

Introduction

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This volume, *Shaping Global Cultures through Screenwriting: Women Who Write Our Worlds*, tells stories of women who have worked with and within communities to bring the communities' stories to life through screenwriting. In gathering these examples, we asked for stories that achieved some level of impact for the communities. Impact was considered across a number of indices. We wanted to show that attitudes have shifted, policies have been rewritten and the life experiences and ranges of possibility for some have changed for the better as a result of women's work. We hope to show through our stories that film can change lives; that sharing stories matters; and that women are everywhere, using their skills in screen production for the good of many.

In her excellent book, *Women in the International Film Industry: Policy Practice and Power*, Susan Liddy (2020) offers 'a wide-ranging, critical assessment of practice, policy and progress' to establish the range and scale of gender inequality that currently exists in the world of screen production. She quotes O'Neill and Domingo (2015) to point out that social, economic and political conditions vary, and 'combine in different ways to enable or constrain women's agency and leadership' in screen production (Liddy 2020: 1). In contrast, our book approaches the same problem from the opposite perspective: we seek to correlate the 'policy, practice and power' (Liddy 2020) with the *actual* work of women screenwriters. Our aim is to point out what women screenwriters, creators and filmmakers are *doing* in disparate corners of the world, and how their effort is positively impacting communities, shaping culture and creating change.

We argue that, despite the fact that women screenwriters are underrepresented in leadership roles in film industries worldwide, the impact of their films remains visible and palpable. We provide evidence that, as women step into the roles of screenwriter, filmmaker and collaborator, using known and emerging technologies, formats and genres under the broad scope of 'screen production', they raise the voices of other women and other communities. This volume shows the impact of women's voices in creating real change for the communities whose stories are told through the topics and themes of these women's screen works. Not least, this volume seeks to celebrate these women and their communities and bring awareness of that impact to broader communities worldwide.

An overarching motivation for this book is to celebrate women. In so many societies, they are the glue that binds communities and cultures of all types. We celebrate women screenwriters' (here, please read 'screenwriter' as often incorporating 'creator' and/or 'filmmaker') passionate engagement with communities. Many of the communities featured face systemic injustice, inequality and generalized powerlessness. The screenwriters' creations are not glory projects. They are high risk, potentially career-wrecking work. Our point is that women initiate these screen works because they care. In making these works, they evidence their concern for others. In effect, they embrace and champion the causes of communities, and in doing so contribute to local, national and international recognition of the causes and issues that affect those who are less powerful. We seek to remind readers of those whose lives are made more difficult because of the hegemonic structure of a global world, a patriarchal world, a capitalist world – and to show how women care by raising awareness and advocating for positive change.

In compiling this book, we sought stories that are more 'local' in their flavour and impact. We also found authors who were as close as possible to the source of their stories. We wished to privilege them, rather than authors living in a developed nation, speaking on behalf of others. This has meant that many of our authors are writing in a language that is not their first language. Some are less familiar with the practices of Western academic writing and thought. An example of this is when our authors refer to the screenwriter they speak of using her first name rather than her surname (as is usual in western scholarship). We have chosen to leave these namings because of all they express about the admiration and closeness that have developed in the hearts and minds of our authors with respect to this screenwriter they admire. Indeed, what could be more powerful and authentic evidence for the impact the screenwriter has had in the world? The patriarchal and hegemonic systems that govern and structure so much of our lives would view humans as flawed because of their emotionality. Instead, we prefer to embrace our humanness, to acknowledge experiences that are based in kindness, empathy and connection with others. Is it not clear where entrenched, older, inherited systems of thought are leading us? And is there not a better way? We argue that through raising women's voices and the voices of 'minority' groups (who, in fact, collectively number a great majority), we may push towards a more human-centred approach to problems and issues that, in turn, may restore greater value to human experience, culture and lifeways.

Each chapter we present in this collection is structured around three distinct threads. First, the screen stories are written, created and/or made by a woman or women working with or on behalf of a community. Second, each chapter highlights a screen story that addresses the needs of that community – needs that are not generally or often represented in the mainstream media. Third, we wanted to show the impact these screen works have had in shifting perceptions, changing attitudes, raising awareness and improving the life experiences in and for the communities directly affected by the issues. Changing society is always a work in progress. Nevertheless, we believe the stories told in this volume are important;

that they evidence change for the better; and that these screenwriters are committed to this change through the process of creation.

We have always held a strong vision for this volume. Our first impetus was to champion women screenwriters. However, it soon became clear that the delineations between roles in screen production are not always so cut and dried. While mostly our stories have a screenwriter at their centre, we have embraced Ian Macdonald's (2004a, 2004b) concept of the 'screen idea'. We have therefore been very open in our interpretation of what constitutes a screen story. Consequentially, our conception of screenwriting has also shifted, leading us to define it very liberally. Thus, for us, screenwriting is defined as 'ideas communicated through a structured narrative form using screen production techniques'. For this reason, we have included some artforms not always considered 'screenwriting' within our pages. This is perhaps not surprising, since screenwriting research has been noted, by definition, to be 'at the boundary of the established and the emerging, both in theoretical and practice-led applications' (Joyce et al. 2018: 3).

Moreover, just as Alexandre Astruc (1948) proposed the *caméra-stylo*, we recognize that writing can be accomplished in many ways. To account for new and emergent technologies, and in recognition of the ways in which screen production techniques are influencing the many ways by which we consume information and stories in the digital world, we interpret the term 'screen' very broadly. *Women Who Write Our Worlds* is broad in our inclusion of varied formats. We conceived the book as a volume that would represent as diverse a set of women and communities as possible. By necessity, this concept was inclusive of bespoke 'narrowcast' screenwriting and productions – those whose purpose was not necessarily entertainment and profit, but specific audiences. The works we feature embrace other purposes and end users, and are not necessarily all meant to be consumed in a cinema.

We have embraced screens of all sizes and screen ideas that relate to a range of formats. We have included women working in virtual reality, in game-writing, an installation artist [...] on the basis that all of these forms of expression of ideas use screen production techniques in their creation and are consumed on screens. In the case of young female rap artists in Nigeria, we recognize their work as writing and creation *across* media. These young women write the lyrics and often the musical tracks, and also work with others to create video clips, which are the main way their music reaches their audiences. In the case of female animators working on the hit Australian children's animation *Bluey* (2019–), we point out the ways in which *drawing* can augment writing in the way it encapsulates ideas. Drawing's contribution to characterization and to creating the *storyworld* as a knowable and known context for the many stories of *Bluey* adds the concept of *screen-crafting* to our interpretation of *screenwriting*. We include a chapter on Rose Troche, whose interactive virtual reality (VR) experience of homelessness is an experiential learning tool. As such, it promotes change through enabling understanding of homelessness as a social problem, rather than the result of mismanagement by homeless people. Whether consumed on phones, tablets, computers or televisions, played in a headset or projected, and whether written literally with a pen or

through screen production techniques, we chose stories that deepen and broaden the concept of screenwriting, and that reveal the many ways this skillset in the hands of women is improving lives.

We have also not limited ourselves to projects of any particular genre. Drama and documentary are represented here, as are hybrid and other experimental forms. Some of our stories involve adaptation; some feature interview techniques; and still others are original dramatic works. As described in Ferrell (2017a, 2017b, 2017c), a screenwriter's voice embraces images, sound and ideas, and incorporates the tone, mood and all content implied or suggested by the text. Therefore, while some chapters directly address screenwriting, others address visual language, aural or musical creation. And all chapters address the message that underlies the screenwork at the heart of its 'writing'.

