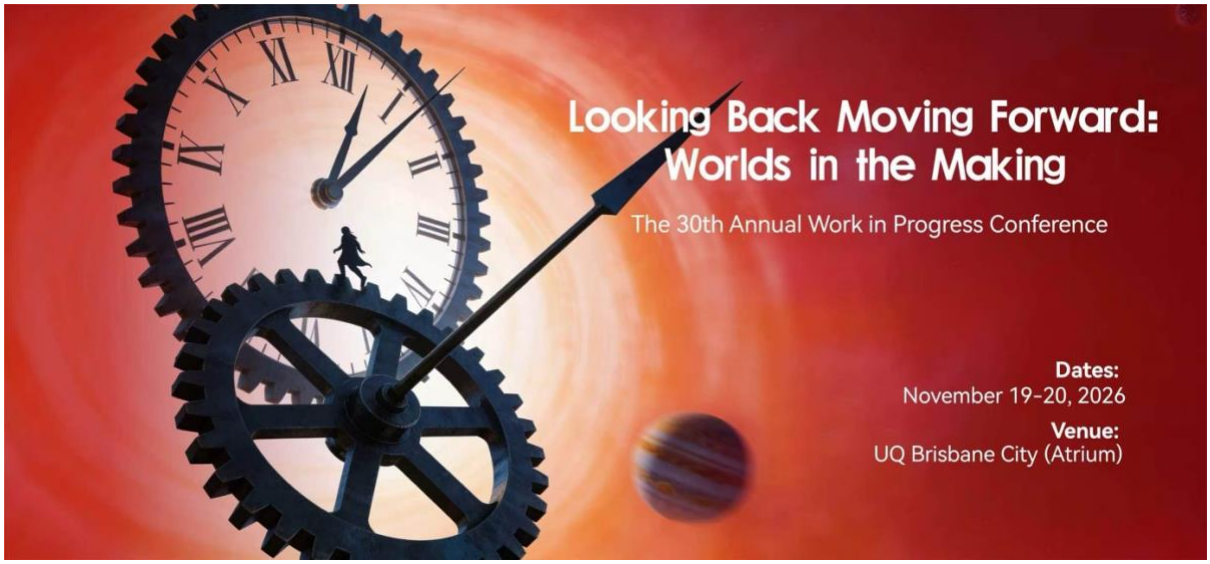


2026 Work in Progress Conference

School of Communication and Arts, University of Queensland

Book of Abstracts

Organised by Panel

Evelynd

Mediating Belonging: Indonesian Diasporic Media Use in Multicultural Australia

Diasporic media plays an increasingly important role in how migrants maintain connections, construct identities, and navigate everyday life across national boundaries. This research examines how Indonesian migrants in Australia engage with Indonesian diasporic media and how these media practices contribute to the ongoing negotiation of belonging. Situated at the intersection of migration, media, and cultural studies, the project draws on theories of transnationalism, media repertoires, and belonging to understand media not merely as channels of communication but as spaces where social worlds are produced, sustained, and reimagined.

Based on qualitative interviews with Indonesian migrants in Australia, the study explores how participants use Indonesian-language news outlets, community media, social media groups, and digital communication platforms to access information, sustain cultural connections, participate in diasporic networks, and make sense of living between multiple places. Rather than understanding migration as a linear movement from one society to another, the findings suggest that diasporic media enable the creation of overlapping social worlds that connect memories of homeland, experiences of settlement, and aspirations for the future.

By foregrounding the experiences of an under-researched migrant community, this research challenges assumptions that belonging is tied to a single national location. Instead, it demonstrates how belonging is continuously negotiated through everyday engagement with diasporic media. In doing so, the project reveals the role of media in shaping transnational worlds and offers new insights into how migrants maintain meaningful connections across distance while building lives within multicultural Australia.

Evelynd *is an Indonesian lecturer in media and journalism at Universitas Negeri Padang. She received a PhD scholarship on Australian Media Use (Understanding Twenty-First Century Media Diets), supervised by Prof Amanda Lotz. She was a professional intern at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), working on women in sports journalism and media inclusion.*

Aaisha Umt Ur Rashid

Reimagining Resistance: Decolonial Worlds in the Making

Resistance has conventionally been studied as opposition either to an authority, a system, a mindset, or a structure of power. Particularly within postcolonial thought, resistance has been linked to struggles against colonial rule, racial hierarchy, and imperial power dynamics. From Frantz Fanon's revolutionary decolonisation to Edward Said's critique of Orientalist depiction and Gayatri Spivak's examination of subaltern agency, postcolonial thinkers have repeatedly approached resistance as a means of challenging and disconcerting structures of colonial power. The historical impact of such opposition cannot be ignored; it has ignited substantial social and political change. Yet describing resistance mainly by what it opposes risks limiting what resistance can actually do. This paper therefore asks: what if we stop looking at resistance merely as an opposing force and see it as an energy that creates?

Rather than focusing on individual literary texts, this paper places resistance itself at the centre of inquiry, locating its movement from outward opposition toward transformative and world-making possibilities. Bringing David Jefferess's theorisation of transformative resistance in conversation with Walter Mignolo's concepts of delinking and epistemic disobedience, the paper examines how resistance can move through refusal and unsettlement toward transformation, construction, and the opening of decolonial possibilities. Resistance, I argue, works not only against external structures of power but also against the assumptions those structures inculcate within the subject. Ideas of race, identity, cultural difference, and belonging live through conditioned colonial logics; resisting them may therefore unsettle the very terms through which self and the world around us have been envisioned. Once these internalised categories are destabilised, resistance can become generative, enabling a movement toward decolonial possibilities through the reimagining of subjectivity, relation, and belonging. Postcolonial subjects, in this sense, resist in order to reimagine. Resistance becomes world-making when it does not only contest the terms of an inherited world but begins to imagine the conditions of another.

Aaisha Umt Ur Rashid *is a PhD student of English Literature in the School of Communication and Arts at The University of Queensland, where she is supervised by Professor Anna Johnston and Associate Professor Amy Hubbell. Her research interests include postcolonial and diasporic fiction, theories of resistance, decoloniality, subjectivity, and belonging. Alongside her academic work, she is a poet, fiction writer, editor, and translator, and the founder of The Bridge, an international literary initiative that brings together writers and creative voices across national and cultural boundaries.*

Melissa Wong

"Home is where the heart is": Home-making journey of international students in Australia

Home is a multilayered concept shaped by social relationships, familiarity, security, and meaningful experiences, and can be both physical and symbolic. For international students, leaving behind familiar people, places, routines, and cultural practices means navigating an unfamiliar world while negotiating how a sense of home can be maintained, adapted, or recreated. This home-making journey can involve hardship, tension, and challenges, but can also provide opportunities for intercultural learning, identity negotiation, and personal growth. Existing research on international students' acculturation has examined their adaptation strategies, co-national and host-national friendships, and the challenges they encounter in their host environments. However, less is known about the ways international students evoke a sense of home through everyday interactions across digital and physical spaces. Addressing this gap, this study investigates how international students carry or abandon aspects of home from the past, maintain or adapt familiar practices in the present, and negotiate new ways of living while imagining their future home across digital and physical spaces. It examines homemaking through three interconnected dimensions: emotions, such as fear, love, and longing; cognitions, including memories of the past, knowledge of old and new cultural norms, and beliefs about how traditions should be maintained, adapted, or hybridised; and behaviours, such as maintaining familiar routines, shaped by individuals' life trajectories, experiences, and cultural diffusion across time. By conceptualising home as an ongoing and portable process rather than a fixed place, the study reframes international students' lived experiences of home as fluid, shaped by relational, emotional, and cultural processes across spaces. This perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of how home "travels" through acculturation across time and space, with implications for supporting international students' psychological wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Melissa Wong *is a first-year PhD student in the School of Communication and Arts at The University of Queensland. Her dissertation investigates how international students recreate a sense of home during acculturation in Australian higher education. Her previous research has examined intercultural friendship, intercultural mentoring, intercultural learning, and adaptation among international students.*

Pierce Wilcox

Speculative Fiction: Writing the Novel of Political Economy

Finance shapes our world. Flows of information and investment affect the money in our bank accounts, our access to housing and healthcare, the prices at the grocery store and the petrol station. Financial data has concrete effects, but it is itself inchoate – numbers and words written on computers by high-stakes gamblers and their bankers. In the era of prediction markets, high-frequency trading, and complex financial instruments, this is how the world is made.

How can storytelling grapple with the invisible, intangible, and world-shaping economic system of finance capitalism? While economists and popular non-fiction communicators have found a variety of approaches, this paper focuses on contemporary fiction, and how it might allow us to grasp the world that finance makes – or imagine a different one. Inspired by Tom LeClair's concept of the systems novel, I consider how particular writing practices and genre structures can help both writers and readers 'master – comprehend, represent, and critique – the world' (14), in this case the world-system of finance capitalism.

