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Chasing Phantoms: Harvesting Dreams as a Methodology for Radical Screenwriting

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By

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Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	5
<i>Dedication</i>	5
<i>A Wakeful Note</i>	5
I. <i>The Afterlight</i>	7
II. <i>Logic Goes to Bed: Questions, Voices, Resistances & The Early Self</i>	12
a) <i>Questions</i>	12
b) <i>Voices</i>	12
c) <i>Resistance</i>	21
d) <i>The Early Self</i>	23
III. <i>DreamLink Activation: Methodological Approach</i>	26
a) <i>The Drift: Visual Harmonisation</i>	26
b) <i>The Test Chamber: Emotional Regulation</i>	36
c) <i>The Collapse: Dream Coordination</i>	44
(1) <i>Research as Dream-Weaving</i>	44
(2) <i>The Threshold Drift: Initial Capturing of the Dream</i>	51
(3) <i>Lucidity: The Dream That Drowns Me</i>	53
d) <i>The Melting Clock: Temporal Strategies & Techniques</i>	56
(1) <i>Repetition</i>	57
(2) <i>Fragmentation</i>	60
(3) <i>Simultaneity</i>	62
(4) <i>Durational Sequencing & Slow-Motion</i>	65
(5) <i>Looping</i>	68
e) <i>The Body in Dreaming: Embodied Practices and Typographic Play</i>	73
(1) <i>Embodied Writing</i>	73
(2) <i>Typographic Play</i>	76

IV. Dream Archive Preparation: Remnants of the Dream.....	81
a) Remnant 1: Writing as Disorientation.....	81
b) Remnant 2: Writing as Mourning.....	83
(1) <i>The Loss of Serene</i>	84
(2) <i>The Loss of the Writer</i>	86
(3) <i>The Loss of Writing</i>	88
c) Remnant 3: Writing as Multiplicity.....	89
V. The Last Flicker: Recollections of <i>REVERIE</i>	92
VI. DreamLink Authorisation.....	98
VII. SomniData: Dream Records & Reference Log.....	100
VIII.SomniMedia: Projections & Holographs.....	103
IX. Recalibration System.....	103
X. The Phantom Library: Bibliography.....	103
XI. Epilogue.....	108

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to the following:

Those who know me know I'm nothing without my dog, my fellow dream companion. To Coco, I dedicate this research to you so that a piece of your presence—your insistence on cuddles and playfulness—is forever part of this work. To my dad, who has listened to me rant, cry, laugh and all my nervous breakdowns, and has never once stopped believing in me, offering support and words of wisdom, even when I felt like giving up. To my Lamb, my best friend, for your constant attention, inspiration and debates on dreams and how to pronounce “Cixous”. Thank you for your unwavering support and for ensuring my brain stayed in one piece long enough to get this done. Lastly, for all the quiet dreamers. May you keep drifting between worlds, following the whispers that others overlook, and finding light in the places where reason sleeps.

A Wakeful Note

Due to the nature of the research, which examines dream-writing (its overflows, fragmentation, and refusal to containment), the writing process necessarily mimics this and produces surplus material. The experimental methods themselves—textual disruption, typographic play, and added phrasing from my screenplay, *REVERIE*—expand the texture and volume of this work. Dreams do not follow linear structures or fixed boundaries. Compressing the work to fit a boundary would contradict the very methodology and principle of this study. The excess, therefore, remains as part of the research: an embodied, textual instance of abundance, radicality and the dream's resistance to closure and confinement.

1. The Afterlight

White pierces through the screen. The room is filled with sharp, bright flashes.

A breath, an inhalation of the new, crisp air.

The wheeze drifts along, following the breeze.

Unease...

I think I'm breathing, though the air doesn't move. The world feels unfinished; crafted in half-coded codas, waiting for someone to decide what comes next.

A polished roof with no foundation.

A boat with no edges, ~~floating~~ sinking in the darkened water—almost unnoticeable if it weren't for the harsh ~~light~~ white.

I take a step back and a flash of the marbleised floor beneath me catches my eye. But as I look down:

the marble turns to ash

turns to soot

turns to sand.

I take with my hand,

bits and pieces of that which once was.

Somewhere in the distance, an echo lingers:

Dream carefully.

Dream Carefully.

Dream carefully.

I reach out as the sand clings to my

shoes

wrapping around me like a vine until my

l

i

m

b

s

g

o

h

e

a

v

y

If anyone finds this—

if anyone wakes—

Tell them the

d r e a m

i s

recalibrating

s t i l l

a l i v e

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

*REVERIE*¹ is a screenplay that follows a young woman, Serene, in her late teens, who has a unique lucid dreaming ability. In SomniCity, a dystopian society, dreams are monitored and harvested to restore a broken, scorched world unbeknownst to its citizens. The city operates under the illusion of a feminist utopia with all men being exiled, and is sustained by surveillance, psychological control and experimentation. Serene's role as dreamer gradually unravels as her reality starts to glitch—her dreams and memories folding into one another, exposing inconsistencies in and lies about her reality (like who her mother really is, whether she is an experiment, whether everyone is in on it). She is met by Silas, a young man trapped in The Wastes, who reaches her through her dreams. As Serene's journey continues, she and Silas work hand-in-hand to unravel the secrets of her world. But with each of Serene's dreams, SomniCity becomes increasingly unstable. Serene leaves her city on a quest to uncover The Wastes in hopes of finding her father—and some answers. Can she escape the control of SomniCity? Can she find the truth? By the epilogue, Serene is caught in a liminal space, between waking and dreaming, which leaves open the question whether she ever awakens or whether she remains trapped within the recursive dream system of SomniCity. *REVERIE* is about exploring dreams (both as narrative and form), testing boundaries and power, and discovering truth through memory and dreams.

Chasing Phantoms: Harvesting Dreams as a Methodology for Radical Screenwriting (or Chasing Phantoms in short) began with dreams² that refused to leave. Its images—a scorched world, an eerie meadow, a flood of ink, static of technology—haunted me long after waking. At the start of the research, I attempted to write the dream in order to understand its meaning and its pull. Soon I realised that what I was doing was not interpretation but a continuation—the dream that kept speaking. I realised that it was impossible to try and capture the dream content from start to finish and my recollection of these dreams proved unstable. Every time I woke up to recollect the dream, my mind was filled with gaps—secrets that the dream locked away from my conscious mind. However, the feeling of the dream lingered and

¹ REVERIE is a term derived from the Old French verb *rêver*, meaning to wander, dream or speak wildly. In the past, the word “reverie” was associated with states of delirium, mystical ecstasy, and departures from rational thought (Sampolahti & Laitila, 2023). My screenplay draws upon these layered meanings to explore dream-writing as a permeable threshold.