In all chapters, we learn about female screenwriters and creators. Feminist thought has long held that the 'personal is political'. In each chapter, we learn of the women screenwriters' lives, which influenced their choices of career and drew them to the specific subject matter developed through their screen works. It is not surprising that many of our screenwriters identify as feminists, as activists, as part of diverse or marginalized groups. These factors inform our screenwriters' passion and bring added richness to the topics explored in each chapter. The subject matter dealt with implies what is at stake for the screenwriters – what they truly care about.

In many chapters, we learn about screenwriting practices. We also learn about issues: cultural, historical and political. We learn about gender relations; treatment of minority groups; and the ways in which hegemonic and patriarchal systems operate to silence those whose life circumstances are 'inconvenient' to state apparatuses. Above all, we learn a whole context that surrounds each project; and we learn about the lives of less visible communities with a story to tell.

Culture and traditions are central to some of our stories, and still others address situations of injustice. These are not just stories made to entertain – although they also achieve that. These are screen projects aimed at bringing a greater diversity of voices into the public realm.

Our chapters complement each other on many levels, and inform knowledge and debates across multiple disciplines. Thus, our book is of value to screenwriting research and film studies, and is no less useful to women's studies, cultural studies, disability studies, anthropology and many of the social sciences. It exposes hidden histories of societies and populations. Most importantly, these are stories that are not generally told in the mainstream annals of film production and industry publications. For the first time, stories have been brought together that respond to the concerns of Liddy (2020) and others about the lack of gender equity in film industries. Here are stories that show what women have achieved and are achieving while modifying their practices and working in new and collaborative ways. These women work on screen projects regardless of whether their work is likely to be recognized or celebrated by the filmmaking 'establishment', or known of among first cinema *aficionados*.

As editors, we have striven to hold a consciousness of the disparity in wealth and life experiences of the many communities who share this Earth. That the screen stories we highlight are not always targeted towards international film-lovers, critics and financiers at international markets, festivals and award ceremonies is not surprising. Many of our authors come from the recently burgeoning academic field of screenwriting research (Batty 2014; Nelmes 2010). It has been noted by Ian Macdonald (2021), who was instrumental in initiating the coming together of scholars interested in screenwriting to form the Screenwriting Research Network (SRN) in 2008, that ‘our research community [SRN] has a genuine desire to experience ideas and stories from everywhere and everyone’ (Joyce et al. 2018: 3). As editors, we acknowledge our positioning as white, Anglo women from European/colonizer backgrounds. We recognize our privilege. Yet we are not content with it. We hope – along with the authors and screenwriters featured in our book – to be allies to the communities represented here, not saviours. The central conceit that embodies this hope is expressed most boldly through the book’s organization around the concept of ‘worlds’. That we hoped to represent each world through an equal number of chapters was part of this conceit.

The worlds we focus on are African Worlds, American Worlds, Asian Worlds, English-speaking Worlds, European Worlds and Island Worlds. We hoped that by spreading our net wide, we could fill each ‘World’ to overflowing, making our book richer and more compelling for its representation of such diverse, global stories. While we had over 60 abstracts originally, global events intervened. We lost authors through conflict in the Middle East, through an earthquake in Turkey and through the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, for this first volume we received many more abstracts from English-speaking and European authors than from African, American, Asian and Island worlds. We received seven ‘African’ world abstracts; six ‘American’ world abstracts; five ‘Asian’ world abstracts; twelve ‘English-speaking’ world abstracts; nine ‘European’ world abstracts; and two ‘Island’ world abstracts. We can never know how many authors and scholars self-selected to opt out because of the perceived academic nature of the book, or because of the perceived Anglo-centric, Eurocentric or ‘western’ bias it may have appeared to represent. It is also fair to note that our requirements were very specific, and contained not one parameter, but three. The authors included here accepted a very challenging task, and we commend them most highly for their work in making this book what it is.

In this volume, we offer 26 chapters. Of these, nine are from English-speaking nations, with three each from Africa worlds, Asian worlds and European worlds. Five chapters are from American worlds, and one stands alone as being from an Island world author. As editors, we augmented the Island Worlds section by writing an extra chapter each because of the number of possible stories from Island worlds that were compelling and yet lacked a local author.

Of course, it would have been possible to organize our content in any way. Despite the smaller number of chapters in the African, Asian, European and Island Worlds sections, we

remain loyal to our concept of worlds, and hope in future to expand upon the model. I now briefly describe the content of each of the worlds.

Within the African Worlds section, we include stories from Zambia, South Africa and Nigeria. In our first chapter, Elastus Mambwe writes about Zambian screenwriter-director, Musola Cathrine Kaseketi, focusing on her feature film, *Suwi: Faith Beyond Limit* (2009). *Suwi* features a woman who is disabled after a car accident. This is an issue that is close to Kaseketi's heart, since she too is a woman living with disability. Mambwe explains that Kaseketi has always shown an interest in the circumstances of others living with disability, as well as in human rights issues – a critical element in the screenplay for *Suwi*. His discussion addresses the portrayal of disability on the screen in *Suwi*, affirming the critical importance of representation as a force in shaping perceptions of disability that impact the lives of the people living with it. The chapter shares, with Gabrielle Stecher's chapter on Ida Lupino, a detailed exposition of how living with disability complicates the most everyday aspects as well as the most intimate parts of a person's life experience.

Mambwe offers an overview of African cinema, noting its history of the portrayal of strong, powerful and positive women characters in African cinemas in colonial, neocolonial and postcolonial periods. He also notes, however, that most often women's contributions to African cinema have been overlooked. His overview of Kaseketi's life and career development includes her establishment of a film production company in Zambia, as well as the founding of the Shungu Namutitima International Film Festival in 2006. This led to Kaseketi receiving international recognition for her role in promoting the African film industry.

Overall, Mambwe's chapter argues strongly for Kaseketi's influence not only on the portrayal of women and the portrayal of people with disability in Zambia, but on the ways in which she has become an important force for change within African cinema through her involvement with Vilole Images Productions, a human rights-focused production company. He argues convincingly for Kaseketi's influence in writing, production and film management in Zambia, and for the real difference her films have made to people's lives.

Continuing the theme of people living with disability, our second chapter, by screenwriter Karen Jeynes, speaks about her work in writing neurodiverse characters for television series in South Africa and elsewhere. Jeynes argues that although state guidelines currently require that 1 per cent of characters on South African screens represent disabled people, there is no consideration as to who is writing these characters. Autistic herself, and with an autistic son, Karen rails against the belief, common in South Africa, that 'only CIS-gendered, white men (or boys) can be autistic'. As Karen tells it:

From the casting director who insisted autistic people would be incapable of acting to the director who told me the character I had written was 'not autistic enough', I'm on a mission to put invisible autistic people – women, the LGBT community, Black people, older people – into my scripts.

After describing her own experience of living with autism, Jeynes explains the complexity of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and describes the neurological approaches taken by members of the medical fraternity. Her chapter brings into focus the spectral nature of autism – in both senses: pertaining to a wide range of neurological differences; and in the ways autism is not always apparent in all who experience it. She explains that, ‘I was writing about the experience of being autistic before I knew that that was what I was writing about.’ Her chapter ranges across topics from the neurological diagnosis of ASD to the representation of neurodivergent characters, to the responses of her audiences. Karen illuminates many of the issues that concern those who live with a neurodiverse condition, and those who live with and love them. Discussing representation, the chapter is enriched by her frank and open personal voice as she puts forward the strongest argument for giving voice to screenwriters, actors, directors and others living with disability so the messages audiences receive and the images that populate their imaginations with regard to neurodiverse (and all) people living with disability are as broad and nuanced as they can be. As argued elsewhere in this volume, it is only through broad representation of diversity in all its colours and flavours that writers make comprehensible the life circumstances of many different types of people and help create a more equitable world.

