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British Popular Culture(s) Conference
9th – 11th July 2026
Falmouth University, Penryn Campus

Thursday 9th July,
9am – 9.30am, SoFT Building Atrium
Arrival/Registration/Coffee

SoFT Cinema, Welcome and Keynote 1

Welcome: 9.30 – 9.45

Keynote 1: 9.45 – 10.45am

Jez Collins, Birmingham Music Archive. Q&A hosted by Professor Neil Fox

Morning Break: 10.45 – 11.15am, Upper Stannary, 2nd Floor Daphne Du Maurier Building (DM)

Session 1: 11.15am – 12.30, 3rd Floor Daphne Du Maurier (DM) Building

Panel 1A: Popular Culture in the Archives

Chair: Kat Flint-Nicol

Location: Lecture B

Melanie Cox ‘Exploring Radical Television in Early Channel 4’

A new archival research project, based in Falmouth and Bristol universities, and an emerging national and regional network has begun to address the urgent need to recover the materials of Channel 4’s Independent Film and Video Department (IFVD) from 1982-1995, to contextualise its productions and consolidate them within an accessible digital database. By examining key commissions and production practices, the research highlights how the department’s output reflected the shifting cultural climate of the 1980s and early 1990s, while also serving as an enduring historical record that speaks to contemporary struggles around representation, media democracy, and cultural memory.

This presentation re-evaluates the IFVD as one of the most radical interventions in British public service broadcasting, claiming that the department functioned as a platform for subaltern counterpublics - a place where marginalised groups can exist to influence the wider public sphere and introduce new ideas, challenge power structures, and create counterdiscourses. While mainstream broadcasting favoured narratives of individualism and market-driven common sense, the IFVD built parallel discursive arenas - giving visibility, voice and agency to the marginalised and unheard. Channel 4’s founding remit to ‘innovate in the form and content of programmes’, and ‘to reach new audiences not catered for currently by British television’ opened space for formally experimental, politically engaged, and transnational filmmaking. Guided by a commitment to radical pluralism, the IFVD commissioned diverse work that reflected

the zeitgeist - a moment of ideological openness within a tightening political landscape shaped by neoliberal reform.

This was showcased in *The Eleventh Hour*, a late Monday evening space that screened political and personal documentary, low-budget fiction, and perspectives from the Global South and *People to People* seasons of access programming. Early seasons such as *New Cinema of Latin America* and *Africa on Africa* introduced audiences to worlds routinely excluded from mainstream media. Through this framework, Channel 4 acquired or partially-financed more than 150 feature films demonstrating a sustained institutional investment in programmes shaped by decolonisation, revolution and Third Cinema aesthetics.

Melanie Cox biography

Melanie is a PhD researcher at Falmouth University and a member of a national network dedicated to recovering and making visible the work of Channel 4's Independent Film and Video Department (IFVD, 1982–1995). Her work examines how the department's commissions and production practices reflected radical, politically engaged, and transnational filmmaking during the 1980s and 1990s, giving agency and voice to marginalised groups. The project also explores the crucial role of archives in preserving and reactivating cultural histories through accurate narration.

Melanie has a strong background in research and education, beginning her career in community television before becoming an experienced film and media lecturer in Further Education. She holds an MRes from University of Portsmouth, where she studied Cuban cinema during the Grey Years (1971-1975), focusing on how filmmakers resisted censorship during a period of extreme orthodoxy.

Matt Melia 'Opening The Ben Kelly Archive at Kingston University'

Eight years ago, Kingston University acquired the archive of the British designer Ben Kelly. Since then, the collection has remained largely dormant, moving between storage locations and currently occupies a room on the eighth floor of an increasingly underused tower block. Uncatalogued and effectively inaccessible, the archive has yet to be fully explored or made available to researchers. There is, however, growing momentum among Kingston University staff and Kelly himself to activate the archive and unlock its creative and research potential for students, staff, and external researchers. In doing so, the collection would take its place alongside Kingston's other significant holdings. This paper Hopes to contribute to that momentum by examining the significance of the Kelly archive and the opportunities it presents for design history, archival practice, and the study of post-war British visual and popular culture.

An initial inventory reveals a remarkable body of material spanning more than five decades. The collection traces Kelly's development from his student work at Lancaster Art College and the Royal College of Art, through his involvement with Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's King's Road boutique *Seditionaries*, to the projects for which he is best known. These include his work for Factory Records, where his distinctive black-and-yellow industrial aesthetic became synonymous with the label, and the design of the legendary Haçienda nightclub. The archive also contains material relating to projects for 4AD and work produced through his long-standing practice, Ben Kelly Design. As a contemporary and collaborator of Peter Saville, Kelly occupies a central position within the networks of art, design, music, and subcultural production that shaped Britain from the late 1960s onwards. His archive—and particularly the material

relating to the Hacienda—offers a unique insight into a pivotal yet comparatively underexamined moment in British cultural history, illuminating the intersections of design, music, nightlife, and creative production that helped define the late twentieth century.

This paper asks how, in the face of institutional barriers such as limited space, funding, and infrastructure, we might meaningfully engage with collections that remain effectively inaccessible. Drawing on my ongoing research into inaccessible archives, objects, and collections, it outlines potential approaches for activating the Kelly archive and considers what such interventions might contribute to the preservation, interpretation, and future use of neglected cultural collections. It also situates the Kelly archive alongside related collections, particularly the British Pop Archive and the Tony Wilson Archive at the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, exploring shared concerns around popular culture, design heritage, archival visibility, and institutional stewardship.

Bio: Dr Matt Melia is Senior Lecturer at Kingston University in the department of Media. His research focuses on archives, material culture, and the histories of film, design, and popular culture. He has published extensively on the work of Ken Russell and Stanley Kubrick, situating their films within broader archival histories of British and international cinema. A central and growing strand of his work examines hidden, overlooked, and inaccessible collections, exploring how such archives can be activated. His current research investigates the cultural and scholarly significance of neglected archival materials and the new perspectives they offer on the preservation, interpretation, and use of cultural heritage.

Tyisha Murphy 'Recontextualizing the David Webb Collection: Exploring Audiovisual Archival Practices'

Tyisha Murphy (she/they) is a curator, researcher, and archivist who is currently located in Tiohtià:ke (Montréal) in pursuit of their PhD in Film Studies.

Their work prioritises the access to audiovisual objects as essential historical representations for queer communities. Previous research projects have been featured at the AGQ (Archives Gaie du Québec), Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies and CFMDC (Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre).

Email: tyishamurphy@gmail.com

Five Keywords: Archives, 8mm Film, Pornographic Collections, British Censorship, Affect

Abstract:

Etiology as a theoretical framework explores the affect of cause, within philosophical thought it asks why things are the way they are. This project extends those considerations towards a theorization of provenance in archival records by examining the function of selective choice made at various stages in the lifetime of objects made available for public research. Film is unique in this consideration as its physical formats are not static objects; they evolve based on their material conditions and environmental factors. Though the relevance of a film's content may justify its inclusion within any archival collection, the question of custody and long-term preservation is

compounded by physical access to properly understand how its contents are evaluated for their significance. |

Such is the case of the David Webb collection; a collection of small-gauge 8mm films which offers unique insights to develop this theorization. Through establishing provenance for the 8mm films, there are multiple questions which emerge and complicate the current representation of the films as archival objects. The primary consideration for the significance of the collection was its pornographic content; this was the basis of its cross-continental acquisition to a Canadian archive from its more heavily censored British origination. A more thorough investigation of its contents provides not only a more developed connection of the collector's political activities against British obscenity but also provides more nuanced insights to the social attitudes towards British film censorship from 1970-1990. |

This project asks what do the physical qualities of each reel reveal about Webb's practices as a collector? Specifically because his ability to acquire films was subject to historic and legal circumstances, what remnants are carried through the tangible alterations on the celluloid material? |

By emphasising the importance of inscriptions as "imprints" on the archival object, this project positions how provenance extends beyond the origin of its creation through its representation as a series of decisions made by individuals to validate an idea of historical significance |

Panel 1B: Objects of Space and Place

Chair: Simon Poole

Location: Seminar K

Richard Elliott "Chillingham Cattle, Bamburgh Castle, Fawdon Rowntree's Fruit Pastilles': Specificity, Memory and Community in a North-East English Song'

Abstract

Songs are repositories of experiences with objects, events and processes. They are also dynamic objects that act as memory prompts. To explore the dual aspect of songs-about-objects and songs-as-objects, this paper explores 'Cuddy's Cave' by Nev Clay. Clay is a Newcastle-based singer-songwriter who has been performing on the local scene for over three decades, occasionally releasing new songs on EPs and singles. He's also been a mentor to many other musicians in the area, including Richard Dawson (subject of my talk at last year's British Popular Culture(s) conference). |

My analysis of 'Cuddy's Cave' as a dynamic object—an object understood as both static and changeable—begins with a description of its lyrical content, a list of people, places, events and objects associated with north-east England. Having established it as a 'list song' that does considerable cultural work, I analyse the song's evolution over several years, from early concert performances and recorded demos through a definitive version included on Clay's 2024 album *So Little Happened for So Long*,

and then the song's continued itinerary as a piece of crowdsourced memory work. In handing over his composition to the local community to revise, Clay has shown how songs can act as both repositories of collective memory and prompts to engage in new memory work and community-based creative acts.

