

**Thursday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>** – White Cross pub at 7pm for informal dinner/drinks (all invited)

**Friday, July 4<sup>th</sup>**

9:00am-9:30am – Registration

9:30am-10:45am – Keynote Brian Baker

10:50am-12:15pm – Panels 1 & 2

12:15pm-1:15pm – Lunch (note: not provided)

1:15pm-2:45pm – Keynote Bryan Talbot

2:50pm-4:15pm – Panels 3 & 4 & 5

4:15pm-4:35pm – Tea break (provided)

4:35pm-6:00pm – Panels 6 & 7

7:00pm – Dinner at 1725 Restaurant (please RSVP in advance)

Keynote by Brian Baker: “Iron Towers, Zeppelins and Brass Engines: the scientific romance and dreams of Empire”

Keynote by Bryan Talbot: “Grandville and the Anthropomorphic Tradition”

**Panel 1 – Interacting with the Real world** – Chaired by Andrew Tate

- Kenneth Fee, Abertay University, "The Impact of Technology on the identity and practice of an artist in the field of digital art for games, illustration and concept development"
- Glyn Morgan, University of Liverpool, "The Necessity of Speaking the Unspeakable, Seeing the Unseeable: The Role of Fantastika in Visualising the Holocaust"

**Panel 2 – Fantastika on the World Map: Exploring National Identities** – chaired by Dawn Stobbart

- Olympia Mavridou, Abertay University, "The Monstrous Transformation of the Self; Translating Japanese Cyberpunk and the Post-Human into the Living World"
- Tugce Bicakci, Lancaster University, "The First Vampire of Turkish Cinema: Adapting *Dracula* and Representing Sexuality in Mehmet Muhtar's *Dracula in Istanbul* (1953)"
- Will Smith, Lancaster University, "Cree, Canadian and American: Negotiating sovereignties with Jeff Lemire's *Equinox* and the 'Justice League of Canada' (2014)"

**Panel 3 – Genre Makeovers** – chaired by Sarah Illott

- Claire Nally, University of Northumbria, "Subcultural Fantaskia: Gender and the Romance Genre in Steampunk Fiction"

- Catherine Spooner, Lancaster University, "Unbecoming Goth: Makeovers, Metamorphoses and Techniques of Transformation in Contemporary Gothic Culture"
- Jo Ormond, Lancaster University, "'Royal or Rebel?': Visualizing the Fairy Tale through Mattel's *Ever After High* Dolls"

**Panel 4 – Interacting with the Digital World** – chaired by Kamilla Elliott

- Dawn Stobbart, Lancaster University, "Losers Don't Play Videogames...Heroes Do: The Remediation of Videogames in 1980s Science Fiction Films"
- John Carter McKnight, Lancaster University, "'I Got Soul But I'm Not A Soldier:' Constructing Collective Heroism in *Pacific Rim* Fandom"
- Stephen Curtis, independent scholar, "Game Over, Man: The Deathsetics of the Killscreen"

**Panel 5 – Exploring Dystopic Spaces** – chaired by Bruce Bennett

- Alison Tedman, Buckinghamshire New University, "Simulation Frames: Young Adult Dystopian Cinema"
- Lauren Randall, Lancaster University, "'The Colours Run the Path of Ashes': The Palette of the End of the World in *Donnie Darko*"
- Asami Nakamura, University of Liverpool, "In and Out of Dystopia: Film and Theatre Adaptations of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*"

**Panel 6 – Fabricating Heroes and Villains** – chaired by Catherine Spooner

- Sunday Swift, Lancaster University, "Stark Naked: Upgrading Defect to Stylised Decadence – [Avenger] Assembling the Self"
- Helga H Lúthersdóttir, University College London, "Wool, Spandex, Leather, Denim: The Stuff that Heroes are made of"
- Alan Gregory, Lancaster University, "Fabric Prosthetics: Fashioning (Disabled) Gothic Bodies in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*"

**Panel 7 – Breaking Down the Visual Codes of Fantastika** – chaired by Brian Baker

- Leimar Garcia-Siino, University of Liverpool, "The Visual Wonder of Gaiman and McKean's Underrated *MirrorMask*, or How this Film Doesn't Conform to the Mainstream Market's Vision of Fantasy"
- Chloe Buckley, Lancaster University, "'more real in a strange way': The authenticity aesthetics of visualising horror in Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie* and Chris Butler's *Paranorman*"
- Vivien Leanne Saunders, Lancaster University, "Sublime Sounds and Twisted Tales: The Uncanny Filmic Fantasies of Art and Music"

## Abstracts and Bionotes Below

### Panel 1 – Interacting with the Real world

- Kenneth Fee, "The Impact of Technology on the identity and practice of an artist in the field of digital art for games, illustration and concept development"

Abstract: Initially, game artwork was low on the developers' priorities. Typically games used artwork from the programmers themselves, and any visual aesthetic was more concerned with disseminating information than artistic direction. This was of little concern for the original niche audience, typically used to employing their imagination with role playing games and fantastical books. However, the power and popularity of games evolved and the marketplace diversified.

As games became mass market, demand for quality visuals increased, and skilled artists had to be found. The most successful were those whose former areas of practice predisposed them to the subjects that the games reflected – typically comics, sci-fi and fantasy. This worked well for many years, until a problem became apparent. The vast majority of applicants for games artist roles...were no longer artists. They could not draw, or sketch, or animate. They had no knowledge of colour theory, perspective or form. The creation of emotion and empathy, the understanding of narrative themes and engagement – all seemed to have been lost. Instead, software knowledge had become confused with creativity. It seemed many joined university courses to be 'made' artists through software – while demonstrating no trace of the values or passions held by their traditionally trained predecessors. These artists had learned with paper and pen, board and ink – with rules of three dimensional design and form acquired through plastic, clay and cardboard, so that for them, the introduction of software was simply a shortcut to knowledge they already had. What, though, for students who had no such grounding, but simply learned to push a button?