While our first two chapters in *African Worlds* focus on people living with different forms of disability, the third chapter, written by Nigerian scholar, Umami Muhammad Hassan, opens a discussion around the complex situation faced by young women whose very modern career aspirations conflict with the culture and religion of their families and society. Umami’s research explores the challenges faced by young female rap artists in the largely Islamic region of North-West Nigeria. Through interviews with five Hausa-language female rap artists, she reveals the gender stereotypes that underpin and limit the aspirations of these young women, who have each faced a range of challenges arising through their families, colleagues in the industry and society in general. Umami begins with a description of rap music and its interrelationship with hip hop and summarizes the gender bias prevalent within the industry towards male artists. She describes her research into the representation of women and femininity in rap lyrics generally, and the highly misogynistic nature of much of the content of the music coming out of the United States, which in turn influences the attitudes of African fans. She then discusses her research, which involved interviews with Nigerian female Hausa-language rap artists. These include one of the most enduring and prolific Nigerian female rap artists, Queenzeeshaq. Umami then synthesizes the experiences of the women to summarize the challenges faced by these young women who, by raising their voices through rap music, seek to challenge and change the society and industry within which they live and work.

The *American Worlds* section focuses on screenwriters from Central and South America. The section features stories from Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico, Chile and Brazil. The author of our first chapter, Aarón Acuña, was a personal friend of Patricia Howell, one of the earliest and foremost women screenwriters and filmmakers in Costa Rica, who was also

politically active and sexually diverse. Acuña begins his chapter with a brief overview of the achievements of the small Central American nation of Costa Rica, which has delivered a better standard of living for its inhabitants, a clear environmental policy and a stable political system without having a national military. Among these advantages, he counts the country's vibrant cinema, which demonstrates aesthetic and cultural perspectives of this small Central American nation and features many films by women that have won international acclaim.

Howell championed women and Indigenous Costa Ricans through her drama and documentary works over the course of her career. In the chapter, Acuña shares stories of Howell's life and analyses two of her most important works: the groundbreaking fiction film *Íntima Raíz* (1984) and a lesbian love story, *Lobas* (2015). Acuña also discusses her unproduced screenplay *When the Rain Falls* (Howell n.d.). Overall, he claims, she paved the way for a national cinema conveyed from a woman's perspective: 'In her work, something different from a female gaze comes into existence, and that is a female voice.'

Acuña describes the three themes that appear in Howell's works: the roots of injustice and the fight for equality; the unpredictability of nature and the wilderness; and the invisibility of women. Howell was adamant that the issues of women had to be central to her work. She was influenced by European feminist filmmakers and also by Clarissa Pinkola Estés' (1992) book, *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, which inspired her ground-breaking 2015 film *Lobas*, the story of a lesbian romance. Acuña describes the strategies Howell used in her films to promote a female perspective, and the shooting strategies that emphasized the emotional aspects of female experiences.

Howell was the first woman employed at the National Film Production Centre, and eventually became its director. In this role and others, she was able to establish quotas for films by women at the major film festival in Costa Rica (CRFIC), and special funding for women's films from the cinema development fund in the country (Fondo para el Fomento Audiovisual y Cinematográfico El Fauno).

In our second chapter in this section, Sara Duque García celebrates the works of Colombian anthropologist, ethnologist and documentary filmmaker Marta Rodríguez. After experiencing the violent political era that followed the assassination of Colombian presidential candidate, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Rodríguez was inspired to study the principles of *cinéma vérité* filmmaking in France. Duque García describes Rodríguez's methodology for collective film creation based on 'close, affective and equal relationships' between the subjects of the documentaries and the film crew. Rodríguez created stories not only *about* the other, but *with* and *for* others. Through her screen works, Duque García claims, 'Marta [...] transformed the lives of the communities in which she has worked by approaching others as equals, as partners and co-creators' even to the extent of putting her own life in danger. From her first and most famous film, *Chircales* (1966–71) – during the shooting of which Rodríguez and her filmmaking and life partner, Jorge Silva, suffered death threats, Rodríguez championed disadvantaged Colombian communities, including labourers, peasants, women and Indigenous people. Duque García shows how Rodríguez's legacy has transformed the place of

women in cinema in Colombia and has vindicated women's participation as leaders and creators in a national industry. Furthermore, Rodríguez's films and archival material provide an invaluable archive and heritage for the nation because of the attention paid to diverse and marginalized communities.

Our next chapter celebrates two different screenwriters: Salvadoran-Mexican Tatiana Huezo and Chilean Claudia Huaiquimilla, both Indigenous women screenwriters and filmmakers working in their own nations in Central and South America, respectively. In this chapter, authors Sebastián González Itier and Juan Carlos Carrillo argue that 'in recent years, Latin American films directed by women have increased both in number and in their global reach'. Huezo's *Prayers for the Stolen* (2021, Mexico) was screened at *Un Certain Regard* at the Cannes Film Festival in July 2021 and Claudia Huaiquimilla's *My Brothers Dream Awake* (2021, Chile) premiered at the Locarno Film Festival in August 2021.

Both Huezo and Huaiquimilla tackle difficult social issues, including drug trafficking, kidnappings, violent social uprisings, femicides, gender violence and forced disappearances in their films, producing moving stories of human struggle.

Tatiana Huezo tells a young girl's coming-of-age story against the background of a lawless Mexican village where drug-related violence and kidnapping threaten the largely female residents (*Noche de Fuego* 2021). In *Mis hermanos sueñan despiertos* (2021), Claudia Huaiquimilla tells the story of children who find themselves in a youth detention centre after having been abandoned by their parents. The authors argue that through Huezo and Huaiquimilla's films, cinema 'can be a tool for social criticism [...] the depiction of reality a catalyst for social change'.

As is the case with the chapters covering Patricia Howell and Marta Rodríguez, both Huezo and Huaiquimilla share a background in documentary filmmaking, which influences their narrative works. Huezo describes her sensibilities as akin to 'slow cinema', with each scene contributing to the development of the conflict even though its action is 'calm'. This suggests similarities with Céline Sciamma's screenwriting methodology (covered in *European Worlds*), in which the plot is structured around tensions and driven by desires – both those of the characters and those of the screenwriter herself. In this way, the work of Huaiquimilla and Huezo is blazing new trails in cinema storytelling.

Next, Lara Carvalho focuses on Brazilian Lúcia Murat's poignant feature docudrama, *Que Bom Te Ver Viva* (*How Nice to See You Alive*) (1989), which impacted Brazilian culture when it was released in September 1989. The film initiated public discussion surrounding the trauma affecting survivors of the torture and imprisonment that occurred during the military dictatorship that devastated Brazil from 1964 to 1985. Carvalho analyses how Murat uses narrative structure and devices in the screenwriting to reflect her own understanding of how we access memory and how personal traumas have a way of playing and replaying in our minds. The chapter is a statement about the importance of expressing traumatic events and their specific impact on survivors as a necessary precursor to healing. Carvalho argues that, rather than being a political film, *How Nice to See You Alive* is an important document

of history and a personal exploration of trauma. This leads into a discussion of the healing impact that art can have on individuals who have experienced trauma and evidences the impact the film still has in Brazil and other places today. This message is reiterated by the authors writing on Jasmila Žbanić's stories set in war settings (found in *European Worlds*). Overall, Carvalho argues that Murat's film is an important document that goes some way towards healing the trauma of a nation.