My discussion of 'Cuddy's Cave' will be informed by Nev Clay's account of the song, by a literary framework that includes work by Joe Brainard, Georges Perec, Adair, Roland Barthes and Gilbert Adair, and by my own thoughts on the poetics of specificity.

Key words: Song, objects, community, memory, specificity

Bio Richard Elliott is a cultural musicologist with a particular interest in popular musics of the world. He is the author of the books *Fado and the Place of Longing: Loss, Memory and the City* (2010), *Nina Simone* (2013), *The Late Voice: Time, Age and Experience in Popular Music* (2015), *The Sound of Nonsense* (2018) and *DJs do Guetto* (2022). He writes about the relationship between songs, place, time, and objects, publishing his research in journal articles, book chapters and via his Substack newsletter, 'Songs and Objects'. Richard is Senior Lecturer in Music at Newcastle University, where he specialises in courses related to popular music and media.

richard.elliott1@ncl.ac.uk

Pamela Brook 'Parachutes, Escape Maps, Monopoly and Wedding Dresses'

This paper addresses one aspect of British Industries contribution to the war effort during World War 2. Textile mills across the country started to weave fabric for parachutes as early as 1938 (YO 3.10.1945). The paper focuses on one West Yorkshire company where this was done. Later, under the strict guidelines of the Air Ministry, fabric was produced for silk escape maps to be used by pilots in the RAF and also the Special Operations Executive who parachuted their agents into Europe to aid the resistance movements in countries such as France, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

During the war supplies of real silk became increasingly difficult to obtain and although stocks of real silk may have continued to be used, from 1942 alternatives had to be found. Artificial silk had become a good substitute as a modern dress fabric during the 1930s and its manufacture, increasingly sophisticated.

Christopher Clayton Hutton was employed in M19 from 1940 to 1943 to introduce an escape and evasion programme and along with John Bartholomew and Son Ltd (cartographers) developed escape maps. Hutton tried to find a paper that was thin, resistant to the elements and did not rustle when inside service uniforms (Bond, 2015). Hutton appointed playing card manufacturer John Waddington Ltd to print the maps on silk. Whereas RAF pilots and SOE agents could secret the maps away on their person, Prime Minister Churchill wanted everyone to have the opportunity to escape including prisoners of war. POWs were allowed games for entertainment and subsequently the maps along with other escape devices were concealed by Waddingtons in playing cards and Monopoly.

After the war stocks of parachute silk and escape maps were appropriated for wedding dresses and underwear.

Archival material and secondary source material will be used as part of the methodology.

References: Yorkshire Observer; 3.10. 1945

B.A. Bond, (2015), *Great Escapes: The Story of MI9's Second World War, Escape and Evasion Maps*, London: Times Books, Harper Collins.

Keywords: Silk, Escape, Evasion, World War 2, Maps.

Biography: Pamela Brook is an independent researcher. She is a retired Art and Design manager and lecturer in Further and Higher Education.

Since 2012/13 she has been a council member of Bradford Textile Society and was the President from 2015 to 2017. Pam worked for Hattersley's in Keighley for 3 years in the late 1970s. She currently volunteers at Bradford College's Textile Archive which holds a substantial collection of historical items from the Society's archive. She has recently curated an exhibition along with Helen Farrar, the archivist, about the history of the Bradford Textile Society Design competition and industry in the Bradford District, during City of Culture 2025. She has also recently completed a PhD at Nottingham Trent University.

Contact details:

Dr Pamela Brook

pambrook@btinternet.com

pam.brook2014@my.ntu.ac.uk

Samidha Vedabala 'From Ravi Shankar to the Present: The Sitar's Journey in British Popular Culture'

The sitar has occupied a distinctive and evolving position within British musical culture, moving from an emblem of countercultural experimentation in the 1960s to a dynamic presence within contemporary fusion, electronic, and diasporic soundscapes. Its early visibility in Britain was significantly shaped by the work of Pt. Ravi Shankar, whose collaborations, performances, and pedagogical influence introduced Indian classical aesthetics to Western audiences and musicians. Through these encounters, the sitar became associated with new forms of musical inquiry, spiritual exploration, and cross-cultural dialogue. This study examines the changing role of the sitar within British popular music, situating it within broader histories of migration, postcolonial exchange, and cultural hybridity. Drawing on qualitative methodology, the research combines musicological analysis of selected recordings with archival sources, artist interviews, and critical readings of performance contexts. Particular attention is given to how melodic structures, improvisatory frameworks, and timbral aesthetics are recontextualised within British musical practices, including rock, experimental, and diasporic genres. By tracing these transformations, the paper foregrounds the sitar not merely as an exoticised sound object but as an active agent in the formation of new musical identities. It argues that the instrument's continued presence in British popular culture reflects ongoing negotiations of belonging, authorship, and cultural authority,

contributing to broader debates on transcultural exchange and the decolonisation of popular music histories.

Keywords: Sitar, British popular music, Pt. Ravi Shankar; cultural hybridity; postcolonial sound studies

Panel 1C: Watching the Detectives with the Crime Genre

Chair: Julie Ripley

Location: Seminar L

Jeannine Baetz ‘Haunting the Anthropocene: Representing the Ecological Uncanny in Contemporary Crime Dramas’

In the 21st century, the socio-critical dimension of crime fiction has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, particularly in connection with the entangled development of crime fiction and Gothic fiction. While recent research into the genre has notably been extended to address the presence of Gothic elements (particularly in the subgenre of Nordic Noir crime fiction) and representations of environmental issues and their socio-political implications, many of these efforts emphasise explicit representations of environmental issues and psychological-realist readings of Gothic elements. Expanding on existing research into ecocritical approaches to Nordic Noir/EuroNoir, its integration of Gothic elements, and the influence of Nordic Noir on contemporary British crime fiction, this presentation brings together these research strands to explore the entanglement of the narrative function of landscapes and the ‘ecological uncanny’ in the British crime drama *The Pact* (2021-2022), focussing on representations of haunting presences and the ‘ecological uncanny’ (applied here in connection to Mark Fisher’s concepts of the ‘weird’ and the ‘eerie’): after the owner of a local brewery in mid-Wales is found dead in the woods after a party, both the forest and surrounding industrial sites evolve into a secondary layer of storytelling as places of convergence for intergenerational trauma, socio-economic inequalities, and environmental concerns.

Drawing on the example of *The Pact*, this presentation argues that representations of the ecological uncanny in British crime fiction have evolved from a psychological projection space to a symptom of a posthuman awareness in the genre, linking recent British contributions to a broader narrative and aesthetic development in the (sub)genre of EuroNoir crime fiction. Consequently, it proposes a reading of works of contemporary crime fiction through the lens of Anthropocene fiction to demonstrate that posthumanist discourses have become increasingly pervasive vis-à-vis the rapid progression of the climate crisis and continue to restructure the genre on a fundamental level.

Key words: EuroNoir, ecological uncanny, Anthropocene fiction, crime fiction studies

Conference bio: Jeannine Hélène Baetz is a PhD candidate in International Cultural Studies at the University of Galway. Drawing on her academic background in Slavic studies, comparative literary studies, and intermediality studies, her current research project focusses on the representation of environmental crises and haunting presences in contemporary European crime fiction. Her research interests include crime and

speculative fiction's interfacing with socio-political issues and intermedial approaches to contemporary European literature and television.

Contact details: J.Baetz1@universityofgalway.ie

Josephine Baetz 'Solving the contaminated future: Pre- and post-apocalypse in Hard Sun and La Zona'

This paper examines the intersection of some recent developments within crime television series, namely (trans)national narratives of catastrophe and the hybridity of the crime genre with pre- and post-apocalyptic elements. These developments, which sit in the wider context of increasing genre hybridity and (trans)nationalism within the crime genre, are analysed here through the two series *La Zona* (2017) and *Hard Sun* (2018). Spanish series *La Zona* is set in the aftermath of a nuclear accident in a fictional town now categorised as a disaster zone, with a cannibalistic serial killer on the loose. In contrast to this post-apocalyptic take on the crime genre, BBC series *Hard Sun* positions itself as a pre-apocalyptic narrative for much of its only season. The scientific discovery of an impending solar event (forecast to cause worldwide societal collapse in a few years' time) leads to a string of murders across London. Both series present the future as contaminated, and frame non-human movement (of radiation and data) across various borders in terms of infiltration. In *Hard Sun*, the projections of future environmental and social impacts are presented as a form of contagion that affects first the people working on the modelling, and then the detectives sent to investigate the murder of a hacker who found out about the results. And *La Zona* sets up its investigation as a (failing) attempt at containment in a society where the worst has already happened. Although the series barely leave the respective cities they are set in, the danger presented in both far exceeds the nation's borders and control. In the end, neither series is able to return to the ordered society that the crime genre typically demands.