As technology's impact on the field of art continues to provoke interest and discussion into this paper considers – through discussion with industry practitioners and educators, as well as with students and graduates – the role that traditional art skills and sensibilities have in the modern field of digital art practice, and reflects on the long terms effects that we may be sewing for the survival of creativity and imagination in a world where a novice with no particular artistic skills can create - through software and technology - a sculpture to match a renaissance master

Bionote: Ken Fee first joined the games industry in 1993, working on the 'Lemmings' series. In 2007 after some 40 further published titles, Ken moved into academia. Programme Tutor for the MProf in Games Development at Abertay University, his latest gallery exhibition 'The Pixel Pushers' sees Ken collaborate with artists from Crytek, Rockstar North, Axis Animation and 2000 Ad to promote artistic values in digital art creation.

- Glyn Morgan, "The Necessity of Speaking the Unspeakable, Seeing the Unseeable: The Role of Fantastika in Visualising the Holocaust"

Abstract: This paper will examine the role of Fantastika, in communicating the Holocaust to modern readers. It will present several approaches taken in approaching the Holocaust and explore

the intrinsic complications and controversies surrounding representation, but especially those which are heightened by elements of Fantastika.

It will argue that, in fact, non-mimetic narratives (which encompass Fantastika) have tools available to them which allow for new and varied approaches to the way we consider memorialisation and visualisation, not just of the Holocaust but of all traumatic events, personal and global, physical and emotional. Whilst some, like survivor Elie Wiesel, may consider the presence of Fantastika in any discussion of the Holocaust to be insulting, I argue that in fact it plays an important role. Fantastika elicits responses and reactions from readers that more straight-forward tellings cannot, and as such, in this context, it forces a reader to re-examine their relationship with history, with trauma, and with the Holocaust. Wiesel himself has said that to forget would be to kill the victims a second time, but as the number of survivors who can provide first-hand testimony ever dwindles, new methods of remembering are required and new approaches to visualisation need to be accepted in order to sustain that memory and ensure it remains engaging and relevant, rather than a chapter in a history book.

My paper will trace a reduced history of Holocaust Fantastika through, amongst others, Calvo's *La Bete est morte* to Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and beyond to superhero comics and more contemporary novels. It will then compare and contrast this timeline with that of mimetic narratives, historical and cultural watersheds, and attempt to highlight the over-looked importance of Fantastika as an essential piece of the puzzle of society's relationship to the Holocaust.

Bionote: Glyn Morgan is a Ph.D student at the University of Liverpool. He is the founder of Current Research in Speculative Fiction, an annual conference for postgraduates to share research into all things SF. In 2014 he became the editor for *Vector: The Critical Journal of the British Science Fiction Association*. [www.glyn-morgan.blogspot.com](http://www.glyn-morgan.blogspot.com)

## **Panel 2 – Fantastika on the World Map: Exploring National Identities**

- Olympia Mavridou, "The Monstrous Transformation of the Self; Translating Japanese Cyberpunk and the Post-Human into the Living World"

Abstract: Neon-lit noir and technology-driven body horrors, oppressive metropolises and vast industrial landscapes, and in the midst of it all a fragile humanity struggling to maintain a semblance of itself in a post-human future –the world of cyberpunk is as visually stimulating as it is disturbing.

Within its own subgenre, Japanese cyberpunk indulges further into this liminal imagery; featuring an ostensible fetish for futuristic teratology, it embodies its central conflict of “man vs. machine” in its protagonists’ bizarre and monstrous metamorphoses.

In 1997, *Final Fantasy VII* presented gamers with a unique entry point into the insular realms of both East Asian RPGs and Japanese cyberpunk. Considered by many as the quintessential example of the *Final Fantasy* series and the archetypal cinematic videogame, *Final Fantasy VII* paints its own brand of a dystopian future with an eclectic range of visual influences, from *Blade Runner* and shōjo manga to Victorian gothic and Kabbalistic symbolism.

This essay will be offering a critical reflection on the aesthetics and visual evolution of *Final Fantasy VII* within the context of the wider Japanese cyberpunk subgenre, as well as discussing the outcomes of a practical study on the fan-driven crossmedia adaptation of the game's visual language into costumed performance (i.e. cosplay).

Known as one of the more esoteric practices of fandom, *cosplay* (or costume play) is the actualization of the fan's personal reading of the text in performative form; a recreation of Fantastika in the real world. The successful fan/performer is tasked not only with faithfully replicating a costume, but with inhabiting the mental and physical space of the character.

The researcher is currently in the process of recreating and performing the character of *Vincent Valentine*; one of the many player avatars in *Final Fantasy VII*, whose narrative arc is a characteristic example of the techno-scientific body horror, dehumanization and psychosexual repression which lie at the root of the Japanese cyberpunk ethos.

The costume will be initially modelled at Dee Con 2k14, the local Dundee games and anime convention and the Dundee Comics Expo on the 5th of April 2014. Both the costuming process and the character performance will be documented for analytical purposes.

Bionote: Originally from Greece, Olympia moved to Bonnie Scotland in 2008. In 2012 she completed her Computer Arts BA in the University of Abertay Dundee and in 2013 she received her Professional Masters in Games Development from the same institution. She is currently working towards a PhD on fan culture.

