

PREFACE

What is Intuitive Screenwriting

"I've seen your film four times in the last week. And I didn't go simply to see it, but in order to spend just a few hours living a real life with real artists and real people... Everything that torments me, everything I don't have and that I long for, that makes me indignant, or sick, or suffocates me, everything that gives me a feeling of light and warmth, and by which I live, and everything that destroys me—it's all there in your film, I see it as if in a mirror. For the first time ever a film has become something real for me, and that's why I go to see it, I want to get right inside it, so that I can really be alive."

Letter from a factory worker in Novosibirsk to Andrei Tarkovsky

The screenwriter's paradox is that their most intimate inner world will never see the light of day, or the darkness of the cinema, unless it becomes the audience's world.

This book explores where that paradox dissolves, where the writer's inner world meets the viewer's, elegantly, organically. It reveals the questions we need to answer, the obstacles we need to transform, so that the audience can recognize, within our solutions, the path to their own truths. Because as much as this process is about us, it is never only about us. It is about a shared experience, one whose tensions and contradictions writers have the rare talent to translate into a universal storytelling language, one that connects us rather than divides us. In a time when we are once again aware of the world's instability, writers have a particular calling: to recognize storytelling as a living knowledge that is deeply embedded in everything that defines us, so that, in moments of silence or doubt, we may return to it and let it carry us forward.

Many screenwriting books and manuals focus on formulas and rules. This book is not one of them. It is a map that leads *to* the rules. Before it explains how the rules work, it asks: *Where do they come from?* And it reveals: *Why are rules, in fact, truths?* What is it in the human psyche that recognizes these truths as rules? Why is every story archetypal? Why are the elements of story and structure the very foundation on which civilization stands and evolves? And how do archetypes, those all-pervasive, dynamic elements of the collective unconscious, define us, connect us, inspire us, challenge us, and awaken us? How can a writer stop being merely an executor of dogmatic instructions and become the true creator of both the story and its laws, which, once recognized in an archetype, can organically transform into plot, situation, or character? In short, this is a *holistic* approach to screenwriting, one that, I hope, will enrich the already vast library of books on the craft while also joining the ongoing creative dialogue on story, its origins, and its transformations.

Throughout the book, I reference and quote many of the most important screenwriting texts. Some approach story through the psychoanalytic language of complexes and inner conflict; others through the archetypal language of myth, image, and transformation. Although this book naturally belongs to the second tradition, the wheel connects both: it brings Freud and Jung into one and the same circle of psychic development in the hero we have followed throughout the centuries.

The hero of ancient worlds was not born merely in mythological battles between good and evil, but first and foremost from cosmogony: from the myth of creation, from the origins of the universe and the world, of heaven and earth, of gods and humans, and from the clash of divine and mortal realms. This conflict between two worlds, this impossible union of the irreconcilable, has always been the hero's battlefield. The modern hero, whether man or woman, may appear to no longer belong to that divided world, through whose rises and falls civilization continues to transform. But this is only an appearance. What myth once revealed as the battle of cosmological worlds can now also be recognized in the hero's inner world, in the psyche. The source of the rupture between worlds can therefore be found and examined within the human being. But does that make our heroism any less? Even if both the division between worlds and the worlds themselves appear to change over time, what defines the hero remains constant: the conflict between two worlds within. Define the world in conflict, and you will find your hero. Define the hero in conflict, and you will describe the world. The polarized world of the story is your playground. And the solution is always integration.

Joseph Campbell wrote extensively about the hero and their psychological development in his seminal book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Later, Christopher Vogler adapted Campbell's monomyth structure for the screen, shaping it into a twelve-stage model of transformation tailored for film. His book *The Writer's Journey* has since become a key resource for screenwriters, offering a detailed guide to the Hero's Journey.

I dare say that this book unveils the secret matrix behind the Hero's Journey, the deeper structure that carries and shapes it. This matrix is not the Hero's Journey itself. It is original. It emerges from the archetypal wheel, which, to the best of my knowledge, has never before been articulated or revealed. This book presents the wheel, investigates it in detail, has grown out of it, and is devoted to it.

At its foundation, the Wheel consists of twelve Jungian archetypes. What makes it unique is that it is neither a catalogue of archetypes nor a single linear sequence. The archetypes are organized within four elemental quadrants, following a precise psychological progression within each one. They do not function as isolated units, but receive their full narrative meaning through relationship: through their polarity with the opposing archetype on the Wheel, and through their tension with their own Shadow.

This archetypal relationship is the generative principle of the system. It is the source of narrative movement and transformation, revealing both the direction of the story and the core conflict that runs through all the story's elements. The wheel should therefore be read as interactive, alive, and ultimately fractal.