Keywords: television studies, crime series, crime fiction, transnationalism, apocalypse

Biography: Josephine Baetz recently finished her PhD in Media, Film and Television at the University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Her research focuses on crime television in a transnational context.

Email: jbae591@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Shauna Wilton 'Contradictory Representations of the Family in British Crime Dramas'

A common trope within fictional crime is to "look to the family." Building on the statistical reality that a person is most likely to be murdered by someone close to them, crime television explores the relationships and social dynamics leading to violence within families. Simultaneously, crime shows are increasingly led by female detectives who bring with them their families – parents, children, spouses – and often their own experiences of discrimination and violence.

This paper explores these contradictory representations of the family as both a source of violence and as a sanctuary, as a source of strength and motivation and as a source of vulnerability and victimization. In particular, I aim to understand how televised representations of family life reinforce or challenge gender norms and stereotypes. Do these shows reflect our current reality and diverse family forms? Are they a format for investigating gendered violence and promoting social awareness and change?

Focussing on televised British crime dramas from the 21st century, I use content analysis and critical feminist theory to explore the representations of family ranging from the

famous question asked of DS Ellie Miller and wife of the killer in Broadchurch, “How could you not know?”, to the mental and physical collapse of DCI Cassie Stuart in Unforgotten in the face of unrepentant violence against women.

Key Words: Crime television, gender, motherhood, family

Biography: Shauna Wilton is a Professor of Poli\$cal Studies and the Chair of the Social Sciences

department at the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta in Canada. Her current research explores the relationship between social policy and popular culture through the study of representations of gender, motherhood and family in television

Lunch: 12.30 – 13.15 pm, Upper Stannary (DM Building)

Session 2: 13.15 – 14.30pm, 3rd Floor Daphne du Maurier Building

Panel 2A: The Legacies of the 1970s

Chair: Johny Lamb

Location: Seminar L

Odry Bastianello ‘Spellbound: Reading Siouxsie Sioux as Shamaness’

This paper considers the front-woman as a shamanic figure, intended as embodied character of a primal form of spiritual practice (Peters, 1989; Winkelman, 2010), specifically analysing Siouxsie Sioux’s shamaness-like function within British popular music. Her work, particularly in The Banshees era, is here situated within established frameworks from shamanistic anthropology and performance studies.

Central to this reading is the observation that many core aspects of cross-cultural shamanism - trance induction through sound, repetitive rhythms, vocal incantation, transformation of the self, and service to a collective (Winkelman, 2010) - can be identified in the performance of many bands, often exalted within the UK’s Post-Punk and Goth scene.

Whilst scholarship has long drawn parallels between shamans and rock performers (S. C. Krippner, 2017; McNiff, 1988; Taylor, 1985), these have overwhelmingly focussed on male artists, reflecting persistent gender inequalities within rock music discourse (Bain, 2019; Berkers & Eeckelaer, 2014), and in contrast with anthropological accounts that locate shamanism’s roots in female and gender-fluid traditions (Harner, 1980; Tedlock, 2005).

In this view, Siouxsie’s work can be read, beyond theatrical provocation, as a form of embodied cultural mediatory practice; a powerful conductor (McCarthy, 2006) of an experience that revolves around the Turnerian concepts of *communitas*, liminality, and concert as communal ritual (Sylvan, 2002; Turner, 1969). Key to the experience, these concepts were endorsed by Goths proposing “a flight from the crushing ordinariness of English life, into a common wildness of ritual and ceremony, magic and mystery” (Reynolds, 2005, p.424).

Whilst the figures of the shaman - whether cross-cultural or indigenous (Puca, 2022) - and the rock star are different both ontologically and in lived experience, there are some similarities in their function and relationship to the public that are here explored in more detail.

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Keywords: goth, shamanism, altered states of consciousness, performance, Siouxsie Sioux

Kat Flint-Nicol ‘Re-evaluating Paul Weller through fan histories: or, confessions of a melancholic Style Council fan’

Simon Poole “‘Black Mass and that sort of Jazz” The 1970s British Counter Culture in Horror Cinema’

Keywords: #counterculture #subculture #horror #film #seventies

Simon Poole is a writer, musician, DJ and radio host. He is the Course Leader of MA Music Management at University of the Arts London. His research covers subcultural and countercultural studies – particularly in relation to material objects, collecting and vinyl.

This paper explores the representation of the post heroic, “post-Manson embers” (Scovell, 2017 p.13) of the British counter-culture of the early nineteen seventies in a series of British and European horror movies. Whilst there is a considered analysis of British horror *as* counter-cultural, or analogous with counter-cultural ideas – the anti-authoritarian narrative of Witchfinder General for instance, or the social commentary of American horror in Night of the Living Dead et al (Wood, 1985), little is discussed in relation to *how* the countercultures of Britain are represented in the horror film. Through exploration of two British movies – the “ignored or ridiculed” (Jones, 2001p.34) Dracula A.D. 1972 & Horror Hospital (1973) alongside analysis of Italian/French co-production Oasis of Fear (or An Ideal Place to Kill) – featuring a British lead character ‘Dick’ played by Ray Lovelock; Italian/French/Spanish co-production Lizard in a Woman’s Skin (set in London), both from 1971, as well as Italian/Spanish movie ‘The Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue’ (1974), a range of approaches to depicting “the hippies, freaks or long hairs” (Scovell, 2017 p.13) emerge from a range of horror narratives that feature Vampires, zombies, psychological, and science-fiction horror.

At times the counter-culture is shown as demonstrable threat to an inquisitive but innocent youth (Dracula AD 1972). At other times counter-cultural characters are depicted as threat (rightly or wrongly) to the established order (Oasis of Fear, Lizard in a Woman’s Skin & Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue) and might be read as part of, what the editorial team of International Times called “The hysterical spate of evil propaganda dished out about hippies” (in Riley, 2019 p.298). Through this analysis, this paper offers some initial explorations of these disparate representations.

Panel 2B: Collaboration and Co-creation in Communities and Collectives

Chair: Maire Tracey

Location: Seminar K

Vicki Fong/ David Thomas ‘Do and Understand Rethinking the impact of participation via physical and digital mediums’

Working together with Street Life York, a York University run project that offers education, skills training and insights into the history of Coney Street and its community. We worked on a project

that introduces the concept of archiving to the general public as an important part of collating and conserving a community's history.

The project resulted in a series of visually rich and informative films that narrated the history of the Willow Chinese Restaurant and Disco. Highlighting its role for the communities within York that visited, together with the family members who helped build the identity of it and contributed to its iconic status among those that frequented there. On completion, we realised that the story of The Willow had a lot to offer communities that celebrate diversity and unity. Individuals that love music and communities from all over the world. We wanted to find a way to introduce the messages of migration, tenacity, creativity, unity and fun to young audiences. We wanted to create resources that hopefully could empower classrooms who wanted to know more about how communities form. The presentation takes the audience through that journey. How we managed to plan and facilitate a model for resource building that includes, interactive workshops, teacher's guides, curriculum mapping and introductions to creative tools such as musical instruments and recording devices.

We piloted the project with Year 6 pupils from Manston St James CE Primary Academy and used workshop activities from this event to help shape a blueprint plan for developing digital workshop resources. On completion, all resource will be available on a platform owned by York University. They will be used to promote the need for universities to facilitate participation learning in schools and introduce student groups to resources such as instruments and skills in creativity used in professional settings.

The Workshop Package utilises a variety of techniques developed by Thomfong in collaboration with StreetLife York that promote:

- Cultural difference and similarity
- The importance of one's history and preserving data/artefacts connected to it
- The importance of development via passion for subject matter
- The role of music as a universal language
- The role of design as a vehicle for self-expression

Sarah Levinsky 'Who Gets to Be Heard? Homelessness, Cocreation, and the Politics of Popular Performance'

Examining how homelessness is negotiated within British popular performance, this paper asks whether popular culture makes space for collective voices or primarily legitimises exceptional individuals emerging from the margins. It focuses on *Seen/Heard*, a performance cocreated with people experiencing homelessness in Cornwall, alongside the subsequent solo work of one participant, whose virtuosic piano medleys and original music now circulate widely through public performance and social media.