- Tugce Bicakci, "The First Vampire of Turkish Cinema: Adapting *Dracula* and Representing Sexuality in Mehmet Muhtar's *Dracula in Istanbul* (1953)"

Abstract: The cinematic adaptations of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) have always been a focus of interest for Gothic Studies. Since Tod Browning's classic adaptation *Dracula* (1931), the story of this immortal fictional character has been adapted into film and TV many times by many different cultures. However, the adaptation in which Count Dracula travelled to Istanbul has never been widely known or discussed by the Western world; yet, it was a ground-breaking experience for both Green Pine –a metonym for the Turkish film industry of the time, and *Dracula* studies worldwide. This paper discusses *Dracula in Istanbul* (1953), directed by Mehmet Muhtar, in terms of its representation of Count Dracula in a Turkish context. Although the adaptation was mostly deprived of the nationalistic tone found in Ali Rıza Seyfi's earlier novel adaptation, I argue that as a transcultural adaptation, *Dracula in Istanbul* constructs Turkish national identity through the vampire figure and its use of historical, religious, cultural and gender imageries. In fact, contrary to popular Western belief, the movie was the first adaptation of *Dracula* in which fangs were seen and also the first Muslim interpretation on silver screen. Therefore, *Dracula in Istanbul* not only initiates the Gothic atmosphere in Turkish cinema for the first time and becomes a classic on several counts, but also brings a new insight to the representation of national identity on the Gothic screen.

Bionote: Tugce Bicakci is a PhD candidate in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University, where she previously completed her MA in Contemporary Literary Studies. Her research revolves around the transformation of Western Gothic in Turkish literature and cinema, and the representation of national identity through the Gothic genre.

- Will Smith, "Cree, Canadian and American: Negotiating sovereignties with Jeff Lemire's Equinox and the 'Justice League of Canada' (2014)"

Abstract: Depictions of Canadian fantastika in comic books have a long history. Canadian and Torontonian Joe Shuster co-created Superman in 1938, drawing on his experiences at the *Toronto Daily Star* to define Clark Kent's everyday life as a reporter. However Canada's "first national superhero" was arguably Nelvana of the Northern Lights, developed during the Second World War and by borrowing liberally from Inuit mythology. At the height of Canadian cultural nationalism in 1975, Winnipeg-based Comely Comix produced *Captain Canuck*, a maple-leaf emblazoned superhero. Captain Canuck melded conventional national-mythology with the otherworldly, most notably in his origin story; an ex-mountie scoutmaster exposed to alien zeta rays. John Bell, in *Invaders from the North* (2006), has suggested that "despite the persistence of Canada's engagement with superheroes, Canadians are probably too wary of the uncritical portrayal of unrestrained heroism and power for the superhero genre ever to become a mainstay of the country's indigenous comic art" (84). In 2014 the American publisher DC comics is echoing its past connections to Canada by returning north of the forty-ninth parallel. Canadian cartoonist Jeff Lemire has created a superhero story-line entitled 'Justice League of Canada.' Also an early working title for the newly-named *Justice League United*, 'Justice League of Canada' introduces a new First Nations female superhero named Equinox. Cree, and from Moose Factory, Ontario, Equinox is in everyday life the teenager Miiyahbin. This paper discusses her depiction and the wider story's use of the visual possibilities of the fantastic as responses to real-life negotiations of American, Canadian and Indigenous identity. Considering 'Justice League of Canada,' the paper examines how national boundaries and identities are re-enforced or challenged through the plot, form and the depiction of Equinox. How might such mainstream forms of American media function when thematically engaged with the transnational, and explicitly negotiating plural sovereignties? The paper also examines the fantastic dimension of Lemire's rewritten storyworld within the context of Lemire's previous work, most notably *Essex County* (2011) which represents a fictionalised area of southwestern Ontario.

Bionote: Will Smith completed a PhD in Canadian Literature at the University of Nottingham in 2012. He is currently an associate lecturer in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University.

### Panel 3 – Genre Makeovers

- Claire Nally, "Subcultural Fantaskia: Gender and the Romance Genre in Steampunk Fiction"

Abstract: Whilst John Clute's definition of 'fantastika' (2011) relates to the non-mimetic, and instead offers an articulation of alternative reality in fiction, the cross-over between steampunk and popular romance presents an interesting slippage between genres. In general terms, my paper will address the following question: how does steampunk revise and revisit 'traditional' ideas of gendered behaviour, and how far does it merely subscribe to them? For instance, the role of

women in steampunk is complex. As a sci-fi subgenre, it is obviously invested in a critique of our worldview through alternative historical spaces. However, its imagery and characterisation is discursively both oppressive and liberating. On the one hand, the iconography of Queen Victoria casts a shadow over steampunk, whilst other positive historical figures, such as Ada Lovelace and Emma Goldman, have enjoyed a resurgence in literature and subcultural practice.

In recent years, steampunk writing has exploded with various novels following the conventional formula of the classic romance genre. Material such as the popular novel *Steamed* by Kate MacAlister (2010) is interesting in this context insofar as it features an intrepid airship captain, Octavia Pye, who is both resistant to and complicit with pseudo-Victorian and romantic conventions of gender and society. This signifies the ways in which historical revisionism seeks to reinterpret the past and the experience of women therein. In such instances, as Mary Talbot has maintained, readers may derive 'a satisfactory sense of closure from the narrative resolution...[but only] by accepting a feminine subject position congruent with that of the focalized character.'<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, I maintain that steampunk's incursion into the fantasies and realities of popular romance has done comparatively little to radicalise the genre in gendered terms, although such texts can provide a space for female readers to explore 'me-time' and a dream of autonomy.