In this hybrid critical and creative paper, I will discuss how other fiction writers have met the contemporary economic moment, and offer excerpts from my work-in-progress experiments in genre-blurring storytelling as I work through the challenge of 'mastering', and perhaps rewriting, the world.

Pierce Wilcox *is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Queensland, where he also teaches. He writes fiction, poetry, and tiny role-playing games, and he has also written extensively for theatre and opera. His writing has been published in Overland, Cordite Poetry Review, and UQ's Jacaranda Journal, and his works for the stage have been performed nationally, including at the Melbourne Festival, Sydney Festival, and the Biennale of Sydney.*

Bianca Millroy

Maddening the Gaze: Hysterical objects, crazy-patch and murder walls – a novel Creative Nonfiction approach to writing contested illness memoir

As novelist Susanna Clarke writes of her eleven-year journey to a diagnosis of contested illness ('a strange, sudden crisis'): 'Illness brings us up against the limitation of words, reminds us that what we experience will always be greater than the words we have to describe it'. Clarke insists that, unless we 'scribble them down' words simply 'evaporate' when striving to describe a crisis, dream or moment of transcendence. In response to the 2026 WiP Conference theme "Looking Back, Moving Forward: Words in The Making", I explore how embodied narration and the uncanny might capture moments of crisis as an unstable phenomenological experience rather than a neat diagnostic category. *Caput Nebula* ('Head of Fog') is a work of creative nonfiction that charts the years before, and after my diagnosis of functional neurological disorder (FND). It braids memoir, personal essay, medical writing and literary analysis to explore representations of contested illness – that is, diagnoses that have been typically stigmatised, gendered and dismissed due to their "medically unexplained" nature. In this paper, I will present my latest exegetical research in the form of literary and textual analysis of my own practice-led work to demonstrate strategic, embodied approaches to writing contested illness. I propose that polyphonic (multi-voice), linguistic and structural interventions enable writers of contemporary medical memoir to construct a narrative that adopts and interrogates the classic detective investigation. Secondly, I introduce "crazy patch" as a structural motif – an example of what creative nonfiction scholar Gemma Nisbet terms "Object Itineraries" (2021). I argue that it is through the sustained choreography of these techniques that enables a nuanced depiction of contested illness that eludes conventional medical categories, thereby illuminating my own, practice-led findings and contribution to new knowledge in narrative representations of FND.

Bianca Millroy *(she/her) is an emerging science writer, editor and podcaster living on unceded land in Meanjin/Brisbane, whose creative work appears in Science Write Now, Jacaranda Journal, Exhume, as well as anthologies: Brisbane Bookshops (AndAlso Books), Ink and Inclusion (UQDC) and FND Stories: Personal and Professional Experiences of Functional Neurological Disorder (Jessica Kinglsey, UK). Bianca was the recipient of the 2024 Scribe/Varuna Nonfiction Fellowship for her creative nonfiction work-in-progress, Caput Nebula, and is soon to complete her PhD in creative nonfiction titled "Re-writing the Narrative: Representations of Contested Illness in Literature" at UQ.*

Natalie Sprite

Bodies of Water, excerpt from a novella-in-progress

After 30 years of longing for home, Anna finds a block of land on an island known as the Meth Capital of Queensland. She doesn't know that's what it's called. By the time she finds out, she's quit her job and driven halfway across the country with her eleven-year-old daughter, Nina.

Ari is about as handsome as a man can be, square-jawed and hugely muscled, closer to a horse or a lion than the men Anna is used to. The first time they meet, she has an almost irresistible urge to touch the skin stretched across a bicep big as a grapefruit. It's not sex, she tells herself, it's just curiosity.

Anna has been celibate for 10 years.

Bodies of Water is fiction born from a writing practice centred in the body. This is part of a practice-led research project investigating how embodiment practices influence the way we create. Can writing from the body support a writer to access what Mihály Csíkszentmihályi called 'flow state', allowing greater access to authentic voice, sensory detail, generative thinking and the capacity to move through creative resistance?

As generative AI's storytelling grows more sophisticated, could this be where our power as human writers lies? In the honest intimacy of a world lived from inside skin. Stories born from breathing, flesh-bound experience—stories that come from our bodies. Maybe the gift of AI's excellent mimicry is a call for deeper, embodied, human authenticity, on and off the page.

Natalie Sprite *is completing a Master of Philosophy in Creative Writing at the University of Queensland. She was shortlisted for the 2021 Glendower Award for The Luminous Heart and the 2002 Australian/Vogel Literary Award for Grace Notes. Her fiction and songwriting have won Australia Council grants and appeared in Meanjin and Australian Award Winning Writing.*

KEYNOTE: THE TROUBLE WITH WARNINGS AND THE WORLDS THEY MAKE

"All a poet can do today is warn," wrote Wilfred Owen. But what can a warning actually do? Warnings ask us to imagine dangers that have not yet materialised and act to prevent futures that may never arrive. They depend on the worlds in which they are made and received: the present in which the future is not yet settled, of shared languages, assumptions about risk, and understandings of harm. What happens when those conditions change, or when a warning reaches an audience its maker could never have imagined?

Beginning with my research into nuclear semiotics and the trouble of communicating the dangers of nuclear waste across deep time, this keynote explores warnings as acts of world-making. Moving between literary representations of danger and the systems through which societies anticipate and manage risk, I consider how warnings—from the Atomic Priesthood to cli-fi, trigger warnings to Okjökull—construct possible futures and attempt (and fail) to shape the conditions of their own reception.

Reflecting on thirty years of the Work in Progress conference, I ask what it means to make creative and scholarly work in times of uncertainty. How do we act with care and responsibility when we cannot determine what our work will become? And what does it mean to inherit intellectual and creative histories while making work that speaks towards futures we cannot yet imagine?

Shastra Deo *is an award-winning writer, researcher, and researcher developer. Her debut poetry collection, The Agonist (UQP 2017), won the 2016 Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize and the 2018 Australian Literature Society Gold Medal. Her second collection, The Exclusion Zone (UQP 2023), formed part of her Doctor of Philosophy in Creative Writing at The University of Queensland, which received a Dean's Award for Outstanding HDR Thesis. Her creative practice research explores the relationship between language, temporality, and survival, with particular interests in ecological crisis and the poetics of warning.*

Shastra's creative and scholarly work has been featured in Poetry Foundation, Australian Book Review, and Continuum, among others. She co-edited Best of Australian Poems 2024 with Kate Lilley, bringing together a snapshot of exceptional Australian poetry, and co-edited the TEXT Journal special issue "Digital Realism" with A/Prof David Thomas Henry Wright and Dr Chris Arnold, examining how digital technologies, literature, and games are reshaping contemporary writing and reading. In 2025, ABC Radio National's Future Tense described her as a "nuclear semiotics expert" in a feature on communicating the dangers of nuclear waste across deep time.

Shastra works at Queensland University of Technology leading industry engagement initiatives that connect higher degree research candidates with industry, government, and community organisations.

Kairo Byrne: INTER/FACE: Robots, Faces, and Personhood in Science Fiction Film and Television

Poppy Saines: Content Warning: Evolving Frameworks for Managing Sensitive Artistic Content in Australian Art Galleries

Hannah Green: ‘Poetics of the Footnote’: Encounters Between Readers and Narrative in the Postmodern Novel

Codie Haycraft: Grace Tame, a Feminist Killjoy: A Case Study of Testimonial Injustice in Australian Media

Ellie Shaw: The Phantom of the Opera: Discovering the Invisible Communication Design of the Stage Manager as Archivist in a Pair of Prompt Copies

Thet Zin Myint

Battlefield of Legitimacy: Alternative News Networks on Telegram in Myanmar's Civil Conflict

This project reveals a new battlefield coexisting with Myanmar's civil war: social media. Since the 2021 coup, alternative news networks on Telegram, aligned with different sides of the conflict, have produced, circulated, amplified, and contested messages about the war and about who deserves to lead. Within these networks, news, manipulation, and genuine grassroots voices become intertwined and hard to tell apart.

Combining network analysis, computational text analysis, and qualitative analysis of 63 public Telegram channels from 2023 to 2025, the project traces how information travels and probes who might be moving it and how they build specific narratives or news realities.

The project challenges the stable media systems assumed by much digital media scholarship, where established news organisations anchor public information and roles and message types stay distinct: producers separate from amplifiers, news from commentary and social media posts. In a civil war, these boundaries blur sharply, and the categories scholars use to describe news environments no longer hold neatly.