² All references to the word *dream* in this paper denote the nocturnal, subconscious experience that is dreaming, and not the aspirational, goal-oriented imagining of future ambitions.

unsettled me as I struggled to recall it. This feeling of unstable recollection led me to my research inquiry: *How do dreams function? How can dreams serve both as a source and method of screenwriting, using the act of writing itself as a form of discovery?*

Today, this project questions how dream-writing functions through form and structure—how it loops, ruptures, fragments, repeats. It asks how dream logic might be translated into a screenwriting practice to expand what a screenplay can hold and how it can think and breathe. The objective of this research was to develop an alternative, radical approach to screenwriting practice through its methodology; a methodology that resists linearity and the hierarchies of traditional narrative form. Perhaps this was a very ambitious task, as *REVERIE* still holds traces of the rational, linear narrative to follow Serene’s journey—but the essence lies in the way it is subtly challenged. While *REVERIE* follows the three-act structure, the screenplay subverts it through dreambleeds that override narrative logic, fragmentation, temporal speech and action (fast and slow-paced) that disrupt predictable rhythms, and textual or typographic patterns that destabilise language and order. These subtle interventions maintain coherence for the viewer while constantly unsettling narrative expectations. This methodology aims to open the process of writing to intuition, sensation, experience and embodied knowledge. I sought to write with the dream rather than about the dream. To let the subconscious (that which exists in the mind but is not immediately available to the conscious, waking mind—the dream) guide the structure, imagery, and rhythm of the screenplay. To me, *that* is the key focus of *REVERIE*—exploring the entirety of dream-writing and what it means, how it functions, and what it can achieve.

Chasing Phantoms draws on Hélène Cixous’s concept of *l’écriture féminine* and her notion of *jouissance*, which are methods of writing through the body as a means of resistance, experience and emotion. The project also utilises Hans-Thies Lehmann’s theory of postdramatic temporality, specifically his concept of *durational aesthetics*, which reimagines time as cyclical and durational rather than linear—tying it together with dream temporality. Furthermore, arts-based research perspectives from Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth St. Pierre particularly embodied writing, and writing as a method of inquiry, inform the research inquiry and the process of discovery through writing. Together, these ideas lay the groundwork on which I built my approach to treating dreams not as metaphors, but as a method—an epistemology of fluidity, disorientation and constant return. The result of this methodology birthed *REVERIE*.

11. Logic Goes to Bed: Questions, Voices, Resistances & The Early Self

a) Questions

I am an extremely diligent person. I overthink, over-plan and overanalyse every little detail to reach perfection. When I started this project, I had a strange sense of confidence. I thought I knew exactly what to do and how to do it. I carefully planned every little aspect and detail of the project down the tiniest detail—*writing a literature review, gathering research on dreams, combining different methods of dream-writing*. I knew what I was going to do. At least, that's what I told myself at first.

I would start by documenting all my dreams and then assembling these 'scenes' into a larger screenplay. *Easy*. The initial research question was straightforward in academic terms: How can dreams function as a methodological process of screenwriting...(and later) through the form of *l'écriture féminine*? Concise, crisp, clear. *But clarity can be a performance too*. Even though the question is straightforward, beneath these carefully articulated words lies something more haunting, elusive, and perhaps something more primal—a *yearning to return to the instinctual space of dreaming itself, which cannot be contained in carefully articulated words*. There was an odd tension between research and dream, order and disorder, writing and feeling. It felt like I was missing something...like I was trying to connect different puzzle pieces that did not (want to) fit.

b) Voices

Before I provide an overview of my frameworks, I find it essential to define what a dream is—especially how I perceive it. Goodwyn writes that “a dream is an experience... of being in an environment, interacting with characters, with plot twists and turns, none of which is consciously created by the dreamer” (2018, p. 1). Sastra defines dreams as “a succession of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations that usually occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep” (2024, p. d653). In my research, I extend these definitions and ideas to view dreaming as a creative experience and terrain—a liminal zone between memory, imagination and the unconscious. Dreams, to me, are not passive occurrences but rather active encounters, revealing something hidden beneath the surface—an uncanny image, a feeling of anxiety, an unresolved thought lingering. By “active” I mean that the unconscious becomes active, generating experiences, images, gestures that the dreamer receives. Dreams resist logic but speak through images, sensations, and rhythms. *And my dreams appear like movie scenes,*

with flashing images, soundtracks and peculiar views of myself as an actor in my dreams. In my writing, both creatively and academically, I treat dreams as co-collaborators, ghostly co-authors that dictate how I write. I have tried countless times to interpret my dreams and have failed. *Perhaps, this is what the dream wants—not to be construed but to be given the space to speak for itself.* While I acknowledge the vast terrain of dream-research through psychology, philosophy, art and more, for this research, my interest lies in using the dream as is—without any interpretation or fixed meaning.

My first exploration of dream-writing research led me to Freud’s most influential book, “The Interpretation of Dreams” (1900), in which his central claim highlights that dreams represent the fulfilment of desires or repressed wishes. These wishes often would manifest through symbols and imagery. By interpreting the “latent content” (what the dream ‘really’ means) behind the “manifest content” (what the dreamer remembers), we can access our unconscious motives (Freud, 1900). Freud argues that a large portion of adult dreams “deal with sexual material and give expression to erotic wishes” (p. 406). Freud further notes that “[n]o other instinct has been subjected since childhood to so much suppression as the sexual instinct with its numerous components” in which “we should never forget the significance of sexual complexes” (pp. 406-407). The parts of our unconscious mind that are barred from conscious expression, thus, manifest themselves in the form of dreams. For Freud, the raw latent wishes are “disguised” or transformed via processes he calls dream-work (condensation, displacement, symbolisation) into the manifest content we remember upon awakening (1900). Freud views the sexual (or erotic) impulses to be amongst the most repressed in waking life (due to social, moral and familial pressures), which is why these impulses are so pertinently disguised in our dream content. To Freud, the dream becomes an encrypted message from the subconscious, and through interpretation, one begins to decode the wish-fulfilment hidden beneath the dream. Here, the waking mind is less involved as the unconscious and subconscious work in tandem to expose the waking desires.

