

The Chilean screenwriter: Quantitative analysis on the craft of writing for film

El guionista chileno: análisis cuantitativo sobre el oficio de escribir para cine

O roteirista chileno: análise quantitativa do trabalho de escrever para o cinema

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ABSTRACT

The study describes the methodology used to construct the script in the Chilean cinema of the last decade. The results come from questionnaires applied to more than sixty filmmakers (screenwriters, directors and producers), and confirm the existence of guidelines or ways of working for writing in the stages of preproduction and editing, noting the coexistence of various creative processes in those involved in the writing, both in the generation of the dramatic idea and in composition. The paths are as varied as filmmakers exist; thus, the script seems to be seen more as a methodology than as a finished text.

Keywords: script; cinema; quantitative analysis; audiovisual industry; Chile.

RESUMEN

El estudio describe la metodología empleada para construir el guion en el cine chileno de la última década. Los resultados provienen de cuestionarios aplicados a más de sesenta realizadores (guionistas, directores y productores), y constatan la existencia de orientaciones o formas de trabajo para la escritura en las etapas de preproducción y edición, advirtiéndose la convivencia de diversos procesos creativos en quienes confeccionan el escrito, tanto en la generación de la idea dramática como en la composición. Los caminos son tan variados como realizadores existen; así, el guion parece ser visto más como una metodología que como un texto acabado.

Palabras clave: guion; cine; análisis cuantitativo; industria audiovisual; Chile.

RESUMO

O estudo descreve a metodologia utilizada para a escritura de roteiro no cinema chileno da última década. Os resultados provêm de questionários aplicados a mais de sessenta cineastas (roteiristas, diretores e produtores) e observam a existência de orientações ou formas de trabalho para a escrita nas etapas de pré-produção e edição, observando a coexistência de vários processos criativos que influenciam a escrita, tanto na geração da ideia dramática como na composição. Os caminhos são tão variados quanto o número de cineastas; Assim, o script parece ser visto mais como uma metodologia do que como um texto acabado.

Palavras-chave: roteiro; cinema; análise quantitativa; indústria audiovisual; Chile.

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INTRODUCTION

This work is part of a broader investigation, whose main objective was to describe the methodology used by Chilean scriptwriters and filmmakers in fiction films released between 2003 and 2013. Specifically, it sought to describe the narrative nuclei and basic principles of dramaturgy privileged in the work of creating scripts in Chilean cinema. The methodological design addressed these objectives with two types of instruments: qualitative and quantitative. The first group includes those techniques of narrative analysis applied to narrative structures. In order to do so, we developed a film analysis model that allowed to deconstruct the assembly of the narrative structure of the audiovisual text and to describe the underlying structures and the recurrent themes told in the stories. The result of this analysis has been presented in other academic instances (Dittus, 2015b; 2016). The same group includes the set of interviews applied to 33 actors of the Chilean audiovisual industry – directors, screenwriters, union leaders, responsible for government agencies related to the promotion of Chilean cinema, researchers and audiovisual critics–. The analysis of these results allowed to observe the perception that the writers have of themselves, to discuss about topics that later appear as relevant for the creation of stories, to exchange information about the institutional context of the profession, as well as regarding job opportunities and funding sources. In fact, these data were key to configure a series of specific categories that define the script not as a finished text, but as a set of stages and mechanisms of writing, filming and editing. This meant understanding the script as a methodology, that is, a rewriting process that ends in the editing room. Other works (Basulto, 2016; Dittus, 2017) have reported these investigative experiences.

In this paper, we present the quantitative instrument and its analysis. In order to systematize and present in figures the opinions of those who work professionally in Chilean cinema, we applied questionnaires to more than sixty filmmakers. The task was not easy, because it sought to understand the opinion that writers and filmmakers have of their activity, thus revealing the daily routine of one of the most anonymous works in our country. In this vein, the identity discourse of an activity which exposes the relationship with actors and the management team is openly confessed. It was based on a hypothesis that was confirmed while advancing in the study: the script in Chile moves away from the classic format that is taught in workshops and

script manuals in the West. Disorganized annotations, diagrams, folders, brief writings are, in general, the texts that could be found by a collector of these stories. This feature is important, since it largely accounts for explicit political acts. A director who moves away from previous narrative precisions embraces one of the least discussed attributes of filmmaking: the judging of realism and the desire to get away from audiovisual capitalism.

The above supports the thesis that cinema is not easy to explore. Discursive and market visions that cross any artistic aspiration lie in it. Most of the time, the audience is less receptive than the critic or the jury at specialized festivals. Thus, we wonder about the scriptural work behind each Chilean film released. Are there professional writing standards in Chilean cinema? What creative models for fiction films have been developed during the last decade? What dramaturgical principles have the writers assumed for their application in the creative writing process? This reflection forces us to investigate creative and methodological issues in one of the least studied products of the audiovisual industry.