The project offers a broader view of a contested news environment in which different forms of manipulation can coexist. It seeks to distinguish genuine alternative news, where it exists, from political actors using these networks to stage the appearance of grassroots consensus, while circulating partial or distorted reporting and obscuring their political motivations. Making these constructed realities visible opens a way for civilians and civil society to reclaim political aspirations that undeclared actors present as their own.

Thet Zin Myint *is a PhD candidate (1st year) at the Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Australia. Their research examines relational and participatory communication practices in contexts of digital contention, with particular interest in contentious politics, polarisation, propaganda, and digital communication during conflict. Their work is informed by lived experience of the ongoing Myanmar Revolution since 2021 and seeks to develop grounded understandings of communication practices in highly contested political environments.*

At QUT, Thet Zin contributed for two years to the Australian Research Council Laureate project Determining the Drivers and Dynamics of Partisanship and Polarisation in Online Public Debate, working on issues including climate change polarisation. They contributed to mixed-method codebook development and co-authored research on Australian media polarisation. They have also worked as a Research Assistant for one and a half years on the Indigenous Teaching and Learning Experiences, a faculty project at QUT. Prior to academia, Thet Zin worked across communication and media projects in Southeast Asia, including a human rights podcast in Myanmar that convened revolutionary armed leaders, political science scholars, and human rights activists to discuss the Geneva Conventions.

Oluwapelumi Oginni

Looking Back at War, Looking Forward to Peace: Journalism and the Construction of Continuity

The legacies of civil war continue to influence political developments in Liberia and Sierra Leone, but how do these histories shape newspaper reporting of contemporary electoral tensions? Drawing on a comparative analysis of newspaper coverage of the 2023 elections in both countries, this paper examines how past experiences of conflict informed electoral reporting and what this reveal about the treatment of historical context within peace journalism.

The findings show that newspapers in both countries drew on their histories of conflict, although in different ways. In Liberia, previous episodes of political violence were often explicitly referenced to interpret contemporary electoral tensions and warn of the possibility of renewed conflict. In Sierra Leone, the influence of the past was less direct. Newspapers gave considerable attention to activities aimed at ensuring peaceful elections, including peace meetings, youth peace agreements and other initiatives intended to prevent electoral violence. Although the civil war was not repeatedly discussed, the attention given to these activities reflected continuing concerns about peace and political stability. Liberian newspapers therefore looked backwards to establish what contemporary political tensions might become, while newspapers in Sierra Leone looked forward by highlighting efforts to preserve peace.

These differences raise questions about the assumption that providing historical background necessarily represents peace-oriented reporting. While references to past conflicts can help explain contemporary tensions, they can also reinforce narratives of insecurity and the possibility of renewed violence. Similarly, appeals to preserve peace may reflect the influence of historical conflict without explicitly discussing it. The paper argues that the peace-oriented value of historical context cannot be determined simply by its presence or absence but requires attention to how newspapers use the past to interpret contemporary tensions and construct expectations about the future.

Oluwapelumi (Pelumi) Oginni *is a PhD candidate in Media and Communication at UQ's School of Communication and Arts. Her research examines news media coverage of conflict in Africa, with a focus on conflict communication and peace journalism. Beyond her doctoral research, Pelumi's work spans media and journalism innovation, artificial intelligence, including AI literacy, AI governance and the implications of emerging technologies for journalism. She also teaches journalism and communication within the school and has presented her research at national and international conferences.*

Juan Camilo Ospina Deaza

Making Infertile Men Visible? Fatherhood and Infertility in Australian News Media

Concerns about declining sperm quality and rising infertility have made men's reproductive health an increasingly visible public issue. Infertility can disrupt, delay, or foreclose anticipated transitions to parenthood. Yet men are often represented primarily as partners or reduced to their reproductive capacity. This study examines how Australian online news media represent infertile men and construct their possible pathways towards, or away from, parenthood.

Although infertility does not necessarily preclude parenthood, it can transform how men imagine and pursue it. Assisted reproductive technologies, donor conception, adoption, and other pathways may support family formation, but access to these possibilities is shaped by resources, relationships, social norms, masculinity, and ideas about biological relatedness.

Using thematic and discourse analysis, the study examines Australian news articles published between 2015 and 2026 that explicitly discuss men experiencing infertility or male factor infertility. It asks how infertile men are positioned in relation to fatherhood, whose voices shape these narratives, which experiences and reproductive pathways are made visible, and how responsibility, blame, masculinity, and reproductive possibility are negotiated.

News media help construct the worlds in which infertility and fatherhood become publicly imaginable. By examining whether infertile men appear as reproductive subjects, partners, patients, or consumers, this study considers which futures of fatherhood are legitimised, marginalised, or left unimagined. It contributes to sociological discussions of parenthood, involuntary childlessness, reproductive inequality, and the gendered meanings of infertility.

Juan Camilo Ospina Deaza *is a PhD candidate in the School of Communication and Arts at The University of Queensland. Trained in anthropology and bioethics, his research examines male infertility at the intersection of health, digital technologies, masculinity, and reproductive futures.*

Felicity Andrews

The Paradox of Decoloniality in the White Cube: Relational Practice in *The Soils Project*

The Soils Project exhibition emerged as an inter-institutional collaboration between TarraWarra Museum of Art (Healesville Victoria, 2023), Van AbbeMuseum (Eindhoven the Netherlands, 2025) and Yogyakarta-based arts-activist collective, Struggles for Sovereignty.

Deriving its theoretical impetus from Mignolo's articulation of decoloniality as delinking from the colonial logics of Western arts institutions, *The Soils Project* enacted a methodology that took shape as a conversation amongst its international curatorium, led by Indigenous curators and artists to establish an aesthetic and place-based language outside of the dominant epistemic territories of the West.

The exhibition emerged from a series of workshops for participating artists and curators conducted on Wurundjeri Country/ Healesville with Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation, advisors to TarraWarra Museum of Art, to inform a dehierarchical model of exhibition making. Through this process of relationality, the exhibition invited artists to respond to the histories of place embedded in Coranderrk Aboriginal Station which surrounds TarraWarra. In *The Soils Project*, decoloniality opened space for a confluence of knowledge systems, grounded in place-based pedagogy and relational accountability between Indigenous and settler peoples, teasing at the tensions between the White Cube museum and the embodied histories of the Country on which it is situated.

This paper examines the transferability of Mignolo's model of decoloniality, emerging from the histories of Abya Yala, to the context of settler-colonial Australia. I consider it in dialogue with decolonial pedagogy from Australian First Nations scholars, such as Martin Nakata, whose theory of the Cultural Interface questions whether Indigenous Knowledge Systems can truly delink from the dominant institutional logics of colonialism. In analysing the methodologies enacted in *The Soils Project,* I evaluate the paradox of decoloniality in contemporary Australian arts institutions, and consider the extent to which a decolonial practice can truly unsettle the institutional hierarchies of the White Cube.

Felicity Andrews *is an arts educator who writes, researches, and creates on Yugerra/Turrbal Land, Magandjin. She is undertaking a PhD in Art History at the University of Queensland exploring relationality as a decolonising methodology for Great Ocean arts institutions. She works as an Education Assistant at the University of Queensland Art Museum, and is a casual academic in the School of Communication and Arts, teaching Art in the Modern World.*

Bonnie Sales

Limitrophy and Empathy in Charlotte McConaghy's *Wild Dark Shore*

In our world of increasing environmental uncertainty, ecological fiction can offer us insight into experiences of climate change and unsettle assumptions about our place in ecology. Charlotte McConaghy's 2025 novel *Wild Dark Shore* is an eco-thriller set on the fictional island of Shearwater, based loosely on the subantarctic Macquarie Island, halfway between Tasmania and Antarctica. The novel shifts genre boundaries to encapsulate issues of climate change. *Wild Dark Shore* employs fear, trauma and the complex relationship between humans and nature to question the ethics of self-sacrifice in the Anthropocene. This paper contends that the limitrophic space of the coastline and the use of the Gothic mode together depict empathy for nature and challenge settler-colonial narratives. Close readings of the lighthouse scenes, coastal imagery, and the children's interactions with non-human agencies will demonstrate how gothic devices illustrate ecological enmeshment and address settler-colonial narratives.

Coastal landscapes are relatively under-represented in both Gothic and Ecocritical scholarship on Australian literature. I undertake an Ecogothic analysis of the interconnection of the human characters with non-human agencies in the coastal landscape. Furthermore, I argue that the children push human/non-human boundaries in ways that are beyond the sensibilities of the adult characters and promote ecological interconnectedness as a way forward in the Anthropocene. This paper contributes to the evolving field of Australian Ecogothic scholarship by centring a coastal Gothic landscape and analysing how Gothic fiction can address settler-colonial harms while promoting the dissolution of human/nature boundaries.

