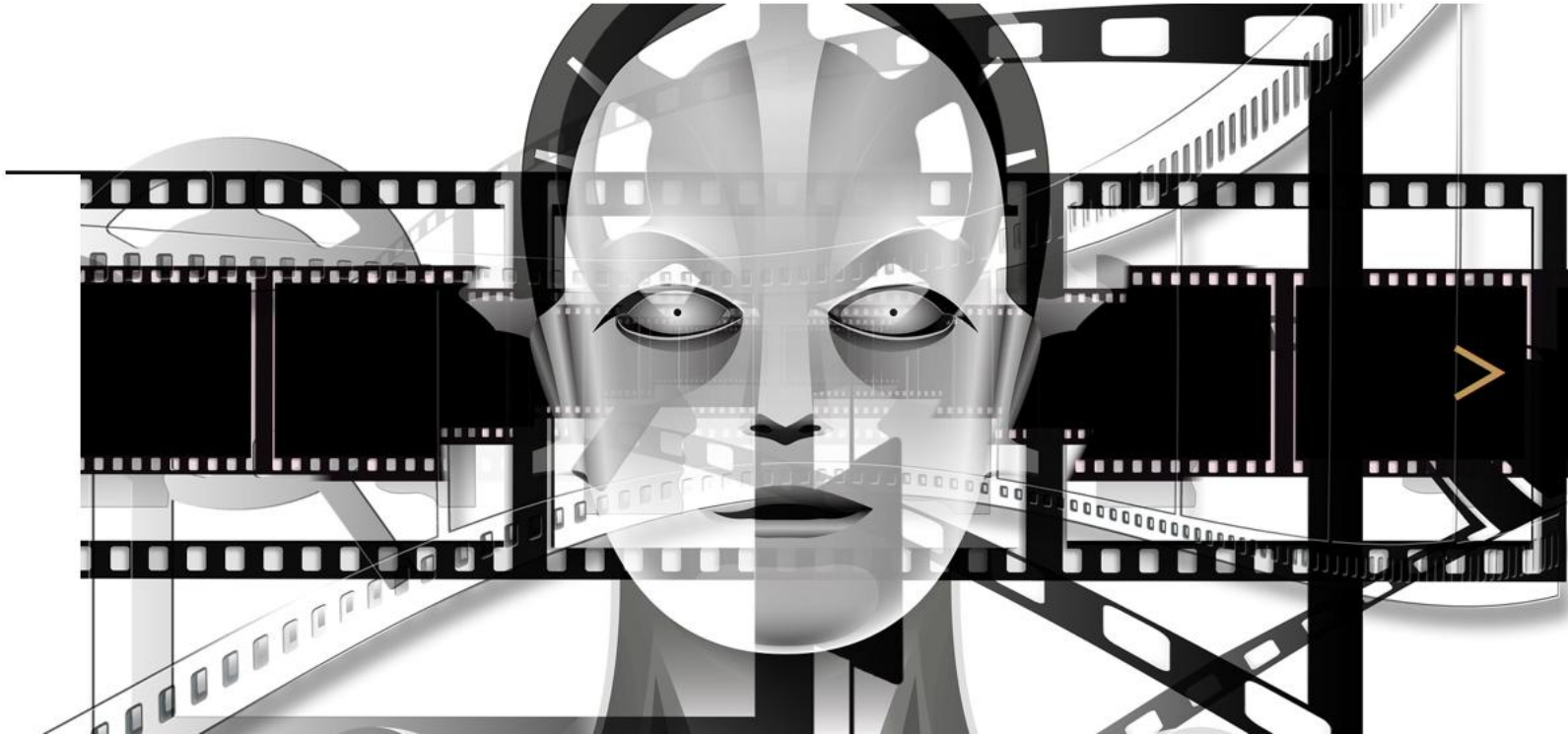
→ Producer
→ Distibuter
→ World Sales
→ Investors
→ Writers



SQUANDER!

European screenwriters use less than 50% of their stories’ potential.

Let’s make it better …



Professional Reading

* During a 1st reading and development phase
  a professional script analyst helps the creative team
  to bring their intentions to paper.

* In the 2nd reading and development phase
  the script analyst becomes the advocat of the audience.
  Will the script work on screen?
  Will it resonate with the audience?

* 3rd reading and development phase:
  Do script and budget fit together?

120 scripts p.a.
3000 since 1989

- These film projects have overcome several obstacles
- have a more or less binding package
- are represented by a world distributor
- are looking for international distributors
- or investors for the remaining financing beyond subsidies.

Nevertheless: 80% of these scripts
either do not have a fully developed story or
the story it is inadequately adapted for film / cinema
- often both.