Bionote: Dr Claire Nally is a Senior Lecturer in Twentieth-Century English Literature at the University of Northumbria. Her first monograph was *Envisioning Ireland: W. B. Yeats's Occult Nationalism* (2009), followed by the co-written book, *Selling Ireland: Advertising, Literature and Irish Print Culture, 1891-1922* (2012) and an edited collection (with Angela Smith) entitled *Naked Exhibitionism: Gender, Performance and Public Exposure* (2013). She is the co-editor of the 'Gender in Popular Culture Library Series' (I.B. Tauris). Her next monograph is entitled *Steampunk: Gender, Subculture and the Neo-Victorian*.

- Catherine Spooner, "Unbecoming Goth: Makeovers, Metamorphoses and Techniques of Transformation in Contemporary Gothic Culture"

Abstract: The Goth makeover has become a recognisable subcultural trope: on lifestyle television and in film and fiction, the process of transformation whereby an 'ordinary' subject is converted into a Goth or vice versa has become a familiar motif. Often used as a way of playing off concepts of an 'authentic' and a performative self, the Goth makeover mobilises judgements of taste, enabling the production of cultural and subcultural distinction (Bourdieu 1984, Thornton 1995). It also, however, taps into a set of cultural myths about self-transformation and metamorphosis. Makeover scenes are by no means unique to Goth; they are a feature of all kinds of subcultural narratives, particularly those that employ what Hebdige (1979) calls 'spectacular' style. In the case of Goth, however, the makeover motif is overlaid with the Gothic narrative trope of supernatural transformation: the metamorphosis into vampire, zombie, werewolf or other supernatural creature. This paper will explore two different kinds of makeover: the 'real' makeover, in which subjects are made over within the confines of the TV lifestyle show or Goth self help manual; and the

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Talbot, *Fictions at Work* (Harlow: Longman, 1995) p. 99.

'supernatural' makeover, in which fictional characters change their appearance when they gain supernatural powers. Using examples from *Gok's Style Secrets* (Channel 4, 2013) and *Snog Marry Avoid?* (BBC 3, 2008- ), it will demonstrate how 'real' makeovers enable an articulation of the relationship between Goth subculture and the mainstream, and often reveal points of tension or contradiction in both mainstream and subcultural ideologies of beauty and resistance. It will then proceed to show how supernatural transformation scenes in a range of contemporary films including *Ginger Snaps* (2000) and *Twilight: Breaking Dawn* (2011-12) sublimate these tensions into metaphysical explorations of the monstrously transformed self.

Bionote: Catherine Spooner is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Lancaster University and co-president of the International Gothic Association. Her publications include *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (Manchester University Press, 2004), *Contemporary Gothic* (Reaktion, 2006) and, co-edited with Emma McEvoy, *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (2007). She is currently completing a monograph entitled *Post-Millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic*, forthcoming with Bloomsbury.

- Jo Ormond, "'Royal or Rebel?': Visualizing the Fairy Tale through Mattel's *Ever After High* Dolls"

Abstract: *Ever After High* is Mattel's follow up to the popular *Monster High* doll range and was released in October 2013. The range currently consists of nine dolls representing the teenage children of fairy tale characters such as Raven Queen (daughter of the Evil Queen) and Apple White (daughter of Snow White) who attend high school together. As well as the dolls there is an interactive website with games, character blogs, short cartoons and personality quizzes. Mattel also commissioned Shannon Hale, a well-known author of fairy tale retellings, to write a series of novellas to accompany the range. The characters are divided into two types, the Royals and the Rebels. The Royals are prepared to accept their destiny and relive the story of their famous parent, while the Rebels refuse to accept their destiny and long to 'write their own happily ever after'. In this paper I will examine the dolls as physical objects, such as the significance of their clothing and accessories, as well as the story that is told on the packaging and through other forms of media. A particularly interesting character on the Rebel team is Cerise Hood who is the daughter of Red Riding Hood and The Big Bad Wolf. Cerise's parentage explicitly recalls Angela Carter's *The Company of Wolves* (1979) and the doll as a physical object brings that narrative to life with pointy ears hidden under a red hood and a streak of silver running through her hair. Through watching the cartoons we find that Cerise keeps the identity of her father a secret and has to play down her athletic ability and bad temper. This paper will explore the ways in which the *Ever After High* range visualizes and retells classic fairy tales as well as the implications of the narratives that are being put into play.

Bionote: Jo Ormond is a PhD student at Lancaster University researching contemporary Gothic fairy tales and young adult femininity.

## Panel 4 – Interacting with the Digital World

- Dawn Stobbart, "Losers Don't Play Videogames...Heroes Do: The Remediation of Videogames in 1980s Science Fiction Films"

Abstract: A decade before the first adaptation of a videogame to film (*Super Mario Brothers*, 1993), computer and arcade videogames were incorporated as subject matter in mainstream Hollywood films such as *Wargames* (1983) and *The Last Starfighter* (1984), presenting the new medium through a science fictional lens. While these films aired widespread anxieties about the ability of computers and videogames to start global wars and override human social structures and agency, at the same time, they figured expert gamers as science fiction heroes and saviours of society, which this paper will explore. The protagonist of *Wargames* both inadvertently sets off and stops a chain of events that would lead to World War III. He does more than save the world from his own error, however: he teaches the government's military computer to think and humanises the machine, rendering it less dangerous. When the protagonist of *The Last Starfighter* beats the arcade game for which the film is named, he is visited by aliens, who inform him that they planted the game in hope of finding a hero with shooting skills that can save the galaxy from its enemies. They transport him to fight that war, and he emerges a victorious hero. All of these films reinvent the 'nerdy' gamer as a hero.