The results generated by the questionnaire are relevant in two aspects: they document the interest that exists among filmmakers to know issues related to their professional performance and confirm a set of non-institutionalized practices that prevent –according to the majority of the respondents– of speaking about an audiovisual industry.

BACKGROUND

The theoretical background of the study is anchored in the thesis that cinema is not understood if it is not within a development model. In other words, nobody makes movies without bases. The Chilean case, like any other, has its particularities. The neoliberal cultural model has become the new sociocultural reference of Chilean cinema. As Trejo (2014, p. 25) indicates, this would be expressed both in the dramatic, visual and aesthetic resources, as well as in the psychology, motivations and social connections of the characters, where the narcissistic realization of the *self* is more important than the plot of “living together”. Obviously, this model also affects the creation of the script and its methodology (where the freedom of the creator in the film business is justified), a place where the market expresses itself as a form and a background, as a place of adhesion or rejection. Precisely, in the search for peripheral authorial proposals and new policies of subjectivity (Póo, Stange, & Salinas, 2012), the questions sought to investigate, in

addition, about those “other methods of scriptural work” or audiovisual products inserted in what Urrutia (2013) calls the “centrifugal character of Chilean cinema”, more subjective, decentralized and with discursive appropriations far from the more classic narrative model.

It should not be forgotten that, in North American universities, the script in the West –as a discipline or technique– is studied starting from the era of silent films. Despite this parallelism, when the writing on film theory began, that intellectual production distinguished itself, from the beginning, of the script theory (Dittus, 2015a). The lack of theorization contrasts with a set of norms that speak of the effectiveness of the structures, specially designed for the audiovisual narrators of today. The result is categorical: although creativity cannot be learned, there is an outstanding number of manuals that teach script techniques or styles. Regarding the narrative models that serve as a guide or inspiration for those who practice the profession of writing for cinema, we must be precise. As indicated in another work that supports the need to investigate the script in Chile (Dittus, 2015a), the majority of the script manuals of recent publication or edition postulate narrative structures, creative paradigms and stylistic resources of various kinds. However, its analysis does not say much about the impact on formal screenwriting courses. Although these are parameters of audiovisual writing increasingly widespread in the script schools worldwide –and which Hollywood calls “success formulas” (Tubau, 2011)– there is not enough information to declare them as relevant in the Chilean creative process. In this academic scenario, the texts of Syd Field (1979), Linda Seger (2002), Robert McKee (2002), Christopher Vogler (1998) or Black Snyder (2010) are compulsory reading in other parts of America and the world. They have become more than recommendations. These are true treaties or dogmatic formulas that teach about risk, the dramatic knot or the transformation of the characters. As Tubau says, “the almost absolute dominance of Hollywood cinema since the mid-eighties and the particular way it obtained its highest income, favored the adoption of narrative techniques that could achieve rapid success, called blockbusters, which make millions of people around the world fill thousands of cinema rooms, at least during the first weekend” (Tubau, 2011, p.20). It is no coincidence, then, that Aristotle is recognized as the oldest teacher of modern writers.

With more than two thousand years old, Poetics is the first great work of dramatic structure known. There, the

principles of the plot and the three acts guarantee the cohesion and discursive unity of the work, considered as a whole (Aristóteles, 2003). Poetics, considered as a knowledge about art in relation to the production of things, is a knowledge of normative character, and deals mainly with the aesthetics of tragedy. The rules there defined seek that the dramatic text (whatever its language: theater, cinema, television or digital media) summarizes in a specific proposal the peculiar conditions of beauty. The cinema adopts each one of these inspiring principles, ordering the storyline and the dimensions of the text in a set of dramaturgical resources (Cano, 1999) through which the author imagines the staging. A study conducted by Brenes (2014) indicates that between 2007 and 2012 more than one hundred new books on script were registered in the Library of Congress of the United States. From this list, most addresses the text of Aristotle from a didactic and technical approach, wasting a second reading of the work: its philosophical and sapiential dimension and, therefore, of greater professional interest for writers and spectators. In this regard, it is said that “when referring to technical issues and interpretation, Poetics is just like a manual of advice for writing; in some cases, they end up rejecting the proposals of Aristotle since they consider them rigid, and in others, they reduce the scope of the text” (Brenes 2014, p. 66).

In another study, the same researcher (Brenes, 2011) postulates that the influence of Aristotle in the script manuals is also observed in the way in which the first writing differentiates from the rewriting. In the first, the scriptwriter is concerned with the structure of the plot and the characters, the dialogues and the actions. Instead, the rewriting seeks to discover the deep poetic structure that gives meaning to the story. In other words, the fundamentals of how to tell a good story are recognized in Aristotle’s work. From these structures, in the current audiovisual industry there are similar stories, with few ingredients of originality. This is due –according to Daniel Tubau (2011)– to a misinterpretation of the work of Aristotle. According to the author, the true Aristotelian theory of narration is much more interesting: a script must be like an organism in which all the parts contribute to the same end. To fulfill a function. For Tubau, the standard way of writing scripts is a formalist interpretation, to an extreme degree, that has nothing to do with the Greeks. “There is no possible comparison between the moderation of Racine and the pain without remedy of Sophocles, not even between the mockery of Molière and the excesses,

profanities and insults of Aristophanes, which is more like Rabelais and his Gargantua and Pantagruel than those that in the French court intended to legislate literature based on a supposed Greek model” says Tubau (2011, p. 31).