Bonnie Sales *is a recently commenced Master of Research (Australian Literary Studies) student at the University of the Sunshine Coast. She is investigating the intersection of coastal landscapes and climate change discourses in contemporary Australian EcoGothic fiction. Bonnie is a secondary teacher at Good Shepherd Lutheran College.*

Oliver Gough

‘The Witching Hour is Here’: Ecocritical Theatre for the End of the World

In ‘Back to Back Theatre’s Multiple Bad Things (2025) ‘At a time like this, in a placeless warehouse, three employees approach a possibly pointless task’ (Projects-Multiple Bad Things). The play presents a spiralling crisis of communication, problem solving and system failure that I suggest presents an escalation of the group’s engagement with intersectional Polycrisis and the Anthropocene. Through its calculated conversational loops, devalued and weaponised language, and failure of the characters’ mysterious central task, the performance productively stages the twisting ironies, strange symbols and dangerous assumptions of Anthropocentrism and growth-oriented neoliberalism. Dave Calvert writes that ‘Back to Back’s post-dramatic negative dialects can be considered “Constellated objects that elude identification…provoking but not satisfying a need for profound reconsideration” (152). This challenging and subversive approach to theatre expands what performance can do in the climate era: destabilise Anthropocentrism, critique the ascendancy of realist theatrical responses to climate change, and build radical new connections between humans and the environment. This company’s work (alongside a growing wave of ecological performance in Australia) are explored in this paper as urgent political performances for a radically altered planet. Through its intersectional and digressive engagement with global crisis, I suggest this play is a part of Mohebat Ahmadi’s identification of an ‘eco-critical turn’ in contemporary theatre that can “present new epistemological and ontological frameworks of thinking, feeling, and viewing our place in the world” (3).

Oliver Gough *is a PhD candidate and playwright based at The University of Queensland. Oliver's PhD explores a new wave of contemporary Australian eco-performance, and previous research into theatre, ecology and absurdism has been published by Australasian Drama Studies and ABC Religion and Ethics. Oliver's plays have been independently produced and is currently under commission by Playlab Theatre.*

Ally Tutkaluk

EHealth is not a Silver Bullet: rethinking digital treatment design for alcohol and other drug challenges

Treatment services delivered through websites and mobile apps (eHealth) offer flexible and cost-effective support for people experiencing alcohol and other drug (AOD) challenges. However, limited research has explored how individuals' lived experiences of AOD challenges shape their access to, engagement with, and use of digital technologies. As a result, communication and design professionals have limited guidance on how to reflect the cognitive, behavioural, social, environmental, and economic contexts of users in eHealth design, potentially hindering the development of more inclusive digital interventions. These contextual factors also influence whether eHealth aligns with an individual's treatment needs and preferences.

As part of this PhD project, I have worked with AOD clinicians and people with lived and living experience of AOD challenges to better understand how these factors can be incorporated into the design of AOD eHealth services. Preliminary findings challenge the assumption that digital health is a suitable solution for everyone. Participants identified barriers that extend beyond commonly cited issues such as digital literacy, internet connectivity, and device access. Data from interviews and creative workshops suggest that digital treatment options may not fit the realities of busy lives, diverse treatment pathways, and preferences for non-digital forms of support. These findings highlight the need for a more flexible approach to eHealth delivery, one that enables digital services to complement, rather than replace, traditional in-person treatment pathways.

Ally Tutkaluk *is a final year PhD Candidate at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia, where her research explores the ways industry can design more inclusive, equitable digital health products for people with alcohol and other drug challenges. Before pursuing her PhD, Ally worked in UX design and digital project management, primarily in the not-for-profit sector. Her main interest lies in understanding how thoughtful design and language can support, rather than hinder, people navigating trauma, stress, and health challenges. Ally challenges the idea of the "average" user and pushes for systems that account for real human complexity, without ignoring the realities that organisations face.*

Yun Laturrakhmi

Beyond the dominant narrative: Community health workers' agency in the intermediary role (case study in rural East Java, Indonesia)

This paper explores community health workers' (CHWs) agency in fulfilling their intermediary role and the conditions that influence it. Widely regarded as intermediaries between communities and the health system, CHWs have dual responsibilities: serving the community and supporting the health system. However, most studies emphasise their community-focused functions, with limited attention to how they influence the health system. Among the few that do examine their systemic impact, researchers highlight the need for CHWs to do more than merely extend health services (Job et al., 2024; Reinschmidt et al., 2015). Adopting a more active stance, often linked to agents of social change, requires exercising agency. Following the culture-centred approach, this paper argues that agency is relational, a culturally grounded and structurally shaped capacity that enables marginalised communities to respond to and engage in actions that reshape the conditions affecting their lives (Dutta, 2007, 2020).

To explore the above argument further, this paper builds on an ethnographic study of CHW practices within the Posyandu, a long-standing community-based health initiative in Indonesia. Using three villages in East Java, Indonesia, as a case study, data were collected through individual interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Data were analysed thematically, with coding facilitated by NVivo 15. The analysis highlights several key findings. First, CHWs demonstrate limited agency in routine service and in village decision-making forums. Second, in undertaking their intermediary function, CHWs experience identity tension, performing different roles across two settings: interaction with the community and within the village health structure. Third, this agency is shaped by organisational structure and practices and is exacerbated by cultural values.

Yun Laturrakhmi *is a PhD candidate at the School of Communication and Arts, The University of Queensland, Australia, and a lecturer in the Department of Communication Science, Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia. My PhD research examines power, culture, and community agency within community-based health programs in Indonesia.*

Latthaporn Chanthonglarng

From Everyday Eating Practices to Culturally Rooted Design: Co-Designing Nutritional Services in Northeastern Thailand

Supporting nutritional wellbeing before older age is increasingly important in Thailand, where everyday eating practices are shaped not only by nutritional knowledge but also by taste preferences, established routines, social relationships, and local food culture. This study explores how understanding these everyday practices can inform culturally rooted approaches to nutritional service design in Northeastern Thailand.

A qualitative, two-phase research design was adopted. The first phase involved semi-structured interviews and household observations with pre-elderly adults and nutrition experts to explore everyday eating behaviours, food practices, and barriers to healthier eating. These insights informed a multi-stakeholder co-design workshop involving pre-elderly adults, community representatives, health and nutrition professionals, and designers. Through five connected activities, participants shared everyday experiences, identified and prioritised nutritional challenges, generated ideas, and collaboratively explored Product–Service System (PSS) concepts. The findings revealed a persistent gap between awareness of healthy eating and everyday practice. Taste preferences, daily routines, community influence, and local food culture emerged as interconnected influences on dietary behaviour. Through co-design, these influences were reframed as opportunities for healthy flavour strategies, habit-supporting services, social participation, and culturally grounded communication.

Rather than positioning existing practices simply as barriers to change, the study demonstrates how design can work with everyday cultural contexts to develop more meaningful directions for nutritional services. It highlights the value of bringing lived experience, professional knowledge, and local perspectives together through co-design. The resulting directions provide a foundation for exploring how interconnected products, services, communication, and community support might contribute to healthier ageing.

Latthaporn Chanthonglarng *is a PhD candidate in the School of Design at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Australia, and a lecturer at Khon Kaen University, Thailand. Her research explores co-design and Product–Service Systems (PSS) to support nutritional wellbeing and healthy ageing, with a particular focus on pre-elderly adults in Northeastern Thailand. Her work brings together design, health, everyday practices, and local cultural contexts to explore culturally meaningful approaches to nutritional service development.*

Snezana Brodjonegoro

From dirty to charity: meanings of waste and its implication on waste communication

To address the current global waste crisis, waste sorting at the household level is essential to effective waste management. The actual implementation, however, is complex. Although existing literature has identified key sorting antecedents and informed campaign design, persistently low recycling rates remain raises the question: *what aren't we doing quite right in communicating about waste?* This question is even more pertinent in the Global South, where waste management is often suboptimal.

This study seeks to answer that question through a practice theory lens. Practice theory is a body of theory positing that our social world is constructed upon interrelated 'practices' – a configuration of meanings, materials, and competences (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996; Shove et al., 2012). Using this theory allows us to look at waste sorting as it was performed and perceived by householders and offers a fresh perspective on this complex matter. Drawing on interviews, observations, and focus groups involving 113 householders across five sites in Jakarta, Indonesia, this study reveals three key findings. To begin with, the meaning of waste is always negotiated in two realms – the domestic and the public. Furthermore, this process of meaning negotiation is intertwined with the material and social realities where sorting takes place. Finally, waste communication focuses heavily on awareness and neglects other phases of practice adoption. These findings enable us to develop a context-based waste communication strategy, focusing not on *what people should know*, but rather on *what people want to know* to empower them to sort waste in a sustained manner.

