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“Global Aesthetics”



British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies



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BAFTSS Conference 2025: Paper Abstracts and Bios by Panel

Wednesday 26 March

Conference Keynote: Lúcia Nagib

Human, Humane, Nonhuman: An evolving realist trend in world cinema

Abstract: This paper argues that an ethical engagement with material reality defines world cinema's most creative peaks. After a survey of the debates surrounding the concepts of 'world cinema', 'realism', and 'ethics', it delves into the study of the ethics of the human in realist endeavours. Humanism had been at the core of the cinematic realism that emerged from the debris of the Second World War, as epitomised by Italian neorealism. In recent years, however, non-anthropocentric approaches to filmmaking have proliferated in a worldwide effort to counter the nefarious effects of the Anthropocene, resulting in what became known as the 'nonhuman turn'. Going against the grain of the teleology imbedded in 'posthuman' theories that posit history as a series of forward-moving phenomena (Grusin), the nonhuman turn conflates a number of often conflicting theories, which however commingle in the opposition to the still largely prevailing Kantian correlationist principle, according to which knowledge of the world is dependent on how it relates to us (Meillassoux). In line with this trend, new cinematic currents have evolved in which the human figure is ascribed a minor or non-existent role. My first example will be what has been termed 'zoomorphic cinema' (Pick), a non-anthropocentric strand which proposes to look at the world through the animals' eyes, in a situation of climate and environmental emergency. Case studies will include *Albatross* (Chris Jordan, 2017), *Gunda* (Viktor Kossakovsky, 2020), *Cow* (Andrea Arnold, 2021) and *It Is Night in America* (*É noite na América*, Ana Vaz, 2022), all of which attempt to decentre the human through emphasis on the humane. My analysis will culminate in some radical examples from China's independent production, in which the non-anthropocentric drive takes the extreme form of self-sacrifice. Here my case studies will be *Silhouette/Shadow* (Gao Xingjian, 2007), *Tape* (Li Ning, 2010), *Frozen* (*Jidu banleng*, Wang Xiaoshuai, 1994) and *An Elephant Sitting Still* (*Da xiang xidi erzuo*, 2018), in which suicidal threats and stunts evolve to real suicides, as author-heroes come to the tragic realisation of their expendable quality. Setting these trends within a context of convergent tropes and recurrent motifs, the paper proposes physical realism as an ethical commitment to truth, which binds together peoples across the globe.

Biography: Lúcia Nagib FBA is Professor of Film at the University of Reading and Honorary Professor of Film at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo. She is an internationally recognised specialist in world cinema, cinematic realism and cinematic intermediality, which she has explored through a novel approach in many publications, including her single-authored books, *Realist Cinema as World Cinema: Non-cinema, Intermedial Passages, Total Cinema* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020) and *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism* (Bloomsbury, 2011). Her edited books include *The Moving Form of Film: Historicising the Medium Through Other Media* (with Stefan Solomon, Oxford University Press, 2023), *Towards an Intermedial History of Brazilian Cinema* (with Luciana Araújo and Tiago de Luca, Edinburgh University Press, 2022), *Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural Approaches to Film* (with Anne Jerslev, I.B. Tauris, 2013), *Theorizing World Cinema* (with Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah, I.B. Tauris, 2012) and *Realism and the Audiovisual Media* (with Cecília Mello, Palgrave, 2009). She is the director, with Samuel Paiva, of the award-winning feature-length documentary film, *Passages* (UK, 2019).

Panel Session 1A

1A.1: 'In Between' Spaces: Migration, Indigeneity, and Cosmology in Contemporary Animation' (Animation SIG) - Hybrid

Chair: Carleigh Morgan (University of Birmingham)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Katerina Athanasopoulou (Royal College of Art), 'Global aesthetics in *The Distance between the Staircase and the Sky* (2022) and *WAVES* (2024)'

Abstract: My paper examines Global Aesthetics through Practice-as-Research (Nelson, 2013), by taking a close look at certain collaborative practices and production pipelines in my two most recent films: *The distance between the staircase and the sky* (2022) and *WAVES* (2024). Both films depict celestial bodies and are created through a series of translations - including from Greek to English, from poetry to film, from data to image, from Virtual and Augmented Reality to single screen, from mocap to character animation. The first film, created as part of my doctoral study, uses immersive technologies and photogrammetry to document real spaces and translate them into moving images. The work was deeply informed by the humble school globe, which cultural historian of South Asia and the British Empire Sumathi Ramaswamy discusses as a colonialist instrument, but also as an inspiration for journeying (2017). Social anthropologist Tim Ingold asserts the colonialist roots of the globe but highlights the vastly different presence of the *sphere* within pre-modern and non-western cultures (2002). *The distance between the staircase and the sky* uses tools stemming from colonialist ideals, but - rather than perpetuating the latter - turns immersive technologies into earth-shaped beach-balls: as playful instruments to exchange and play together. The second film, *WAVES*, listens to the recently resurrected dreams of colonising outer space. Inspired by the 1972 Pioneer 10 mission and its 'pioneer plaque', it imagines an alien woman waving back to an old human message of interplanetary friendship - an interstellar kind of global, bringing Earth and Moon into contact through silent gestures.

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Jacqueline Ristola and Evelyn Ramiel, (University of Bristol), 'A global dispersion of aesthetics in *Kipo and the Age of Wonder-beasts*, *Brand New Animal (BNA)*, and *Wolfwalkers*'

Abstract: My paper examines Global Aesthetics through Practice-as-Research (Nelson, 2013), by taking a close look at certain collaborative practices and production pipelines in my two most recent films: *The distance between the staircase and the sky* (2022) and *WAVES* (2024). Both films depict celestial bodies and are created through a series of translations - including from Greek to English, from poetry to film, from data to image, from Virtual and Augmented Reality to single screen, from mocap to character animation. The first film, created as part of my doctoral study, uses immersive technologies and photogrammetry to document real spaces and translate them into moving images. The work was deeply informed by the humble school globe, which cultural historian of South Asia and the British Empire Sumathi Ramaswamy discusses as a colonialist instrument, but also as an inspiration for journeying (2017). Social anthropologist Tim Ingold asserts the colonialist roots of the globe but highlights the vastly different presence of the *sphere* within pre-modern and non-western cultures (2002). *The distance between the staircase and the sky* uses tools stemming from colonialist ideals, but - rather than perpetuating the latter - turns immersive technologies into earth-shaped beach-balls: as playful instruments to exchange and play together. The second film, *WAVES*, listens to the recently resurrected dreams of colonising outer space. Inspired by the 1972 Pioneer 10 mission and its 'pioneer plaque', it imagines an alien woman waving back to an old human message of interplanetary friendship - an interstellar kind of global, bringing Earth and Moon into contact through silent gestures.

Biography: Dr. Jacqueline Ristola is a Lecturer in the Department of Film and Television at the University of Bristol. She received her PhD in Film and Moving Image Studies from Concordia University, Montreal. Her research areas include animation/anime studies, media industry studies, and queer representation.

James Rose (Leeds Beckett University), 'Kahhori re-shapes the world: Decolonising indigenous representation through sovereignty'

Abstract: Released onto the Disney+ streaming platform during December 2023 as part of Marvel's popular animated *What if...?* series, the episode *What if... Kahhori Reshaped the World?* introduced a new and original superhero into the Marvel Cinematic Universe, a young Mohawk woman named Kahhori. Adding further uniqueness to this episode is its setting at the moment of first contact with the Spanish colonisers along with virtually all the dialogue spoken in Kanien'keha, the Mohawk language. This, coupled with the imagery of pre-contact Mohawk life, a reworking of the Mohawk Creation story and a centralising of women within the narrative, suggests the episode can be read as an instance of contemporary Mohawk sovereignty.

The proposed paper will examine the episode's production context to demonstrate this proposition, outlining the collaboration between writer Ryan Little and members of the Mohawk Nation, particularly Mohawk historian Doug George-Kanentiio and Mohawk language expert Cecelia King, all to ensure accuracy in cultural representation. In its consistent use of Kanien'keha, *Kahhori Reshaped the World* functions as a secure instance of language sovereignty, a media production which respects, communicates and preserves a language that UNESCO defines as "definitely endangered." The episode's use of songs written and performed in this language by the Kontiwhennenha:wi-Akwesasne Women Singers both reinforces this aspect as well as the production's centralising of community power and action within the women of the Mohawk community. All are clear instances of Indigenous sovereignty that culminate into a counter-narrative that works towards decolonising the Mohawk from decades of colonial misrepresentation.

Biography: James Rose is a PhD candidate at Leeds Beckett University. His current study is an examination into the representation of Indigenous American and First Nations women in

contemporary Horror and Science Fiction film and television. His first monograph, *Beyond Hammer: British Horror Cinema since 1970* was published by Auteur in 2009. Since then, he has been widely published in a range of international peer-reviewed edited collections including *The Palgrave Handbook of the Zombie* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025) and *Future Folk Horror* (Lexington Books, 2023) alongside publications with the British Film Institute, *Senses of Cinema*, *Offscreen* and *Studies in Comics*.

Mary Martins (University of Westminster), 'An exploration of the migration and settlement of the African-Caribbean community in Thamesmead through documentary and animation'

Abstract: In this paper, I analyse the potential benefits of using animation to examine the topic of migration in relation to the systematic nature of social injustices that threaten human connection. Drawing upon scholarship on animated documentary and critical theories presented by Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, I position the medium of animation as a methodological framework. These theories support the practice-based research, and the production of my animated documentary, *Made in Thamesmead* (2024) in which I illustrate how migration of the Black African and Caribbean community have shaped the progressive cultural landscape of modern Britain. This paper asserts the need to include stories on the Black experience into locally based community archives, creating interdisciplinary theoretical and practical strategies to challenge the ways post-racial imaginaries prevent social change.

With a focus on migration and belonging, the animated documentary explores the evolving cultural landscapes and architectural history in Thamesmead, South East London by combining animation with experimental moving image and archive material. To achieve the goal, I have drawn on experimental working methods from my own practice to allow for new forms of interactions between local residents and the intended audience. The outcomes of the research revealed the potential for wider engagement with communities in London, as animation was identified as a provocative tool that can represent complex topics, untold stories and using the past to show an evolving social landscape. A collaborative method of engagement can inform ideas and approaches that explore the concepts of decolonisation, anti-racism and inclusivity. This project addresses a wider discourse around these themes.

Biography: Mary Martins is a British-Nigerian documentary animator, experimental filmmaker and PhD student. She uses animation to inform new models of creative delivery development that feed into local and global conversations, producing multi-layered and abstract documentaries that represent the experiences and stories of underrepresented groups.

1A.2: Ecophilosophical Screens - Hybrid

Chair: Pietari Kaapa (University of Warwick)

[Hybrid session - Register here](#)

Kiki Yu (Queen Mary, University of London), 'Meditative cinema and cinematic meditation: The aesthetic and senses of healing and co-flourishing in contemporary global cinema'

Abstract: In this paper, I propose a category of 'meditative cinema' to refer to a group of films that emerged over the past decade in the face of ecological and existential crisis. Films as a meditative media evoke a physical and sensorial experience of breathing, meditating, healing and co-flourishing. It encompasses various forms and genres including arthouse drama, sci-fi, documentaries, experimental nonfiction, artists' moving image, and short videos on social media. What they have in common is the poetic, slow paced aesthetic, non-narrative or circular narrative that, instead of exciting the audience, invites a fasting of the heart-mind. These films are usually about process and treats nonhumans as equally important if not more, amplifying the vital energy of all things. Sharing features with 'slow cinema' or 'contemplative cinema', they fundamentally invite physical experience of breathing with the moving image.

In defining 'meditative cinema', I propose a new approach of experiencing cinema not just with eyes, ears, or heart-mind, but with breath, qi, or vital energy. Challenging the Euro-American film theorisations that regard cinema as following 'the model of the eye' or 'the model of the brain', I propose a Daoist approach that follows 'the model of Dao', through the epistemology of qi (chì). Engaging with qi as a film and media epistemology, I will discuss the key features of 'meditative cinema', and how it is different from 'therapy films'. I will also discuss the political implication of 'meditative cinema' in contemporary time and its historical resonance with traditional art forms in East Asia.

Biography: Kiki Tianqi Yu is Senior Lecturer in Film at Queen Mary University of London. Her current project 'Daoism and Cinema' engages film and moving image with Daoist philosophy, ecology, East Asian art and literary history. She is the author of *My Self on Camera* (2019), the co-editor of *China's iGeneration* (2014), and *Essay Film and Narrative Techniques* (2025). Her feature films including *China's van Goghs* (2016), *The Two Lives of Li Ermao* (2019) have been shown widely around the world. Her curatorial projects include 'Polyphonic China' (2009), 'The Spirit of Mountains and Water' (2023), "Dancing with Water" (2024).

Maria Ball (Oxford Brookes University), 'Comprehending the incomprehensible rules of the dark game'

Abstract: Thomas Elsaesser (2021) conceptualised the mind-game film as a mode of storytelling that disrupts conventional causal-effect logic and refuses to offer imaginary solutions to entrenched socio-cultural contradictions. Extending Elsaesser's theory, this paper examines the representation of the Anthropocene as a "mind-game narrative", utilising the Netflix television series *Dark* (bo Odar, 2017–2020). The scale and complexity of the Anthropocene—particularly its non-human timescales and ecological catastrophes—renders it incomprehensible within classical mimetic modes of representation. The entirety of *Dark*, arguably, comprises two formal structures: (1) complex kinship structures that are perpetuated to permit impossible relationships; and (2) circular, mythological narrative structures.

Commencing with (1), I argue that imposed, complex kinship structures are a product of culture that manifests a crisis in nature. *Dark*'s transgressive relations can be categorised into four types: incestuous, intertemporal, extra-marital and an incestuous bootstrap paradox (conveying an

impossibility to separate cause [birth] from its effect [death]). Regarding (2), *Dark* reverts to cyclical, mythological methods of storytelling, conflating generational time (the time between generations) and species-time (the time span of a series). Instead, the narrative proceeds via deterministic logic to depict humanity as a self-destructive force constrained by intergenerational and ecological entanglements.

By exposing humanity's inability to reconcile with planetary boundaries, *Dark* critiques anthropocentric ideologies, including the contemporary slogan, "saving the environment", as an imaginary solution to a misunderstood contradiction. Through its dark ecological lens, mind-game narratives cathartically manifest irresolvable internal contradictions, and by extension, confront the crisis of an anthropocentric mindset.

Biography: Maria de Carli Ball is a third year PhD Research Student at Oxford Brookes University. Her research interests include film theory, narratology, and postmodern visual media. Her PhD research reconceptualizes the mind-game film as a radical representation of immense and incomprehensible events such as the Anthropocene.

Andrea Virginás (Babes-Bolyai University), 'Middle-aged "eco-warrior" women and superheroes in transmedial landscapes – or post-cyberpunk saviours'

Abstract: Possibly in the context of "Environmentalism in international screen media" this talk addresses the way climate change emergency has been mediated in a post-societal collapse scenario, and in a transmedial landscape. 21st century live-action and/or animated science fiction films made in a Hollywood framework – like *Interstellar* or *Mad Max: Fury Road* – and less mainstream European examples like *Vesper*, *Aniara*, or *White Plastic Sky* are examined in comparison to computer-animated videogames like *S.T.A.L.K.E.R* or *Metro 2033*.

Chaotic and unpredictable real-world processes petrify rather than enable, with debilitating individual effects – climate anxiety and trauma –, while downsizing, fake news-ing or conspiracy theorizing dominate our "deeply mediated" (Hepp) public sphere. Stereotypes redundantly repeated and streamlined to "qualified media(l)" (Elleström), transmedial and emerging media(l) contexts have the power to elicit mythological frames (Frye) and archetypal interpretation (Jung) – which might break through the threshold of apathy and inaction.

The contemporary figure of the 'eco-warrior' woman – often close to middle-age, infertile and engaging into small- or larger-scale individual actions on behalf of a natural world in need of help – is such a cultural construct. Identified in the research as a post-Digital Revolution development in the collapsing cyberpunk universe, it is juxtaposed to the young male action hero(s) populating post-apocalyptic, post-climate change universes. The superhuman, hyperbolic features made possible by the CGI video game might prevent rather than enable real-world climate change actions – for the mediation of which the stereotype and/or archetype of the wise old woman/the seer/the crone might be more adequate.

Biography: Dr. hab. Andrea Virginás researches film genres, cultural and gendered stereotypes, narrative, medial and memory structures – specifically the audiovisually mediatized processing of collective traumas, including environmental trauma. Associate Professor in the Faculty of Theatre and Film, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Bolyai János Research Fellow of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2021-2024); Affiliated Research Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study, Central European University (2023-2024), member of the *Ageing and Gender in European Cinema* research project (Volkswagen Stiftung, 2023-2027). Latest volume: *Film Genres in Hungarian and Romanian Cinema: History, Theory, and Reception* (Lexington Books, 2021).

Rupali Das (Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology), 'Between conservation and exploitation: Examining eco-pedagogy, eco-guilt, and eco-grief in Indian OTT series *Poacher* (2024)'

Abstract: The present article intends to situate Indian Malayalam OTT series *Poacher* (2024)—directed by Richie Mehta—within the critical paradigm of ecothriller or ecocinema. With growing alarm in unauthorized poaching nexus (for Ivory trade) on a global scale, this article aims to unravel the complex mechanism of corporate behaviour, triggering to biodiversity loss and extinct of endangered species in contemporary times. Addressing human-wildlife nexus, *Poacher* captures the intersectional but problematic moments where hunters, traders and sustainability-minded citizens collide and illuminate the 'green' tension between the politics of conservation and the history of ecological exploitation. Screening a series of eco-psychological behaviours such as eco-anxiety, eco-guilt, eco-grief, and eco-coping, this article establishes the Freirean concept of (echo)-pedagogical approach and its global application to overcome various wildlife challenges. By reflecting human endeavours to secure the wildlife and nature from corporate consumption/greed, the paper concentrates on how the OTT as an 'alternative' media remains instrumental in cultivating ecological awareness among guilt-stricken humans. In short, this paper encapsulates how this web series *Poacher* initiates exemplary measures in retrieving eco-normativity in today's deteriorating world.

Biography: Rupali Das is an Assistant Professor at the Dept. of Humanities, under the School of Liberal Studies, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology Bhubaneswar (KIIT Deemed to be University). She is pursuing PhD from National Institute of Technology Rourkela. Her areas of interest include Gender and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Colonial Archives, Transgender Filmography, Environmental Studies; Cultural Studies, Media Studies etc. 'The Queer Body', published in IGNOU MWG-104 *Gendered Bodies and Sexualities* (2024), is her most recent work.

1A.3: Structures of Feeling, the Affective Economy and the Aesthetics of Precarity

Chair: Francesco Sticchi (Oxford Brookes University)

Martin O'Shaughnessy (Nottingham Trent University), 'The crisis of neoliberal subjectivity as an emergent structure of feeling'

Abstract: When we seek to approach films politically, there is always a danger of discovering in them fixed patterns, structures or ideologies already identified in works of theory. Not only do we risk finding what we already think we know, we also risk marginalising the films' aesthetic richness, affective resonance and ability to open up to and register emergent social and cultural shifts by straitjacketing them within written discourse's narrower and linear semiotic unfolding. Taking its principal inspiration from the work of Raymond Williams and of Lauren Berlant, but drawing on other thinkers where relevant, this paper will track crises of the neoliberal subject as they make themselves felt across important films by Mia Hansen-Løve, Stéphane Brizé, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne and others. Particular attention will be paid to the films' mobilisation of bodies and gesture, movements and rhythms, soundscapes, and the interaction between human figures and spaces, not as static relationships, but as dynamic and multi-directional ones. It will be argued that such attention to the films' aesthetic choices and semiotic richness allows us to identify a pre- or non-discursive sense of an emergent coming-into-crisis, something which may resonate with and complement discursively elaborated accounts of the conjuncture but which never simply reflect them.

Biography: Martin O'Shaughnessy is an emeritus Professor of Film Studies at Nottingham Trent University. He is the author of *Jean Renoir* (2000), *The New Face of Political Cinema* (2007), *La Grande Illusion* (2009), *Laurent Cantet* (2015) and, most recently, *Looking Beyond Neoliberalism: French and Francophone Belgian Cinema and the Crisis* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022). He is very interested in the contemporary cinema of precarity but also works on a range of other areas and periods.

Ben Scott (CY Cergy Paris Université), 'Structures, or just feelings? Aesthetics of labour, class and affect in recent French documentary'

Abstract: While currently undergoing something of a resurgence within the fields of media and film studies, Raymond Williams' concept 'structures of feeling' has not been without its detractors. Williams' former student Terry Eagleton is amongst the most incisive critics, arguing that Williams' analysis of literature lacks the necessary precision and determinacy to reach properly structural conclusions, resembling an analysis of patterns instead. What might this critique mean for film, a medium whose aesthetic conventions and constraints mean that it often struggles to map the kinds of expansive structural relationships that Eagleton has in mind? This paper interrogates the confrontation between film studies and 'structures of feeling' through an examination of representations of labour and class in recent French documentary. Labour and class are amongst the most typically structural concepts with which Williams and Eagleton are both concerned; they are also imbued with powerful forms of affect that take on particular resonances in the context of the precarisation of the neoliberal era. I first of all interrogate the kinds of affective environments that are charted out in this body of film, paying close attention to the aesthetic strategies employed. This opens up a broader questioning of film's ability to articulate feelings and affects with politico-economic structures and the kinds of filmic forms which might facilitate or hinder this. Finally, in light of my analyses, I consider the ways in which this body of work helps us to reconsider Eagleton's critique of Williams' concept, and the relation of the latter to film studies more generally.

Biography: Ben Scott is a EUTOPIA-SIF COFUND Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at CY Cergy Paris Université. His doctoral research investigated the representation of work within contemporary Francophone cinema, while his current research turns towards French workplace documentary, interrogating the politics of this body of work through an approach that combines political economy and production studies with analyses of form and narrative. He has published in journals such as NECSUS and French Studies.

Francesco Sticchi (Oxford Brookes University), 'Polluting the subject: Negative solidarity as annihilating force in *Palazzina Laf*'

Abstract: The paper analyses the recent and widely praised political drama *Palazzina Laf* (2023) by Michele Riondino, which dramatizes notorious mobbing practices carried out in the infamous ILVA steel plant of Taranto. The film is grounded and centred upon the action of Caterino Lamanna, who, willing to endear himself to the management, and to find a way out of arduous low-paid work, accepts spying on his demoted colleagues, relegated and confined within the building bearing the same name of the title. Caterino is a perfect embodiment of what is often regarded as one of the main affective symptoms of contemporary transnational capitalist neoliberal hegemony: negative solidarity. In his turning the awareness of injustice into a weapon to perversely further individualised exploitation and competition, the main character experiences a violent process of subjective and physical degradation, matching the devastating environmental impact of the steel plant. This narrative trajectory, the analysis highlights, is also developed through the reworking and borrowing the longstanding tradition of the Italian Grottesco. This same cultural specificity, however, does not separate the film from wider aesthetic trends concerning narratives about precarious labour, but rather adds a peculiar twist to popular visual patterns and motifs of the neoliberal economy on screen.

Biography: Dr Francesco Sticchi is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at Oxford Brookes University. His most recent book is *The Politics of Monstrous Figures in Contemporary Cinema: Witches, Zombies, and Cyborgs Re-enchanting the Ends of the World* (2025, Amsterdam University Press) and the forthcoming *Between Negative Solidarity and Collective Insurrection: Cinema and The Affective Economy of Neoliberal Authoritarianism* for ZeroBooks. He works in the field of film-philosophy and ecology of media. He is co-founder of the Cinematic Precarity Research Network.

John Marks (University of Nottingham), 'Sophie Bruneau, *Rêver sous le capitalisme* (2017): Structure of feeling as a dreamworld'

Abstract: Raymond Williams' concept of 'structure of feeling' indicates ways of thinking that circulate in embryonic form before they are expressed in either official or coherently resistant modes. The twelve dreams about work that are narrated in Sophie Bruneau's documentary *Rêver sous le capitalisme* (2017) represent precisely such thoughts and feelings that are still in the process of being articulated. Taken together, these dreams provide access to a social unconscious: structures of feeling that are profound responses to our contemporary material reality, but which have not yet found collective linguistic and institutional expression. The overall effect of the film is to convey a compelling poetics of neoliberalism as a mode of social organisation that is deeply embedded in every aspect of life, but which operates silently and invisibly. Employees experience the perverse and violent affects of neoliberalism in their night-time dreams, and at the same time neoliberalism is the bloodless daily dreamworld in which they are forced to live. Bruneau's aesthetic choices allow the dreams to function as seismographs, registering a psychic shock or trauma that has not – or cannot – be consciously articulated in the normal course of daily life.

This paper will consider the ways in which Bruneau's documentary employs an innovative aesthetic approach and draws on the field of social dreaming in order to explore a contemporary structure of feeling.

Biography: John Marks is Associate Professor in French Studies in the Department of Modern Languages & Cultures at the University of Nottingham. He has written on French philosophy, culture and social theory and is currently completing a co-edited collection *Education and Contemporary French Film* (LUP), which will be published in 2025.

1A.4: Women and Documentary Practices - Hybrid

Chair: Rosemary Alexander-Jones

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Laura McMahon (University of Cambridge), 'Maternal returns: Archival reworkings in recent feminist documentary'

Abstract: Feminist historiographies are increasingly in evidence in experimental documentary cinema, with feminist practice turning in particular to archives in a bid to explore counter-histories and latent possibilities. Feminist remediations – of home movies, photographs, news footage and other sources – tend to interrogate the presumed authority of archives through undutiful repurposing and speculative reimagining. Such historiographic experiments resonate with the concept of the 'heretical archive' proposed by Domietta Torlasco, which addresses 'the ways in which new media artworks disrupt and reroute received lines of transmission' (2013: ix). Inspired by the global perspective of recent studies of feminist filmmaking (e.g. Mayer 2016, White 2015), this paper adopts a transnational approach to these recent feminist experiments in 'archiveology' (Russell 2018). I turn to three films in which daughter-filmmakers trace the lives of their mothers in the context of broader socio-political histories: Alina Marazzi's *For One More Hour with You* (Italy, 2002), Rania Stephan's *Memories for a Private Eye* (Lebanon, 2015) and Firouzeh Khosrovani's *Radiograph of a Family* (Iran, 2020). Remixing various kinds of archives (including letters, home movies, photographs), these films revisit and reframe maternal histories in intimate, affective and political terms. While feminist cinema has often been understood in terms of its subversive visions of the body, this paper underlines the provocations of its historiographical impulses, prompting new perspectives on feminist documentary in a contemporary global context.

Biography: Laura McMahon is an Associate Professor in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. She is the author of *Animal Worlds: Film, Philosophy and Time* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019) and *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of Touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis* (Legenda, 2012). Her current project explores feminist archival engagements in recent documentary and artists' moving image practice.

Zoë Burgess (University of West London), "'Duddy as a Mayan Indian and Bobby with the jaguar cub": Audrey Granville Soames (1900-1990) and early post-colonial participatory media'

Abstract: London born Audrey Granville Soames came to amateur filmmaking through her second marriage in 1937 to Ronald Sloane Stanley, during the course of which she elevated her social position from the middle class to the upper echelons of British society. With this new sense of social mobility there was a resultant geographical freedom. As she travelled the world her camera trained in the populist model, mimicked and proliferated post-colonial imagery she had consumed as a member of the audience viewing Pathé newsreels and British Movietone news bulletins. Familiar tropes embedded in her subconscious, are teased out in her work as she, a new entrant to the social group with which she was travelling, adopts the gaze of a colonial ethnographer, tempered with a desire to integrate and ingratiate herself with her new peers.

This paper will explore how early participatory technologies, much like those available today facilitated expressions of creativity within and outside of societal expectations. I will consider how popular forms of media consumption shaped Audrey's filmmaking practice and consider how her gender has impacted how her work has been archived and discussed. Furthermore, I consider the tricky position of women amateur filmmakers such as Audrey Granville Soames whose international work falls awkwardly outside of the collecting remit of UK regional film

archives; and consider, whose history is most at risk of being lost if we continue to value amateur film for local evidentiary qualities alone. Does Audrey's work fit within a broader field of practice of British colonial women amateurs (Motrescu-Mayes, 2011, 2012; Motrescu-Mayes and Norris Nicholson, 2018), or do her working-class roots betray a more specific positionality?

Biography: Zoë Viney Burgess is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of West London. She earned her PhD in Film from the University of Southampton, where she focused on gender and class in amateur film within the collection of Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA). Zoë has been in post at WFSA since 2016, where she is now Film Curator. In 2023-2024, she served as Senior Research Associate on the *Women in Focus* project at the University of East Anglia. She has taught various MA courses and participated in research projects with the *Social Practices Lab* and the school of Languages, Cultures, and Linguistics at the University of Southampton.

Hasmik Gasparyan (University of York), 'Women filmmakers' representation of frozen conflict in post-Soviet space'

Abstract: More than thirty years since the collapse of the USSR, yet 'frozen conflicts' are further orchestrated and plagued: South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, and as is forecasted today, Crimea and Donbas. It is known that 'Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding' (Einstein).

This conference paper is part of a bigger project that aims to explore underrepresented women filmmakers' artistic voices from post-soviet Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova; and investigate their unique perspective on 'frozen traps' (De Wall) through cinematic language.

As a comparative case study, this paper will focus on documentary films by Armenian and Georgian women filmmakers: including Shoghakat Vardanyan's recent award-winning documentary '1489' (2023) and Nino Kirtadze's 'Something about Georgia' (2009). As both filmmakers look at the conflict orchestrated by Russia to explore the impact of war on human life, captivating similarities as well as differences will be observed and analysed in terms of visual aesthetics and the modes of production.

Biography: Dr Hasmik Gasparyan is a Lecturer in Directing for Film and Television at the University of York, UK. She studied screen documentary at Goldsmith, University of London (2011).

Further completed a PhD by Creative Practice at the University of York - Thesis: Investigating the Making of Cinematic Silence (2019).

More than ten years Hasmik Gasparyan worked at various television studios as a director; and later as an independent filmmaker of portrait and investigative documentaries. Her current documentary funded research project 'My Voice Journey' is looking at the impact singing and performing activities have on marginalised communities.

Her recent publications include Investigating the Making of Cinematic Silence in Akerman's D'Est (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023) and Film Group Project as an Educative Adventure (AMPS, 2024). Hasmik Gasparyan is a Winner of the Best Postgraduate Poster competition BAFTSS 2019 and received a Joint Honourable Mention in Moving Image (Documentary & Image) category for the Best Practice Research Portfolio BAFTSS2020.

Ireneusz Koper (Oxford Brookes University), 'First-person documentary filmmaking: Is it an ethical act or an act of betrayal?'

Abstract: My Ph.D. by practice involves the making of a 60-minute documentary film, an intimate, detailed, and confessional portrait of a psychodynamic therapist named Monika. On camera, Monika talks openly about her present and past experiences and anxieties, gradually revealing her key anxiety -- being an adult child of an alcoholic (ACA). Before this revelation, my role as documentary filmmaker was marginal; but her confession about her alcoholic father resonated with me, for Monika's experiences mirror my own (growing up with an alcoholic father). From that point onwards, the documentary film also became an investigation into my own past, eventually leading me to 'come out' to my father. From a theoretical perspective, the crucial issue concerns the relationship between the filmmaker and the subject of the documentary – is this relationship symmetrical or asymmetrical? To what extent is it possible to make a film about such a painful topic as ACA (a topic shared by both filmmaker and the subject) and remain in some way 'objective'? Is it even desirable to be bound by conventions of documentary objectivity? This project not only raises ethical issues about filming someone talking about their intimate experiences; it also highlights my own experiences during the creative process, as well as the unexpected transformation this project had on me. My project offers a reflexive examination of personal trauma and its expression in the first-person documentary format. I aim to present the first-person documentary film as a new therapeutic way of thinking and understanding.

Biography: Ireneusz Koper is a Polish filmmaker. Koper graduated with a Master's Degree in Digital Film Production and Technologies at the University of Bedfordshire and continued at the Ph.D. level at Oxford Brookes University. Recently has worked as a Video on Demand Acquisition Manager. His main interest is in psychoanalysis in documentary filmmaking.

1A.5: Transnational Streaming

Chair: Douglas Morrey (University of Warwick)

Jeongmee Kim (University of Lincoln), 'K-drama or N-drama: Korean drama and Netflix in the global streaming era'

Abstract: With the extraordinary success of *Squid Game* in 2021 across the globe through Netflix, Korean drama has enjoyed increasing visibility and global reach via this global streamer, as well as through other streaming services. Netflix's initial streaming of K-drama in its catalogue and more recently its local 'original' content has helped mainstream K-drama in the West. Some have argued that K-drama has quickly adapted to the demands of the global platform and the need to appeal to diverse audiences (Yaeri Kim, 2022), going so far as to envision a new model of 'collaboration' between local production and the global 'digital' west (Hyejung Ju, 2022). This perspective is very much supported by the Netflix announcement of an investment of \$2.5 billion in K-drama production (Sohee Kim, 2023) over the next four years - increased investment being the case with other streaming companies like Disney+ and Apple+ also (Patrick Brzeski, 2021). While Netflix utilizes K-drama as a means to practice and capitalise on a sense of 'global cosmopolitanism', this paper suggests that K-drama producers have not yet fully conformed to the media-giant's requirements for content with transnational appeal. They have instead, in some important respects, returned to relatively regional and 'traditional' approaches to adapting transnationally recognisable genres as a means to become identifiable and distinct in the global market of digital streaming. What is notable in this step towards carving out a market share and recognizable 'brand' within the mixed offering Netflix provides has been a move away from generic mixing and experimentation, which had been key distinguishing and much discussed features of K-drama in the 2010s, towards tried and tested themes and approaches reminiscent of the first Korean Wave of the early 2000s.

Biography: Dr Jeongmee Kim is an Associate Professor in Film and Media at the University of Lincoln, United Kingdom. She is the editor of *Reading East Asian Drama: Crossing Borders and Breaking Boundaries* (I.B Tauris, 2004) and the co-editor of the special issue of 'Beyond Hallyu' for the *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* (2017). She has also published in journals such as *Critical Studies in Television and Media*, *Culture & Society*. Her current project looks at Korean serial drama in the digital era.

Zlatina Nikolova (University of Exeter), 'Browse by country: Streaming platforms structuring national identity'

Abstract: This paper reflects on the notion of national identity in the context of the aesthetic and narrative patterns imposed on local media industries by the popular streaming services, and their individualised responses to the demands of a global audience.

Subscribers' freedom to choose from a diverse viewing catalogue, available to watch at any time and anywhere is a core tenet of streaming services' offer. However, the domination of Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney Plus or Apple TV Plus expands the audiences of Anglophone and specifically North American content, enforcing a set of formal and narrative characteristics typical of their original content. While these streaming services include titles from other national industries, their content emulates the style and narrative tropes of streaming's original titles in order to gain viewership.

In its investigation, this paper pursues two lines of inquiry: first, it focuses on the place of the national, national cinemas and their heritage in the context of streaming media, and second, it

investigates the articulation of national identity across streaming services' homogenised output. New moving image productions are made to follow the same narrative and aesthetic patterns in order to ensure viewership, jeopardising the identity of individual national industries. As localised industries try to follow streaming services' formal and narrative tropes in order to beat their algorithms and gain audiences for their own titles, this in turn shapes and reshapes the versions of national culture and identity communicated through their productions.

Biography: Dr Zlatina Nikolova is Lecturer in Film Studies in the Department of Communications, Drama and Film at the University of Exeter where she teaches broadly across the Film studies curriculum. Her work focuses on contemporary screen media, the dialogue between old and new film technologies, streaming and spectatorship. Dr Nikolova is currently completing a monograph entitled *Constantly Streaming: Digital Platforms, Touchscreens and Moving Image Spectatorship*. She is due to speak on streaming platforms' reinvention of the spaces of spectatorship at the BFI in March 2025.

Ahmet Atay (College of Wooster), 'Days of Our Lives and online soap operas: Creating new digital soapy aesthetic and storytelling'

Abstract: Soap opera is a relatively older television and radio genre that dates back to the Golden Age of radio in the US during the 1930s. The genre has been a staple for both American and British television, and other countries worldwide for that matter. Although stylistically, there are differences among them, they are known for their over-the-top dramatic stories and similar production characteristics. Hence, they operate within a similar global vision and aesthetic. They are often aiming to attract a particular demographic, middle-class or working-class women and men of a certain age. With that said, they are also known to feature bold and ritzy stories revolving around younger characters. This is true for both British and American soap operas.

Even though the characteristics of their production and their broadcasting slots have been consistent over the decades, in the last couple of years, soap operas have begun to change and transform with the changing times and media environment. One of these changes is how soap operas are being broadcasted. In August 2022, NBC announced that their only remaining soap opera, Days of Our Lives (DOOL), would be relocated to its Peacock services beginning in September. In this presentation, I will focus on this particular change, moving from a traditional broadcasting network to an online platform. Since this move, DOOL has begun to air ritzier stories around their younger characters. Hence, in this presentation, I focus on this shift, its negatives and positives, and its influence on production and storytelling. With that, I also further theorize how the audience's viewing habits are also changing with the shift.

Biography: Ahmet Atay is a Professor of Global Media and Communication at the College of Wooster. His research focuses on diasporic experiences and cultural identity formations; British and US soap operas, the usage of new media technologies in different settings; and the notion of home; representation of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity in media; queer and immigrant experiences in cyberspace, and critical communication pedagogies. He is the author of *Globalization's Impact on Identity Formation: Queer Diasporic Males in Cyberspace* (2015) and the co-editor of several books. His scholarship appeared in a number of journals and edited books.

1A.6: Gender and Body Genres

Chair: Catherine Constable (University of Warwick)

Clementine Vann-Alexander (University of Leeds), “We’re going to make you one of us”: Identity, horror, and hybridity in the makeover movie

Abstract: This paper argues that the makeover in film can be read as horror, and that by interrogating this generic hybridity structures of power that enforce conformity can be brought to light. By focusing on manipulations of the body and the self through powerful forces, the makeover subject finds their appearance and identity warped beyond recognition in a process that is often framed as painful and spectacular. Furthermore, the makeover can be positioned as a corrupting force that results in a loss of individuality and a thirst for power over others. Using textual analysis as a principal method and drawing from theorists such as *Creed* (1993), *Lažar* (2017), and *Grosz* (1994), this paper will consider multiple films including *Mean Girls* (2004) and *Ingrid Goes West* (Spicer, 2017) to critically analyse various elements of these films including the makeover sequence itself. This paper will also look to the lineage of feminist horror scholarship and its use of psychoanalytic theory, specifically abjection, to bring the generic hybridity of the makeover to the fore. Key questions asked by this paper are: which generic conventions of horror can be identified as both present and persistent in the makeover narrative? How are pain and discomfort framed and linked to beauty in cinematic makeovers, and what do those links say about the makeover's understanding of power and identity?

Biography: Clementine Vann-Alexander is writing up her PhD thesis on abjection and makeover narratives in Hollywood cinema at the School of Media and Communication at the University of Leeds (UK), where she is a postgraduate researcher and teaching assistant. She is interested in entanglements with beauty work and culture, 'chick' media, cultures of social and aesthetic surveillance, feminism and its incarnations and contortions, horror, and representations of women on screen. Her writing has been published in *Frames Cinematic Journal*, and she has presented papers at MECCSA and DisNet this past year.

Amy Chambers (Manchester Metropolitan University), ‘Who (re)produces the future? Ecto-genesis, exo-planetary survival, and women directors of science fiction’

Abstract: *High Life* (Claire Denis, 2018), *Aniara* (Hugo Lilja, Pella Kågerman, 2018) and *Pod Generation* (Sophia Barthes, 2023) present imagined futures where human procreation and the environment (destruction or restriction/containment of nature) are inextricably entwined. In all three films the most fundamentally universal human experience – childbirth – is central to the female characters’ experiences in these post-apocalyptic and/or post-nature futures. Childbirth is a global experience and yet, on film, it often remains hidden behind careful framing and a stereotypical and often inaccurate imagination of this experience. Discussions of natural versus scientific/artificial intervention are found across *High Life*, *Aniara*, and *Pod Generation* where ‘nature’ is something to be remembered or recaptured, commodified or contained. The majority of popular representations of childbirth have been horrors directed by men that promote the interventionist medical model of childbirth. In science fiction (SF), where there are relatively few women directors able to contribute to this conversation, new approaches focus on the bioethics of reproduction futures placing childbirth in conversation with the future of the planet and the environment. Reproduction is discussed in terms of being beyond Earth (*High Life*, *Aniara*) and beyond nature and even the body (*Pod Generation*). Science fiction as a mode offers an experimental space where bioethical questions about the future of humanity can be played out. No model of bioethics, especially in the reproductive arena, can ever be politically neutral. In a

charged political space, SF allows for the exploration of alternative reproductive futures placing the perspectives of marginalised bodies at the heart of the conversation.

Biography: Amy C. Chambers is a Senior Lecturer in Film and Media Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research examines intersections of entertainment media and the public understanding of science. Amy is the co-convenor of the BAFTSS Science Fiction and Fantasy SIG. She is currently co-editing a collection titled *PUSH!: Childbirth in Global Screen Cultures* and co-authoring a monograph called *Reading Science Fiction: Sociality, Publics and Pleasures* (Palgrave 2025). Recent publications explore COVID-19 and viral virus movies; 1990s dinomania; medical and religious horror in *The Exorcist* (1973); representation of women scientists and expertise in film and TV; and women-directed science fiction cinema

Francesca Hardy (Nottingham Trent University), 'Beyond global aesthetics: Male body hair in space'

Abstract: In space, no one can hear you scream...when you cut yourself shaving.

Recent research is taking our understanding of the impacts of spaceflight on the human body to new frontiers, suggesting that women are better suited to boldly going where no man has gone before. In the wake of these findings, the profound physical changes that the residents of the space stations in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) and Claire Denis' *High Life* (2018) undergo, for instance, spaghettification or becoming ectoplasmic, take on new resonances. What the films don't document are the more discreet changes that occur at the follicular level for long term stays in closed space environments alter, even inhibit, hair growth perhaps most profoundly that of male astronauts. Like the research that inspired it, this paper takes space exploration to a further frontier: male body hair.

A hairy ear, a sweaty brow, an unkempt face, saved shavings, male body hair sprouts in both *Solaris* and *High Life* much like it does across film theory (and occasionally in close proximity to heavenly bodies). Edgar Morin attributes the refusal to don beards for period roles as 'the first stars declar[ing] themselves' (1961: 11), whilst Roland Barthes' 'third meaning' (1970), his precursor to the *punctum*, takes inspiration from the false beard of the eponymous *Ivan the Terrible* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1945). Male body hair thus enables us to read film aesthetics, in this instance beyond the global, and this paper will examine how in going interstellar stubble, shorn discards, bushy eyebrows and ear canals shape these outer space worlds in significant and surprising ways.

Biography: Francesca Hardy is a Senior Lecturer in Film and Television. Her research interests lie in cinema's relationship to the body both on- and offscreen.

Rossana Galimi (University of Warwick), 'Female coming-of-age as a global form of body horror'

Abstract: The Palme d'Or awarded to Julia Ducournau's *Titane* (2021) underscored the existence of a developing phenomenon, evident in recent years, of female-directed body horror that intertwines the employment of genre tropes, rather than their deconstruction (Paszkievich 2017: 32), with the exploration of issues pertaining to female identity and agency.

Among these productions, a subgenre is consolidating, which thematises the metamorphosis female bodies experience during puberty as "becoming animal" (Deleuze and Guattari 1975 [1986], 1980 [1987]; Braidotti 2013). These films resume body horror's audiovisual aesthetic (Brophy 1986), which they adapt to the display of female puberty, understanding identity as

inscribed in matter and subjected to metamorphosis. For instance, they employ visual tropes such as skin shedding, which, in addition to blurring the boundaries between species, codifies the transition from childhood to the normative adult world as a process involving the cultural and material production of a new bodily surface. Moreover, these films rework coming-of-age horror—especially the imaginary related to the monstrous-feminine (Creed 1993/2024)—through an emphasis on its socio-cultural dimensions, exploring monstrosity as both a product of and a reaction to social discipline (Foucault 1975).

Confronting several case studies from Europe to Asia, this paper will argue that this strand of female body horror is emerging as a global aesthetic form, focusing on “the resistance or recalcitrance to the processes of cultural inscription” (Grosz 1994: 190) enacted by female bodies in the face of different cultural contexts.

Biography: Rossana Galimi is a PhD student in cotutelle in Philosophy at the University of Milan and in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. She graduated in Philosophy (BA) at the University of Padua with a thesis in feminist visual culture, and in Philosophical Sciences (MA) at the University of Milan, with a thesis on French director Julia Ducournau. Her research delves into the rewriting of the horror genre by contemporary female directors, studied from a feminist perspective. Her essays have appeared in the international journals *VCS. Visual Culture Studies* and *European Journal of Women's Studies*.

1A.7: AI and Creative Practice

Chair: Liam Rogers

Zhang Kuihua (Bournemouth University), 'Visual spectacle and surrealism in short AI film'

Abstract: Short AI films are updating the cinema landscape by leveraging artificial intelligence technologies for visual design, storytelling, or directing. These films typically have a duration of under 15 minutes. Notable examples include *Sun Spring* (2016), *The Safe Zone* (Richard Juan, 2022), *Given Again* (Jake Oleson, 2023), and *The Frost* (Waymark, 2023).

Short AI films exhibit two main aesthetic features. First, visual spectacle demonstrates how AI technology enhances and transforms film production elements, such as visual design, sound, and thematic expression. By harnessing tools like ChatGPT, DALL-E, or NeRF, these short films create striking, uncanny, and entertaining visuals that blur the lines between reality, the virtual world, and imagination. Second, the considerable affinity that exists between surrealism and AI film stands out and attracts attention. AI-driven films showcase the disruption and reconstruction of reality, illustrating how humans engage with the digital world, which bristles with surreal sensibility, compelling viewers to perceive the world not just through their eyes, but with a deeper, introspective awareness that transcends ordinary reality. They effectively draw on elements of the sci-fi and thriller genres, crafting potent metaphors through clever cuts and juxtapositions.

Ultimately, the impact of AI in film production is profound. It not only integrates cutting-edge technologies into filmmaking but also reveals a redefined understanding of our inner selves—encompassing existence, identity, attribution, relationships, and behavior.

Biography: I am currently in the fourth year of my Ph.D. studies at the Faculty of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University. I have completed my dissertation, which provides an in-depth analysis of documentary films about the Nanjing Massacre, focusing on historical representation and the pivotal role these films play in shaping collective memory. At present, I am engaged in research on AI applications in cultural creativity. Before embarking on my Ph.D. research in 2021, I dedicated six years to teaching and conducting academic research in media production at Jingchu University of Technology in China.

Magdalena Krysztoforska and Oliver Kenny (ICI Berlin & Institute of Communication Studies (ISTC)), 'Prompted footage film'

Abstract: Recent advances in generative AI (GenAI) have led to multimodal models increasingly capable of generating convincing video output. Whilst even the current state-of-the-art text-to-video models (such as RunwayML, Sora, or Stable Video Diffusion) do not yet allow for generating complete films using a single prompt (with 20 sec per clip being the current output limit for most models), the capabilities of these models are continuously improving, raising fears of not just their impact on creative professions, but also on visual culture more generally. Despite the majority of these models being trained on internet-scraped data, this paper proposes a perspective that doesn't necessarily see text-to-video as a force for creating an aesthetic monoculture. We specifically highlight a technique we term 'prompted footage', where the moving image material generated by a model serves as 'raw material' for further experimentation. From this perspective, the latent space of the model (that an artist interfaces with by way of prompting and prompt engineering) functions as an idiosyncratic and dynamic archive, which can act as a source of the initial footage that is subsequently processed and transformed by the artist. Just as found-footage techniques in avant-garde filmmaking gave rise to a wide range of

aesthetically- diverse output, we believe that ‘prompted footage’ techniques can be equally fruitful, and can lead to a potential reframing of some of the preconceived notions about the aesthetic possibilities of experimental AI film.

Biography: Magdalena Krysztoforska is a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin and member of the Responsible Computing Group at the Max Planck Institute for Security and Privacy.

Oliver Kenny is Assistant Professor in Film and Media at the Institute of Communication Studies (ISTC) and member of the research lab ETHICS at the Université Catholique de Lille.

Paolo Russo (Oxford Brookes University), ‘The film without an audience. The case of *The Last Screenwriter* at a turning point for the use of AI in filmmaking’

Abstract: 2023 was the year AI took centre stage. An OpenAI working paper assessing the impact of Large Language Models (such as GPT-4) on labour foresees “high” or “full exposure” for professions such as writers, creative writers, authors, journalists, interpreters, translators, editors and copywriters (Eloundo et al., 2023). In the US, the long WGA strike culminated in a new Agreement asserting that “exploitation of writers’ material to train AI is prohibited” by law (WGA MBA, 2023). However, recent reports exposed that as many as 140,000 film and TV scripts have been used to train and power several LLMs (Reisner 2024) further ignited an already heated debate; and Content London is launching its first AI Festival Screenings showcasing twelve AI-generated films in the programmatic hope that “the business gets to grips with generative AI” (Jenkinson, 2024).

This paper presents a preliminary assessment of the use of GenAI in screenwriting. From multiple pulpits we are assured that AI tools such as ChatGPT can generate ideas, outlines and other development documents, plotlines, enhance character development and improve dialogue among many other things. Can they really? Through an approach framed by recent modelling of Screenwriting as a Complex Adaptive System (SCAS, Russo 2023), the paper analyses the original development documents of the controversial *The Last Screenwriter* (dir. Luisi, 2024) – promoted as the first ever film “written entirely by ChatGPT-4” and eventually pulled from exhibition. The findings highlight shortcomings as well as raise questions about the potential shifting of screenwriting skills towards a form of prompt engineering.

Biography: Paolo Russo is Senior Lecturer in Film at Oxford Brookes University. A former Chair of the Screenwriting Research Network, he is co-editor of the Award-winning *The Palgrave Handbook of Screenwriting Studies* (2023). Among his other publications: ‘Screenplectics: Screenwriting as a Complex Adaptive System’ (Palgrave 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 WGGB, Russo was on the writing team of *Topo Gigio* for Italian broadcaster RAI.

Panel Session 1B

1B.1: Adaptation and Global Concerns (Adaptation SIG)

Chair: Christina Wilkins (University of Birmingham)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

E. Charlotte Stevens (Birmingham City University), 'The aesthetics of gameplay in Chinese television dramas'

Abstract: This paper considers the visual strategies used to represent gameplay in three Chinese popular television series about gaming, all produced by Tencent Video (a subsidiary of the world's largest game company). *You Are My Glory* (2021) and *Cross Fire* (2020) both adapt existing video game IP, whereas *King's Avatar* (2019) is a live-action adaptation of a popular web novel. Rather than taking a unified approach, they offer a range of aesthetic strategies to adapt a feel (or experience) of gameplay.

The three dramas engage in a diegetic negotiation with how video games are represented on screen: in *King's Avatar* the camera moves through a computer screen into an animated fantasy diegesis where players interact as their avatars; in *Cross Fire* the in-game diegesis is a live-action adaptation of a first-person shooter map intercut with players at their PCs; and in *You Are My Glory* visual elements from a mobile battle arena game appear as graphical overlays in the players' diegesis. These diverse approaches do not offer consensus about how to adapt games; they explore the boundaries of remediating games into television.

These offer an interesting contrast to television programmes such as *Fallout* and *The Last of Us* where narrative and characters are adapted into a linear narrative, with the game's storyworld translated into a different medium. With this paper, I explore how these games' adaptation into television is folded into a narrative where the pleasures and social value of gaming are foregrounded in an often-hostile cultural policy environment.

Biography: E. Charlotte Stevens is Lecturer in Media and Communications at Birmingham City University, where she leads the Game Cultures research cluster with Nick Webber. She is author of *Fanvids* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020), and has also published on videogame fan histories, screen vampires, and Chinese tomb-raiding television dramas.

Tomas Elliot (Northeastern University London), 'The age of the lost world picture: Early film adaptations of global evolution'

Abstract: This paper explores how early cinematic representations of prehistoric periods responded to ongoing anxieties over evolutionary theory, at a time when issues of heredity remained far from settled. While Cuvier and Darwin had laid the foundations for the golden age of palaeontology and evolutionary biology, the exact nature of the relationship between contemporary human beings, their simian siblings, and their reptilian ancestors—the dinosaurs—remained an ongoing question in the early twentieth century. These prehistoric creatures posed a problem of vision (how to represent the pre-human globe?), a problem dramatized in many of the early science-fiction accounts of the 'lost world' of the dinosaurs, from the dismissal of Professor Challenger's 'blurred photographs' in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912) and its 1925 film adaptation to the representation of the mystical apparatus for visualizing the prehistoric past in *The Ghost of Slumber Mountain* (1918, Willis O'Brien's earliest attempt to represent prehistoric animals, preceding his work on *The Lost World*, 1925, and *King Kong*, 1933). The dizzying disorientation provoked by the visualization of the

prehistoric in the present arguably continues as late as *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), in which the modern American marriage plot succeeds precisely as a Brontosaurus reconstruction collapses. Reflecting on each of these representations of the collision of global prehistory with global modernity, this paper argues that early-twentieth-century adaptations of prehistoric worlds became loci for working out the anxieties of vision, representation, and being that had been unearthed by the previous century's revolutions in palaeontology and biology.

Biography: Dr Tomas Elliott is Assistant Professor in English at Northeastern University London. His research focuses primarily on cinematic and theatrical adaptation, with a particular focus on the reception of post-Darwinian evolutionary theory in 20th-century media. His work has appeared in *Adaptation*, *Humanities*, *Frames Cinema Journal*, and *Classical Reception*. He is currently completing a monograph entitled *Evolving Adaptions: Literature and Cinema after Darwin*, which examines the impact of Darwinian and post-Darwinian theory on ideas of transmedia adaptation and cultural change.

Fay Winfield (independent scholar), 'Netflix, South Korea and the American dream: *Squid Game: The Challenge* in global context'

Abstract: When Netflix launched Hwang Dong-hyuk's *Squid Game* in 2021, it rapidly became its most successful show to date, boosting Netflix's stock market value by \$19 billion in the first month after its release and cementing its place among the streamer's most valuable pieces of intellectual property. Two years later in 2023 Netflix's investment in *Squid Game* as a brand was made clear with the release of *Squid Game: The Challenge*, a reality TV/challenge series adapted from the original series in which 456 players from across the world competed for a \$4.56 million prize, the largest cash prize in TV history.

Building on initial work presented at the Association for Adaptation Studies Conference in 2024, this paper will explore how *Squid Game: The Challenge* works as a cross-genre and cross-culture adaptation, primarily focusing on how its aesthetics can be seen to reflect Netflix's pursuit of a global audience. It will argue that the way the series adapts elements of the original South Korean series is representative of our current age of globalised production and commissioning practises, with an enormous level of attention to detail given to recreating its imagery and elements of South Korean culture it has popularised (both for the contestants and the viewer) while blending this with the aesthetics and generic characteristics of American reality television. Ultimately, it will reflect on the priorities and geographies of global production and streaming that have enabled Netflix to adapt a drama critiquing capitalism in South Korea into an international game show format.

