Screenwriting, poetics, horror: *Full Circle: The Haunting of Julia*

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In 2010, I was working on a research project on seances in British horror cinema. Professor Peter Hutchings, my research mentor at the time, recommended that I watch the British–Canadian horror film *Full Circle*, released in the USA as *The Haunting of Julia* (Richard Loncraine, 1977). An adaptation of Peter Straub's 1976 novel *Julia*, it features Mia Farrow as the eponymous protagonist, a grieving mother haunted by a demonic child, in a canny piece of intertextual casting that trades on Farrow's star image in *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968). I had not heard of the film, which I soon discovered to be a common state of affairs. *Full Circle* had been neglected both academically and critically, and as recently as 2017 it was described as 'one of the great "lost" British horrors of the 1970s'.[1] As this 'lost' suggests, it had neither a DVD nor a Blu–Ray home release, and I eventually found a poor-quality pirated copy on YouTube. Once found, the experience of watching this film created new questions. There was a distinctive brown wash coating the film, muting the colours and making some scenes genuinely hard to see, and it was unclear whether this was an artistic choice or archival deterioration. In addition, I found the film itself profoundly unsatisfying: I struggled to make sense of the narrative, and the viewing experience was alienating. Yet *Full Circle* continued to nag away at me, and a few years later I explored the archives at the BBFC and BFI Special Collections in London. There I discovered it had been roundly trashed by international critics at its Cannes premiere in May 1977, and duly re-edited for theatrical release in the UK a year later – whereupon most British critics followed suit in its pulverization. John Pym for *Monthly*

1 Simon Fitzjohn, '*The Haunting of Julia*', *The Dark Side*, no. 184 (2017), p. 52.

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Film Bulletin wryly noted that '*Full Circle* succeeds in getting almost everything wrong, from the location of the newspaper section of the British Library to the ludicrous […] effect of having Julia finding a mutilated tortoise in a park sandpit'.[2]

Failure is fascinating. For the next couple of years I tried, on and off, to write about this film, but could not find my way in. It was only when I studied historical poetics that I seemed to have found a suitable point of attack. In his 1989 essay, 'Historical poetics of cinema', David Bordwell explains that the 'poetics of any medium studies the finished work as a result of a process of construction', and that this process includes 'a craft component (e.g. rules of thumb), the more general principles according to which the work is composed, and its functions, effects and uses'. For Bordwell, the questions underpinning poetics are 'what are the principles according to which films are constructed and by means of which they achieve particular effect?', and 'how and why have these principles arisen and changed in particular empirical circumstances?'[3] In his 2008 book, *Poetics of Cinema*, Bordwell reworks and substantially extends his original 1989 essay. He simplifies his 'central question' of film poetics to become 'how are films made in order to elicit certain effects?' [4] He then suggests a three-stage poetic analysis, composed of the 'analytical' (film narrative and style, theme and subject), followed by 'the principles of filmmaking as they inform films in their particular historical circumstances' (norms of production, craft practices, how filmmakers' choices are affected by, when and how they make films), and finally the 'poetics of effect' (how the film creates reactions in its audiences).[5]

In the case of *Full Circle*, I want to consider why the textual construction does not work and thus why the film fails, with a specific focus on the way that the film story is told. Straub's source novel was well received, but the film adaptation's contemporaneous critical mauling centred on its inability to deliver a compelling story: the *Observer* commented that 'suspension of disbelief becomes increasingly difficult' as the story progresses, while the *Daily Mirror* pronounced 'there are more loose ends in this film than in a tipsy knitting contest'.[6] The study of this little-known film is therefore an opportunity to widen the remit of scholarship on the history of British horror cinema. The research then goes further, utilizing historical poetics to ask how and why *Full Circle*'s story fails, and what elements of the film's narrative operation make it so unsatisfying to watch.

As I will demonstrate, engagement with poetics and horror has, to date, been limited, and this research offers an opportunity to think more deeply about the value of historical poetics as a method for analysing specific film genres. Yet the essay ultimately moves beyond contributions to film history. In what follows, I draw upon archival screenplay drafts and screenwriting methodologies to illuminate when and how structural decisions were made about *Full Circle*, and I focus on what impact these decisions had on the stories that the censors and the critics then wrote about this film.

2 John Pym, '*Full Circle*', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol. 45, no. 532 (1978), p. 89.

3 David Bordwell, 'Historical poetics of cinema', in R. Barton Palmer (ed.), *The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches* (Atlanta, GA: Georgia State Literary Studies, 1989), p. 371.

4 David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 54.

5 Ibid.

6 Tom Milne, 'Cowboy in Hamburg: cinema', *Observer*, 7 May 1978, p. 32; qtd in Fitzjohn, '*The Haunting of Julia*', p. 52; Arthur Thirkwell, '*Full Circle*', *Daily Mirror*, 5 May 1978, BFI Special Collections #S14114.

In her introduction to the 50th anniversary issue of *Screen*, published in 2009, Annette Kuhn asks, 'what is theorizing for?' She suggests that 'theorizing ought to equip us with tools for thinking about, understanding and explaining the objects with which a body of knowledge concerns itself. Ideally, theorizing should also take on board any shifts or changes in those objects.'[7] In my analysis of *Full Circle*, I suggest that the time has come for such a shift, and make a case for the screenplay as an object working together with screenwriting as a practice to create new knowledge in film studies Screenwriting studies is a relatively new area of study in academia: Craig Batty demarcates 2009 as the beginning of the 'screenwriting turn' in screen and cultural studies, Intellect launched the *Journal of Screenwriting* in 2010, and in 2013 Palgrave inaugurated the Studies in Screenwriting book series with monographs by Ian W. MacDonald and Eva Novrup Redvall.[8] MacDonald's *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea* is grounded in Bordwell's ideas, and suggests that 'a poetics is an explanation of how a work is constructed'.[9] MacDonald's main aim, however, is the development, naming and explication of concepts – his 'screen idea', the 'screen work', the 'Screen Idea Work Group' – none of which serves me here. In this essay I turn away from screenwriting studies' established engagement with practice research, with production studies, and instead reach deeper into film studies – into the methods of historical poetics, into the contents of film archives, and into the theorization of film genre.