That theatrical origin explains the dramaturgical influence in manuals and formal script courses. There is no doubt that the most similar creative document to the script is the theatrical text. There are similarities regarding the order of the dialogues, the presentation of the scenes and the author’s notes for the team, director or actors. In its beginnings, this bond was even greater. The cinema was practically the recording of a play, since it lacked a story and narrative production. The scenic expressions, a fixed camera as a simulation of the eyes of a spectator and the actors dramatizing in front of the camera, were elements that made the cinema and the theater a couple without many nuances. Both formats are, in short, in constant dialogue. As stated by Pérez, “very early on the cinema resorts to the construction of a simplified universe taken directly from the theatrical melodrama: opposing principles [duty/passion, loyalty/love, hate/forgiveness], extreme typing and schematism of characters and situations, etc.” (Pérez, 2004, p. 574). In its evolution, however, the cinema had to forcibly move away from theater, since it was already beginning to become an independent art. The lack of sound, without a doubt, is the characteristic sample of the change of model suffered by the cinema, because it had to focus its narration solely on the image (Pérez, 2004, p. 574).

All these backgrounds make the script a written document with demands like any dramatic text. And as such, it has a double burden: of literary and technical value. That is, it must consider communicating ideas to an audience, but without closing the door for its enrichment during the process of production and realization (Robino, 2015). This dual nature requires the scriptwriter to be a bridge between the idea and the audiovisual product, in an activity in which the collective and collaborative effort is the number one requirement. Thus, other figures appear on that creative path. As a finished and developing text, the script needs a reviewing look, that accompanies and judges, that orders or enriches the opinion about the work. The advisor or the jury at festivals and film competitions evaluate that structure that was once learned or replicated in the complex world of the film industry. Otherwise, script consultants or dramatists with that special ability to “accompany” the writing

process would not be hired. That usual attachment to a set of technical tools feeds the inner critical author that every screenwriter has. The search for a methodology that enhances audiovisual narrative thinking is the goal that script training programs propose year after year, with dissimilar results. In this context, terms such as talent, creativity, premise, dramatic knot and antagonistic force are validated.

The spectator is another actor to be considered. Accustomed to happy endings or dramatic turns in the seventieth minute of the third act, many times he does not evaluate well a film that escapes that paradigm. It is a kind of omniscient narrator who rests in the unconscious of the spectator, since he knows the plot, the archetypal characters and which will be the end of the story. The cinema market in Chile is not immune to this trend. The paradox is that, apparently, the most rebellious writers are not willing to consider the audience, generating a kind of struggle with the viewer, something like “if you do not understand my movie, it is your problem”. This contradicts one of the basic principles of the script theory, which is that the story should capture the interest of the audience, a rule that gave title to one of the most read books in the area: *Save the cat!*, by Black Snyder. In it, it is indicated that the first and main thing is that the spectator likes the person with whom he will make the hour and a half journey: the character. “I call it the scene of *Save the cat*. And they do not include it in the movies. And it is fundamental. It is the scene in which the hero appears and we see him do something—like saving a cat—, which defines his personality and makes us—the spectators—like him” (Snyder, 2010, p. 19). For this American author, a good screenwriter must think about everyone involved in the process, including the director. That is the challenge for building the premise of the film. The Chilean panorama would not have to be different, according to those who wish to professionalize an activity in which there is a great dose of instinct and talent. It seems that a good symptom is that a large number of written scripts are never filmed (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2001), which speaks about the selection and capacity to produce the so-called good stories.

This and other problems have become a topic of reflection. In Chile—as well as in Europe—, where policies to support cinema and audiovisual media do not follow a single model (Gournay, 2004), the opinions of screenwriters and filmmakers regarding their ways of working have generated alternative models that have somehow disturbed the more traditional ways of

making movies, those that reach us through the most commercial distribution. The Chilean filmmaker Raúl Ruiz is the one who best represents that anti-normative struggle. Contrary to hegemonic Aristotelianism, Ruiz recalls the first statement of that theory: “A story is set in motion when someone wants something and another does not want him to get it. From there, through different digressions, all the elements of the story are organized around that central conflict” (Ruiz, 2013, p. 15). Ruiz proposes to multiply the narrative forms, looking for those that are not governed by the centripetal force of the central conflict, which wishes to concentrate even the smallest detail through a dramatic nucleus that articulates everything. As noted by Sánchez (2011, p. 109), with this methodology Ruiz goes further, filming everything that is outside the script, mimicking the work of oriental musicians, who have a score, and then play everything, except the score itself, thus desacralizing the script.