Motherhood is one of the most significant events in the lives of women who choose to have children. This is shown in the next chapter, written by Patrícia Dourado and Mirian Tavares, and in our first chapter in *Asian Worlds* about Afia Nathaniel. Dourado and Tavares' chapter discusses Anna Muylaert's fictional feature film screenplay, *The Second Mother* (2015). The screenplay reflects the ironic situation of many poorer women in Brazil, who leave their own children to work as a nanny to a wealthy family. Screenwriting practice is illuminated through the methodology Muylaert employed in writing the script.

The authors discuss the development of Muylaert's film in relation to Cecilia Salles' critical theory of creation processes (*Unfinished Gesture* 2019; *Networks of Creation* 2019) and Jack Epps' *Screenwriting is Rewriting* (2016), which emphasizes the relevance of rewriting processes. Dourado and Tavares relate how Paul Joseph Gulino's work *Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach* (2004) has influenced the techniques that Muylaert uses in structuring a screenplay. As well as this, the authors discuss how Anna Muylaert uses creative processes of improvisation on set, emphasizing collaboration among her actors and crew to strengthen the drama up until the point of shooting. Dourado and Tavares argue that although Muylaert begins production with a meticulously planned screenplay, she also employs more collaborative, artisanal techniques when on set, which are later integrated into the film's screenplay.

While these craft aspects of screenwriting and subsequent additional crafting through activities on set are the foreground to the chapter, its background discusses the political and social context of Brazilian society that influenced Muylaert's hunt for the appropriate ending. Muylaert was only able to complete the script when actions from the Brazilian government intersected with, and surprisingly answered, her quest for a more positive ending for her character, Jéssica. The film expresses the difference that can be made in the lives of less privileged people when there is State support for education. This occurred in Brazil while Muylaert was writing the script, and provided her with an appropriate vehicle to deliver the ending she had hoped to write. The authors describe how the symbiosis between the political context of the nation and the storyline of the screenplay worked together to allow the more positive ending of *The Second Mother* (2015) to have a stronger impact on its audiences.

In *Asian Worlds*, we offer stories from Pakistan, Hong Kong and South Korea. Azam Sarwar discusses Pakistani screenwriter Afia Nathaniel through her film *Dukhtar* (2014), which tackles the critical issues of child marriage, women as guardians of family honour and repressive social mores in traditional Pakistani society.

Sarwar notes how Nathaniel engages with issues such as the objectification of women in traditional *masala films* and describes how women's representation in Pakistani film has changed over past decades. She argues that, through placing her female characters' points of view at the centre of her storytelling, and in refusing to align her content with traditional ways of filming women, Nathaniel raises the discussion of a male gaze in Pakistani cinema. Sarwar engages with concepts from feminism and representation that are a theme in many of the chapters in this book. Her chapter contributes to feminist discussions of motherhood and mothering – specifically, transgressive mothering – through the central premise of the story, which shows the lengths to which a mother will go to protect her daughter from child marriage. She argues for a new Pakistani women's cinema in which screenwriters such as Afia Nathaniel are impacting the direction of filmmaking through challenging social and artistic norms, and creating a space for a new kind of cinema that represents a female viewpoint.

Next, writer and independent researcher Ian Fong highlights the role played by Lou Shui-wa, the female screenwriter of the film, *The Way We Are* (2008) in a meditation on women's roles, the perceived 'boringness' of the everyday and the way low-income earners are expected to live in ill-designed, unattractive, high-density and remote housing estates in Hong Kong. The screenplay for *The Way We Are* focuses on the day and night of two central women who live in such apartments, and the ordinariness of their lives, which seem to hold little excitement or joy.

Lou's script, offered to director Ann Hui while Lou was still a student, became the basis for the film. However, although the film received critical acclaim, Lou remains virtually unknown as a screenwriter. Fong questions the social inequity and lack of visibility of both Lou as a screenwriter and the women protagonists of the film, who play out the 'everyday' life of many poorer women in Hong Kong. He approaches questions of women's invisibility, powerlessness and passivity in Chinese culture, and suggests that women are marginalized because of the assumption of their connection with 'ordinary life'. For Fong, the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life causes it to be invisible to many. However, he sees the film as successful because of the ways it defamiliarizes audiences with the everyday as a strategy towards engaging them in its representation. Through the discussion of Lou and her script, this chapter proposes possibilities for portraying the everyday through using techniques of defamiliarization, in which rhythm is a key strategy. The chapter draws attention to the situation faced by many lower-income people in Hong Kong, and also raises questions about the gender roles at play in traditional Chinese society, which still hold sway in the modern city of Hong Kong.

The third chapter in the Asian Worlds section is written by researcher Thomas Carter, who focuses on the Korean screenwriter Young-Ah Yoo and her adaptation of the novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (Cho 2016) into the eponymous film (2019). The novel caused controversy when it was first published because it raised feminist issues in a nation where women have traditionally faced scorn and mockery for addressing themes of gender inequality – issues that stem from engrained patriarchal ideologies that support women's subservience to men.

Novelist Cho's intention in writing the novel was to initiate public debate on the issue. In January 2018, a high-profile sexual harassment case sent ripples through Korean society when a senior male Justice Ministry official was accused of sexually harassing a female public prosecutor. This led to what was to become the Korean #MeToo movement. Against the background of these events, in 2019, screenwriter Young-Ah Yoo could expect a strong reaction to her adaptation of the novel.

Carter discusses the ways in which Yoo's adaptation restructures the story by putting the protagonist, Kim Jiyoung, at the centre of a story told in real time, a necessary adaptation for the medium of film. He also discusses the ways in which two major characters – Jiyoung's husband and mother-in-law – support and antagonize Jiyoung respectively, and how these characters are pivotal to creating a more balanced picture of the ways in which patriarchal structures are enacted by both men and women. The story ends on an optimistic note in comparison to the novel, which is pessimistic. Carter claims that the novel's 'narrative paints a bleak and damning portrait of the ordinary female experience in Korean society'. Its portrayal of women's and girls' experiences of gender inequality from birth through childhood to womanhood shows the double standards, discrimination, sexual harassment and societal expectations placed on women, which are different from those placed on men. Carter argues that, by comparison, the film's more positive message is more likely to generate discussion across the spectrum of traditionalist to feminist audiences, achieving the novelist's aims. While the impact of the film is not easy to quantify, Carter offers strong evidence that there has been a notable increase in 'dramas [which] continue to challenge how modern women are perceived in society, [and which] address gender equality issues that continue to be debated' in the wake of the release of the film.

The English-speaking Worlds section embraces the nations around the world whose national language is English, and whose origins represent the colonial expansion out of England from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries and beyond. In this section, we feature chapters from the United States, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The first film discussed in this section is that of English screenwriter Ida Lupino, who became one of the most prolific screenwriters and directors during the 'Golden Years' of Hollywood. Lupino is heralded as one of the first feminist filmmakers in that industry and the second woman to be admitted to the Directors Guild of America. As the studio system began its decline, Lupino – following women such as Lois Weber – established an independent production studio with others so she could write, produce and direct projects that spoke *to* and *of* ordinary life.

