

**BRITISH POPULAR CULTURE(S) CONFERENCE: SPEAKER ABSTRACTS & BIOS**

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## Thursday 5th June

**Panel 1A: PL Lecture 2**  
**Finding your community**

Michael Peplar: Associate Professor of History, Northeastern University – London  
'East London, Music Hall and Modern Urban Popular Culture: Placing the early Hoxton Hall in Context'.

**Abstract:**

[Hoxton Hall](#) opened as 'Mortimer's Hall' in November 1863, part of a wave of purpose-built music halls which appeared in London after the successful building of the new Canterbury Music Hall in Lambeth. Mortimer's project, which was part of a movement to provide 'rational entertainments', was short-lived and the hall soon changed hands, reopening as MacDonald's Music Hall. Adjacent to the new Mortimer's Hall was another purpose-built music hall, The Britannia. What spurred this new trend for purpose-built music halls? And how does the history of the early Hoxton Hall fit into the wider context of the development of public entertainment spaces in East London?

This paper will seek to answer these questions by introducing the early history of Hoxton Hall and by placing the hall in its wider and longer-term historical context. To do this it will trace the antecedents of purpose-built musical halls back to the early adapted halls of the 1840s, the song-and-supper rooms of the early nineteenth-century, and further back to the pleasure gardens and associated popular concert halls of the eighteenth century. The paper will situate the history of these popular entertainment spaces within the context of the emerging modern city with its mass population, newly industrialized and internationalizing economy, and diversifying popular culture.

The paper will show how Hoxton Hall was conceived and developed within a set of specific contexts connected to the development of mass entertainments in London and the emergence of new - as well as the decline of older - popular cultural spaces in mid-to -late nineteenth century London.

This paper is part of a wider project commissioned by the trustees of Hoxton Hall to bring together academic and community historians to write a history of the hall.

**Key words:**

Music-hall; east-London; modern; urban; history

**Brief Biography**

Dr Michael Peplar is Associate Professor of History at Northeastern University - London where he is Director of the Doctoral School and teaches courses in modern History. Previously, he taught for many years at Boston University's London campus where he ran the Undergraduate History Research Programme and taught courses in the history of London, including *Cultural Capital: The History of London's Popular Culture*. His recent work on Hoxton Hall is due to be published by Exeter University Press in 2025 in a multi-author book on the history of the hall.

**Jeanie Sinclair, Falmouth University**

'The Season of the Witch: Women, Parties and Pop Culture in 1960s St Ives'.

**Keywords: Creative economy, counterculture, feminism, community, tourism**

Described variously as bohemians, bluestockings and beatniks, women came to St Ives in the years after the Second World War because of the towns' reputation for utopian bohemianism, and the freedoms this promised. This paper uses gossip as a framework to explore the gendered experience of 1960s popular culture in Cornwall. By looking at how women performed countercultural femininity in 1960s St Ives, I will show how this community created a sense of both individual and collective identity as a form of resistance to patriarchal capitalism, and how this identity was expressed and shared through parties. As somewhere that was both remote from, but connected to, urban centres, St Ives was a place where women were able to transgress heteronormative gender roles. The creative community in St Ives offered women support networks, pedagogical frameworks and social spaces that made it somewhere women could live independently and be part of the creative economy. The party was the locus for women's social and cultural exchange; a social space in which women came together to create and define their community. The party was a social sculpture, that developed, defined and maintained these social and cultural identities, and brought people together to gossip, and in doing so, defined and strengthened a sense of community and place. This paper explores the party as a form of cultural and countercultural practice where women got together and formed cohesive communities as a form of resistance. Drawing on oral histories from the St Ives Archive, gossip is a powerful tool that can unearth hidden and alternative queer and feminine

narratives of modernities. (Rogoff, 1996) Using gossip as a methodology reveals the importance of feminine sociability, the party as an alternative, feminine creative practice, and the complex relationships and vital support networks that developed between women in St Ives' postwar art community.

Jeanie Sinclair (she/her) is a lecturer in critical studies at Falmouth University. Her research uses gossip in oral histories as a feminist epistemology to undermine and dismantle dominant narratives. She is particularly interested in how archives can be performed in different ways to reveal hidden histories.

Jessica Beechey, Falmouth University

### **Cornish Identity, Marginalised Communities, and Sound Art as Political Agency**

Cornwall occupies a complex position within British popular culture - simultaneously romanticised as a site of Celtic heritage and tourism, yet historically marginalised through economic precarity and cultural erasure. This paper explores the intersection of Cornish identity, regional creative economies, and the political agency of marginalised communities through sound art practice. Drawing from my practice-based PhD research, which examines the dialogue between sound art and Cornish manmade subterranean heritage sites, I argue that sound can function as a form of resistance - amplifying voices that have been historically silenced.

The paper situates Cornwall's industrial and cultural history within broader discussions of popular culture, exploring how the region's mining heritage and contemporary socio-economic struggles inform creative practices. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR), my project engages with marginalised communities - including the Cornish, refugees, ethnic minorities, and queer communities - through deep listening, soundwalks, and site-specific performances in former mining sites and fogous. These practices facilitate new narratives of belonging and challenge dominant representations of Cornish identity that often exclude its diverse inhabitants.

By framing Cornish soundscapes as both a cultural archive and a living, evolving expression of identity, I propose that sound art can create a space for political agency - redefining Cornwall's place within British popular culture beyond nostalgia or myth. The presentation will offer insight into how sonic methodologies can contest erasure, reframe identity, and activate regional creative economies. Ultimately, this research highlights the power of sound as a tool for both cultural preservation and transformation, reinforcing the necessity of inclusive and critically engaged approaches to popular culture in Britain today.

This paper contributes to discussions on regional popular cultures, interdisciplinary creative practices, and the intersections of identity, politics, and sound.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Cornish identity /Deep Listening/Sound art /Heritage /Political agency

**BIO:**

Jessica Beechey is a Cornish sound artist, sound designer, and researcher whose work explores the intersections of sound, identity, and landscape. She creates minimalist, drone-based compositions using field recordings, interactive systems, and generative techniques, often engaging with the unique sonic properties of Cornwall's subterranean heritage - particularly its mines and fogous, ancient underground structures. Her current PhD research examines how sound art can activate these spaces as sites of political agency, amplifying the voices of marginalised communities in Cornwall through participatory methods such as deep listening, soundwalks, and site-specific performance. By blending acoustic and acoustemological perspectives, her work investigates how these enigmatic environments may have functioned as ritual spaces while interrogating contemporary narratives of Cornish identity and cultural belonging. Beyond her sound practice, Jessica is the founder of *Boulderdash Zine*, a DIY publication celebrating the intersection of stones, drones, and noise. She is also the synth bassist for Thee Alcoholics, a touring and recording noise-rock band known for their raw, experimental sound.

**Panel 1B:**

**Digging your scene? Subcultural style**

Nick Clements, UAL Central Saint Martins

'Style Transfer: The Role of the Glimpse and the Subcultural Stylist in the Context of the Southern Soul Boy Scene (1973-1982)'.

**Keywords:** clean, flaneur, glimpse, soul, stylist.

**Popular Culture Category:** Fashion, alternative scenes and practices.

The focus of this research is towards a greater understanding of the 'glimpse' as a physical and theoretical phenomenon, that is mooted as a significant agent in the transfer of style within subcultural milieux. With similar concepts already defined by Martin Heidegger in the 'augenblick' (blink of an eye) and further developed by Henri Cartier-Bresson in the 'decisive moment', this research runs in parallel to a significant body of existing literature to which, this research aspires to contribute. The human vector for glimpse events is the seldom addressed subcultural 'stylist', who acts as the glimpse receiver, editor and translator. So that useful data might be gathered, the two freewheeling phenomena of the 'glimpse' and the 'stylist' must be corralled into a single subculture and within specific dates, so that data-collection through interviews and photo-elicitation has the highest possibility of achieving meaningful outcomes. Thus, a less-known subculture, referred to by David Buckingham as 'southern soul boys' (c.1973-c.1982), has been chosen as the field of study. Largely ignored in academic circles and vastly overshadowed by the canon on Northern Soul, southern soul disrupts the cultural studies narrative of gritty working-class resistance or bourgeoisie counter-cultural political

engagement. Pragmatic, entrepreneurial and multi-ethnic, southern soul boys are situated towards the end of a timeline of ‘clean’ subcultures, that started with the mods. These council estate flâneurs from the suburbs initiated many of the original punk styles in dress, kick-started the Soho club scene of the early 1980s, made music and had an immeasurable influence on male style.

### **Biography**

After graduating from the RCA with an MPhil (Fashion Menswear) in 2011, I ended my 30-year career as a menswear photographer and moved into teaching. Since then, I have been a senior lecturer in sociology with a specialisation in British, style-based subcultures.

### **Russ Bestley, London College of Communication**

#### **‘Punk As Product: Selling the New Wave’.**

This paper reflects on the ways that the punk subculture has been marketed and commercialised over the past fifty years through advertising, branding, journalism, graphic and product design. This has led in turn to a range of ‘punk’ products spanning music, fashion and lifestyle, print and television media, interior design and decoration, even toys and collectables. The critical context of the paper centres on the marketization of ‘punk history’ as we approach the forthcoming 2026/27 official fiftieth anniversary of punk’s ‘Year Zero’ moment, with major galleries, museums and institutions vying with publishers, record labels and live events promoters to capture the ‘punk pound’ while the market is still hot.

The core focus of this paper is on the ways in which information relating to punk and new wave music and fashion was disseminated in the United Kingdom between 1976 and 1979, particularly through the promotion of punk as a new pop trend for consumption by teenagers and young adults in the wider regions of the UK, where direct contact with the high profile and much documented scene in London or Manchester was limited. Running counter to the narrow, overly exposed and exhausted history of a small, elite scene in the capital, this body of research seeks to understand how punk was mediated and marketed through journalism, graphic design, branding and advertising, to a national audience of young potential fans. Examples of commercial and promotional material cited include articles, posters and pin-up photographs in teenage magazines such as *Oh Boy!*, *Blue Jeans*, *Mates* and *Jackie*, unofficial and unlicensed commercial products (from badges and clothing to jewellery, ornaments and bubble gum cards), along with the development of a ‘new wave’ visual style suitable for the pop music marketplace.

### **Keywords**

Punk, New Wave, Media, Magazines, Teenage

### **Dr Russ Bestley**

**Reader in Graphic Design & Subcultures, London College of Communication**

Author and designer Russ Bestley is Reader in Graphic Design & Subcultures at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts, London. He is lead editor of the journal *Punk & Post-Punk*, series editor and art director for the Global Punk book series (Intellect), a founding member of the Punk Scholars Network (PSN) and the UAL Subcultures Interest Group (SIG). His research archive can be accessed at [www.hitsvilleuk.com](http://www.hitsvilleuk.com).

