Antipodean dream
Determinations of ‘Australianness’ and ‘the Australian character’ have been and continue to be inextricably linked to the fetishisation and reification of space in popular cultural manifestations of Australia. This is evident throughout white Australian cultural histories, as well as white histories of Australian culture. Perhaps this is a tautological claim in relation to any conception of nation, tied as such conceptions are to modern practices of cartography and geography. However, it is my contention that whilst notions of space play a determinant role in general vis-à-vis the configuration of nation (and national character), they play a larger role than usual in the configuration of ‘Australia’; the function of space in the conception of Australia is less modulated through competing discourses such as class, ethnicity and religion than in other national examples.


Imagining excess
This article discusses the function of ideology in four Miami/Florida films which gesture, of course, only obliquely toward the role of the US state in the promotion of economic and social policy. However, under conditions of contemporary digital, global capitalism - the neoliberalism pioneered by American thinkers like Milton Friedman - it is becoming necessary to think in new ways about the function of representations of America, the American, and the American Dream in the reproduction of ideology. Florida, frequently depicted as one of the imaginary and actual topoi for the revitalisation of American capitalism, seems to offer a suitable psycho-aesthetic terrain in which to locate and discuss such representations.


Cinema of cruelty
*Olympus Has Fallen* is one of the most blatant pieces of right-wing propaganda to emerge in recent Hollywood cinema. The US president, with the help of Secret Service member Mike Banning, asserts his rugged individualism against a horde of invading North Koreans. Given that the film’s blustering about freedom in the face of the evil Other is ethically and aesthetically puerile, what about the film appeals to the viewer? Is the political configuration of the film indeed reducible to the dimension of message over medium? Drawing on Herbert Marcuse’s *The Aesthetic Dimension*, this article suggests that the putative ‘message’ of *Olympus Has Fallen* is in fact undercut by the nature of its engagement with the viewer at the level of the spectacle. This article, furthermore, hypothesizes a distinction between modes of spectacle in action cinema – ‘cinematic-spectacle’ and ‘action spectacle’ – through comparative analysis of the screen-spectator relationship in *Olympus Has Fallen* and *Avatar*.

Celebrating NiTROs

You will certainly have heard research buzzwords like “industry engagement” and “end-user impact”. Yet for many of our staff the activities these phrases describe are not new at all, but simply what they have always done. Our School’s creative practice disciplines organically forge links with those in industries outside of academe, whether in theatre, film or writing, and have always engaged with non-academic end-users (readers, audiences). With the new Masters coursework degree in Writing beginning in 2018, it thus seems timely that Artefact should celebrate our creative practice researchers – what I call the NiTRO special issue (Non-Traditional Research Outputs). The staff researcher interview is with Tony Radevski, whose latest film development project, Risen, is doing amazing things. The School now has two non-traditional HDR research students in Writing, Elspeth Gardiner (MPhil) and Sarah Christie Ayoub (PhD). You can read all about Sarah’s research in this issue. Camilla Nelson tells us what she achieved while on partial Study Leave last semester. Plus you will find all the usual goodies to help you catch up on what our busy staff and HDRs have been doing via recent publication excerpts and conference reports.

Dr Christine de Matos is a Senior Lecturer in History and the Associate Dean, Academic Development and Research.

Future of play

This chapter examines the ‘future of play’ as it is writ large in the mediatisation of the global toy industry, with a focus on the commercial operations of the Lego Group and their flagship The Lego Movie. It provides an analysis of the operation of play within the film, the commercial play products it has been designed to market and the mediatised play practices of the many Lego fans who have engaged with the franchise. In so doing, it examines the transformation of play in the political and economic context of contemporary post-industrial society.


Playground of the mind

This chapter begins with the claim that conventional serious, strictly syllabus and goal-oriented teaching does not inspire students with confidence in their own capacity to engage critically and creatively with and contribute to interpretations of literature. It poses the solution of employing a playful pedagogy, via games and props. The chapter initially explores the theoretical background of the concepts of play and playful pedagogy, drawing on early learning and, where available, adult learning contexts, as well as literary and philosophical perspectives on creativity and play. It then argues that by appreciating the playful aspects of both reading and writing, literary study becomes more pleasurable.


Silent DisCo

Musician Taylor Swift, via structured interaction with fans, commonly referred to as ‘meet and greets’, fosters the identity of a celebrity who has a sincere interest in the lives and livelihoods of her fans. Selected fans for meet and greets, particularly those meet and greets focusing on fans with disability, generate publicity for Swift and allow the fans to be a part of defining Swift’s identity as a ‘good’, accessible and charitable celebrity. Such ‘good’ work by Swift is undermined, however, by her perpetuation of individualist models of disability. Individualist models reduce the relational nature of disability to biologically determined impairment and reproduce charitable narratives of disability; these views, however, are criticized by disability advocates and scholars. This is because individualist and charity models are problematic for pursuing structural change and realizing human rights consistent with the United Nations’ Disability Convention (DisCO).


cont. p6
Could you tell us briefly about your project?

