

artist | lecturer | academic

actor | director

art house | commercial | experimental

writer | linguist

film | body | machine

screenwriter | composer | director | mother | daughter | activist

SCREENWRITING RESEARCH NETWORK

HYPHEN

SIGHTLINES: FILMMAKING IN THE ACADEMY

ADELAIDE, 17-20 SEPTEMBER 2025

researcher | artist | labourer

filmmaker | scholar | storyteller

ethnographer | researcher

audio | visual | haptic | tactile | sensual

fiction | documentary

film | artefact | performance

screenwriter | teacher

writer | director

screenplay | performance

creative | practice | research

cinema | streaming | television

comedy | drama | fantasy



University of South Australia

Creative People, Products and Places Research Centre (CP3)

aspera



Program

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Wednesday, 17 September 2025:

OPENING KEYNOTE SOPHIE HYDE



Acclaimed Australian filmmaker Sophie Hyde will open the combined Screenwriting Research Network and Sightlines: Filmmaking in the Academy conference-festival with a keynote reflecting on a career built at the intersections of roles. As a writer, director, producer and collaborator, Hyde moves fluidly between disciplines to create work that is both personal and deeply collaborative. She will discuss her own writing practice, her approach to working with other screenwriters, and the ways in which collaboration shapes the life of a film from its first draft to final cut. Olivia Colman, who stars in Hyde's latest feature, has described her as "a proper actor's director" who understands that actors "need to feel trusted and safe" to do their best work.

Ahead of its Australian premiere as the opening film of the Adelaide Film Festival in October, Hyde will use her most recent film, *Jimpa*, as a case study in autobiographical storytelling and creative partnership. Written by Hyde and long-time collaborator Matthew Cormack and directed by Hyde, *Jimpa* draws from Hyde's own life to tell the story of a mother and child whose journey to visit the child's gay grandfather reshapes their understanding of family and identity. The film offers an intimate example of how a director can work closely with another writer to translate lived experience into narrative while maintaining space for performance, interpretation and audience connection.

Launching against the backdrop of a global rollback of trans and queer rights, particularly in the United States, *Jimpa* had its world premiere at Sundance this year before opening two of the country's most prominent queer film festivals, NewFest in New York and Frameline in San Francisco. In this climate of heightened political tension, the film resonates as both personal testament and political act. Hyde will reflect on how occupying the space between roles, the hyphen, allows her to navigate complex creative and cultural terrain, and how screenwriting itself can be a form of resistance and renewal.

Speaker's Biography:

Sophie Hyde is an award-winning South Australian filmmaker known for *52 Tuesdays*, *Animals* and *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande*. A co-founder of Closer Productions and Adelaide Film Festival Patron, her work explores identity and unconventional relationships with formal and emotional boldness.

Saturday, 20 September 2025

KEYNOTE CHRISTY DENA

Between Now and Us: Story Design for Narrative Change in Screenwriting



Business as usual won't save the day, same with stories as usual. In 2014, in *This Changes Everything*, activist, filmmaker and author Naomi Klein said that addressing the climate challenge is not simply about spending a lot of money and changing a lot of policies, 'it's that we need to think differently, radically different, for those changes to be remotely possible'. Activists, scientists, politicians, and everyday folk are making those changes. According to Yale's 2024 report on (American) attitudes towards climate change, the majority of people are concerned and motivated, and the numbers keep rising, while only a small percentage of people are against it. Yet, "refusing the call" is still touted in screenwriting as the standard way characters should respond to change. Story design orthodoxy is out of step with the times.

Pro-Change Storytelling is a craft intervention for creativity, scholarship, and social good. It expands the conventional arc to overtly include the creatives and characters who view change as natural and adapt in regenerative ways for themselves and their communities. While present in characters and audiences, it is underrepresented and even omitted from screenwriting manuals, articles, and talks. This oversight limits the creative scope of screenwriters and leads non-experts in corporate, educational, and activist contexts to apply designs that aren't aligned with their message. It also enables overrepresentations of change that reflect and amplify a world most of us want less of: a world where people, communities, and states are forced to change, and change within the bounds of an expiring status quo.

There are plenty of folks who reach for a new kind of change, though. Pro-change storytelling resonates personally with plenty of screenwriters and their audiences, and it fits better with their characters and themes. As many of you have already signalled, we just need to emancipate ourselves from the great creative dampening brought about by screenwriting orthodoxy. Then our stories will more readily bridge the one-now with the many-nows and the many-possible. If we take producer and script editor John Yorke (2020 [2013]) at his word, then '[c]hange is the bedrock of life and consequently the bedrock of narrative'. We just need to remember that rocks — and the entire planet — change, too.

Speaker's Biography:

Christy Dena is a narrative design activist, storyteller, educator, and researcher who is living and making for a more kind, just, and creative world. She is a writer, designer, and director of multi-artform and interactive projects whose work spans installations, apps, live games, tabletop, ARGs, VR, films, theatre, and TV. Christy runs her own studio, Universe Creation 101, and has won National Writers' Guild and State Premier's Prize awards for her original interactive writing. Her interactive projects have been exhibited across Australia, New York, and Los Angeles.

PRESENTER ABSTRACTS

Thursday, 18 September 2025:

STREAMING-ARTHOUSE-COMMERCIAL-MAYHEM

Made-for-streaming not Made-for-TV: why original feature films made for streaming services have failed to make their mark

Matthew Dabner

Over the past decade, whilst subscription video on demand (SVOD) has radically transformed scripted television, the same cannot be said for its feature film output (Tavlin 2024). Services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple+ and Disney+ have all struggled to execute a sustainable strategy when it comes to offering original feature content on their platforms (Sperling 2024). Contrasting the sense of promise with which streaming was initially greeted with by independent filmmakers (Tryon 2009, 2013), with the realities of their first decade of feature film output, I will interrogate why these films have failed to gain purchase with critics and audiences. I will ask, “Have films made-for-streaming been unproductively associated with films made-for-television? Can films made for these services be considered cinematic if they do not result in a cinematic screening?” and finally, “Have we, instead, all been bearing witness to the birth of a new screen story format; the made-for-streaming movie?”

With the streaming wars now concluded (Lee 2024) and with Netflix’s pivot to quality versus quantity in respect of features well underway (Sperling 2024) this paper will postulate on the possible future(s) of this new film format and the implications for screenwriting practice.

Keywords: SVOD, tv-movie, cinema, streaming, made-for-tv

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Presenter Biography: Matthew Dabner is a Lecturer in Media Arts & Production at the University of Technology Sydney and a PhD student at the University of South Australia. Active in the Australian screen industry for over twenty years, Matthew has credits as a screenwriter (*The Square*), producer (*Cedar Boys*) script editor (*Riot*, *The Family Law*) and investment consultant (Screen Australia). Trained at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts, Matthew's career began with development roles at Mel Gibson's Icon Productions and Alex Proyas's Mystery Clock Cinema. Matthew's experience in education includes teaching postgraduate screenwriting at the Australian Film and Television Radio School, before commencing his current position at UTS. Matthew's creative practice PhD looks at the opportunities presented to the Australian scripted drama in the emerging age of internet-distributed television.

Arthouse-Commercial: A Screenwriting Framework to Fuse Meaning with Market Appeal

Hamid Taheri

In screenwriting, theme is crucial yet challenging to master. Robert Mckee (1997, p123) believes that theme — the “controlling idea” that “shapes the writer’s strategic choices”— has become a “vague” word. Social issues, instead of abstract concepts, offer an invaluable source for finding themes, helping writers create profound and structured works. However, films with social themes often belong to arthouse cinema, struggling to attract a broad audience. The new Iranian cinema that follows Asghar Farhadi’s film style offers a solution by intermingling social problems with mainstream genres, producing hybrid “arthouse-commercial” films that concurrently appeal to the general audiences and festivals. These films mirror what Paul Ramaeker (2010) calls “art-genre” films in the 1970s United States — such as *The French Connection* (William Friedkin 1971) — that combined elements of realism with established genres, creating socially conscious genre films with a new perspective. Farhadi’s films are not only successful at the box office, but they have won numerous awards, including two foreign language film Academy Awards for *A Separation* (2011) and *The Salesman* (2017). The reason for their concurrent success in both markets is arguably their adherence to the commercial rules of storytelling while carrying social themes. In other words, Farhadi entertains the audience with technical storytelling and further engages them in social issues. Johan Galtung’s (1969) theory of structural violence can adequately explain how Farhadi introduces and expands the theme and, thus, provides writers with a framework to make their stories more profound. According to Galtung, there is some latent structural violence in society (for example, some people with cancer live, and others die because of their lower rank in the system). An event triggers a “conflict” between the individuals and the system, manifesting latent violence, ultimately leading to peace. This peace can be positive or negative. When individuals modify the system, peace is positive, and when suppressed, it is negative. I will use Farhadi’s Oscar-winning *A Separation* to show how this latent/manifest/conflict/peace process can be applied to the classic three-act structure. Although Farhadi’s films are realistic, this method can be expanded to other genres, e.g. sci-fi. This theory not only helps screenwriters find engaging themes but also, more importantly, helps them gradually expand their themes due to its inherent structure.

Presenter Biography: Hamid Taheri is a doctoral candidate in media studies at RMIT University in Melbourne, where he investigates the effects of modesty censorship rules on Iranian films. He has published extensively in Iranian publications and international journals such as *Feminist Media Studies* and the *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*. Taheri is also a screenwriter and filmmaker whose name appears on several TV series, features, and short films. His short films have travelled the world through film festivals, and his feature debut, *The Lower Ground* (2024), is available on Amazon. He currently teaches screenwriting and cinema courses at different universities in Melbourne.

Manufacturing Mayhem: The Collision of Vérité and Narrative in *Mockbuster*

Sandy Cameron

This paper interrogates the tension between vérité objectivity and narrative construction through the lens of *Mockbuster*, an observational documentary written and directed by Anthony Frith, and co-written and produced by Sandy Cameron. *Mockbuster* chronicles Frith's collaboration with The Asylum—the studio behind *Sharknado*—to produce a micro-budget adaptation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Land That Time Forgot* in metropolitan Adelaide. *Mockbuster* is a creative-critical hybrid, simultaneously documenting and intervening in its subject matter. This presentation will dissect the often-invisible labour of “writing” observational documentary, tracing how the filmmakers negotiated their dual roles as embedded participants and narrative architects. Through test footage, draft narration, and story documents, we reveal how vérité's illusion of unfiltered access is carefully constructed through editorial choices, participant-filmmaker intervention, and the strategic omission of reflexive filmmaking moments. The analysis highlights the ethical and aesthetic paradoxes of scripting spontaneity, particularly as Frith and Cameron balance their subjects' performativity with their own authorial voice. By interrogating the film's development and production processes, alongside the key creatives' negotiation of observational purity and narrative intentionality, this paper argues that industrial pragmatism and artistic agency collide not only in the film's subject matter of “mockbusters” —cheap knock-offs of blockbuster releases—but also within the contemporary documentary form itself, where authenticity is both a commodity and a contested ideal. The presentation will include exclusive sneak peek at pivotal scenes from *Mockbuster* ahead of its Australian premiere at the Adelaide Film Festival.

Keywords: Observational documentary, hybrid documentary, screenwriting

Presenter Biography: Sandy Cameron is an Australian Writers' Guild award winning screenwriter and feature film producer. His work has screened in official selection at Sundance, Toronto, Venice and South By Southwest film festivals, streamed on Netflix, Stan and Binge and been remade internationally. He has been nominated for an Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Award and a company he co-founded has been nominated for Production Company of the Year by Screen Producers Australia. He has also worked extensively in screen funding agency roles, as well as a freelance film journalist. He is a Lecturer at UniSA, teaching production courses and the Graduate Certificate of Film and Television at UniSA, an industry collaboration with NBCUniversal International Studio owned production company Matchbox Pictures.

TIME-PLACE-COMMODITY-SINGLE-TAKES

The Hybrid Filmmaker-Academic and the Antagonism of Time: Experimenting with Temporal Tension in *A Moment*

Adam Daniel

This paper explores how my dual role as a hybrid filmmaker-academic enables an innovative engagement with time as a narrative and structural antagonist in my short film project, *A Moment* (produced in March 2025). Positioned at the intersection of creative practice and critical inquiry, my work on this project interrogates how temporal distortions — compression, dilation, looping, and fragmentation — can function as both a storytelling device and an experiential force that shapes audience perception. Drawing on theories of cinematic time from Gilles Deleuze as well as contemporary screenwriting and editing methodologies, this paper examines how *A Moment* manipulates time to generate tension, disorientation, and horror. The film’s formal approach maintains conventional linearity, while also using the compression of a time loop narrative to position time itself as the antagonist. This approach both works with traditional screenwriting paradigms regarding the time loop, while also attempting to innovate within that structure. It also reflects a broader engagement with the hybrid nature of screen production within academic research.

By situating *A Moment* within the context of practice-based research, this paper demonstrates how the hybrid filmmaker-academic can push the boundaries of narrative convention, expanding our understanding of time as an adversarial force in screen narrative. Ultimately, this work argues for the productive tension between filmmaking and scholarship as a means to innovate within both theory and practice.

Presenter Biography: Dr Adam Daniel is a filmmaker and Associate Lecturer in Communication at Western Sydney University. He has published on film, television and popular culture, including essays on the works of David Lynch, Steven Spielberg and Terrence Malick, and is the author of “Affective Intensities and Evolving Horror Forms: From Found Footage to Virtual Reality” by Edinburgh University Press. He has produced the short films *The Replica*, *Mud Crab* (nominated for Best Short Film at 2023 AACTA Awards), *Portals*, *Agoge*, and *Flow*.

Night Walks

Jacob Brinkworth

A pressing issue facing the world today is that of time being treated as a commodity. With ever-increasing developments in transportation, communication and globalisation adding to workers' inability to ever turn off work truly, many workers' relationships with natural temporal elements have become warped due to a lack of proper and/or valuable free time. The psychological effects of having this warped relationship with time can be difficult to express. *Night Walks* is a 20-minute short film made as a part of a practice-led research project at Edith Cowan University that attempts to portray the emotional ramifications of commodified time using contemporary transcendental film stylings to portray a distorted temporal experience of exhaustion and alienation.

Responding to the primary research question: How can the contemporary transcendental film style be used to portray the emotional ramifications of commodified time? The film explores a generational temporal stasis many young Australians are facing today with an over-casualised workforce with diminishing workers' rights and a general lack of time-ownership, and, by extension, what it means to make art in that climate through slow cinema techniques. It portrays two characters, one indebted to their professional job, another who is indebted to their creative practice even though they perform to an audience to almost no one. The film explores their isolation as well as their strained attempts at connection with one another through static, durational shots.

The film also responds to an additional research question: How can the time-orientated concerns of contemporary transcendental style be employed in a short film format? The film carefully synthesised durational shots with sparse *mise-en-scène* to experiment with the contradictions between the durational long-form nature of slow cinema style with the time-limitations of a short film format.

The practical output extended beyond the academic setting it was made in by premiering at the 27th Revelation Perth International Film Festival, one of Australia's biggest, most reputable film festivals and seeking to be further exhibited at film festivals and research conferences.

Running time: 19 minutes, 39 seconds

Presenter Biography: Jacob Brinkworth is a Perth/Boorloo-based filmmaker and PhD candidate at Edith Cowan University. The practical output of his practice-led honours research project "Night Walks: An Exploration of Time as a Commodity Through Transcendental Cinema" premiered at the 27th Revelation Perth International Film Festival.

He started his PhD studies in 2025 with a proposed practice-led research project that aims to critically engage with the fossil fuel industry's impact on politics and culture in the state of Western Australia through a feature-length screenplay.

He is a member of the Australian Directors Guild.

An Isolated Incident

Adrian Holmes

Creative Work Synopsis

Things threaten to unravel when a young girl is left unattended in a quietly horrific safety training workshop for a group of security and medical personnel prior to their deployment to an Australian Government offshore detention centre for asylum-seeking refugees.

Context of the Work

An Isolated Incident (Holmes 2023) is a short drama produced as a creative practice-led research component of my MFA at the University of Melbourne. The research explores the potential of duration to create experiential cinematic alternatives to those determined by montage, focusing on how these might emerge and evolve in and around a constant, continuous frame.

This creative practice examines the ways in which single take films are made and to what effect. The film utilizes single shot and durational film making techniques determined by the length and form of the single shot and the movement of camera throughout the location and scenario. A large ensemble cast of untrained actors performed multiple storylines and interactions which were all developed through improvisation in rehearsal guided by a written but unsighted script.

The film production also involved a complex stunt which severely impacted the intended shooting style of the film. The ways in which I adapted the shooting style to preserve and maintain the integrity of time and space will constitute an important part of my discussion of how the production process was shaped by the philosophical intention and practical desire to achieve the work in a single take, and vice versa.

This research was important in allowing me to explore the nature of onscreen and offscreen tension as a narrative device, an essential aspect of the film that needed to be formally realised as an expression of theme. I also discovered the single take form allowed for greater aspects of narrative ambiguity that emerged as a consequence of the restrictions of the single shot, something that also worked to create building tension that wasn't released via editing.

Research Statement

Although motion picture film began as a durational form, soon after its invention the use of continuity editing quickly emerged as a foundational and fundamental aspect of film language, one that was defined and refined over the next few decades to the point at which its ubiquity became so prevailing that film cultures all over the world employed it as the primary tool for constructing narratives in the form. (Elsaesser T. , 1990) Indeed, arguably, it may still be considered the essential grammar of storytelling in the medium.

The success of this narrative form relies on audiences agreeing to a fundamental delusion: the continuity of time. Editing allows the film maker to reconstitute time in a manner that it hadn't previously existed, and in such a way that it creates the illusion of continuous time.

Why then, did the seventh art, as cinema was described by André Bazin, so quickly and willingly give up that which distinguished it from all preceding visual forms of art: the unity of time and space. What has been the opportunity cost of the evolution away from duration as a fundamental expression of cinema? And what do we lose when time no longer has a real-world form, and as such is ostensibly separated from the story world? What might we gain by re-uniting time and space? What kinds of stories might open up for us?

My research examines the work of film theorists such as Bazin, Deleuze, Schrader and Bordwell who have argued for the legitimacy of temporality and its narrative import, as well as the proclamations of the Montage theorists in the USSR, particularly Eisenstein and his insistence on the primacy of montage as the quintessential story form. I also examine the creative works of contemporary filmmakers Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Alfonso Cuarón and Alexander Sokurov for their use of time as a formal device supporting non-traditional narrative structures in the films *Uncle Boonmee can recall his past lives*, *Roma*, and *Russian Ark*.

Length/Format: 9'35" Digital

Written and directed by Adrian Holmes

Presenter Biography: Adrian Holmes is an academic at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, where he is also studying a Master of Fine Arts in Film and Television. His practice-led research focuses on the potential of durational storytelling forms to challenge montage as the essential grammar of storytelling in cinema, exploring film languages and narrative structures that seek to maintain the unity and integrity of time and space. In this he is inspired by film makers working outside the mainstream, predominately in non-English speaking film cultures, and his work has been extensively shaped by nearly two decades of documentary collaborations with Ngaatjatjarra artists in the Gibson Desert region of Western Australia.

The Screenwriter-Linguist: Representing Aboriginal English and First Languages in the dialogue of television screenplays

Samuel Herriman

This paper explores the screenwriter-linguist hyphenate through a focus on the representation of Aboriginal English and First Languages in television screenplays. Informed by the dominant majority, language ideologies link ways of speaking to a set of beliefs and attitudes related to the identities and traits of the speaker. In fictional screen narratives, the way a character speaks is indelibly linked to the real-world identities and traits represented by that speech. Indeed, Bednarek (2018) notes that that 'narrative mass media play[s] a significant role in establishing, reflecting, recycling and changing language ideologies, language attitudes and social norms' (p18).' Consequently, the choices made by a screenwriter contribute to this cycle of linguistic ideologies, attitudes and norms. Through a linguistic construction of character, the screenwriter imbues their work with an inalienable relationship to language ideology. I argue that screenwriters inherently understand and draw upon social constructions of language in their work, and thus it is necessary to consider the implications of the screenwriter- linguist as hyphenate. This paper considers the screenwriter as linguist through a sociolinguistic analysis of Aboriginal English and First Languages as used in the television programs *Mystery Road*, *The Warriors* and *The Heights*. Following the linguistic disenfranchisement wrought by British colonisation, Aboriginal English is an umbrella term for myriad varieties of English used by Aboriginal people in Australia and is a 'strong encoder of ethno-cultural identity' (Rodriguez Louro & Collard 2024, p1). Through this work I demonstrate how screenwriters utilise indexical features of Aboriginal English in screenplays to reflect and challenge attendant linguistic ideologies.

Keywords: Aboriginal English, dialogue, representation, language ideology, First Languages, sociolinguistics

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Presenter Biography: Samuel Herriman is an early career researcher, tutor and writer for screen and stage hailing from Whadjak Nyungar boodja (Perth, Western Australia). He is a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney researching the role of the screenwriter in representations of Aboriginal English in fictional screen media. He holds a Master of Screen Arts (Screenwriting) from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School. His research interests have developed from screenwriting practice, and in particular scripted representations of identities, with a recent focus on how identities are expressed through dialogue.

Navigating Two Worlds in Indigenous Screenwriting Practice

Jess Love

This paper suggests that Indigenous screenwriters must navigate two worldviews when engaging in the act of writing a screenplay – an Indigenous worldview and a Western worldview. Within screenwriting doxa, Western perspectives dominate, creating an oversaturation of Western worldviews. Recently, there's been a focus on making different perspectives and worldviews visible within academia. My PhD research explores the idea of navigating two worldviews simultaneously, in which the writer reflects the characters in a zombie screenplay who must either embrace an individualist or communitarian approach in the fight for survival. This paper explores this idea of navigating two different worldviews and how they might collide by juxtaposing a localised approach versus a universal approach. By examining the fundamental philosophical differences that emerge in practice between these two worldviews, this paper aims to provide insights, understandings or knowledges about Indigenous screenwriting practices.

Keywords: Indigenous screenwriting, worldviews, individualism, communitarianism, zombies

Presenter Biography: Jess Love (BA Hons. LTU Masters Media RMIT) is a Bundjalung (Widjabal)-Gumbayngirr creative from Albury-Wodonga, living in Melbourne. Jess is a screenwriter and academic who is currently undertaking a PhD in screenwriting at RMIT. Jess's creative practice focusses on Indigenous screenwriting practices and experimenting with genre – often, through her familial co-writing partnership. Previously, Jess has worked on grass-roots community-driven, Indigenous-led audio-visual projects which embraced and supported her connection to country, community, kin and language. Currently, she is conducting research on Indigenous screenwriting practices through exploring the nexus of zombies, Indigenous worldviews and screenwriting doxa.