Snezana Brodjonegoro *is a PhD candidate at the School of Communication and Arts, where her research explores how strategic communication can address environmental challenges, particularly in waste management and climate change. Her doctoral work focuses on the role of communication in shaping household waste-sorting practices in Jakarta, Indonesia. Her broader research interests include consumer behaviour, social media, and brand communication.*

Shannon Breen

A more equitable future? Power, profit and public relations in the Australian mining industry

As the world searches for critical minerals required for the green energy transition, mining on traditionally owned Aboriginal land is projected to increase. My research focuses on the mining industry's impact on Aboriginal land, and the interplay of power, profit and public relations. In PR scholarship and practice, we talk about dialogue with stakeholders and community engagement. But what do these concepts mean in the Australian mining industry, particularly after the destruction of Juukan Gorge in May 2020? Today, every mining company expresses a commitment to respect and protect Indigenous peoples' rights and cultures. The industry is responding to public concerns about sustainability and human rights, and companies report on these criteria in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reports to investors. My research asks whether these reports written in corporate headquarters in the language of PR reflect what's happening on the ground. Is there a gap between the rhetoric and the reality? My critical analysis applies Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action to mining engagement practices and draws on data from interviews with community engagement professionals working in mining. Given the power imbalance, commercial pressures and radically different worldviews of mining companies and Aboriginal Traditional Owners, are more equitable outcomes possible in the future?

Shannon Breen's *research examines how public relations is used to establish social licence to operate in the mining industry following the destruction of Juukan Gorge in 2020. Shannon's master's thesis focused on media framing of Juukan Gorge crisis and its aftermath in the Australian Financial Review. A former ABC broadcaster, Shannon has worked in South Australia, the Northern Territory, at Triple J and Radio National. She has a post-graduate qualification in Writing, Editing and Publishing from UQ, and has worked in marketing and communications in the education sector.*

Zhenyu Mei

Environmental Communication and Environmental Governance in China: The Structuring Role of Ecological Civilisation

Ecological Civilisation has become a central framework for environmental governance in China. Yet outside China, particularly in English-language scholarship and public discourse, it is often understood primarily as a political slogan, ideological construction, or broad environmental policy vision. Such interpretations may obscure its structuring role in organising relationships among policy priorities, institutional responsibilities, governance actors, and communicative practices.

This presentation introduces my doctoral research on the structuring role of Ecological Civilisation in contemporary Chinese environmental governance and communication. It examines how, through Ecological Civilisation, environmental communication participates in environmental governance itself. The project explores how policy narratives define environmental problems and responsibilities; how state and non-state actors are positioned within governance arrangements; how these arrangements are communicated and negotiated through domestic news and social media; and how Chinese environmental governance is represented, questioned, and reinterpreted in English-language news.

Drawing on government communication and actor-network theory, the project combines policy-text analysis, computational and qualitative media analysis, social network analysis, and interviews across three interconnected studies. The presentation considers what becomes visible or obscured when environmental governance is examined not only through policies and institutions, but also through the communicative processes through which governance is constituted and made consequential.

Zhenyu (Ryan) Mei *is a PhD researcher in the School of Communication and Arts at The University of Queensland. His research focuses on environmental communication, government communication, and environmental governance. His doctoral project examines the structuring role of Ecological Civilisation in Chinese environmental governance and communication, with particular attention to policy narratives and legitimacy, actor relations, domestic news and social media, and international news representation. His broader research interests include political communication, digital communication, environmental narratives, and computational approaches to communication research.*

Prawinda Anzari

Bridging the Digital Gap: Exploring Digital Skills and Everyday Digital Engagement among Young Mothers in Indonesia

Digital participation has become integral to social, economic, and family life; however, access to technology alone does not ensure meaningful digital inclusion. This work-in-progress study investigates how intersecting inequalities influence the digital participation of young mothers in Indonesia who married before the age of 18. The research explores how disrupted educational trajectories, gendered family roles, socioeconomic status, and geographic location affect women's digital skills, daily technology use, and the benefits derived from digital engagement.

Informed by intersectionality and the Third Digital Divide, this study extends beyond access to examine how social inequalities are perpetuated through disparities in digital skills, usage, and outcomes. Fieldwork is underway in East Java and West Nusa Tenggara with 30 women aged 25 to 35. Data collection integrates a workshop-based self-assessment, adapted from the Digital Ability Self-Assessment Tool (DASAT), with individual semi-structured interviews. During the workshop, participants assess their digital practices in areas such as device use, communication, information seeking, online safety, digital parenting, and income-generating activities. The completed self-assessment serves as a prompt for more in-depth discussion during the interview.

This presentation outlines the study design and discusses the benefits of employing an accessible, participatory self-assessment approach with women whose educational opportunities have been limited. It conceptualizes digital exclusion not merely as a lack of access, but as a manifestation of broader and intersecting social inequalities.

Prawinda Putri Anzari *is a PhD candidate in the School of Communication at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). She is affiliated with the Digital Media Research Centre and the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child. Her research focuses on digital exclusion, gender inequality, and digital participation among young mothers in Indonesia.*

Dimitri Josephine

Title: From Individual Imagination to Shared Worlds: Audience Participation through Generative AI-Driven AR

Immersive environments are often conceived as worlds authored in advance: designed, constructed, and experienced by audiences within a predetermined spatial and aesthetic framework. This practice-led research questions this model by exploring what happens when audiences contribute to the formation of the world they are experiencing.

The project investigates how generative AI-driven augmented reality (AR) can translate individual audience contributions into visual elements that become part of a shared immersive environment. Rather than positioning audiences solely as recipients of an authored world, the research explores them as contributors to its ongoing formation. Through guided prompts, participants contribute words and emotional associations, which are transformed through generative processes into visual AR elements encountered within a shared physical space.

The research reveals an emerging world in which individual and collective experiences coexist. Each participant may encounter a different visual response shaped by their own contribution, while remaining part of the same unfolding environment and event. In doing so, the project unsettles the assumption that a shared immersive experience requires audiences to encounter the same content or perspective.

The world is therefore neither entirely authored nor entirely generated, but emerges through relationships between audiences, generative systems, spatial technologies, and physical presence. The project imagines future immersive environments as adaptive and participatory spaces in which audiences can contribute to the worlds they inhabit, while creative technologies mediate new forms of collective meaning-making.

Through this practice-led inquiry, “sharedness without sameness” is proposed as an emerging concept for thinking about how individually meaningful contributions might coexist within collectively experienced worlds.

Dimitri Josephine *is a Creative Technologist, Virtual Production specialist, and PhD researcher working across immersive media, XR, virtual production, and real-time technologies. With over eight years of experience in creative technology and extensive experience in virtual production across Indonesia and Southeast Asia, her practice combines creative production, emerging technologies, and audience experience. She is currently undertaking a PhD exploring real-time audience personalisation through generative AI-driven augmented reality in immersive environments. Her practice-led research investigates how emerging technologies can reshape participation, experience, and the relationship between audiences and creative works.*

Beheshteh Atrian

Growing Closer Across Distance: Designing Worlds of Shared Nature Practice for Grandparents and Young Children

Geographical distance can reshape how grandparents and grandchildren experience family life. Many technologies for remote connection focus on conversation, video calls, or screen-based exchange, yet these forms of interaction do not always align with how young children engage, play, and build relationships. This research explores an alternative way of supporting remote intergenerational connection in which nature becomes part of family interaction across distance.

Drawing on interviews with distanced families and a Research through Design program, the project examines how practices such as noticing seasonal change, growing plants, sharing discoveries, and exchanging nature-related memories can support connection between grandparents and grandchildren. These practices can connect different points in time, allowing grandparents to revisit memories and experiences from the past while creating new shared experiences with younger generations in the present. Early findings suggest that nature can provide a continuing point of attention through which stories, knowledge, curiosity, and experiences can be shared across generations and over time.

The project questions the assumption that remote connection must be centred on synchronous communication or discrete technological encounters. Instead, it considers how technology might support ongoing shared practices grounded in family memories, children's environments, and relationships with nature. In doing so, the research looks backwards and forwards, considering how intergenerational experiences can carry memories and knowledge from the past while supporting new forms of connection for the future.

The next stage will investigate these possibilities through a longitudinal co-design study with families, exploring how shared nature practices can be supported and sustained over time.