Reader ←→ Customer

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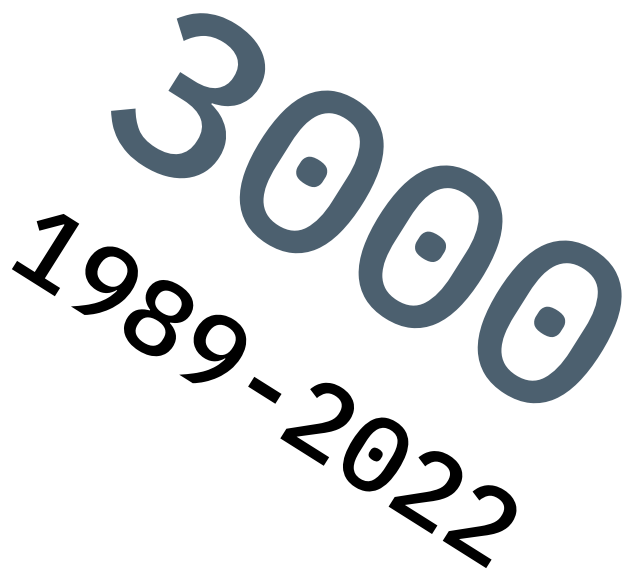


* Reading for buyers | investors
* Reading in case of copyright infringements
* Reading for creative teams
* Reading for film funding agencies
* Reading as jury member at film festivals
* Reading screenplays to learn and to teach

SSO | *40-STEPS-METHOD

* Practical experiences in film industry
* the encounter with František “Frank” Daniel
* and Paul Schrader
* studying theory, psychoanalysis, and masterpieces

SSO | *40-STEPS-METHOD

* Sheds light on the author's intentions and his/her story in a psychoanalytical nature.

* It exposes the strengths, weaknesses and, above all, black holes of the story and script.

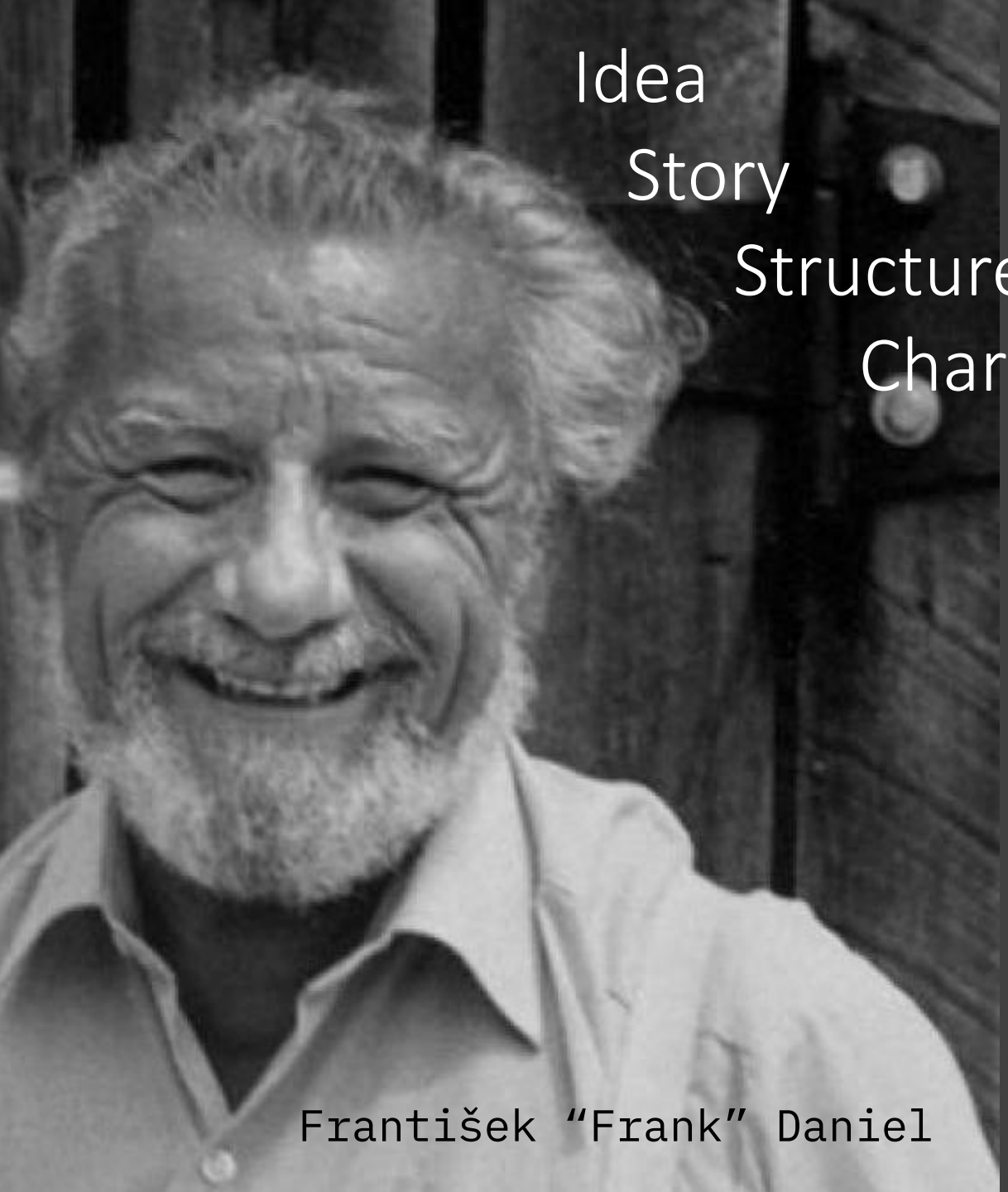
* Last but not least – it helps the analyst to minimize his/her emotional involvement and to gain and maintain objectivity by establishing the analysis.