While Freud’s theory offers a bold approach to interpreting dreams, critical feminist critiques³ highlight its limitations. Firstly, my observations find that Freud positions desire and wish-fulfilment almost always from a male-subject perspective—the Oedipus complex, the *phallic* mother, the castration anxiety, and so forth, all centre the male child’s trajectory. Female experience is often derivative or secondary to the male normative. Secondly, although Freud

³ See bibliographic references for feminist critiques on Freud, i.e., Findlay, H. (1992), Hsieh, L. (2012), and Garnier, M-D. (2008).

emphasises sexual material, it is not just the presence of sex that troubles me—it is *whose sexual perspective is privileged and how female sexual desires are explicitly structured to serve the male gaze or male subject*. I refer to Freud’s dream of Irma, his patient who complains of pain, to illustrate this point:

My friend Otto was now standing beside her as well, and my friend Leopold was percussing her through her bodice and saying: ‘She has a dull area low down on the left.’ He also indicated that a portion of the skin on the left shoulder was infiltrated. (I noticed this, just as he did, in spite of her dress.)
(Freud, 1900, p. 132).

In this dream, Freud positions the female body as a site of investigation—an object of male medical (and implicitly sexualised) scrutiny. “Irma” lies passively while male doctors examine her mouth, crossing into intimate territory. The phrase “in spite of her dress” momentarily exposes the slippage between clinical inspection and voyeuristic access. Thus, the latent wish is filtered through Freud’s symbolic economy of male desire.

Hélène Cixous argues that Freud’s interpretation of dreams flattens their distinctness, especially for women, by subsuming them into a masculine logic of meaning-making as “Freud pruned the story of its involved narrative structure, of the heterogeneity of its points of view, of all “superfluous” detail” (Cixous, 1976, p. 534). In other words, female sexuality and/or desires are not only ignored but read through a framework that centres male desire. This framework, thus, renders the woman’s dream experience in relation to how she serves or is objectified by the male subject. Like Cixous, contemporary feminist critiques (Zhang & Guo, 2018; Scalabrini, Esposito & Mucci, 2021), offer alternatives that treat dreaming as complex, multidimensional and not reducible to latent wish-fulfilment.

My own research is invested in dreams as method, sensation and experience—rather than fixed interpretation. Thus, Freud’s model becomes limiting, positioning thought and rationality above the rawness of the dream experience. My choice to privilege sensation, the experience of my dream, is a response to this: I resist reducing the dream to a decoded message under male-gaze-rich interpretive logic. Instead, I hold the dream as it is—an embodied, unsettling, non-linear event in the night, before it is shunted into meaning. This way, the dream resists the priority of interpretation and the waking mind, instead honouring the dream’s own language, fragmentation, and recurrence—its resistance to fitting neatly or being subjected to male-centred views. This resistance stems from the philosophy that *l’écriture féminine*

embraces—an embodied, sensorial, fragmented approach. *Should I choose to write about my desires, my jouissance, then it should stem from my own mind and bodily instincts and exist for the sake of my own pleasure—unexamined, unmediated and unapologetically mine; and such pleasure is cyclical, self-contained and self-referential—not teleological or linear like Freud suggests.*

With a clear view of how I view dreams, it was time for me to develop my own cartography if I resisted Freud's. The truth is, at the beginning of this project, I clung to a map of sorts. I was stuck in the ways that academia writes, thinks, and argues. As a first-year student, you are taught to write research in a specific way, to follow a clear, linear structure. Naturally, after four years of adhering to the rules, it became increasingly difficult to rid myself of the imposed structures and ways of doing. I was still trying to control the project—however radical it claimed to be. This research not only tested and pushed me beyond my artistic comfort zone but continues to shape who I am as a person—how I now think, feel, and write—a process of continuous exploration, discovery and navigation.

Initially, I thought the dreams would create a pathway or arrive like a gift and offer up a structure or order. My dreams, as it turns out, are quite messy, menacing and haunting. They lacked structure, clear character arcs, and neat narratives. They looped, glitched, became repetitive and complex to transcribe into words. I had to unlearn the belief that narrative was a fixed, impermeable container for chaos and messy thoughts and start recognising that my story—this project—was already spilling over and eating its own edges. If I am being honest with myself, my early impulse was to prove something with my research. To challenge the three-act structure that has become an industry standard for screenplays. To resist and not give in to patriarchal writing systems—in both academia and in creative writing. I wanted to prove irrevocably that the subconscious can be scripted in unconventional ways. I discovered that narrative control for the dream came at a cost—the more I explained, the more words seemed to fail to sustain the dream realm. What remained compelling was the experience itself—the sensation of being inside a dream. What I *really* wanted—and perhaps what I couldn't yet admit—was to feel my way through. To be seduced by uncertainty. To be undone by ambiguity. *"If performance is a promiscuous lover, then my writing is the jealous ex—lingering, messy and never quite able to let go"* (Barton, *Framing Document*, 2025).

It was not until I familiarised myself with the works of French feminist scholar, Hélène Cixous, that I felt permitted to do this—to write not as a reiteration of theory, but as an act of being and becoming, expressing and discovering. Cixous's *l'écriture féminine* (writing the

feminine) is a writing framework—and philosophy—that argues for women to reclaim both language and the body as intertwined sites of expression and liberation. Cixous insists that through writing, women “will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her” due to patriarchal thought and control, and to “write your self” is to let “your body be heard,” for only then “will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth” (1976, p. 880). In opposition to what Cixous calls phallogentric language and thought—rational, linear and hierarchical logic of male-centred discourse, *l’écriture féminine* privileges expression over analysis, chaos over order, emotion over reason. *L’écriture féminine* calls for a form of writing that stems from the body—rhythming, sensorial, fluid and saturated with release and an overflow of emotions (or as Cixous calls it, *jouissance*) (1976).

Cixous notes that writing the feminine does not imply writing as a female, but rather the way in which the writing possesses feminine qualities. To distinguish, Cixous describes male writing within “the realm of the Proper”—reflecting masculine ownership, hierarchy and control—whilst writing the feminine exists within “the realm of the Gift”—writing as a feminine mode of giving, openness and resistance to possession and closure (1976). To write the feminine is to disrupt the masculine systems of representation by allowing breath, instinct and bodily pleasure to think on the page.

In *REVERIE*, I engage this method by writing through sensations and movements of the dream, rather than relying on analysis or containing the dream through ordered or logical thought. Such masculine binaries—mind versus body, reason versus emotion, clarity versus ambiguity—demand hierarchy and mastery to regulate meaning. *L’écriture féminine* resists this phallogentric order and embraces fragmentation, ambiguity, and emotional texture, which allows the subconscious—the dream—to dictate the rhythm and flow in *REVERIE*⁴. Echoing Cixous’s belief that women’s expression “lays herself bare...her flesh speaks true...she *inscribes* what she’s saying, because she doesn’t deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking” (1976, p. 881), the dream space itself becomes the site of feminine writing—porous, unstable and ambiguous. In this sense, *REVERIE* enacts *l’écriture féminine* as both theory and method: it writes the body in and through the dream, reclaiming the silenced feminine voice, and releases tension—*jouissance*—through the lived pleasures that animate such writing.