Bionote: Dawn Stobbart is a PhD candidate studying at Lancaster University's English Department, focusing on the way that videogames function as a carrier for narrative and its role within this medium. She has an interest in contemporary Literature, and especially the way this translates to the videogame.

- John Carter McKnight, "I Got Soul But I'm Not A Soldier: Constructing Collective Heroism in *Pacific Rim* Fandom"

Abstract: *Pacific Rim* distinguished itself from the typical Hollywood action movie in its inversions and rejections of the heroic monomyth, from the notion of "drift compatibility" of two pilots rather than solo prowess as the key to combat success, to a devotion of significant screen time to the scientific and industrial support behind front-line fighters. While these manipulations of expected tropes may have contributed to the film's relative lack of commercial success, this paper argues that it is precisely such visions of collective action which contributed to the rise of an active, politicized fandom. *Pacific Rim* fandom's engagement with the politics and symbols of collective labor may point to the potential for an emergent techno-socialist alternative to a dominant techno-libertarian discourse in science fiction and popular culture.

This paper applies James Paul Gee's discourse analysis (Gee 2013) to read the film and fan creations as discourses among director, screenwriter, actors, multiple audiences and fan producers in which messages of class and politics are coded into multiple channels and layers of meaning flowing in multiple directions. Interviews with a broad range of *Pacific Rim* fans will be used to test the hypothesis that the film has provided material for the creation of a new fannish discourse of techno-socialism.

This paper's title comes from the chorus of The Killers' "All These Things That I've Done," used in a key scene in a work of fanfiction, scifigirl47's *Through the Dark Tide of Memory*, presented here

as an exemplar of fan creation of a multimedia language of heroic techno-socialist labor. The paper will conclude that *Pacific Rim*'s Tumblr-based fandom has given rise to a textual, visual and memetic discourse which stands in genuine contradistinction to dominant cultural themes of techno-libertarian heroism and forms at least a potential for an emergent science-fictional counter-discourse of techno-socialism.

Bionote: John Carter McKnight is a postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of Sociology at Lancaster University. His work focuses on the role of internet platforms in the formation and management of communities, particularly those of planetary science and of science fiction fans.

- Stephen Curtis, "Game Over, Man: The Deathsetics of the Killscreen"

Abstract: From the early static 'Game Over' screens of 1980s videogames to the elaborate and snuff-like voyeurism of contemporary character death videos, the end of games has always held the potential for a final realisation of the death drive that motivates the player. As technology has developed and enabled the increasing realism, or, more accurately, fidelity, of videogame visuals, a concomitant fascination with the death of the player character has arisen. My paper examines the ways in which this development can illustrate a shift in the cultural positioning of videogames and also explores the increasing awareness within gaming of its uncanny mirroring of real-life.

The relationship between avatar deaths and visual fidelity is emblematic of the rapidly increasing economic aspects of the gaming industry. As killscreens become more detailed and aesthetically impressive, they also, on the whole, become more difficult to encounter. The constant deaths and restarts of the coin-op arcade games necessitated a killscreen as a financial imperative - 'Insert coin to continue' - but gaming's filmic aspirations, and the accompanying budgets, seem to have reversed this relationship. Instead of frustrating the player through constant deaths and creating a ludic-Stockholm Syndrome, modern games do not require such a transparent application of the economics of play. It is ironic, therefore, that recent games such as *Dark Souls* have become so unexpectedly popular because of their willingness to kill the player.

My paper argues that the closer that videogames come to photo-realism and the more resistant designers become to the mechanics of death in games, the greater the aesthetic and ludic desire for game over becomes. In other words, the more successful the game's attempts to duplicate the visuals of film become, the greater the deathsetic appeal of the killscreen. In short, to quote from the soundtrack to *Sega Rally Championship* - 'Game Over Yeah!'

Bionote: Stephen Curtis is an independent scholar.

## Panel 5 – Exploring Dystopic Spaces

- Alison Tedman, "Simulation Frames: Young Adult Dystopian Cinema"

Abstract: *Divergent* (2014) is based on the first of a young adult fiction trilogy by Veronica Roth. The film drew in \$56 million at the box office on its opening weekend. Its marketing campaign was based around the key theme of the first novel: the division of society into factions based on dominant personality traits. The heroine, Beatrice/Tris is warned that she is 'divergent' and in

danger because of this. The original novel is part of a large and growing subgenre of dystopian YA fiction, actively sought by publishers and with a strong fandom. YA dystopian literature has roots both in adult dystopian literature and the wider YA market. Its success has been critically linked to societal and ecological fears, and to identities and choices associated with adolescence, although it is acknowledged that the literature actually appeals to a wide age range. In cinema, there are fewer dystopian young adult films than novels, and their conventions are less established. *The Hunger Games* franchise (2012; 2013), which might be said to have begun the popularity of the YA dystopian cinema, is still in progress. The films are often associated with other YA films which hybridise horror or fairy-tale with tropes of teen drama. They are also part of the wider Hollywood cinema of spectacle, fantasy, action and effects. Like YA dystopian novels, films such as *The Hunger Games*, *Enders Game* (2013) and *Divergent* are influenced by tropes of games, simulations and surveillance, but they draw on a range of influences including action cinema, contemporary spectacle-based SF, army training dramas and teen dramas. The *Divergent* trilogy is also influenced by the fact that Roth is a Christian, leading to a sacrifice motif. This paper examines the forms and aesthetics of *Divergent* and other YA dystopian films.