The allusion to the East is not whimsical, because it is a vision that has a different concept of the cosmos. Unlike the Western narrative, which needs the violent clash between two opposites over three or five acts to generate a story, Kishōtenketsu –or art of contemplative narration– starts from observing the universe, understanding how it is and accepting it. It has its origin in Chinese and Korean poetry (exported to Japan), and has a structure in four acts that narrate two events that apparently have no relationship, but the sum of both forms a whole that transcends them (Sanz-Magallón, 2007). The events of the first, second and third act do not have to face each other. They can be kept separate. Although the fourth act unifies the work, in no way it implies violence over the first three, but only extracts a conclusion from its juxtaposition. These differences arise, apparently, from a human obsession to find a universal structure and “a misinterpretation of Aristotle’s Poetics by several experts” (Tubau, 2015, p. 88), which is nothing but the result of a hasty reading of the Greek author.

The recent history of Chile has given us some narrative experiences that move away from the audiovisual paradigms of the West, which is remarkable because it verifies that, often, the interest to do something different arises in the same film schools and is diluted once that these graduates face the reality of market and audiences. This is what happened with a generation of students from the School of Communication Arts (EAC) of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, which operated between 1970 and 1978. As Vergara

(2015, p. 118) acknowledges, “in the period of study, the audiovisual energy (of the students) was set in formal and political searches, sharing certain features with the Latin American cinema of that period”. They were, mostly, militant documentaries or fictions socially committed to a convergence towards reality. On the one hand, the militant cinema found exhibition spaces in venues of political parties, workers’ associations and parishes (Bolzoni, 1974), and, on the other hand, a more experimental (or anthropological) cinema was broadcasted in art cinemas. A group of those future filmmakers –led by Cristián Sánchez, one of the filmmakers most recognized today for his clear authorial work and dramatic deconstruction– was interested in the aesthetic and narrative proposals of Raúl Ruiz, Luis Buñuel and Jean-Luc Godard. The aim was to create a cinema contrary to the cinematographic canons taught at the time. In the words of Jorge Ruffinelli, “while filmmakers usually deny or hide the traces of previous films, often under the neutralizing clothing of realism and naturalism, Sánchez emphasized the constructive, intellectual, experimental condition of his cinema, and developed it without shyness as a film narrative of high innovative quality (...) he sought to work on ambiguity, in the indefinite impulses of the filmic discourse, without seeking comfort and the support of what was established in the community as form, style and content” (Ruffinelli, 2007, p. 46). Sánchez’ nomadism (that’s what was called his particular risky and uncomfortable style) is an example of how other cinema is possible, from irregular, personal and innovative forms and contents, but with obvious reading difficulties. It is a narrative detachment of the classic, that the audiovisual industry rarely allows. The differences observed in the creative processes draw rather a dialogue between a kind of precarious, rebellious and rupturist cinema and another more canonical cinema, with more industrial paradigms (Briceño, 2015).

However, these criteria, far from the traditional model, have not been massively systematized, being limited to audiovisual experiences that are not replicable in the training academy. In fact, one of the few script manuals written in Chile –*Guion para un cine posible* [Screenplay for a possible cinema], by Orlando Lübbert– echoes those resources already disseminated by the screenwriting best sellers. The Chilean author and filmmaker reflects on a possible, democratic and effective cinema in the Latin American perspective, but giving indications on the dramatic construction, in

which the concepts of point of view, cinematographic idea and depth are supreme values for audiovisual writing. In the midst of these creative demands, Lübbert puts the emphasis on the context –a cinema with identity– as the great ally of the screenwriter, whose great wealth is “unheard stories, amazing places and endearing characters” (Lübbert, 2009, p. 13).

METHODOLOGY

The elaboration of the questionnaire considered –in addition to the theoretical background– the data collected in the previous interviews and the documentation obtained from some formal script courses in Chile. The opinion of some academic coordinators was relevant at this stage. In general, it is noted that script and dramaturgy courses tend to become normative, which in the long run is pernicious for the profession (Stranger, 2011). This is evidenced by the conviction –for some– that the management of a technique could hinder the creative abilities of a writer. Some interviewees, on the other hand, reinforce the thesis that formal education allows the imaginary to be liberated and fully developed. At this point, several respondents agree that the formal study in creative writing “is in diapers” and that a self-taught training is privileged.