Beheshteh Atrian *is a PhD candidate in the School of Design at Queensland University of Technology. Her research explores how tangible and interactive technologies can support emotional closeness between geographically distanced grandparents and young grandchildren through shared nature-based practices. Working across Human-Computer Interaction, Research through Design, and co-design, she is interested in how technology can support ongoing relationships grounded in everyday life, shared experience, and engagement with nature.*

Emma Light

The Power and Privilege of Non-Lead Female Characters in Prestige Television

Prestige television constructs complex worlds, with leading examples predominantly created by male showrunners that centre male and-heroes within male-dominated settings. In response, feminist scholarship has frequently concentrated on female-led series, employing categories such as the "difficult woman" to interpret empowerment, leaving supporting women in male-centred prestige dramas comparatively underexamined (Pinedo, 2021). From a feminist perspective, this project investigates how non-lead female characters navigate positions of power and privilege in masculine prestige worlds. Through close textual analysis, supporting female characters are assessed across a twenty-year period, examining how their relationships to power and privilege add to the complexity of prestige television. I begin with The Sopranos (1999-2007), assessing how Carmela Soprano (Edie Falco), wife of protagonist Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini), the boss of the New Jersey mafia, has proximity to power and privilege, benefiting from Tony's crimes. A contradictory character, Carmela expresses moral guilt for her high-class lifestyle yet enjoys this status too much to give it up. Evaluating key scenes, I argue that Carmela's hypocritical attachment to power and privilege heightens the value of prestige television by highlighting a show's ability to develop intricate characters who are not easily categorised as "difficult". Such examinations will expand feminist understandings of complex female characters within prestige television, in critical consideration of their positioning within male-dominated worlds. How characters like Carmela negotiate their relationship to power and privilege reveals how supporting women contribute to the complexity that distinguishes prestige as an elevated mode of television.

Emma Light *is an MPhil student in Film and Television Studies at the University of Queensland. Her research evaluates female character representation in prestige television from a feminist perspective.*

Matthew Bapty

Bright Yellow Heels, Unrestrained Public Sorrow: Conceptualising Queer Space on Stage

In John Hepworth's 1963 play *The Last of the Rainbow*, eight misfits take up residence in a run-down pub named The Rainbow, and in these shabby conditions they pre-emptively mourn the impending destruction of their collective home. Reviews of the premiere production criticise the play's unbridled excess, which gets in the way of a discernible plot. I, however, read this unbridled excess as a kind of ephemeral queer presence, and in this paper I position The Rainbow as a queer space. This framing is, initially, confusing. Can a space be queer if its inhabitants express no explicit queer sexual desires? What *is* queer space, beyond simply a space that queer people inhabit? In this paper, I argue that queer space has less to do with the expressed sexuality of its occupants, and more to do with discursive interplay, or with the creation and facilitation of discursive counterpublics. I will also argue that the theatrical representation of queer spaces was, pre-gay liberation, reliant on fluidity, on ambiguity, and on the sense that the audience was being kept at an arm's length. To make this argument about queer space, I map Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's formulation of queer counterpublics onto *The Last of the Rainbow*, which portrays a discursively constructed, oppositional, and exclusive community formation, determined not by the open expression of sexuality but by mobility, fluidity, and a common subject position.

Matt Bapty *is a PhD candidate at The University of Queensland, researching the genesis and development of queer playwriting in Australia throughout the twentieth century. He is also a playwright, a producer with the Meanjin/Brisbane collective Flaming Carnations, and has had work performed at La Boite, QPAC, Brisbane Fringe and Anywhere Festival. He has been published in Australasian Drama Studies, Performance Paradigm, Jacaranda and by Playlab.*

Swastika Samanta

Of Visibility, Voice and Lived Sustainability in the Himalayas: zine-making as a praxis of reimagining worlds

In his book, Kim, Rudyard Kipling calls Spiti Valley “a world within a world” and Ladakh is known as “the land of the high passes”. These inherited “ancient worlds” and my case study sites are at the epicentre of diverse transformations and are being reshaped by environmental uncertainty, shifting identities of the local communities evolving media environments.

Drawing on my doctoral research examining sustainability and equity within visibility economies of ecotourism in the ecologically fragile landscapes of Spiti Valley and Ladakh, India, I will present a work-in-progress zine that brings together photographs and critical reflections from fieldwork, participant quotes alongside key findings. Rather than reproducing dominant influencer narratives of "authentic", “local” and “responsible” travel through ecotourism, the zine centres the everyday practices, realities and inherently sustainable lifestyles of the local community obscured by incessant online promotion of “sustainability” through ecotourism. Through my research, I foreground voice and gaze as barriers to equitable, digital storytelling on social media for the local community and use the zine as a means of digital storytelling.

This presentation will explore the conference themes, particularly critical enquiry to navigate a time of change and transformation through alternative modes of knowledge translation and a decolonial approach to communicating research beyond my thesis. The zine functions as an alternative knowledge making and dissemination tool to challenge whose knowledge is made visible and how research is shared. In the future, I intend for the zine to also be the primary means of disseminating findings from the research project to interested participants and relevant stakeholders. In this way, this zine aims to amplify less-heard voices and contribute to more equitable understandings of sustainability and ecotourism.

Bio: *A doctoral candidate at the School of Communication and Arts, UQ, my PhD project is at the intersection of communication (online and offline), sustainable tourism and environmental management. With a background in environmental consulting and the start-up ecosystem, I am currently interested in visual platform affordances, participatory and social impact assessments to name a few. Actively working towards translation of this research in creative ways to the local community and aiding policy changes for ecotourism in India.*

Lisa Lindawati

Rurality in the Making

Rural life has long been depicted in various media, often reduced to spectacle and commodified to serve urban interests. Today, social media expands rural communities' ability to produce information and shape their representation. This shift changes how rurality is represented, circulated, and valued in the digital sphere. This study examines content creation practices in rural Indonesia to explore how social media contributes to the making and transformation of contemporary rurality. Monetisation schemes enabled by platforms and the advertising industry shift the intention of social media participation from social connection to income generation, shaping how rurality is negotiated, represented, and reshaped. Drawing on discussion about cultural production and ICT for rural development, the study analyses rural-themed content across YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Using rural-related keywords through the platforms' 'explore' function and their 'most popular' content, the study identifies 255 rural creators and examines more than 500 rural-related pieces of content to develop a multifaceted typology of rural creators and dominant themes. By bringing together creator typology and dominant themes, the study shows how social media actively shapes which forms of rural life become visible, desirable, and valuable, and participates in remaking rurality as an evolving social, cultural, and economic formation.

Lisa Lindawati *has been a lecturer at Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia, since 2014, where she focuses on ICT, digital media, and their impacts on society and economic development, particularly in rural contexts. Her research interests also include youth and entrepreneurship, community media, and journalism. She is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Queensland as an Australia Awards Scholarship (AAS) awardee. Her research and academic work are driven by a commitment to fostering an inclusive digital ecosystem that supports community sustainability and equitable participation in digital society.*

Badriya Mohammed Salim Al Balushi

When Regional Conflict Disrupts Fieldwork: Methodological Reflections from Clean Energy Communication Research in Oman

This paper examines the methodological challenges and adaptations encountered during data collection for a qualitative study exploring Omani government communication strategies supporting the transition to clean and renewable energy. The study sought insights from communication and public relations professionals, journalists, and other stakeholders involved in communicating, promoting, or supporting clean energy initiatives and communication policies in Oman. Although the research initially aimed to conduct approximately 35 semi-structured interviews, the fieldwork process required significant adaptation because of organisational, logistical, and geopolitical challenges.

Participant recruitment and organisational access proved more difficult than anticipated. Initial approaches through official organisational channels generated limited responses, requiring a shift towards relationship-based recruitment and snowball sampling. Establishing organisational contacts, obtaining approvals, and coordinating interviews with senior professionals demanded persistence, repeated follow-up, and flexible scheduling.

The most significant challenge arose following the escalation of conflict in the Middle East in February 2026. Ongoing regional instability disrupted travel between Australia and Oman through repeated flight cancellations, reducing opportunities for planned face-to-face fieldwork. Consequently, the study adopted a flexible approach that combined online and in-person interviews and utilised a transit visit to Oman to engage directly with participants.

Drawing on researcher reflexivity, this paper reflects on how flexibility, relationship-building, and adaptive fieldwork strategies enabled the successful completion of data collection despite significant disruptions. Although the final sample comprised 11 interviews, participants possessed specialised expertise relevant to the study, generating rich insights and highlighting the importance of methodological adaptability when conducting qualitative research in policy-sensitive and uncertain environments.

Badriya Mohammed Salim Al Balushi *is a PhD candidate in the School of Communication and Arts at The University of Queensland, Australia. Her doctoral research explores how government communication supports Oman's transition to clean and renewable energy, with a particular focus on stakeholder engagement and communication practices surrounding clean energy initiatives. She is also a lecturer in Media and Mass Communication in Oman, with eight years of experience in higher education. Her research interests include strategic communication, public relations, government communication, sustainability communication, and qualitative research methodologies.*

David Rymer

Journey Around My Genre: Discovering Australia's Neglected Post-9/11 Spy Fiction

Australians inherited a long tradition of covert espionage. These institutional memories represent a creative backstory, a rich vein of inspiration waiting to be mined by present and future Australian espionage novelists. Despite A. G. Hales debuting Australia's first spy novel*, Little Blue Pigeon*, in 1905, the genre remains an overlooked academic backwater. This research seeks to reveal the world of post-9/11 Australian espionage fiction. The research critically questions past assumptions about the genre by examining how Australian writers navigate geopolitical, social, and cultural turbulence through their novels, and by delving into the literary genome of these works.