SSO METHOD

story-step-outline
de-dramatize the script
in order to
re-construct the story behind

NO MERCY

NO INTERPRETATION



František “Frank” Daniel

Idea

Story

Structure

Character

Topic

Subject

Dialog

Irony

Planting & Pay Off

Mystery

Final Impact ...

RULES ?

Important - but of

LIMITID VALUE

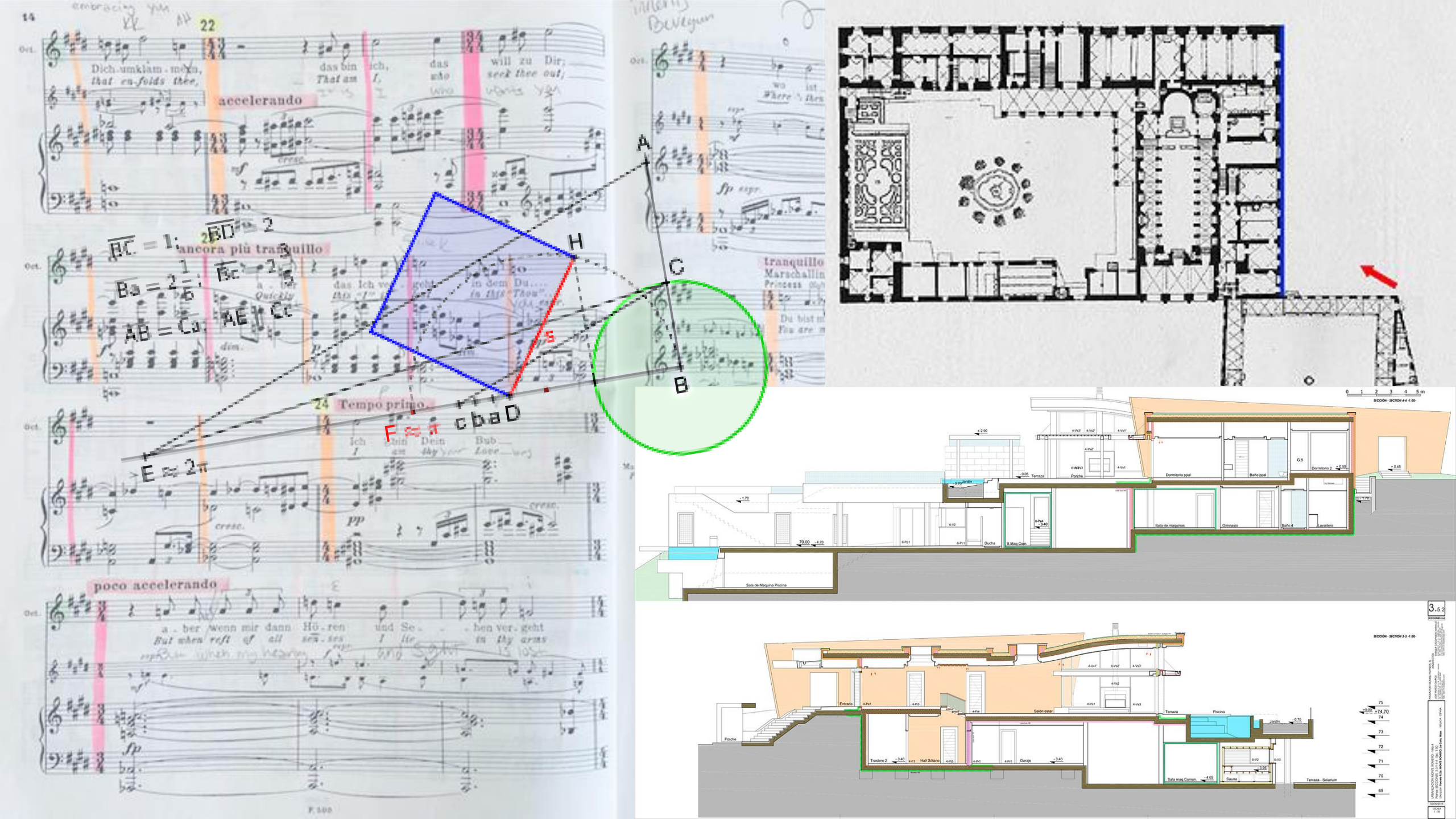
SSO|*40-STEPS-METHOD

3+1 part-analysis

✅ Professional Reading

1. SSO
2. 150 Questions & Remarks
3. Classical Criteria Analysis

4. Discussion



14
22
accelerando
ancora più tranquillo
24 Tempo primo
poco accelerando
A
B
C
D
E
F
H
S
c b a