“Somos Paja de Cerro” (Rooted voices): Screenwriting and Visual Storytelling for Decolonial Education

María Teresa Galarza-Neira

This presentation reflects upon the creation process of *Somos Paja de Cerro (Rooted Voices)*, a practice-based research visual essay that aims to raise awareness about racism and the need of recognition of linguistic diversity within the Ecuadorian educational system. Positioned at the intersection of screenwriting studies and social activism, this short film employs creative storytelling techniques (screenwriting grounded in literature and poetic inquiry) to challenge dominant narratives and foreground the voices of Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian communities.

Emerging from socio-educational research employing social cartographies within academic spaces, the project maps experiences of discrimination to inform a narrative that seeks to enhance the visibility and recognition of ethnic and linguistic diversity in Ecuador. The film itself functions as a hyphen, bridging academic inquiry and cinematic storytelling through a scripted visual narrative that integrates fragments of testimonies of racism, to merge them with fictional accounts, and re-tell them in six of Ecuador’s indigenous languages and Spanish. By inhabiting this liminal space between research and creative practice, *Somos Paja de Cerro* explores how screenwriting can be used as a critical intersection, a methodological and artistic tool to construct a counter-narrative against racism.

Through a multilingual polylogue and animated texts, the film highlights XXI century lived experiences of racism, exclusion and resistance, interwoven with Paulo Freire’s concept of education as a liberatory practice, fragments from XX century Afro-Ecuadorian literature, and the revolutionary thought of Indigenous Ecuadorian activists Dolores Cacuango and Tránsito Amaguaña.

About the film: *Somos Paja de Cerro*, directed by Ecuadorian award-winning filmmaker Alfredo León (USFQ), animated by practice-based researcher Alvaro Neira (UCUENCA) written and produced by María Teresa Galarza, is a co-production between UCUENCA, ARTRA, and SEIBE (Secretariat of Intercultural Bilingual Education), with the collaboration of USFQ’s Film School. This film is one of the outcomes of the research project *Racist Discourses and Practices in the Life Experiences of the Educational Community at the University of Cuenca*, directed by Professor and Researcher Angél Japón. This project was funded by the Vice-Rectorate of Research at the Universidad de Cuenca.

Keywords: Practice-based research, Linguistic diversity, Screenwriting, Storytelling, Racism, Education

Presenter Biography: María Teresa Galarza-Neira is a writer, film producer, professor, and researcher specializing in gender, migration, and human rights through artistic practice. She holds degrees in film, education, and law, along with postgraduate studies in communication, film, cultural studies, and education.

In 2018, she earned a Ph.D. from the **Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne**, with a practice-based screenwriting research project on reproductive justice in Ecuador and Latin America.

She currently teaches screenwriting at the University of Cuenca, where she conducts artistic practice-based research. She also coordinates REDIC (Creative Research Network) and is a member of research groups MetPro and PYDLOS-DIEP.

FEMALE-WRITERS-DIRECTORS-CHARACTERS

Years – In Search of a Different Ending for the Female Characters

Patrícia Dourado & Mirian Tavares

Part of this story is told in the book *Women Who Write Our Worlds* (Rosanne Welch & Rose Ferrell, Intellect, 2025), and we would also like to present some of it at the SRN Conference 2025 in Adelaide. Our aim is to contribute to the discussion on the nuances of screenplays written by women, based on the study of some singularities of Anna Muylaert's writing process for the film *The Second Mother* (2015). Almost 20 years went by between the first and the last versions of *The Second Mother* screenplay. "I started writing in 1996 when I had a baby in my arms, and now he is a grown man with a beard", says Brazilian filmmaker Anna Muylaert (*Encontros de Cinema* 2015). The screenwriting process of *The Second Mother* involved a great deal of rewriting and change of direction over nearly 20 years. Despite how it may seem, however, the filmmaker claims that the project was never shelved. Instead it was in permanent transformation, having been rewritten at different moments over the years. Muylaert details this process in several interviews, including *Encontros de Cinema* (2015), *Metrópolis* (2015a), and *Primeiro Tratamento* (2020), when she points out the four great moments of the screenplay and its transformations from one version to another (1994-95-96; 2004; 2009 and 2013). Based primarily on these reports and the screenplay version of 30th December 2013, we undertook a study of the archives documenting the creation of *The Second Mother* screenplay. We focused on Anna Muylaert's search for a different ending for the female characters (mother and daughter). This work was underpinned both theoretically and methodologically using Cecilia Salles' critical theory of creation processes (*Unfinished esture*, 2019; *Networks of Creation*, 2019) and, in addition, studies by screenwriter Jack Epps (*Screenwriting is Rewriting*, 2016) about the relevance of rewriting processes, and by Paul Joseph Gulino (*Screenwriting: sequence approach*, 2004) about the sequence approach technique used to structure screenplays, fundamental to Anna Muylaert's creative process, as she stated, for the freedom of improvisation on the set, and the incorporation of the environment, as sought by her.

Keywords: artistic creation process; screenwriting practices; screenplay versions comparative study; Brazilian contemporary cinema

Presenter Biographies:

Patrícia Dourado

Coordinator of the Postgraduate Program in Creation Processes at PUC-São Paulo and Professor in the Master's Programme in Creation Processes at the University of Algarve. Postdoctoral Researcher at the Arts and Communication Research Centre (CIAC) at the University of Algarve, and member of the Creation Processes Research Group at PUC-São Paulo. She holds a PhD and a Master's degree in Communication and Semiotics from PUC-São Paulo. She studies Creation Processes in general, and Cinema in particular, with particular focus on screenwriting practices in contemporary cinema. Screenwriter with experience in fiction, animated series, documentaries, institutional, and digital education.

Mirian Tavares

Cathedric Professor at the University of Algarve. Coordinator of the Arts and Communication Research Centre (CIAC), and Director of the PhD Programme in Digital Media Art. She holds a PhD degree in Contemporary Communication and Culture from UFBA and a Master's degree in Communication and Semiotics from PUC-São Paulo. She develops research and theoretical work in the fields of Cinema, Visual Arts, and Literature. Curator of numerous artistic exhibitions, essayist, art critic and columnist for Meer Magazine and Algarve Informativo.

WRITER-DISRUPTOR

And the Walls came Tumbling Down... – An exposition of the Impact of Women’s Screenwriting

Rose Ferrell

This paper examines the *real-world* impact of screenwriters to contemplate the question: what impact has screenwriting had on social beliefs, structures and practices in this ever-changing world?

The presentation responds to research which examines gender equity in the opportunities afforded to women screenwriters and filmmakers in film industries globally. Based on chapters in the up-coming publication *Women who Write our Worlds* (Intellect, *in press*), the paper reveals the ways in which women screenwriters’ work with and within communities has brought communities’ stories and issues to broader public awareness and achieved some level of impact for those communities.

The paper discusses the conditions within which the women have worked, as well as the impact their screenworks have achieved. The presentation suggests indices by which impact can be measured or judged, as it provides evidence that attitudes have shifted, policies have been rewritten, and the range of possibilities and life choices has expanded for some groups as a result of women’s work in the medium of film. The paper argues that through screen stories lives are changed; that screen stories matter; and that though perhaps still under-represented amongst the workforce in film industries worldwide, women are using their skills in screen production to help raise the voices of other women and communities towards creating a more equitable world for all.

Keywords: screenwriting, impact, activism, women’s writing, social movements, feminism

Presenter Biography: Rose Ferrell is an independent researcher and practitioner and staff member at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). Rose has a background in film production as both a technician and writer-creator, and as a filmmaker-trainer in community arts projects. As a screenwriter and researcher, Rose’s interests are in creative practice and screenwriters’ voice. She has been published in the *Journal of Screenwriting* (Intellect, 2010-), the Palgrave *Handbooks* of both *Screen Production* (2019) and *Script Development* (2021). Rose’s latest work is a stage musical, *Her Latest Flame*. She is currently adapting Sasha Wasley’s fourth novel, *Snapshots from Home* (2023), into a television series.

█: This should always appear singular possessive as in “screenwriter’s voice” as it refers to each individual screenwriter and their individual voice and not some monolithic voice of them as a group.

When Women Write What They Say, They Say So Much More: Powerful Actress-writer-producers Past, Present & Future

Rosanne Welch

In response to the concept of *hyphen* this paper allows us to take a deeper look at the work of actress-writer (and sometimes)-producers in television and film. Students often know Sylvester Stallone wrote *Rocky* as a star vehicle for himself and that Matt Damon and Ben Affleck wrote *Good Will Hunting* and Donald Glover created the show *Atlanta* to star himself and friends.

Yet whenever I teach the screenplay to *Sense and Sensibility*, I realize even with winning the Golden Globe AND the Oscar for Best Screenplay, it is mostly a surprise for MFA candidates (even female ones) to learn Emma Thompson wrote the film in which she starred. EVEN after she published *The Sense and Sensibility Screenplay & Diaries: Bringing Jane Austen's Novel to Film* in 1996.

Yet Thompson was not the first actress to write her own parts. Many women have shared their actress title with one of being a writer on their projects – or projects for others. In the 1920s Frances Marion wrote for Mary Pickford and in the 1940s Ruth Gordon wrote parts for Katherine Hepburn.

Television opened the door for many more actress-writers, often (especially with women of color) having to write parts for themselves because men weren't writing with them I mind. From the early days there was Gertrude Berg, creator, writer, and star of *The Goldbergs*. Modern shows are written, created and star everyone from Tina Fey to Issa Rae, to Mindy Kaling to Lena Waithe. This paper discusses the way women writing their own characters, dialogue, and worlds into existence impacts the audience and the industry.

Keywords: Emma Thompson, Issa Rae, Tina Fey, Gertrude Berg, Mindy Kaling, Lena Waithe.

Presenter Biography: Rosanne Welch is Executive Director of the Stephens College MFA in TV and Screenwriting. Television credits: *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Picket Fences*, *ABCNEWS: Nightline* and *Touched by an Angel*. Award-winning books include: *When Women Wrote Hollywood* (2018) and *Women in American History* (2018). Also: *Why The Monkees Matter: Teenagers, Television and American Popular Culture* (2016). Welch serves as Book Reviews editor for *Journal of Screenwriting* and Vice-Chair to the SRN Executive Committee. Her talk "The Importance of Having a Female Voice in the Room" from the TEDxCPP is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JFNsqKBRnA> and other recorded lectures on her YouTube Channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/DrRosanneWelch>

Writing for the Wandering Eye: What Short Videos Mean for Screenwriters

Jan Černík

The audience's attention is not only controlled by the visual and auditory means of the film itself (Hasson et al. 2008, Smith 2012), but already by what the screenwriter writes in the script. Filmmakers have built up tools for controlling audience attention (Cutting 2021), but these may be losing their power nowadays due to the growing popularity of short videos. While long films in landscape format have more focused viewing, short videos in portrait format suggest that viewers watch them less focused with more fragmented patterns of gaze (Wen, Yang, Xu, Qiao, Xu, Bai 2024). And these viewing habits may carry over to movies and TV shows (Chen, Li, Guo, Wang 2022). The research aims to show how viewing patterns are changing specifically and what implications this may have for how scripts are written. My research combines eye-tracking experiments and textual analysis of scripts. First, I intend to show how viewer attention is guided in films and TV shows and their scripts. I will then illustrate how viewing patterns change in portrait format videos. Finally, I will reflect on the implications this has for screenwriting.

Keywords: short video, film, TV series, portrait format, landscape format, TikTok, perception, attention

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Presenter Biography: Jan Černík (1988) studied film studies and philosophy at Palacký University in the Czech Republic. His research focuses on the history of Czechoslovak screenwriting. He is currently working at Royal Holloway, University of London, where he is conducting research on the transformation of viewing habits under the influence of short videos.

Sustainability in Cinema: A Comparative Film and Screenplay Analysis

Lukas Materzok

Films shape how we perceive sustainability, by reflecting debates or imagining futures. Building on previous research that has examined sustainability themes in cinema from various theoretical perspectives (Rust et al., 2013) and following the approach of Svoboda (2016), this study adopts a comparative analysis of fictional films to map their normative and narrative patterns concerning sustainability.

By combining qualitative coding methodologies (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) with screenplay analysis (Nelmes, 2011; Macdonald, 2013), the research examines films across diverse genres, including drama, animation, comedy, thriller and science fiction, that address ecological and social issues such as resource scarcity, pollution, inequality, and climate change. Examples include: *Embrace the Serpent* (2015), *Woman at War* (2018), *Parasite* (2019), *Don't Look Up* (2021) and *Strange World* (2022). These films are analysed to identify recurring patterns in narrative structure (plot, characters, cinematic techniques, symbolism) and normative elements (ethical, moral, ideological positions, thematic engagement).

The study proposes a theoretical scale to classify fiction films according to their potential to inform, enlighten, or emotionally engage viewers on issues related to sustainability. The scale is derived both *deductively* — drawing on strategic communication, film theory, and film analysis — and *inductively* — through the examination of sustainability films. Designed as an instrument for researchers, educators, and practitioners interested in analysing or developing film projects, the scale spans a continuum from minimal to significant potential impact. Thus, the conceptual 'hyphen' of the research lies between films that omit sustainability relevance and those that actively foster environmental and social awareness.

The findings reveal distinct storytelling techniques and underlying values that reflect how filmmakers and screenwriters construct and convey sustainability on screen. By mapping both the narrative and normative patterns, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how sustainability is interwoven into modern cinema and what value systems these works promote or critique.

Keywords: Sustainability in cinema, comparative film analysis, screenplay analysis, narrative and normative patterns, strategic communication

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<https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.381>

Presenter Biography: Lukas Materzok is a PhD student at the University of Applied Sciences Darmstadt, in Germany, researching the integration of Virtual Production (VP) in screenplay development to advance sustainability narratives. He holds a BA in Motion Pictures and an MA in Leadership in the Creative Industries from h_da. As a lecturer in both bachelor's and master's programs, he teaches courses on Unreal Engine, virtual production techniques, screenwriting, and visual storytelling. Recently, he collaborated on an Applied Research Lab project, developing a low-budget VP studio to facilitate student-led Unreal Engine 5 environments in an escape-room installation.

Screenwriting-AI - LLMs, KRR, SCAS, and other useful acronyms to rethink the use of trustworthy artificial intelligence in content development

Paolo Russo

The knives are out between screenwriters and content creators on one side and Hollywood studios and Big Tech on the other. The recent revelation (Reisner 2024) that large corpora of dialogue sourced through crawling of around 140,000 film and TV scripts have been used to train and power several LLMs fuels the already hot debate around exploitation of creative work, future job safety, likely infringement of copyright and labour laws and agreements even further; in turn, it highlights the inadequacy, if not the paucity of current legislative/regulatory frameworks and institutional positioning on issues that are bound to have global repercussions. And while the WGA calls “on studios to take ‘immediate legal action’ against AI companies” for their systematic looting intellectual property, (Kilkenny 2024), the WGGB has recently condemned the UK government’s proposal to allow such companies to use copyrighted materials to train their AI, calling instead for the establishment of a new, independent regulator.

The global debate ignited in the last couple of years also shows how the discourse around AI and the ownership of any related R&D has become the monopolized preserve of limited, well-guarded sections of the industry, to the exclusion of the actual players and experts – i.e. writers and screenwriting researchers – the consequences of which become evident in the current flaws and shortcomings of even the most powerful Transformer models. In order for screenwriting researchers to redress this one-way approach, they must plug the gap in knowledge and understanding of AI. Almost no specialized literature explores the convergence of LLMs and screenwriting. Screenwriting research only recently broached the issue as a study object but has not yet found ways to really delve into its intricacies; and a comb-through of most major journals and research papers dedicated to AI yields very few relevant contributions that barely scratch the surface of this field of inquiry.

Building further on the ontological reconceptualization of Screenwriting as a Complex Adaptive System (Russo 2023), this paper addresses some of those intricacies from a knowledge representation and reasoning (KRR) perspective. To that end, it will combine key notions and techniques that are typical of LLMs – e.g. scaling, training, alignment tuning, prompting – with examples of ML algorithms, with a view to assessing the viability and effective applicability of “trustworthy” AI to screenwriting/content development.

Key to acronyms and keywords:

Screenwriting as a Complex Adaptive System (SCAS)

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

Large Language Models (LLMs)

Knowledge Representation and Reasoning (KRR; aka KR&R, KR2)

Machine Learning (ML)

Prompting, Scaling, Training, Alignment tuning, Algorithms

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Kilkenny, K. (2024) Writers Guild Calls on Studios to Take “Immediate Legal Action” Against AI Companies. *Hollywood Reporter*, 12 December.

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Presenter Biography: Paolo Russo is Senior Lecturer in Film at Oxford Brookes University (UK). He is a member and former Chair of the Screenwriting Research Network. He is co-editor of the 2024 SRN Best Book Award-winning *The Palgrave Handbook of Screenwriting Studies* (2023). Among his other publications: *Storia del cinema italiano* (2008); ‘Dream Narrative in *Inception* and *Shutter Island*’ (Routledge 2014); ‘Storylining engagement in *Gomorra – The Series*’ (*Journal of Screenwriting* 8:1 2017); ‘Screenplectics: Screenwriting as a Complex Adaptive System’ (Palgrave Macmillan 2023); ‘Re-assessing the development and writing of Kubrick’s *The Shining* through archival research’ (Vernon Press 2025 forthcoming); and ‘The measure of (artificial) intelligence in a changing world for screenwriting’ (*Journal of Screenwriting* 2025, forthcoming). A professional screenwriter and a member of the Writers’ Guild of Great Britain, Russo was on the writing team of Season 1 of *Topo Gigio* for Italian broadcaster RAI.

WESTERN-INDIGENOUS-NEOCOLONISATION

Writing across languages, writing across time, writing across audiences: Exploring the hybridity of Māori-Pākehā writers and characters

Christina Milligan

The 2024 dramatic feature *Ka Whawhai Tonu* (Struggle without End) is a Māori-language feature set in 1864 during the land wars in New Zealand. These wars were fought between British and colonial forces and the Indigenous Māori people, as the number of arriving British settlers grew and the colonial government sought to appropriate land for them. *Ka Whawhai Tonu* tells the story of a pivotal battle in which tribes in the Waikato region fought against impossible odds, with 300 Māori outnumbered by 1400 British and colonial soldiers. The film is told from a Māori perspective in the dialects of the tribes who fought in the battle. The filmmakers see their work as a tribute to their ancestors, as a “testament to their strength and resilience, often overlooked in mainstream narratives” (Curtis 2024). As such, the film could be said to offer a subaltern view of the land wars. However given the substantial intermarriage of colonial and Indigenous in New Zealand since the first arrival of whalers and sealers in the late 18th Century, a more appropriate lens may be that of the hybrid.

The subject of Māori-Pākehā (European) hybridity has been problematised in New Zealand because of Māori suspicion of hybridisation as a continuation of the colonial project and also because of the demands of government-sanctioned biculturalism, which can mitigate against the actual complexities of lives lived in ambiguity of definition (Bell 2004; Moeke-Maxwell 2006). Moeke-Maxwell discusses hybridity as freeing the subject from “a sense of unbelonging, dislocation and alienation, and (of only) a partial participation and location within the culture(s) of origin (cited in Grennell 2014). The sense of working from a new space – Bhabha’s (1994) Third Space – is a sense shared by a range of filmmakers in New Zealand and is characterised by producer Tainui Stephens’ comment: “I’m very aware of what new fusion we are creating. New definitions. New ways of working that involve the best of Māori and Pākehā” (personal interview 2018). It is therefore not necessarily unusual that in a historical film told from a Māori perspective, the hybrid is centred in the lead character of Haki/Jack, a teenager whose father is a British soldier and whose Māori mother’s death is a motivator for Haki to seek out his Waikato relatives and get caught up in the central battle.

The current research emerges from a series of dialogues between the writer of the film and the researcher who was an executive producer on the project. In these dialogues, we explore our shared hybridity as Māori-Pākehā working in the world of film and specifically, interrogate the writer’s decision to centre the film on a teenager caught between the two worlds of Indigenous and colonial forces.

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Presenter Biography: Dr Christina Milligan is Associate Professor in Screen Production at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. She is an award-winning producer of feature and television drama and documentaries and much of her industry work reflects her Indigenous heritage as a member of the Ngāti Porou tribe of the Māori people. Christina serves on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Screenwriting and was recently appointed by the NZ government to the Board of NZ On Air, the national funding body for public media.

Mutual Respect and Shared Narratives: A Filmic Journey with First Nations and Non-Indigenous Creators

Phoebe Hart

The paper examines the collaborative efforts of creative arts scholars and practitioners from dominant cultural backgrounds who engaged in a co-writing and co-creative endeavour with First Nations participants from Australia and Taiwan. This partnership was grounded in mutual respect, understanding, and a shared objective of producing a documentary film centred on an Indigenous artists' exchange. After describing the co-creation field, the paper describes and analyses the process of relationship-building and trust development, recognising diverse perspectives, and valuing a richness of thought and culture. Indigenous artists contribute their traditional knowledge, narratives, and cultural practices, while non-Indigenous filmmakers offer their artistic skills, techniques, and viewpoints. Together, they harmonise their talents to create a filmic expression that encapsulates both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, enhancing cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

Presenter Biography:

Phoebe Hart is an acclaimed Australian documentary filmmaker recognised for her exploration of themes related to identity, family, and personal journeys. Through her filmmaking, Hart highlights significant social issues and promotes greater understanding and acceptance.

Malu Tatau: Rite of passage empowering women.

Vaoiva Natapu-Ponto & Agapetos Aia-Fa'aleava

Pasifika women have always had to balance their traditional Pasifika culture with the dominant cultures around them. In a mesmerising art piece called 'Walking the Wall' by Angela Tiatia, she shows how these struggles are shown through the representation of women in her work. Tiatia's art has been an important part in our research in education, sports, ethnography, and creative arts. Using a camera, we were able to capture the stories of Paralympians in a non-intrusive way, picking up on all the little details and emotions during their interviews. We also combined stories of non-Samoan women and Indigenous Samoan Faafafine to show the power of women, Pasifika feminism, and Indigenous knowledge. Our research has brought up some tough topics for people to think about and reflect on. These stories are told by those who are often overlooked in our community.

Presenter Biographies:

Dr Vaoiva Natapu-Ponton completed her doctorate in Education at The University of Melbourne investigating the motivations of Melbourne-based Pasifika students to learn, what concerns them, and impediments to their educational success. Spending the last 25 years as an educator, she is interested in strategies to enhance student success in the transition from school to the tertiary sector. Her experience of utilizing Pacific Methodologies is explored in various publications.

