

Screening hands

Introduction

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Jérémy Clapin's animated film *J'ai Perdu Mon Corps/I Lost My Body* (2019) portrays a severed hand in search of its body. The past of this hand and body are often connected to a cassette player and microphone, and to the practices of listening and recording. These devices are hand-manipulated by the central character during the car crash that killed his parents. It is only near the film's conclusion (and another accident) that the hand and body are brought into temporal alignment (still physically severed, since the hand is not attached), and we learn what first detached them (a bandsaw in a woodshop) and what alternative futures might have followed. This is but one evocative example of the prominence of hands in screen media. Hands physically and conceptually cut media scenes, produce musical and informational sounds, communicate identities and positions, orient filmic spaces, act as frames and cradles for mobile devices, shield and broadcast views of screens, and transmit written and painted messages.

In this 'Screening hands' dossier, we bring into focus how such diegetic and non-diegetic hands function as, and in relation to, screen cultures and technologies. Centring on visual case studies ranging from auteur cinema and artists' films to internet vlogs, the contributors analyse the prominent meanings articulated around screen hands from the late 19th century to the present. These meanings encompass the hand's conceptual connection to different screen forms and craft production, and the hand's articulation of agency and recasting of media ontology. Our focus on screen hands can help scholars to review the ontological connections between screens, sight and light by

foregrounding other embodied and sensory screen elements, including physically touching and manipulating.

When outlining these and other implications of researching screen hands, the essays introduce new interdisciplinary theories and perspectives to existing discussions of hands and tactility. Our intent is to expand understandings of screen hands and to capture their particular resonances in the present. We argue that research on hands should be further incorporated into screen studies and related disciplines, and can reshape considerations of screen production and the kinds of agency, ontology and embodiment we associate with these texts. A focus on screen hands can thus facilitate further considerations of such issues as conceptions of humanness; the more-than-human and lived worlds; how bodies are articulated and what parts are represented; feelings and affects; and what kinds of work and workers are foregrounded and elided.

Hands are a central feature of screen representations and engagements. Yet screen studies and related scholarship often provide only provisional comments about hand depictions and functions rather than offering substantive studies.¹ The dossier rectifies this gap in scholarship by foregrounding close engagements with screen hands as an analytical method. While centring on specific corporeal figures, we also pursue the branching meanings that screen hands so often evoke, implications that, we argue, provide especially rich insight into screen production, agency and ontology. In what follows, we outline some of the main themes and topics linked to hands in existing scholarship, including artistic labour, media and mediation, embodied screening, tactile identifications, digital devices, human ontology, eroticism and horror. We then situate the dossier's contribution in relation to these discussions and outline the novel analytical examples this collection incorporates and the new directions it opens up for the study of screen hands.

At different moments across cinematic history, screen hands have been closely entwined with the figure of the artist and producer, their craft and labour. For example, Donald Crafton identifies the presence of the artist's hand – and various stand-ins for this hand – as a prominent trope that early animated film inherited from vaudeville 'Lightning Sketches'.² The artist's hand has also been notable in the history of avant-garde cinema. Maya Deren's elongated arm and hand almost bifurcate the frame and are foregrounded throughout *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Deren and Alexander Hackenschmied, 1943).³ The handmade practices of film production and women's work are centred in Deren's *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946), where a skein of wool, and by association the film text, are repetitively manipulated by hand. Twentieth-century 'handmade cinema', produced by Stan Brakhage and others, in which artists paint, scratch and otherwise make marks on celluloid, foregrounds material traces of the artist's hand. Gregory Zinman emphasizes the centrality of the artist's hand in rendering these visual works and rejecting 'industrial modes of moving-image making that hinge on mass production in favour of homespun technique,

¹ One exception is

Barry Monahan's recent *Hands on Film: Actants, Aesthetics, Affects* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022).

² Donald Crafton, 'Animation iconography: the "hand of the artist"', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1979), pp. 409–28.

³ For a longer consideration of how Deren's hands are highlighted, see Saige Walton, 'Hands in the machine: Maya Deren and Marie Menken's manual gestures', *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 23 (2022), pp. 32–51, <<https://www.alphavillejournal.com/Issue23/HTML/ArticleWalton.html>> accessed 18 September 2024.

