



UNIVERSITY
of York

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, FILM AND TELEVISION

9TH ANNUAL POSTGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

Digital Stories: Narrative and Aesthetics in Post-network Media



THURSDAY 21ST JUNE 2018



Schedule

9:00 Arrival – Coffee & Tea

9:30 Welcome to the Symposium, by Kristyn Gorton, University of York

9:40 Key speaker: **Dr Glen Creeber, University of Aberystwyth**
'Breaking the Loop: Contemporary TV Drama and Convergence'

10:40 Short break – coffee & tea

10:50 Panel 1: **Poetics of Digital Realities**
Chair: Dr Jenna Ng, University of York

Samuel Kaufman, University of York
88:88: Time, Precarity and an Alternative Economy of Images

Felix Rose Kawitzky, University of Cape Town
Harry Potter and the Magical Message Boards: Continuous collective storytelling in online fan spaces

Joshua Schulze, Independent Scholar
The Poetics of Desktop Cinema: Close Readings of a Digital Aesthetic

Claudia Lisa Moeller, IASSP Milano
Keeping Up With The Kardashians – The ruminating communication

12:10 Short break – coffee & tea

12:20 Panel 2: **Emergence of digital aesthetics in real life environments**
Chair: Dr Guy Schofield, University of York

Jez Coram, Newcastle University
Post digital zones: Expanding the essay film and the performative moving image essay

Elisabetta Fabrizi, Newcastle University
The role of the contemporary art curator in the shift of artists' experimental film&video to the mainstream of the visual arts.

Claire Frampton, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University
Digital Technology in Creative Heritage Theatre Projects

Richard Kearns, University of York
Art, Technology and Narrative Agency

13:30 Lunch

14:15 Panel 3, Annual Progression Presentations 1: **Reimagining Narratives**
Chair: Mr Ed Braman

Tasos Giapoutzis
The Interplay of Landscape and Nostalgia in Contemporary European Cinema

Simona Manni
Responsive media and non-linear participatory narratives of mental health

Joseph Horsey
Finding documentary's metaphors

Gabrielle Russell
Towards a feminist mythography: a practice-based enquiry exploring female archetypes in native folktales and how these might play as source material in film narratives that aim to configure a contemporary feminist mythic cycle.

15:35 Coffe/Tea break

15:45 Panel 4: Annual Progression Presentations 2: **Narrating Catastrophes and Social Changes**
Chair: Dr Kristyn Gorton

Michael Holden
Comics and Catastrophe: Global Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Graphic Narrative

Hadeel Shqair
Aljazeera TV's Role in Shaping the Political Consciousness of Arab

Rosamund Portus
Extinction Studies: Imagining a World without Bees

16:45 Wine Reception



Panels

Keynote

Dr Glen Creeber, University of Aberystwyth

Glen Creeber is a Senior Lecturer in Television Studies at the University of Aberystwyth. While he is best known for his work on television drama and genre, he has recently begun moving into areas of Digital Culture. This includes media convergence, participatory culture and issues surrounding immersive media like Virtual and Augmented Reality.

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Panel 1: Poetics of Digital Realities

Samuel Kaufman, University of York

88:88: Time, Precarity and an Alternative Economy of Images

This paper will consider Isiah Medina's *88:88* (2015) as a political response to contemporary discourses on digital media and moving images. Medina creates superimposed images from a huge range of representational technologies, amalgamating temporalities, forms and media into simultaneity. Narrative is less important in these layered images than the inward focus on their own form. On top of this aesthetic practice, in *88:88* Medina constructs a study of poverty in Winnipeg through his friends and immediate community. The film argues that living precariously is living in a suspended time – its title refers to the display flashing on digital clocks once people can afford to reconnect their electricity after it has been cut. It reconfigures digital technology as a state of potentiality, not inherently revolutionary or reactionary, but containing a capacity for a formal realisation of an emancipatory politics of time. *88:88* taps into a recent wave of experimental films which concern themselves with the paradox between medium specificity and the media convergence of internet and post-internet art. What is more, along with Godard's most recent work and Rosa Menkman's reinvigoration of glitch art and resolution studies (to give two very different examples), Medina is among theorist-filmmakers troubling the waters of current thinking on digital materiality. The collisions between form, resolution, time and stasis in *88:88* speak as much to what Hito Steyerl meant by "the alternative economy of images" in 2009 as they do to an attempt to find new ways of articulating a technological future in experimental and minor cinema.