**Jake Hawkes, Central Saint Martins, UAL**

**‘Happy Days?: Examining Nostalgic Youth Culture in London 1978-1988 through Rockabilly and Psychobilly’.**

**Abstract:** Subcultural research covering the period 1978-1988 focusses on a London that was dominated by subcultures which looked to the present or future, such as punk, post-punk, the new romantics, synth-pop, and to the emergence of rave music (Thornton 1995; Worley 2017). In the same period however, an explosion of nostalgic subcultures took place which drew stylistic, musical, and cultural inspiration from images of the past.

This paper uses the British youth subcultures rockabilly and psychobilly, its horror and sci-fi inspired evolution, in London 1978-88 as case studies to examine nostalgia in subcultures and wider British popular culture during the studied period, exploring why these two subcultures moved away from contemporary influences and instead became enamoured with a mythical 1950s of jukeboxes, roadside diners, and rock ‘n’ roll.

Reporting preliminary findings of a research project on the nostalgic Americanisation of rockabilly and psychobilly, this paper argues that these subcultures, while considered less worthy of attention than novel, future-facing groups of the time, were just as influential on British youth and popular culture as the futuristic androgyny of synth-pop or the ‘year zero’ mantra of punk.

It does so by qualitatively utilising primary evidence including fanzines, imagery, and the music press, examining the influences on these subcultures (including films such as *American Graffiti* and television shows such as *Happy Days*, which mythologised the American ‘fifties’) and the subcultures’ internal views of how and why they were mediating American and British influences. In prioritising direct quotations, thoughts, and feelings it will recreate the structure of feeling (Williams 1961) of the time, uncovering two ignored subcultures and their place within the studied period. The paper concludes that rockabilly and psychobilly were at the forefront of a wave of working-class nostalgia within popular culture during the studied period.

**Keywords:** Subcultures, Nostalgia, Americanisation, Rockabilly, Psychobilly

**Bio:** Jake Hawkes is a PhD Student at Central Saint Martins, UAL, focussing on the nostalgic Americanisation of music subcultures with specific focus on rockabilly and psychobilly between 1978-1988. He has presented his research at the KISMIF 2024 conference in Porto, as well as UAL's RNUAL symposium 2024. He is also a music journalist writing for Dork, Clash, NME, and Rolling Stone UK.

## Panel 2A:

**Ecologies of sound and practices of listening****Jamie Dobson, UCA****‘Transparent sound: searching for enlightenment through embodied listening, fetish and transcendence in ‘golden eared’ audiophile communities’.****Keywords: Alternative scenes and practices, DIY culture, audiophiles, myths, music, DIY, technology****Abstract**

Audiophiles strive for ‘transparency’, the idea that recorded music can be reproduced without the equipment designed for its playback altering its sonic characteristics – to enable listening as if through a clear window into the artists performance.

Audiophiles build or assemble sound systems that can cost many hundreds of thousands of pounds. They are often made by small boutique manufacturers, many of the oldest and most coveted are from Britain.

There are broadly two approaches to their pursuit of transparency. Ethnomusicologist Marc Perlman refers to those who adhere to physiological and engineering principles and objectively verify data as ‘meter-readers’, and those who favour personal subjective experience ‘golden-ears’.

There is an epistemological dispute between those who adhere to these opposing approaches. Meter-reading audiophiles deride their golden-eared kin for their disregard of scientific doctrine. Golden-ears can’t offer empirical evidence in support of their beliefs and obfuscate through criticism of meter-readers' methods and processes for collecting and interpreting data.

Meter-reading audiophiles are a small, educated and wealthy group of individuals. Technologically they are extremely literate, however their rational understanding is infused with myths and beliefs.

**Abigail Wincott,. Falmouth University; Natalia Osorio-Ruiz, l’Université Paul-Valéry, Fauré Laurent, l’Université Paul-Valéry.****‘No presenter, just one of the gang: evolutions in UK politics podcasting’.****Keywords: podcast, journalism, politics, interactions, affect****Abstract:**

Politics podcasts are hugely popular in the UK and regularly top podcast charts (Makari 2023; Collins 2023; Maher 2024) even selling out arena-sized venues for live shows (Bootle 2024). But in this presentation we go back the shows that did so much to



popularise the form: *Remainiacs* (Podmasters) and *Brexitcast* (BBC). Our analysis focuses on the absence of a clear presenter or host in these, and what it might tell us about evolutions in podcast genres.

Both series were devoted to the machinations of Brexit during a time of political instability and uncertainty, before rebranding as *Oh God, What Now?* and *Newscast*, respectively in 2020. In our analysis of the constructions of Brexit in these series, we realised it was hard to identify a presenter and questioned whether the word was appropriate. In this paper we attempt to unpick why and why it matters.

In broadcast journalism, the presenter is easily recognised. They have the authority to frame each episode, signal the qualifications of contributors to speak and the significance of topics to be covered (Clayman 1991). Guests may speak more, but the presenter permits or prevents the speech of others. They thus manage issues of balance, timekeeping and represent the interests of listeners through their questions.

In these podcasts however, though one person usually does some of the framing work, they otherwise interact as part of ‘a group of regular speakers. Their talk is humorous, tentative and they share emotions and domestic details. If the presenter performs important functions in journalism this is problematic. Actually, we have seen that these series have developed different ways to perform objectivity, impartiality, expertise and to manage the strong emotional dimensions of contemporary political podcasting.

## Bio

**Abigail Wincott** is a former BBC producer and now Associate Professor of Audio Journalism at Falmouth University. Her research explores how changes in technology interact with professional cultures in journalism.

**Laurent Fauré** is Maître de Conférences (≈ Senior Lecturer) in interactional linguistics at l’Université Paul-Valéry in Montpellier, France, where he leads the Opmé research centre for emerging media practices.

**Natalia Osorio-Ruiz** is Maître de Conférences at l’Université Paul-Valéry where she researches interactions with and through audio technologies at work and in the home.

*This collaboration is funded through a Leverhulme Trust International Fellowship.*

**Will Jeffery, University of Sydney.**

**‘Echoes of Confinement: Class, Space, and Stylised Sound in Andrea Arnold’s *Fish Tank* (2009)’.**

This paper examines the role of stylised sound in Andrea Arnold’s *Fish Tank* (2009), focusing on how the film employs rendering to shape its exploration of class, space, and identity. Drawing on Michel Chion’s concept of rendering, which emphasises the stylised potential of sound over its mimetic truthfulness, and James Buhler’s theory of the soundtrack as oscillating between phonography and abstraction, this paper argues that *Fish Tank* uses its soundscape to render Mia’s precarious journey toward self-discovery. Building on analyses by Marie Puysségur and Katarzyna Sticchi, the paper contends that sound is integral to the film’s



phenomenological immersion, shaping the audience's engagement with Mia's socio-economic and emotional realities.

The diegetic soundscape of *Fish Tank*—from the omnipresent hum of the East London council estate to the integration of diegetic music—renders Mia's subjective experience of spatial confinement and emotional precarity. There is a lack of nondiegetic film music, or underscore, in the film, allows the soundtrack to blur the boundaries between realism and abstraction, particularly in Mia's dance sequences, where music and movement momentarily liberate her from the oppressive realities of class-based marginalisation. These moments demonstrate the narrative purpose of rendered sound, as the stylised auditory elements invite the audience to inhabit Mia's fragile aspirations within a confining environment. Through its layered and stylised sound design, *Fish Tank* complicates the conventions of social realism. Like the film's visual motifs of corridors, windows, and mirrors, its rendered soundscape articulates the tension between Mia's restricted environment and her yearning for agency. This paper positions *Fish Tank* as a pivotal case study for understanding how rendering, in the absence of underscore, blurs the boundary between stylised sound and film music, enabling a metaphorical escape from the fish tank of social confinement in contemporary cinema.

**Keywords:**

*Fish Tank*, stylised film sound, rendering, class, space.

**Short Biography:**

Will Jeffery received his PhD in Film Studies from the University of Sydney in 2023. He teaches film music and theory at the University of Sydney, where he also conducts research. Will has presented his work at conferences in Australia and the United States, contributed to online media outlets, and has forthcoming articles in journals such as *The Soundtrack*. He is currently working on a monograph exploring film music and sound.

**Panel 2B:**

**Is this where you belong? Cultural places; cultural spaces**

Vivienne Gaskin, Leeds Beckett.

'From The East End to the Mall: Issues in Curation, Class and DIY Cultures 1991 - 2000'.

This paper reflects upon the formation and activities of independent art projects and curatorial practices in East London during the 1990s. Specifically, initiatives which encouraged collaborative dialogue and artistic cultures which proposed an alternative model for art practice and society. Drawing on data from original interviews with contemporary artists, autoethnographic accounts from my time in the East London scene and my own curatorial practices at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA). The research explores the emergence of a DIY art scene, cultural democratisation and the rebirth of modernist-inspired forms of

self-institutionalisation, which has all too often been side-lined in popular accounts. It concentrates on the role and function of the social event, such as the club night, as a significant popular cultural agent that connected previously siloed strata within the art world and blurred the lines between art and entertainment. It demonstrates that DIY art and curatorial practices were forms of social and cultural experimentation, resolving in a brief yet vital independence from the institutionalised establishment of the art world. These neglected, more critically engaged practices stood in critical opposition to the ‘art headlines’ around the yBa (Young British Art) of the period. It further addresses the liberation of the curation of art practice, which was a catalyst for an expanded audience and narrative. Together, these areas of DIY practice proposed an alternative model for the presentation and mediation of art. This directly impacted my curatorial practice at the ICA, where I introduced the club night programme as a social vehicle for the mediation of art. Finally, the paper will propose lessons for today stemming from the power conflicts of the period.

**Key Words: Curation, art, DIY, institution, ICA, collaboration, culture, private view, autoethnography**

**Nina O'Reilly, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London**

**‘King’s Crossings: art, culture, and regeneration in King’s Cross’, London.**

UK urban regeneration projects frequently see former industrial sites cleared and converted into spaces of consumerism and white-collar industry. King’s Cross, London has followed this well-worn path, transforming former warehouse and railway lands into a neighbourhood of luxury living, tech HQs, and research and educational institutions. This work has been much lauded, with the masterplan receiving several RIBA awards and nominations in 2024 and the area being ranked one of the world’s coolest neighbourhoods by *Timeout* magazine in 2023.

While regeneration presents a new chapter for King’s Cross, its past is also continually mobilised to substantiate the area’s sense of heritage and identity. Architecturally, this is palpable via the regeneration of former industrial buildings. However, King’s Cross was also once a locus for popular culture, chiefly subcultures, club cultures, radical movements and queer cultures. This paper, based on ongoing PhD research, will uniquely address how these cultural histories are resurrected by Related Argent, the area’s developer, to foster a sense of place and cultural cachet.

