The Creativity Maze: Exploring Creativity in Screenplay Writing

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The present article aims to address a current gap in our understanding of creativity in screenplay writing by focusing on the cognitive, conative, affective, and environmental factors that come into play at different stages in the creative process. It reports a study employing in-depth interviews with 22 recognized French screenplay writers. The findings reveal a series of distinct but interrelated stages in screenplay writing, starting, in general, from a long and enjoyable phase of impregnation, followed in some, but not all cases, by a formal phase of structuring (writing an outline and or treatment), and, finally, intense periods of writing and rewriting the script. These 3 stages, and, in particular, the multiple and concrete decisions to be taken within each one of them, support a vision of the creative process in this domain metaphorically conceptualized as crossing a maze. Creators prepare for this "journey," create "maps," and then enter the maze navigating through various true path segments and blind alleys. This maze is seldom traveled alone, the followed path is not linear, and there are several back-and-forth movements before reaching the "exit," which is represented by the "final" version of the script. These findings are discussed using central ideas from a number of theories, and ideas for future research are proposed.

Keywords: creative process, screenplay writing, script, literary creativity, multivariate approach

Alfred Hitchcock said, when asked about what is the most important part of filmmaking, "the script, the script, the script" (Truffaut, 1968). And yet the screenplay writer's activity is rarely visible and its end product, the script, almost never seen by audiences outside the film industry (Simonton, 2011).

Screenwriters' activity has been theorized from a multitude of perspectives from sociology, economy, and labor (Blair, 2001; Conor, 2010), to critical theory and gender studies (Cox, 2005; Kohn, 2000). Only a few volumes have been published based on interviews with celebrated screenwriters (e.g., Engel, 2002; Ferguson, 2004, 2009, 2014; Katz, 2000); others include personal reflections on one's own activity in the film industry (e.g., Goldman, 1996). The scarcity of studies is probably symptomatic of the marginalization of screenplay writers within a highly hierarchical film industry (Conor, 2010; Pritzer & McGarva, 2009).

The present article aims, in this context, to contribute to our understanding of creativity in the case of recognized French screenwriters. It focuses, in particular, on the activity of writing a script as well as on individual differences that have the potential to shape this activity. To do this, we consider first the stages of the creative process as experienced by screenwriters.

The Creative Process of Screenplay Writers

The creative process has been a key topic within the psychology of creativity during the past century. Wallas (1926) distinguished four main stages—preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. However, the general stages proposed by Wallas might

not be adequate to capture the essence of screenwriting activities. For example, discussing writing processes more generally, Hayes (1996) proposed a simpler, more specific model including the interrelating phases of planning, generation, and revision.

Screenwriting can be considered within the creative problem-solving framework. In one formulation of this model, Treffinger (1995) discussed three sets of processes specific for creative work: understanding the problem (including mess finding, data finding, and problem finding), generating ideas (idea finding, elaboration of ideas, and evaluation of ideas), and planning for action (solution finding and acceptance finding). To capture these particularities in relation to screenplay writing, Redvall (2009) applied the creative problem-solving model to the creation of the Danish film *Lille soldat*. This case study revealed that institutional acceptance and financing issues have a determining role in passing from one stage of scriptwriting to the next. This research highlighted the role of collaborative exchanges, including meetings with the actors, in shaping the final outcome and also the importance of specialist, disciplinary knowledge in this exchange.

The role of knowledge as a type of resource is emphasized but also contextualized within the multivariate approach to creativity (Lubart, Mouchiroud, Tordjman, & Zenasni, 2003; Sternberg & Lubart, 1995). This framework considers different resources for creativity such as intelligence, knowledge, cognitive style, personality, affect, motivation, and environmental aspects. Within the multivariate model, resources are grouped into four broad categories: cognitive, conative, affective, and environmental. Hayes's (1996) updated model of the three main processes (planning, generation, and revision) makes reference to several of the "resources" aforementioned. He made a link between these processes and the cognitive functions of reflection, production, and interpretation, and referred, for example, to the role played by information retrieved from long-term memory in writing the text. These cognitive elements were also related to other aspects such as motivation, affect, and the task environment.

However, when faced with screenwriters' descriptions of their own work, it becomes hard to recognize distinct stages within a process that seems experimental above all else; for instance, the French screenplay writer and celebrated novelist Jean-Claude Carrière (1994, p. 177) characterized it as a "step-by-step discovery of a theme, a story, a style—a highly erratic process marked by long dry spells and sudden flashes."

The present study aims to analyze the activity of professional screenplay writers, its stages, and their characteristics, based on interview material, considering, as well, the differences between writers based on their professional training (graduates from scriptwriting and/or filmmaking schools vs. writers without specific training, e.g., literature, history, philosophy) and their previous or current experience as novelist, scriptwriter, or director.

Method

Participants

An initial sample of 41 French professional screenwriters were contacted to take part in this study. They were selected by two film studies specialists on the basis of their institutional recognition (e.g., their films were well received by film critics and they enjoyed recognition from peers). Among them, 22 (54%) accepted

and an appointment was made with each scriptwriter, by e-mail or phone, during which the study was briefly presented. Following this, scriptwriters were interviewed either in their home or at their office. The sample included seven female and 15 male professional scriptwriters. Biographical details such as age, experience, formal education, function, types of film scripts written, and prizes and awards are presented in the Results section (see Table 1).

Materials

The interview guide used to collect data started with a general presentation of the scriptwriter. Then the writers were asked to reflect on the stages of their creative process, to present the general way in which they create a new script, and to illustrate these aspects by describing one of their most successful productions.

The interview guide used was based on the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) and invited participants to describe in detail a particular creative activity in order to avoid as much as possible generalizations and vague descriptions:

> Among the scripts you have written or cowritten, is there one in particular that you consider as the most important in your career? Can you describe how you wrote it? Did you follow the official steps: synopsis, treatment, outline and then the script? Did you think of particular actors while writing? and so forth.

Adapted questions from the Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ) developed by McCormick, Denisi, and Shaw (1979), were included to cover scriptwriters' activity in terms of information input (where and how the scriptwriter gets information and inspiration), mental processes (reasoning, planning, thinking, daydreaming, problem solving, decision making), relationships with others, job context, and constraints.

Procedure

Before starting, the interviewer presented in detail the research and its objectives. The interviews were semistructured and lasted for 90 min on average. All interviews were recorded with the authorization of the participants (their anonymity was guaranteed), and then transcribed verbatim. The verbatim transcription consisted of faithfully noting the verbal content of the interview, including remarks about onomatopoeias, pauses, and so forth. Direct quotations from the participants are presented in the Results section.

Data Analysis

A qualitative coding of the 22 interviews was performed. Thematic coding was achieved, though the construction of a coding frame that was both data and theory driven. The theoretical background for framing questions was the creative problem-solving model (Treffinger, 1995), with a special focus on the stages of understanding the problem, generating ideas, and planning for action. In addition, "emotional outcomes" were also considered.

Twenty analysts (postgraduate psychology students) each independently coded four interviews, and, after applying the initial coding frame, proposed a detailed set of features regarding the various sources of information and inspiration, as well as the mental processes involved in this type of activity. Then they

Table 1
Scriptwriters' Demographics, Experience, and Achievement

	Directors ($n = 8$)	Scriptwriters ($n = 9$)	Novelists ($n = 5$)	Total ($N = 22$)
Gender				
Male ($n = 15$)	100%	33%	80%	71%
Female ($n = 7$)		67%	20%	43%
Age				
40–50 ($n = 14$)	75%	78%	20%	64%
50–60 ($n = 5$)	12,5%	22%	40%	23%
>60 ($n = 3$)	12,5%		40%	14%
Education				
Filmmaking & scriptwriting schools ($n = 10$)	63%	44%	20%	45%
Experience				
Average experience in years (A)	24.4 ± 8.5	17.1 ± 5.5	24.6 ± 7.1	21.4 ± 7.6
Number of films (B)	137	114	122	373
Average: B/participant	17.1 ± 6	12.7 ± 6.7	24.4 ± 12	16,95
Average: B/A (year)	.77 ± .35	.77 ± .36	.96 ± .26	.88 ± .33
Type of films				
Authors ($n = 8$)	10%	38%	40%	29%
Drama ($n = 9$)	56%	23%	20%	32%
Comedy ($n = 2$)	11%	8%	0%	7%
TV ($n = 4$)	11%	15%	20%	14%
All types ($n = 5$)	22%	15%	20%	18%
Nominations & awards				
Total (C)	65	16	15	96
Average: C/participant	8.12 ± 6.7	1.8 ± 1.2	3 ± 3.5	4.4 ± 5.2
Average: C/A (years)	.34 ± .24	.12 ± .11	.11 ± .12	.20 ± .20
Average: C/B (total films)	.65 ± .73	.23 ± .27	.10 ± .09	.35 ± .51

enriched the main categories with subcategories, as shown in Table 2 in the Results section.