Agapetos Aia-Fa'aleava, PhD

I am a proud Samoan filmmaker, educator, and researcher residing in Meanjin (Brisbane), Australia. My deep fascination with the Samoan malu led me to pursue a PhD, which culminated in a creative-led project. As part of this research, I produced my debut documentary, *One Tatau, Two Worlds* (2024), which is currently being showcased at film festivals. The film explores the experiences of women and their relationship with the Samoan malu.

In addition to my research and filmmaking, I am currently serving as a Facilitator for the Student Success Write Up program. This program provides support to students at high risk of failing their degrees, offering guidance and assistance to help them succeed. I find great fulfillment in being part of a team dedicated to advocating for and supporting students in need.

AFRICAN HYPHEN AMERICAN – ‘BLACK PANTHER’S KILMONGER AS THE DIAPORIC AFRICAN.

Rex Obano

The Marvel Studios feature film *Black Panther* (2018) was a critical, cultural and financial phenomenon. Written by the African-American screenwriters Ryan Coogler and Joe Robert Cole, this incredibly successful film has been widely praised for challenging Western stereotypes of Africa, its people and people of the African diaspora. However, I aim to argue that the screenplay, far from being uniting, stages a conflict between native African and hyphenated African-American characters. The screenplay pits the noble African (Black Panther) against the radical African-American (Kilmonger). Furthermore, I argue that this conflict, which sees the hyphenated defeated, needs to be understood within the context of neo-colonialism. Neocolonialism is a multifaceted term linked to the control of a country's resources, but when specifically applied to screenwriting it describes screenplays that conceal a deeper conformity to the Western narrative paradigm that the colonised are victims in need of colonisation. Rather than construct a postcolonial narrative in which characters of African descent are central sovereign figures with full agency over their destinies, Coogler and Cole's black characters exist in a neo-colonial paradigm where they fight among themselves, and militancy is crushed and ultimately the colonisers are given the valuable minerals. Furthermore I will examine that it is, in fact, Coogler and Cole's hyphenated identity that leads to an internal colonialism exemplified by the use tropes such as the control of children's education with regard to fatherlessness and ethnic division with regard to statelessness which further eradicates, nullifies and subdues the militancy of diasporic Africans against their former colonisers rendering the screenplay as a neo-colonial text.

Keywords: Neo-colonialism, Black Panther, screenplay

Presenter Biography: Rex Obano - Teaching Fellow in Screenwriting, Media Arts, Royal Holloway, University of London. My research focusses on cultural neo-colonialism and its effect on Black-British screenwriting. I am also a playwright and screenwriter, my plays have twice been shortlisted for the Alfred Fagon Award, awarded the Roland Rees Bursary. My theatre includes *Slaves* (Theatre 503) and *The Door Never Closes* (Almeida Theatre). I am also part of the writing team for the long running radio series *Faith, Hope and Glory* – where each series charts the lives of three 'Windrush' families from 1946 to the present day in five-year intervals.

FEMINISM-COMEDY-DRAMA-AGING

Poking the beaver: feminist approaches to television comedy as creative resistance to patriarchal and organisational power

Susan Cake & Marilyn Leder

Responding to the theme *Hyphen*, two practitioner-academics discuss how feminist critique is combined with Foucault's theories of power to examine the moral viewpoints from which the objects of satire are targeted in their comedy television series, *Fighting Fit* (Cake) and *The MILF Next Door* (Leder). Cake establishes an anti-neoliberal moral viewpoint as the critical lens through which to satirise bureaucratic workplaces. Referencing narrative comedies such as *The Office* (2001–2003) and *Utopia* (2014–2024), her analysis highlights how *Fighting Fit* subverts corporate power structures by situating them within the context of a gym. Leder's discussion of *The MILF Next Door* uses a feminist perspective, drawing upon *Love* (2016–2018) and *Veep* (2012–2019) to examine how transgressive female protagonists publicly and personally resist patriarchal power. By locating their series in relatable, suburban settings, the writers of *Fighting Fit* and *The MILF Next Door*, extend the reach of satire that provokes an ideological critique to a broader audience. Their analysis demonstrates how satire is operationalised as a potent tool for challenging entrenched power structures. They discuss examples from their work to demonstrate how satirical feminist moral viewpoints can enable a powerful form of creative resistance.

Keywords: screenwriting, narrative comedy, creative resistance, satire

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Presenter Biographies:

Dr Susan Cake is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and Senior Lecturer in Film, Screen and Animation at QUT where she teaches Screenwriting. Susan has taught screen production in the vocational and higher education sectors in the UK and Australia. Her creative practice research, focusing on narrative comedy script development, has been published in national and international journals and the Palgrave Handbook of Script Development. She was a chief investigator examining studio capacity and screen production on the Gold Coast and is a CI on an ARC Linkage Project titled Advancing Digital Innovation in the Australian Live Performance Sector.

Dr Marilyn Leder (formerly Marilyn Tofler) is a Melbourne-based screenwriter, lecturer, comedian and television, film and theatre script assessor. Marilyn has published journal articles and book chapters on comedy television and web series, film and gender. Her PhD focused on satire screenwriting for female characters. She has performed widely in musical

theatre and stand-up comedy and co-wrote and created the critically acclaimed television comedy series, *Whatever Happened to That Guy?* Marilyn is a film and television lecturer at Swinburne University of Technology.

Comedy-Drama or Drama-Comedy? That is the question.

Deborah Klika

In recent times industrial categorisations of TV programmes have incorporated dual descriptors such as the comedy western, drama romance and fantasy horror. While such marriages help to define the tone and audience expectation of the screen text, it raises the question as to which genre descriptor leads. This presentation asks if by inserting the hyphen does that predicate which genre leads in the descriptor? And in doing so, does the order inform either the narrative structure or the tropes in play?

In this sense, a primary question emerges: how do industry and academic definitions of comedy and drama shape our understanding of these TV genres?

Examining how IMDB categorises TV comedy dramas alongside contemporary genre definitions and terminology, this paper will tease out which programmes fall into which categories and if there is a pattern in the narrative structure and stories which determines the lead term.

For example, in the sitcom the A plot (main storyline) may primarily adhere to comedy, featuring humorous situations from which the main character/s seek to escape but fail. In contrast, the B plot (secondary storyline) could delve into more serious, emotional terrain, such as a character's relationship struggles, and which may progress over the course of a season. The C plot is often purely comedic, even slapstick moments (in comedies as well as dramas). This shift between storylines creates a blending of comedic and dramatic modes and understanding the balance between them assists in determining which genre takes precedence, be it a comedy-drama or a drama-comedy.

By re-examining the balance of comedy and drama particularly through the lens of narrative structure and industry practice, it may be possible to arrive at more definitive genre descriptors, or at least a clearer understanding of how dual genres, particularly the comedy-drama, inform story development and audience experience.

Key words: comedy, drama, dramedy, television, sitcom.

Presenter Biography:

Deborah's area of research is screen comedy and screenwriting pedagogy. For her PhD by creative practice at the University of York, she examined the nature of plotting in screen comedy, specifically when transposing a sitcom to a film and then a film to a sitcom.

Deborah is currently on the next draft of her feature film script, a dark comedy about her Czech parents driving across the top end of Australia in 1960, in pursuit of their careers, yet her pregnant mother could neither drive nor speak English.

The between, the connected: the hybrid of comedy and drama in the research artefact *Adora is Allergic to Bees*.

Joanne Tindale

This presentation explores the hybrid nature of comedy and drama in screenwriting, specifically in relation to age and gender representation. My practice-based creative research artefact, a feature film screenplay titled *Adora is Allergic to Bees*, interweaves comedy and drama to challenge the pervasive ageist and sexist stereotypes on screen. Rather than positioning comedy and drama as opposing forces, this work embraces their intersection as a dynamic tool for reframing societal narratives about ageing.

A key objective of the screenplay is to craft comedic moments that foster audience identification—encouraging viewers to laugh **with** the characters, rather than at them. Research from the Geena Davis Institute of Gender in Media (2020, 2021) underscores the persistence of on-screen ageism, particularly for women over 50, who remain underrepresented or are depicted through limiting stereotypes. *Adora is Allergic to Bees* counters these portrayals by centring on three complex, authentic women over the age of 40 who exercise agency in both comedic and dramatic contexts.

To develop this hybrid form, I analysed drama, and comedy works that foreground older women. Case studies include the drama feature films *Nomadland* (Zhao 2020) and *Some Happy Day* (Hill 2021), as well as the comedy series *Grace and Frankie* (2016–2022) and *The Golden Girls* (1985–1992). These examples illustrate how both genres engage with themes of resilience, self-determination, and financial precarity—key concerns in my screenplay. By merging elements of these traditions, *Adora is Allergic to Bees* demonstrates the potential of the hybrid comedy-drama form to reshape on-screen narratives around ageing and, in turn, influence societal attitudes.

Ultimately, this research highlights the power of screenwriting as a transformative practice. Through this hybrid approach, *Adora is Allergic to Bees* contributes to the ongoing effort to diversify representations of ageing on screen, fostering new ways of seeing and understanding women over 40.

Keywords: script development, screenwriting, homelessness, social impact, social change, older female protagonists, comedy, drama, creative practice, screenwriting-as-research

Presenter Biography: Joanne Tindale is an emerging writer and researcher whose work explores ageing, gender inequity, and the representation of women over 40 on screen. She co-produced the inaugural Screen Queensland–funded Women in Film and Television Australia Online Film Festival (2021) and directed the short documentary *Mei Mei, Speak More Chinese* (SBS 2023-2024). Joanne holds a Bachelor of Film and Screen Media Production (First Class Honours) and a Bachelor of Asian and International Studies (majoring in China and Mandarin language). Currently a PhD candidate in screenwriting at Griffith Film School, Brisbane, her screenwriting-as-research has been published in the *Australasian Studies in Cinema* journal.

ACTORS-DIRECTORS-HEROES-CHARACTERS

Teleplay by Steven Spielberg: Creative development in his scripts and outlines for *Amazing Stories*

Brett Davies

Perhaps the most successful filmmaker in the history of cinema, Steven Spielberg's output has been analysed extensively in academic books and journals. Almost every critical study focuses on those films that he has directed or produced, while his work as a writer, conversely, is usually overlooked. In fact, Spielberg has received "Written by" or "Screenplay by" credit on four films, including *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *The Fabelmans* (2022), and "Story by" credit on three others. In 1985, the half-hour anthology series, *Amazing Stories*, debuted on NBC Television, with Spielberg its creator, developer, and executive producer. He called the show his "elephant's burial ground for ideas," an opportunity to experiment with short-form narration, and across its two-year run, as well as directing two episodes, Spielberg contributed eighteen stories and one teleplay. Adopting a historiographical approach, including newly-acquired primary evidence (through interviews with his collaborators as well as access to previously unreleased scripts), this paper will demonstrate just how much Spielberg actually contributed to the writing of these episodes of *Amazing Stories*. Furthermore, through textual and formal analysis, it will examine how the writing process may have been a vital step in Spielberg's artistic evolution, when his focus shifted away from blockbusters such as *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), toward attempts at more mature work in *The Color Purple* (1985) and *Empire of the Sun* (1987), eventually leading to *Schindler's List* in 1993. As well as providing new insights into an under-investigated aspect of Steven Spielberg's canon, the paper will contextualise his scripts and stories, demonstrating the importance of the written word within the creative profile and development of the world's most celebrated filmmaker.

Key words: *Amazing Stories*, American television, anthology series, Steven Spielberg, teleplay, writer-director

Presenter Biography: Brett Davies is Professor of English in the School of Global Japanese Studies at Meiji University, Tokyo. He has published extensively in both cinema studies and linguistics, and his doctorate thesis analysed the career of writer-director Lawrence Kasdan. The subsequent book, *ReFocus: The Films of Lawrence Kasdan*, was published by Edinburgh University Press in 2024. His areas of research include the use of homage and pastiche in modern Hollywood cinema, intertextuality, and thematic relationships between Japanese and American films. He is currently working on a new book, *Spielberg on the Small Screen*, scheduled for publication in 2026.

The Non-Hero, or the Neo-Hero of the Post-Heroic Era: Screenwriting Beyond the Classical Archetype

Lucian Georgescu

The figure of the "hero" has undergone a fundamental transformation in the time of the "big mindshift" (Göpel 2016), in all areas of human civilization. This paradigm shift has prompted sociologists such as Zimbardo to explore the notion of the "banality of heroism" (Franco & Zimbardo 2006), while Bröckling posits that societal reinterpretations of heroism frequently involve its negation or caricature (Bröckling 2019).

The present study will switch this sociological perspective to the role of the "hero"—once "the narrative engine of classical storytelling"—its usage in contemporary New Romanian Cinema (NRC). In communist Romania, the regime once imposed stringent censorship on heroic representation, reducing it to two rigid templates: the glorified historical-national savior and the idealized worker-hero—a proletarian redeemer tasked with defeating capitalist oppression and building a Soviet-inspired future. This ideological straitjacket, in effect, stifled complex character development, and film authors (with only a few exceptions, such as Lucian Pintilie) were deprived of the freedom to explore inner conflict or moral ambiguity.

This paper will examine how contemporary Romanian cinema, the NRC, and its screenwriting reclaim narrative space not (only) by modifying the hero definition and its subsequent paradigms but by dismantling the narrative architecture that once required one. While often described through neo-realism or minimalism, NRC is more accurately defined by its rejection of teleological structure and agency-driven plotting. The analysis draws upon the work of film narratologists such as Bordwell (1985), Carabăţ (2001) and Chatman (1978) to explore how NRC screenplays disrupt causal logic, minimise character intention, and suspend resolution.

The analysis is focused on Cristi Puiu's foundational films: *Stuff and Dough* (2001), *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (2005), and *Sieranevada* (2016). The protagonist of Mr. Lăzărescu, the icon of NRC, is not an agent of change but rather a patient in every sense of the word, subject to systems rather than navigating them. This depiction of Mr. Lăzărescu exemplifies the dichotomy of patient versus agent, as defined by Carabăţ (2001). Even Mioara Avram (Luminița Gheorghiu), the overworked ambulance assistant, is unable to assume a traditionally heroic role. Her persistent presence and moral decency do not culminate in any transformation or resolution, thus reinforcing the post-(non)-heroic narrative framework.

The result is a cinematic paradigm that defies the traditional, Hollywoodian one, manifesting not only in the characters but also in its structural framework. NRC screenwriting resists classical arcs, climax, or catharsis. Instead, it embraces absence, repetition, stasis, and non-action; such an approach fails to satisfy the structural demands of mainstream cinematic storytelling (Comerford 2016). As Stojanova (2022) contends, this represents a "cinema from the end of time." I argue that this epoch can also be considered the "screenwriting from the end-of-the-hero era."

Keywords: New Romanian Cinema, Screenwriting, Narratology, Non-Hero, Communism, Post-Heroism, Cristi Puiu

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Presenter Biography: Lucian Georgescu is a Professor of Film at UNATC (Universitatea de Artă Teatrală și Cinematografică) in Bucharest and Visiting Professor in Audiovisual at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He is a member of the European Film Academy, FIPRESCI, Creative Commons, and the European Association of Creative Writing Programs, and Member of the Executive Council of the Screenwriters Research Network (SRN). A practitioner (writer/director) and academic, his work explores the road movie as a metaphor for human displacement, examines the streaming industry's impact on audiovisual language, and investigates digital distribution models in peripheral cultures.

ETHICS-NATURE-LIFE

AI-Fictions Ethics

Marsha Berry and Fotini Toso

We are curious about how AI can push the boundaries of creative practice and vice versa but also interested in what this means for ethics - both philosophical in terms of virtue, as well institutional in terms of how they inform and frame responsible research practices. The conference theme Hyphen brings to mind the connections between humans and nonhuman systems and entities and what lies between humans and AI and what does this mean for creative practices and ethical creative practice research? We turn to the work of Donna Haraway for inspiration and thought strategies to frame our explorations of language and image generators and how these may be used in creative practices for screen production research. The relations between humans and AI are complex entanglements without clear boundaries and are evolving at a lightning speed. We take Donna Haraway's injunction to stay with the trouble to imagine entanglements of ethics and AI through speculative fabulation. We commenced our enquiry into AI, ethics and creative practice with questions posed by Coekelburgh, a philosopher who writes about ethics and AI: 'can computers have intelligence, consciousness, creativity? Can they make sense of things and understand meaning?' (Coekelburgh 2020, p32). These questions are our departure point for a speculative fabulation in the form of speculative fictions using text and image generators to explore the conundrum that is AI. We imagine AI systems as oddkin collaborators with creative writers and filmmakers in order to challenge the binaries of human and machine for the purposes of our thought experiments using fiction. The notion, oddkin emphasises the relational aspects of our interactions and interdependencies with nonhuman beings and systems. In plainer terms, embracing and using AI systems for creative practice is a way to better understand the ethics implications of AI for creative practice. And like all kinship relations - the relations between humans and AI systems are not all milk and honey - they can be toxic as well. We address questions around what such relations and collaborations may entail and how these might be acknowledged formally. We also raise questions about the ethics of AI and creative practice research.

Presenter Biographies:

Marsha Berry is an Associate Professor in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University. She is an ethnographer, writer and artist and is the author of *Creating with Mobile Media* (2017), Palgrave MacMillan and is co-editor of three volumes of essays on mobile media and screen production. With over 50 articles and book chapters, she has published her research extensively in highly prestigious international journals such as *New Media and Society* and *New Writing*. She is the Chair of the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network.

Fotini Toso is the coordinator for the Design and Social Context ethics network at RMIT University and has a PhD in literature. Her current research interests include AI and Ethics from multiple perspectives including law, computer science and the humanities as well as the impact of AI on fiction and creative writing.

In this place, at this time

Catherine Gough-Brady

Composer and Audio Designer: Gail Priest

This short essay film explores audio-visual ways of capturing the mobility of humans, trees and insects in a colonised landscape. This mobility has led to them coming together to create a place. In particular, the filmmaker and sound designer are thinking about how to show the non-human alongside the human as agents within the story. Techniques include 'over the shoulder shots' of trees using their trunks as the 'shoulder' to capture them in relationship to each other. The use of micing people at a distance to bring in sounds of the location as well as the human voice. These are entwined together into a filmic reflection on both our ability to move around the world, and how we become part of what creates a place in ways that can combine love and destruction.

These three quotations form anchor points in the film:

"he ceased to be lost not by returning but by turning into something else" (p. 71)

Solnit, R. (2017). *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. Canongate.

"Love and sorrow connect you to Country. They help make Country part of you" (p. 111)

Gay Wu Group of Women. (2019). *Song Spirals: Sharing women's wisdom of Country through songlines*. Allen & Unwin.

"In this continuous flow, the present becomes both a memory and a promise" (p. 176)

Braidotti, R. (2019). *Posthuman Knowledge*. Polity Press.

Medium/format: Digital 16:9

Running time: 7:05 mins

Synopsis

The people using the park, the trees in the park, and the bugs killing the trees, none of them are from Perth/Boorloo, and yet they are all in this place at this time.

Presenter Biography:

Catherine Gough-Brady is an award-winning documentary producer and director. Her most recent documentary for ABC TV is *The Communicator* (2022). Catherine is a senior lecturer at Edith Cowan University who publishes on the relational nature of documentary production processes and is an associate editor of *Screenworks*.

Doodling In~Between Living Life

Thanut Rujitanont

This practice-based research with process-based approach proposes doodling techniques as an attentive and creative animation process to deepen your connection to yourself, to nature, and to the world around you, and to compose the rhythmic vitality of life through the animated figures of motion as creative animation practices.

This project engages Dan Torre's concept of thinking through animation as the process itself and 's idea of life being evidenced in movement (Torre 2017). This research applies the anthropologist Tim Ingold's concepts of 'wayfarer' and 'meshwork' (Ingold 2007, 2011, 2015) that shades the light on the interconnectedness of lives moving through spaces, leaving paths as lines of movement, endeavour, struggle, and achievement, to evolve and expand the animation practice.

Through this research, I develop an image of doodling as animated processes through which 'rhythmic vitality' is composed via the 'figures of motion' in the kinetic artist Len Lye's word. These concepts engage John Cage's artistic perspective of art in everyday life, where the intersection of animation and everyday life's characteristics: repetition, tedious, attention is a generative doodling for the invention of techniques.

Through artistic practice, I am exploring doodling techniques for integrating animation into living life in human-nature relation, and for deepening to mind-body with motion experience.

This research seeks to connect moving image makers who find themselves working in a closed work environment that is profoundly hostile to the task of being alive to the 'outer' world of the surrounding environment through artistic and exploratory experience in field work. This research extends animation pedagogy and practice through fieldwork (Gidney and McGrath 2020).

This in-progress research explores for 'non-traditional' ways of screen-based process, production and output.

This paper is part of PhD research Doodling from Life Animatedly at Griffith Film School.

Keywords: animation, creative practice, process-based research, human-nature relation, in-between.

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Presenter Biography: 1993, Bangkok, Thanut Rujitanont is an animation artist who was invited as a visiting scholar at Griffith Film School in Brisbane in 2023 and is currently a PhD candidate. He holds a RE: ANIMA European Joint Master's degree from Belgium, Finland, and Portugal. His master's thesis 'The Announced Tragedy' was part of 'Expanded Memories: Artistic Experiments into Hybrid Analogue-Digital Animation' supported by FilmEU-RIT funded by the European Union and was published in *Animation Studies* journal. His works explore no-clear cut separations of process-product, potentiality-actuality, actual-virtual, and presence-absence in animated forms.

Friday, 19 September 2025:

COMPOSING-SOUNDING-WRITING

The Screenwriter-Composer

Gonzalo Maza

This paper is based on my forthcoming book 'The Sound of Writing', which explores narrative structure in fictional screenplays by drawing parallels between musical composition and screenwriting. Specifically, this presentation will be focused on introducing the "pentatonic structure" as a practical framework based on five core narrative stakes analogous to the notes of a pentatonic scale. This hybrid method is based on the structural dichotomy of consonance/dissonance in music theory and the presentation will focus on how screenwriters and screenwriting educators can use it as a flexible tool for story construction. Just as jazz musicians improvise melodies within the pentatonic scale, screenwriters can use these narrative stakes to create dynamic and balanced stories, regardless of their order or placement. The groundwork for this exploration is based on cognitive sciences studies on how music creates pleasure in the human brain, and how this "predictive coding" and "reward mechanism" based on expectations are also present in fictional narratives on the screen. This flexible framework complements established structures like the Three-Act Structure and the Sequence Approach and, whilst presented within the context of screenwriting, resonates with the fundamental principles of narrative construction across various mediums.