Full Circle is an adaptation of *Julia*, American novelist Peter Straub's third novel but his first horror story. Living in London in the 1970s, Straub saw a strong commercial opportunity in the emerging market for horror, one 'that offered opportunities both for established writers and new ones so far as particular kinds of horror fiction were concerned'.[10] Straub was keen to produce not only a commercial genre novel that would be well received during what Steffen Hantke describes as the 'heyday of literary horror' fiction in the 1970s, but also a novel that had cinematic opportunities.[11] The touchstone for this was William Peter Blatty's 1971 novel *The Exorcist* and William Friedkin's film adaptation in 1973. The film has been seen as arguably 'the first modern horror blockbuster', an 'enormous commercial success' that spawned 'a legion of imitators both in the United States and abroad'.[12] *The Exorcist* was a major shift in the cinematic depiction of horror, eschewing what Mark Kermode describes as 'the costumed high-campery of the traditional Hammer romps', instead presenting 'a credible portrait of the modern urban world ripped apart by an obscene, ancient evil'.[13] Straub concurs: 'I chose horror because at the time there were two or three books in the genre doing really well as films – *The Exorcist* and *Rosemary's Baby*. I'd seen both and thought it might be possible for me to do something along those lines.'[14] Straub's calculated response to market trends was noted by the *Observer* in its review of *Julia*. Anthony Thwaite comments that Straub plays 'skilfully but cynically' with the current taste for 'spiritual wickedness', summarizing the book as 'absurd, fairly unpleasant, fairly

7 Annette Kuhn, '*Screen* and screen theorizing today', *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2009), p. 5.

8 Craig Batty, 'Introduction', in Batty (ed.), *Screenwriters and Screenwriting: Putting Practice into Context* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p. 1; Ian W. MacDonald, *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013); Eva Novrup Redvall, *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark: From The Kingdom to The Killing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013).

9 MacDonald, *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea*, p. 9.

10 Peter Hutchings, 'By the book: American horror cinema and horror literature of the late 1960s and 1970s', in Richard Nowell (ed.), *Merchants of Menace: The Business of Horror Cinema* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. 54.

11 Steffen Hantke, 'The decline of the literary horror market in the 1990s and Dell's Abyss series', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2008), p. 57.

12 Ian Olney, 'Unmanning *The Exorcist*: sex, gender and excess in the 1970s Euro–possession film', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 31, no. 6 (2014), pp. 561–62.

13 Mark Kermode, *The Exorcist*, rev. edn (London: BFI, 2003), p. 9.

14 Qtd in Fitzjohn, '*The Haunting of Julia*', p. 51.

well written [… with] the air of a book waiting to be snapped up for the movies'.[15]

British film producer Peter Fetterman read *Julia* and paid approximately $500 for the film rights. He commissioned a first draft from Harry Bromley-Davenport, titled *The Link*, which remained close to the source material. Director Richard Loncraine was then brought on to the project, but he considered *Julia* 'a hack job' and 'wasn't so interested in the horror aspect'. He explained that the appeal to him was 'the chance to make a film in which there two parallel stories, capable of entirely different interpretations'. Dave Humphries was hired to rewrite *The Link* as *When the Wind Blows*, which he worked on with uncredited support from Andrew Birkin, completing a new draft by the end of September 1976.[16]

Julia begins with a small blonde girl, aged about nine, running along a Kensington street lined with townhouses. The girl disappears into Holland Park as Julia, a wealthy American heiress in her 30s, stands at the doorstep of no. 25. She is accompanied by a disdainful estate agent, about to give her the key to the property for the third time. Her inability to retain the previous two keys leads him, contemptuously, to tie the third key with a yellow ribbon to help her remember. But then Julia sees the girl running past and feels dizzy, followed by a 'sharp, familiar ache of loss, now so strong as to make her feel […] sick'. This is clearly not a traditional, happy transferral of home ownership, and the agent has had enough of his client, writing her off as 'precipitous and eccentric to the point of lunacy', while she herself is mentally absent. Julia then bolts, taking off after the girl into Holland Park, telling herself that 'the girl looked remarkably like Kate. Of course she could not be Kate. Kate was dead.'[17] This efficient opening scene encapsulates the novel's premise. It sets up the question that informs the first third of the text: does Kate's ghost exist, or is Julia imagining it? We meet Julia in action, upsetting the norms of expected social behaviour and pursuing (what she believes to be) the ghost of Kate, her dead daughter. In addition, through access to the agent's thoughts and witnessing his behaviour, we realize that the grieving Julia is not only eccentric but unreliable.

In the *When the Wind Blows* screenplay, the most obvious story transformation is the substantial re-ordering of events in the first act. This version of the screenplay offers a linear story, beginning with a scene over breakfast, during which Julia's daughter, Kate, dies. On page 2 there are three pages of revisions in pink, inserted on 26 October 1976, a few days before shooting began. There is now overt dialogue about money: Magnus complains about Kate's private school fees; Julia ignores him. Then, at the bottom of the second (pink) page, Kate chokes. Events escalate, and Julia prepares to perform a tracheotomy as Magnus calls an ambulance. A new revision on page 4 depicts Magnus opening the door as the ambulance arrives. Julia stands alone, in a trance, soaked in blood. The first scene is thus the traumatic event that sets the story in motion, while the second is set in a psychiatric unit. Time has passed,

15 Anthony Thwaite, 'We are not aroused', *Observer*, 29 February 1976, p. 27.

16 All production history taken from Fitzjohn, '*The Haunting of Julia*', p. 53.

17 Peter Straub, *Julia* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1975), pp. 2–3.

and Julia is deemed fit for release, yet she does not return to her husband. She takes the keys to her new house in Kensington and unpacks Kate's possessions in a nursery.