Jouissance, for Cixous, is the creative and bodily force of pleasure and expression

⁴ Moreover, in *REVERIE*, the soft, feminine world-building illustrates resistance of the phallogentric, creating and constructing architecture (their homes, offices, school buildings) as spherical, non-linear, and circular to reflect the woman and the womb—a nurturing, safe space.

beyond the constraints of patriarchal language and thought. *Jouissance* is the source of writing the feminine rooted in her body and unconscious. Cixous writes that *jouissance* is a form of *l'écriture féminine* that “takes the metaphorical form of wandering, excess, risk of the unreckonable...a feminine text can’t be predicted, isn’t predictable, [and] isn’t knowable” (1981, p. 53). *Jouissance* is where the excess, emotion, body and unconscious converge—a pleasure in writing that is not only enjoyment or satisfaction but a disruption to the usual symbolic order of rationality—a surge of creative energy embedded within the body that resists being fully contained by words and patriarchal logic (that is, the expectation that writing must follow clarity, restraint and mastery—structures that align with masculine authority and control⁵). *Jouissance*, therefore, not only relates to bodily pleasures but rather the pleasure of releasing tension—and in the case of *REVERIE*, the release of anxiety, fear, disorientation and emotional or bodily impulses as satisfaction and enjoyment through writing about it. *Jouissance* is poetic writing—a writing that leaks from the body and spreads its droplets over the page—and writing that captures pleasure through sensation and excess of emotion where feelings swell so quickly or so powerfully that language cannot keep pace, producing affect that overflows the boundaries of clear articulation or containment—like a warmth the sun will envy, a warmth that nestles itself onto your skin, hugging the hairs on your arms with delight and delicacy.

In *REVERIE*, *jouissance* appears when I allow the dream sequences to morph—no, bleed—and loop, when bodily rhythms override the narrative, when a gesture or sound carries meaning that cannot be pinned down, and when Serene’s experience is written from within her body rather than described from an external viewpoint. For example, *REVERIE* continually prioritises Serene’s sensations—her limbs go heavy, her breath slows down, her thoughts fragment, words imitate her actions. A key point of her embodied experience is written when she escapes SomniCity and crosses the border—her steps counted, her breaths calculated, her senses heightened.

⁵ Conquergood (2002) and De Certeau (1980) extend this argument by revealing how dominant knowledge systems subtly enforce what is considered valid and legitimate ways of understanding. Conquergood argues that systems of authorised knowledge carry their own harm and violence, operating through traditions of patriarchal and masculine authority and text-centred reasoning—structures that present themselves as objective while compelling obedience. De Certeau, however, suggests that one can manoeuvre within and subtly disrupt these systems through small, everyday gestures that subvert rigidity.

Gets two metres up.

ZAP!

Her fingers jerk back.

Electrocuted.

A low throb pulses in her wrist.

She slides down.

Breathless.

Stops.

She paces.

Looks up.

Again.

Then-

She strips off her jacket.

Wraps it around both hands.

Grabs the metal.

Winces.

Climbs.

At first, it is small.

A brush, gentle, sincere. As if the whole universe holds its breath between them.

But then-

SERENE kisses him.

Fully, hungrily, savagely tender. The kind of kiss that pours out of the mouth, chest, and soles of the feet. The type that speaks in a language unlike any other. That splits open the words and forms a sentence in the air between them.

SILAS grips her arms, then her face, then her waist, unsure where to hold her. Holding her in one place does not allow him to fully devour her love.

Time shudders.

For them.

Finally.

REVERIE
Page 109

REVERIE
Page 171

It isn't only a dream sequence, but a felt force that is *jouissance*—the writing itself rides the body's wave. The release of her bodily tensions—whether it be pleasure with Silas, fear in her dreams, or anxiety or physical exertion—creates a *jouissance* that is experienced mentally, physically and spiritually. Thus, the concept of *jouissance* links back to Cixous's argument that women must write from their bodies and reclaim language that, to Cixous, is inherently embodied.

D. Soyini Madison (1999) contends that writing can—and should be—an embodied performance, where writing, theory and performance intersect rather than remaining disembodied from one another. As Madison writes, this mode of writing “seeks a felt-sensing meeting between theory, writing, and performing” in which “[t]he performer claims an uneasy possession of performance as a means of both subjectivity and freedom” and the “[t]heory becomes another way to know performance better; and performance becomes the desired illuminator of theory” (1999, p. 107). The following imagined dialogue illustrates my understanding of Madison's (and Cixous's) arguments for embodied writing:

Scene: A quiet café outside Paris. Two friends sit across one another with oversized coffee mugs in hand. The smell of freshly baked, buttery croissants fills the air. Sunlight spills across the table. Their conversation flows naturally, between thought, gesture, and laughter.

Hélène: It's funny you mention it. You know, I always thought that writing is a performance...The way I pick up a pen and write from the deepest corners of my mind—that is a performance. The words don't just sit on the page. They *do* stuff. They stretch, they breathe, they do a little *pirouette*.

Soyini (*laughing*): Exactly! And the writer? We don't just sit at the desk and stare at the page until we think of something. We're not a damn statue. We live in it. In the stories we write. Every breathe I take, every little twitch my neck gives from sitting there for too long...that's all written on the page.

Hélène: *Oui!* [Yes!] It emerges from the body. It's so satisfying. Like, every part of my being is helping me craft the writing. Every pulse, gesture, tick all laid out bear for my reader. And I am satisfied too. Writing my life onto the page. *Maintenant, c'est jouissance, non?* [Now, that's pure pleasure, no?]

Soyini: Totally! And see, this is the fun part. We get to mess with the old rules. Mind versus body? Toss ‘em. Rationality? Meh. We wiggle between thought and gesture like cats on a sunny windowsill, soaking up the joy of the heat.

Hélène (*leaning back*): We reclaim our body! Our language!

Soyini (*raising mug*): Amen to that! And, you know, it’s not defensive or disobedient, really. It’s actually very obedient...to our bodies. Our bodies tell us what to write. It demands we follow it. Thought comes later. Breath first, words second, you know?

Hélène: Cheers to that!

Soyini clinks her mug against Hélène’s. The two take a sip of their coffee and sigh with delight.