Author Gabrielle Stecher describes Ida Lupino's early life, including her move to the United States in 1933, where she contracted poliomyelitis at the age of 16. At that time, the disease was rife in the United States, creating fear and anxiety. Although Lupino recovered well from the illness, the experience led her to write *Never Fear* (Lupino 1950), which follows the dancer Carol, whose career is derailed when she contracts polio. Stecher expands on the elements within the screenwriting that make it notable as a social issue film. The attention

given to portraying the psychological impact of the disease on Carol was an important element in emphasizing a woman's experience through the film. Carol's lack of agency as the men in her life take over her rehabilitation is also portrayed. Lupino's script took the film into new territory by portraying the therapies and stages of rehabilitation that Carol underwent at a time when disability was rarely foregrounded, and a woman's experience of it was almost entirely absent. Stecher contends that the film is a 'meditation' on the ways such a disease can 'disrupt, delay, and even paralyze the lives of working women, particularly women artists'. Yet it is an optimistic film, in which Carol walks out of the hospital to face a new life at the film's end.

The chapter addresses screenwriting practice through examples of how Lupino used visual language to communicate an interior state of mind. It also reveals the female perspective embedded in the script, around such things as the impact of illness on a woman's self-identity, and experience of gender expectations. The script does not shy away from making clear the ways in which the men in Carol's life take control.

A commentator at the *New York Times* noted Lupino's 'independence of mind' in breaking with Hollywood tradition through insisting on making films on social issues, in defiance of the bias towards epic entertainment films, which were the bread-and-butter of Hollywood production. Stecher argues for the film's cultural significance in the ways it shaped conversations about disability in the 1950s. It offered real information about treatments for polio at a time when confusion and fear surrounded the disease. Lupino's other works included films on the plight of unwed mothers (*Not Wanted*, 1949) and sex crime (*Outrage*, 1950), to name only a couple of titles. Although Lupino sustained a financial loss through *Never Fear* (1950), she continued to assert that it was her favourite among her films. Like many of the women screenwriters featured in this volume, Lupino's success was built on films that spoke *to* and *of* everyday people from a woman's perspective.

In our next chapter, author Polly Ellen Goodwin features games writer Amanda Gardner, who is the writer of the first-person survival horror adventure video game *Perception* (2017), which has a young, blind female protagonist at its centre. Goodwin begins by stating that the game is intended to give the clear message 'don't judge' to people who marginalize others.

Goodwin herself is an audio describer. She begins the chapter by offering a description and transcription of the opening gameplay of *Perception*, which quickly gives readers direct experience of the set-up of the story both in described images and through the dialogue. This beginning also gives a taste of the horror genre of which the game is an example.

The chapter discusses the research undertaken by Gardner and her collaborators before and during the game design and production phases. She outlines the process of writing the game, including the development of plot, characters, backstory and the core gameplay loop. Goodwin explains the tools available for people with visual impairment in real life, and the way facsimiles of these are employed strategically within the game to aid players to move forward in it. She offers research into who accesses the game and the response of sighted and

non-sighted players. The chapter concludes by addressing the question of sighted writers writing a game that features a protagonist with visual impairment.

The next chapter is on American Rose Troche's interactive virtual reality (VR) work *We Live Here* (2020), which allows the interactor to explore the everyday life of a person who is homeless and 'living rough' in Los Angeles. Author Kath Dooley argues that Troche's feature film, *Go Fish* (1994), which first won her international recognition, and the drama series about lesbian women, *The L Word* (2004–09), testify to Troche's social activism, particularly around sexual diversity and concern for women's issues. It was Troche's desire for a new artistic challenge that led her to focus more recently on short interactive VR works.

Troche's hands-on research and consultation with homeless and formerly homeless people in Los Angeles led her to want to make a work that showed those who are homeless are not broken; in fact, bad luck can strike any of us and can lead to precarious living. *We Live Here* (2020) was created through Meta's (formerly Oculus) 'VR for Good' programme. It was devised in collaboration with awareness-raising, non-profit organization Invisible People, Los Angeles Housing.

Dooley describes something of the range of technologies that fall under the banner of VR, including software and hardware used. She also gives an overview of the story of the main character, Rockey (59), and the strategies employed within the production that set the context for Rockey's story to unfold through objects placed in the VR world. Dooley also describes the ways in which the user is drawn into the experience of the protagonist through visual and audio cues, which directly affect the senses of the user while within the VR experience. The author argues that,

by utilising three degrees of freedom (3DoF) and six degrees of freedom (6DoF) technologies, Troche fosters a personal connection with the protagonist through giving the viewer physical access to a 360-degree storyworld. This allows for a deeply subjective experience of story, moving beyond the methods of viewer/protagonist identification offered by traditional screen media.

Dooley ends the chapter with a statement regarding how Rockey found accommodation through LA Housing in the wake of the VR production, illustrating the positive impact VR technology can have when used for social issue productions. Rockey has also been able to tell her story on YouTube, with the help of Invisible People (2019), suggesting another communication channel through which such VR productions can garner audiences and raise greater awareness of social concerns.

Our next author, Joanne Tindale, also addresses homelessness – this time in Australia. She focuses on screenwriter Catherine Hill's feature film *Some Happy Day* (2021). While Troche's VR work allows the interactor to experience the world of precarious living, Hill's story shows how support systems encourage a woman experiencing homelessness in Melbourne to find her own agency and create her own vision for her future.

The screenwriter, Hill, has been a long-time case worker for the Sacred Heart Mission, Salvation Army Crisis Centre and other organizations, as well as a screenwriter. The chapter stresses how the five major principles of the ‘strength-based’ counselling framework underpinned Hill’s approach to scripting. In writing the screenplay, Hill drew on the rich experience of her communities, members of whom acted as mentors and collaborators. In filming the screenplay, Hill was also able to utilize a dedicated cast of co-workers and community members – who each had their own experience of precarious living – as actors.

Using *Some Happy Day* as a case study, Tindale’s chapter gives a comprehensive overview of the different factors that led to the decisions made within the screenwriting, and in the production process, thus shaping the project. It is an inspiring story of community and low-budget filmmaking. More than this, however, the chapter outlines the impact campaign that followed the film’s marketing and distribution. Tindale states:

On 25 October 2022, the Minister for [the] Department of Social Services, The Hon Julie Collins MP announced the establishment of Housing Australia, a new National Housing Supply and Affordability Council and a National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

While it may not be possible to find direct evidence of the influence the screenplay and its impact campaign had on Australian government policy, the screenplay and film are achievements that have raised awareness and reflect Hill’s own belief, that ‘if everyone acts, then we have a million small actions and that’s incredibly powerful’.

Next, Andrew James Couzens illuminates the work of Aboriginal Australian screenwriter Leah Purcell and her revisionist feature film *The Drover’s Wife* (2021). Couzens argues that while continuing the project of mainstreaming indigeneity that began in recent decades in Australia, Purcell ‘contributes to important social change by reinforcing the central role of women and Indigenous Australians in the nation’s history and culture’. She does this by adapting Henry Lawson’s classic Australian story *The Drover’s Wife* into a feature film, with the female protagonist, Molly Johnson, at its core. Over the course of the story, Molly embraces her own Aboriginal heritage, which she passes on to her children. Couzens argues that by putting an Aboriginal woman at the heart of this story, Purcell creates an alternative, more inclusive national foundation myth that addresses historical traumas. In doing so, Purcell also revises the generic conventions of settler colonial cinema and lays the groundwork for political and social change in a nation that continues to struggle with its shared Aboriginal and colonial past. Couzens describes the background to Lawson’s classic story before analysing the film in greater detail to demonstrate how Purcell achieves her purpose of integrating both Aboriginal and white identities into a vision of an inclusive Australia, while addressing sexual violence against women and symbolic violence against both women and First Nations Australians.