Elements in the aforementioned frame were scored for presence or absence in the interviews, and, when present, descriptive quotes were selected from the text data to illustrate the elements of the frame and they were rated on a scale according to their importance for the creative process (1 = *unimportant*; 2 = *of little importance*; 3 = *moderately important*; 4 = *important*; 5 = *very important*). "Importance" corresponds to the emphasis placed by the script-writer on a particular item or aspect of the writing process. Emotions were not rated in terms of importance because the scriptwriters expressed these during different stages of the creative process.

To ensure consistency in coding, the 20 analysts coded the interviews using the consolidated checklist, and the overall agreement between coders was then determined for each interview as a whole (e.g., not for each category). The correlation coefficients matrix showed a high level of agreement between the analysts for presence–absence (.90). However, the rating of the "importance" of an item in the creative process was more subject to personal interpretation when writers were ambiguous or ambivalent. In addition, some analysts considered the recurrence of an item in the writer's discourse, whereas others rated an item according to the emphasis placed by the writer on this item. This led to a moderate level of agreement per interview: .70 on average, with a minimum as low as .66 and a maximum of .88. For each interview, an average score was used per item and the descriptive quotes were aggregated.

Results

The analysis of the interviews with 22 professional scriptwriters covered the whole writing process as well as the differences between scriptwriters at each stage. This section will describe, first, an overview of job context and the scriptwriters' biography, and second, the chronology of the scriptwriting stages and activities from the emergence of the initial idea of a film to the production of the "final" version of the script. Cognitive, conative, affective, and environmental factors mobilized during each stage of the creative process are explored.

Scriptwriters' Biography and Job Context

Table 1 shows the main information related to the scriptwriters' age, experience, formal education, function, number and types of film scripts written, and prizes and awards.

Occupation or function. Forty-one percent of the participants presented themselves as scriptwriters making a living based only on their scriptwriting activity, and, among them, two had also a limited previous experience of filming (a short film or documentary). Thirty-six percent presented themselves as "film directors," writing scripts for their own films and cowriting other directors' films; finally, 23% were both scriptwriters and novelists. Two directors in our sample produced their own films. An alphanumeric code was attributed to interview quotes in order to differentiate between these three main categories of participants—"D" for director, "S" for scriptwriters, "N" for novelist—and was numbered from 1 to 22.

Age and experience. Sixty-four percent of professional scriptwriters were between 40 and 50 years of age. Three writers had previous experience in acting. The average experience in scriptwriting and filmmaking was 21.4 ± 6.2 years. The oldest and the most experienced writers were novelists and the youngest and least experienced ones were scriptwriters.

Table 2
Sources of Information, Inspiration, and the Mental Processes Involved in the Creative Process

	Frequency	Importance means (SD)
Verbal input		
Communication with sponsors, peers, cowriters	91%	4.48 ± .82
Interviews & meetings with experts (e.g., doctors)	64%	4.02 ± .76
Visual input		
Written material (reading books, magazines, newspapers, archives)	77%	4.24 ± 1.15
Others' productions (watching films & documentaries, visiting art galleries, looking at photos)	68%	3.24 ± 1.11
Human behavior and physical appearance (actors, politicians, strangers . . .)	64%	3.20 ± 1.16
Other sources of inspiration		
Chance, hazard, and unexpected events	59%	3.85 ± .90
Desires	73%	3.06 ± 1.13
Introspection	68%	3.91 ± 1.22
Intuition, instinct, unconscious processes	55%	3.69 ± 1.04
Mental processes		
Imagination, dreaming	50%	3.17 ± 1.29
Incubation, thinking, reflection	50%	4.18 ± 1.17
The cycle of writing: New ideas–Making choices–Action or change	86%	3.42 ± .75
Solving problems/reasoning	41%	3.55 ± 1.13
Structuring, planning (frequency of use)		
Synopsis (never, avoid)	95%	1.18 ± .66
Outline & treatment		
Group 1 (never, avoid)	45%	1.99 ± .70
Group 2 (always)	55%	4.38 ± .83

Note. Frequency = percentage of interviews including an item. Importance for the Creative Process scale: 1 (*unimportant*), 2 (*of little importance*), 3 (*moderately important*), 4 (*important*), 5 (*very important*). Average score and standard deviation (*SD*) of the importance of an item over the interviews in which the item was mentioned.

Participants wrote scripts mainly for art cinema (e.g., author films) and/or dramatic films. Scriptwriters and novelists wrote mostly scripts for author films and described their films as the type that open on few screens and earn less money. For example, one novelist who works regularly with an art cinema director commented on this type of film:

> with [name of the director], with whom I worked the most: it's someone who sees the script as a kind of intellectual question rather than a story to tell. So there are days and days of discussion together, debate, theorizing, shared readings, and so forth. (N15)

Directors are more involved in writing for dramatic films than any other type. Nearly 20% of participants accepted all kinds of productions: author, drama, adaptations for TV, comedy, or documentary.

Participants were involved in a total of 373 films. The average number of films per participant was the highest for novelists (24.4 ± 12) and the lowest for scriptwriters (12.7 ± 6.7). When experience is taken into account, the ratio number of films/experience (years) was again the highest for novelists (0.96 ± .26 films per year). The average number of films for directors was as low as 17.1 ± 6, with a ratio of .77 ± .35 films per year, similar to scriptwriters. Although novelists and directors both had an average of 24 years experience, directors were involved in a fewer number of films, which could be explained by the long process of making a film once the script is "finished."

The majority (82%) of participants wrote scripts for films with small or medium budgets (up to €3M [$4-million] or between €3M and €7M [$4-million and $9.4-million], respectively), and even high-budget films (more than €7M [$9.4-million]) remain very modest compared with the $71.5-million average budget for a film distributed out of a major Hollywood film studio (Ferguson, 2009). Despite the relative low budget of their films, participants mentioned that, in France, the production is more interested in feasibility and money than in art:

> From my point of view, I find that there is a rampant censorship, which consists of asking: Will this film make money? Will the budget be paid off when the film opens on screens and through its various revenues? There are about 90% to 95% of movies that are considered like that and that are designed like that. . . . It's like a dictatorship of the mind, or the dictatorship of the market, because it must sell. (D18)

> What producers say here in France is still often quite poor: "I like/I do not like"; "It looks like me/it does not look like me"; "It will work/it will not work." . . . They never talk about art. They never talk about content! They talk about "feasibility." If only they said, I like romantic movies. But no, they do not even say that anymore. There is no "taste" anymore. (D16)

Background and education. More than half of the participants (55%) were self-taught with a degree in literature, psychology, history, journalism, philosophy, or political sciences. Some of them were sarcastic when commenting on how younger generations of French scriptwriters adopted the American way of structuring a story in acts, plot points, and so forth.

I do not know all these techniques. I hear more and more about them, with English words of which I know nothing. I think there are a lot of young writers who have been trained in that school and apply with conviction these certainties that after 7 and a half minutes, such event must happen and we cannot have a certain type of character without having its negative double, and so forth I have always worked empirically. I learned my trade with artisans on the workbench. (N13)

The others (45%) had graduated in scriptwriting and/or filmmaking from New York or Parisian universities and French schools for film studies (FEMIS [École Nationale Supérieure des Métiers de l'Image et du Son], IDHEC [Institut des hautes études cinématographiques], ENSATT [École nationale supérieure des arts et techniques du théâtre]). Participants' comments about the benefits of graduating from these schools varied between directors and scriptwriters. According to the directors in our sample, there was no formal training in scriptwriting in their schools or universities—they considered themselves as self-taught when it comes to writing a script; however, they recognized that they benefited from the opportunity to occupy different positions in the film crew (cameramen, editing, etc.) and learned a lot from making a dozen films over 3 years. One director commented on the chance offered by the school to "fail a film without any negative consequences on the opportunity to make another film; to be liberated and not haunted" (D4).

Writers, who graduate in scriptwriting from schools, described the benefits in terms of acquiring the discipline of daily work, a better tolerance to critics, as well as the need to understand the intrinsic motivation or the goal of the story to be written:

I always loved writing, but before attending this school, I wrote sporadically, waiting for "inspiration" . . . from the [title of the school], writing became for me a craft, something more concrete . . . I began to understand the value of daily work. I can no longer work differently: I must sit down almost every day at a table in front of a computer, and force myself to write even if I have no ideas. Then ideas come from the work itself. (S2)

[In this school] I have learned to confront what I wrote to the scrutiny of other—which then allowed me to withstand criticism, reassessment . . . the principle to always ask why I wrote that? What effect do I want to convey? These are basic questions, but before, I would not bother to ask them of myself. (S14)

Achievement. Participants received a total of 96 awards and nominations, and directors, in particular, received 68% of them. Although the collected information might be incomplete (information gathered from cinema websites) and the analysis not thorough (compared with Simonton's, 2011, extensive research), it seems that the directors who write or cowrite their scripts win more prizes and award nominations than the other categories of writers. As previously indicated, they are mainly involved in drama films.