Extending the practice of embodied writing, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) argue that the practice of writing itself produces knowledge through the method of writing as an inquiry. They propose a nomadic, experimental approach to writing, in which the writer’s body, mind and intuition co-create knowledge. They note that “writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 967). Writing as inquiry is about letting the thought unfold in the moment and in motion, allowing the writing to emerge as exploration rather than being confined or polished. The knowledge is discovered through the rhythm, intuition, and materiality of writing itself—a constant creative negotiation between writer and writing.

Writing as inquiry is a creative process that can be achieved through CAP (Creative Analytical Practices), such as ethnographic writing, poetry and lyricism, literary devices and “narratives about the writing process itself” (Richardson, 2000, p. 931). Richardson calls this process “rhizomatic” where knowledge is discovered and produced through its interconnectedness with multiple points of connection and experience (2000, p. 931). Much like Cixous and Madison, Richardson and St. Pierre embrace the fluidity and multiplicity of writing and the bodily intuition over rigid and linear logic. Richardson argues that the tripartite method of writing (the three-act structure) is limited in its perspective as it oversimplifies and obscures the complexities and nuances of the writing process (2000). By treating writing as a method of inquiry, I foreground discovery rather than finality. This made it difficult to fit the dream—which is circular, fluid and multiplicative—into the traditional, linear three-act structure, generating tension between the form and the material.

c) *Resistance*

Although these academic works felt like a light illuminating a dark tunnel, there has always been a faint glow of resistance embedded within me. I wanted to resist the three-act structure of screenwriting because it imposes a rigid order on processes—dreams, sensations, and subconscious logic—that naturally occur in a non-linear manner. The three-act structure can be understood as follows: (a) Act 1 sets the story’s central conflict in motion through an inciting incident that compels the protagonist to engage with the unfolding drama; (b) Act 2 follows the protagonist as she embarks on her journey, usually following a moment of pause after the first sub-climax in Act 1, allowing both character and audience to regroup before the next climax; (c) Act 3 begins with the significant turning point, redirecting the story’s course and pulling the protagonist out of crisis, driving her towards a resolution (Fink, 2014, pp. 16-34). This structure is neat, clear and to the point. Yet, I wanted to tear off the polished suit and tie of the traditional three-act film structure and dress it in vulnerability. I wanted the screenplay to show the most hidden parts of the human—those parts we shy away from in public. My screenplay wanted to

sweat,

s s s s t a m m e r

and

SCREAM

through the page from the onset of this project.

There is a phantom version of myself that I often return to in my writing—the self that began this process. Her walls were decorated with sticky notes, all colour-coded due dates, and bullet points. She wanted to impress...others, yes, but herself even more. She also wanted the logic of the dream but didn’t want to unleash what makes her dreams the most vulnerable. My phantom, though very naïve, was the driving force of the project; a deeper layer to uncover through the writing. But she no longer drives this project. No more sticky notes, bullet points, neatly defined parameters. Instead, I sit here as an evolved form of the phantom, in the mess and rubble of collapsed outlines. I am no longer interested in “good writing” so to speak, but in haunted writing. Embodied writing. Writing that pours out of the soul and lingers...writing that refuses resolutions.

My phantom would argue that she was chasing her dreams to find some meaning. Now, I think the dream has been chasing me. This thought led me to the writings of Jacques Derrida

who famously coined the term “hauntology” in his influential book “Spectres of Marx” (1994). To me, hauntology refers to a ghostly figure that never entirely disappears and always returns, unfinished and unresolved. Hauntology can be understood as a ghostly figure:

And its time, and the untimeliness of its present, of its being “out of apparition of the inapparent joint.” To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. (Derrida, 1994, pp. 201-202).

Hauntology thus refers to the idea that the present is haunted by traces of the past and the future, by things that are no longer and things that are not yet. Hauntology is that “what cannot be described or classified and what demands from us an admission of our inability to know and understand everything” (Lorek-Jezińska & Więckowska, 2017, p. 8). The notion of hauntology encapsulates this project in that it casts doubt on objectivity and certainty, on being absolute or complete, while embodying the “workings of human memory, both on individual and collective levels” (Lorek-Jezińska & Więckowska, 2017, p. 8). In a way, the linear, three-act structure haunts this research too in that I cannot escape it entirely—but its very existence is what allows me to push against it. Moreover, Colin Davis writes that hauntology reveals a new layer of understanding as it “may open us up to the experience of secrecy as such: an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know” (Davis, 2005, p. 377).

Earlier drafts of *REVERIE* or the shorter, micro-dreamplays⁶ already resisted control of structure and form—demanding specific fragments of the dream to spill over lines and follow its own form. The dreams and stories are presented as fractured, unanswered images. Strange. I ended up writing something that, at the time, I couldn’t make sense of—and, instead of cutting this and returning to the norm, I kept returning to it. At first, a repeated image of

EXT. A PIER — DAY

EXT. A HARBOUR — DAY

EXT. A PIER HARBOUR? — DAY

It didn’t make sense but it kept creeping up on me like a lingering shadow in a dark room. Repeated phrases “wake up” would continue to haunt me throughout the day. I had no idea

⁶ Short, experimental screenplays that deal with dream-writing in structure and form. See Section [The Test Chamber](#) for more details.

what these phrases meant but I knew I did not want to delete them. That was the first spark—the first sign—that this project had a mind of its own, that the writing ~~was~~ *is* haunted.

d) The Early Self

Dream-writing, writing that uses dreams as a generative, structural or narrative logic (Crespy, 2012), dates back to the Surrealist era, consisting of arts practices (painting, writing, filmmaking) that resist conventional and realist structures, embracing the subconscious and dream imagery in experimental form. Experimental screenwriting encompasses many critically acclaimed screenwriters, such as Luis Buñuel (*Un Chien Andalou*, 1929), Marcel Duchamp (*Anémic Cinéma*, 1926), and Maya Deren (*Meshes of the Afternoon*, 1943), and more recently, Coralie Fargeat (*The Substance*, 2024), at the forefront. These films are known for their disruption of narrative forms, utilising dream- and automatic-writing-inspired⁷ imagery and uncanny juxtapositions (Jia *et al.*, 2024). Scholarly work such as Alexandra Ksenofontova’s “The Modernist Screenplay: Experimental Writing for Silent Film” (2020), contends that experimental films are as much a literary text as it is a production document, illustrating how such writing “challenges the borders between functional and literary writing, between everyday labour and art” (p. 143). Positioning my screenplay as a radical, experimental film, I draw on this history of filmmaking to justify my refusal to the linear and logical, and my embrace of dream-writing and dream-logic as a valid form of writing.