Proven effective in screenwriting pedagogy, I argue that the pentatonic structure offers a less rigid, more intuitive lens, fostering creative freedom and allowing writers to "jam" with their narratives within existing structures. The pentatonic structure also provides a fractal lens for understanding story construction, applicable to everything from plot and acts to sequences and individual scenes. By presenting a few examples of this method, this presentation will provide a glimpse into the theory and a simple, approachable method to unlock innovative and engaging storytelling for screenwriters of all levels.

Keywords: screenwriting structure, cognitive narratology, pentatonic scale, music theory, unconventional storytelling, fractal structure.

Presenter Biography: Gonzalo Maza is a Chilean screenwriter, director, and producer. He collaborated with director Sebastian Lelio to co-write international festival hits like *Gloria* (2013) and the award-winning *A Fantastic Woman* (2017, **Oscar for Best International Film** and the **Silver Bear for Best Screenplay** at the Berlin Film Festival). As a screenwriting consultant, he has been multiple times an advisor for the **Sundance Screenwriting Lab** and has even been also invited to judge in the Academy Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting. In 2020, he founded School of Guion, an online Spanish-language screenwriting school, and since 2024, he has been a lecturer on screenwriting at the **University of Manchester**. He lives in London.

The Listening Lens

Elisabeth Monge and Anne Regine Klovholt

Do we find new storytelling methods and stories by writing with sound as the pen? We aim to investigate how the active use of sound as a development method can lead to more distinctive audiovisual stories.

We believe everyday sounds are more than just background noise. They are a key to unlocking creative potential. Led by screenwriting and sound design faculty from Kristiania, this paper invites the audience to actively engage their auditory skills. We propose that awareness of auditory perception provides a multi-layered pathway to more flexible ideas, especially in interdisciplinary art forms often dominated by visual expression.

Our approach is rooted in the idea that our everyday experiences are a direct source of creative inspiration. We aim to show how the sounds of our surroundings may act as a catalyst for stories. By exploring diverse perspectives and locations through sound, we will unveil new pathways for storytelling and artistic expression. We embrace the idea that sound's inherent ambiguity open up a world of interpretative possibilities.

As a method for interaction and innovation between fields that often work separately in both auditory and audiovisual storytelling, this approach can be transferred to any degree of mixed disciplinarity. It can advantageously be used as an agile tool for scriptwriting for audiovisual projects – films and series, which utilize the creativity that arises at the intersection of two professional functions.

In this paper we will share examples from our relevant teaching exercises, previous and present artistic research.

Keywords: sounddesign, scriptwriting, interdisciplinary art forms, auditory skills, storytelling, development

Presenter Biographies:

Elisabeth Monge is head of BA in Sound Design at Kristiania UAS. Monge has over 20 years of experience as a sound designer in film and television. She has worked on drama series, documentaries, feature films, podcasts, and commercials.

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1144275/>

Her academic work and research focus on sound design and auditory storytelling. She has contributed to the academic and pedagogical development of new interdisciplinary methods for using sound as a narrative tool. She is actively involved in teaching and mentoring students, helping them explore the potential of sound in various media and contexts. Monge aims to encourage students to a deeper understanding of how sound can influence and enhance storytelling.

Anne Regine Klovholt is head of BA in Screenwriting at Kristiania UAS and a screenwriter. Klovholt's works as a screenwriter has won international and as well as national awards. Klovholt began her career in national and international theatre and began writing for film and

television in 2006. She has since written more than 20 hours of produced TV drama.

https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0460142/?ref_=nv_sr_srsq_7_tt_0_nm_8_in_0_q_anne%2520regi

As an academic she is a part of several international projects and collaborations, a. o. the research network KONSTFORSK funded by NordPlus, a blended Intensive Programme funded by Erasmus+, and active events and collaborations within Nordcil and CILECT organizations. She is also a member of SRN and the research group PRISMA.

The Sonic Screenplay: Teaching and Reframing Scriptwriting Through Audio

Ben Slater

In 2023 I wrote a journal article exploring how screenwriters have (and have not) considered sound as a significant part of their storytelling. In my conclusion I proposed that one method to inculcate the use of sound in screenwriting students would be for them to 'produce' their screenplays in audio form, complete with voice performance, music and sound FX. In 2024 I put this idea into practice for a Screenwriting class at the School of Art, Design & Media at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. I required twelve students to create an audio 'table read' of the screenplays they had developed during a three-month semester. The point of the exercise was not for them to create the most sonically refined or well-performed version of their story/script. Instead, by creating this hybrid entity – an audio-designed and vocally performed adaption of their screenplay – they would gain experience of 'producing' their work. There were two intended outcomes – firstly, for the writers to reframe their writing 'off the page' and hopefully gain new insights into their stories and scripts, and secondly for them to think more carefully about the use of sound itself in screenwriting. Since that class, two students have gone on to produce their screenplays as short films. This paper is an opportunity to qualitatively reflect on the process of producing these 'sonic screenplays'. It aims to assess the student's experiences based on their own reflections and to move towards an evaluation of how effective the exercise was as an educational tool (which others could use), as well as to consider wider applications.

References:

Slater, B. (2023). "Sound-conscious" screenwriting: Considering sound as storytelling tool in the screenplay'. *International Journal of Film and Media Arts*, 8(3).

Keywords: Screenwriting, education, audio, sound, pedagogy.

Presenter Biography: Ben Slater is a screenwriter-educator who has been teaching at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) since 2010, where he is a Senior Lecturer. He has script-edited and consulted on several produced screenplays, most recently *Baltimore* (2023), by Joe Lawlor and Christine Molloy. He's written or co-written two feature films produced in Singapore, *Camera* (2014) and *Malam* (2021) and a TV series, *Come Closer* (2022). He edited *NANG 1: SCREENWRITING* (Cinemasias Editions, 2016), a collection of interviews with screenwriters from Asia, and recently completed a PhD in Creative Writing at NTU, comprised of a creative nonfiction work entitled *Lost Cinema*. He has presented papers at previous SRN Conferences in Sydney (2012), Milan (2018) and Porto (2019).

TEACHING-ACADEMY-POSTSCRIPT

Exploring the Intersections of Academia and Industry through the +SCREEN STORIES Symposium and Mentorship program

Natalie Krikowa

The hyphen, connecting distinct identities and roles, embodies the complexities faced by creative practice academics working at the intersection of academia and industry. This paper explores the hybrid space occupied by these practitioners, particularly in screenwriting and screen production. While the academic sector has increasingly embraced the "creative practice" model—valuing lived experience alongside scholarly research—the same cannot always be said for industry spaces. In these environments, creative practitioners with academic credentials often face resistance, needing to prove their "industry relevance" despite their established expertise.

The paper examines the growing acceptance of the "creative practice" and "academic" hyphen within academia, particularly through networks like the Screenwriting Research Network (SRN), the Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association (ASPERA), and the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA), and the establishment of academic journals including the *Journal of Screenwriting* and *Media Practice and Education*. It contrasts the experience of creative practice academics who find a "welcoming home" within the university setting with the challenges of bridging these worlds with the industry. Specifically, it focuses on the tension of needing to prove one's industry credibility in spaces that prioritise commercial and industry-oriented credentials.

Using the 2024 +SCREEN STORIES symposium and queer mentorship program as a case study, the paper reflects on how institutional expectations and industry norms shape this divide. It explores the impact on practitioners' access to industry networks, opportunities for collaboration, and professional legitimacy. The presentation will also consider how creative practice academics can redefine these boundaries and contribute to both academic and industry spheres. By examining this hybrid space, the paper contributes to the ongoing conversation about the evolving relationships between academia, industry, and creative practice/research in the screen sector.

Keywords: Creative practice, academia, industry, intersections, +SCREEN STORIES

Presenter Biography: Dr. Natalie Krikowa (she/they) is a media scholar and practice-led researcher at the University of Technology Sydney. Natalie's research focuses on the intersection of media technology, cultural practices and social justice, with a particular emphasis on giving voice to marginalised communities. Natalie's work examines how screen media and digital platforms can be leveraged to amplify underrepresented narratives and positively influence public discourse. Natalie's queer-focused creative practice works include *The Newtown Girls* (2012), *All Our Lesbians Are Dead!* (2017), and *Queer Representation Matters* (2023).

On the Edge of Eternity— Academic Screenwriting Between Research and Representation

Dilyana Mincheva

The hyphen represents a space of negotiation, transition, and in-betweenness—whether between identities, disciplines, or modes of storytelling. My paper explores how the academic screenplay functions as a hyphen, bridging the gap between research and creative practice, ethnography and imagination, history and emotion. Specifically, my ongoing research, culminating in the screenplay *On the Edge of Eternity*, delves into the lives of interfaith couples in the Cold War Balkans—including Bulgaria and the countries now comprising former Yugoslavia. These individuals traversed complex intersections of religious, political, and national identities, navigating state and communal constraints with resilience.

On the Edge of Eternity inhabits a liminal space between fact and fiction, employing cinematic storytelling to unearth historical silences and amplify voices erased from dominant narratives. Drawing on archival research, interviews, and critical theory—including feminist film theory, Hamid Naficy's concept of the *averted gaze*, and bell hooks' **oppositional gaze**—my paper repositions screenwriting as a powerful scholarly methodology. Through this lens, the screenplay becomes a medium for engaging with history and memory, offering unique ways to explore marginalized perspectives.

By examining how interfaith love stories navigated religious and political restrictions in a region fraught with ethnic tensions, my research highlights the screenplay's potential to function as both a creative and academic tool. Unlike traditional scholarly outputs, an academic screenplay integrates emotional, intuitive, and multimodal forms of knowledge, providing a compelling means of representing silenced voices. My paper also reflects on the challenges and opportunities of screenwriting as a methodological approach, showcasing select scene excerpts that exemplify its themes of hybridity, connection, and in-betweenness—not just in content, but throughout the research process, structure, and theoretical contributions.

Keywords: ethnographic screenwriting, interfaith narratives, hyphenated identities, hybrid methodologies, oppositional gaze

Presenter Biography: Dilyana Mincheva, Associate Professor at McMaster University, specializes in the study of Islamic feminism and the intellectual and public dimensions of Islam within indigenous and diasporic contexts. She is the author of *The Politics of Western Muslim Intellectual Discourse in the West* (Liverpool University Press, 2016/2022) and *Adversarial Islamic Feminism: Islam and Feminism in the Western-Islamic Public Sphere* (Amsterdam University Press, 2024). Her scholarly work also explores themes such as religious agency, social change activism and histories of Islamic media arts.

Postscript: towards an afterlife of Australian Screenplays

Radha O'Meara and Stayci Taylor

Screenplays are essential for tracing histories of screenwriting, for industrial training, for research, and for building storytelling traditions into the future (Sengupta 2021; Arellano 2016). Screenplays hold enormous cultural heritage value, which is largely inaccessible. One of the many reasons that Hollywood continues to dominate global popular discourses, research and education around screenwriting, is that it provides access to some of its screenplays, through traditional publication, online release and archives (O'Meara, Are, Taylor, Moore 2023). In Australia, our major national collecting institutions focus on preserving films themselves and provide limited access to their tiny collections of hardcopy screenplays. As Rakesh Sengupta asks, "How does one write screenwriting history without film scripts?" (2021, p5), artefacts that live somewhere in between print and moving image media and, as such, are too often overlooked.

In this presentation, we will outline our developing project with the RMIT Australian Screen Research Collection (RMIT ASRC, formerly AFIRC) to create an online, open access archive to self-reflexively preserve the cultural heritage of Australian screenwriting. Our aim is to interrogate the cultural and technological functions of the archive as we build it, to support the development of research, teaching and public knowledge about Australian screenwriting, and to problematise the national paradigm as we reinscribe it. In preserving Australian screenplays, the archive aims to represent a diversity of writers, themes, communities and narrative approaches, with the knowledge that inclusions and exclusions will reveal creative, industrial, political power at work. We hope that a screenplay archive will create a new dialogue around Australian voices, imagery, stories, and memories, and work towards displacing Hollywood as the centre of screenwriting knowledge.

Keywords: screenwriting, screenplays, script development, archive, screen studies

References:

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Presenter Biographies:

Radha O'Meara is senior lecturer in screenwriting at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Her research focuses on screenwriting, industrial authorship and social inequalities in contemporary film and television production, particularly disability and gender. She co-edited a collection on the best Australian television dramas, TV Transformations & Transgressive Women. From *Prisoner: Cell Block H* to *Wentworth* (Peter Lang 2022). She has published on soap operas, superheroes and cat videos.

Stayci Taylor is senior lecturer in creative writing at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia and, at the time of writing, the program co-manager of the creative writing BA. Her research focuses on screenwriting, queer screen production and creative practice methodologies. She is co-editor of two collections on script development, one on creative writing methods, and another on women-in-prison dramas. She has published on queer methods, web series and diarology.

DOCUMENTARY-REALITY-DRAMA-MEMORY

Documentary and Drama Merge in Participatory Approaches to Screenwriting

Aurora Scheelings

'Keeping Home' (working title) is a screenplay for a short film about residents living permanently in a caravan Holiday Park. Using participatory and collaborative approaches, the collective experiences of real residents are together re-imagined into a work of screen fiction. The participants' story is a fading one in our national landscape, with permanent sites grandfathered to make way for tourism. Thus, the screenplay also serves as a creative record of a disappearing community and lifestyle.

As a documentary practitioner steeped in ethnographic and observational cinema conventions, the intention with this fictional endeavour remains true to my documentary roots. That is, I am invested in the creative work providing a voice to, and offering a window into, the lived experience of the characters it portrays. And in the Griersonian documentary tradition, there is a social purpose inherent in the work.

The reason for creating a work of fiction instead of an observational documentary as I normally would be inclined to do are two-fold. Fictionalising actuality in this way offers participants freedom from the ever-present and watchful eye of an observational camera and crew, as well as freedom from being portrayed onscreen as themselves – a future reality which comes with its own pressures. So too, as a creative practitioner, I give myself freedom from the ethical dilemmas often presented when portraying real people on screen, thus allowing the focus to be on storytelling.

What I wish to explore in this screenwriting process is the possible creative outcome from combining ethnographic and participatory documentary conventions to a work of screen fiction. In so doing, I am testing the ways in which documentary approaches can be harnessed to tell a deeper, and perhaps more compelling truth. This work is inspired by the practice and ethos of filmmakers like Khoa Do and Leonard Retel Helmrich.

Keywords: participatory approaches, collaborative storytelling, observational documentary, ethnography, ethnographic fiction, social realism

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Presenter Biography: Dr. Aurora Scheelings is a Senior Lecturer in Screen Production, and Program Director for Master in Cinematic Arts, Griffith Film School, Griffith University. She has worked as an educator within Australian universities for almost two decades, leading undergraduate screen degree programs and receiving recognition for outstanding contributions to student learning. Her professional experience in the film and television

industry, in particular the civic values aligned to practice as documentary filmmaker, inform her approach to teaching and research. Aurora's work explores social issues, cultural diversity and ethnography more broadly, including the study of film and television practice across fiction and non-fiction.

Scripting Autobiographical Documentary in the Academy: Challenges and Opportunities for the Intrepid Writer-Researcher-Subject.

Kath Dooley

In 2024 I began researching and writing an outline for a feature length essay film with autobiographical elements, tentatively titled 'The Lost Twin'. Although centred around a personal story (a search for information about my twin sister, who died shortly after birth), the documentary project delves into broader narratives associated with the historical treatment of stillborn babies and their parents. This is disturbing and daunting material, but more daunting I have found, is the task of inserting myself into the story as subject, a move that calls for both objectivity and subjectivity due to my multiple roles within the project.

By exploring autobiographical subject matter as a writer-researcher, I add to a significant body of screen-based creative practice research. Over the last decade, in particular, several autobiographical essay films have been produced as non-traditional research outputs by practitioner/scholars working within academic settings (for example, *The Silences* [writer/director Margot Nash, 2015]; *Baxter and Me* [writer/director Gillian Leahy, 2016]; and *Record* [writer/director Joanne Callaghan, 2020]). These projects, which place the making of a film at the centre of a research project (Batty and Kerrigan 2018), gather and express subjective experiences through creative means, offering a contribution to knowledge that benefits the discipline of screen production as well as other fields of study.

With reference to the exegetical writing of Nash, Leahy, Callaghan and others, as well as the early development of *The Lost Twin*, this paper will consider the essay film format, which fosters 'deep connections between different strata of the world' (Martin 2017, 89), the inclusion of personal archival material, and the defining of the self in relation to family, community and societal structures. The paper will also consider the scripting of voice over narration, which Rascaroli describes as 'a privileged tool for the author's articulation' in the essay film (2008,189). Through critical analysis and reflections on practice, I will seek to further explore these issues, highlighting the challenges and opportunities associated with the writing of 'the self' in the context of screen-based creative practice research.

Keywords: Scripting; screenwriting; autobiography; creative practice research; subjectivity; self-reflection

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Presenter Biography: Associate Professor Kath Dooley is a writer/director and academic based at the University of South Australia. Her creative work has screened at events such as the Melbourne International Documentary Festival and the International Festival of Virtual and Augmented Reality Stories (FIVARS), Toronto. Kath is author of *Virtual Reality Narratives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024) and co-editor of *Screenwriting for VR: Story Space and experience* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024) and *The Palgrave Handbook of Screen Production* (2019). Her research interests include embodiment in the context of screen media, virtual reality and screenwriting, women's screen industry practice, and diversity in the screen industries.

Navigating the Body as a Border and the State of In-Betweenness in Science-Fiction Script Development in *Lost Tales: An Academic Screenplay*

Azade Falaki

This research examines the representation of 'aliens' and the broader notions of otherness in the script development stages of *Lost Tales*, an academic science-fiction screenplay. By thinking through the practice of script development and screenwriting, this research analyses the characterisation of different species and the theme of 'becoming minoritarian'. The focus is on the process of academic script development of *Lost Tales*, which is grounded in the theoretical concepts of borders and 'becoming minoritarian' in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophy, transnationalism, and minor theories rather than industry and financial forces. This project explores how *Lost Tales* uses the concept of border to be inscribed on the bodies of 'human' and 'alien' characters. This places the characters' bodies as the bearers of the border and the smallest scale of bordering. As a result, characters experience the position of 'in-betweenness', or being in the middle, in the border between the groups. The story-world in *Lost Tales* reflects what Donna Haraway called the 'Capitalocene' era through various story elements and thematic layers. Correspondingly, characters assume different responses to border-related hierarchies but share the common experience of suspenseful and crisis situations. This research analyses the outlining and writing process of these situations, the turning points and the character's arc. It explores the 'hyphen', the 'hybrid' and the 'between' through the worlds of diverse species and different modes of academic and creative research. I draw on Craig Batty and Dallas Baker's term 'double articulation' to demonstrate how my critical academic and creative practice elements engage with the same issues in diverse methods. Thus, as Batty suggests, script development as a practice-based PhD can contribute to knowledge production through a self-reflective 'mode of research'.

Keywords: Script development, Screenwriting, Border, Science-Fiction.

Presenter Biography: Azade Falaki is a PhD candidate at the University of Technology Sydney and a casual academic at UTS and UNSW. She teaches various screen and media courses to undergraduates and postgraduates. Her research revolves around screenwriting, film and television studies, subscription video-on-demand (SVOD), philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and minor theory, studies of migration and mobility, postcolonisation and critical race theory, Anthropocene and Capitalocene concepts and comedy and sci-fi genres. She is also a member of the Creative Practice Research Group at UTS. Azade's creative works embrace screenwriting, scriptwriting, short story writing, and directing in Persian and English.

Creating and Hyphenating with the Real: exploring through conversation

Gabrielle Tremblay and Dominic Hardy

We are professors working in different disciplines within the same university. Meeting for the first time in late 2024 around the theme of creative practices and interdisciplinarity, we learned that our respective research focus had more in common than we realized. Gabrielle has published in 2024 a study of the 1974 screenplay and film *The Orders* by Michel Brault, a fictional approach to Québec's 1970 October Crisis and its impact on civil liberties. Alongside his filmmaking brother Justin, Dominic took part in the documentary *Children of the Wicker Man* (2024), a reconstruction of the events leading to the making of the cult film *The Wicker Man* (1973), directed by their father Robin Hardy. Working in film and scenaristic archives, Gabrielle sheds light on the unique methodology of narrative construction developed by Brault. For *Children of the Wicker Man*, newly located archives dating from the early 1970s are given narrative form through onscreen testimony. Initial conversations led us, Gabrielle and Dominic, to understand that we were each working with objects that had singular ways of working with the real. Moreover, in keeping with the theme of this conference, we realized that Brault's film and the Hardy brothers' research-creation project both invest the entre-deux, the hyphen as structural element and motif, considered from a narratological perspective.

The publication of Gabrielle's book and the release of Dominic's documentary are not final stages in our respective research: there is scope for returning to them with renewed and experimental perspectives. This presentation will give us the opportunity to develop the critical and theoretical reflection that will enable us to go forward by establishing a dialogic collaboration around the question of creating and hyphenating with the real. Our conversation will draw on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Hayden White, Raphaël Baroni, Rebecca Solnit, Alain Boilat and Serge Milan.

Presenter Biographies:

Dominic Hardy is professor of Québec and Canadian art history at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and a member of the Interuniversity Research Centre on Literature and Culture in Québec (CRILCQ). He is director of LAB-A Laboratoire numérique des études sur l'histoire de l'art, currently engaged in the development of protocols for placing art history at the service of migrant and refugee communities in Montreal. A specialist in the history of visual satire, he has edited *Sketches from an Unquiet Country: Canadian Graphic Satire 1840-1940* (MQUP 2018, with Annie Gérin and Lora Senechal Carney) and *L'image railleuse. La satire visuelle du 18e siècle à nos jours* (INHA/OpenEdition 2019, with Laurent Baridon and Frédérique Desbuissons). He is working on a study of the intellectual life of British sculptor Helen Chadwick (1943-1996).

Gabrielle Tremblay is a professor of screenwriting studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and a member of the Interuniversity Research Center on Literature and Culture in Québec (CRILCQ). Among her recent publications are the following titles: (in French) 'Reading screenplays. For an interdisciplinary and renewed approach to

screenwriting practices' (Montreal University Press, 2024), (in French) '*The Orders. A screenplay and a film by Michel Brault*' (Somme toute, 2024), the editing of the special issue (in French) 'Current views on screenwriting in Quebec' (*Voix et Images*, academic journal, 2022), and the coediting, with Dr. Romana Turina, of the special issue 'Textual Perspectives: Screenwriting Styles, Modes, and Languages' (*Journal of Screenwriting*, 2022).