Biography: Fay Winfield has recently finished her PhD at the University of Manchester looking at representations of Empire in BBC television adaptations of Victorian novels, which she completed alongside working full-time in the unscripted TV industry on a variety of documentaries for major UK broadcasters. Her primary research interest is screen adaptation, and she is currently working on a journal article which reads *Squid Game: The Challenge* as an adaptation in light of contemporary streaming production and business practises.

Christina Wilkins (University of Birmingham), 'Adaptation, representation and authenticity in contemporary media'

Abstract: Questions of identity and representation have endlessly pervaded cultural debates, often centring around who and what gets to be represented. This becomes doubly clear in

adaptations to visual media, where changes to characterisation may be made, shaping the representation. Limitations are placed on bodies and identities, whether they are conscious or not, and this shapes how representations are seen, understood, and whether they are accepted. These questions of representation often revolve around key visible markers such as race and gender. However, with an increased push towards authenticity in contemporary discourse, representations of minority or underprivileged experiences are starting to become part of the debate too. It is from this perspective that I am going to explore narratives about male mental illness, with a strong focus on adaptations, to draw out crucial thinking on representation's importance in the contemporary moment. Using the examples of *About Alex* (2014) and *All The Bright Places* (2020), I argue that representation continues to matter, but that these texts do not go far enough in their offering; they need to do more than reflect, particularly with experiences that are restricted by identity-based frameworks, such as male mental illness. Examining representation is not only looking for the visibly obvious elements or markers but seeking out representations of experiences. In making this visible through mediation in fictional narratives onscreen, it can begin to shape discussions of how an experience or aspect of identity is seen more broadly in culture.

Biography: Christina Wilkins is a researcher in film and television. She has written chapters on television, adaptation, mental health and identity. She currently teaches at the University of Birmingham. She is the convenor of the BAFTSS Adaptation SIG.

1B.2: Feminist Poetics and the Politics of Resistance - Hybrid

Chair: Laura McMahon

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Melissa Oliver-Powell (University of York), “All the way through, eyes open”: Audrey Diwan’s *L’Événement* and the emergence of the international “abortion drama”

Abstract: Reproductive rights have returned to international screens with renewed urgency in the 21st century. Whilst films that centrally feature abortion have been in circulation for at least a hundred years, the designation of the ‘abortion drama’ as a consistent critical and commercial category has emerged only relatively recently. This phrase was ubiquitous in English-language coverage of contemporary films including *L’Événement* (Audrey Diwan, 2021) and *April* (Dea Kulumbegashvili, 2024) – both of which received prestigious prizes at the Venice Film Festival – and has retroactively constructed a canon, including European dramas such as *Vera Drake* (Mike Leigh, 2004) and *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days* (Cristian Mungiu, 2007), US indie films such as *Never Rarely Sometimes Always* (Eliza Hittman, 2020), and reframed Hollywood classics like *Dirty Dancing* (Emile Ardolino, 1987). Focusing on Audrey Diwan’s 2021 adaptation of Annie Ernaux’s memoir, *L’Événement*, as an exemplary case study, this paper examines the construction and reception of the ‘abortion drama’ as an aesthetic category that responds to a contemporary political need, creating cinematic and critical spaces for activist dialogues at a moment in which women’s reproductive and sexual rights face numerous and profound threats globally. As well as contextualising the critical (and political) construction of the ‘abortion drama’ (taking into consideration the roles of European film festivals and international activist discourses) I will argue that *L’Événement* develops an aesthetics of timelessness and placelessness to engage a moment of contemporary crisis with global histories of struggle for reproductive and sexual autonomy.

Biography: Melissa Oliver-Powell is a lecturer in Film and Literature in the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York. Her research focuses on issues of gender, sexuality, reproduction and reproductive politics, and motherhood in European film from the postwar period to the contemporary. She has published on topics including representations of abortion, mothering subjectivities, queer kinships, and mothering, migration, and race in British, French, Senegalese, and American film. Her first monograph, *Pepsi and the Pill: Motherhood, Politics and Film in Britain and France, 1958-1969*, was published with Berghahn Books in 2022.

Giulia Rho (London South Bank University), ‘Liberatory filmmaking: Urban magic and the women of the L.A. Rebellion’

Abstract: Los Angeles, 1960s. UCLA welcomes two students to its short-lived Ethno-Communications program: Charles Burnett and Haile Gerima. They will become lead exponents of a new kind of experimental cinema, one that merges the artistic sensibilities of Third Cinema with the political charge of the American Civil Rights Movement. Their objective was to create an aesthetic of decolonization and liberation that could lead to a revolutionary transformation of society by re-aligning African American struggles with the cultural patrimony of their ancestry (Field, Horak and Stewart 2015). To do so, they challenged the restrictive representations of African Americans and aimed instead to reveal “the historical subtext behind Black people’s surface emotions” (Sheppard 2015). In their films, modern daily life and work, African history and fables, and political struggles all becomes worthy subjects of art.

Retroactively named 'L.A. Rebellion', the movement included several women who, from the margins of the marginal, contributed to writing this transformative chapter in the history of Black cinema.

This paper considers the early work of Barbara McCullough, one of the 'insurgent sisters' of the LA Rebellion. Her womanist sensibilities (Collins 1996) offered a different image of Black womanhood and community to that produced by Hollywood at the time, reclaiming Black female subjectivity through poetic, folkloristic and playful retellings. I examine the recent re-discovery and restoration of her archival works, focusing on the case study of *Water Ritual #1: An Urban Rite of Purification* (1979), through the lens of Kara Keeling's theories of the interval, poetry from the future and Black political possibilities (2007, 2019).

Biography: Dr Giulia Rho is a Lecturer in Film Studies at London South Bank University. She has recently completed her PhD in Film Philosophy. Her research covers experimental women filmmakers and queer artists, especially those operating within the New York Avant Garde and LA Rebellion. Her work deals with post-structuralist feminist philosophy as well as theories of queer time and questions of archival memory and justice. Her writing has appeared in *Frames Film Journal* and *Film-Philosophy*.

Srikrupa Raghunathan Vedal (Queen Mary, University of London), 'Aesthetics of trauma body in pain: Feminist and decolonial filmmaking in crip time' (Online)

Abstract: This paper explores the embodied experience of trauma and pain through the lens of feminist and decolonial filmmaking. Drawing from my doctoral research examines how women in Hyderabad, India, navigate trauma while collectively reflecting on their lived realities through workshops. These workshops served as a platform to co-create narratives and co-write a script for a nonfiction film, delving into lived experiences of trauma framed as spaces of desire, protest, and liberation. The uses 'workshops', inspired by the 1970s feminist film collectives and participatory movements, as well as decolonial methods such as survivance-based inquires and pluriverse, that refuse to tell stories of trauma that are 'rooted in pathology, victimry or damage' (Morrill and Sabzalian 2022, 31).

As a filmmaker experiencing pain and immobility, I had to unlearn internalized ableism and embrace a "crip space" approach to filmmaking, embracing new rhythms, patterns of feeling, and time to navigate the world. My cripness and pain challenged my ableism in filmmaking to reflect and make this co-written film that embraces – slowness, fragmented, imperfect, accessible, and non-linear ways in nonfiction filmmaking. By combining feminist, crip, and decolonial frameworks, this paper offers a collaborative model of nonfiction filmmaking that redefines temporality, aesthetics and space in ways that centers marginalised voices and lived realities. This process of filmmaking not only resists Brahmanical patriarchal structures and Eurocentric trauma frameworks but also reimagines the possibilities of narrative and aesthetics in nonfiction cinema, offering new pathways for filmmaking aesthetics that centers healing, solidarity, and the collective power of marginalised voice.

Biography: Srikrupa Raghunathan Vedal is a practice-based doctoral researcher at Queen Mary University of London in the UK. Her PhD research focuses on participatory, experimental, and multi-sensory filmmaking techniques to explore the shared experiences of trauma and its effects on the bodies of upper-caste, middle-class women in India. She holds an MA in Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, India, as well as an MA in Filmmaking (Screen Documentary) from Goldsmiths, University of London, in the UK.

Kingsley Oyong Akam (Lancaster University), 'Breaking the code: Patriarchal mutism and women's resistance in two Nollywood films'

Abstract: This paper explores the representation of patriarchal mutism in Nollywood films, specifically in *Code of Silence* (2015) by Emem Isong and *Wives on Strike Part One* (2017) by Omoni Oboli. Patriarchal mutism, defined as the systemic silencing of marginalised voices, is examined within the socio-cultural and institutional contexts depicted in these films. The article underscores the intersection of gender dynamics, cultural norms, and power asymmetries that perpetuate silence and complicity in patriarchal societies. Through in-depth analysis of the narratives, characters, and cinematic techniques, the study reveals how these filmmakers critique gender inequality, sexual violence, and societal complicity. Themes such as victim-blaming, transactional thinking, and institutional corruption are analysed alongside the transformative potential of collective action and women solidarity. By employing film as a medium of social critique, Isong and Oboli confront audiences with uncomfortable truths about oppression while advocating for systemic change and women's empowerment. This study contributes to ongoing conversations about gender, tradition, and modernity, highlighting the vital role of Nollywood in fostering societal introspection and advocacy.

Biography: Kingsley Oyong Akam is a doctoral student in Film Studies at the Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University, UK. He has taught theatre, media, and film studies at Lancaster University, UK, and the University of Calabar, Nigeria. Akam is a trained theatre and film professional with expertise in production, drone piloting, special effects makeup, scripting, directing, and teaching. His research interests include national and transnational cinema, health filmology, sociology of film and drama, gender studies, postcolonial issues, Afrofuturism, and Afrocentric colonialism. Akam has published scholarly articles and book chapters and has participated in various academic conferences.

1B.3: British Cinema: Migration and Colonial Legacies

Chair: Tim Coleman

Xiaoxin Cheng (Queen Mary, University of London), 'From homeland to home: Family, identity, and patriarchal and generational tensions in British-Chinese cinema'

Abstract: With growing recognition of the fluidity and complexity of ethnic identities in the context of global migration, this paper explores how British Chinese cinema constructs the cultural identity of ethnic Chinese individuals through the lens of family dynamics. The family, as the smallest unit of society and a primary space where younger generations shape their identities and undergo socialisation (Berghahn, 2013, p.2), serves as a vital vehicle for exploring cultural identity. Family narratives are also a recurring motif in diasporic films worldwide, appearing across British, American, and other international productions. This paper draws on two films to support and complement the analysis: *Ping Pong* (1986), which examines conventional family structures, and the documentary *Abandoned Adopted Here* (2015), which presents an alternative family model through the story of Chinese adoptees raised in white British families, offering an even more complex view of ambivalent identity.

The main focus of this paper is cultural identity formation in youth, focusing on the unique challenges faced by children who immigrated to the UK at a young age or were born there. For these children, the concept of 'home' is often ambiguous, contrasting with their parents' perception of China as their homeland. In the early post-migration stages, the differing cultural assimilation rates between generations contribute to familial discord. Not only are these children responsible for navigating their own lives, but they often play an essential role in helping their parents adapt to new social and political landscapes (Donald, 2001). Meanwhile, Chinese British parents' strong desire to pass down cultural heritage, language, and traditions may create feelings of disconnect or pressure in their children. This tension fosters a dual sense of belonging and alienation from both cultures. This paper further examines how young characters redefine "home" on their own terms, often portrayed as a journey of self-discovery, where they forge a personalized understanding of "home" that encompasses their multifaceted identities. Additionally, it considers how patriarchal norms and generational conflicts are often portrayed as sites of rebellion and subversion, reflecting the nuanced ways youth negotiate their "Chinese-ness" and "British-ness" within family relationships.

Biography: Xiaoxin Cheng (Chloe) is completing her PhD in Film Studies at Queen Mary University of London. She holds a BA in Film Production from the Beijing Film Academy and the University for the Creative Arts, and an MA in Film Studies from the University of Westminster. Previously active in film production in China, she contributed to projects such as *The Minister to Tibet* (2016) and *Crime Paradise Lost* (2015), etc. Now focused on research, she explores diasporic identity, transnational cinema, and family representation in British Chinese cinema. She is currently working on her PhD thesis, *Between Worlds: Exploring Family Dynamics and Cultural Identity in British Chinese Cinema*.

James Harvey (University of Hertfordshire), 'Brown masculinity in crisis: South Asian diaspora aesthetics in recent British cinema'

Abstract: Theorisations of 'diaspora aesthetics' from the 1980s (from critical theorists including Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, Kobena Mercer and Stuart Hall) mirrored the increasingly prevalent black visual arts and film of the era, signalling 'an awareness of the black experience as a diaspora experience' (Hall, 1996: 447). The diaspora aesthetic thereby came to underpin some of the most groundbreaking British art works of the late twentieth century. As public funding for

independent screen practices was replaced by an increasingly creative industries machine, the language of nation would come to relegate the ‘diaspora-ization’ (Hall, 1996: 447) of experience to the margins. However, in the context of a contemporary British film industry filled with new diaspora narratives, the time is ripe for a reconsideration.

This presentation focuses on the development of a South Asian diaspora aesthetic in recent independent British cinema. It does so by proposing an emergent preoccupation with cultural identity crises, which presents itself through threats to the body and the mind of male protagonists. With reference to *Mogul Mogli* (Bassam Tariq, 2020), *Sky Peals* (Moin Hussain, 2023) and *In Camera* (Naqqash Khalid, 2023), this presentation is particularly concerned with the construction of brown masculinity as an aesthetic phenomenon. Building on Shoba S. Rajgopal work on ‘the politics of location’ (Rajgopal, 2003) and Jigna Desai’s demand for more intersectional analysis of the South Asian diaspora (Desai, 2004), I shall argue that the films share a concern for troubling both fragmentary and hybrid conceptions of the diasporic subject.

Biography: Dr James Harvey is a Senior Lecturer in Film and Media at the University of Hertfordshire. His research is preoccupied with the politics and aesthetics of film and screen media, with an emphasis on themes of race, coloniality and nation. He is currently working on a new book on diaspora aesthetics in contemporary British film, TV, documentary and visual arts. He is the author of *John Akomfrah* (BFI Publishing/Bloomsbury, 2023), *Jacques Rancière and the Politics of Art Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018) and the editor of *Nationalism in Contemporary Western European Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Peter Kirkpatrick (Kingston University), ‘Genre conventions, production contexts, and personal insights: A multi-genre analysis of the representations of displacement and the refugee experience in post-2015 British cinema’

Abstract: Throughout the 2010s, millions of people became displaced from their homes as a result of war or terrorism and sought refuge overseas. Following the global media coverage of the discovery of Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi’s body upon a Mediterranean beach in 2015, awareness of such suffering increased, but anti-migrant rhetoric became increasingly prevalent amongst many nations’ politicians and media outlets, including some of Britain’s. However, in British cinema, displacement and the refugee experience have been represented much more sympathetically in a variety of films, including biopic *A Private War* (2018), documentary *For Sama* (2019), horror *His House* (2020), and drama *Limbo* (2020). Drawing upon my PhD research, this paper shall analyse how the broader generic contexts, as well as the degrees to which those involved in their productions drew upon personal insights, served as significant informing factors upon these films’ perspectives and their ability to engage with the issues of displacement and the refugee experience. As part of this analysis, a consideration will be undertaken of how these informing factors had a determining effect upon the different aspects of those issues to be represented in individual films, but also imposed challenges and limitations to the degrees of complexity with which they were so. In so doing, this paper shall argue for the ways in which, collectively, the various case studies demonstrate the effectiveness of post-2015 British cinema in depicting displacement and the refugee experience, highlighting various components of those issues’ complicated nature, and treating displacement as a multi-faceted struggle for those enduring it.

Biography: Peter Kirkpatrick studied for his PhD at Kingston University, and passed his Viva examination in Autumn 2024. His thesis, *Based on a True Story: Framing the Present through Depictions of the Past in Post-2010 Biopics and Historical Films*, addresses the relationship between those genres and the contemporary socio-political climate, and considers how post-2010 biopics and historical

films have represented issues concerning race relations, gender equality, mental illness and the refugee experience. In addition to those genres, Peter's research interests include the film and media industries' relationships with politics and society, film history, and contemporary British and American cinema.

Anushrut Ramakrishnan Agrwaal (University of St Andrews), 'Trope and tropicality: Glass and environmental obsession in *Black Narcissus*'

Abstract: "There is something in the atmosphere that makes everything seem exaggerated" David Farrar's character articulates the British classic *Black Narcissus* (UK, Powell and Pressburger, 1947) orientalist outlook on India. This "exaggerated" Indian "atmosphere," of the film was an English fantasy. *Black Narcissus* was primarily shot at Pinewood Studios, near London, where the artist Percy Day created vivid landscape paintings representing India. These landscapes are part of longer history of matte paintings on window glass, colloquially called 'glass shots,' that partially covered the camera lens to suggest that actors were on location.

Using *Black Narcissus* (and its atmospheric obsession) as a case study, I argue that the material of glass is central to imperial ideologies underpinning British orientalist fantasies. Connecting film production history to the history of science, I compare the use of window glass in 18th/19th century botanic greenhouses – trapping heat to create tropical environments for non-native plants – to the use of orientalist glass shots in *Black Narcissus*. Positioning glass' relationship to light as seminal to ideologies of exploration/collection, I claim that glass shots continue in a tradition of imperial science and produce a *reified tropicality*: a forever still oriental fantasy to help a dissolving Empire maintain pictorial hegemony.

Reading the history of imperial and global networks sustaining scientific exploration (and exploitation) within the glass shot, the paper argues that glass shots have shaped our understanding of global environments, and thus are representations of globality. Further via the continued celebrations of films like *Black Narcissus*, these shots continue to foster orientalist imaginations within a global world.

The paper is part of a larger project on the criticality of glass to modern British visual culture.

Biography: Anushrut Ramakrishnan Agrwaal is an Associate Lecturer at the Department of Film Studies, University of St Andrews. His research interests include nineteenth and twentieth century educational and visual culture, non-theatrical film, film technologies, science and cinema, and colonial and post-colonial cinema.

1B.4: Globalising Stardom

Chair: Ashish Dwivedi

Claudia Aguas (Universidad de Zaragoza), 'Streaming stardom: Penélope Cruz's Donatella Versace and the new global aesthetics'

Abstract: As an actor whose career began in the 1990s, Spanish star Penélope Cruz has experienced the transition from an era in which films premiered exclusively in cinemas to a time in which streaming platforms have become a common distribution channel. Streaming platforms have enabled global access to some types of audiovisual content, fostering the development of narratives and aesthetics that resonate with international audiences. Consequently, performers like Cruz have had the opportunity to participate in projects that allow them to play characters from diverse nationalities and backgrounds across various formats, including series. This versatility has enabled Cruz to consolidate her status as a transnational star.

This paper will look at how Penélope Cruz's portrayal of Donatella Versace in the FX award-winning limited series *The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story* (Ryan Murphy, 2018) demonstrates the actor's ability to embody one of the fashion industry's most recognisable figures while maintaining her own distinct star persona. As will be argued, Netflix's global distribution of this US television thrives on the combination of different cultural aesthetics. Cruz's performance involves balancing authenticity with individuality, reflecting a synthesis of Spanish, Italian, and US cultural influences –her Spanish identity, Donatella's Italianness and the US production of the series. This blending exemplifies how the actor contributes to a global aesthetic that celebrates diversity. Rather than being overshadowed by Donatella's identity, Cruz's star persona adds new layers to Donatella's already-established image. Conversely, the role has also impacted on Cruz's well-established star persona, further shaping Cruz's reputation as an actor capable of navigating transnational narratives.

Biography: PhD candidate in Film Studies at the University of Zaragoza. I hold a BA in English Studies from the University of Zaragoza. I also received an MA in Screenwriting for Film & Television Series from the Rey Juan Carlos University (Madrid). My PhD thesis analyses the spaces of the transnational in Penelope Cruz's cinema. My research interests include transnational stardom, the representation of motherhood in contemporary cinema, and the construction of personal identity in films. Besides this, and often relatedly, I am a screenwriter and I have worked mostly on animated feature films.

Steven Roberts (University of Bristol), 'Central women in widescreen films directed by Cristian Mungiu (2007-2022)'

Abstract: Csilla (Judith State) performs mercurially in a standout sequence from *R.M.N.* (Cristian Mungiu, 2022) as her bakery's hiring of Sri Lankan migrants becomes an issue of debate in a rural Romanian village hall, modelled on an incident in Ditrău in 2020. Topics of colonialism, migration, conservation, the European Union and online misinformation are brought into the conversation, giving globalisation chaotic force in a claustrophobic environment. Mungiu's widescreen mise-en-scène patiently tracks State's agile responses to her character's mounting entrapment, which the viewer is able to see in the context of the local community's often xenophobic responses to their (offscreen) mayor. Csilla is centrally positioned in this particular snapshot of Central and Eastern Europe, recalling a formula seen in Mungiu's previous films *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007), *Beyond the Hills* (2012), and *Graduation* (2016).

This paper offers an aesthetic survey of performances by leading women in four widescreen sequences directed by Mungiu. Alternating between two cinematographers, Mungiu has framed films in the aspect ratio of 2.35:1 since 2007, all of which competed for the Palm d'Or at Cannes Film Festival – signalling their aesthetic and critical significance. But each film also contains a complex scene of political or spiritual crisis for their protagonists, performed amid tableau-like group shots. While the discussion of 'widescreen mise-en-scène' dates back to post-war aesthetic criticism (e.g., Perkins 1962), this paper furthers analysis as done by Steve Neale (1983) regarding widescreen's specific influence upon individual performances rather than isolating these from stylistic patterns in directorial staging.

Biography: Dr Steven Roberts is Lecturer in European and World Cinema at the University of Bristol. He is currently preparing a monograph about widescreen film history, having published on this topic in *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, *Vienfinder Magazine*, and the collection *Sixties British Cinema Reconsidered*, and completing related curatorial projects for the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum as part of his AHRC-funded PhD (2015-2019). Broader interests in transnational cinema have also led him to assist the research projects *Mediating Cultural Encounters through European Screens* (in 2015, University of York) and the *UK Subtitling Audiences Network* (from 2024-25 at Bristol).

Yilan Wang (University of Southampton), 'Alternative reception aesthetics in archive: A mysterious actress wandering in filmdom and ballrooms in the 1930s'

Abstract: Since the emergence of female spectators was discussed in Babel and Babylon, the construction of the relationship between film reception and modernity involved by this peculiar group has historically been elucidated in Western film studies. In early film history, compared to women's obsession with actors in Western countries, Chinese female spectators were influenced more by actresses. Researchers have paid more attention to well-known actresses and their influences than those who are less famous to people today since the 1920s in Chinese film historiography. However, the archive reminds us that those who were ignored had challenged the canonical reception aesthetics of films. The image-shaping of 'New Women', the emotional transmission and audience reception formed the complex and multi-dimensional interaction. Taking the actress Liang Saizhen, who had been compared to China's Mae West, as an example, this paper explores the emotional impact of the actress on the shape of 'New Women' outside cinemas, studios and department stores. Liang used to be an actress and turned to be a dance hostess in ballrooms in the 1930s. The overlap of her career as an actress and a dance hostess, brought ballrooms seen as the degenerate places into film reception. The complexity of the sites of cinematic reception has led to a plurality of interpretations by the audience of the image of the 'new woman' portrayed in the film, which also influenced the audience's expectations of the 'New Woman'.

Biography: Yilan Wang is a third-year PhD student at the University of Southampton. Her project is about Chinese early film history and modernity. Her supervisors are Tim Bergfelder and Huw Jones.

1B.5: Rethinking Transnational Auteurism

Chair: Douglas Morrey (University of Warwick)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Lin Zhang (Ulster University), 'Authorship, female identity in the heterotopia: The analysis of Chloé Zhao's *Nomadland* (2020)'

Abstract: Through the displacement of bodily experience, transnational Chinese female director demonstrate the agendas of contemporary women, and their unique authorship that acts in the film text after the fusion of cultures. Among this group of transnational female directors, Chloé Zhao and her film *Nomadland* (2020) is a typical example. The success of the film is largely due to Zhao's interpretation and reconstruction of the original text in her unique authorial capacity, and her further commitment to finding a way to reinterpret the modern sense of loss that everyone faces in a capitalist society. Against this background, this chapter will be divided into two main parts: the first will be a comparative analysis of the original and the film text, especially her approach to replace the real nomad, Linda May, with the fictional Fern, which reveals her intention to construct a universal value of nature and human beings that transcends the cultural gap; the second part will use Hölderlin's poetic dwelling and Foucault's notion of heterotopia (1967) to unpack the relationship between specific spatio-temporality, such as the vans and the wasteland in this film, which are important mediators of nomadic life, thus grasping the way in which Zhao advocates a sense of poetic habitat. Through the analysis of these two major sections, this chapter, I argue, reveals not only Zhao's reimagining of the American West's wilderness as a way of escaping from the dominant residence of American dwellings, but also sheds light on the gender dilemmas of the commodity economy.

Biography: Lin Zhang, Funded PhD researcher. Her research area focuses on the representation of women's cinema in mainland China, gender politics in social media, and gender structures in the media. She is particularly interested in contemporary women directors and feminist films from the Global South, especially mainland China, and how they interact with world ideologies, popular culture, and social media under the current capitalist economy.

Thomas Sutherland (University of Southampton), "Un monde sans romantisme": Technocratic governance and the aesthetic persona in *Alphaville*

Abstract: Two notable films from the 1960s – Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and Jean-Luc Godard's earlier *Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* (1965) – offer early glimpses into then-nascent worries around artificial intelligence, both emphasizing the perils of computational inflexibility in the face of irreducibly human situations. But whilst *2001*'s HAL 9000 is the archetypal, trope-defining example of artificial intelligence turning against its creators, a putatively sentient machine who becomes disobedient and destructive, not out of malice but as a result of his inability to grapple with the nuances of human communication and conflict, Alpha 60, *Alphaville*'s cruel, dictatorial master computer and central command system, is less reflective of fears about artificial intelligence itself and more of mid-century anxieties about technocratic governance and cybernetic managerialism, the fear of political subjects being submitted to rationalized scrutiny, planning, and manipulation. Accordingly, in this paper, I wish to argue that *Alphaville* can be viewed as an emblematic instance of an enduring critique of artificial intelligence that long precedes the advent of 'Artificial Intelligence' proper (in the way we understand this term today). More specifically, a critique of automatism and the ways in which humans can so easily fall back into mechanical habits and ways of thinking. The film's anti-hero, Lemmy Caution (a character Godard borrows from the novels of Peter Cheyney and their numerous French cinematic adaptations), becomes an unlikely mouthpiece for the

classically Romantic gesture of aesthetic self-cultivation as a means of eluding such mechanical determination and its alienating effects.

Biography: Thomas Sutherland is a Lecturer in Digital Media in the University of Southampton's Film Studies Department.

Toby Ashworth (University of Cambridge), 'Chris Marker's global geological imaginary'

Abstract: This paper explores the centrality of volcanoes to the development of Chris Marker's global imaginary in the 1960s. With particular attention to his commentary for the 1966 documentary *Le Volcan interdit/The Forbidden Volcano* (Haroun Tazieff, 1966), I argue that Marker used developments in geological science and personal encounters with volcanoes in the 1960s to redefine the vision and scope of his worldview. Drawing on the revolutionary consolidation of the theory of plate tectonics in the decade, I analyse the imaginary of global interconnectedness and geological intimacy that Marker articulates in *Le Volcan interdit*, examine the implications of reintegrating this film into Marker's body of work, and explore the tentative openings to ethical and utopian thought that he seems to find in volcanic processes. Finally, I trace the distribution of volcanic intertexts through Marker's oeuvre between 1966 and 1997, suggesting that the circulation of these ideas has much to tell us about his approach to filmmaking and much to contribute to our understanding of the central volcanic images in 1982's *Sans soleil*.

Biography: Toby Ashworth is a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge. His research explores connections between geology, documentary film and the archive, focusing on volcanoes as a privileged locus for documentary explorations of the relationship between filmmaker, medium and the world.

Shifan Yu (University of Southampton), "Feminist consciousness" in personal gender narration in Sinophone cinema: Analysis of Norris Wong'

Abstract: Increasingly cited in interviews with ethnic Chinese female directors, 'Feminist Consciousness' (女性自觉性, Nv Xing Zi Jue Xing) has become essential for discussing feminist representations and voices in their films, as these filmmakers craft gendered stories within a transnational context. 'Feminist Consciousness' echoes Nancy Miller's 'Bear the Signature of Women', exploring feminist theory from diverse perspectives of women authors.

After Alison Butler applied Hamid Naficy's concept of accented performative authorship to feminist experimental films by female directors, Wang Lingzhen used transnational feminist theory to analyse the gendered experiences of ethnic Chinese women. She emphasises that female authors present personal social practices and experiences that transcend traditional film. Additionally, the mobility of female filmmakers across borders has become common among a new generation engaged in transcultural practices. How do the experiences of transnational ethnic Chinese female directors influence their portrayals of multicultural and gender-conscious existence?

My research examines an emerging female filmmaker – Norris Wong, in Hong Kong cinema known for her personal work. Despite her accolades, she lacks sufficient academic attention. I will use a transnational feminist lens to explore how Norris Wong depicts women's subjectivity and agency through gendered experiences globally.

Biography: Shifan Yu is currently a third-year PhD candidate in Film at the University of Southampton. She graduated from Shanghai Theatre Academy with a BA in Film and Television Photography and Production and has directed and edited short films while in school. After working as an unknown director and producer in Shanghai for a few years, she came to the UK to study for an MA in Film Studies at the University of Southampton and graduated in 2021. Due to her passion for Filmmaking and being a female filmmaker/labour, she starts researching Sinophone contemporary women filmmakers under Dr Ruby Cheung and Professor Shelley Cobb's supervision.

1B.6: Transnational Aesthetics

Chair: Alastair Phillips

Konstantina Zygouri (University of Southampton), 'Film aesthetics: Light as a question of existence in the cinema of Apichatpong Weerasethakul'

Abstract: This paper aims to consider the nature of light in Apichatpong Weerasethakul's film *Cemetery of Splendour* (2015). The study explores the aesthetic nature of cinematic lighting as it pertains to both Thai politics and the myths of Thailand's Isan region. The film's central theme and setting concern an abandoned treatment clinic used for military patients, each connected to a mechanism of light that can affect their dreams while sleeping. In particular, the movie follows Jen, a woman with a limb impairment who cares for Itt, an ex-soldier suffering from narcolepsy amidst a multicoloured room full of comatose soldiers. Two mythological figures later reveal that the hospital grounds are built over the ruins of an ancient kingdom's cemetery. The eerie, colour-shifting clinic scenes unveil a symbolic allegory through the characters' incurable illness, alluding to the nation's perpetual political repression. Ancient rulers have captured the soldiers' spirits to fight their eternal battles, leaving their unconscious bodies in lethargy, as similarly, past and present dictatorships affect the nation to this day, implying by this visual metaphor a collective political apathy. In a contrasting tone, the colourful tubes artificially create better memories in the soldiers' subconscious minds. This film is exemplary of Apichatpong's use of light, expressing an aesthetic and political viewpoint that, although derived from ancient national history, remains thoroughly contemporary. Apichatpong's dynamic aestheticism positions him as a proponent of critical cinematic expression through the symbolic capacities of the audio-visual form, conveying concepts rooted in Thai culture yet amenable to global art cinema.

Biography: Nadia Zygouri is a director from Greece having created personal film projects awarded at film festivals worldwide. She has been working in the art industry since 2008 and has collaborated with major production companies to produce films, documentaries, commercials, and music videos on a global scale. She completed her BA in Film Production in Athens and her MA in Arts and Philosophy at the University of Liverpool. She is now in the third year of her PhD at the University of Southampton's Film Department, basing her research on the interrelationship of film and philosophy in the cinema of Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

Oliver Dixon (University of Cambridge), 'The aesthetics of Britishness as the aesthetics of the world-system in 1970s independent cinema'

Abstract: Recent scholarship has returned to the history of 1970s experimental and political cinema in the UK. However, the question of the Britishness of such work or its implicit framing as a national (counter-)cinema has not been interrogated. What distinguishes such work from other radical, national film movements of the 1960s and 1970s? How did the British political context and film industry shape the independent film movement?

This paper analyses the Britishness of the independent film movement as a transnational aesthetic, revealing attempts to think, visualise and respond to the capitalist and film-industry world-system in a British context. Initially, I propose a materialist framework for conceptualising the emergence of this transnational aesthetic. This framework centres the political-economic configuration of British independent cinema vis-à-vis other national cinemas, shifting class composition and emergent political movements of the 1970s.

Furthermore, drawing on Paul Willemsen, I explore the aesthetics of this transnationalism through the category of dialogic nationalism across three terrains: internal competing

nationalisms (Welshness), the internal colony (the north of Ireland) and post-colonial citizens. Dialogic nationalism frames the question of national identity as a shifting ground of competing discourses within and against a hegemonic nationalism. Analysing *Pressure* (1975), *Divide and Rule – Never!* (1978), *So That You Can Live* (1981) and *Maev* (1981), I use the notion of ‘outsideness’ to assess how independent films, by working within and against established genre frameworks of British cinema, made visible the limits and boundaries of British nationalism that foreclosed the national from the world-system.

Biography: Oliver Dixon is an AHRC-funded PhD student in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. His PhD research investigates histories of British film collectives, independent film and emergent radical political movements in the 1970s. He programmes film screenings for Welsh arts organisations and the London Short Film Festival. Email: ojld2@cam.ac.uk.

Joana Jakob Ramalho (University College London), ‘Infernal memory: The gothic’s exilic aesthetics’

Abstract: This paper explores the Gothic as a global, intergeneric, and transhistorical aesthetics of memory and exile which has evolved, and yet remained remarkably stable, over three centuries. It suggests that the cross-border movements of exiles, émigrés, and professional travellers was crucial to the emergence, development, and dissemination of the Gothic. In addition, it argues that, from Méliès’s *féeries* to mid-century melodramas, cult punk-horror films, and YouTube serials, the Gothic’s visual language has remained steeped in exilic aesthetics. Guided by two concepts – memory and exile – I propose a reappraisal of traditional approaches to film by reading surfaces as sites of socio-political meaning.

My aim is to examine different permutations of the Gothic to reassess the aesthetic’s extraordinary resilience and influence and enable a reflection on how it operates. To accomplish this, I will take an intersectional approach to memory’s ‘infernal aspect’ (Adorno 2005, 166), examining it in relation to gender, mental illness, and disability. I will develop a transnational and trans-periodic analysis of specific formal elements, suggesting that the mode has evolved dialectically – through the interchanges between several, and sometimes seemingly disparate, genres, subgenres, styles, and European avant-garde phenomena, including German Expressionism, French Impressionism, Soviet montage, and poetic realism. Moving between filmic categories, geographical boundaries, and different decades, my paper will likewise trouble the canon by considering the exilic aesthetics of significant but neglected productions, namely *Orlacs Hände* (1924), *Peter Ibbetson* (1935), *While I Live* (1947), *Juliette, ou la clef des songes* (1951), *Los otros* (2001), and *Repo! The Genetic Opera* (2008).

Biography: Joana Jacob Ramalho is Lecturer (Teaching) in Film Studies, Comparative Literature, and Portuguese at University College London. Specialising in Film and Gothic Studies, her research is primarily concerned with intergeneric and intermedial representations of memory, displacement, and failure, as explored in her monograph, *Memory and the Gothic Aesthetic in Film* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). Other publications focus on thing theory and creepy dolls; radical humour in punk cabaret; sexsationalist feminism in postmillennial gothic musicals; décor leitmotifs; portraits in Romantic-Gothic melodramas; and the queer failure and mock heroism of King Ludwig II of Bavaria. Her current project analyses satire in classical Hollywood.

Ruixuan Wu (University of Southampton), 'Diminishing allure of the wizarding world: Analysing box office performance of the *Fantastic Beasts* series in mainland China'

Abstract: Films may encounter challenges in achieving success in the global market due to the “cultural discount”, which denotes difficulties consumers from different cultural backgrounds may have in identifying with the style and values portrayed in a film. To lessen cultural specificity and attract broader global audiences, many filmmakers seek to regroup factors from prior productions that were popular in worldwide marketplaces into future projects. The *Fantastic Beasts* series exemplifies a combination of multiple factors from previously successful formulas, such as well-known intellectual property, captivating visual spectacles, and less culturally specific genres; however, the three *Fantastic Beasts* films have experienced an ongoing drop in their international box office performance. This research aims to explore the influencing factors that were contributing to the *Fantastic Beasts* series’ declining performance in overseas marketplaces, with a particular focus on mainland China. To investigate perceptions of Chinese consumers regarding the various influencing factors in the films, content analysis was conducted to analyse the film reviews posted by empirical Chinese viewers on Maoyan and Taopiaopiao (two major ticketing platforms in China) from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. The findings indicate that the strategy of prioritising visual spectacles over narrative qualities is inefficient in maintaining the cross-cultural appeal of the *Fantastic Beasts* series. Despite the *Harry Potter* franchise’s popularity and the Wizarding World’s spectacular audio-visual effects have mitigated cultural discount and attracted substantial Chinese consumers, *Fantastic Beasts* films’ inability to sustain success in the Chinese market could be primarily attributed to the compromised plots.

Biography: Ms Ruixuan Wu is currently a final-year PhD candidate in Film Studies at the University of Southampton. After completing the Higher Education Foundation Programme in Social Science at the University of Warwick, Ms Wu obtained a Bachelor of Science in Communications, Media, and Society from the University of Leicester, then earned a Master of Arts in Arts and Cultural Management from King’s College London. The topic of Ms Wu’s PhD thesis is the cross-cultural box office performance of British Films in mainland China.

1B.7: User-Generated-Content, Influencing and Politics

Chair: Shreepali Patel (London College of Communication)

Tabassum Islam (Ulster University), 'Cultural hybridity in the digital age: Navigating identity through Instagram among Bangladeshi diasporic women influencers'

Abstract: This research critically examines how Bangladeshi diasporic women influencers - @parisianbengali, @yourlilcook, and @mohuyaakhan - navigate cultural hybridity through visual and narrative strategies on Instagram. In an increasingly globalized digital landscape, understanding the complexities of identity construction is vital for marginalized voices that blend elements of their home culture with contemporary global aesthetics.

This study analyses the cases of these influencers through the lenses of Digital Intersectionality and Cultural Hybridity. Digital intersectionality illuminates how intersecting identities—such as race, gender, class, migration status, and religion—inform their content and audience engagement (Nakamura, 2021; Crenshaw, 1991), while Bhabha's concept of hybridity emphasizes how they negotiate their identities by synthesizing local traditions with global influences, thereby creating new cultural meanings (Bhabha, 1994; Kraidy, 2005). Employing qualitative methodologies, including thematic and visual analysis of Instagram posts and audience interactions, this research aims to uncover specific strategies these influencers use to maintain cultural connections with home culture while appealing to diverse transnational audiences. By examining the role of social media in expressing diasporic identities, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature regarding the impact of digital platforms on identity construction, contributing valuable insights to cultural studies and migration studies.

The significance of this research lies in its ability to deepen our understanding of how digital platforms empower diasporic women influencers to articulate their cultural identities. By aligning with the conference's focus on global aesthetics, this study explores how globalization influences cultural representation and identity construction, ultimately offering critical insights into the evolving nature of diasporic identities in the digital age.

Biography: Tabassum Islam is a PhD researcher in Cinematic Studies at Ulster University, specializing in British South Asian diasporic cinema. Her current research examines how cinema shapes cultural narratives and identities, with a particular focus on the representation of gender and migration within the South Asian diaspora. Beyond her academic pursuits, Tabassum actively advocates for fair participation and representation of women in creative industries. She writes extensively on women's contributions to South Asian cultural fields and popular media, analysing the intersections of gender, culture, and representation to highlight the unique experiences of women.

Kun Fang (University of Glasgow), 'Reimagining Chinese rural narratives: Douyin's impact on cultural production and aesthetic innovation in digital rural era'

Abstract: The emergence of Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok) has redefined cultural production among rural youth in China, providing them with an unprecedented platform to shape their self-image and challenge longstanding public perceptions of rural life. This presentation explores how rural youth producers (RYPs) utilize Douyin to craft dynamic and compelling digital narratives that reimagine traditional rural aesthetics. These creators navigate a complex web of influences, including national policies, platform algorithms, and global cultural trends, highlighting the nuanced interplay between personal expression and structural constraints. By drawing on the paradigms of platformization and digital intermediation, this

study reveals how RYPs merge rural authenticity with the unique affordances of short video media to create a “digital public rural” space that resonates with diverse audiences both within China and internationally.

Key findings illustrate the synergy between Douyin’s “New Farmer Plan” and China’s rural revitalization strategies, showcasing how rural youth balance empowerment with the limitations imposed by platform regulations and state-directed narratives. Their content spans a wide array of formats, from intimate depictions of family life and community bonds to scenic portrayals of rural landscapes, reflecting both personal creativity and strategic engagement with algorithmic visibility. By situating Douyin within the broader digital transformation of rural cultural governance in China, this study highlights how the platform disrupts the traditional urban-rural binary, fosters innovative rural aesthetic forms, and expands opportunities for rural youth to participate in cultural dialogues with mainstream society.

Biography: Kun Fang is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Glasgow. His research interests include rural culture, platformization, cultural governance, platform regulation, and media economics. Kun’s current research focuses on the cultural production practices of rural youth on Douyin, China’s leading short video platform, examining these practices within the context of shifting rural policies and digital transformations.

Godswill Ezeonyeka (Coventry University), ‘Speaking subalterns: Representing postcolonial perspectives of activism through visual social media’

Abstract: In October 2020, Nigerians worldwide rallied against police brutality under the #EndSARS movement, which spotlighted abuses perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian Police. The movement was galvanised by social media, with millions of posts—photos, videos, and livestreams—capturing visceral moments of protest, loss, and resilience. This use of visual artefacts in activism has historically maintained the impulse of using juxtaposition, subaltern perspectives, and striking representations to challenge dominant narratives. #EndSARS visual artefacts were pivotal in sparking the protest, articulating grievances, and evidencing state-sponsored oppression. The films and documentaries made about the #EndSARS protests have however, struggled to capture the wealth and breadth of stories made available through social media.

In this paper, I present my practice research work, which utilised these visual artefacts to tell a more complete story of the movement using an interactive film platform – Networked Narratives. Through curated Instagram posts recontextualised with short video commentary from the original creators, the platform is designed to document and expand the visual legacy of #EndSARS. Users are invited to navigate the movement through multiple entry points, comparison tools, and interactive prompts. By harnessing the potential of social media as an archive of lived experiences, Networked Narratives allows for a participatory, layered storytelling experience that goes beyond the constraints of conventional film or social media platforms. This method, grounded in the postcolonial principle of letting the subaltern speak, introduces new possibilities for awareness in global activism.

Biography: Godswill Ezeonyeka is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University in Social Media Activism. His research explores how documentary filmmaking can capture multiple perspectives to challenge dominant narratives around social media activism in Nigeria, focusing on the [#EndSARS](#) movement. Godswill’s work spans documentary and poetry films such as “Hashtag Activists”, “Dream by a Nigerian” and the upcoming interactive film platform “Networked Narratives”. He has also contributed to various

independent films and NGO projects associated with organisations like UNESCO and the National Peace Academy in Nigeria.

Jing Wang (University of Oxford China Centre), 'Emerging aesthetic forms in user-based screen media: A case study of *This Is Life* and the integration of short video practices into documentary cinemas'

Abstract: This paper examines the role of user-generated content (UGC) and user-based screen media (e.g., Kuaishou, TikTok, Douyin) in shaping new aesthetic forms in contemporary cinema. Using the Chinese documentary *This is Life* (2024), which is created from 887 clips contributed by 509 laborers through the Kuaishou platform, the paper investigates how the blending of vertical short videos with traditional horizontal cinema opens up new possibilities for cinema aesthetics. Through multimodal text analysis, semi-structured interviews of creator and audience, this study explores how social media aesthetics challenge traditional cinematic norms and offer a fresh lens for portraying contemporary life. The paper argues that the convergence of these forms introduces new aesthetic strategies, including the juxtaposition of spaces, the emotional intensity of vertical frames, and the self-aesthetic of users, which prioritizes authenticity and personal expression. By redefining cinematic space and emotional engagement, user-based media offers a hybridized visual language that engages both creators and viewers in dynamic and participatory ways.

Biography: Dr. Jing Wang is a Research Fellow at the University of Oxford China Centre. She earned her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Journalism and Communication from Tsinghua University, Beijing. Her research focuses on realistic film, documentary studies, and visual anthropology. With over 11 years of experience as a director and producer (ie. *This is Life*, 2024) in documentary filmmaking, she combines academic scholarship with practical insights. Dr. Wang is currently authoring "*Documentary in Fiction: Global Aesthetic Trends in Realistic Film During the Post-Cold War Era*", forthcoming from Springer.

Thursday 27 March

Panel Session 2A

2A.1: Global Capitalisms

Chair: Will Kitchen

Mingkun Li (King's College London), 'AIGC as cyber-necromancy: Corporate horror, global capitalism and Rizaldi's *Notes from Gog Magog*'

Abstract: Research on the integration of AIGC (AI-Generated Content) and moving image art remains in its early stages, with existing discussions neglecting the Global South. This paper examines *Notes from Gog Magog*, a short horror film by Indonesian artist Riar Rizaldi, to explore how Stable Diffusion-generated imagery was used in it to reflect on global capitalism and what this technology signifies as an aesthetic and cultural practice.

The film's first part depicts Indonesian dock workers—situated at the downstream end of Samsung's supply chain—being fatally crushed by containers due to unsafe working conditions, their spirits lingering as “ghosts.” Rizaldi employs Stable Diffusion to generate eerie, distorted imagery, such as the grotesque merging of a worker's corpse with the container.

I argue that this application of AIGC is a form of “cyber-necromancy.” Firstly, Rizaldi amplifies Stable Diffusion's distortive characteristics through *jump scares*, *zoom-ins*, and *loops*, forcing repeated encounters with unsettling visuals to evoke fear and unease. This strategy visualizes labor exploitation's brutality under global capitalism, provoking critical reflection on the neglect of marginalized workers. Secondly, Stable Diffusion parallels Indonesia's indigenous spirit-summoning rituals. The AI, trained on large-scale datasets that likely include real accident imagery, acts as a digital “medium,” reconstructing traumatic scenes. This denoising and generative process mirrors summoning the spirits of the dead but raises concerns: the AI's recreation of violent imagery risks exploiting victims' suffering. And also, as a product of global capitalism, AI technology embodies the very anxieties and alienation it exposes, fostering reflexive unease in its viewers.

Biography: Mingkun Li is a fourth-year PhD candidate in Film Studies at King's College London. His doctoral research explores the complex relationship between memory politics and screen media practices in contemporary China, with a particular focus on forced migration and traumatic memory. His work exploring how activists leverages documentary films and the affordances of digital platforms to serve memory activism in China is forthcoming in *Memory Studies*.

Ekaterine Chavchanidze (Georgian Institute of Public Affairs) & Tina Kandiasvili (University of Edinburgh), “Made with blood, sperm, and tears”: Gaspar Noé's *Love* (2015) against capitalism’

Abstract: Scholarship on Gaspar Noé's work often critiques his use of sexually explicit imagery, dismissing it as shock value designed to benefit from capitalist economy. However, this paper argues that Noé's *Love* (2015), examined through Byung-Chul Han's *The Agony of Eros* (2012), challenges capitalist values. By juxtaposing the commodified emptiness of porn aesthetic with the sincerity of a love story, the film interrogates the monetization of love and questions whether love is still recognizable in a capitalist society.

In *Agony*, Han draws a parallel between capitalism, pornography, and the impossibility of love. He argues that capitalism eradicates love by eliminating the Other and fostering a culture of Sameness. Genuine connection is replaced by self-validation, consumption, and monetary value. Han refers to this process as the "pornographication of society," where pornography epitomizes the shift, reducing love to self-gratification. "Pornographication" strips life of meaning, presenting everything as an object for display, devoid of content.

This paper argues that *Love* addresses Han's critique by turning capitalism's language against itself. Noé uses 3D porn as a tool of commodification to tell a story of love's failure in a world driven by capitalist values, symbolized by the protagonists' relationship to the world through consumption: of carnal pleasures, art, and finally, each other. While the film portrays love's impossibility within capitalism, it critiques capitalism by voicing questions that the system obscures by using the very language of the system - pornography. Through this dialectical relationship between form and content, *Love* creates a space where resistance to capitalism—the Other—becomes possible.

Biography: Ekaterine Chavchanidze is an invited lecturer and author of several courses at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA). Her works have been published in a few journals, including *de: Nostalgia* and *Liberali*. Her research interests include the interplay between political philosophy and cinema, particularly focusing on themes of rebellion, resistance, and love.

Tina Kandiasvili is a PhD student in Film Studies at the University of Edinburgh, researching Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy within Lars von Trier's cinematic oeuvre. Specifically, she explores Kierkegaard's theory of irony and its ethical implications across von Trier's trilogies. Her research interests include the intersections between film and philosophy and film and religion.

Will Kitchen (University of Chichester/Arts University Bournemouth), "I came up here to build a bridge": Colonial capitalism and the representation of leadership in *Zulu* (1964)

Abstract: This paper will offer a textual and contextual analysis of the film *Zulu* (1964) – a historical drama about a battle during the nineteenth-century Anglo-Zulu War in South Africa – and examine the link between cultural representations of military authority and colonial capitalist ideology.

During the represented battle of Rorke's Drift, 22nd January 1879, the torch of leadership is passed from aristocratic Lt Bromhead (Michael Caine) to the engineer Lt Chard (Stanley Baker) – an action which is emblematic of British culture's transformation into a postcolonial power during the mid-twentieth century.

The central aim will be to interpret how the two central characters' various embodiments of heroic leadership are explained to the film audience, and to unpack the political implications of the text's ability to communicate 'the ideology of leadership' in a colonialist / imperial context (i.e., the judgement that a post-class hierarchy, open to agents of professional social mobility, is a necessary aspect of modern social organization).

This paper will be based on an article recently published in the *British Journal for Military History* (Vol. 10/3, November 2024, Screen Shots).

Biography: Will Kitchen has taught film, media and cultural industries at the University of Southampton, the University of Chichester and Arts University Bournemouth. He is the author /

editor of *Culture, Capital and Carnival: Modern Media and the Representation of Work* (Bloomsbury, 2025), *Film, Negation and Freedom: Capitalism and Romantic Critique* (Bloomsbury, 2023), *Romanticism and Film: Franz Liszt and Audio-Visual Explanation* (Bloomsbury, 2020) and *ReFocus: The Films of Lindsay Anderson* (Edinburgh University Press, 2025).

2A.2: Rotoscoping, VFX and Animated Practices - Hybrid

Chair: James C. Taylor

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Tomas Mitkus (Vilnius Tech), 'Reframing rotoscoping: A modern theoretical and practical approach to animation's polarizing production method'

Abstract: Rotoscoping as the animating method is over one hundred years old. Furthermore, it is as popular now as it was popular in the early days of professional animation. Thus, there is no shortage of theoretical and methodical text that would analyse and instruct how best to employ this 2D animation production method. Yet, rotoscoping has a very severe public image problem – today, the result of this approach is perceived as fundamentally grotesque, low quality, and even uncanny, and the animators employing this method are lazy and unskilled. This situation is quite peculiar because quite a few animated films that employed the rotoscoping method today are considered cult classics. Thus, in this article, the author will aim to explore the theoretical approach to the rotoscoping method and propose a revised framework for how to employ this production technique in order to achieve the best possible aesthetic results. In addition, this article will investigate recent films and TV shows that employed digital rotoscoping to discuss workflow improvements and to identify modern practical challenges of the method.

Biography: Dr Tomas Mitkus is a Vilnius Gediminas Technical University lecturer and an animation practitioner. Thus, when Tomas is not writing a new article or textbook, he works on some animated TV or feature projects. Or maybe illustrating a new comic book.

Joe Evans (Manchester Metropolitan University), 'Traced by hand: AI animation and the rotoscope technique'

Abstract: 'Did We Just Change Animation Forever?' was the incendiary title of the YouTube video uploaded in 2022 by Corridor Digital. Seeing the backlash to their AI sequence, which used live-action footage as a base, recalled hostile responses in previous decades to the use of rotoscoping – critics described both as a filter rather than an animation technique, decrying them as cheap shortcuts undermining artistic integrity.

Corridor claimed their work emulated an anime aesthetic – training AI on anime imagery. However, the realistic movements of live action footage are at odds with most Japanese animation styles. Corridor explained they hoped to democratise animation production.

Rotoscoping became associated with American studios through the 1920s. By the time Ralph Bakshi was using rotoscoping to aid the production of 1977's *Wizards*, the technique already had a bad reputation.

Since then, that reputation has been transformed, not just in America, with Linklater's acclaimed films, but in the UK with Joseph Pierce's hypnotic shorts, and with the features, *Olimpia* (Mexico) and *Tehran Taboo* (Germany). In 2013 the manga *Aku no Hana* was developed into an anime series, forgoing its comic book style for rotoscoped realism.

There is a stylistic universality to rotoscoping which undoes distinctive animation traits that might differentiate anime from western animation. Will AI animation techniques do the same? In this paper I will discuss how rotoscoped animation has developed internationally, what future it might have in the face of AI advancements and explore how much a guiding human hand exerts a creative influence for both.

Biography: Joe Evans is a freelance 2D Animator and Illustrator currently teaching Animation at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. He graduated from the University of Brighton's Sequential Design/Illustration Master's Course in 2015. And is currently looking for a platform to develop his PhD.

His MA project, titled 'The Animators of Pre-Cinema & Their Demons,' comprised three graphic novel histories of animation, exploring the development of Victorian optical toys, chronophotography and magic lantern projection. The project also resulted in the production of several looping animations presented through phenakistoscopes and a praxinoscope – exhibited as part of a Fabula Collective exhibition at Hove Museum.

Suryansu Guha (University of California, Los Angeles), "Animation in London/Matchmove in Bangalore": Territorial profiles of visual effects workforces in the global media industries (VIDEO ESSAY)

Abstract: Published in 2019, Hye Jean Chung's study of the vast transnational network of obscured VFX labor is a provocative account of the exploited workforce that shoulders the real cost the global film industry's ceaseless yield of effects-heavy blockbusters. In pursuit of her question of how messy networks of global capital nevertheless projects an image of seamlessness, she interviewed Hannes Ricklefs, the erstwhile global head of pipeline of a UK-origin multinational conglomerate called Motion Picture Company (MPC). While answering her question Ricklefs reveals how the efficiency is the result of an assembly line splitting of VFX work in different territories like "animation in London, matchmove in Bangalore, and compositing in Vancouver." (Chung, 2010)

My video essay builds from Ricklefs' casual attribution of the specific tailored components of VFX work to specific locations which betrays a clear hierarchy of VFX work whereby – tasks such as animating CG models is considered a 'high-end', 'creative' job, while matchmove, which is a form of virtual camera tracking that allows the computer-generated objects to be composited onto the frame of the real camera, is considered 'low-end,' 'technical' work.

However, such a hierarchy is premised on a naive rhetoric of globalization that assumes that only the labor-intensive and non-artistic parts of VFX labor is outsourced to 'low-cost locations' like Bangalore, while the artistic *creme-de-la-creme* is conceptualized in London. I show this premise to be not just an oversimplification, but also demonstrably false because 'conception' work does frequently get outsourced to India. Ultimately, I argue that such deterministic profiles instead devalue outsourced work to control the workers while also keeping the prices low thereby ensuring the devalued worker produces devalued work.

