

Friday 22 March 2024, 3-5pm (Paris time)

***Hollywood in the Pacific?: North American Productions in Aotearoa New Zealand During the COVID-19 Pandemic***

**Sophie V. Gilmore, Harvard University**

Aotearoa New Zealand's regimented and effective public-health response to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in low infection rates and a very fast return to a normal state of affairs relative to most other countries. One outcome of this extensive governmental management of COVID-19 was that for a period of several months New Zealand became one of the only locations in the world where film and television productions could be safely and legally undertaken. This resulted in an influx of international film productions in the country, and an output of films that are compelling artefacts of an unprecedented production milieu.

Alongside the safety and freedom of activity that Aotearoa offered productions in comparison to other territories in the wake of the pandemic, the country hosted international productions for three key reasons: 1) It's remarkable and expansive natural landscape, which has been transfigured into various imaginative settings, especially in the Te Waipounamu region (South Island) 2) Economic motivations in terms of a strong rate-of-exchange between the American Dollar and local currency, as well as a generous tax-incentive scheme for productions and 3) the availability of technologically cutting-edge infrastructures for production and post-production, including special-effects facilities. Interestingly, most international productions both before and after the pandemic have been of North American origin or a direct product of the Hollywood industrial system, and non-Anglophone productions have been scarcely represented.

In my paper I evaluate whether the flood of North American film productions in New Zealand during the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic can be viewed as a meaningful instance of transculturation in film production, questioning whether these productions and their resulting filmic texts can be viewed according to the conception of transculturation as a process of cultural "give and take." Film production in New Zealand offers a uniquely complex and engaging case-study for transcultural production studies because the country is itself innately bicultural. It is a Post-Colonial nation featuring dynamically and often uneasily intertwined cultural threads from indigenous Maori and European-derived custom. Thus, one of the main questions that emerges from a consideration of North American productions in New Zealand is how bicultural identity can be brought to bear on this exchange. One possibility I will explore in my paper is the concept of *utu*, a lived understanding of reciprocity (pertaining to hospitality and economy) which is a core ethos in Maori *tikanga* (custom) and occupies an important position in the broader national identity. In my paper, I question whether post-pandemic-era North American productions in Aotearoa can be seen as honoring the principles of reciprocity inherent in *utu*, or whether these productions can be more simply held as further instantiations of imperialism in an economic and cultural sense.

**References**

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Johnson-Yale, Camille. *A History of Hollywood's Outsourcing Debate: Runaway Production*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017.

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### **Academic biography**

Sophie V. Gilmore is a PhD candidate in Film and Visual Studies at Harvard University. Her dissertation focuses on algorithmic technologies in contemporary film, with an emphasis on Hollywood-New Zealand co-productions. Other research and teaching interests include New Media and Postcolonial Cinemas. She holds an MA in Art History from the University of Otago, New Zealand. She recently published a piece on the history of digital motion-capture in *Senses of Cinema*.

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## **CinEcoSA Digital Seminar Series Transcultural Production Studies SEASON 3 2023-2024**

### **17 November 2023, 3-5pm**

*South Africa's Post-Apartheid Co-productions: Current debates regarding the role of production environments for multicultural exchanges, skills development, and knowledge transfer*

Natalie KOWALIK (University of Antwerp, Belgium) and Philippe MEERS (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

Discussants: Ana Vinuela (Sorbonne Nouvelle / IRCAV) and Joël Augros (Sorbonne Nouvelle / IRCAV)

### **8 December 2023, 3-5pm**

*Spatialités multiples et régime de production des Afronovelas en Afrique de l'Ouest francophone : pour une approche sociospatiale*

Séverine MARGUIN (Technische Universität Berlin, Germany) and Daddy DIBINGA (Technische Universität Berlin, Germany)

Discussants: Patricia Caillé (Université de Strasbourg / LinCS) and Christel Taillibert (Université Côte d'Azur / LIRCES)

### **19 January 2024, 3-5pm**

*The Commitments (1991): Hollywood, Anglo-Irish relations, and the micropolitics of film production in pre-Celtic Tiger Ireland*

Nessa JOHNSTON (University of Liverpool, UK)

Discussant: Cecilia Tirtaine (Nantes Université / CRINI)

### **9 February 2024, 3-5pm**

*Les chefs opérateurs qui venaient du sud : Marius Raichi et Charlie Bauer dans l'industrie cinématographique finlandaise (1937-1940)*

Aymeric PANTET (University of Turku, Finland)

Discussant: Bérénice Bonhomme (Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurès/IUF, LARA-SEPPIA)

### **22 March 2024, 3-5pm**

*Hollywood in the Pacific?: North American Productions in Aotearoa New Zealand During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Sophie GILMORE (Harvard University, US)

Discussants: Katalin Pór (Université Paris 8/IUF, ESTCA)

**5 April 2024, 12-2pm**

*'Runaway' Foreign Film Productions from a Global South Perspective*

Wikanda PROMKHUNTONG (Mahidol University, Thailand)

Discussant: Nolwenn Mingant (Université d'Angers / 3LAM)

This seminar is held online – please register here for the Zoom link:

<https://forms.gle/LQAKKsN9DY3Ni2UQ6>