$\overline{BC} = 1$; $\overline{BD} = 2$
$\overline{Ba} = 2\frac{1}{6}$; $\overline{Bc} = 2\frac{3}{5}$
$AB = Ca$; $AE = Cc$
$E \approx 2\pi$
$F \approx \pi$
Dormitorio ppal
Baño ppal
Sala de maquinas
Gimnasio
Baño 4
Lavadero
Sala de Maquina Piscina
Entrada
Salón estar
Terraza
Piscina
Jardín
Porche
Trastero 2
Hall Sótano
Garaje
Sala maq Comun.
Sauna
Terraza - Solarium

Please note

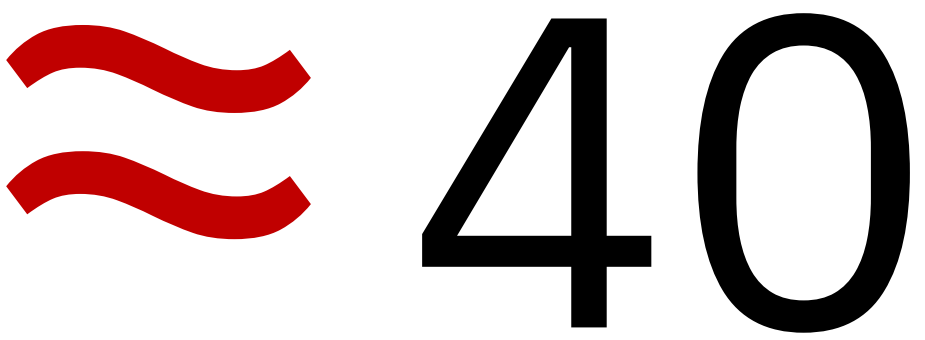
Story ≠ Screenplay

PLOT

STORY

Protagonist | Goal

Main character‘s steps → Goal



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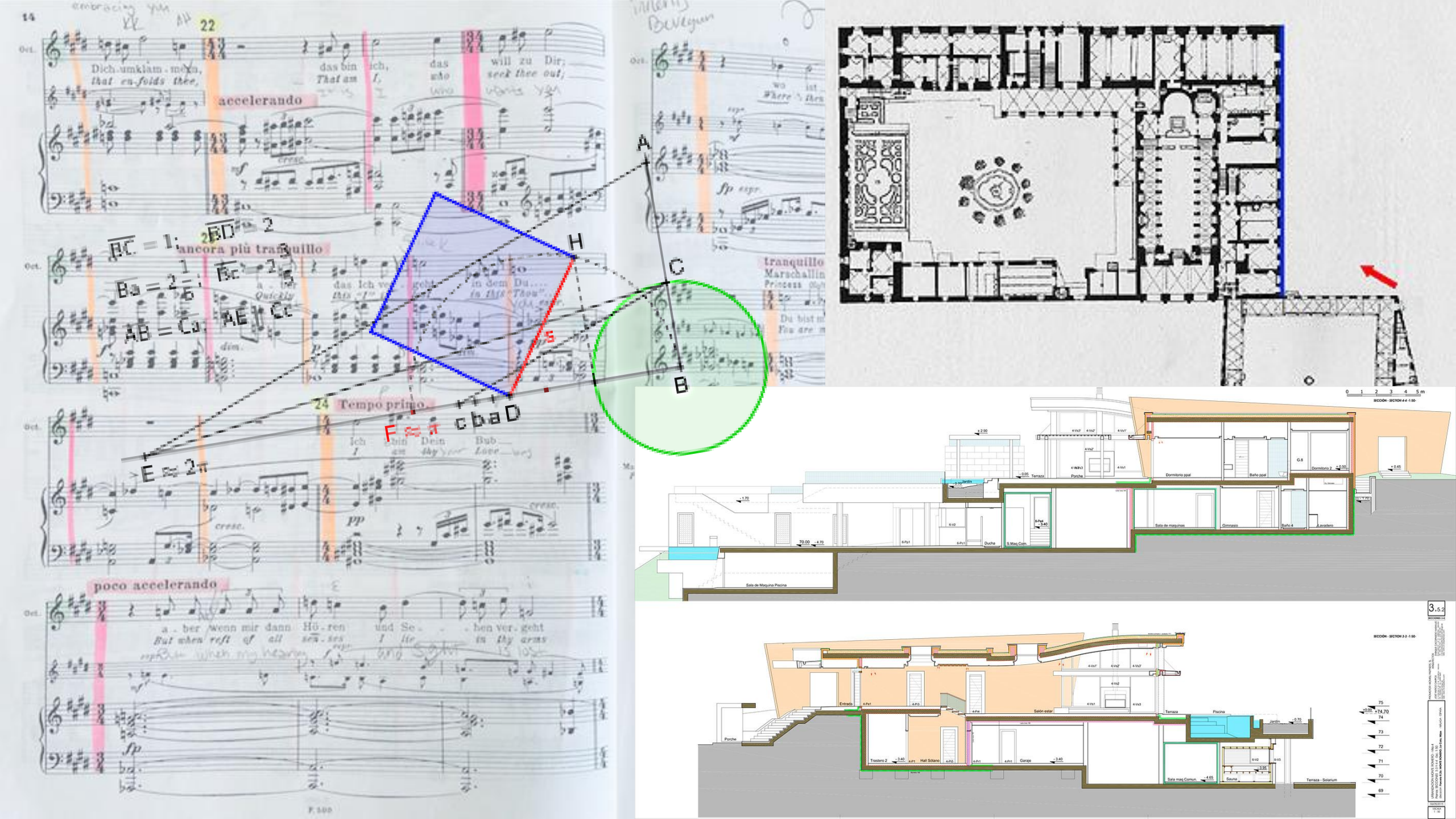