- 4 Gregory Zinman, *Making Images Move: Handmade Cinema and the Other Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020), p. 7.
- 5 Lisa Cartwright, 'The hands of the projectionist', *Science in Context*, vol. 24 (2011), pp. 443–64; Nele Wynants, 'Invisible hands in the history of the magic lantern: where theatre studies and media archaeology meet', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2020), pp. 422–47.
- 6 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), p. 15.
- 7 Zinman, *Making Images Move*, pp. 9–10.
- 8 Jack Bratich, 'The digital touch: craft-work as immaterial labour and ontological accumulation', *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization*, vol. 10, no. 3/4 (2010), p. 303.
- 9 Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Laura U. Marks, 'Video haptics and erotics', *Screen*, vol. 39, no. 4 (1998), pp. 331–47.
- 10 Vivian Sobchack, 'What my fingers knew: the cinesthetic subject, or vision in the flesh', *Senses of Cinema*, no. 5 (2000), <<http://sensesofcinema.com/2000/conference-special-effects-special-affects/fingers/>> accessed 18 September 2024.
- 11 Shaun Moores, 'Digital orientations: "ways of the hand" and practical knowing in media uses', *Mobile Media and Communication*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2014), pp. 196–208.
- 12 Heidi Rae Cooley, 'It's all about the fit: the hand, the mobile screenic device and tactile vision', *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2004), pp. 133–55.

individual ingenuity and idiosyncratic engineering'.⁴ The hand in this context is thus linked to artistic ingenuity, while also evoking a commitment to craft traditions.

The hand and its fingers have enduring conceptual ties to different screen forms. Studies of earlier screen technologies, such as Lisa Cartwright's research on the 'pre-cinematic projector' and Nele Wynants's analysis of the magic lantern, reference hands as a means of complicating media production.⁵ Cartwright highlights how the moving body of the travelling projectionist rubbed indexical marks into the projection box, and Wynants associates the fingerprints on lantern slides with past performances and operators. The 'fingerprint' has often been deployed as a metaphor for the indexicality so central to discussions of the media specificity of photochemical photography and celluloid film. Roland Barthes also links photography to the actions of hands and fingers when he asserts that the photographer's 'organ' is incorrectly identified as the 'eye', but it is the 'finger: what is linked to the trigger of the lens'.⁶ Zinman relates the haptic traces visible in handmade cinema to indexicality, arguing that such handprints are in fact more 'faithful' than photography to Charles Sanders Peirce's conception of this sign.⁷ While cinema's digital transition is associated with the receding of indexicality's metaphorical fingerprint, fingers have enduring etymological and conceptual ties to the digital. For instance, Jack Bratich notes that 'digital' refers to the 'informational, virtual realm of ones and zeros but also to the fingers'.⁸ Hands and fingers are referenced in the proliferation of 'buttons' and other programmed devices that connect bodies to digital screens.

Scholarship on haptic screens in sensuous cinema studies associates hands with tactile modes of engaging and understanding films and media works. Laura U. Marks argues that representations of hands are not necessary for rendering people's haptic media experiences, including video graininess and soft focus, but that such engagements can evoke touch through association, including identification with individuals and/or with their hands.⁹ Vivian Sobchack describes a scene in *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993) where the viewer identifies with and experiences the character's hands. Sobchack cannot see the focused view because the protagonist holds her fingers close to her/our face, but Sobchack's fingers understood the film sequence and 'grasped it'.¹⁰ Sobchack and other scholars' studies of fingers' grasping abilities argue for a way of knowing, as chronicled by Shaun Moores, where familiarity with and an understanding of objects appear to be processed by hands.¹¹ In such cases, tactility, location and balance are associated with specific hand positions and methods of sensing.

In internet and new media studies, hands are mentioned in relation to the tactile address of touch-screen devices and other interactive interfaces. Heidi Rae Cooley's study of mobile devices, for example, describes how hands and devices mould to, interpenetrate and 'fit' each other.¹² The term 'fit' also evokes marketing claims that touchscreens (and other technologies) mesh with people's hands,