Satisfaction and recognition. Among the participants who mentioned their income (68%), the majority (80%) were satisfied with the overall level of pay for their professional activity, the number of contracts they had, and mentioned satisfaction linked to their profession such as reading and writing: "[being a professional writer gives me] freedom. The right to read, as if I had bought my reading time" (S1).

Unlike directors, scriptwriters and novelists mentioned a lack of public and media recognition in France:

There is no recognition in this profession. Recognition goes to actors, producers and directors. The rest does not exist. Neither the writers nor the technicians. (N12)

The public could not care less, and journalists generally do not talk about it. (N10)

I know very well that the public will never read my name in the closing credits nor do I dream about being invited to a TV show . . . but what is disgraceful is to be quite systematically undersomething: underpaid, underrewarded, underrecognized. (S14)

One novelist mentioned that the only scriptwriters who receive credit for their work are those who write for TV series: "It is true that the boss in a TV series is the one who made the Bible, who wrote at least the first few episodes and basically designed the thing" (N8).

Although complaining from a lack of recognition, the idea of directing a film seems a very daunting task for scriptwriters, and even for some directors, preferring to remain in the "shadow" of a director either because they consider that they do not have the necessary skills, the leadership, or the "urgent need to tell a story in images":

I could never block a street, or spend four years on the same thing . . . It scares me. I would not be this kind of entrepreneur, and I think I do not have the disposition for it. . . . And I'm not even talking about the day the film is released or the day before, it seems crazy to me. Directors are protected by their defenses, by an excitement and by the conviction that their film is good, which I would never find in myself. While here, I can hide myself. The writer is stashed. (S1)

[To become] a director, no, I do not want to do it because I think it involves a special talent, it requires the kind of force of an entrepreneur: One must constantly move mountains at all levels. (S15)

For me, there is more pleasure in being hidden behind the director with whom I work rather than in the exhibition and in the act of saying this is my movie. (D9)

First, I'm shy. . . . But above all I did not feel I have something "urgent" to say and I did not see images in an acute way, as an "urge." (S17)

Scriptwriters tend to seek solace in writing books or in the number of contracts they sign and the recognition of their peers. They were also satisfied when the film was well received by film critics or the general public and, consequently, a producer or a director wished to work with them again.

Working environment and hours. The majority of participants commented on the fact that their professional and personal lives are intertwined (writing, shopping, cleaning, cooking, picking up children from school, etc.). They worked mainly at home or in cafeterias and sometimes in a production office:

I work in cafes. At home I do the printing and the correction. But the first draft, it is never at home . . . In a café I have the feeling that I manage to be just a mind at work . . . at home, it is as if all defined myself too much as myself. (S3)

Among the participants who mentioned their working hours (68%), the majority (84%) enjoyed their freedom and autonomy regarding their working hours and not having to go every morning to an office. Despite this freedom, they all worked

extended hours (up to 15 hr/day) during the writing and rewriting phase.

Some participants mentioned their need to listen to music or to have background noise, which helped them to be creative while writing:

I listen to music, radio . . . I have always something in my ears when I write. It is like a state of trance. (N5)

I go to coffee shops because there is a soundscape that helps me to be "absent of myself," distant from the person I am all the time. . . . Being outside, in other circumstances, and with a sort of background noise gives me greater freedom for objects to "circulate" in my head and around me. I feel that the connections are not similar (when working at home). (S3)

If I work in conditions where a whole part of myself is forced to fight against the outside, against noise for example, the surplus of power that I deploy to resist allows me to concentrate better. I am fiercer with my own object, more active. . . . more powerful in what I am going to tell, avoiding coquetry or things that would just be pleasing to me. (D16)

Scriptwriters' Activities and Their Stages

Writing a script was based on a concept, a true story, a book, a synopsis, or an existing script. A director or producer can commission a scriptwriter, novelist, or another director to write or cowrite the script. After accepting a demand for writing a script or having an idea for a film, the writers will engage in different activities and stages that can be summarized as follows (see Figure 1): impregnation (Phase A), structuration (Phase B) and writing–rewriting (Phase C). These phases involve information input from different sources, mental processes, and are associated with specific emotions (see Tables 2 and 3). Several similarities and differences among participants were observed in relation to the importance and the order of these general activities and stages.

The demand or the initial idea. Only directors (36%) wrote or cowrote a script animated by an intrinsic desire or need to create a film. For the majority of participants, writing a script had its origin in a demand mainly from a director and sometimes from the producer of a TV series or documentary. Being commissioned by a producer to write a script for a film without knowing who will be
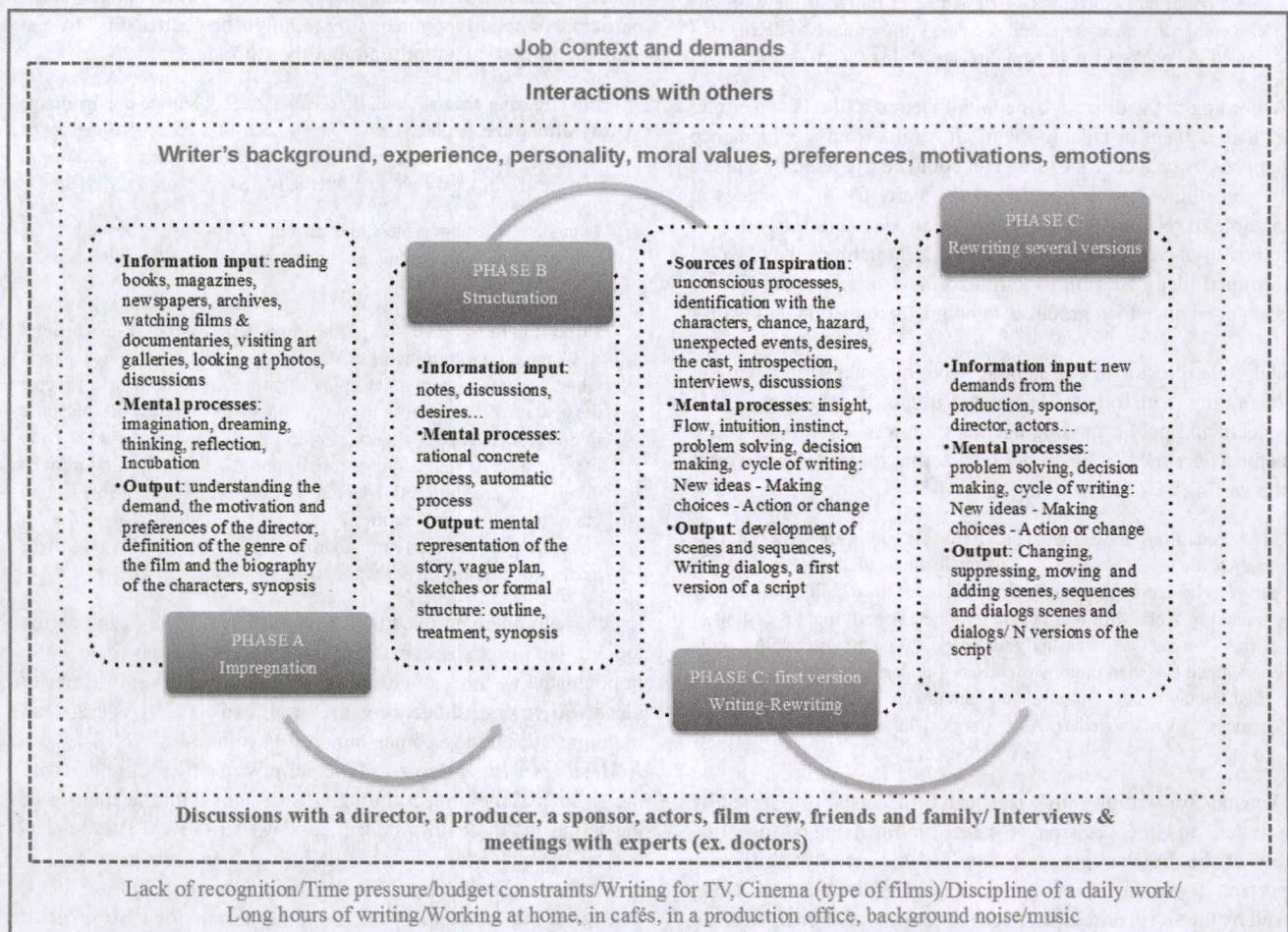

Figure 1. Activities and stages of the writing as well as job context and demands. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Table 3

Positive and Negative Emotions Involved in the Three Stages of the Creative Process: Impregnation, Structuring and Production

