

Author Biographies

Heather Blakey is a PhD candidate in Literary Studies at the University of Western Australia. Her research focuses on affect and aesthetics in video games and literature of the digital age, with a special interest in the work of Supergiant Games. Heather previously worked as a communications advisor in the publishing industry and has worked for academic and commercial brands in Australia and the UK. Her writing has been published by M/C Journal, ArtsHub Australia, Australian Book Review and Westerly. Heather co-hosts the game studies podcast Meaningful Play with Dr Sian Tomkinson.

Lindsay Demarchi is an astrophysicist and long-time collector of the fantastical and unsettling. At her day job, she studies core-collapse supernovae and the mechanisms of stellar deaths. To this end she has been branded a "Stellar Mortician." Her obsessions include gravity, cats, and accounts of the afterlife.

Vik Gill is a PhD student in the School of Communication at Falmouth University where she is working on a feminist supernatural Cornish Gothic novel within the Dark Economies research programme. Key themes of her research include vengeful ghosts, feminist vigilantes, and Cornwall as a site for crime fiction. Other research interests include representations of older women's selfhood, sexuality, and spirituality in transgressive, crime, and gothic fiction.

Jeff Howard is Associate Professor of Games and Occulture at Falmouth University in Cornwall. He is the author of two monographs: *Quests: Design, Theory, and History in Games and Narratives* (now in its second edition) and *Game Magic: A Designer's Guide to Magic Systems in Theory and Practice*. He translates theory into practice as a core team member of Apocalypse Studios, where he consults on worldbuilding and systems design. He is also the creator of "Howard's Law of Occult Design," published in *100 Principles of Game Design*. Howard has presented on games and the occult at a variety of international conferences, including Berlin Occulture, Trans-States, and ESSWE9. In addition, he has been an invited speaker at Viktor Wynd's Last Tuesday Society, where he has spoken about folk magic and folk games. With Steve Patterson, he is the winner of the RENSEP (Research Network for the Study of Esoteric Practice) award for best Tandem Analysis Paper for "To Reveal the Hidden Kingdom of Eld: Andrew Chumbley, the Cultus Sabbati, and Imaginal Space in Cornwall." Howard studies Sabbatic Craft at the intersection of the Left Hand Path and the Typhonian current. Through his

scholarship and creative practice, Howard is an ambassador for the power of play as a transformative and transcendent practice.

Rose Johnson is a PhD candidate at Falmouth University with a research focus on witches, identity, and internet cultures. She received her Master's and Bachelor's degree, both in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, from the University at Albany. She is an instructional designer at Antioch University.

Joshua Madara is an occult technologist and techno-occultist in Seattle, Washington. For more than ten years he has given lectures, taught classes, written articles, and exhibited artifacts about the *coniunctio* of cybernetics and sorcery, including *Technomancy 101: Advanced Cybermagic for Beginners*. He is currently working on a book of robomancy.

Jeff Martin is a research social scientist with the USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Research Station. They are a settler scholar originally from San Francisco, California, and hold a PhD in Geography from the University of California, Berkeley. Previous publications concern environmental governance and conservation in working landscapes – including struggles over land use and wildlife conservation – as well as themes of critical worldbuilding.

Marie-Luise Meier (marie-luise.meier@ut.ee) is a lecturer and PhD student at the University of Tartu. Her research as a game scholar combines literary and media research. Her PhD project aims to create a holistic methodology for analyzing gender in video games, taking into account the unique features of games. In addition to gender, film, and game theory, her research focuses on transmedia, dystopian and speculative fiction, transhumanism and fantasy theory from the 20th and 21st century.

Matteo Polato is a researcher, curator and sound artist. He is currently PhD candidate at Manchester Metropolitan University, researching on the roles of sound, vibration and resonance-based processes in contemporary occultural discourse on paranormal experiences. His artistic practice spans from music – electroacoustic composition, free improvisation and psychedelic rock – and experimental videogame development (with the project Yami Kurae). Recently, he co-founded the DVARK – Dark Arts Research Collective, a research group of academics and artists based at MMU School of Art which

explore the creative, communal and boundary-breaking potential of occultural practices.

Simon Poole is the Course Leader for [MA Music Management](#) at London College of Communication. Simon is a writer, broadcaster, event organiser, musician and academic. His first experience of the music business was working in a record shop as a teenager. A life long love of vinyl and our individual and social engagement with the cultures of music ensued, culminating with a PhD in record collecting from Brunel University. His work focuses on our engagement with musical objects as genre communities and subcultures, and the journey to make a sustainable and equitable music business. Alongside this, he has written for magazines, run record labels, organised events and produced merchandise.

Simon is also a musician and has toured across Europe, America, Australia and Japan performing at festivals such as Dark MoFo, Psycho Las Vegas and Roskilde. He has released music on independent and major record labels and recorded sessions for the BBC on Radio One and Six Music. His most recent album was released in December 2024 on Universal. Previously Simon was a senior lecturer in the Music department at Falmouth university and course leader for MA Music Business. He has also run undergraduate and postgraduate Music Management and industry programmes at other U.K. universities.

Tim Rideout hold a PhD in English Literature from the University of Lincoln. His research interests lie in engaging with the Gothic literary mode as a political form, exploring the ways in which the Gothic decodes contemporaneous fears and anxieties. He is the author of *Gothic Precarity: Fear and Anxiety in Twenty-First-Century Fiction*, due to be published by the University of Wales Press in September.

Mikael Sebag is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Informatics at the University of California, Irvine.

Vik J. Squires (they/them) is a musicology PhD candidate at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne. Their PhD thesis is centred on Australian, gender-diverse, metal musicians and their negotiations within a masculinist environment. As well as focusing on metal music studies, Squires also researches autistic autoethnography and queer music history.

Aoife Sutton-Butler is a doctoral researcher (NECAH funded) in the School of Archaeological and Forensic Sciences at the University of Bradford and a Freer Fellow at the Royal Institution, London. Her research focuses on the ethics, display and conservation of fluid preserved human remains (anatomical specimens) dating to the 18th and 19th centuries in Britain. Her research interests include bodily preservation, history of medicine, archaeological human remains, embalming, mortuary practices, death archaeology and bereavement. She runs a website/blog entitled 'The Pathological Bodies Project', where she regularly contribute posts on topics such as the archaeology of epidemics, post mortem bodily integrity, and the archaeology of embalming. She is also a trustee of the Undercliffe Cemetery Charity, Bradford.

Ande Thomas is the Director of Content at *What Sleeps Beneath*, an online publication dedicated to exploring the horror genre as a vehicle for cultural reflection. He is an independent member of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies and a supporting member of the Horror Writers Association. He focuses on the intersection of sci-fi and horror, where our understanding of the natural world clashes with our fear of the new and unknown.

Malte Wendt (malte-wendt@gmx.de) is currently an independent scholar, who previously taught at the University of Liverpool. His research interests center on the intersection between cultural studies and game studies, with a particular focus on North American Studies, postcolonial theory, and ludology.