However, within this refusal lay a unique tension between my ideas and my actual process which surfaced subtly at first but later blurred the boundaries between them. I once thought of my work as mapped out and fixed, but found myself lost in the unknown world of film at the time. Every time I tried to ‘force’ my ideas onto the page, into the dream, the writing became flat and unconvincing. The abovementioned films all emphasised feeling over representation, which resonated with me. This re-seeing of experience—freed from conventional form—permitted me to frame my own work and practice. I have an extensive background in theatre with over a decade of training, experience, and knowledge-building in performance. I realised that I carried embodied performance knowledge into my writing—a knowledge that not every screenwriter has the privilege of having: I know how to perform a scene, I know how an actor makes decisions on their character, and I know the inner workings

⁷ A form of writing produced without conscious control or correction—letting the subconscious ‘take over’ and guide the words/images (Jia *et al.*, 2024).

of a rehearsal—its repetitions, its rhythms, its movements.

It is worth noting that *REVERIE* is not my first screenplay. During my Honours year, I wrote five short screenplays that taught me I could write for film. However, the real intervention comes from transposing the theatre's body-in-space knowledge into screenwriting. In this light, I position myself not only as a screenwriter or film scholar, but also as a theatre practitioner venturing into film—and writing for screen—enabling my methodology to draw the connections between performance and writing—*because, as we know, writing IS a performance.*

III. DreamLink Activation: Methodological Approach

a) The Drift: Visual Harmonisation

My methodology began in the in-between, liminal space of dreams. Between wakefulness and sleep, my methodology evolved in the zone where the body is soft and the mind is detached, where logic has not reasserted itself. The first part of the process I call *The Drift*. Each night, I fell asleep with the intention of harvesting my dreams--my notebook was open beside my bed, my pencil resting on top of the pages, and a little night lamp on standby to wake up with me. Often, I would wake up from a dream at the early hours of the morning to scribble a few associative words down—ink, water, window, mirror—to capture the core image of the dream. I would then try to sketch this image, sometimes even in half-darkness, to the best of my abilities, though not all sketches were successful. I found that my most vivid dreams were often the ones that I could remember more intensely. At other times, I would lie still upon waking, replaying the fragments of my most recent dream in my mind and jotting down the emotional residue or sensations I was left with—sinking, anxiety, terror, heaviness, harshness, heat, sweat, chills, a gust. During *The Drift*, I was not yet writing full scenes or moments of the screenplay. This process involved recording fragments, gestures, and sensations before they slipped away. I view *The Drift* as a process of attunement to the subconscious, rhythm and body's own quiet dictation of the dream.

Recording and remembering my dreams was a vital part of the process that enabled me to somewhat lucid dream. Lucid dreaming was an exciting concept for me and I wanted to incorporate it into the creative process. Lucid dreaming can be “defined as the ability of a dreamer to become aware that [s]he is dreaming and to possibly change some aspects of [her] current dream” (Zink & Pietrowsky, 2013, p. 98). Lucid dreaming training entailed setting alarms at differing hours; after ensuring at least 70-90 minutes of deep sleep (the duration it takes to achieve full REM sleep). This alarm would ring in the background of my dreams, allowing me to become conscious and aware. Another method to test lucid dreaming was to look for signposts—people, places, or objects that seemed unreal or illogical (such as counting the fingers on my hand, which would always be less or more than 10 but never the precise amount; or searching for clocks that then read in strange patterns). The techniques I implemented drew from LaBerge and Rheingold’s book on lucid dreaming (see references). However, after a few nights of practising lucid dreaming, I quickly realised that being able to control the dream, however small, was not only a daunting task but one that imposed structure onto the dream. I found that being aware during the dream state inherently changes the dream’s

shape, form, and feeling—and that was precisely what I was trying to avoid. So, I abandoned my practice and training of lucid dreaming. The techniques and training I had practised were not taken for granted—I embedded these techniques and theories of lucid dreaming as the scientific/psychological background of *REVERIE*.

PROFESSOR STRAY (CONT'D)

While most students project surface-level imagery, your visualisations are rich, layered, and visceral. They carry emotional weight, complexity rarely seen at this stage.

(leans closer, studying her)

You weren't just releasing joy or fear or simply daydreaming, Serene. You were shaping your image...dream-signing it. You approached these visualisations with precaution, almost like you knew it was a dream. Hyper-awareness like this is a rare gift. It's as though your subconscious mind understands the mechanics of dreaming better than most ever will.

SERENE

(uneasy)

Shaping? I... I don't even know what I did.

PROFESSOR STRAY

Exactly. That's the beauty of it. It's innate. A raw ability to bend the dreamscape into something profoundly personal and resonant. With training, Serene, you could go beyond comfort and joy. You could wield dreams into remarkable events. As long as it doesn't lead to defiance, I think you'd be a useful tool to SomniCorp.

SHARLA

(leaning forward, curious)

What do you guys think about the new training programme they announced? The whole "dream enhancement" thing?

SELENA

I think it sounds amazing! Imagine what we'll be able to do once we're fully trained. They're saying it'll push our abilities beyond what we even thought possible.

SANGFROID

(chewing on sandwich)

Yeah, it's wild. I heard some staff talking about advanced dream projection - like creating full environments that others can enter.

SELENA

(excited)

Right? I heard one girl even started...

(whispering cautiously)

...lucid dreaming!

(normal tone)

And apparently the entire class could see her dreams like it was happening to them.

(excitedly)

Imagine linking dreams with other people. It could change everything!

REVERIE

Page 43

REVERIE

Page 40

Lucid dreaming allowed me to become more aware of my dreams upon awakening, which aided my journalling process. Sometimes my dreams appeared as full images, other times a colour, shape, phrase, or feeling. A pier harbour. An eerily serene meadow. Somewhere on a beach...

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] a [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] flood [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ink [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

...A monolith I couldn't reach but always seemed to appear like a flash in the dark. The early stages of my journalling were not a steady process. At first, I tried to jot down my dreams—or the gist of them—as quickly and precisely as I could, whether it be in the morning when I wake up, or in the early hours of the day when I jolt awake by a nightmare. But even these acts of capture felt **VIOLENT**. The dream kept resisting transcription.

It was

like trying to

capture

a butterfly in a jar,

except the jar is way too small

and the BUTTERFLY doesn't fit.

The moment I touch the dream with structure—with some order or system—something escaped. The dream was inaccurate and completely incomprehensible, like riding *ευ νδσιρø* *ρoμu λiαιu*. Over time, I stopped trying to remember *accurately* (using memory-based writing by writing exactly what happened in the dream) and started writing *intuitively* (using sensorial, embodied writing—writing as if in the dream). This was the missing link. These

fragments became more valuable to me than a full recall. These images *were* the dream—the tone, the atmosphere, the traces of the subconscious on a page.