Positive emotions		Negative emotions	
Pleasure	82%	Hesitation/doubt/blocks	80%
Jubilation	50%	Frustration	55%
Excitement	45%	Anxiety	55%
Interest/passion	32%	Sadness	36%
Amusement	27%	Bad mood	23%
Pride	23%	Boredom	14%
Enthusiasm	23%		

Note. Frequency = percentage of interviews containing the specified emotion. Pleasure, jubilation, frustration, anxiety, and doubt were the most frequently quoted emotions.

the director was mentioned only twice; in one case, the experience was described as "exciting," and in the other case, as a "nightmare" because of a lack of guidance and feedback during script development, as reported by a novelist:

> To take a simple example, if I write that the character enters a building, will he take the stairs or the elevator? Basically, I do not care. I prefer that a director says: "I will never film in an elevator!" At least things are clear; someone decides. I do not have to decide. If I wanted to decide, I would be a director. (N13)

According to the directors, the initial idea of a film is something that "haunts them or talks to them"; it results from a coincidence or happens by chance; for example, it could be triggered by a photo or by something seen or heard. The difficulty for them resides in being able to recognize the potential of an idea and to develop it. Two novelists commented on the fact that sometimes they "gave" the original idea of a film to a director, and one reported that he was engaged once by a producer to help a director find an idea for a film.

Only one director in our sample wrote his own scripts without collaborating with others. However, it has been reported that producers and public funding agencies are less keen to support a director who writes on his or her own script; they even participate in the casting of screenwriters:

> The conditions have tightened. Before, there were very intimate stories, focusing exclusively on the feelings of the director. Such projects have now more and more difficulties to be built . . . A director wanted to work with me, but the production performed a casting of writers—which is increasingly the case. . . . and a writer with a more developed CV than mine was chosen. I understand that the producer tried to play it safe: But in the end the director and the writer did not manage to work together. As I was next in line, they called me in. (S15)

Demands for writing film scripts can be accepted or rejected by the writer, and the decision is based on financial reasons (the ability of the director/sponsor to pay for this activity) and, more importantly, personal preferences (accepting because of being moved by the story, or rejecting because the genre of the film is not of interest): "There are subjects I could not do, so I say no. And there are subjects that do not interest me, so again I say no. . . . Then money matters" (S20).

The alchemy and the affinity with the director was described as being of great importance by scriptwriters when they commented on previous bad experiences:

> It occurred to me to work with lunatics, it was hell. And I do not want that, I do not want to work in a kind of sadomasochistic relationship, or in a kind of vampiric relationship. (D18)

> I do not want to work anymore with psychopaths, and there are still too many. . . . because projecting neuroses onto others does not bring much. (S15)

> When I meet someone who has expressed his desire to work with me, I take the time to know if I would want to work with him. . . . If he is someone who is very hysterical, who tends to worship an idea the night before only to burn it the next day, there is no way it can work. If it's someone who knows too much what he wants it also bothers me because I feel I will just have to fill the gaps. (N10)

Phase A: Impregnation. During this phase, scriptwriters focused on understanding the demand through discussions with the director or peers, collecting an important amount of documentation, and, finally, thinking and "dreaming" about the topic of the film. This initial phase can last several weeks and even months before writing the actual script begins; it was considered a determinant phase in the creative process. Referring to this phase, some participants made comments regarding their difficulty to get started and how they "turn around the film idea":

> I like to hang around, read, do nothing . . . If I am the one in charge of writing the outline, I say: "yeah, yeah, it's coming along" even though I have not written a f***g line. But I have taken some notes, I have read . . . I have worked internally. (S1)

> I am starting a new project and currently I am turning around. It's a kind of ritual: I am turning around the topic like wolf around its prey. (D18)

> I find it hard to tackle the job head on. I first circle, I turn around it. I have a relation to work a bit like the way I read the newspaper: when I spot a page in a newspaper that interests me, I read first all those with little interest to me to finish by reading the one that interests me. This is a very perverse mania; when I find a good idea, or a scene that I like, I turn around it. Generally, I do a lot of things that are indirectly related to the work, I read a lot, I copy many texts that interest me, I see a lot of movies, I listen to a lot of music . . . I do many things around the work which I think will be the foundation of the work itself. (D4)

Other writers mentioned their need of being impregnated by the topic of the film to be able to generate ideas: "One has to be really impregnated with his story. . . . if one is sufficiently impregnated, ideas will emerge suddenly while on the bus. . . . If you are not impregnated, nothing comes out, you have no idea" (N12).

Meetings with sponsors. The scriptwriter tries to understand the "heart" of the project through discussions with the sponsor of the script, the director, producer, or cowriter (91%). These meetings are frequent (usually on a daily basis) and are associated in general with the feeling of interest and pleasure in sharing ideas. Dialogues are free and open, and these discussions are of great importance for the majority of the scriptwriters (importance score and $SD = 4.48 \pm .82$). In this phase, there is a lot of "desire" (73%) and openness to whatever comes.

One of the major aims of these meetings is to understand the motivation behind the film. Some writers described these meeting as "psychoanalytic" sessions necessary to discover the motivation and preferences of the director:

> Besides, I think that working with the director would count as psychoanalysis . . . . we talk about "sessions." We meet every day—this is a serious analysis. . . . especially when it's personal. . . . we have to talk about very intimate things, otherwise it will not work. Sometimes you're dealing with people who have difficulty verbalizing, and you're there to listen, bring them slowly to speak about themselves. (N13)

Similarly, a director who wrote a script for another director, said,

> I have to strike a deep chord. . . . he (the director) must explain to me in an analytical way or another, whatever. But, I need to know why he is interested in this subject. Because if I do not know, I might take him to side roads, and this is not the desired outcome. (D18)

A scriptwriter offered an interpretation of the cause of a bad script as a lack of understanding the meaning of the story rather than the writing:

> Because a very bad scenario, it is not that it is not well written, but the question as to why this story has to be told has not been asked. . . . when the purpose is lacking, in fact. . . . When there is a purpose, a real drive, something will always come out of it. (S22)

Another aim of these first meetings is to define the characters, the topic of the film, set the tone, and decide on the genre (all within the constraints of the film budget), but also to get to know each other and the habits and the filming preferences of the director, as mentioned in the following interview passage:

> For me it is essential to discuss the options for the film. If you write things that the other doesn't want to film or doesn't know how to film, even if the script is good, it will be a catastrophe on the screen. . . . For example, I wrote for [name of a director] and I've come to understand that she does not film spaces at all. . . . she prefers people. . . . When directing she always forgot to film spaces, scenery, and location, that have an important role in the script. (N5)

In general, the scriptwriter takes notes and then sketches out a temporary storyboard showing several alternatives; the familiarization with the main characters of the story starts at this stage and their personality and biography are defined.

Documentation. The majority of participants declared that they collect information for their writing through:

• Reading books, magazines, newspapers and consulting archives (77%). This is a very important source of information, and the amount of data collected for each film is usually disproportionate compared with the needs of the script, as "each film is an excuse to buy a ton of books." (D20);

• Consulting experts (64%) to give their characters more credibility and complexity;

• Watching plenty of films and documentaries, visiting art galleries and museums to become permeated with an epoch, a subject, or a theme;

• Observing human behavior and the physical appearance of politicians, actors, and family members, or even strangers could be a source of information or inspiration (64%).

Thinking and dreaming. Half of the participants emphasized the importance ($4.18 \pm .17$) of thinking, reflecting, or allowing time for incubation during this initial phase of working on a script. They considered that incubation helps establish unconscious connections that are important for the productive phase of the creative process. In addition, 70% of them mentioned that the impregnation phase is strongly associated with a lot of "day dreaming" about the topic of the film and imaging situations:

> Dreaming for as long as possible about things, in a chaotic and erratic way, I try to make this time of openness last as long as possible. I find that this space of connections made at the beginning, mainly because you are still not "under the gun," is generally decisive. (S3)

> I need time to imagine, to leave some room for daydreaming. . . . In any case, I think that it is like a washing machine cycle, you know, the ones that are very slow: We believe the machine is done but no, in fact it continues to work. In fact, you can do other things, even watch a silly TV show, there are neurons that connect and stay on the topic. It is foundational work being done: it moves, it is always there. (N13)

This long process of impregnation seems to be limited when it comes to adapting a book, writing for a TV series, and when the script is based on a true story or personal experience. Two scriptwriters who were mainly involved in a literary adaptation considered that most of the time they did not create anything because the story already existed—they knew what to "tell" even when taking some liberties with the original book, and the basic work was to read the book and decide on what to keep and what to leave out. However, sometimes the changes were so deep that the script was considered as original work "inspired by the main idea of the book": "It was a script inspired loosely from the book: it does not end the same way, the characters do not have the same age, and so forth The sociology remains the same, but many things have changed" (S22).