Couzens’ chapter is centred on the mythic resonances of ‘home’ in terms of an Australian national mythology. It is followed by a chapter that focuses on Australia as home in a

very different context. This chapter discusses the hit Australian children's animation series *Bluey* (2018–23), created by Joe Brumm. Andi Spark, who was the production manager on the original series, argues for a broader concept of screen-crafting in this screenwriting book, when she illuminates the input of key female creatives who worked collaboratively to bring the scripts to life once they had been written.

Using Schaefer's (2016) description of an actor's body as their instrument, Spark builds her argument around nonverbal elements – hands, face, posture, stride, gaze, gait and muscles – as she expands on the ways in which animators build characters from the ground up through drawing, and in the process add important, personalized elements of characterization that become raw material, which is central to the scripted stories. These come out in behaviour, look, actions and personality traits, and are soon incorporated into the series through the cumulative sense of who the character is. This information is retained and built on throughout future episodes and series.

Spark describes four key roles in the animation production process: lead art director; animation co-director; production manager; and storyboard artist. She also points out that other elements – timing, staging and perspective – are in the hands of animators. Through her argument, Spark effectively promotes the role of animators in adding new and original elements to the text, which in turn enliven the characters and world beyond what is expressed in the script.

Spark argues her case under the headings 'context', 'visuals', 'performativity' and 'organization' to demonstrate the impact of the work of these female professional animators. Because animation is often seen to be more about the images than the text – particularly children's animation – Spark's argument that these crew members exerted a subtle influence that contributed to the scripting and directly contributed to *Bluey*'s success is thought-provoking.

Our next authors, Angie Black and Anna Dzenis, question the concept of family in their discussion of Miranda July's 2020 film *Kajillionaire*. Black and Dzenis evoke the concepts of 'queer utopias' and the 'cultural construction of happiness' in their argument that July's film invites us to question preconceived ideas about family relations, identity and cultural expectations. They mount an argument that July challenges the orthodoxy of screenwriting and heteronormativity more broadly and speaks to a queer community when she raises questions about what constitutes happiness and 'family' through the film.

Black and Dzenis describe July's varied body of works and her unique approach to storytelling. They argue that July's characters are neither derivative nor representative of the type of (queer or not) female characters regularly encountered on screens, and that through her work July challenges conventional discourses, labels and categories. They argue that it is the emotional sincerity of her characters – the lack of cynicism that makes a virtue of naivety, which creates a space for the acceptance of difference, queerness, otherness and uniqueness in July's work.

The authors also describe July's attention to her fanbase. July's screenwriting methodology and the originality she evidences in her work and life choices form the basis of the

authors' major proposition: that July makes her greatest contribution to social and artistic change through the way she and her works speak to marginalized audiences.

If Miranda July can be shown to influence audiences of the twenty-first century, Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* has been influencing readers and audiences for over 150 years. Armando Fumagalli's chapter illustrates how the 2019 film, adapted and directed by Greta Gerwig, influenced Hollywood to fund more films made by female writer-directors. Fumagalli begins by describing the difficulties – even in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries – that Gerwig faced in finding funding in Hollywood for a project that has an overwhelmingly female production team and cast.

He then describes the approach taken by Gerwig to integrate the two parts of the book, which represent the present and the past, into one coherent screenplay. (The second book was originally published a year after the first.) The discussion broadens into the ways Gerwig negotiates both the nineteenth-century mores and restrictions placed on women and the opposite, more 'liberated' expectations and goals held by modern audiences. Fumagalli also emphasizes the ways in which the story is as contemporary now as it was when it was first published. Indeed, Fumagalli expresses the meaningfulness of the story for Gerwig, who describes it as both an inspiration in her youth and an example in her womanhood. Fumagalli completes the chapter with some notes on the decisions Gerwig made in the filmmaking, which enhance the story's impact. Overall, the chapter shows how *Little Women* has served as a story of hope for many women, encouraging them to follow their own dreams – whether as mothers and wives, or as writers and artists, or both.

Our next chapter builds on the theme of women's aspirations to artistic careers, and also speaks specifically to questions of 'in' groups in society, and the ways in which migrant groups experience marginalization from the dominant cultures in their adopted homes. Screenwriters, Ghazaleh Gol and Shuchi Kothari present a discussion on their experiences as diasporic New Zealanders (from Iran and India respectively), and the different career trajectories each has taken. These two Asian-New Zealand screenwriter-filmmakers have forged impressive careers that have led to greater representation of Asian voices on New Zealand screens. However, the take-home message is that this work is never done.

Formatted as a conversation, the topics addressed include the lack of representation of diverse and immigrant New Zealanders in New Zealand mainstream television and cinema; cultural influences on storytelling structures; and the importance of mentorship for diasporic women seeking to work in the New Zealand film industry.

The chapter introduces its readers to several initiatives that have been successful in New Zealand film and television, in terms of raising the awareness and visibility of diverse groups in the wider community. As the final chapter in the English-speaking Worlds section, it is a celebration of the work of both screenwriters and also a tribute to the Pan-Asian Screen Collective (PASC) in Aotearoa New Zealand, whose key aim is to 'represent, provide advocacy and facilitate opportunities for Pan-Asian screen practitioners on and behind New Zealand's screens'.

The European Worlds section features three chapters, which present stories from Bosnia-Herzegovina, France and Italy. Our first chapter in the section discusses the films of Bosnian screenwriter Jasmila Žbanić, whose experience during the Bosnian War (1992–95) shaped her screen storytelling. Like Lúcia Murat's feature docudrama *Que Bom Te Ver Viva* [*How Nice to See You Alive* (1989)], Žbanić's film, *Quo Vadis, Aida?* (2020), explores trauma and memory, and seeks to answer a question that is of vital importance to Bosniak, Serbian and Croat citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina: 'Are we able to accept the past and are we able to move on into a shared future?'

Authors Bruno Lovric and Miriam Hernandez describe Žbanić's experience of the Bosnian War and illustrate the ways in which trauma, forgiveness and the untrustworthiness of political organizations are recurring themes in Žbanić's works. They show that the war films she writes, directs and produces illustrate how the indiscriminate application of ethnic labels in war settings dehumanizes women.

Jasmila Žbanić's works explore different aspects of womanhood: her lead characters are mothers, wives, daughters and sisters caught in the overarching conflict, war and trauma around them. Žbanić's cinema is 'made by women, speaks to women's experiences, and/or addresses the spectator as female'. Her stories often address rape, used by soldiers as a tool of terror in the Bosnian War. However, her major focus is not revenge, but forgiveness.

Žbanić's films have provided an opportunity for communities to publicly acknowledge the survivors' trauma and offer symbolic reparations through culture. In the absence of political leadership, intervention from individuals such as Žbanić speaks to the importance of the arts as a gesture of civic activism. As Žbanić writes, her protagonists have every right to be angry and hateful, but instead her scripts focus on hope and regeneration. They not only offer a more nuanced portrayal of women, but also serve as a powerful and inspirational message, showing that even in the face of adversity, one can find strength, purpose and hope in moving forward.