Biography: Suryansu Guha is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Film, TV and Digital Media at University of California, Los Angeles. His doctoral dissertation is on the outsourcing of visual effects labor to India. His main area of research is below the line labor (or the crafts) in global media industries. His research has been published in prestigious journals like *Television and New Media* and he has been the recipient of prestigious writing awards such as the SCMS Graduate Student Paper Award. In 2022, he was also awarded the Wenner Gren Dissertation Fieldwork Grant.

Carleigh Morgan (University of Birmingham), "The new mass image: From heterogeneity to conformity in the simulation of virtual crowds"

Abstract: Visual effects programmes like Golaem, MASSIVE, and Houdini supply crowd simulation toolkits as part of a suite of commercial products available to the modern film and television industry. These toolkits are reshaping what crowd animation entails by blending artistic control with data-driven decision making, thereby enabling animators to create virtual crowds that better mimic the unpredictability, spontaneity, and messiness of real-world crowd behaviours. The accessibility of these crowd simulation toolkits has secured visual effects as the preferred means for creating crowds onscreen, and the availability of such toolkits—which are fit for use by professionals and non-professionals alike—has unleashed the work of crowd simulation from the specificities of film production, circulating it as ubiquitous visual effect.

This paper argues virtual crowds can be understood as a new ‘mass image’, one which surfaces a regression towards aesthetic conformity on a globalised scale. Virtual crowds like those seen in Disney’s *The Mandalorian* (2019), Amazon’s *Rings of Power* (2022), or the Netflix film *RRR* (2020) emerge out of a production landscape where physical and virtual elements are integrated; production workflows iterate across geographic boundaries; and cooperation amongst transnational workforces is a necessity. This is what Hye Jean Chung refers to as a ‘media heterotopia’—a complex media ecosystem replete with internal contradictions. Despite the virtual crowd’s formal attributes as a heterogenous mass and its embeddedness within the media heterotopias of global film production, I maintain that the virtual crowd as visual effect demonstrates a regression towards aesthetic conformity on a mass scale.

Biography: Carleigh Morgan (she/they) is Assistant Professor of Film at the University of Birmingham. Her doctoral thesis—*Work in Motion: Labour and Aesthetic Production in the Animated Film industry*--explored cinematic labour through histories and practices of animated filmmaking. She is a first-generation academic and former Fulbright Scholar (2013-2014) whose research interests include animation, visual effects, labour, production studies, media theory, and film history. She is co-convener of the BAFTSS Animation SIG.

2A.3: Screening Sex SIG

Chair: Polina Zelmanova

Polina Zelmanova (University of Warwick): *Bridgerton*, “Thinking through, with, and beyond the sex scene”

Abstract: *Bridgerton*, a romance TV adaptation [2020-] set in Regency London, has, since its debut, sparked a large amount of media coverage, particularly in relation to its sex scenes. In current academic scholarship, the sex in the show is contrastingly discussed as either excessive and gratuitous (e.g Reid 2024), or sanitised and quantitatively minimal (e.g Davisson and Hunting 2023). This contrasting response and criticism serves as the point of departure for this paper.

Through close textual analysis of specific moments in *Bridgerton* this paper challenges existing writing on the show, arguing for a necessity to engage closely with the show’s aesthetic, textual and generic specificity in order to create a more nuanced understanding of sex in the series. In my reading I engage with feminist scholarship on romance fiction and its discussions of sex in the genre (e.g Snitow 1980; Roach 2016; Roach and McCann 2021) and the relating issue of value judgement which provide a useful framework for examining the series. The show has often been dismissed as “fluff” reflecting the persisting value judgement both on romance (see Byrne 2014, 213; Moseley et al. 2013, 241-2) and feminine and decorative aesthetics (see Galt 2011). In taking these dismissed elements of the show seriously, this paper argues that the show disperses sex and desire across the screen and narrative, raising questions about formal, temporal and conceptual understandings of what we might understand as the ‘sex scene’ (See Snitow 1980; Wan 2024). Thinking beyond the conventional ‘sex scene’ in *Bridgerton* creates the potential to re-orient the series’ relationship to normative temporalities of sex and the dominant male economy of desire, and instead emphasise other modalities and temporalities of pleasure.

Biography: Polina is an AHRC Midlands4Cities funded PhD candidate in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. Her thesis is titled 'Sex in Contemporary Film and TV: Power and Pleasure after #MeToo'. She is a teaching assistant and module co-convenor in Film and Television studies, and is part of the *Screening Sex* working group. Polina has forthcoming publications in *Porn Studies* and, outside of academia, is also a sex and relationship education facilitator for the School of Sexuality Education.

Dr Matthew Hilborn (University College Dublin): “It doesn’t move me like you move me”: Rethinking queer romance and dating apps in *Smiley* (Netflix, 2022-)”

Abstract: This paper examines the representation of physical and digital intimacies in queer Spanish romantic comedy series *Smiley* (Netflix, 2022-). Situating its portrayal of LGBTQ+ dating apps within broader debates on the platformisation of both affect (Van Dijck et al. 2018) and romcom itself – following the genre’s global “renaissance” (Wilkinson 2023, Idle 2024) on Netflix – it analyses onscreen tensions between somatic and cyber-mediated sex. Through split-screen editing, parallel narration, and diegetic emoji use for both carnal *and* cloud-based relations, *Smiley* visualises the barriers and resolutions in queer love, portraying new “hybrid ecologies” of dating (Licoppe et al. 2016). Yet, rather than affirming data-driven, algorithmic matching as a “digital fix” for romantic “messiness” (Bandinelli & Gandini 2022), the series critiques the online marketisation and quantification of relationships, which reframe lovers as entrepreneurs.

With its unapologetic depiction of gay sex, *Smiley* disrupts the deferral of sexual explicitness so common to romcom (Henderson 1978), challenging the relative conservatism of the genre in

twenty-first-century Spain. Yet, while its “heteropessimistic” tone (Seresin 2019) aligns with screen media’s post-romantic turn and erosion of “couple confidence” (Harrod, Leonard & Negra 2021), its final insistence on monogamy, family orientation, and happy endings ultimately reflects homonormative ideals of the “good life” (Ahmed 2006, 2010). In embracing the gay male “cuteness” so ubiquitous in global Netflix LGBTQ+ series (Dhaenens & De Smet 2024; Evans 2023), *Smiley* combines subversive potential with conventional single-partner fidelity, displaying (incongruously) a cautious scepticism toward casual, non-exclusive encounters and mediated “relationshopping” (Heino et al. 2018).

Biography: Matthew Hilborn is Government of Ireland Research Fellow in Spanish Film Studies at University College Dublin. His current project, funded by the Irish Research Council, is entitled “The Spanish Romantic Comedy post-2000: Passion, Pleasure, Politics and Play”. Challenging feminised deprecation of the genre, and assumptions of little more than feel-good escapism and/or reconciliation, it examines how these films have reshaped sociocultural norms related to (perceived) crises regarding gender, sexuality, and nationhood. From 2022-24 he was Postdoctoral Research Associate on “Screen Encounters with Britain: What do young Europeans make of Britain and its digital screen culture?” (AHRC) at King’s College London.

Belén Salinas Torres (Universidad de Zaragoza): “‘What binds you together as women?’: *Sex Education*’s sexual assault storyline as a #MeToo narrative’

Abstract: While Projansky (2014: 3) acknowledges it as a “timeless (...) key aspect of storytelling throughout Western history”, it is crucial to examine how the portrayal of sexual violence evolves in response to shifting socio-cultural contexts. Building on this foundation, *Sex Education*’s (Netflix, 2019-2023) five-episode sexual assault storyline constitutes a subversive subgenre of sexual violence narratives resonating with the contemporary #MeToo movement. Inherent and exemplary didactic potential is provided to the audience facilitating the recognition and processing of such traumatic experiences while modelling an exemplary response of sorority through an educated, liberal feminist perspective. By shifting the focalization to the survivor and focusing on the roots of restorative justice, the narrative engages with the antithesis between the protagonist’s vulnerability and her path to independence.

Using textual analysis as the primary methodology, the paper examines the diverse aesthetic and narrative strategies that consolidate the series as a prominent example of a #MeToo narrative. It then explores the trajectory of trauma, from its actual perpetration until the beginning of the survivor’s healing journey, emphasising the long-time impact of the aggression and its psychological consequences. The acknowledgement of the perpetration is also established as one of the key elements of the healing process, entailing the creation of empathy connections among survivors, external recognition by the community, and “discussions of accountability, transparency and vulnerability” (Wexler et al., 2019: 51, 65). Finally, it analyses the significance of the cultural representation in shaping public discourse around sexual violence, contributing to a deeper understanding of trauma and recovery.

Biography: Belén Salinas (Universidad de Zaragoza) specializes in Film Studies and English, with a broad background encompassing Film Production and MFL Education. Her research focuses on exploring the female identity and the cinematic portrayal of the female gaze, particularly within the context of post-#MeToo discourse.

Dr Donna Peberdy (University of Southampton): 'Sexual violence and the sex scene: Ending gender-based violence through short film'

Abstract: This paper shares key findings from the first year of “Screening Sexual Violence”, a British Academy fellowship project exploring representations of sexual violence and the role of film in shaping public understanding. The project focuses on short films by female filmmakers from ten countries submitted to the film festival 16 Days 16 Films, a female-led initiative inspired by the global campaign 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-based Violence. The Screening Sexual Violence project has involved the creation of a dataset of nearly 400 films, close textual analysis of 80 films, and interviews with filmmakers, educators, charity advocates and support workers.

Drawing on filmmaker interviews, I consider how filmmakers grappled with and navigated what to show and what not to show in depicting and representing sexual violence. The interviews and film analysis raise important questions about the “sex scene” as it relates to sexual violence in film and culture. In contrast to the limited frame and “basic formula” (Cuklanz) common in mainstream film and television, these short films depict and represent a complex spectrum of sexual violence and get much closer to capturing the idea of sexual violence as a continuum (Kelly). Collectively, the short films offer a significant intervention in the representation of sexual violence on screen, challenging the parameters of what we understand by sexual violence against women and girls and showcasing how the short form can be utilised in creative and often provocative ways to challenge myths and misconceptions, improve understanding and educate about the causes and far-reaching impacts of sexual violence.

Biography: Donna Peberdy is Associate Professor of Performance, Sex and Gender in the Department of Film and Media at Southampton Solent University. Her publications include *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan) and *Tainted Love: Screening Sexual Perversion* (IB Tauris). Donna is co-director of the Screening Sex network, co-convenor of the BAFTSS Screening Sex SIG and co-editor of Edinburgh University Press's Screening Sex book series. Her current project - Screening Sexual Violence – is supported by the British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship scheme and explores representations of sexual violence and the role of film in shaping public understanding.

2A.4: Affordances of Animation

Chair: Ferdinando Cocco

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Nairy Eivazy (LUCA School of Arts/KU Leuven), 'Remembering with animation: Expressing and sharing memories of displacement through participatory stop-motion with cherished objects'

Abstract: For those living in the diaspora, memory is a foundational element in preserving identity and maintaining connections to their cultural heritage. Personal objects, such as artefacts, mementos, and souvenirs, along with the processes of sorting and deciding what to carry or leave behind, play a significant role in preserving these memories and rebuilding a sense of place. Participatory stop-motion is a form of participatory filmmaking in which laypeople collaborate to create stories by bringing physical objects and materials to life. The hands-on process of creating stop-motion (by focusing on specific items, photographing them, and carefully touching and placing them for smooth movement) has the power to encourage participants to re-engage with their own narratives encapsulated in physical objects. This practice based research explores stop-motion's potential to engage participants with their own memories through the making process. Reflecting on participatory stop-motion workshops conducted with the Armenian diaspora community in Europe, we have learned that collaborative stop-motion making with personal objects contributes to the evocation of memories, the creation of new ones, and opportunities for self-representation. Plus, the stop-motion making can provide new perspectives on memories, foster a sense of belonging and collective care. We believe this collective approach and embodied in the lived experiences of participants in animation-making, can shed light on marginalized narratives that have been historically underrepresented. Furthermore, it has the potential to reimagine how animation can function as a tool for decolonial practice, particularly within the context of the diaspora.

Biography: Nairy Eivazy is an Armenian-Iranian animation artist and researcher specializing in animation film with a participatory approach. She is currently pursuing a PhD at LUCA School of Arts/KU Leuven. Her research work has been published in international peer-reviewed conferences, such as C&T and in journals concerning Animation.

Ferdinando Cocco (University of Cambridge), 'Experimental animation and the geopolitics of cinematic abstraction'

Abstract: Although as a taxonomic category, "experimental animation" attempts to give a name to the whole spectrum of animation production that has offered and continues to offer alternatives to the hegemonic visibility of industrial studio practice, in the critical rubrics of animation studies, "experimental," for historical reasons, remains largely synonymous with the aesthetics of a narrower tradition of films and production practices. Today, these aesthetics pervade media culture at large, proliferating across national boundaries and different media and production models. Yet before the widespread institutionalization of professional animation training granted them global viability, they were circumscribed to a body of avant-garde cinema that first originated in Europe and then matured within the confines of North American culture. This paper retraces the history of so-called Visual Music, the one tradition of experimental animation that has arguably produced the most cohesive body of work and scholarly responses, to track the series of developments that allowed experimental animation to transition from an avant-garde practice to a somewhat defined subject of university tuition. Departing from the scholarly orthodoxy that regards Visual Music principally as a site of sensorial synthesis, the liminal place where images take on aural qualities while sounds take on visual ones, I argue that in the United States, Visual Music also served as another kind of

frontier: one in which hegemonic culture encountered its Other. What transpires from this line of argument is a recognition of how the pervasive aesthetics of Visual Music point to specific histories of migration and abjection.

Biography: Ferdinando Cocco is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. A theorist and historian of queerness and media, he weaponizes the academic studies of particular neglected histories and practices of queerness and animation to make wider theoretical statements about the relationship between visual culture and ideology. At present, his research tries to stage an encounter between the fields of Queer and Animation Studies in pursuit of a reparative history of queer animation as well as of a queer theory of animation aesthetics.

Lucas Ferraço Nassif (NOVA Institute of Philosophy), 'Multiplanar unconscious of Japanese television animation'

Abstract: This presentation underlines the importance of the global phenomenon of Japanese television animation, anime, considering its productions of multiplanar images and *animetism* not as representations of what, in psychoanalysis, is defined as psychotic or perverse structures, but as other possibilities of aesthetic creation that subvert the relations Jacques Lacan builds between the symbolic, the real, and the imaginary. By the study of audiovisual processes found in Japanese television animation, I will present the hypothesis of my new book, *Unconscious/Television* (Becoming Press, 2025), working on the intersections between Jacques Lacan and Félix Guattari, and discussing the transversality of Thomas Lamarre's studies in media ecology. I intend to work with Jacques Lacan, not against him, in both complexifying and breaking understandings of the notions of structure and Other — operating with the immanence of the concept of the unconscious, looking for several *unconsciouses* that run with multiplicity. For that, I will underline narratives made for television — and nowadays internet streaming — that do not operate on the divides of form and content, object and subject, and nature and culture: assembling new paths for clinical works with desire that are not oriented by the boundaries of symbolic castration. My main focus will be debating the compositions of the anime *Serial Experiments Lain* (1998), directed by Nakamura Ryutaro.

Biography: Lucas Ferraço Nassif holds a Ph.D. in Literature from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro. He's a researcher at the Cinema and Philosophy Laboratory, part of the NOVA Institute of Philosophy, and a member of the Portuguese Center of Psychoanalysis. Director and editor of the films Reinforced Concrete, Being Boring, and Unfamiliar Ceiling/The Beast; and author of the book Missing Links, published by Barakunan, and awarded by the Association of Moving Image Researchers [AIM] in Portugal as the best monographic book of 2023. In 2025, his book *Unconscious/Television* will be launched by Becoming Press.

2A.5: Race, Media and Modernity

Chair: James Harvey (University of Hertfordshire)

Benjamin Goff (King's College London), 'Beyond Eurocentricity: Postsecular aesthetics in American film'

Abstract: The field of film studies often approaches the postsecular through a predominantly Eurocentric lens, leaving little room for distinctively American contributions. This paper interrogates this gap, drawing on Stanley Cavell's provocation, "has America expressed itself philosophically?" and extending it to explore how the United States, particularly through its Black cultural output, articulates a unique postsecular aesthetic.

By pairing Cavell's philosophical inquiries with James Baldwin's incisive critiques of American identity, this study argues that the American postsecular is best understood not as an extension of European frameworks but as an aesthetic deeply embedded in the nation's specific socio-historical and racial contexts. Focusing on three films—*The Last Black Man in San Francisco* (2019), *Get Out* (2017), and *American Fiction* (2023)—this paper analyzes how the Black experience in the U.S. serves as a prism through which to understand the nuances of American postsecularism.

Through themes of dislocation, community, and transcendence, these films reveal an American aesthetic that negotiates the sacred and secular in ways that both resonate with and depart from European paradigms. This analysis underscores the critical role of Black cultural expression in shaping an aesthetic that is simultaneously local and global, particular and universal.

By situating these films within the broader context of global aesthetics, this paper contributes to a more inclusive understanding of the postsecular, advocating for an approach that acknowledges the multiplicity of its manifestations across cultures.

Biography: Benjamin Y Goff is a PhD Candidate in Film Studies at King's College of London. He holds a BA from Baylor University and an MA from Columbia University. He previously taught Film Studies and Art History at Baylor University. His current research focuses on the postsecular pivot in America, primarily through interrogating the works of Stanley Cavell, Charles Taylor, and Richard Rorty.

Edson Pereira Da Costa Junior (State University of Campinas), 'Crossroads and Fugitivity in Black Cinema'

Abstract: The paper aims to discuss how Afro-diasporic avant-garde short-films from the Americas and the Caribbean deploy an aesthetics based on fugitivity to confront historical and contemporary forms of racial violence that threaten Black lives. The concept of fugitivity is explored through two primary strategies: the articulation of a spiral temporality, where past, present and future coexist simultaneously, and the production of paradoxical representations of Black people on stage. These strategies disrupt conventional temporal frameworks and resist the interpretative mechanisms of power-knowledge systems, thereby challenging the determinations imposed by colonial time and raciality. By analysing films such as the Brazilian *Vaga Carne* (*Dazed Flesh*, 2019), by Grace Passô and Ricardo Alves Jr., and the Guadalupean *Fouyé Zetval* (*Plowing Stars*, 2020), by Wally Fall, the paper argues that Afro-diasporic cinema develops an aesthetic of fugitivity that reclaims principles of the Black radical tradition, particularly a revolutionary consciousness against the colonial system and its multifaceted forms of domination. The paper's contribution lies, firstly, in recognising the political correspondences between Brazilian and

Caribbean films, informed by an aesthetics of fugitivity that reactualise historical practices from maroon and quilombola communities. Secondly, it underscores the significance of situating cinema from the Americas and the Caribbean within the broader Black radical tradition of thought.

Biography: Edson Costa Jr is a Postdoctoral Fellow and Visiting Lecturer at the State University of Campinas in Brazil. He is a recipient of a grant from The São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP-21/02448-5). He was a visiting scholar at the AmazonLab and the Department of Romance Studies at Duke University (2023-2024) with a scholarship from the Research Internships Abroad (BEPE/FAPESP). He holds a PhD in Media and Audiovisual Processes from the University of São Paulo. His research interests include Latin American Cinema, Indigenous Film and Art, Black Aesthetics, World Cinema, and Cinema and Visual Arts.

David Melbye (University of Huddersfield), 'Transnational horror jazz: African American music in the visceral 60s and 70s crime film'

Abstract: This paper/presentation focuses on the cinematic evolution of the genre-crossover from crime to horror in the 1960s and 70s, specifically where the presence of jazz and its cultural legacy as an African American artform informs this crossover. Beyond significant Hollywood entries, cases of such films from overseas contexts will also be considered. The analytical framework is interdisciplinary, integrating media, critical race, and cognitive neuroscience approaches.

Crime and horror are film genres naturally understood and defined through their idiosyncratic array of narrative and stylistic conventions, and each would appear to have separate evolutions across the entire history of cinema. However, during the 1960s and 70s, an increasing number of crime films experienced a palpable crossover into the horror genre, in terms of maintaining their plot conventions, while also incurring a more visceral agenda, akin to the priorities of horror. These multinational cases did not simply become more graphically violent. They made their antagonists into psychological 'monsters' capable of sadistic murder and so eschewing the convenience of firearms.

The evolving presence of the modern jazz idiom in Hollywood crime dramas since the 1940s and 50s also found its way into these crime-turned-horror films, especially according to jazz's forays into rhythmic aggressiveness, dissonant harmony, and/or improvisational erraticism. This paper will explore these cases where an integrated African American musical form, as such, ultimately served to extend media-manufactured impressions of 'primal' otherness even further to a sadistic degree connoting the most primitive impulses toward manslaughter.

Biography: Melbye earned his doctorate in Cinema and Television from the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts. He has published two monographs, *Irony in The Twilight Zone* and *Landscape Allegory in Cinema*. Melbye has also produced music for popular television shows including *Friday Night Lights*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, and *One Life to Live*. He is currently functioning as a UKRI/Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Music and Design Arts at the University of Huddersfield.

Alexandra Grieve (University of Oxford), 'Soul power: Music, modernity and style in African anti-colonial filmmaking'

Abstract: This paper examines fashion in African film from the 1960s and 1970s. While overlooked in studies of African film from this era, this paper argues that a critical engagement with the seemingly ‘frivolous’ histories of fashion can reveal the creative means through which Africans communicated a sense of modernity and self-possession, in keeping with a growing spirit of anticolonial resistance across the continent and wider diaspora. As evidenced in the portrait photography of Malick Sibidé, James Barnor, and Seydou Keïta, African photography from this period embraced bold fusions of local, Western and Afro-diasporan sartorial styles with important implications for the development of modern African subjectivities and the emergence of pan-African solidarities. While inspired by American or Afro-diasporan music and cultural phenomena (the 1960s ‘road movies’, singers James Brown and Jimi Hendrix), African films equally invoked indigenous concepts of fashionable self-presentation to create highly local and particularised visions of Black African modernity, in dialogue with global points of cultural reference. Through examination of the films of Moustapha Alassane, Souleymane Cissé and Djibril Diop Mambéty, I suggest onscreen fashion embodies the real and imagined sense in which continental Africans and peoples of the wider African diaspora were culturally imbricated, whilst de-essentializing the notion of a fixed or homogenous ‘African’ identity. These style-conscious films illustrate the network of political, cultural and economic convergences that inform Africa’s past and present, and reveal how Africans and Afro-diasporans shaped what it meant to be “modern” (a term derived from *la mode*, fashion) in a global postcolonial context.

Biography: Dr Alexandra Grieve is a Junior Research Fellow at St John’s College, Oxford, in Modern Languages. She is a researcher and filmmaker trained in South Africa, where she received her BA in Film and Media Production. Her doctorate explored dress and material culture in African and Afro-diasporan cinema with an emphasis on contemporary works by women filmmakers and artists, such as Julie Dash, Wanuri Kahiu, and Zina Saro-Wiwa. Her current research interests are situated across disciplines and include filmmaking in Africa and its diasporas, global postcolonial filmmaking, cinematic embodiment and material culture.

2A.6: Politics and Social Cinema from Genre to the Arthouse

Chair: Ruidi Xu

Shupeng Zheng (University of Southampton), “The contemporary British biopics, 2010-2024”

Abstract: Biopics are one of the main genres of popular cinema and have a place in both Hollywood and British films. As a film genre that tells the ‘real’ story of a person or a small group of people, it has continued to change over the past century to adapt to the popular trends of the times.

This project examines contemporary British biopics. By building a database, it focuses on the trends and changes in British biopics over the past decade. It examines their latest representations in terms of sub-genre, sexual orientation, gender, and class.

This project selects some biopics with British protagonists that have been widely successful at the global box office as case studies to examine which types of biopics are more likely to succeed in the global market and find out why. Since most of these cases feature male protagonists, this project will also involve research on masculinity to illustrate the image of the British male that British films try to showcase globally. Through this analysis, the project aims to understand the overall status of contemporary British biopics and critically examine how (prestigious) British biopics representation closely links national identity with masculinity. Therefore, my study attempts to construct a broader and more detailed perspective on the performance of British biopics in the global market and to fill the gap in research on masculinity in British biopics over the past decade.

Biography: I am a PhD student in the Department of Film at the School of Humanities, University of Southampton, and I am currently in my second year of doctoral studies. My current research focuses on the film genre of biopics and their interweaving with national identity, gender and the star system.

Rhys Handley (King’s College London), “‘Marshalled to do the work’: Childhood’s queer potentialities squandered under capitalism in Clio Barnard’s *The Selfish Giant* (2013)”

Abstract: In the playful, familiar dynamic shared by Arbor and Swifty, the boy heroes of Clio Barnard’s second feature, we see queer glimmers of potential struggling to emerge amid the restrictive realities of their circumstances on the margins of society. Notably, the boys are unbothered by suggestions that their physical expressions of closeness might entail any romantic or homosexual component. Through Hannah Dyer’s critical framework, which constitutes queer behaviours in childhood identity formation as “the veering away from expectation”, we may read Barnard’s film as an emphatic case for the preservation of childhood’s subversive behaviours in the face of hegemonic forces under which such aberrant characteristics are “marshalled to do the work of societal norms”.

Setting *The Selfish Giant* amid Bradford’s illicit scrapping trade, Barnard replicates our global capitalist superstructure in miniature. Arbor and Swifty are inducted into this shadow economy by scrap merchant Kitten, who exploits the boys’ entrepreneurial tendencies and economic insecurity to coerce them into the dangerous harvesting of electrical copper wiring. Kitten is positioned as the ‘selfish giant’ of the title, despite his reaping only meagre benefits from his extractive, exploitative enterprise. Himself an outcast from mainstream society, Kitten instead merely hands down the system’s exploitations to those at his own mercy.

As such, the diminishing of Arbor and Swifty's queer potentiality symbolises the ways extractive capitalism prevents all its subjects from forming and maintaining the solidarities necessary to facilitate the creation of new worlds and new possibilities beyond its ideological boundaries.

Biography: Rhys Handley holds a Master's in Film Studies from King's College, London. His dissertation, comprising an eco-critical reading of the films of Clio Barnard, won the departmental award for highest mark in the 2023/24 academic year. His ongoing work concerns aesthetic and philosophical readings of ecological and societal injustices depicted in film, with a particular interest in social realist cinemas and the post-industrial communities of Northern England. He has previously worked as a journalist and an education support worker for disadvantaged children.

Ruidi Xu (University of Reading), 'Cultural codes and implicit narratives: Political critique and censorship in Yang Lina's *Spring Tide* and *Song of Spring*'

Abstract: This paper examines Yang Lina's use of cultural codes in *Spring Tide* (春潮 *chun chao*, 2019) and *Song of Spring* (春歌 *chun ge*, 2022), exploring how these films critique systemic power and global trauma while navigating state censorship. Drawing on Roland Barthes's cultural codes and Louis Althusser's concept of the family as an ideological state apparatus, the analysis reveals how Yang embeds symbolic and multilayered meanings to address politically sensitive topics. In *Spring Tide*, the fraught relationships between three generations of women symbolise state hierarchies infiltrating private lives. Subtle references to the 1980s 'Strike Hard' (严打, *yan da*) campaign and the Cultural Revolution are encoded within personal narratives, offering a critique of systemic oppression and historical violence. Similarly, *Song of Spring* explores the erasure of historical memory through symbolic locations and the protagonist's guilt over her father's death during the Cultural Revolution. The films blend explicit family dramas with implicit sociopolitical critiques, making them accessible to general audiences while offering deeper insights for informed viewers. By embedding political critique within accessible narratives, Yang Lina balances artistic expression with the constraints of censorship, offering a nuanced exploration of memory, identity, and power. Her work connects local sociopolitical hierarchies with global aesthetic concerns, enriching the discourse on contemporary Chinese cinema.

Biography: Xu Ruidi is a PhD student at the Department of Film, Theatre and Television, University of Reading. Her research focuses on the aesthetic transformations of Chinese independent cinema from 2009 to 2019. Through detailed film textual analysis of selected films, her research investigates how Chinese independent cinema responds to the contemporary threat posed by the convergence of state-driven mainstream political propaganda and commercial cinema, which severely undermines cinematic diversity and critical discourse. By examining these transformations, Ruidi aims to uncover how Chinese independent films confront and adapt to the risks endangering film aesthetics and cultural critique in the present context.

Juan Tarancón (University of Zaragoza), 'What you gonna do when the world's on fire?: Cinematography and the problems with identity politics'

Abstract: Roberto Minervini's filmmaking provides a key site for an examination of how identities are played out in contemporary society and what they have to say to us about the current political moment. This presentation analyzes the strategies adopted by Minervini in his look at marginal communities in the United States' Deep South. More specifically, it focuses on how the cinematographic qualities of *What You Gonna Do When the World's on Fire?* (2018)—the

framing and the photographic aspects of the shots—underscore the relationships between film and identity. Starting off from the premise that identity is a process that is always being constituted within representation, what I propose to do is to draw together the film's aesthetics of intimacy and compassion, on the one hand, and cultural studies' emphasis on radical contextuality, on the other, to show how the film articulates into a complex conjunctural whole formed by diverse historical processes and contradictory perspectives regarding identity struggles and their relation to emancipatory projects. One of the most characteristic features of the present political landscape is the changing attitude towards identity politics, in particular as concerns the relationships between universality, collectivity, and individuality. While reactionary groups are appropriating the affective power of identity to move their political projects forward, the Left is caught up in a struggle over the appropriateness of identity-based movements. As I aim to show, Minervini's aesthetic strategies offer positions from which we can deal with these contradictions, forcing us to embrace the complexity of identity issues.

Biography: Juan A. Tarancón is Lecturer in Film Studies and Cultural Studies in the Department of English at the University of Zaragoza, Spain. He has written on film genre theory, on representations of immigration and class, and on the work of filmmakers like John Sayles and Carlos Saura. His work has appeared in *CineAction*, *Cultural Studies*, *The Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *New Cinemas*, etc. He is the co-editor of *Global Genres, Local Films: The Transnational Dimension of Spanish Cinema* (Bloomsbury, 2016) and *Screening the Crisis: US Cinema and Social Change in the Wake of the 2008 Crash* (Bloomsbury, 2022).

2A.7: Reconstructing Aesthetic Historiographies

Chair: Matthew Bruce

Vladimir Rosas-Salazar (Queen Mary, University of London), 'Piecing Together the Blast: Memory and Image Reconstruction in Natalia Garayalde's *Esquirlas*'

Abstract: The use of home movies and amateur archival footage has become an increasingly prominent way for documentary filmmakers to provide an intimate counterpoint to official historical accounts. This presentation examines how Natalia Garayalde's *Esquirlas* (2020) assembles a compelling narrative around the 1995 Río Tercero military factory explosion through the lens of childhood-recorded footage. Through its layered temporal structure merging amateur video recordings, family archives, and contemporary reflections, *Esquirlas* blurs the boundaries between public and private memories of Argentina's political violence. Garayalde juxtaposes her intimate childhood perspective of filming the explosion at age 12 with the nation's broader issues of institutional impunity during the President Carlos Saul Menem era. This interweaving of the personal and the national demonstrates how private memories, particularly those captured through a child's gaze, can challenge and subvert public histories. *Esquirlas* deconstructs how amateur recordings, initially created as a child's response to trauma, can transform into powerful historical documents that contest official narratives. From the raw footage of the explosion's immediate aftermath to the complex web of political implications that emerged over decades, the documentary highlights how personal archives can unveil hidden histories. I argue that *Esquirlas*'s innovative use of childhood-recorded footage serves as a case study for understanding how amateur archives can dismantle mainstream historical narratives and reveal new dimensions of collective trauma.

Biography: Vladimir Rosas-Salazar is a Lecturer in Latin American Studies at Queen Mary, University of London. He did his PhD in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. His research bridges film and media studies with memory studies, focusing on the interplay between archival materials, personal histories, and cultural memory.

Miguel Gaggiotti (University of Bristol), 'Coming to terms with nonprofessional acting: Comparing critical writings on "the coffee grinder sequence" in *Umberto D.*'

Abstract: This paper explores challenges critics face when describing, analysing and evaluating performances by non-professional actors in fiction films. More specifically, through a comparative analysis of writings on "the coffee grinder sequence" in *Umberto D.* (dir. Vittorio de Sica, 1952), I will argue that certain instances of non-professional acting meaningfully mobilize a variety of self-effacing details that, building on the non-professional actor's anonymity, draw attention *away* from the acting, delaying its aesthetic appreciation as such.

The "coffee grinder sequence", in which young maid Maria (Maria Pia Casilio) goes through her morning routine, is among the most discussed scenes in the history of European cinema and has attracted the interest of André Bazin ([1952] 2005), Luis Buñuel ([1953] 2002), Gilles Deleuze ([1985] 2014), Millicent Marcus (1986) and Andrew Klevan (2000), among many others. Vittorio de Sica (director), Cesare Zavattini (writer) and Maria Pia Casilio (actor), have also offered their views on this iconic sequence and how it was crafted. However, despite the sequence's intense focus on Maria's gestures, movements and actions, little attention has been paid to Casilio's performance. This lack of scrutiny is particularly significant given the fact that Casilio had no acting training or experience before making the film. This paper will explore how the figure of the non-professional actor complicates, among others, aspects of aesthetic appreciation and authorship. Furthermore, this meta-critical study will expand our understanding of how

non-professional acting can guide our perception to specific performance and non-performance features and, in the process, invite or deflect our attention.

Biography: Miguel Gaggiotti is a filmmaker and Senior Lecturer in Film and Television at the University of Bristol. He is the author of *Nonprofessional Film Performance* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2023) and his writings on film have been published in *Screen*, *Movie: A Journal of Film Criticism* and *The Routledge Companion to European Cinema*, among others.

Lillian Wang (University of Manchester), 'Speaking to fragmented pasts: Creative practice methodologies and Asian film archives'

Abstract: This paper takes as its starting point an accidental discovery of a made-in-Singapore film that is not part of the Asian Film Archive in Singapore. After learning that a friend's mother had a small role in the 1958 film, *Selendang Delima*, I could find only a collection of stills and a VCD copy of the film in other Singaporean institutions, as well as an unsubtitled version on YouTube. This incomplete discovery exemplifies the unevenness of film archives in Asia and challenges the conclusiveness and authority of archives in the Asian context.

The status of film archives, particularly in post-colonial Asian nations, tends to be unstable, due to political upheaval, limited resources and environmental factors. Scholars and activists (Khoo, 2021; Edmonson, 2000) have called for increased transnational cooperation to preserve what remains of Asian film history. However, existing structural inequalities of international networks, largely established and financially supported by relatively stable European and North American institutions, can reinforce dominant Western-centric narratives (Navitski, 2021) and risk measuring Asian archival practices against Western-centric benchmarks.

My PhD research explores such complexities through creative practice, asking: How can researchers of Asian cinema address ambiguities in the archives? In what ways can creative practice intervention offer new perspectives by engaging with film artefacts beyond the archive? This presentation traces my uncovering of fragments of the history of *Selendang Delima* and suggests that creative practice intervention can foster dialogue with the past, gaining new understandings of film culture and identity from these fragments.

Biography: Lillian Wang is a filmmaker and PhD student in Film Studies at the University of Manchester. She holds an MFA in Film Directing and Production from the UCLA School of Theatre, Film and Television and an MA in Film Studies from the University of Manchester. She has over 25 years of experience as an independent filmmaker and as a screenwriter and executive producer for television. As a film scholar, she is interested in archives and national identities in film, particularly in post-colonial and Asian contexts.

Jiacheng Du (University of Southampton), 'Terayama Shūji's reinterpretation of Surrealism'

Abstract: In 1925, just one year after the publication of the Manifesto of Surrealism, French Surrealist works were introduced to Japan. As an important figure of Japanese avant-garde art, Terayama Shūji showed great interest in Surrealism and paid tribute to Surrealism in his films. Previous scholarship has focussed on Terayama's application of Surrealist visual techniques in his filmmaking, but not enough attention has been paid to his view of Surrealism and his reinterpretation of it. My paper discusses how Terayama reinterprets the notion of Surrealism as 'a sustaining attack on the veiled reality.' For Terayama there is no alternative to 'Sur-reality' because real life itself is Surrealist. My paper sketches the socio-cultural context and the tradition

of Japanese Surrealism to explain the formation of Terayama's understanding of Surrealism. A specific case study in my analysis is *Den-en ni shisu* (*To Die in the Country*, 1974). My paper argues that for Terayama, Surrealism is not just a series of stylistic choices but a method to reveal the inner life of a hidden reality.

Biography: Jiacheng Du is a third-year PhD candidate of Film Studies at University of Southampton, and his research interests are Surrealism and film, and interdisciplinary studies of film and art world. Jiacheng's PhD dissertation is *Female Representations in Surrealist Films*, aiming to discuss Surrealist reinterpretations of desire, rebellion, and other notions in the Post-war era.

2A.8: Mediating Migration and Diasporic Lives

Chair: Yunke Li

McNeil Taylor (University of Cambridge), "Try a little tenderness: Cinematic bruising and grafting in *Saint Omer* (2022)"

Abstract: Alice Diop's courtroom drama *Saint Omer* (2022) is a drastic escalation of recent French women filmmakers' exploration of transgression and the monstrous. The film follows the trial of a young Senegalese immigrant to France, Laurence Coly (Guslagie Malanda), who admits to drowning her infant daughter in the sea while also attributing the act to the influence of sorcery. I begin by contending that Diop's invocation of the myth of Medea, via grafted footage of Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1969 cinematic adaptation of the myth, colors the murder as a paradoxical act of tenderness, a concept with a long pedigree in her work, most notably in her film *Towards Tenderness* (2016).

I argue that this ambiguous notion of tenderness is clarified via the related form of the blues, operative as a sensorial and conceptual threshold across *Saint Omer* and its prominent intertexts. From the Nina Simone recording of 'Little Girl Blue' which soundtracks the film's closing sequence, to the marine hauntology of the Atlantic Ocean which threatens to engulf the film's legal drama, I analyse how notions of blueness—and its correlate of blackness—conjugate trauma across aesthetic and political registers. Emphasizing the 'black and blue' quality of the film's cinematic grafts as a kind of 'diegetic bruising', I argue this embodied and affective understanding of inter-textuality reworks boundaries between documentary and fiction, humans and the nonhuman environment, and most importantly, the trauma of history and the promise of a fugitive politics.

Biography: Dr. McNeil Taylor is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Cambridge. He researches intersections between French cinema and philosophy, with a particular focus on questions of ecology, sexuality, embodiment and affect, and cinematic time. His current book project, adapted from his dissertation, examines a corpus of slow cinema filmmakers who allow us to see the fluctuating boundaries of the human figure in the Anthropocene as a question of sexuality. His research has appeared in venues such as *French Studies*, *Paragraph* and *Humanities*, and he has also written public-facing criticism for venues like *Notebook*, *Hyperallergic* and *Another Gaze*.

Yunke Li (Queen Mary, University of London), 'Psychogeography of post-millennial Shenzhen cinema: Migration, non-places, and hybrid spaces in *Damp Season* and *China's Van Goghs*'

Abstract: This paper explores the representations of global migration and hybrid urban spaces in post-millennial Shenzhen, as depicted in the films *Damp Season* and *China's Van Goghs*. Shenzhen, one of China's super tier-1 cities, catalysed rapid urbanisation through economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. This transformation has drawn millions of migrant workers, creating a geo-culturally hybrid population while also giving rise to what Erin Huang terms "the emergence of non-places—places of transit without history or identity." These films vividly capture Shenzhen's sensory and psychogeographic dimensions, portraying the interplay between migrant identities and the city's fragmented, ever-changing spaces.

A key focus is the "urban village" located in the city centre, marked by its affordability and chaotic, cyberpunk aesthetic. These liminal spaces embody both opportunity and alienation, revealing the precarious existence of migrant workers negotiating lives between globalised modernity and cultural dislocation.

I will examine how the sensory aesthetics of these films—through imagery, sound, and narrative—convey the psychological and emotional connections between the urban village and its inhabitants. By tracing the lived experiences of these migrants, this paper highlights the city's dual role as a site of belonging and estrangement, shaped by its residents and shaping them in turn.

This analysis situates Shenzhen's cinematic representation within broader discourses on transnational migration and globalised urbanisation through psychogeographic research. It contributes to understanding how screen media engage with the dynamics of megalopolises, hybrid spaces, and the lives of migrant workers navigating societies of transit and transformation.

Biography: My research engages with psychogeography in post-millennial Chinese cinematic cities. It aims to illuminate the sensory side of the city and the interdependent psychogeographic relationship between urban place and their inhabitants. I will target cities that haven't been extensively discussed by western scholars such as Shenzhen, Wuhan, Chongqing, and Hangzhou. I did my MA for Research at The University of Warwick, and my BA at Huazhong University of Science and Technology, National Taiwan University, and UC Berkeley.

James Mulvey (University College Cork), 'Displaced pixels: The essay portrait film and the migrant journey'

Abstract: Shahin is at sea, he is an immigrant, he is alone, and when he panics and calls out, nobody answers. The global posthuman aesthetic of the gaze-as-surveillance unsettles the viewer. A camera scans the coast: there are close ups of rock formations, a lighthouse and the flare of light it emits. The camera loops, disappearing back out to sea, surveying far beyond the capacity of the human eye. The narrator tells us that it is Shahin's birthday; he is twenty-one: "He said: while I was dreaming I knew it was a dream, but when I woke up, I realized there were flashes of reality, remnants of the past... I feel old, I aged in fast forward, I lost track of time, a blank, a void...".

Ailleurs Partout (2020) is a dystopic essay portrait film, essaying on the deadness of time as experienced through the pursuit of asylum. This portrait is a reconstruction of Shahin's journey, composed of text messages, administrative documents, conversations, and the narrative voice of the filmmaker as friend. This is an archival faceless portrait where an encounter takes place between the viewer, Shahin as seen by the bureaucratic structures of the state, and the filmmakers.

This paper proposes a mode of portrait-making which undermines representations of likeness through the production of a life recorded from digital images, sound and text and archived materials. As an essay portrait film, it recreates the migrants journey negotiating the tension between the local and global and the concrete and virtual.

Biography: Dr James Mulvey is a Lecturer in Film Studies in University College Cork. His main interests include the essay film, the portrait film, fiction/non-fiction and film-philosophy. He is a member of the Consultative Board for *Alphaville Journal of Film and Screen Media*. He is the Early Careers Researcher representative for the *European Communication Research and Education Association* (ECREA) in the division of film studies. He is the documentary programmer for IndieCork film festival, with an emphasis on fostering independent, essayistic and art cinema, where he focuses on developing links between the academic and filmic communities.

Qinran Wang (University of Birmingham), 'Are you coming to help or hurt? Drone footage usage in refugee documentaries, nature documentaries and war propaganda'

Abstract: Recent military conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East and elsewhere, have seen an increasing use of militarised drones, including the extensive repurposing of consumer models. Equipped with a camera for piloting, drones have been used to bomb and divebomb combatants and facilities, with footage shared widely on traditional or social media (or both) for propaganda purposes, with images shared on both tradition and social media. Samuel (2018), points out the dehumanization at work in such imagery, and the questionable ethics of drone warfare. However, there are other film genres where drone cinematography has also been used extensively, notably natural history documentaries and refugee documentaries, but with very different intentions. Drone shots in such documentaries are usually designed to stimulate the audiences' compassion, often through the presentation of the stark contrast between small individuals and large environments. Although having contradictory purposes, the camera movements and shot sizes in those documentaries are similar to those in war propaganda videos. Are the good intentions undercut by an inherent dehumanization in drone cinematography? How do these different uses of drone footage inform each other? Working as a development of Samuel's (2018) research, but also making use of ideas developed by Baudrillard in 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place' (1991), this paper discusses drone shots in refugee documentaries, nature documentaries and war propaganda videos from the perspective of distance, spaces and 'violent cartographies'.

Biography: My name is Qinran Wang (Leo), and I am from China. I completed my master's degree in Film and TV at the University of Birmingham in 2021. Currently, I am a Ph.D. candidate at the same university, focusing on film and creative writing. My research interests are refugees, human rights and documentaries, and my Ph.D. program is the Humanitarian gaze in refugee documentaries.

2A.9: Imaginations of Flourishing Futures (Media and Environment SIG) - Hybrid

Chair: Nina Halton-Hernandez (University of Southampton)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Rebecca Harrison (Open University), 'This land is their land: Alternative encounters with nature at *Star Wars* location sites'

Abstract: For 48 years, the *Star Wars* franchise has filmed at sites across Wales, Scotland, and England. From demilitarised air bases to woodland, and from quarries to petrochemical infrastructures, filmmakers have represented British locations as seemingly futuristic places on far-off planets. Some, like Ivinghoe Beacon, are digitally transformed to appear flooded or destroyed by war. Others, like the Barbican, stand in for imperial architecture under authoritarian rule. But what do these environments look like in their natural state? Who makes decisions about where and when filming takes place, and are non-human lives accounted for? How can we encourage more people to care? In answering the questions, my paper considers how screen media can encourage community organising for 'flourishing futures.' I've spent the past six months visiting *Star Wars* locations across the three nations, and have recorded video of the sites in their natural states for a short film that will invite audiences to pay closer attention to Britain's varied ecologies, and to land ownership and management. Drawing on the footage, data from project surveys, and UK nature policy, I aim to present an alternative audiovisual encounter with the land and its inhabitants.

Biography: I'm principal investigator of the Environmental Impact of Filmmaking project, which explores how the *Star Wars* franchise has made new worlds at the expense of local communities and ecologies around the globe. My research more broadly is interested in histories of media technologies and how they are implicated in systems of power. My work appears in a variety of journals, broadcast media, etc. Currently, I'm employed by The Open University.

Maria Velez-Serna (University of Stirling), 'Open-cast coal and the future of landscape in sponsored film and video'

Abstract: Opencast or open-pit mining is a form of extraction that produces visible, large-scale changes to natural and cultural landscapes. The visual representation of these changes, in documentary film and photography particularly, has tended either towards the technological sublime or towards the dystopian. Industrial and institutional film and video, on the other hand, offer pragmatic visions of change, where promises are made regarding the future of mining landscapes. This paper examines visual discourses of mine remediation and ecological restoration produced by UK and Colombian coal mining companies through their corporate and public relations media, both historical and contemporary. Contributing to the project of thinking through "media's entanglements with extraction" (Jaikumar and Grieveson 2024), I consider the role of sponsored visions for a flourishing post-extractive future in legitimating this form of mining.

Biography: María A. Vélez Serna teaches film and media at the University of Stirling. She studied at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia and the University of Glasgow. She is the author of *Ephemeral Cinema Spaces* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020) and has also written on early film distribution and showmanship, and on Colombian films and audiences. Her current work focuses on the uses of audiovisual media in facilitating and contesting extractivism. She is on the editorial board of NECSUS.

Zohreh Baghban (De Montfort University), 'Grim posterity: "Staying with trouble" through my cat's gaze'

Abstract: This audio-visual (mixed media) presentation explores how imagery mixed with sound and the environment might constitute a form of practice-research project in the way we communicate multiple perspectives. Through the application of my digital collages and Kris's arresting compositions, Grim Posterity tells the tale of entangled humans and nonhumans in the contemporary world. It confronts the audience with the discerning gaze of a cat upon the world as the images merge into different shapes and sizes on the vast darkness of the screen. It's the audiovisual experience of global warnings of two clashing sides as the clock is ticking for the next generations. It provokes searching for possibilities in the hasty world of parallel interests. We flee from revealing apocalypses looming over corpses of our children. Putrefaction of our desires ails us as war, the herald of Armageddon, warps our dreams/nightmares. Through this example in creative practice, I will show how using Haraway's "staying with trouble" in practice might offer a different perspective in imagining flourishing futures, where there is an attempt at balancing the overwhelming destruction with hopeful reimagining. This short film will propose that creative associations with nonhuman representations through audiovisual modes offer a potent vehicle in imaginatively enabling an audience to inhabit 'other' perspectives. In the act of looking through an 'other' perspective through this audiovisual experience, I explore how our creative actions approach what Joseph Anderton suggests is a 'gulf between the human and the world of nonhuman animals' so often figured in terms of language/subjectivity.

Biography: Zohreh Baghban is an Iranian PGR writer/artist, undertaking an M4C funded PhD at De Montfort University, concerning creative writing's capacity to imaginatively adopt animals' perspective to generate a bio-ethical understanding of UN's SDGs (2, 12, and 13) in Climate Change, sustainable consumption, and food security to impact non-scholarly audiences, using theoretical and empirical research. Kris Parker is a Post Graduate student at DMU studying for an MA by Research in Music.

Kieran Wakeley (Queen Mary, University of London), 'Revisiting *The City* (1939): Imagining better futures through sponsored film'

Abstract: The debut of *The City* (1939) at the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair typified the utopian ambition on display at the 'World of Tomorrow' for building a better future. A coalescence of artists, designers, urban planners, and industrialists used cinema to communicate an uplifting vision of America's future. New ways of living facilitated by wonders of modern technology projected an optimism about the future and promised that an emerging consumer culture and transformations in patterns of living would act as a panacea for the blight of the second industrial revolution. These speculative futures were linked not just to the sociopolitical crises and aesthetic modes of the day, but to the institutional prerogatives of their producers and the fair's organisational body. To explore these concepts, this paper draws from the rich archival records of the New York World's Fair Corporation to draw attention to the overlooked production and exhibition history of *The City*. Although the film has received some critical attention from scholars, its production context and exhibition practices have so far eluded close scrutiny. By revisiting *The City*, this paper interrogates the motivations of those producers whose imagination of the future was committed to film and seen by the multitudes of fairgoers, contextualising the internal conflicts of its production and questioning what might be learned by considering how this optimism for better living slipped from the horizon.

Biography: He is an early careers researcher and recent doctoral graduate. He was awarded a LAHP funded PhD from UCL where he also was awarded an MA in film. His research interests

include: the relationship between cinema and culture, cinematic interventions into public life particularly by sponsored, non-theatrical, and educational film, American political history - with a focus on twentieth century thought and culture, short film, documentary, and propaganda. He is currently working on a journal article analysing educational films produced by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM).

Panel Session 2B

2B.1: Aesthetics of Authenticity

Chair: Louis Bayman (University of Southampton)

Rosemary Alexander-Jones (University of Warwick), 'Aesthetics of authenticity: How to construct a believable heritage diegesis for a global audience'

Abstract: The set of films and TV known as period or costume dramas (here referred to as heritage media) often rely on a certain aesthetic to draw in and then engage their global audience. This aesthetic, identified in the work of Andrew Higson in the 1980s now needs to be reevaluated to understand how modern heritage media, such as *Wolf Hall* (BBC), *Bridgerton* (Netflix), *The Great* (Hulu), and *Sanditon* (ITV), have changed. The creation of a heritage diegesis is deliberately inoffensive and pleasingly picturesque, constructed to illustrate an entirely narratively driven world that 'feels' authentic to the audience. But where does this authenticity come from? How do audiences understand the world of heritage media and what filmmaking techniques are required to create it? Drawing on the work of Andrew Higson, Gaham Cairns, and Ning Wang, this paper proposes a new theory of authenticity when considering heritage media, where the indisputable age of the filming locations (along with the connection to film tourism) alter the audience's perception of what is authentic and what can be accepted. Driven primarily by the aesthetics, the objective authenticity (and the awareness of historical accuracy) leads to a new understanding of how a global audience understands English heritage media.

Biography: Rosemary Alexander-Jones is a teaching fellow at Warwick University where she convenes and co-ordinates the Inquiry Research Skills modules for the International Foundation Programme. Her research focusses on filming at heritage sites, and she was awarded her PhD from the University of York for her thesis 'The Impact of Filming on Heritage Locations in England'. She is also an accomplished filmmaker and her short films have been showcased at the 360° Film Festival and the Jane Austen Film Festival. Her previous video-essay 'Chatsworth: The Permanent Pemberley' can be found on the Association of Adaptation Studies' YouTube channel.

Lance Hayward (University of Warwick), 'Deception, authenticity and performance in reality television'

Abstract: Reality television's claim to represent reality is often perceived as problematic because of the kinds of performances it exhibits. As Annette Hill notes, the 'more ordinary people are perceived to perform for the cameras, the less real the programme appears to be to viewers' (2005, p.57). Formats which formalise deception as central to their artificiality add a complex dimension to this, because they often then allow us to differentiate between authenticity which is performed for the purposes of deceiving other players, and more everyday forms of social performance. This paper will take as its focus the internationally successful formats of *The Circle* and *The Traitors*. *The Circle* is a social media-based popularity contest in which players can augment their virtual personae, or 'catfish' as entirely different people. While this would seem to foreground deception, because the participants live separately and interact virtually, the programme gives the impression that participants only perform online. By contrast, *The Traitors* features participants who complete challenges to build a cash prize. Participants nominated as deceptive 'traitors' must 'kill' competing players and remain undetected by the true 'faithful' in order to outlast them and steal the cash prize at the end. This premise foregrounds, and encourages us to analyse, both deceptive and everyday performances of the self and claims to

performative authenticity. This suggests an as-yet unexplored facet of reality television's claim to represent real behaviour, despite its formats' inherent artifice.

Biography: Lance Hayward (he/him) is an Early Career Fellow at the University of Warwick's Institute of Advanced Study and an Associate Tutor in Warwick's department of Film and Television Studies. He recently completed his PhD in Film and Television Studies at Warwick. His thesis, which sits at the interface of Television Studies and documentary theory, explores the formal properties and theoretical implications of the serialised documentary. His doctoral research was funded by a Midlands4Cities/AHRC studentship. He has broader interests in documentary and factual television, and is a member of Warwick's Centre for Television Histories.

James Macdowell (University of Warwick), 'YouTube aesthetics, immediacy and metamodernism'

Abstract: In her already widely influential book *Immediacy, or the Cultural Style of Too Late Capitalism* (2023), Anna Kornbluh argues that 'postmodernism no longer furnishes the logic of the contemporary.' She suggests that what has taken its place is 'immediacy': an aesthetic tendency that rejects formal stylization and fictionality in favour of perceived 'directness', 'authenticity', and 'first-personalism'. This paper begins a dialogue between Kornbluh's immediacy and another influential account of 'post-postmodern' aesthetics: metamodernism (see, Vermeulen/van den Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', 2010).

Kornbluh contrasts 'postmodernism's skepticism and irony' against 'immediacy's authentications'; postmodern 'waning of affect' against immediacy's 'affective extremity'; the former's 'metafictional irony' against the latter's 'unfiltered authenticity'. By contrast, metamodern thinkers typically stress the oscillation *between* comparable aesthetic gestures within contemporary aesthetics: self-reflexivity oscillates with authenticity; emotional distance with affective intimacy; irony with sentimentality. Are these divergent or complementary diagnoses?