Bionote: Dr Alison Tedman is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Media Production and Performance at Buckinghamshire New University. Her PhD, from the University of Kent, theorised fairy-tale cinema. She has extensive experience in lecturing on fantasy cinema and TV among many other areas.

- Lauren Randall, "The Colours Run the Path of Ashes': The Palette of the End of the World in *Donnie Darko*"

Abstract: As a pre-millennial set, post-millennial shot independent film, Richard Kelly's *Donnie Darko* (2001) forges a rare apocalyptic vision: a 'realistic irreality' (Sukin, 1979) of a doomsday narrative that has already been (by)passed in time. It is the aim of this paper to focus upon the aesthetics of Kelly's film, examining the use of existing iconographical frameworks in forging such an 'end of the world' narrative. Specifically, it will analyse the application and effect of the traditional genre palette of sci-fi-Gothic - the use of blues, greys, and reds - in the creation (and collapse) of the apocalypse. By centring its attention upon the film's imagery and colour, this paper will also posit that the habitual and uncanny echoes prompted by colour motifs are not only integral to the materialisation of Kelly's world on screen but also, both explicitly and subliminally, to the evolution of the plot and the 'post-film' theories prompted by the plot's complexity. As such, this presentation will also explore the influences of colours without the visual, drawing upon their appearance in the film's diegetic and non-diegetic soundtrack and dialogue in order to understand possible cultural allusions and their significance. Focusing on the palette of the image, this exploration intends to discern how this layer of the visual (or, rather, this layer of cinematic code) produces a bold paradigm of a world on the cusp of annihilation, with the genesis of the apocalypse anything but black and white.

Bionote: Lauren Randall is a PhD student at Lancaster University. Her doctoral thesis is centred upon the concept of 'Sunshine Gothic' (primarily Beach Gothic and Tourism Gothic) in contemporary American narratives. She has previously given papers on the nightmares of Beach

Gothic in film, fiction and advertising, notably at the International Gothic Association Conference in 2013.

- Asami Nakamura, "In and Out of Dystopia: Film and Theatre Adaptations of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*"

Abstract: This presentation considers film and theatre adaptations of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by comparing them in terms of their distinct approaches to the novel; if the former focuses on the content of the text, the latter focuses on the form. I argue that those adaptations provide insights into the spatial paradox of *inside* and *outside*, which is already inscribed in the metafictional aspect of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Two film adaptations—Anderson's 1956 and Radford's 1984 versions—are examined. Neither makes major alterations to the story, but each has a different emphasis; Anderson's is mainly political and didactic, whereas Radford's is psychological and nostalgic. They both work as critical commentaries of the novel, while being works of art themselves. Adaptations are reinventions rather than representations of the original (Hutcheon, 2006); though situated outside the original, they can, intertextually, be regarded as part of the text.

While those film adaptations seem "faithful" to the text, Headlong's 2013 stage play version is even more so, as it focuses on the Appendix (disregarded by the films) which is "attached" to and frames the story. The Appendix is a scholarly account of Newspeak, which works as an interpretation/commentary of Winston's story, while still existing *in* the text. The play reproduces this nested structure by positing a future reading group in which the members examine the text of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Further by incorporating some scenes where actors directly refer to the audience, the play makes the audience aware of the way they actually interpret the text, questioning the possibility of a political fiction persuading readers into fulfilling its program; can fiction (Winston's message) get out of itself and reach reality (the future addressees)?

There are, then, four types of the *in-and-out-ness*: those involved in the relationship between the original and its adaptation, the text and its critique, fiction and reality, and dystopia and utopia. By delineating how the dialectic of those notions operates, this presentation provides a spatial approach to the theory of adaptation.

Bionote: Asami Nakamura is a Ph.D student at the department of English at the University of Liverpool. Her recent essay is "Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* as a Multidimensional Critique of Rebellion" in *The Journal of American and Canadian Studies*. Her current research subject is the spatial analysis of dystopian fiction.

## Panel 6 – Fabricating Heroes and Villains

- Sunday Swift, "Stark Naked: Upgrading Defect to Stylised Decadence - [Avenger] Assembling the Self"

Abstract: During a press conference at the end of Iron Man, expected to deny that he is, in fact Iron Man, Tony Stark argues that being a super hero 'would be outlandish and fantastic. I'm just

not the hero type. Clearly. With this laundry list of character defects, all the mistakes I've made, largely public. The truth is... I am Iron Man.'

This statement underlines not just Stark's attitude toward his own status as a super hero, but addresses what his heroic alter ego Iron Man is founded upon: defects. The arc reactor that powers both Stark's heart and his suits resists shrapnel threatening to enter his heart and kill him. He wears his weaknesses as a badge of glory; his imperfections and scars are not only exposed, but also stylised and displayed for consumption.

Iron Man is a fascinating study not just for contemporary Dandyism, but how internal physical and psychological defects can be aesthetically represented as superior. Stark's Iron Man identity is founded on trauma, serving as a marker of both his physical and emotional stability, as well his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Stark very rarely reveals anything substantial about himself, thus the key to understanding Stark is not in the dialogue or even Stark himself, but in the state of his suits.

This paper will analyse the relationship between Stark and his suits, focusing specifically on how the suits can serve as a visual code for both his emotional and physical instability. Whether he is attempting to create, upgrade, repair or recapture the identity he has created, Stark's suits are used as aesthetic signifiers for Stark himself.

Bionote: Sunday Swift is a PhD student at Lancaster University. Her area of research focuses on masculinity and Dandyism in contemporary British and American television. Additional areas of research include: Irish Gothic literature, Cinema, Contemporary Gothic television, military Gothic, Popular Culture, Fashion and Deaf culture.