Breaking fresh ground in literary studies, the project melds Moretti's distant reading concept, based on 395 novels, with a data repository of Anglophile post-9/11 espionage fiction. Designed to generate insights into the genre's literary patterns, themes, and victimology, the research spans 2001 to 2026. The research generated the genre's taxonomy, identifying twelve sub-genres.

This research will answer seven fundamental questions for Australian scholars: Who are Australia's espionage novelists, and how many are there? Are they men or women? When were their works published? Do they draw on intelligence-lived experiences? What form of espionage fiction are they working in? When are their narratives set? Espionage fiction brings the moral complexities of spying to life, underlining the layered subterfuge in a profession where 'spies' and 'lies' rhyme and truth often remains ambiguous as security services compete to create a secure future environment.

Bio: *I am a PhD candidate, and Embracing the Chaos forms the basis of my exegesis in my hybrid doctorate. In a former life, I was a freelance corporate ghostwriter and Australian Financial Review columnist. My non-fiction work is The World in Prints (2019).*

@DrymerAuthor

Brianna Merriman

Pandemic Poltergeists: The Spectres of Artists Past in Sophie Cunningham's *This Devastating Fever* and Angela O'Keefe's *The Sitter.*

Writing on plagues in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Michel Foucault notes that behind the "disciplinary mechanisms" of authority, there remains a "haunting memory of 'contagions'". While Foucault refers not only to plague, but to the memory of "rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, [and] people who appear and disappear," this image of a haunting contagion reappears throughout contemporary post-COVID fiction. Pandemics and viruses, like ghosts, unsettle our assumptions about temporality, problematising the "clock time" of capitalism, situating us within epidemiological time frames, and complicating linear narratives of recovery. Ruth Clemens and Max Casey name this reconfiguration of time "viral temporality," describing how viruses create "different structures of time that are not simply quantifiable" and allow for "several, often-contradictory temporalities [to] exist alongside each other simultaneously" (68). Sophie Cunningham's *This Devastating Fever* (2022) and Angela O'Keefe's *The Sitter* (2023) invoke viral temporalities through the disembodied spectres of Virginia Woolf, Leonard Woolf, and Hortense Cézanne. These "pandemic poltergeists," appearing at moments of infection, disrupt the linear chronologies of their texts. In doing so, they unsettle capitalist-humanist temporal framings and invite us, as readers, to recognise our spatial, temporal, and bodily entanglements with the nonhuman world in an age of environmental uncertainty and risk.

Brianna Merriman *is a PhD candidate in Literature at the University of Queensland. Their research examines the representation of viruses in contemporary Australian climate fiction.*

Gillian Hagenus

Implicating architecture in the story: the sentience of the built environment in a space-driven hotel narrative

As the traveller and itinerant navigate their own phenomenological slipperiness between coming and going, home and away, they settle in the space of the urban hotel, itself a building, a business, a concept predicated upon liminality. They check in to this space, or as Wayne Koestenbaum suggests, the hotel checks into them. The literary hotel can be seen as the perfect example of the spatial turn in narrative, which takes as its core assumption the idea that we navigate and understand our reality as bodies in space, blurring the boundaries between inward and outward space by consistently projecting one onto the other. In the case of built space, inhabitants must also navigate the intentions of the designers, architects and planners of space, either bending to, or warring with the wills of their surroundings. This paper explores what can happen when storyteller becomes architect, building narrative not on character or plot, but on setting and space. Interweaving theories of architectural disjunction with fragments from a current novel-in-progress, set in a fictional hotel, I do with narrative as Dora Epstein suggests we must do in life: implicate architecture in the story. Moving through the various architectural features of the hotel, through the dizzyingly vertical trajectories of elevators and the aggressively horizontal labyrinths of corridors, the paper exposes the almost sentient hand of built space at the wheel of hotel narratives.

Gillian Hagenus *is an author of contemporary Gothic fiction and current PhD candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Queensland. She holds a Master of Philosophy in Creative Writing from the University of Adelaide and is the author of the newly released short story collection, Common Places (UQP).*

A screening of two short films by Melanie Easton, accompanied by a discussion, facilitated by UQ PhD candidate Keya Makar.

Dragon's Breath (2024) (10 mins): A group of middle schoolers must convince their friend to perform in the school talent show after she reveals an embarrassing and fantastical secret.

Aquaphobe (2020) (15 mins): A young woman who used to be a cat must overcome her fear of water in order to save her relationship.

Melanie Easton *is PhD candidate in her final year at UQ, and a filmmaker in her non-academic life. As a screenwriter and director, she has a passion for fantastical but grounded storytelling that explores themes of becoming and belonging. Her first short film AQUAPHOBE screened at the Adelaide Film Festival in 2020 and Sydney's Flickerfest in 2021 and was nominated for three South Australian Screen Awards. Her most recent short film DRAGON'S BREATH (2025) premiered at Flickerfest and won the 2025 Australian Writers' Guild Award in the Short Film category.*

In addition to writing and directing, she also has 10+ years of broader industry experience, working as a Segment Producer on the children's television series TOTALLY WILD for Network Ten, and in various roles across feature films and television for companies including Matchbox Pictures, Seven Network and the ABC.

As a PhD student, Melanie's research sits at the intersection of Memory Studies and Film Studies, with a focus on popular Hindi cinema (also known as Bollywood). She holds a BA in English from Carleton University and MA in Comparative Literature/South Asian Studies from the University of Toronto.

Mohammad Faidol Juddi

Beyond financial inclusion: The political economy of embedded finance in Gojek's platform ecosystem

Contemporary discussion on financial inclusion extends beyond only access to financial services, now emphasising measurable improvements to quality of life. This shift has driven the integration of financial services into users' daily experiences, as exemplified by Gojek's embedded finance ecosystem in Indonesia. Gojek and its digital financial services, GoPay, can boost income and improve the financial health of its drivers, who work as gig workers and are often excluded from traditional banking. This model allows the platform economy to enter the financial sector by leveraging vast data to offer digitally fragmented financial services. However, despite the promise of automatic access, the effectiveness and true implications of such initiatives are complex. The financial services these platforms provide may become another burden, with workers no longer earning a living but also paying off debts. This study uses Polanyian Political Economy to understand how Gojek's embedded financial ecosystem structures the relationship between drivers and the platform, critically analysing its impacts on their livelihood, power, and autonomy.

Juddi *is currently a PhD candidate at the School of Communication and Arts, University of Queensland, researching financial inclusion and its impact on gig workers in Indonesia. His work also includes studies on digital payments, the platform economy, the gig economy, political economy, and migrant workers. In addition to his PhD, he is an assistant professor at Telkom University in Bandung, Indonesia.*

Alisha Aprilla

The Limits of Counting: Platform Interfaces and the Uncounted Risks of Gig Labour in Jakarta

Digital platform presents itself as a "neutral" artifact coordinating supply and demand. As an intermediary determining commissions, prices, and wages, the platform's ecosystem privileges specific categories of data to systematically maintain their market position while shifting operational risks onto workers that remain invisible within the interface. Despite the proliferation of platforms, the architecture of the platform economy is far from even, shaped by persisting inequalities.

This risk-shifting plays out most acutely in developing countries like Indonesia, where over four million two-wheel drivers depend on "super-app" platforms for their livelihood, facing extreme heat, traffic congestion, and poor air quality daily, with little labour protection to match. Existing scholars discuss the consequences of platformisation of work and the downstream impact on workers' wellbeing, yet what remains unaddressed is what counts within the platform architectures as appear on the interface and what remains uncounted.

This work-in-progress project, currently at the proposal and early literature review stage, explores these questions through a qualitative single-case study of Gojek in Jakarta, examining the work of its two-wheel drivers across five services. The study is planned to be conducted in three phases, each addressing one guiding question: (1) document and interface analysis to understand how counting is constructed by the platform, (2) consumer and driver walkthroughs to understand how workers and customers experience what counts, and what that reveals about what is left uncounted, and (3) employee interviews to explore how they understand and account for what counts and what does not.

Alisha Aprilla *is currently enrolled as a PhD student in the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland, where her research is embedded within Dr. Luke Munn's ARC Future Fellowship project on platformised labour. She holds a Master of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (UQ) and a Bachelor of Psychology (Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia). Professionally, she held over 7 years of experience in product marketing, commercial strategy, and platform/product-system design across SEA, Hong Kong and China.*

Jana Voelker

Negotiating Authenticity: Sponsorship, Branding and the Making of Australian Olympic Equestrian Sport

Australian Olympic equestrian sport occupies a distinctive commercial and cultural world created by tradition, elite competition, human–horse relationships, sponsorship, media representation and intensifying scrutiny of animal welfare. As commercial partnerships become more embedded in sport, questions arise not only about whether sponsorships are commercially effective, but also whether they are perceived as genuine, appropriate, and consistent with the values of the sporting community.

