

Caméra-Stylo 6 Conference Program

The Entanglement

Networks, Intersections, Polyphonies, and Intertextuality in
Literature and Cinema

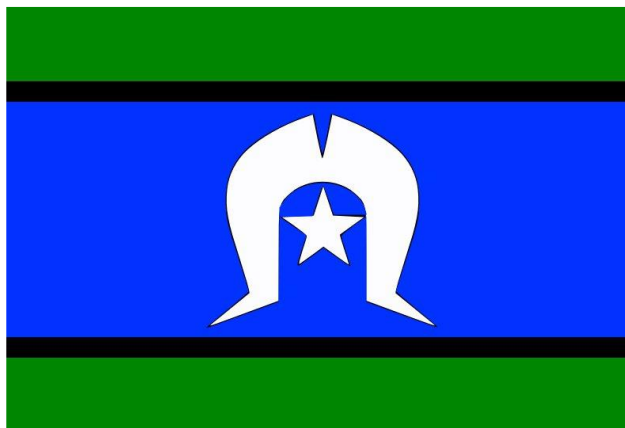
Macquarie University, the University of Sydney, and Online

July 16-18, 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

The Sydney Literature and Cinema Network would like to acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and the law of Country on which Macquarie University stands. Where we are today has for millennia been a meeting place, a place for sharing culture, for collaboration, for knowledge systems intermingling. It has been for thousands of years a place of meaning and learning. We would love to acknowledge that we are holding this conference on these lands that were the ancestral and unceded lands of the Wallumattagal clan of the Dharug Nation. We recognise and respect the custodianship of elders past, present, and emerging who have cared for and continue to care for this country.



ZOOM LINKS

Keynote 1: Kim Wilkins – Wed 16 July (seminar room 650, A02)

Meeting ID: 846 6268 6275

Password: 745817

<https://macquarie.zoom.us/j/84662686275?pwd=oK3YENSt3vavVLqjCRqBSPKhvYumMX.1>

Keynote 2: Karen Pearlman – Thurs 17 July (10HA T1)

Meeting ID: 856 6990 9949

Password: 120293

<https://macquarie.zoom.us/j/85669909949?pwd=VRzf9420B7uMxBr2UtNG2ko4bYJqxw.1>

Keynote 3: *Winhanganha* Screening – Fri 18 July (10HA T1)

Meeting ID: 820 3583 9683

Password: 948449

<https://macquarie.zoom.us/j/82035839683?pwd=b7gH7bzoSp9PNRhS66EnusY8IwaljV.1>

Thursday 17 July – Panel Stream A (B603)

Meeting ID: 840 2948 4386

Password: 902156

<https://macquarie.zoom.us/j/84029484386?pwd=abt09s9sX6bolinDMN8f6N3m5FmBuA.1>

Thursday 17 July – Panel Stream B (C326)

Meeting ID: 865 5902 0893

Password: 497473

<https://macquarie.zoom.us/j/86559020893?pwd=JTrajMGhyKXLCv4qB9yrdRbXUyoqJ.1>

Friday 18 July – Panel Stream A (B603)

Meeting ID: 811 2648 4752

Password: 062726

<https://macquarie.zoom.us/j/81126484752?pwd=HnwEa8pSzLzLY6v0CMwC7hO5gRgMss.1>

Friday 18 July – Panel Stream B (C326)

Meeting ID: 824 9334 4284

Password: 234448

<https://macquarie.zoom.us/j/82493344284?pwd=qTfymq6gN4YHv8XGqubXyrVqjj6QGm.1>

ROOMS AND DIRECTIONS

Kim Wilkins' keynote will be held at the University of Sydney on Wednesday, July 16, from 17:15. It will be held in **seminar room 650** (level 6) of building A02 (FASS). The keynote will be followed by a catered opening night reception. The nearest public transport access is the University of Sydney Ross St Gate bus stop on Parramatta Road.

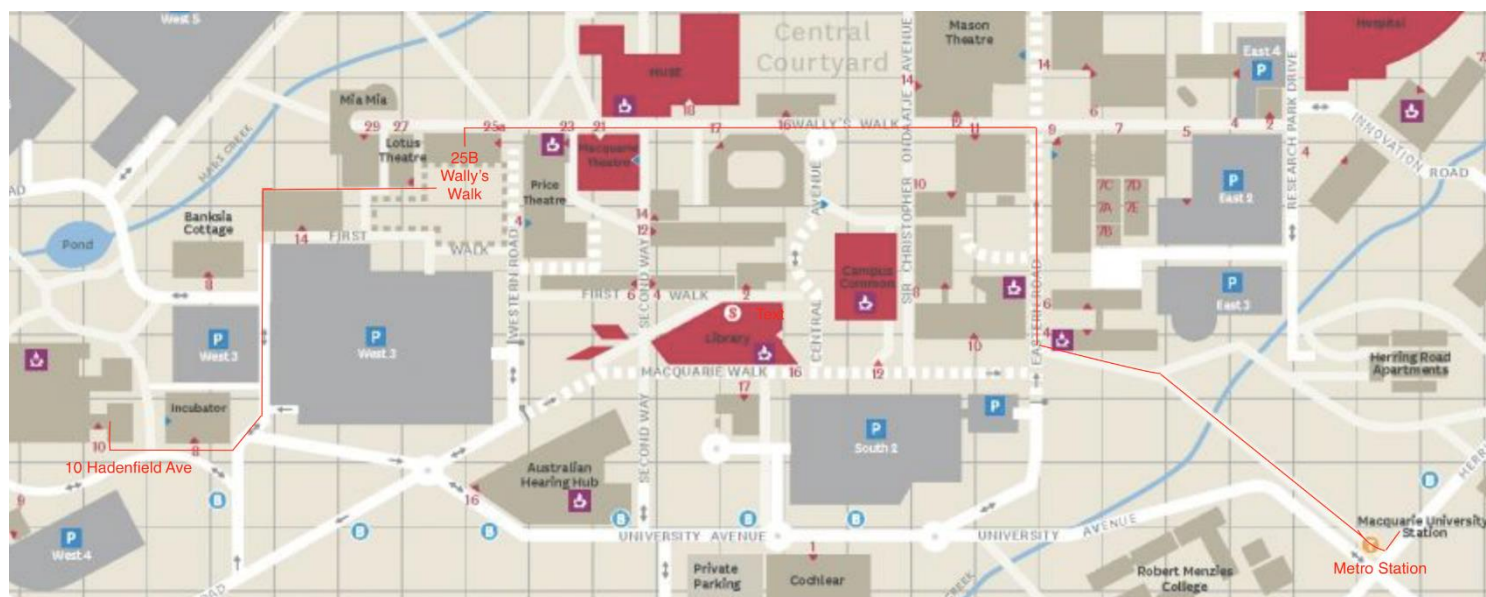
The rest of the conference is held at Macquarie University's Wallumattagal (North Ryde) Campus. The campus can be accessed by bus and the Macquarie University metro station. The nearest parking is the West 3 lot on Link Road.

Thursday's and Friday's panels take place across two streams in the Arts Precinct. Directions to the Arts Precinct are found by searching Arts Precinct B in Google Maps. Panel stream A will be in room **B603** on level 6 of building B, and panel stream B is located in **C326**, which is found by going down to level 5 and along the hallway to building C. Signs will be posted to help navigate between the two rooms.

Karen Pearlman's keynote on Thursday, July 17, will be in the **T1 theatre** in 10 Hadenfeld Avenue from 17:15. Karen's keynote will be followed by a screening of her short film *Breaking Plates*. We will then journey together on the metro to the conference dinner at The Prophet restaurant in Surrey Hills at 19:30.

The conference will close with a screening and discussion of the film *Winhanganha*, also in 10 Hadenfeld's **T1 theatre** from 16:00. After the closing remarks, we will again head on the metro to Brewdog in South Eveleigh for drinks and dinner from 19:00.

Presentation slides and video clips you would like to be loaded locally (not screen-shared) should be sent to slcn2025@gmail.com. Please let us know in advance if you have video clips to play since we will load and test these ahead of time.



CAMÉRA-STYLO 6 Schedule 2025

Wednesday 16 July (UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY, BLDG A02 [FASS], ROOM 650)

5pm Conference opening

5:15 pm

Keynote 1: A/Prof Kim Wilkins (University of Oslo), 'Gentrifying Scenes on and off Screen'

Discussion / Q + A

6:45 -7:30 pm

Video essay screenings

Journal (*Cinégraphie*) + website (Caméra-Stylo) launch

7:30 pm Opening reception

Thursday 17 July (MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY, 25B WALLY'S WALK [ARTS PRECINCT])

9:00-9:15 am Conference registration: level 6

9:15 am Opening remarks, conference info

9:30–11 am (Room B603)

Panel 1: Intertextual Resonance (chair: Bruce Isaacs)

1. Alex Howard (USyd), 'Brutalopolis: Architectural Entanglements and the Spectre of Ayn Rand in Francis Ford Coppola and Brady Corbet'
2. Padraic Killeen (Galway; Zoom), "'Something In The Way": Onscreen Journaling as Site of Melancholic Intermediality and Postdigital Intimacy in *The Batman* (2022)'
3. Simon Baré (USyd), '*Transgressions in David Lynch*'

11-11:30 am Morning tea (Level 6, Staff Kitchen)

11:30 am-1 pm

Panel 2a (Room B603): Identity / Selfhood (chair: Thomas Britt)

1. Paul Sheehan (MQU), 'Breaking *Jeanne Dielman*: Film, Theatre, and the Physics of the Body'
2. Dana Munteanu (Ohio State U), 'Fictionalized and Real Strangers: Entangled Affects'
3. Lana Chrysavgis (MQU), "'Sound and then ... light": Disrupted Sound-Image and Descriptive Bodies in Marguerite Duras' *India Song*'

Panel 2b (Room C326): Form / Genre (chair: Lynnette Lounsbury)

1. Harry Gay (USyd), 'Entangled Tracks: Overlapping Histories of Nations, Trains and Cinema'
2. Pao-Chen Tang (USyd), 'Martial Arts Cinema in the Age of Neo-industrialization'
3. Betul Kat (U Tubingen; Zoom), 'Not So Tough Anymore: The Generic Disintegration of *Noir* in *The Ice Harvest*'

1-1:45 pm Lunch (L6, Staff Kitchen)

1:45-3:15 pm

Panel 3a (B603): Systemic Violence (chair: Alex Howard)

1. Wyatt Moss-Wellington (UNE), “Which One of You Will Hurt Me?” Interpreting Men’s Propensity for Violence on and off Screen in *Woman of the Hour*’
2. Lynnette Lounsbury (Avondale U), ‘Monstrous Futures: Art, Guilt, and Evolution in *Hellbound* and *Sweet Home*’
3. Tara B. M. Smith (USyd), ‘Administered Dehumanisation: Technological Hellscape in Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We*, Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* and the Australian Robodebt Scheme’