- Helga H Lúthersdóttir, "Wool, Spandex, Leather, Denim: The Stuff that Heroes are made of"

Abstract: In a brief scene in Alan Taylor's *Thor: The Dark World* (2013), the trickster Loki repeatedly changes his appearances while striding alongside Thor, visually, physically suggesting whom Thor might prefer to have as his companion. The scene is loaded with irony, both as this display of Loki's shape-shifting abilities reminds the audience that no companion is likely to equal Loki and for its direct reference to another one of Marvel's characters, Captain America. "Oh, this IS better - the costume's a bit much, it's so tight - but the confidence! I can feel the righteousness surging", Loki exclaims in his own voice and face, but the garb of Captain America, "Hey, you want to have heroic discussions about truth, honour, patriotism? God bless America!"

I argue that representations of the Norse gods and goddesses given in *Thor* (Kenneth Branagh 2011) and *Thor: The Dark World* are no less accurate as representations of our contemporary times than are the few depictions we have of these gods and goddesses from pagan times; something already demonstrated by the colour-coordination and related designs of the costumes of Thor and Captain America in *The Avengers* (Joss Whedon, 2012). Same may be said of the early designs of Marvel's Universe of the 1960s and 70s, as well as their numerous redesigns. Each visual depiction represents not only the fashion and style of its period, but equally the personal emphasis of the characters, the interests and needs of their followers, and the various agendas of their creators. Larger than life, these characters have always been displayed as a fantastic depiction of that which is needed, intended, desired and, equally importantly, forbidden.

I will trace the thread of the popular, represented both visually and orally from the earliest depictions of Thor and his various companions through to contemporary Hollywood celebration.

Bionote: Helga holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from University of Colorado, Boulder. She currently convenes the Icelandic BA Programme at the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University College London. Her research interests include visual representations of Norse Mythology and the Nordic Region in popular culture, Nordic Noir, and Nordic (post)colonialism.

- Alan Gregory, "Fabric Prosthetics: Fashioning (Disabled) Gothic Bodies in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*"

Abstract: In *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2004), Catherine Spooner identifies the morbid attire favoured by Goth girl Lydia Deetz, of *Beetlejuice* (1988), as symptomatic of the dark aesthetic which characterises Tim Burton as a Goth director. Burton's cultivation of a dark visual palette is also displayed in his presentation of various male figures, particularly the deformed grotesque Oswald Cobblepot, of *Batman Returns* (1992). Cobblepot's disfigured corpus represents a reprisal of the motif of the disabled male body originally examined by Burton in *Edward Scissorhands* (1990). However, unlike Edward, whose ability to create elaborate hedge and ice sculptures with his incomplete hands recodes his disability as, what Michael Bérubé terms, 'an exceptionality' (2010), Cobblepot's emergence from his underworld beneath Gotham is dependent upon the erasure of his deformity. This process is initiated by clothing his disabled body in respectability.

Costume's contribution to the temporary erasure of Cobblepot's disfigurement adheres to David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's innovative concept, *Narrative Prosthesis* (2000), as it initially conceals his deformity from public view, before the prosthetics' ultimate failure to return his disabled body to the invisible status of normalcy. Instead, Cobblepot removes his various fabric prosthetics to facilitate a return to his underworld existence, and a subsequent reclamation of his identity as the Penguin, which allows him to display his deformed corpus organically.

The Penguin's status as an emblem of John Clute's concept of *Fantastika* (2011) is further enhanced by his presence in other forms of visual media. Gregg Hurwitz's series of DC comics, *Penguin: Pain and Prejudice* (2012) is a particularly prevalent exemplar of the Penguin's cultural significance as it recognises his origins in DC's *Detective Comics*, while simultaneously acknowledging the influence of Burton's visualisation of the Penguin as a corporeal grotesque.

Bionote: Alan Gregory completed his doctoral thesis at Lancaster University in 2013. He has recently submitted a book chapter on Patrick McGrath's *Martha Peake* for inclusion in *Technologies of the Gothic* (forthcoming 2014), and his current research project focuses on representations of the disabled male body in contemporary Gothic fiction.

## Panel 7 – Breaking Down the Visual Codes of *Fantastika*

- Leimar Garcia-Siino, "The Visual Wonder of Gaiman and McKean's Underrated *MirrorMask*, or How this Film Doesn't Conform to the Mainstream Market's Vision of Fantasy"

Abstract: New wave fabulist Neil Gaiman and illustrator Dave McKean have been collaborating for over twenty years, from every issue of *The Sandman* to various young adult novels to several illustrated short books for both adults and young children. It is no surprise then that, in 2001, when approached by the Jim Henson Company about making a film, they jumped at the opportunity of collaborating once more, creating the 2005 film *MirrorMask*. Visually stunning, the film is characteristic of McKean's imaginative style, and it does not shy away from the strange, unusual and often grotesque in its attempt to create a wholly different fantastic landscape. The film, though originally intended as a straight-to-DVD movie, had a brief theatrical release in the U.S. and garnered some attention from critics who found it not merely disjointed in its complex narrative, but visually unapproachable. One critic called it "hazy, indistinct, sepia-tinted, overcrowded and flat", saying that its "monochromatic panoramas are too busy and flat to yield an illusion of depth or to convey a feeling of characters moving in space." Since its release it has held lukewarm ratings on such popular sites as Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic, though general users tend to be more favourable toward it. In a decade as ripe for fantasy as the 2000s was, what makes a fantasy film be visually and narratively compelling, and are these only responses from audiences accustomed to mainstream fantasy? What, if anything, do Gaiman and McKean achieve in diverging from the standard visualizations of fantasy? How is *MirrorMask* different from other fantasy films being produced at the time, including Gaiman's own film adaptations *Stardust* and *Coraline*, and what do these changes fundamentally indicate? How far can the visual tropes of fantasy be taken, subverted or changed before a mainstream audience becomes incapable of relating to it? These are some of the questions that will be considered in this paper that seeks to identify what makes *MirrorMask* unique, and what that tells us about the landscape of Fantasy.