This paper, using discourse analysis of press, event, and marketing materials from Related Argent and companies/institutions across King’s Cross, will examine how artistic collectives, club, and queer cultures are séanced into the area’s placemaking strategies. I argue that this process belies the potency of these historic cultural movements, appropriating their dissidence and impact for aesthetic appeal while firmly rooting them in the safely distant past. Further, through archival analysis, oral history interviews, and thematic analysis of art and culture associated with the area, I argue that reclaiming the un-sanitised and

rupturing aspects of these movements allows both for an informed critique of urban regeneration and a speculative viewpoint for alternative futures. This project, by examining King's Cross, provides a fresh perspective on urban regeneration and contributes to questions around cultural life in London and beyond.

Keywords: Cities, Alternative scenes and practices, DIY culture, Heritage, Gentrification.

#### **Bio**

Nina O'Reilly is a PhD researcher at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Her research interests include queer culture, subcultures as well as alternative and DIY music and publishing practices. Her current research is focused on the King's Cross regeneration project and the area's former radical and subcultural past.

**Dr Kay Calver (University of Bedfordshire), Dr Bethan Michael-Fox (Open University)**

**Bethan Radford (Falmouth University), Virma Jones (University of Bedfordshire).**

**'Constructing the University student in British Popular Culture'.**

**Abstract:** The [Students on Screen](#) research project examines how screen representations of university students produce, frame, inform and contribute to complex understandings about what it might mean to be a university student. A limitation of the existing literature examining media representations of students is that much of this work is produced from an academic standpoint (including our own publications), rather than involving students in a co-produced analysis of their positioning as university students. With funding from Research England, three university students were appointed as research assistants to help examine three television dramas – *Clique* (BBC, 2017-2018), *Normal People* (BBC, 2020) and *Big Boys* (Channel 4, 2022-2025). Through this co-constructed analysis, we have sought to identify current concerns and anxieties about the lives and experiences of university students. In this paper, we explore themes relating to mental health, forms of exploitation, and transitions to adulthood. We also critically consider the positioning of the university itself, and to what extent higher education is currently framed as a 'dark economy' in British popular culture.

#### **Panel 3A:**

##### **Female Narratives**

**Jo Parsons, Falmouth University.**

**"Addicted to Love": Sex, Power, and Female Desire in Jilly Cooper's *Rivals*'.**

October 2024 saw the release of the first television adaption of Jilly Cooper's 1988 Bonkbuster novel, *Rivals*, on Disney+. The series opened with the cheeky pops of champagne corks and Rupert Campbell-Black swaggering out of an airplane toilet

having just enjoyed membership of the mile high club. The accompanying contemporary soundtrack, including Robert Palmer's 'Addicted to Love', and the brightly coloured and aggressively angled shoulder pads in the ambitious female characters' power suits, jostle alongside the softer nostalgia of country roads and Laura Ashley skirts as the audience are shown the excesses and trivialities of the 'decade that taste forgot'.

However, the pejorative label 'Bonkbuster' undermines the importance of this genre's contributions to both the field of romance writing and feminism. The Bonkbuster was a diverse form of writing popular from the late 1970s into the 1990s, which gave women permission to desire and demand good sex and professional success at a time that was still very much a man's world. The word 'Bonkbuster' is loudly shouted in the press that accompanies the series' promotion, while the trailers focus on the lighter, and saucier, comedic elements of the adaptation (Maud's high kick as she enters her extravagant party on an elephant; Sarah Stratton spraying perfume in her knickers before an illicit sexual encounter), all of which scream sex and frivolity.

Sex is fun and funny and not always saved for one's spouse superficially appears to be the message as double entendres volley across the screen. However, as this paper will examine, this light-hearted attitude to sex, needs to be considered through the lens of attitudes to female sexuality in the 1980s and the present day. This paper will also discuss how, like the original Bonkbusters, these comedic and often preposterous sexual encounters are sharply counterbalanced by much more traumatic sexual experiences. In the original Rutshire novels, these acts of abuse are often framed in ways that demonstrate *little* sympathy to the female victim, thereby complicating the positive depictions of sex and sexual pleasure in the texts. However, in a post-#MeToo world, the hard realities of 1980s gender dynamics and sexual power games need to be exposed. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the fluctuations in the sex-centred comedy that occur throughout the series, and how these are used to demonstrate both changing attitudes to female sexual desire and the limits placed upon female sexual freedom and safety. It will consider how comedy is used as a vehicle to celebrate, as well as restrict, female desire and power, as well as interrogating the tension between such comedy and the casual cruelty inflicted upon the female characters.

**Jo Parsons** is a Senior Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Falmouth University. She is an expert on romantic fiction, and is currently writing a book on the Bonkbuster. Her books include *Doomed Romances* (British Library, 2024) and *13 Cornish Ghost Stories* (Mabecron, 2024). She is the co-editor of two book series with Edinburgh University Press (Gender and the Body in Literature and Culture, and Nineteenth-Century and Neo-Victorian Cultures) and has another book series on romance forthcoming with University of Wales Press.

**Ann Misiak, Falmouth University**

**'The Outrun (2024): The Female Strength 'Lies Down in Green Pastures'.**

When *The Outrun*, Nora Fingscheidt's adaptation of Amy Liptrot's 2016 memoir, graced UK screens in September 2024, it was celebrated for its unique and honest narrative approach to a journey out of addiction. Daisy Lewis's non-linear script allowed viewers to empathise with Rona's mental struggles during numerous failed attempts to break her drinking habit. The film's cinematography, with its close-ups and muted colours, effectively conveys the protagonist's inner turmoil and the bleakness of her situation.

As intense and emotional as the film is, it has also been hailed as a powerful cautionary tale. It offers a rare UK film narrative of a female addict's survival, serving as a stark and necessary reminder of the dangers of excessive drinking. Some critics have even compared it to Carol Morley's *The Alcohol Years* (2000). Yet, the significance of *The Outrun* in popular culture goes beyond the character's addiction. Venturing into a much less spectacular landscape than what caught the eye of Cheryl in *Wild* (2014), Rona leaves her life in London and then her parents' Scottish home to travel to Papa Westray, the mizzly northern edge of the Orkneys. There, she finds solitude and the will to survive in minimal, depressing yet powerful natural surroundings. As a result, her outlook on her life as a woman transforms.

Rona's confidence and determination to be sober stabilise during her uneventful stay in a tiny, rented house among the bare pastures. That's when the film becomes a counternarrative in a culture where traditional patriarchal expectations are still alive. It shows that the active female agency sometimes emerges through passive acceptance of the present, social isolation, and separation from family and friends. Rona's encounters with the forces of nature on the island lead to the re-discovery of her mental strength, born in and out of silence.

This paper reads Rona's recovery from alcohol through the prism of Luce Irigaray's 2021 book *A New Culture of Energy*. It ultimately illustrates that *The Outrun* is a timely contemporary feminist film because it elevates female strength through an intricate, subtle, yet significant narrative, challenging historical misconceptions of women's silence, withdrawal, and seclusion as acts of patriarchal submission.

**Nicola Coplin, Falmouth University**

### **From the Fringe to the Screen. The *Essence* of *Baby Reindeer*.**

This paper considers the success of recent TV series such as *Baby Reindeer* and *Fleabag* and their origins in Fringe Theatre. Both of these highly esteemed shows began years earlier in fringe theatre venues, notably at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. What does writing for the theatre bring to the adaptation into a screenplay that might otherwise be missing? Richard Gadd refers to it as an 'essence'.

Leaning into feminist theories of embodied storytelling, particularly in the case of the retelling of trauma narratives, I will argue that embodied forms of writing can be a powerful tool in screenwriting practice.

*Panel 3B:*

### **Whose Heritage?**

**Simon Poole, University of the Arts London**

#### **'Over The Top: British Drummers, Virtuosity & Showmanship'**

This paper explores musical virtuosity and greatness through the work of 1960s British drummers alongside models of virtuosity suggested by Matt Brennan and Mandy Smith. In the myriad 'greatest drummers' lists that proliferate the drumosphere's magazines and web content, a trio of British drummers hold sway in the top ten, and often the top three, but there are also British drummers occupying lower tiers of fame, or regard. The triumvirate of Cream's Ginger Baker, The Who's Keith Moon and Led Zeppelin's John Bonham feature highly in these lists but are also accompanied by British drummers Cozy Powell, Ian Paice and Bill Ward alongside Charlie Watts, Ringo Starr and Mitch Mitchell.

There is a peculiarity of these three British drummers in particular, when situated in these lists with their largely North American counterparts - Neil Peart of Rush and Terry Bozzio in particular, but followed by Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Hal Blaine etc. This peculiarity - the U.S./U.K. divide of greatness - can be explored through the work of Mandy Smith (2020) and Matt Brennan (2020). For Smith it is the 'primitive' in opposition to the 'virtuosic', as ends of a continuum. For Brennan (2020: 238), it is the 'showmanship that demand[s] they are] seen as well as heard' (2020:224). The language of categorization of great rock drummers relies on naming what I call the technician drummer in opposition to personality drummer as 'virtuoso', creating a continuum from the primitive to the virtuosic. For example, Terry Bozzio as technician virtuoso and Ginger Baker as personality, or exhibitionist, virtuoso. Brennan (2020) develops aspects of drumming categorized as virtuosic through a number of tropes, which can be explored, through 'technical rigour and mastery', through 'complexity', and thirdly via the visual component of virtuosity, or 'exhibitionism'. This paper explores these academic models to tease out notions of British drumming virtuosity.

**Keywords:** #Drumming #Virtuosity #Rock #Sixties #Drummers

#### **Bio:**

Simon Poole, Course Leader of Music Management at University of the Arts London is a drummer and academic focusing on the material and fan cultures of popular music engagement.

**Karolina Kosinska, Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IS PAN), Warsaw, Poland.**

'The Other Myths – *The Way* and *Sherwood* series as examples of Parallel Heritage'.

The BBC miniseries *The Way*, written by James Graham and directed by Michael Sheen, explores a possible scenario of escalating social unrest in the post-



industrial Welsh town of Port Talbot. Following the death of a young steelworker, a strike and then a riot break out. Emotions are fuelled not only by memories of the strikes of the 1980s, but also by ancient prophecies based on local beliefs. In another series, *Sherwood*, written by the same scriptwriter, the plot also goes back to the 1980s - the old divisions and an indelible sense of betrayal of the strikers establish the plot tensions of the series and define its narrative. The past is recalled as something recognisable and indispensable in the context of today's social unrest.

In my talk, I want to ask: what if we read these shows as examples of heritage cinema? And whether it would be legitimate to treat the whole tradition of post-war social realist cinema in Britain as a specific heritage cinema reclaiming the meaning of working-class culture, parallel to the historical costume dramas typically grouped under that name? This argument relates not only to content and plot, but also to the stylistic choices, visual codes and relationship between spectacle and plot usually associated with heritage costume dramas. *The Way* and *Sherwood* can be seen as playing a similar role in celebrating and recreating the social realist tradition as costume dramas play in commemorating imperial/aristocratic heritage. These series also literally draw on myths, using them to create or support a particular vision of history and the present. By juxtaposing writings on British social realism (John Hill, Samantha Lay, David Forrest) with those focusing on heritage cinema (Claire Monk, Belén Vidal), I aim to reflect on possible parallels between these two conventions.