Žbanić addresses the enduring effects of sexual violence on both individuals and communities through her films. The film *Grbavica* (2006), in particular, succeeded in pressuring Bosnian politicians to provide wartime rape victims with the same official recognition and benefits received by former soldiers. In 2006, the Bosnian Federal Law accorded the status of 'civilian war victims' to women rape survivors and awarded them welfare payments. Following on from this, children born from wartime rape were finally legally recognized in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Žbanić's stories challenge the status quo because she casts her characters contrary to their ethnic identities. She also refuses to be claimed by any political group within her country. Žbanić has founded an artists' association, Deblokada (2023) believing that screen works can correct social anomalies, challenge post-war social ordeal and ask important questions.

Continuing to address filmmaking from a woman's point of view, authors Philippa Burne and Angie Black discuss Céline Sciamma's fourth feature film, *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019). Sciamma has developed a screenwriting methodology in which *desire* is the

element that motivates action and holds bodies in tension, to create ‘a quiet rollercoaster of intensifying emotion’. The method – exemplified in Sciamma’s screenplay for *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* – is described in detail in this chapter.

The story is described as a period, queer story about a painter who falls in love with her model. The story is about the gaze. However, for Sciamma the gaze is ‘female’. This female gaze is characterized by its active nature. These women are agents in their own stories. They look, they see, they allow themselves to be seen – or do not.

This is enhanced in the story through the ways in which Sciamma keeps the world of men external to the story, and to the drama we experience on the screen. Although the women are impacted by the power and needs of the men around them, the men barely appear. Through the settings and action, Sciamma insulates her characters in a female world; any men who are implicated in the story remain outside the frame – and also, we understand, outside the world of tension and desire, which belongs to the women.

In the chapter, Sciamma’s screenwriting methodology is explained in detail, using the example of the film to expand on the affect created through using this storytelling method. This mode of storytelling is at once about women’s voices, women’s desires and an active female gaze.

The third chapter in the European Worlds section also discusses the power of a female gaze and voice, this time in the context of the filming of a rape trial by a group of Italian feminist filmmakers, including Annabella Miscuglio. The documentary, *Processo per stupro* [*Trial for Rape*] (1979), for the first time showed the Italian public the symbolic violence perpetrated by the Italian judicial system on women victims of rape. The impact reverberated across the nation, and as author Milly Buonanno describes, remains a watershed moment that raised awareness of the misogyny of legal structures not only in Italy, but across the world.

The chapter describes how, in 1978, members of a feminist film collective, including Annabella Miscuglio, Maria Grazia Belmonti, Anna Carini, Rony Daopoulos, Paola De Martiis and Loredana Rotondo, were admitted to the courtroom in a provincial Italian town to document a rape trial. The documentary was commissioned by the national broadcaster, RAI, which had just begun a second channel and, in response to the growing feminist movement in Italy, had appointed a woman to lead the new channel.

Trial for Rape received record audiences when it was broadcast on the second RAI channel in the spring of 1979. Its impact was such that it was rescheduled for an October screening on the flagship channel RAI, which attracted 9.5 million viewers. Its broadcast caused genuine shock, which reverberated through national public opinion. For the first time, people on the street could witness the offences inflicted on the credibility and dignity of abused and raped women, who were humiliated and belittled through the process of interrogation and cross-examination.

Buonanno describes the growing feminist consciousness in Italy at the time, which led to the formation of the feminist film collective. She also outlines the set of circumstances in Italy that led RAI to commission the work for its second channel. Buonanno claims that the only member of the group who has received recognition to date has been Loredana

Rotondo, the RAI producer who was instrumental in getting network agreement. While Buonanno recognizes that ‘each and every member of the collective played an essential role’, and that hierarchies are ‘alien in principle to the feminist vision of cooperation between women’, she focuses her discussion on Annabella Miscuglio (1939–2003) specifically because of Miscuglio’s ‘charismatic authorial presence’, her commitment to feminist film culture through co-establishing the Filmstudio feminist filmmaking collective, her effort in curating *Kinomata: The Woman with the Camera* film festival in 1976 and her undeniable, active presence among the field of women filmmakers in Italy in the 1970s and beyond. Buonanno also explains that she made this choice because, in her words, ‘Annabella Miscuglio has largely been relegated to obscurity’ in the intervening period. Today, *Trial for Rape* is considered a watershed moment for the formation of a collective awareness about sexist prejudices in legal culture in Italy, which also stands as an example in other parts of the world.

The Island Worlds section features a chapter from Samoan researchers resident in Australia and two chapters written by Rose Ferrell and Rosanne Welch, respectively. Together, these chapters reveal much about the current issues facing the small island nations of the world. Each focuses on screenwriting as the foundation of projects that are disseminated through small screens, for very specific audiences. The projects exemplify the ways in which digital technologies allow the production of screen works aimed at specialist audiences; productions which can be produced and widely disseminated to targeted audiences globally through internet-based distribution networks such as social media sites.

The first chapter, by Agapetos Aia-Fa’aleava and Vaoiva Natapu-Ponton, uses the provocation of installation artist Angela Tiatia’s audiovisual work *Walking the Wall* (2014) to deliver a wide-ranging discussion on the experiences of Samoan women living in Australia. The discussion is focused on the traditional practice of tattooing, by which Samoan women receive their malu (tattoo from the top of the thighs to below the knees) from a Samoan traditional *Tufuga ta Tatau* (skilled tattoo artist).

Aia-Fa’aleava and Natapu-Ponton use Tiatia’s screen work to discuss the conflict created within Samoan diasporic communities, and particularly for Samoan women living in Australia, who must negotiate their lifeways with consideration of their own and Australian cultural and gender expectations of women. On one hand, Christianity taught Samoans that a woman’s malu should be hidden. On the other hand, diasporic Samoan women live within a dominant culture that encourages women to be ‘free’ with their bodies – even if that freedom makes those women vulnerable to judgement, slurs and, in the worst cases, violence.

The discussion offers a rich perspective on the experience of Pasifika women living in Western cultures and brings to life the importance of their Samoan heritage to these women who live between two cultures. Some of them, like Tiatia, are using audiovisual media and screen production techniques to embolden women in their communities to stand proud while making their own choices about their bodies.

The next chapter, written by Rose Ferrell, features screenwriter Sophia Perez and her active involvement in preserving and promoting the language and culture of the Chamorro

people of the Northern Mariana Islands. Sophia's project, *Island Time* (Perez et al. 2023), is 'an episode of a children's show that teaches the Chamorro language and celebrates the Chamorro culture with Chamorro actors, local music, animations, and wacky puppets' (NMHC 2023). The chapter describes the complex history of colonization over almost 500 years, which has resulted in the need for a programme to teach Chamorro language and culture to Chamorro youth in the Marianas. In part, the chapter is about the present-day colonization of minds and identity, and the struggle – which is ongoing – for the Chamorro and Carolinian peoples to retain their culture and language in the face of globalization and technologization.

It shows how the production came together to include an impressive cast of community members and organizations who gave their time, resources, skills and knowledge to bring the project to fruition. It proposes that this commitment demonstrates the value and importance that local Chamorro people place on their cultural survival. In a broader discussion, it underlines the role of culture in cohering communities and speaks to the concept of a worldview, which is the foundation of a culture. It contrasts this with a generalized 'western' outlook, implying the question, 'What are we losing?' as First Peoples come under greater pressure to become 'westernized' to survive economically in the twenty-first century.