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Felix Rose Kawitzky, University of Cape Town

Harry Potter and the Magical Message Boards: Continuous collective storytelling in online fan spaces

This paper will look at the formation of digital storytelling communities around existing fictional universes, using as its case study the fan-made website, Hogwarts is Here (HiH); a multi-purpose Harry Potter fan platform with over four hundred thousand members. It will go on to explore the particular storytelling techniques that have developed in these virtual environments, and how they

are used by fans to unofficially broaden and diversify the canon laid down by author J.K Rowling. HiH is modelled after the eponymous magical boarding school of Hogwarts, offering in-depth courses in subjects such as potions, transfiguration, herbology and charms, including essay-based assignments graded by volunteer Hogwarts is Here 'Professors'. It also asks members to join a Hogwarts House and provide a character profile, and is host to a number of themed forums and message boards containing hundreds of long-term, text-based roleplaying games set in the expanded Harry Potter world.

HiH gives members the opportunity to become immersed in the fictional setting, facilitating a spectrum of innovative and interactive narratives reaching far beyond the limits of the original books. This site is a castle built, brick by brick, post by post, by the constant negotiation of story, character and self by its users.

For the paper, I will focus on the following (all in the context of the Harry Potter fandom):

- How the "official" content of the fictional universe is expanded by online communities.
- How the inherent digitality of these fan-driven platforms converts the original narrative from static and univocal, to dynamic and collaborative, via an active exchange of ideas.
- The significance of the chat-forum/message board format as a creative technique for virtual storytelling and world-building.
- The way that these modes of fan autonomy allow for more diverse representation (including more spaces for queers and people of colour) in an otherwise largely heteronormative, white, cis-dominated setting.
- The selective suspension of disbelief which sustains diegetic fan engagement.

In the words of the site itself: "It's Real for Us - and it'll feel real to you, too. Welcome to Hogwarts is Here".

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Joshua Schulze, Independent Scholar

The Poetics of Desktop Cinema: Close Readings of a Digital Aesthetic

My paper will survey the various critical approaches that have emerged towards the desktop film or 'on-screen film', synthesising their key ideas in a manner that moves towards a new rubric for analysis. The general consensus towards these films, which include low-budget horrors such as *Unfriended* and *The Den*, short films such as *Noah*, *Internet Story*, and *Transformers: The Premake*, and even television episodes such as *Modern Family's* 'Connection Lost', has been to consider them emblematic of what Steven Shaviro calls 'post-cinema'. In addition, critics have reflected on the wider implications the films have in terms of inter-mediality and the digital, post-classical age of filmmaking. However, few have looked close enough at the films themselves and their unique strategies for conveying narrative meaning. The unprecedented capacity for exploring character and point-of-view through someone's personal interface (such as their laptop's home screen, which can encompass their music tastes, communication with others, hobbies and interests, and various other attributes) demands a close reading that meets the films on their own terms. Thus, using two key examples (*Noah* and 'Connection Lost'), my paper will attempt to delineate how this inter-medial, post-classical, post-cinematic mode of address can work to reach new levels of narrative expressivity. It will incorporate various aspects of film theory, including Andre Bazin's writing on photography and realism, Gilles Deleuze's theory of film and time, and V.F. Perkins' approach to textual analysis and narratology, finding a middle ground between each that best suits these unique cultural artifacts. In that respect, the paper will acknowledge and expand on the existing approaches to desktop films, situating their aesthetics as both a product of our digitised world and also innovative in their own right, finding creative ways to better engage with their contemporary audience.