**Keywords:** social realism; heritage cinema; 1980s strikes; British cinema

**Karolina Kosińska** - Assistant Professor in the Department of Film Studies, Audiovisual Arts and Anthropology of Culture at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IS PAN), Warsaw, Poland. She is the editor-in-chief of the academic film journal *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, published by IS PAN. Kosińska is interested in British cinema, especially in the history and aesthetics of British social realism.

**Jessie Seymour, Independent Researcher**

**‘Regency!punk; A creative intervention of Punk and Regency fashion through cosplay’.**

The Regency period is an iconic part of British history, solidified in Western popular culture by the romantic poets, Jane Austen, and recently Netflix’s *Bridgerton*. One of the most recognisable Regency heroines is Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*; the 2005 adaptation starring Kiera Knightley remains relevant and beloved, and screenshots from the film often appear in aesthetic moodboards, cosplay, and homage fashion aesthetics like cottagecore and dark academia. At what could be considered the opposite end of the aesthetic spectrum is the rise of Punk in the 1970s. Punks are a community of music lovers who became recognisable in popular culture for their fashion – a bricolage of dark and neon colours, leather and denim, metal accessories, and an air of rebellion. The performance of rebellion through fashion is particularly noteworthy; like the



Regency, Punks are recognisable by their aesthetic as it has been preserved, observed, and reproduced in popular culture.

This paper is an exegetical account of a creative intervention to explore what a Punk would look like in 1810s Britain, using *Pride and Prejudice* and popular imagery of Punk aesthetic as touchstones to build upon. clothing was politicized and demonstrated social relevance, as well as the establishment of important indicators of class and personal identity. By designing and crafting a Punk!Elizabeth Bennet cosplay, I will examine recognisable features of Regency dress and combine them with Punk fashion and aesthetic in order to determine a) how a character like Elizabeth could embody ideological and social rebellion in fashion, and b) how that rebellion could be expressed using the materials, tools, and silhouette of the Regency.

**Keywords: fashion, cosplay, regency, punk, creative**

**Bio:** Dr Jessica Seymour is an Australian researcher and lecturer at Fukuoka University, Japan. Her research interests include children's and young adult literature, popular culture, digital humanities and comparative literature. She has contributed chapters to several essay collections, which range in topic from online/transmedia writing, to TV series like *Doctor Who* and *Supernatural*, to ecocriticism in the works of JRR Tolkien.

#### **Panel 4A:**

#### **Production of cultures**

**Rosie Gailor, QMUL.**

#### **Manufacturing Pop Culture Relevancy: Roald Dahl**

Unlike many authors who have largely been resigned to irrelevance some 30 years after their death, Roald Dahl remains a pop culture cornerstone. There are a handful of possible reasons for this: the unrelenting endorsement and marketing efforts of Penguin Random House; the iconically identifiable and well-matched illustrations of Dahl's books by Quentin Blake, whose illustrations are used in both branding and literary endeavours; the many film adaptations, with renewed interest due to Netflix's acquisition of the rights to Dahl's books; the buying power of Millennials and Gen X, many of whom are parents or grandparents now and want to buy their loved ones the books they also read as a child, with nostalgia playing a crucial role in popular culture trends. Now, the Dahl universe is extending, with

new texts written by modern children's authors: there is a continuation of The Twits as well as a new collection of short stories featuring Dahl's much-loved children's characters. Dahl's texts have frequented bestseller lists in many years since his death - but is this evidence of the continued organic interest in his books and their wide appeal to children and adults alike or is it engineered by a capitalist society which commercialises nostalgia? No doubt, publishers and producers have identified a reliable source of income for texts by an author whose controversies persistently intrigue, and who remains a figure of interest to the public; modern authors who have attempted to emulate Dahl's violent and comic style (notably, David Walliams) have done so to varying degrees of success, suggesting that the nostalgia of Dahl's work is more appealing than the nature of the story itself. Does the intrinsic controversy of Dahl and his text, and more widely the art-versus-artist debate, mean that his works will always be culturally relevant and therefore marketable?

**Key words:** Roald Dahl, children's literature, nostalgia, controversy, celebrity authorship

**Cosima Holmes, Independent Scholar/Falmouth University**

**'Harry Potter and the Death of the Author — We should still be writing Harry Potter fanfiction'.**

Once the author of possibly the most famous book series in the world, JK Rowling has in recent years become an incredibly controversial figure for her opinions on feminism and transgender people. Her views have had the knock-on effect of tarnishing the *Harry Potter* series for many people who grew up with the series, myself included. The loss of such an integral part of one's childhood is a devastating thing, and it can be a messy, slow process of disentanglement. Some ex-fans have chosen to completely boycott of anything related to *Harry Potter*, but I would argue that there is still a way with in to engage with that world; via the avenue of fanfiction.

I wish to utilise Barthes theory *Death of the Author*, both the original text as well as more modern interpretations, to explore how fans may be able to utilise the separation of author and text in order to continue to possess a love of the *Harry Potter* world.

Historically, Rowling has been an outspoken critic of fanfiction and in the past has forced the removal of Potter-related fanfics and fic-sites via cease-and-desist letters. I wish to explore this to show how current-day fanfiction can become an act of rebellion against its creator or a wrestling away of power, especially given how fanfics have often been seen as subversive.

The idea of fic allowing a fan to reclaim power and control over a text will be central to this paper, in order to help fans who may be struggling with wanting to retain their love and passion for a beloved childhood text whilst acknowledging, and being at odds, with the opinions of its author.

**Keywords:** Harry Potter, fanfiction, death of the author, control, JK Rowling  
**Biography:**

Dr Cosima Holmes is a recent PhD graduate from Falmouth University/UAL. Her PhD dealt with the myriad of ways with which authors can insert themselves and their desires into their fanfictions, as well as how the emotions felt for fictional characters can bleed between player and character. She is interested in fanfiction/fandom studies as well as romantic narratives and how emotions within texts can be felt, explored and utilised by players/authors/developers.

**Rebecca Lloyd, Independent Scholar/Falmouth University.**

**“‘You’re saying that football is not about football?’: the multiple meanings of foot-the-ball in Terry Pratchett’s *Unseen Academicals* (2009)’.**

Pratchett’s fantasy novel has as its central premise a game of football held in the urban sprawl of Ankh-Morpork between a team of street roughs and one formed from a disparate group of untrained and unenthusiastic wizards. As the title indicates, humorously combining the real Scottish team of Hamilton Academical with Discworld’s Unseen University, Pratchett uses the fictional mode in conversation with Roundworld (our world) concerns to consider how football is viewed by players and spectators for whom it represents the pleasures and pains of commitment to place, class, and identity.

Noting the old (British) ‘folk’ version of the game (‘foot-the-ball’ or Poore boys’ Funne in the novel) as an origin story in which anyone might be involved and where violence is sanctioned, Pratchett also considers how the sport has been configured, and reconfigured, through myth and the formalising of rules, whereby elite groups express power through the containment of play and appropriation of ‘low’ sport. One street player, whose skills at kicking a tin can are both ‘natural’ and brilliant beyond understanding, must nonetheless learn to use a ball, because this is how the game must now be played. Simultaneously, the question of the legitimization of some modes of masculinity over others is raised, engaging the nature of fandom and its relationship to its subcultural (and media-based) iterations in the hooligan and the casual.

Combining several perspectives (Bourdieu’s physical capital, Huizinga on sport as atrophied play, Elias’s civilising process, as well as sociological studies), this paper unpacks how Pratchett produces a humorous yet serious critique of the intersecting meanings and sociocultural economies of ‘the people’s game’, as well as the importance of pies to British football culture.

**Keywords:** Terry Pratchett; British football; identity; masculinity; class

**Bio:**

I am an independent researcher on Terry Pratchett, Gothic creatures, landscapes and humour. Publications include ‘Ghostly knowing laughter: Comic Gothic in the works of W.S. Gilbert’, in *Ghosts and the Gothic*, (eds.) Ruth Heholt and Joanne Ella Parsons (Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2025); ‘Ghostly Objects and the Horrors of Ghastly Ancestors in the Ghost Stories of Louisa Baldwin’ in *Women’s Writing*, July 2022, Vol. 29 (2), co-author Ruth Heholt; ‘Dead Pets’ Society: Gothic Animal Bodies in the Films of Tim Burton’ (2021), in *Tim Burton’s*

*Bodies: Gothic, Animated, Corporeal and Creaturely*, (eds.) Stella Hockenhull and Frances Pheasant-Kelly; 'The Human Within and the Animal Without? Rats and Mr Bunnsy in Terry Pratchett's *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*' (2020) in *Gothic Animals*, (eds.) Ruth Heholt and Melissa Edmundson; 'Gravy Soup: humouring conformity and counterfeiting in *A Rogue's Life*' in *The Wilkie Collins Journal*, 2017, Vol. 14; 'Haunting the Grown-ups: The Borderlands of *ParaNorman* and *Coraline*' (2016) in *Haunted Landscapes: Super-Nature and the Environment*, (eds.) Ruth Heholt & Niamh Downing; 'Anne Rice' (2013), co-author Ruth Heholt, in *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic* (eds.) William Hughes, David Punter & Andrew Smith.

#### **Panel 4B:**

#### **Recording cultures**

**Mark Fryers, The Open University.**

#### **'The Last Hunter Gatherers: The Fisher Folk of British Culture'.**

This videographic essay poem seeks to act as a performative, immersive and pedagogical response to the projection and characterisation of fishing communities within British culture, with a special emphasis on visual culture (and film and television in particular). Marked by romance, melancholy, endurance, death and fortitude, this video will show how audio-visual culture carried the cultural baton of art, music and literature (as well as folk and oral cultures) into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries demonstrating how fisher folk and fishing communities still continue to be a cultural projection of perceived fantasies, fears and desires.

It will mix footage from fishing films, television and documentaries with original footage to situate fisher folk within a long tradition within British culture, demonstrating their long provenance as unlikely avatars of national identity; continuing up to recent texts such as *Bait* (2019) and *The Catch* (2023) and ongoing debates around borders, migration and sovereignty.

Fishing communities retain a ghostly and liminal presence, their depiction often confined to small communities in the South and East Coast of England or the Celtic fringes: Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man and, overwhelmingly, Cornwall. The communities are marked by often contradictory depictions – both romanticised and ostracised, political avatars for liberalism or conservatism, at once hardy and enduring, at others doomed and dying.

As such, it will actively engage with a number of the thematic priorities of the conference, in particular film, television, performance, gender, class, sexuality, popular culture industries and the popularisation of folk cultures (employing folk music as these indicative texts often do), bringing the story from the eighteenth century to the present day as fishing communities continue to suffer the fallout from everything from Brexit, fishing quotas, intensive capitalism, environmentalism to coastal gentrification.

**Keywords:** Fishing Cultures, British Maritime Culture, Folk Cultures Onscreen, British Film and Television, Romanticism.