Bionote: Leimar Garcia-Siino is a PhD student at the University of Liverpool. Her current research looks at fantasy genre theory, metafiction and Neil Gaiman. She also has a MA in Science Fiction Studies, and has contributed to the *Foundation* journal, the *Hélice* journal, and the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, and is an organiser for the postgraduate speculative fictions conference CRSF.

- Chloe Buckley, "'more real in a strange way': The authenticity aesthetics of visualising horror in Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie* and Chris Butler's *Paranorman*"

Abstract: Gothic critic, Jeffrey Weinstock, describes Tim Burton's films as 'Gothic lite'. For Weinstock, the 2012 remake of *Frankenweenie* demonstrates how Burton's use of nostalgia and irony produces "gothic" rather than gothic works.

*Frankenweenie* is self-conscious and self-referential, composed of a patchwork of allusions and references, replete with meta-techniques of parody. Nonetheless, to describe it as inauthentic gothic does not adequately explore how its visual aesthetics function.

Both *Frankenweenie* and Chris Butler's *Paranorman* use pastiche and parody to reanimate tropes from classic horror and B movie cinema. The parodic reanimation of these tropes does not subject them to ridicule, but reinvigorates them in a way that celebrates the inauthentic. *Frankenweenie* and *Paranorman* offer viewers an alternative to the visual aesthetics of found footage horror films, such as *Paranormal Activity*.

The stop motion animation used in these films reconstructs a patchwork of visual styles from the silent movie era to Hammer Horror productions. Weinstock is right to describe these films as nostalgic. However, the emphasis on outdated visual aesthetics reconstructs an era of horror film production that is positioned as more, rather than less, authentic.

Whilst there is a conflation of authenticity with DIY artistry, the use of layered references and the re-faking of already fake visual codes go beyond a statement of artistic authenticity.

Through their visual style, these films foreground and deconstruct the notion of authenticity itself. This is a bold move in a culture where the value of authenticity pervades. Certainly, authenticity continues to be privileged in readings of gothic texts. However, as David Grazian points out, authenticity is a social construct, with moral overtones, rather than an objective appraisal.

*Frankenweenie* and *Paranorman* problematize authenticity by exposing the process by which it is staged, undermining the critical questions implicit in Weinstock's reading about what constitutes 'real' horror.

Bionote: Chloe Buckley is a PhD student at Lancaster University, researching gothic children's literature, geek culture(s) and Weird fiction. Her publications include: 'hatcht up in villanie and witchcraft': fictional and historical recuperations of the witch child, *Preternature* (3: 1); 'Gothic and the Child reader - 1840 to Present', in *The Gothic World*. Byron, G. & Townsend, D. (eds.) Routledge; 'Psychoanalysis, "Gothic" Children's Literature and the canonization of *Coraline*', in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (Forthcoming). She writes regularly for *The Gothic Imagination* and also co-manages the project, *Beyond Twilight - Young Adult Gothic Fiction*, which brings together writers, readers and scholars of children's and young adult gothic.

- Vivien Leanne Saunders, "Sublime Sounds and Twisted Tales: The Uncanny Filmic Fantasies of Art and Music"

Abstract: In the 1980s the Jim Henson Studios produced the fantasy films *The Dark Crystal* (1982) and *Labyrinth* (1986). These films, as celebrations of the talents of artist Brian Froud and composers Trevor Jones and David Bowie, employ a fascinating collision of musical and visual languages. Both works demonstrate a distinctive creative process where the demands of visual and sound design are given precedence over much of the plot. This has formed works which are inherently discordant: as unsettling and unstructured as they are beautiful.

In this paper I will discuss how the languages of music and art merge and collide in both films, and the effects that this collision creates. Specifically, I seek to voice a possible answer as to why the films have been received with marked critical polarity: both performed relatively badly at the box office, but became cult classics. My argument is that the conflicting blend of arts signifiers suspends both films between the familiar and the strange. The fantasy genre and surreal plots effectively defamiliarise the audience, taking them away from their comfort zones to immerse them in the sensual combination of visual and sonic ideas. At the same time, the timely attempt to conform to the cultural conventions of film, music and art creates a juxtaposition between the mundane and the uncanny which renders both films functionally unstable.

By granting authority to the artists, the plot of both works emerges from the design. This means that, while the narrative itself is structurally flawed, it reflects the themes encoded in the sound-score and visual design to a much higher degree than we might expect if this creative process was

reversed. While the traditional forms of narrative may be construed as ineffective in both films, deeper themes in both *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth* exist in, and can be reconstructed from, idiosyncrasies in their visual and musical cues.

Bionote: Vivien Leanne Saunders is currently working on her PhD on narrative and the temporal arts at Lancaster University. She is a member of the Society of Musical Analysis (SMA) and the International Gothic Association (IGA). Her research interests range from: discussions of soundtrack dissonance in contemporary film; explorations of the Gothic genre in literature, modern music, art and film; analysis of sound and image in video games; and the effects of temporal perception on our understanding of narrative.