This paper applies these concepts to a field of contemporary media aesthetics persistently associated with 'directness', 'authenticity', and 'first-personalism': YouTube. YouTubers' address is routinely assumed to create (however misleadingly) impressions of 'direct', 'intimate', indeed '*immediate*' communication. Nonetheless, scholars often note YouTubers' routine 'self-reflexivity' about their videos' mediated nature – even (perhaps especially) when they *do* apparently seek an 'unmediated' style of address. Focusing especially on YouTube video essayists who represent differing approaches to these tendencies, this paper weighs immediacy and metamodernism as frameworks for understanding these styles, concluding by reflecting on their relevance to the aesthetics of online video more broadly.

Biography: James MacDowell is Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *Irony in Film* (2016) and *Happy Endings in Hollywood Cinema* (2013). His current research concerns the aesthetics of YouTube, and he makes audiovisual essays for his YouTube channel *The Lesser Feat*.

2B.2: Social Narratives and Practices from Transmedia to Transgender - Hybrid

Chair: Michael Goddard

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Hande Müge Yıldız and Tuğçe Kutlu (Ankara University), 'An Analysis Of The Film *The Watchers* (2024) in the Context Of Surveillance And Privacy'

Abstract: This analysis interprets a forest in film as a metaphor for social media addiction, emphasising themes of identity construction, surveillance, behavioural modification, and the aesthetic representation of globality in screen media. The vast, disorienting forest symbolises the boundlessness of social media, while elements like the bird and missing person posters evoke platforms such as Twitter and inactive yet enduring profiles, underscoring the universal reach and persistent presence of digital identities across borders. Mina's reflection in the mirror, combined with her use of a disguise, reflects the curated identities individuals construct online, illustrating how social media enables users to project idealised, culturally transcendent selves that resonate globally. The coop, akin to a smartphone screen, represents the omnipresent surveillance culture in which users become both observers and the observed, embodying a digital panopticon that reflects global aesthetics of connectivity and exposure. This analysis further examines the "post-truth" nature of social media, where platforms shape behaviours through design, fostering globally interconnected yet often superficial interactions. Using panoptic and omniptic surveillance theories, this paper critiques how privacy erodes, identities become commodified, and users are drawn into addictive behaviours. These metaphorical representations provide a foundation for future research into data ethics, user privacy, and the psychological impacts of prolonged exposure within an aesthetically and culturally globalised digital sphere.

Biography: Hande Müge YILDIZ graduated from the Faculty of Communication, Department of Public Relations and Advertising at Ege University in 2012. She completed her master's degree in 2017 at Yaşar University, School of Social Sciences, Department of Communication, with a dissertation titled 'The Impact of Consumer Engagement On Social Media On Brand Loyalty'. The same year, she began her doctoral studies in the Department of Public Relations and Advertising at Ege University, Graduate School of Social Sciences. In 2021, she was appointed as a Research Assistant in the Department of Public Relations and Advertising at Ankara University, Faculty of Communication. She earned her doctorate in 2024 with a dissertation titled *Perception of Privacy in Social Media: A Research on Generations*.

Tuğçe Kutlu completed her undergraduate education in Radio, Television and Film as a valedictorian at Ankara University, received another BA in International Relations from Anadolu University. She completed her MA in Film Studies at University College London (UCL) under a scholarship, wrote her dissertation on grief in the 21st-Century horror films supervised by Professor Susanne Kord at UCL. She wrote her dissertation on the 21st-century Turkish cinema and power relations for her second MA at Ankara University. Her works have been published by academic journals. She has been to numerous academic conferences, presenting her work. She was also a part of the 'Doing Women's Global Horror Film History Project', led by Alison Peirse. She is a PhD Candidate at Ankara University working on trauma narrative in post-war films. She is a research assistant at the same faculty.

Michael Goddard (Goldsmiths, University of London), 'The World According to 90 Day Fiancé: Reality Vérité, The Touristic Gaze, and Global Social Media Facilitated Romance'

Abstract: Described by its creator Matt Sharp as ‘the most diverse show on television’ and filmed in more than 50 countries, *90 Day Fiancé* (2014-) and its spin-offs constitute a very different mode of Romance Reality TV to other contemporary examples like *The Bachelor* or *Married at First Sight*. Unlike the closed sets and artificial set ups of these shows, the 90 Day franchise takes place in a range of real global locations, presents pre-existing relationships, and initial casting was via immigration lawyers, rather than applications or social media. Instead of a self-imposed temporal structure it was initially based on the US 90-day fiancé visa as providing an accelerated marriage timeline, although this is not necessarily the case for many of the spinoffs. Nevertheless, the show is very much a symptom of the international links made possible by the global dissemination of both smart phones and social media platforms, facilitating connections that would never have taken place in the past. This paper will examine how this diversity is presented, with reference to some critiques of the show as mobilising a touristic gaze, as well as the privileging of US participants. It will argue that the show is equally focused on othering and making strange all its settings, including the US ones, and at times makes radical aesthetic choices, especially in its presentation of differently abled participants. As such, the show follows the tradition of cinema vérité interventions in reality, rather than direct cinema or Reality TV conventions.

Biography: Dr Michael N. Goddard is Reader in Film and Screen Media at Goldsmiths, University of London. He has published widely on international cinema and audiovisual culture as well as cultural and media theory. He is also a media theorist, especially in the fields of media ecologies and media archaeology, as well as in digital media. In media archaeology, his most significant contribution is the monograph, *Guerrilla Networks* (2018), the culmination of his media archaeological research to date, which was published by Amsterdam University Press. His previous book, *Impossible Cartographies* (2013) was on the cinema of Raúl Ruiz.

Yihui Wang, ‘The Thinking-Being Relationship under the Technology-World: On Metaverse Weltanschauung’

Abstract: The concept Metaverse originates from rapid development of digital technology, implying a quest for the transcendence of Metaverse, i.e., the Metaverse Worldview. This question involves the search for answer to the existential theory of how people grasp themselves and cope with the most subtle changes in their living conditions in the era of confusion between the virtual and the real. Starting from Kant, Weltanschauung is a person’s grasp of the totality of the world in which he lives, including three aspects: (1) the depiction of the material world, (2) the recognition of the spiritual world, and (3) the contemplation of the relationship between thinking and being. Throughout history, worldview of mankind has gone through four stages: (1) the primitive stage of animism, (2) the language stage of spiritualism, (3) the scientific stage of intellectualism, and (4) the modern and postmodern stages of generationism. In this sense, Metaverse Worldview can be positioned in the modern/postmodern generationism while conceived in the scientific intellectualism, and can be defined as a future picture drawn for the world by people based on Virtual Reality digital technology in the development process of Internet technology. Finally, at the level of thinking-being relationship, human beings regain courage to rebuild the tower of Babel and ambition to create a digital utopia. Metaverse is a combination of humanity’s long need to transcend itself and the vast possibilities offered by virtual digital technology. It seems infinite but there are hidden boundaries, while every shaking of human worldview happens at the boundary.

Biography: Yihui Wang, a PhD student from Communication University of China under co-supervision from University of Bristol from 2023 to 2024. Interested in film philosophy and

Romantic criticism, now exploring on the historical and aesthetic attributes of Romanticism in relation to works and movements in recent Chinese cinema, and considering the social and spiritual questions arising from these works in relation to contemporary forces of modernity and modernization.

Sarah Dean, 'Tracing Latin American Trans Ethnographies'

Abstract: In the absence of substantive archive when thinking of trans and queer representation on screen, this research pulls from the global cache of documentary filmmaking as a restorative and ongoing project, to reveal unfounded territories within trans screen ethnographies. Looking within a Latin American context, this paper considers the autoethnographic output of Colombian films *Anbell69* (Theo Montoya, 2022) and *Autoetnografía* (Iván Esteban Reina Ortiz, 2021) as differing approaches that evidence a steer in Latin American ethnographic film towards the auto-, distinguishing a practice that is less interested in the educational and informative, and more towards the aesthetic and experiential.

Bringing together theories of queer futurity (Muñoz 2009) queer negativity (Edelman 2004), and queer decolonisation (Domínguez Ruvalcaba 2016), this research considers the ethics and stakes of the hybrid nonfiction mode when capturing queer and trans lives on screen. In questioning the extent to which autoethnography can fill the representational gaps created within more conventional trans ethnographic depictions, this research asks whether autoethnography offers a reasonable answer to (re)presenting trans aesthetics on screen.

Biography: Sarah Dean is a recent MPhil graduate in Film and Screen Studies from the University of Cambridge. They have been published in the Bowdoin Journal of Cinema and have a paper forthcoming with Intellect publication Film Matters on non-binary humanoids. Their research focuses on trans and queer aesthetics in film.

2B.3: Temporalities in Contemporary Japanese Cinema - Hybrid

Chair: Alastair Phillips (University of Warwick)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Jennifer Coates (University of Sheffield), 'Living in non-linear time: Habitation and multi-timeline storytelling in contemporary Japanese cinema'

Abstract: From art house cinema to commercial films, contemporary Japanese cinema is taking an increasingly innovative approach to the depiction of temporality, recalling the playful and challenging approaches to time common to earlier avant-garde films of the 1960s and 1970s Japan. Focusing on Kiyohara Yui's *Our House* (*Watashitachi no ie*, 2017) and Chihara Tetsuya's *Ice Cream Fever* (*Aisu kurimu netsu*, 2023), this presentation explores the role of habitation in marking time in non-linear narratives, and the relation of habitation and time to themes of loneliness and social isolation.

Habitation encompasses not only housing but also the networked social existence that is living in a community. Architecture scholar Oliver Heckman argues, "It not only transcends the often monofunctional focus on housing and with it the different socio-spatial demarcations of the apartment, the house, the neighbourhood, and the city, but it also encompasses the socio-economic practices and networks emerging across these domains" (2022: 2). Habitation is therefore both an activity and a networked condition of existence with others.

The films analysed here use domestic spaces and behaviours to mark the passage of time, and to evoke the loneliness and isolation of the protagonists, which in turn acts to distort the protagonists' own sense of time. Habitation spaces and behaviours are used to evoke this sense of isolation and its impact on the loneliness sufferer's sense of time. This presentation explores how multi-timeline storytelling and the depiction of non-linear time is made legible for audiences using habitation spaces and behaviours.

Biography: Jennifer Coates is Professor of Japanese Studies at the School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield. She is the author of *Making Icons: Repetition and the Female Image in Japanese Cinema, 1945-1964* (Hong Kong University Press 2016) and *Film Viewing in Postwar Japan, 1945-1968: An Ethnographic Study* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022) as well as a number of journal articles and book chapters on cinema and audiences in postwar and contemporary Japan. Jennifer is a AHRC Innovation Scholar and recipient of the 2021 Philip Leverhulme Prize for Visual and Performing Arts.

Yue Su (University of Warwick), 'Queer children and the (im)possibility of "Growing side-ways" in Hirokazu Koreeda's *Monster* (2023)'

Abstract: *Monster* (Hirokazu Kore-eda, 2023), awarded the Queer Palm, deploys the global aesthetics of queer cinema (Schoonover and Galt, 2016) to enable the portrayal of children's sexuality in today's Japan. To explore the queer children in *Monster*, this paper deploys Kathryn Stockton's notion of 'growing sideways' that proposes a non-linear mode of children's growth 'involving odd lingerings, wayward paths, and fertile delays'. 'Growing sideways', therefore, dismantles the straight and linear trajectory of 'growing up' towards heteronormativity and adulthood (Stockton 2009). For *Monster*, I argue that 'sideways' acts as a narrative and aesthetic strategy to create a queer time and space to question the logic of teleological progression and explore alternative ways of growing.

Following the tripartite narrative structure, I will explore three main spaces in this film – the family, the school and the children’s self-created space, examining how the film shifts its perspectives to reconsider the possibility and the impossibility of sideways growth. Firstly, I will discuss how the film negotiates with the growth mode towards heterosexual marriage and then resituates the children in a more liquid form of kinship. Secondly, I will observe how the film criticises the dysfunctional school system that orients children into a hegemonic path towards the future. Thirdly, I will turn to the agency of children evidenced by their capacity of creating a queer space out of the institutions of family and school. Through a close reading of the abandoned train carriage, I will further question the (im)possibility of children’s sideways movement in an uncertain age.

Biography: Yue Su is a PhD student in the Co-Tutelle PhD Programme in Global Screen Studies between the University of Warwick (UK) and Nagoya University (Japan). His PhD project is titled *‘Liquid Kinship and the Cinema of Kore-eda Hirokazu’*. His article *‘Liquidity and Stillness: The Sea and Shore and the Furo in Kore-eda Hirokazu’s Cinema’* was granted an honourable mention for the ‘Best Published Essay by a Doctoral Student’ in the 2024 BAFTSS publication awards.

Betty Stojnic (University of Warwick), ‘Anime’s past futures: Prometheanism and Epimetheanism in Ōtomo Katsuhiro’s *Steamboy*’

Abstract: Science fiction media is commonly discussed in terms of its ability to speculate on the future and anticipate new technological developments. This presentation examines the importance of both the past and the future for the temporality of science fiction via the steampunk anime *Steamboy* (Ōtomo Katsuhiro, 2004), a retrofuturistic film set in a fantastical version of nineteenth-century England. *Steamboy*’s depiction of the industrial revolution and its ethical challenges is analysed in relation to Prometheanism, the political and philosophical affirmation of humanity’s knowledge and mastery over the natural world, symbolised by the myth of Prometheus. *Steamboy* challenges the Prometheanism and scientific determinism of the industrial revolution by adopting what Bernard Stiegler calls an ‘Epimethean’ perspective on technoscience, named after Prometheus’ brother Epimetheus who lacked the foresight to endow humans with natural survival attributes, forcing Prometheus to steal fire from the gods. By uniting *prometheia* (forethought) with *epimetheia* (afterthought), Stiegler argues that a reflection on past shortcomings is just as crucial to the development of technics as the anticipation of the future, opening up alternatives to the progressivist view of technoscience.

Steamboy’s anachronistic portrayal of steam power, its critique of scientific megalomania, and its simultaneous use of 3DCG and ‘traditional’ hand-drawn animation enable it to hold these temporalities – forethought and afterthought – in constant tension. By staging an encounter between the technological past and the future through genre, narrative, and animation forms, *Steamboy* demonstrates anime aesthetics’ unique ability to interrogate the unpredictable outcomes of technological advancement.

Biography: Betty Stojnic is a student of the Co-Tutelle PhD Program in Global Screen Studies at Nagoya University and the University of Warwick. Her research focuses on the intersection of philosophy and anime, particularly the depiction of technology in science fiction. She is currently writing her doctoral dissertation on the films of Ōtomo Katsuhiro and their resonances with various theories of technological acceleration.

Adam Bingham (University of Nottingham), 'The past is the present of the future: Time travel in Japanese cinema'

Abstract: This paper explores globality in Japanese cinema through analysis of two recent time travel films. Beyond *Doraemon* and *The Girl Who Leapt through Time* and these texts' myriad different iterations Japanese cinema has engaged with this subject in different and singular ways and with distinctive means. This paper analyses two such works, *Summertime Machine Blues* (2005) and *Beyond the Infinite Two Minutes* (2020), which explore time travel in both its denotative and connotative potentialities and posit Japan at the confluence of past and future anxieties.

Both films rework extant material by the Kyoto-based theatre troupe Europe Kikaku, and each makes comparable use of time travel. They both contradict notion of expansive journeys through highly contrastive temporalities by featuring time travel between only 24 hours (*Summertime Machine Blues*) and only two and four minutes (*Beyond the Infinite Two Minutes*); they are both set in and around a single location, feature young protagonists and technology; and both parody theoretical concepts of time travel whilst taking it as an *a priori* 'reality'. This paper explores how the protagonists become anxious over contravening linear time, how their actions and attitudes become indexed to a sense of selfhood that can only be defined through recourse to thinking about the present as a tenuous dialogue between past and future. It will analyse style and sensibility, especially the latter film's unfolding in one long take as a marker of visualized time, and these deceptively light pictures' engagement with time, space, youth and Japanese nationhood.

Biography: Dr Adam Bingham is a lecturer in Film and Television at the University of Nottingham. He gained his PhD in Takeshi Kitano from the University of Sheffield and has taught film and Japanese Cultural Studies at five different UK institutions, including Edge Hill University and SOAS: University of London, at which he was the senior lecturer in Japanese Film Studies. He is the author of *Japanese Cinema Since Hana-Bi* as well as several chapters in books on Ozu Yasujiro, Imamura Shohei, Japanese eco-disasters and female directors in Japan. He is also the Asian film critic/correspondent for the magazine *Cineaste*.

2B.4: Future French and Francophone Screen Studies (Round Table) (French SIG) - Hybrid

Chair: Kate Ince (University of Birmingham)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Hannah Holtzman (Sophia University, Tokyo), 'Future French and Francophone screen studies in the United States'

Gemma King (Australian National University), 'Future French and Francophone screen studies in Australia'

Kate Ince (University of Birmingham), 'Future French and Francophone screen studies in the United Kingdom'

Pierre Eugène (Université d'Amiens/ *Cahiers du cinéma*), 'Future French and Francophone screen studies in France and French-speaking territories'

2B.5: The Emergence of AI Aesthetics: Navigating Realism, Responsibility and Authenticity

Chair: Lúcia Nagib (University of Reading)

Hannah Andrews (University of Lincoln), 'The AI in satire: Artificial intelligence as satirical subject, tool, author and audience'

Abstract: This paper will address the question: what are the aesthetic implications of AI for satire, and satire for AI? It will begin with a brief discussion on AI as a satirical *subject*, using a 2023 *Saturday Night Live* sketch to reflect on the aesthetic challenge of representing AI, and a comedic take on the current limitations to AI ethics. It will explore the ITVX series *Deepfake Neighbour Wars* (2023) as a demonstration of AI as a satirical *tool*, considering both distinctions and continuities between the series and its TV predecessors (especially *Spitting Image*). Third, it will look at the current limitations to AI as a satirical *author* when commercially available tools (such as Gemini, Copilot and Chat GPT) have disabled certain generative features relevant to satire such as impersonation and caricature creation as part of their user safety features. Finally, it will explore AI as an *audience* for satire, reviewing the growing body of literature on machine learning and the detection of sarcasm and irony, and the ability of AI to distinguish satire from other forms of disinformation. What could the implications of this be for the future of audiovisual satire?

The paper will use these four themes as a lens through which to scrutinise the key issue of artificial intelligence and authenticity. Satire's complex relation to reality – as both a mimetic and an exaggerated aesthetic form – makes it an interesting test case in the limits of artificial intelligence's ability to authentically replicate (or replace) human creativity.

Biography: **Hannah Andrews** is associate professor at the University of Lincoln. She is the author of *Television and British Cinema* (2014), *Biographical Television Drama* (2021) and the forthcoming *TV and Caricature*. She has written on televisual impersonation in journals such as *Celebrity Studies*, *Journal of Popular Television*, *Screen* and *Critical Studies in Television*.

Dominic Lees (University of Reading), 'The aesthetics of AI-generated film: Between photorealism and fantasy'

Abstract: The use of Generative AI to create synthetic films began in early 2023. This paper looks at the emerging aesthetics of complete fiction films made with AI Tools, principally Runway Gen3. Current limitations of the technology determine that the majority of the works examined are short films.

Close reading of recent texts will develop an argument around the visual qualities delivered by the technology, interrogating the tension between AI developers' drive towards photorealism and filmmakers' embrace of AI to explore fantastical film imagery. A key question explored asks, is there a gap between the aesthetics of animation and the aesthetics of AI-generated film images?

The paper will illustrate the work processes of filmmakers producing synthetic film, with a case study of the American director, Paul Trillo. This analysis of technological labour enables a reconsideration of concepts of aesthetic authorship, suggesting how these may be adapted in order to understand films 'created' by artificial intelligence. A further question discussed in the paper is, to what extent are the aesthetic qualities of synthetic film imagery technologically determined, and to what extent does the human operator control the aesthetic outcomes?

Biography: Dominic Lees is Associate Professor in Filmmaking at the University of Reading and leads the Synthetic Media Research Network. He co-edited a special issue of the journal *Convergence* on deepfakes, and has published articles in *Studies in Documentary Film*, *Critical Studies in Television*, *The Journal of Media Practice*, *Convergence*, and *Media Practice and Education*. He is co-author of *Seeing It on Television* (Bloomsbury, 2021). Lees is also lead writer on AI for the British Film Institute's *Sight and Sound*.

Sarah Thomas (University of Liverpool), 'In Conversation with AI: Virtually Parkinson, authenticity and responsible AI'

Abstract: This paper examines how the aesthetics of media texts created with AI tools are shaped by emerging dialogue between policymakers, professional bodies, and creative media producers working to formalise AI governance frameworks across creative media production – and the role that 'responsible use' and 'authenticity' play in this.

To explore this, it analyses *Virtually Parkinson* – a podcast created with the aid of generative AI currently in production. It reuses archive material of British chat show legend, Michael Parkinson, to produce an interactive, real-time conversation between a synthetic audio version of Parkinson and real celebrity guests. It is produced by Deep Fusion Films, who have extensive involvement with formulating parameters of responsible use of AI in media creation, in collaboration with Mike Parkinson Jr, who manages his father's estate and legacy.

Already the subject of media debate in the popular press, I will outline how the approach of the podcast producers is underpinned by shifting markers of what determines appropriate AI use: informed consent of participants (or representatives), transparency around the use of AI tools, ethical data management, and job creation – not elimination. I will map how these external factors impact on the design of the project and the textual characteristics of the look, sound and feel of AI media. I then analyse how ideas of authenticity surrounding Parkinson's own history, performance and persona impact the creation and promotion of *Virtually Parkinson*, being used to partly reframe debates around ethical AI and directing audiences to assess AI-driven aesthetics and synthetic performance in a new way.

Biography: Sarah Thomas is Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media at the University of Liverpool. She is the author of *Peter Lorre – Face Maker* (Berghahn Book 2012) and *James Mason* (BFI Bloomsbury 2018) and the forthcoming works *Smart Stardom: Advanced Digital Technologies and the Replication of Celebrity* (with Christopher Holliday, Routledge) and *Stars and Franchises: Image, Identity and Intellectual Property* (with Mark McKenna, Edinburgh University Press).

2B.6: Reflections on Global Screen Worlds

Chairs and Respondents: Lindiwe Dovey (SOAS, University of London) and Kate Taylor-Jones (University of Sheffield)

Pooja Thomas (MICA, Ahmedabad) and Kay Dickinson (University of Glasgow), 'Urban imaginaries between Dubai and Kochi: From cinematic to smart cities'

Abstract: Concepts of modernity, 'development', and urbanization move back and forth between the port cities of Kochi (India) and Dubai (the United Arab Emirates), long connected through trade and migration routes across the Indian Ocean. These ideas manifest within the built environment, but get negotiated within the diegetic spaces of cinema. Both these urban centres are significant nodes in the circulation of people and capital between Kerala and the UAE. By tracing continuities between what is construed as real, manipulated, or fantastical, between screened and built worlds, the economies and technologies that manifest them are also made visible. Malayalam cinema establishes its urbanity, materially and rhetorically, through migration to Dubai, which frequently features in its narratives, as well as its aesthetic pronouncements. The "Kochi film," situated more squarely within this city itself, emerges as the product and producer of a particular kind of urban modernity in dialogue with Dubai. Such imaginaries can then be seen to prop up a smart city development that is conceived, financed, and managed through mutating Kochi-Dubai relations.

Biography: Pooja Thomas is interested in key questions that concern our cultural life and the broad themes that shape and influence us individually and as members of various cultural groups. She has a background in literature and training in cultural studies. She has published in the domains of urban heritage politics and language dynamics in urban contexts in high-impact journals such as *Urban Studies* and *Interventions: International Journal for Postcolonial Studies* and as book chapters. A TEDx speaker and a recipient of the national Dr. Pritam Singh Award, India, for excellence in management education, Pooja is presently Associate Professor at MICA, Ahmedabad.

Kay Dickinson is a Reader in Film and Television Studies and convenes the MA Creative Arts and Industries at the University of Glasgow, UK. She is the author of *Supply Chain Cinema: Producing Global Film Workers* (BFI, 2024), *Arab Film and Video Manifestos: Forty-Five Years of the Moving Image Amid Revolution* (Palgrave, 2018), and *Arab Cinema Travels: Transnational Syria, Palestine, Dubai and Beyond* (BFI, 2016).

Irene González-López (Birkbeck, University of London) and Zebunnisa Hamid (Lahore University of Management Sciences), 'The city as a site of contention: Contemporary Japanese and Pakistani cinemas in conversation'

Abstract: Engaging with the paradigm of 'global screen worlds' (Dovey and Taylor-Jones 2021), this chapter analyses the representation of Tokyo and Lahore in two contemporary Japanese and Pakistani films produced in the margins of the mainstream. This critical comparison contributes to 'de-centre' and 'de-westernise' academic discussions about the cinematic city and about themes such as modernity, community and the self, which are often associated with fictions of the city.

The two films include *Dawn of the Felines* (*Mesu nekotachi*, dir. Kazuya Shiraishi, 2017; Japan), a soft-porn film promoted as part of the Roman Porno Reboot Project that depicts the lives of three female sex workers in Tokyo; and *Zinda Bhaag* (translation: Run for Your Life, dirs. Meenu

Gaur and Farjad Nabi, 2013; Pakistan), an exponent of New Pakistani Cinema that follows the story of three working-class male friends in Lahore.

Our analysis explores the ways in which the two films depict questions of mobility and agency as fundamental to the experience of the city. Both films share a focus on dysfunctional masculinities and underscore the link between access and transactional relationships, which are inevitably connected to gender, class, technology and its screen worlds. Yet, each film offers a different understanding of the conflicting experience of modernity in the city, its dreams and pitfalls. In their similarities and differences, these films urge us to rethink the experience and cinematic representation of the Asian city and the ways in which it has been theorised in academia, inviting us to explore collaborative methodologies.

Biography: Irene González-López is Lecturer in Japanese Studies at Birkbeck, University of London. Her research spans Japanese creative industries, with a special focus on postwar cinema and issues related to gender and sexuality, both in front and behind the camera. She is currently writing a monograph on sex work in Japanese cinema and co-editing a volume on documentary director Haneda Sumiko. Recent publications include “How to sell a remake: The *Gate of Flesh* media franchise” (2023); “‘Female Director’: Discourses and Practices in Contemporary Japan” (co-authored, 2022); and *Tanaka Kinuyo: Nation, Stardom and Female Subjectivity* (co-edited; 2018, Edinburgh University Press).

Zebunnisa Hamid is Assistant Professor of Film and Screen Studies and Program Director of Comparative Literature and Creative Arts (CLCA) at Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) in Pakistan. Her published and ongoing research focuses on gender and the cinematic city, the production and circulation of small cinemas, alternative filmmaking and censorship, and the role of new media and streaming platforms. She is currently working on her manuscript on New Pakistani Cinema. She has trained as a film editor and worked as a production consultant on Mira Nair’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. She has also served on Pakistan’s Oscar selection committee.

2B.7: Migration / Migrants on Screen

Chair: Gabor Gergely

Frank Mannion (Birmingham City University), 'The Colour of Green - Ireland on Screen'

Abstract: *The Colour of Green - Ireland on Screen* is a practice-based video essay that looks at representations of global migration and migrants on screen through the on-screen portrayal of the Irish and the global reach of the Irish diaspora (which numbers 82 million globally). This will be done by examining the production, distribution and exhibition of two recent feature documentaries about the Irish identity, *Quintessentially Irish* (2024) featuring Pierce Brosnan and *A Sip of Irish* (2025). It will also look at the aesthetic strategies adopted by the distributors in pursuit of a global audience for these two films that aimed to target the 82 million people around the globe with Irish heritage.

The format would be stills/clips from both films including exclusive footage shot at the White House on St Patrick's Day from *Quintessentially Irish*. The 1500 word written statement will look at the film history of the representation of Irish identity and migrants in films like *The Quiet Man* (1952), *Ryan's Daughter* (1973) and *In The Name of Father* (1994), and how those films informed international perceptions of Irish migrants. The methodology is to take two auto-ethnographic case studies directed by the award-winning academic and filmmaker, Dr Frank Mannion, that will look at the complexities of Irish identity and how stereo-typing is used to inform the portrayal of Irish migrants and Irish themed films.

Biography: Dr Frank Mannion is Senior Lecturer in Film Distribution, Marketing & Entrepreneurship at Birmingham City University. He is a law graduate of Trinity College Dublin and the University of Cambridge and holds a PhD in film distribution from Birmingham City University. He is currently writing a commissioned monograph entitled "The Dependent Film Distributor" for Palgrave.

He is an award-winning filmmaker from Ireland. Mannion directed *Sparkling: The Story of Champagne* with Stephen Fry, described as "a valentine to French bubbly" by the New York Times. He directed *Quintessentially British* starring Ian McKellen and Judi Dench and *Quintessentially Irish* with Pierce Brosnan & Jeremy Irons which The Sunday Times called "fast paced and highly entertaining". He produced *Grand Theft Parsons*, starring Johnny Knoxville and Christina Applegate for MGM and *Jackboots on Whitehall* with Ewan McGregor, Richard E Grant & Rosamund Pike for Sony Pictures.

Tasos Giapoutzis (University of Essex), 'Nostalgia and decolonial cinema: Reimagining the past in diasporic narratives'

Abstract: This paper examines the role of nostalgia as a complex narrative and aesthetic tool in contemporary decolonial cinema, with a particular focus on diasporic and transcultural filmmaking. It builds on Paul Grainge's conceptualisation of nostalgia as both a "mood" and "mode" to explore how nostalgia functions as a formal device that reimagines colonial histories while interrogating their persistent legacies. Using Miguel Gomes's *Tabu* (2012) as a central case study, the paper investigates the film's use of nostalgia through its aesthetic choices — such as black-and-white cinematography — and narrative structure, highlighting the tension between personal memory and collective history. *Tabu's* layered portrayal of nostalgia not only evokes longing for a mythologised past but also critiques the inequalities and erasures embedded in the colonial era it represents. The paper situates *Tabu* within broader socio-political and cultural contexts, considering the ways in which nostalgia in diasporic and transcultural cinema intersects

with decolonial discourses to challenge dominant historical narratives. It further explores how filmmakers use nostalgia to destabilise fixed notions of time and identity, inviting audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about colonialism and its ongoing effects. Drawing on broader theoretical frameworks, including the works of Katharina Niemeyer and critical scholarship on migration cinema, this paper underscores the transformative power of nostalgia in decolonial cinema. By engaging with these discursive and aesthetic strategies, it shows how filmmakers reclaim the past and offer urgent counter-narratives that resonate deeply with contemporary struggles over displacement, identity, and historical reckoning.

Biography: Tasos Giapoutzis is Subject Head of Film Studies and Director of the Centre for Film and Screen Media at the University of Essex as well as a filmmaker. His interests as a researcher and filmmaker lie in the exploration of the filmmaking process, aesthetics of film and its multifaceted spatiotemporal features. More specifically, Tasos is interested in interactions between film and memory, nostalgia, place and displacement, and the intersections between fiction and non-fiction in contemporary cinema. He is the author of the forthcoming monograph *Nostalgia in Contemporary European Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025) and the director of the feature-length docufiction film *Mnemonic Muse* (2025).

Manman Yang (University of Manchester), 'Enduring, awakening and rebelling: The global representations of Chinese emigrant women on screen'

Abstract: This research will examine the cinematic portrayal of Chinese emigrant women, focusing on their journeys from resilience under socio-cultural constraints to self-awareness and, ultimately, active defiance of oppressive systems. The study will discuss about films capturing their struggles as individuals navigating displacement, identity, and agency in foreign contexts, by focusing on race, gender, and class.

The research will be chaptered into three progressive phrases covering the themes of *Enduring, Awakening and Rebelling* with screen analyses derived from international screen media featuring the Chinese emigrant women:

1. Enduring: Eating bitterness

Chinese emigrant women in global cinema are frequently depicted as enduring hardships or *Eating Bitterness*. In the face of structural inequalities and personal sacrifices for their family, many films explore the grueling lives of Chinese emigrant women as laborers in foreign industries suffering from economic exploitation (*Farewell China*, 1990, Clara Law; *The Joy Luck Club*, 1989, Wayne Wang).

2. Awakening: Realization of Individual Desires and Intergenerational Dynamics

The “awakening” phase reflects a shift in consciousness where women begin to question their circumstances and develop self-awareness about their identities, desire and structural inequalities in the host country throughout cultural isolation and gender oppression (*The Home Song Stories*, 2007, Tony Ayres).

3. Rebelling: Defiance and Liberation

This part will signify characters against the structures that oppress them, embracing agency and self-determination in new generation of Chinese emigrants women (*She, a Chinese*, 2009, Xiaolu Guo; *The Farewell*, 2019, Lulu Wang; *Crazy Rich Asians*, 2018, Jon M. Chu).

Biography: Documentarian and anthropologist on the way, born and raised up in the southwestern China, a Dong minority. She got her MA from Beijing Film Academy in film and drama studies in 2015 and then worked as an independent filmmaker in China. In 2024, she got the Chevening scholarship from the British council to study in the University of Manchester. She is one of the 18 Chevening scholars in China of 2024. Her works covered the topics of Migrant Workers, Marginalized Group, ethnic minorities, Cultural identity, Place& Space, Topophilia, Political Criticism, Cultural Comparison, Visual Anthropology and Cultural& material Heritage.

Augustin (University of Cambridge), 'Wajib's Palestinian aesthetics: Nazareth speaks of Palestine and the West speaks of Nazareth'

Abstract: In a letter to his son, Palestinian writer and activist Ghassan Kanafani wrote about the event of his son learning of his Palestinian identity "It was as if a blessed scalpel was cutting up your chest and putting there the heart that belongs to you". It is a moment of life and tragedy, "a distant homeland was being born again". Kanafani identifies how Palestine reconfigures how we may think of the relationship between the local and the global. The local exists insofar as it is global. Kanafani speaks of Akka and not Palestine because he is away.

Annemarie Jacir's 2017 film *Wajib* (Duty) makes Palestine (and specifically Nazareth) into a place whose material history transforms the local into the global and vice-versa. Shadi's family duty to return to Nazareth is made analogous to his duty towards Palestinian liberation while living abroad.

This paper argues that *Wajib's* aesthetic move suggests that global aesthetic problems can only be dealt with through local politics and that local aesthetic problems can only be made sense of through global politics. *Wajib* tells us that in Nazareth, to choose a dress for a wedding has everything to do with the inability for Palestinians to return.

Biography: Augustin is PhD student in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. They received an MPhil in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge with Distinction. They hold a dual BA from SciencesPo Paris and UBC in Political Theory and Film Studies.

Augustin's work examines how a processual understanding of film thought reveals the production of a politics. They attend to decolonization, revolution, and political intervention in contemporary global cinema, from *Lost Highway* to *Wajib* including *Vanaprastham*. This inquiry moves with Jacques Rancière against the notion that aesthetic configurations anticipate the political forms to come.

2B.8: Rebellious Acts (Practice Research SIG)

Chair: Shreepali Patel (London College of Communication) & Agata Lulkowska (University of Staffordshire)

This Practice Research SIG workshop calls for short presentations (2-5 minutes which can include film clips) of Rebellious Acts of Practice Research. Followed by a discussion led sandpit which will lay the foundation for a manifesto on Sonic Screen based Practice Research.

The aim of this SIG Panel event is a call for action on:

- Strengthening the voice of our community
- Bringing existing knowledge and threads of sonic screen Practice research together (nationally and globally)
- Identifying future goals including the archiving of existing audio-visual (sonic screen) practice research.
- Laying down the foundation for a manifesto on sonic screen practice research

Contributors include: Fotis Bekglis; Lee-Jane Bennion-Nixon; Hande Cayir; Sophie Jackson; Jyoti Mistri & Nobunye Levin; Orson Nova; Funke Oyebanjo; Ella Wright; Sarah Gibson Yates

Panel Session 2C

2C.1: British Television

Chair: Will Kitchen (University of Chichester/Arts University Bournemouth)

Matthew Floyd (University of Glasgow), ‘Global interventions in British television: The wax and wane of the “International” of the Edinburgh International Television Festival’

Abstract: This paper isolates the ‘international’ element of my ongoing doctoral research into the history of the Edinburgh International Television Festival (1976 – present), which focuses on its keynote MacTaggart Lecture. The festival holds a unique space in the media landscape in providing fluid and hybrid roles for stakeholders, shifting year on year, session by session, between celebratory, analytical and interventionist functions per the zeitgeist and needs of the industry. These shifts are epitomised in the keynote MacTaggart, an important platform for policy announcements and agenda-setting speeches by leading broadcasting figures. In the early years of three channels on British screens, lecturers traded theses on the virtues and limitations of aesthetic form, with John McGrath, Marcel Ophuls and Troy Kennedy Martin’s arguments and naturalism and realism. However, the coming of the fourth channel, technological changes with satellite and cable, and the influence of the Thatcher government and market ideology saw the increased focus on the changing shape of British public service broadcasting in an increasingly global landscape. This paper examines the increasing prominence of the ‘international’ in the Edinburgh International Television Festival, in both the discourses present, which included lectures from the likes of Rupert Murdoch, Christine Ockrent and Denis Forman, and the shifting function of the festival itself.

Biography: Matthew Floyd is a doctoral researcher at the University of Glasgow, where he researches the history of the Edinburgh International Television Festival (1976-present) and particularly its keynote MacTaggart lecture.

Hannah Hamad (Cardiff University), “Take four girls”: *Angels* (BBC, 1975-1983) and the cultural configuration of NHS nurses and nursing on British television’

Abstract: The BBC drama series *Angels* (1975-1983) is a landmark in the history of the NHS on television. Beginning in 1975, at the height of second wave feminism, and in the aftermath of several turbulent years for the nursing profession in the UK during which time nurses became more politicised, more unionised and more willing to confront the government with campaigns about pay and working conditions, *Angels* was the first medically oriented British television series to focus exclusively on nurses, and thereby, on the feminine and feminised side of healthcare work. Archival research reveals the intention of producers to balance depictions of nurses’ working lives with depictions of their personal lives as central to the premise from the point of inception. This is something that would go on to colour drama series about nurses on television in ensuing decades, up to and including the present. With a particular focus on the 1975 first series, this paper explores the depiction of nurses and nursing in *Angels*, and the real-world socio-political backdrop of the watershed period of NHS nursing history from which it emerged. It does so with a view to arguing both that second wave feminism and the changing professional status of NHS nurses at that time are key contexts in relation to which the representation of nurses and nursing in the series have to be understood, and that *Angels* would set the template for subsequent cultural configuration of nurses in the history of nurses on British television in the years thereafter.

Biography: Hannah Hamad is Reader in Media and Communication at Cardiff University, School of Journalism, Media and Culture.

Jonny Smith (University of Leeds), 'London's a riot with Spy v Spy: The Global palimpsestic city in *Slow Horses* (2022-)'

Abstract: This paper will examine the topography and urbanism of London in Apple TV's spy thriller series *Slow Horses* (2022-). Across its four seasons London has functioned as a pivotal material and symbolic location in *Slow Horses*. Rather than a monolithic presentation of London, once that can easily be mapped on to conceptual ideas of 'landmark' or 'local' London, *Slow Horses* constructs a diverse and unstable city constantly negotiating its own historic spatiality. This paper will draw on the metaphor of the palimpsest to examine the topography of *Slow Horses*' London. Productively applied to the study of urbanism, the palimpsest metaphor serves to unpack the temporal, spatial and imaginary layers of the city. More than just an examination of the programme's notable architectural spaces – ranging from the Brutalism of the Barbican Estate to the newly regenerated King's Cross area – the palimpsest metaphor also illuminates the global contours of contemporary London.

While London has always been considered one of the world's foremost global cities, the Brexit referendum in 2016 has since brought London's international status into sharp focus. In contrast to suggestions that the UK has since become more isolated, parochial and nationalistic, *Slow Horses* reiterates London's inherently interconnected nature. This global perspective is reflected in narratives revolving around right-wing terror groups, French mercenaries and Cold War grudges, but also within the dynamic utilisation of rural and urban space. Subsequently, *Slow Horses* constructs a unique palimpsestic London that situates its espionage drama in a globalised, historical and dynamic city of the twenty-first century.

Biography: Dr Jonny Smith is a lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Leeds. His research interest is in British Cinema, particularly representations of place and architecture, as well as their intersection with class, power and regional identity. He has published widely on British cinema in edited collections and in the *Journal of British Film and Television*. His monograph *Brutalist Architecture in British Cinema* is due to be published by Bloomsbury.

Rachel Loewen (University of Warwick), 'Navigating the thresholds, separation, and confinement of COVID-19 through *Doctor Who* fan fiction'

Abstract: On 23 March 2020, Boris Johnson stated that the Government would immediately 'close all shops selling non-essential goods.' The following day, a Guardian article described how 'retailers followed pubs and restaurants in being told to *shut their doors*.' These excerpts are both expected and evocative, interweaving COVID-19 with imagery of closed doors.

Yet, the door is 'more than just a functional place of passage, [it] is an object onto which we project our anxieties and hopes, as well as a site of power, exclusion, and inclusion' (Jütte). There is little empirical research exploring how people's lived and felt experiences with doors changed during the pandemic. This paper illustrates these changes at work by presenting the results of a qualitative, inductive study exploring *Doctor Who* fan fiction written during the first year of COVID-19. I textually analysed 33 fan fictions on Archive of Our Own and was surprised to find an emphasis on confinement, separation, and the doors and thresholds that enable both.

This paper argues that some *Doctor Who* fans used fan fiction to negotiate feelings surrounding physical barriers and social distance caused by COVID-19, specifically by both validating and trying to shift potential existing ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams). By exploring the emphasis on doors and thresholds in the fan fiction – and in particular the main TARDIS doors – this research demonstrates how *Doctor Who* fans came together through shared imagery, consequently generating a better understanding of how telefantasy fans may use fiction to interpret reality in times of global crisis.

Biography: Rachel is a fourth year PhD researcher at the University of Warwick in the Department of Film and Television Studies. She holds an MA in Film Studies from Carleton University (Canada), along with her BA from Brescia University College/Western University (Canada). Rachel’s doctoral research, tentatively titled ‘*Doctor Who* Fans and COVID-19: Fandom-Based Strategies for Pandemic Engagement,’ explores how fans utilized their fandom as a tool for making meaning out of the pandemic. Along with fan studies and telefantasy studies, her other research interests include representations of mental illness on screen and the role of audiovisual media in creating social change.

2C.2: Urban Spaces in Transnational Cinema - Hybrid

Chair: Mary Harrod (University of Warwick)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Hal Young (University of St Andrews), 'Alternative spaces: Exploring the poetic imagination in Ito Takashi's film work'

Abstract: Through his camera, the Japanese experimental artist Ito Takashi seeks to remove the outer layer of his urban surroundings, exposing the body of another city hidden beneath them. This approach is especially pertinent in the radical stop-motion animations he created during his time living in Tokyo, amidst the height of Japan's economic boom in the 1980s. Applying the theoretical framework of Gaston Bachelard's work on the poetic imagination, this paper closely examines two of Ito's films: *Grim* (1985) and *The Mummy's Dream* (1989). In doing so, it argues that the way in which Ito visually deconstructs his surroundings functions as a critique of Japan's mass consumerism during the 1980s, revealing the alienation many felt during this period; as well as a heightened focus on what was being left behind. The paper then contextualises the poetic imagination in Ito's work by grounding it within the Japanese spatial discourse around the hidden, or the invisible, in the country's cities, prominent amongst theorists during the 1970s and 1980s. Specifically, it draws from Hidenobu Jinnai's 1985 book *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology*, in which the author details his walks around Tokyo with an old map, experiencing the city through landmarks and buildings that are no longer visible. Ultimately, Ito's works use his surrounding elements to create new, imaginary spaces, which paradoxically restore something increasingly hidden from view – Tokyo's old landscapes – back into the foreground of his films.

Biography: Hal Young is a third-year PhD student at the University of St. Andrews, having previously completed his BA and MA degrees at The University of Warwick. A recipient of the Wolfson Foundation and AD Links Scholarship awards, Hal's research focuses on the representation of urban spaces in 1980s Japanese experimental cinema, closely analysing the films made during this period within their social and economic contexts. Hal's critical biography of Obayashi Nobuhiko has been published in *Senses of Cinema*, and, most recently, he has assisted with the launch of the CCJ (Collaborative Cataloguing Japan) experimental Japanese film streaming platform.

Ciara Moloney (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick), 'Overlaying interculturalism In Bruges, in Dublin, in Venice, and in London'

Abstract: In Martin McDonagh's *In Bruges* (2009), Brendan Gleeson and Colin Farrell play two Irish hitmen who live in London, but find themselves in the third space of Bruges, a town in Belgium which, as Margitta Rouse writes, is "without contours in the cultural imaginary" (2011, p. 174). Both characters clearly legible as Irish emigrants to London whose sense of home, if not national identity, has been altered by their experience. By centring these characters with legible diasporic identities, the historical and cultural associations of both Dublin and London are overlayed on Bruges, which acts as a cross-cultural or even liminal space. Through the interpolation of *Don't Look Now*, the image of Venice in the cultural imaginary is also brought into a relationship with Bruges. Through this web of intercultural allusions, *In Bruges* becomes not merely a film focusing on diasporic characters, it is itself a diasporic work, existing at a cross-section of, and blurring the definition of, multiple national cinemas.

Biography: Ciara Moloney is a PhD candidate at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, supported by the Irish Research Council. Her research focuses on interculturalism and diaspora in Martin McDonagh's work for stage and screen. She is chief film critic at *Current*

Affairs magazine, and has also written film and television criticism for *Cineaste*, *Fangoria*, *Paste*, and *MUBI Notebook*.

Jiyoung Kim (University of Nottingham), 'Transnational territories of cinema: Virtual production, industrial competition, and the globalisation of film location'

Abstract: This research examines the transformative impact of virtual production technology on global cinema, focusing on its potential to redefine traditional notions of film location and territory. By enabling immersive digital environments without physical shooting locations, virtual production empowers smaller cities to compete as vibrant cinematic hubs within a globalised media landscape. This ongoing study uses South Korean cities such as Hanam and Paju as case studies to explore how advanced technological infrastructure, strategic government policies, and industry innovation converge to create distinctive “cinematic territories.”

With an emphasis on policy analysis, industry evaluation, and case studies, this research investigates how local and national policies, infrastructure investments, and cross-border collaborations foster media ecosystems that are both competitive and inclusive. Early findings highlight South Korea's strategic approach to leveraging virtual production for economic resilience and cultural representation, providing valuable lessons for cities seeking to position themselves within the transnational film industry.

By bridging discussions on policy frameworks, industry strategies, and cultural economy, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the decentralisation of media hubs and the role of technology in shaping global screen aesthetics. It offers a foundational framework for further comparative research and practical recommendations for policymakers and industry stakeholders aiming to build sustainable cinematic futures in an increasingly networked world.

Biography: Jiyoung Kim holds a PhD in Film and Television Studies from the University of Nottingham. Her research interests focus on the intersection of cinema and the city, employing broad and in-depth theoretical approaches. She has taught film, media, and creative industries at the University of Nottingham. Currently, she is working on her first monograph about the cinematic Boston.

Victoria Santamaria Ibor (Universidad de Zaragoza), 'Beyond the ruins: Rethinking urban spaces in global horror cinema'

Abstract: This paper looks at the portrayal of urban locations in horror cinema from 2008 onwards. The 'dangerous city - a site of criminality inhabited by the abject urban other - had already been the setting of horror films from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931) to *Candyman* (1992). However, after the 2008 crisis, urban settings have not only become more common in the genre than ever before (and at a global scale), but their representation has also changed in relation to new urbanization processes. As Florida argues (2017), while post-industrial cities are suffering a further deterioration, cities with blooming creative industries are becoming more gentrified, which, in turn, increases social inequalities. In this context, films like *Absentia* (2011), *It Follows* (2014) and *Kandisha* (2021) take place in streets of cracked roads and crumbling buildings, which reveals anxieties regarding budget cuts in the maintenance of cities after the recession. *Attack the Block* (2011), *Vermine* (2021) and *Pengabdi Setan 2* (2022) reflect on the spatial dynamics that put marginal communities in danger. Similarly, films like *Vampires vs the Bronx* (2020) and *Candyman* (2021) show a special concern for gentrification practices. This paper aims to explore global

aesthetics in the portrayal of abject urban locations in contemporary horror cinema in order to explore how horror critically engages with the spatialization of cities.

Biography: Victoria Santamaría Ibor is a PhD candidate in Film Studies at the University of Zaragoza. She holds a BA in English Studies from the University of Zaragoza. Currently, she is writing her thesis on spaces of abjection in horror cinema from 2008. Her research interests include: horror cinema, abjection, spatial theory, precarity, gender and otherness.

2C.3: China on Four Surfaces: Remediated Aesthetics in Contemporary Visual Media - Hybrid

Chair: Yijiao Guo (King's College London)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Yijiao Guo (King's College London), 'Communist hair and Xiaohongshu clay: Remediating history in digital things'

Abstract: In 1965, the US Treasury Department embargoed hairs from Asiatic regions and required that all human hair items be detected as having a non-communist origin. It led to industrial reconfiguration in Hong Kong and many other East and Southeast Asian US alliances, particularly South Korea and Japan. In around early 2020, playing slime—a soft, viscous jelly-like clay manufactured by the American toy company Mattel—went viral on Chinese streaming media, especially on Xiaohongshu. Fuelled by the ACG culture, such as video games, virtual interactive images, short videos, and horror films, the spectacle of watching people playing squashy clay soon becomes lucrative and significant in China's E-commerce. The two cases illustrate that the international and transpacific flows of commodities have mapped out new territories that reshape the real and virtual worlds. Such a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, as Deleuze and Guattari have it, is influenced by human economic activities but independent from human control. Accordingly, this paper examines how things recreate and reconnect human society and eco-political relations in a digital media ecology. Analyses will be given on the wig hairs in Wang Bo's *An Asian Ghost Story* (2023) and the slime clay in Wei Xiankun's *Slime* (2022). My primary attention will be the remediation via which things associate and interconnect with other things in moving images. I argue that, in Wang and Wei's works, the functioning of things has transformed from the stewardship of commodities to rhizomic agencies of history-remaking and culture-making.

Biography: Antonio Yijiao Guo is a PhD candidate from The Department of Film Studies at King's College London. His primary research interests lie in independent documentary cinema, thing theory, lyricism, and contemporary Chinese literature. His current thesis project concentrates on historiography in things and material culture in the post-Cultural Revolution era. Before joining KCL, he received his MPhil and M.A. in Humanities (Literature) at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and a B.A. (Hons.) in Translation at Hong Kong Baptist University.

Weiting Fan (Chongqing University), 'Digitalizing nature through anime open-world video games: *Genshin Impact* and its Buddhist approach'

Abstract: While nature and technology have long been considered as an antithesis, how can we explore the digital image of nature in open-world video games' potential contribution to our environmental awareness? I intend to address this question by introducing an Asian perspective to the existing scholarship on the relationship between nature and video games. Specifically, I focus on the anime-styled open-world video game *Genshin Impact* (原神), a Chinese video game that has become a global phenomenon since 2020. By investigating how *Genshin Impact* reappropriates Buddhist philosophy in its environmentalist narratives and game mechanics simulating innovative interaction with nature, my research suggests a meontological re-apprehension of both the natural and the digital. I argue that *Genshin Impact's* digitalization of nature sutures the nature-technology split by offering us a post-human and post-nature narrative which subverts the anthropocentric construction of the concept nature itself.

Integrating Buddhist thinking with the style of Japanese anime, Genshin Impact's game design highlights the players' affective engagements with the ecology of the game's virtual world, whose digital construction is blatantly presented through multiple layers of self-reflexivity. The non-human ecology is thus no longer viewed as a concrete entity separated from humans, but as an open-structured system that is always altering and being altered by human behaviours. Meontologically, the natural and the digital blur into each other through their interactive relations with humans that decenters humans themselves.

Biography: Weiting Fan is an Assistant Professor at Chongqing University, Meishi Film Academy. In 2022, she gained her PhD in film theory and film philosophy from King's College London, with her PhD thesis titled *Towards a Lyrical Cinema of Shuqing: Reconfiguring Contemporary Film Theory with Buddhist and Daoist Poetics* supervised by Dr. Victor Fan and Prof. Chris Berry. She also holds an MA in comparative literature from King's College London and a BA in comparative literature from the University of Hong Kong. Her research expertise mainly includes film philosophy and new media theory from the perspective of Chinese philosophy.

Han Sun (University of Oxford), 'Repetition, reproduction, and recreation: The relationship between ephemeral graffiti and media temporality in mainland China'

Abstract: Graffiti, which was born on the street as a symbol of resistance, illegality, and self-expression of the lower class and masses, is ephemeral both in the uncertain process of its creation and its existence. Artists respect and pursue ephemerality as the essence of graffiti. They prefer to draw graffiti on hard-to-access walls, which strongly connects with the ephemerality and authenticity of graffiti. Meanwhile, ephemeral graffiti relies on artists' strategies and transmedial transformation to last visually. However, the media's influence on graffiti is not just a representation process; it can also rewrite its essence through media temporality, leading to a complex tension. This paper will explore the dynamic relationship between graffiti and various media. On the original media wall, graffiti disappears immediately and sometimes cannot even be created continuously or completed. Thus, writers keep writing the same characters and creating identical pictorial images by repeating and replicating themselves they battle ephemerality and root themselves in the city's visual memory. Most graffiti rely on photography to be preserved, collected, and promoted. Photographic reproduction draws graffiti from its here-and-now and loses the aura of unpredictability that characterizes encounters with graffiti on the street. With the increasingly pervasive phenomenon of using Apple Pencil to draw graffiti on iPads, digital media has had a more disruptive influence on graffiti. It changes the cultural techniques of graffiti and makes ephemeral visual art permanent without objectivity or materiality. Graffiti in digital media is solid and safe, never withering. Leaving the streets, resistance, and ephemerality, graffiti in digital media is like amber, which looks alive from the outside but has already died inside.

Biography: Han Sun is a DPhil student from the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford, fully funded by the Clarendon Scholarship. Her research interests are graffiti, writing, and contemporary Chinese art.

Nick Stember (National Museum of Denmark), 'Tonsorial Qi: Chinese animated television series *Scissor Seven* (2018-) as *Mo Lei Tau* Wuxia'

Abstract: In this paper, I consider the reinterpretation of tropes from wuxia (martial hero) fiction through the lens of *Mo Lei Tau* (lit. 'nonsensical') humour in the Chinese Animated

Television Series *Scissor Seven*, now in its fifth season. Starring the titular assassin turned hairdresser, Seven, the series was created by the Guangzhou-based writer-director He Xiaofeng in 2018, being picked up for global distribution by the American streaming platform Netflix in 2019. Perhaps most closely associated with the ‘real life Looney Tunes’ style of actor-director Stephen Chow, *mo lei tau* combines non-sequiturs, physical comedy, and exaggerated make-up and props to create parodies of triad dramas, martial arts epics, and other mainstays of Hong Kong cinema. As such, it is a style of filmmaking which is particularly well-suited to being animated, as the example of *Scissor Seven* demonstrates. More than this, however, I argue that *Scissor Seven* effectively (and affectively) capitalizes on pre-existing familiarity with both wuxia and *mo lei tau* to engage with audiences outside of China. At the same time, both by mixing Mandarin and Cantonese dialogue in the action sequences and, by incorporating memes, indie music, and other examples of *mo lei tau* inspired internet humour, He Xiaofeng and his creative team bring attention to the transcultural status of both genres within the Chinese-speaking world. Taken together, therefore, *Scissor Seven* draws on legacy Sinophone media to create an imaginative world grounded in the *de facto* post-nationalism of our global present.