CO-WRITING-CONNECTING-NEUROAFFIRMING

Hyphen as Connective Tissue: Collaborative practices in Co-screenwriting, co-directing, and co-connecting filmmaking intercontinentally

Angie Black and Michael Keerdo-Dawson

The concept of the 'hyphen' as a connecting force in the collaborative process of filmmaking, challenging the auteur theory of a single creative vision. As screenwriters we can see a hyphen on the page - a linking symbol that brings two disparate ideas together to create new meaning. But if we think of 'hyphen' as the invisible sign that connects people in the filmmaking process, it helps to clarify what it means to develop a more collaborative practice. When hyphenating two otherwise separate parts there is a connective tissue which bridges them. Filmmaking by its very nature is about bringing separate artistic practices together. Hyphenating is what filmmakers do well, bringing ideas – practices - people – creatives – actors – locations – etc. together to create a new meaning.

The IMPROV(E) research project involves two writer-directors (Black and Keerdo-Dawson) co-screenwriting and co-directing a feature film from different countries (Estonia and Australia), with two separate filmmaking and acting teams. The process disrupted the traditional film production process order - casting came before screenwriting, directing happened between writing sessions, editing between directing. Characters were developed before plots, requiring the writers to find connections between characters despite the distance. Creative challenges of thematic and/or story focus, time differences and distance allowed for more creative possibilities through embracing the literal and metaphorical gaps between the two screenwriter-directors and the potential failures. Recurring images, tropes and modern telecommunications became the connective tissue unifying the divergent story elements, rather than traditional setups and payoffs.

The resultant film (still a work in progress) explores a highly collaborative, non-linear filmmaking process which subverts traditional hierarchies and instead allows connections to emerge organically through the process itself. Characters connect sonically rather than physically much like the filmmaking teams in each territory. Coherence in the screenplay and the finished film became not a case of planting elements that pay off later, but in allowing the left turns, dead-ends, and structural asymmetries to be bound together by the invisible hyphen - the recurrent images, tropes, and modern technology acting as the connective tissue bridging the disparate elements.

Just as the hyphen joined the writer-directors across continents, so too did it unite the fragmented pieces into a cohesive whole, exemplifying filmmaking as an intrinsically hyphenated practice of bridging divides through collaboration.

Keywords: Collaboration, co-screenwriting, co-directing, filmmaking, improvisation, entangled screenplay, creative practice-led research, artistic research

This research was supported by: The Estonian Ministry of Culture; The Estonian Cultural Endowment; Baltic Film, Media, Arts School (Tallinn University); and made possible by a Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) Foundation Engagement Grant, The University of Melbourne 2024.

Presenter Biographies:

Dr Angie Black is a Senior Lecturer in Film & Television and current Associate Director (Research) at VCA, The University of Melbourne. They are an award-winning director who specialises in filmmaking as practice-led research. Black holds a PhD in performance approaches in film production and an MA in screenwriting. Their debut feature film, *The Five Provocations* (2018), released through Label Distribution, along with an extensive body of short films, explores innovative approaches to filmmaking and actively promotes on-screen diversity. Black's research examines approaches to filmmaking, screenwriting, and performance practices, with a focus on gender, sexuality, and cultural diversity on screen.

Dr Michael Keerdo-Dawson is an award-winning Lecturer of Audiovisual Storytelling at the Baltic Film, Media and Arts School (Tallinn University) who specialises in experimental approaches to screenwriting, storytelling, and film production. He holds a PhD in Audiovisual Arts and Media Studies and a Master's degree in Literature, Visual Culture and Film Studies. Keerdo-Dawson also has two decades of experience in the film and television industry and has written and directed short and feature films selected for prestigious film festivals including his interactive film *The Limits of Consent* (2022) which premiered at Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival.

Learning to work and working to learn, the interplay between professional work and PhD

Karen Jeynes

Having written projects for co-production and for local broadcast, numerous questions have arisen for me as a screenwriter which I am now interested in looking at through my academic work. When we create a co-production, how do we ensure the content speaks to audiences in all the countries involved? How do we create characters which read as authentic to a local, knowing audience, as well as to an audience who are discovering something unknown and fresh? To what extent do we need to explain, what added layers of meaning are needed?

As the hyphenated head writer - co-director - creative producer on these shows, I will show extracts of my work while discussing questions around:

- Running an international hybrid writer's room
- Making authentic content that resonates with local (knowing) and international (unknowing) audiences
- Finding humour that works in both hemispheres
- Discovering cultural differences through script notes, and how to resolve them

With shrinking global television budgets, co-productions increasingly make financial sense, allowing multiple parties to pool their funds to create great television. We've long been used to the opening titles of indie films featuring multiple logos and thanks, but television is swiftly following suit. While there's a strong business case for co-productions, particularly in a market like South Africa's, how do we as creatives ensure that we aren't simply pandering to the demands of the budget when we tell stories for multiple audiences?

How do we as screenwriters respond to this challenge? What does it mean for the language our characters use, the idioms of speech, the references they make? Is it really possible for a South African to make the Germans laugh?

Keywords: co-production, comedy, hybrid, writers room

Presenter Biography: Karen Jeynes has worked extensively as a writer and director for stage and screen, most recently as the writer, co-director and creative producer of comedy series *The Morning After*, and drama series *Recipes for Love and Murder*, now in its second season. Other productions she has developed and overseen with creative partner Thierry Cassuto at Both Worlds are *Point of Order*, *Comedy Central News*, and *Parlement Parlement*, and the documentary *Africa and I*, as well as working as the head writer for *ZANews: Puppet Nation*. Both Worlds has a new project in production with KykNET, for which Karen is the lead writer and director, and other projects coming soon. She is the cofounder of DAWN (Disabled Audiovisual Workers Network) and is currently busy with her PhD on autistic representation on South African television through the University of Pretoria.

***Creating-Crafting-Connecting* across cultures: A Case Study**

Dean Chircop, Martha Goddard and Margaret McVeigh

Creating-Crafting-Connecting across cultures is a Case Study reflecting upon the authors' work in designing and delivering the DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) Australia Awards Indonesia (AAI) Program Short Course: *At the Forefront of Film: Writing and Directing*. The Australia Awards include short courses offered to emerging leaders (in this case film industry) from developing countries for study, research and professional development in Australia and the region. In the AAI Awards "Australia has partnered with Indonesia to invest in human capital development, respond to social and economic development priorities, and create and maintain enduring ties between Australia and Indonesia". Twenty-five Indonesian Filmmakers were recipients of the 2024-2025 award program which consisted of three workshops: a pre-course workshop delivered in Indonesia, a two-week workshop delivered in Australia and a post-course workshop delivered in Indonesia. Workshops included presentations from Australian academics, industry practitioners, distributors, production houses and state film development agencies all designed to address AAI program objectives to enhance screenwriting and directing skills and advance industry knowledge and expertise to empower next generation Indonesian filmmakers. In this paper we reflect upon how we developed, delivered and responded to our ongoing observations regarding pedagogical and cultural imperatives as we addressed two of the key objectives of the program: "to develop and pitch a well-structured and engaging script concept" and "to critically understand a range of different approaches to writing and directing in the context of the cultural advent of storytelling". In doing so we deploy screenwriting, filmmaking and transnational filmmaking and research to scaffold our reflections in best practice in teaching and developing authentic and engaging transnational screenwriting and filmmaking skills across cultures.

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Key words: Script development, screenwriting, directing, transnational filmmaking, transcultural storytelling,

Presenter Biographies:

Dr. Dean Chircop is Director, Bachelor of Film and Screen Media Production Program and Head, Directing at Griffith Film School. Renowned for his ability to find irony in compelling personal stories Dean has helmed several critically acclaimed projects, including the Dendy Award-nominated *The Parlour* and the award-winning *Bloody Footy* which screened at the Berlinale, Tribeca and Pacific Meridian Film Festivals with accolades including Best Short Fiction at the ATOM awards and Best Narrative Film and Best Australian Film at the Heart of Gold Festival. Beyond academia Dean has a distinguished directing career having helmed television commercials, music videos, and drama.

Martha Goddard is an award-winning writer and director. Her work is defined by authentic performances and distinct visual style, gaining acclaim at local and international festivals including New York International, London Independent, Cineglobe Switzerland, Cinequest California, Sydney's Dendy Awards, and has been described as 'having a frankness rarely seen' (The Guardian), 'intimate and heartfelt' (BBC's Cultural Frontline), 'darkly humorous' (Huffington Post). Martha is an AFTRS Masters graduate and alumni of Screen Australia's Talent Escalator Program, working a director's attachment with mentor Jocelyn Moorhouse on *The Dressmaker*. Recently Martha directed her first television episode on *The Bureau of Magical Things*, Season Two.

Margaret McVeigh PhD is Associate Professor and Head, Screenwriting and Contextual Studies at Griffith Film School, Griffith University. Margaret has worked in the media in Australia and overseas, including as Commissioning Editor for Wiley and as Writer for *ABC Splash*. She was 2021-2022 Chair of the SRN (Screenwriting Research Network International) and co-writer of the award-winning documentary, *Love Opera* (2019) screened in Australian cinemas and Cannes. Margaret has presented Keynotes and workshops in Europe and China as well as published extensively on Creativity including in her 2023 Palgrave Macmillan book, *Screenwriting from the Inside Out: Think and Write Like a Creative*.

SCREENPLAY-GAPS-HYPHENS

From Dashes to Epic: The “Hyphen Style” of Screenwriting and Growth of Screenplay Form

Gabriel M. Paletz and Clarisa Mazon Miranda

For the SRN Conference on the theme of “hyphen,” this presentation illuminates what I call the international **“hyphen style” of screenwriting** from the first half of the 1910s, its development in the production of the screen epic CABIRIA (Italy, 1914) and its possibilities for contemporary film writing.

What I call the “hyphen” or “dash” style appeared in the early 1910s as a compact form of screenwriting for one- and two-reel films. The distinctive feature of the style is a series of incomplete sentences or phrases connected by dashes (“—”).

As a concise means of storytelling, the hyphen style had advantages for different national film industries. As described by American film critic and writer E. Winthrop Sargeant in his early screenwriting guide *The Technique of the Photoplay* (1912 edition), the style compacts action for the movement-driven U.S. film production. But other countries employed the style differently.

The Italian film epic CABIRIA remains a landmark in cinema history. Using my knowledge of Italian and access to the picture’s script drafts, I examine the growth of the hyphen style from the film’s first sketch to its epic scale. Although the hyphen style remains constant through the various drafts, it expands to include the film’s famous set pieces such as the sacrifices to Moloch and in settings and descriptive details.

The expansion of the hyphen style was essential to CABIRIA’s epic scope, the film’s famous camera movements and also illustrates the continuing usefulness of the form. The hyphen grows a story by the associations between words as well as the structuring of events. Like other past forms of screenwriting, the hyphen style both preserves the history and offers new imaginative shapes of our craft.

Keywords: hyphen/dash style, screenwriting form, screenwriting history, *Cabiria*

Affiliation: Prof. Gabriel M. Paletz, Prague Film School, Prague, Czech Republic

Presenter Biography: Dr. Paletz won the SRN Best Journal Article Award last year for his essay ‘Writing Sound in the Screenplay: Traditions and Innovations’. He earned the first PhD in film history and theory with a minor in film production from the University of Southern California and teaches screenwriting to filmmaking students from five continents in Prague. His latest film program, a tribute to the female screenwriters of U.S. silent cinema, recently premiered at the world’s largest silent film festival and he has served as script consultant to the National AIDS Resource Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia among other institutions.

Mind the gaps! The no-noticeable in-betweens which help arrange and inform the narrative of the screenplay.

Sylvi Jane Husebye

Hyphens help arrange a sentence. Narrative story gaps help arrange a screenplay's story. Hyphens, like gaps, combine individual elements into a new, often more interesting meaning, making $1+1=3$. Advice and rules on how to use hyphens are available in books and on the internet. Not so with story gaps. The usage of hyphens can be discussed with a common ground of objectivity. A screenplay's story gaps, lacking more objective descriptions, does not have the same opportunities.

A gap can be described as the opening of possibilities or a question of missing information which keeps the audience wondering. Gaps may create surprise and or ambiguity with the reader (and later the viewer of the corresponding movie) and will induce her/him to perform hypothesis formulation to different degrees. Gaps may be of different kinds and have different durations. How can the story element gaps of a screenplay be studied so that relevant characteristics of the gap structure may be described, rendered and possibly measured in an understandable manner? The goal of my research-in-progress is to find an approach for this. I will seek to apply a type of mathematical description of the gap structures within a set duration of the text in the screenplay.

The strength of a mathematical description will rest in the objective quality of the data on which it is based. The description and classification of gaps will therefore be based on already acknowledged descriptions. I will build on Meir Sternberg (1971) and David Bordwell (1985). I will also consider how "how-to-write"-authors like Robert McKee (1999) as well as Paul Joseph Gulino (2014) and Gulino, Connie Shears (2020) approach and describe various types of gaps.

Keywords: Narratology – gaps – screenplay – screenwriter

Presenter Biography: Marianne Sylvi Jane Husebye, born 1965. Master of Management (Norwegian school of business, Oslo, Norway, 1989). Project under the Norwegian screenplay development funding arrangement (2001-2002). Master of Arts in Film studies (Chapman University, CA, 2004). I presented my master thesis' findings at SRN's conference in Olomouc 2024 'The Screenwriter as Auteur: Assessing the Writer's Contribution in Contemporary Hollywood. Nora Ephron's *Heartburn*.' I have started to work towards a PhD based on my master thesis' topic. I am not connected to any university yet.

I am also a writer. At Chapman I included creative screenwriting classes when graduating in theoretical film studies. When returning to Norway it was not easy to find a relevant job in the film industry or academia. I took ordinary daytime jobs and kept writing. It is often easier to write and publish books rather than write a screenplay and have it made. I have written and published 11 books.

***Id-Entity*: Hyphenating Identity in Screenwriting Pedagogy in Dhaka**

Imran Firdaus

The hyphen, as a syntactical marker, signals both connection and division, transformation and hesitation. In the context of screenwriting pedagogy, it reveals how identity (*id-entity*) manifests in the creative decisions of emerging writers.

During my undergraduate scriptwriting course in Dhaka, Bangladesh, I observed a striking pattern regarding character sketching task prompt: among twelve students, five set their stories outside Bangladesh—primarily in Tokyo, Shibuya, or unnamed cities in Anglocentric space and defined by trauma or pain. Their characters lived in landscapes they had never physically inhabited, yet imaginatively occupied. When questioned, the students articulated a cultural estrangement from their immediate surroundings, shaped by media exposure, digital landscapes, and aspirational geographies rather than lived realities.

This paper explores the pedagogical and theoretical implications of such dislocation in screenwriting practice. What does it mean when young screenwriters locate their narratives in places they have never been? Does the hyphen between *id* and *entity* suggest a subconscious Freudian id—the repository of desires—superseding the material conditions of their existence? Drawing on screenwriting pedagogy frameworks that examine the relationship between personal voice, industry expectations, and creative agency (Batty & Taylor 2017; Nash 2013; Maras 2009), I interrogate how emerging screenwriters negotiate their *id-entities* through their work. If screenwriting is inherently an act of world-building, how do imagined geographies disrupt or reinforce a sense of self and belonging?

By situating this phenomenon within global screenwriting pedagogy, I argue that the hyphen in *id-entity* encapsulates the tension between inherited culture and desired subjectivity, between the self and the elsewhere. How might this insight reshape screenwriting education in postcolonial contexts? Can pedagogy acknowledge and integrate these imagined spaces without reinforcing cultural dislocation? Through this discussion, I seek to position the hyphen as a site of both creative possibility and epistemological rupture in screenwriting practice.

Keywords: Screenwriting pedagogy, identity, creative agency, imagined geography, world-building

Presenter Biography: Dr Imran Firdaus is an Early Career Researcher, Filmmaker, and Curator based in Sydney/Dhaka. He works at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) as an Assistant Professor in the Media and Communication department. Imran is the recipient of Charles Wallace Bangladesh Trust Fellowship 2025 at SOAS South Asian Institute, University of London. His films and video art have been exhibited in Amsterdam, Caserta, Dhaka, London, Oslo, Sydney, and Yogyakarta.

ADAPTATION-FANDOM-FANTASY-HYBRID

Screenwriting Hybridity: Adapting Hierarchy through *The War of the Worlds*

Dale Crosby

My research uses an interdisciplinary and multimodal methodology, hybridizing adaptation and screenwriting studies to generate and interrogate an original screenplay adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* (hereafter “*TWOTW*”).

Adaptation and screenplay studies have been defined as lying between textual, media-based, modal and disciplinary boundaries, but their apparent inability to fully conform to any category has resulted in their definitional deficits. Few have posited their definitions as hybrids. Additionally, both subjects have thus far remained theoretically estranged, however, screenplay adaptations flourish amidst the film and television industries. My research explores hybridity as a way of understanding their processes and as a methodological intervention, and calls for the inclusion/integration of practice-based theories from both fields.

This study undertakes rhetorical metatheoretical analysis of both screenwriting and adaptation studies’ discourses and integrates them as characterizations within an original *TWOTW* adaptation. By maintaining these metaconceptual connections between theory and practice, and interleaving engagement with both modalities, the perceived ‘gaps’ between both subjects may be reconceived.

Throughout my research, themes of perspective, positionality, and identity are explored in relation to *TWOTW*’s narrative, and the metatheoretical discourses I navigate. I chose to adapt *TWOTW* for these thematic connections, in addition to its being a generative narrative, with adaptations spanning many medial, cultural, and political contexts. In particular, *TWOTW*’s exploration of hierarchy through the collapse of social order created space for my creative-critical practice to challenge the subordination of adaptation and the screenplay, positing instead their coexistence on both sides of the presupposed binaries that bifurcated their definitions.

Rather than ‘invading’ or ‘overthrowing’ previous theoretical knowledge, my research seeks to place it in discourse with practice-based theories generated during the creative-critical process of adaptation screenwriting. The resultant outcome therefore seeks to reorient adaptation and screenplay discourse through the perspectival/modal hybrid of ‘inside-out’, and ‘outside-in’ theorization.

Keywords: Adaptation, screenwriting, creative-critical, multimodal, interdisciplinary

Presenter Biography: Dale is a final year PhD student with the University of London, Birkbeck.

The pr-aca-fan: Bringing creative practice to the aca-fan perspective

Dante DeBono

This presentation discusses my experience of revisiting Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as a base text, delving into the creative process of writing a queer, modernised screen adaptation. In an unexpected turn, I realised the adaptation process I most connect with during script development is that of fan fiction. The popular practice of queering canonical texts within fandom spaces aligned with the progressive goals of the combined subaltern methodologies underpinning my PhD project. Where previously aca-fan has been a designation in research that acknowledges the hybridity of a scholar-fan's identity as both a subjective positioning statement and measure of insider expertise, I felt as though my case differed slightly. There is a level of embodied affect associated with the emotional connection between a fan and the text they love that is worth noting when critically considering their cultural impact. But by looking beyond this analytical form of fan engagement, I bring into the fold another important aspect of fandom productivity: fan fiction writing. Previous scholars have certainly examined this interpretive, generative fan practice and its outcomes, but it is less common to see it incorporated into creative research methodology itself. Moving beyond textual analysis and anthropological studies, I instead want to embody fannish perspective, to take up fan fiction writing in my practice-led research as a novel methodological approach to screenwriting. In this sense, I might instead think of myself as a *pr-aca-fan*, simultaneously acting as practitioner, academic, and fan as I embarked on writing my screenplay.

Keywords: fan studies, creative practice, screen adaptation, queer, aca-fan

Presenter Biography: Dante DeBono is a PhD candidate at the University of South Australia with the goal of promoting social inclusivity and equality through work focussed on diversifying queer representation in research and creative outputs. Her current thesis is focused on the queer potential of revisionist adaptations in fiction through screenwriting-based practice-led research. She served on the Central Committee for the Gender, Sex and Sexualities Conference from 2021 to 2023, and is a Committee Member of Oral History Australia SA/NT.

Hybrid Narrative Regime: Reality and Fantasy

Shmavon Azatyan

This conference paper argues that cinematic storytelling is invariably formed through a hybrid narrative of reality and fantasy. I use my own writing and production processes of the documentary *The History of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Melbourne* (M. Keisoglu, S. Azatyan 2022) and the feature drama screenplay *The Station of Fossil Man* (S. Azatyan 2019). Firstly, in the process of telling a story a filmmaker uses the real world for resource (D. Herman); and secondly, cinematic narrative can capture only 'aspects of reality' (S. Azatyan 2017). In view of this, I consider the narrative in film and fiction as double-layered. There is a fundamental layer that is the depiction of reality, and the other – fictive layer that presents the imaginary material.

Building on my discussion that 'reality' is not definitive, and my argument that actuality and fantasy are inextricably inscribed in cinematic narrative (J. Ellis 2000), I propose that the boundary between non-fiction and fiction constantly shifts depending on the filmmaker's intention as to what extent they want to 'manipulate', that is, to *comment* on the depicted events. In conclusion, drawing on cognitive theory proposing that narrative production and reception are embodied (Hutto 2008), my deeper arguments are that cinematic expression of emotion generates entertainment by a larger extent, than cinematic statements of facts.

Keywords: cinematic storytelling, hybrid narrative, reality and fantasy in filmic narrative, fiction and non-fiction film, entertainment, facts

Presenter Biography: Shmavon Azatyan studied at Yerevan State University (1993-1998), majoring in English Language and Foreign Literatures. Thereafter he continued his education at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (2002-2004), where he received his MA in English/Creative Writing. From 2015 to 2019 he was employed by La Trobe University as a Higher Degree Researcher at the Department of Creative Arts and English where he completed his PhD in Screen Arts/Screenwriting. Shmavon has published articles about film in *Offscreen*, Taylor & Francis, and *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*. In 2022, he co-produced the documentary *The History of the Armenian Church in Melbourne*. Currently, he lives in Melbourne where he teaches writing and works on screenplay and fiction projects.