In the novel, Straub initially concentrates on the action in the moment to propel the reader from Julia seeing Kate and running after her into the park, but then he slowly and methodically reveals a nonlinear backstory, predominantly through Julia's thoughts and dreams and through the people around her. The screenplay, in contrast, is very literal in its causal and linear re-ordering of events. In fewer than ten pages, Julia has spent time in a psychiatric unit, absconded from her husband and moved into a creepy old house, where she enacts a game with her dead daughter's belongings. The screenwriter has taken the key plot elements that underpin the premise of the novel and created a linear list; so much happens, so quickly, that we have little time to breathe, take stock or begin to care. In addition, the proximity of such major events, one after the other, makes them feel melodramatic. By re-ordering the story, the novel's major plot mechanics are revealed for the audience to see.

In the novel, following our introduction to Julia, the third-person narrative then employs internal variable focalization, entering the heads of all the major characters: Julia, her husband Magnus, her sister-in-law Lily, her brother-in-law Mark. Yet the internal form of narration predominantly remains very close to Julia's point of view, and it is her descent into psychic dissolution that informs the story. By experiencing the present-day scenes just as Julia does, our own experience is shaped by her thoughts and words. At the same time, the tying of a yellow ribbon signals that memory will be a major preoccupation of the story. Julia's forgetful nature is stressed as indicative of her unreliability; she does not trust herself, so how can the reader trust her?

In the screenplay, after the initial flurry of action in the first ten pages, Julia then drifts through the first act – going for tea with Lily, walking through Holland Park, being locked out of her house. During this period the audience watches Julia, who is often alone and has very little to say, even when she is in company, but what she is thinking remains a mystery to us all. This has huge implications for the elicitation of sympathy, and thus intimacy. Julia is so shut down, so inaccessible to her audience, that although we may empathize with the terrible loss she has suffered, we cannot really summon up the inclination to feel sympathy for her in particular, or to care what happens next. If we cannot care about a character or feel tension when she is in jeopardy, it is almost impossible to create moments of genuine horror. To some degree this is reflected in the film's reception, with the *Evening Standard* commenting that 'what's lacking is a Polanski to make the journey obsessive and stifling. Too often the shock in *Full Circle* seems applied from the outside, rather than induced from within.'[18]

Eventually there comes a point when we need to know what Julia is thinking. The screenplay relies on dialogue to communicate this.

18 Felix Barker, '*Full Circle*', *Evening Standard*, 4 May 1978, BFI Special Collections #S14114.

On page 21 she has a major argument with Marcus, 'since my daughter died I'm seeing everything a lot more clearly than I've ever done … that includes you, and me, and our whole relationship since I married you Magnus … We got married for Kate, remember? When she died there was nothing left for me to pretend for.'[19] Jill Nelmes argues that screenwriting 'can be compared to poetry; it is a sparse, minimal form, where dialogue is kept to a minimum, where visual metaphors are often as important as dialogue in communicating an idea, where what is not said carries great emotional weight'.[20] These principles are not adhered to in the above exchange. Having been almost mute for most of the first act, Julia now articulates exactly what she is thinking and feeling; in addition, the purpose of the exchange is to explicate the backstory to Julia and Magnus's relationship. There is a lack of visual metaphor in this scene, and in much of the screenplay as a whole.

What is interesting from an archival perspective, however, is that this whole exchange is in the 'pinks' – the pages of first revisions. To explain further, it is worth noting a few things about the status of *When the Wind Blows*. Traditionally, screenplays 'have a language that suggests, but does not lay out, the actual shot structure of the film', while the shooting script functions as a basic blueprint for the screenwork.[21] Humphries's script is somewhere in-between the two. Dated 12 days before shooting began, it lacks the detailed camera directions and shot set-up one would expect from a shooting script, yet each scene is numbered, and pink pages are littered extensively throughout. The pinks are a clue to the status of this archival document. In filmmaking, 'printing shooting-script changes on multicoloured paper is a common practice', and these coloured-page changes are usually ordered in pink, then blue, then yellow.[22] As such, the screenplay held in the BFI archive is a locked script going into production, and already subject to further revisions. But at the same time, as noted above, it does not have the blueprint quality of a shooting script, which suggests that this is a very late, unstable version of *When the Wind Blows*, somewhere between screenplay and shooting script.

Given all this, we can perhaps extrapolate here that the writer has been directed to explicitly signpost character motivation and backstory, and perhaps to rewrite with a particular audience in mind that was not necessarily the filmmaking team. As actor Rebecca Hall explains, late-stage scripts are 'always overwritten prior to going into production because so much of it is being written for the financiers who can't understand subtext or subtleties or what visual references or keys there might be that are telling the story'.[23] This demonstrates that screenplay analysis is an important area of study that offers further opportunities to decentre the director as the primary author of meaning.

The problem with the archival holdings being so late stage is that much of the development work is lost to us. Script development, 'the process of moving a project from a creative genesis to an industrial activity; a complex and time-consuming, albeit essential, practice', is a

19 Dave Humphries, *When the Wind Blows*, unpublished draft screenplay (1976), p. 21, BFI Special Collections #S14114.

20 Jill Nelmes, 'Some thoughts on analysing the screenplay, the process of screenplay writing and the balance between craft and creativity', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2007), p. 108.

21 Ken Dancyger and Jeff Rush, *Alternative Scriptwriting: Beyond the Hollywood Formula* 5th edn (London: Focal Press, 2013), p. 279.

22 Laura Schellhardt, *Screenwriting for Dummies*, 2nd edn (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008), p. 274.