Situating the analysis within British Popular Culture Studies, the paper draws on Pierre Bourdieu's account of cultural capital and taste to explore how value and legitimacy are socially produced rather than neutral. While cocreation is often positioned as an inclusive and democratic cultural practice, the paper asks whether popular circulation ultimately privileges familiar narratives of individuality, resilience and talent. Engaging bell hooks' writing on multiple aesthetics and Wibke Schniedermaun's analysis of how homelessness is reshaped for

popular appeal, it considers how marginalisation may be repeatedly retold as individual redemption, even when structural conditions remain unresolved.

Seen/Heard took the form of a shared performative meal, unfolding across five themed courses of food combined with theatre, movement, song, and storytelling. Audience members were placed within and displaced from labelled positions such as The Veteran, The Tramp, and The Junkie. Periodically removed from the table and replaced by others, they experienced interruption and displacement as part of the dramaturgy. These strategies disrupted dominant narratives of homelessness by foregrounding collectivity, discomfort, gritty humanity and relational encounter, holding moral resolution and individual transcendence in suspension rather than offering them as closure.

By contrast, the later public reception of one participant raises questions about the figure of the exceptional individual within British popular culture. The paper asks whether popular performance cultures are more comfortable celebrating singular talent than confronting the systemic conditions that allow homelessness to persist, and considers what cocreation can, and cannot, do to unsettle these cultural hierarchies.

Key words: homelessness, cocreation, popular performance, cultural legitimacy, aesthetics

Biog: Sarah Levinsky is a Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at Falmouth University, where she completed her practice-based PhD, Encounters Between Dance and Digital Meaning: Discovering Potential in the Question of Movement. She works as a theatre maker, choreographer, and workshop leader, and specialises in cocreation, devised performance, and socially engaged practice, particularly with people with lived experience of homelessness. She is currently leading a pedagogical research project, Imagining Sustainable Futures: Technologies and Cocreation, through which she is further developing the Seen/Heard workshops and exploring how futures thinking can emerge through co-creative practices with people often excluded from dominant sustainability and policy conversations.

Simon Strange 'Creative Spheres: collective creativity in popular music scenes'

Keywords: (collaboration, scenes, scenius, networks, creativity)

Abstract: Based on my book *Creative Spheres*, due for release in Spring 2026, I take an autoethnographic perspective of the French Latin punk, Glasgow indie, London jungle and Bristol music scenes from the mid 1980s onwards, utilising Howard Becker's (1982) art and Nick Crossley's (2015) music worlds, where collaboration and community were key in scene development. I take my perspective as an understated member of successful scenes, including as a trombone player in French band Chihuahua, studio engineer at the Practice Pad in Glasgow and hi-tech music salesperson at Turnkey London/ Sound Control Bristol, where modern technologies and inter-genre relationships helped to fuel music genres.

Like Becker (1982) or Eno (1996) I argue against the lone genius, celebrating the multifaceted roles undertaken by humans and the collective creativity that ignited a range of scenes or scenius. Vital roles were played by the perceivers, who danced (Warren, 2023) and suggested elements which supported music development (Goldie, 2018), in effect co-authoring with the producer/ composers of the

time. People, venues, networks, subcultural groups, and a DIY/ DIO aesthetic were key, breaking hegemonic structures where all roles have importance, from the performers to the audience, the venue managers, and community spaces, naturally connected in a largely pre-internet world. A collective resonance which should be more closely acknowledged, supporting non-hierarchical societal development where the importance of music is social (Rogers, 2022).

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Panel 2C: Visions of London

Chair. Colm McAuliffe

Location: Lecture B

Vivienne Gaskin 'The Re-Birth of the Cultural Playground: ICA Club Nights 1997-2006'

This paper reflects on the founding mission statement, coined by the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) first director, Sir Herbert Read, who, in 1945 claimed it to be an *Adult Playground* (Read in Massey, Muir 2014). It will explore how popular cultures were at the core of the post-war ICA programme and further embedded in the curatorial strategies introduced by the Independent Group in the 1950s. It will pay particular attention to the function of the social, the provision for the conditions for discourse and the wider connection to the 'popular' and the 'everyday' in the formation of the ICA.

Direct connections will be made to the ICA in the late 1990s. Challenging a perceived curatorial introspection at the time the paper will discuss the ICA 's Club Night Programme which I curated from 1996-2006 and the ensuing formation of a culturally informed social scene. Herein, sociability and playfulness were employed as methods of mediation to foster an expanded participation in the production and consumption of culture. Channels of popular cultural mediation were employed to disseminate the programme and expand participation. This was situated alongside a deconstruction of the role of the curator as a gatekeeper during the 1990s. The expanded community of practitioners, many of whom are practitioners of popular culture genres, is discussed in terms of institutional impact and critical response. The ensuing practice of galleries and museums expanding their programme into the nighttime economy will be addressed extending the discussion into the present day to evaluate participatory methods and degrees of authenticity.

KEY WORDS: Curation, Social time, Play, ICA, Participation, Inclusion

Biography: Dr Vivienne Gaskin is a Senior Lecturer in the Creative Industries at Leeds Beckett University. She has taught across arts and cultural management at Birkbeck College, University of Gloucester and the University of Leeds since 1998. Between 1996-2006 she was Director of Live and Digital Arts at the ICA London. She was the inaugural Director of Programme at the relaunched Centre For Contemporary Arts, Glasgow (CCA) and founder of Vivienne Gaskin Cultural Management Ltd .2007 – 2012 representing the art careers of John Squire (Stone Roses), Edwyn Collins, KMA and Gina Czarnecki.

Karen Smith ‘Club, Screen and Space: 1980s Goth, Scala Cinema and the Batcave’ This proposal draws upon archival research and autoethnography; participation in the UK 1980s repertory cinema boom and beginnings of a London Goth scene. Distinct from other repertories as the ‘Sodom Odeon’ (Giles, 2008) the now closed *Scala Cinema*, King’s Cross – a ‘non-place’ (Augé, 2006) area of transition – had a well-deserved reputation for sex, drugs and rock’n’roll. The Rogue *Scala Cinema* offered space to subcultural groups and scenes enabling multiple and contradictory performances of self (Goffman, 1987) animated by the interaction between audiences, communities, fandoms, staff and the films on screen; a venue linking film, music, performance, clubbing, present and past.

Often associated with grindhouse (Atkinson, 2007), *Scala* horror screenings ranged from schlock, gore, cult to classics and many vampires (Giles, 1994; Stanley, 2001). After its move from Fitzrovia the *Scala* became ‘London’s premiere Batscreen’ (Unsworth, 2023), part of the London Goth scene alongside the Soho’s *Batcave* as London clubland renewed itself. Soho clubbing, with its combination of location, history, spaces, music, drama, excess and intoxicants, provided a stage upon which to present an experiment of the self, an excessive, fluid, Goth persona encouraged in part by memories of film and television and current screenings at the sometimes gothic *Scala*. The *Scala* and *Batcave* provide a focus for discussion of habitus and scene (rather than celebrity) of London Goth, bringing together horror film fans, the 1970s ‘Haunted Generation’, new clubs and music scenes (Bourdieu, 1992; Thornton, 1995; Straw, 2004; Stahl, 2019, 2022) in relation to films, music and club programming, and neighbourhood (Wood, 1986; Fisher 2016; Newman, 2005, 2011; Young, 2021). With qualitative and quantitative analyses of contemporary *Scala* promotional material, personal recollections, autoethnography as *Scala* manager and *Batcave* regular, this paper explores Goth scenes and city zones.

KEYWORDS: Scala, Cinema, Goth, Batcave, Subcultures

Karen Smith – short biography. Previously Principal Lecturer, Academic Leader, Deputy Leader Cass Art School at London Metropolitan University, Visiting Media Tutor at Birkbeck College for over 20 years, visiting BFI speaker on or teaching: media theory, changing media distribution and exhibition, international cinema history, subculture, cult, horror media. After studying anthropology, experience in film

programming, exhibition and distribution in repertory and alternative cinemas informs my research. Conference contributions based on my PhD (King's College) research includes papers on repertory and cult cinemas, horror, subculture histories and urban geographies. Forthcoming publications: chapters on gothic cinema and television, Irish horror films, folk horror and subcultures.