The journalling stage was not a formal process but rather a culmination of habits and rituals. I kept an open notebook on standby beside my bed, jotting down fragments of the dream, listing sensations, sketching images. The small, instinctive practices became an extension of my subconscious, rather than merely a record of it. Later, during the drafting process, I drew on these rituals—the immediacy of voice, the rhythm of half-formed sentences, and the sensorial textures of the dream—folding them into the screenplay’s structure and tone. I was able to recall specific moments of the dream or what LaBerge and Rheingold call “dream signs”—people, objects, animals, buildings, and so forth that seem out of place in a dream, which the brain recognises and gains awareness of being in a dream (1990). These signs appeared as phrases, feelings or colours and the dream eventually became a collaborator.

During the journalling and micro-dreamplay phases, the dream offered writing material through images, fleeting scenes, and unexpected motifs or metaphors. It directed me by dictating the order of sequences, the structure of how the sensation or experience should be written as fragmentary, or which fragments demanded my attention first, often guiding me to unplanned scenes. It also responded when I engaged with it, typically distorting, shifting, or introducing new elements to the narrative and structure, both typographically and temporally. In practice, this forced me to stop mid-writing to follow an impulse, an image, or a memory from the dream, letting a fragment expand before I could rationalise it, or noticing recurring motifs that insisted on repetition before I realised their recurrence. The dream set its own rules, and my role was to observe, to capture and follow this logic without imposing meaning or structure on it—a process of constant

t w i s t i n g a n d T U R N I N G.

With that being said, there would be days when I would begin writing without particularly knowing whether I was remembering the dream, or whether it was a memory. This unknown dream-membering—the fragmented remembering of dream signs or memories—creates a blurred line that becomes fertile ground for my screenplay. I was no longer concerned about accuracy or truthfulness—I knew whatever arose would be my truth nonetheless—and my writing started reflecting this. Reflecting on *REVERIE*, I noticed this—characters beginning to

remember things they never experienced, speaking words that they didn't know, waking in loops, reliving moments that never happened.

During the initial drafting of *REVERIE*, I began by sitting at my desk, creating a broad outline of the plot, characters, the narrative journey and a map to structure the screenplay:

Placement and Pacing

- **Pages 1-25:** Establish the world, characters, and initial conflict (e.g., Serene's resistance to dream standardisation).
- **Pages 26-70:** Develop relationships, introduce micro-twists, and escalate tension.
- **Pages 71-90:** Major character betrayals and losses, leading to Serene's lowest point.
- **Pages 91-110:** The final moments, revelations, including the big twist and Serene's rebellion.

But dream-writing would not allow this structure to be maintained for long. It felt erroneous to start a dreamplay with coherence and order. As much as I knew I had to establish the world, characters and conflict, the dream insisted on being the first author of this work—the screenplay had to be shaped by dream-logic from the onset; the dream dictates what appears, what tone is emphasised and what image takes priority. For example, the first moments of *REVERIE* open with dream-bleed sequences, setting up the controlled environment of SomniCity and foreshadowing Serene's disobedience and the urgency of dreams within the narrative:

FADE IN:

EXT. SHATTERED EXTERIOR WALLS OF SOMNICORP - EVENING

A GIGANTIC CURVED SKYSCRAPER IS BENT IN HALF. SPARKS FLY OUT THE WIRES THAT CONNECT THE BUILDING TOGETHER. SHATTERED OVAL GLASS WINDOWS ARE COVERED IN A TSUNAMI OF DUST.

PAN TO: CITIZENS BELOW HEADQUARTERS

CITIZENS ARE SEEN PANICKING, CAUSING MAYHEM AND VICIOUSLY ATTACKING ONE ANOTHER. INDISTINCT SCREAMS AND PROTESTS ARE HEARD AS THE YELLING CRESCENDOS INTO DISHARMONIOUS CRIES.

REVERIE
Page 2

SERENE FULL BODY

UPON THE RELEASE OF HER BREATH, SHE OPENS HER EYES, LOCKING THEM ONTO A BRIGHT, HOLLOW, METAL OBJECT.

MATCH CUT TO: SOLDIER WITH GUN

THE SOLDIER'S INDEX FINGER IS LOCKED ONTO THE TRIGGER. WITH A MENACING SMILE THAT REVEALS POWER RATHER THAN JOY, THEY RELEASE THEIR FINGER, CATAPULTING AN ELECTRIC BULLET IN SERENE'S DIRECTION. A POWERFUL BANG IS HEARD.

FADE OUT.

REVERIE
Page 2

I remember writing this, almost in a daze, thinking: *Is this how the screenplay will end?* Although I now know that *REVERIE* ends differently, I still believe these initial dreams haunt the ending and foreshadow many of the actions that take place (The Wastes, Silas being shot, SomniCorp). Suddenly, my plot outline became a blurry remnant of the past—of the writer who wanted to take control.

The dream spoke and I listened. Just drifting back to the dream realm and collecting dreams. In retrospect, I don't think I was collecting dreams. It would be more appropriate to say I was inviting the dream into my writing—into my body. It was a harvesting process, not a careful selection. I wrote without judgment or imposition, scribbling freely on blank pages and journals, letting sentences emerge from feeling and bodily impulse. Sometimes, I visited discarded scenes, circling and underlining phrases that resonated and echoed the experience of the dream, following threads across multiple notebooks (academic, dream, reflection, and draft journals). The process was cumulative and immersive: (re)reading, (re)writing, and (re)layering dream fragments until they spoke back, directing the following line or sequence (a shift in tone, a new beat, a cue to the dreamleeds). Every bodily action—writing, pausing, reading aloud, stretching, moving—was embedded in the writing, a way of letting the dream lead. The layered fragments left me with sketches, snippets of dialogue, repeated motifs, fleeting sensations and images. It was like a patchwork of scrawled lines, arrows connecting ideas, circled words, and marginal notes indicating tone or emotion. Sometimes, I jotted down bursts of scribbled handwriting, then paused to read aloud or create gestures and physical step-by-step actions tracing Serene's movements. Over time, these fragments became a tactile, visual archive and terrain for creating the full draft.

Everything was on the table—even my deepest, most intimate, fearful dreams. I began writing that which lingered. If a sentence hovered from a dream, I followed it. If a sensation

remained—like cold skin, breathlessness, or objects I incorporated these elements into dialogue, sensation, or dream structures within the screenplay.

The sun presses against my skin like an iron pulled fresh from the fire. It doesn't just burn—it seeps. A slow, insidious heat burrowing under my flesh, sinking into my bones. My breath feels thick, sluggish, like dragging air through boiling water. Each inhale sticks to my throat. Each exhale exclaims dust. Dirt. Dryness.