23 Qtd in Alison Peirse, 'How to write a horror film: *The Awakening* (2011) and development practices in the British film industry', *Film Studies*, vol. 14 (2016), p. 68.

crucial stage in screen production.[24] Within screenwriting studies, it is only recently that this specific stage of script development has been subject to any detailed study. As Stayci Taylor and Craig Batty put it, development is the 'hidden practice' of screenwriting.[25] While the study of screenwriting began to grow in the late 2000s, it took nearly a decade before script development was examined in any depth. The *Journal of Screenwriting* published its first special issue considering script development in 2017, and the first academic book dedicated to this area appeared in 2021.[26] In approach, the study of script development owes something to the literary studies model of genetic criticism, 'which, in addition to and sometimes in place of, the final published text, takes sketches, notes, drafts, letters and other preparatory documents as its objects of analysis'; this material is the '*avant-texte(s)*', specifically the 'sketches, manuscripts, proofs and "variants" – all of the material which precedes a work and which can form a single textual system with that work'.[27] The screenplay itself is particularly fascinating in this regard. Jamie Sherry argues that adaptation studies traditionally focus on 'unified' media, such as the source novel and the finished film, and in so doing fail to consider the adapted screenplay. For Sherry, the screenplay is a 'transitional, *in-between* stage', 'both understudied and potentially fruitful', that '*exists* in order to be interpreted and remediated', distinguishable from novels and short stories which merely have *potential* to adapted.[28]

Sherry's insistence on the screenplay as transitional, and his concept of the adapted screenplay as a 'interstitial text – a liminal entity […] between their source media and their destination form', is ideal for identifying potent links between the novel *Julia*, the archived screenplay *When the Wind Blows* and the completed horror film *Full Circle*.[29] This nevertheless remains problematic, due to the fact that late-stage scripts and therefore the evolution of the storytelling – from novel to screenplay to shooting script – are beset by absences and chasms in the archive, where one can only extrapolate on what the 'activity of writing' might have been, and analysis is restricted to the 'traces, signs or indices that we can pick up and interpret'.[30] Given this situation, all I can do is make apparent the absences in the archive, to gesture towards possible writer intention, the intended effect on the (presumed) audience, and the expansive opportunities of script development work beyond this specific case study.

Even with much of the development material lost to us, we can still find value in this analysis. In screenwriting studies, when horror does appear it tends to be in articles elucidating practical techniques for the aspiring screenwriter,[31] or the use of genre screenwriting as a pedagogical tool.[32] Studies of the poetics of horror tend to be rather light, methodologically speaking, with 'poetics' often simply presented as a word in the title, chosen to signify a desire to explore the audiovisual and the narrative components of a film, and the ways in which these two forms work together to create meaning. For example, in 'The poetics of

24 Craig Batty, et al, 'Script development as a "wicked problem"', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2018), p. 156.

25 Stayci Taylor and Craig Batty, 'Script development and the hidden practices of screenwriting: perspectives from industry professionals', *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2016), pp. 204–17.

26 Craig Batty, Stayci Taylor, Louise Sawtell and Bridget Conor, 'Script development: defining the field', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2017), pp. 225–47; Craig Batty and Stayci Taylor (eds), *Script Development: Critical Approaches, Creative Practices, International Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2021).

27 Oliver Davies, 'The author at work in genetic criticism', *Paragraph*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2002), p. 92.

28 Jamie Sherry, 'Adaptation studies through screenwriting studies: transitionality and the adapted screenplay', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2016), pp. 19–20 (emphasis in original).

29 Ibid., pp. 20–21.

30 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 28.

31 Shaun Kimber, 'Horror screenwriting: blending theory with practice', in Batty (ed.), *Screenwriters and Screenwriting*, pp. 46–65; Devin Watson, *Horror Screenwriting: The Nature of Fear* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2009); Marc Blake and Sara Bailey, *Writing the Horror Movie* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

32 Debbie Danielpour, 'Imitation and adaptation: a screenwriting pedagogy', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2012), pp.103–18.

horror: more than meets the eye', Dennis L. White argues that in a good horror film 'it is something within the identities of the pieces from which the film is constructed and within the nature of the ways in which they are combined'.[33] However, beyond a citation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, that is as far as this methodological approach goes.

More recently, in Christa van Raalte's nuanced study of the characters in Kathryn Bigelow's films, she argues that it is difficult to separate 'the characterisation of the protagonist (or antagonist) from the structural, technical and affective qualities of the film as a whole'.[34] The only time poetics is mentioned is in the essay title, and there is no explanation of what poetics is, or where it might have come from. Similarly, in 'Poetics of early Hammer horror films: a statistical style analysis', Jonathan Olliver makes a convincing case for exploring how 'institutional practices influenced the films' construction'.[35] He outlines the methodology for statistical style analysis, but poetics is only referenced in a signposting capacity, a reminder to the reader that this is a 'survey of poetics', or 'a synthesis of historical poetics and statistical style analysis'.[36] These essays are all accurate in their description of their research as poesis, but within them there is an implicit assumption that we know what a poetics of cinema is.

In her recent book on female directors of horror film, Patricia Pisters provides a more rigorous engagement with the poetic approach. She defines 'the poetics of horror' as 'form, aesthetics and meaning', later expanding on this as 'the aesthetic and affective qualities of the films' cinematography, *mise-en-scene* and other formal and stylistic elements, as well as the stories told and the contexts in which they are told'.[37] She outlines the history of this model through Bordwell, but then suggests the limitations of his approach in achieving a deeper understanding of horror film. Instead she chooses to pursue an 'affective poetics', which she defines as the 'affective qualities that the images express not only on a purely formal level but also in relation to the refracted historical realities embedded in both the film itself', to be read through 'the contemporary context in which its viewing is taking place'.[38]

Pisters's book offers a new approach to exploring the historical poetics of horror through its examination of screenwriting, and specifically script development. As such, it becomes one of the very few scholarly publications to genuinely bring horror film studies and screenwriting studies together, alongside Katarzyna Paszkiewicz's essay on screenwriter Karen Walton, Rosamund Davies's reading of *Don't Look Now* (Nicholas Roeg, 1973) as palimpsest, and my study of censorship in *Night of the Demon* (Jacques Tourneur, 1957).[39] Steven Price suggests that academic research and script development are 'inextricably entwined in engaging with a process that requires both an understanding of screenwriting practice and a historically informed understanding of the institutional and industrial contexts within which it is usually performed'.[40] Price's process and areas for analysis are also natural bedfellows with my historical poetics of the horror model, expanding the

33 Dennis L. White, 'The poetics of horror: more than meets the eye', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1971), p. 1.

34 Christa van Raalte, 'The poetics of obsession: understanding Kathryn Bigelow's characters', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2021), p. 257.

35 Jonathan Olliver, 'Poetics of early Hammer horror films: a statistical style analysis', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2015), p. 355.