Nathaniel Weiner 'From Blitz Club to Companies: Art School, Subcultural Capital and the 1980s Creative Economy'

ABSTRACT: Established in 1979, the Blitz Club was an influential London nightclub famous for being “the spiritual nightclub home of the New Romantics” (Brownlee, 2011, p.92). Following in the wake of punk, the Blitz Club was known for the stylistic experimentation of its patrons, many of whom went on to prominence in the creative industries (Stratton, 2022; Worley, 2024). Held up as a metaphor for the Thatcherite consumer culture of the 1980s freeing individuals from collective identity to facilitate the pure creative expression of individual identity (Kallioniemi, 2017), the Blitz has been the subject of considerable mythmaking, Not least because so many Blitz Club luminaries went on to fame and fortune in the enterprise culture of 1980s Britain. This conference paper reports research from a project that delves deeper into the Blitz Club, going beyond the clichés and myths to understand the experiences and motivations of those lesser-known Blitz attendees whose stories have not been recounted in the books and exhibitions. This includes female participants, who have long complained of being excluded from official accounts of the scene (Morère, 2019; Worley, 2024), and those who went on to live lives outside the spotlight of minor celebrity. Drawing on interviews with 25 Blitz attendees, this paper focus on how in the context of the culturalization of the economy (Lash & Urry, 1994; McRobbie, 1988) and postmodern fragmentation (Jameson, 1991), the Blitz Club facilitated the trajectories of the lesser-known research participants into the creative industries of the 1980s. This is approached in terms of the '(sub)cultural capital' (Thornton, 1995) accrued at the Blitz and at London Art Schools more generally, with this paper arguing that the Blitz milieu was a vehicle for class mobility that facilitated careers in the creative industries even for the Blitz's less-known faces.

KEYWORDS: Blitz Club, Class, Creative economy, New Romantic, Subculture

Dr Nathaniel Weiner is a Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies at Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London). He holds a PhD in Communication & Culture from York University and Ryerson University's joint program. His research interests include consumption, digital cultures, masculinity, menswear and style subcultures. Nathaniel has published in *The European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *The International Journal of Fashion Studies*, *Men and Masculinities* and *Punk and Post-Punk*. His monograph *Sharp Dressed Men: Menswear, Masculinity and Consumption Online* is forthcoming from Palgrave Macmillan

Panel 3A: Shaping Culture: Theorising Culture**Chair: Matt Melia****Location: Seminar K****Melanie Anderson ‘Popular Culture on Trial: Tabloid Intrusion and the Limits of British Press Regulation’**

ABSTRACT: Prince Harry’s ongoing litigation against sections of the British press regarding unlawful methods of information gathering has been widely framed as a personal dispute between a highprofile celebrity and an intrusive media culture. This analysis argues instead that the case should be understood as a systemic regulatory failure within the UK’s post-Leveson press framework, and as revealing the governance of British popular culture.

By adopting a media policy perspective, this article situates Harry’s claims within a broader and pattern of tabloid intrusion, including phone hacking, the misuse of private investigators and the unlawful acquisition of personal data. The analysis examines the relationship between civil litigation, press self-regulation through the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and statutory protections under UK privacy and data protection law. Methodologically, it combines legal-doctrinal analysis with media governance theory, drawing on case law, regulatory codes, and policy debate sources surrounding press self-regulation. The discussion highlights how reliance on self-regulation has failed to deter unlawful practices and has instead placed the burden of enforcement on individual litigants rather than regulatory bodies. It explores how tabloid journalism mobilise discourses of press freedom and public interest in a bid to lend legitimacy to intrusive reporting of culturally significant figures, particularly members of the royal family. In this context, popular culture emerges as a regulatory blind spot: celebrity and scandal operate as economic drivers that systematically undermine ethical and legal constraints.

By reframing Harry’s litigation as a policy stress test rather than an exceptional celebrity dispute, this article contributes to debates on media governance, press accountability, and the future of UK press regulation in a digital, celebrity-driven media environment.

KEYWORDS: Media Governance, Popular Culture, Press Regulation, Privacy and Data Protection, Tabloid Journalism.

BIOGRAPHY: Melanie Anderson is a tenured Assistant Professor in British Media History and a permanent research member of the Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory for Societal Innovation (LIRIS) at the University of Rennes 2 in France. She holds a PhD in British Media History from the University of Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle and has previously been a Visiting Researcher at the University of Edinburgh’s Graduate School of Social and Political Science. Melanie Anderson’s research lies at the intersection of media history, political culture and regulation, with particular attention to press freedom, investigative journalism, journalistic ethics, political economy of the press, public interest, source protection, surveillance and freedom of expression.

Colm McAuliffe ‘It Works in Practice...But Will It Work in Theory?’

Abstract: What was theory in British popular culture? Why did it inform the workings of the BFI Education Department while appalling the BFI governors, yet still transform film into a serious site for study? How did the Conservative government fund Jacques Derrida's first major talk at a British institution? Why did a simple reading of a Roland Barthes text provide the rationale for a scratchy post-punk group like Scritti Politti to turn into a sleek, white soul outfit? Has the time come for us to truly historicise theory as a unique and staggering moment in contemporary British history? And most importantly, how can theory allow us to create a direct line between Russell Harty and Louis Althusser?

This paper considers that period in British history when Theory became capitalised. It offers an insight – theoretical but also gleefully indiscreet – into the journey of theory through para-academic institutions including the British Film Institute, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and the popular music press, asking what happens to abstruse thinking – often in another language – when it becomes appropriated outside the academy. The paper will predicate upon a series of unusual and unlikely coincidences between 'theory' and popular culture in Britain, and will shine a fresh and exciting light upon the astonishing history of theory's journey in Britain. It demonstrates how theory moved from seminar rooms to record sleeves, from Parisian lecture halls to *Screen* journal, creating a distinctive engagement with theoretical discourse that remains under-examined in histories of both popular culture and intellectual life.

Drawing on archival materials and incorporating video footage, this performance-paper traces the circulation of French theory through unexpected British cultural spaces, revealing how Continental philosophy collided with practical institutions, governmental funding structures, and creative practice.

Keywords: Theory, British Film Institute, Popular music, Para-academic institutions, Intellectual history

Bio: Dr. Colm McAuliffe is a writer and academic from Co. Cork, affiliated with Goldsmiths and Anglia Ruskin University. He has written about theory for years. His book on the BFI Education Department, *Film, In Theory*, is being published by Bloomsbury in February 2026. His next book on the wider trajectory of French theory in Britain will be published by University of Minnesota Press later this year. He has also worked on the Make Film History project – opening up institutional archives for creative reuse – with the BBC, BFI and others; written about popular and unpopular culture for *The Guardian*, *Sight & Sound*, and *New Statesman*; and programmed film festivals across the UK and Ireland. His work is represented by the Wylie Agency.

Contact: cm9265@aru.ac.uk

Panel 3B: Categorisation/Adaptation/Remediation

Chair: Johny Lamb

Location: Seminar L

Mark Fryers ‘Get the folk out?! The Problems of ‘Folk’ Horror’

The critical and generic category of ‘folk horror’ has become established and gathered extraordinary momentum over the past fifteen years. Conferences, collections, monographs and specially edited journals have sprung up in a remarkably short time period, while short story collections around the theme have proliferated. IMDB has been used to surreptitiously re-categorise texts long after they were released.

What is entirely absent is any critique of the term, something this paper will tentatively introduce. Texts like *The Wicker Man* were largely designated as part of a strain of occult or witchcraft films in the British canon, something now overlooked.

The problems can be both linguistic and conceptual, as well as problematic representationally. Most texts are only partly folkloric, in that they engage with folklore in an often-abstract manner. The real problem is the epithet ‘folk.’ Folk culture has a long history of being freely publicly available to use and reconfigure, tied to literal working-class communities and proud political and other forms of grass-roots resistance. Virtually none of the myriad texts designated ‘folk horror’ fall into any of these categories, let alone all, nor do they routinely function to keep folk cultures and languages alive in any meaningful way.

Furthermore, most of the representation of poor rural and coastal communities reinforces damaging top-down public discourse of these communities as backward, violent and uneducated; which renders discourse of these texts as being about cultural resistance problematic.

This paper will therefore challenge some of the axioms established, with reference to other disputed categories such as Film Noir (which, unlike ‘folk horror’ has an established visual language allied to thematic commonalities). It will question whether terms such as pagan horror, rural horror or simply ‘horror’ might actually be more useful categorial and generic distinctions to employ.

Keywords: ‘Folk’ Horror, British Culture, Popular Horror, Folk Culture, Problematic categories

Biography: Dr Mark Fryers is a Lecturer in Film and Media and founder member of the School of Creative Industries at the Open University, UK. He has published widely on film and television history and theory including in the *Journal of Popular Television*, *Gothic Nature*, *Revenant*, and *Critical Studies in Television* and edited collections. His monographs include the ‘Devils Advocates’ series book *The Woman in Black*, and the forthcoming *Cybernetic Imaginations* and *The Haunted Waters of British Film and Television: Dark Mythologies* for Palgrave’s Gothic series.