Regarding the creative methodology, that is, the way in which the writers give shape to the story and its philosophical arguments, the interviews accounted for three currents: first, scriptwriters who ascribe to a classic model of narrative construction and that, in addition, document themselves and investigate on the subject to be treated; then, those who use the script as an initial kick, and then begin a process of improvisation that often ends up being materialized in the editing room. Finally, there are the writers who resort to their personal experiences to build the stories that will later be brought to the screen. In the last two cases, there is an inclusion of classical elements in their method, but, in general, it is not intentional. In the light of these affirmations, it seems that there is no script school in Chile, let alone a narrative model, as observed in other countries in the region. Intuition is the best friend of many filmmakers, an issue that is visible, above all, in their first works. This reality would have historical roots: the data confirm that, in Chile, there has never been a concern for the script and, for a long time, we have looked for a model to follow. Academic research has shown no interest in this field, focusing instead on

historical reviews of Chilean cinema or its relationship with literature and mass media. Precisely one of those studies (Fuenzalida, Corro, & Mujica, 2009) addresses the melodrama and the melodramatic in the Chilean cinema and television of the nineties, a series of stories marked by the return to democracy: themes that are expressed through a socio-politics point of view from the private world with dramas of ordinary people.

These initial descriptions allowed to design the instrument, which sought to describe the basic principles of dramaturgy privileged in the work of creating scripts.

Thus, the variables measured in the questionnaire were the following:

- a. Theoretical or philosophical influence in the writing process.
- b. Influence of another scriptwriter, director or expert in the scriptural phase.
- c. Construction of the model spectator in the narrative design.
- d. Practice of the recursive method in writing.
- e. The search for original or adapted stories.
- f. The relevance given to research or documentation.
- g. Adherence to some model learned as a formula.

The instrument contained 27 questions about the creative work to make films in Chile, of which the following was open: based on your experience in the area, what advice would you give to new filmmakers (directors, producers and scriptwriters) starting their path in Chilean cinema? The rest of the questions (26) were closed and allowed to mark only one of the five proposed alternatives.

The questionnaire was sent by email the week of June 2, 2015 to 170 Chilean scriptwriters, directors and filmmakers who premiered an audiovisual product in the last decade. All those professionals who, in one way or another, participated in the narrative design of a fiction feature film were included in the same group. The previous documentation showed that the task of scriptwriter is not sufficiently differentiated from the direction of a film. Most of the time, the roles of director and writer are exercised by the same person.

For registration purposes, both the name and the main activity account for the specific role of each respondent. These data were used to encrypt some fragments of responses. The database was carefully prepared from the available web portals, Chilean cinema repositories, trade associations, specialized magazines and personal contacts. Of the 170 email sent, 64 were answered within the stipulated period –before June 22 of the same year– and were processed, tabulated and plotted in the following weeks. The preliminary estimates considered an approximate time of 15 minutes to answer the questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profile of the interviewees indicates that they are less than 50 years old (44.4% are between 30 and 39 years old, 31.7% between 40 and 49 years old, and 17.5% between 18 and 29 years old) and reside, mostly, in the Metropolitan Region (68.3%); a smaller percentage (6.3%) indicated that they reside outside of Chile. Also, a considerable number defines itself as a professional filmmaker (62.3%), followed very far by the creative (13.1%) and artist (11.5%) options.

In addition, the authorship or co-authorship preferences of those surveyed in the scriptural work are not categorical enough to speak of a single creation methodology. When answering the question: What kind of jobs did you privilege recently?, the answers do not show trends: authorship without a consultant, 33.9%; co-authorship, 24.2%; authorship with a consultant, 22.6%, followed by collective authorship (creative work between more than two people), with 19.4%. Regarding the time dedicated to tasks of audiovisual production, respondents say they dedicate, mostly (40.3%), between 4 and 8 hours a day, followed by 24.2% of those who dedicate between 8 and 12 hours a day to the same job. Regarding the activities prior to filming or editing, a large majority (58.1%) affirm that they take more than three months.

Another aspect consulted in the study is about academic training and specialization courses in creative writing. In general, it is a debated topic with considerations linked to the freedom of the scriptwriter and the commercial influences with which the best-known paradigms of audiovisual narrative associate, such as the model of the three acts, the journey of the hero or the central conflict theory. The results indicate that the script theory is quite present in the respondents, either in courses of universities or institutes (29.5%),

workshops or other training courses (26.2%) and self-taught training (32.8%). Despite these influences, they recognize that, when designing the guidelines of a story, there is no theoretical preference, since this varies according to the audiovisual project (56.5%). It is a key fact that the group consulted lacks academic experience or in training other filmmakers. When consulted about the last activity associated with outreach or research in the audiovisual area, the majority indicates a media interview (35%), followed by talks (13.3%), lectures at a university or institute (18.3%) or presentations in congresses or seminars (11.7%).

This has repercussions on the existence of a specific theoretical base or on an author with greater ascendancy in the creative process. Only a minor part of the respondents indicates that, at the time of writing or designing the guidelines of an audiovisual story, they resort to an original idea based on their biography or that of close ones (22.6%) and on the theory of central conflict or other classic models (12.9%). The great majority indicates that it varies according to the audiovisual project (56.6%). In the same vein, Aristotle and Robert McKee are the authors with which scriptwriters have the highest degree of identification (with 29% and 27.4%, respectively); a similar percentage chooses the option none of the above (27.4 %).