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Claudia Lisa Moeller, IASSP Milano

Keeping Up With The Kardashians – The ruminating communication

The Kardashians are one of the most discussed, beloved and hated families of the world because of their innovative strategy of communication. Their reality show, their social presence, and in the end the old fashioned gossip newspapers (or webpages) are all together working to produce a new type of narrative that develops through all these media in different passages. As the cows digest through ruminating (they keep chewing and digesting the same food), so does the Kardashians' communication strategy. Their stories appear in different forms, with a different amount of details, in different periods in all these communication channels like the cud chewed by the cows. For example, in 2009 Khloé Kardadhian married basketball player Lamar Odom. They even had their spin- off *Khloé & Lamar*. In 2015, gossip magazines and other newspapers reported that Lamar Odom was found unconscious and about to die due to an overdose. Khloé Kardashian and the family did not at first comment the rumor, but later the story was confirmed. Lamar Odom had had a crazy night in a brothel in Las Vegas, and there he exaggerated with drugs. Khloé Kardashian had to take all the medical decisions about the health and future of her unaware husband. Later, Khloé Kardashian released an interview on *People* magazine. She posted different messages in the following months on Twitter about her husband, their marriage, and their love story. In the meantime, webpages and magazines speculated about this story. On August 21 st 2016, E! broadcasted the episode about what happened one year before. All the details, the pain, and fears of those days appear on television once again. We could get another prospective and other detail of a story that took place one year previously. In 2017, in occasion of the 10 th anniversary of their reality show Khloé Kardashian talked openly again about that accident. She stated that she feared her husband could die in 2009. This strategy is a new type of communication that unites television, newspapers, and social media. The stories are few, but their repetition makes them a continuous material of speculation, attention. This system is a perfect example of the new interaction with different media (transmedia) and the exploit of all these channels.

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Panel 2: Emergence of digital aesthetics in real life environments

Jez Coram, Newcastle University

Post digital zones: Expanding the essay film and the performative moving image essay

The written essay has been a primary narrative form of ideological critique, ideas weighing, play, and attempt to explain the human condition, since Montaigne's first conception of an essay in the 16th Century. However, recent years have seen increased research interest in the creative-critical potential of translated essay forms, such as the photographic, video, and film essay, largely due to a steady emergence in the twentieth century of distinct essay film-making practices, situated in between fiction, documentary, and artists film-making. Yet, some scholarship has noted a shift from single screen essay works to expanded moving image works, including multi-screen installations, exhibited in galleries. In addition, there have been enquiries into tangential practices, notably the 'performative essay'. However, the politics of the moving image is changing rapidly and to date little work has thoroughly examined expanding the essay as a form beyond photographic and film essay forms, to accommodate radical critical making strategies and practices in areas such as sound, performance, architecture, new media, moving image, and in appreciation of new image and spatial networked technologies. Without adequate practical and theoretical analysis of expanded essay forms, we undervalue the existence and impact of their aesthetic and political critical potential,

ultimately leading to a one sided view of how the essay can exist formally and operate critically. This paper is delivered as a performative moving image essay, formed and presented through the improvised assemblage of pre-recorded moving image, sound, and live spoken text, creating a post digital zone to explore a question of what next for the essay film as a creative critical practice, and the essay as form in an era of 'radical technologies'? Or in other words how should we write essays in our current techno-political climate?

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Elisabetta Fabrizi, Newcastle University

The role of the contemporary art curator in the shift of artists' experimental film&video to the mainstream of the visual arts.