- 13 Wanda Strauven, *Touchscreen Archaeology: Tracing Histories of Hands-on Media Practices* (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2021), p. 20.
- 14 Sarah Pink, Jolynna Sinanan, Larissa Hjorth and Heather Horst, 'Tactile digital ethnography: researching mobile media through the hand', *Mobile Media and Communication*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2016), pp. 237–51.
- 15 Roger Odin, 'Spectator, film and the mobile phone', trans. Ian Christie, in Christie (ed.), *Audiences* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), pp. 165–66.
- 16 See José Van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- 17 See Tom Tyler, 'The rule of thumb', *JAC*, vol. 30, no. 3/4 (2010), pp. 435–56.
- 18 Michele White, *Touch Screen Theory: Digital Devices and Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2022).
- 19 Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1976), p. 16.
- 20 Frederick Engels, 'The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man', *Marxists.org*, January 1996, <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1876/part-played-labour/index.htm>> accessed 18 September 2024.
- 21 Notably, though, Engels's essay is already an understanding of how human hands develop in conjunction with machinery (here, the machinery of the labour system) – an observation that implicitly challenges human exceptionalism insofar as it points to the immanent imbrication of human and machine, echoing in this sense a key argument put forth in Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

normative individuals are mechanically agile and technologies connect distant individuals. This digital emphasis on agility and active touching is addressed in Wanda Strauven's touchscreen research, including such programmed and described hand gestures as 'Pointing, pinching, scrolling, swiping, zooming, zapping, clicking'.¹³ The associated mobile technologies make people feel more closely linked with others when they place their fingers on the screens, according to Sarah Pink, Jolynna Sinanan, Larissa Hjorth and Heather Horst.¹⁴ Echoing this sense of the closeness of hands and mobile devices, Roger Odin emphasizes the hand of the filmmaker in mobile phone filmmaking, contending that 'the viewer sees what the hand sees, rather than the eye', and that 'filming with a phone is like pointing'.¹⁵ Experimental filmmaker Scott Barley's *Hunter* (2015), made on an iPhone 6, evocatively literalizes this claim, for viewers see and follow Barley's hand (and forearm) as it stretches out into profilmic space and glides, slowly, through the night-time forest. The hand and arm appear almost detached from his body.

Contemporary internet platforms also include some of today's key screen hands, notably the 'like' icon and hand-pointer. The 'like' icon functions as a data-gathering device and is part of the algorithmic and discriminatory production of users.¹⁶ In addition, the like's thumbs-up representation is linked to earlier misogynistic references to hands, including the 'rule of thumb' and measurement of tools for abusing women.¹⁷ The hand-pointer magnifies etymological and conceptual connections between fingers and the digital, being at once a digital representation, an element that activates computer processes and a reflection of individuals' finger digits. As Michele White argues in her work on digital hands, the hand-pointer is the most common representation of individuals who use computers and online interfaces, and unfortunately a further means of establishing whiteness and able-bodiedness as the norm.¹⁸

Both within screen studies and beyond, the hand is too often employed to articulate the purported exemplariness of humans. Martin Heidegger argues that hands differentiate the human from other animals and that the human hand is separated from other 'grasping organs' such as 'paws, claws, or fangs' by 'an abyss of essence'. He avers that 'only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have hands and can be handy'.¹⁹ Heidegger emphasizes the hand's close relation to human design work, sign production and thought. Associating the human hand with 'perfection', Friedrich Engels presents it as demarcating the ontological separation of humans from the nonhuman ape when theorizing the hand's key role in the development of the labour system.²⁰ The hand's role in labour, he continues, leads to the emergence of a whole range of human activities and expressions.²¹ The hand has often been framed in this way as a 'synecdoche' for human labour, sociality and artistic expression, as 'an emblem of humanity as such', as James Hodge

- 22 James J. Hodge, *Sensations of History: Animation and New Media Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), p. 50.
- 23 Peter J. Capuano, *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), pp. 238–39.
- 24 Sobchack, 'What my fingers knew'.
- 25 See Jean-Pierre V. M. Hérubel, 'The darker side of light: Heidegger and Nazism: a bibliographic essay', *Shofar*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1991), pp. 85–105.
- 26 Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Brothers Grimm, 'The willful child', in *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*, trans. Margaret Hunt (New York: Pantheon Books, 1944), no. 117.
- 27 Walter Benjamin, 'The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility', 2nd version, in Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin (eds.), *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 19–55. See also Esther Leslie, 'Walter Benjamin: traces of craft', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1998), pp. 5–13.
- 28 Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery Vol. 2: The Katastrophē of the Sensible* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), p. 7.
- 29 Hodge, *Sensations of History*, pp. 27–70.

puts it.²² Portrayals of human hands engaged in labour are additionally found across the history of cinema and screen media, with notable early examples including *Le rêve des marmitons/Scullion's Dream* (Segundo de Chomón, 1908), *Man With a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929) and *Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin, 1936).