Biography: Nick Stember (he/him) is a historian and translator of Chinese literature and popular culture who is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the National Museum of Denmark, studying visual depictions of Daoist self-cultivation in comics, animations, video games, and other transmedia adaptations of xianxia or “immortal fantasy.”

2C.4: Social Realism and Cohesion - Hybrid

Chair: Melissa Oliver-Powell

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

K.M.D. Chathurika Nimalachandra (University of Colombo), 'A visual analysis in child representation in cinematic narratives promoting ethnic harmony'

Abstract: Sri Lanka suffered a thirty-year war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government from 1983 to 2009, primarily affecting North and Eastern provinces of the country. Despite the conflict between the predominantly Sinhalese and Tamil ethnicities, these groups coexisted peacefully in other parts of Sri Lanka. Various art forms, especially cinema have played significant roles to fostering harmony among the above two ethnicities. This study focuses on two films: *Saroja* (2002) by Somarathne Dissanayake and *Her. Him. The Other* (2018) is an anthology film directed by three directors and produced by the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (a Department of the Government of Sri Lanka). Both films explore themes of ethnic coexistence through children's narratives. Employing qualitative research methods, the study analysed these films' pictorial and textual elements to examine the representation of children as mediators of cultural and ethnic understanding. The findings indicate that directors used children's innocence and their true nature to address two ethnicities. Further, these movies were created with the knowledge of the cultural beliefs of two ethnicities and children had used to strengthen the bondage among the ethnicities. These films highlight the potential of cinema as a medium for fostering peace in society.

Biography: Chathurika Nimalachandra is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Performing Arts, Sri Palee Campus, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Her primary research interest is cinema, and her research has been presented at numerous national and international research conferences. She has engaged with the film industry in Sri Lanka and achieved several national and international awards for her short films. Currently, pursuing a PhD at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Dan Martin (University of Leeds), 'Negative conviviality: Paradoxes of racial antagonism and class solidarity in cinematic representations of northern England'

Abstract: In British culture, the North of England is often constructed as a place which exists in symbolic tension to the global. Since the turn of the century, the region has supplied a parochial place-myth of "traditional" working-class life which has been left behind by the nation's reconstruction as a modern, globalised, and neoliberal society (Dave, 2019). Cultural theorists have most dominantly interpreted this parochial construction as reactionary in form and function, most specifically when it has been invoked in social and political discourses around migration and the changing nature of Britain's ethnic make-up. For instance, Miah et al. (2020) refer to the persistent construction of the region as emblematic of Britain's 'failed space[s] of multiculturalism', an essentialising construction which bespeaks the failure of the multicultural ideal while symbolically associating this failure with the cultural backwardness of white and "immigrant" working-class populations in the North.

While recognising the reactionary tendencies of this imaginary, this paper explores how recent cinematic representations of the North appropriate the region's association with multicultural failure to work through complex intersections of contemporary classed and racial identity which are elided in the progressive construction of Britain's global identity. The paper uses close textual analysis to examine two films which centre on racially coded antagonisms between working-class characters in the North: *Catch Me Daddy* (2014) and *God's Own Country* (2017). The paper

asserts that, paradoxically, these films use overtly racist encounters as representational sites where alternative forms of classed solidarity can be imagined.

Biography: Dr Dan Martin is a Research Fellow at the University of Leeds. He currently works on the project Public Service Media in the Age of Platforms (PSM-AP) which examines changing values in PSM in response to platformisation. Dan's research also explores class, gender, and regional identity in British film and television. He has recently published work in the *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* and *Political Quarterly*.

Karolina Kosińska (Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences), 'Regional aspect of social realism: The case of eastern and central European cinema'

Abstract: The films of the Romanian New Wave not only pointed to the need to address current regional social problems, but also linked them to Romania's past as part of the Eastern Bloc. Recognised and appreciated at the most important Western film festivals, the wave inevitably flattened and dispersed, while in some cases directors fell into the trap of self-exoticization in order to adapt to the expectations of Western audiences. The best example is Cristian Mungiu's 2022 film "R.M.N.". This case proved that it is easy to cross the fine line between attempting a critical social diagnosis and reproducing clichés that maintain established perceptions.

However, the cinematic attempts to diagnose and analyse local social problems are still alive in the cinema of the region. These attempts imply a revision of the modes of the social realism conventions: those imposed by Western European cinema (such as British social realism, seen as synonymous with the convention itself), but also those coming from the tradition of the socialist past of Eastern and Central Europe.

In my presentation, I would like to explore the regional aspect of social realism as it used in contemporary Eastern and Central European cinema, and also to ask questions about specific narrative and stylistic practices used to communicate local issues. Drawing – inevitably – on the writings of British theorists such as Raymond Williams, John Hill and Samantha Lay, as well as modern commentators from Eastern and Central Europe, I aim to outline a framework for the distinctive method of realism in this region.

Biography: Associate professor in Department of Film Studies, Audiovisual Arts and Anthropology of Culture in the Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Science (ISPAN). She is an editor-in-chief of an academic film journal "Kwartalnik Filmowy" published by ISPAN. She is the author of the book 'Androgyne: Identity, Longing and Desire' [Androgyn. Tożsamość, tęsknota, pragnienie] (Warsaw, 2015). She is interested in British and Irish cinema, and also in the history and aesthetics of social realism.

Seth Compaore (Austin College), 'The representation of market women in *Colobane Express* (2001) and *Frontiers* (2017): Reclaiming spaces in African cinema'

Abstract: Over the past two decades, African journey-based films have evolved beyond the themes of anticolonial resistance and national liberation, embracing road movies as a medium for exploring self-discovery and social dynamics. Films like Kadhy Sylla's *Colobane Express* (2001) and Apolline Traoré's *Frontiers* (2017) spotlight the journeys of local market women and transnational female traders, offering visibility to their navigation of urban, national, and transnational landscapes.

Unlike traditional road movies focused on individual protagonists, these films depict entire communities in motion, using shared transportation—particularly buses—as spaces for rich social and cultural interaction. They explore the challenges of mobility justice, highlighting the restrictions, surveillance, and power dynamics faced by market women, whose freedom of movement is shaped by gender and ethnicity.

Sylla and Traoré use innovative cinematic techniques, such as shot/reverse shot sequences, to emphasize both the individuality of their characters and the challenges of filming in confined spaces, reflecting the marginalized status of women in African cinema. Their work represents an effort to reclaim African women's self-definition and challenge male-dominated portrayals of female subjectivity.

The films also delve into the historical and cultural significance of West African market women's economic activities, demonstrating how urbanization has reshaped their roles while maintaining ancient trade networks. Through narratives of resistance and agency, *Colobane Express* and *Frontiers* underscore the resilience of market women, portraying their pivotal roles in African society and cinema while redefining representations of women's mobility and empowerment.

Biography: Seth Compaoré is a Visiting Assistant Professor of French at Austin College (Texas, USA). His main research interests in the field of French and Francophone Cinema include border crossing, journeys of migrations in French and Francophone films, women in African films, and sound in Africa cinema.

2C.5: 'Forget about the beautiful: the messy, the uneven, the disappointing, and the silly' (Film-Philosophy SIG)

Chair: Dominic Lash (Anglia Ruskin University)

Alex Clayton (University of Bristol), 'L'Atalante, or the virtues of messiness'

Abstract: A restoration of *L'Atalante* (Jean Vigo, 1934) caused Terrence Rafferty to declare that 'the best thing about this new version is that, for all the restorer's diligence, the film is still messy, imperfect, defiantly incomplete'. This paper will consider on what basis messiness and imperfection might be celebrated.

Marina Warner (2015) demurs from Rafferty's assessment, stating that she 'read[s] Vigo's imprint more definitely on the material', noting 'stylistic energy' resulting from aesthetic innovation, and praising its 'fluidity' and 'grace'. Yet even the film's most devoted champion, François Truffaut, acknowledged that *L'Atalante* contains lapses in continuity, sporadic clumsiness in shot sequencing, and a slapdash approach to story. He regards such flaws as redeemed by an array of 'wonderful details... [which] save it, and the film gets back on track'.

Monroe Beardsley (1962) cites Paul Ziff approvingly: 'Some good paintings are somewhat disorganized; they are good in spite of the fact that they are somewhat disorganized. But no painting is good because it is disorganized...' (486) Beardsley uses this to assert 'disorganization' as a primary (negative) critical criterion.

Yet this is clearly at odds with Rafferty's invitation to celebrate the film *for* its messiness. How might we consider messiness in aesthetic appreciation? If we follow Noël Carroll's (2008) conflation of achievement and value, we might be tempted to assert intentionality (i.e. the film is *deliberately* messy). If we follow Beardsley, we rely on an accountancy model where merits and demerits are tallied and weighed. Is there a third option?

Biography: Dr Alex Clayton is Associate Professor in Film and Television at the University of Bristol. He is the author of *Funny How: Sketch Comedy and the Art of Humor* (SUNY Press, 2020) and has written widely on performance, comedy, criticism and aesthetics. Recent articles include a study of Hitchcock's casting strategy (in Garvey, A. & Lowe, V. (eds.), *Acting and Performance in Hitchcock*, MUP, forthcoming), and an appreciation of the detective figure in *Columbo* (in Bignell, J., Cardwell, S. & Donaldson, L. (eds.), *Epic/Everyday: Moments in Television*, MUP, 2023).

Jessica Moore (University of Cambridge), 'Reconsidering "unevenness" in Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*'

Abstract: Bergman's 1957 *Wild Strawberries* follows a retired doctor on his journey from Stockholm to Lund to receive an honorary degree. On the road, he encounters hitchhikers who lead him to ruminate on his life's pleasures and disappointments. In this sense, the film captures a day in the life and an 'entire life' (Greenberg, 1970). Pauline Kael (1968) calls it an 'uneven film' (368) and in her review lists off an array of apparent defects, which include 'peculiarly unconvincing flashbacks' and 'overexplicit dialogue' (369). Kael's ascription of unevenness thus refers to inconsistent quality across the film; that some elements are successful while others are not, making for a 'very lumpy odyssey' (369).

Though we may simply disagree with Kael's assessment, this paper moves beyond 'uneven' as an epithet to describe the film's wavering quality (its typical use in film criticism) and investigates whether 'uneven' might offer a productive aesthetic optic; seen this way, 'unevenness' prompts considerations about structure, continuity, suitability, and coherence, aspects which could

illuminate the philosophical contents of the film. Following this line of thought, it is possible that reconsidering a film's alleged demerit pronounces other formal matters, even aesthetic achievements, and so makes available fresh critical insights. Testing whether this is true in the case of *Wild Strawberries* is the principal pursuit of this paper.

Biography: Jessica is a PhD candidate in Film at the University of Cambridge. Her thesis conceptualises and examines the quality of 'looseness' as it appears in the narrative film, with theoretical support from literary studies and philosophy. Jessica's research generally concerns films which are in some sense unsteady, loiterly, or digressive.

Dominic Lash (Anglia Ruskin University), 'Distraction and disappointment in *Trenque Lauquen*'

Abstract: Everyone is looking for something in Laura Citarella's film *Trenque Lauquen* (2022). Ezequiel (Ezequiel Pierri) and Rafa (Rafael Spregelburd) are looking for Rafa's girlfriend Laura (Laura Paredes), who has disappeared. But we soon discover that Laura and Ezequiel had been on their own investigation, pursuing the story of a woman called Carmen Miranda. As the four-hour film moves into its second half, however, we learn that this quest had been distracting Laura from what she deemed a more fascinating story, that of a peculiar creature recently discovered in the lake that gives the Argentinian city of Trenque Lauquen its name. Laura never sees the creature, Miranda's trail peters out, and Ezequiel and Rafa never find Laura. Distraction and disappointment unify the film's narrative threads.

Trenque Lauquen clearly intends the viewer to reflect on how the experience of watching it parallels those of its characters. Are we concentrating on the right thing, or is what grabs our attention distracting us from what we should be attending to? Are the mysteries of the lake creature sufficient to compensate for our disappointment in the film's abandonment of the Miranda narrative? To say that the film teaches that the journey is more important than the destination would be to risk offering the most unilluminating of clichés. Can we understand the film in a way that accepts distraction and disappointment as what they are while still seeing them as aesthetic achievements? Such is the question that this paper will attempt to answer in the affirmative.

Biography: Dominic Lash is currently an associate lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University. His book in the BFI Film Classics series on Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Cure* (1997) was published in 2024. Recent and forthcoming articles include a reading of Scorsese's *The King of Comedy* drawing on the philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe (*Transformations*, no. 37 [2024]) and a chapter on mirrors in Bresson's *Four Nights of a Dreamer* (in Hourigan J. (ed.), *Coming to Terms with Robert Bresson*, MUP, 2026). A monograph entitled *Haunting the World: Essays on Film after Perkins and Cavell* is forthcoming in 2025 from SUNY Press.

Pete Falconer (University of Bristol), 'The uses of silliness in horror movies'

Abstract: Horror movies frequently contain elements that could be described as silly. In *Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Lucio Fulci, 1979), a zombie fights a shark on the ocean floor. *Intruder* (Scott Spiegel, 1989) gives point-of-view shots to multiple inanimate objects, including groceries on a supermarket shelf. One of the main characters in *The Substance* (Coralie Fargeat, 2024) pulls a whole, cooked chicken drumstick out of her navel.

We might want to say that successful horror films find ways to mitigate their silly elements, or that horror conventions help to contain certain forms of silliness. While this is often true, it does not account for the deliberate and productive use of silliness in many horror movies.

This paper will investigate the aesthetic purposes that silliness can serve in horror films. These include both offsetting and enhancing depicted cruelty, shaping nuances of tone and emphasis, and engaging with characteristic themes such as paranoia and taboo. The horror genre explores the impossible and the irrational in diverse forms, extending beyond the conventionally supernatural. Silliness can play an important role in this exploration.

I will also consider horror movies that fail to embrace, or at least reckon with silliness, and the potential consequences of this failure. The best horror movies neither treat the genre as irredeemably silly nor attempt to make it wholly serious. Examining perspectives that fall between these extremes can help us to gain a more complex understanding of standards of value and achievement in horror.

Biography: Pete Falconer is a Senior Lecturer in Film and Television at the University of Bristol. His research focuses on the forms and genres of popular cinema and the critical challenges that these can present. His first book, *The Afterlife of the Hollywood Western*, was published in 2020. He is currently working on his second book, about horror movies and aesthetic evaluation.

2C.6: Documenting the Self - Hybrid

Chair: Cinta Pelejà

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Laís de Lorenço Teixeira (UNICAMP – Brazil / University College London), ‘Inscriptions in documentaries of the self in Latin America’

Abstract: Documentaries of the self are films structured around a first-person narrative constructed throughout the work. This approach examines how such narratives are established, without necessarily requiring the self to coincide with the director.

Contemporary Latin American documentaries have a growing tradition of embracing the personal self as a central narrative thread. These narrative selves both organize and are shaped by the documentary as they engage in memory work, often tied to historical events but also as a political exercise of subjectivity through personal matters.

To examine how the self is inscribed and constructed in these memory exercises, two documentaries offer contrasting approaches, highlighting diverse forms of inscription: *Con mi corazón en Yambo* (María Fernanda Restrepo, 2011, Ecuador) and *Tudo Vai Ficar da Cor que Você Quiser* (Letícia Simões, 2015, Brazil).

In *Con mi corazón en Yambo*, María Fernanda investigates the disappearance of her brothers. While addressing a political issue, the film intertwines familial memory with personal and public archives. The director's narrative self organizes the documentary, as she shares her memories. Conversely, in *Tudo Vai Ficar da Cor que Você Quiser*, the director – Letícia Simões – remains absent as a narrative self. Instead, the focus shifts to the self of Rodrigo de Souza Leão, a multi-artist and writer, portrayed posthumously through his archives and testimonies from family and friends.

These contrasting approaches demonstrate the plurality of inscriptions in documentaries of the self. Through this analysis, we intend to comprehend diverse possibilities for constructing and inscribing the self within memory exercises.

Biography: Laís de Lorenço Teixeira is a PhD candidate in Multimedia at UNICAMP in Brazil (FAPESP Fellowship). She is currently a Visiting Researcher at University College London, under the supervision of Professor Stella Bruzzi. Her doctoral research focuses on documentaries of the self in Latin America, examining their relationship with archival materials and space. Masters in Multimedia (UNICAMP) and a bachelor's degree in Cinema (UFF).

Cinta Pelejà (Goethe University Frankfurt), ‘Group reassembling: Collective screen encounters in early 21st-century documentary’

Abstract: A period marked by the consolidation of global neo-liberalism, the early 2000s saw the emergence of a transnational group of political documentaries featuring social actors watching themselves onscreen. From *Metal Workers* (Eduardo Coutinho, 2004) to *Red Line* (José Filipe Costa, 2012), these documentaries are sequels of 1970s militant films about the emergence of the Workers' Party in Brazil, Salvador Allende's socialist project in Chile, the Portuguese Carnation Revolution, or the anticolonial movements in Guinea-Bissau. The protagonists of these early 21st-century films are seen watching themselves as politically-engaged actors of past collective struggles.

In this paper, I focus on the documentation of such self-viewing practices, a phenomenon that I refer to as “screen encounter.” I situate the screen encounter of these documentaries within the theoretical frameworks of the home movie, understood as a viewing structure shaped by discourses around recognition, community, and nostalgia. As scholars like Vivian Sobchack and Roger Odin have shown, the home movie genre is a reception mode that invites a collective return to a past already lived. In these films, the screen encounter operates as a reassembling tool: it rejoins a fragmented, dispersed political collectivity for viewers, in the act of watching and in the film’s formal structure itself. To account for the screen encounter’s dual nature—as both a global aesthetic and a tool for the reassembly of specific local groups—I suggest that it served as a critical response to the dismantling of collective struggles by globalization processes specific to the early 21st century.

Biography: Cinta Pelejà (she/her) is a postdoctoral researcher at the Graduiertenkolleg “Configurations of Film” at the Goethe University, Frankfurt. She received her PhD in Cinema and Media Studies from the University of Chicago in 2023. Her research focuses on transnational non-fiction cinemas and bears on theoretical and historical questions around politics, gender, and the archive. Her monograph-in-progress analyses how the phenomenon of seeing oneself onscreen—a reception practice referred to as “screen encounter”—has been employed as an aesthetic device within a range of models of moving image making to develop inquiries around history, agency, and the collective.

Ming-Yu Lee (Shih Hsin University, Taipei), ‘Selfies, performance, and the idea of the self in Gérard Courant’s *Cinématon*’

Abstract: Gérard Courant’s *Cinématon* series, which commenced on February 7, 1978, remains an active project, encompassing over 200 hours of footage and more than 3,196 films as of September 2024. The fundamental premise of this series is to transfer the notion of identity from the realm of photography to that of film. The objective is to capture portraits of emerging artists and notable figures, thereby documenting their artistic trajectories. A defining characteristic of the series is its adherence to a silent close-up format, with each film lasting precisely three minutes and twenty seconds without cutting.

This paper examines Gérard Courant’s *Cinématon*, with a particular emphasis on the autoportraits within the series. It explores how, through the act of observing others, Courant simultaneously constructs his own self-portrait films. Furthermore, the article analyses the performances and self-representations of the subjects captured in the more recent iterations of *Cinématon*. It also considers how Courant’s work can be contextualized within the historical framework of cinema, tracing its lineage back to the Lumière era, while simultaneously engaging with contemporary notions of post-cinema in the digital network age. As Courant articulated following the establishment of his YouTube channel in 2012, where he began disseminating the *Cinématon* online, he posited that “it is no longer cinema, but the principle of cinema.”

Biography: Ming-Yu Lee is Associate Professor of Department of Radio, TV and Film at Shih Hsin in Taipei. He is the author and editor of *The Diary Film and Subjectivity of the Self: Taiwan-New York-Paris* (2016) and *Crossing Cinema: the Diary Film, the Essay Film, and the Voice of I* (2022). He is an independent filmmaker, his films were selected and won awards in international film festivals and museums, including Liverpool Underground Film Festival, Lausanne Underground Film & Music Festival, VIDEOFORMES, Festival Tous Courts, Taiwan Biennial, and Jeu de Paume.

Júlia Vilhena Rodrigues (University of Coimbra), 'Affective landscapes of deterritorialization in contemporary cinema'

Abstract: This paper delves into the movements of deterritorialization in cinema to understand the affective landscapes that reverberate within the diegetic space of narratives centered on exile, migration, and diaspora. Through an in-depth analysis of the films *A Media Voz* (2019) by Cuban filmmakers

Heidi Hassan and Patricia Pérez, and *Nous* (2021) by Franco-Senegalese filmmaker Alice Diop, we reflect on the subjective, intimate, historical, and political dimensions arising from the filmmakers' experiences of displacement and inscribed within the cinematic form. By putting autoethnographic practice (Russell, 1999) into perspective, we examine how the affective landscapes in these films echo the "staging of subjectivity" of the filmmakers and a sense of otherness created in the gaps of the fragmented "self". The article proposes a rapprochement between contemporary "accented cinemas" (Naficy, 2001) and the essay film, highlighting how the essay form operates in a "third space," open to the fractures and becomings of migrant and diasporic identities. Viewing it as a "minor cinema," derived from Deleuze and Guattari's (1975) concept of minor literature, we see the crossing of borders as a political and aesthetic gesture, generating processes of translation and hybridization amplified by essayistic cinécriture. The paper weaves together theoretical articulations around identity and otherness in cinematic practices, in dialogue with diasporic thinkers from Cultural and Postcolonial Studies, and with the aesthetic-political manifestos of Third Cinema movement, which emerged in the 1960s and 70s in Latin America.

Biography: Júlia Vilhena is a Junior Researcher at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies CEIS20 at the University of Coimbra (UC). In her PhD research in Art Studies, with a specialization in Film Studies at UC, she develops practice-based research in the fields of documentary, migration, and post-colonial studies. Júlia holds a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Brasília (UnB) and a Film Direction degree. Her MA thesis in Compared Literature at PUC-Rio focused on the film-essay by Global South women directors. In addition to her work as a researcher, Júlia works as an independent director, screenwriter and curator.

2C.7: (Re)documenting the Real

Chair: Ocean Xu

Fotis Begklis (London College of Communication), 'History from below: The micro-historical documentaries of London's Lost Village'

Abstract: This proposal for a paper draws on my creative practice and research through making six short microhistorical documentaries as its primary lens. It aims to elucidate how the granular focus in these documentaries incites an enriched dialogue that offers an alternative pathway to historical understanding anchored in the intricacies of micro-level interplays.

The paper will question the characteristic omniscience of the traditional expository documentary, which usually focuses on the past in a macrohistorical sense.

Traditional documentaries often strive to project a sense of objectivity, producing a top-down view of history.

The documentaries explore the complex interplay between urban transformation and colonial legacies in East London's Leamouth peninsula. By juxtaposing the intricate architectural nuances and fluid spaces of the **London's Lost Village**, Trinity Buoy Wharf area with its profound historical entanglements with the East India trade, these films unravel the hidden traces of colonial imprints that shadow East London, set against the backdrop of modern urban metamorphosis.

I argue in this presentation that what looks closed and linear becomes more complex and reveals new engagement possibilities as viewers engage with the films and explore the micro-historical cracks and hidden layers within the fabric of traditional historical knowledge. I will conclude that these documentaries should be conceived as a source of multiple dialogic tensions, suggesting the potential for new historical interpretations that incorporate multiple temporalities and micro fragments that create unique dialogic spaces between the film and the viewer.

Biography: I am a non-fiction filmmaker and practice-based researcher my work and research constantly explore ways of making films to tell stories deeply rooted in people and explore social issues. A key aspect of my work is co-creating media projects with community members, particularly amplifying the voices of underrepresented local groups.

Jason Potel (University of Warwick), 'Nanook of the south: Performing primitivity in ethnographic television documentary'

Abstract: In 1971, the Filipino government made world news after encountering a band of indigenous people in the Cotabato rainforest on the island of Mindanao. Believed to be completely isolated for two thousand years, the Tasaday became immediate stars appearing in multiple American ethnographic documentaries including *The Cave People of the Philippines* (NBC, 1972) and *A Message from the Stone Age* (Nance, 1983). Fifteen years after their 'discovery,' the Tasaday reappeared in the cultural milieu due to rumours that they had never been isolated but rather were villagers hired by the Marcos regime to temporarily live in caves. This era produced a wave of Western conspiracy theory documentaries and media coverage including 20/20's 'The Tribe that Never Was' (ABC, 1986) and *Scandal's* 'Tasaday: The Lost Tribe' (*Central Independent TV*, 1987). Only by the end of the eighties did filmmakers form a more nuanced sensibility that avoided noble savage tropes and paranoid epistemologies as demonstrated by various documentaries by public service broadcasters including *Horizon's* 'Trial in the Jungle' (BBC2, 1989), *Das Regenwald Komplott* (NDR, 1992), and *NOVA's* 'The Lost Tribe' (PBS, 1993). Finally, in

the twenty-first century, we approach auto-ethnography with the Tasaday documented in Filipino documentaries such as *I-Witness* 'Tasaday' (GMA Public Affairs, 2017). This paper examines how evolving postcolonial documentary practices shaped the myriad incarnations of Tasaday identity by examining each phase of their narrative beginning with intrusions by independent and journalistic ethnographers to the international work of educational and non-commercial television, and finally a more domestic and auto-ethnographic perspective.

Biography: Jason received his BA in English and his BS in Cinema from Ithaca College, his MA in Media Studies from Columbia University, and is completing his PhD in Film and Television Studies from the University of Warwick. He has published in *In Media Res* and has a chapter on Pare Lorentz's unfinished film *No Place to Hide* in the forthcoming book *Studying the Unmade, Unseen, and Unreleased: Histories Theories, Methods from Intellect Publishing*. He has worked at various documentary production companies across New York City. His podcast *Snake Oil* features interviews with notable figures including 9/11 survivors and Theranos whistleblowers.

Phoebe Anson (University of Sheffield), 'Documenting the (sur)real: Unravelling fact, fiction, and surreality in experimental (docu)film'

Abstract: While it may seem incongruous to discuss realist cinema alongside Surrealism, Michael Richardson claims that 'the documentary may even offer the most natural means for the exploration of surrealist themes.' (Richardson, 2006). Through identifying these themes, such as unreality, automatism, and dream-states, this paper situates two examples of world cinema within the typically eurocentric movement of Surrealism to examine both a historical precedent of the Surrealist documentary while exploring the potential for contemporary world cinema to transcend boundaries of reality and imagination. In his debut feature, *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000), a documentary or docufiction, Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul uses the Surrealist technique of *cadavre exquis* ("exquisite corpse") to interview local people, constructing a collective (surreal) narrative that grows as the film crew travels across Thailand. Similarly, Austrian filmmaker Sandra Wollner's debut *The Impossible Picture* (2016) uses realist modes of cinema, specifically the home-movie and found footage formats, as it follows a 13-year old girl recording the everyday life of her family following the death of her father. I also compare Surrealist filmmaker, Luis Buñuel's *Land Without Bread* (1933) to the contemporary work of Wollner and Weerasethakul through analysing their shared interest in depicting real landscapes and people through Surrealist aesthetics, like disorientating camera shots, and Surrealist tones, like their incorporation of dark humour. These 21st Century films, like Buñuel's, adopt the facade of realism to (re)assess those aforementioned Surrealist themes and thus contribute to the Surrealist conception of 'an absolute reality: a surreality' (Breton, 1924).

Biography: Phoebe Anson completed both her BA and MA in English Literature at the University of Sheffield and is now a postgraduate researcher funded by the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities. Her PhD is focused on examining Surrealist aesthetics and tendencies in contemporary world cinema, the focal point being mostly independent filmmakers working both within and outside of Europe. Her thesis' main concerns revolve around (inter)national discourses of cinema and perceptions of the Surrealist movement, particularly examining cinema with presumed fascinations of the "real", as well as mixed-media and new digital media formats.

Laurence Kent (University of Bristol), 'Basma al-Sharif's *O, Persecuted* (2014) and the politics of noise'

Abstract: *O, Persecuted* is a found-footage experimental film utilising “noisy” aesthetics to unsettle archival image practices and their relationship to Palestinian politics. Al-Sharif superimposes images from Kassem Hawal’s 1974 Palestinian Militant film *Our Small Houses*, an Egyptian belly dancer’s performance, and contemporary images of Israeli party culture. Samirah Alkassim describes al-Sharif’s use of found-footage as a form of “counter-ethnography” that “disables the colonial gaze of the image archive”; al-Sharif utilises noise to trouble assumptions of transparency in archival practices as she performs a kind of anti-restoration on Hawal’s film, scrawling on the image and adding new sonic disturbances to the soundtrack. My paper will explore this form of aesthetically codified noise as a technique of experimental cinema, which then, with the intrusion of hard dance music and footage of Israeli parties, produces a different layer of noise.

To understand this, I will look to philosophers of noise, such as Ray Brassier, who laments the enclosing of noise into a global “genre”. He rails against the “sterile orthodoxies of ‘noise’ as pseudonym for experimental vanguardism” and puts forward a more radical aesthetics of noise through “forcefully short-circuiting incommensurable genres”. Al-Sharif’s film mimics this movement from noise as genre to an attack on the generic itself through noise. Al-Sharif uses noise to add obscurity to the colonial gaze on the archive, but she then moves to trouble the possibility of noisy aesthetics itself. I argue that this must be understood in the context of the history of Israeli sonic warfare against the Palestinians.

Biography: Laurence Kent is a Lecturer in Digital Film & Television at the University of Bristol. He has published and presented on various topics within film theory and philosophy, from Deleuzian ethics, experimental cinema, Hollywood action film, archiving practices, and anticolonial aesthetics. His articles and book reviews have appeared in *Film-Philosophy*, *Alphaville*, *Studies in World Cinema*, *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, *Frames Cinema Journal*, and *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*, amongst others. His current research explores forms of contingency and noise within screen media.

2C.8: Extended Screens

Chair: Pietari Kaapa (University of Warwick)

Tom Livingstone (University of the West of England), ‘The Grinning Man: Liveness in XR’

Abstract: This paper will summarise case-study research into an experimental production – “The Grinning Man” - taking place within the UKRI’s MyWorld programme. “The Grinning Man” is a VR remediation of a performance of the cult musical of the same name, recorded as motion capture data by Andy Serkis’ The Imaginarium in 2017.

The R&D impetus behind the remediation is to explore the possibility of “unbottling” recorded performance data and interpellating it with animation driven by real-time data (e.g. from eye-tracking within the Quest 3 HMD), in order to generate an emotional encounter in XR.

This paper will:

- assess the challenges associated with re-formatting historical performance data to generate a coherent one-to-one performance in XR
- offer insights into the possibilities uncovered through the experimental interpellation of real-time and recorded animation for XR performance
- sketch a trajectory for future R&D around the convergence of discrete data sets in the generation of digital performances

Most significantly, this paper will look at the Grinning Man within the larger context of XR media’s re-constitution of the technological and cultural conditions of “liveness.” Taking Philip Auslander’s argument that “what culturally counts as live experience changes over time in relation to technological change,” as a prompt to interrogate the emergent aesthetics of “liveness” as exemplified in XR experiences such as The Grinning Man. What can be learned about the contemporary techno-cultural criteria of live experience from The Grinning Man’s deliberate blurring of the boundary between real-time and recorded data?

Biography: Dr Tom Livingstone is a Research Fellow at UWE on the UKRI’s MyWorld project exploring the impact of emerging media formats visual culture’s pipelines and aesthetics. He has published widely on film and digital media and his first book *Hybrid Images and the Vanishing Point of Digital Visual Effects* is published by Edinburgh University Press.

Ningning Song (University of Glasgow), ‘Cinematic Virtual Reality Documentary as a Storytelling Medium for Representing Personal Memory’

Abstract: This proposal explores changes in memory representation in the digital era. Memory is understood as an active, mediated and remediated process rather than a static retrieval of the past, it is shaped by the interplay of personal and cultural narratives (Freeman, 2010). The emergence of cinematic virtual reality (CVR) documentaries, which has expanded the boundaries of memory representation, highlighting a unique narrative way and enhancing the affection experience. CVR documentary allows viewers to actively participate in memory rather than merely retrieve it. My CVR documentary practice explores the interplay of history and daily life, constructing a family memoir that encapsulates personal. The practice reimagines memory spaces by situating secular family life within broader cultural memory, blending historical witnessing with intimate storytelling. In the following, I will address what I propose are three major aspects to demonstrate why CVR documentary is an ideal medium for memory-based

storytelling and why memory as a thematic focus presents opportunities to explore the narrative potential of CVR : (1) the digital transfer in memory; (2) CVR documentary as a storytelling medium for memory; (3) cultural memory and personal memory in CVR documentary practice.

Biography: Ms Ningning Song is a PhD student in Film and Television Studies, University of Glasgow. Ningning's primary interest research focuses on the intersection of documentary film studies, film practices, and virtual reality studies. Her ongoing research will present a review of the literature that discusses the specifics of story narrative for a 360-degree VR documentary and uses film practice as research.

Cecilia Chen (King's College London/University of Hong Kong), 'Progressive possibilities of virtual reality pornographic games'

Abstract: Considering the growing interest in virtual reality technologies in the past decade, little has been written about the abundance of pornographic content produced for this medium. In VR, most pornographic media is made using 360° or 180° live-action video, following the style of point-of-view pornography. This format usually embodies the VR user in a white male body, forcing them into a restricted subjectivity and reinforcing heteronormative ideals. Although an argument has been made for the humanising potentials of this form of pornography through a sense of empathy arising from embodiment (Rubin, 2018), the notion of VR as an 'empathy machine' has been problematised in recent discourse (Nakamura, 2020).

On the other hand, VR pornographic games such as Captain Hardcore and Dominatrix Simulator explore different aspects of kink. Captain Hardcore, a sci-fi themed sex simulator with extensive character customisation options, allows for a variety of LGBTQ friendly sexual scenarios. Dominatrix Simulator allows players to choose the gender, pronouns, and genitals that are referenced in the game dialogue. This paper explores how VR pornographic games provide an alternative avenue for adult content that deviates from the heteronormative focus of POV-style videos. The adaptability of game-engine built experiences and independent funding structures contribute to such progressive possibilities. As most of these games are funded and accessed through Patreon subscriptions, developers strongly consider member requests when updating game features. Additionally, players' sense of immersion is increased through the various available forms of interactivity, cultivating a greater feeling of freedom and play in these experiences.

Biography: Cecilia is a Film Studies and American Studies doctoral researcher on the University of Hong Kong and King's College London Joint PhD program. Her research looks at virtual reality film spectatorship through the intersections of film theory and phenomenology.

Pauline Nottingham (King's College London), 'Scrolling, the montage and the multiverse: The reactive relationship between contemporary popular cinema and scrolled digital media'

Abstract: This paper considers the exchanges currently being made between popular cinematic films and scrolled digital media with a focus on the status of the montage - what it has meant within film historically, how it relates to the experience of engaging with new media, and, as a conclusion, how its meaning within film has transformed in tandem with the huge popularity of 'scrolling' as a cultural phenomenon. The montage, once a way to cross bridges of time and distance within the singular world of a film, can now be seen as demonstrative of the aesthetics of overwhelming collage that the user may engage with whilst scrolling visual media on a digital device. Montage recreates the affect of scrolling through, up and down expansive media

ecologies, with shutter-speed hyper-cuts between disparate shots, seemingly disconnected. Instead of being utilised as a formal device by which to cross time or space within a film, montage now acts as a bridge between the 'real' and the 'unreal'. On an ideological level, the emphasis on creating and disturbing a distinction between the real and the unreal is in fact an analogy for the ever-blurring distinction between the 'real' and the digital within contemporary western society. This analogy is explored within an emergent genre in popular cinema – the multiverse film. Therefore, multiverse films feature the montage as a prominent means by which not only to illustrate the simultaneous existence of multiple realities outside of the real to an audience, but to imitate the phenomenon of scrolling.

Biography: Pauline H. Nottingham is a PhD candidate in their final stage of study who researches the intersection between film-philosophy, visual cultures and emergent digital medias. She has an interest in art history and visual cultural theory and teaches as a GTA in the Department of Film Studies at Kings College London, within which department and institution she is also supervised.

2C.9: Exhibition Roundtable: *Transnational Arab Stardom* Edited Collection and Artwork
Participants: Kaya Davies-Hayon, Stefania Van der Peer, Bahia Shehab

Friday 28 March

Panel Session 3A

3A.1: Narration, Storytelling and Adaptation - Hybrid

Chair: Yuchn Zhou

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Yue Liu (Queen Mary, University of London), 'The contemporary significance of mythological adaptation: A sample of *White Snake: Afloat* (Directed by Jianxi Chen and Jiakai Li, 2024)'

Abstract: This article highlights the significance of studying traditional mythological adaptation within an ever-changing context, which reveals the intrinsic linkages between identity and performance, between intellectual discourse and social practice, and among sexuality, revolution, and commercialism (Luo, 2014). The Legend of the White Snake is a renowned traditional tale in China, it has been adapted into multiple versions, each reflecting a distinct emphasis and presenting a complex set of negotiations and interactions in art works and other social aspects. This article re-examines the masculinity and femininity in *White Snake: Afloat* (Directed by Jianxi Chen and Jiakai Li, 2024) from a critical stance. As Louie and Edwards (1995, p136) assert, unless masculinity is interrogated in a manner analogous to femininity, masculinity will persist as the criterion by which women and other marginalized groups are evaluated. This article contends that the principal male characters in the film exhibit a kind of male attribute that extols "Wu" to a greater extent yet does not neglect the presentation of "Wen". Masculinity attains a certain balance between the literary and the martial, while the female characters remain confined within the framework of "being gazed". Furthermore, humanism is accentuated in the film, particularly the portrayal of Xu Xian, which emphasizes Xu Xian's initiative as a human being who confronts supernatural power. This aligns with the individualism praised well by neoliberalism. This article supplements the study of contemporary adaptation of Chinese myths from the aspects of masculinity and audience comments, with the aim of providing a clearer perspective and the development context of contemporary Chinese mythological adaptation.

Biography: I am currently a PhD candidate in film studies, with a focus on Chinese contemporary women's cinema. My research interests encompass female empowerment, consciousness, and the evolution of women's cinema within the domain of commercial filmmaking. Specifically, I am exploring the negotiation between feminism and mainstream culture, the agency of female directors, and the representation of female characters. Concurrently, I have a profound interest in the interplay between traditional Chinese culture and contemporary culture.

Yuchen Zhou (Bournemouth University), 'Cross-cultural adaptation and temporal storytelling in screenwriting: A practice-based exploration of *The Tenants*'

Abstract: Time travel has been a popular subject in both physics and film. Its portrayal in cinema is nearly as long as the film medium itself, paralleling the development of film adaptation as a creative practice. Despite their commonalities, these two fields are often treated as separate research areas. This presentation addresses the overlooked intersection between them by exploring how the concept of time travel is reinterpreted through the practice of cross-cultural adaptation in screenwriting. I argue that, in adapting narratives across cultures, screenwriters function as time travellers, transporting stories to new temporal and spatial contexts. In this

presentation, by taking my PhD project, *The Tenants*, as an example, I will employ practice-based research method, to demonstrate how the screenwriting process enables a unique form of temporal and spatial storytelling, allowing script writers to travel across different time periods and cultural landscapes.

Biography: Yuchen is a PGR (PhD candidate) in the Department of Media Production, Faculty of Media & Communication at Bournemouth University. Her research mainly focuses on Chinese film adaptations based on British literature. She is also highly interested in the areas of filmmaking and scriptwriting. Her short film *Feeling Good Tonight* (director, co-screenwriter) has been selected by the Infinity Film Festival (2023).

Ben Broomfield (University of Lincoln), 'Plotting ethically: Choosing death for a character'

Abstract: Narrative feature films present a structured arrangement of representations of real life human behaviours displayed through an array of fictional character acts, choices, and actions. Inevitably, each of these representations will undergo a process of fictionalisation, in which the representation will be moulded by the needs of the story in order to tell a cohesive narrative.

Suicide is a human behaviour that is considered to be a statistical rarity in the real world, which has lead suicidologists and philosophers to label the act as irrational (Lester, D. (1993) *The Logic and the Rationality of Suicide. Homeostasis*. 3(4) 167-173.). My paper seeks to explore if the act of suicide within the Anglophone commercial film can ever be considered truly motivated when the narrative framework in which it is deployed essentially demands that all character choices are motivated - or "understandable" - from the point of view of the audience?

By analysing several key representations of suicide in film, such as *Le Feu Follet* (1963), *A Star is Born* (2018), and *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), I argue that the fictionalisation of suicide, even when it is adapted from a real life occurrence, causes the act to become a central conceit of the narrative and therefore must be set-up and established by the narrative in the same way that other conceits of narrative are, such as details and rules related to the land, technology, and people that occupy a story world.

This is achieved by forefronting the suicide's irrationality to help shape an ethical aesthetic of suicide that is appropriate for global audiences.

Biography: Ben Broomfield is a PhD candidate and senior lecturer in screenwriting at the University of Lincoln. His PhD explores the representation of suicide in the narrative feature film and draws upon his experience as a practicing screenwriter and passion for telling ethically sustainable stories

Helen Piper (University of Bristol), 'True stories that travel: *Sambre* and *The Long Shadow*'

Abstract: The growing reach of global streaming services for the distribution of television drama has exacerbated creative tensions around the telling of stories which have distinctively regional provenance and/or are of specifically local and national interest. Since the advent of TV3 in the previous century, critics have regularly noted tendencies towards ahistoricism, the rise of the generic 'non-place', and often arbitrary relations between the somewhere of a story's provenance and the nominal spaces used as setting. Nevertheless, during the same period, factual or 'true story' dramas have become ever more ubiquitous in contemporary television. These have proliferated across both broadcast and streamed services, their factual referents

underpinning a claim to (contingent) authenticity. As actual historical events occur only in actual space and time, such drama series appear to militate against the otherwise globalising tendencies pioneered for streamer-funded fiction.

This paper will explore how the dramatic reinterpretation of geographically specific, historical events may nevertheless allow for both cultural specificity and international resonance through the use of aesthetic strategies that transcend boundaries. Analysis will focus on two recent television series which dramatise protracted police investigations into actual, regional - and nationally notorious – serial crimes: *Sambre* (France Télévisions, 2023) and *The Long Shadow* (ITV, 2023). Both of these dramas privilege an affective emphasis on intersectional and marginalised subject experiences, on readily identifiable themes of injustice, victimhood, and scandal, and on the (often reflexive) deployment of internationally recognisable conventions of fictional television genres.

Biography: Helen Piper is Associate Professor in Television Studies in the Department of Film and Television at the University of Bristol. She has published widely on television, television aesthetics, and genres of reality television, light entertainment and crime drama, including the monograph *The TV Detective – Voices of Dissent in Contemporary Television* (2016). Her new monograph, *Hopeful Vision: Entertainment on the Small Screen*, will be published by EUP in June 2025.

3A.2: Global Horror - Hybrid

Chair: Johnny Walker (Northumbria University)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Reece Goodall (University of Warwick), 'My palette will die happy: Sensorial viewership in *The Menu*'

Abstract: As befitting such a food-focused film as Mark Mylod's 2022 work *The Menu*, consumption and taste are frequented foregrounded throughout the runtime. The film works as a scathing critique of the rich in the USA, a satirical element that was much discussed upon its release, but I intend to analyse it through the realms of the sensorial; that is to say, it functions effectively and affectively through its evocation of the sense of taste (and, to a lesser extent, the associated senses of sight and touch).

In order to facilitate this particular affective response on the part of its audience, the film draws upon the language of two connected forms: the traditional cookery show and, of more likely relevance for a modern audience engaging with screen media, the overly aestheticized depiction of the culinary world in FoodTok. As Ralph Fiennes' Chef Slowik speaks to his assembled audience (and, implicitly, to the viewer), he presents them with a simple instruction: 'I have to beg of you one thing. It's just one. Do not eat. Taste. Savour. Relish.' Drawing on notions of the cinematic sensorium and familiar globalised aesthetics associated with the depiction of food, I examine how *The Menu* allows us to do just that, producing a film we can taste as well as watch.

Biography: Dr Reece Goodall is a Director of Student Experience at the University of Warwick, where he completed a PhD thesis comprising an industrial and theoretical analysis of contemporary French horror cinema. He has previously written for French Screen Studies, Horror Studies and Animation Studies, and is the author of the forthcoming monograph *French Horror: Media, industry and culture*.

Han Geng (University of Southampton), 'Reimagining the monstrous: The fox spirit and women in Chinese horror'

Abstract: As a shape-shifting figure that transcends boundaries between the human and non-human, divine and demonic, the fox spirit exists in various forms across Asian cultures. Rooted in shamanistic practices, the fox spirit has evolved through literature and folklore over centuries in China. With its ambiguous and complex characteristics and the capacity to manifest both benign and demonic powers, the fox spirit has become a potent figure in Chinese horror cinema to explore personal emotions, cultural tensions, and shifts in societal discourse. They are often closely associated with women, portrayed as sacrificial amorous ghosts or as erotic figures wielding destructive allure on screen. These depictions of the fox spirit not only deepen our understanding of its cultural significance but also reflect socio-cultural conflicts and compromises in contemporary times. However, it has received limited attention.

Through the lens of the fox spirit, this paper will examine its representation in mainland Chinese horror cinema and contribute to the dynamic landscape of horror cinema and the Asian Gothic genre. Given the significance of the fox spirit within the Chinese cultural context, this study will first analyse how this figure has been reimagined and redefined on screen. By investigating the fox spirit as a complex monstrous feminine figure in *Painted Skin* (2008) and *Painted Skin: The Resurrection* (2012), I will argue how this figure combines the traits of a threatening ghost and a deceptive fox spirit, challenging gender norms and reflecting evolving societal values and power dynamics. Moreover, it will also analyze how the fox spirit blends past and present, serving as a

site to explore broader social predicaments, such as the dialectical relationship between mainstream discourse and the ‘Other.’

Biography: Han Geng is a SWWDTP2 (AHRC)-funded PhD student in Film Studies at the University of Southampton. She is interested in unravelling the intricate cultural tapestry of modern China through the lens of horror cinema, specifically delving into the representation of ghosts in Chinese-language horror films. She has contributed to the AHRC-funded project for the MAI Special Issue on Women Filmmakers Working in Global Horror Cinema, which she has recently completed.

Tim Coleman (University of Warwick), ‘The horror of liminality in *His House*’

Abstract: In 2020 Remi Weekes’ *His House* arrived on Netflix, a startling portrait of the experiences of asylum seekers in the UK couched in the trappings of a ‘haunted house’ narrative. Along with other socially-conscious horrors of the period (e.g. *Get Out*; *Us*; *Saint Maud*; *Relic*), the heightened visual language of genre cinema was used to explore socio-political issues, here inviting the audience into proximity with refugees, who are frequently constructed as liminal ‘others’.

Locating *His House* in the geo-political context of the so-called Mediterranean Migration Crisis – and the ongoing discourse in the UK about small boats crossings – this paper explores the idea of cinematic empathy, with *His House* asking audiences to cross the political divide and identify with migrants who have endured real-world horrors; terrifying experiences made accessible to audiences by being smuggled inside the more fantastical – and therefore fictive – horrors of a supernatural threat (though these experiences are themselves represented as liminal, bridging the paranormal and psychological).

Additionally, the fact *His House* was distributed by Netflix, and – at the time of writing – has never had a physical release, suggests that the film itself is liminal: on a para-textual level it, much like its central characters, has no permanent residence. One might seek to acquire a ‘ripped’ version on Blu-ray, but this – like those arriving into the UK on small boats – could be classed as illegal. As such *His House*’s status is, by virtue of the Netflix model, inherently temporary and remains at the whim of corporate-political powers.

Biography: Tim is an Assistant Professor in Social Work at the University of Warwick, and a freelance film critic who has written for *Total Film*, *Second Sight Films*, *Fangoria*, the BFI and others. He is also the editor and host of podcasts *Moving Pictures Film Club* and *The Top 100*, as well as being an award-winning screenwriter.

Tim also worked for almost 10 years as a frontline social worker in a Local Authority asylum unit, supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who were seeking refuge in the UK.

Elinor Dolliver (University of Cambridge), ‘National folklore in a global genre: Horror cinema’

Abstract: This paper investigates the transformation of national objects of folklore when adapted for international horror film audiences. In these, folk characters from Ireland (*The Hallow*), Japan (*Ju-On*), and Australia (“The Moogai”) become visually more specific, often in ways that conform to globalised horror film aesthetics. Narratives which were originally cautionary and open-ended become preoccupied with closure and defeat. Film adaptations of folklore are often necessarily global and multinational retellings of local stories, and frequently

risk oversimplifying or misrepresenting folklore, evoking anxiety from cultural critics who regard the horror genre as too closely affiliated with Hollywood to effectively express national concerns (Radley 2013, Flynn 2008). Critically and in popular culture, horror films which adapt folklore are often also mislabelled as folk-horror, a distinctly British genre with little relation to specific folklore. As Keetley acknowledges, “Because definitions of folk-horror have emerged almost exclusively in the context of British folk-horror, folk-horror in other national traditions almost by necessity will not quite ‘fit’.”(2020). Folk-horror is an inappropriate tool for reading non-British texts, as Thurgill (2023) observes regarding Japanese ‘folk-horror’, and alternative methodologies may better enrich readings of folklore in horror cinema especially from Britain’s former colonies, including India, Australia, and Ireland. This paper calls for an alternative approach to reading folklore in horror cinema beyond folk-horror, suggesting that theories from folklore studies and corresponding disciplines such as Native American studies may help understand these adaptations in a more representative light.

Biography: Elinor is an AHRC funded PhD candidate at Cambridge’s Centre for Film and Screen, where she researches the intersections between horror cinema and folklore. Her current research revolves around Irish folklore in horror cinema, as well as the folkloric structure, context, and function of horror cinema more generally. Her thesis proposes that the folk and fairy story are not lost alongside pre-literature cultures, but rather survive in modern filmic reincarnations that maintain their vital social functions. Her Master’s thesis: “Béaloides agus Blockbusters: Supernatural Irish Mythology in the Movies”, is on representations of Irish folk creatures in horror and fantasy cinema.

3A.3: Childhood, Queerness and Global Screen Cultures

Chair: Abigail Jenkins (University of Glasgow)

Rachel Milne (University of Cambridge), ‘Curiouser and curiouser: Queer adaptations of classic children’s literature’

Abstract: Texts for children routinely celebrate alterity, equating anormativity with pleasure and play and opposing dominant cultural perceptions of deviance. Childhood has therefore been considered a queer time in one’s life (Bond Stockton 2009), and prior studies of children’s texts have mobilised queer readings that reflect this sentiment (Abate and Kidd 2011; Pugh 2011). However, despite the fact that adaptations of children’s texts are one of the most popular facets of modern cinema, with sustained global appeal (Buckingham 2007; Cartmell 2007; Zipes 2013), the role of adaptation is rarely accounted for in studies of children’s texts. With anxieties over the “moral influence” of film and of queerness sky-high where children are concerned, little room is ostensibly left for flamboyant gendered and sexual presentations; in other words, little room is left for queerness on screen. However, if to queer is to make something strange, odd, or unconventional through a process of transformation, then to queer ‘may be to adapt; to adapt is to queer’ (Demory 2019, 1). This paper draws from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Peter Pan* (1953), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) and *Pinocchio: A True Story* (2022) in arguing that classic children’s texts are effectively queered through the process of adaptation. These four texts, I argue, demonstrate how adaptations of classic children’s texts open up a space to incorporate queerness into traditional stories, characters, and worlds, facilitated by their literary original’s embrace of difference in its manifold forms.

Biography: Rachel Milne is a HDPSP-funded PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge. Her work centres around representations of neuroqueerness, disability, neurodivergence and queer identities in children’s literature and film. Her writings on childhood, queerness, and non-normativity in literature and film have been published in peer-reviewed journals and blogs, and she has presented her work at various international conferences. She additionally sits on the Editorial Board for the academic journal *Mapping the Impossible*, and the Executive Committee for the British Comparative Literature Association, for whom she is also Postgraduate Representative.

Catherine Lester (University of Birmingham), “‘Show us your fangs!’ Sideways growth and the queer possibilities of the child vampire’

Abstract: Child vampires in global screen media present dual opportunities to disrupt conventional and limited constructs of (Western) childhood. First, their status as vampires, with the violent and erotic connotations of blood-sucking, subverts the ideal of childhood innocence and naivety, leading to them to be represented in adult vampire fiction as tragic figures or abominations. Second, the immortality of vampirism interrupts normal perceptions of time and maturity. In this way, child vampires literalise Katherine Bond Stockton’s queer theorisation of ‘sideways growth’, whereby a person’s growth is measured by experience, not age (2009). Yet child vampires in children’s screen media often do not realise this queer and horrific potential due to restrictions facing what is deemed ‘suitable’ in children’s horror media (Lester, 2016). Child vampires are stripped of their most violent characteristics, while the status of vampirism is either a curse to be broken (*The Little Vampire*) or a state to be ‘grown out of’ on the way to heteronormative, vampiric adulthood (*Hotel Transylvania*, *The Twilight Saga*). However, animated television programmes including *Mona the Vampire*, *School for Vampires* and *Vampirina* present more sustained opportunities for child vampires to realise their queer potential on account of television’s episodic structures and animation’s detachment from ‘real’, live-action children – both

qualities that resist narrative closure, growth and maturity (Barnett, 2017). This paper explores how and to what extent differences in medium, form and target audience affect the potential for the vampire identity to be harnessed by child characters for endless, and decidedly queer, play.

Biography: Dr Catherine Lester is Associate Professor in Film and Television at the University of Birmingham who researches the intersections between children's culture, the horror genre and cult media. Her publications in this area include the monograph *Horror Films for Children: Fear and Pleasure in American Cinema* (Bloomsbury 2021) and the edited collection *Watership Down: Perspectives On and Beyond Animated Violence* (Bloomsbury 2023). She is Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded Youth & Horror Research Network (2023-25).

Abigail Jenkins (University of Glasgow), 'Growing wrong: Fat kids, queer kids, and the pedagogy of conversion in British reality programming'

Abstract: There is an oft-repeated social claim that Britain has been taken over by a childhood obesity epidemic. This chimes with the supposed flood of misguided youth identifying as transgender and/or queer more broadly. 'Solutions' for childhood fatness and/or queerness are often centred on early conversion therapies (e.g., weight loss or LGBTQ+ conversion programmes); yet, fatness and queerness actively rebel against white supremacist notions of the figure of the child, whose body, gender, and sense of self is held hostage in the service of shaping a particular national identity (Edelman, 2004).

This paper draws from Kathryn Bond Stockton's (2009) notion of 'growing sideways' to unpack the overlapping rhetorics around queer/fat children's bodies as they refuse, in some way, to grow up; these ideas are interconnected with theorising around fatness and public pedagogies (Kyrola, 2011; Cameron and Watkins, 2017; Saguy, 2013). Considering ideas of conversion, transformation, and growth in Channel 4 documentaries - *Junk Food Kids: Who's to Blame?* (2015), *Trans Kids: it's time to talk* (2018), *100 Kilo Kids* (2020) - this analysis considers the reality TV pedagogy around fatness and queerness that upholds a (colonial, white, able-bodied) figure of the child-as-biocitizen, rather than advocating for the health and lives of actual children.