Auto-adaptation: repositioning the screen narrative and authorial identity in the writers' room

Cath Moore

The inherent complexities bound to fidelity & authorship have long anchored discourses in adaptation studies. The ontological precarities of a text in adaptation are still subject to Foucault's 'transcendental anonymity,' arguably most evident at the nexus of being and becoming. In sensing 'the movement of writing (transforming the self into writing) and writing as movement (towards new mediations)' Rossholm frames auto-adaptation as transpositional discourse between practice and the practitioner. This process supposes a continuing authorial autonomy between mediums. How are voice and visibility negotiated when development practices shift? This challenge became apparent during my time spent in a writers' room, adapting my feature film screenplay into a TV series. As an industrial construct, the writers' room necessitates dynamic collaboration between the writer/creator, producer, story producer and other screenwriters. While research has often focused on cultural logics (Redvall, Henderson, Phalen & Osellame), this paper examines the writers' room through the lens of identity negotiation. Employing a practice-led analysis, I reflect on authorial disembodiment & reconfiguration; the experience of leading, getting lost and being led through the process of 'breaking' the story from one narrative shape to another. For research purposes, the screenplay is located as a boundary object, one of action and negotiation (Davies) that offers intermedial points of connection between existing and emerging texts. In doing so, I examine the challenges of holding authorial agency despite disparate creative impulses and the industrial requirements of form and format.

Presenter Biography: Dr Cath Moore is a lecturer in screenwriting at The University of Melbourne, a filmmaker and author. She has a Masters in Screenwriting from the Australian Film Television and Radio school and a PhD on Danish screenwriting practises from Deakin University. With a focus on Scandinavian cinema, the child on screen and transglobal screenwriting practices Cath has published with the *Journal of Screenwriting* and was a chapter contributor to *Refocus: The Films of Susanne Bier* (Edinburgh Press 2018), *Script Development: Critical Approaches, Creative Practices, International Perspectives* (Palgrave 2021), *The Palgrave Handbook of Script Development* (Palgrave 2021), *The A-Z of Creative Writing Methods* (Bloomsbury 2022), *The Scandinavian Invasion: Nordic Noir and Beyond* (Peter Lang 2022) and *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Screenplay Theory* (Bloomsbury, late 2025).

Saturday, 20 September 2025:

NARRATIVE-INTERACTIVE-MULTI-HYPHENATE

No-thing: deconstructing and reconstructing the narrative structure of a short film.

The creative tension between script and footage in the edit room of *Nothing*.

James Nicholson and Ross Brannigan

James Nicholson (cinematographer, editor) and Ross Brannigan (writer, director, actor) are filmmakers within an academic context. The short film *Nothing* was the creative outcome of a practice as research project designed to pull apart the components of a structure that we had carefully scripted and shot. The resulting components were taken into the editing room, leaving the narrative in a state of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA). The process mirrored the dislocated mind of the protagonist of the film. The decision to deconstruct the narrative and to explore it was taken to force us to try alternate structuring strategies embracing formalist or realist styles or some combination of both.

In addition to our industry-based work we operate within an academic environment. Both researchers are founder members of the AUT Centre for Screen Practice Research and have two decades of experience in joint research projects. Working within a university environment enabled us to build a crew of ex students including a post graduate member of SPR. Casting was facilitated from within our community of practice of professional actors.

Research Question

We set out to find out what we could we learn about the scripted core elements of the narrative of a short film by deconstructing it into fragments using the principle of VUCA. After editing *Nothing* in realist style and chronological order a method of re-ordering the narrative using alternative styles and emphases was chosen to exercise our collaborative creativity.

The significance of this research project sits in the disjuncture between editing and writing. Both phases of production structure the narrative of the short film but a deeper understanding of the relationship that exists between the two can be built. The re-structuring of *Nothing* is meant to contribute to the discourse around authorship within dramatic short film creative practice.

- VUCA is a tool used in business to navigate a chaotic situation
- Bennett, Nathan & Lemoine, G. James. (2014). 'What VUCA really means for you'. *Harvard Business Review*. 92.

Presenter Biographies:

Ross Brannigan (PhD, AUT) teaches Performance and Screen Production at Auckland University of Technology in Aotearoa, New Zealand. He is a founder member of the Centre for Screen Practice Research at AUT. His professional practice encompasses more than seventy screen and thirty stage productions as actor, writer, director and intermedial designer and maker. Academic interests revolve around the fusing of stage and screen and the collaborative creativity of actor and cinematographer. He is currently researching the complex relationship between the need for an actor to maintain subjective performativity and to concurrently be aware of visual and technical production elements in realist intermedial theatre.

James Nicholson (MA, Auckland) is a lecturer in Screen Production at Auckland University of Technology's School of Communication Studies, Aotearoa, New Zealand. He is a founder member of the Centre for Screen Practice Research at AUT. He is an experienced cinematographer and editor, whose research has focused on screen production practice in both documentary and fiction.

Cross-cut: How a Multi-hyphenate Career Enhances Screenwriting Practice

George Merryman

The use of “multi-hyphenate” was once primarily the domain of the entertainment industry (i.e. writer-director-producer). The application of the term has widened with the rise of the gig economy and as the nature and future of work changes. In this session, I speak about my PhD research which is designed to draw upon the four planks of my portfolio career as a multi-hyphenate: writer-educator exhibitor-researcher.

I examine how these interconnected roles inform one another and contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary screenwriting practices. I discuss how the act of curating and exhibiting films influences my own scriptwriting processes, how teaching informs both my creative work and my research, and how the blending of these roles provides a more holistic approach to writing for the screen. This session engages attendees in identifying, amalgamating and incorporating their own varied professional pursuits into their screenwriting and academic careers, emphasising the significance of cross-disciplinary knowledge.

The presentation is framed around my PhD research – ‘Writing a ‘Love Letter to Cinema’: A screenwriter’s creative practice approach to investigating an emerging film genre’. As with all love letters, a love letter to cinema displays a passion for the object of its affection: in this case, the medium of film. The genre has existed within the industry since the beginning of movies (*Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show*, 1902). But the form was not given a name until 1990, in a newspaper review of what has become the gold standard of the ‘love letter to cinema’: *Cinema Paradiso*. Despite its longevity and ubiquity, including a recent ‘LL2C’ cycle in 2022 (*The Fabelmans*, *Babylon* and *Empire of Light*), academic engagement with the subject has been negligible, hence the thesis employment of the phrase “emerging film genre”, emphasising the novelty of the research within the academy.

Key words: multi-hyphenate; screenwriting; creative practice; cross-disciplinary; film genre; love letter to cinema

References:

Altman, R. (1999). *Film/Genre*. London: BFI Publishing.

Batty, C., & Kerrigan, S., eds. (2018) *Screen Production Research: Creative Practice as a Mode of Enquiry*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature for Palgrave Macmillan.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2018). *The Cultural Industries* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Presenter Biography: With 39 hours of produced television to his credit and as co-writer of a feature film, George has taught screenwriting at the University of Newcastle, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), and the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS). Since 2014, he has been the exhibitor at the Regal Cinema, the last single-screen

cinema in Newcastle, NSW. In 2023, George became the co-founder and co-director of NIFF – the Newcastle International Film Festival. Currently pursuing a PhD, George is employed as a Research Associate at Flinders University. His publications include co-authorship of a book, sole authorship of a chapter and joint-authorship of an article.

The gap between the original idea and the real production possibilities: a research project developed with undergraduate students on the writing of live-action films that feature animals as prominent characters

Clarissa Mazon Miranda

This paper presents the results obtained until now of an ongoing academic project of research on screenwriting practice that is being developed by a research group composed of two professors, eight undergraduate students and one invited professional screenwriter at the private higher education institution *Antonio Meneghetti Faculdade* (Antonio Meneghetti College), located in the South of Brazil. This screenwriting practice research project has its focus on the study and development of screenplays of live-action films that feature animals as key parts of the story to be told. The objective is to verify how the screenwriters initially foresee the performance of the animals in the story and how this script may perhaps undergo changes based on the real production possibilities. The screenplays chosen as case studies by the professors for the students are *The Lighthouse of the Whales* (Spain, 2016); *Secretariat* (USA, 2010), *Le Loup et le Lion* (Canada and France, 2021), *The Art of Racing in the Rain* (USA, 2019), and *My Penguin Friend* (Brazil, 2024). As creative practice research activity, two screenplays featuring animal characters are also being written collectively by the students with the use of the knowledge acquired in the research of the chosen screenplays and with guidance of the professors and the screenwriter. When their scripts are ready, in mid-October (2025), they will be presented to invited industry professionals. This paper presents, among its main inputs, the methodology of this creative practice research activity, challenges faced in the classroom, activities conducted and the testimonies of the students. The theoretical framework includes: McVeigh (2014, 2023), Molloy (2012), Bousé (2011), Hirschman & Sanders (1997), Horton (2000); Sherry (2014); Corday (2002), Senje (2017), Batty, Taylor (2019).

Keywords: creative practice research; animal characters; screenwriting practice; production technology.

Presenter Biography: Clarissa Mazon Miranda

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2323-112X>

Holds a Ph.D. in Literature at *Universidade Federal de Santa Maria* (Brazil, 2018). Her PhD thesis explores the intersemiotic translation of novels into movie scripts. Holds a Master in Mediatic Communication at the same institution (Brazil, 2012) and a Master in *Creacion de Guion Audiovisual* at The Core Entertainment School (Spain, 2023). Holds a bachelor's in Journalism by *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina* (2005). Has completed two certificate programs at the National Film & TV School (UK): Certificate in Filmmaking (2023) and Certificate in Screenwriting (2024). Works as a professor and researcher at *Antonio Meneghetti College* (Brazil); as public relations and international affairs officer at *Fundação Antonio Meneghetti* (Brazil); and as a free-lancer screenwriter and reporter. Member of the Executive Council of SRN since 2022.

FILMMAKER-ETHNOGRAPHER-(AUTO)-BIOGRAPHER

Screenwriting the Bio-Pic: reflections on the temporal, spatial and psychosocial gap between screenwriter and biographical referent.

Michael Bentham

In screen studies literature the word 'biopic', often hyphenated 'bio-pic', is used to denote the biographical fiction feature film. In a field that continues to labour over a taxonomic assessment of the genre (Bentham 2022, 190), the use of a hyphen in bio-pic appears to hold little significance other than indicating the conflation of the words 'biographical' and 'picture' into a single descriptor. From a screenwriter's perspective, however, the hyphenated gap between the biographical referent and their re-presentation in the form of a fictional character carries great significance. The process of re-presenting an historical person as a fictional character presents the practitioner with a series of daunting gaps that must be navigated, bridged or filled. The most challenging of these is the temporal, spatial and psychosocial gap between the screenwriter, situated in the present, and the historical subject, situated in the past. The yawning gaps in the historical record (Mantel 2017) also reveal a series of ethical questions: What responsibility does the ubiquitous marketing phrase, "based on a true story" place on the shoulders of the socially responsible screenwriter who is essentially writing a fiction? In this paper Bentham will draw on his forthcoming book on 'screenwriting the contemporary biopic' to explore the gaps between fact and fiction, truth and the real, the reflexive "I" and the historical "other".

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Bentham, M. 2022. "The biopic screenplay as a research output: Towards a working definition of narrative fiction filmmaking methodology." *Journal of Screenwriting*, 13(2), 187- 206.

Mantel, H. 2017. "The Day is for the Living." *Resurrection: The Art and Craft*, BBC Reith Lecture, No. 1, 7 June 2017.

Keywords: Biopic, bio-pic, screenwriter, biography, history, fiction film

Presenter Biography: **Dr Michael Bentham** is an award-winning filmmaker, researcher and educator. A graduate of the UK's National Film and Television School, his feature drama *Disclosure* (2020) was nominated for an Australian Academy Award (Best Indie Film) and an Australian Directors' Guild Award (Best Direction in a Feature Film). Michael holds a Doctorate from the University of Melbourne, where he received the Margaret Lawrence Social Justice Award in recognition of the social impact of his narrative fiction films. Michael's current research at the University of South Australia explores the articulation and application of screen production as methodology.

Based on a True Story: Autoethnographic Lived-Experience Fictionalisation

Matthew Doherty

"Based on a true story" is a phrase often used in films to suggest authenticity. But more often than not, it serves to heighten drama rather than faithfully represent lived experience. While screenwriting scholarship has explored literary adaptations of historical and biographical narratives, there has been little attention given to adapting undocumented personal experiences. Adaptation theory, as discussed by Linda Hutcheon, and emotive autoethnography, as explored by Caroline Ellis, provide useful ways to understand this process. By bringing these perspectives together, this research offers a structured approach to transforming lived experiences into cinematic storytelling. For screenwriters, this approach provides a way to shape personal experiences into engaging narratives through fictionalization and adaptation. As Linda Hutcheon (2013) notes, "there are many and varied motives behind adaptation, and few involve faithfulness." Autoethnographic adaptation embraces this creative license, allowing filmmakers to craft stories that bridge the personal and the universal. This presentation examines how autoethnographic screen adaptation can serve as a valuable framework for industry practitioners. Drawing on my own experience adapting personal stories into the short film *Father's Footsteps* (2024), I explore the creative, collaborative, and practical challenges of fictionalizing lived experience. By reflecting on this process, I highlight how screenwriters can navigate the balance between truth and storytelling, ultimately shaping authentic yet dramatically compelling narratives.

Keywords: Autoethnography, adaptation, screenwriting, fictionalisation,

References:

Hutcheon, L. & O'Flynn, S. 2013. *A Theory of Adaptation*, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge.

Presenter Biography: Matthew Doherty is a filmmaker, educator, and researcher specializing in screen adaptation and media production. He holds a Bachelor of Film and Television from Swinburne University and teaches cinematography at Swinburne and Deakin, as well as screen production at Victoria University. Currently pursuing a Master of Arts/PhD at Swinburne, his research explores Autoethnographic Cinematic Adaptation. With over a decade of experience, Matthew has worked as a freelance filmmaker across corporate and narrative projects. He has also contributed as an organizer to initiatives like the 3-Shot Film Festival at The University of Melbourne.

Against the “Perfect Victim”: Autofictional Trauma Onscreen

Georgie Harriss

Autofiction – a narrative mode frequently associated with the portrayal of traumatic lived experiences – can be defined as a playful and performative blend of autobiographical and fictional content in which the author often shares their own name with the narrator-protagonist (Hansen 2017, 48). Within a televisual context, the term autofiction has been widely attributed to two series that deal in the creative representation of autobiographical trauma: Michaela Coel’s *I May Destroy You* (2020) and Richard Gadd’s *Baby Reindeer* (2024). Both series work to rescript the painful lived experiences of their creators while paying particular attention to their identities – textual *and* extratextual – as writers. However, both creators respectively challenge and reenforce foundational definitions of autofiction by, on one hand, refusing an eponymous relationship with their protagonists, while, on the other hand, embodying the protagonistic roles as performers.

Throughout this paper, I will explore how specific screenwriting techniques are deployed by both Coel and Gadd and how these techniques are situated within recognisable models of autofictionalisation. In particular, I will focus on the ways in which the two screenwriters cultivate a sense of moral ambiguity and evade traditional demands for likeability/relatability with respect to their textual avatars. I will then discuss how these creative decisions can be interpreted as a rebellion against normative understandings of victimhood and survivorship. The paper will ultimately demonstrate how queer, abjected and antisocial aesthetics – along with narrative qualities specific to the televisual form – function to resist societal demands to perform the ‘perfect victim’ as well as how they undermine traditional understandings of trauma-based art as being motivated by desires for the therapeutic or the cathartic.

Keywords: Autofiction, trauma, Queer, abject, *I May Destroy You*, *Baby Reindeer*.

References:

Coel, M. (Creator). (2020). *I may destroy you* [television series]. BBC One & HBO; Binge. <https://binge.com.au/shows/show-i-may-destroy-you!7651>

Gadd, R. (Creator). (2024). *Baby reindeer* [television series]. Clerkenwell Films; Netflix.

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Presenter Biography: Georgie Harriss is a non-binary creative writer, researcher and tertiary educator whose practice encompasses screenwriting, playwriting and memoir/autofiction. Their research spans the fields of creative writing, narratology, queer theory and trauma-informed arts practice. Their PhD project ‘Creative Pleasure and

Autofictional Pain: Towards a Queer Narratology of Trauma' explores queer and pleasure-centred approaches for writing about lived experiences of trauma. In 2022, their autofictional play *Love Bird* was published by In Case of Emergency Press. They are currently a lecturer in film and television at The University of Melbourne (VCA).

SCREENWRITERS-SCREENWRITING-SCREENPLAY

Hyphen: Conflict-Desire

Disruptive Desire: The Screenwriting Method of Celine Sciamma

Philippa Burne

In her 2019 BAFTA Screenwriting Guru talk, French writer/director Celine Sciamma proposed a new model of screenwriting emerging from her own practice. Sciamma calls it Writing Through Desire, and argues for driving screenplays through desire not conflict, especially when telling the stories of women and gender-diversity. Sciamma used this method to develop and write the screenplay of her breakthrough film, *Portrait of A Lady On Fire*, which won Best Screenplay at Cannes in 2019.

My recent PhD research sought to test Sciamma's theory of Writing Through Desire through the writing of a screenplay using her three-step approach: Identifying the Desires of the Writer; Working at Scenes Level; Mapping the Scenario.

The intention was to challenge the narrow orthodoxy presented by the how-to manuals as the only way to write a screenplay. This orthodoxy is focussed heavily on the conflict-model offered by The Hero's Journey which draws on Campbell's monomyth. Sciamma directly challenges this in her desire to find new possibilities for authentically telling women's stories onscreen.

Another key part of this research-led practice PhD was to challenge the concept of screenwriters as crafts people not artists (Nelmes 2007), and explore the ways screenwriters can enact creativity. In the writing of the screenplay, *Uplift*, I employed creative methods from many disciplines including embroidery, watercolour painting and slow stitching (deliberately chosen for being devalued as 'feminine' crafts).

This paper will discuss how Sciamma's method of Writing through Desire can work in practice to open up screenwriting for creativity and for telling women's screen stories.

References:

Nelmes, Judith (2007). 'Some Thoughts on Analysing the Screenplay, the Process of Screenplay Writing and the Balance Between Craft and Creativity', *Journal of Media Practice* 8 (2): 107-113

Sciamma, Celine, 'On Letting Desires Dictate Writing', BAFTA Screenwriters Lecture Series, December 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7F9k-340fc> Accessed June 13, 2020

Presenter biography: Philippa Burne is an Honorary Fellow in Screenwriting at the VCA, University of Melbourne, and a PhD candidate in screenwriting at UniSA (Creative). From 2000 to 2017, she worked as a professional television screenwriter in Australia, Croatia, Poland, The Netherlands, Slovakia and the USA. From 2014 until 2024, she was a lecturer in screenwriting in the BFA Screenwriting at the VCA. She is a published novelist and holds an MFA (Creative Writing) from Kingston University London. She has a book chapter (co-

author Dr Angie Black) on Celine Sciamma's theory of writing through desire in *Women Who Write Our Worlds*, (2025) eds Rose Ferrell and Rosanne Welch.

Writer-wraith: The 'Invisible' in *The Way We Are: The Scriptwriter, the Script, the Everyday, and the Audience*

Ian Fong

The Way We Are (2008) is a Hong Kong film written by Lou Shiu-wa and directed by Ann Hui. Her original script was named *Ordinary Household*. The script title hints that it narrates the everyday life of an ordinary family. Based upon *Ordinary Household*, Ann Hui's *The Way We Are* depicts the lives of a widowed, single mother, Lady Kwai, living with her teenage son, Cheung Ka-on, and of a lonely old woman, Leung Foon. The film captures a few of their ordinary days from morning to evening. The everyday is not generally put under a spotlight. The scriptwriter and her script seem to be sidelined. I argue that the scriptwriter, the script, and the everyday become 'invisible' in the film and in the actual world. It is difficult to research the reactions of the female audience. They do not make their voice heard. Perhaps women associated with the everyday accept, or are comfortable with, their 'invisibility', as implied in Lou and her script. The script which narrates the 'invisible' everyday is written by the 'invisible', addressing the 'invisible' audience.

I argue that these various layers of 'invisibilities' are ideologically constructed in Louis Althusser's sense. In the everyday under the representation of modern capitalism and patriarchy, women, to follow Henri Lefebvre, are more often contained in the domestic work to serve the masculine labors so that the latter can stay in a good form to serve capitalist production. The daily life is marked and routinized by the standardized clock, an ideological apparatus; it is divided into countable segments; then, 'everyday life', borrowing from Lefebvre again, 'is made of recurrences'. It is represented as repetitive, functioning against the modern concept of time that is represented as a linear progression. The everyday is trivialized; boredom in the everyday is manufactured and (mis)represented as its real condition of existence. The everyday becomes 'invisible.' To follow Maurice Blanchot, it is difficult to discover, and *Ordinary Household* is best written in a poetic manner. This is the cultural politics I can read in this script.

Keywords: everyday, walking, patriarchy, modernity, castration, repression

Selected References:

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Highmore, Ben (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*, London; New York: Routledge.

Lefebvre, Henri (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (trans. Sacha Rabinovitch), New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Presenter Biography: Ian FONG is an independent scholar teaching literary and cultural studies in various tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. He received his PhD degree in

comparative literature from the University of Hong Kong. He is an author of a chapter in the upcoming book, *Women Who Write Our Worlds* edited by Rose Ferrell and Rosanne Welch.

Miranda July's *Kajillionaire* and queer utopias

Angie Black

Miranda July is an independent US screenwriter – director - actor – artist – author whose creative work spans film, video, writing, acting, performance, music, conceptual art, and app development. We analyse July's screenwriting in her 2020 film *Kajillionaire* through a queer lens, drawing on the queer theories of José Muñoz and Sara Ahmed and the questions they pose about 'queer utopias' and 'the cultural construction of happiness'. The presentation argues that July makes significant contributions to the queer community through the stories and characters she creates and the way that she challenges the orthodoxy of screenwriting and heteronormativity more broadly. Much like July herself, who hybridises her practices to resist being bound to a single mode of working, July's film engages with a queer community by questioning what constitutes queerness and challenging conventional discourses, labels and categories. Through her distinct creative practice of screenwriting, July's screen work fosters societal change by crafting nuanced and complex queer characters and narratives.

July is a distinctive voice in contemporary screen culture, and her filmmaking practice – encompassing both writing and directing - challenges how a filmmaker, working within an industrial production process, can maintain artistic autonomy. In addition to an expanding body of short films, July has written and directed three feature films, each of which subverts and pushes the boundaries of the screen form. This presentation examines July's third feature film *Kajillionaire* (2020), situating it within her broader body of work, where she continues to 'creat(e) images that break through a dominant regime of cinematic clichés' (Backman Rogers 2011). On the surface *Kajillionaire* appears to be a heist film centred on 26-year-old Old Dolio, the daughter in a family of small-time scammers. However, it transcends genre conventions, reflecting July's ongoing exploration of marginal characters who navigate the fringes of society while interrogating themes of family, cultural expectations, and human connection.

This presentation proposes that July's practice is queering the form of screenwriting and filmmaking. While the form of July's work is undoubtedly queer in the making, *Kajillionaire* is the first of July's feature films to actively address representation of queer in an overt way.