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dfk films
better script – bigger success

TABULAR EVALUATION

Part of COVER or READING REPORT or ANALYSIS

Title
Writer
Draft
Pages
Contact

Reader gcs +1
Date

WORKING **Logline** (no sales logline)

	+	∞	–
Does the script tell a complete STORY? Stong Idea. No STORY, only PLOT[1] (definition below)			X
Do we BELIEVE in the idea of the main story and the sub-stories? Do we BELIEVE in the "story"?		X	
Does the story have MAIN CHARACTERS we are rooting for?		X	X
Are the Main Characters main GOALS interesting? Insufficiently developed.		X	X
Are the OBSTACLES and FORCES of ANTAGONISM strong and complex?		X	X
Does the Main Character go through a meaningful CHANGE?			X
Is it possible to PENETRATE the mind of the Characters?		X	X
Do the stories develop an interesting THEME, a potent message?			X
Is the UNIVERSE (where and when) appealing? Relevant? Original?	X	X	
Is the storytelling DYNAMIC?		X	X
Is the DIALOGUE well written?		X	
Potential for VISUALLY stunning scenes?		X	
Social RELEVANCE? Not yet.	-	-	-

Target AUDIENCE	
REFERENCEs ||| GENRE	
REMARKS	

Does the script tell a complete STORY?

Do we BELIEVE in the "story"?

Do we BELIEVE in the idea of the main story and the sub-stories?

Does the story have MAIN CHARACTERS we are rooting for?

Are the Main Characters main GOALS interesting?

Are the OBSTACLES and FORCES of ANTAGONISM strong and complex?

Does the Main Character go through a meaningful CHANGE?

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Do the stories develop an interesting THEME, a potent message?

Is the UNIVERSE (where and when) appealing? Relevant? Original?

Is the storytelling DYNAMIC?

Is the DIALOGUE well written?

Potential for VISUALLY stunning scenes?

Social RELEVANCE?

Classical Criteria Analysis

Logline

Synopsis

Motto

Plot | **STORY** | Narration

Genre

Characters

Dialogue

Adapted universe

Credibility

Pace

Irony

Tone | Mood

Structure → acts → sequences → key-scenes

Cinematic solutions

Music

Themes | subjects | topics and their social relevance

Final Impact (main theme)

...

Additional Basic Questions

The potential of a film can be determined with a high degree of certainty if essential requirements are met in the screenplay.
You can confront your story & screenplay with several fundamental questions:

- Is the basic idea convincing and comprehensively worked out?
- Has an interesting story been developed from the idea, with an INTRODUCTION, CONFRONTATIONS-RESOLUTIONS-FIGHTING and a convincing RESOLUTION?
  In short: with a beginning, a middle and an end.
  So, is the story complete and told to the end?
- Have the dramaturgical rules been observed and, where the story allows, have surprising twists been added?
- Have the necessary sub-stories been developed that advance, comment on, supplement, vary and deepen the main story?
- Is the type of film narrative appropriate to the plot AND the story?
- Have the key scenes been fully developed and dramatized (Billy Wilder: ‘milked’)?
- Have credible characters with clear and interesting character traits been developed?
- Can the main character be identified with? Does he/she generate empathy?
  Does the protagonist have a goal or does she/he have no goal at all and cause catastrophes?
- Is the antagonistic character strong or even overpowering and makes us fear for the main character?
- Is there a clearly developed main theme with universal potential?
- Is the dialogue appropriate to the characters (short) or are it just the authors talking?
- Is the story told credible and convincing in the context of the universe created?
- Have the various possibilities of using irony been utilised?
- Has a main genre emerged and has the mix with the sub-genres been successful?
- Is the narrative cinematic? Has the cinematic potential been utilised and have appropriate representational solutions been developed?
- Has the main character learnt something very personal and intimate, and have we learnt something with him/her?
- etc., etc.

How we teach Script Analysis to people who do not want to read.