36 Ibid., pp. 383, 381.

37 Patricia Pisters, *New Blood in Contemporary Cinema: Women Directors and the Poetics of Horror* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p. 11.

38 Ibid., p.14.

39 Katarzyna Paszkiewicz, 'Gender, genre and authorship in *Ginger Snaps*', in Alison Peirse (ed.), *Women Make Horror: Filmmaking, Feminism, Genre* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020), pp. 104–21; Rosamund Davies, '*Don't Look Now*: the screenwork as palimpsest', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2013), pp. 163–77; Alison Peirse, 'The script, the séance and the censor: writing *Night of the Demon*', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2018), pp. 73–94.

40 Steven Price, 'Script development and academic research', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2017), p. 320.

areas for analysis not just beyond the film itself to the screenplay, but beyond that to the varied and historically specific iterations of each version of that screenplay.

I now explore the impact that the script development of *When the Wind Blows* had upon the censorship and reception of *Full Circle*, and how we might contextualize this in terms of filmmaking trends in the 1970s and 1980s. Drawing upon Bordwell's 'analytical' poetics to read the release of information across the screenplay and film (bearing in mind that the story they tell is almost identical), I also gesture towards Bordwell's 'poetics of effect' through an examination of the film's critical reception. This, I believe, will help in our understanding of *Full Circle*'s fascinating failure.

We can begin to comprehend *Full Circle* more fully by examining the work of the British film censors during this period. Their comments, which are finely attuned to the British filmmaking culture, are a useful indicator of the cultural barometer at the time. After completing production in December 1976, *Full Circle* made its debut at Cannes in May 1977. It was then re-edited, and passed uncut with an AA certificate by the BBFC in August 1977. The BBFC reports on the edited film are, at this point, positive. Tony Kerpel describes how 'a sense of déjà vu pervades this film – reincarnation, the lasting spirit of evil, prophecies of death – but it is intelligently made'. He then provides a clear plot summary (no mean undertaking given the film's multiple dead children with their own storylines), surmising that 'the film is very slow in its build and never hysterical in order to achieve effect'.[41] Rosemary Stark produces a synthesised, stylish synopsis, concluding that the horror is 'carefully muted', that the film's theme is 'internal horror', that the film is handled with 'considerable restraint', its 'horror implicit rather than gorily depicted', and that the effects are 'no more horrifying to teenager than to adults'.[42] Kerpel and Stark both certify it as an 'AA', Kerpel commenting there is 'nothing which really disqualifies the film for over 14s'.

The film nevertheless then took a full year to secure theatrical exhibition in the UK, and was consequently recut and reviewed by the BBFC again in April 1978. This time an anonymous BBFC reviewer writes that *Full Circle* is 'a relatively articulate variation on an overused theme […] with indifferent box office chances', noting that it was made two years before (and thus that the moment for its popularity had potentially passed), and rather damningly predicts that 'a combination of title, a probably unwanted AA certificate, its distributors apparent lack of enthusiasm to release the film and its generally undramatic treatment will probably ensure it achieves little commercially'.[43] It received a theatrical release in UK in May 1978, whereupon the long break between production and UK theatrical exhibition was noted negatively by the press. John Coleman for the *New Statesman* pointed out that 'it is bad

41 Tony Kerpel, 'Readers report: *Full Circle*', 5 September 1977, BBFC *Full Circle* Collection.

42 Rosemary Stark, 'Readers report: *Full Circle*', 5 September 1977, BBFC *Full Circle* Collection.

43 Anonymous, 'Renter: *Full Circle*', 18 April 1978, BBFC *Full Circle* Collection.

luck it has hung fire for so long, because meanwhile we have had such spin-offs from *The Exorcist* as the Franco-Canadian rubbish *Cathy's Curse* and that Robert Wise concoction, *Audrey Rose*', musing that 'the cycle is surely punctured beyond redemption now'.[44]

Coleman's point about cycles is perceptive. As Hutchings explains, while 'genre' definitions can obscure localized specifics, film cycles 'usually have a historical specificity to them. They exist in relation to particular times and particular places and they offer an intermediate stage between the uniqueness of individual films and the formulaic nature of generic production.'[45] As noted earlier, at the time of writing *Julia*, Straub was responding to a fully established demonic-child cycle in horror fiction. In this sense *Julia* was on time; *Full Circle*, however, was too late. The reviews for *Full Circle* are full of references that look backwards into horror film history, but it is not a history of Hammer; it is not the history you might expect, should you read David Pirie or Barry Forshaw's books on British Gothic cinema. Instead, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* suggests that while *Full Circle* emulates the tone of *Don't Look Now*, it 'succeeds in getting almost everything wrong'.[46] The *Sunday Times*, *Financial Times*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Evening Standard* all indicate that *Full Circle* is haunted by *Rosemary's Baby*.[47] Nicholas Wapshott for *The Times* notes that in 1968, Farrow's success 'set in motion a succession of sequels about demonic children which have ranged from the sublime (*Don't Look Now*) to the very weak (*Audrey Rose*)'.[48] This comment speaks to Hutchings's position that critical attitudes are 'defined and redefined in relation to trends in film production', while at the same time filmmakers respond 'to these attitudes, sometimes reacting against them'.[49] Wapshott then goes on to register the irony of *Full Circle*'s title, a decade after *Rosemary's Baby*, in this context. This position is confirmed in the *Scotsman*'s review, which suggests that Loncraine now joins 'the line of those who have taken on the demonic children cycle and been beaten'.[50] This sense of a culmination to a specific cycle of films in regard to the film's UK reception can be further contextualized in relation to anglophone horror filmmaking in the 1970s, which underwent 'a shift in focus to exploitative, violent gore and the eroticisation of the hideous body'.[51] Or, as the *Guardian* put it, in its review of *Full Circle*, '*Carrie* it isn't'.[52]