Panel 3b (C326): Digital Writing / Storytelling (chair: Paul Sheehan)

1. Luke Monks-Quinane (MQU), ‘The Will-lessness of Power: the Spectre of Media and Automating the Last Man’
2. Daniel Binns (RMIT), ‘From Caméra-Stylo to Prompt-Stylo: Co-Hallucination and Entangled Inscription in the Age of Generative AI’
3. Thomas Britt (George Mason U), ‘Full Frontal *Unfiction*: Soderbergh and Hough’s Post-9/11 Filmmaking’

3:15-3:30 pm Afternoon tea (L6, Staff Kitchen)

3:30-5 pm

Panel 4a (B603): Gender + Monstrosity (chair: Wyatt Moss-Wellington)

1. Bridgette Glover (UNE), “At 50, it stops”: Menstrual horror and postfeminist idealism in *The Substance* (2024)’
2. Brooke Linnegar (MQU), ‘My Words to Joker the Harlequin above the Vat of Estrogen: Entanglement, Monstrousness & Villainousness through Transgender Self-narrative’
3. Jessica Hughes (SAE; Zoom), ‘Identity Entanglement in Transnational Body Horror Cinema [*The Substance*]’

Panel 4b (C326): Mediating History / Pastness (chair: Daniel Binns)

1. Lefa Afrika (U Cape Town; Zoom), ‘Text, Context, Intertext: Reading *Zone 14* as Resistance Television in Post-Apartheid South Africa’
2. Jennifer E. Nicholson (USyd), ‘Past and Present, Entangled: Pedagogical Approaches to Postmodernism in Jane Campion’s *Bright Star* and Wong Kar-Wai’s *In The Mood For Love*’
3. Aiman Khan (Aligarh Muslim U, India; Zoom), ‘Aurangzeb and the Art of Political Finger-Pointing’
4. Paromita Patranobish (Mount Carmel College; Zoom), ‘Entangled Spatialities and Suspended Futurity in Larissa Sansour’s Arabfuturist Cinema’

5:15-6:30 pm (10 HA [Hadenfeld Ave], Theatre 1)

Keynote 2: A/Prof Karen Pearlman (MQU), ‘Breaking Plates: Creative Entanglements across 125 Years’

Film screening: *Breaking Plates*

Discussion / Q + A

7:30 pm

Conference dinner The Prophet Restaurant (274 Cleveland St, Surry Hills)

<https://www.theprophetrestaurant.com.au/>

9:30-11 am

Panel 5a (B603): Film / Music / Philosophy (chair: Bruce Isaacs)

1. Lachlan Liesfield (MQU), 'Che and the Movement Image'
2. Daragh Henchy (MQU), 'Deleuzian Meta-Cinema and Image Production in *The Truman Show*'
3. Tahrin Bell (U Notre Dame), '"The closely woven fabric": Film-Music's Entanglement as a Theory of Chirality'

Panel 5b (C326): Utopia / Dystopia (chair: Paul Sheehan)

1. Sebastian Sparrevohn (MQU), 'Images of Afghanistan: 20th Century Men as a Decolonial, Revisionist Comic Book'
2. Oscar Douglas (MQU), 'Mythologising Oppenheimer as a Climate-Change Warden'
3. Xiujuan Yao (Tianjin Chengjian U; Zoom), 'An Existential Crisis: On the Apocalyptic *Don't Look Up*'

11-11:30 am Morning tea (L6)

11:30 am-1 pm

Panel 6a (B603): Love + Care (chair: Luke Monks-Quinane)

1. Çisemnaz Çil (Hacettepe U, Zoom), 'To Love the Unlived: Entangled Temporalities and Ethical Care in Celine Song's *Past Lives*'
2. James Mackenzie (MQU): '"If I had my way, we'd sleep every night all wrapped around each other like hibernating rattlesnakes": Multiple Entanglements in Luca Guadagnino's Adaptation of *Queer*'
3. Elizabeth Pender (USyd), 'The Politics of Toxicity: *Better Call Saul* and Illness'

Panel 6b (C326): The Feminist *Bildungsroman* (chair: Sabina Rahman)

1. Bruce Isaacs (USyd), 'The Politics of "Always" and "Never": The Monologue Heard around the World'
2. Kelly Panchyshyn (USyd): Cringe-topia: Exploring Affect in Contemporary Teen Television
3. Meg Funston (Monash U), 'Fraught Girlhoods: Feminine Coming-of-Age in the Post-2016 Era'

1-2 pm Lunch (L6)

2-3:30 pm

Panel 7a (B603): Cultural Mediation (chair: James Mackenzie)

1. Shonima N (English & Foreign Langs U; Zoom), 'Style or Substance: Regional Languages, Global Platforms and Youth Culture in the Malayalam Film *Thallumaala*'
2. Eileen Meneses and R. Elliott M. Guta (U Philippines Los Baños), 'Women in Intersemiotic Translation: The Entanglement from Marvel Comics to Cinema / TV to Gaming and Back Again'
3. Dr. Mohammed Shafeer K P (Joy U; Zoom), 'Films, Mainstream Media and Nationalism: Impact of Creative Representations in Media on the Growth of Hindutva in India'

Panel 7b (C326): Empathy + Technology (chair: Thomas Britt)

1. Helen Goritsas (UNSW), 'Entangled Empathy: Narrative Intersections Between Virtual Reality, Film and Literature'
2. Mel Kennard (UNE), '*Companion* (2025): Identity, Humanity and the Cyborg's Revolt'
3. Juan Wu (USyd), 'Subjective Double, Psychological Narcissism and Ideological Obsession in Nabokov's *Despair* and Fassbinder's Adaptation'

3:30- 4 pm Afternoon tea (L6)

4-5:45 pm (10 Hadenfeld Ave, Theatre 1)

Keynote 3: Introduction to film

Film screening: *Winhanganha* (dir. Jazz Money)

Discussion / Q + A

5:45 pm Closing remarks

7 pm Drinks / dinner Brewdog (Bay 1 Locomotive Workshops, South Eveleigh, Redfern)

<https://brewdogssoutheveleigh.com.au/>

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE 1

Associate Professor Kim Wilkins, University of Oslo

Gentrifying Scenes on and off Screen

Large cities and metropolitan areas play a key role in the world economy, global society, and the popular imaginary. Whether seductive and seedy or clean and creative, the city has long featured on screen as a site of professional and economic promise as well as (often fraught) personal revelation – from *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) to *Muriel's Wedding* (1994), *Unorthodox* (2020) to *Emily in Paris* (2020-). Yet, as many of us know – either from first-hand experience or media coverage – in recent decades city-living has become increasingly unaffordable. Prohibitively expensive, even. Across the globe, housing crises proliferate. The promises of urbanism become ever more entangled with the realities of inequality. Among the multifactorial challenges and contradictions that underpin urban change, ‘gentrification’ has become the dominant term for conceptualizing spatial inequality both on and off-screen.

Gentrification’s prevalence as a narrative and thematic preoccupation in contemporary literature, cinema, and television have led scholars and critics to identify gentrification styles, cycles, scripts, and plots, while concomitantly the term ‘gentrification’ has emerged as a cultural concept that exceeds its definition as a process of demographic replacement and spatial change along socio-economic lines. Indeed, in contemporary parlance “gentrification” has become a somewhat sweeping criticism or metaphor to describe commercialization and/or discrimination where issues of representation are at stake, particularly where marginalized identities are (perceived or actually) erased, or filtered out, of a sociocultural or political space. In this talk I argue that—beyond its narrative depiction or metaphoric use—gentrification is a contemporary sensibility of place-making. It is a process that structures the construction, and our encouraged comprehension of, mainstream screen cities and the actual cityscapes they virtualize. Reading screen cities through the lens of gentrification means coming face to face with who and what we have come to expect to find where.

KIM WILKINS is Associate Professor in Media Aesthetics and Head of Screen Cultures at the University of Oslo. She is the author of *American Eccentric Cinema* (Bloomsbury, 2019) and co-editor with Timotheus Vermeulen of *Refocus: The Films of Richard Linklater* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022). She is also co-editor of *Refocus: The Films of Spike Jonze* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019) and *The Body Swap Film* (Berghahn, forthcoming 2026), both with Wyatt Moss-Wellington. Her essays have appeared in *Screen*, *The New Review of Film and Television*, *Film Criticism*, *Sydney Studies in English*, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, *Cinephile*, *Mediapolis* and numerous anthologies. She is currently completing a monograph theorizing the screen aesthetics of gentrification for Oxford University Press, as well as collections on the studio A24 for Edinburgh University Press, and on Ari Aster for Bloomsbury – both co-edited with Bruce Isaacs.

KEYNOTE 2

Associate Professor Karen Pearlman, Macquarie University

Breaking Plates: Creative Entanglements across 125 Years

This is a hybrid keynote, investigating entanglements of documentary and fiction forms; archival and contemporary media; authorial and collaborative practices; first and fifth wave feminisms; and creative and analytic research methods as practiced by writer/director/editor/performer and screen academic Karen Pearlman. The keynote includes critical discussion and a screening of the award winning, 25-minute film [*Breaking Plates*](#) (Pearlman et al. 2024). *Breaking Plates*, a raucous documentary about the not-so-silent women of the silent film era, entangles ‘sober’ documentary form with comedic and chaotic archive clips and contemporary reanimations. It asks the cross-dressed cowgirls and slapstick comediennes of early cinema: what did you know? What can we learn? And why are we so much more polite? This keynote unpacks the making of this cross-generational conversation to demonstrate the ‘distributed creativity’ model of film authorship and how directorial ‘vision’ is necessarily entangled with the agency, creativity, and intelligence of key cast and crew – past and present. This discussion and screening will put to the test Pearlman’s proposition that research can be fast moving and comedic, and still be an effective catalyst for reflection and insight. It will enact the core feminist principle that if we want to tell different stories, we have to tell stories differently.

KAREN PEARLMAN is an Associate Professor at Macquarie University who writes, directs and edits screen productions. She researches creative practice, cognition and feminist film histories. Karen’s [films about historical women editors](#) (2016, 2018 & 2020) have won 34 competitive national and international awards from peak industry bodies and film festivals. Her film *Breaking Plates* was awarded Best Short Documentary at the 2025 Antenna International Film Festival for “... a playful invitation to consider very serious questions of feminism and voice”. Karen is the author of [Cutting Rhythms, Creative Film Editing](#) (3rd edition, 2025) and the monograph [Shirley Clarke Thinking through Movement](#) (EUP 2025).