Phase B: Structuring and planning. This phase, which focuses on building the "architecture" of the story, includes the writing of a synopsis (the condensed version of the plot), an outline (a list of scenes and sequences), and a treatment (the elaborated version of the outline in 30 to 40 pages).

The great majority of scriptwriters (90%) considered writing the synopsis before finishing the script to be an "aberration due to production constraints"; unless they are formally contracted to do so, they refuse to write it in the initial phase of the creative process because, as mentioned by one participant, "It seems very artificial; it forces us to develop a story with characters we do not yet know . . . .we have to pretend. . . . I hate it" (S2).

However, one director commented on the necessity for him to have a synopsis: "When I write for myself and because I am not a famous director, I always have to 'go through' with a synopsis or treatment to get funding" (D18).

One major difference in this regard between scriptwriters was related to creating an outline and a treatment. Two groups can be identified based on this.

A first group of 10 scriptwriters (three directors, four novelists, and four autodidact scriptwriters) considered the writing of an outline and/or a treatment as a daunting task and avoided it unless formally specified in the contract. They declared that they are against a preconceived plan; for them, the writing of the narrative is not about "filling in the gaps" of the outline:

I feel I should have written a scene to know how to "shape" the next one. It's the same for my books, I do not have a plan. (N8)

I am not able to follow the official steps: synopsis, treatment, outline and finally script. I can proceed with the details of some scenes while I still do not know yet what will be the end of the film. . . . I do not start from the skeleton and then add muscles, organs and so on. What I have is some organs, some muscles, a head, arms, maybe bones, and when I have all the parts of the body I try to combine them and make them fit together. (D6)

This is also why I do not like the outlines and treatments: I find them too predictable. Especially now that they are "validated" by the producers, so if you change something, they strike back. (N8)

However, they do recognize the use of a basic or "vague" road map of drawings and diagrams made for personal use: "I have in general a vague idea of the architecture [of the script], but a finished plan is something that I never get to have and wouldn't like to make" (N8).

In addition, experience seems to balance the lack of a rigorous plan or outline. Indeed, the discourse of some writers suggests that some processes as complex as building a story or adopting a 90-min format became automatic with time:

I have the impression of having acquired a certain competency regarding these fundamental questions: how to construct a story, depart from one already written, how to write dialogues that don't sound too awkward, how to enter a scene and end it without getting lost. (N8)

Writing is a matter of "breath." A story of 1 hour 30, it is a bit like an athletic discipline: The more you practice, the more you are comfortable. But I'm useless when I have to write a short film! What's crazy is that, almost by magic, by experimentation as well, the rhythm of 90 minutes becomes natural. I have great difficulty with other rhythms. (S15)

A second group of 11 scriptwriters (among them six with a specific education in scriptwriting) seemed very rigorous about developing an outline and treatment before starting to write:

After this very open dialogue phase, I start with the treatment which I often offer to write alone. In general the directors agree, because the treatment is a step that pisses them off, while it allows me to already set things. (S14)

In this group, scriptwriters described the benefits of the outline as follows:
• It sets the temporal pattern of the narrative: the plot order, the duration of the story, the rhythm of the story, the shortcuts, acceleration, ellipsis, flashbacks;
• It helps to have an overview of the story, which is one of the major challenges during the writing-rewriting phase;
• It is a useful diagnostic tool; it helps to step back from the manuscript to see what might be wrong in it.
The structuration phase seems to involve rational concrete mental processes:

You can have all the talent and all the literary imagination—which are two essential components of the profession—if you don't have the skills for this tedious task of structuring, you cannot go far. This is something that has more to do with math, a kind of mental structure or consistency: such cause produces such effect. (N15)

The scriptwriters in the second group emphasized that the initial structure of the treatment or the outline is neither static nor a definitive tool. It is most often challenged or updated retroactively while writing scenes and dialogues because of the choices that are continuously made. It acts like a hybrid object containing dialogues.

The exact moment when the outline or treatment is written can vary. For example, an outline may be generated early in the process in order to understand the problem, and then written formally before the production phase or after an initial version of the script.

The differences between these two groups mentioned above have been described by one scriptwriter:

It is as if you are starting a walk. There are two schools: you either go on an adventure and let yourself be guided by the path, or you carefully study the maps, weather forecast, possible pitfalls, and so forth Either way you can have a very nice walk. (N13)

Phase C: Production. This stage concerns the actual process of writing and rewriting the script. For some participants, the writing process seems to take place intensively and at great speed; some of them declared that they set time constraints for working:

And suddenly I would say, let's get started! . . . I like this frantic process: I get up at 4:30 in the morning, I work all day. . . . it becomes a kind of war plan. . . . I can stay 15 hours completely immersed in my work. (S1)

Other writers seemed to wander aimlessly as reported below by participants who, in general, disliked the development of formal architecture:

I'm going in all directions, like a hunter who wanders in a forest. (D16)

For an original script, I start from a situation, which seems interesting or funny. Then I try to see where it will lead me. In most cases, I don't know where I am going. Things build up gradually, and the meaning of all this emerges very late and sometimes not at all. (D6)

I start writing the scene, I know roughly where I want to go, even though I do not really know how to get there, and the fact of writing by following the character makes me find it. (D20)

For example I start a scene, I try to write dialogues, and then I realize that it is too early. If you do not know where it all goes, you often find that the dialogues are very poor. So I always work everything at the same time: I write a synopsis and I start a scene. . . . It is very mixed, and frankly it's a bit of a bloody mess. (N12)

When writing for a TV series in which the format is clear and always the same, the creative process speeds up; as a scriptwriter pointed out,

For example, I think of those who write series or things very formatted for TV. They are more professional than me, as they know how to treat a subject very quickly, or even several subjects at the same time. They have acquired a real expertise, appropriate to their imagination. . . . And they make a lot more money than the movie writers. (S17)

Depending on the project, the first version of the script could be written alone (when the director does not want to take part in writing) or with another writer or the director (writing with "four

hands,"' as mentioned by co-scriptwriters). In some cases, the writer had an advisory role—he read what the director wrote and rewrote the text if needed. In other cases, the director asked the scriptwriter for a first version of the script and rewrote it afterward.

Information and inspiration. The main sources of inspiration mentioned during the production phase are linked to internal and external sources such as intuition, instinct, or unconscious processes; chance, hazard, and unexpected events; introspection and identification with the characters; the cast; opinions and discussions; and documentation and interviews.

Intuition, instinct, or unconscious processes lead to a new development that was not planned in advance and is somehow beyond the scriptwriter's will, as described in a "flow" state experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). It is as if the character took control:

> Sometimes, indeed, a character that one has created or half created, escapes. . . . There is a moment when, as the story gets built, the characters begin to have some rationality in behavior that can then lead to a new situation, and get the story to progress. (D6)

> It is the unconscious that talks. You are about to write something and it takes you in an unforeseen direction. (S1)

One scriptwriter used a metaphor of an automatic car to illustrate the feeling of being carried over:

> In every story, there is a moment that reminds me of what we feel in an automatic car. There can always be a change of gear decided by the car itself, not your hand or foot. This arrives when the story is on the way. . . . There is a sensation of speed and fluency one can recognize when it happens. (S3)

Introspection and identification with the characters was reported as one of the major sources of inspiration during the writing process, as mentioned by the following directors:

> Even when you're writing a science fiction movie, or a film that is apparently the opposite of our life, which is not at all autobiographical, it is totally made up of who we are, our personality and our life. (D18)

> From the dialogues, and in each scene, I really put myself in the skin of the character . . . then allow myself to be carried over, I let unpredictable things happen, putting myself inside the characters. (D16)

Knowledge of the cast plays its part. According to scriptwriters, knowing the cast or just thinking about a particular actor (even a dead one) can be a source of inspiration:

> What can change the writing is knowing the casting. . . . One realizes that with that particular actor or actress, we get the desire to make him or her do something. This creates a desire. Knowing who will play the part changes the vision of a character and undoubtedly gives many more ideas, ideas that couldn't have come otherwise. (S3)

Another scriptwriter reported an "exciting" experience when choosing the cast (based on a synopsis) with the help of a casting director, and then started writing:

> Then we wrote a script for them, for these specific actors, on the advice of a professional. I loved it, it was very exciting! As I saw what

I wrote, I imagined the actors, and it motivated me. . . . We were lucky all the actors accepted their role, later on. (N5)

> Chance, hazard and unexpected events such as reading the night before a heart breaking passage from a book will suddenly inspire you. . . . So yes, in that period, something you read, or see in a movie, or experience in an everyday situation, can echo the work you are currently doing. So, this can trigger a new idea. (D6)

Documentation and interviews. To write a specific scene, scriptwriters need sometimes to assume the role of the character or ask for a tour from an insider:

> For a film, I worked at the laundry service, I learned to iron with someone there, it was very strange. . . . For another film I was an intern with the police. For a short film, I spent one morning in an intensive care unit. (N10)

Opinions and discussions with a cowriter, peers, friends, or family members can help sometimes to see other perspectives for the story. Yet one needs to select a good adviser:

> There are good and bad readers. For example, [name of a director] is a very good reader, and [name], who is a producer, can also be a good reader. . . . what is very important to me is when a reader opens a new angle of the story we had not seen ourselves. Then it becomes interesting! Bad readers cling to details, say for example, "But this girl, shouldn't she be blonde, rather than brunette?" With this, you cannot do much. (N12)

The cycle of writing scripts: New ideas–making choices–action or change. According to 86% of the participants, inspiration, insight, new ideas, and solutions occur mainly during the production or writing phase whether or not you have an initial plan, outline, or treatment for the script. Indeed, when scriptwriters were asked to describe when and how they were inspired for the writing of a particular film, they were unanimous about the fact that there was no inspiration without the discipline of hard and daily work. Insight and bright solutions would happen suddenly only if they had tried hard before:

> It is necessary to be detached from any idea that could be close to "inspiration," from all those fantasies you read about writers with their little notebooks where they would take a note of a sudden brilliant idea. . . . If I were to write only when I am in the mood of writing, I would not go far. (N5)

> I'd say you must search, search, and again search; nothing comes without effort. Nothing is ever given to you. And this is also why regular daily work is required. There are days when nothing happens, and this is normal, so you should not blame yourself. And there are other days when things happen . . . and this is because for three days you have searched without finding anything. (S3)

Bright ideas could emerge while writing, as well as during unrelated tasks:

> I'll start by reading it [the proposal of the director], then I'll hang out the washing and maybe there I will have an idea. . . . It could be while giving my daughter a bath. . . . but also when I force myself to write. (S1)

Quite often while developing dialogues and scenes, what has been planned can be abandoned; new ideas are generated, tested, and implemented, which will have an impact on what has been

already written—a classic "domino effect." The choice between new alternatives or ideas leads to the rewriting or suppression of previous dialogues and scenes. These processes occur in a cyclical manner until the task is completed:

> We progress by asking questions. But the choices are made when you write. . . . then you will start all over again and try to pull the thread for a week. Sometimes it leads to an impasse, you realize that it is no longer tenable. . . . Because the scenario is like a game of dominoes: the action of a character on scene 3 will have consequences not necessarily predictable at the beginning. (S1)

While writing, the review of the written material results in changing, adding, suppressing, and moving dialogues, scene, and sequences; because the outcome is too long, there are lot of irrelevant details, repetitions, weak links, and so forth:

> Because in this first attempt of dialogue, we shift to something much less controllable, which has to do with the way the characters speak. . . . Often, what was defined in the outline as the object of a scene, when writing we notice that it sucks, and that it is useless to "talk" for pages while what we want to express can be told with a situation in a 'mute' half-page. So everything can be reconsidered. (S22)

Some of the writers (in particular, the second group which is very rigorous about developing a plan) update their initial outline and treatment accordingly in order to maintain an overall view of the story:

> I do not stick to the letter of the outline, this is not a cooking recipe. This is a transitional object. And after the first draft, I often redo an outline to have a clear view of the movement of the film. Because often, while writing, the scenes change and I always need the outline to keep an overview of the whole. (S2)

A major difference during scriptwriting is linked to the writer's experience with filmmaking. A director would include in the script decisions about the shooting:

> I feel—especially when I'm cowriting with [name of a director]—that what we already handled is largely the staging. (D9)

> And I noticed that for me, the writing determines the staging . . . having written the scenes myself helps me know instinctively how I should film when I get on stage. (D21)

In contrast, scriptwriters needed input from the director about the emotions the latter would like to convey or trigger:

> I cowrote with a director a script where there were trucks traveling at night. So I asked him: These trucks, how do you want to film them? What image do you see? Is it a helicopter view, or is the camera on a truck? Or is the camera on the side of the road and watching the trucks pass by? Each type of image conveys an emotion, which guides the writing. . . . But directors do not like these kinds of questions. They feel that we step on their toes. (S11)

Reasoning and problem solving. Scriptwriters reported on the problems, obstacles, impasses, or deadlocks they experience during the writing process: "the created characters or the situations they are in lead to impasses or deadlocks" (S2). Solving these problems leads to new developments: "There are also times when it is laborious. And inspiration happens sometimes because it was

laborious, because we made a mistake, because we reached impasses" (D20).

Different types of problem solving strategies were described by scriptwriters and were used alternatively: a confrontational strategy; seeking support and opinions; a passive strategy or period of incubation; and rational analysis.

The confrontational strategy. Writers spend hours "fighting" with the problem, which leads often to fixation or mental blocks. It becomes impossible to go back and impossible to consider other solutions. Directors seemed to use frequently this strategy to solve problems, but were aware of its inefficiency and commented on their feeling of frustration:

> There are moments when you feel it just turns around and you are not getting anywhere. (D6)

> Often it is the case that we struggle for a very long time only to settle the problem with one line. I can struggle for two hours for a comma, really! But if I struggle it is because I am not wise enough to notice that the situation is not good. I try to solve the problem artificially, but the characters cannot exist in that situation. (D16)

Seeking support and opinions. Writers can ask someone they trust to read or review the script; they can talk about it. These exchanges can solve the problem or give a new direction:

> Often, and this is the advantage of cowriting with a director, when one blocks, the other can find the solution. It can also be a third party, the producer for example. . . . Once, with the director, we were both floundering; nose glued on our characters, we could not have the necessary distance. . . . And it was the producer of the film, reading the script, working on it, who found the solution. (S20)

The passive strategy or period of incubation. This strategy involves stepping back from the manuscript, doing something that is not related to it:

> Yes (I work simultaneously on different projects). It is difficult and at the same time, I find it good. Because when I struggle and when I am saturated with a project, being able to switch to another project frees my mind and allows me to find answers to the first. (S1)

> Like in painting, you need to let it dry. You write a version and then let it rest . . . .then retake it. Because it's very hard to see it when you have your nose in it. It is exactly like in painting: if you have blue and want it to be red and it is not dry it will become brown. (D16)

One scriptwriter used the following "fishing net" metaphor to describe an efficient strategy for solving problems in creative writing:

> When your fishing net is tangled, full of knots, the only way is to untangle it without reflecting too much on how it became tangled. You must ease things, restart the game. In doing this, in general, we find quite naturally the things and logic of the craft. Being annoyed and pulling means getting stuck. (D9)

Rational analysis. Using the outline as a diagnostic tool to see what might be wrong in the manuscript:

> When I reread the dialogues, I am more in the detail of the scenes. The fact of returning to the outline allows me to take some distance from the script and better see what might be wrong there. Because in the script, there is already the affect: we started to love our scenes, to

make our characters speak; we become attached to a particular moment, a particular dialogue. . . . we then struggle to understand where the problem is or to cut when it is too long. The outline, which is much colder object than the script allows it. It is very boring to read. (S2)

Rewriting several versions. The certainty that the script will eventually become a film is rarely obtained during the writing process. It depends, of course, on funding and other external factors. The film can, in some cases, be produced long after the script has been completed. As the script progresses through the hands of many people, the scriptwriter could be asked to make changes before or during the shooting. The suppression of some scenery or the rewriting of scenes could be related to a tight budget, or because the director, producer, sponsor (in the case of TV), actors, or technicians did not like a scene:

> Everyone has an opinion, and should be taken into account more or less. The director would say, "My wife did not like the end," "The sponsor does not want a child martyr." . . . And you are forced to constantly adapt. (N13)

> The producer will say, e.g., "This character is not friendly enough. Give him a more sympathetic character. Maybe if he was a musician as well, or if he feeds the pigeons, etc. (D16)

> Each person who reads a script, will fantasize about the film, he is less interested about the movie than about his own fantasies. And that is the danger. (S11)

> So once you have written a script, at the request of a production company . . . they start looking for a director. The most talented or the most ambitious would say, "Ah, but I would not do it this way" . . . so we have to redo everything. (N13)

> The producer wanted this actor, the director, who sometimes is forced to compromise, began to doubt. . . . Anyway, we rewrote almost 10 different ends to this project, and the last one, which eventually convinced the actor and the producer, and is perhaps the one that will be filmed, is in my opinion at odds with everything we had originally imagined. So, in this instance, I am a bit disappointed. (D20)

Regarding the reactions generated by these changes, one scriptwriter emphasized that "one should not be in the projection of the self in a scene so that, if one amends it, it's like a personal prejudice. Yet, many people are like that" (S22).