The agility of human hands has been linked to different forms of knowing and knowledge. Thus, Peter J. Capuano foregrounds the 'deep etymological connection in German between manual grasping (*greifen*) and intellectual comprehension (*begreifen*)'.²³ This connection also plays out in English where phrases such as I '*grasped* it', as Sobchack indicates, further correlate holding with understanding.²⁴ The human hand is sometimes understood as a functioning part that supports and signals cognitive capacity and, in a further ableist framework, as biologically ideal. References to screen and other hands can thereby reproduce problematic hierarchical evaluations and/or reference different class positions, and connect handiwork with skilled and hard labour.

One further area of human activity in which hands recur is political history, where raised hands appear in contexts ranging from fascism to progressive politics. It has been suggested, for example, that Heidegger's elevation of the hand was associated with his support of National Socialism and its related arm and fist gestures.²⁵ Yet Sara Ahmed's feminist scholarship poses a resistant reading of The Brothers Grimm's 'willful' girl and her raised arm, which she pushes out of the earth following her death and burial.²⁶ Ahmed identifies this arm and hand as part of a history of feminist and labour resistance, including challenges to oppression.

Some scholars, including Walter Benjamin, argue that the incarnate hand and its gestural repertoire have been increasingly displaced and externalized by machines since the Industrial Revolution.²⁷ While the hand is afforded a starring role in Bernard Stiegler's early account of the emergence of the human and its co-constitution with technics, the philosopher asserts that there has been a 'becoming-finger (*digit*) of the hand' since the 19th century, pointing to examples ranging from the finger that presses the camera button to the finger working 'the buttons of the tape recorder and the digital keyboard' that allows 'for the algorithmic and digital generation of forms, which produces new artistic material' today.²⁸ Hodge argues similarly that we can perceive a steady withdrawal of the human hand if we follow the recent history of screen animation. One example he offers is the animated game *Cookie Clicker*, where animated manicules eventually replace the user's hand, with the result that the individual can leave the game running in the background without needing to click anything to 'progress'. Hodge relates such a withdrawal of the human hand to the notion of the 'out-of-hand', which, he suggests, aptly captures human experiences of amplified technical opacity.²⁹ While taking into account the distributed agency, spread between humans and machines, to which these observations point, our dossier showcases not the withdrawal but rather the ongoing

foregrounding of hands of different sorts. Contributors explore how hands, including digitally animated screen hands, conjure embodied proximities with technology and media.

Both within screen cultures and beyond, relationality is another important meaning that hands continue to evoke. Shaking hands and the digital conception of the ‘handshake’ establish professional positions and seal agreements, including viewers’ correlation with the screen and the connection of devices. The reflexive and direct addresses of clapping hands constitute the role of viewers and, through details about the hands and associated sounds, their identities as embodied clapboards, compliant supporters of texts, emotional subjects, musical accompaniment and playing children. During the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic, songs were used to assist people in ‘proper’ handwashing, and images of hands were screened repeatedly. Journalists’ articles about the virus, and their accompanying illustrations, sometimes depicted hands as frightening and contaminating, in a kind of horror text portending a dangerous relationality. In a number of these accounts, people’s refusal of contact was blamed on the #MeToo movement, which also used a raised hand as a protest signifier, even though this interrogation of non-consensual contact started before the pandemic.³⁰ As this suggests, hands are employed to convey both the acceptability and the harm of touching, including in relation to age. Karen Lury, for example, notes instances of hand-holding in filmic depictions of children, including adults ‘taking’ and ‘handling’ children’s hands, and outlines the complexities and ambivalences of such relationality.³¹

Screen hands are also employed to elicit eroticism and sexuality. Mandy Merck emphasizes the ways that screen evocations of ‘lesbian hands’, including the association of lesbians with finger fucking, have been refused because they are identified as stereotypes and queerly sexual.³² Merck also suggests a critical means of intervening in the ways women and other oppressed subjects are denied subjecthood, when she identifies how such hands can displace and frustrate the gaze. Sadie Benning’s *It Wasn’t Love* (1992) articulates a related conception of the active lesbian and queer hand by transforming arms and fingers into title cards, cutting and suturing devices, points of queer erotic contact and genitals. The recent French arthouse film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (Céline Sciamma, 2019) also marshals touch to articulate queer desire. Touch here is strongly linked to the film’s central artmaking process – Marianne’s portrait of Héloïse. Clara Bradbury-Rance references Merck when she indicates that Marianne’s ‘hand on canvas’ acts as ‘a stand-in for the touch of skin’, and the ‘charcoal works in [Marianne’s] hand almost as a hand on a body might’.³³ The hand’s ongoing prominence in screen eroticism is taken up by Sarah Cooper and Lucy Bollington in their contributions to this dossier.