These data seem to confirm the absence or scarce relevance assigned to the script theory (or basics of dramaturgy) in the curriculum of audiovisual communicators. An initial review of the study plans –from which another qualitative research emerged– indicates that the script courses are far from the hours assigned to audiovisual composition or editing in Chilean film schools. This observation is, at least, contradictory, since the so-called generation of digital natives reaches higher education with much better aesthetic and audiovisual knowledge than its predecessor. As a consulted source says, “nowadays adolescents are born with images in their heads, they are complete digital alphabets, but of images; thus, that tool should not be unknown and we should add value to it, but it should be a State policy” (script professor, 44 years old). In spite of this, for a large part of the respondents, the current level of the script is superior in content and specialization than it used to be. A couple of decades ago, the absence of script professors forced film apprentices to learn by doing. At present, this training has been institutionalized through universities, film schools and script workshops open to the community. This, added to the availability of technical books,

Alternative	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
Script courses in university or institute	18	29.5
Master or diploma of script or creative writing	6	9.8
Workshops or training courses	16	26.2
Personal reading or self-taught education	20	32.8
I have not received formal script lessons	1	1.7

TABLE 1: QUESTION 6. Indicate the last update of contents related to script theory that you received.

Source: Own elaboration.

Alternative	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
Aristotle	18	29.5
Joseph Campbell	4	6.5
Syd Field	6	9.2
Robert McKee	17	27.4
None of the above	17	27.4

TABLE 2: QUESTION 10. Which of the following authors or classic thinkers do you identify as the one of greater theoretical influence for scriptwriters and script scholars today?

Source: Own elaboration.

writing manuals and online courses that teach the structure of the script, leads us to deduce that the interest in learning about narrative is increasingly higher, regardless of the path that each scriptwriter has.

Consistent with these statistical results, some opinions reinforce the need to know well the narrative models in order to propose other ways. The choice of these opinions is only exemplary. A respondent says that it is necessary:

To study and understand the basics of the script and the cinema and then transgress them if you want., and really understand them. I even think one should start writing as classic as possible, trying to tell a good story, well told. I also think that adapting literary works can be a great learning in the construction of stories since, classic or not, it is not easy (Film director, 34 years old).

In a similar vein, another opinion indicates that:

Study and deepen the knowledge of the subject, study the characters, then define what it is that you want to communicate, define a dramatic structure of the story,

define and know the characters, write the script from the story and the characters built, after this process and –with the written script– seek advice from a script expert. The script is the foundations of the building that will later be the film, if it does not work, the film will not work either. The process is long” (Scriptwriter, 38 years old).

There is no doubt that a great value is assigned to the script, but more as a structural basis than as a closed or unchangeable text. The questions referred to this matter confirm the initial hypothesis that, in general, those who intervene in the processes of change to the original text are the director (with 70.5% of preferences) and other agents of the filming process (49.2%).

The question referred to the authorship of the script is important. In general, writing manuals give account for the tension that exists between the writer’s authorial work and the modifications or objections imposed by the director. It is noted, however, that the Chilean reality is far from that controversy, since –mostly– the cinema of our country concentrates both roles in

the same person. Despite this, the nature of the script and its possibilities are defended throughout the post-production process through collective work.

Some opinions in that vein are the following:

“In the script, dream. In project development, think about distribution. In pre-production, adapt the script to the budget. When shooting, work with a technical script. When editing, the director is the editor” (Film director, 46 years old).

“Imagine a lot when writing. Think about the distribution, the development of the project. Adapt the script to the budget. Work with a technical script when filming and the director is the final editor” (Scriptwriter, 30 years old).

“A good director and his team can do something great with a good story. Everything depends on the story and the way of working. One must never lose passion” (Director, 52 years old).

When asked about how to achieve quality stories in Chilean cinema, most respondents (59%) are inclined towards the originality of the script or the search for their own narrative models. Further back, in order of preference, are the alternatives the existence of spectators interested in Chilean cinema (18%) and the professional training of the scriptwriter or director (14.8%).

Regarding the most used sources of funding, there is a match between preferring the State aid, through the Audiovisual Promotion Fund, and the national private funds (own resources, banks, companies, foundations or others), both with 42.6% of the answers. This has great significance, since it is still private financing that drives a large part of audiovisual projects in this period. The upward trend in the number of Chilean film released in the last five years confirms, however, the great impact that public policies have had on this matter. We must clarify that the lack of qualitative studies on the structure of the story has prevented the industry from seeing the relationship between the script models of those films and the professional standards of creation (Dittus, 2015a).