All the writers considered that the script is never finished and directors in general introduced changes during the shooting and during the editing. A director commented on the changes when he cowrites a script for another director and when he is in charge of the shooting:

> When I work for others, this is what I think: The script will now live in the transformation that it will undergo during the shooting. But I do not really consider the scenario as the end of a job. . . . I consider my scripts as "finished" when image editing is finished and we move to sound editing. The script itself, we know that it will be challenged by the shooting and the editing. It is never static. (D9)

Emotions. In general, the creative process was associated with pleasure (82%) and excitement (45%), and when a bright idea was found, it was associated with "jubilation" (50%; see Table 3). To a minor extent, some other positive emotions are mentioned through the discourse, including interest/passion (32%), amusement (27%), pride (23%), or enthusiasm (23%). Also, negative emotions appeared with anxiety (55%), sadness (36%), bad mood (23%), and boredom (14%).

The great majority of scriptwriters mentioned that the writing process becomes painful when they experience blocks (80%). The emotional state is constantly fluctuating between jubilation and frustration (55%), as mentioned in the following excerpt:

> There is a constant fluctuation. There are only manic-depressive people in this profession! (laughs) It's like climbing stairs toward an untouchable star, because in fact at each step we need to climb another one, and as the goal is to reach an untouchable star, we are always in this situation. So, depending on where we are, we pass from extreme jubilation to extreme depression and the key is to look back and say: well, I have gone up three, four steps, I can cling to something and see the road I traveled. The other difficulty is to know when to stop. (S22)

The impact of this mood swing on the family had been reported by one director:

> In the periods of mental block, for example, you are less attentive to the people around you, family, loved ones, and I think it must be quite painful for them. Because we rehash it, rehash it, and therefore we close up. In the positive phase, however, when the work is progressing well, it's easier to say that I now stop and I can focus on other things, like family. It is more difficult to make this break when there is no progress. (D6)

At the end of the process of writing, feelings of relief, joy, and fatigue were reported. As described by one scriptwriter,

> When a script is finished and everyone is happy. . . . there are about 48 hours where I am the happiest person on earth. . . . But then I will slump into deep dejection; first fatigue will overtake me. . . . What I love, however, after writing, is the rehearsal period with the actors. That is an absolute reward. . . . The first readings are a true test. And this is a time of incredible intensity, intense joy even, sometimes. (S3)

After the release of a film, different feelings and emotions could be experienced. For example, scriptwriters commented on how they were disappointed and "hurt" when the director seems to have forgotten the long collaboration and the complicity during the writing:

> If the director, for example during an interview, acts as if he had written his film alone, I feel bad and slightly humiliated. . . . we have spent a year of our lives, sometimes more, shared many things, conflicts, joy. . . . it's pretty violent. (S2)

Novelists were more "vocal" and angry probably because they are used to having more recognition and credit for the books they wrote:

> I happened to shout sometimes because I found my name in the herd, stuck between the editor and I do not know whom, unreadable. We must see how it's done! . . . It's as if a too important script bothers, curiously and paradoxically, a director. (N10)

A director who wrote or cowrote a script for another director described different feelings (pleasure, boredom, anger) depending on the final output (the film):

> I'm pleased with a film when the director has provided an added value by his realization . . . When the film sticks to the script, when it is only an illustration, I get bored. And when it is below the script, then I'm furious. (D18)

Finally, directors commented on their relief followed by the apprehension regarding public reaction to the film:

> First, there is a feeling of deliverance. Then anxiety about how the film will be received, will it touch the public? . . . It is no longer the anxiety of creation. (D19)

> At the end of a film I have directed, there is a satisfaction that comes from the fact that it exists, that something concrete has come out of so much subjectivity and doubts even if jitters persist about how people will receive it? . . . . There is confusion between the self and the object. I always try to tell myself that the goal is that this is the film that one judges, not me. (D9)

Discussion

The present study uncovered a series of general stages of activity in the case of screenplay writers—their emotions, background, and experience, as well as job context and demands that come into play when creating. Creative action usually starts from a demand (i.e., a film project never originates through a screenwriter as described in the "script development" stories of major Hollywood studios; Ferguson, 2004). The writer can be hired by a director, a producer, or a sponsor (TV) to develop an original idea, adapt a book for the screen, or modify an existing script. As previously shown (Ferguson, 2004, 2009, 2014), financial reasons, but more importantly the affinity with the director, artistic preferences, and moral values, are deemed to be essential with regard to accepting or refusing a demand. Indeed, participants commented on bad experiences with some directors they qualified as "psychopaths," "lunatics," or "madmen" who engage in a sort of "sadomasochistic" or "vampiric" relationship with them. They seek to have a cordial relationship based on trust and esteem. It has often been noted that creative individuals are described by traits such as perseverance, tolerance for ambiguity (Zenasni, Besançon, & Lubart, 2008), openness to new experiences, individuality, risk taking, and even psychoticism. According to Ferguson (2014), professional creators, such as screenplay writers, develop different practices to achieve respectful and successful creative collaboration with film crew members.

The process of rewriting several versions of the script seems to be universal among screenplay writers, engaging often the producer of the film, actors, and so forth. The simultaneously individual and industrial working contexts foster interactions with others that can be, at times, a source of tension and frustration (Conor, 2010). A final version of a script is virtually impossible. as it is challenged before and during the shooting, as well as during the editing. Participants acknowledged that the goal of the creative process is making the film; therefore, the completed script is the "end of the beginning," as Winston Churchill (Churchill, 1942) said after El Alamein: "Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Despite the relatively low budget of their films, participants complained about the production obsession with profitability, its lack of artistic interest, and how this economic pressure influences the writing process. Recognition of peers (directors and producers) was a more sensitive issue than the lack of social status and public and media recognition for scriptwriters. Preliminary analyses of participants' achievement showed that drama film directors won more prizes and award nominations than novelists and scriptwriters. Pritzer and McGarva (2009) found that a large majority of

Oscar-winning writers also did the directing, and Simonton (2011, p. 113) mentioned, "Those who occupy more than one position in the core crew are more likely to attain award-winning achievements . . . they enjoy the freedom to work out a unique creative vision." Personality, leadership, being haunted by an idea or images, and a "compelling" need to tell a story contribute to a director's achievement. However, the contribution of the scriptwriter or cowriter is not recognized enough, leading to uncomfortable and ambivalent feelings. The late Jean Aurenche (a French scriptwriter with 60 years experience) said that the only creator is the director but sometimes he gave talent to talentless directors (Riou & Riou, 2002).

The creative process typically includes three phases: impregnation (Phase A), structuration (Phase B), and the period of writing and rewriting the actual script (Phase C). These three stages, and, in particular, the multiple concrete decisions to be taken during Phase C, resemble the act of wandering through a maze, sometimes laboriously and sometimes effortlessly, with a feeling of being "carried over," as described in a flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). This maze is seldom traveled alone, and the "exit" is represented by the "final" version of the script, but just as with any maze, there are various true path segments (good ideas) and blind alleys (unsuccessful ideas/blocks), as well as obstacles, problems to solve, and constraints. The writer progresses down the maze by trial and error, retracing his or her steps, progressing meticulously by seeking advice, consulting and updating the "map," responding to internal and external stimuli or cues, and so forth. Frustration increases when experiencing many obstacles, entering several blind alleys, going back over and over, and getting lost. However, the writer could traverse the maze quickly in an intuitive or automatic way if the path to follow is clearly indicated (e.g., book adaptation), or if he or she had already experienced a similar maze (e.g., TV series format) and had learned how to navigate by developing a sort of cognitive map of where many of the blind alleys are.

To consider the underlying mechanism that promotes the emergence—the selection and implementation of creative ideas during script writing—the discussion will focus on central ideas from a number of psychological and neuropsychological theories.

Preparing to enter the maze is what defines all the actions grouped under Phase A of the process. During the initial meetings or "sessions," the writer considers the script project in terms of "why" rather than "how" and, just as in "talking therapy," he or she tries to understand the director's motivation behind the project of the film through daily discussions without censorship. The openness, trust, and pleasure in sharing ideas and desires that characterize these meetings might lead to a positive mood and a feeling of freedom to explore unconventional ideas about the story to be told, to develop the personality and the biography of the main characters. Research suggested that events happening in the distant future—for example, the project of the film in our study—are represented in a more abstract, structured, high-level manner. According to construal level theory (CLT), a framework that links processing styles and psychological distance (McCrea, Liberman, Trope, & Sherman, 2008), processing information in a global, abstract, and explorative way helps in finding creative solutions and ideas (Förster & Dannenberg, 2010; Steidle & Werth, 2013). At the same time, the feeling of being free from constraints

(Steidle & Werth, 2013) and in a positive mood (Labro & Patrick, 2009) elicit global thinking and promote creative idea generation.