Keywords: Miranda July, *Kajillionaire*, Sarah Ahmed, José Muñoz, Queer utopias, Queer film, alternative screen production.

References:

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Backman Rogers, Anna (2011), 'Disconnection Notices: Interview with Miranda July' *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 65, no. Winter 2011

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Muñoz, José Esteban (2009), *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press.

Presenter Biographies:

Dr Angie Black is a Senior Lecturer in Film & Television and current Associate Director (Research) at VCA, The University of Melbourne. They are an award-winning director who specialises in filmmaking as practice-led research. Black holds a PhD in performance approaches in film production and an MA in screenwriting. Their debut feature film, *The Five Provocations* (2018), released through Label Distribution, along with an extensive body of short films, explores innovative approaches to filmmaking and actively promotes on-screen diversity. Black's research examines approaches to filmmaking, screenwriting, and performance practices, with a focus on gender, sexuality, and cultural diversity on screen.

IDENTITY-MEMORY-REPRESENTATION

Little Potato

Chen Chen (presented by Christina Milligan)

This is a portrait of my grandmother Shou Ai Xia who suffers from dementia in a documentary style. The work functions as a hyphen between two intertwined worlds that she inhabits in a poetic way. One is a fading ordinary world. In this space, she forgets people, places, and the way to go home. However, certain fragment of memory, such as tea rituals with her husband are still palpable for her. The second world is hallucinate resulting from Lewy body dementia. In this world, she demonstrates her gratitude and ideological commitment. She worked for the Chinese Communist Party for over forty years. The documentary considers both the revolutionary passion of her youth and the drawing of life into a quiet, gradual close.

The use of the poetic hyphen offers insights into how documentary filmmaking can move beyond the conventional trope of the 'tragic discourse of dementia,' providing a more nuanced and multidimensional representation of the condition. During filming, my camera followed *Little Potato* wandering around the ruin of time. Here, elements, including everyday objects, ageing textures, and abandoned buildings, connect past time and the marks of existence. The marks of decay also allude to my grandmother's mental state, which is a juxtaposition of the present and fragments of the past.

Thus, the film not only explores the personal impact of dementia but also weaves in cultural symbols and metaphors, creating a connection between my family, cultural background and the experience of dementia. This adds complexity and emotional depth to the story from a Chinese lens. The impact of the work is associated with the International Film Festival screenings, and the audience reception and emotional engagement. The film has premiered at an Oscar-qualifying festival, the St. Louis International Film Festival (SLIFF) November 2024. Additionally, collaborating with AUT dementia researchers could facilitate community screenings of the film, reaching audiences directly affected by dementia and fostering greater understanding and empathy within these communities.

Running time: 24:23

Premiere: the St. Louis International Film Festival (Nov 2024)

Presenter Biography: Chen Chen is a lecturer and the program leader of Cinematic Arts Minor at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Her short films have been selected in competition at over 20 international film festivals including the New Zealand International Film Festival. She has taught across a number of disciplines including independent film making, Chinese philosophy and aesthetics, curatorial practice, and studio practice in visual effects, animation and gaming. Chen completed her practice-led, artistic PhD journey at AUT. This PhD thesis received the Dean's award for best Doctoral thesis of 2018.

The Impact of Representation on Iranian Women's Documentary Films

Shirin Barghnavard

This paper examines the boundaries of characteristic formation as depicted in the films of Iranian women documentary filmmakers. It explores the role of the politics of representation in amplifying the politicisation of documentary films created by Iranian women. It examines the role played by international film festivals in shaping the landscape of Iran's cinema through their selections. These festivals emphasise urgent political and social issues within Iranian society, influenced by Western media's portrayal of the Middle East as a crisis hotspot. While the global documentary film industry has seen a surge in female directors' Iranian female documentary filmmakers face a range of distinct hurdles. Those in the diaspora navigate the realities of their new environment, while those who remain in Iran adapt to shifting circumstances within the country. Their narratives are intricately woven with socio-political contexts from their backgrounds portraying them as figures confronting these challenges. The global perception of this portrayal constricts them, leaving a permanent mark on their artistic journeys.

This study questions whether female filmmakers from politically challenging regions, such as Iran, can be disentangled from their socio-political context. It critically challenges the concepts of familiarity (attachment) or alienation/de-familiarity (detachment) with their homeland. This inquiry arises from a perpetual interconnectedness that indicates an inevitable perception and stereotyped understanding of the works of Iranian women documentary filmmakers by both Iranian and international audiences. The presentation features excerpt the documentary film, *Invisible* (2019), directed by the presenter. The film uses the Berlin Wall as a metaphor to explore the impact of nationality on representation. It highlights the psychological and social walls that persist today. The paper examines nationality as a construct that perpetuates division, with the theme Hyphen exploring the intersection of visible and invisible barriers imposed by nationalism, where personal stories and broader socio-political contexts interconnect.

Keywords: Politics of representation, gender, trauma, identity

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Presenter Biography: Shirin Barghnavard is an award-winning documentary film director based in Perth and a PhD scholar at Edith Cowan University. Her films explore social issues, focusing on women's roles and the effects of politics on individuals. Notable works include

Density of Emptiness (2023), Invisible (2019), and Poets of Life (2017). Her films have been showcased at international festivals like CPH:DOX and IDFA, earning awards such as the Tim Hetherington Award (Sheffield DocFest) and Special Jury Award (Green Film Festival). Currently, she coordinates the 'In Frame' short film initiative at DADAA and teaches at ECU.

Making Space: A Different Kind of Sci-Fi

Gillian Ashurst

This presentation explores *Inheritance*, an evolving hybrid screen project that aims to produce an ambitious science fiction feature film without conforming to dominant screen industry production models. Building on my MFA research into the clash between commerce and creativity in directing, this work-in-progress asks: How can slow, hybrid screen production methods create space for more inclusive filmmaking - and what new forms of collaboration and creativity emerge from this approach?

Inheritance centres on a young woman with Down syndrome who is sent to space to help save humanity after a global catastrophe. Rather than shooting within a conventional block, the production is spread over years, with intermittent shoots - a model that echoes documentary practice while delivering a fictional sci-fi narrative.

Elements of the film have already been shot over a 15-year period using a blend of documentary, drama, and essay film modes. A recent collaboration between university and industry has enabled a more focused stage of production, that will continue over the next year, and includes access to a virtual production studio for the space station scenes. As our lead actor has matured, new story material is also emerging through collaborative workshops with performers, enriching the narrative through lived experience.

The project embodies multiple hyphenations: writer-director, mother-filmmaker, documentary-drama, practitioner-academic. It responds to Lisa French's research on gender equity in screen production, which critiques conventional schedules and funding practices that disadvantage those with caregiving roles. It also draws on Laura Rascaroli's concept of the essay film as a subjective, reflexive "thinking form," allowing story and structure to evolve over time.

This presentation will reflect on the creative freedoms and constraints of this method and the challenge of making audience-facing work while resisting traditional production norms. Clips from different phases of the work will illustrate the evolution of story, character, and form.

Keywords: sci-fi, writer-director, documentary-drama, inclusive, virtual production.

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Rascaroli, L. (2009). *The Personal Camera: Subjective cinema and the essay film*. Wallflower Press.

Presenter Biography: Gillian Ashurst is a Canterbury-based writer and director. Her debut short film, *Venus Blue*, premiered at **Sundance (1999)**, and was soon followed by her award-winning feature *Snakeskin*—a fast-paced road movie that, as one critic put it, “*booted the cinema of unease into the new century.*” Like many female directors, her career slowed with motherhood, but she remained active in commercials and documentaries, including a series on **Ernest Rutherford**. A recipient of the **NZFC Female Director’s Scholarship (2017)**, she completed a new short, *The Meek* in 2021 and now lectures in **screenwriting** at the **University of Canterbury’s Digital Screen Campus**.

EMOTION-IMMERSION-DRAMA

We Were Children Once: Crafting Narrative and Emotional Immersion through XR Soundscapes

Alicia Butterworth and Peter Hedegus

Sound design is an under-researched and crucial aspect of extended reality (XR) where little is currently known about best practice. XR is a unique medium, positioned between several better-explored media forms—cinema, games and theatre. Although these well-known disciplines may have much practical wisdom to offer sound designers in XR, there is scant literature available to guide practitioners about how to best adapt their skills and experience to this new format. In the quest for a new language of sound in XR, this paper explores how sound practices from the disciplines of cinema, games, and theatre can contribute to sound for extended reality.

The findings discussed were gained from the production of a 15-minute virtual reality film entitled *We Were Children Once*. The paper is supported by a literature review and unpublished interviews with leading sound designers who have backgrounds in cinema, games, or theatre, and who are currently working in XR. These findings detail the practical considerations of on-set sound recording, the meticulous requirements of an XR dialogue edit (and the AI tools making it easier), the software advances in spatial sound plugins, the use of generative AI voices in documentary, the problematic lack of bass in headphone playback, and the designers' differing approaches to creative sound design in the studio.

This paper will also contribute the directorial perspective, exploring the process of how sound becomes an essential tool for shaping both narrative and emotional immersion of a particular project. It will be argued that in virtual reality and other forms of immersive mediums, sound does more than accompany images — it anchors the viewer, directing their attention and helping them orient themselves within the story world but more importantly grounding them in reality of the environment. This process requires not only technical precision but a deep understanding of how sound can evoke memory, shift mood, and give voice and meaning to environments and characters. The paper will explore the creative collaboration between director and sound designer detailing how sound is amplified in XR, where the boundaries between sound, space, and story constantly blur.

The creative practices developed in this research project could be used by sound designers and directors in the creative design and development of XR soundscapes to create more engaging and impactful virtual reality experiences.

Keywords: Sound Design, Virtual Reality, Cinematic Sound, Game Sound, Theatre Sound, interdisciplinary practice.

Presenter Biographies:

Ass. Prof. Peter Hegedus. Griffith University, Brisbane Australia

Associate Professor Peter Hegedus is a filmmaker Academic who has been working at the Griffith Film School (GFS) since 2013. With over 25 years of industry experience having produced internationally acclaimed documentaries for a variety of broadcasters, Peter's research focuses on innovating storytelling techniques to advance and reflect on key social justice issues. His feature documentaries and drama work have been broadcast around the world receiving critical acclaim including a shortlist for the Academy Awards and a film in competition at the Venice Film Festival. Peter has also participated in Academic Conferences, has been invited to various panel discussions around the world concerning international financing, documentary ethics and directing.

Alicia Butterworth. Griffith University, Brisbane Australia

Alicia Butterworth (Eames) is an experienced international location sound recordist and designer who has worked on a wide range of projects from feature documentaries to award winning TV shows. As well as freelancing in screen sound, Alicia is currently conducting research into sound for virtual reality films at Griffith University and is a lecturer at Griffith Film School and the School of Audio Engineering. Alicia is passionate about the transformative power of sound to move audiences through film-based storytelling and loves nothing more than fantastic and clean on-set audio.

Queen Richard

Cameron Nelson, Tiffany Knight and Matt Hawkins

Queen Richard investigates how to create opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration between Screen and Drama students that enhance their creative networks and professional skills in the 21st century market. The precarious nature of the Australian film industry demands that emerging practitioners not only develop a wide array of technical skills but also become “effective and productive collaborator(s)” (Dooley and Sexton-Finck 2017, p.75), adept at developing their own creative networks.

Although the artistic and industrial challenges facing Screen and Drama students are linked, finding opportunities for them to collaborate can be difficult. Actor training institutions may have the staff to teach screen performance techniques but are frequently dependant on external production companies to produce and shoot projects (McDermott 2013). Meanwhile, screen production students often lack the opportunity to work with trained actors, much less study actor-centric approaches to directing. As Preeshl observes, “the time has come to emerge from the disciplinary pools and immerse shared resources in an interdisciplinary sea” (Preeshl 2020, p.4).

Queen Richard functions as a case-study demonstrating how a hyphen can be established between Screen and Drama training by embracing the constraints inherent in operating across two degrees. The film follows a student documentary crew as they capture the events leading up to the final dress rehearsal of student production of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*. We capitalised on the resources available to us: a fully equipped theatre, period costumes and the opportunity for long-form improvisation during screen acting classes to develop grounded and nuanced performances. Our truncated shooting and post-production schedule informed the decision to employ long takes using a jib and dolly, with a minimum need for cuts. The result is a film that challenged students on both sides of the camera to develop subtlety, precision and heightened collaborative skills. Feedback from students in both degrees indicates that the industry simulation not only enhanced their respective skills but also sowed the seeds of promising creative partnerships.

Length: 19min

Presenter Biographies:

Cameron Nelson is a writer/director/producer whose award-winning first feature, *Some Beasts* screened at international festivals and received a physical and streaming release via Turn Key Films on Amazon. His most recent short films, *Pillars* and *Comforter*, World Premiered at the Slamdance Film Festival in 2020 and 2021. His producing credits include Daniel Laabs' *Jules of Light and Dark* and Hannah Moore's *Mars Futures*, which premiered at the 2024 Melbourne International Film Festival. He is currently pursuing a PhD in practical production while serving as a lecturer in Screen at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia.

Tiffany Knight is an actor, director and lecturer in Drama at Flinders University, where she specialises in teaching Screen Acting. Tiffany recently directed the SASA-nominated web series *Behind the Seams*. Her screen appearances include *Battlestar Galactica*, *Stargate*

SG-1, *ANZAC Girls*, *Red Dog* and *Wanted*. Her stage credits include seven seasons with Vancouver's Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival and the multi-award-winning solo show, *19 weeks*. Tiffany's practice-led PhD examined the status of the actor in contemporary independent theatre and received the Flinders University Vice Chancellor's Prize for Doctoral Thesis Excellence in 2018.

Matt Hawkins is a playwright, screenwriter, lecturer, director, and co-founder of South Australian Playwrights Theatre. He has spent the last twenty years writing and directing his own plays and films and developing the work of other actors and screenwriters. His television credits include *The Micallef Program* (ABC), *Always Greener* (7 Network) and *Life Support* (SBS). His feature films and shorts have appeared in over 30 international film festivals. His theatre work includes *Frank Forbes and the Yahoo Boy* (2018), *Bordertown*, (2020), and *The Deep North*. (2022) Matt lectures in screenwriting and dramaturgy at Flinders University.

References:

Dooley, K., & Sexton-Finck, L. (2017). 'A focus on collaboration: Fostering Australian screen production students' teamwork skills'. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 8(1), 74–105. <https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2017vol8no1art642>

McDermott, P. (2013). "The Personal Made Public: an Actor-Led Devised Film Project." DIT, Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre.

Preeshl, A. (2019). *Reframing Acting in the Digital Age: Nimble Scaling Actor Training in the Academy*. London, Routledge.

TABLE READS:

Deborah Klika



Czech in the Rear View Mirror (*Čech ve Zpětném Zrcátku*) is a black comedy set in 1940/50s Czechoslovakia and 1950s/60s Australia, when two Czech migrants, decide to drive from Darwin to Brisbane - in the wet season. One of them cannot drive or speak English, and even though a baby is about to drop, she is determined to be qualified as a doctor in this foreign land.

Based on actual events this dark comedy explores how displacement affects migrants and the Indigenous people in a land that is no longer their home. It's about lying to survive.

Contextual statement and its relationship to the hyphen:

Czech in the Rear View Mirror: A Czech-Australian migrant story that explores the effects of displacement in two hybrid worlds – the Australian-Indigenous world and the Czech-Soviet world of post WWII. Written by Deborah Klika.

Extending on my presentation at SRN2024 in Olomouc Czechia, which examined how comedy can be effected through lying, misunderstanding and the confluence of language, this screenplay seeks to also explore the following:

- the migrant experience from the point of view of the migrants, in particular a female protagonist, alongside the Indigenous peoples and how displacement drives people to lie, in order to survive.

- Invert the 'need' of the character by using a trait commonly regarded as unacceptable – the need to lie.
- Situating white Australian comic characters in a way to demonstrate that white Australia has all the (multiple) jobs.

Australian films about migrants have traditionally used the migrant as the butt of comedy, by way of 'tales from a suitcase' or caught up in an outback horror. This work uses dark comedy as a means to explore the migrant experience from their perspective, alongside some difficult issues in the Australian context. While not denigrating the violence of the Aboriginal experience, this story exposes the reality of life in 1960s White Australia through the eyes of two people trying to understand and assimilate in a culture that itself is fragile – much like the relationship between these two hapless and idealistic migrants.

Practice and impact:

Growing up the child of migrants I have always lived between two worlds, and never felt fully accepted by either. My academic research, practice-research and screenwriting explores the (comic) tension that arises when a character attempts to escape situations that are disempowering only to find the 'other' just as disempowering. This story brings a new perspective to the migrant experience, and the intersection with the Indigenous experience at a time when many still adhere to the white Australia policy, as it was slowly being dismantled, and officially in 1973. Has it been extinguished?

Following is feedback from Screen Australia, when I applied for development funding that now requires Indigenous creatives to be confirmed:

The concept is distinctive as it explores the resilience of Czech migrants and First Nations characters from a female perspective. The film's premise is centred around cultural alienation and displacement in post-colonial Australia from multiple perspectives..... This is a concept with heart and aims to uncover an immigrant perspective unparalleled on screen. It also has the potential to resonate with an international audience.

Writer Biography: This script is written by Deborah Klika, born in Brisbane, Australian, grew up in Sydney and now teaches screenwriting at the University of Greenwich, London. Deborah's creative practice and research centres on screen comedy. She has written five sitcom pilots, two being awarded recognition at the Cannes Screenplay Contest. Deborah's PhD by Creative Practice examined what elements needed to be in play when transposing a sitcom to a feature, and a feature to a narrative comedy. *Czech in Rear View Mirror* is her second feature script.

Dahl for Chocolate Cake: Embracing Empathetic Female Screen Protagonists Through Vulnerability

Priscilla Cameron

Medium: Television – limited series screenplay excerpt

Format: Table read presentation (20 min)

Drawing on *New York Times* bestselling author and professor, Brene Brown's (2015) research my screenwriting practice, '*Dahl for Chocolate Cake*', a 4 x 1 hour limited television series screenplay, embeds through reflection on action (Schön 1983; Smith 2001, 2011) vulnerability to be both present and felt in my screenwriting, which in turn creates vulnerable screen characters and draws on the power of opposing valence to act as a tool of deep connection, catharsis and possible empathetic healing for its audience. By depicting authentic notions of vulnerability, particularly in the set-up, of "*Dahl for Chocolate Cake*' my screenwriting practice not only creates deep empathy for its midlife female screen protagonist but also seeks to address the lack of midlife female protagonists and the authentic representation of female inner transformation, sexuality and erotic desire in 'passionate pop culture' (*The Singapore Women's Weekly* 2021, Homes 2021, Nielsen 2021, Nexttribe 2021).

Allowing an audience to embed themselves within a screen protagonist and care about their journey and outcome depends on the audience being able to feel into the protagonist's emotional state and understand why they do what they do. To reach this deep empathetic feeling state by proxy is a task that screenwriters often grapple with and achieving it can be the difference between successful audience engagement or a lack thereof.

Renowned screenwriting authors and educators such as Michael Hauge (2024), Robert McKee (2019) and Karl Iglesias (2005) have communicated various techniques that writers can draw on to create empathetic screen characters. Techniques such as making us feel sorry for a character, unjust treatment towards a character, imbuing the character with humanity by showing they care deeply for something/someone, giving them admirable traits and putting them in jeopardy where their emotional/spiritual or physical survival is threatened. However, **how can female screen character empathy creation also be generated through identifying and embedding significant ways in which midlife women experience vulnerability?** The introduction to the protagonist in the set up for '*Dahl for Chocolate Cake*' embeds vulnerability through various screenwriting choices, such as social and familial isolation through ostracization, body shame as well as fear of loss and abandonment all of which threaten her spiritual and emotional survival.

References

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McKee, R., (2019). *Q&A: How Can Writers Generate Empathy for Their Characters?* <https://mckeestory.com/creating-empathy-for-secondary-characters/>

Iglesias, K., (2005). *Writing for Emotional Impact: Advanced Dramatic Techniques to Attract, Engage and Fascinate the Reader from Beginning to End*. Wingspan Press.

Presenter Biography: Dr Priscilla Cameron is an award-winning screen writer/director, educator and more recently academic researcher. For more than a decade she has designed and taught a variety of screen media courses at Griffith Film School to both undergraduate and postgraduate students across the disciplines of live action, animation and games. She is particularly interested in research that explores creative relationships, haptic visuality and using vulnerability to create compelling screen characters.

PANEL

Embodied Spectators: relationships between creators and their audiences

Catherine Gough-Brady, Kim Munro, Christine Rogers and Cassandra Tytler

Researcher-filmmakers Catherine Gough-Brady, Kim Munro, Andrea Russell, Christine Rogers and Cassandra Tytler explore the embodied spaces and connections between the creator and the audience. Using their own practice in fiction, documentary and art filmmaking, they interrogate who these spectators might be. Explorations include their role in the creative work, their embodied engagement with nano-worlds, their closeness to the maker and obligations that ensue, and that these audiences might not always be human. In this panel, these researcher-filmmakers extend and develop current research on the screen spectator.

Catherine Gough-Brady

The desired spectator in critical filmmaking

Susan Kerrigan suggests that the spectator is located inside the filmmaker as they create screen works (2016). In commercial projects, this desired spectator is a mass audience. In critical filmmaking in the academy, which is infrequently targeted at a mass audience, who is that desired spectator? Can it be other academic-filmmakers? And the film becomes a dialogue between filmmakers in the academy via the journals and conferences? Gough-Brady has interviewed academic-filmmakers from around the world and draws on their understandings of how they position their work in relation to the audience. She combines this with her own experiences, both inside the academy and in the commercial filmmaking world. She finds that the relationship to audience differs between filmmakers, but that many have developed a relationship with target audiences, for instance dance film enthusiasts or horror film watchers. Others have replaced the spectator inside them with research concerns, or even with the people or things they film, creating an internalised dialogue not primarily aimed at the film as a thing to be watched, but more a process to be explored. This paper is of interest to screen creative practitioners.

Kerrigan, S. (2016). 'The spectator in the film-maker: re-framing filmology through creative film-making practices'. *Journal of Media Practice*, 17(2-3), 186-198.
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Kim Munro

Spect-actors and the embodied documentary audience

Radical Brazilian theatre maker and activist, Augusto Boal proposed the term 'spect-actor' to describe an audience that is not merely passive, but an active participant in meaning-making and social change (2008). For Boal, while the theatre may not intrinsically be a space for transformation, it might at least provide an opportunity for "rehearsals for revolution" through engaged dialogue.