This study considers the agency of the contemporary art curator in the move of Artists' experimental Moving Image (AMI) practice (film, video and digital) from the periphery to the mainstream of the visual arts. Since AMI's inception in the 1920s, we have observed its fluctuations between the fields of film and the visual arts, with reciprocal influences occurring. This continues to this day, with AMI's circulation persisting in both directions. However, in its approach, this research recognises that whilst AMI production and exhibition has remained at the margins of film, in the last twenty-five years a significant and progressive field-shift has taken place, to AMI holding a mainstream position within contemporary art. As curators hold a central role in the network of forces shaping current contemporary art exhibition making strategies, of which AMI is now consistently a part, the study proposes an analysis of the significance of the agency of this actor within the field-shift process through exhibition and production. Curators have recognised the potential of the introduction of the real and of storytelling into the Gallery through the inclusion of moving image works within the exhibitions they were curating. Film, Video and digital works were welcomed en masse into the contemporary art sphere and within a generation this in turn has resulted in much story-driven experimental moving image material relocating from the film field to that of the visual arts. The enquiry places itself within the domain of a growing body of research into the importance of the context in which moving image cultural production takes place and how digital technologies have influenced these changes. But the study recognises – and wishes to redress – the lack of critical attention paid to the agency of the contemporary art curator in this process, and specifically in relation to AMI practice.

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Claire Frampton, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University

Digital Technology in Creative Heritage Theatre Projects

I am currently undertaking a professional research portfolio for my certificate Associateship of the Museums Association. Working Title: Exploring the potential of creative drama as a learning tool in museums and heritage. Examining current projects and academia, proposing, running and evaluating projects in museums. Exploring the potential to develop drama as an educational tool in museums and heritage. What are the unique benefits and potential of drama as a learning tool in museums and heritage? For this paper I wanted to present about how technologies enhanced a theatre project I designed and other examples of technology in heritage theatre.

Case studies: Summer 2015 I organised to run a drama project I wrote for 13-16 year olds, creative drama presentations inspired by the Labours of Hercules in the Ashmolean Cast Gallery inspired by casts of decorative elements of architecture from the Temple of Zeus in Greece, depicting scenes from the stories. Parts of the scenes are missing, the student drama filled in the gaps, this ran as Play in a Week.. When it ran for a second year technology was integrated into the learning process where students collected information and created picture collages of the artefacts on iPads for

inspiration for the performance. The project ran as Julius Caesar in one day Autumn 2017 where students took photos of themselves in relation to the objects before rehearsing in the galleries. For this paper I wanted to discuss the unique benefits to the project of technology, how does technology facilitate engagement with the objects? At the Ashmolean Linguamania Night January 2017 a theatre presentation based on OVIDs Metamorphosis incorporated text on a screen to facilitate audience engagement with translation and original text. What is the future potential for use of technology with this kind of project?

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Richard Kearns, University of York

Art, Technology and Narrative Agency

As part of my doctoral research I built two art installations with the primary purpose of observing modes of audience interaction. The first of these was titled Soundweb, which was exhibited 2016, and the second, Interplay, was open to the public in 2017. Neither environment contained physical artefacts, instead they operated by projecting visual or audio stimuli into a darkened un-facilitated space. One of the outcomes each of the artworks explored was how audiences appropriated the provocations into open-ended story-building. This manifested physically in the audiences, who were mostly children, and was evident in repeated styles of behaviour. In the form of a short presentation that will include a brief overview on how the two installations operated, I propose discussing some of the interactions that occurred within them. This will focus on how aspects of each installation were interacted with in specific ways that gave interactors new and full agency to experiment without restraint. That will include screen interaction, and group story building. In addition to discussing of some of the observations that occurred within these environments, the aim of the presentation is to question how a narrative might reveal itself in an open-ended implicitly digitised environment. With this in mind, there are indicated exciting possibilities for the development of narrative directions in the future, which can be potentially applied to the domains of art, gaming and systems-based operations.