Future research could qualitatively deepen into the motivations of those who write for cinema. Do they do it to win funds or to captivate new audiences?, is the question that remains in the air. In practice, it is recognized that the usual is to submit to the contests financed by the State scripts that are modified during filming and then changed during editing. That reality, however, is inherent to audiovisual work and does not seem to be an obstacle to generating good critics results or at the box office. In other words, a carefully crafted

script defended to the end in the editing room does not guarantee a good film.

In this vein, the profile of the audiences is another controversial issue, mainly regarding the recipient of the work, and is the reason why many films released at festivals do not have the same impact in their commercial exhibition. When asked about the target audience, 41.7% of respondents said that it is the international mass audience, followed by the national mass audience and a more select public of lovers of good movies, both alternatives with 26.7%. The options to the second question, which seeks to understand the lack of support from the Chilean audience to the award-winning films, reaches similar percentages of answers: 32.3% of the respondents indicate that the criteria of festivals juries is not necessarily commercial, 27.4% indicates that Chilean filmmakers do not make films thinking of the general public and 24.2% of the answers consider that the narrative structure of American commercial cinema is dominant.

The support to the national cinema is a mandatory subject whenever the difficulties that the Chilean filmmakers have are addressed. The opinions expressed, however, show an infectious enthusiasm, but full of criticism. “State funds benefit repeated and commercial stories”, says one respondent (scriptwriter, 33 years old). The reason would be that “silly American cinema controls the cinemas and the public seems to enjoy them”, says the same person. “The only way to survive”, says another, “is never to discard self-management, to invent new forms of financing and resistance above all” (film director, 42 years old). Other opinions indicate that “given the ungrateful numbers of audience that Chilean cinema has historically had, leaving aside the few exceptions of audience success, the authors create with the certainty that the mass audience will not watch them” (producer, 52 years old). Thus, it seems that the discourses of Chilean cinema have been oriented towards the only audience they can aspire to, generating a vicious circle where it is not clear if it is little watched because it is a market niche or it is a market niche and, therefore, filmmakers have no choice but to respond to these expectations.

The following expressions support the indicated thesis:

“The film project should consider the opinion of the audience” (Producer, 44 years old).

“The audience is not the same as 15 or 20 years ago (...) the topic of dictatorship is tiring and *Mapuches* are not hobbits” (Film critic, 31 years old).

Alternative	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
Spectators interested in watching Chilean cinema	11	18
The budget of the movie	3	4.9
The originality or search for narrative models	36	59
The professional training of the scriptwriter or director	9	14.8
The alliance with foreign filmmakers	2	3.3

TABLE 3: QUESTION 22. The value given to the quality of stories in Chilean cinema depends, to a large extent, on:

Source: Own elaboration.

Alternative	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
The criteria of the festival jury is not necessarily commercial	20	32.3
Chilean spectators do not appreciate good cinema	2	3.2
Winning a festival is not synonymous with cinematographic quality	8	12.9
Chilean filmmakers do not make movies thinking about the public	17	27.4
The narrative of American commercial cinema is dominant	15	24.2

TABLE 4: QUESTION 23. In your opinion, why Chilean films awarded at international festivals do not have the same impact in cinemas?

Source: Own elaboration.

“Do not think about being validated by European festivals that try to show and bond with Latino filmmakers more than walking around red carpets” (Producer, 48 years old).

“The search should be a balance between a cinema that proposes aesthetic reflections, but at the same time satisfies the need to cultivate larger audiences” (Filmmaker, 33 years old).

“We have to look more closely at reality, stop thinking about film festivals and glamour, or the status they give” (University film teacher, 55 years old).

“Do not make a movie thinking about the prizes or the number of viewers that you will have. Rather think about what you want to say, be honest, original and creative” (Scriptwriter, 41 years old).

These opinions reflect the need for a path of their own. In the analysis of the evolution of Chilean cinema, its current state, its strengths and weaknesses, there is an agreement that we are not dealing with a consolidated industry, but rather with an artisanal one, with much desire and few resources, according to 41.9 % of respondents, and a varied range of artistic trends, according to 37.1%. In fact, there are substantive elements in the filmic narrative, such as authorial discourse and the identification of a conflict, which are recognized as strengths with 45% and 30% responses, respectively. Meanwhile, the construction of the plot, with 43.3%, and of dialogues, with 33.3%, appear as script weaknesses in the current Chilean cinema. For most respondents, all the dialogues should have a previous observation, interacting with different

characters in field visits, and observing their dynamics. The fact that the characters of flesh and blood are what inspired the fiction was permanently reinforced by some writers.