* We deliver the screenplays before the workshop.
* We recommend to read all of them and to **STUDY** to masterpieces
* We recommend to watch the movie before the workshop starts
  – after heaving read / studied the script.
* In the workshop we discuss elements of script analysis
  on the given examples.
* In the evening, we watch the movie together.
* The participants get some tasks on the script.
They have to send their results to the facilitators during the night.
* In the morning, we show the film again. With turned down volume and we talk over to move to point out what has been written in the script and why. And how it wors on the screen.

Institute · of · Creative · Arts · for · Progress · in · Africa · (ICAPA · Trust) · presents

EQUAL · VOICES · WORKSHOP

Script · & · Film · ANALYSIS · | · Story · and · Script · DEVELOPMENT

Tsitsi · Dangarembga · | · Gabriele · C. · Sindler · | · Donat · F. · Keusch ·

Harare · | · August · 12 · to · August · 31, · 2024

Kentucky · Ecumenical · Centre, · Hazel · Ln, · Harare, · Zimbabwe

PROGRAMME

WEEK · 1: · Script · & · Film · ANALYSIS
Introduction · | · THEORY · | · Screenings · | · Tasks

WEEK · 2 · & · 3: · Story · & · Script · DEVELOPMENT ·
THEORY · | · PROJECTS · | · Screenings · | · Tasks

WEEK · 3: · COLLABORATION · with · IIFF
Masterclass · | · IIFF-Screenings · | · PROJECTS · | · Tasks

Preparation · for · all · participants · of · the · workshop · with · feature-length · projects:

1) · Polish · your · latest · texts · and · present · your · projects · on · 2 · (max. · 4) · pages
···· so · that · the · other · participants · will · be · able · to · understand
···· a) · your · story
···· b) · your · project
···· c) · your · vision
···· Email · the · results · until · August · 10 · to · Tsitsi, · Gabriele · & · Donat.

2) · Read · at · least · 30-50 · pages · of · the · script · NO · TITLE — · until · you · know · enough · to
····· answer · the · following · questions:
- → Who · is · the · protagonist? · Write · a · short · description · / · characterization.
- → A · short · description · / · characterization · of · the · antagonist · and · the · antagonistic · forces.
- → What · is · the · core · of · the · story?

····· Email · the · results · until · August · 10 · to · Tsitsi, · Gabriele · & · Donat.

3) · Your · success · with · this · workshop · relies · on · your · studies · of · the · scripts · we · sent · to · you
···· over · the · last · weeks. · We · trust · that · you · established · a · cover · for · each · script — · and · made
···· notes, · remarks, · questions...
- ···· CHINATOWN
- ···· DEMAIN · TOUT · COMMENCE · | · TWO · IS · A · FAMILY
- ···· E.... · NO · NAME
- ···· IO · CAPITANO
- ···· L'INSULTE · | · THE · INSULT
- ···· PARASITE
- ···· THE · EQUALIZER
- ···· *ONE · FLEW · OVER · THE · CUCKOO'S · NEST*
- ···· *THELMA · & · LOUISE*

5 of 21 workshop days

The · 21 · days · of · this · workshop · are · intense. · There · will · be · no · time · left · for · other · activities. · It · starts · on · Monday · Aug · 12 · at · 9:30 · and · ends · on · Saturday · Aug · 31, · 2024, · in · the · evening. · During · the · weekends · you · will · have · to · improve · your · texts · with · references · to · everything · learnt · during · the · training · days. · Or · you · will · have · to · establish · an · analysis. · It · will · be · hard · work. · At · the · end · of · the · workshop, · you · must · be · able · to · write · a · better · script · and · to · develop · your · project · to · a · professional · level.

WEEK · 1: · Script · & · Film · ANALYSIS
Introduction · | · THEORY · | · Screenings · | · Tasks