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Panel 3, Annual Progression Presentations 1: Reimagining Narratives

Tasos Giapoutzis, University of York

The Interplay of Landscape and Nostalgia in Contemporary European Cinema

Due to the ongoing societal changes in Europe and the high numbers of refugees fleeing conflicts in the Middle East and Africa over the last few years, even more diasporic populations in the European region have been created. Reterritorialising and crossing borders – both geographic and cultural – subjects people to nostalgia for their homeland and instates their characters as dynamic and evolutionary. As a result of these developments, the representation of migrant identities has assumed a prominent position in recent cinematic traditions. My research project aims to investigate the complex relationship between landscape and nostalgia in defining cinematic identities in contemporary European cinema. As part of the research, two experimental films will be made which will explore how filmmaking techniques can express nostalgia triggered by landscape, emulating the authentic human experience. In this presentation I will explore the initial developments of this research as well as its forthcoming stages and objectives.

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Gabrielle Russell, University of York

Towards a feminist mythology: a practice-based enquiry exploring female archetypes in native folktales and how these might play as source material in film narratives that aim to configure a contemporary feminist mythic cycle.

I am a fiction filmmaker exploring native British folktales as a source of inspiration for developing challenging new configurations of the feminine in contemporary film narratives. My creative practice involves a process of adaptation taking as inspiration significant female characters from *The Mabinogion*, exploring their archetypal nature, and then writing and directing film narratives that re-configure these ancient archetypes in a new cycle of stories set in the present day. To formally structure a cycle of new stories and to enhance their potential to resonate with women's lives today, I chose characters that represent key aspects of the female life cycle. My aim is to create contemporary female characters that retain the potency of the archetype rooted in native mythic consciousness and effectively translate this as a feminist storyteller, as a means of challenging patriarchal representations of women in film, and continuing a narrative tradition in a new feminist direction.

I will present scenes from the first film in the cycle "Deer Woman Child" written in collaboration with poet and author Sarah Corbett. This story takes as inspiration the character of Rhiannon an infertile woman, and explores the life stage of motherhood. I will attempt to illuminate how my creative process in writing and directing this film relates to the key themes of my research question: what does feminist mythology reveal about our cultural perceptions of the feminine, and how might a feminist filmmaker use native myth to re-configure representations of women that challenge perceptions of the feminine in relation to power?

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Joseph Horsey, University of York

Finding Documentary's Metaphors

Metaphor pervades documentary film and television in a variety of forms, and at a number of levels. There would appear to be a dissonance in combining a genre built on the foregrounding of its truth-claims, with an inherently illusory device, and yet the closer we look at non-fiction, the more metaphor emerges as something that shapes, and is shaped by, documentary's depiction of reality. My research explores the notion of metaphorising the real - where a filmmaker searches for, and finds, metaphoric connections in their interactions with the world, their subjects, and in their raw material - and how that process challenges the ways we define both metaphor and documentary. This presentation will take an example from Patricio Guzmán's *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010), and observe the conflicts that arise in the creation and interpretation of its overt, yet cryptic uses of metaphor. If, as contemporary metaphor theory contends, we live in a world that we construct and experience through metaphor, then what may its documentary iteration illuminate about that philosophy?

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Simona Manni, University of York

Responsive media and non-linear participatory narratives of mental health

The aim of the research is to investigate how emerging forms of interactive and responsive media can be used to support participatory film production on mental health and to empathically engage audiences in the subject. The research is based on experiences of participatory filmmaking Simona

has conducted for the past five years in a variety of community settings, mostly supporting the recovery of people who experience mental health problems. While participatory filmmaking offers many opportunities for participants, there are still challenges to overcome due to the nature of the narrative material produced and to the limited role reserved to the audience. Responsive media technology in development at the DC Labs could support the production of non-linear polyphonic films, able to accommodate several voices while preserving a sense of unity, to convey the complex nature of experiences of mental illness through immersive viewpoints, and to stimulate audience engagement. The research will be conducted through the direct involvement of participants who have a lived experience of mental health problems.