KEYNOTE 3

Film screening: *Winhanganha* (dir. Jazz Money)

For this final session, there will be a screening of the landmark First Nations documentary, *Winhanganha*. The film was commissioned by the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, and is presented as a ‘poem in five acts’. It was created by the Wiradjuri poet and artist, Jazz Money, who worked closely with the NFSA’s extensive collection of works made by and about First Nations Australian people. She uses film, television, audio and music recordings, some from as far back as the 1930s, to show that archival inheritances can have powerful and lasting effects in our contemporary world. *Winhanganha* promises to open our minds to entangled relations of which we might only be vaguely aware.

This is the description from the NFSA website:

Winhanganha is centred upon the belief that it is our own bodies that are the truest archive of our experience, and that First Nations bodies tell a powerful story of sovereignty and resistance. [...] And while First Nations bodies have been documented, mythologised, degraded and catalogued and stored within the colonial gaze of archive, these bodies, these people, have danced and sung and marched and are utterly whole, beyond what can be held in these collections. The film asks how we will create new futures through that which we inherit.

The screening will be followed by a discussion about the nature of the archive – what it can do, how it can be ‘read’, and the responsibilities that it imposes on us, as viewers and scholars – that will include a Q + A.

Text, Context, Intertext: Reading *Zone 14* as Resistance Television in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Lefa Afrika, University of Cape Town

Zone 14, a popular television series on SABC1, appears like a run-off-the-mill popular depiction of South African township life. However, an intertextual reading of this text seems to reveal a reference to a rich tradition of not just protest, but a more radical form of resistance to the prevailing political order. This study deploys Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality to read the drama's second order of meaning beyond popular entertainment value. *Zone 14* appears to reference theatrical texts of *Woza Albert!* and *Waiting for Godot*, which are based on radical political traditions of resistance theatre in South Africa and existentialism in Europe. The analysis articulates itself in terms of explicitly linked texts and does not follow a more poststructuralist 'endlessness of signification' approach. The paper argues that it is through this intertextual strategy that *Zone 14* has survived the censure of incumbent political power while politically appealing to the 'struggle' audiences with prior exposure to resistance texts.

LEFA AFRIKA is an honorary research affiliate at the Centre for Film and Media Studies (CFMS), University of Cape Town. He is a media practitioner with 20 years' experience in the television industry. He has held managerial positions at Multichoice Africa and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). He is also the managing director of Afriprime, a television content distribution company based in Johannesburg.

Transgressions and Entanglements found in the Practice of David Lynch

Dr Simon Baré, The University of Sydney

The late David Lynch's elusive creative practice is reflected in the content and form of his work, its openness to interpretation, and the processes used to generate it. This can be seen through the intermedial, intertextual and metaleptic entanglements present in his moving image, painting, sound and other endeavours. It can also be found in the plethora of illusions Lynch makes to artists – such as Franz Kafka, Francis Bacon, and Marcel Duchamp – and in the processes gleaned from their creative works. While obituaries of Lynch predominantly focused on his cinema, his other creative endeavours were largely seen in relation to his films, or as an aside. I will suggest however, that Lynch's moving image works are entangled creative assemblages which operates at the same level as his other creative projects, as an entangled intermedial and transmedia whole. I will argue that this whole functions like ergodic literature (Nabokov's novel, *Pale Fire* and the divinatory *I Ching*) – as a labyrinthine collection of competing narratives and commentaries, ephemera, procedures, representations and abstractions – which may be navigated and interpreted in radically different ways and forms.

SIMON BARÉ is an academic, artist, award-winning filmmaker and educator, who interrogates the intersection of narrative and non-narrative creative practice and form. His writing has explored the absurd, liminal, uncanny, intertextual, intermedial, metaleptic, ergodic literature, and elusive ergodic practice. Simon teaches filmmaking and moving image practice at Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney and holds a PhD from the same institution.

“The closely woven fabric”: Film-Music's Entanglement as a Theory of Chirality

Tahrin Bell, University of Notre Dame

Film as an artform presupposes entanglement with other arts; the relationship between film and music has exacerbated as technologies progress to unite the once separate realities of image and sound. The integration of the popular music soundtrack as a foundational part of film

reception exemplifies this entanglement as we, the audience, experience it today. This paper proposes a theory of chirality to account for the ontological metamorphosis that pre-existing music undergoes when used in a film. Chirality, a term adopted from chemistry, refers to a molecule that cannot be superimposed upon its mirror-image and, my paper suggests, the ontological state a pre-existing song inhabits after it's been used in film in relation to its mirror-original recalls this figure of chirality. The original song – the spīro – possesses the context that defined it at the time of its inception and distribution. The mirror song – the drēm – is then recontextualised through its inclusion in film, transforming the recollection and impression of the spīro within the perception of the audience member so that it becomes forever associated with the film. Chirality is more than mnemonic entanglement or two-way intertextuality between the media of film and music; it is the entanglement of the individual and the media as pre- and post-cognitive impressions of artistic phenomena that cannot be codified according to a simple logic of cause and effect. This paper will begin to theorise this relationship through a discussion of popular cinema and music in *Back to the Future*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Body Double*.

TAHRIN BELL is a postgraduate student at the University of Notre Dame, completing a Master of Arts (Research) on the film-music soundtrack and a new theory of chirality. His areas of focus include film-music, affect theory, and Deleuzian post-structuralism

From Caméra-Style to Prompt-Style: Co-Hallucination and Entangled Inscription in the Age of Generative AI

Daniel Binns, RMIT University

As generative AI systems fulfil and exceed the ambitions of classical cinematic apparatus theory, we find ourselves in a kind of caméra-style/ kino-eye fever dream. What emerges is what I call 'prompt-style': a form of entangled authorship where human intent, algorithmic processes, and training data co-compose new visual texts. While Astruc imagined cinema becoming as expressive as the essay, today's generative systems introduce forms of linguistic-visual inscription that operate through co-hallucination: the emergence of shared thinking processes between human perception and machine pattern-recognition. Drawing on media materialism, post-cinematic affect theory, and Beller's notion of the cinematic mode of production, this paper explores three entangled dynamics: (1) the diffusion of creative agency across human and machinic collaborators; (2) hallucination as a productive logic that operates both within machine-generated media and as a framework for their analysis; and (3) recursive creativity as a mechanised processing of cultural memory through datasets. The paper argues that these systems enact what might be called an 'automated cinematic apparatus' – one that operates through networked, intertextual authorship, while manifesting new forms of cinematicity that fulfil cinema theory's longstanding dreams of mechanical vision. This positions generative media as both continuation and complication of Astruc's vision, demanding new critical methods for understanding creative labour and collaborative meaning-making that can guide responsible practice in the context of algorithmic co-hallucination.

DANIEL BINNS is a media theorist and filmmaker tinkering with the weird edges of technology, storytelling, and screen culture. He is the author of *Material Media-Making in the Digital Age* and currently writes about posthuman poetics, glitchy machines, and speculative media worlds.

Full Frontal Unfiction: Soderbergh and Hough's Post-9/11 Filmmaking

Thomas Britt, George Mason University

This paper argues that the 2002 feature film *Full Frontal*, written by Coleman Hough and directed by Steven Soderbergh, is a noteworthy instance of unfiction. Popularized by Sean Stacey in 2002, unfiction is, in some cases, a mode synonymous with alternate reality games (ARGs), in which the central story, as designed by its creators, adapts because of the influence of other users, whose creative contributions (like solving puzzles) affect the flow of information. An ethical dilemma or conundrum arises from this freedom to exchange and deceive / inform, involving the creation of characters and / or interaction with real-life individuals whose identities get lost or compromised in the web of fiction. Though feature films are not typically texts examined within discussions of unfiction, *Full Frontal* typifies many elements of this kind of storytelling, especially as engaging with the film as an audience member requires continuously sorting between layers of intersecting and overlaid plots and contrasting visual approaches, all of which blur the line between truth and fiction. While *Full Frontal* is not an interactive film, it is intertextual; it also transcends metafiction to focus more on fiction about the real. The paper emphasizes the filmmakers' influences, the way the performers in the film are caught between their fictional and actual personas throughout the film's production, and how the available paratexts both fill in gaps that are present within the narrative as well as further entangle the onscreen participants and the viewers in the filmmakers' experiment in uncertainty.

THOMAS BRITT is a Professor of Film and Video Studies at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. His research agenda includes screen ethics, global horror films, and popular music. His recent publications include “‘Borderline Experimental:’ Red Letter Media Plays the Pandemic” from *Broadening the Horror Genre: From Gaming to Paratexts* (2025) and ‘The Fiery Furnaces: Memory-Based Rock Music as Literature’ from *Textes & Contextes* vol. 19, no. 1 (‘L’entre-deux, une recomposition des représentations. Regards transdisciplinaires et transfrontaliers’).

Email: tbritt@gmu.edu

To Love the Unlived: Entangled Temporalities and Ethical Care in Celine Song’s *Past Lives*

Çisemnaz Çil, Hacettepe University

‘To love across time is to become entangled with ghosts – not of the dead, but of the unlived.’ Celine Song’s *Past Lives* (2023) offers a subtle yet radical meditation on temporal entanglement, diasporic longing, and the ethics of potentiality. Rooted in the Korean philosophical notion of in-yeon – a belief in karmic interconnectedness across lifetimes – the film becomes a polyphonic exploration of identities that are not only intertextual, but intertemporal. The paper situates *Past Lives* within a theoretical framework that weaves together Karen Barad’s agential realism, Claire Colebrook’s politics of time, and Alva Noë’s notion of aesthetic transformation. In this reading, choice is not a decisive act but a diffraction pattern of multiple co-existing possibilities. The characters’ refusal to actualize certain possibilities becomes an act of care toward alternate versions of themselves, an acknowledgment of parallel narratives they carry within. Ultimately, *Past Lives* emerges as a work of cinematic entanglement – between cultures, times, languages, and potential selves. It invites viewers to dwell not in what is chosen, but in what remains vibrantly unlived. This paper argues that such a gesture of aesthetic care is what makes *Past Lives* not merely a story, but an event of becoming in the entangled agora of art and life.

ÇISEMNAZ ÇİL is an undergraduate student in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey. Her academic interests include speculative fiction, affect theory, and the aesthetics of temporality in literature and cinema. Currently, she

is exploring entangled temporalities and the ethics of care through interdisciplinary approaches that bridge film studies, philosophy, and cultural theory.