My film and TV project is called RISEN. It has received funding from Screen Australia, under a scheme known as Hot Shots Plus. They finance both a proof-of-concept (in our case, a short film) and the development of the TV series.

The short film will follow teenager Sean, who roams the streets with other teenagers searching for bodies of ‘the fallen’ - reckless users of a street drug which causes people to float and then plunge to their deaths. The full series will flesh out this story world and look at the wider impacts of drug use in a society that is geographically and socially divided.


What is your current focus?

Most of my films make a commentary on social justice issues and often focus on disenfranchised characters who are searching for a connection.

What is the cutting edge in your field and how does your work extend/relate to it?

The story we are trying to tell is very different to what is usually produced in Australia, dealing with social and political themes in a dystopian world.

The visual effects elements in this film will be challenging and RISEN is the most VFX-laden project I have worked. Overall, it is the most ambitious project I have undertaken.

How has your research influenced your teaching?

I am working with new digital technologies on this project, and developing a unique pipeline for the visual effects elements. All within a modern, production environment using the latest industry standard practice.

These skills and this knowledge inform the production units I teach. I will embed this current practice across levels.
ANZCA Conference, Communication Worlds: Access, Voice, Diversity, Engagement, University of Sydney, 4-7 July 2017

Cate Thill

In July I gave a co-authored paper with colleague A/Prof Tanja Dreher (UNSW) on media justice and disability at the Australia and New Zealand Communication Association Conference (ANZCA). The conveners, Gerard Goggin, Fiona Martin and Jonathon Hutchinson, designed the program to foster engagement – with a number of plenary sessions consisting of a dialogue between academics and industry professionals. The most memorable was the opening plenary in which Aboriginal media practitioners were interviewed by Prof Bronwyn Carlson, Head of the Department of Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University. In this session, journalist and radio broadcaster Daniel Browning spoke about The Punishment Tree as one of the most memorable stories he has produced – a story about two brothers, part of the Stolen Generations, who recounted their experience of being separated from their siblings on Central Station. Daniel reflected on the importance of telling familiar stories about colonialism in new ways so that they did not lose their significance. Inspired by this approach, I am going to use the podcast from this story in my Sociology of Childhood unit this semester to do just that – to tell a story about the childhood of many Aboriginal people in a locally meaningful way.

At the conference, Tanja and I were the recipients of the Christopher Newell path building scholarship and advocacy in this field. Tanja and I worked with Christopher briefly, convening a symposium on listening and disability in 2009 with Gerard Goggin, and continue to find his concept of rejected knowledge claims useful for understanding the non- or misrecognition of people with disability in media. Sadly, Christopher passed away before the workshop, which was postponed and then held in his memory.

Two conferences and a report: the Japanese Studies Association of Australia (JSAA) conference, University of Wollongong 27-30 June 2017; and the Australian Historical Association (AHA) conference, University of Newcastle 3-7 July 2017.

Sarah Bell and Christine de Matos

Christine:

In June 2017, I attended the JSAA conference in Wollongong. I have been out of this academic collective for a while, but was amazed at how easy it was to slide back in. I was able to (re)connect with many familiar faces, old colleagues and current friends. An extra special treat was running into my old PhD student, Dr Emma Dalton, who has grown to be such a great Japanese Studies scholar.

I was invited to be a discussant on one of the panels, titled ‘Japan and the Pacific’ and organised by Peter Mauch from Western Sydney University. The panel consisted of Peter, who spoke on ‘Taking responsibility for the war? Hirohito and MacArthur’, plus Tomoko Horikawa (USyd) and her paper ‘Japanese-Australian clash over the White Australia Policy 1894–1901’, and Toshiki Asakura-Ward (WSU) on ‘A Case of Resurrecting Henry Black (1858-1923): Why was there a sudden revival of interest in him in the 1980s?’. My job was to act as both Chair and Discussant, drawing out the common threads of the papers and noting further points for discussion or future research. The panel was a great success, and one of the easiest ever to Chair as all papers were well prepared and well timed.

Panel members left to right: Christine de Matos, Peter Mauch, Tomoko Horikawa and Toshi Asakura-Ward.