Thomas Gebhart ‘Putting the X in Comix: social media platforms, creation, and remediation in Quarantine Comix and Nap Comix’

As creative expressions that rely on digital tools and technologies, digital comics provide a compelling lens to examine how comics cultures and networks have developed in the digital environment. Nowhere is this more apparent than the number of comics creators that use social media platforms to publish, promote, and build communities online. Using social media makes comics publishing accessible to

creators from diverse and marginal backgrounds. Sean Kleefeld (2020) argues for a very personal side to how creators use social media, not just as a promotional tool or revenue stream but to build meaningful connections with creators and readers around shared identities and values. Publishing a comic on social media platforms means creators can attract a readership that is both specific and broad.

Taking Rachel Smith's *Quarantine Comix* and *Nap Comix* as case studies, this paper will explore aspects of the relationship between digital comics and social media platforms. It will examine how digital comics distributed via social media provide an interface for connection and collaboration between creator and reader. From here the paper will explore potential conflicts between the themes and content of digital comics and the technologies they rely on. It will argue that using social media platforms problematises the idea that the Web lets creators “explore the comics medium with an ethical dimension and a networked culture” (Fenty, Houp and Taylor 2004, p.10) because the cultural and social contexts of digital comics may be at odds with the cultural, social, and political contexts of the platforms they rely on.

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Keywords Digital comics, webcomics, platform economics, social media, community building.

Biography: Thomas Gebhart (he/him) is an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership PhD student at the British Library and University of the Arts London.

His research explores how UK digital comics offer new ways of telling stories and whose story is told. From here, his research examines how digital comics contribute to the aims and objectives of critical librarianship, taking advantage of the digital environment, to foreground marginal, alternative voices, to create more inclusive and diverse library and archive collections. In doing so, the research addresses the opportunities and challenges digital comics present to UK Non-Print Legal Deposit collection and preservation policy.

t.gebhart0720191@arts.ac.uk

Karolina Kosińska 'Adapting/Rendering Britain – The Silent Twins by Agnieszka Smoczyńska'

In 2022 Polish filmmaker Agnieszka Smoczyńska directed *The Silent Twins* – a specific biopic focusing on the lives of Black twin sisters, Jennifer and June Gibbons. The sisters grew up in a Welsh town in the 1970s, their parents were from Barbados, and the girls were born in Yemen. The family finally settled in the United Kingdom. The girls' peculiarity lay in their self-isolation from the world – from a very early age, they ceased to communicate with anyone but each other. They were inseparable and developed behavioural quirks. Their adolescence was full of experimentation with alcohol, drugs, and petty crime, as well as interventions from psychologists and therapists. Ultimately, they spent over a decade in Broadmoor psychiatric hospital.

The aforementioned specificity of this biopic lies in the directorial and narrative perspectives. Rather than portraying the lives of the sisters, attempts to present their inner world. The film is a double adaptation, based not only on Marjorie Wallace's 1987 biographical book, but also on the Gibbons' twins private art/works/texts. Smoczyńska mixes animation and songs with real events into create a visually stunning fantasy.

However, there is also a third level of adaptation. Although the story is set in Wales and the main characters are played by British actresses, but the production was based in Poland. The entire set was built in Lower Silesia, and the Broadmoor corridors and views from the windows bear the hallmarks of typical Polish architecture and landscapes. Thus, Smoczyńska adapts Britain itself, negotiating its identity rather than reproducing it. just as any other identities are negotiated here. In my presentation, I will explore this third type of adaptation by analysing the tension between the 'real life' locations and their artificial, foreign renditions.

Karolina Kosińska: Assistant Professor in the Department of Film Studies, Audiovisual Arts, And Cultural Anthropology at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IS PAN). She is the editor-in-chief of the academic film journal *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, published by IS PAN. Her book based on her doctoral thesis, *Androgyn. Tożsamość, tęsknota, pragnienie* (2015), has been awarded the Bolesław Michalek Award as the best film studies publication of 2014-2015. Curator of the British Film Festival in Poznań. She is interested in British social cinema, Irish cinema, and forms of cinematic social realism.

karolina.kosinska@ispan.pl

Keywords: Agnieszka Smoczyńska; Jennifer and June Gibbons; production design; adaptation

Panel 3C: Imagining the Past

Chair: Roddy Hawkins

Location: Lecture B

Cat Mahoney 'Pop-History: Projecting the politics and aesthetics of the present onto reimagined pasts in *Bridgerton* and *My Lady Jane*'

This paper is interested in an emergent trend in British period drama characterised by series such as *Bridgerton* (Netflix 2021 –) and *My Lady Jane* (Amazon Prime 2024) that it argues represents a new iteration of the relationship between popular culture and British history. These series move away from the realism and naturalistic style of traditional period drama to present versions of the past imbued with modern aesthetics and sensibilities. Incorporating music, costumes and casting choices that are deliberately anachronistic, these series signal their inaccuracy and unreality. Moving away from the naturalism that characterises series such as *Call the Midwife* (BBC 1 2012 –), *Downton Abbey* (ITV 2010-2015) and *The Crown* (Netflix 2016 – 2023), the artificiality of these series is marketed as part of their appeal. Taking into account existing debates around period and heritage drama's previous characterisation as "bad objects" (Monk 1995; Higson

2012), this paper considers the implications of this new mode of historical drama for the relationship between popular culture, history and memory.

Scholars such as deGroot (2015; 2016) argue that historical dramas offer alternative and often more accessible ways of knowing and imagining history via the medium of popular culture. In so doing, these pop-histories suggest the possibility of multiple or polysemic histories with their fictive narratives becoming enmeshed in and in some cases inextricable from popular conceptions of the past. Despite their patent and purposeful inauthenticity, this paper argues that dramas such as *Bridgerton* and *My Lady Jane* still contribute to our collective ‘historical imaginary’ deGroot (2016: 71). It is therefore necessary to consider the stories these series tell about the past and which elements of British history, identity and culture they choose to preserve and which they seek to challenge.

Bio: Dr Cat Mahoney is a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media at the University of Liverpool. Her research focuses on the relationship between television, history and memory with a specific focus on representations of gendered histories. Her forthcoming monograph *Imagining alternative histories of Britain and Northern Ireland in television drama. British Fictions and Fictional Britains*, will be published by Routledge.

Susan Imgram/Markus Reisenleitner ‘Bletchley’s Colossal Enigma of Imitation’

Bletchley Park’s role in code-breaking during the Second World War has become a highlight of progressivist British popular cultural memory. Continuing interest in British lineages of cryptography complements and counteracts hegemonic narratives about the US as the vanguard of developments in computer science through, first, their superior military research funding and, then, the startup culture of Silicon Valley.

In reading the well-known star vehicles *Enigma* (2001, based on Robert Harris’s 1995 novel) and *The Imitation Game* (2014, based on Andrew Hodges’s 1983 biography of Alan Turing), together with TV programmes that negotiate Britain’s cultural memory of its cryptography expertise: *The Bletchley Circle* (2012), its spin-off, *The Bletchley Circle: San Francisco* (2018), and *Prime Target* (2025), we situate the emergence of computer-based expertise in larger historical trajectories of British imperialism and post-war transatlantic lines of connectivity with the United States and explore how the fissures and contradictions of the British national popular related to “just” wars are negotiated. With a special emphasis on the role of women and the rehabilitation of Alan Turing, narratives that invoke Bletchley tend to draw attention to classist, patriarchal, heteronormative, and colonial legacies in their reappraisals of the dynamics of computer science developments on both sides of the Atlantic, and notably not the invention of the Colossus computer to aid decryption calculations. Our most recent example, the mini-series *Prime Target*, a UK/US production by AppleTV, pitches a queer White Cambridge PhD student prodigy, whose dissertation could herald the end of encryption, and a renegade non-binary Black ex-NSA super-hacker against American omnipresent surveillance, a private company that loosely resembles Cambridge Analytica, and a deadly Cambridge don, bringing together several dimensions of an imaginary that has had a profound impact on popular understandings of

the current roles of computer science and cryptography.

Keywords: Bletchley Park, Enigma codebreakers, Alan Turing, computing, cultural memory

Susan Ingram and Markus Reisenleitner are both Professors of Humanities at York University in Toronto (singram@yorku.ca / mrln@yorku.ca). Their research focusses on the intersections and socio-political implications of popular culture, Digital Humanities, the urban, fashion, and the legacies of European cultural modernity. They are the coauthors of *Wiener Chic: A Locational History of Vienna Fashion* and *L.A. Chic: A Locational History of L.A. Fashion* (both published with Intellect Books), and their *Silicon Chic: How Silicon Valley Restyled the World in its Digital Image* is forthcoming with Intellect.

Francis Mickus ‘Escape and Escapism in The Cadfael Chronicles’

When Ellis Peters invented Brother Cadfael, she never thought she would be inventing a new book series, let alone a new literary genre : the medieval mystery. Cadfael may not have microscope or a magnifying glass, but he does have a lab. More importantly, he holds the key to a gateway.