Email: cilcisemnaz.6204@gmail.com

‘Sound, and then... light’: Disrupted Sound-Image and Descriptive Bodies in Marguerite Duras’s *India Song*

Lana Chryssavgis, Macquarie University

Fifty years after its release, Marguerite Duras’s film *India Song* (1975) continues to enchant audiences with its haunting soundscape, sumptuous images, and phantasmic spectacle of repressed desire and doomed passion within the colonial malaise of a French embassy in Calcutta, India. Deemed to be the most successful of Duras’s films, it continues to receive both critical appraisal and attention for its unconventional approach to sound, a move that challenges the primacy of image over sound as the key mode through which the audience receives the film’s narrative structure and ideas. Critics have argued that her unique cinematic approach encapsulates the auteur’s attempt to mediate experiences from her own childhood in colonial French Indochina through a ruptured cinematic form. This mode, which attempts to encapsulate the complexity of subjectivity, also critically aligns with contemporaneous feminist efforts to provide new models of representation that challenge prevailing filmic, social, and political hierarchies. While Duras’s construction of the off-screen soundscape remains a dominant structuring mode, the construction of on-screen bodies as descriptive figurations of the film’s critical concerns becomes a secondary consideration. This paper will therefore explore how *India Song*’s corporeality exposes the irreconcilable economies of the female body and agency under colonialism.

LANA CHRYSSAVGIS is a sessional academic in Literature at Macquarie University. Her Master of Research thesis focused on the use of modernist impersonality in the poetry of Sylvia Plath. She is now interested in exploring the ways through which women modernist writers and filmmakers represent narratives of selfhood as both formed and informed by transnational spaces, places, and encounters.

Mythologising Oppenheimer as a Climate-Change Warden

Oscar Douglas, Macquarie University

Christopher Nolan’s *Oppenheimer* recaptures the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer as a figure of twentieth-century myth. Rather than focusing on the historical context of the Manhattan Project, Nolan explores the biographical context: shaping Oppenheimer’s life into a cautionary tale of the pitfalls of unbridled Promethean pursuit. Understanding the film mythologically requires entangling the text with the contemporary crises onto which the Oppenheimer myth may be mapped. Through this historical entanglement, this paper explores what has urged Nolan to recount this story now, in the 2020s. While the threat of fiery nuclear extinction still looms, it has become vastly overshadowed by the slow and unceasing burning of the warming biosphere. By recognising the mythological identity of Oppenheimer, this paper invites an entirely new ecocritical reading of the text that considers its urgency in a contemporary context. Oppenheimer, as a mythological figure, operates as synecdoche for the wild excesses and Promethean efforts of technologism and late-stage Capitalism engendering the ongoing climate catastrophe. By highlighting the relationship that myth draws between text and reality in *Oppenheimer*, Nolan reveals the complex way that text contorts the history of crisis into contemporary mythography.

OSCAR DOUGLAS is a PhD student at Macquarie University, Sydney. He completed his Master's thesis, entitled "'Somber Glee at Any Idea of Mass Destruction': History, Crisis, and Affect in Pynchon" in 2023. He writes on the relationship between literature and the history of crisis as well as on affect theory, utopianism, and political engagement with texts. He is currently working on his PhD thesis on affect, extermination, and the normalisation of crisis in dystopia.

Fraught Girlhoods: Feminine Coming-of-Age in the Post-2016 Era

Meg Funston, Monash University

To come-of-age post-2016 is to navigate a complex web of social and political demands, endure ubiquitous instability and turbulence, and to be hyper-connected to a digital culture of surveillance and competition. This presentation will provide an overview of how girlhood film and television texts released in the complex terrain of the 2016-2024 period are intricately entangled with the social, political and cultural contexts of the Me Too movement, the post-Trump political world and the era of social media. Through analysis of popular film and television texts, including Bo Burnham's *Eighth Grade*, I will discuss how contemporary visions of girlhood are ensnared in discourses of feminine confidence and resilience, and within the regulatory networks of social media. This paper will situate these texts and their young heroines within a broader cultural context, attending to the shifting tastes and concerns of Gen-Z audiences, discussing new ideals and constructions of femininity, and revealing wider cultural shifts concerning the state of feminism and femininity, and how they negotiated, in popular culture.

MEG FUNSTON (she / her) is a PhD candidate at Monash University. Her work investigates contemporary girlhood cinema and television, and considers the ways in which these texts revise and reconfigure coming-of-age traditions and girl-power mythologies, attending to the influences of popular feminism, confidence culture and generation-Z audiences.

Entangled Tracks: Overlapping Histories of Nations, Trains and Cinema

Harry Gay, The University of Sydney

This paper will be drawing on research I have been conducting for my PhD on Australian train cinema. I will be discussing the ways in which the history of the train, the history of cinema and the emergence of ideas of national identity all coincide. I will discuss the links between trains and cinema through the lens of socio-cultural and political changes occurring in the Victorian age, in particular, the Industrial revolution and new emphasises on visuality, and standardised time. The need to bound together a nation temporally through the emergence of standardised time coincided with the desire to bridge spatial gaps within nations. I will draw on early actuality and panorama films to discuss the ways in which early cinema also acted as a way to break down time and space, bringing images of far-off countries closer to the spectator through phantom ride films (POV shots of trains moving through landscapes and vistas). I will locate these ideas to my further research, suggesting the train's special qualities to bringing forth particular images and psyches of a nation, touching on momentarily my thesis work, as I look to Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (1971) as a film in which the train acts as a portal to the darker aspects of the Australian national identity. In this way, particular cinematic representations of the train, the ways they are filmed and enmesh themselves in the broader story and narrative of a film, speaks to particular ideas of the nation.

HARRY GAY is an Australian-based writer and editor for various independent publications, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Advanced Studies (Honours First Class) from The

University of Sydney. He has lectured at a number of conferences both in Sydney and internationally in San Francisco, Glasgow and India. He is set to be published in the upcoming book *Critical Insights into Science Fiction: Exploring Posthumanism, Alternate Realities, and Cyberculture* from Springer Nature. Harry is currently working on his PhD which explores the history of Australian train cinema.

‘At 50, it stops’: Menstrual Horror and Postfeminist Idealism in *The Substance* (2024)

Bridgette Glover, University of New England

In postfeminist culture, a woman’s identity and worth is entangled with her body. In order to achieve and maintain the idealised feminine body – controlled, self-regulating and hypersexualised – the postfeminist woman is subjected to constant self-monitoring and discipline. The menstruating body is considered the antithesis of the postfeminist idealised body and a threat to a postfeminist character’s pursuit to be a productive, docile subject. And yet, her menstruating function is deemed permissible due to its intersection with prized aspects of womanhood: youth and fertility. The menopausal woman, conversely, has no place in postfeminist culture. Her ageing body renders her unruly, abject and invisible. In the 2024 horror SF film, *The Substance*, director and writer Coralie Fargeat offers an uninhibited critique on how women are valued for their youth and erased ‘at 50’. Focusing on the film’s postfeminist themes of transformation and self-surveillance, this paper explores how *The Substance* reveals the (typically secret) violence and monstrosity involved in the futile endeavour to conceal and control the female body. Through close analysis of Elisabeth and Sue’s intertwined reproductive identities, I examine how *The Substance* works to expose the impossible bind for both menstruating and menopausal women existing for a postfeminist, patriarchal male gaze.

BRIDGETTE GLOVER is an early-career researcher and sessional academic in Media and Communications at the University of New England. Her PhD research explored the representation of menstruation in screen media, with a focus on feminism, menstrual stigma and activism. Bridgette’s research on feminist screen media has been published in *M/C Journal* and *The Conversation*, and her work on *I Love Dick* and *Barbie* is featured in forthcoming edited collections. She has presented her doctoral research at various conferences for both critical menstruation studies and screen studies.

bglover7@une.edu.au

Entangled Empathy: Narrative Intersections Between Virtual Reality, Film, and Literature

Helen Goritsas, University of New South Wales

This paper examines how virtual reality (VR) is developing as an immersive storytelling medium that is intricately linked to literature, film, and other visual media. Starting from Chris Milk’s statement that VR is an ‘empathy machine’ as a provocative rather than a conclusive statement, it draws upon the scholarship of McRoberts (2018), Kunert (2024) and Triberti et al. (2025), to explore the ethical and emotional challenges of immersive storytelling. Focusing on highly regarded VR productions such as *Clouds Over Sidra* (UN, 2015), *The Party* (The Guardian, 2017), and *Travelling While Black* (Felix & Paul Studios, 2019), the research considers first-person point of view, spatial sound, and sensory design within their effects and impacts on presence. They are analysed alongside literary texts like *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro wherein intimacy and revelation are slowly brought to light, and films that use a subjective lens to simulate entrapment, such as *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (2007). This

paper makes the case that virtual reality (VR) reconfigures rather than replaces traditional narrative forms, drawing on Hayles' (2002) concept of intermediation. It situates VR as a hybrid space, a space where empathy is not only felt, but also co-designed by means of a shared grammar of narrative, space, and sound.

HELEN GORITSAS holds a PhD in Screen Arts from The University of Sydney, Sydney College of the Arts. She is sessional academic in the faculty of Arts and Media at the UNSW, and is a filmmaker, educator, and former President of WIFT NSW and Director of the Greek Film Festival of Australia. She has made and directed award winning films, curated festivals, and published on filmmaking, film studies and screen craft with a growing focus on virtual production.

Women in Intersemiotic Translation: The Entanglement from Marvel Comics to Cinema / TV to Gaming and Back Again

R. Elliott M. Gruta and Eileen Meneses, University of the Philippines Los Baños

Deriving from the worldwide popularity of the digital collectible card game (DCCG), *The Art of Marvel Snap* (2025) coffee-table comics showcases the heroes and villains located in the entangled multiverse of Marvel Cinematic Universe which, in turn, draws from the classic Marvel Comics. This paper discusses the coming to full circle from the perspective of Jakobson's conceptualization of intersemiotic translation and as an aesthetics of the entanglement. Comics historians observe that Marvel has long engaged in social commentary, since the 1941 debut cover art of Captain America punching Hitler or the 1966 inception of superhero-of-color, Black Panther. But the pervasive critiques diverge from its content being either 'too woke' (e.g. an 'unrealistic' disabled, Native American woman superhero) or underwhelming in movie iterations of feminist tokenism (e.g. The Marvels trio or Queen Ramonda, who's conspicuously missing in the digital game). The discussion specifically explores how film adaptation, or conversely adapting from film, translates women discourses from source to target text. In illustrating the workings of *Marvel Snap* card battles, it argues for the dialogism, if not dialectics, between old and new, from print to film / television, from DCCG predecessors to interactive platforms, and so on, so forth, and back.

R. ELLIOTT M. GRUTA is a former student of Computer Science at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, when he won the digital collectible card game, 'Hearthstone World Championship Southeast Asia (SEA)' in 2015. He emerged as 'King of Snap PH' in 2023 and champion of the second *Marvel Snap* PH tournament in 2024. He also holds a degree in Psychology.