Once you learn to recognize and work with archetypes, you'll see that plot, theme, character, structure, and even genre are not separate components, but inseparable elements of every story, facets of the same dynamic within the archetypal wheel. Each element can be clearly defined and intuitively understood through this system.

When this fractal logic is followed through the unfolding movement of transformation, it demonstrates why the turning points in both story and psyche are what they are, why the points

of inner transformation are the very same points that drive the story forward, and vice versa. It also reveals where my system aligns with the Hero's Journey as a twelve-stage model, and where it diverges or proves more precise. In nearly all previous attempts to define the structure of a feature film, theorists have outlined the beginning and the end with clarity, but pass over the middle or treat it with insufficient depth. Here, the beginning, the end, and the middle are all explored, articulated, and clearly defined.

Most importantly, the wheel is not arbitrary. There is no random order, either in a film's plot or in its structure. The wheel is immutable across time. It is a kind of universal language, a *logos*, a pattern, a meaning, a principle, a law. It turns chaos into something coherent, something we can grasp and feel. No matter how story has evolved through history, its essence remains the same. Like us, it is both static and dynamic, and that's why we still need it. That's why we still experience it in the same way.

I know many readers will wonder how a fixed narrative matrix can leave any room for creative freedom, let alone inspire it. The answer is simple: this wheel is like the human body. Its form is harmonious, and its essential parts, the heart, brain, and spine, are always located in the same place, each with its function. But whether that heart is youthful, tired, or full of joy, what you feel in it, how you think, and what kind of thoughts arise, none of that is predetermined. It all emerges from the variations you intuit, recognize, and express within this wheel. That's how you create.

We could say this wheel is both the anatomy and biology of a story, its DNA. It holds both information and manifestation. At the same time, it carries a blueprint: a set framework *and* a call to transformation. To put it playfully: the only freedom you don't have... is the freedom not to be human. Everything else is open.

It should also be noted that this wheel isn't limited to screenwriting; it supports all storytelling on an archetypal level. I began with film because film structure is the one I know best. I've been teaching Feature Film Structure and Screenwriting for seventeen years, and I felt a growing need to integrate my knowledge as both a writer and educator into one organic system, one that is not separate from the modern world we live in, nor from the eternal cosmos we are a part of. That's why, from the beginning, the logline of this system, for me, was: "*How to co-create your story with the universe.*" This book shows how to perceive the cosmos through the lens of the psyche, and the psyche through the lens of the cosmos. Intuitively connecting with these archetypal keys is enough to summon the magical space of inspiration and let it reveal its secrets.

When we speak of archetypes, we're actually speaking of emotions, relationships, and living, dynamic emotional images in relation. The movement between diving into emotion and stepping back from it is the very dynamic that gives rise to any work of art, one that uses emotions and their evolution across time and space as its core building blocks. Here, you'll get to know those building blocks and learn how to work with them in a way that is, I believe, playful and above all intuitive.

I, too, discovered this system entirely through intuition. When I decided to take a break from teaching, I didn't expect that I would so quickly feel the urge to finally write down my lectures, after so many years of giving them. And when I began writing, I had no idea I would stumble

upon the secret of story itself, as if it had simply fallen into my lap. With a basic knowledge of astrology, which helped me define the archetypes, and a deep familiarity with feature film structure, I intuitively recognized how the wheel should be assembled. I sensed that it needed to be explored, and what followed were investigations: philosophical, theoretical, geometric, and even quantum reflections on storytelling, alongside analyses of films and of one Greek tragedy, which together serve as evidence that the wheel “works.”

You now hold those explorations in your hands, just as they emerged in real time. You can use them as an inspiring theory or as a structured guide through the phases of writing for film. You can read each lesson individually and simply follow the creative elements it covers. Each one ends with a writing exercise. If you already have a script in progress, this system should help you pinpoint exactly what’s missing and guide your revision process with greater precision.

I would love for this book to give screenwriters and storytellers working across all narrative kinds, forms, and genres wind in their creative sails, the courage and will to explore, and a safe shore on which to rest.

So I wish you a successful journey across the cosmic mysteries, with enough wind to raise questions, and a strong sun to illuminate truths. And let us hope for an audience that is warm, open, and emotionally attuned, one that, inspired by one of our films, may send us a letter like the one that opens this preface, written to Tarkovsky in response to his film *The Mirror*.

All art, and film especially, through its synthesis of all the arts, is a kind of collective mirror. When artists look into it, they see the audience. And when the audience looks into it, they see the artists. One cannot exist without the other. It is the great world we live in, reflected in miniature, with its mysteries, which we occasionally, fleetingly, reveal to one another. We sense them. We never fully know them.

And so, we keep searching.

Ana Lasić

Belgrade, April 24, 2021.