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Ordinary pain.

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Research Statement – Ordinary Pain

1. Description of the Work

The creative work - an hour-long television pilot "dramedy" screenplay entitled *Ordinary Pain* – follows on from a Q1 traditional research publication by the author published in *Journal of Screenwriting* in 2016 entitled 'Writing characters with intersex variations for television' and thus is "artistic proof" that scripts with intersex characters must develop those characters and narrative arcs in league with the intersex community in order to rupture stigma and pre-inscription, defy current medical interference and promote ethical debates. As such, the creative work repositions characters with an intersex variation as 'an everyday social type'. Throughout history, people with intersex variations have been positioned somewhere between fetishism, voyeurism, pornography, mythology and medical discourse. Contemporary representations have changed in step with societal values, yet it could be argued there is still slippage towards sensationalism. The research posits that television screenwriters must go beyond limiting, stereotypical representations.

2. Statement of the Research Component

2.1 Research Background

The research seeks to answer the question whether the intersex voice can be authentically captured via innovative screenwriting processes. Previously, the writing of sensational and unsubtle intersex characters and narrative arcs are arguably the by-product of the cultural-industrial mechanisms of television production. Aside from tight financial and time constraints, groups of writers working on television series (the "writers' room") are subject to interpersonal dynamics and 'complex control over decision making' (Macdonald 2013: 73). Even writing groups with a diverse membership often develop characters of gender, race, class, and cultural difference that 'mimic the dominant group because there is little acceptance of actual difference' (Henderson 2011: 152). Under such circumstances it may therefore be understandable, if inexcusable, that the portrayal of characters with intersex variations on television series often lacks insight and sensitivity.

2.2. Research Contribution

For writers unfamiliar with the terrain of intersex, a willingness to collaborate with members of the intersex community and a certain openness and self-awareness is required. Pullen encourages screenwriters to 'explore your environment and to find a pathway for potential audience engagement' as a screenwriter's personal processes, experiences, convictions and attitudes infuse the script and are readable by audiences (2014: 284). There are rewards for those who take the time to research and engage with people with intersex variations, as audiences want to learn more about the human condition, especially via courageous characters at the limit of self, placed in the 'most severe situations' (Lee 2013: 84).

Positioning people with intersex variations as "'Other", immoral, and odd' results in individuals feeling socially unaccepted, stigmatised and unacceptable (Preves 2003: 20). While the media often contributes to the notion of intersex as extraordinary and atypical, this research demonstrates there is the possibility that future writing of characters with intersex variations and their narrative arcs for television will represent us as the 'everyday social type' although not without our challenges.

3. Research Significance

The creative work was first presented in part at the University of Southern Queensland's "Scriptwriting as Research Symposium" on 29 September 2016, and then as a second stage at the same event on 26 June 2017, providing academic scriptwriter with an opportunity to have her short

script “table read” and reviewed by peers (other creative practice researchers) who were in attendance. The readings were followed by a short 10-minute research presentation by the author contextualising the script’s value as research or the research process used to create it, which then opened up to questions, comments and criticisms from the scholars in attendance. The script was performed by USQs acting and theatre students, directed by Scott Alderdice, an esteemed lecturer in Acting at the University. The readings and the presentations were filmed in studio and live streamed on the internet, making them eligible as research outcomes under the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) system. The resulting creative work which was borne out of the symposiums and the research itself was then published by Text Journal of Writing and Writing Courses (an international electronic refereed journal published twice yearly) Special Issue (Series Number 48 April 2018) “Screenplays as Research Artefacts” edited by Craig Batty (UTS) and Dallas Barker (USQ).

Hart, Phoebe (2016) Writing characters with intersex variations for television. *Journal of Screenwriting*, 7(2), pp. 207-223.

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