**Bio:**

Dr Mark Fryers is a Lecturer and founder member of the Film and Media department and School of Creative Industries at the Open University, UK. His thesis examined the intersection of maritime culture, regional identity, and audiovisual media. He has since published widely on a number of topics related to environmentalism, maritime and cultural history, including in the *Journal of Popular Television*, *Gothic Nature*, *Revenant* and edited collections including on the costume drama, global folklore and maritime animation, British naval cinema, the oceanic blockbuster, Daphne Du Maurier and hydrofeminism and children's maritime culture. He is the recipient of several Book Authority Awards and been interviewed by *The Washington Post* for his expertise on oceanic culture. His forthcoming monographs include *The Woman in Black* (Liverpool University Press), *Cybernetic Imaginations* (Peter Lang) and *The Haunted Waters of British Film and Television: Dark Mythologies* (Palgrave Macmillan, Gothic Series).

**Máire Tracey, University of Salford.**

**'Makerworld'.**

**Key words: Space, Art Workshops, Lefebvre, Tactical Urbanism, Children**

Tactical urbanism is about reimagining and repurposing urban spaces to meet the evolving needs of communities. Town centres across the globe have been impacted by a massive reduction in footfall. People want to connect – they just need the space.

***Makerworld*** is a short documentary I made in 2024 showing how artists are using an empty retail unit in Huddersfield to run free workshops for children, how this impacts the lives of the people who take part, and what this brings to the town. At its core, this film poses the question: What is a town for?

Like many towns across England, Huddersfield is transitioning away from a retail town centre to an experiential one.

***Makerworld*** offers a utopian glimpse of how town centres could thrive if they replaced consumerism with community.

Told through the lens of the parents and children who attend the free weekly sessions; we hear about the benefits of free community art to young and old – from stress relief to confidence and from social mobility to inclusivity.

Henri Lefebvre's notion of public space informed the critical practice and the creative storytelling of the documentary.

Within the body of the film, I focussed on the tripartite of the exterior space of a post-capitalist town, the interior social space of ***MakerWorld*** and the creative space inside the families' worlds.

The film also sets the interior abstract space of **MakerWorld** in dialogue with the exterior concrete space of Huddersfield – a town with 358 listed buildings and yet also a town with huge economic deprivation.

As town centres are rushing to reinvent themselves, **Makerworld** provides an alternative view of how free community art can change lives, bring families into our dying towns and help reimagine our town centres in the 21st century.

Link to film: <https://vimeo.com/1007349984/72a3b587f2>

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Máire Tracey is a Senior Lecturer in Media Practice at the University of Salford, where she leads MA programmes in Documentary, Drama, Editing and Wildlife Documentary Production.

### **Roel Meuleman, Falmouth University**

#### **‘Mark Jenkin’s *Enys Men* (2022): the cinematic (re-)construction of Cornish Iconography in a Timeless Landscape’.**

Bernard Deacon has stated that for long, “the Cornish are constructed; they have little role in the construction” (1997: 7), particularly due to Cornwall’s position within Britain’s periphery. In more recent years, technical advances and globalisation signified an intensification in the exchange of information and images between Cornwall and the supposed ‘centre(s)’, offering opportunities for the Cornish to actively take part in the cultural construction of Cornish identity. The film medium in particular offered the tools to renegotiate images that have traditionally been linked to the county, often in a stereotypical manner. Cornish iconography, such as the bal maidens, the engine houses, the standing stones, etc., regularly makes appearances in short and feature-length films of Cornwall-based filmmakers as they attempt to reevaluate their significance and meaning.

This paper considers Mark Jenkin’s 2022 feature *Enys Men* as a culmination of this process of renegotiation. Its narrative stages a literal dialogue between the past and the present, wherein Cornish imagery that has been essentialised and often stripped of its human attributes, in favour of a picturesque tourist view, is gradually reintroduced within a Cornish landscape. The utilisation of traditional iconography in an effort to renegotiate cultural constructions inherently entails a risk of further reinforcing, rather than combatting, the image of Cornwall as the exoticised ‘other’. However, it is, precisely, the Cornish filmmaker’s strong awareness of Cornwall’s (cinematic) history and focus on lived experiences, that distinguishes *Enys Men*’s Cornwall from previous imaginings that were often rooted within fiction and place myth.

**KEYWORDS:** Cornwall, Cultural Construction, Mark Jenkin, *Enys Men* (2022), Iconography

**BIOGRAPHY:**

Roel Meuleman is a Belgian researcher currently enrolled in the PhD programme at Falmouth University after completing a master in Film & Television in 2023. His current studies explore the contemporary cinematic representations of rural regions by local directors, more specifically concerning Mark Jenkin's construction of Cornwall (U.K.) and Michelangelo Frammartino's cinematic Calabria (ITA).

Friday 6th June

**Panel 5A:****Ecologies of anxiety****Rebecca Harrison, 'No Animals Were Harmed? The Political Ecologies of Star Wars Location Shoots in Britain'.**

Over the past five decades, the Star Wars franchise—a behemoth of cinematic popular culture in Britain and beyond—has filmed at a variety of sites across England, Scotland, and Wales. From demilitarised air bases to woodland, and from coastal quarries to petrochemical infrastructures, filmmakers have represented British locations as seemingly futuristic places on far off planets. Some, like the tree canopy of Whippendell Woods (*The Phantom Menace*, 2019) or meadowland of Ivinghoe Beacon (*The Rise of Skywalker*, 2019) are digitally transformed so that they appear to be destroyed by war. Others, like Canary Wharf station, are less fantastical and stand in for imperial architecture under authoritarian rule.

But how does this filming at locations across Britain come about? Who gives permission and determines legislation when deciding what gets filmed, and where? Why are local communities and nature so underrepresented in decision-making processes – and, importantly, what can we do about it to better protect them?

In answering these questions, my paper responds to the conference provocation to explore film, cultural and environmental policy, and regional political economies. It not only aims to question who 'owns' the land on which film production takes place, but also challenges extractivist practices that, I argue, treat British wildlife and people as resource. Having visited 14 Star Wars filming locations across three of the four nations in 2023, my research (undertaken for the Environmental Impact of Filmmaking project) draws on ecological observation, public surveys, interviews with policymakers, filmmakers, and local politicians, and archival materials. By incorporating video footage from each of the sites into the presentation, I'll offer an alternative audiovisual encounter with Britain's



varied ecologies that invites the audience to consider the environmental impacts of popular culture in new ways.

### **Keywords**

**Film, environment, policy, economy, community**

### **Biography**

Rebecca Harrison (she/her) leads the Environmental Impact of Filmmaking project, which explores ecological and other harms that result from screen industry activities. She has authored various publications investigating media, power, and technology, and her work features in a variety of print and broadcast media

### **James Reath, Exeter University**

#### **‘Here Come The Sprays’.**

The ecstasy of cinematic spectacles of aerial crop-spraying first crystallizes in Alfred Hitchcock’s infamous “Crop-Dusting Sequence” (Scene: 115) of *North by Northwest* (1959), before becoming a feature of Blockbuster’s from *It Happened at the World’s Fair* (1963) and *Charley Varrick* (1973) to *Thelma and Louise* (1991) and *Pearl Harbor* (2001). Filmed along Highway 155 in the Californian desert lands north of Bakersville, Hitchcock’s iconic scene subtly relays post45 anxieties regarding what Rachel Carson, writing a few years later in 1962, calls the way in which “chemicals sprayed on croplands or forests or gardens lie long in soil and enter into living organisms [...] in a chain of poisoning and death.”

My paper surveys post45 popular culture’s representations of what we might call “the Sprays,” a positively beastly social and cultural force of a form that overwhelms the period much in the manner of “the Thing” or “the Blob”. Moving from Hitchcock’s spray-spectacle to Carson’s obsession with “spray” and “the sprays” in *Silent Spring*—where the terms recur almost 400 times—“Here Come the Sprays” zooms in on a handful of world-destroying pesticidal figurations of the Sprays in pulp fiction, film, and television—including JG Ballard’s story “Storm-Bird, Storm-Dreamer” (1966); the “Project Sahara” episode of *Doomwatch* (1970); Charles McCrann’s “video nasty” *Toxic Zombies* (1980); and David Rudkin’s BBC teleplay *White Lady* (1987).

What emerges is post45 popular culture’s communication of a new kind of public feeling. Responding to the proliferation of “chemical infrastructures” and “chemical regimes of living” (Murphy), the Sprays remediate manifold hopes and fears for both DuPont’s dreamworld of “Better Living... Through Chemistry” and the “delayed destruction” and “slow violence” (Nixon) of industrial chemicals accreting all around.

Matthew Rogers, Falmouth University

‘Psychonavigating the (Sub)Urban Idyll – pervasive filmmaking in Andrea Arnold’s *Bird* (2024)’.

**Abstract:** This paper seeks to introduce a nascent research interest that explores how some UK 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. More specifically, this paper situates the broader research interests within the framework of British Popular Culture through unpacking some of the place-based ways that writer/director Andrea Arnold offers the conditions of a nationally-specific, class-based, alterity within her film *Bird* (2024). *Bird* is situated within an identifiable, contemporary British suburban landscape, however the central character Bailey appears to psychologically navigate and broaden the conditions of their existence beyond materiality through developing and deploying shamanic insight. The audience is invited to join Bailey on their revelatory journey via a miasma of pervasive filmmaking techniques that engender a ‘contact-high’ within the corporeal framework of a range of (necessarily) embodied spectatorial pleasures.

**About the author:** Matthew is a socially-minded Senior Lecturer who applies innovative and inclusive teaching methods that communicate a passion for the creative screen industries, sub-cultures, equality, and diversity. Matthew works across both the ‘Film’, and the ‘Television and Film Production’ degrees at Falmouth University. Matthew is the module leader for the third year 'Dissertation' module on Film and he also leads the second year 'Artistry' and 'Impact' modules on Television and Film Production. Matthew has conducted extensive research and published papers that seek to better understand how community and citizen journalism initiatives are being used by regionally marginalised individuals as selfadvocacy tools. Matthew is also a freelance audio producer for the BBC where he has produced Cornish features for the flagship BBC Radio 4 Arts programme *Front Row*.

**Panel 5B:**  
**Quintessentially British?**

**Frank Mannion, Birmingham City University**  
**‘Quintessentially British: From Shakespeare to Downton Abbey: the Complexities of British Popular Culture on Screen’.**

Quintessentially British: From Shakespeare to Downton Abbey: the Complexities of British Popular Culture on Screen will be a practice-based look at the British identity by examining the production & distribution of the feature documentary, *Quintessentially British* (Frank Mannion, 2022). Led by a distinguished British cast including Ian McKellen and Judi Dench, Lady Carnarvon of Highclere Castle (where

Downton Abbey is filmed), the historian Max Hastings, Lindsay Hoyle (The Speaker of the House of Commons), the film captures some contrasting views on what it means to be quintessentially British. Ian McKellen and Judi Dench describe their 60-year quest to master the cadences of Shakespearean delivery. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9ikBKAQtU>

The paper will look at the challenges facing the regional creative and cultural economy, as exemplified by the release of the film in UK cinemas in December 2022 and throughout the early half of 2023. It will also examine the post-Brexit reception of the film in London and the various regions of the UK that allowed the film to become the catalyst for the wider discourse across the British Isles about the nature of British identity. The methodology is to take the auto-ethnographic case of *Quintessentially British* directed by the award-winning Irish academic and filmmaker, Dr Frank Mannion, that will look at the complexities of the British identity and how stereo-typing is used to inform the portrayal of the British from the 13th century to the present day.