This work-in-progress PhD research examines how participating and non-participating stakeholders within Australian Olympic equestrian sport evaluate sponsorship authenticity and sponsorship acceptance. It considers how stakeholders interpret commercial relationships across athlete, horse, and event brands, with particular attention to sponsorship congruence, ethical alignment, trust, community contribution, and horse welfare. The project also expands existing human and athlete branding research by exploring whether highly recognisable horses may themselves function as brand entities through the emotional, symbolic and commercial meanings stakeholders attach to them.

Positioned within a critical realist framework, the study will use non-participatory ethnography, semi-structured interviews and a survey to examine both naturally occurring stakeholder discourse and directly elicited perceptions. Rather than treating equestrian sport as a fixed commercial environment, the research conceptualises it as a world continually negotiated through relationships among riders, horses, spectators, sponsors, organisations and wider publics.

The paper considers how sponsorship may reinforce, challenge or reshape established understandings of authenticity within equestrian sport, and asks whose values ultimately determine whether commercial involvement is regarded as legitimate. In doing so, the research contributes to wider discussions of how sporting worlds are constructed, contested, and reworked under increasing commercial and ethical pressure.

Jana Voelker *is a PhD candidate at the University of the Sunshine Coast whose research examines sponsorship authenticity and sponsorship acceptance within Australian Olympic equestrian sport. Her research interests include sport marketing, branding, sponsorship, stakeholder perceptions, athlete and animal branding, and the intersection between commercialisation and horse welfare. Drawing on her professional experience in marketing and longstanding involvement in equestrian sport, her doctoral research explores how participating and non-participating stakeholders interpret commercial relationships across athlete, horse and event brands.*

Ruizhe Jiang

Understanding how tarot readings on RedNote shape the self-identity of young women in China

This study explores how Tarot readings help young Chinese women negotiate uncertainty in intimate relationships, emotional complexity, and the social norms that shape their romantic lives on social media platforms. Focusing on the Chinese platform RedNote, it asks how users interpret relationship-oriented Tarot readings and make them meaningful in relation to their own intimate experiences.

Using reflexive thematic analysis, the study examines 301 publicly visible comments collected from three Tarot-reading videos posted by the RedNote creator "taluo131413". The analysis identifies four interconnected themes. Commenters first assess whether collective readings apply to their circumstances by drawing on zodiac signs, personality types, intuition, and relationship details. They then compare the readings with their lived experiences, affirming, questioning, or adapting the creator's interpretations. Commenters also use Tarot to reflect on romantic vulnerability, emotional investment, self-protection, and self-worth. Through interactions in the comment sections, they share similar experiences, provide reassurance, and collectively interpret uncertain relationships.

Viewed through the lens of Chinese postfeminism, these practices show how romantic uncertainty is frequently framed as an individual responsibility requiring emotional self-management, self-protection, and self-improvement. Interactions among commenters also demonstrate that these seemingly private responsibilities are collectively negotiated through shared experiences and peer interpretation. The study therefore shows how RedNote Tarot practices reflect postfeminist understandings of intimacy, agency, and the self while complicating their individualising logic.

Ruizhe Jiang *recently completed a master's degree in communication at The University of Queensland. Her research focuses on gender, digital cultures, and mediated intimacy, with a particular interest in how young Chinese women make sense of relationships on RedNote.*

Farisha Sestri Musdalifah

Narrating Multiple Selves: Relatability and Identity Negotiation among Indonesian Muslim Women Politicians on Instagram

Social media provides a space for politicians to construct and communicate narratives about themselves through personal and visual storytelling practices. Within platform culture, politicians are increasingly encouraged to appear approachable and relatable as a way of building relationships with audiences. For Muslim women politicians in Indonesia, however, this expectation is more complex, as they must simultaneously maintain religious piety, political authority, party identity, femininity, and family roles. This paper examines how Muslim women politicians in Indonesia use storytelling practices on Instagram to negotiate their multiple identities. Specifically, it explores how performances of relatability become a way of negotiating identity demands that are often in tension with one another. Using qualitative content analysis of Instagram posts from 10 Indonesian Muslim women politicians between January 2025 and May 2026, the paper identifies how these identities are constructed and negotiated through everyday digital narratives. Preliminary findings suggest that performances of relatability do not always generate acceptance from digital publics. Instead, such performances often reveal tensions between the need to present oneself as a competent and authoritative politician while simultaneously performing as a pious, moral, and approachable Muslim woman. This paper argues that performing relatability constitutes a form of identity negotiation that is inherently fragile and never fully stable. The findings demonstrate that not all political actors have equal access to forms of storytelling that are considered legitimate and relatable. By foregrounding the fragility and unevenness of relatability, this paper shifts understandings of relatability from a political communication strategy toward a broader understanding of how identity, legitimacy, visibility, and closeness to publics are continually negotiated in digital political life.

Farisha Sestri Musdalifah *is a PhD student (HDR) in the School of Communication and Arts, University of Queensland. Her Cultural Studies research examines how Muslim women politicians in Indonesia negotiate identity, piety, and digital visibility on Instagram with gendered, religious, and political structures.*

Chethan Sethu

"What Does this AI Overview Tell You?": Analysing Communication within Dyads in the Family When Interacting with GenAI Content

From the very beginning of the 2020s, Generative AI has increasingly become a larger part of many people's lives, and the rapid pace of development has made it harder to identify what is AI-generated and what isn't; unlike most technologies, the younger generations can also not explicitly be declared as the definitive experts on using GenAI and communicating. A significant amount of people learn and discuss unfamiliar technologies within the family; while there has been a fair amount of research into AI and its interactions with individuals, there has not yet been much research into how individuals interact as a dyad in similar situations, especially in terms of the that arise in communication; This study therefore aims to identify the negotiation of communication roles beyond those defined by Bakardjieva's theory of Warm Experts, by analysing how young adults and old adults in the same family communicate as a dyad when undertaking tasks involving AI-generated Overviews. The results of this study expand the theoretical understanding of human-machine communication and intergeneration communication paradigms, and potentially support further practical integration like in adult digital literacy programs.

Chethan Sethu *is a second-year postgraduate student in Strategic Communications at the University of Queensland.*

HUMS, TRICKS AND TREMORS: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH INSTRUMENTS OF DIAGNOSIS – A CRITICAL MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND CREATIVE WRITING APPROACH

The rhythmic thump of a heartbeat. The cold press of steel against skin. Wires tracing the brain's electrical pulses across a monitor. Nearly all of us have been examined with a diagnostic instrument, but how often do we stop to ask what these encounters make us feel?

Drawing on critical medical humanities and creative writing, this one-hour seminar explores the cultural history of diagnostic instruments alongside our own lived encounters with them. We open with lightning talks on the ophthalmoscope (Eeva Savolainen), and a memoir reading on examination by EEG (Bianca Millroy).

Then we turn to our own time in the examination room. In a creative session, participants are invited to write or draw their encounters with diagnostic technology, before coming together for an open discussion. Sharing is entirely optional: you're welcome to simply listen. No writing or artistic experience is needed, just curiosity and a story of your own.

Bianca Millroy *(she/her) is a writer, editor and podcaster based in Meanjin/Brisbane. She has recently submitted her PhD thesis titled "Caput Nebula (Head of Fog): A Creative Nonfiction Approach to Writing Contested Illness" at The University of Queensland. Bianca has been published in Jacaranda Journal, Visible Ink, Science Write Now, and in the forthcoming edition of Exhume literary journal. In 2024, she was awarded the Scribe/Varuna Nonfiction Fellowship for her work "Caput Nebula", a hybrid investigative memoir exploring her lived experience of functional neurological disorder (FND) interwoven with case studies on hysteria and the history of medicine.*

Eeva Savolainen *(she/her) is a medical humanities doctoral researcher based at the Universities of Stirling and Glasgow (Scotland) and a Visiting Doctoral Researcher at UQ. Her doctoral project "Gothic Diagnostics in British Fiction 1830-1897" investigates the gothicisation of diagnostic fears and fantasies in the nineteenth-century medical Gothic. Her PhD is funded by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities. Eeva is the Social Media Officer for the Medical Humanities Research Centre at Glasgow and a founding member of the Scottish Critical Disability Studies and Medical Humanities Postgraduate Researcher Network. She has also published about her lived experience as a disabled immigrant researcher(SGSAH 2024; The Polyphony 2025).*