Participants commented on their difficulty to get started, on how, at first, they collect a massive and usually disproportional amount of information, reading books, magazines, newspapers, consulting archives and photos, watching movies, and so forth. They engage in actual writing when a deadline is looming. The CLT framework could explain this. McCrea, Liberman, Trope, and Sherman (2008, p. 1308) indicated that participants "would engage in an activity at a later point in time when it was described in abstract (rather than concrete) terms, when they had first considered why (rather than how)." As suggested by McCrea et al. (2008), mental association between level of abstractness and temporal distance is a bidirectional relationship: Events that are distant in time tend to be represented more abstractly than events that are close in time, and the level of representation of an event has effects on the time when the activity is performed. In other words, procrastination increases when thinking about the task in abstract terms rather than in concrete ones.

Writers put lots of emphasis on allowing the mind to wander freely, reflecting, thinking, daydreaming, reading, and collecting information, and so forth before starting the actual writing. They made comments about how their brain works feverishly and continuously making unconscious associations and connections, how images emerge and how solutions are suddenly transferred to consciousness at a later stage of the creative process. Interestingly, their description of what happens in their brain during this passive state is in line with the findings of neuroimaging studies of the brain (Andreasen, 2011; Andreasen, O'Leary, Cizadlo, Arndt, & Rezai, 1995): When individuals are given the instruction to "relax and simply think about whatever comes into their mind," the association cortices are the most active; these brain areas, which are referred to as the default network (DNT), are similar to those active during remembering in an autobiographical task. During this passive period, creative individuals (who have won prestigious awards in art and sciences) demonstrated stronger activations in DNT compared with control participants. As pointed out by Binder et al. (1999, p. 85), such activations are adaptive: "By storing, retrieving, and manipulating internal information, we organize what could not be organized during stimulus presentation, solve problems that require computation over long periods of time, and create effective plans governing behavior in the future." Subsequent research (Buckner, 2012; Buckner, Andrews-Hanna, & Schacter, 2008, p. 18) showed that the activation of the DNT has been associated with "constructing dynamic mental simulations based on personal past experiences such as used during remembering, thinking about the future, and generally when imagining alternative perspectives and scenarios to the present."

These conscious and unconscious processes result in the extraction of the gist of the original idea of the film, and boost the associative search for creative solutions using the collected information, introspection, past experiences, and thoughts. The biography of the main characters is refined and a schematic representation or "map" of the story emerges, turning an abstract goal into more concrete specific steps necessary to achieve the goal.

A crucial point in the creative process, defined as Phase B in our study, is creating a "map" for the path to be taken before entering the labyrinth of creation. This map can be more or less well defined, conscious or unconscious, a simple sketch of the story to be written or an elaborate sequenced plan. The generation of a rigorous map is specific for writers trained at scriptwriting schools and distinguishes them from writers with a nonspecific education in script writing (history, literature, or filmmaking studies with no strong training in writing, etc.). For these writers, the role of the outline is to organize the temporal aspects of the script, give an overview of the story, and offer the writer a possibility to step back from the dialogue and consider it in relation to the broader picture. However, while writing (Phase C) they do not hesitate to explore new opportunities and implement new idea goals relevant to, but not present in, the initial plan. It is worth noting that experienced screenplay writers often do not need to write down a full extended outline of the story, and are still being guided by the general plan at all times. Their expertise allows them to counterbalance the lack of a rigorous map at the start and find an effective path within the labyrinth of creation, which is more or less "automatic" and intuitive—an example of habitual creativity (Glăveanu, 2012). As Nelmes (2007, p. 112) considered, "experience and craft help the writer know how to get characters out of difficult situations, how to get around plot inconsistencies, distract the audience from slips in logic or unbelievable situations, and work through difficult scenes."

Another stage widely discussed in the literature refers to the period of writing and rewriting the script. In contrast to the myth that creative ideas result from a "dreaming" person having a flash of insight, our participants insisted on the fact that insights, new ideas, and solutions are the result of discipline and daily hard work, also confirming previous findings (Paton, 2012). They engage in conscious work even when not inspired, focusing their attention on the task, developing ideas, solving problems, and taking decisions or making choices between different alternatives. Participants described the writing process as a cycle, alternating between generating creative ideas and evaluating their potential, through "a continual testing of and discarding of ideas as to their suitability for the story," as mentioned by Nelmes (2007, p. 111). Markman and Dyczewski (2010) described the portrait of an effective decision maker, problem solver, and goal pursuer as "an individual who displays the cognitive flexibility to think and act both globally (i.e., looking at the forest) and locally (i.e., looking at the trees)" (p. 240). This flexible information-processor employs both processing styles either simultaneously, or at least more interchangeably. The discourse of our participants suggests that this process is driven not by the plot or the structure, but rather by the characters, the emotions they elicit, and consequences of their "actions" on past, present, and future events. In addition, they reported that as one "*gets into the skin of the main character*," "*understands the character*," and "*makes him talk*," they often experience enjoyable moments in which intuition, unconscious, and automatic process take over the generation and selection of creative ideas. The empathy with the characters leads to the feeling that they came to life and make the choices instead of the writer as reported by Australian fiction writers, "hijacking or guiding the story line in unexpected ways" as reported by Australian fiction writers (Paton, 2012, p. 74). This sense of being "carried over" designates a temporary loss of self-consciousness characteristic for the flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Most screenplay writers commented on the fact that idea generation occurs frequently during unrelated tasks (e.g., emptying the washing machine, bathing a child, taking public transport, or working alternatively on another film project in a less demanding

phase). Some of the participants emphasized their need to write with background noise in cafes or to listen to their favorite music. These findings could be explained by the mediating role of unconscious thoughts and distractions in facilitating problem solving and decision making. McMahon, Sparrow, Chatman, and Riddle (2011) showed that participants who were distracted with easier tasks (listening to music and word search puzzles) made the best decision significantly more often than conscious thinkers, and even outperformed participants distracted with more difficult tasks. Finally, Mehta, Zhu, and Cheema (2012) suggested that moderate (70 dB) background ambient noise reflecting consumption contexts (e.g., a combination of multitalker noise in a cafeteria, roadside traffic, and distant construction noise) induced processing difficulty, which activates abstract cognition and consequently enhances creative performance. Studies on the deliberation-without-attention effect show that a period of unconscious thoughts while making complex decisions can actually lead to better decisions than a period of thorough conscious deliberation (Dijksterhuis, Bos, Nordgren, & Van Baaren, 2006).

These phases of work—Phases A, B, and C—broadly resemble the planning, generation, and revision model proposed by Hayes (1996), without a one-to-one correspondence (e.g., planning is central for Phases A and B, generation takes places at all times, particularly in Phases C and B). Because our model articulates phases that are more heterogeneous than those suggested by Hayes, the latter could be considered as cyclical processes taking place within the units of the former. Most importantly, our data seem to suggest different possible "paths" between these three broad stages. Writers can have a more linear work process, advancing (on the whole) from Phase A to B and then C, but they can also start with Phase A and then alternate between Phase B and C. The variables that affect these variations, perhaps both individual (e.g., experience and training) and situational (type of demand, etc.), require further research.

There are a few limitations of the present research. To begin with, all the writers were involved in French cinema and the sample was quite heterogeneous. In our exploration, only two main differentiating criteria were observed (previous training and function). Additionally, the article did not address the creation of spec scripts, which initiate with the writer. Differences could also be studied in the future in relation to gender, the type of scripts being written (comedies, drama, documentaries, etc.), their destination (e.g., TV and/or cinema), the nature of the collaboration, stylistic diversity, and internal cohesion of the creative team (cowriting a script with a professional scriptwriter, a novelist, a director, an actor, or a producer). Future studies could equally try to apply different data collection methods, like the diary method, or another observation technique in order to capture group dynamic, the duration, and the order of the various stages and activities of crossing the "creativity maze" that lead to a successful outcome in this creative domain. A direct exploitation and valorization of the results of this project and future studies could be observed in education in order (a) to help prospective writers gain a deep awareness regarding job demands and constraints, (b) to put more emphasis on the role of the two initial phases (Phases A and B) of the creative process, and (c) to develop training guidelines to coach scriptwriter students in conjunction with other film production members to enhance communication, mutual understanding, problem solving, decision making, and teamwork.

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Correction to Tchalenko, Nam, Ladanga, and Miall (2014)

In the article "The Gaze-Shift Strategy in Drawing," by John Tchalenko, Se-Ho Nam, Moshe Ladanga, and R. Chris Miall (*Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 330–339. doi:10.1037/a0036132), there was an error in the author note. The last sentence of the second paragraph of the author note stated that "R. Chris Miall is also funded by the Wellcome Trust and the HFSP." The third paragraph of the author note stated that the article was published under the Creative Commons Attribution License; however, this was mistakenly added. This article was not sponsored by the Wellcome Trust or the HFSP. The copyright is therefore retained by the American Psychological Association. The online version of this article has been corrected.

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