The question of what role the audience plays in contemporary small-scale and non-industrial documentary is taken up by Patricia Zimmermann and Helen De Michiel in their discussion of what they term 'open space new media documentary' (2016). For the authors, open space documentaries traverse conventional modes of production and formal limitations. The movement away from auteurist feature films sees these kinds of documentaries employ strategies from fields such as contemporary art, spatial politics, activism, digital media and theatre. Open space means to be engaged with social, environmental and community-based issues with the aim to collapse the traditional distinctions between maker, subject and audience. Here, the open space documentary creator designs encounters with the aim to bring about social action (2016).

In this presentation I discuss my iterative documentary project, *The Art of Work is a Work of Art* (2023-2025). This experimental archive project about the feminist theatre organisation, Vitalstatistix based in Yartapuulti / Port Adelaide, explores how we might mobilise the spatial and dramaturgical aspects of the theatre to create an embodied audience experience of history, collective action and artist labour. Employing a range of aesthetic and formal strategies, as well as collaborations across disciplines, *The Art of Work* imagines the expanded potential for documentary within community spaces and stories.

References:

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Christine Rogers

An astronaut: a filmmaker-stepmother negotiates connection and disconnection.

I am a filmmaker-stepmother and the first has not significantly impacted the second until now. The stepmother is a role marked by kin ambiguity and conflicting expectations (Church 1999) marginalisation and lack of agency (Miller, Cartwright and Gibson 2017), high levels of stress and depression (Murtoirinne-Lahtinen 2020) and overshadowed by the pervasive evil stepmother myth. Made foreign, like astronauts in our own homes (Ibid.), we are typically absent in research where the focus is on the children. Now I wish to make work in this under-represented space, to turn my lens on my own experience and that of women like myself. I have interviewed three stepmothers and plan to shoot a dramatic monologue with an actress.

However, my relationship with my three stepdaughters is now strong, and I have no desire to harm this. This brings me to a painful quandary. Connection is at the heart of my decolonizing research practice, informed by my Ngāi Tahu whakapapa (Māori ancestry), but how can I connect my public and private selves and represent what was a difficult personal experience without negatively impacting my family?

In this paper, I interrogate the entanglements of an autoethnographic research practice, family obligations and the idea of 'truth telling'. Though a close focus on practice I will examine how a polyphonic form of hybrid fiction-nonfiction film might best speak to the complications of artist-in-connection. This research speaks to my ongoing investigation of belonging.

References:

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Murtorinne-Lahtinen, M., & Jokinen, K. (2020). 'Stepmothers' constructions and negotiations of belonging'. *Journal of Family Studies*, 26 (1), pp. 51-66

Cassandra Tytler

From Installation to Screen and In-Between: Audiencing Across Forms and Spaces

A Journey Forward from Behind is an essay film that traces the evolution of an artwork from the gallery space, where it was a participatory sculptural installation, to a documented performance, and finally a single screen-based work. Reason and Londelof (2016) conceptualise 'audiencing' as an active process of attention, affect, and meaning-making, where spectators bring performances into being. This framing informs my examination of how different modes of engagement—installation, performance, social media, and screen-based viewing—shape audience interaction and anti-colonial artistic practice. The project began with *A Journey Forward*, a mixed-media installation where visitors engaged with soil from Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar in the South-West of Australia, sieving it, examining it under a microscope, and feeding puzzle pieces of colonialist soap advertisements back into it. This participatory act invited audiences to confront entanglements with colonial histories and commodity racism (McClintock 2020). When the exhibition closed, I sieved the puzzle remnants from the soil and returned the earth to Lake Gnangara on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar—an act performed without human spectators but not without an audience. Lindelof, Schmidt, and Svabo (2016) describe environmental performances as framing the world as an unfolding event, where liveness emerges through relational encounters. Here, the performance of the soil itself—its decomposition of the puzzle pieces—enacts a form of liveness, an interval where transformation occurs between materials, histories, and temporalities. The act was documented, with stills posted on Instagram, where audience engagement took the form of quantified recognition with 50 likes and zero comments. *A Journey Forward from Behind* extends this trajectory, positioning audience attention, memory, and reflection as forms of participation. Through installation - environmental act - digital trace - cinematic frame, *A Journey Forward from Behind* explores how audiencing operates across different artistic forms and spaces, shaping the political work of the project through varying conditions of engagement.

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Panellist Biographies:

Catherine Gough-Brady

Catherine Gough-Brady is an award-winning documentary producer and director. Her most recent documentary for ABC TV is *The Communicator* (2022). Catherine is a senior lecturer at Edith Cowan University who publishes on the relational nature of documentary production processes and is an associate editor of *Screenworks*.

Kim Munro

Kim Munro is a documentary filmmaker and researcher whose work has been screened on television, art and moving image galleries, and festivals. Her practice includes film, sound, and installation, many of which involve close work with communities in change, histories and archives. Kim is the Program Director of Film & Television at the University of South Australia.

Christine Rogers

Christine Rogers is a Ngāi Tahu/Pākehā academic, filmmaker and textile artist with multiple screen credits in drama, documentary, corporate and digital stories. Her films have been screened on television and many national and international film festivals. She holds a PhD from RMIT University, and her writing has been published in journals, anthologies, and newspapers. She is a screen media lecturer at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Cassandra Tytler

Cassandra Tytler is a video artist and researcher whose practice spans experimental moving image, performance, and site-based installations. Her work explores the complex power hierarchies that shape relationships between human and more-than-human ecologies, examining how these dynamics contribute to exclusion, oppression, and the climate crisis. She is a Forrest Creative & Performance Fellow with the Centre for People, Place, and Planet at Edith Cowan University.

SCREENINGS

Dis-Connect

Angie Black and Michael Keerdo-Dawson

Dis-Connect is the working title of a feature film and outcome of investigations into comingled filmmaking methodologies. This collaborative film project builds upon the alternative filmmaking methodologies explored in the filmmakers previous creative practice / artistic research projects. In this experimental international co-production between Estonia and Australia, the researcher/filmmakers combine extensive character development, improvisation, and anti-dramatic narrative techniques to challenge three traditional filmmaking practices:

1. **Linear Production Stages:** Traditionally, filmmaking follows distinct stages: development, pre-production, production, and post-production. In our project, these stages are intentionally entangled, allowing creative elements to flow more dynamically across the entire process.
2. **Character Development and Casting:** Rather than casting actors based on pre-written characters, actors were cast early in the process, prior to the screen story and collaborated with to develop characters through improvisation, observation and conversation. The story then emerged organically from these character interactions, reversing the conventional order of screenplay development.
3. **Single Directorial Vision:** Instead of one director overseeing the entire project, we adopted a co-writing, co-directing model with two writer-directors working simultaneously from different continents. This approach fostered a more collaborative and flexible creative environment.

This entangled methodology opens space for diverse creative contributions from actors and writer-directors alike. The process resembles jazz improvisation, with participants continuously responding to one another's creative impulses. The result is a more organic, evolving narrative that challenges traditional filmmaking norms and explores new collaborative potentials for international co-productions.

Presenters: Co-directors Angie Black and Michael

Medium/format: Feature film

Running time: 93 minutes

Presenter Biographies:

Dr Angie Black is a Senior Lecturer in Film & Television and current Associate Director (Research) at VCA, The University of Melbourne. They are an award-winning director who specialises in filmmaking as practice-led research. Black holds a PhD in performance approaches in film production and an MA in screenwriting. Their debut feature film, *The Five Provocations* (2018), released through Label Distribution, along with an extensive body of

short films, explores innovative approaches to filmmaking and actively promotes on-screen diversity. Black's research examines approaches to filmmaking, screenwriting, and performance practices, with a focus on gender, sexuality, and cultural diversity on screen.

Dr Michael Keerdo-Dawson is an award-winning Lecturer of Audiovisual Storytelling at the Baltic Film, Media and Arts School (Tallinn University) who specialises in experimental approaches to screenwriting, storytelling, and film production. He holds a PhD in Audiovisual Arts and Media Studies and a Master's degree in Literature, Visual Culture and Film Studies. Keerdo-Dawson also has two decades of experience in the film and television industry and has written and directed short and feature films selected for prestigious film festivals including his interactive film *The Limits of Consent* (2022) which premiered at Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival.

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Close To The Bone

Kareen Ely-Harper

The documentary film, *Close to the Bone*, is developed from creative research initially undertaken as part of a PHD and tells the story of my father's migration to Australia from Britain in 1948. Family memory narratives are interwoven with dramatic reconstructions and staged sequences with archival footage, interview and observational material to inquire and reflect upon the contributions of British child migrants in the creation of a uniquely perceived Australian identity. In my use of the documentary form the moving image is understood to be a performative text, which consciously and purposefully stages memory. The camera as a 'technology of memory' not only represents but also reproduces memory. By staging individual memory narratives on film, they become social, public memories. *Close to the Bone* as visual text functions as a memory theatre for staging, performing and reflecting on the past.

As an act of memory transmission and visible evidence screening the film as part of Sightlines Hyphen I aim to draw attention to the documentary films continuing contribution to the interpretation and revision of history and capacity to fill in gaps and address social memory lapses of the dominant discourse where the voices of the vulnerable and marginalised are too often missed. The memory stories of British child migrants represented offer an intervention where official history, until recently, has failed to provide mechanisms for those children (now adults) to be heard and acknowledged. Through the process of recording and transmitting conversations between myself and the research participants autobiographical narratives have become social narratives. What may have been lost to history in the absence of this research (the film itself is a form of memory transmission) is now restored, sitting alongside old history, not only as a counter-narrative but as a starting point for new histories to emerge.

Keywords: documentary, social history, family memory narratives

Length: 56mins approx. **Format:** Digital video

Genre: Documentary Social History

Log Line: Six British orphans arrive in Australia in 1948 hoping for a "new and better life"

Synopsis: On June 24th 1948 the SS Ormonde docked at Railway Pier in Port Phillip Bay. Amongst its passengers were 250 British children who had arrived, without parents or family, to begin "*a new and better life*" in Australia. Within that number were six orphaned brothers and sisters; Jayne Harper 20, James 17, John 15, Betty 12, David 10 and Margaret 6. John is my father, and the others are my aunts and uncles. My father's story came in bits and pieces that didn't add up. The death of both his parents led to a childhood interrupted by trauma, poverty and migration. A curious child now adult I began asking questions about the past to uncover a difficult family history.

Director/Writer: Kerreen Ely-Harper

Producer: Jenny Day

Funding: Screen Australia, Curtin University

Presenter Biography: Kerreen is a creative media researcher, educator and filmmaker. Her practice research interests are staging and performing memory and trauma narratives on film. Media projects include short fiction, documentaries, corporate, dance film, virtual 3D digital texts: Foul Whisperings, Strange Matters in Second Life: In Her Own Words, Best Education Resource ATOM Winner; Even Girls Play Footy, Best Secondary Education Resource ATOM nomination; Parts of a Horse, Best Short Film ATOM nomination; Girls Can Do Anything Winner Best Film, Spiritus Short Film Festival; No Bus, Best Social Issue Drama nomination, iCINEMA Film Festival, "Obiettivo Corto" Mobile Short Film Festival.

WHAT'S GOING ON

Helen Gaynor

This is 43-minute work in progress documentary by filmmaker/academic Helen Gaynor. This observational work captures the work of 5 female theatre makers exploring what goes in the minds of the men who hurt those they purport to love. It is a response to the levels of violence by men against women and children in Australia, with the aim of shedding some light on What is Going On in the heads of the men who commit these acts of violence. It is also a documentary process response to the current highly charged and often abusive social media environment and the implications for documentary participants, the fraught intersection of documentary filmmaking within the ethics approval environment of the academy¹, resulting in a 'between' solution of improvised performance filmed in the observational mode as a response to both considerations.

WARNING: This work contains depictions of psychological & emotional violence and abuse.

Key words: Documentary, Experimental Documentary, Feminism, Family Violence, filmmaking in the academy.

Presenter Biography: Helen Gaynor has been an award-winning documentary filmmaker and scripted drama director for over thirty years. Her documentary work has been commissioned by amongst others, ABC, SBS, Arte-ZDF and the Premier Fund MIFF. Helen has taught at film schools all over Australia and overseas including the AFTRS and The International School of Film & Television (EICTV) in Cuba. Her academic career commenced in 2013. Her PHD, which was completed in 2019 explores the application of documentary theory and practice to the non-linear world of the digital world. She is currently a senior lecturer at VCA FTV, Faculty of Fine Arts & Music (FFAM), University of Melbourne.

¹ <https://www.aspera.org.au/sightlines-contribution/questioning-creative-practice-human-research-ethics>

Children of the Wicker Man (2024)

Dominic Hardy

Art historian Dominic Hardy was plunged into filmmaking in 2022-2023 when he joined his brother, veteran history drama filmmaker Justin Hardy, in the designing and making of a documentary about their late father, Robin Hardy, director of the cult classic *The Wicker Man* (1973). Early on, Justin decided to place Dominic in the role of on-screen spokesperson for their journey to find the father absent from both their lives in the 1970s. This new role entailed what Dominic now thinks of as “writing out loud”, a development that has subsequently influenced his teaching, research, and art practice.

SYNOPSIS:

50 years on from the making of *The Wicker Man* (UK, 1973), director Robin Hardy's lost papers come to filmmaker son Justin. Enlisting his brother Dominic, they journey to discover the complex nature of independent filmmaking and fatherhood.

The making of this film, from its conception to what is on screen, is the result of collaborative research-creation work.

The film was presented in a few festivals in 2024. As part of this conference-festival, the screening of the film would be accompanied by a presentation by Professor Dominic Hardy.

Presenter Biography: Dominic Hardy is professor of Québec and Canadian art history at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and a member of the Interuniversity Research Centre on Literature and Culture in Québec (CRILCQ). He is director of LAB-A Laboratoire numérique des études sur l'histoire de l'art, currently engaged in the development of protocols for placing art history at the service of migrant and refugee communities in Montreal. A specialist in the history of visual satire, he has edited *Sketches from an Unquiet Country: Canadian Graphic Satire 1840-1940* (MQUP 2018, with Annie Gérin and Lora Senechal Carney) and *L'image railleuse. La satire visuelle du 18e siècle à nos jours* (INHA/OpenEdition 2019, with Laurent Baridon and Frédérique Desbuissons). He is working on a study of the intellectual life of British sculptor Helen Chadwick (1943-1996).

A Love Poem: Untangling nothing from everything and everything from nothing

Siobhan Jackson

A Love Poem is a feature documentary, charting a mother's relationship with her adult children, particularly her relationship with her eldest. The film is a bricolage of personal archive and casual communication, gleaned from phones, hard drives, and SD cards – footage and conversations forgotten, incomplete, partial, bias, funny, curtailed, imperfect, bewildering. The mother is me and the children, mine.

A Love Poem operates in the shadow world between intentional making and unwitting discovery. I had initially intended to re-create and film a conversation I had had with my daughter, years earlier, in the car park of a suburban shopping mall – a deep conversation in a shitty location. I had been transfixed by the occasion's contradictions – exhilarated and devastated – sad and happy. I wanted to capture it, to experience it again, preserve it, share it, understand it, interrogate it, master it. Make a film of it. I never did. I couldn't. We couldn't.

Instead, I made ***A Love Poem***, an unwitting cinematic hyphen, a film falling in the gaps between artistic intention and personal failure, between fiction and documentary, between real and imagined, between the professional and the amateur, between mother and daughter – my very own Frankenstein. And it is this monster, and its creative and critical implications, that I intend interrogating in the paper, ***A Love Poem: Untangling nothing from everything and everything from nothing***.

As a practitioner academic, ***A Love Poem*** has insisted I grapple with notions surrounding critical autoethnography, post-structuralism, post-qualitative inquiry, performed authorship, the paper-thin distance between the public and the private, how I know what I know, how I share what I know, and where knowledge lives and how we/I create it. I propose sharing these 'grapplings' in an attempt to connect, acknowledge and articulate the intimate relationship between creative practice and critical thinking.

Keywords: Hybrid, documentary, Critical Autoethnography, filmmaking, authorship.

2. Exhibition of creative screen production work:

Film Title: *A Love Poem*

Writer/Director: Siobhan Jackson

Producer: Kelly Hucker

Format: Digital

Duration: 70minutes

Presenter Biography: Siobhan Jackson, senior lecturer, writer, director and researcher in the area of Film & Television production, completed her first feature, *You can say vagina*

(collaboratively with Mischa Baka), in 2018 and her second feature, *Saltbush* (with Baka) in 2025, along with her first feature documentary, *A Love Poem*.

Siobhan holds an MFA from the University of Melbourne and is currently completing her doctorate, 'Cine Refuse: Towards a Methodology of Refusal', informed by notions and acts of social and cinematic refusal. She also researches in the areas of performative authorship, and alternative approaches to creating content and performance for the screen.

Left Write Hook

Donna Lyon and Shannon Owen

Left Write Hook is an interdisciplinary creative practice research project that uses participatory documentary filmmaking to explore the lived/living experiences of victim-survivors of childhood sexual abuse. This 10-minute cutdown of the feature documentary *Left Write Hook* follows the journeys of three key participants - founder and facilitator Dr. Donna Lyon, and survivors Nikki and Pixie.

Through unprecedented access and an ethically-engaged methodology, the film captures the innovative Left Write Hook program that combines boxing and creative writing as trauma-informed healing practices. The film foregrounds the voices and embodied narratives of victim-survivors, offering profound insights into the enduring impacts of abuse and the power of connection, expression and reclamation.

This work operates within the interdisciplinary spaces of documentary filmmaking, creative practice research, trauma studies, and social impact media. It seeks to address how participatory artistic practices can authentically represent marginalised experiences while serving as catalysts for personal and societal change.

The significance lies in demonstrating filmmaking's unique capacity as a research method to translate complex theoretical concepts around trauma, the body, and healing into emotionally resonant storytelling that reaches diverse audiences through contemporary platforms. The filmmakers prioritised an ethical framework and participant agency through applying trauma informed principles, modelling possibilities of empowerment for survivor-centric representations.

Ultimately, the film of *Left Write Hook* aims to influence public discourse, policy, and support services around childhood sexual abuse through its innovative combination of creative practice outputs - the documentary, an anthology, and a formalised survivor-led program with a medical intervention trial attached to its program delivery. Measuring impact currently involves evaluating shifts in cultural attitudes, institutional practices, and the scaling of the Left Write Hook model itself.

This screening and discussion invite critical reflection on expanding the role of creative practice research as a vital bridge connecting intellectual, artistic, and real-world domains for social impact.

Presenter Biographies:

Dr Donna Lyon (Associate Professor, University of Melbourne) is an accomplished academic, creative practitioner, and founder/CEO of the Left Write Hook charity supporting trauma survivors.

Dr Shannon Owen (Practitioner Researcher, University of Melbourne) is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose work explores representation ethics and social impact storytelling.

Signatures of Earth

Robert Nugent

Signatures of Earth sets out to challenge documentary narrative hierarchies in the Anthropocene. The film aggregates fragmentary encounters with cuttlefish and quasars, and much else in between, happened upon during a transcontinental journey to film a total eclipse of the sun. Propositional, in the tradition of Brechtian distancing, the film is also poetic, ethereal, roving, contemplative, richly cinematic and empathetically engaged. *Signatures of Earth* presents a fractured vision of the cognitive and sensory muddle that is an antipodean road trip in the so-called Space Age. The film adopts a manifesto approach which aims to counter the blank acceptance of technically deterministic narratives on the planetary.

Presenter Biography: Robert Nugent is a non-fiction filmmaker who has never really accepted documentary film's narrative orthodoxies. His films employ and critique various documentary forms and perspectives. They have arisen from purposefully taking a camera on speculative expeditions to remote locations in Indonesia, Guinea, Iraq, Ethiopia, Egypt, Tanzania and Australia. *End of the Rainbow* was the story of an eternal gold mine, wandering from one place to another on planet earth. It won international film awards and screened in Europe, the US and Australia. *Memoirs of a Plague* tackled the Locust story, heretically proposing that these Biblically imagined insects actually don't cause famine. His last film, *Night Parrot Stories*, sought to reconcile western perspectives on a rare bird with other ways of knowing and thinking about Australian geographies. Nugent would argue that how we have come to imagine the Anthropocene, and the adjacent narrative of Spacefaring, is an eminently cinematic proposition and a logical progression from the strange contortions gold, locusts and parrots have created in our minds.

Elenydd

‘Placing the Gaze: Environmental Experience and the Landscape View. A practice research investigation through the production of *Elenydd* (2025)’

Richard O’Sullivan

Diverse understandings of the human experience of the natural or wild environment have been offered within cultural geography, cultural studies, philosophy and aligned disciplines.

This research project identifies two opposing approaches. The first emphasizes the treatment of the environment as a ‘landscape’. This ‘way of seeing’ subjects the environment to a particular type of vision, both in actual scenery and within the artistic genre of landscape painting, and in so doing provides an experience of space to the viewer which has been interpreted politically. Marxist-materialist theorists, such as Denis Cosgrove (1984/ 1998), John Berger (1972), and Raymond Williams (1973/ 2011), have defined and critiqued the cultural concept and activity of ‘landscape’.

Phenomenological approaches by contrast emphasise an immersed bodily experience within an enveloping environment, and the holistic functioning of the senses working together, and as such refuse the separation of viewing subject and viewed scenery inherent in the ‘landscape’ approach. Working from the disciplinary perspective of philosophy, Edward S. Casey advanced this type of analysis in *Getting Back into Place* (2nd Edition, 2009), identifying six moments or traits of wild places.

This research project explores how these two understandings can be embodied or expressed through film techniques in an experimental film. It aims to identify the techniques through which these understandings can be brought into juxtaposition. This paper will explicate the two positions and consider what the production of the experimental film *Elenydd* (2025) reveals about the relationship between landscape as conceived by Cosgrove, Berger and Williams, and the experience of wild places described in Casey’s phenomenological analysis. This paper, then, will discuss the insights generated in this area through *Elenydd*, which portrays an area of mid Wales in the United Kingdom.

Film details: *Elenydd*, 2025, 63m, 4K upscale from HD, stereo sound 24bit.

Presenter Biography: Richard O’Sullivan is Senior Lecturer in Film at Queen’s University, Belfast and convenes the MA in Film at the university. His practice research has been submitted to two iterations of the UK’s Research Excellence Frameworks, in 2013 and 2021. His experimental films have been screened at significant festivals worldwide. He has presented his practice research at conferences including MeCCSA and Film-Philosophy. He studied Film Studies and Literature at Warwick University and holds a PhD-equivalent MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA Film School).