In addition, throughout this decade the whole British film industry was suffering. As Johnny Walker explains, 'the gradual withdrawal of American funding from much British film production in the 1970s made it increasingly difficult for producers to commission British films', while Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley confirm that the low-budget possibilities of horror meant the genre 'suffered less than others', but by the end of the 1970s, 'even the most modest of productions were finding it impossible to recoup their costs in their home market, as more cinemas closed and audiences dwindled'.[53] Unsurprisingly, therefore, *Full Circle*'s UK box office was poor. The film's producer Fetterman then had extensive difficulties obtaining international distribution, explaining

44 John Coleman, '*Full Circle*', *New Statesman*, 5 May 1978, BFI Special Collections #S14114.

45 Peter Hutchings, *The Horror Film* (Harlow: Longman, 2004), pp. 15–16.

46 JPym, '*Full Circle*', p. 89.

47 Alan Brien, '*Full Circle*', *Sunday Times*, 7 May 1978, BFI Special Collections #S14114; Nigel Andrews, '*Full Circle*', *Financial Times*, 5 May 1978, BFI Special Collections #S14114; Tom Hutchinson '*Full Circle*', *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 May 1978, BFI Special Collections #S14114; Barker, '*Full Circle*'.

48 Nicholas Wapshott, 'The arts', *The Times*, 5 May 1978, p. 13.

49 Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond*, p. 4.

50 Anon, '*Full Circle*', *The Scotsman*, 13 May 1978, BFI Special Collections #S14114.

51 Peri Bradley, 'Hideous sexy: the eroticised body and deformity in 1970s British horror films', in Paul Newland (ed.), *Don't Look Now: British Cinema in the 1970s* (Bristol: Intellect, 2010), p. 128.

52 Derek Malcolm, 'The thriller finds a German friend', *Guardian*, 4 May 1978, p. 10.

53 Johnny Walker, *Contemporary British Horror Cinema: Industry, Genre and Society* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p. 112; Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley, 'The return of the repressed? British horror's heritage and future', in Chibnall and Petley (eds.), *British Horror Cinema* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 6.

that he 'kept being told it was too subtle for audiences, that it wasn't gory enough, or that it was too slow'.[54]

Nonetheless, the reason why Fetterman had such problems with distribution cannot be attributed solely to the timing of the release (although this certainly is one factor). Horror is a genre predicated upon repetition and audience recognition, and it seems likely that a coherent ghost story might still have stood a chance of success. Straub's novel *Julia* has a three-part structure, equivalent to the traditional three acts of a screenplay. Each part of the novel is framed by a question to which Julia is determined to find the answer, and each answer leads to the next question. In the novel's first part, 'The Haunting: Julia', Julia is living alone after the tragic death of her daughter, Kate. She has moved into a Kensington townhouse to start a new life, but soon discovers the house to be haunted. She wants to find out who is haunting her, hoping it is Kate, but realizes instead that it is a nine-year-old blonde girl, Olivia Rudge, who was killed by her mother, Heather. This answers the novel's first question: *why* is Julia's house haunted? In contrast, in act one of the screenplay (and later the film), Julia attempts to perform a tracheotomy on her choking daughter, and in the process kills her. She is sent to a psychiatric institution, and upon her release she leaves her husband and moves out of the family home. In her new townhouse she holds a seance, at which the psychic announces she can see a child. Julia believes it to be Kate.

In part two of the novel, 'The Search: Heather', Julia visits Mrs Braden, who reveals that her then four-year-old son Geoffrey was tortured and murdered by Olivia. Next Julia visits Heather in a psychiatric institution, and Heather explains that she killed Olivia because she was evil. This answers the novel's second question: *why* was Olivia murdered? This revelation comes at the midpoint of the novel. However, the second act of the screenplay and film is a series of meandering, seemingly unconnected events: Julia finds out from a neighbour that Olivia died in the house after choking to death; she then discovers Geoffrey Braden was murdered in the neighbouring park; a new character, David Swift, confirms that Olivia was killed by her mother, and shortly after Julia has left his flat he is pushed down a set of stairs and dies; Julia's friend Mark is then killed in the bath.[55] The most random event is Magnus's death. He too dies when someone pushes him down the stairs, but these are the cellar stairs at Julia's house. Magnus was originally meant to survive, and this scene was only shot and edited into the film following *Full Circle*'s premiere at Cannes. Due to the scene's late addition, Magnus's disappearance and death are not remarked upon, neither do they affect any of the remaining characters. By the end of the second act, Julia realizes that she is haunted not by Kate or Geoffrey, but by Olivia; both screenplay and film here answer the question of *why* the house is haunted – the question resolved in the opening section of the novel.

54 Quoted in Fitzjohn, '*The Haunting of Julia*', p. 51.

55 In the novel, Mark is Julia's brother-in-law; in the screenplay he is 'a young antique dealer who befriends her'. Humphries, *When the Wind Blows*, p. 37.

At this point in the screenplay and film, we do not know who murdered Magnus, David and Mark, nor why they did so. The texts gesture towards Olivia as the perpetrator, but we are unsure why, or to what end. In any case, the deaths of these men have little to no effect on Julia. She does not notice when her husband disappears a third of the way into the film, despite being the major (living) antagonist, nor does she seemed perturbed when Mark fails to show up for a designated trip to Swansea. The random, non-causal, ineffective deaths of a number of characters in the film was commented on by *Film Reviews*, which notes the lack of impact the multiple murders have on Julia, and declares that 'this kind of arbitrary twist is not a means of compelling suspense; it is an artificial outlet from a sloppy plot'.[56] In the *Financial Times*, Nigel Andrews similarly argues that 'characters are murdered with wondrous casualness and just as wondrously forgotten about'.[57]

In part three of the novel, 'The Closing: Olivia', the haunting has still not stopped. Julia asks her final question: why is she, specifically, being haunted? Poring over old issues of *Tatler* in the British Library, she discovers the truth in a society photograph: she recognizes her Kensington house; she recognizes Heather; she recognizes her estranged husband Magnus, then much younger, posing with Heather; she finds her answer. '"Because", she thought, "Magnus is Olivia's father. Because both of his children were stabbed to death. Because Olivia wants revenge".'[58] There is a very important, and absent thought here, one of which the reader (though not Julia) is painfully aware. At the end of the line 'stabbed to death', what appears to be missing is the final part of the statement – 'by their mothers'. But this is a thought Julia cannot yet bring herself to accept. Thus the plot of the novel is organized around Julia's fact-finding missions and the ensuing revelation that Olivia is haunting Julia as a form of revenge: revenge for Julia living in Olivia's house; for Julia marrying Olivia's father; for the death of Kate, Olivia's stepsister, who died in the same way as Olivia. This creates a terrible, deadly pattern of repetition and return for Magnus's daughters and their mothers. It brings Julia, eventually, to her final, and most important revelation: that she herself killed her daughter Kate. The novel concludes with Julia submitting willingly to her own murder, her throat slit by Olivia.