EILEEN MENESES is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, where she obtained her master's degree in Communication Arts. She studied Journalism in the national university's flagship campus, University of the Philippines Diliman, and is currently completing her dissertation on feminist translation studies under the PhD Filipino program.

Deleuzian Meta-Cinema and Image-Production in *The Truman Show*

Daragh Henchy, Macquarie University

This paper offers a Deleuzian reading of *The Truman Show* (dir. Peter Weir, 1998), examining how the film deploys key taxonomic elements from Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. In particular, it argues that Weir's formal choices (his framing, camera placement, shot durations, and the construction of Truman's world) uses Deleuze's image-types to reflect and critique the logics of surveillance, spectacle,

and subjectivity. This analysis identifies moments in the film where perception-images dominate, revealing the extent to which Truman is seen and sees himself within a controlled schema of movement and reaction. It further explores the emergence of time-images, especially as Truman begins to question the consistency of his world, introducing irrational cuts, false continuity, and crises of belief. By mapping Deleuze's taxonomies onto the narrative and aesthetic structure of the film, this paper contends that *The Truman Show* not only exemplifies the transition from classical to modern cinema but also allegorises the shift in spectatorship and agency in the late twentieth century. Ultimately, the film operates as a meta-cinematic reflection on the conditions of image-production and human freedom within the regimes of mediated life.

DARAGH HENCHY is a PhD candidate at Macquarie University. His studies fall within the domain of philosophy of cinema. He will be pursuing and investigating how our brains interact with cinema through the contemporary application of neuroaesthetics. Daragh has been a part-time scriptwriter and short film filmmaker over the past three decades.

Brutalopolis: Architectural Entanglements and the Spectre of Ayn Rand in Francis Ford Coppola and Brady Corbet

Alexander Howard, The University of Sydney

Alisa Zinovyevna Rosenbaum arrived in the United States in 1926. Having renamed herself Ayn Rand, she made her way to California, determined to make a mark as a screenwriter. Eventually, despite some initial success, Rand's career in Hollywood ground to a halt. In response, Rand set her sights on becoming a novelist. Subsequently, *The Fountainhead* (1943) marked the emergence of Rand's philosophical system, later formalised as Objectivism. Taking Rand's novel – and its delirious, 1949 screen adaptation – as a point of departure, this paper turns to two recent films from 2024: Francis Ford Coppola's *Megalopolis* and Brady Corbet's *The Brutalist*. Both films engage with architectural ambition and political idealism, and both are haunted, in very different ways, by the spectre of Randian individualism. Where *Megalopolis* unfolds as a sprawling, genre-defying vision of urban reinvention, *The Brutalist* offers a formally austere, introspective meditation on exile, memory, and the moral weight of architectural legacy. This paper considers how both films, in their differing aesthetic registers, expose the tensions between utopian aspiration and authoritarian impulse that often underpin grand architectural visions and cinematic production – and, in doing so, gesture toward the enduring ambivalence of Rand's legacy in popular culture.

ALEXANDER HOWARD is Senior Lecturer in English and Writing at The University of Sydney. He is the author of *Charles Henri Ford: Between Modernism and Postmodernism* (2017) and the editor of *Glossator 10: Astern in the Dinghy: Commentaries on Ezra Pound's Thrones de los Cantares 96-109* (2018). His work has appeared in *Modernism / Modernity*, *Film-Philosophy*, and *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*. He is currently editing the third volume of *Readings in the Cantos* (with Richard Parker).

Identity Entanglement in Transnational Body Horror Cinema

Jessica Hughes, SAE University College

This paper will examine Coralie Fargeat's *The Substance* (2024) within the context of transnational body horror films, arguing that its power lies in its ability to entangle audiences in themes of identity fragmentation. *The Substance*, echoing work by filmmakers including David Cronenberg, Pedro Almodóvar, and Takashi Miike, depicts the disturbing erosion of self through visceral transformations and psychological disintegration. By analysing Fargeat's

recent film alongside earlier films such as *Videodrome* (1983), *The Skin I Live In* (2011), and *Audition* (1999), this paper demonstrates how body horror, despite diverse origins, shares a preoccupation with blurring self/other boundaries. Drawing on Blasi's (2019) application of entanglement theory to film studies, emphasising active viewer engagement over passive observation, this paper explores how body horror's psychological techniques – paranoia, unease, and distorted realities – entangle viewers in characters' experiences. The transnational appeal stems from its ability to evoke universal anxieties about identity loss. *The Substance* reconfigures these anxieties within a Hollywood context of beauty standards, demonstrating how body horror transcends national borders. This examination reveals the genre's global significance, highlighting its capacity to connect audiences through shared psychological experiences within an increasingly interconnected cinematic landscape.

JESSICA HUGHES is a Lecturer in film and media studies at SAE University College, Australia. She received her MA in Film Studies from the University of British Columbia (Canada) in 2011 and her PhD from the University of Queensland (Australia) in 2017. Her dissertation focused on the transnational cult appeal of excess and otherness in Asian Extreme cinema. Her writing on Asian Extreme has been published as an article in *Refractory* journal (2013) and a book chapter in *Making Sense of Cinema* (2016), and work on the 'postmodern vampire' has appeared as articles in *Image & Text* (2011) and *Cross-Cultural Studies* journal (2012), as well as a book chapter in *The West in Asia and Asia in the West* (2014). She was editor-in-chief for an issue of the University of British Columbia's *Cinephile* journal ("Sound on Screen," 6.1) in 2010.

jessica.hughes@sae.edu.au

The Politics of 'Always' and 'Never': The Monologue Heard Around the World

Bruce Isaacs, The University of Sydney

Upon its release, *Barbie* was received by diverse communities for its confrontation with white, cis-gendered, patriarchal power structures. As much as the film garnered praise for its various registers of political representation, a great deal of commentary, social media discussion, and critical acclaim revolved around the core of its political project: a 2:18 uninterrupted monologue scripted by Greta Gerwig and delivered in a passionate performance by America Ferrera. The monologue was received by various communities and activist groups as a statement about contemporary womanhood; it is a chronicle of, as Ferrera's single mother Latina character, Gloria, suggests, the impossibility of 'being a woman'. Ferrera's performance has since garnered an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actress and has become a touchstone for the contemporary articulation of female identity. This paper proposes two separate though interrelated lines of criticism of the political project encompassed in the text of the monologue: that 'womanhood' can be conceptualised as a static gender (and social/political) category; and that, while Ferrera represents a marginalized demographic within a hegemonic white patriarchy, nonetheless, the monologue strategically segregates the complex power dynamics of race and class from the film's overtly binaristic gender power dynamic presented in the film.

BRUCE ISAACS is Associate Professor in Film Studies at The University of Sydney. His work focuses on the intersection of technologies of production, aesthetic styles, and modes of representation in classical and contemporary Hollywood. He is the author three monographs, most recently *The Art of Pure Cinema: Hitchcock and His Imitators* (Oxford University Press, 2020). He is also the co-creator of the popular podcast, FILM Versus FILM (<https://filmversusfilm.podbean.com/>).

Not So Tough Anymore: The Generic Disintegration of *Noir* in *The Ice Harvest*

Betul Kat, University of Tübingen

Charlie Arglist, a crooked lawyer, steals two million dollars from his mobster boss and intends to leave the town. His attempt however fails due to the icy roads much like his tough guy act. Unlike Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), Arglist doesn't have a steady detective style and poised mastery over the matter, which makes the movie a dark comedy rather than classic *noir*. In this paper, I argue that *The Ice Harvest*'s failure as a *noir* film is a meta-commentary on the disintegration of the genre – *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005) being another, though funnier, example of the trend. While previous studies cover pastiche in *film noir* (Hantke, 2009; Booker, 2008) *The Ice Harvest* is overlooked. By close scene and dialogue analysis I explore how American neo-noir evolves from classic stability to its ruinous contemporary form.

BETUL KAT (she / her) was born and raised in Turkey. She got her BA from Western Languages and Literatures at Boğaziçi University. Currently she is an American Studies MA student at the University of Tübingen. She is interested in adaptation, gender and film history.

***Companion* (2025): Identity, Humanity and the Cyborg's Revolt**

Mel Kennard, University of New England

The relationship between human and humanoid machine has often been represented in science fiction film and television through the hybridisation of the genre with horror to caution against our entanglements with such technology. From *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) to *M3GAN* (2022) and Netflix's *Cassandra* (2025), SF film and television is rife with examples of humans becoming the victims of their own enmeshed relationships with advanced robotic technology. *Companion* (2025) stands in stark contrast to these previous SF iterations, as 'sexbot' protagonist Iris is presented not as the villain but rather as the victim of humans' entangled relationship with technology. In this paper, I explore *Companion*'s role in SF representations of the relationship between humans and human-like artificial intelligence. I argue that, in her journey towards self-awareness, Iris' narrative problematises our understandings of the power dynamics between humans and artificially intelligent beings, suggesting that the human capacity for mistreatment and abuse is greater than that of the robots they create. Moreover, I argue that *Companion* raises questions about *what* exactly makes us human, reframing SF's cyborg, through the character of Iris, as a chimeric being who attains humanity and whose narrative is not one of villainy but rather of revolt.

MEL KENNARD is a PhD candidate in creative practice at the University of New England (UNE). Her work focuses on the relationship between SF and the early eugenics movement. She completed her Master of Arts in Media and Communications at UNE, writing her dissertation on the current television adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Most recently, her paper on *The Handmaid's Tale* as a work of eugenic horror has been published by the *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture*. Mel's creative writing has been published in *Meniscus Literary Journal* and *Literary Taxidermy*.

Aurangzeb and the Art of Political Finger-Pointing: A Study

Aiman Khan, Aligarh Muslim University

In recent years, the portrayal of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in Indian media has become a focal point for debates surrounding historical interpretation and its influence on contemporary

societal tensions. Applying Stuart Hall's Representation Theory provides a framework to understand how these media portrayals shape public perception and contribute to communal discord. In the context of Indian media, films like *Chhaava* depict Aurangzeb as a tyrannical oppressor of Hindus, emphasizing narratives of religious persecution. Such portrayals contribute to a monolithic and negative image of Aurangzeb, overshadowing the complexities of his reign. Historians such as Audrey Truschke argue that Aurangzeb's policies were multifaceted and not solely driven by religious zealotry. She suggests that his actions were often motivated by political pragmatism rather than purely religious considerations. However, the selective representation in media narratives tends to simplify this complexity, leading to polarized public perceptions. By applying Hall's Representation Theory, this paper critically assesses how media narratives construct and perpetuate specific interpretations of historical figures like Aurangzeb. These representations influence collective memory and can exacerbate communal tensions. This work also recognizes the constructed nature of these portrayals and compares history with representation.