Buried hands that break through the earth, severed hands that try to find and kill their bodies, and bloody hands that act as indexical markers

30 White, ‘Afterword: being “less touchy-feely” during the pandemic: socially distancing and emotionally feeling’, in *Touch Screen Theory*, pp. 179–201.

31 Karen Lury, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), pp. 55–56.

32 Mandy Merck, ‘The lesbian hand’, in *In Your Face* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 124–47.

33 Clara Bradbury-Rance, ‘Lesbian legibility and queer legacy in Céline Sciamma’s *Portrait de la jeune fille en feu* (2019)’, *French Screen Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2/3 (2023), pp. 177–78.

34 See Aviva Briefel, 'Hands of beauty, hands of horror: fear and Egyptian art at the Fin de Siècle', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2008), pp. 263–71; Dawn Keetley, 'It's alive! why so many hands in horror?', *Horror Homeroom*, 23 September 2016, <https://www.horrorhomeroom.com/hands-in-horror/#_ednref1> accessed 3 January 2024.

35 Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

of crime are common aspects of the horror genre. There are numerous horror film titles (as well as foreign translations and television titles not fully listed here) that reference hands, including *Bloody Knuckles* (Matt O'Mahoney, 2014), *Hand of Death* (Gene Nelson, 1962), *Hands of the Ripper* (Peter Sasdy, 1971), *Idle Hands* (Rodman Flender, 1999), *The Beast with Five Fingers* (Robert Florey, 1946), *The Crawling Hand* (Herbert L. Strock, 1963), *The Devil's Hand* (Christian E. Christiansen, 2014), *The Devil's Left Hand* (Harley Wallen, 2023), *The Hand* (Henry Cass, 1960), *The Hand* (Oliver Stone, 1981), *The Hands of Orlac* (Robert Wiene, 1924), *The Hand That Feeds* (Blair Smith, 2021), *The Mummy's Hand* (Christy Cabanne, 1940), *The New Hands* (Brandon Scullion, 2023), *The Red Right Hand* (Mike Gioscia and Kurt St. Thomas, 2001) and *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (Curtis Hanson, 1992). In addition, dirty hands and filthy, broken fingernails, including fingernails that are augmented and that rip through walls, are aspects of the horror genre and frequently coded as feminine.³⁴ These texts suggest how non-normative and differently abled hands and fingernails are coded as dangerous and grotesque. It is worth noting briefly that such coding extends beyond horror media. For example, Gilles Deleuze's long fingernails, which he indicated were necessary because of the sensitivity of his fingertips, are often referenced as abject and an oddity.³⁵ Screen culture tends to associate men's normative fingernails with shorter lengths and to portray women's fingernails as manicured and more elongated.

Rethinking screen studies from the vantage point of the hand, the 'screening hands' dossier expands on several of the areas of inquiry described above, while offering new analytical pathways. The authors contribute to theorizations of the hand's relation to screen forms by offering novel examples centred on the hand's mimicking of the work of the cinematic close-up shot, for instance, and on the connections drawn between fingernails and digital screens within contemporary internet videos. Studies of digital nail blogging videos, which demonstrate nail art applications and engage with beauty cultures, also represent a new direction in research on the hand's relation to craft production, showing the enduring relevance of this association in platformed culture. Processes of identification, and indeed disidentification, as they are facilitated by screen hands remain key concerns.

The dossier also presents screen hands as important sites where agency is asserted, negotiated and rethought. Several contributors employ Ahmed's aforementioned theoretical discussion of the wilful raised hand to examine the contestatory and agential potential of screen hands. In addition, authors consider how screen hands articulate distributed forms of agency divided between human and nonhuman figures and elements. Accompanying this distributed view of agency is a related focus on the ways that screen hands locate the human as enmeshed within its material and technological environments. The authors' rethinking of agency and ontology complicates the hand's historical associations with human

exemplariness, showing instead how the human exists in immanent relation with the environment in which it is enmeshed.