In July I attended the AHA conference, and this time I organised a panel. The panel consisted of myself (Working for the Victor: Women and Labour in Occupied Germany), Sarah Bell (UNDA Masters, Liberation to Legacy: The Post-war Lives of AANS POW) and Elicia Taylor (UoN PhD, ‘Unspeakably Happy and Content’: Unmarried Australian Women and WWI Service). In the end, Elicia was unable to make it, but a colleague stepped in to read her fantastic paper.

Overall this was a great conference (with the best conference food ever!!!), once
A/Prof Camilla Nelson

So I’m back from Study Leave. Unlike most applicants I elected to take partial leave, working a 0.5 research leave alongside my new fulltime position. Like any other leave candidate, I’d stacked up projects in advance and not finished nearly as many as I hoped. Nevertheless, in six months I’ve finished some book chapters and a journal article, kept an edited book project going, signed off on page proofs and peer reviews, laid down the blueprint for (what I hope is) a new book project, written a bunch of journalism, sat on an expert panel for the Walkley Foundation, and appeared on ABC Radio National’s ‘Books and Arts’ on a couple of occasions – which seems to be the prime time media slot in my disciplinary field, with an astonishing number of my academic colleagues listening in. Teaching time was also productive, with the new undergraduate major in Writing launched and the new MA specialisation in Writing approved.

Here’s the proof that I wasn’t just going to the beach:

**Study Leave report**

### Book Chapters


### Journal Article

“Beyond Prometheus: Creativity and the Anthropocene”, *Knowledge Cultures* (under review).

### Other Publications

“Friday essay: from grotesques to frumps – a field guide to spinsters in English fiction”, *The Conversation*, 17 March 2017.

“#ThanksforTyping: the women behind famous male writers”, *The Conversation*, 6 April 2017.

“Unflinching, luminous, and moving, the Stella shortlist will get under your skin”, *The Conversation*, 18 April 2017.


“Scrounging for money: how the world’s great writers made a living”, *The Conversation*, 17 May 2017.
sion” at the Reading and Writing in the Twenty-First Century conference at the University of Queensland. The paper considered the ideas of leading scholars and practitioners in the field of literary studies education.

Drawing from live interviews with Steven Connor, Raimond Gaita, Marina Warner and Adam Phillips, among others, the paper developed a picture of current philosophies of literary pedagogy, as well as future directions in the field.

While the paper addressed teaching methods, it also pushed further into exploring bigger questions, such as: What is the point of literary study? Can a case still be made for the discipline? What is literary studies’ place in the humanities more broadly? Are literature and the humanities in need of defending? Or is their time up? What is their future? While entertaining different points of view and a variety of responses to these questions, the paper attempted to offer a way forward into the twenty-first-century classroom.

Screen Studies Conference, 23-25 June 2017, University of Glasgow

Ari Mattes

In June 2017, I presented a paper to the Screen Studies Conference, held annually at the University of Glasgow. The conference, associated with Screen, the world’s leading film and TV studies journal, brings together some of the most exciting scholars from around the globe. Acceptance is highly competitive, so it was an honour in itself that my paper, “The Cinema of Accidents: Hollywood Cinema in the Disaster Ecology,” was selected.

Livened up by the frosty air of the Scottish summer, the conference unfolded like a scholar’s dream – notwithstanding the usual antipodean jetlag – with extraordinary papers by cultural studies luminaries like Richard Dyer (St Andrews) and Steven Connor (Cambridge), balanced by standout panels from emerging UK, European and US scholars on subjects ranging from ecology and film to technologies of vision. The most inspiring paper, perhaps, was from Anthony Enns (Dalhousie): “Optography and film: prosthetic vision and postmortem cinema.” Compared with the North American SCMS conference – the other major annual international film and media studies event, which sees hundreds of papers presented over five days with sometimes as many as 25 concurrent sessions – the turnout for Screen was rather small, with around 100 papers presented over the three days. The smaller size enriched the experience for me – I had a chance to meet every participant, and forge some lasting intellectual connections along the way. Most promisingly, there was interest from some of the major academic publishers in attendance, and I am now in the process of developing my paper as a sample chapter for a book proposal for Duke University Press, facilitated by connections I made at the conference. Here is the abstract for the paper/chapter:

We inhabit a world rife with technological and environmental accidents. From Fukushima to the “collateral damage” of drone strikes to anthropogenic climate change, the Accident has become a constitutive feature of our modernity. It is bureaucratised in the form of the institutional “risk” assessment; it is commercialised as the limit of the global re-insurance cycle. The history of the twentieth century, as Paul Virilio argues, can, in fact, be seen as a history of anthropotechnical disasters: Auschwitz, Nagasaki, and so on.