Biography: Abigail Jenkins is a Lecturer in Film and Television Studies and Media, Culture, and Society at the University of Glasgow. They work on television and feminist media studies with an emphasis on the study of marginalised identities and embodied affects. Their current research focuses on the ways in which fat and plus-size bodies are represented, performed, and discussed in contemporary British and American television. She has been published in peer-reviewed journals, provides peer review for the *Fat Studies Journal*, and is an active member of BAFTSS, MECCSA and SCMS.

Jane Batkin (University of Lincoln), 'Queer little figures in the elsewhere world: Othering, agency and the animated child'

Abstract: Childhood belongs to itself. The space occupied by children is secret and unbreachable; Jenks suggests that they inhabit this world yet seem "to answer to another" (2020, 2), while Bond Stockton argues, "we cannot know the contours of children, who they are to themselves" (2009, 4). The image of the child is forever contentious; cinema attempts to capture its essence while asking questions about its authenticity. The perpetual 'othering' of the screen child reflects philosophical thought about global childhoods and resonates with queerness. Animation accentuates these ideas, even as it leads us into its own artificial 'Elsewhere' world. Here, the animated child celebrates its 'other' nature, and is able to address its stigma and

hauntology. This chapter will explore the animated child as queer figure, focusing on child characters such as Cuca, in Abreu's film *Boy and the World*, as he journeys to find his father, and the child Icare in Barras' *My Life as a Courgette*, who experiences life at an orphanage for abused and abandoned children. *Wolfwalkers*, meanwhile, places the ostracised child within nature to celebrate and accentuate the queering of such figures. Troutman applies Bond Stockton's theory of childhood to the animated child, who is placed as 'odd' and estranged, and who seems to naturally grow sideways rather than upwards (Troutman, 2019). The child haunts these spaces as a doubly artificial entity. It is here, however, in the deeply and equally odd Elsewhere, that the queer child is able to ignite with agency and celebrate its own difference.

Biography: Jane Batkin is the author of *Identity in Animation* (2017) and the monograph *Childhood in Animation: navigating a secret world* (Routledge, 2024). She has written chapters on the animated child for the edited collections *Coraline: A Closer Look at Studio LAIKA's Stop-Motion Witchcraft* and *Animated Mischief: Essays on Subversiveness in Cartoons since 1987*, as well as chapters on identity for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: New Perspectives on Production, Reception, Legacy*, *Toy Story – How Pixar Reinvented the Animated Feature* and *Aardman Animations: Beyond Stop Motion*. Jane is Associate Professor of Film and Media and recruitment lead at the University of Lincoln and teaches across Animation, Film and Television Studies.

3A.4: Post-racial, Posthuman, Post-cinema - Hybrid

Chair: Catherine Constable

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Yao Cheng (University of Liverpool), 'Hollywood cinema: Lucy Liu, post-feminism, and post-racialism'

Abstract: Lucy Liu, a leading Asian American star in Hollywood during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, faced a recurring dilemma: celebrated as a role model for increasing Asian representation, yet simultaneously criticized for reinforcing stereotypes, particularly in her early roles as Ling Woo in *Ally McBeal* and Alex Munday in *Charlie's Angels*. This research situates Liu's career within the sociocultural contexts of post-racialism and post-feminism—ideologies that claim gender and racial inequalities have been overcome. Although Liu's on-screen roles reflected these ideals, they often reinforced systemic inequities by catering to the dominant white gaze. Her portrayals frequently relied on hypersexualized and stereotypical representations of Asian American women, reflecting Hollywood's tendency to exploit such identities to serve white male fantasies. Off-screen, Liu's personal experiences further exposed the hypocrisy of post-racial and post-feminist narratives. Although she appeared to enjoy individual success and autonomy, Liu consistently encountered marginalization and discrimination, highlighting the persistence of systemic inequalities. By examining the intersection of Liu's on-screen portrayals and off-screen realities, this research critiques the illusory nature of post-racialism and post-feminism. Rather than fostering genuine equality, these ideologies perpetuate white patriarchal dominance under the guise of progress, leaving true racial and gender equity unachieved.

Biography: Yao Cheng is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication and Media at the University of Liverpool, where she is affiliated with Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University. She presently serves as a Research Assistant for The Heritage and Communication Research Group within the XJTLU Centre for Culture, Communication, and Society

Jaka Lombar (Trinity College Dublin), "Ceci n'est pas une réalité virtuelle": Queer theory in virtual reality'

Abstract: This paper explores the generative potential of queerness as a framework for engaging with the disorienting nature of virtual reality (VR) artworks, particularly Tung-Yen Chou's *Mist Trilogy*, which examines underground gay spaces. In these works, the materiality of queer bodies and spaces becomes a site for re-evaluating media phenomenology amidst broader critical shifts—most notably, the so-called decline of queer theory.

How does VR, with its capacity for both sensory immersion and conceptual estrangement, illuminate queerness as a lived and mediated experience? Furthermore, how might queer bodies and subjectivities be understood in relation to emerging critiques that question the universality of queerness as an umbrella term, particularly from trans and BIPOC perspectives? By situating the post-cinematic disorientation of extended reality (XR) within the ongoing post-queer studies turn, this paper interrogates the intersections of media, embodiment, globality, and identity. Sara Ahmed argues that disorientation is central to queerness, highlighting how heterosexuality shapes what is perceived as 'given' and the disruptive effects on those who refuse its coherence.

The paper proposes that queer virtual reality artworks not only destabilize traditional phenomenological frameworks but also invite a critical reckoning with the evolving politics of queerness itself. In their embrace of disorientation, these works challenge us to reconsider the

coherence of identity, the limits of spectatorial selfhood, and the role of queerness in negotiating the globalities of being in contemporary post-cinematic landscapes.

Biography: Jaka Lombar is a PhD student at Trinity College Dublin. His research is funded by Taighde Éireann – Research Ireland, grant number IRCLA20222959.

Giulia Rainoldi (Queen Mary, University of London), 'Inside/outside: Lisa Reihana's *In Pursuit of Venus [Infected]* as heterotopia'

Abstract: Presented at the 2017 Venice Biennale, *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (*iPOVi*) is an immersive 180-degrees video installation. Here, British Māori multimedia artist Lisa Reihana digitally intervenes on the 1804-1805 French wallpaper *Les sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* to interrogate and refute the colonial narrative unfolding in the aftermaths of the 1770s English discovery expeditions in the Pacific Ocean.

This paper suggests considering *iPOVi* alongside Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia' (1986). Like utopias, heterotopias establish alternative environments but, unlike utopias, these are real spaces taking place within the very same society they aim to disturb. Reihana's *iPOVi* can be interpreted as a heterotopia not only for its postcolonial depiction of the Pacific, but also because its immersive apparatus constitutes a space that is simultaneously real and suspended from reality.

To conceive heterotopias at once 'outside of all places' and 'exist[ing] and formed in the very founding of society' (Foucault 1986, 24), Foucault blurs inside and outside. My argument is that *iPOVi* complicates this same opposition on two levels. First, in the immersive mode of spectatorship it inaugurates: instead of remaining outside the screen, the audiences are asked to 'infect' the installation and look at it from within. Second, in its relation to global capitalism: Reihana's immersive artwork emerges within the contemporary profit-driven and experience-inducing cultural industry, but it also establishes a space that temporarily exists outside of the market's demands. On top of its postcolonial representation, then, it is this twofold operation that makes *iPOVi* a political piece.

Biography: Giulia Rainoldi (she/her) is a PhD candidate in Film Studies at Queen Mary, University of London. Originally trained in philosophy, her research interests include spectatorship theories, immersive cinema, film-philosophy, and feminist film-philosophy. Her thesis, supervised by Prof Lucy Bolton and Dr Mario Sluga, is provisionally titled 'From Cave to Womb: Contemporary Projection Rooms alongside Feminist New Materialism'.

3A.5: Masculinities

Chair: Christina Wilkins

Callum Ratcliffe (University of Sheffield), “‘You’ll be our star attraction’: The global capital of Michael Jordan, *Space Jam* (1996), and marginalised masculinities in 1990s Hollywood sports films’

Abstract: Exploring *Space Jam*’s role in re-affirming Michael Jordan’s global capitalism by bridging his return to the NBA, this paper will trace the relationship between the form of animation and sports, and the construction of marginalised sporting identities via race, class, and gender. Positioned against the backdrop of 1990s Hollywood sports films (which both promoted and problematized the exceptionalism of black sporting bodies), the film is as much interested in re-centring Jordan’s star persona and, what David Andrews and Ron Mower call, “Jordan’s post-racial neoliberal individualism”, as it is with mythologizing nostalgic Looney Tunes Cartoons and re-asserting their enduring hegemony in American culture. This paper will examine the way in which the film employs animation to satirise and interrogate the gaps between the professional and amateur sporting worlds, as a way of highlighting marginalised sporting identities and masculinities. As well as exploring the film’s transactional portrayal of ‘talent’ and sporting exceptionalism, I will place into focus ‘alternative’ and marginalised sporting identities through, for example, the film’s paradoxical treatment of Lola Bunny, the depiction of other NBA players compared to Jordan, and the Looney Tunes’ embodiment of ‘otherness’ and anthropomorphism. Finally, I will consider the film’s use of dream space, its ubiquitous ‘flight’ motifs and imagery (and the implications of animating Jordan’s sporting body), and the way in which animation works in conjunction with, and against, Jordan’s embodiment of both fractured and hegemonic American sporting masculinity.

Biography: I’m a second year PhD student at the University of Sheffield, researching ‘The Politicisation of Marginalised Sporting Masculinities and ‘Othered’ Bodies in British, American, and Irish Sports Fiction’. The project utilises a cross-cultural approach to national cinemas to explore the intersectional representation of race, class, and gender in sports fiction. I’m interested in the forms of aesthetics that are deployed to examine marginalised masculinities and ‘othered’ sporting identities, by looking at different mediums such as film, documentary, and novels. My work also evaluates the role of author-athletes, lived experiences, and global celebrity stardom in sports narratives.

Min Xu (Durham University), ‘Global crime drama, northeast China, and masculinity in *The Long Season*’

Abstract: This paper investigates how global aesthetics are adopted in Chinese streaming crime drama series *The Long Season* to challenge the negative image of Northeast China (Dongbei) while simultaneously perpetuating globally circulating masculinist models. Once the industrial and cultural hub in Maoist China, Dongbei was responsible for translating and distributing foreign films. The region’s transnational fame declined after large-scale closures of state-owned factories in the 1990s that led to structural unemployment and urban poverty. In the dominant cultural discourse, Dongbei was reconstructed as rustic and isolated from the world for its affiliation with old-fashioned state socialism. However, this began to be challenged in the recent emergence of Dongbei-themed online crime dramas, the best-received one being *The Long Season* (2023). Revolving around an unsolved murder that occurred during Dongbei’s economic restructuring, the series was a hit in China before being distributed globally by Netflix. Utilising theories on masculinity and intertextuality, I will examine how *The Long Season* nods to, and at times explicitly references, global cultural forms (particularly Anglo-American crime literature and TV dramas)

to challenge the provincialist image of Dongbei, yet this intertextuality largely manifests in the male characters forging a transnational identification of ‘tough man’. In this way, the series’ globality is rooted in its construction of marginalised masculinities, which negotiate Dongbei’s place within the existing politico-economic hierarchy at the expense of cycling conservative gender ideals in the transnational mediascape.

Biography: Min Xu is a PhD candidate in Chinese Studies at Durham University. Her research focuses on male images and marginal places in Chinese web crime dramas.

Wanzhou Xiao (Queen Mary, University of London), ‘Constructing one’s identity is navigating through masks: Metaphoric identity and masculinity in post-9/11 cinema’ (VIDEO ESSAY)

Abstract: This videographic essay explores the metaphor “*Constructing one’s identity is navigating through masks*” as a lens to examine the representation of personal and collective identity in Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) and M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Village* (2004). In both films, the **mask** operates as a thematic and conceptual device, simultaneously obscuring and constructing identity. While *Eyes Wide Shut* centers on the fragility of **personal identity**—with the protagonist’s medical persona and literal masks revealing his crisis—*The Village* examines **collective identity**, where the elders’ symbolic masks maintain societal conformity and order. Despite their differing contexts, both films reflect the **decay of masculinity** within a shifting socio-political landscape, underscored by cultural anxieties that intensified post-9/11.

Grounded in George Lakoff’s cognitive semantics and Christian Metz’s semiotics, this study situates the *mask* as a recurring metaphor that maps abstract identity construction onto tangible cinematic forms. Through videographic criticism, the project visualizes how metaphor operates across filmic processes—mediating character identity, narrative framing, and viewer interpretation. It highlights the role of screen aesthetics in articulating global anxieties, where patriarchal structures unravel amidst societal instability.

By engaging abstraction through abstraction, this videographic essay contributes to **practice-based research**, offering a reflexive exploration of cinematic metaphors. It invites co-authorship and challenges viewers to reconsider the evolving relationship between identity, film form, and cultural context.

Biography: I am a third-year PhD candidate in Film Studies by Practice at **Queen Mary University of London**, focusing on employing videographic criticism to study metaphors shaped by significant cultural events, with a current emphasis on post-9/11 cinema. My research integrates cognitive semantics, semiotics, and film aesthetics to explore the construction of identity through cinematic processes. I attended the *Middlebury College Videographic Workshop* in June 2024, enhancing my methodological approach to practice-based research. My work contributes to the growing field of global aesthetics and videographic criticism through innovative engagements with audiovisual media.

3A.6: Globalising Nontraditional ‘Cinematic’ Formats

Chair: Douglas Morrey (University of Warwick)

Sazkia Noor Anggraini (University of Birmingham), ‘Grief beyond sadness: A formalist reading of short film aesthetics and cultural agency in Yogyakarta’s cinema’

Abstract: This research examines the aesthetic characteristics of short films emerging from Yogyakarta, a special city in Central Java, Indonesia, widely recognized as a creative hub with dynamic film production. By focusing on two government-supported short films—*Kembalilah dengan Tenang* (Rest in Peace, 2018, directed by Reza Fahri) and *Bendera Putih* (White Flag, 2023, directed by Budi “Tobon” Dwi Arifianto)—this study explores how grief is expressed cinematically through formal and stylistic approaches.

Both films received funding and support from Yogyakarta City and Province Cultural Affairs, positioning the government as an active agent in the region’s cultural production. This paper investigates how such agency is reflected or subtly critiqued within the films’ narratives and visual language. By employing a formalist approach, the study highlights how grief is articulated beyond traditional portrayals of sadness, offering deeper emotional and cultural layers.

The analysis reveals that these films use aesthetic strategies to evoke multi-dimensional critiques, bridging personal loss and broader socio-cultural reflections. Through their form and style, the films not only reflect the creative dynamism of Yogyakarta’s filmmaking landscape but also serve as mediums of subtle commentary on the agency involved in their production.

By focusing on short film aesthetics and cultural agency, this research contributes to an understanding of how cinematic form in Yogyakarta engages with complex emotional and cultural narratives, solidifying its role as a vital creative space in Indonesian cinema.

Biography: Sazkia Noor Anggraini (Anggi) is a lecturer, researcher, and documentary filmmaker focused on narrative studies, regional cinema, archives, and visual ethnography. She holds degrees in Cultural Anthropology from Gadjah Mada University and Film Studies from ISI Yogyakarta, where she earned her master’s in Art Studies. Currently, a doctoral candidate at the University of Birmingham, Anggi’s research examines post-Reform Indonesian short films. Her documentary *The Age of Remembrance* won Best Short Documentary at Piala Maya 2022. She is also active in film programming and research with Indonesian Film Studies Association (KAFEIN).

Louis Bayman (University of Southampton), ‘Randomly repeating: Is there a common form for the anthology film?’

Abstract: This paper attempts to address a truly global form of cinema known either as the anthology, omnibus, portmanteau or multinarrative film. Born soon after the narrative feature film, these collections of multiple shorter films have been a continual presence in cinema. Early examples like *Intolerance* (1917), *Häxan* (1922), *Three Songs about Lenin* (1934) and *Paisà* (1946) show the ambitious nature of many of these productions.

Yet as the multiple terms for these films also indicate, there is little sense that the format is united by any common features. Classical narrative may display conventions like cause-effect narrative and narrative resolution. But the presence of multiple parts in each anthology film defies such dramatic logic.

Drawing from a range of contemporary examples including *A Touch of Sin* (2013), *Bombay Talkies* (2013), *Wild Tales* (2014), *Certain Women* (2016), *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs* (2018) and *That Christmas* (2024), I seek to show the common patterns that make the anthology film a distinctive format. These patterns privilege the interplay of randomness with repetition, highlighting the role of chance in human affairs, instead of the eventual heroic mastery that is thought to motivate to classical cinema.

I aim finally to outline a historical shift in the assumptions expressed by the anthology film, from an older faith in the triumph of progress to a current resignation to the motive force of accident.

Biography: Dr Louis Bayman is an Associate Professor of Film Studies at the University of Southampton. This work is part of a larger project on varieties of time in contemporary narrative cinema, under contract with SUNY Press. He has previously written on a range of topics concerning popular cinema and film aesthetics and is the co-editor of the forthcoming *Radical Embodiment on Film: Time and the Cinematic Object*, as well as *Folk Horror on Film: Return of the British Repressed*, *Journeys on Screen: Theory, Ethics and Aesthetics*, and *Popular Italian Cinema*.

Tomáš Jirsa (Palacký University Olomouc), ‘Resonances, dissonances, affects: Political atmospheres in east-central European music videos’

Abstract: While atmosphere has long been recognized as a cornerstone of cinematic aesthetics—intricately tied to style, mise-en-scène, and viewer experience—it remains overlooked in music video studies. Drawing on recent atmosphere scholarship in media and affect theory (Zhang 2018; Felski 2020; Riedel 2020; Hven 2022), this paper explores how music video atmospheres articulate broader political dimensions by intertwining global aesthetic forms with localized socio-cultural tensions and conflicts. Focusing on two East-Central European works—Maria Peszek’s “Modern Holocaust” (dir. Przemysław Wojcieszek, 2016) and Smack’s “People Factory” (dir. Jan Gemrot, 2015)—this paper investigates how political atmospheres emerge from the interplay of audiovisual form and socio-political content. Peszek’s Polish video critiques hate speech and systemic violence against sexual minorities through an incendiary mise-en-scène of flames and gestural dance, while Smack’s Czech grime-infused piece reframes resistance to capitalist norms through dissonant audiovisual “glitches” within a confined courtyard. Inspired by Susanna Paasonen’s concept of affective resonances (2019), this paper argues that these music videos generate politically charged atmospheres not through straightforward protest but via resonances and dissonances between musical rhythms, affective forms, and staged political conflicts. By situating their artistic strategies within the broader discourse of global aesthetics, the paper sheds light on how music videos negotiate the local and the global through their distinctive atmospheric affordances.

Biography: Tomáš Jirsa is Associate Professor of Literary Studies at Palacký University Olomouc, Czechia, where he directs the PhD Program in Film, Television, and Theatre Studies. Interested in the intersections of literature, visual arts, affect theory, and music video studies, he is the author of *Disformations: Affects, Media, Literature* (Bloomsbury, 2021) and co-editor of *Reconfiguring the Portrait* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), *Traveling Music Videos* (Bloomsbury, 2024), and *How to Do Things with Affects* (Brill, 2019). With articles published in journals such as *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* and *Illuminace*, he has also held fellowships at IKKM Weimar and ASCA Amsterdam.

Nicholas De Villiers (University of North Florida), 'We had faces then: Tsai Ming-liang's late digital era and Warhol's screen tests'

Abstract: Taiwan-based director Tsai Ming-liang's late museum-commissioned and "post-retirement" film and digital video work including *Visage* (2009), *Your Face* (2018), *Days* (2020), and *Xining Public Housing* (2024) mark an important shift in the global auteur's approach to moving images. Tsai's recent works have moved away from scripted narrative and more toward film and digital images *as images*. I connect Tsai's experiments with the ontology of the image and the role of the face in cinema—specifically the aging face of his "male muse" Lee Kang-sheng—to the early films of Andy Warhol. Warhol's non-narrative approach to the faces of his Superstars in his silent "Screen Tests" recalls aging star Norma Desmond's line from *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) about the fate of silent cinema: "We didn't need dialogue. We had faces."

Tsai's oeuvre is known for minimal spoken dialogue, but his recent films have downplayed dialogue even more, with the close-ups of aging faces in *Your Face* accompanied by a score by Ryuichi Sakamoto, and the intergenerational and intercultural *Days* starting with a title card stating: "This film is intentionally unsubtitled." I examine how *cinéphile* culture in Taiwan has allowed Tsai to collaboratively curate retrospective events like *Tsai Ming-liang's Days* at the Museum of National Taipei University of Education, even as he has been remarkably productive beyond "retirement" with commissioned works. Tsai thus revisits early filming locations, recalls and restages his career, and reflects on the aging faces of his nonprofessional actors and the face of the city of Taipei itself.

Biography: Nicholas de Villiers is professor of English and film at the University of North Florida. He was a Fulbright US Senior Scholar and visiting scholar at National Central University in Taiwan (2023–2024, 2017). He is the author of *Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol* (2012), *Sexography: Sex Work in Documentary* (2017), and *Cruisy, Sleepy, Melancholy: Sexual Disorientation in the Films of Tsai Ming-liang* (2022), all from the University of Minnesota Press.

3A.7: Exploitative Screens

Chair: Pietari Kaapa (University of Warwick)

Jinni Ren (University of York), 'Contemporary Chinese audiences' responses to the aesthetics of sex worker community culture in films (1951-1994)'

Abstract: The two Chinese historical films, *Stand Up, Sisters* (Xihe Chen, 1951) and *A Soul Haunted by Painting* (Shuqin Huang, 1994), as this research samples that exhibit aesthetics that align with the historical period and prevailing political ideologies. For instance, the unadorned of proletarian revolutionary aesthetics, or a romanticised depiction of female nudity. The use of "Chinese red" in visual composition transforms the sex worker into a mysterious and exoticised artistic figure of the East. The aesthetic implications presented in these two films lead to deeper questions: What do beauty and nudity signify? The occupational nature of female sex workers, who provide erotic services for men, seemingly reinforces the legitimacy of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1989). As Gripsrud (2008) and Hill (2007) argue, contemporary audiences get very little theoretical attention. How Chinese participants who holding diverse gendered attitudes and positions, respond to scenes and imagery associated with the themes of beauty and nudity? In the era of streaming platforms, the ways male and female audiences engage with and respond to online historical films reveal significant insights: challenges to conventional Chinese cinematic portrayals of female sex workers from feminist perspectives and personal experiences, or constraints by traditional Chinese cultural norms or diversity viewing perspectives. This study argues that in contemporary China, the emergence of individuals seeking greater personal liberation has disrupted the relationship between modern individuals and traditional Chinese patriarchy, as well as state-driven gender ideologies. This shift enables more democratised textual responses to take place.

Biography: I am a Ph.D. student at the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York. My Ph.D. project focuses on feminist film, aiming to explore films through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates social anthropology, history, and visual analysis.

Elena Savvas (University of York), 'Orgasmic anachronisms: (dis)integrating sex and queer (im)mortality in New York's cruising spaces (1978-1991)'

Abstract: In *Arthur Rimbaud in New York* (1978-9), David Wojnarowicz photographs torsos posed as the French flâneur in infamous New York cruising spaces. Decapitated bodies don a retouched Xerox photocopy of an 1872 Étienne Carjat portrait of Rimbaud as a mask, situating the photo-series neither within present nor past, anachronistic in their intermediality. Wojnarowicz and Rimbaud unite through their embrace of abandoned cityscapes and transgressive sexualities, especially as Wojnarowicz photographs sex. The photographs are conscious of their histories: the chiaroscuro black-and-white colouration recalls the history of the film camera, whilst old graffiti haunts the mise-en-scène, educating its previous inhabitants. This is a form of self-shattering: a suppressed individual selfhood becomes consumed by a past queer identity, in order to unlock a fictional artistic future.

This notion of self-shattering recounts Georges Bataille's *petite mort*. In *Eroticism*, Bataille writes that "the being loses himself completely" during sex, that one's subjectivity and mortality dissolves at the point of orgasm. Wojnarowicz's photos integrate history, sex, and death. This is common in New York's cruising space filmic archive. In this paper, I will draw on Bataille's erotic death, postulating queer sex spaces as unlocking a temporal practise that stops – fucks – time, claiming the geographical archive as resisting a singular time and place as it "climaxes". I propose that there is life in the *petite mort*, one that proceeds the present existence of the self and points

towards a queer collective history and, through this, hopeful futurity. I speak on Wojnarowicz, Alvin Baltrop, Ruth Kligman, and more.

Biography: Elena (she/they) recently graduated in English from the University of York with distinction, specialising in queer filmmaking practices. She wrote a dissertation theorising ‘transgender architecture’ as an aesthetic strategy, by combining recent trans+ theory with an understanding that cinematic fiction refashions the walls, rooms and buildings behind its camera. In her final piece she proposes Andrzej Żuławski’s *Possession* (1981) as trans-architectural cinema filmed on both sides of the Berlin Wall. In their spare time, Elena is working with the Museum of Transology to photograph, record and catalogue the transgender archive at the Bishopsgate Institute.

Nessa Johnston (University of Liverpool), ‘From Eggsploitation to Texsploitation: Tobe Hooper’s countercultural impulse and the Texan imaginary’

Abstract: Tobe Hooper’s second feature *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) is a cult classic and a cultural landmark. In the 21st century, it has moved beyond its previous subaltern status in the US as a ‘midnight movie’ and in the UK as a ‘video nasty’, to being credited as pivotal in helping ferment screen production in Austin, Texas, and establishing it as a significant regional production hub, or even the US film industry’s ‘Third Coast’ (Macor 2010: 3).

It is also a well-established part of the horror cinema canon, and has been the subject of repeated academic study, whereas Hooper’s relatively unknown countercultural debut feature *Eggshells* (1969) has had little attention. This paper will present archival research of the production and marketing of both films which I argue presents new insights into screen cultures and production contexts specific to their time and place.

The commercial failure of *Eggshells* and the commercial success of TCSM allows comparative study. Given the plethora of academic and non-academic writings on TCSM, it is challenging to disentangle myths surrounding the film’s production and reception from fact, and as Gunnar Hansen (who played Leatherface) contends, everyone involved in the making of the film mythologised aspects of their participation (Hansen 2013). This paper will therefore explore the wider role of these processes of mythologisation as industry sense-making (Caldwell 2013: 158), as well as with respect to the ‘Texan-ness’ of both productions.

Biography: Nessa Johnston is Lecturer in Screen Studies and Digital Media at University of Liverpool. She is the author of *The Commitments: Youth, Music and Authenticity in 1990s Ireland* (Routledge 2022), co-investigator on the Leverhulme funded project *Anonymous Creativity*, and co-editor with Jamie Sexton and Elodie Roy of the forthcoming edited collection *Anonymous Sounds: Library Music and Screen Cultures in the 1960s and 1970s*. She has published widely on film sound, low budget filmmaking, American independent cinema, Irish cinema and cult cinema, including in the journals *Music*, *Sound and the Moving Image*, *The Soundtrack*, *The Velvet Light Trap* and *Alphaville*.

Canan Balan (University of Southampton), ‘Agency and objectification: Middle eastern women’s visibility in archival footage and digital media’

Abstract: This paper examines the persistence and refutations of Orientalist narratives in representations of Muslim women across archival and new media. In September, I conducted research at the Netherlands Filmmuseum in collaboration with the silent film curator Elif

Kaynakci, compiling 11 hours of early film footage from the late 1890s to the 1940s. This footage, produced mainly by Western European and North American filmmakers, depicts landscapes, travelogues, war newsreels, and fiction set in former Ottoman territories, including the Near East, Northern Africa, the Balkans, and modern Turkey.

A key focus of my analysis is the portrayal of women, often represented through Orientalist tropes such as unveiling as a symbol of liberation from Muslim or Eastern men, echoing postcolonial feminist critiques. These narratives persist today, particularly on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where Arab women's clothing—often underwear—is ridiculed, confiscated, or culturally appropriated, notably by Israeli soldiers.

However, contemporary digital media also disrupts these frameworks. Videos of Iranian and Kurdish women unveiling or undressing in defiance of oppressive regimes highlight acts of resistance, even as these women face arrest, psychiatric treatment, and torture. Juxtaposing archival Orientalist footage with these modern depictions reveals the dual role of media as a tool for objectification and a platform for agency. This paper argues that while colonial and postcolonial frameworks persist, the dynamism of feminist movements and Middle Eastern women's resistance challenge and undermine these enduring narratives.

Biography: Canan Balan is a research fellow at the University of Southampton working on post-Ottoman women in film. Her monograph on early film culture in Istanbul, entitled *Torn is the Curtain*, is forthcoming with Berghahn Books in 2025. She published numerous articles, book chapters and essays in English and Turkish, including articles in *Film Philosophy* and *Early Popular Visual Culture*. She is the screenwriter of several documentary features and a veteran lecturer of Istanbul Sehir University, which was closed down in 2020. She holds a PhD in Film Studies from the University of St Andrews in the UK

3A.8: The Child, Film and the Nation: an Ordinary and Extraordinary Aesthetic

Chair: Karen Lury (University of Glasgow)

Junwei Lu (University of Glasgow), 'Childhood Memory con-fronts colonialism: the duality of locality and globality in Taiwanese home movies'

Abstract: This paper explores how amateur filmmakers like Deng Nan-Guang and Ding Rui-Yu present children, highlighting the duality of locality and globality in early Taiwanese home movies. Produced during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945), these films not only capture intimate childhood moments but also reflect the socio-political climate of their time. Deng, renowned for his cinematography, documented children during a kindergarten sports day in Taipei, portraying everyday activities shaped by imperial ideals. In contrast, Ding, a medical practitioner who lived between Malaya and Taiwan, documented trans-local colonial landscapes that bridge multiple cultural contexts. These films therefore engage with emerging global aesthetics, adopting techniques influenced by colonial modernity and Western media. By analysing motifs such as the children's playful interactions with cameras, traditional attire, and symbolic landscapes, this paper investigates how these home movies frame childhood as a site of both cultural preservation and imperial experimentation. The paper positions these films as responses to the complexities of colonial rule, where children serve as mediators between national identity and global modernity. This research situates Taiwanese home movies as crucial souvenirs, revealing a nuanced negotiation of identity within broader frameworks of colonialism and globalisation. By linking personal memory to more significant historical trajectories, the study provides fresh insights into the dual roles of childhood as both a repository of historical continuity and a canvas for aesthetic innovation.

Biography: Junwei is a second year PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, his thesis focuses on the representation and agency of the child figure in Taiwanese cinema, addressing questions related to colonialism, nationalism and history. He is exploring a range of genres and modes of film-making including home movies, news reels as well as independent and commercial cinema.

Jack Anderson (University of Glasgow), "Scared to Death": The Child, Water and Public Information Films'

Abstract: It is a peculiar structuring irony of public information films (PFI) intended for young audiences across the globe, that in order to promote safety, they chose to depict peril. Alongside road safety campaigns, perhaps the most hazards site represented sources of danger for the child in the PFI are watery spaces. The child would die, or miss a mortal mistake by a whisker, again and again in the PFI: A mise-en-scene of oceans, rivers, swimming pools ditches, fetid canals, slippery streams and burns, boggy-bogs, slurry pits, deceptively deep puddles, disused and derelict building sites. Children are advised to be wary of teapots, pans, pots and mugs brimming with skin searing oil or boiling water; of kitchen pantries, out-of-reach cupboards and garden sheds - all emporiums of liquid poison. The films feature accidents that are usually depicted on screen with brevity and brutality: gruesomely reified with an aesthetic constitution which would not be out of place in a horror film.

This paper will investigate the semantic and semiotic transposition of water and water spaces, exploring how their representation on-screen functioned as a didactic device to warn children and parents of its elemental danger. Overlooked as something of a non-collegiate province in the field of film and television studies, public information film is a fertile field for further study both

here in the United Kingdom and Internationally. The paper will look at a number of films including *Lonely Water* (1973), *Absent Parents* (1982) and *Abbey's Hope* (2017).

Biography: Jack Anderson is a second year PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow. His interdisciplinary thesis, drawing on geography as well as film studies and history explores the relationship between the child, water (and watery spaces) in a range of films, including commercial cinema and other genres such as the public information film.

Karen Lury (University of Glasgow), 'Ghosts of past, present and future: amateur media, children and Christmas'

Abstract: This paper has two purposes; firstly to reflect on a (past) research project that explored the representation of children in amateur films and children as film-makers, including home moves, charity films and amateur fiction films in Scotland. One aspect of that research that 'got away' would have focused on the Christmas film - of which there are many in the National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive (the project partner). In relation to this, having secured their full permission, I want to explore my three daughters' Christmas films (made between 2010 and 2016) when they were between 7-16 years old. Entirely self-directed, performed, scripted and edited, these six films were, from a film analyst's point of view, entirely typical - the Christmas film is a common home movie theme, the films were generally parodies of film or television programmes and they were intended to be humorous. At the same time, they are entirely unique – for me, they are both sentimental and uncanny souvenirs and, as I discussed the films with my daughters, I discovered that their origins are at once well known yet also obscure. The last film in the series, *A Shitmas Carol* - a very scatological adaption of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* - serves as a case study and offers a framework for an analysis of the series itself. Self-conscious, garish and eccentric – my daughters' literal embodiment of the ghosts of the past, present and future, gesture more widely to the disruptive qualities of the 'child' in archives whether these are private or public

Biography: Karen Lury is a Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Glasgow. She has written widely on the figure of the child in film and television, most recently as editor of the collection *The Child in Cinema* (Bloomsbury, 2022). She is an editor of the international film and television studies journal, *Screen* and is currently Head of School of Culture and Creative Arts.

Panel Session 3B

3B.1: Feel-Bad TV: Discomfort, Dis-Ease, and Displeasure in Contemporary Television

Chair: Victoria K. Pistivsek (King's College London)

Laura Minor (University of Salford), 'The politics of discomfort: Class, performance, and unease in Britain's female comic figures'

Abstract: This paper examines how two female comic figures that emerged in British popular culture during the 2010s—the 'hun' and the 'messy millennial'—negotiate discomfort through distinct class positions. While both challenge traditional femininity through social transgression, they evoke the 'contradictory feelings of pleasure and discomfort' (Hargraves, 2022) in different ways. Drawing on Lübecker's theory of 'feel-bad' modes (2015) and McDermott's 'feel-bad' postfeminism (2022), alongside Hargraves' work on how unease 'manifests as disgust, perversion, addiction, uncanniness, disidentification, realism, and irritation' (2022), I analyse how these forms of discomfort operate through these comic figures. More specifically, I explore how the working-class coded 'hun'—typically engaged in reality TV or the 'theater of neoliberal suffering' (McCarthy, 2007)—finds their potential discomfort neutralised through celebratory fan practices on platforms like Instagram, transforming their excessive performances into sources of pleasure and identification. By contrast, middle-class 'messy millennials' in prestige comedy deliberately construct 'quality' forms of cringe that remain central to their reception, with their unease positioned as integral to their cultural legitimacy. Through analysis of television programming and social media content, this paper reveals how discomfort is both deliberately cultivated and transformed across class boundaries and media platforms in contemporary British comedy.

Biography: Dr Laura Minor is a Lecturer in Television Studies at the University of Salford, UK. She is the author of *Reclaiming Female Authorship in UK Television Comedy* (EUP, 2024) and Co-I on the AHRC-funded project, 'What's on? Rethinking class in the television industry,' working in partnership with the BBC and Channel 4. Laura has previously been published in *Feminist Media Studies*, the *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, and the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* for her work on comedy, feminism, social class, and British popular culture.

Sarah Lahm (University of Leeds), 'Ugly feelings on repeat: Time loops and the discomforts of neoliberalism on women-centric US TV'

Abstract: This paper explores what the time loop trope in recent women-centric TV programmes adds to our understanding of the discomforts (Hargraves, 2023) and anxieties (Ames, 2020) that characterise neoliberal (feminist) subjectivities. *Russian Doll* (Netflix, 2019–2022) and *Undone* (Amazon Prime Video, 2019–2022) show their characters' ambivalence towards neoliberal feeling rules through time loops and time travel, while programmes such as *Made for Love* (HBO Max, 2021–2022) and *Ship* (The Roku Channel, 2023) revolve around repetition within augmented and parallel realities. This paper will take a closer look at the aesthetics and storytelling devices these programmes employ to articulate characters' ugly feelings (Ngai, 2005) and affective dissonances (Dobson and Kanai, 2018) in recent television programmes in a US context. The discomfort evoked in these screen narratives is often tied to not only gender but also race and class in portrayals of horrible White people (Nygaard and Lagerwey, 2020) and precarious women (Wanzo, 2016). In the context of late-stage capitalism, time loops and the invocation of parallel realities enable the articulation of the intensity of the emotion work (Hochschild, 1983) and performance of positivity that are required of neoliberal

subjects and may invite critical reflections on undervalued affective labour in viewers' own lives. This paper thus traces how time loops articulate contemporary, post-recessional discomforts, as well as the relational work that is required to transcend the market logics of neoliberalism on post-recessional television.

Biography: Dr Sarah Lahm has recently completed her PhD at the University of Leeds. Her research is concerned with the articulation and questioning of neoliberal feminism and its affects on contemporary women-centric US TV. Her thesis, titled *Time Loops and Fragmented Women in the Contemporary Complex Half-Hour US TV Drama*, investigates the entanglement of female protagonists' fragmentation with televisual complexity and neoliberalism. Sarah's work on *Russian Doll* and *Search Party* has been published in *Critical Studies in Television* and the *Journal of Gender Studies*.

Victoria K. Pistivsek (King's College London), 'Violence begets laughter: Bloody political humor in *The Boys* and *Squid Game*'

Abstract: Amidst rising global inequalities and shocking political violence, popular discourses have become inundated with paradoxical comicality. E.g., the late-2024 shooting of a US health insurance CEO was 'celebrated' by myriads of memes on the Anglophone internet; elsewhere, the 2024 South Korean martial law crisis was 'commemorated' by an abundance of internet humor too. According to Lauren Berlant and Sianne Ngai, we are stuck in a 'permanent carnival,' a discomfiting world stage drenched in absurd laughter; we consistently laugh at the unfunny, finding humor, or having to find it, in tragedy, coping with our late neoliberal realities through comedic abjection. This paper explores how these carnivalesque tensions are affectively and aesthetically negotiated in two recent streaming hits, namely the US program *The Boys* (Amazon Prime, 2019–) and the South Korean program *Squid Game* (Netflix, 2021–). Building on Maggie Hennefeld's investigation of how the contradictory entanglement of violence, shock, and laughter in mainstream films like *Joker* (2019) and *Parasite* (2019) accompanies revolutionary action, engendering apparent cinematic catharsis, I will show that such cathartic 'feel-bad' pleasures—which are always gendered, racialized, and classed—are both strengthened and problematized in my televisual case studies. While liberalism and discomfort have already significantly shaped postmillennial TV (Nygaard and Lagerwey; Hargraves), the violent laughter (and the ludicrous yet glorified masculine violence) in *The Boys* and *Squid Game* not only reflects today's intensified global crisis zeitgeist but also renders mounting calls for revolutionary social movements simultaneously plausible and absurd, thus de- and restabilizing broader political hegemonies.

Biography: Victoria K. Pistivsek is a PhD Researcher and Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Department of Film Studies at King's College London. Her doctoral project explores unstable negotiations of hegemonic masculinity, divisive politics, and abject laughter in post-2016 American television.

3B.2: (Documentary) Hybridity - Hybrid

Chair: Abigail Whittall

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Shuo Yang (University of Southampton), 'Fictional narratives from surveillance: *Dragonfly Eyes* and the reimagining reality of CCTV'

Abstract: In an era dominated by surveillance technology, the boundaries between reality and fiction are increasingly blurred. *Dragonfly Eyes* (dir. Xu Bing, 2017) exemplifies this phenomenon by crafting a dystopian love story entirely from surveillance footage captured across China. The film's title analogises the dragonfly's compound eyes that consist of numerous ommatidia to the array of monitors a surveillance room, as well as the fixed-grid display of pixels in a screen, evoking the composite vision of a world seen through an insect's eyes, with real-life locations coming together in a kind of statistical montage. This unique approach offers a case study for exploring how images, originally intended to document reality, can be repurposed to create fictional narratives reflecting contemporary social issues. This article will examine how *Dragonfly Eyes* integrates CCTV footage into a fictional narrative and the implications of this approach for our understanding of narrative and reality in the digital age.

Ultimately, *Dragonfly Eyes* offers a compelling exploration of the intersection between reality and fiction in the age of surveillance. By integrating real CCTV footage into a fictional narrative, the film challenges viewers to reconsider their perceptions of authenticity, identity, and narrative coherence. Through the application of theoretical frameworks from realism, surveillance studies, and postmodern narrative theory, this article will provide a comprehensive analysis of how *Dragonfly Eyes* reimagines reality and invites reflection on the role of surveillance in contemporary society. The film not only reflects the complexities of modern life under surveillance but also poses critical questions about the nature of storytelling and reality in the digital age.

Biography: Shuo Yang is a PhD candidate (4th year) and teaching assistant in Film Studies at the University of Southampton. The key strand of his current research explores Chinese science fiction cinema. His research background and interests are interdisciplinary, including fine arts, visual communication, and popular genre studies. Recently, he has written for *Art Panorama* (Chinese), and *Journal of Screenwriting* (in progress) and has given conference papers at the Goldsmiths, University of London and Uniwersytet Łódzki.

Ali Suriel Melchor (University of Cambridge), 'Crossing the hills: Peasant modernity in *Máscaras* (1976) and *Trás-os-Montes* (1976)'

Abstract: In 1976, following a revolution that ended the decades-long dictatorship and brutal colonialist regime, two films were made which focused on a rural region of north-eastern Portugal. *Máscaras* (*Masks*, dir. Noémia Delgado) and *Trás-os-Montes* (dir. António Reis and Margarida Cordeiro) look to traditional customs of isolated peasant communities as a way of trying to trace the future trajectory of a country in the verge of change. These films are positioned at various intersections — between Portugal's colonialist past and its as-yet-undecided democratic future, between the 'local' of a quasi-non-existent film industry and the transnational character of the directors' training, and between the underdevelopment of its rural regions and the coming of global modernity — that remain fundamental to understandings of Portuguese cinema today. The scholarship around these films has mainly focused on their complex relationship to ethnography, with the films' entanglement of documentary and fiction being used to think through the lives of the inhabitants of the region, but doing so by cleaving their existence off from the rest of Portugal. This paper will build on these accounts' focus on

women's labour but will diverge in its attention towards the films' aesthetic strategies, which are understood as a way of re-establishing the relational quality of the underdevelopment of the countryside. The importance of the transnationality of these films' aesthetics, which are in conversation with European avant-gardes, registers the filmmakers' attentiveness to the movement of modernity and ultimately marks the importance of the region as a cipher for the broader development of Portugal.

Biography: Ali Suriel-Melchor is a second-year PhD student in the Centre for Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. Their research, informed by Marxist feminist theory, looks at the transitions from fascism in Southern European film cultures during the long 1970s. They received an MA in Contemporary Art Theory from Goldsmiths, University of London, after which they joined the operations team at Forensic Architecture, a research agency investigating state and corporate violence.

Abigail Whittall (University for the Creative Arts), "Scaring differently": Documentary, drama and horror hybridity in HBO's *Chernobyl* (2019)"

Abstract: This paper will consider HBO's 2019 limited series *Chernobyl* through the lens of 'horror hybridity'. Though primarily considered a 'drama', the series dramatizes the 1986 disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and thus re-enacts a true event with the purpose of disturbing its viewers. *Chernobyl* can therefore be discussed in connection to other genres and forms, including horror, the Gothic and documentary. From this hybridity emerges potential tensions between realism and sensationalism, accuracy and exploitation, empathy and horror. Further complicating the generic makeup of the series is arguably its place as 'quality television' which brings with it both aesthetic and thematic expectations.

Despite the creators' resistance to discussions of genre and horror, with director Johan Renck arguing in one interview that 'A horror film is all a ruse anyway. What we're doing is scaring differently because it gets to you', this paper contends that an exploration of *Chernobyl's* horror hybridity is important. In particular, a focus on horror draws attention to three interlinked anxieties: concern for bodies and the personal; landscapes and the Anthropocene; the State and secrecy. The way these anxieties are expressed ranges from the unsettling to the sickening, from the local to the global, and close analysis of the series' horrifying affect allows us to understand how, why and by whom the Chernobyl disaster is being remembered in the 21st century.

Biography: Dr Abigail Whittall is Research Manager at the University for the Creative Arts where she also contributes to the BA Film Production and supervises three PhD students. She completed her PhD at the University of Winchester where she has taught both Film and English Literature. Her research frequently considers horror and the Gothic across a range of contemporary media. She has published on the representation of Nazism in horror and superhero texts, co-created a video essay part of the project 'Doing Women's Global Horror Film History', and is currently co-editing a collection on 'Atomic Horror'.

3B.3: Latin American Identities Across Media - Hybrid

Chair: Vladimir Rosas-Salazar

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Daniel Zacariotti (University of Warwick), 'Subverting fascist homelands through queer cinema in Brazil'

Abstract: This paper explores the concept of *Pátria* (Homeland) within Brazilian queer cinema, focusing on *Orgia ou o Homem que Deus Cria* (1970) as a subversive challenge to fascist nationalist narratives. Through an intersection of worldmaking and fabulation, the film by João Silvério Trevisan dismantles rigid nationalistic identity frameworks by presenting a “march of outcasts” whose diversity and resilience oppose Brazil’s conservative ideals. Drawing on Doria’s (2020) insights into nationalism in fascist ideology, Anderson’s (2006) notion of “imagined communities,” and Schoonover and Galt’s (2016) framework of “worldmaking,” this study examines how *Orgia* reconfigures *Pátria* to accommodate divergent Brazilian identities.

Trevisan’s film performs a strategy of fabulation, building a fictional, chaotic, and queer Brazil that critiques national uniformity through exaggerated and carnivalesque forms. Embracing Preciado’s (2018) concept of “wonder” as both curiosity and defiance, the film uses the unconventional lives of its characters—such as a *travesti* and Indigenous figures—to challenge the state’s narratives of purity and homogeneity. Through fabulation, Trevisan situates queerness as a dynamic force that disrupts socio-cultural norms, creating a contested space where *Pátria* becomes inclusive and complex.

Incorporating cinematic elements from Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal, *Orgia* rejects fascist binaries by embodying a Brazilian identity in flux, one that resists fascist authoritarianism. By foregrounding fluidity and subversion, the film reclaims Homeland as a site for pluralistic belonging, offering a new vision of Brazilian identity through the subversive power of queer worldmaking.

Biography: Daniel Zacariotti, a PhD candidate in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick, examines queer cinema under far-right regimes in Brazil through a decolonial, intersectional lens. Holding an MA in Communication and Consumer Practices from ESPM, his research delves into how queer art forms challenge authoritarian narratives in Latin America, highlighting media’s role in LGBTQIA+ rights and public policy.

Luiz Felipe Rocha Baute (University of Campinas/University of Cambridge), 'Online circulation of Latin American crime fiction: A study on media made for SVODs'

Abstract: Crime fiction has become a considerably flexible formation, commonly connecting and transforming itself alongside other genres, complicating its analysis beyond a simple label. Looking through transnational lenses, this complex system is also influenced by the fusion of local and foreign forms, with productions developed alongside genre conventions boasting considerable popularity in Subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) services today. Notwithstanding, proposals originating in Latin America compete for space with other media distributors, despite being produced in adverse and often antagonistic contexts, especially when compared to the respective national policies in broader marketing scenarios. It is not unusual to find that such works carefully articulate responses to the pressures and limits of historical conjunctures, in which generic formulations discuss both general and specific demands. Therefore, this presentation highlights contemporary crime fiction formations in three Latin American countries, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Exploring selected media from these three

countries, I will outline and debate a series of Latin American productions available for streaming on major platforms such as Netflix, Prime Video, AppleTV+, and Max, addressing their genre content in relation to the culture and politics of their places of origin. For that, I will engage with theories and methods of transnational cinema studies, as developed by Fredric Jameson (1992), Lucia Nagib (2006; 2011), Iain Robert Smith (2017), and Dolores Tierney (2018).

Biography: Luiz Felipe Rocha Baute is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Campinas and a Visiting Student at the University of Cambridge. He is currently researching both the development and the uses of crime genres in contemporary screen and media.

3B.4: Indian Feminisms - Hybrid

Chair: Stefanie Van de Peer

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Poorvi Gaur (Queen Mary, University of London), 'Feminising the Films Division of India: Situating women in documentary film practices (1948-80s)'

Abstract: This paper looks at the initial decades in the history of the Films Division of India (henceforth, FD), the main film-medium organization of the Government of India, to explore the patterns and politics of women's work in FD's documentary filmmaking. Through a feminist analysis of FD's film praxis, primarily through oral history interviews, this study attempts to problematise the invisibility of women's work in India's documentary film history.

My examination of FD, through the lens of gender, reveals cracks in the state's otherwise overtly heteropatriarchal cinematic imaginations. Both popular media and academic scholarship (Kaushik 2017; Sutoris 2016) produced on FD have primarily focused on the works of male filmmakers including S.N.S Shastry, S. Sukhdev as the iconic figures of FD's era. What they present is a history that has pushed FD's women filmmakers to the footnotes of its knowledge production. In bringing archival research and oral history together, I bring forth the problem of missing women film workers – Shaila Paralkar, Dolly Thakore, Usha Deshpande, Aruna Raje and Neelam Khurana – and initiate a timely and critical dialogue about the history of women documentary practitioners in early independent India.

While the feminist wave in the Indian documentary movement is universally recognized by scholars to have emerged during the 1980s, I argue that it is imperative to revisit the pre-video era (1948-80) to trace the initial ruptures in the newly independent state's cinematic visions and endeavour to reclaim FD's female filmmakers' foundational voices, contributions, and experiences that remain overlooked in the state archives.

Biography: I am a PhD Candidate in Film Studies at the School of Arts in Queen Mary University of London. My doctoral project titled, "Planning films for 'family planning': Situating women in films and practices of Films Division of India (1950-80)," examines the overlaps between state-sponsored documentary, family planning and women's agency in early independent India. My research interests lie in documentary film, archives, and gender studies.

Hiya Deb (Goldsmiths, University of London), 'Representation of women and caste in Ritwik Ghatak's Partition trilogy'

Abstract: This paper examines the representation of caste and women in Ritwik Ghatak's Partition Trilogy- '*Meghe Dhaka Tara*' (1960), '*Komal Gandhar*' (1961) and '*Subarnarekha*' (1965). Set against the backdrop of the 1947 Partition of India, Ghatak's films delve into the socio-political and emotional consequences of displacement, focusing on the lives of marginalised communities and women. His narratives depict women as both symbols of resilience and victims of systemic oppression, burdened by the dual forces of patriarchal expectations and the upheavals of Partition. Characters like Nita in '*Meghe Dhaka Tara*' and Sita in '*Subarnarekha*' reflect the sacrifices demanded of women in rebuilding broken families and communities, often at the cost of their individual aspirations and well-being.

Ghatak addresses caste as a persistent axis of oppression within displaced communities, critiquing the hypocrisy of refugees who uphold caste barriers despite their shared suffering.

'*Subarnarekha*' is particularly notable for its interrogation of caste-based discrimination, revealing how lower-caste women face compounded marginalisation due to their gender and social status.

Through a distinctive cinematic language that combines melodrama, symbolic imagery and Brechtian distancing, Ghatak offers a intense critique of societal inequities. His films challenge traditional Indian cinema by foregrounding the intersectionality of caste and gender, exposing how systemic hierarchies perpetuate even in the face of collective trauma. This paper situates Ghatak's work within postcolonial and feminist frameworks, emphasising its lasting relevance in understanding the politics of displacement, identity and resilience in South Asia.

Biography: Hiya Deb is a filmmaker and researcher. Recently she completed her PhD in Media and Communication at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research explores Dalit refugee narratives and transgenerational trauma through creative documentary practice. Hiya's work challenges dominant narratives and centres marginalised voices using participatory methods. Alongside her filmmaking and research, she teaches media and film courses. She has completed her MA in Filmmaking from Kingston University.

Parichay Patra (Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur), 'Decolonization and globality: The curious case of Mrinal Sen'

Abstract: The centenary of the Indian auteur Mrinal Sen (1923-2018) has recently been observed and his interest in forging cine-political and aesthetic associations with other Global South cinemas has been subjected to a renewed academic interest. This paper looks at Sen's autobiographical writings in Bengali and English, his unpublished letters and essays (accessed at the University of Chicago Mrinal Sen collection) and film-texts from the long 1960s to locate his politics of decolonization in the domain of the South-South dialogue that he tried to initiate through his association with Latin American and African filmmakers at several international film festivals. It critically explores Sen's strong resistance to the idea of a national cinema, his referencing of Third Cinema through audio-visual means and argues how transnational cinema itself can become a cine-historical method.

Biography: Parichay Patra is an Assistant Professor at the School of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur, India. His areas of interest include transnational cinema, Global South Cinemas and the many new waves of the long 1960s. He has co-edited such volumes as *Cinema and the Indian National Emergency: Histories and Afterlives* (Bloomsbury, 2025) and *Sine ni Lav Diaz: A Long Take on the Filipino Auteur* (Intellect, 2021).

3B.5: Rural Aesthetics in Global Cinema

Chair: Ilaria Puliti (University of Warwick)

Tim Lindemann (University of Portsmouth), “‘There is no border’: Transnational aesthetics of the native reservation in recent US indie films’

Abstract: This paper examines depictions of Native Reservations in three recent US indie films: *Frozen River* (2008), *Songs My Brothers Told Me* (2015), and *War Pony* (2022). It argues that all three films display an interactive, unbounded understanding of rural landscape to illustrate the tribal nations’ legal and cultural sovereignty within the United States. I will focus on the motif of the dissolution of boundaries of landscape in two distinguishable, yet interconnected aspects.

Firstly, the films approach their specific rural landscape not as mere setting but, as Don Mitchell puts it, “a concrete materialisation of social relations” (Mitchell 2005: 50) and conditions of possibility. It is these spatial, material conditions the films highlight in their engagement with rural poverty. At the same time, however, they take on their marginalised Native protagonists’ perspective on their surroundings through a tactile focus on the rural landscape as a lived-in environment. All three films contain central scenes in which their protagonists seek to merge with the landscape around them.

Secondly, the paper discusses the relation between rural landscape and the nation in the US context and demonstrates how the three films actively subvert the exclusionary role hegemonic landscape images have historically played in the naturalisation and mystification of US imperialism. This becomes apparent in the films’ blurring of national and internal borders and is achieved by bringing the materiality of the Reservation space into focus. Therefore, they fall into line with Native cinema’s original impulse to “refute Hollywood depictions, other simulations or [ethnographic] ‘images of Indians’” (Schweninger 2013: 11). At the same time, however, their non-Native authorship and industrial position on the border between indie and mainstream challenges Native cinema’s traditional tenets of “visual sovereignty” and self-representation.

