



Words in Action: Forms and techniques of film dialogue

By Paolo Braga

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Words in Action dedicates to the subject of film dialogue a comprehensive exploration. The book analyzes a wide series of examples, perfectly chosen in contemporary American mainstream cinema – from *Gladiator* to *The Devil Wears Prada*, from *Schindler's List* to *A Beautiful Mind*, from *Collateral* to *The Dark Knight* – and, in some cases, also in prime time TV drama – *ER*, *The West Wing*, *House M.D.*, *John Adams*.

In a screenplay, the secrets of well written dialogue are hidden in the construction of the scene, where every word should stem from the theme of the story. At the light of this basic assumption, the book explores how Hollywood screenwriters create verbal duels assigning characters different frames of values and making the hero win by «reframing» what is at stake in the scene. The author elaborates on how Oscar winner authors such as Paul Haggis, Aaron Sorkin and Steven Zaillian create subtext. Finally, the book highlights the screenwriting techniques to cover exposition, an issue which gives the author also the opportunity to concentrate on the differences between dialogues in movies and in TV drama.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The success of Braga's book is its ability to deliver strong screenwriting practice, whilst also taking a rigorous approach to techniques of dialogue in screenplays using narrative theories and numerous industrial script examples. In doing so, it represents a most welcome shift away from the paucity of serious scholarly practice in many (or most) screenwriting manuals towards studies that deliver serious screenwriting technique with well-researched examples from successful screenwriters working in the contemporary film and television industries."

(Jamie Sherry, New Review of Film and Television Studies, Vol.14, No.3, 2016)

About the Author

Paolo Braga is Assistant Professor in Semiotics at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, where he teaches Screenwriting. He has published extensively on the topics of the construction of empathy with character and of U.S. television series. The rhetorical dimension of storytelling is his general research area.

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