AIMAN KHAN is a postgraduate student in the Department of English, at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. She has thirty poems and several articles published to her credit, has co-authored several books, and is the recipient of various national-level accolades from IIT Delhi, IIT Hyderabad, EFLU Hyderabad, University of Delhi, and Aligarh Muslim University. She is an active member of the Gaza Poets Society based in Gaza, the Dorris Lessing Society, the International Language Association, the Raleigh Literary Society Arz Hai, etc.

aimankhan.e@gmail.com

‘Something In The Way’: Onscreen Journaling as Site of Melancholic Intermediality and Postdigital Intimacy in *The Batman* (2022)

Padraic Killeen, University of Galway

In developing the script and conceptual design for *The Batman* (2022), director Matt Reeves acknowledged a number of direct influences. Many of these influences are quite overtly channelled into the film, including Frank Miller's graphic novel, *Batman: Year One* (1986), *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976), and David Fincher's disturbing noir films *Se7en* (1995) and *Zodiac* (2007). Other influences are more subtle: e.g. Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and the iconographic cultural status of Kurt Cobain, the latter mediated in part by Gus Van Sant's biopic of the latter, *Last Days* (2005). Drawing on previous scholarship on the intermedial status of handwriting in cinema, and also recent theorising of the role of handwriting in postdigital aesthetics, this paper will consider the way *The Batman* mobilises these intertexts, and a specific iconography (the act of writing on screen), to develop a melancholic perception of intermediality that arises from the necessary condition of mediation itself: the quality of there being always in human experience a 'something in the way'. In a postdigital era of media habituation to screens, a somewhat romantic view of handwriting as an 'intimate' or more authentic 'technology of the self' has emerged, and Reeves' film can be regarded as tapping into this desire for a restorative media practice while at the same time disclosing its more debilitating qualities.

PADRAIC KILLEEN is a Lecturer in Digital Arts and Humanities at University of Galway, Ireland. His research interests include film studies, iconography, intertextuality, and media archaeology. He is the author of *The Dark Interval: Film Noir, Iconography, and Affect* (Bloomsbury, 2022) and a number of essays on topics in film and digital culture.

Films, Mainstream Media and Nationalism: Impact of Creative Representations in Media on the Growth of Hindutva in India

Dr. Mohammed Shafeer K P, Joy University

Even from the evolution of silent epic film of the 20th century, Indian films has portrayed cultural context of Hinduism which influenced the mass and helped in building nationalistic fervour among the people at the time of colonisation. The presentations in film communicated even to the illiterate common people of the country and the spreading of television and other communication devices helps in the spreading of Indian culture, folklore and tradition which was based on Hinduism, coupled with nationalistic attributes. The mainstream and nationalistic media propagated screen representations in the form of films and serials with seemingly secular perspectives. But the films and the serial representations of the 21st-century communicated directly to the common people of India and established the Hindu identity. The telecast of Ramayana serial helped a specific community to have a cultural dominance. Dominance for Hindu ideals, created the basis for the generation and dissemination of Hindutva, a political ideology. With the propagation of Ramayana serials, Rama became the ideal of Hindutva politics and the diety was used as a tool for creating the Other and for demonisation of a community. The present paper analyses the influence of films, mainstream media in generating nationalism and the creation and dominance of Hindutva politics in Indian mainstream political atmosphere.

MOHAMMED SHAFEER K P is an Assistant Professor in the School of Arts and Natural Sciences at Joy University, Kanyakumari, Tamilnadu. He completed his Masters and M Phil in English Literature from Annamalai University, Tamilnadu and has his PhD from Thiruvalluvar University, Vellore. He has presented papers at more than 150 seminars and conferences, and published more than seventy articles in journals and books. His areas of interest include regional studies, postcolonialism and cultural studies.

Email: mskpshefi@gmail.com.

Che and the Movement-Image

Lachlan Liesfield, Macquarie University

Steven Soderbergh's 2008 *Che* diptych (*The Argentine* and *Guerilla*) initially presents itself for all intents and purposes as a straightforward biopic. The audience is primed for a film wherein we will follow explicitly the struggle and story of the eponymous character. However, the film itself largely avoids typical biopic tropes in its narrative and, more interestingly, in its construction. I want to examine how Soderbergh's choice of shots produces a novel way of characterising its protagonist for the audience. I will argue that this process is best explained by utilising Deleuze's cinematic typology, notably that presented in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, primarily through the interaction of affection images (primarily their absence), and action images (which the film is almost purely structured within), and while taking on none of the typical traits of the biopic, still offers a forceful image of its titular hero.

LACHLAN LIESFIELD is a PhD candidate at Macquarie University in philosophy, where his research looks at Participatory Art, its form and source.

My Words to Joker the Harlequin above the Vat of Estrogen: Entanglement, Monstrousness, and Villainousness through Transgender Self-Narrative

Brooke Linnegar, Macquarie University

Transgender life is art. More than a piece of hollow sloganeering, I assert this as someone for whom the entanglement of life and art is etched into name I chose, the regulation of my body by exogenous hormones, the pronouns I use, the remixed flesh between my legs, and the way I adorn my body. Vera Drew's *The People's Joker* (2022) feels what Susan Stryker calls monstrousness through my challengingly de(v)fiant body and asks me to long for trans art that rejects the innocence of the monster in its destruction of dominant ideologies. I argue these statements through an analysis of Drew's D-I-Y autobiographical feature. Drew uses parody of villains from the Batman IP to tell her coming of age story and each reference harnesses the context and temporality of its origin and forces my own journey along a similar path into conversation with Joker the Harlequin's (Drew) as I reflect on my own relationship to the characters. By analysing how the varied discourses around the source material Drew draws upon engage with her deployment of these pop culture artifacts I highlight how transgender narrative highlights the entanglement of art and life.

BROOKE LINNEGAR (she / her and they / them) is a filmmaker at Macquarie University and a Master of Research graduate. Her research interests are documentary film, film studies, film production studies, and queer theory.

Monstrous Futures: Art, Guilt, and Evolution in *Hellbound* and *Sweet Home*

Lynnette Lounsbury, Avondale University

Art has long served as a lens for imagining alternative social, political, and economic structures, often reflecting humanity's collective anxieties and aspirations. This paper examines the Korean dystopian television series *Hellbound* and *Sweet Home* as exemplars of how art interrogates monstrosity and guilt, reimagining the evolution of society into a new world. Both series construct narratives where individuals face existential threats, forcing them to confront personal and collective moral failings. In *Hellbound*, supernatural beings mete out punishments in a spectacle that exposes societal guilt and authoritarian control, questioning the boundaries of justice and faith. Meanwhile, *Sweet Home* depicts a world ravaged by monstrous transformations triggered by inner desires, symbolizing the struggle to overcome personal flaws for communal survival. By analysing these narratives, this paper argues that monstrosity is not merely a threat but a metaphorical bridge to alternative futures, challenging traditional hierarchies and ideologies. The monstrous becomes a site of guilt, transformation, and redemption, encouraging audiences to reconsider the values underpinning current systems. Ultimately, *Hellbound* and *Sweet Home* envision a path where confronting monstrosity enables the creation of a new world order—one rooted in redefined relationships between self, society, and morality. This study contributes to understanding how dystopian art is entangled with discourse on human evolution and potential futures.

LYNNETTE LOUNSBURY is a Lecturer in Media and Communication at Avondale University, as well as an author and filmmaker. Her PhD is in Speculative Histories. Her creative practice spans literary fiction, young adult fiction and documentary, and her research is cross-disciplinary at the intersection of film, media, and history, with a particular focus on dystopian narratives and the speculative mode. Her work explores how imagined futures and alternative pasts function as critical tools for cultural reflection and social commentary.

“If I had my way, we’d sleep every night all wrapped around each other like hibernating rattlesnakes”: Multiple Entanglements in Luca Guadagnino’s *Queer*

James Mackenzie, Macquarie University

Luca Guadagnino’s 2024 adaptation of *Queer* by William S. Burroughs transforms the short, textually unstable novel into a lush feast for the senses. While many creative decisions were made to build upon the bare bones source material, the adaptation stays true to the nature of Burroughs’ vision, particularly in relation to the concept of entanglement. This paper will discuss three ways in which entanglement is represented within Guadagnino’s *Queer*. First, the film effectively dramatizes Burrough’s exploration of how the body is made malleable by extreme states such as desire. In the film, we see bodies becoming incorporeal, and flesh merging, as a result of desire, mirroring Burroughs’ description of bodies becoming solid, liquid, and gas. Second, the film represents the entanglement of reality and fantasy, a theme reflected throughout Burroughs’ writing. In the film, images of landscapes appear intentionally artificial in order to disrupt perceptions of the film as purely realist. Finally, the film dramatizes the entanglement of multiple temporalities, through its use of anachronism. Non-contemporary musicians such as Nirvana soundtrack the film, creating a mix of time periods that defies any sense of historical linearity. This aesthetic strategy mirrors Burroughs’ merging of disparate cultural, historical and anthropological concepts in his writing.

JAMES MACKENZIE is a Senior Lecturer in the Bachelor of Arts at Macquarie University. He has recently published two articles on Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957), concerning the novel’s 2012 adaptation and its representation of the real.

The Will-lessness of Power: the Spectre of Media and Automating the Last Man

Luke Monks-Quinane, Macquarie University

Media is dead – and we are the ones who have killed it. In the post-world – better, a post-world, a world that no longer performs its worlding, that which acts a mediator is gone – what remains are spectres with no medium around to ask them what they want. Here, we find ourselves entangled in a world of ghosts – and necromancers – where what we, those who speak of the Media from its roots as something liminal – a bordering, a confrontation – rather than as means of interpretation find ourselves with good seats for an end of the world on repeat. In this paper, I claim three things: first, that representation is dead – along for the ride are uncomfortable acknowledgements of the good that representation can do in a mediated system. Second, I suggest that in the wasteland left by the demise of mediation and representation, we find new systems of auto-horizontalism (don’t worry, I’ll explain) that troubles any active ‘bordering’ (which I will also explain) by a Crypto-metaphysics that relies on the spectacle of ‘golden necromancy’. Finally, I come to the necessity of a showdown between the demonological and the necromantic. To get here, I engage in a series of diagnoses that treat the figures of golden necromancy as symptomatic of the unworlding that begs for disentanglement with the new territories that are available to those who treat media as a bordering rather than interpretation.

LUKE MONKS-QUINANE completed his PhD in 2023. He is a sessional teaching academic in the School of Humanities at Macquarie university, working in the disciplines of philosophy and literature. His research treats the form of fiction as a necessary casualty in the race against knowing. This has led to a zone of thought in which motion is all that is under consideration (which isn’t very honest of him, but that’s kind of the point).