In the final act of the screenplay and film, the major revelation is Heather's announcement that she killed Olivia because her daughter was evil. This provides the answer to the question of *why* Olivia was murdered – a question answered at the midpoint of the novel. The film concludes with Julia sitting in her sitting room, her throat slit. The perpetrator and motivation remain murky: did Olivia do it? Did Julia kill herself? Does Olivia even exist? In addition, the novel's third question – *why* is Julia being haunted? – is never addressed. The plotline revealing Magnus as Olivia's father is never introduced. This was picked up in the UK reception, with Coleman commenting that the film is 'peculiarly irritating', that Olivia and Kate's connection is 'never established', that

56 J. Paul Costabile, 'Richard Loncraine's *Full Circle*', *Film Reviews*, June 1978, pp. 40–41.

57 Andrews, '*Full Circle*'.

58 Straub, *Julia*, p. 241.

'read it how you will, it refuses to add up'.[59] Similarly, the *Daily Telegraph* proclaims the film 'fatally lacking' in 'necessary narrative drive' and the *Monthly Film Bulletin* dismisses the plot as 'circumstantial' and contrived', while the *Guardian* comments that the 'screenplay is clearly deficient'.[60]

In the novel, Julia goes on a quest to discover the truth about events that happened at her house in the past, but her quest is not ours; it is a mere distraction of her own making. Ultimately the story is about her (re)discovery that she killed her daughter. As readers we would have learned this fact early on, in the second chapter of the book. Magnus's sister Lily remembers what happened: Kate choked; while waiting for the ambulance Julia performed an unsuccessful emergency tracheotomy; Kate bled to death. Julia's culpability is something she is unable to accept, and throughout the novel she regularly (mis)remembers Magnus as the murderer.[61] The novel presents Julia as detective, making often erroneous deductions until she finally returns to her first and only real enigma, experiencing as a revelation the truth that is new to her alone, not to the reader. The novel is thus a tragedy masquerading as a story of detection, and at her moment of realization of the truth she has unwittingly sought for the entire novel, Julia dies. The most we can say about the connection between the screenplay and the film is that a grieving mother lives in a haunted house and tries to connect with an evil child ghost. The screenplay and film begin with Julia killing Kate, and throughout the adapted texts she remains aware of what she did. Indeed, soon after moving into the house she stands in her bathroom and whispers, 'Baby, forgive me'. Julia's awareness of her own guilt at Kate's death is never in any doubt, and thus the enigma at the heart of the novel is ripped out in the screenplay in the film's opening moments. The result is a protagonist without a purpose.

Full Circle was eventually picked up by US distributor Discovery Films, and debuted in the USA in May 1981 under the new title *The Haunting of Julia*. As well as a name change, the film had a new look. The five-year delay between production and US exhibition, coupled with poor storage conditions, had a negative effect on the film stock. The film now had a distinctly brown hue, the colour palette that so intrigued me when I first watched the film on YouTube. This colouration may have been accidental, but it was still considered positively by the American critics: Judith Martin of the *Washington Post* commented that it is 'filmed in velvety browns', while Janet Maslin in the *New York Times* argued that the brown colouring gives 'the film its only touch of novelty'.[62] The discolouration of the film stock was not the only problem. If *Full Circle* was out of step with British horror filmmaking in 1978, it was even more at odds with American filmmaking culture in the 1980s. Five months after *Full Circle* debuted in the UK, *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978) was released worldwide. *Halloween* was produced for $320,000 and grossed over $50 million at the US box office.[63] Independent filmmakers Sean S. Cunningham and Victor Miller

59 Coleman, '*Full Circle*'.

60 Brien, '*Full Circle*'; Patrick Gibbs, '*Full Circle*', *Daily Telegraph*, 5 May 1978, BFI Special Collections #S14114; Pym, '*Full Circle*', p. 89; Thirkwell, '*Full Circle*'; Malcolm, 'The thriller finds a German friend', p. 10.

61 Straub, *Julia*, p. 83.

62 Judith Martin, 'The fizzling of *The Haunting of Julia*', *Washington Post*, 6 February 1981, p. 17; Janet Maslin, 'Film: *Haunting of Julia* frazzles Mia Farrow', *New York Times*, 29 May 1981, p. 8.

63 Adam Rockoff, *Going to Pieces: The Rise and the Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978–1986* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), p. 50.

noted *Halloween*'s success and created *Friday the 13th* (1980), which was subject to a three-way bidding war between MGM, Warner Brothers and Paramount, and became a 'blockbuster hit'.[64] A new, youth-oriented cycle was born – and without a demonic child in sight.

Full Circle was thus released in North America during the apex of the slasher cycle, when 'ten of the films opened between May 1980 and August 1981, a remarkable ratio of a new teen slasher every six weeks'.[65] It necessarily competed for audiences in an over-saturated market flooded with *Halloween* copycats, such as *Prom Night* (Paul Lynch, 1980) and *My Bloody Valentine* (George Mikhalka, 1981). The final death knell for *Full Circle* in terms of box-office success came when it was roundly derided by most American critics; the same narrative issues as were highlighted in the UK press came up time and again. Maslin for the *New York Times* commented that it 'manages to draw on every horror movie cliché available and still make very little sense'.[66] Michael Blowen of the *Boston Globe* argued that *The Haunting of Julia* 'collapses under the weight of its heavy-handed plot' and Martin for the *Washington Post* complained that there are 'no end of superficial connections' with 'clumsy coincidences'.[67] *Full Circle* made little-to-no impact at the North American box office.