Biography: I am a Lecturer and ECR in Film and Media Studies at Portsmouth University. I completed my PhD at Queen Mary University of London in 2023. My thesis is titled *New Rural Cinema - Landscape, Community and Poverty in Recent US Indie Films* and has been published as a monograph by DeGruyter in 2024. I have worked as a research assistant at the Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin and have contributed research to several major exhibitions. As a curator, I have contributed to the programming and selection process of Interfilm short film festival, Berlin.

Joe Garrard (University of Warwick), “The rural counter-archive and the forest in the cinema of Lav Diaz’

Abstract: The Philippine rural landscape has long been central to the national cinematic imaginary, but was also a crucial symbolic space in representations of the nation by their colonial occupiers from Spain and the United States – the forest becoming emblematic of the ‘wildness’ of these distant islands, something to tame (Bankoff, 2004). From the earliest representations of the Philippines in Edison Company films which cinematically configured rural space as colonial space (Campos, 2016), to the contemporary reconfiguration of rural space in films of the digital revolution (such as in the films of Raya Martin and Khavn De La Cruz), the representation of landscape – be it remote barrios, vast expanses of farmland, or the dense thicket of the forest – offers a clear insight into the ongoing dialectics between the violent temporalities of colonial history and the present postcolonial, sovereign nation-state.

In the cinema of Lav Diaz, this relationship between rural space and national history becomes all the more pronounced. This paper argues that by subordinating the human to the rhythms of the natural landscape through Diaz's signature durational aesthetics, his films posit the rural as a representational space which acts as a living and breathing archive of Philippine traumatic memory, fusing human and non-human, the political and the ecological (Chulphongsathorn, 2021) towards an incisive look at the traumas of a nation still suffering the aftereffects of repeated colonial exploitation.

Biography: Joe Garrard is a first year PhD student in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. His research is concerned with decolonial archival praxis in global South cinemas, particularly of the Philippines, Latin America, and global diasporic filmmakers, and the ways in which contemporary experimental filmmaking formally attends to the loss of, or lack of access to, personal and national histories.

Ilaria Puliti (University of Warwick), 'The sound of the cave: Non-anthropocentric perceptions in Frammartino's rural Calabria'

Abstract: This paper proposes an exploration of the status of the Anthropocene in rural Calabria through a reading of Michelangelo Frammartino's *Il buco/The Hole* (2022). Situated within the broader debate on slow cinema, Frammartino has consistently sought to move beyond an anthropocentric view of the land to rearticulate Calabria's rurality, employing a highly structured shot composition and a formal interplay of space and time within the frame. The paper considers how Calabria's cinematic portrayals often reduce the region to a passive, objectified land, reinforcing its subaltern position not only to its urban counterpart but also to a broader national North, where the idea of the rural South becomes synonymous with depopulation, natural disasters, illegal waste dumping and uncontrolled construction. Drawing on Franco Cassano's call to '[re]think modernity in the light of the South' (1996: 4), which reframes southern shortcomings as reflections of global capitalism rather than a fault of the South itself, the paper explores how *Il Buco* disrupts these narratives. It is argued that the film's soundscape invites viewers to adopt the subterranean perspective of the cave, displacing the anthropocentric gaze through a horizontalization (McMahon, 2015) of the senses. By situating the exploration of the cave from a non-human perspective, the film crucially refuses to align the representation of rural Calabria with a landscape to be looked at or a colonial space to be further exploited. Instead, it constructs rurality as a space where multiple (non-human) gazes and alternative temporalities can be superimposed and thus coexist within the Anthropocene.

Biography: I am an ECF at Warwick's Institute of Advanced Study. I completed my PhD in Film and Television Studies (Warwick) in 2024 and am currently developing my thesis *Rural Modernities: The Politics and Aesthetics of Extra-Urban Experiences in Italian Cinema* into a monograph. I have contributed chapters to volumes on Italian film exhibition and on themes of toxicity and waste in Italian film and television. My research interests lie at the intersection of cinematic representations of space/place and non-urban film locations, and how these spaces shape meanings in the context of film production, environmental issues and gender identities.

3B.6: Where Film Stardom Meets Transnational Aesthetics: Pathways to Success in Asian Film Industries

Chair: Yixuan Feng (Independent researcher)

Ashish Dwivedi (University of Southampton), 'Corporeal transnationality and stardom cultures of 1950s India: The case of Dev Anand'

Abstract: Corporeal transnationality is generally understood as a consciousness or a philosophy that allows the interpretation of physical bodies as mediators of a global imaginary. It becomes a pertinent avenue where the local meets the global, and vice-versa, and could be employed to understand the stardom cultures of 1950s India. This era saw Bombay cinema engaging, quite dynamically, with western influences, leading to frequent cross-sectional imaginations of Indian stars against their Hollywood counterparts. Mostly fan-based or critic-informed, most of these comparisons were drawn on the basis of similarities between their visages, their thematic canonisations, or/and their performance styles. Iconic pairings, such as Madhubala with Marilyn Monroe or Ashok Kumar with Spencer Tracy, exemplified this phenomenon, though such parallels were rarely acknowledged by the stars themselves, albeit with some exceptions.

Dev Anand, one of India's greatest superstars, has documented how his early star-images were concocted via a juxtaposition of the star identities of Hollywood stalwarts like Humphrey Bogart, Gregory Peck, and Cary Grant, allowing him to depart from the already-established performative and aesthetic traditions of his contemporaries like Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor, thereby segueing into an otherwise nascent archetype: the urban antihero. Moreover, these cinematic intersections enabled him to resuscitate the genre of the Indian film noir. My paper, therefore, aims to speak with the conference's theme by initiating a renewed understanding of Dev Anand as India's foremost icon embodying a corporeal transnationality, a common feature of Indian film stardom that conversely reverberates its propensity for global aesthetics/outreach.

Biography: Ashish Dwivedi is a doctoral student at the University of Southampton, with a specialised interest in early popular Hindi cinema, stardom studies, politics of memory, archival studies, and animation. His work has been published, or is forthcoming, in a range of creative and academic journals, including *Afterimage*, *Film-Philosophy*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Silhouette Magazine*, amongst others.

Dr Julia Szivak (University of Nottingham/Pazmany Peter Catholic University), 'The alchemy of whiteness in Bollywood cinema'

Abstract: This paper looks at the careers of contemporary non-Indian female actors in Bollywood cinema. During the 1920s and 1930s, acting was considered a morally dubious profession in Indian society. As a result, actresses considered foreign often took up female roles in films. However, as acting became a more mainstream job during the 1930s and 1940s, foreign women were pushed back to the margins.

This is where we find them today. Currently, they usually play supporting roles, that include the stereotypical characters of colonial belles or easy-to-forget temporary girlfriends for film heroes. Since the 1990s, the bodies of non-Indian actresses are often used to play out anxieties related to globalisation and the loss of traditional Indian values.

Despite the lack of versatility in roles, there is a growing number of non-Indian actresses hoping to make their mark in the Bollywood industry. However, their opportunities are even more limited since the 2010s, when Non-Resident Indian actresses from the diaspora started to arrive

in Mumbai with the hopes of building a career in the homeland. The non-Indian and NRI actresses are often cast in similar roles that explore the limits of national identity and belonging. Still, among them, mostly NRI actresses achieve mainstream stardom. What makes the difference then?

Contrasting the careers of non-Indian actresses and diaspora actresses offers fertile ground for investigating the intersections of gender, nationalism and globalisation. The paper thus reflects on the relationship between Indian identity, stardom and the different shades of whiteness.

Biography: Dr Julia Szivak is an Associate Lecturer at the Pazmany Peter Catholic University in Hungary. She earned her PhD from Birmingham City University in 2021. Her research interests include Indian popular culture and society. Her first monograph entitled *Hinduism and Digital Media in the 21st Century* was published in Hungarian in 2024. She will start a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at the University of Nottingham in 2025, in the framework of which she will be looking at non-Indian participants in the Bollywood creative industry.

Yixuan Feng (Independent researcher), 'Wu Jing's authorial roles in *Wolf Warrior 2* (2017): Constructing a Chinese tough guy with "Hollywoodised" aesthetics'

Abstract: Chinese male star Wu Jing has arguably emerged as one of the most bankable film stars in contemporary Chinese cinema since *Wolf Warrior 2* (2017). The military-themed action blockbuster attained the 'phenomenon-grade' status (Teo, 2019) due to its record-setting box office gross of 854 million dollars in the Chinese market. At one level, the film's commercial success catapulted Wu Jing, who portrayed the protagonist Leng Feng in it, into cinematic superstardom in China. At another level, Wu's profound engagement in production as director, co-producer, and co-screenwriter allowed him to exercise extensive creative autonomy and freedom in constructing and shaping a well-received screen image, which also contributed to his national fame.

This paper examines Wu's authorial roles in *Wolf Warrior 2*, with a particular focus on how Wu constructed his onscreen image – a specific PLA special ops soldier and more generally a Chinese tough guy – by localising the tough guy type in Hollywood action cinema. Using 'cinematic citationality' (Chan, 2009) as an analytical framework, it explores how the character Leng Feng and the Chinese masculinity presented in the film are shaped by Wu's reimagining of Hollywood's tough guy. Aside from looking at the filmic representation, this paper draws on Wu's interviews and promotional paratexts in relation to the film to uncover how Hollywood aesthetics impacted his creative process of constructing his character. It argues that Wu's rise to film stardom is closely linked to his on- and off-screen involvement of this film, with Hollywood serving as a significant influence.

Biography: Yixuan Feng received her PhD from the Department of Communication and Media at the University of Liverpool. Her research interests include transnationalism, Chinese stardom, and the Chinese entertainment industry. She has published in *Celebrity Studies* journal and the edited book *Starring Asian Femininities* (Bloomsbury). She is currently working on a chapter on Wu Jing's film stardom in China for *Stars and Franchises* (EUP) and a monograph about transnational Chinese female stardom.

3B.7: Genre Hybridity

Chair: Douglas Morrey (University of Warwick)

Mingyuan Wan (University of Cambridge), 'Genre-bending and post-cinematic affect: Global aesthetics in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022)'

Abstract: This paper explores the concept of genre-bending as a representation of global aesthetics in cinema, focusing on Daniel Scheinert and Daniel Kwan's (the Daniels) film, *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (USA, 2022) (hereafter, *Everything*). The Daniels' Oscar-winning film incorporates multiple genres and media conventions, referencing global, transnational, and popular cinemas, such as Hong Kong cinema, Disney, and superhero films. The transgression of genre conventions and various cinematic references constitute the film's genre-bending form. Drawing on Arun Appadurai's theorisation of mediascapes as a cultural dimension of globalisation, I argue that *Everything's* genre-bending form represents the globalisation of film production and consumption (Appadurai 1996). In global mediascapes, genre-bending has become the novel cinematic lingua franca familiar to the viewer. This paper thus demonstrates how *Everything* satiates the contemporary viewer's demand for global aesthetics in its form.

Furthermore, I argue that the technique of accelerated montage constructs *Everything's* genre-bending form through acceleration and continuity. If Sergei Eisenstein (1949) posits montage as a collision of images that invokes dialectic thinking in the viewer, the fast-paced editing in *Everything* creates continuity between shots and touches upon the viewer through affect. Although Steven Shaviro (2010) underscores fragmentation as the hallmark of post-cinematic affect, I contend that *Everything's* seamless genre-bending form precipitates an alternative post-cinematic affect echoing contemporary mediascapes shaped by cultural globalisation. This affect accounts for the viewer's reaction to the film's global aesthetics. Therefore, this paper approaches global cinematic aesthetics through transnational and affective lenses, illustrating how the cultural dimension of globalisation influences cinematic forms.

Biography: Mingyuan Wan (he/him) is a PhD candidate in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. His PhD thesis examines representations of queer migrants and refugees in contemporary global queer cinema, exploring how queer cinema invokes political consciousness in the viewer. His other research projects focus on trans cinema, biopolitics, melodrama, and German visual culture.

Marcin Zembrzuski, 'The gothic spaghetti western. The global and the national within one subgenre'

Abstract: The 1950s and 1960s was a unique period for European popular cinema. It witnessed both the formation of international co-production system opposing the Hollywood dominance on European film markets and the birth of various national film genres that would often draw inspirations from foreign trends. The spaghetti western is a well-known example of this: an Italian genre adapting the American western, primarily shot in Spain and co-produced by companies from Spain, France and West Germany. Although this already makes it a transnational hybrid, the spaghetti western additionally consists of subgenres merging it with other popular film conventions. One of them is the Gothic spaghetti western which mainly appeared due to the popularity of British horror films produced by Hammer Film Productions. My paper aims at evaluating the use of space in Italian westerns influenced by Gothic horror, resulting with Frontier ghost towns becoming equivalents of Gothic castles and styling the western characters as ghastly or undead. I analyse this hybridity through the prism of the term *filone*, the Italian equivalent of genre, and the chronotope, a concept of "time-space" popularized by Mikhail

Bakhtin. Whereas the former denotes the lack of clear rules, and thus explains the subgenre's eclecticism, the latter, with its focus on objects or places through their past and influence on the narrative, allows me to define the horror-like ghost town as both a signifier of the subgenre and a reflection of 1960s Southern Italy – the land of countless semi-abandoned villages and high unemployment and crime rates.

Biography: Marcin Zembrzuski is a third year PhD student in Film Studies at University of Southampton, researching the Italian western and horror. He contributed to two books in the series *Europejskie kino gatunków (European Genre Cinema)*, published by Jagiellonian University Press in Poland, with articles on Italian peplum and horror films. He completed his BA in Film Studies at University of Hull - where he was awarded with The Dissertation Prize for a thesis about the spaghetti western - and his MA in Film Studies at UCL – with a thesis on the Italian peplum.

Gábor Gergely (University of Lincoln) and Júlia Havas (University of York), 'The wrong genre: The sights and sounds of Holocaust cinema and *Le Parfum vert*'

Abstract: *Le Parfum vert/The Green Perfume* (Pariser, 2022) is a little-known French spy caper that on its surface is a Hitchcock pastiche whose novelty lies in transplanting *North By Northwest* (1959) into a cross-European setting. Yet its storytelling and aesthetic, at first unexpectedly, reveal its preoccupation with the legacy and memory of the Holocaust and its ongoing effects on the European present, which eventually emerges as a central theme of the film. In this way *Le Parfum vert* opens itself up for comparisons with a recent slew of prestige Holocaust dramas such as *The Zone of Interest* (Glazer, 2023), *Saul fia/Son of Saul* (Nemes-Jeles, 2015), *A Real Pain* (Eisenberg, 2024), and *The Brutalist* (Corbet, 2024).

We analyse the film's aesthetic strategies, which metonymically and synaesthetically create an encounter in the film's present between the protagonist on his continent-crossing journey and the Holocaust as an unfolding process. Unlike prestige Holocaust dramas recognized through awards and accolades in the West which ostentatiously place the viewer close to the violence of the genocide through bravura film technique and virtuoso performance of transgenerational grief, *Le Parfum vert* does not fetishize the sites of mass killing. Instead, it co-opts the legitimating framework of the Hitchcockian 'wrong man' film to make its claim about the Holocaust as an unavoidable everyday presence in Europe. Our aesthetic analysis of *Le Parfum vert* is thus an ideological critique of the business of Holocaust cinema and the global extraction of sites of suffering leveraged for prestige and power.

Biography: Júlia Havas (University of York) and Gábor Gergely (University of Lincoln) are scholars of Eastern European and Anglophone popular film and television's co-constitutive ideological, aesthetic and technological entanglements. They have co-authored an article, conference papers and grant applications on this topic. Their single-authored works include *Woman Up: Invoking Feminism in Quality Television* (Havas 2022) and *Hungarian Film 1929-1947: National Identity, Anti-Semitism and Popular Cinema* (Gergely 2017).

3B.8: Animating Aesthetics

Chair: Eve Benhamou (Université Paul Valéry - Montpellier)

Rayna Denison (University of Bristol), 'Collaborative aesthetics in the animated films of Naoko Yamada'

Abstract: Naoko Yamada is a rare woman director working at the top of the commercial animation industry in Japan. Beginning as an animator at Kyoto Animation in the mid-2000s Yamada has since emerged as a major force within the landscape of popular anime filmmaking. From her first film in 2011, *K'On!: The Movie* through to her more recent work on films like *A Silent Voice* (2016), *Liz and the Bluebird* (2018) and *The Colours Within* (2024), Yamada has been generating a body of work unusual for the depth of her collaborative practice.

Yamada rarely makes films with the same look and has even moved between animation studios. Nevertheless, Yamada has retained consistency in approach to aesthetics. This comes from partnerships forged with two key collaborators: screenwriter Reiko Yoshida and composer Kensuke Ushida. As Paul Ocone has argued about *Liz and the Bluebird*, "The artists creating this film have navigated artistic boundaries (especially between music, sound design, and animation) and found ways to express concepts and metaphors through the blurring of these artistic practices." (Ocone 2021, 43) Yamada's anime aesthetics are, therefore, consistent in conceptualisation. In this paper, therefore, I look to how Yamada and her collaborators discuss their working relationships in order to examine how they produce their increasingly integrated audio-visual aesthetics.

Biography: Rayna Denison is Professor of Film and Digital Arts at the University of Bristol where she teaches and does research on contemporary Japanese animation and live action cinema. Her books include *Studio Ghibli: An Industrial History*, *Anime: A Critical Introduction* and edited collections including *Princess Mononoke: Understanding Studio Ghibli's Monster Princess*. She is an editor for *Japan Forum* and has edited special issues of journals including the *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*, the *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* and her research can be found in journals including *JCMS*, the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* and *Velvet Light Trap*.

James Davis (University of Warwick), 'Animating a global aesthetic: The Disneyfication of cultural and ethnic narratives/style for a western audience'

Abstract: This paper aims to explore the hybridity of the animated film musical, focussing primarily on the Walt Disney Studio's utilisation of the genre to explore and re-present non-western identities in pursuit of a global audience, investigating how Disney finds itself in a position of power based on the company's rich animated past of cultivating representations for the big screen.

Offering an introduction to the contexts and stakes of depicting otherness in Disney animated films, the paper will highlight the medievalism's of the Disney formula and how they are visually and musically brought to the forefront within the animated film musical in order to depict a global aesthetic, one that is mediated by a major Hollywood studio.

Complimenting this, the paper will offer a close textual analysis of *Moana* (2016) and *Encanto* (2021), uncovering the extent to which Disney's contemporary output continues to alter its formula as a means to negotiate their relationship with a global audience through a continual re-engagement with conventions that were/ still are drawn upon to explore, re-present and aestheticize the cultural and ethnic 'otherness' of global audiences. In which Disney's

presentations of such discourses ultimately authenticates these stories as Disney narratives first before anything else.

In this way, the paper responds to a call for further research to be done around the specificities of the animated film musical, offering a new avenue for addressing Disney animated films and the politics of representations associated with their non-western narratives and depictions of a global/ culturally specific animated aesthetic.

Biography: I am a first year MPhil/ PhD Student at the University of Warwick in which my PhD research currently titled ‘Visualising Mental Health: the Role of Intersectional Marginality in the Persistence of the [Contemporary] Hollywood Film Musical’, is concerned with how mental health as its own marginal group intersects with the LGBTQIA+ histories and representations from across the Hollywood film musicals vast history, and how this informs the contemporary climate of the genre and its increasing interest in representations of mental health. My main research interests are in film stardom, performance, musicals, Hollywood/ American cinema, animation and representations.

Vladimir Rizov (University of Sussex), “‘For now we see...’: Philip K Dick and paranoid cinema in *A Scanner Darkly*’

Abstract: In his authoritative study on science-fiction, the late Fredric Jameson (2005) classified Philip K Dick’s (PKD) writings as rooted in the exploration of subjectivity even more so, Jameson argued PKD’s work marked a stage in the development of the genre. With few exceptions, many of PKD’s novels and short stories have been adapted to either TV or film, with prominent examples such as *We can Remember it for You Wholesale* adapted as *Total Recall* (1990) and *Total Recall* (2012), *The Adjustment Team* (1954) adapted as *The Adjustment Bureau* (2011), *The Minority Report* (1956) adapted as *Minority Report* (2002). While I will argue that many of Dick’s screen adaptations tend to be preoccupied with paranoia and suspicion, this paper will focus primarily on *A Scanner Darkly* (2006, dir. Richard Linklater) adapted from the novel of the same name (1977) as an example par excellence of this phenomenon. Linklater’s screen adaptation also follows other common themes in Dick’s writing such as that of dystopian society, policing as ubiquitous and pervasive, and late capitalist commodity culture, all of which often converge around a thematic of social control and the individual subject’s relation to it. I will explore the film’s representation of these themes through a reading of Dick’s ‘The Android and the Human’ lecture to discuss the problem described by him as ‘androidization,’ that is ‘to be pounded down, manipulated, made into a means without one’s knowledge or consent’ (1972:299). For Dick, androidization requires subjects that are both obedient and predictable. In this paper I will seek to extract Dick’s problematisation of surveillance and everyday life by taking seriously his representation of police agents as ‘subjects assembled and produced, becoming instruments of violence’ (Linneman, 2022:118).

Biography: Vladimir Rizov is a sociologist working in criminology. He has written on the history of urban space, documentary photography, and representations of crime in film. Vladimir has published in CITY, Theory, Culture & Society, The Journal of Aesthetic Education and Journal of Urban History. His first monograph, *Urban Crime Control in Cinema: Fallen Guardians and the Ideology of Repression*, was published in early 2023 as part of Palgrave Macmillan’s Crime, Media and Culture series. His second monograph, entitled *A Criminology of Videogames*, is forthcoming with Bristol University Press. He is currently undertaking a project funded by the British Academy on Philip K Dick and science fiction.

Panel Session 3C

3C.1: Colour

Chair: Reece Goodall (University of Warwick)

Tom Mason (Newcastle University), “Now we know what C stands for”: The strange case of colour and *Spectre* (2015)’

Abstract: The usage of single-colour grading, applied in post-production over anything from a single shot to an entire film, has long been an effective aesthetic choice to instil a particular visual tone: from otherwise monochrome films such as *In Nacht und Eis* (1912) and *Nosferatu* (1922) to modern blockbusters such as *The Matrix* (1999) and beyond.

The 2015 James Bond film *Spectre* became somewhat infamous upon its release amongst both reviewers and audiences for the noticeable yellow grading applied to the entire film. While it is not even the first film in the Bond series to utilise such a technique, *Spectre*’s yellow grading became more egregious in a global context due to its application in the film’s opening scenes set in Mexico - something which other media, most notably the television series *Breaking Bad* (2008-13), have recently been criticised for.

This paper will utilise *Spectre* as a case study – including close reading, primary sources of reception, and comparisons with ungraded shots – to investigate how the aesthetic choice of single-colour grading may impact, both positively and negatively, upon a film’s global reception. Utilizing a variety of further examples, it will use *Spectre* to delve more widely into the development of this underexplored area of cinematic aesthetics, with particular focus on the increasing trend of retroactive application of such gradings to films which may not have originally had them (most recently seen in home media releases of Michael Mann’s filmography) and what this means for a global audience’s future consumption of these films.

Biography: Tom Mason is a fourth-year PhD student at Newcastle University, with a thesis investigating the reception of Surrealism in the United States and its intersections with Hollywood filmmaking. His additional research interests include horror and the James Bond series.

Shreepali Patel (University of the Arts London), ‘Ash and decomposition: Connecting intangible, transnational narratives by means of camera, colour and affordances’

Abstract: This paper explores the use of camera, colour, and process to provoke a stateless, timeless connectivity between intangible narratives of the past with the present, seeding the future. The presentation examines the process underlying the work of Indian street photographer, Tikam Chand and use of his third generation 1860 shutterless Carl Zeiss Jena box camera; and the creation of ‘virtual images’ using the colour black as the ‘other’ by Moroccan born, Touhami Ennadre. Both works informing the process of an auto-ethnographic approach combining the use of a medium format camera and inherited post-colonial transnational media to explore intangible memories.

Biography: Shreepali Patel is Professor of Multimodal Storytelling at the University of Arts London. Her research is underpinned by over 30 years of film and broadcast industry experience across television, radio and cinema. More recently with multiplatform experiences including, artist gallery exhibitions and immersive XR. She explores the convergence of storytelling and creative technologies to develop deep-rooted narrative driven experiences with a

focus on culture, heritage and identity. She was Director of StoryLab, currently leads the Sonic Screen Lab at UAL, is an associate of Cambridge Digital Humanities, and co-director of BAFTA and Emmy Award winning Eyelinefilms.

Sarah Street (University of Bristol), 'Crafting colour design in long-form television: Ryan Murphy's colour aesthetics in *Ratched* (Netflix, 2020)'

Abstract: *Ratched* is a 2020 Netflix series, a psychological thriller created by Evan Romansky and developed by Ryan Murphy. Sarah Paulson plays nurse Mildred Ratched in a drama that depicts the life of the fictional character prior to the events portrayed in the famous 1962 novel and film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. My paper will discuss the role of colour in the series, drawing on debates about 'cinematic' television, and the contribution of colour to that much-debated theme in television studies. Drawing on key examples, the series develops an aesthetic sensibility which suggests a more nuanced understanding of how colour is used across television narratives, especially in long-running, serial form. I argue that a 'new colour-consciousness' is evident in contemporary televisual forms, as the series draws on a wealth of intertextual and intermedial referents, involving production design, cinematography and photojournalism. In particular, and what *Ratched* emphasizes, is how colour establishes extensive, and varied associations during the series, enabling a play with aesthetic experimentation and delight which is in many ways 'spectacularly chromatic'.

Biography: Sarah Street is Professor of Film at the University of Bristol, UK. She is the author of *Colour Films in Britain: The Negotiation of Innovation, 1900-55* (2012) and co-author of *Colour Films in Britain: The Eastmancolor Revolution* (with Keith M. Johnston, Paul Frith and Carolyn Rickards, 2021) and *Chromatic Modernity* (with Joshua Yumibe, 2019). Her latest book is *Pinewood: Anatomy of a Film Studio in Post-war Britain* (2024).

3C.2: National Cinemas - Hybrid

Chair: Gábor Gergely (University of Lincoln)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Adam Powell (Kingston University), 'The global, multicultural crime imaginaries of Nicolas Winding Refn's *Pusher* film series'

Abstract: Nicolas Winding Refn's 1996 debut film *Pusher* and its subsequent sequels initiated the representation of the contemporary migrant character within Danish cinema from the 1990s onward. The *Pusher Trilogy* (1996, 2004, 2005) also pioneered a crime genre within both Danish and European cinemas in the proceeding years that represents issues transnationalism and globality in both the film's production and narrative themes. This paper presents the influence of Refn's *Pusher* film series on European genre cinema of 21st century by examining the films' presentation of Copenhagen as a global city with representations of multiple nationalities alongside depictions of people and drug trafficking in the pursuit of commerce. Examining the subsequent film work (both Danish and international) of the three central actors in *Pusher* (1996), the film that introduced Kim Bodnia, Mads Mikkelsen, and Zlatko Buric as national film stars, I will present the impact of the *Pusher* films in establishing genre archetypes and migrant representations within a burgeoning transnational and global genre cinema. Refn's subsequent transnational production career following the trilogy and involvement in international remakes of his debut film are examined to highlight the significance of Refn's crime trilogy in the development of transnational genre cinema of the last 25 years or so. The paper applies Arjun Appadurai's concepts of cultural flow as well as "the imagination as social practice" in the context of globalization to analyse the development and reception of 21st century transnational genre cinema.

Biography: I am a current final year PhD candidate at Kingston University completing a thesis titled 'Nicolas Winding Refn as Global Metteur en Scene'. The thesis contains original research material from my own interview sessions with several of Refn's main collaborators as well as archival research gained from trips to the Danish Film Institute. My central research topics include challenging the figure of the auteur, European cinema since the 1990s, and New Danish Cinema. I have presented my research at several academic conferences in the past few years including 'Disrupting Dominance in the Archive Conference' held at UAL in December 2022.

Yahya Sefa Ekinici (Istanbul Bilgi University), 'Allegory and power in contemporary Turkish cinema'

Abstract: This paper examines the intricate interplay between allegory and power in contemporary Turkish cinema, focusing on how allegorical narratives critique and represent power dynamics. Through a close analysis of the critically acclaimed film *Burning Days* (2022), which competed at the Cannes Film Festival, the study explores how allegorical elements encapsulate and critique social, political, and cultural hierarchies. The research situates allegory within a theoretical framework, tracing its historical evolution and relationship with symbolism while emphasizing its capacity to navigate and subvert ideological structures. Drawing on the works of Walter Benjamin, Fredric Jameson, and Paul de Man, the study highlights allegory's dual potential to reinforce dominant ideologies or challenge authority through its layered narratives.

Employing textual and visual analysis alongside contextual interpretation, this paper reveals how allegory operates through dialogue, cinematography, and mise-en-scène to illuminate power dynamics in a politically charged provincial town. *Burning Days* interrogates mechanisms of exclusion and social conflict, focusing on the allegorical depiction of marginalization and

resistance. Notably, the film's exploration of LGBTQ+ themes led to the loss of state funding, highlighting the contentious interplay between artistic expression and institutional authority in Turkey. This controversy underscores broader cultural and political tensions surrounding representation, allegory and censorship in contemporary cinema while revealing the film's progressive potential.

Ultimately, the study enriches understanding of allegory's role in Turkish cinema as a mode of resistance and commentary, offering new perspectives on the intersections of film, power, and society in a globalized cultural landscape.

Biography: Yahya Sefa Ekinci works as a research assistant at Istanbul Bilgi University and contributes to academic research and education in the Media Department. He is also an M.A. student in Communication Studies at Kadir Has University, Istanbul. He earned his B.A. in Film and Television from Istanbul Bilgi University, where he graduated with high honors and a full scholarship. His research interests include film language, political aesthetics of cinema, Global South cinema, and experimental and avant-garde cinema.

Kristof Van Den Troost (Chinese University of Hong Kong), 'The Age of *Qiqing*: Chor Yuen's martial arts films and the critical term that defined Hong Kong's 1970s cinema'

Abstract: In the 1970s, Hong Kong filmmaking underwent a dramatic transformation. In just a few years, it seemed a new cinema was born, with violent action replacing family melodrama, male stars surpassing their female counterparts, and conservative restraint making way for a wild and often cynical irreverence. This decade saw the international breakthrough of Bruce Lee, but also the immense local popularity of Michael Hui's satirical comedies and Jackie Chan's comic action antics. This paper will zoom in on the term *qiqing* (or *keicing* in Cantonese) commonly used in the local film criticism of this time. A hard to translate term that connotes, amongst others, the strange, the marvelous and the sensationalist, it was occasionally used in film advertisements in earlier decades to describe films of an astonishing variety. This paper will argue that the mid-1970s saw a further proliferation of the term, as it was used to describe the then emerging local crime film (especially of the 'true crime' variety), but also the contemporaneous film adaptations of Gu Long's martial arts novels by Shaw Brothers director Chor Yuen. Investigating the uses of *qiqing* in local film criticism and focusing on Chor Yuen's Gu Long adaptations, this paper will propose that *qiqing* best captures the local perceptions of a broader qualitative shift that was then taking place in Hong Kong cinema.

Biography: Kristof Van den Troost is an Assistant Professor in Chinese Studies at the Centre for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). His first monograph, *Hong Kong Crime Films: Criminal Realism, Censorship and Society, 1947-1986*, was published by Edinburgh University Press in 2023. His work has also appeared in *Screen*, *Asian Cinema*, *Asian Education and Development Studies* and various edited volumes. His current research projects deal with the post-1986 history of the Hong Kong crime film, Hong Kong's "new" New Cinema, and the historiography of Cantonese film.

3C.3: Screening Global Spaces of Youth - Hybrid

Chair: Catherine Lester (University of Birmingham)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Andrés Buesa (Universidad de Zaragoza), 'Eavesdropping from the threshold: Childhood and borders in contemporary film'

Abstract: Positioned at “the threshold between nature and culture” (Randall 2017, xii) and thought to be in a state of transition towards adulthood, children are often conceived as liminal figures. In many films, eavesdropping—those moments in which children sneak into liminal spaces, and they observe adults without being seen—becomes a formal strategy through which such sense of liminality is coded in spatial terms. Focused on the representation of borders as sites of socio-political struggle, this paper reads children’s eavesdropping as a global aesthetic trope that shapes the social and spatial articulation of cinematic borders in specific ways.

It considers two European films about children who grow up in borderly spaces: *A Ciambra* (Jonas Carpignano, 2017), set in Italy’s southern region of Calabria; and *L’île rouge* (Robin Campillo, 2023), set in a French military base in Madagascar. In both films, children negotiate social, ethnic, and national differences as they navigate the borderscape. In spatial terms, they are often positioned at thresholds (doors, windows, walls) from which they eavesdrop on the world of adults.

By exploring the function of those thresholds in children’s spatial trajectories—whether they are dividing lines, contact zones, or vantage points from which to scrutinise the unequal power relations around them—this paper presents the border as a process that is performed into being through practices of division and encounter, and which works both as a “site of the production of sovereign power [as one] of resistances and struggles” (Brambilla and Jones 2020, 3).

Biography: Andrés Buesa is a doctoral researcher in Film Studies at the University of Zaragoza, Spain. His thesis, entitled *Mobilities and the Child in 21st Century World Cinema*, discusses contemporary fiction films that engage with the interrelation between mobility and power through the figure of the innocent child. His work has been published in the international journals *Atlantis* (2022), *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* (2023) and *Sociology Lens* (2023), as well as on Routledge’s edited collection *Embodying Vulnerabilities in Literature and Film* (2023).

Luis Freijo (King’s College London), 'Showdown at the Arab frontier: Space, national identity and the child in *Theeb* (Naji Abu Nowar, 2014)'

Abstract: This paper considers the intersection between the representation of the child as a global aesthetic figure and the global Western genre in the film *Theeb* (Naji Abu Nowar, 2014). Set in the Arab province of Hejaz under Ottoman control during World War I, *Theeb* establishes its credentials as a Western by depicting a frontier space where the modern state does not hold the “monopoly of legitimate physical violence” (Weber, 2004: 33), but also roots its narrative and aesthetic choices against the backdrop of the Arab Revolution of 1916-1918. The child protagonist Theeb becomes then “out of joint” (Derrida, 2011: 36), located at the juncture between tribal and modern forms of social organisation and mobility. Specifically, this paper focuses on how the film places conventions of the global Western such as the landscape and masculinity “under erasure” (Derrida, 1976: 23), through its depiction of space and movement as experienced by the child, where space is “not an objective structure but is a social experience” (Hubbard, 2002: 14). Theeb must confront demands of adult masculinity to survive the space of the desert, but the film’s articulation of space also indicates the creation of an Arab identity

within colonial modernity. Ultimately, *Theeb* deploys conventions of the Western under erasure to expose “a master narrative of Western imperialism” (Mayer and Roche, 2022: 1), but at the same time proposes the child as an “ideological figure” (Buesa, 2023: 108) through which to configure a new regional identity deferred into the future.

Biography: Luis Freijo is a Research Associate at the Department of Film Studies at King’s College London, where he works for the project AGE-C: Ageing and Gender in European Cinema and investigates issues of ageing, gender and cinematic stardom. His research has previously focused on the dynamics of World Cinema and film genre studies, specifically the global film Western. He also has a previous background in journalism in Spain, where he worked on radio, written press and, especially, the private network Telecinco.

Frances Smith (University of Sussex), ‘Haunted spaces of contemporary teen media’

Abstract: The locker room, the cafeteria, the mall, the bedroom. Such spaces have been variously surmised as the principal spaces of teen media (see Shary 2014; Martin 1994; McRobbie 1978). This paper asks what it would mean to consider these spaces as haunted. I take up Mark Fisher’s Derridean account of hauntology according to which hauntological spaces are characterised by repetitions, patterns and spectres (2012). While the first two of these – repetition and patterns – are the hallmarks of genre filmmaking, the latter – spectres – are less often considered a part of teen media. For Martin Hägglund, the spectre is not necessarily literal but instead marks a relation to what is “no longer” or “not yet.” As a result, I suggest that adolescence, where the subject is neither child nor adult, may be construed as spectral.

This paper centres on *Euphoria* (HBO 2019 – present), though I also consider other examples of contemporary teen media, such as *Do Revenge* (Robinson, 2022) and *Sex Education* (Netflix 2019-2023). I develop previous scholarship on teen media, which notes its pleasurable intertextuality, and instead consider how the nods to previous examples of the genre might attest to a form of stasis and immobility that has been noted elsewhere in youth culture (see Wojcik 2024; McDermott 2022). I argue that, through attention to the spaces tentatively inhabited by their characters, haunting best characterises the recent change from fun affects, characterised by movement across media and modes, to stasis and regression.

Biography: Frances Smith is Associate Professor in Film Studies at the University of Sussex. She has published in a variety of journals, most recently in *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* and *French Screen Studies*. She is the author of *Rethinking the Hollywood Teen Movie* (EUP, 2017), *Bande de Filles* (Routledge, 2020), and co-author of *Trans Representations in Contemporary Popular Cinema* (Routledge, 2022). This abstract represents the first stage of a wider project on the aesthetics and affects of contemporary teen media.

3C.4: Queer Asian Screens - Hybrid

Chair: Misha Yakovlev Iakovlev

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Jamie J Zhao (City University of Hong Kong), 'The transmedia futurity of adult lesbianism: Studies of queer older sisters in contemporary Chinese entertainment media and pop cultures'

Abstract: This presentation explores a pronounced queer women-centered pop cultural imaginary in post-2010 China, namely, “older sister” (jīe 姐) fantasies that center around mature women. I first contextualize this imaginary in relation to East Asian and Chinese-language girls’ love (GL) and queer women’s cultures. In so doing, I propose that the “older sister” imaginary in the Chinese context is an inherently queer fantasy constructed by, for, and/or about women with same-sex desire. Nowadays, it has been refashioned by commercial entertainment as well as feminist and queer communities as a means of navigating norm-defying images of mature women in heterocentric, reproduction-focused contexts. I then trace this “older sister” trope on contemporary Chinese TV to the enduring popularity of an online 2012 autobiographical-style queer women’s story known as the “sister-kid literature.” I also inspect the transmedia metamorphosis of the trope and the wide recitation of the story in contemporary Chinese media and pop cultural terrains, which reveals an evolving, heteronormativity-intervening temporal logic of adult female homoerotic narratives. By (re)considering the significance of reconstructing this “older sister” imaginary across divergent media to dismantle China’s heteronormative-patriarchal assertions of the (non-)futurity of adult lesbianism, I argue that the imaginary has been reconfigured by, as well as responsive to, Chinese queer women’s contextually specific longings and lived struggles in a heterosexual-confident mainstream society. Ultimately, this study suggests transformative ways to understand queer women-driven (trans)media productions and cultural activities that are situated in largely LGBTQ-suffocating social and fantasy worlds.

Biography: Dr. Jamie J. Zhao is an Assistant Professor in the School of Creative Media at City University of Hong Kong, HKSAR. Her research explores East Asian media and public discourses on female gender and sexuality in a globalist age. She is the editor of *Queer TV China* (HKUP, 2023), and coedited *Boys’ Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols* (HKUP, 2017), *Contemporary Queer Chinese Art* (Bloomsbury, 2023), and the *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Gender and Sexuality* (Routledge, 2024). She has also (co)edited ten special journal issues on the topics of global queer media, celebrity and fan studies.

Yvonne Zhao (University of Leicester), 'A brief analysis of Sinophone adolescent lesbian film from an intersectional perspective'

Abstract: My research is about the epistemology of Sinophone adolescent lesbian films.

At present research progress, my overall research question is: How is the intersubjectivity between characters in Sinophone adolescent lesbian films (including the PRC (People’s Republic of China), Hong Kong and Taiwan) after the New Millennium dissolve the gender representation of being a lesbian? How has this intersubjectivity between characters in the Sinophone context been influenced and alienated by Confucianism?

I characterize my research as an intersectional exploration of inside of Sinophone adolescent lesbian films which based on textual analysis, combining with intersubjectivity, heterotopia space, Mise-en-scène, and queer theory. Within the various feminist methodologies, this project explores how cultural representations and gender concepts derived from Confucianism ideology

in the Sinophone context intersect to shape the intersubjectivity of characterization in Sinophone adolescent lesbian films from an intersectional perspective.

I chose the Intersectionality as my research methodology, it provides an approach for me to address my hypothesis in textual analysis. It focuses on the internal differences among women and the macro-social processes that create these differences, that is, analyzing the mechanisms of internal differentiation among women and the structural factors behind them. Furthermore, when I explore the term of the “Ai Mei 暧昧 (the definition of which I will explain during the panel)” relationships among characters in films, intersectionality allows for a multi-faceted analysis based on gender, class, family, education, politics, and local culture within the film narratives.

Biography: Yvonne Zhao is a doctoral candidate at the University of Leicester.

Beth Carroll (University of Southampton), ‘Bridging the gap in Thai Girl Love series’

Abstract: The recent rise of the Girl Love genre (GL) has been remarkable and particularly associated with Thailand. Series such as *Gap: The Series* (2022), *Blank* (2024), *The Loyal Pin* (2024), *The Affair* (2024), and *The Secret of Us* (2024), represent a growing queer body of work that frequently defies Western understandings of quality, stardom, fandom, and aesthetics. Whilst many series are linked to Thai TV stations (e.g. GMMTV and Workpoint TV), the weekly episodes are also released via YouTube accruing large viewing figures. *Gap: The Series*, Thailand’s first GL, has over 800 million views on YouTube alone.

This paper argues that the newly emerging genre’s audiovisual coherence can only be understood through an intersecting analysis of the onscreen diegesis and offscreen paratexts, thereby prioritising a transmedial reading that takes account of the series’ global following. Though distinctly Thai, these series should also be understood as products of global technologies; as Rosalind Hanmer argued, ‘[v]irtual queer fandom assists individuals to resist the hold of the local [...]’ (Hanmer, p. 148). These GL series have taken this further, incorporating the queer fandoms and paratexts *into* their internal logic, blurring the lines of the text’s edges. An exploration of the global online fandom, the stardom, and the paratexts (e.g. concerts, watch-alongs, and music videos) associated with these series is necessary to understand the genre’s developing aesthetic and sonic landscape. The GL series onscreen cohesion relies upon a knowingness from its fandom and an open dialogue with them, developing a unique space currently unexplored.

Biography: Dr Beth Carroll is a Lecturer in Film at the University of Southampton. Her research interests include space and place, experience, sound and music, musicals, popular culture, as well as virtual and digital constructions.

3C.5: Humour, Politics, and Identity: East Asian Comedies in a Global Frame

Chair: Wayne Wong (University of Sheffield)

Wayne Wong (University of Sheffield), 'Laughter in the dark: Dayo Wong, (post)comedy, and collective catharsis in post-2019 Hong Kong cinema'

Abstract: This paper argues that the unexpected resurgence of post-2019 Hong Kong cinema at the box office can be attributed to collective catharsis, where comedy has emerged as a crucial conduit for repressed anger and pain, embodied by the ex-stand-up comedian turned movie star, Dayo Wong. Existing scholarship on comedy in Hong Kong cinema often frames the genre as absurdist escapism reflective of sociopolitical transitions, as exemplified by Stephen Chow's nonsensical (Mo Lei Tou) humor in the 1990s, which grappled with anxieties surrounding the 1997 handover. However, limited attention has been paid to how comedy in post-2019 Hong Kong films articulates suppressed emotions in an era of unprecedented political repression, particularly through enigmatization—a hermeneutic strategy that preserves local expressions within privileged interpretive communities. This paper examines Wong's key films, both within and beyond the comedy genre (or "post-comedy"), including *Table for Six* (2022), *A Guilty Conscience* (2023), and *The Last Dance* (2024), as cinematic sites of catharsis where audiences engage in commemorative practices and mass solidarity. By embodying a subtle nostalgia for Hong Kong's past—a time of relative democracy and freedom of expression—Wong's "post-comedic" performances resonate with audiences as vehicles for collective anger, mourning, and redemption. This nostalgia is encoded through Wong's comedic delivery and witty dialogues, which preserve a uniquely local sensibility and create an intimate bond with in-group audiences seeking a connection to a disappeared past. The analysis highlights Wong's post-comedic style—his embodiment of socio-political critique—as resonant with Hong Kong audiences' need for indirect resistance and emotional release in politically constrained environments. Situating Wong's box office success within the broader context of Hong Kong's political shifts, this paper underscores the transformative power of (post)comedy and cinema as sites of collective memory and resistance, reframing the discourse on Hong Kong's cultural resilience.

Biography: Wayne Wong is a lecturer in East Asian Studies at the School of East Asian Studies at The University of Sheffield. He holds a joint PhD in Film Studies and Comparative Literature from King's College London and the University of Hong Kong. He has published in peer-reviewed journals, including *Asian Cinema*, *Global Media and China*, *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, and *Martial Arts Studies*. He has just completed a monograph titled *Martial Arts Ecology: Aesthetics, Philosophy, and Cinematic Mediation* (Edinburgh University Press) and is editing an anthology titled *Michelle Yeoh: Everything and Everywhere on Global Film Screens* with the same press. He is an editor of the *Martial Arts Studies journal*.

Elaine Chung (Cardiff University), "I do sex comedy because I know little about politics": Park Na-rae and the economy of gender-charged humour in South Korean screen media'

Abstract: Having won prizes in prestigious awards and been voted as the most-liked entertainer in domestic polls, Park Na-rae is one of the most popular and successful female television comedians in South Korea nowadays. However, being known for her bold outfit choices and sexually suggestive humour, Park has also sparked controversies and even faced police investigations for her 'inappropriate' jokes. Studying the star persona of Park Na-rae, this article explores the role of comedienne in traversing gender norms in South Korean screen media. I examine the on-stage performances and paratextual representations of Park's one-woman,

sex-themed Netflix stand-up show *Park Na-rae: Glamour Warning* (2019) as a prime example of her strategies to produce and, simultaneously depoliticise feminist humour. This article uncovers the transgressive agency of female comedians like Park, who challenge patriarchy within the boundaries of mainstream culture governed by local market conditions, industrial practices, and socio-political circumstances. It engages the 'economy of charged humour' (Krefting 2014) as an analytical framework and discusses its usefulness in deciphering the understudied subject of female comedic personas in East Asia.

Biography: Elaine Chung is a Lecturer in Chinese Studies at Cardiff University. Her research interests lie in the transnational politics of East Asian popular cultures. Her essays have been published in *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* and edited volumes with McFarland, Routledge, Multilingual Matters, Edinburgh University Press, and MLA. She has also co-edited a Special Issue on East Asian media comedies for *Archiv Orientální*.

Yung-Hang Bruce Lai (King's College London), 'Sentimentalism and patriotism in contemporary Chinese comedies'

Abstract: This paper explores the aesthetics of contemporary comedy films in mainland China, which blend comedic humour with melodramatic sentimentalism. By reviewing Chinese comedy films from the past three decades, I propose that cynical and satirical forms of humour have given way to melodramatic and sentimental elements in recent comedies. Drawing on Rey Chow's concept of 'warm sentiment-ism' in Chinese cinema, which emphasises moderation and tolerance, I examine how mainland Chinese comedies incorporate melodramatic elements, emphasising familial and interpersonal relationships. These films provide audiences with a complex emotional experience, oscillating between pathos and humour. The paper also investigates the trend of 'main melody comedies' during the second term of President Xi Jinping. I argue that these films illustrate how neoliberalism is contained and absorbed into Confucian ethics and socialist politics. Echoing the 'praising comedies' of Mao's era in the 1950s, these 'main melody comedies' celebrate the party-state's achievements and socialist legacy while appearing to challenge the neoliberalisation that has characterised Chinese cinema since the 1990s. In these films, familial love is incorporated in the framework of patriotism. Focusing on the anthology films *My People, My Country* (2019), *My People, My Homeland* (2020), and *My Country, My Parents* (2021)—featuring top-ranking filmmakers and stars—this paper explores how these comedies negotiate humour and sentiment, propaganda and entertainment, and the socialist past with the Reform agenda. I propose that the nationalist sentiments in 'main melody comedies' exceed the 'warmth' of sentiment-ism, utilising pathos and melodramatic excess. Comedy's optimistic tone mediates tragic events or painful experiences, consolidating a proud sense of national identity.

Biography: Yung-Hang Bruce Lai obtained his PhD in Film Studies at King's College London. His research interests include comedy, Chinese language cinema, Christianity and film, and neoliberalism. He is also a member of the Hong Kong Film Critics Society.

3C.6: The New Female Pop Doc: Global Circulations of Female Pop Stardom (Performance and Stardom SIG)

Chair: Julie Lobalzo Wright (University of Warwick)

Andrew Lennon (Birmingham City University), 'Complaint and the "All-American Girl": *Shut Up and Sing* (2006)'

Abstract: Within contexts of public outspokenness, institutions or individuals who wield power can regulate attention away from the issue of a complaint, to negatively refocus it back onto those nonconforming voices. As Sara Ahmed (2021) expressed, '[t]o be a complainer is to become the location of a problem'. *Shut Up and Sing* (2006) foregrounds one such instance of verbal rebellion from 2003, when the lead singer of The Chicks (formerly The Dixie Chicks) publicly voiced her shame at the actions of President George W. Bush on the eve of the Iraq invasion. The documentary intercuts between the fallout from this statement and the recording of the group's next album in 2006. In a time of intense patriotic fervour in the U.S., the commercial success of the then biggest-selling female group worldwide collapses and, moreover, their personal safety is repeatedly threatened. While familiar themes of artistic, professional, familial and emotional pressures that commonly underpin popstar documentaries are similarly present here, *Shut Up and Sing* distinctively charts a fall from popularity, the real-time processing of this, and the attempt to reconstitute not only careers but also a sense of personal and professional identities. This paper investigates the documentary's role as a material component in the reformulation of The Chicks' brand and in the group's appreciation of their own shifting identities from national-anthem singing 'All-American' girls, to country-music outcasts, and finally to an affirmation of their actions and of the value in dissenting.

Biography: Andrew Lennon holds an AHRC funded PhD from the University of Birmingham (UK), which focuses on documentary practices in contemporary theatre performance. He is a graduate of the Motley School of Design with a practice background in stage lighting, design and scenography, primarily working in England and Ireland. He has published on the staging of darkness in productions of Samuel Beckett's works, the "gaming" of political protest, and the regional screen industries of the UK. He is currently a lecturer at Birmingham City University and has previously taught at the University of Birmingham and the University of Gloucestershire.

Kirsty Fairclough (Manchester Metropolitan University), 'This is me: Interrogating the female pop star documentary'

Abstract: *Lady Gaga: Five Foot Two* (2017) to *BlackPink: Light Up the Sky* (2020), *Billie Eilish: The World's A Little Blurry* (2021) to *Love, Lizzy* (2022), female pop documentaries have become an important medium through which international female pop stars navigate and negotiate their public and private personas. This paper positions the pop star documentary as a critical cultural artefact, analysing how it constructs and interrogates the complexities of female celebrity. Through interdisciplinary frameworks, it considers the ways these documentaries challenge gender stereotypes, celebrate artistic achievements, and reveal the personal and professional resilience of women in pop music. By focusing on the intersection of storytelling, branding, and cultural impact, this paper highlights how female pop star documentaries contribute to broader conversations about artistry, authenticity, and representation in global pop culture. It offers fresh perspectives on the often-overlooked genre of the music documentary, arguing that these films not only document individual journeys but also shape collective understandings of gender, celebrity, and popular music in the 21st century. The findings provide insights into how women

in pop transcend traditional narratives, reshaping the cultural aesthetics and discourses of contemporary music history.

Biography: Professor Kirsty Fairclough is Deputy Head and Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange at the School of Digital Arts (SODA) at Manchester Metropolitan University. Kirsty's current research areas include popular digital culture, celebrity studies and popular music. Kirsty has published widely on popular culture and is the co-editor of *Diva: Hip-Hop, Feminism and Fierceness*, *Prince and Popular Culture*, *The Music Documentary: Acid Rock to Electropop*, *The Arena Concert: Music, Media and Mass Entertainment* and *Music/Video: Forms, Aesthetics, Media*.

Alice Pember (University of Warwick), 'How we're feeling now? Collaboration, community and digital fandom in *Charli XCX: Alone Together* (2022)'

Abstract: This paper works to illuminate the central place of the female centred pop music documentary in the global operation of 'neoliberal resilience discourse' and how this informs the depiction of international pop star Charli XCX in the documentary *Alone Together*. It is suggested that the documentary's depiction of XCX's whirlwind production of the lockdown album 'How I'm Feeling Now' in the Spring of 2020 taps into a recent trend in pop music documentaries, which present talented and hardworking female musicians overcoming myriad personal constraints 'with resilience and determination' (Prins 2022: 103). As well as emphasising the success and achievement of this pop star in the face of adversity, *Alone Together's* depiction of the support she is offered by her global network of loyal LGBTQ+ fans as she constructs the album emphasises digital community and collaboration in a way which sets it apart from these other 'resilient' examples. In this way *Alone Together* seemingly distances its depiction of musical collaboration from the performance of individual resilience in other recent documentaries about female pop stars. By focusing both on the film's tracing of the ill effects of resilience discourse on XCX herself and its evocation of the globally networked digital community spaces that were facilitated by her collaborative production of the album, the chapter highlights ways in which *Alone Together* is both informed by and responds to the 'resilient rhetoric' channelled by other female-centric contemporary pop documentaries.

Biography: Alice Pember is an Assistant Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. Her current work focuses on the intersecting affects and political implications of girlhood, dance and pop music in contemporary cinema. She has published on girlhood, race and resilience in journals including *French Screen Studies* and *Film Philosophy*. Forthcoming chapters include work on Sarah Gavron's *Rocks* and the female pop documentary. Her first book *The Dancing Girl in Contemporary Cinema* will be published with Edinburgh University Press in 2025.

3C.7: The Dynamics of Mobility

Chair: Alastair Phillips (University of Warwick)

Jacopo Mascoli (University of Warwick), 'Global borders: Labour, airports and ring roads in contemporary Italian documentary'

Abstract: Borders have shifted their function. Whilst they are no longer just the limits and the protectors of national states, they have become new mechanisms for managing labour, capitals and human flows. Manifold borders serve as 'extra state' (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013) sites such as free trade zones, logistics corridors, private labour areas, ports, airports, etc., with the aim of regimenting human movements, capital flows, and transport. Under such conditions, borders can be read as productive forces that in turn create new conditions of illegalised and precarious labour.

The aim of this paper is to examine how the non-fiction moving image attempts to understand this contemporary reconstitution of borders as multiple and proliferating regimes of labour. The paper investigates how logistical spaces – in particular airports and ring roads – impact on the borders they interact with and how they influence human labour contained within them. I will focus on the Golden Lion-winning *Sacro GRA* (Gianfranco Rosi, 2013), an unusual documentary mapping the human life along the ring-road surrounding Rome; and on the documentary *Il castello* (*The Castle*, Massimo D'Anolfi and Martina Parenti, 2011), that witnesses individual lives, procedures and controls within the Malpensa Airport (Milan). Through an observational style, both documentaries defetishize (Toscano, 2018) logistical spaces by focusing more on human lives and labour operations than on the infrastructure itself. It is my contention that within both docs there is a keen focus on examining the mechanisms of labour, bodies, and capitals embodied in such sites. Ultimately, I will argue that both docs produce a responsive and attuned documentary aesthetic that allows to visualise, and simultaneously remap, the structures of power, exploitation and precarisation reinforced by these infrastructures.