This vision of Chilean cinema is complemented by other dimensions of the same survey. Most of the respondents indicate that the main objective sought in the making of a film in Chile is to represent a historical or daily social reality (53.3%), followed by the options of entertaining the audience (16.7%), obtain recognition of peers and critics (13.3%), and raise a controversial social issue (11.7%). This perception is coherent with those who think -the majority- that there is no theme that is subject to censorship (40.3% of opinions) in the financing process, the dissemination or the exhibition of national cinema. Among the options listed as potentially censored topics are power (politics, religion, business), with 24.2% of preferences, and sexuality, with 19.4% of responses. Less voted alternatives are marginality (9.7%) and military dictatorship (6.5%). In the opinion of a respondent, due to the similar social origin of those who make films, narrative treatments tend to be similar. "In Chile, it is very unusual that writers do not follow schemes, even in the most reflective cinema. The cinema that is produced in the country is endogamous, that's why the cinematographic production responds to the same motivations", emphasizes the same source (film director, 31 years old). In the plot analysis made for this same study, the way in which conflicts are resolved is predictable. There is a logic in terms of good and evil and in the resolution of sexual, economic or political problems. The strategy trending is that of "do it yourself", in which outstanding productions are made in a few weekends and with a small digital camera, to tell personal stories, far from political denunciation, but protected in helplessness and the nostalgia, as confirmed by other studies (Horta, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

The data shown in this quantitative analysis draw the profile of the discrete profession of being a scriptwriter in Chile. It is a subtle radiography about those who mark the beginning of the productive chain of audiovisual production. In the core, they are professionals and technicians who dedicate a great deal of time to tasks related to the story, in any of the classic tasks of the field: production, direction or writing. In practice, they are all co-writers. The script as a methodology allows us to understand the point of view of an activity that draws

from a variety of backgrounds and irregular hours of dedication, expressed in a diversity of audiovisual formats and supports.

The answers to the questionnaire reveal a set of practices and ways of working the script in Chile that, far from closing the topic, open and reinforce it. The data confirm the inexistence of stable parameters or dramaturgical principles applied as a template in the process of scriptural creation (either following a school or inspired by an internal or external theoretical current), noting, instead, the coexistence of various creative processes, either in the generation of the dramatic idea or in the composition of those who participate in making the script. In that sense, the interviewees do not feel part of a scriptural tradition. The absence of a systematic formation in creative writing has repercussions in describing a typically Chilean identity, even when a certain ascription to foreign or more classic narrative models, such as the Aristotelian, is recognized. The little or moderate value given to the names proposed in the questionnaire reveals the lack of philosophical adherence to proven formulas.

The interference of another scriptwriter, director or expert in the scriptural phase is very valued, much more than what a researcher, an art critic or someone detached from the audiovisual area can say. This pair recognition implies the importance of the practice in an area with little theoretical development, since the richness of the script is the result of teamwork. The path of each project is faced with the opinions in a collaborative act in which the latest version is proposed, mostly, by the director and, to a lesser extent, the actors. The answers confirm the thesis that the script does not remain unchanged: it is not the master guide of the filming process nor a minor document that undergoes some changes based on budgetary needs. The script is sketched as a map, and not a territory. It reflects the nuanced reality of the actors, the locations, the last-minute expenses or the differences that the director has with the producer. The filming is presented, then, as a forest that the writer is not able to foresee with accuracy. It embraces all those possible changes based on artistic contributions of others involved in the filming process. In this regard, the practice of the recursive method is recognized, but in a collective way. The tensions surrounding authorship, originality, the quality of dialogues or the themes narrated are not relevant issues. Neither is the duality of director-scriptwriter. A significant number of respondents think

that both share authorship for the film, an idea that is validated with the possibility that the scriptwriter and the director are the same person.

An ever-controversial theme is the quality of the stories of Chilean cinema. The absence of themes perceived, in a categorical way, as material susceptible to censorship accounts for an audiovisual Chile that moves in greater spaces of freedom. The fact that identifying originality or searching for personal narrative are the value given to the quality of stories in Chilean cinema is the recognition that good cinema does not depend exclusively on financing or a good marketing strategy. This is evident once again, when authorial discourse is recognized as the great strength of our cinema. It is about the desire to narrate a point of view with risk, dedication and honesty. The counterpart is categorical. The maximum expressions of a good script appear as the dramaturgical weaknesses of Chilean cinema: plot and dialogues. The inability to locate that bifurcation seems to be the debt of those who measure the impact by the economic numbers. The lack of public support in cinemas is not consistent with the good reception of our films at festivals. That unknown territory is the

biggest challenge for the methodology of audiovisual creation. Most of the respondents manifest their ways of proceeding in this matter from opposite logics and philosophies but, in the end, they do not have annul each other.

The scriptural activity is approaching, very fast, to the logic of an increasingly demanding and competitive industry, where television has already shown clear signs of professionalism. Contemporary cinema – in its right diversity– demands new ways of telling stories and writers teams, in a society in which the radical change is no longer new technologies but the participation that audiences have in it. Following Scolari (2013), writing a script ceased to be the responsibility of a single person. Under this premise, it is possible to venture new research questions aimed at a business model that came to stay, in which what was once used for film and television is, nowadays, part of other audiovisual strategies. In short, we talk about the expansion of the narrative universe, where each medium –including cinema– can become a fragment that contributes, with the best of itself, to the story in that multiplatform experience.

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