The conference could screen a 20-minute extract of the film (or even the whole 90-minute film), to accompany the conference paper. The 20-minute extract or the full length film screening could be billed as a Cornwall premiere.

**KEY WORDS: Identity. Film. Cultural Economy. Shakespeare. Stereotyping.**

**Biography:** Dr Frank Mannion is Senior Lecturer in Entrepreneurship, Film Distribution & Marketing at Birmingham City University. Palgrave will publish his “The Dependent Film Distributor” in December 2025. An award-winning filmmaker, he directed *Sparkling: The Story of Champagne* with Stephen Fry (“a lush valentine to French bubbly” according to the New York Times) and *Quintessentially British* starring Ian McKellen and Judi Dench.

**Nathaniel Weiner, Central Saint Martins.**

**‘The Country Gent and the Urban Subculturalist on Instagram: Imaginary Geographies, the National Past and Polysemy in British Heritage Menswear Brands’ Branded Content’.**

This paper presents initial findings from an investigation into the intersections of craft, place and nostalgia in the marketing of British heritage brands. Drawing on cultural historian Patrick Wright’s (1985) idea of the ‘national past’ as a public staging of history, it looks at how British brands define themselves as ‘heritage brands’ through a mobilisation of an idea of ‘pastness’. The paper employs visual discourse analysis in its study of promotional images drawn from heritage brands’ Instagram accounts. The Instagram accounts analysed are those of the menswear-focused British brands Barbour, Fred Perry, John Smedley and Loake. The brands are polysemic (Hall, 1980) in their overlapping and sometimes contradictory class meanings; they mobilise both their original aristocratic meanings as brands selling business and leisure clothes to gentlemen, and the

‘subculture capital’ (Thornton, 1996) derived from their ‘expropriation’ (Fiske, 1989) by working-class subcultures. Key to these brand narratives are imaginative geographies (May, 1996), locating British heritage brands in the kinds of locales that Wright associates with the nostalgic imagining of the national past: the urban backdrops of Victorian city centres, the rural idyll of country paths and the man-made wilderness of heathlands. This paper argues that in an age of globalised mass production, by locating the brands in such locations the brands are drawing on nostalgia for the community cohesion and local manufacturing traditions of the national past. For both those brands that still manufacture in the United Kingdom and those that no longer do, these ‘commodity aesthetics’ (Haug, 1986) of place work to produce an association with craftsmanship directed at ‘craft consumers’ (Campbell, 2005) and an association with tradition aimed at fashion-sceptical menswear consumers. Furthermore, this ‘recuperation’ (Clarke, 1976) of the youth subculturalists’ stylistic innovations places him within the British national past alongside the more familiar figure of the country gent.

**Key words: branded content, fashion, Instagram, nostalgia, subculture**

**Bio:** 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.

**François Allard-Huver & Julie Escurignan, Université Catholique De L'Ouest  
‘Black Mirror: A decade of British Realistic Dystopia’.**

Black Mirror is a dystopic television series that is now 14 years old. Since 2011 and its broadcast on Channel 4, the show has revolutionized the TV panorama on dystopia and gained a worldwide audience through its move to Netflix. Indeed, Black Mirror does not present a distant world that audiences cannot relate with: on the contrary, it relies on our current use of technologies to imagine a close future where our technologies have gotten out of hand. This dystopian future creates a “black mirror” made of technologies and new media for audiences, who are invited to reflect upon their use of technology. The seventh season of Black Mirror is planned to be released in 2025 on Netflix, highlighting once again the topicality of this show in today’s world. Relying on previous research undertaken by the authors on Black Mirror (Allard-Huver & Escurignan, 2020; Escurignan & Allard-Huver, 2018), this project intends to take a step back and look at the relevance of this TV series within British culture. What seemed to be in 2011 a simple dystopian show programmed on a British channel, appeared to be a major reality forecaster for certain usage of technologies. The technological panopticon depicted in the episode Nosedive for instance has partly become a reality in China through social media surveillance of its population. Hence, this research analyses the six seasons of Black Mirror to distinguish the elements that are particularly

crucial in terms of culture and technology in the 21st century, as well as the aspects that can be qualified as specifically British in this series. Indeed, even if it is now seen as a global dystopian TV show, *Black Mirror* is and remains a media product embedded in British culture, and reflects a critical British perspective on our global relationship with media and technology.

**Keywords: Black Mirror; dystopia; British; culture; TV series Authors**

**Biographies:**

**Dr. Julie Eскурignan** is an Associate Professor of Management at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest in Angers (France). She researches the relations between cultural industries and audiences. She is more particularly interested in fans' haptic practices, immersive experiences, media representations and branding strategies in the CCI. She is the author of several articles and book chapters on fandom and cosplay as well as on successful television series such as *Game of Thrones* and *Black Mirror*.

**Dr. François Allard-Huver** is an Associate Professor in Digital Communication at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest in Angers, France and a researcher at the Center for Research on Humanities and Societies (CHUS). His research is focused on controversies – especially regarding pesticides, GMOs, and new technologies – , fake news, transparency as well as the question of digital parrhesia. Topics he worked on range from transparency in organizations to the question of surveillance and security devices in superhero films and TV series.

**Panel 6A: Objects of desire? Ephemera and materiality**

**Richard Elliott, Newcastle University.**

**'Ladbroke's Pens, Ringtons Plates and Highland Toffee: Myths and Memories of the UK in Richard Dawson's Songs'.**

**Abstract**

In a review of Sherry Turkel's edited collection *Evocative Objects* (2007), the philosopher Graham Harman wrote, 'Surely even the dullest of objects are laced with songs and legends that await their bards'. One of the preeminent contemporary bards responsible for uncovering the hidden lives and meanings of everyday objects is the Newcastle-based singer-songwriter Richard Dawson. Dawson has established an international reputation as a crafter of uniquely themed and composed songs and as a dynamic live performer.

In terms of lyrical content, Dawson's work often highlights what Johny Lamb, writing for *the Quietus*, termed 'the minutiae of things', an accumulation of seemingly unremarkable details made remarkable by Dawson's songs. While it may be a general feature of popular music that songs inevitably deal with—and therefore amplify—details of everyday life, many fans and critics note the simultaneous mundanity and oddness of the objects which appear in Dawson's lyrics. These objects are mundane because they are artefacts of the world with which many of his listeners are familiar, yet they are odd because of their rarity as

song lyrics; there simply aren't that many songs which feature Phillips-head screwdrivers, bars of Highland Toffee, Woolworth's price stickers, trolleys and snooker cues.

In this paper, I discuss Dawson's object-oriented songcraft via recourse to Gilbert Adair's 1986 book *Myths & Memories*, a British response to earlier works on popular culture by French writers Roland Barthes and Georges Perec. In doing so, I'm driven by two questions. The first relates to popular song: why is it still so unusual to hear songs about British cultural commodities? The second relates to the study of British popular culture more broadly: is Adair's book still a useful model for exploring the interplay between cultural commodities and communal memories?

### **Key words**

Song, commodity, community, memory, national identity

### **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.

### **Tory Turk & Neil MacDonald, Independent Researchers.**

#### **'Finding space for a UK skateboard museum'.**

In 2024 skateboard historian Neil MacDonald, filmmaker Winstan Whitter, photographer Wig Worland, archivist Dan Adams and curator Tory Turk started to discuss the idea of creating a repository for UK skateboard history. After two major exhibitions on skateboarding, Somerset House's *NO COMPLY* and the Design Museum's *SKATEBOARD*, there was a shared feeling of urgency. It was now the time to start to seriously preserve skateboarding's rich history, credit its present influence and identify its potential impact for the future.

Skateboarding, now recognised as an Olympic sport, is globally accepted as an impressive extreme sport. However, skateboarding's journey into popular consciousness and acceptance has been shaky. The history of skateboarding, photography and film are intimately intertwined, and skateboarder stereotypes have been negotiated by its media portrayals. Skateboarding has been viewed as nice and naughty, the skateboarder has been both hero and felonious. With films



such as *Back to the Future*, inspiring a generation, highlighting how popular culture has always played a role in skateboarding's representation.

From the 1970s onwards, skateboarding in the UK shaped its own identity, a parallel adaptation of what was happening in California and on the big screen, one based on the country's climate, terrain and wider youth culture. British Skateboarding's relationship with popular culture is unique and specific.

The founders of a future UK skateboard museum want to do UK skateboard history justice. The museum aims to tell the story of the people, places, products and brands, who, across six decades, created a distinct movement that continues to influence not only new generations of skateboarders, but popular culture and wider society today.

As the museum is in its embryonic stage, it is the time for questions. How does the museum founders navigate a commitment to authenticity, a key component to the DNA of skateboarding. How does the museum describe and contextualise skateboarding narratives to not disrupt and compromise skateboarding's legitimacy. How do you make the UK skateboarding a revered and reliable resource? And ultimately, do you want the UK skateboard museum to be for everyone?

\*The museum is currently being named internally (TBC Feb 2025).

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[Tory Turk](#) is a curator specialising in style and popular culture and the co-founder of HYMAG, the world's largest magazine collection. She has curated exhibitions at prestigious institutions such as The Fashion Space Gallery and [Northampton Museum](#) and collaborated with brands like Hennessy/LVMH, Pentland, and Amazon. Her projects, including [No Comply at Somerset House](#) and **SKATEBOARD** at the Design Museum, explored skateboarding's impact on communities and culture. Tory's work reflects a commitment to cultural storytelling, supported by organisations like the Arts Council and the Korean Cultural Centre (KCCUK).

Neil Macdonald has been writing about skateboarding, music, and culture since 2007, contributing to publications like **Thrasher** and **Sidewalk**. He owns a vast archive of over 5,000 pieces of skateboard media and runs the popular Instagram account [@scienceversuslife](#), celebrating 1990s skateboarding style. Neil's forthcoming book, [Elsewhere: The Story of UK Skateboarding, 1987–2002](#), is set to be published by Batsford in September 2025, cementing his role as a key chronicler of skateboarding culture and history.