“Which One of You Will Hurt Me?” Interpreting Men’s Propensity for Violence on and off Screen in *Woman of the Hour*

Wyatt Moss-Wellington, University of New England

The serial killer film *Woman of the Hour* (Anna Kendrick, 2024) represents the emotions of an untenable yet common experience: having to interpret which men will be violent. Its key question concerns how women learn to navigate a world in which male violence is provided political and cultural means to conceal itself. As a piece of true crime meta-media, or a film about television production, *Woman of the Hour* also magnifies entanglements between violent attitudes extended through apparently benign media formats, and the real violence perpetrated against women every day. In this paper, I consider the politics of representing male violence on screen. I look at two possibilities that can be in tension in screen violence: the potential of rendering violence visible in audiovisual means, so that perpetration is made clear, comprehensible, and possible to intervene, and the potential to show how misogynist cultures make the consequences of violence unclear, placing the onus of interpretation and emotional management on those who live with the ever-present threat of violence. A close reading of *Woman of the Hour* shows how the film navigates these two responsibilities in unique ways.

WYATT MOSS-WELLINGTON is Senior Lecturer in Digital Storytelling at the University of New England. He is the author of *Cognitive Film and Media Ethics* (Oxford UP, 2021) and *Narrative Humanism: Kindness and Complexity in Fiction and Film* (Edinburgh UP, 2019). Moss-Wellington’s work has appeared in journals including *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind*, *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, *Style*, *Genre*, *Film-Philosophy*, and *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*.

Fictionalized and Real Strangers: Entangled Affects

Dana L. Munteanu, The Ohio State University

In *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (1991), K. Walton has proposed that our involvement in art resembles children’s games, in which we “pretend to” be part of a virtual world. While that may be the case on occasion, my talk suggests that, instead, we often invest more time, emotions, and thought in narrative arts (especially in literature and movies) than we do in real life events—and that with good “reason.” Certain techniques already mentioned by Aristotle (e.g. “bringing before the eyes”), as well as techniques of focalization, symbolic projection, and repeated familiarity with the characters can stir our affects more powerfully than journalistic reports. I further argue that we become more involved *para-socially* in fiction than *pro-socially* in the world around us. Paradoxically, we may be more inclined to save Dicken’s Oliver Twist, or to cry for the fate of the lost boy in the movie *Lion* (2016) than adopt an orphaned child from a current war zone. However, I conclude that we could perhaps redirect our affects and our actions by refocusing our narrative lens with the help of fiction.

DANA L. MUNTEANU is an Associate Professor of Classics at The Ohio State University who focuses her research on Aristotle, reception of classics, as well as the philosophy and psychology of emotions. Among her significant publications are *Tragic Pathos. Pity and Fear in Greek Philosophy and Tragedy* (Cambridge, 2012) and *Decoding the Tragic in Aristotle: From Involuntariness in the Ethics to the Puzzles of the Poetics* (Oxford, forthcoming). She has edited and co-edited several volumes, including (with Pierre Destrée and Malcolm Heath) *The Poetics in Its Aristotelian Context* (Routledge, 2020).

Style or Substance: Regional Languages, Global Platforms and Youth Culture in the Malayalam Film *Thallumaala*

Shonima N, The English and Foreign Languages University

This paper looks at how new media technologies reconfigure and shift traditional modes of cinematic experience both in terms of its film form and cinema viewing practices. Through the aesthetics of language and the entanglement of global and local cultures, the 2022 Malayalam film *Thallumaala* (dir. Khalid Rahman) has managed to capture the attention with its unique comic book graphic-styled film form and catchy experimental music that simultaneously indulges the global aesthetics of rap and hip-hop music while trying to root itself in the local dialect of Malappuram region (in the Northern Malabar part of Kerala, India). The movie with its sensory overload cashes in on the virality and swag aesthetics of social media reels to demonstrate how OTT platforms and phone screen cinema viewing constitutes an entirely new medium that demands content that is capable of negotiating with the challenges of multiple screens, mobility and distractions that are part of such fragmentary viewing practices. As the new cinema turns away from the metropolitan spaces towards small towns, and streaming platforms promote and back regional content, the question of whether language itself becomes a commodity within the globalising capitalist market becomes important. At the same time, with new media technologies and digital practices, the idea of 'style' and individual desires takes on new meaning for youth where the interaction and intersection of the local and the global have made the social space of everyday life more open and far-reaching. By foregrounding the significance of linguistic and cultural regions for the global expansion and localisation of streaming platforms, this paper will look at how new storytelling practices emerge from the network of different media dynamics remaking the link between region, identity and culture.

SHONIMA N. is a PhD student in Cultural Studies at The English and Foreign Languages University, India. Her research focuses on regional identities, small-town urbanisation and spatiality in new Malayalam cinema.

Past and Present, Entangled: Pedagogical Approaches to Postmodernism in Jane Campion's *Bright Star* and Wong Kar-Wai's *In The Mood For Love*

Jennifer E. Nicholson, The University of Sydney

How does, and how should, a film represent the past? This paper will consider filmmakers' treatments of historical material by treating them as scholars and critics of their subject matter. The distinction between these two approaches is more easily spotted, and perhaps more naturally a source of friction, in literary studies (see Parvini, Shakespeare 10.2, 2014). However, both literary and film studies have much to be gained by reconsidering both extremes not simply as scholarly apparatuses but rhetorical ones which inform all kind of textual and artistic creations. The aesthetic qualities of a film's historicity could be understood to inhibit the verisimilitude of a filmmaker's final product or to embody and thereby enhance its nostalgic impetus. Viewed through Tom Gunning's spectacle of cinema, Jane Campion's *Bright Star* and Wong Kar-Wai's *In The Mood For Love* exemplify significant divergences and connections between cinematic artistry, historicity, and postmodern storytelling. This paper will consider these topics in the context of teaching film studies across secondary and tertiary learning, taking note of how students, teachers, filmmakers and critics are consistently positioned to view cinema as a site of postmodern multiplicity.

JENNIFER E. NICHOLSON is an early career scholar working mostly in early modern drama, considering how locating Shakespeare and Marlowe at the porous edges of French and English

generates new readings of nationhood, identity, and uncertainty. To develop her book project on this topic, she is working on the presence of ‘French English’ in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and other Renaissance texts, deepening work begun during her PhD at The University of Sydney. Jennifer is also working on critical whiteness studies in *The Winter’s Tale* and a project about affect and pedagogy. Her recent publications include work on the relationship between *Hamlet* and Montaigne’s *Essais*, and the impact of acculturated translation for Anglophone viewers of Japanese film. Since conferral, she has taught as a sessional academic and as a secondary English teacher.

@justjenerally

Cringe-topia: Exploring Affect in Contemporary Teen Television

Kelly Panchyshyn, The University of Sydney

Cringe alert: this paper considers the emotional entanglements of contemporary teen television. With reference to *Pen15* (Hulu 2019-2021), *Sex Education* (Netflix 2019-2023) and *Heartbreak High* (Netflix 2023-), I highlight the importance of negative affect within teen TV. Although it is often understood as a form of comfort television, the genre invariably contends with the uncomfortable experience of being a teen. Thematically this results in narratives that foreground adolescent feelings of shame, embarrassment, angst and confusion. Contemporary teen series, however, have found a way to take the intense feelings associated with the teen figure and transform them into an outlet for queer and feminist politics. I argue that these series thus use difficult emotions to destabilise hetero-patriarchal and capitalist norms and emphasise the need for new alternatives. In doing so, they provide audiences with an opportunity to imagine more liberating social and political possibilities. I also draw out how the genre’s embrace of negative affect reflects emerging structures of feeling around modern adolescence and adulthood.

KELLY PANCHYSHYN (they / she) is originally from Yukon, Canada, and now lives on Gadigal Lands, where they are undertaking a PhD in Film Studies at The University of Sydney. Their research explores the historical and contemporary significance of teen television through queer, feminist, and anti-colonial frameworks.

Entangled Spatialities and Suspended Futurity in Larissa Sansour’s Arabfuturist Cinema

Paromita Patranobish, Mount Carmel College

This paper wishes to examine the configuration of stasis and waiting in Palestinian-Danish video and conceptual artist Larissa Sansour’s speculative short films *In Vitro* (co-directed with Søren Lind, 2019) and *A Space Exodus* (2009) to unpack the link that they articulate between the trope of virtual futures as a deferred, yet-to-be actualized temporality, embedded in what Johannes Voelz calls “the traumatic time of suspended futurity,” (2018, 160) and a radical politics of extraterritorial space as a critical threshold from where to rethink questions of Anthropocenic territoriality and its colonial, carceral, extractivist and toxic legacies. By focusing closely on the contrasting topoi of an enclosed and surveilled underground bunker and the unmarked non-place of the cosmos, I will analyse how Sansour’s cinematic conception of possible futures is firmly grounded in an ontology of space, envisioned through and with spatiality as a productive heuristic for both speculative interrogation and an ethico-aesthetic ungrounding of Palestinian history as a history of spatial negotiations. I will first locate both films within Sansour’s Arabfuturist oeuvre which includes her science fictional allegories of Palestine as a futuristic topography. My paper will then analyze *In Vitro* and *A Space Exodus*

as offering and opening up a set of questions and potential conceptual cartographies bordering the implications of existing in damaged, even non-existent and obliterated topographies.

PAROMITA PATRANOBISH is Assistant Professor of English, Mount Carmel College, Bangalore. She has a PhD on Virginia Woolf's literary phenomenology from the University of Delhi (2017) and her writing has been published in *Fields of Play: Sport, Literature and Culture* (Routledge, 2015), *Studies in Travel Writing* (Taylor and Francis, 2019), *Journal of Posthumanism* (Transnational Press, 2023), *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (Taylor and Francis, 2024) *Science Fiction Studies*, (DePauw University, August 2024), and other venues. Articles in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* (October), and *Anglia* (July) are forthcoming in 2025.

The Politics of Toxicity: *Better Call Saul* and Illness

Elizabeth Pender

This paper offers a commentary on the representation of electromagnetic hypersensitivity in the series *Better Call Saul*. The representation of electromagnetic hypersensitivity is historically a fairly new storyline, and I first provide close commentary on some scenes that offer a record of, or a script for, human interactions on the topic of this particular hypersensitivity. I enter briefly into the mode of lay diagnostician as a way to offer some critical distance from the series. Based on my observations, I then consider the representation of illness and disability versus the representation of stigma in relation to Chuck's storyline. I suggest that the series pursues as its main interest social stigma rather than illness or disability, and that this focus results in the death of the character Chuck. I situate these interpretations in relation to recent commentary on the representation of other stigmatized groups in visual media; in relation to other contemporary representations of electromagnetic hypersensitivity, for example in official health statements; and in relation to the series.