Day · 1 Mon ·	· Aug · 12	Introduction ·	· THEORY ·	· Screening ·	· Task
10:00-10:30		-- · Introduction · to · the · workshop · by · Tsitsi · Dangarembga, · Gabriele · Sindler, · Donat · Keusch. · Organisational · information · by · Angeline · Madyara. · (Thabiso)
10:30-13:00		Presentation · of · the · participants · and · their · projects: · name, · main · occupation, · expectation · to · this · workshop... · (10 · min · per · project), · Q&A **-- · Working · tea** · (every · day · at · 11:00)
13:00-14:00		Lunch
Lecture · 1a 14:00-16:00		**Part · I: · Basic · principles · of · script · and · film · analysis:** **What · is · a · "script · for · a · film"? · How · to · read · a · script · and · the · preparation · for · an · analysis.** **Link >>> · Technical · Terms · | · Script · Analysis** Idea, · Premise, · Outline, · Story, · Story-Step-Outline · and · Script-Outline, · Story-Treatment, · Film-Treatment Script, · Shooting · Script, · Storyboard; · the · usual · Format · and · Fonts Time · & · Place/Geography Universe · of · the · Created · Story, · Genre, Story · & · Plot, · Adaptation; · Tension, · Conflict, · Mystery Shot, · Scene · & · Master-Scene, · Sequence, · Act; · Culmination/Climax, Exposition, · Planting, · Pay-Off, · Twist, · Resolution, · Denouement/Unknotting, · Sub-Stories/Sub-Plot, · Mood, · Pace/Rhythm Themes/Topics, · Relevance, · Irony, · Running · Gag, · Credibility... Character, · Biographies, · Protagonist, · Antagonist, · Subsidiary · Character, Dialogue, · Empathy...
16:00-16.30		**Working · tea**
Screening · 1a 16:30-19:00 		Screening · of · PARASITE, · in · original · Korean · version · with · English · subtitles, · written · and · directed · by · Bong · Joon-ho, · co-written · by · Han · Jin-won. · the · first · Korean · film · to · win · the · top · prize · of · all · film · festivals: · the · Palme · d'Or. · Short · introduction · to · film · festivals · in · general · and · the · specifics · of · the · one · at · Cannes. Among · its · numerous · accolades, · PARASITE · was · the · first · non-English-language · film · to · win · the · Academy · Award · for · Best · Picture · and · additionally · three · Oscars: · Best · Director, · Best · Original · Screenplay · and · Best · International · Feature · Film.

Seitenumbruch

Task 1 19:00-22:00 Group 1 LWANDA JAWAR CHIMBO CHEBERE EINTO --- Group 2 SUNDOWN MIMOUNA STUPID STUPID HEART OUR SWEET HELL	**Group Harare: Please list decent restaurants.** **Group Work (2 groups)** 1) Write a logline (3-5 lines) of **PARASITE** 2) Write a short characterization of the protagonist and the antagonist as well as their overall goal. (max. 1 page) 3) Identify and describe the main theme and the sub-themes. (1/2 page) 4) Revise your originally established cover of PARASITE **Please email your result of task 1 to Gabriele (gcs) | Donat (dfk) | Tsitsi until 10 pm. Keep a copy (with name and date on the cover).**

Day 2 Tue | Aug 13	**THEORY BASICS APPLIED: Screening with analysis | LECTURE | Task**
Screening 1b 10:00-13:00	Screening of **PARASITE**, with voice-over analysis of script & film by Gabriele and Donat **- Working tea** (every day at 11:00)
13:00-14:00	Lunch
Lecture 2 14:00-15:00	Based on **PARASITE** Lecture about Premise, Structure, Characters, Story, Dialog, Topics, Credibility, Irony, Mood, Metaphor, Archetypes / Myths as well as "Plantings and Pay-offs" (visually or by Dialog), Mid (highest) Point, Twist, some Turning Points, Genre...
Discussion 15:00-16:00	**Working tea** Discussion and revision of the results of your task 1 AND: Organisation of and with **The Short Film Group**
Screening 2a 16:00-18:00 	Screening of **DEMAIN TOUT COMMENCE | TWO IS A FAMILY** in French version with English subtitles. Written by Hugo Gélin, Mathieu Oullion and Jean-André Yerlès The film is a remake of the very successful Mexican **INSTRUCTIONS NOT INCLUDED (NO SE ACEPTAN DEVOLUCIONES)** – story and script by Guillermo Ríos and Leticia López Margalli. Short explanation about remakes in the film business.
Task 2 18:00-22:00	Short descriptions in your groups of - the premise (describe the event on max. 2 lines) - the protagonist and his helpers (max. half a page) - the antagonist and his helpers (max. half a page) - the plot, the story (half a page) - the main topic/theme (plot- & story-wise on max. 2 lines) - the learning process of the protagonist (max. half a page) **Email your DEMAIN TOUT COMMENCE | TWO IS A FAMILY results of task 2 to gcs|dfk|tsi until 10 pm**