I have used the archive to trace a story beyond screenplay itself, a story that encompasses censorship and critical reception. Yet, while this is an analysis of what happened after the film was made, rather than an analysis of the decisions made about the film adaptation, it is in fact the same story retold: a narrative that is 'clumsy', cliched, contrived. This uncanny repetition of derision demonstrates just how important form and meaning are as they arise and develop across multiple draft screenplays; and thus the importance of studying script development to reach a better understanding of a film and its reception.

Thus far I have focused on the way that stories are told. I have considered how the shift through different media, from novel to screenplay to film, is affected by production context and censorship as well as exhibition and distribution. This, however, is only part of the story. In the original ending to this essay, drafted in 2021, I noted that *Full Circle* was not available on home release, and quoted freelance film writer Simon Fitzjohn, who explained that while Technicolor owned the negative they would not 'authorise a re-release unless a chain of ownership is provided'; the problem being that 'many of the original investors have sadly passed away and the production companies have been liquidated'. As it stands, Fitzjohn cannot 'prove who currently owns the film' and thus *Full Circle* remains without a release,[68] on which sombre note my essay ended. However, in April 2023 BFI Flipside released a 4K restoration, scanned from the 35mm original camera negative, with the combined UK and US release title *Full Circle: The Haunting of Julia*. The brown wash of deteriorated

64 Richard Nowell, '"The ambitions of most independent filmmakers": indie production, the majors and *Friday the 13th*', *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 63, no. 2 (2011), p. 38.

65 Richard Nowell, *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 16.

66 Maslin, 'Film', p. 8.

67 Michael Blowen, 'A haunting performance by Mia Farrow', *Boston Globe*, 2 October 1981, p. 42; Martin, 'The fizzling of *The Haunting of Julia*', p. 17.

68 Simon Fitzjohn, personal email to author, 20 October 2021.

film stock had been removed, the film grain was once more apparent, the colours were sharp, the scenes clarified. Many of the audiovisual questions raised in my initial viewing of the pirated television screening on YouTube, over a decade earlier, had been resolved. The BFI Ultra HD and DVD release, with accompanying audio commentary, audiovisual supplements, and an illustrated booklet of essays, statements and interviews, ensure that the film will now become a widely known contribution to British horror film history, rather than a great 'lost' film.

My decision to note this shift in film distribution, and in my thinking around the film, is inspired by Thomas Elsaesser's 1986 review-essay on 'The new film history' in *Sight and Sound*. In this he suggests that 'what is missing' from the then-contemporaneous studies of film history is 'a more direct awareness of the historical changes underlying their own perspective', that is, 'how we come to view' film's history.[69] As film analysts we are simultaneously enabled and constrained by the prevalent discourses circulating during the period in which we write. This suggests a need for reflexivity in our theorizing; as Kuhn notes, we must remain sensitive to the need to adapt and shift, as our thinking and disciplinary boundaries change. In this sense, my essay can be read as a historical poetics of genre scholarship, recognizing how our film histories shift and change over time, and that our thinking can never remain static. Or, as Bordwell proposes, the 'imaginative inquiry of any sort, poetics-based or not, that is grounded in argument and evidence remains our best route to understanding cinema, its makers and viewers, and its place in our lives'.[70]

At the same time, some things do not change. While the quality of the restoration improves the audiovisual experience, the problems arising from decisions made during the development of the script remain the same. At the restoration screening at the BFI Southbank in May 2023, director Loncraine revealed that 'it's nearly a good movie, but I don't think it's quite a good movie'. He praised the cinematography, the score, the lighting and the production design, but confessed 'a year after I directed this movie I didn't understand it', due to the 'flaws in the directing and perhaps in the script'. He then fielded audience questions about 'what happened to Magnus?', confessing that they reshot and re-edited after Cannes, and the story is 'full of holes'.[71] Loncraine's confession demonstrates that no amount of digital restoration, even four decades after release, can alter the story. The film – still – does not work.

As I finish this essay, screenwriting studies is in its ascendancy. The *Journal of Screenwriting* has released its 14th volume, while studies of screenwriting and screenplays are regularly published in an array of interdisciplinary journals, including *Theory, Culture and Society*, *Black Camera*, *Feminist Media Histories*, *Narrative Culture* and *Bioscope: South Asian Studies*.[72] Palgrave has now published over 25 books on screenwriting and/or screen production studies, with the 1000-plus-page *Palgrave Handbook of Screenwriting Studies*

69 Elsaesser, 'The new film history', p. 251.

70 Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, p. 4.

71 Vic Pratt, '*Full Circle: The Haunting of Julia* – BFI Q&A with Richard Loncraine and Simon Fitzjohn', BFI Southbank NT1, 3 May 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ApGdMYFbZQ&ab_channel=BFI> accessed 30 December 2023.

72 Liz Clarke, '"No accident of good fortune": autobiographies and personal memoirs as historical documents in screenwriting history', *Feminist Media Histories*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2016), pp. 45–60; James Naremore, 'Two screenplays by Charles Burnett: *Bless their Little Hearts* (1984) and *Man in a Basket* (2003)', *Black Camera*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2017), pp. 7–24; Rakesh Sengupta, 'Towards a decolonial media archaeology: the absent archive of screenwriting history and the obsolete *Munshi*', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2021), pp. 3–26; Rakesh Sengupta, 'Writing from the margins of media: screenwriting practice and discourse during the first Indian talkies', *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2018), pp. 117–36, Ida Yoshinaga, 'Disney's *Moana*, the colonial screenplay, and indigenous labour extraction in Hollywood fantasy films', *Narrative Culture*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2019), pp. 188–215.

the most recent.[73] This essay is in conversation with these exciting, fast-paced developments in the field, but at the same time it is also conversing with film studies more generally, and *Screen* in particular. It promotes a genre-specific model of historical poetics with a purpose: the removal of screenwriting studies from the margins of academia, and its repositioning as a storytelling methodology that is essential to deepening our understanding of film history.

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73 Rosamund Davies, Paolo Russo and Claus Tieber (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Screenwriting Studies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).