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Panel 4, Annual Progression Presentations 2: Narrating Catastrophe and Change

Michael Holden, University of York & University of Leeds

Comics and Catastrophe: Global Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Graphic Narrative

What is an appropriate means of representing the Holocaust? This is a question that has vexed scholars of the event working in diverse academic disciplines for some time. In my research, which I will outline in today's paper, I aim to tackle this question from the perspective of comic books, and I ask the following key questions: What do the formal features of graphic narratives allow for with regard to transmitting personal and historical trauma, and why have so many authors been drawn toward representing the Holocaust in this way? How does the form differ from (arguably) more conventional means of representing the event such as, say, novels or films, and what is the relationship of comics to other forms of representation?

In my paper, I will outline the theoretical fields that form the framework for analysis in my thesis, and I will give an overview of some of the comics texts that I will interrogate during the course of my research, along with their relevance to the above questions; I will likewise outline the intervention into existing scholarship that my thesis represents.

If, as Theodor Adorno's famous (and often somewhat misinterpreted) dictum runs, "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," what hope do comics have? To begin to answer this question by decoding their apparent appeal may contribute, in a small way, to an understanding of how we might best perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust for future generations.

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Rosamund Portus, University of York

Extinction Studies: Imagining a World Without Bees

Bees are an integral part of human survival; without bee pollination much of the food humans depend on would be impossible to grow. Yet, despite their significance for human survival, bees are in decline. Recent research reveals that bees are threatened for a multitude of reasons, such as habitat loss, pesticide use, climate change, predatory attacks and the spread of disease. Yet bees are not the only species in decline: we are living through the sixth mass extinction in which species are becoming endangered or extinct at unprecedented rates, an occurrence directly linked to human behaviours. As concerns around the sixth mass extinction increase there has emerged a new body of knowledge which suggests that, rather than study extinction as a singular and purely biological phenomenon, we need to study extinction as a multifaceted phenomenon that is experienced, understood, caused, resisted and challenged in a variety of ways. A significant yet relatively underexplored way in which people are engaging with increasing ecological concerns is

through creative practice. Therefore, drawing upon interviews with creative practitioners whose work studies the bee decline, supplemented with participant observations of relevant events, interviews with individuals that work with bees and the facilitation of relevant workshops, I ask how people are using creative practices to respond to the decline of bees. More specifically, I study how creative methods are being used to narrate, discuss, explore, challenge and resist the potential extinction of bees, further exploring what role creative practices might have in shaping bees' futures.

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Hadeel Shqair, University of York

Aljazeera TV's Role in Shaping the Political Consciousness of Arab

This Research focuses on Aljazeera TV, the Qatar based Arabic language television satellite channel, studies its news content, content production, and the institution thinking during the 18 days of the Egyptian revolution, starting from 25 January till 11 February 2011.

Since its inception, there were different opinions about Aljazeera coverage. Some agree with it and with its coverage and trends, and some suspects its presentation and its hidden intentions behind its coverage.

Scholars from disciplines including media, communication, and political science have studied Aljazeera TV's coverage in terms of the political presentation in addressing the events, but what seems to be missing is a theoretical framework aims to understand the nature of Aljazeera's coverage in terms of the used technical television tools, the used terms, music, images, colors, beside the reporters and the broadcasters' performance, on a hand, and the institutional thought of the Channel, its guidelines, aims and agenda on the other hand.

In this study I attempt to answer detailed questions falling under two key questions. The first question is "What is the nature of Aljazeera's role during its coverage of the Egyptian revolution?" The second question is "How did Aljazeera employ its media experience, programs, reports, staff, technical tools, technology and media discourse to play its role in the political change in Arab world, especially during the Egyptian revolution?"

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Many thanks!

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The Department of Theatre, Film and Television

Dr Kristyn Gorton

Rebecca Turgoose

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This year's PG Symposium has been produced by:

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