ELIZABETH PENDER has published articles in *Critical Quarterly* and *Modernism / modernity*, and with Cathryn Setz, co-edited the essay collection *Shattered Objects: Djuna Barnes's Modernism* (Penn State UP, 2019). *The New Modernist Novel: Criticism and the Task of Reading* was published by Edinburgh UP in October 2024.

Breaking *Jeanne Dielman*: Film, Theatre, and the Physics of the Body

Paul Sheehan, Macquarie University

Chantal Akerman's 1975 'epic', *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, is arguably more celebrated in the 2020s than at any time since it first appeared. This paper addresses the critical resurgence of the film by exploring its entangled relations between theatre and film. Gilles Deleuze observed as much, in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), when he placed Akerman in the vanguard of 'cinema of bodies' directors, for the artful ways in which she articulates the postures of the body and 'the ceremony or theatre of cinema which is revealed'. Thus, even though *Jeanne Dielman* is highly cinematic in its aesthetic design – rigorously formalistic, with static camera set-ups, long takes, and sparse, understated sets – it also evokes an aura of theatricality. I address the implications of this claim by showing how, throughout the film, Jeanne Dielman's body is paramount, as a site of labour, confinement and desire within a radically transformed domestic space. What is more, it is a theatre of cruelty that is the film's mandate, and that, in some sense, defines the protagonist's life. This paper also examines the ways in which Akerman manipulates and restyles screen-time, and relates it to the modes of cruelty that determine much of the film's purport.

PAUL SHEEHAN is an Associate Professor at Macquarie University. He is the author of *Modernism and the Aesthetics of Violence* (Cambridge UP, 2013) and co-editor of 'The Literary Image: Film, History, Theory' (2021), a special issue of *Textual Practice*. Most recently, he co-edited *Adapting Television and Literature* (Palgrave, 2024) and has published articles on the television series *Atlanta*, the cinema poetics of Cormac McCarthy and Don DeLillo, and the comics of R. Crumb.

Administered Dehumanisation: Technological Hellscape in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985) and the Australian Robodebt scheme

Dr Tara B. M. Smith, The University of Sydney

Theodor Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* states that we are living in the Administered world where anything that cannot be reduced to numbers is rendered useless. Adorno saw the true power and maintainers of this Administered world not as the bourgeoisie, but the managers and administrators. This reality is echoed in the Russian dystopic novel *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1921). The novel depicts the character D-503 who journals his everyday life and experiences in the fictional totalitarian state in the future, the One State. In his society, people are reduced to numbers and echo Horkheimer's warning in that instead of dreaming machines to do our work, we are also now acting more like machines. Terry Gilliam's black comedy film, *Brazil* (1985), similarly moves itself from dreams and technoscapes as Sam Lowry, an office worker, tries to navigate a poorly functioning bureaucratic nightmare. In Australia, the 2016 Robodebt scheme resulted in 470,000 people being issued incorrect debts. The algorithm which illegally used incorrect income averaging data was caused by the mismanagement of many administrators, politicians, and managers. The result of this has been the reduction of people to numbers on paper, figures and characters, easily disposable and dispensable. As the Royal Commission (2023) has still yet to deliver any justice, administrators dodge and weave from responsibility despite the negative repercussions. This presentation will use these examples to critique and explore Adorno's Administered world. It will advocate for systems to be more thoughtful, less coldly rational and encourage people to think less like machines and more like humans.

TARA B. M. SMITH is an early career interdisciplinary academic with a research focus on speculative fiction, new religious movements, popular culture and ecology. Recently a Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard University she explored religion in the tabletop game *Warhammer 40k*. Tara is a current research affiliate at The University of Sydney. She is currently working on turning her thesis into a book and finding her next post-doctoral fellowship. She lives in Neutral Bay with her partner and two cats Thomas O Malley and Momo.

Images of Afghanistan: 20th Century Men as a Decolonial Revisionist comic book

Sebastian Sparrevohn, Macquarie University

A recent intervention into the revisionist superhero comics genre is Deniz Camp, Stipan Morian and Aditya Bidikar's *20th Century Men* (Image Comics 2022). Typical of the genre, it is an alternate history that takes superheroes as living embodiments of the military power and ideology wielded by global superpowers. The historical focus is on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a key marker of the USSR's decline that foreshadows the subsequent US invasion. Afghanistan becomes a battleground for the superpowers to exert their own might while paternalising the local population. *20th Century Men* is not a nostalgic revision. Stipan Morian's art and Aditya Bidikar's lettering critiques the concept of historicity by examining

the political conditions that give rise to the superpowers' nationalist ideologies. This paper explores the representations of American and Soviet superheroes and shows how the comic establishes one vision of an Afghan superhero. By including the voices of the Afghan people, *20th Century Men* opens up new space in the popular revisionist tradition of Anglophone superhero comics by offering a deliberately postcolonial critique of the challenges to self-determination that result from the Global South's enclosure in the grand narratives of history propagated by the declining empires of the Global North.

SEBASTIAN SPARREVOHN (he / him) is a PhD candidate in the discipline of Literature at Macquarie University. His work explores how the comics medium expresses the aesthetic sensibilities of metamodernism – a return to historicity, affect, and depth. He has published an article on Kierkegaard's 'existence-spheres' and *The Wicked + The Divine* in the *Journal of Comics and Culture*. He also convenes the Sydney Literature and Cinema Network at the University of Sydney.

Martial Arts Cinema in the Age of Neo-industrialization

Pao-chen Tang, The University of Sydney

This paper examines the reconceptualization of martial arts mastery in Xu Haofeng's films—*The Sword Identity* (2011), *Judge Archer* (2012), *The Final Master* (2015), and *100 Yards* (2023)—as reflecting broader shifts in human-technology relations under China's neo-industrial conditions. Where traditional martial arts cinema emphasizes organic unity between practitioner and technique through the metaphysics of self-cultivation and cosmic harmony, Xu's work systematically disentangles skill from such holistic frameworks. Instead, his films frame martial arts as a codified technical system, with proficiency determined by mechanical comprehension rather than personal transcendence. The representational shift parallels contemporary industrial transformations, where automated systems reconfigure but do not wholly displace human labor. Xu's films neither fully replicate Taylorist models of deskilling nor preserve traditional notions of embodied mastery. Rather, they exhibit a dual movement: the standardization of combat knowledge coexists with residual assertions of practitioner agency. By replacing metaphysical constructs with operational logic while maintaining martial arts' technical complexity, Xu's vision of martial arts registers the contradictions of skill valuation in automated production regimes. The paper argues that his films articulate a distinctively post-traditional yet pre-mechanized moment in martial arts discourse—one that reveals the genre's capacity to mediate changing paradigms of embodied knowledge.

Pao-chen Tang is a Lecturer in Film Studies at The University of Sydney. He is the author of *The Animist Imagination in East Asian Cinema* (2025) and co-editor of *Socializing Medicine: Health Humanities and East Asian Media* (2025).

Subjective Double, Psychological Narcissism and Ideological Obsession in Nabokov's *Despair* and Fassbinder's *Adaptation*

Juan Wu, The University of Sydney

Vladimir Nabokov penned his sixth Russian novel, *Despair* (*Otchaianie*), while residing in Berlin in 1932. The novel unfolds through the unreliable narrative of Hermann, who believes he has orchestrated the perfect crime involving doppelgängers. His disorienting, self-contradictory monologue has inspired extensive critical exploration of *Despair's* intertextual engagement with the theme of duality, including its parodic references to Dostoevsky's works. However, the political dimensions of Hermann's subjective doubling remain underexplored. In *Despair*, Nabokov intricately interweaves ideological and political themes into Hermann's

obsession with his double. Hermann's affinity for Soviet communism, with its emphasis on uniformity, blurs the lines between his personal delusions and political sympathies. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1977 film adaptation of *Despair* diverges from Nabokov's novel by embedding explicit political and historical references, particularly to the Weimar Republic and the rise of National Socialism. Building on two key interpretations, I argue that the film's portrayal of Nazism deepens Hermann's psychological crisis, underscoring parallels between his obsessive desire for sameness and the destructive ideologies of National Socialism. Moreover, the novel's exploration of narcissism and the quest for resemblance prompts critical reflection on human nature and the potential for ideological fanaticism to justify heinous acts. Contrasting Hermann's obsession with uniformity, Nabokov's literary emphasis on difference and plurality serves as a potent critique of ideological conformity and the perils of seeking sameness at the expense of individuality.

JUAN WU is a Teaching Fellow at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at The University of Sydney. Previously, she served as an Associate Professor of English at the Beijing Institute of Technology and was a visiting scholar at the University of Oxford. Her academic research focuses on modern American literature and East Asian cultural studies. She is the author of *Vladimir Nabokov: A Rigid Moralist* and has published over forty articles in academic journals such as *Nabokov Studies*, *Comparative Woman*, *Foreign Literature Studies*, and *English Studies*.

Email: juan.wu1@sydney.edu.au.

An Existential Crisis: On the Apocalyptic Movie *Don't Look Up*

Xiujuan Yao, Tianjin Chengjian University

In *Don't Look Up*, the apocalyptic movie presents a world of absurdity, where there would be a crisis concerning a huge comet hurtling toward the Earth. Despite the imminent destruction of the world, human beings get no help from the indifferent universe. In this situation, in order to make their lives worth living, two groups of people make different choices. The first group – the tech billionaire (Mark Rylance), the president (Meryl Streep), and news anchors (Tyler Perry and Cate Blanchett) – merely care about their delusion of a perfect life, in which there is not any sorrow or anxiety. For them, the perfect life is always connected with such fashionable issues as material benefits, reputation, and political power. By contrast, those defenders of truth – Professor Randall Mindy (Leonardo Dicaprio), his PhD student Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence), and Dr. Oglethorpe (Rob Morgan) – choose to fight for the truth. Although they have to confront misunderstandings and even threats from their opponents, they live their lives to the fullest, as Albert Camus's Sisyphus does. Taken together, the movie suggests that a commitment to the truth rather than self-deception is a proof for one's genuine existence.

XIUJUAN YAO is based at Tianjin Chengjian University, China. She got her doctoral degree in English language and literature from Xiamen University, Xiamen City, Fujian Province, China, 2019. She was a visiting scholar at Boston University, Boston, U.S.A. from 2013 to 2014. Her major field of study is American Transcendentalism and Environmental Criticism. Current research interests include Thoreau Study and other American Transcendentalists' studies. Dr. Yao was granted as "Thoreau Society Short-Term Fellowship" in the United States in 2014.

Email: artwish123@163.com