**Michelle Varini, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan.**

**‘Hell Bent for Leather: A cultural study on the black "Flying Jacket"’.**

The 1980s was a period rich in countercultural and subcultural, musical, artistic and political forms of expression. One of these is the iconic and distinctive clothing that is making a comeback today. In this revival of 1980s style in clothing, one garment in particular is the object of our attention: the black leather ‘Flying Jacket’. Its invention, dating back to the early 1900s in England, was of wartime derivation, later becoming a cultural symbol of revolt: from *Easy Rider* to *Terminator*, from the Sex Pistols to Judas Priest, the uniform par excellence of youth cultures, a sign of recognition, belonging and revolt. Of all the stylistic revivals we are witnessing today, the adoption (and cultural appropriation) of the ‘Flying Jacket’ by the general public is very conspicuous: we see it on the catwalks of fashion weeks all over the world, just as we see it crowding the shelves of fast fashion chains, with variations in colour and material, increasingly of low quality. The path this garment has taken over the last 50 years is an interesting litmus test to describe some interesting dynamics, among them that of globalisation, which has taken this iconic garment all over the world, and that of capitalism, which increasingly modifies its forms using tools originally thought to be contrary. Secondly, through the material culture of this jacket, we can recount political ideas and struggles, how these have changed and often distorted. This study aims to explore this phenomenon by sampling through a netnography the fast fashion chains that resell these products. Furthermore, several consumers of this garment will be interviewed in the Italian context, with a twofold aim: to reconstruct how the subculture of origin of the ‘Flying Jacket’ has been readapted to the Italian context, and secondly to describe how the history of the object is intertwined in various ways with personal stories.

**Keywords:** #cultural studies #digital methods #mixed methods #subculture #fashion

**Panel 6B: Ageing and the passing of time**

**Joseph Oldham, British University in Egypt .**

**“The false gods we appoint’ (Almost) Adapting John le Carré’s *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) for the 2010s’.**

**Keywords:** John le Carré, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, *A Legacy of Spies*, George Smiley, Brexit

In 2016 production company The Ink Factory announced their intention to adapt John le Carré’s breakthrough spy novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) for television, following their successful version of the same writer’s *The Night Manager*. But on finding the original novel insufficient in scope to support the intended six episodes, the production team enlisted the octogenarian le Carré himself to build a new narrative ‘superstructure’ around the original story. And when

this new material caused yet further structural problems, The Ink Factory elected to postpone the venture indefinitely

The project, however, would spark an obsession that dominated the final years of le Carré's life. Not only would the author spend the next four years working on further script drafts for *The Spy*, but this process repeatedly inspired new material for him to adapt *back* into prose works. Firstly, the 'superstructure' was reworked into a new sequel novel, *A Legacy of Spies* (2017), which revived le Carré's famous protagonist George Smiley for the first time since 1990 and reflected the author's public opposition to 'Brexit' by explicitly reframing Smiley's Cold War as serving the cause of Europe rather than Britain. Secondly, at the time of his passing in 2020, le Carré was developing another spin-off project: a Smiley short story collection that, in part, pondered how the opportunities of the post-Cold War world had been squandered.

Drawing upon material in le Carré's personal archive, this paper will chart the curious compulsion of this writer to repeatedly revisit his 1963 classic as an unlikely vehicle for exploring topical concerns of over 50 years later. Through this I explore how the project's failure to entirely cohere lies in the awkward fusion of the original text's moral ambiguity and the more forcefully activist agenda which underpinned its new incarnations.

## Biography

Joseph Oldham is an Associate Professor of Communication and Mass Media at the British University in Egypt, where he is the director of the postgraduate programme. He is the author of *Paranoid Visions: Spies, Conspiracies and the Secret State in British Television Drama* (Manchester University Press 2017) and has published in journals including *Adaptation*, *Cold War History*, *Critical Studies in Television*, *Intelligence and National Security*, and the *Journal of British Cinema and Television*. He has contributed articles to *Doctor Who Magazine*.

**Sofia Theodosiadou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece).**

**'Middle age vulnerability in British film: the case study of *I Daniel Blake* (2016) by Ken Loach'.**

Like gender, sexuality, race or class "old age" should be seen as the product of discourse and culture rather than the property of chronology or biology (Dolan, 2016).

Representations of older men in British cinema are often assumed to do little more than reiterate familiar stereotypes. Yet some British films have carved out a space for more transgressive representations of aging men.

This paper seeks to reframe and recontextualize the study of ageing representations in British films through a synthetic analysis that enhances critical discourse analysis with language ideology (Stamou, 2018) setting as an example the fictional discourse of Ken Loache's film *I Daniel Blake* (2016). According to the proposed synthetic framework of analysis, Stamou (2018) argues a three level analysis (macro social analysis, meso discourse analysis, micro textual analysis) that is considered to be appropriate for delving into both the details but also the enlarged

cultural and political concept that Loache's film prepare us for. Ken Loache's film depicts middle age framed from a vulnerable perspective due to health issues, poverty and this conflicting relationship with the welfare state (The Guardian, 11/9/2016). To be more specific both Daniel and Katie are mostly presented as objects in the public sphere and the mere passive witnesses of their own life as they are separated from the mainstream system (Lehmann, 2020). In other words, they are invisible to a system that blames them for their situation (Lehmann, 2020). Loach's film chooses to set a dialogue among the individual and the capitalist system that goes through a tremendous crisis and in doing so it represents a revolution in what it says and what draws the audience's attention on (Hall, 2022). *I, Daniel Blake* may serve as a welcome reminder of narrative cinema's ability to rile the audience up and engender sympathy for society's downtrodden (Koresky, 2016).

**Keywords:** identity, age stereotypes, film discourse, CDA, Ken Loach

**Emma Longmuir, Newcastle University.**

**'Rethinking Renewal: Vocal Absence and Vocal Embellishment in Annie Lennox's Later-Life Performances of 'Why'.**

#### **Abstract**

Annie Lennox is a popular musician whose career as lead singer of Eurythmics and as a solo artist has epitomised the concept of 'renewal'. Lennox's constant reinvention of her celebrity image via her elaborate stage personas defied gender stereotypes 'in a strategy that challenged the male gaze' (Hawkins 2016). Lennox's performances from 2020 onwards have allowed her to embark on a fresh series of renewals at a later point in her life by covering songs from throughout her career. Her later-life performances largely bypass typical 'decline narratives' (Gullette 2004; Gardner 2020) and 'double standards of ageing' (Sontag 1972) that ageing female popular musicians are frequently subjected to. Instead, responses to Lennox's performances focus on her 'ageless voice': a voice which represents being 'all ages and no age' (Segal 2013) and which moves 'out of time and out of place' (Halberstam 2005).

Through consideration of two performances of 'Why' (2021; 2023), I investigate how Lennox's approaches to her performances allow for a rethinking of renewal beyond its associations with youth and anti-ageing. I argue that renewal within ageing popular music performance is integral to the process of 're-possession' (Plasketes 2005). I examine Lennox's voice and place it as a 'mirror' which reflects on her past and refracts aspects of the present through 'vocal absence' and 'vocal embellishment' (Longmuir 2024). I consider vocal absence in her 2021 performance of 'Why' as a space to 'hear' past versions of the song, as well as a moment which places it within a pandemic context. In Lennox's 2023 performance of 'Why', I analyse the intricate vocal embellishment she adds to the ending of the song, bringing it to a renewed place musically. Through both performances, I suggest that

Lennox continues to subvert gender stereotypes by challenging typical decline narratives usually faced by ageing female popular musicians.

### **Keywords**

Annie Lennox; Ageing; Gender; Renewal; Voice

### **Biography**

Emma Longmuir is a PhD candidate in Music and Media at Newcastle University and a recipient of the Clara Whittaker Music PhD Scholarship. Her research focuses on age, time, renewal and life narratives in Annie Lennox's work from 2020 onwards. Emma was the 2023 winner of the IASPM UK&I Andrew Goodwin Memorial Prize for her essay about Lennox's 'ageless voice', and she has recently published an article on Lennox's approaches to renewal in her 2021 performance of 'Why'.

### **Panel 7A: This women's Work? Gender, work and leisure.**

#### **Vicki Aimers, Falmouth University.**

#### **'In-Service and Silence': Exploring the Liminal Lives of Governesses Through Film, Text, and Archives'.**

The governess occupies a liminal position in British culture, caught between servant and educator roles, and navigating complex relationships with both employers and fellow servants (Hughes, Poovey). This paper, rooted in my practice-based PhD, explores these tensions through three key representations: the 1998 film *The Governess* (dir. Sandra Goldbacher), Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, and the archival photographs of Marion Ash at The Morrab Library, Penzance. Drawing on studies of societal positioning (Gates) and gendered power structures (Armstrong), I examine the emotional labour performed by governesses within domestic spaces.

In *Agnes Grey*, Brontë presents a governess grappling with the tensions between duty and autonomy, highlighting her struggle to assert authority. Similarly, *The Governess* portrays the protagonist's isolation and emotional labour as she negotiates her place between family and staff. The broader exploration of Victorian women in domestic roles (John) further illuminates the governess's role as both insider and outsider.

Finally, the archival photographs of Marion Ash provide a rare insight into the lived experience of an early 20th-century governess, which I responded to during my residency at the Library. Through artist books, workshops, and public engagement activities, visitors were invited to reflect on contrasting perceptions of governesses like Marion. This study considers how these participatory practices, alongside comparisons of Ash's photographs, *Agnes Grey*, and *The Governess*, reveal how the figure of the governess persists in popular imagination. By examining these cultural representations and engaging audiences through

creative methods, I explore the continuing resonance of the governess as a symbol of emotional labour, liminality, and shifting social identities.

**Keywords:** governess, emotional labour, liminality, archival photographs, *Agnes Grey*, *The Governess*, Marion Ash, public engagement, artist books, Victorian and Edwardian women, domestic roles, Barbara Gates, Nancy Armstrong, Juliet John, Kathryn Hughes, Mary Poovey

**Biographical information:**

Vicki Aimers is a PhD researcher at Falmouth University, exploring the intersections of needlework, female education, and archival storytelling. Her research examines the forgotten stories behind Cornwall's stitched samplers, crafted by young makers and their teachers in the last century, using creative practice to bring these narratives to life. Inspired by archives, literature, and community engagement, her work combines artist books, public workshops, and interactive art to uncover hidden histories. She is currently researching the life of Marion Ash, a governess in the early 20th century, during a residency at The Morrab Library in Penzance.

**Lisa Hood, Brighton University.**

**‘From “War-worked hands” to “peacetime loveliness”: hand beauty product advertising in British movie magazines during WWII’.**

Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, and the associated lockdowns, the previous event with truly global impact was the Second World War (1939 – 1945). Reflecting on the effects in Britain, it is clear both events imposed upon the general population privations in respect of access to food and goods, prescribed movements of people and in extremis, resulted in death. This presentation looks at film fan magazines of the war period, in particular *Picturegoer* and *Picture Show*, and examines how the content evolved throughout the period.

In her essay, ‘Cinema Culture and Femininity in the 1930s’ (1996), Annette Kuhn noted that the launch of *Woman* magazine in 1937 changed the face of the women's press and promoted a new type of femininity. She wrote that that it was no longer ‘taken for granted that marriage in itself excludes paid employment’ (1996: 186) and further, that this shift allowed *Woman* magazine to throw its weight behind the ‘women must work’ campaign when war broke out in 1939.