Biography: Jacopo Francesco Mascoli is a PhD candidate at the University of Warwick. His research interests focus on the relationship between work and cinema, with a particular emphasis on the Italian post-financial crisis context. His dissertation intersects film studies with labour studies, sociology and economics, addressing global economic issues such as deindustrialisation, precarisation, among others. He is also interested in examining similar issues within a world cinema approach in general and from a transnational Mediterranean perspective in particular.

Su Kepsutlu (University of Leeds), 'Girling the border: Aesthetics of migrant girlhood in Tina Gharavi's *I am Nasrine* (2012) and Sally El Hosaini's *The Swimmers* (2022)'

Abstract: Migrant cinema, frequently described through terms such as 'accented cinema' (Naficy, 2001), 'intercultural cinema' (Marks, 2000), or 'cinema of borders' (Bennett and Tyler, 2007), has garnered increasing scholarly attention in recent decades. Similarly, there has been increased attention to cinemas of girlhood and coming-of-age narratives in contemporary global 'art' films (Handyside and Taylor-Jones, 2016; Franco, 2018; Hill, 2021). The concepts of migration and girlhood have both been theorised as disrupting traditional frameworks of national cinema by engaging with the fluidity and the contested nature of space, place, and identity. Nevertheless, within film scholarship, the two concepts have rarely been considered intersectionally in conjunction with each other. Building on the previous studies, this paper considers Tina Gharavi's *I am Nasrine* (2012) and Sally El Hosaini's *The Swimmers* (2022), two rare examples of a narrative film directed by a woman with a migrant background that foregrounds young girls' experience of border crossing. Through the two films, this paper teases out the parallels

observed both in migrant filmmaking and girlhood cinema regarding the notions of liminality and in-betweenness. With particular attention to the depiction of border spaces, this paper conducts a close textual analysis of the two films, drawing on Berlant's (2011) conceptualisation of impasse and the affective rhythms of survival. The paper examines how migrant women filmmakers represent hybrid identities and liminal spaces, exploring the cinematic techniques employed to portray border-crossing from a gendered perspective and to offer an alternative lens for the experiences and subjectivities of migrant girls.

Biography: Su Kepsutlu is a PhD Candidate in the Centre for World Cinemas and Digital Cultures at the University of Leeds. Her recently completed thesis explores the representation of female migration in European cinema with a particular focus on migrant women's filmmaking. Her research interests include transnational cinema, feminism, migration, and issues of identity in film. Beyond research, she is currently teaching in the School of Media and Communication at the University of Leeds, contributing to modules such as Introduction to Cinema, Visual Communication, and Feminism and Identity.

Isabel Treviño (Universidad de Zaragoza), 'The spectacle of global mobilities in *The 355*'

Abstract: This paper analyses *The 355* (Simon Kinberg, 2022), a film about a team of hypermobile women spies operating in transnational contexts, to explore the interplay of cinematic spectacle and global aesthetics in twenty-first-century action cinema. The film constructs a portrayal of hypermobility that extends beyond character movement, foregrounding the role of cinematic techniques in portraying global mobilities.

Central to this analysis is the concept of cinematic spaces of mobility, which encompasses the use of cinematic strategies and formal techniques—such as intensified continuity (Bordwell 2006) and the "perpetual motion aesthetic" of action cinema (Jones 2019)—to create spaces defined by movement and velocity. The hyperkinetic aesthetics of *The 355* transform urban locales into fluid spaces of mobility, emphasizing the frictionless navigation of its protagonists and thus reshaping traditional portrayals of women's mobilities.

The film's multinational cast—including Jessica Chastain, Diane Kruger, Lupita Nyong'o, Penélope Cruz, and Fan Bingbing—further enriches its global aesthetic. Their transnational star personae, along with the use of linguistic and cultural markers, add multiple layers of mobility and global resonance, positioning the film within the framework of global action cinema and its strategies to attract a global audience.

While action cinema has long focused on "the spectacle of human bodies moving at dangerous velocities" (Kendall 2016, 112), contemporary films are sometimes more concerned with "the spectacle of the frame itself" (Jones 2019, 106). This paper argues that such films are also increasingly concerned with the spectacle of global mobilities, highlighting the aesthetic appeal of transnational movement.

Biography: Isabel Treviño is Assistant Professor at the Centro Universitario de la Defensa in Zaragoza and member of the research project "From Social Space to Cinematic Space: Mise-en-Scènes of the Transnational in Contemporary Cinema". In 2023 she obtained a PhD in English Studies from the University of Zaragoza with a dissertation on the representation of mobile professional women in 21st-century cinema. Her research interests include the cinematic portrayal of women's mobilities, work, identities and spaces.

3C.8: Kineticism and Media Flows Across Time-Space: from Action Cinema to YouTube

Chair: James C. Taylor (University of Warwick)

Steve Rawle (York St John University), 'Godzilla x Godzilla: Global/national interactions in the Kaijū film'

Abstract: At a time when major blockbusters seem calculated to appeal to global markets, cinema seems to be catering to a much more muddled transnational space. Despite being seemingly less consciously designed to appeal to Chinese audiences than previous Legendary MonsterVerse films, *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire* has been 2024's highest grossing foreign film in China. However, *Godzilla Minus One* (2023), described as a piece of 'soft nationalism' (Schilling), ostensibly helped prepare the ground for the wider global success of the Hollywood film amid a resurgent wave of popular Japanese cinema. But, in China, along with wider East Asia, the Japanese film went unseen due to licensing issues in the agreement between Tōhō and Legendary Entertainment.

This paper reflects upon the continuing hierarchization of transnational flows relating to the increasing popular *kaijū* film. The global success of the nostalgically nationalistic *Godzilla Minus One* can be complicated by the presence of bigger budget transnational visions of the same franchise in Hollywood's MonsterVerse films. As Legendary's ownership returns to American hands, their films still seem designed for a global aesthetic, including Italy, Brazil, Morocco, and Australia amongst its settings and filming locations. Its avoidance of 'China-bait' has apparently not harmed its appeal for Chinese audiences. Yet the national vision of *Godzilla Minus One* also succeeded at the global box office, despite its absence in Japan's regional neighbours. This speaks to the complex, and surprising, interactions of globalization with specifically national, local contexts that have been recurring circumstances for these films.

Biography: Steve Rawle is Professor of Film at York St John University. He is the author of *Transnational Cinema: An Introduction* (2018), *Performance in the Cinema of Hal Hartley* (2011), and *Transnational Kaijū: Exploitation, Globalisation and Cult Monster Movies* (2022). He also co-edited *Monstrosity and Global Crisis in Transnational Film, Media and Literature* (2024). His writing has appeared in *Film Criticism*, *The Journal of Japanese & Korean Cinema*, *Asian Cinema*, *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* and *The Journal of Fandom Studies*. As a co-investigator of the Cinema and Social Justice Filmmaking project, he executive produced the award-winning film *Cost of Living* (2022).

Min-Kyoo Kim (University of Cambridge), 'Appropriating the apocalypse: Re-uses of U.S. nuclear test footage in the Marshall Islands in *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *Godzilla* (2014) and *Radio Bikini* (1988)'

Abstract: Speculation on nuclear apocalypse is reaching fever pitch. In 2024, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists set the Doomsday Clock to 90 seconds to midnight, "the closest to global catastrophe it has ever been". However, Karen Barad (2018) has criticised how "focusing on the apocalyptic phantasm of total war" distracts "attention from the realities of war in its ongoingness". I thus turn to the history of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands, where the U.S. detonated 67 bombs between 1946 and 1958, rendering certain islands uninhabitable for thousands of years. Firstly, I trace how films have often re-purposed the footage of the inaugural pair of tests at Bikini Atoll, codenamed Crossroads. I focus on two particular examples: the concluding montage of *Dr. Strangelove* re-temporalises the mushroom cloud at Bikini to symbolise the detonation of the mythical 'Doomsday Device'; meanwhile, the reboot of *Godzilla* re-writes the history of Crossroads as an attempt to kill the film's eponymous *kaiju*. Therefore, both remediations of this footage from Bikini ironically dislocate the experiences of the Bikinians,

animating Jacques Derrida's (1995) insight that "there is no archive without a place of consignment... without a certain exteriority". Subsequently, I explore how the documentary *Radio Bikini* addresses Anaïs Maurer's (2024) call to "recenter the nuclear apocalypse" in its coordinates in the Pacific. Through intercutting the U.S. Navy's footage of the tests with the testimonies of exiled Bikinians, *Radio Bikini* illuminates otherwise occluded experiences in the archive, which testify to the traces of apocalypse both past and now.

Biography: Min-Kyoo Kim is a PhD candidate in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. He studied for a MPhil in Film Studies at Cambridge, and a BSc in International Relations at the LSE. Drawing on this interdisciplinary background, Min-Kyoo explores the aesthetic and ethical complexities of representing nuclear violence, with a particular focus on the occluded histories of colonised and racialised victims. Min-Kyoo's research is funded by the Wolfson Postgraduate Scholarship in the Humanities.

Lindsay Steenberg (Oxford Brookes University), 'What fighting can teach us? UK stunt performance in the global media landscape'

Abstract: Recent films such as *Polite Society* (Manzoor 2023) in the UK, *The Fall Guy* (Leitch 2024) in the US and *Stuntman* (Leung & Leung 2024) in Hong Kong have told stories celebrating stunt performers. Likewise, a core objective of this paper is to highlight and contextualise the stunt performer's invisible labour on set, largely drawing from a collection of interviews with screen combat and stunt trainers and observations of their training practices.

This industrially focused paper investigates the labour practices and performances of the British stunt industry and their place within a flexible global interchange of labour and expertise. It aims to reveal the precarious training and employment practices that inform the work of UK stunt performers, in particular on-screen fighters. Its objective is to identify and challenge patterns of discrimination in the industry, particularly around gender and ethnicity. One of my central research questions asks what on screen fighting can teach us, particularly about the inequalities of precarious labour in the UK's globalised creative economy. To answer this question, I use a hybrid methodology combining ethnography with historically situated industrial and film studies methods to investigate the work involved in creating violent spectacles, putting them into wider contexts of professional accreditation, regulation, and creative production.

To deepen this analysis, I also consider the fight scenes that stunt performers collaborate to create, using a detailed close analysis of several key fight scenes in British films made by transnational crews, for example in films such as *Sherlock Holmes* (Ritchie 2009) and *Enola Holmes* (Bradbeer 2020).

Biography: Lindsay Steenberg is Reader/Associate Professor in Film Studies at Oxford Brookes University where she is Chair of their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Research Network and coordinates the BA programme in Film. She has published numerous articles on the crime and action genres and is the author of *Forensic Science in Contemporary American Popular Culture: Gender, Crime, and Science* (2017) and *Are You Not Entertained? Mapping the Gladiator in Visual Culture* (2021). She is currently completing a monograph on the fight sequence in post-millennial action cinema with Lisa Coulthard.

Panel Session 3D

3D.1: LGBTQIA+ SIG - Hybrid

Chair: Chris O'Rourke

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Michael Williams (University of Southampton), 'Stories of the London Fog and Paris Underworld: Ivor Novello and the Queer Chronotopes of *The Lodger* (1926) and *The Rat* (1925)'

Abstract: Ivor Novello was a leading British male film star of the silent era but equally well known for his music compositions and stage work. His play, *The Rat*, co-written with Constance Collier, was a major success on stage in 1924 and then on screen. In *The Rat* (Cutts, 1925), playing the titular Apache of the Paris underworld, Novello introduced audiences to an expressionistic Montmartre club named 'The White Coffin' where heteronormativity was playfully subverted. A year later his most famous role in *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (Hitchcock, 1926), would see the star play a suspicious figure ambiguously referred to as 'queer' in the intertitles who appears disinterested in women and who wanders (cruises?) the foggy streets at night and navigates between 'high' and 'low' cultural spaces.

This paper focuses on the ambiguously queer experiences of other cities, including Paris and New York, visited by Novello that we can glimpse through sometimes-coded reports in the contemporary press. Significantly, Novello established his own queer space, the 'Fifty-Fifty Club', in London's Soho in 1924, complete with murals depicting the star as 'The Rat' by the Swedish caricaturist Nerman. I argue that Novello's queer authorship shaped the spaces we see in these films and adopt a contextual approach to uncover traces of the international inspiration, queer cultural networks and oblique representations that shape the spaces seen on screen in *The Rat* (in its centenary year) and *The Lodger*.

Biography: Michael Williams is Professor of Film at the University of Southampton. His research focuses on stardom, silent cinema, queer reception, and classical reception studies. He is author of *Ivor Novello: Screen Idol* (BFI, 2003), *Film Stardom, Myth and Classicism* (Palgrave, 2013) and *Film Stardom and the Ancient Past* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and is co-editor of *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (Palgrave, 2011) and *Call Me by Your Name: Perspectives on the Film* (Intellect, 2024).

Miguel García López (University of Bristol), 'Pastel-Trash in Contemporary Spanish Film: Crisis, Millennial Authorship and Queer Aesthetics'

Abstract: This presentation explores millennial aesthetics in contemporary Spanish film, focusing on emerging filmmaker Eduardo Casanova and his unique combination of dissidence and film aesthetic elements drawing on the Trash Cinema style of cult filmmakers like John Waters or Todd Solondz and on auteurist styles like those of Pedro Almodóvar and Álex de la Iglesia. Casanova's use of what I call a 'pastel trash' aesthetics conflates dark humour and satire with the subversive potential of queer representation. Casanova's cinema reassesses social constructs around gender, sexuality, and corporeality, articulating shocking, melodramatic and aesthetically complex works which shine a light on the oppressive, discriminatory, and multifaceted nature of regimes of normality, which run deep in contemporary Western societies. Through close reading of two of his feature films and some of his short films, I argue that Casanova's cinema is representative of a Spanish queer aesthetics which navigates between

combative subversion and mainstream inclusion, denouncing a present rife with global crises, precarity and disillusionment. More broadly, I assess to what extent contemporary screen cultures are still challenging hegemonic social and ideological constructs in relation to gender, sexuality, and identity and in what ways they grapple with LGBTQ+ visibility and subjectivity vis-à-vis the mainstream audio-visual media industries in Spain and transnationally.

Biography: Miguel García López is a researcher in Hispanic Film and Queer Screen Studies. My monograph *Queering Lorca's Duende: Desire, Death, Intermediality* (2022) proposed a queer reading of Spanish author Federico García Lorca's intermedial literary and visual works. My current research project, 'Millennial Screen Cultures: Queer Film and Streaming Television in Contemporary Spain', examines queer representations of youth and their articulations of intergenerational memory in contemporary Spanish film and streaming television, focusing on queer identities and emerging audio-visual creators. My interdisciplinary work with filmmakers and non-academic organisations focuses on audio-visual representations of minoritised communities as agents of social and institutional change.

Ellie Smith (University of Warwick), ““Cambiar el dolor en oro”: Transnational Queer Strength and Virtue in Jacques Audiard's *Emilia Pérez* (2024)”

Abstract: Jacques Audiard's *Emilia Pérez* (2024) is the latest in a wave of films that feature queer and lesbian characters in action-style roles. While the rise in the prevalence of women action heroes has been relatively well-documented, the phenomenon of increasing sapphic representation in the genre is yet to receive significant scholarly attention. Like in *Drive-Away Dolls* (2024), *Love Lies Bleeding* (2024), *Atomic Blonde* (2017), and, in the French context, *Volenses* (2023) and *Sentinelle* (2021), *Emilia Pérez*, which follows a trans woman as head of a Mexican cartel, gives rise to renderings of queer psychological strength rather than the mental illness that has all-too commonly been associated with sapphic women on screen. Concurrently, the film is emblematically transnational, being French produced yet written in Spanish and English, filmed in Paris yet being set in Mexico, Bangkok, Tel Aviv, Switzerland and London. Locations are clearly defined by dialogue and title screens yet feature no distinctive visual markers, creating a sense of postnational fluidity and suspension. This presentation argues that such fluidity reflects and accommodates flexibility in both queer identities and the concept of what constitutes psychological strength and virtue. It gives rise to a queer courage and resilience that is constantly evolving in response to its environment.

Biography: Ellie Smith is an M4C-funded PhD researcher in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Warwick. Her project explores representations of queer women's psychology in contemporary French film, aiming to draw focus away from the pathological through the recruitment of 'positive psychology'.

3D.2: Sound in Cinema - Hybrid

Chair: Douglas Morrey (University of Warwick)

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Corey Cribb (Technological University Dublin), 'Voix off: Marie-Claire Ropars & the sound from outside'

Abstract: Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier was a founding faculty member of France's first Cinema Studies Department at the *Centre Universitaire Expérimental de Vincennes* (today, *Université Paris 8, Saint-Denis*), where she worked alongside the likes of Michel Foucault, Hélène Cixous, and Gilles Deleuze. In prolific career as a film critic and film scholar spanning 50-years, arguably her most important film theoretical works were those, published in the 1980s, which radically reimagined film semiology by positing a fundamental division between cinema's visual and aural registers, thereby problematising the "program of syncretism" championed by structuralist semioticians like Christian Metz and Jacques Fontanille. With particular attention to her account of off-screen sound, this presentation will focus on Ropars's close readings of three French films: Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959), Godard's *Breathless* (1960) and Duras's *India Song* (1975). For Ropars, I argue, the innovative use of voiceover and off-screen sound in these widely acclaimed works of modernist cinema tells us something fundamental about the process by which cinema produces meaning not through a synthesis of its many expressive registers (i.e. sound, cinematography, performance etc.) but by putting to work the various 'gaps' [*écarts*] or contradictions which characterise cinema's "signifying procedures".

Biography: Corey Cribb is a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellow at Technological University Dublin. His research interrogates the question of 'sense' (i.e. meaning) and its relation to 'the sensible' (i.e. affect) in French film theory and philosophy. He is presently working on his debut monograph, *Film and the Philosophy Sense*, which analyses French language debates over cinematic meaning from the 1940s to the present, tracing the field's progression from phenomenology to structuralist semiotics, to contemporary philosophical approaches to cinematic meaning.

Arzu Karaduman (Marist University), 'Muted images and cryptic voices as new sonic aesthetics in contemporary arthouse cinemas'

Abstract: In terms of the typical arthouse principle of open aperture ending, Emin Alper's *Burning Days* (2022), Justine Triet's *Anatomy of a Fall* (2023), and Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *About Dry Grasses* (2023) all leave the knots in their mysteries tied.

While *Burning Days* is about the rape of a mentally-challenged woman from an ethnic minority, *Anatomy of a Fall* revolves around the mysterious death of a man from a fall. In *About Dry Grasses*, a school teacher is accused of sexual assault on a favorite student.

The cinematic treatment of the he-said, she-said scenarios in these contemporary global crime/mystery narratives reveals the need for an emerging aesthetics of ambiguity and suspension that involves sounds and sound-image synchronizations that hide and reveal at the same time. One of the two techniques that challenge cinematic synchronization in a new way is the cryptic voice, that is a voice separated from the body of its speaker, who talks but whose lips do not move. In their suspensions of synchrony, cryptic voices defy hierarchies between presence and absence, life and death, and interiority and exteriority. Similarly, the impossible synchronizations in the "muted image bridges," which connect the sounds of one scene with the

-muted images of another, foreground Derridean difference and dissemination and ridicule our anthropocentric attempts at synchresis between what we see and what we hear at the same time.

Biography: Arzu Karaduman studies sound in contemporary global cinemas and film philosophy. She has presented widely at national and international conferences and published on film sound, film philosophy, psychoanalysis and film, and gender and race in contemporary global cinemas. Dr. Karaduman is currently working on turning her dissertation titled “Sounding Anew: Anasonicity in Contemporary Global Cinemas” into a book. In her research, Dr. Karaduman pays particular attention to how contemporary cinemas challenge synchronization by playing with the thresholds between audibility and inaudibility in novel ways.

Larissa Barbosa Curi (Tallinn University – Baltic Film, Media and Arts School), _____
‘Acousmatic and visualized horrors: expanding the taxonomy of the verbal account in horror
films and thrillers’

Abstract: The horror genre is well-known for its affect, employing both visual and auditory stimuli to evoke strong reactions. Yet, a seemingly counterintuitive narrative strategy is often found in the genre, one which aims to engage the audience by withholding visuals and relying solely on the viewer’s imagination. Conceptualized by Julian Hanich (2010), the verbal account comprises two categories of scenes where characters deliver information verbally: either narrating a past event (messenger’s report) or describing images concealed from the audience (teichoscopy). Evoking similarities with first-person narration in horror literature and oral tradition, the verbal account denies the relatively objective and omniscient perspective of the event given by a flashback, directing the audience’s attention to conjure mental images.

Employing textual analysis of a small sample of verbal account scenes in horror films and thrillers, this presentation expands the taxonomy introduced by Hanich, drawing on Michel Chion’s work to propose that verbal accounts further branch into acousmatic or visualized. This categorization extension shows a focus on either the speaker or listener on screen, supporting the analogy of the verbal account as a contemporary filmic rendition of a campfire story, and further arguing for this narrative strategy as an effective tool still underexplored by filmmakers.

Biography: Larissa Barbosa Curi is a Junior Fellow Researcher at Tallinn University’s Baltic Film, Media and Arts School. Her research focuses on the horror genre in audiovisual, particularly the verbal account narrative strategy and its affect approached from a cognitive and embodied perspective.

3D.3: Paratexts in the Margins of Paratextual Discourse

Chair: Stephen Istvan Dragos (King's College London/University of Northampton)

Zeyu Gao (King's College London), 'Shanghai film periodicals in the 1930s: The communion of cultural elite and mass cultures'

Abstract: Film magazines are an unavoidable medium in film studies, especially in the study of early Chinese films. Due to war, poor preservation, and insufficient research, early film materials are severely lacking, and the contemporaneous film periodicals that focus on them are possibly the only way we can learn about these films and the film culture of this period. As Li Daoxin points out, film periodicals will enrich, develop, and even rewrite the early Chinese film history by supplementing the actual evidence of film history (Li 2006, 12).

One type of existing research on early film magazines is the discussion of its founders and editors (Zhou, 2007; Shen, 2015; Yang, 2020). However, despite the fact that they are known to be the cultural pioneers in this period (Yang 2020, 11), the contradiction between these elite editors and the mass readers is often overlooked. The question remains as to whether this amalgamation of former writers, poets, and photographers, who were almost completely ignorant of commercial operations, had any awareness of the popular nature of the film magazines they founded. Therefore, this paper will draw on a highly prestigious film magazine, *Modern Screen*, published in Shanghai in 1933, to examine how its founders interacted with films and how these embarked on the path of founding the film magazine. By investigating the labour process behind the magazine, I will try to answer whether the perception of the cultural elite and the needs of the popular masses have been successfully merged in the end.

Biography: Zeyu Gao is a PhD candidate in the Department of Film Studies at King's College London. He is currently writing a dissertation on early Chinese film periodicals in Shanghai from 1921 to 1937. His research focuses on the role of early film periodicals in the dissemination of early film culture and in shaping readers' experiences of urban modernity.

Stephen Istvan Dragos (King's College London/University of Northampton), 'Debates surrounding the Polish film poster from the 1960s and 1970s through the lens of Susan Sontag'

Abstract: Polish film posters have become something of a collector's item in recent years. Gallery exhibitions and coffee table books have constantly praised the non-commercial nature of Polish film posters and for refusing to create a "consumable identity" for the films (Keith M. Johnston, 2019: 646).

While these accounts constantly praise the film posters for their lack of commerciality, and for standing in opposition to Western posters, these accounts fail to consider how this lack of commerciality has also created tensions within the movement at the time. For instance, Lenica argued that the "true function of the poster" needs to be addressed and that a "new metamorphosis [is needed] in the Polish school of poster art." (1960: 137)

By enquiring the debates from the 1960s-1970s surrounding the Polish film poster from trade journals, such as *GRAPHIS*, exhibition booklets, but also interviews from the International Poster Biennales, my paper aims to offer a holistic view over the Polish film industry rather than just a small and idealized depiction that contemporary publications offer. For this enquiry, my paper aims utilize Susan Sontag's often forgotten essay, "Posters: Advertisement, Art, Political Artifact, Commodity." Sontag's methodology observes the historical and political developments that shaped the four eponymous poster categories in relation to Cuban posters. My paper aims

to historically contextualize the development of the four poster categories within Poland, to better contextualize what led to the artistic tension from the 1960s-1970s, and how these tensions led to the creation of hybrid forms of posters within Poland.

Biography: Stephen Istvan Dragos is a PhD candidate within the department of Film Studies at King's College London and an Associate Lecturer at the University of Northampton. He also is the curator of the student led Trash Film Club at King's College London. He is currently writing a dissertation on Eastern European Film Posters during the Cold War (1947-1991) and is particularly interested in the neglected film poster traditions of Romania and Hungary, but also in film posters as collector's items.

Carmen Spanó (University of Leicester), Title TBC

Abstract: Launched in 2009 on ABC, the fictional TV show *Castle* sees a fiction writer team up with NY detective Kate Beckett (Stana Katic) to solve mystery crimes; drama and comedy ensue. Within the show, Castle writes and promotes books of great success (namely, the Derrick Storm and Nikki Heat's novels). These books have been made available outside the fictional world of the TV show via, for instance, a dedicated Amazon author page (<https://www.amazon.com/nikki-heat/s?k=nikki+heat>) and they have debuted at high positions on the New York Times Best Seller list.

This paper explores the phenomenon of Richard Castles' authorial presence as it develops into the production of a set of works that spans across linguistic and mediated divides and, in so doing, challenges the notion of para-textual relationships (Consalvo, 2017).

Indeed, the existence of Castle's books as material objects that transcend the fictional boundaries of the original TV program posits questions of both para-textual labour and fruition dynamics. On one hand, the actual impact of the creative process at work in producing a supplementary text that allows for the re-negotiation of the texts' 'hierarchy of values' needs further unpacking and reflection (Barker, 2017). On the other, the implications of alternative pathways for media engagement and consumption call attention to a network of possible actions, uses and contributions that might further strengthen processes of surpassing and relocation, and according to a logic of new meaning generation.

Biography: Carmen Spano' is Teaching Fellow and Programme Director of the Media and Advertising Programme at the University of Leicester. She received her Ph.D. in Media, Film and Television from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Throughout the years, Carmen has taught modules on Media Audiences, Media and Advertising, Television Studies and Media Communication at different universities in different countries (University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington, Università Cattolica e Università IULM di Milano). Her academic research and publications mainly focus on practices of audience viewing and engagement with trans-media texts such as films and TV series.

Respondent: Ed Vollans (University of Leicester)

Biography: Dr Ed Vollans is a Lecturer in Media & Advertising at the University of Leicester, UK. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts and before academia has worked as a Journalist in Mumbai. His work focuses on Promotional Paratexts within the creative industries from aesthetic and historical perspectives, recent publications include *(Not) In the Game: History Paratexts and Games*, 2022 De Gruyter Oldenbourg (with Regina Seiwald), and 'From 6ft Turkey'

to Marketing Monster: Marketing Jurassic Park and its Sequels'. *The Jurassic Park Book*, 2023 Bloomsbury, London.

3D.4: Screening Iran/Iranian Cinema - Hybrid

Chair: Maryam Ghorbankarimi

[Hybrid Session - Register Here](#)

Sajad Sotoudeh (University of Bristol), 'Male-centred walking in Iranian cinema and culture'

Abstract: Throughout modern Iranian history, there has been a significant struggle between men and women over access to public space. Although many texts address this struggle, few studies in Iranian literature comprehensively examine the act of walking and its implications in the public sphere, particularly in Iranian cinema. This study explores the dialectical confrontation between male and female characters walking together in Iranian films. It investigates how gender discrimination, often embodied in the control of women's physical movement, restricts the connection between emancipation and mobility in Iranian culture and cinema. This masculine kinetic model, which I term "male-centred walking," reflects how cultural and historical norms shape bodily movement. Through an interdisciplinary lens, I analyse scenes from films such as *Brick and Mirror* (Ebrahim Golestan, 1964), *Nazanin* (Alireza Davoudnejad, 1976), *Boutique* (Hamid Nematollah, 2004), and *Crimson Gold* (Jafar Panahi, 2003), where female characters' walking is subordinated to that of male characters, marginalizing women's movement in the public sphere. This research highlights the gendered disciplinary patterns imposed on the female body in Iranian cinema and culture, as well as women's resistance to these constraints. In doing so, it contributes to the underexplored area of gender, space, and body movement in Iranian studies.

Biography: Sajad Sotoudeh is a Ph.D. Candidate in Film and Television at the University of Bristol. He was a lecturer at the University of Art in Tehran for six years (2017-2023). He has published numerous peer-reviewed articles in academic journals such as *Feminist Media Studies*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, and *Cogent Arts & Humanities*. He also published a chapter in a book by Bloomsbury Publishing related to Iranian cinema (*Trends in Iranian cinema: local and global perspectives*). His research interests are Iranian cinema, flânerie, body movement, and urban modernity.

Navid Darvishzadeh (Georgia State University), 'Between the actual and the virtual: The imaginal chronotope of Iranian modern cinema'

Abstract: Halfway through Mohsen Makhmalbaf's *Gabbah* (1995), in the scene after the wedding, the clan departs, leaving the newlywed couple alone by the riverbank to celebrate their honeymoon. In the extreme-long-shot, the crowd moves past a mosaic of over a hundred uniquely designed and colorfully adorned *gabbahs* (the hand-woven rugs), presumably spread out to dry along the riverbank in the sunlight. Beyond the visual appeal and its aesthetic allure, what deeper insights does this scene offer into *Gabbah*, a film that intricately weaves together actuality and virtuality, past and present, as well as reality and dream? Zooming out even further to view this film within the constellation of Iranian modern films, how does this specific shot capture the prevalent fascination with the nature of time and the indiscernibility of the actual and the virtual in a vast array of these films? I argue that the answer to these questions is grounded in the chronotope of these films encapsulated in this shot—their unique approach to the spatiotemporal relations—producing a cinema that is intricately intertwined with Iranian-Islamic cultural notions and beliefs that I theorize as "imaginal cinema." The unique approach of these modern films to space and time summons the Imaginal realm (*alam al-mithal*), which, rephrasing Laura Marks, accounts for collective wishes that turn the unthought into the thinkable. I argue that through what Gilles Deleuze theorizes as mirror-images, and the coexistence of seemingly mutually exclusive worlds such as the confluence of the peaks of the present and the sheets of

the past, these modern films evoke what Walter Benjamin calls the *erfahrung* of the collective past—the collective memory handed down from generation to generation.

Biography: Navid Darvishzadeh teaches film and media studies courses at the School of Film, Media & Theatre, Georgia State University. His research and teaching interest include Film Theory, Deleuze and Cinema, World Cinema, and Feminism and Queer Theory, and Post-colonial Studies. His publications have appeared in *New Cinemas*, *Film-Philosophy*, *Visual Anthropology*, and *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*. He is the associate editor of *Film International*. In his role as the managing editor of *In Media Res*, he co-edited several special issues focused on “The State of Film Theory,” “The Contemporary Streaming Style,” “Critique and the Moving Image,” and “Labor and the Moving Image.”

Maryam Ghorbankarimi (Lancaster University), ‘Hybrid aesthetics and intersectional narratives: The shifting landscape of underground Iranian cinema’

Abstract: This paper examines the shifting aesthetics of underground Iranian cinema through a comparative analysis of Bahman Ghobadi’s *No One Knows About Persian Cats* (2009) and Panah Panahi’s *Hit the Road* (2021). Iranian underground cinema, particularly since the late 20th century, navigates a fraught terrain of censorship and global visibility. Ghobadi’s documentary-styled exploration of Tehran’s illegal rock music scene and Panahi’s road movie probing themes of exile and displacement reveal a shared use of hybrid aesthetics, blending neo-realist techniques, reflexive narratives, and digital innovations. Drawing on Hamid Naficy’s concept of “accented cinema” and Homi Bhabha’s hybridity framework, this paper explores how these films negotiate between local cultural specificity and global cinematic language while grappling with the complexities of marginalization and cultural survival.

By foregrounding underrepresented voices and marginalized communities, *Persian Cats* employs digital filmmaking to expose Tehran’s vibrant yet precarious underground music scene, creating a platform for intersectional experiences that intertwine class, gender, and generational tensions within a repressive socio-political context. *Hit the Road*, meanwhile, integrates sonic and visual elements to mediate between internal exile, familial dynamics, and physical displacement, capturing the nuances of generational trauma and muted resistance. Both works reflect the ongoing transformation of Iranian underground cinema in response to transnational influences, digital distribution platforms, and the constraints of state surveillance.

Through this analysis, the paper examines how underground Iranian cinema innovates aesthetic and narrative strategies to reflect the layered complexities of cultural identity, intersectionality, and representation in the post-national and digital era, crafting narratives that resonate both locally and globally.

Biography: Maryam Ghorbankarimi is an Senior Lecturer of Film Studies at Lancaster University. Her research examines the representation of women in front of and behind the camera, with a focus on Iranian cinema. She is the author of *A Colourful Presence: The Evolution of Women’s Representation in Iranian Cinema* (2015) and her other works includes *ReFocus: The Works of Rakhshan Banietemad* (2021) and co-edited the *I.B. Tauris Handbook of Iranian Cinema* (2024).

3D.5: Global Hollywood

Chair: Will Kitchen (University of Chichester/Arts University Bournemouth)

Iain Smith (King's College London), "Towards a comparative global history of the Hollywood film poster"

Abstract: In recent years, there has been a growing cultural fascination with the international film posters that were produced for Hollywood films in the mid-to-late 20th century. During this era, film distributors in different national markets would often produce their own local posters for Hollywood releases rather than following a centralised marketing strategy. This meant that the posters would reflect local trends and innovations in graphic design, and the works of individual painters such as the Polish artist Andrzej Klimowski, the Ghanaian artist Leonardo and the Thai artist Tongdee Panumas have come to be celebrated for their differences from the original poster designs in the US. However, with online articles such as Den of Geek's '50 Great Foreign Movie Posters for English Language Films' and Screen Rant's '10 Weirdest Foreign Movie Posters for Hollywood Movies', it is clear that there is a danger that these posters are circulating largely as 'weird and wonderful' decontextualised kitsch.

Drawing upon Ross Melnick's work on the cultural negotiations and tensions underpinning Hollywood's global distribution, and Ranjani Mazumdar's work on the material life of the film poster, this paper will outline a methodology for a comparative global history of the Hollywood film poster. By grappling with the challenges faced by producing a transnational history of the Hollywood film poster, this paper will consider the implications that this has for our understanding of the transnational circulation of Hollywood cinema and the politics of global Hollywood more broadly.

Biography: Iain Robert Smith is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at King's College London. He co-founded the SCMS Transnational Cinemas scholarly interest group in 2012, and is author of *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema* (EUP, 2016) and co-editor of *Media Across Borders* (w/ Andrea Esser & Miguel Bernal-Merino, Routledge, 2016), *Transnational Film Remakes* (w/ Constantine Verevis, EUP, 2017) and *Global Cult Cinemas: Decolonising Cult Film Studies* (w/ Dolores Tierney & Shruti Narayanswamy, forthcoming). He is currently preparing a monograph on the transnational history of the Hollywood movie poster.

Dom Thornton (University of Warwick), "Trans(national)formers: The politics and aesthetic strategies of global Hollywood in *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (Dir. Michael Bay, 2014)"

Abstract: During the 2010s, the success of a blockbuster Hollywood production was reliant on its ability to "be flexible and adjust its content to turn a profit in the Chinese market" (Lukinbeal, 2019:107). Upon its release, *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (Dir. Michael Bay, 2014) arguably marked the greatest success for an American-Chinese co-production, grossing \$1.1 billion, with \$320 million coming from China (2019:101-102). For Chris Lukinbeal, such co-productions are integral to contemporary Global Hollywood and "commit production to certain creative obligations" that are reflected in the final text (2019:101).

Though Lukinbeal asserts that *Age of Extinction* is an important text in spite of its narrative, this paper takes a textual analysis-based approach to build upon such production-focused research to examine not only how the production strategies, and creative obligations, of transnational co-productions are presented in the narrative and aesthetics of *Age of Extinction*, but how such strategies are important precisely because of their ability to reflect and resonate with the wider political shifts that have defined the decade since its release. This paper pays particular attention

to the depiction of (post-)industrial spaces, such as abandoned factories, railways, and cinemas, and how they reflect the fall of American industry and a fractured American identity in an era of globalisation. Following this, I examine how such qualities offer symptomatic value as they mirror the crises relevant to the political shifts during Trump's rise to power throughout and beyond the 2010s, leading to a rejection of globalisation and an embrace of patriotism (Trump, 2020).

Biography: Dom Thornton is a PhD student in the Film & Television Studies department at the University of Warwick. His thesis focuses on direct-to-video (DTV) action cinema, drawing from theories of star studies and exploitation cinema to examine the aesthetics and characteristics of DTV cinema. He holds a BA (First Class) and an MA (Distinction) in Film and Television Studies from the University of Warwick, where his research explored the legacy of silent slapstick comedy in Hong Kong action films, and the aesthetic influences of early silent cinema in the Jackass series.

Yichen Dan (University of Reading), 'Anxiety and escape: Ecotopia and dystopia in Hollywood science fiction films'

Abstract: This article explores a series of contemporary Hollywood science fiction films, examining the intersection of environmental, social, and human anxieties in contemporary science fiction films. How to reconstruct and repair the earth and human beings themselves has become a recurring ecological theme in contemporary science fiction films, reconstructing not only the material world but also the spiritual world, and how these fictional landscapes are represented in different utopia and dystopia ways.

Barbara Klonowska argues that utopia has been withdrawn from contemporary cinema. The decline of utopia is related to the general skepticism of utopian fantasies in modern society, as well as its static and slow-paced narrative character, which does not conform to the modern audience's preference for fast-paced consumerist films. On the contrary, the gradual occupation of Utopia by Dystopia after World War II indicates that contemporary culture is more willing to focus on dark visions than optimistic ones. In particular, science fiction films exaggerate the future apocalyptic landscape in a commercial and entertaining mode, which coincides with the rapidly growing and enduring popularity of contemporary Hollywood science fiction films on the theme of ecological disasters.

My project presents a different point of view, and I believe that utopia has not disappeared from contemporary cinema, but has survived in the landscape and narrative of ecological science fiction films, providing a hopeful vision and a model for shaping the ecology of the future. This paper pays more attention to the eco-utopian aspect of science fiction films, arguing that utopia and dystopia are closely linked and intertwined. If utopia in the past is mainly elaborated as a static background, then it is precisely because utopia exists in the present but points to the future, so utopia is dynamic, continuous, and full of vitality, and is composed of pictures, landscapes, characters, and plots.

Biography: Yichen Dan (04-1998) Second year PhD student in Film, Theater and Television department at the University of Reading. My main research direction is the Utopian and Dystopian landscapes and cultural expressions in Hollywood ecological science fiction films. Graduated with a Master's degree in Theater and Film from Henan University (China) in 2023, with main research direction is the narrative characteristics and cultural shift of China's new mainstream films. Published two academic papers in the journals *Sound and Screen World* and *Comedy World*. I independently presided over a municipal-level philosophy and social science

planning research project,exploring the adaptation process of Contemporary Internet Literature in film and television media.

3D.6: Transmediality and Adaptation

Chair: Klára Feiksová

Luodeng Ouyang (University of Liverpool), 'The adoption of the western genre and Cluedo in Tibetan film: Jigme Trinley's film adaptation *One and Four* (2023)'

Abstract: For a long time, scholarly examinations of Tibetan cinema have focused on the narratives on the lives of pastoralists and the spiritual plight of Tibetans in the face of economic and political pressures. Although Hollywood has dabbled in Tibetan-themed films since the 1930s, as one of the classic Hollywood genres, the Western is not a genre that has found much adoption in Tibetan cinema and is hence a largely uncharted area of scholarly investigation. This paper will analyse Tibetan director Jigme Trinley's film '*One and Four* (2023)' considering the specificities of the genre of the Western and the board game Cluedo. It will be argued that Jigme Trinley combines narrative strategies inspired by the Cluedo board game with the hallmarks of the Western genre in order to adapt an indigenous story '*One and Four* (2016)' by Tibetan writer Chiangyong Tsering. I will demonstrate that Jigme Trinley forges new narrative paths which present a fresh perspective onto Tibetan story and which transcends the thematic and formalistic paradigms of earlier Tibetan cinema. This research will contribute to an enhanced understanding of the new Tibetan filmmakers and the ways in which their innovative film-making formulas help shed light on contemporary Tibetan stories in entirely new ways.

Biography: I am currently a year four PhD (Film Studies) student at the University of Liverpool with a strong focus on contemporary Tibetan cinema, digital cinematography and Chinese film adaptation. Outside academia, I've worked as a director and cinematographer for several years.

Klára Feikusová (Palacký University), 'Approaching the cinematization of television through the lenses of transmediality'

Abstract: This paper explores the ways in which transmediality can be used to approach the cinematization of television. While cinematization is often seen as a marker of media convergence, the question of transmediality is rarely addressed. The cinematization of television, defined as the influence of cinema on television, addresses the question of how these two media are becoming similar, therefore transmediality could be a useful way to understand it. Since television and cinema are both audiovisual and share the same modalities, it may not seem necessary to consider their relationship as transmedial. But the cinematization of television is connected to the intertextuality and adaptation, and so is fruitful to at least consider the ways in which these two phenomena can inform each other. Both the transmediality and cinematization of television represent a current trend and may function as a strategy how to reach the quality demographic. It can be argued that cinematic television programmes travel well across national borders because of their potential to interest audiences through their attractive aesthetics. Also, because transmediality here encompasses film and television, these transmedial texts tend to be more easily found internationally than other forms of transmedia that may be geo-blocked (Rendell 2023: 23). In this way, cinematic television programmes can be attractive to audiences (who want to see the television version of their favourite films, or vice versa) and thus to the industry.

Biography: Klára Feikusová is an assistant professor at Palacký University in the Czech Republic, where she also holds a PhD. Her main areas of interest are television aesthetics, media convergence, horror television and minority representation. Klára wrote her doctoral thesis on the concept of cinematization of television in the academic discourse. She has published in the

Quarterly Review of Film and Video and in edited monographs published by Bloomsbury and McFarland.

Qinyi Hao (University of Southampton), 'Chinese-language film adaptations: Debut directors and the mainland Chinese audience market'

Abstract: This paper explores Alec Su's directorship as a possible 'constructed authorship' in his debut film, *The Left Ear* (Alec Su, China, 2015). Since the early 2010s more and more debut directors who were already respected film stars and celebrities in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan have adapted films from famous literary works. Among these, coming-of-age Chinese-language novels published since 2005 were the most popular sources of adaptations. The resulting film adaptations are mainstream commercial productions distributed and exhibited publicly in mainland China, mostly for young generations of film audience. However, these debut directors and their adapted films are still under-researched.

But the way these new film directors adapt literary works to be their own, with the help of different entities, is an interesting phenomenon. This paper uses Su's debut film as a case study for understanding how and why authorship is possibly constructed in and for the mainland Chinese audience market. Informed by auteur theory, film marketing studies, and adaptation studies, I argue that Su's authorship is not naturally established through years of filmmaking experience. Instead, it is constructed by different individuals and organisations in the mainland Chinese film industry during the life cycle of *The Left Ear*.

Biography: I am a third-year PhD student at the University of Southampton, specialising in contemporary Chinese film adaptations. My research focuses on Chinese filmmakers and how film adaptations since 2010 reinterpret and reflect evolving cultural, social, and political landscapes. With a background in film studies and a keen interest in transmedia storytelling, I explore the creative processes behind these adaptations, investigating how they resonate within domestic and international contexts. Through my work, I aim to deepen the understanding of adaptation as a form of cultural dialogue and artistic expression within modern Chinese cinema.

3D.7: Comedic Aesthetics

Chair: Louis Bayman

Tom Hemingway (University of Warwick), “It’s Not TV, It’s A24” – Reflections on Contemporary Stand-Up Comedy Television

Abstract: After establishing themselves with a string of cult and often critically-acclaimed film productions, in 2015 the independent entertainment company, A24, expanded their output to include a television division. This division eventually led to the production of a number of stand-up comedy specials from comedians such as Ramy Youssef, Eric Andre, Jenny Slate, and Jerrod Carmichael. Much like their other television productions, the stand-up specials produced by A24 adhere to the model set by HBO decades prior, where ‘doing a special is a sign of arriving’ and the legitimacy offered by the platform was ‘for the privileged few’.

This paper will first discuss the ways in which A24 attempts to create a sense of cultural legitimacy through the selective nature and boutique presentation of their comedy specials, now at odds with the sheer volume of stand-up material released by distributors and platforms like Netflix. Following this, through close analysis of moments from *Jerrod Carmichael: 8* (HBO, 2017) and *Jenny Slate: Seasoned Professional* (Prime Video, 2024), I will engage with Ian Wilkie’s concept of the ‘dual audience’, where ‘the viewer or viewers at home also watch the stand-up act but consume the comic message once removed. They are detached from the ‘live’ ‘communal’ experience’. The paper will argue that these specials are attempting to create a unique aesthetic experience where the viewer is aware not just of what is being communicated via the comedian on the stage, but also of the way it is being communicated via the special itself.

Biography: Tom Hemingway is a Teaching Fellow in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. He leads BA and MA classes on Television Criticism and Analysis, and US Comedy Television. He has work published in the edited collection, *Binge-watching and Contemporary Television Research*, video essay work published in the *[in]Transition* journal, and other writing in *Critical Studies in Television*, *Open Screens*, and *The Conversation*.

Theresa Trimmel (University of Bristol), ‘Subverting the traditional American family sitcom: Class, gender and feminist aesthetics in AMC’s *Kevin Can F**k Himself*

Abstract: When AMC released *Kevin Can F**k Himself* in June 2021, the series immediately attracted significant media attention due to its distinctive narrative and visual aesthetics. Critics praised the show’s innovative blending of two conventional television genres — the multi-camera network sitcom and the laugh-track-free, cinematic single-camera style quality TV drama — but also discussed the programme’s self-conscious critique of sitcom stereotypes and gender tropes (e.g., Chaney, 2021; Framke, 2021; Truffaut-Wong, 2021). This paper examines the interplay of the series’ political themes and aesthetic form in order to analyse how the show integrates a feminist sensibility within its narrative, aesthetic and representational strategies. It also interrogates how the series constructs female subjectivity while critiquing the stereotypical portrayals of women in American family sitcoms. By considering both the political and aesthetic values of the series, this paper draws on James Zborowski’s assertion that “[t]o analyse a text for its representations of particular dimensions of socio-cultural identity and to treat it as an aesthetic object are different activities, but not necessarily mutually exclusive ones” (2016, p. 12).

As this paper argues, *Kevin Can F**k Himself* subverts traditional sitcom conventions, offering a meta-critique of the genre while self-consciously embodying a feminist sensibility. Through aesthetic strategies, the show negotiates feminist politics, critiquing the limitations of American

family sitcoms and their representations of gender, class, and family values. The show consequently positions itself as both a critique of the genre and a platform for feminist discourse.

Biography: Theresa Trimmel is a Lecturer in Film and Television at the University of Bristol. Her research focuses on gender and television and her writings have been published in *Mai: Feminism & Visual Culture*, *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, and *Communication, Culture, and Critique*, among others. She is currently working on her monograph titled *Female Authorship, Feminism, and Contemporary Women-Centred Television: When Women Run the Show* (Routledge, 2025) and is co-editing the collection *TV and Empathy* (Palgrave, 2025).

Harriet Idle (University College Dublin), “‘Men don’t want women with their own homes!’ Nollywood, Netflix and the Apartments of Global Romantic Comedy”

Abstract: This paper analyses the form and aesthetics of the Nollywood rom com film through a specific focus on the film texts’ shifting relationship to domestic space. Using the Jadesola Osiberu’s 2017 film *Isoken* as my primary case study, the paper will focus more narrowly on a reading of the Nollywood rom com apartment, and I aim to emphasise Netflix’s striking influence in reshaping how the new wave of Nollywood cinema represents and utilises domestic spaces. I argue that the emergence of the globalised and neoliberalised spatiality of the ‘single-girl’ apartment - explicitly engaged with in *Isoken* through spatial and aesthetic intertextuality with other global rom com texts - points to a moment of change in the formal relationships between Nollywood cinema and domestic space. I will discuss how, as part of the ‘new Nollywood’ cinematic style which is informed by a wider context of neoliberal and digital transformations, rom coms such as *Isoken* express on a textual level an acknowledgement of a new set of relations between the film text and audience, whereby domestic structures become increasingly aestheticised and repositioned as spectacular objects for global consumption. Ultimately, this paper hopes to gesture more broadly to the ways in which both Netflix and the romantic comedy genre are entwined within the ongoing processes of neoliberalisation and globalisation that has been occurring within the city of Lagos, within the Nollywood film industry, and also on a textual level within the formal construction of the Nollywood films themselves.

Biography: Harriet Idle recently completed her PhD in the department of English, Drama and Film at University College Dublin, and is the Director and Curator of Samizdat Film Festival in Glasgow, Scotland. Her research focuses on urban space, global cinemas, and genre studies; her recent research output includes an essay on Christmastime and Hollywood romantic comedy, which will be published in January 2025 as part of an edited collection on Holiday romance films.

3D.8: Ecocinema and Colonialism

Chair: Pietari Kaapa (University of Warwick)

Angelos Koutsourakis (University of Leeds), 'Third Cinema and the Anthropocene'

Abstract: World-systems and environmental humanities scholars have noted that the global eco-crisis demands non-linear historical thinking, which enables us to understand it as the outcome of multiple temporalities that can connect the late capitalist present with the colonial past (see Yusoff 2018; Moore 2022; Deckard 2024).

This paper argues that Third Cinema's anticolonial politics can also be understood as a call for environmental justice and is thus relevant in the context of the Anthropocene crisis. Informed by world-systems theory and environmental humanities studies that highlight the racial and colonial dimensions of the Anthropocene, I aim to reveal Third Cinema's ecopolitics and anti-extractivist poetics. In doing so, I offer a range of insights that can help us expand the movement's temporal parameters.

The paper is part of a wider project on Third Cinema and the Anthropocene, which operates on the premise that film studies sensitive to climate issues need to engage in more productive dialogue with environmental humanities scholarship interested in decolonizing the Anthropocene and climate discourse.

Biography: Angelos Koutsourakis is Professor in Film and Cultural Studies at the Centre for World Cinemas and Digital Cultures, University of Leeds. He is the author of *Kafkaesque Cinema* (Edinburgh UP, 2024), *Rethinking Brechtian Film Theory and Cinema* (Edinburgh UP, 2018), *Politics as Form in Lars von Trier* (Bloomsbury, 2013) and the co-editor of *Cinema of Crisis: Film and Contemporary Europe* (Edinburgh UP, 2020), and *The Cinema of Theo Angelopoulos* (Edinburgh UP, 2015).

Garrabost Donald Jayalakshmi (Edinburgh Napier University), 'Only connect: Indigenous and colonial narratives in *Dance of the Seasons*'

Abstract: The standard UN definition of climate change is 'long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, mainly caused by human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels'. The world is engaging with it with varying degrees of success.

A second hidden cost of climate change is the endangerment to traditional cultures and knowledges in the face of ecological challenges. The loss of habitat and ecosystems that spoke of an indigenous philosophy of the oneness of nature and culture has meant a loss of identity, belonging and dignity.

Dance of the Seasons combines ancient dance traditions of Bharatanatyam and film to produce meaningful discourses around climate change. The documentary uses Kalidasa's Sanskrit poem *Ritu Samhara* (circa 400 CE) and its English translation, *March of the Seasons* (1942) to imply both a 'march' and 'destruction' of the seasons as '*samhara*' has both meanings in Sanskrit.

My paper explores how two art forms – one indigenous to India and one, an appropriation of a Western art form into an Indian aesthetic – can 'only connect' to create sustainable artistic practice.

Secondly, how can we 'only connect' Bharatanatyam and film sensitively to culturally nuance current socio-political debates surrounding climate change? After all, they were both used for

nation building and nation branding and the creation of Indian soft power during colonial times when Bharatnatyam had been banned by the British (1910) and R S Pandit translated the poem as he languished in solitary confinement, fighting for Indian independence.

Biography: Prof G D Jayalakshmi (commonly called Jaya) is an award-winning filmmaker, researcher, educator and media consultant and Professor of Creative Practice at Edinburgh Napier University.

Jaya's industry experience in film, TV and radio spans 20 years including 12 at the BBC. Having created international content throughout, she continues to look for meaningful opportunities to collaborate across cultures, both in documentary and fiction.

Jaya joined academia in 2007. She has held teaching and administrative roles in the UK and China. She is passionate about the need to extend knowledge for 'all experience is an arch wherethrough gleams the untravelled world'.

Rachata Sasnanand (King's College London), 'Global and universal aesthetics: Reading Hannah Arendt's "The Conquest of Space" through Terence Malick's *Voyage of Time* (2016)'

Abstract: Combining traditional photography with space photography and advanced special effects technologies, Terrence Malick's 2016 experimental documentary *Voyage of Time: Life's Journey* depicts the creation of the universe and the eventual development of life on Earth. Using these technologies, Malick's film renders, as Andrew Utterson has pointed out, 'deep time' processes as cinematic time. Such processes, which can span multi-million – or even multi-billion – years, are often difficult for the human mind to comprehend. In condensing such events into cinematic time, this paper argues, in the vein of theorists such as Jane Bennett and Karen Barad, that *Voyage of Time: Life's Journey* presents an ecological account of the entanglement between nonhuman and human actants; that is, that our very existence is the product of vast cosmo-geological processes, and the interactions of the various nonhuman materialities those processes entail. This paper intends to then position *Voyage of Time: Life's Journey* as kind of cinematic resistance to the myth of human exceptionalism – a myth vital to Anthropocene conceptions of humanity.

Yet, as Hannah Arendt warns, the macrocosmic aesthetics deployed by the film, as well as the technologies it uses to construct that aesthetic, risks the creation of an epistemic distance between the human and the planetary processes it depicts. As Arendt writes, "we have come to our present capacity to 'conquer space' through our new ability to handle nature from a point in the universe outside the earth [...] we have found a way to act on the earth as though we disposed of terrestrial nature." Indeed, in the cosmic grandeur of *Voyage of Time*, it is perhaps easy to forget the relationship man holds to the world created by those cosmo-geological processes the film depicts. Or, more importantly, the vast amounts of terrestrial damage wreaked by humans on that world. Consequently, this paper will examine the ways in which Malick has attempted to mitigate these criticisms, focusing on his usage of footage filmed on Digital Harinezumi cameras around the globe. In doing so, it argues that *Voyage of Time: Life's Journey* presents a global, and universal, aesthetic that confronts both the planetary and cosmic, and the human actants entangled within.

Biography: Rachata Sasnanand is a postgraduate student at King's College London. His PhD research concerns a new theoretical framework he calls the 'material gaze'. He aims to examine certain cinematic practices of the last 20-30 years which have attempted to align the spectator with nonhuman perspectives, positioning such practices as a reaction to the climate crisis. The

current chapter he is working on explores the material gaze in the context of anthropomorphism, asking if such a perception of the nonhuman might work to restore subjectivity and agency to them.