Analysis | Story & Script Writing | IIFF
Workshop | Harare 2024

Day 3 Wed | Aug 14	**THEORY | PROJECT | Screening | Task**
Screening 2b 10:00-12:15	Screening of **DEMAIN TOUT COMMENCE | TWO IS A FAMILY** in original version with English subtitles with gcs/dfk's voice-over/annotation/live analysis of script & film.
Lecture 3 12:15-13:00	Based on **DEMAIN TOUT COMMENCE | TWO IS A FAMILY** Lecture on Premise, Characters, Story, Dialog, Topics, Credibility, Irony, as well as "Plantings and Pay-offs", Genre, Narrative Style (modern storytelling vs. classic storytelling, storytelling in games...)
13:00-14:00	Lunch
Discussion 14:00-15:00	Discussion and revision of your result of the task 2 on **DEMAIN TOUT COMMENCE | TWO IS A FAMILY**.
Lecture 4 15:00-16:00	Based on **PARASITE** & **DEMAIN TOUT COMMENCE | TWO IS A FAMILY** lecture about the act-structure: Beginning (introduction), middle (confrontation) and end (resolution), sequences and more.
16:00-16:30	**Working tea**
Screening 3a 16:30-18:30 	**CHINATOWN** (USA 1974, 130 min) a film directed by Roman Polanski, written by Robbert Towne and Roman Polanski Starring Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway, John Huston, Perry Lopez, John Hillerman, Diane Ladd, Roy Jenson, Roman Polanski, Burt Young... In 1937 Los Angeles, private investigator Jake 'J.J.' Gittes specializes in cheating-spouse cases. His current target is Hollis Mulwray, high-profile chief engineer for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, whose wife suspects him of infidelity. Eventually Gittes sees Mulwray meeting with an unknown young woman who isn't his wife. Gittes is assisted by Mulwray's wife Evelyn, but he thinks she isn't being forthright with him. The further he gets into the investigation, the more secrets he uncovers like the one with Mulwray's former business-partnership with Evelyn's father, Noah Cross. **Qotes** Noah Cross: You've got a nasty reputation, Mr. Gittes. I like that. (...) Noah Cross: You may think you know what you're dealing with, but, believe me, you don't. [Gittes grins] Noah Cross: Why is that funny? Jake Gittes: That's what the District Attorney used to tell me in Chinatown.
Task 3 18:30-22:00	**Short descriptions in your groups of** - the premise (describe the event on max. 2 lines) - the protagonist and his helpers (max. half a page) - the antagonist / antagonistic forces and helpers (max. half a page) - the plot, the story (max. half a page) - define the genre (max. 2 lines) - list the mysteries **Email your CHINATOWN results of task 3 to gcs|dfk|tsi until 10 pm**

Day 4 Thu | Aug 15	THEORY | Screening | Task
Screening 3b 10:00-12:30	CHINATOWN with voice-over remarks. **- Working tea** (every day at 11:00)
12:30-13:30	Discussion task 3
13:30-14:30	Lunch
Lecture 5 14:30 – 15:30	Based on CHINATOWN lecture about the collaboration of the writer with the co-writer/director and with the crazy film producer. The co-writer/director's work with the actors – one is a very creative one, another was one of the most famous and most experienced film-directors of the time and the third one is a diva.
15:30-16:00	**Working tea**
Discussion 16:00-18:00	SCRIPT WITH NO TITLE (you got this script on Aug 3 by email) You **studied** at least 30-50 pages, until you knew enough to answer the questions. As scriptwriters and as potential partners of screenwriters, you are usually dealing with texts / stories / scripts in development – not with completed masterpieces. • Who is the protagonist? Write a short description / characterization. • Who is the antagonist? The antagonistic forces? Write a short description / characterization. • What is the core of the story? What is it about?
Task 4 18.00-22:00	Revised Premise of CHINATOWN. (One part of the premise begins before the film starts...) **Email the results to Tsitsi, Gabriele & Donat until 10 pm.**

Day 5 Fri | Aug 16	THEORY | Screening | Task
Screening 4 10:00-13:00 	Screening of NO TITLE in original version with English subtitles with gcs/dfk's voice over/annotation/live analysis of script & film. After the screening a short introduction to the script development and the production of the film. **- Working tea** (every day at 11:00)
13:00-14:00	Lunch

Lecture 1b 14:00-18:00	**Part II:** **Basic principles of script and film analysis:** **What is a "script for a film"?** **How to read a script and the preparation for an analysis.** The script is the film! A carefully worked out script with a complete story which was adapted the right way for a film will allow the producer and the crew to make a good and successful film. It's no doubt that such a script must tell the complete story with three-dimensional characters, interesting settings and topics and a lot more. Preparing for a script analysis you must forget everything you heard or read about this project (title, writer, producer, director, stars...). You must approach the reading of the script as if written by an unknown person. Read it without any interruption. Don't make any notes. That's the first reading. Now you know, who is the main character and you will have some idea what could be his/her goal. Knowing the protagonist and his/her goal will allow to figure out the act structure and to identify some more things like sequences, the important steps helping the protagonist achieving the overall goal and more. At the second reading/studying of the script you may take some notes like the names of the characters, the place(s), the time, the topics and, and... Now, you are analysing the following issues: Idea, Premise, Outline, Story, Story-Step-Outline and Script-Outline, Story-Treatment, Film-Treatment Script, Shooting Script, Storyboard; the usual Format and Fonts Time & Place/Geography Universe of the Created Story, Genre, Story & Plot, Adaptation; Tension, Conflict, Mystery Shot, Scene & Master-Scene, Sequence, Act; Culmination/Climax, Exposition, Planting, Pay-Off, Twist, Resolution, Denouement/Unknotting, Sub-Stories/Sub-Plot, Mood, Pace/Rhythm Themes/Topics, Relevance, Irony, Running Gag, Credibility... Character, Biographies, Protagonist, Antagonist, Subsidiary Character, Dialogue, Empathy...
Task 5 18:30-22:00	Work on your projects individually or in groups.

Programme | 5 of 21 workshop days

Thank you for your attention.

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