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with ecological catastrophe looming on the horizon, cultural theory seems uniquely primed for a discussion of the Accident in popular cinema: the Accident as subject, the Accident as style, the Accident as milieu. How has Hollywood cinema responded to the increasing dominance of the Accident in our economic, technological and ecological lives? This paper, through critical development of Virilio’s recent work on the primacy of the accident vis-à-vis technology, interrogates the figuration of the Accident in three recent Hollywood films, The Impossible (2012), The Visit (2015), and Spring Breakers (2012), thereby beginning to shed light on some of the dominant cultural anxieties of the 21st century.

from p6

Islamic Environmentalism

Islamic Environmentalism examines Muslim involvement in environmentalism in the United States and Great Britain. The book focuses upon Muslim activists and Islamic organizations that approach environmentalism as a religious duty: offering environmental readings of Islamic scriptures, and integrating religious ritual and practice with environmental action.

Honing in on the insights of social movement theory, Hancock predominantly examines the activism and experience of Muslims involved in environmentalism and bases her research on interviews with activists in the United States and Great Britain. Indeed, the reader is first provided with an insightful analysis of the ways in which Muslim activists interpret and present environmentalism - diagnosing causes of environmental crises, proposing solutions, and motivating other Muslims into activism. This is followed by a discussion of the importance of affective ties, emotion and group culture in motivating and sustaining Muslim involvement in environmental activism.

Could you tell us briefly about your thesis?

My research project is fairly unconventional in that it is both a research PhD and a creative writing exercise. I’ll be looking at the way Australian Young Adult (YA) fiction challenges representations of teenage girls from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and specifically on how counter-narratives play out in typical stories of adolescence, where the character has the added hang-up of coming from a marginalised group. I’m fascinated by the stereotypes that dominant groups have of the ‘other’, and the way that we as a society think of, and approach, otherness. I find that despite our heavily multicultural society, representations of ethnicity are still stereotypical and tokenistic, and I plan to explore how, in YA fiction at least, the ‘other’ is not necessarily a homogenous group. I’ll be analysing three award-winning Australian YA novels that were published over three decades (and which are narrated by Australian characters of Italian, Palestinian and Vietnamese backgrounds respectively) for their counter-discourses, examples of identity politics and elements of transculturalism. I’ll also be looking at the concept of fluid identities in fiction and the intersectionalities of race, class and gender in answering stereotypes of migrant groups. My creative component will involve writing a 70,000 word YA novel to contextualise my research in a current-telling of an ‘other’s’ story – that of a refugee teen fleeing the Middle East and finding herself in detention in Australia.

How would you explain the broader significance of your research to an educated layperson?

Australia is home to a multitude of cultures – people with different creeds, ways of life, traditions and customs. Yet we only see a fraction of the real Australia when we open a magazine, read a book or turn on the telly. Our population is so diverse and yet there’s a lot of ignorance and stereotyping – it’s not always intentional, but it’s often easy to lump a minority in a single category without realising that their experiences are not at all uniform. It’s especially hard for first-generation migrant teens who are navigating the complexities of adolescence while straddling two worlds. Basically, the significance of the research is that it will foster a greater understanding of the migrant experience from an adolescent female’s perspective by challenging common stereotypes and therefore enabling a greater chance at harmony.

What is your current focus?

I’m straddling the literature review – theories on transculturalism, embodiment, intersectionality and identity – as well as my creative component. I tend to work best under pressure, and as a creative writer I am not very disciplined. My plan was to write the creative first but I am finding that without doing some reading on existing literature, I can’t comfortably write my creative because the literature review is what seems like the hardest slog in the whole project.

What is the cutting edge in your field and how does your work extend/relate to it?

Right now there’s a big push for diverse stories on a global scale, and there’s an ‘own voices’ movement on social media and in bookstores that is really gaining momentum. It’s all about pushing and publishing the stories of minorities – not writing on behalf of them but giving them the platform to write characters and families and experiences that reflect their personal identities. My work looks at the importance of this and the value that such stories contribute socially, particularly to younger generations experiencing similar things to the characters they’re reading about. But it is also fostering a sense of empathy and understanding – without the clichéd representations – among the wider population.

What do you hope to do when you finish your degree?

I’m a journalist first and foremost, so I hope to keep writing features and sharing my passion for news + feature writing as a tutor here at UNDA. I also hope to keep writing creatively, and to continue visiting schools and writers’ festivals and talking about the things I am passionate about. My research project is a reflection of this passion as I’m really interested in people’s stories: the stories we rarely get to see and the people behind them; the stories of young women finding their footing in the world; the experience of people in minority cultures as they navigate the conflicting elements of their identities and everyday lives.