The originality of Peters’ novels lies in her propensity to draw similarities between the Shrewsbury under King Stephen and Comerford, the contemporary stand in for Shropshire, in her previous Inspector Felse series. For one thing people move in Peter’s medieval world. They have to. Stephen’s reign is termed The Anarchy, as it was dominated by the contested succession between Stephen and Henry I’s daughter Mathilda (named Maud in the series). Thus, characters embracing one side or the other are constantly trying to avoid detection while advancing their cause.

Cadfael and his abbey stand as a neutral ground with its own moral imperatives. Cadfael finds himself helping young idealists, or even not so young sinners, escape the clutches of an unstable society and its laws. By exploiting detective fiction, Peters explores the moral and social similarities between both worlds.

The medieval world becomes a place at the same time recognizable and different. Cadfael was intended as a character in a stand-alone novel, but Peters found herself drawn into what would become her final book series and artistic testament. The books series becomes her private garden which she charts in detail and invites us to discover. Even the mysteries are upstaged. The Cadfael Chronicles are a world we enjoy rediscovering, they are one of the few mystery novels people reread.

Peters throttles the idea that the Middle Ages are the antithesis of the contemporary age. The Middle Ages are as familiar as yesterday.

Francis Mickus is completing his Doctorate in History at the University of Paris 1, Pantheon-Sorbonne. His thesis topic involves the politics behind the use of Henry V’s imagery. For his two Masters in Art History at the Sorbonne’s Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art (University of Paris IV, he studied the imagery of

Henry V King of England in the first -year dissertation, and the film adaptation of Shakespeare's plays with the character of Henry V (Olivier, Welles, Branagh) in the second year. He holds an earlier Maîtrise in Modern Letters from the Sorbonne Nouvelle (University Paris III), which discussed the 1939 film adaptation of Hugo's Notre Dame de Paris.

He has written a number of papers on Henry V in both politics and culture, on film (Hitchcock, Welles, Zemeckis, Wyler), and on the relationship between history and images. He is the editor of A Critical Companion to David Fincher, and is completing a collective volume on William Shakespeare's The Tempest. He currently works at the Musée d'Orsay

Afternoon break: 15.45pm – 16.15pm, Upper Stannary, 2nd Floor Daphne Du Maurier Building

Session 4: 16.15 – 17.30pm

Panel 4A: Sound & Listening Cultures

Chair: Kat Flint-Nicol

Location: Seminar K

Matt Ashdown 'Access, Agency, and Systems Thinking: Modular Synthesis and Space'

Modular synthesis is often understood as a niche music technology associated with experimental sound and specialist communities. This paper explores its potential as a form of accessible cultural pedagogy through which participants develop systems thinking and signal processing literacy, with relevance to understanding complex technological infrastructures, including those associated with space and communications systems.

Drawing on practice-based work developed through Moogie Wonderland's Cornwall Youth Noise Orchestra programme across community, informal learning, formal education settings, and interdisciplinary contexts, the paper examines how modular synthesizers support engagement with concepts such as signal flow, modulation, feedback, calibration, and failure through hands-on, exploratory practice. These concepts are encountered not abstractly, but through tactile, audible, and socially situated activity, allowing participants to experiment with complexity, interdependence, and emergent behaviour.

The paper reflects on questions of access, particularly for participants who face barriers to traditional music education or arts provision. It considers how modular sound practice, delivered at a flexible and responsive pace rather than through standardised formats, can support participation, confidence, and sustained engagement, and how this may widen participants' sense of what forms of education or future pathways — including technical or space-related fields — might be possible or imaginable.

The paper situates modular synthesis within traditions of British DIY culture, electronic music practice, and informal technological learning, and considers its recent resurgence in relation to wider cultural interests in transparency, agency, and material engagement with technology. Rather than proposing modular synthesis as a substitute for disciplinary education, it considers its value as a complementary, practice-led approach to systems literacy rooted in popular culture and sound practice.

The presentation may take the form of a paper or a hybrid practice–theory session incorporating short demonstrations of modular patches used to explore signalprocessing techniques common to both music and space communications.

Keywords: Modular synthesis, DIY culture, sound practice, systems thinking, space imaginaries

Author Bio: Matt Ashdown is an experimental musician, educator, and programme designer, and Director of Moogie Wonderland, a Cornwall-based organisation developing practiceled approaches to sound, systems thinking, and access. He devised and leads the Cornwall Youth Noise Orchestra, through which he develops modular synthesis as a form of cultural pedagogy, creating flexible, exploratory learning environments that support participation, agency, and engagement across community and educational contexts.

Jean Baptiste Masson “Using a tape recorder is an initiation to a way of life”: Sound hunters, tape-recording clubs, and the pursuit of sound in Britain’

While mostly forgotten nowadays, sound hunting (the hobby of sound recording) was a popular activity from the 1950s to the 1980s. Britain was an active country, with numerous sound hunters: in 1964, the magazine *Amateur Tape Recording* listed more than 140 tape recording clubs in England alone. At that time, three different magazines were dedicated to the pursuit, with a combined print-run of almost 100,000 copies per month. Local and national contests were organised, and a programme existed on the Third Programme for several years. Beyond Britain, an international contest and an international federation also existed, with a European (East and West) reach.

This presentation will offer an overview of the sound hunting movement in Britain. The first part will show how it started, evolved, and changed. Sound hunters were amateurs and the diversity of their backgrounds will be highlighted. In a second part, I will show that through the tape recording clubs, the magazines, and the radio programme, it was a knowledge about listening and sound recording that sound hunters developed. This happened while the independent sound recording sector was nascent. Sound hunters filled spots where businesses were only burgeoning or non-existing, and several of them used tape recording clubs as a springboard to develop their own sound businesses. A last part will look more closely at sound hunters’ recordings, to introduce their aesthetics. It will be the opportunity to listen to several tapes: home recordings, travelogue, bird songs, trains, and a piece about sinks of South-West England, composed by a salesman from Oxford (a

piece that won the Grand Prix of the 12th edition of the International Amateur Recording Contest).

Keywords: msound hunting; tape recorder; tape recording club; hobby; listening

Biography: Jean-Baptiste Masson just achieved a Marie Skłodowska-Curie / Bienvenüe fellowship based at the Université Rennes 2 and at the Cinémathèque de Bretagne, where he wrote a manual for the restoration of the sound of amateur films. He was previously a fellow of the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities at the University of York, where he worked on the history of the sonic practices of amateur sound recordists – the sound hunters – in France and Britain. His first monograph, *Sound Hunters. A History of Amateur Sound Recording*, is to be published by Routledge in May 2026. Besides his research, Jean-Baptiste is also a composer and improviser working with instruments, microphones, and machines. jbmasson.com

Panel 4B: Locating the Celtic

Chair: Johny Lamb

Location: Seminar L

Daryl Perrins ‘Can you imagine Lou Reed walking ‘round Banwen’? Searching for ‘Cool Cymru’ in 90’s Welsh Cinema’

‘[t]he shape of Wales, more than most, is in constant movement [...]. Our experiences have been so dynamic and so shifting that if the shapes had not changed, we should now be wholly adrift: adrift of ourselves’ (Raymond Williams 1979).

This paper considers the relationship between the cultural movement known as ‘Cool Cymru’ and three English-language films from the 1990s set in South Wales; *House of America* (Evans, 1997), *Twin Town* (Allen, 1997), and *Human Traffic* (Kerrigan, 1999). It first establishes the iconoclastic value placed on this short film cycle within the national motif of ‘remaking Wales’ (Thomas: 1997) in the time of devolution. The paper will then contend that the expropriation of the ‘oppositional attitude’ (Pountain and Robins: 2000) of ‘cool’ for the purposes of nation building runs counter to the Welsh national project. Rather for example these independent films offer a robust working through of Neo-Liberalism and its ill effect on the future for Welsh youth post devolution.

Notably, all three films are critical of the atomised working practices, identified as signs of Welsh cultural confidence (Woodward: 2006). Indeed, I will argue that they warn against the shift away from the collective and masculine clichés associated with the heavy industries of coal and steel. The paper will conclude by looking at how the soundtracks of each film play out this battle between national reinvention and nostalgia (*hiraeth*), via an often-jarring montage of musical genres and artists e.g., the Welsh male voice choir and the Welsh indie band Catatonia (*Twin Town*) and The Velvet Underground and Tom Jones (*House of America*). And that these songs offer the often-mute working-class witnesses held within these post-industrial narratives, a subjectivity beyond their now stilted vocabulary.