The final chapter, written by Rosanne Welch, highlights the distress felt by Oceanic peoples in the face of climate change, and the ways in which activists are applying screenwriting and filmmaking skills to promote their causes. It focuses on the efforts by Solomon Islander Cynthia Houniuihi, president of Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC), to bring the question of climate change impacts in the Pacific to the United Nations. Houniuihi and fellow students of environmental law at the University of the Pacific decided to take action on climate change by advocating for members of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to support a resolution to ask the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for an advisory opinion on states' obligations with regard to climate change impacts on island states. The chapter tells the story of the students' actions as they reached out to their political leaders across the Pacific, leading to the Climate Diplomacy Manager for the Republic of Vanuatu commissioning a song and video clip to present to the ICJ in 2022. Vanessa Quai of Vanuatu, known as 'one of the South Pacific's best female singing sensations', agreed to write and star in the music clip. 'Climate Change at the International Court of Justice' (Quai et al. 2022) became the official theme song and video clip of the ICJ campaign.

Through her chapter, Welch argues that devising the song and its video clip was 'screenwriting'. She shows how the juxtaposition of the right images with powerful lyrics and melody can create impact. Welch also notes that in creating presentations to go with speeches she has made, Houniuihi is utilizing principles that are common to those utilized in effective screenwriting. The chapter discusses other instances where groups of youth, students and others have created songs and videos to build awareness of climate change across the globe. The chapter also tracks other strategies used by students and others to create awareness of

their campaign, which has fundamental, life-and-death ramifications for small islands battling to survive in the era of climate change.

Themes

The screenwriters and screen stories we present in this volume are diverse yet highlight common themes. Among these is motherhood and its influence in a woman's life. Whether mothers ourselves or the daughter of a mother, this central relationship is intrinsic to how we behave in the world and what stories we choose to weave which reflect our experiences.

The ideal of motherhood is one of nurturing and caring for others. As a theme, motherhood often implies service to others, which often entails sacrifice. The women screenwriters featured in this book variously display such concern through their work as filmmakers, whether or not their screen stories are about being a mother. Several chapters address this theme. Anna Muylaert's screen story shows the sorrow and sacrifice of Brazilian women who must leave their children in the care of others in order to financially support their own families. Afia Nathaniel's screenplay involves a Pakistani mother who rescues her daughter from the experience of child marriage, which in some cases presents the danger that children will be subject to servitude, slavery and legitimized rape. Carter's chapter on Young-Ah Yoo shows the choice that a young Korean woman must face when deciding to either become a stay-at-home mother and be reviled as a parasite, or to follow her chosen career path and her heart and be censured for not fulfilling her family duties. In contrast, Ian Fong's study shows us the bleak and lonely existence of a Hong Kong Chinese widow who brings up her only son in public housing, knowing she is unable to offer him a bright future.

Screenwriting and film practice are discussed across many chapters. The concept of a female gaze, which is different from the 'male gaze' theorized by Laura Mulvey (2009), is expanded upon in several chapters. Buonanno's chapter on Annabella Miscuglio characterizes the 'female gaze' in the television documentary *A Trial for Rape* (1979) as 'restraint', which allowed the audience to more directly empathize with the victim of the rape and experience the 'symbolic violence' committed by the judicial system. Buonanno describes the impact the documentary had on the Italian public – male and female – in advancing their desire to do better on behalf of women victims in future. Other chapters that propose a female gaze include those on Costa Rican Patricia Howell and Bosnia-Herzegovinan Jasmila Žbanić. Author Azam Sarwar describes the ways in which Afia Nathaniel challenges the conventional male gaze in Pakistani women's cinema.

Likewise, Céline Sciamma keeps the focus on the female gaze in *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019) by essentially focusing her story on the female characters and leaving the male agents outside the frame, even in the pages of the screenplay. This parallels the work of Miranda July in her film *Kajillionaire* (2020), in which she deliberately 'incubates' her characters in an unrealistic (and yet strangely believable) world in order to deliver a message that supports

her fan-base among LGBTQI+ people. The *unrealism* of the situation and characters in *Kajillionaire* supports the contention, put forward by the authors, that *Kajillionaire* delivers a positive message through the way its protagonist, Old Dolio, escapes an inauthentic, traditional family and moves into a new life situation with someone who genuinely loves her.

Some of our screenwriters challenge the predominance of the hero's journey as the most successful structure for a screenplay. While Sciamma adopts a specific screenwriting methodology that uses the tension created by desire within the screenplay to move the story forward, July relies on acting out her scripts as she writes in order to remain connected to the drama. Although not described by July as such, this methodology would seem to accord with Sciamma's proposition that the screenwriter's own desire is also at play within the formulation of a dramatic script, and can guide the writer towards a satisfying dramatic arc.

The invisibility of women's personal lives appears often among these chapters, from Fong's look at poorer women in Hong Kong to Acuña's description of how Patricia Howell saw that women in Costa Rica bear double roles that went unrecognized. The films written by our authors that feature female protagonists living with disability (Kaseketi, Jeynes, Lupino) directly combat the issue – prevalent globally – of the invisibility of people living with disability. While doing this, these portrayals aid in increasing audiences' understanding of what it is to live with a disability. By living the experience vicariously, audience members can engage more fully with the point of view presented and are encouraged to see the person rather than the disability when they encounter others in the world around them.

Fumagalli's analysis of the difficulties of funding Greta Gerwig's version of *Little Women* points to the professional invisibility (and/or unconscious bias) experienced by female creatives even when those women have significant credits in the US film industry. The theme of professional invisibility is tackled again in our chapter from New Zealand on Indian- and Iranian-New Zealand women screenwriters. The positive message that arises from this chapter is the ways these New Zealand diasporic women screenwriters have created a niche for themselves and other diverse women in the local New Zealand film industry. In the Australian context, Aboriginal screenwriter Leah Purcell cleverly writes female and Indigenous characters *into* traditional mythology – which, in general, erases both groups – through her adaptation of a classic Australian literary story. Invisibility is also a factor in our story from Nigeria of young Islamic female rap artists and is a theme throughout the works of Central and South American women screenwriters, whose films champion a diverse range of women and marginalized communities (Howell, Marta Rodriguez, Tatiana Huezo and Claudia Huaiquimilla, Lúcia Murat and Anna Muylaert).

Perhaps deserving special mention are the chapters in the Island Worlds section, which tell the story of women and communities who are raising their voices through screen works to preserve their cultures and the right to live in accordance with age-old traditions which reflect unique identities. These chapters broadly reflect the theme of colonialism and its consequences, reminding those readers in westernized nations of the ongoing complexities in the wake of the imperialist ventures of the last five centuries, which still impact communities.

Most important, and strangely lacking in all but one chapter, is climate change and its impacts. For island worlds, it is a devastating reality – and one for which wealthier ‘continental’ nations are reluctant to accept responsibility. It is in these chapters, most of all, that the potential of digital technologies is realized, allowing the least empowered to still make a large impact through embracing the newest technologies in the creation and distribution of their screenworks, which can then reach the rest of the world through social media and other popular, accessible platforms.

Other themes, such as women’s work, the misogyny women often encounter, the unpaid work women engage in and the ongoing struggle of women to assert their value as equal citizens, are like tendrils that weave throughout our chapters, emphasizing the need for this book (if there has ever been any doubt about its relevance).

In the same spirit that has compelled the women screenwriters featured in these chapters to write about ordinary people and communities in order to understand and further the interests of those communities, we also seek to be allies in bringing these stories to light. The final common thread across our book is the willingness of female writers to expose truths about injustice and inequality. For this, they have often been made to feel uncomfortable; at other times, they have compromised their own safety. At no point have they turned away from the work they felt compelled to do and the stories they wished to tell. It is for this reason that *Women Who Write Our Worlds* has been created: to reveal the power of women to change the world for the better through telling the stories of marginalized people.

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