This presentation builds upon contributors' work in *Star Attractions: Twentieth-Century Movie Magazines and Global Fandom* (2019) which identifies and discusses the formulaic structures of film fan magazines. It will interrogate how features and advertisements changed within these structures during the war years to reflect the socio-political changes, with particular focus on women. By concentrating on advertisements for hand health and beauty products it will examine the paradoxical demands made upon hands, and by extension women, to

meet the idealised femininity of the period by fulfilling their duty to beauty whilst meeting the practical necessities of life.

**Keywords** Film magazines, World War II, Beauty, Femininity, Duty

### Biographical Note

Lisa Hood is a PhD researcher at the University of Brighton. Her interests include film history, fan magazines, star images and propaganda. She is currently undertaking AHRC-funded research examining the influence of British star images on behaviour during World War Two.

**Rebecca Nesvet, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay.**

### **‘Literary Needlewomen: The Victorian Precariat and Popular Romance’.**

*Literary Needlewomen* reveals how the Victorian feminised literary precariat revolutionised prose romance for generations to come. Professional labour is often feminised: when women enter a field, it loses status and economic value. This is hardly a twenty-first-century phenomenon. Early in the nineteenth century, male workers went on strike against women’s inclusion in their trades and women’s work was blamed for handloom-weavers’ loss of status and wages.<sup>1</sup> The popular serial *The Working Girls of London* (1864-5) called female workers ‘precarious’. Feminisation impacted popular print, too. The novelist Hannah Maria Jones related the ‘authoress’ to an icon of pathos: the indigent needlewoman heroine of Thomas Hood’s ‘Song of the Pen’ (*Punch*, 1843). Like the needlewoman, Jones’s indicative ‘Authoress’ is overworked, underpaid, and precariously employed.

Although Jones recognised a feminised literary precariat, scholarship on working-class and female writers does not clarify this domain’s impact on the production of popular literature. I investigate how in Victorian popular fiction precarious employment was shaped by gender and shapes genre. For the purposes of comparative study, my small pantheon of precariously employed writers of popular prose storytelling includes women, men, and one arguably transmasculine author. It consists of Jones (c. 1785-1854); Thomas Peckett Prest (1815-59) and James Malcolm Rymer (1814-84); genteel yet insecure coterie writers Mary Shelley (1797-1851) and Sophy Cracroft (1816-1892); imaginative war reporters George Augustus Sala (1828-95) and Mary Seacole (1805-1881); and *New Grub Street* writer George Gissing (1857-1903) and ‘George Fleming’ (1853-1938), author of *fin-de-siecle* ‘noname novels’ and observer of romance-fandom. Each of these precarious writers attained a mass audience at least fleetingly, supported more famous authors’ efforts, and temporarily or ultimately experienced economic insecurity while writing up a storm. Intriguingly, they all excelled at composing ‘domestic romance’, a genre whose plot tectonics mirror the precarious knowledge worker’s perils, including the cycles of frenetic activity and burnout. The Victorian literary precariat’s depiction of its struggle presages our own economy of knowledge.



**Bio:** Rebecca Nesvet, Professor of English and Humanities at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, is author of *James Malcolm Rymer, Penny Fiction, and the Family* (Routledge, 2024) and serves as Technical Director of COVE Editions. She has guest edited *Victorian Popular Fictions Journal* and serves as Reviews Editor of *Victorian Periodicals Review*. With art historian Aisha Motlani, she is editing *Picturing Sherlock Holmes's Indian Empire*.

**Keywords:** precarity, feminised labour/work, popular print, gender, romance

**Panel 7B: ?**

**Matt Melia, Kingston University**

**‘Macca-Sculinity: Paul McCartney in Peter Jackson’s *Get Back* (2022)’.**

Over the course of this proposed paper I will discuss the framing of Paul McCartney in Peter Jackson’s *Get Back* documentary (Disney+. 2021). Here, at the end of the decade which started with the ban on DH Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928) being rescinded and in which Lawrence was positioned as a key cultural influence, McCartney (sporting full on beard, and waistcoat) cuts a distinctly image of Lawrentian masculinity (particularly in evidence in the 1969 rooftop gig on top of the Apple Building, Savile Row, London). In the documentary, Paul is not only depicted as ‘family man’ and ‘father figure’ (in the sequences in which Linda Eastman and her daughter Heather appear) but also as the struggling creative genius (in the now famous sequence in which comes up with the single ‘Get Back’, struggling on) earnestly trying to keep his other family, The Beatles, together (as seen in several sequences across the documentary, not least in his infamous fall out with George Harrison). The paper will examine McCartney within changing ideas of male-ness in the 1960s.

Jackson’s documentary, uses new digital technology to re-energise *Let it Be* (Lindsay-Hogg, 1970) – a documentary film which notoriously offered a window into the last gasps of The Beatles at the 1969 *Let It Be* album sessions. *Get Back* punctures many of the cultural myths regarding this cultural moment, including McCartney’s own, often vilified role, in the proceedings. This paper will examine the ways in which Jackson frames and position McCartney subverting these long held suppositions. It will also argue that if John Lennon, embodies the rebel identity of the counter-culture we might argue that Paul, whose mother died early, and who was brought up by his father, can be also aligned, in terms of ‘male values’ more closely with those of the previous generation of working class scousers. While the focus will largely be on a critical assessment of how Paul is represented in the *Get Back* documentary, it will also pay close attention to themes of parenthood (particularly fatherhood) in his songwriting and the divergences between the Lennon-McCartney personas where I will posit that the *Get Back* documentary posits a role reversal in their male identities.

**Bio**



Dr Matt Melia is a Senior Lecturer in Film, Media and English Lit at Kingston University, he has published widely – notably on the work of both Ken Russell and Stanley Kubrick. His other research interests include the re-conceptualisation of archives and archival spaces. He has published several books including *ReFocus: The Films of Ken Russell* (EUP, 2023), *Anthony Burgess, Stanley Kubrick and A Clockwork Orange* (Palgrave, 2022), *The Jaws Book: New Perspectives on the Classic Summer Blockbuster* (Bloomsbury, 2020) and *The Jurassic Park Book: New Perspectives on the Classic 1990s Blockbuster* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

### **Francis Mickus, Musee d'Orsay Paris**

#### **'The Colonel and the King: Fighting Fascism on the Silver Screen'.**

When in 1940 the war with Germany truly reached its full thrust in violence and Britain suffered the relentless onslaught of the Blitz, the logical response by authorities was to keep people safe and limit civilian movement especially at night time. They therefore ordered the closure of movie theaters. The decision was counterproductive as it added to the plummeting of civilian morale. Movies theaters were quickly reopened and authorities developed a production policy to enhance civilian fortitude. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressberger met in 1939 for the film *Spy in Black*, which considered the dangers of German espionage during the Great War. The two produced a series of films that tested the very meaning of freedom. *49th Parallel* and *One of our Aircraft is Missing* are parallel stories, with the first telling the story of a German bomber crew trying to reach safety in the then neutral United States, while the second tells the same story of an English bomber crew over Holland. The tandem pushed the envelope with their wartime masterwork *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. Churchill felt that the film would destroy morale and did all he could to stop it. Failing that, he personally oversaw Laurence Olivier's production of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Neither film is what one expects. *Col. Blimp* holds up an unflattering mirror to English wartime society, but it is hardly unEnglish, whereas *Henry V*'s inherent exploration of historical representation undercuts Churchill's jingoist refashioning of Shakespeare. Both epitomize the complexity of England's cinematic response to the war. Curiously however, the film English moviegoers at the time felt best reflected English pluck during the Blitz was shot twelve thousand miles away on the MGM backlot in Hollywood by an Alsatian gentleman who spoke German, French and English with equal ease. That film was William Wyler's *Mrs. Miniver*.

**Keywords: English wartime films; Michael Powell and Emeric Pressberger; Laurence Olivier; Winston Churchill; The Blitz**

**Francis Mickus** holds degrees in art history and literature and is completing his doctoral dissertation in History at the Université de Paris I – Panthéon-Sorbonne on the politics of *Henry V*'s imagery. He has published a number of papers on *Henry V*, Lancastrian England, late Medieval art and Shakespeare. He is editing a collective volume on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. His earlier studies in film have also given him a solid grounding in film and film history and he has written articles on filmmaking and film makers. He has edited *A Critical Companion to David Fincher* (2024). He currently works at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

**Jeannine Baetz, University of Galway.**

**‘Euroscepticism and Euronostalgia in Post-Brexit British Spy Fiction – A Comparative Analysis of *The Night Manager* (2016) and *Treason* (2022)’.**

Since its early days, the genre of spy fiction has been closely interlinked with and responded to its contemporaneous sociopolitical developments and events, with the character of the spy occupying a key role in the genre’s representation of national and transnational discourses by alternatively serving as a national icon (cf. Samuel Goodman, *British Spy Fiction and the End of Empire*, 2015) or as a perpetual outsider to the ‘imagined community’ of the nation (cf. Shiv Visvanathan, “The Glasnost Spy”, 1990). Based on the hypothesis that nostalgia and national discourses constitute a linking element between post-Brexit spy fiction and the wider umbrella category of Brexit fiction, and that Brexit can be considered a turning point in the genre of spy fiction comparable to the Cold War period or 9/11, this presentation aims to demonstrate the impact of Brexit on spy fiction’s representation of national and transnational discourses by analysing the representation of the two underlying discourses of Euroscepticism and Euronostalgia in two post-Brexit spy fiction: *The Night Manager* (BBC, 2016) and *Treason* (Netflix, 2022). Through a concept-based and comparative analysis of both series, this presentation aims to highlight a shift from Euronostalgia to postnational nostalgia in post-Brexit British spy fiction, as well as an increasing emphasis on the ‘imagined communities of spies’, a narrative trend emerging from the predominantly national focus of the twentieth century. Subsequently, this presentation will contextualise the case studies in the wider context of Brexit fiction by applying a combined theoretical framework consisting of Sara Alessio (2020) and Joanna Rostek et al.’s (2019) typologies of Brexit literature under the umbrella term of Russell Foster’s concept of the ‘Imperial Gothic 2.0’ (2022). This approach demonstrates the constant questioning and renegotiation of national and European identity in post-Brexit spy fiction reflected in the increasing alienation of the spy.

**Key words:** BrexLit, spy fiction, postnational nostalgia, Euronostalgia

**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 genre fiction’s interfacing with socio-political issues and intermedial approaches to contemporary European literature and television.

**Panel 8A: Crafting identity**

Troy Wise, UAL Central Saint Martins.

‘Navigating Criticality and Transformation: Subversion and the RÆBURN Aesthetic in the Intermedial Wild of Critical Fashion Practice’.

Ryan Taylor, Liverpool Institute of the Performing Arts.

‘Gurinder Chadha: Fiction as Self-Narration and Narrative as Allegorical Negotiation of a Post-Colonial Britain’.

Rhys Handley, Independent Scholar.

"He fails: we fail" Educating Essex and the cruel optimism of the English Exam System’.