Keywords: Cinema, identity, Wales, music, devolution

Bio: Dr Daryl Perrins is a Cardiffian and one-time Coleg Harlech mature student who has taught Film and Television studies at The University of South Wales since his graduation from said institute some three decades ago. He also now holds a doctorate from Royal Holloway, University of London. Daryl's primary research interests revolve around the representation of the Welsh working class in popular film and TV. He has published on rereading the value of the mining cycle of films- *How Green was my Valley* (Ford:1943) etc... and on the role of both the English and Welsh language in the development of modes of Welsh film and TV drama. Comedy is a central tool in the negotiation of these two cultures, as argued in his most recent output; 'Now Say Something in... Welsh': *Gavin and Stacey in Translation* (2023). Daryl is presently working on his first monograph for University of Wales Press; 'They can't stop us singing': Film, Television, and the Representation of the Welsh Working Class'. He is now semi-retired and when not teaching or writing he leads 'The Atrium Ramblers', leading staff and students alike around the untrodden paths of South Wales, in an effort to uncover its folklore and legacy of radical politics. He is also a stand-up comic and has recently been cutting his comedy teeth at gigs in Kentish Town, Bristol and Bath and he says he now feels ready to be cancelled- 'please'!

Malu Barroso 'Strange Folk Have Been Seen to Pass This Way': Celtic Scotland, Wales, and Ireland in Contemporary Folk Horror'

This paper is concerned with the representation of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish national identity within the contemporary revival of the folk horror subgenre. It will identify the themes, tropes, and motifs of the classic period of the genre, which is epitomised by films such as the 'unholy trilogy' – *Witchfinder General* (Reeves, 1968), *The Blood on Satan's Claw* (Haggard, 1971), and *The Wicker Man* (Hardy, 1973).

Upon establishing the foundations of the genre in British cinema, it will compare its classic period to the new wave of independent folk horror films that use generic elements to break away from the inherent 'Britishness' of the genre and to focus on the national identity of its individual countries instead. This will be explored through the Celtic nations of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, with a specific film being analysed as a case study for each country: *Harvest* (Tsangari, 2024), *The Feast* (Jones, 2021), and *All You Need Is Death* (Duane, 2023), respectively.

In closely analysing Scottish, Welsh, and Irish folklore and mythology through the themes of rural landscape, cultural isolation, and skewed belief systems seen in the films, this paper will address key issues of post-colonialism and national identity within small nations. It will establish the aesthetic of this new wave of nationalist folk horror, arguing that the revival of the subgenre in the twenty-first century strays away and deconstructs the amalgamated 'Britishness' of classic folk horror, instead focusing on local Scottish, Welsh, and Irish traditions. Thus proving that filmmakers, audiences, and scholars alike are, as the Judge from *Blood on Satan's Claw* put it, 'bent on reviving [the] forgotten horrors' of the Celtic lands.

Keywords: folk horror / film / Celtic identity / post-colonial / folklore

Panel 4C: 'Feels So Real' - Embodiment in Culture**Chair: Nathaniel Weiner****Location: Lecture B****Mark Leary 'The Pull of the Tide: Surfers' Sensations, Perceptions and Embodiment Through a Lens-Based Practice.'**

Surfing is a draw for many, through which meaning emerges from embodied, sensory engagement in the act itself, connection with blue space, and rich cultural associations. Grounded in practice-led research, this visual ethnographic study explores surfing as a multi-sensory mode of engagement—shaped by the dynamic interaction of body, mindfulness, environment, place, and culture—and tests how such lived practices are visually documented.

Although surfing is now a global practice, its visual representation often feels prosaic. Despite its worldwide reach, cultural depictions of surfing remain largely tied to imagery of the Pacific West Coast. American ideals have long influenced British surfing, and yet, regularly surfing on UK shores requires a different approach due to the often inhospitable conditions and frequently mediocre wave quality. This study frames these conditions not as deficiencies but as sites where alternative visual regimes and embodied aesthetics emerge, challenging established surf imaginaries.

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology and Gibson's ecological approach to perception, this study examines how lens-based ethnography may evoke surfers' embodied experiences. The research examines the affordances and limitations of photographic and lens-based methods, positioning creative practice not only as a mode of representation but as a primary method of inquiry through making.

The project contends that visual ethnography both reveals and limits. Whilst lens-based imagery can communicate sensory elements—such as texture, movement, and rhythm—it often fails to convey the emotional and affective intensity of surfing. To address this, the methodology combines iterative cycles of fieldwork, collaborative engagement, creative experimentation, and reflexive analysis.

By blending visual anthropology, sensory ethnography, and practice-based research, this approach positions the camera as both observer and participant, positioning creative practice as both method and theory-building process: seeking to evoke—rather than simply document—embodied and affective experiences, foregrounding visual practice as a critical, relational, and theoretical mode of inquiry.

Keywords: Surfing · Photography · Embodied · Sensory · Movement**Bio|:** Mark Leary is an award-winning visual artist, lecturer, and PhD researcher.

Implementing experimental photographic practices, Mark's research interrogates the everyday, examining why the commonplace is often overlooked in favour of moments of grandeur. By reimagining the familiar, he explores whether a photograph's subject can evoke reverie through association, or whether reverie arises from the way an image is presented.

His current research, 'The Pull of the Tide', investigates how lens-based ethnography can translate surfers' sensorial, embodied, immersive experiences, and how its capacities and limitations might reshape understandings of embodiment in visual research.

Over the past fifteen years, Mark has exhibited widely at galleries and creative spaces, including The Photographers' Gallery, London. He has spoken nationally about his practice and produced award-winning fine art images, films, advertising campaigns, design and editorial work, as well as two photographic art books: *Made in China* (2007) and *Salt+Wax* (2012).

Mark is a PhD researcher and module leader on the MA Photography (Online) at Arts University Bournemouth. He previously led the BA Photography programme at Bournemouth University. He holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Education and an MA in Photography, where his research explored individuals' journeys and their desire for moments of solitude.

Ellie Neason 'Squatting in the 00: Embodied Liminality; Crusty Culture and the Technologically Mediated Body'

Keywords: Performance, Embodiment, Nomadism, Posthuman, Technoculture

Culture, individualism and diversity has spawned out of the rapid progression in technologies, offering a boundless platform for globalising identity play and individual expression. Nomads, ravers and 'crusty's' knew this instinctively. The old-school hippy type meets the new-school raver as bodies pulsate in unison to the 4/4 kick and resonant bassline of acid-house in the late 80's, refusing compliance, dissolving stagnant boundaries and rejoicing in the hedonism and diversity of a new mosaic movement.

But the shaping of culture through global connectivity and digital fusion is a twisted script. With the British crusty phenomena operating as an inclusive host for cultural transformation, optimism collided with radicalisation and the well-intentioned was met with widespread disenchantment. Technologies became a part of the environmental condition, revealing and uneasy marriage as a symbiotic, relational cybernetic prosthesis to human life.

As boundaries between the biological and the technological collapse in modern culture and identity performance, a liminal space emerges in which, I propose, the corporeal body becomes a contradictory prosthesis - an abject contemporary monster that exposes creation through chaos, imminent action as a flesh that resists algorithmic self-fashioning.

Through a performative telling, this paper presents the British 'crusty' as an unlikely lens for understanding bodily transformations in technologically mediated culture. Drawing on cyborgian theories and Rosi Braidotti's theory of Nomadic Subjectivity (2012), this piece positions the 'crusty' as a potent antagonist and monstrous simulacrum for the corporeal body that is caught in the uneasy marriage between flesh and device. Through radical mal-function the crusty performs its logic. Unclean and uncooperative; a disenfranchised parasite, squatting in the underground.

Bio: Ellie Neason is a PhD researcher with the Centre for Blended Realities at Falmouth University. Through trans-disciplinary practice spanning performance, film, writing and installation practice, Ellie's work explores the body as a perceptual cite for understanding and investigation. Highlighting the liberational potential of embodied conversation, they explore the ways we perceive and understand lived experiences in and through technological worlds. Investigating slippages of the body and spaces for corporeal agency in modern social, political and physical landscapes, their practice currently examines the co-production of identity, culture and consciousness with intelligent technologies through the lens of nomadism.

Matthew Rogers 'The 'Fuck It!' Principle: psychoactive drug use in contemporary British Film.'

Abstract: This paper seeks to build upon a nascent research interest that explores how British filmmakers employ on-screen (or implied) depictions of psychoactive drugs use as a plot device that both establishes and destabilises a nationally specific logic within the storyworld of their films through the deliberate development of an expanded cinematic syntax, which positions the audience within an indeterminate, corporeally-inflected, spectatorial position. Proposing a linkage between specifically British on-screen depictions of drug culture, and an intoxicant-specific somatic responses to the readings of scenes of drug culture inside the minds (and bodies) of an audience suggests a correlation between the actions of other embodied forms of film spectatorship, such as horror (fear), comedy (hilarity), pornography (arousal), by positing that scenes of drug culture and drug taking induce what could be described as a 'contact-high' within the spectatorial pleasures of the audience.