The dossier is structured to move through different filmic examples before addressing digital culture. It begins with Mary Ann Doane's contribution, which considers cinematic faces and hands in terms of their differing relationship to the close-up shot. Doane argues that representations of hands actively orient and produce cinematic space, and as such the hand 'mimics the work of the close-up'. The hand offers methods of closely focusing on elements of the text by functioning as a framing device and pointing finger. Doane's essay thereby evokes the continuing close relation of the hand to screen forms and mediation.

Sarah Cooper opens the dossier's consideration of the ways that screen hands take us beyond anthropocentrism. By pursuing the metaphor of 'green fingers' and the association of human and plant reproductive parts, Cooper examines the fusion of the human hand with flowers in the mid 20th-century cinematic and literary work of Jean Genet. Her focus on Genet's texts also advances our interests in how screen hands convey homoeroticism and other non-normative connections.

The dossier's focus on more-than-human life and other forms of grasping continues with Bruno Cornellier and Jenny Heijun Wills's contribution, which centres on human characters' attempts in *Lamb* (Valdimar Jóhansson, 2021) to hold the hoof of a lamb that is adopted and anthropomorphized by Icelandic sheep farmers. Cornellier and Wills read *Lamb* with and against the images of hand-holding foregrounded in adoption narratives. They theorize the lamb's cloven hoof as a wilful agentic figure that will not be held in hand, and as a form that contains the trace of the first mother (the sheep) that the human adoptive mother violently repels.

Lucy Bollington examines the screen hand's relation to distributed agency and affect. Her contribution centres on British artist Ed Atkins's deployment of a digitally rendered hand in his gallery film *Even Pricks* (2013) to mimic, and manipulate, the Facebook 'like' icon. Bollington discusses how, through the mutability of the rendered hand, Atkins presents an immanent vision of human existence in the time of platformed society. In so doing, Atkins simultaneously recasts the 'like' icon so it comes to express and also undercut the psychic and somatic conditioning and other forms of 'ill-being' unfolding at scale today.

Concluding the dossier, Michele White highlights the feminist importance of screen hands and fingernails in contemporary digital culture through an analysis of videos and related texts made by women nail artists. White identifies these women's screen hands and nails as powerful methods of asserting their production and resistant agency. She discusses how the fingernail acts as a screen and thus as a site where embodied relations to media and technologies are conceived and negotiated.

The dossier, then, commences with the close-up and ends with the screen: it is bookended by close theoretical discussions of screen hands' ongoing conceptual ties to screen forms and production. Collectively, the

essays evidence the aesthetic and political insights generated when one approaches cinema and digital culture through their screen hands, with a particular emphasis on insights related to media production, agency and ontology. Through these contributions, we aim to inspire future engagements with screen hands and cement the importance of this corporeal figure to the discipline of screen studies. Three of the essays – those authored by Doane, Bollington and White – build on talks first given at the 2022 Screen Conference, where we were inspired to develop this dossier and engage in further dialogue with *Screen*.

Future research might further address the critical implications of the ways that hands convey connections to, and detachments from, bodies and things; are rendered as nonhuman and monstrous; represent (and enact) consensual and non-consensual relationships; reflexively foreground and/or elide the produced aspects of texts and presence of viewers; labour in and produce screen media; evoke religious practices; and function in different periods and national texts. This critical focus on hands offers opportunities for additional critical thinking across scholarly areas and interdisciplinary inquiries. For instance, disability studies researchers' focus on ableism, crip theory and access provide some frameworks to address media representations of braille and of wounded or differently abled hands. Scholars of media and sound studies might further centre the functions of clapping hands (and their direct address to audiences), the featuring of hands in autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR), and the ways that hands reference noise and silence. Creeping hands and the practice of individuals placing their hands over their own and other people's mouths raise further feminist questions about media representations, and the commingling of, fear, threats and consent.

The hands in Clapin's *I Lost My Body*, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, propose how hands can facilitate alternate futures and embodied experiences. Such hands are important but understudied aspects of screen media even when the hand is demarcated by touchscreens, hand-pointers and the buttons of devices and evoked by the names of such technologies and processes as handsets, handcrafting and handwriting. These and other cultural understandings of hands encourage us, and we hope readers, to further recognize how the hand is employed in screen media and elsewhere as a means of articulating human and more-than-human being, and rendering affiliation, distinction and harm. We believe that critical analysis of such screen structures and framings of hands can thus expand people's connections to, and understandings of, animate and inanimate worlds.

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