I force my feet forward. The ground scorchs through the soles of my shoes, as if the earth itself is molten beneath me. The heat rises in waves, a shimmer that distorts the edges of everything, turning the world liquid even as I solidify into something brittle, breakable.

I tilt my head up. The sun is a god with no mercy. A gaping, searing eye that stares without blinking, watching, waiting, unrelenting. It does not judge, it does not rage. It simply devours.

I want to move, to run. But my limbs are heavy, weighted with heat, thick with exhaustion. My knees buckle, and I fold, slow and inevitable, into dust. It greets me like an old friend, hot and suffocating, wrapped around me, slipping into my mouth, my nose.

Journal Entry 40
The Scorch
09/01/2025

A vast expanse of sand shimmers under an oppressive, unblinking sun. No horizon. No end. Just heat. Just burning.

A FIGURE stands in the vast nothingness. It is ME.

MY SKIN

Peeling. Stretching. Splitting. It never stops.

MY BREATH

Thick. Heavy. Dragging. It never fills my lungs.

MY TONGUE

Swollen. Cracked. Lifeless. It never tastes relief.

The sun presses. It seeps. Burrowing deeper. A heat that does not burn away but lingers, clings, grows. The pain is not new. It is old, ancient, endless.

ME (V.O)

The sun presses. It seeps.
Into the skin. Into the bones.
Into the marrow. Into the breath.
And it does not let go.

My lips split. A bead of something wells up-

It does not fall. It cannot. It dries before it can be.

ME (V.O) (CONT'D)

I am shrinking.
Drying.
The sun drinks me. It drinks and
drinks.

The air warps. The world shimmers, distorts, softens. Heat rises in waves, curling the edges of the visible world, twisting it, bending it-

ME (V.O) (CONT'D)

Time bends with it.
A mirage. A memory. A mistake.
A cycle. A loop. A trap.

The Scorch
Dreamplay 8
17/03/2025

THEN THE SMOKE APPEARS. THIS TIME, UNWAVERING.

THE GRASS WITHERS TO BRITTLE ASH, STAINING SERENE'S HANDS LIKE INK BLOTCHES ON A CLEAN SHEET OF PAPER.

THE WORLD COLLAPSES.

PANORAMIC VIEW: THE WASTES.

A BROKEN, SCORCHED LAND STRETCHES OUT BEFORE THEM. TOWERING METAL CARCASSES OF SKYSCRAPERS, ROADS CRACKED LIKE DRIED SKIN, AN UNBREATHABLE SKY SWIRLING WITH SOOT. SERENE GASPS. THE AIR IS THICK, PRESSING AGAINST HER RIBS. A MEMORY - OR A DREAM - RIPS THROUGH HER MIND.

FLASHBACK:

INT. THE SCORCH - DREAM

SERENE'S FATHER KNEELS IN THE SAND OF THE SCORCH. HIS EYES ARE BLOODSHOT RED. IRRITATED. DRIED. BEGGING FOR OXYGEN. A BEAD OF SWEAT DRIPS FROM HIS FOREHEAD INTO HIS MOUTH. HE IS THANKFUL FOR THE DROPLET SOOTHING HIS PARCHED THROAT.

FATHER
(hoarse, pleading)
*Serene...You have to wake up. You
have to see what's real. They're
using your dreams to restore...*

SHE STANDS FROZEN, HER LIMBS UNRESPONSIVE, THE HEAT LICKING AT HER SKIN.

FLAMES IN THE DISTANCE, BUILDINGS CRUMBLING. THE WORLD SCREAMS AROUND HER, AND YET SHE IS STILL.

FATHER (CONT'D)
(straining)
*They've built the city but you can
rebuild the whole world-*

A HIGH-PITCHED FREQUENCY CUTS THROUGH THE AIR. HER FATHER CONVULSES, HIS EYES ROLLING BACK, AND THEN-

WHITE NOISE.

REVERIE
Page 88-89

b) The Test Chamber: Emotional Regulation

Writing dreams comes in fragments of memory and feeling, or what I termed “dream-membrance” at an early stage of the process. These fragmentary images, sensations and writing did not come to a halt after journalling. Dream-membrance begins again in the testing. After *The Drift*—the soft, receptive process of dream tracing—came a phase that required its own form, disruption and decision-making. *The Testing Chamber*, then, held the dream up, pulled it apart and rejoined the fragments together like kintsugi, and questioned it.

Can this feeling hold shape?

Can the dream speak in time?

What is the structure of the dream?

Can the dream survive the pressure of structure?

I never wrote the same dream twice, nor did I edit, rewrite or transform the original entry. Instead, I captured a single journal entry for each dream in a concentrated, unfiltered pulse of that night’s impression. The entries did not necessarily focus on narrative elements but were distilled through emotional echoes—or what I call “emotional architecture”—and attempts to keep the feelings and sensations of the dreams alive (*before reason smothers it*).

From the entries, I created micro-screenplays or dreamplays which were typically two to five pages in length. These micro-dreamplays were my attempt to capture the form of the dream within a screenplay format, experimenting with the dream’s logic, sensation, rhythm and/or resistance to the form. These micro-dreamplays became the testing ground for the dream to become alive and to hypothesise structure as sensation. I would argue that these micro-dreamplays were not intentionally built or designed to become a final product, per se. Instead, they were emotional transcriptions of my dreams and early experimentations of form. Each micro-dreamplay had its own world, characters, and loose narrative—like a closed circuit of one particular texture, tone or theme. This process brought up more questions than answers—*perhaps they were questions that I didn't know how to ask with theory.*

What if there is no place in dreams?

How do multiple dream events intersect?

What happens if the dream breathes?

How does the dream resist? Why?

I returned to these questions as guidance for the form of my screenplays, aiming not to arrive at an exposition or climax, but at atmosphere and rhythm.

My earliest investigations into the form of dream-writing explored postdramatic

techniques drawing on Hans-Thies Lehmann’s concept of “durational aesthetics” (2006, p. 126), which I explain in further detail down [below](#). Although Lehmann’s concepts applied to theatre, it became apparent that these techniques could be applied to film. Lehmann’s focus was “to turn *time as such* into an object of the aesthetic experience” (p. 156), which I believe the dream inherently does. Rather than progressing through linearity, causality or plot, dreams—and in turn, my screenplay(s)—enact time as experience. There are moments in the writing that *s t r e t c h*, folding over multiple pages or lines through spacing letters apart, or completely fragment through quick interjections, time jumps, *frag ment ed speech*, reflecting how the time in my dream *feels*. The temporal moments of the dream(plays) are thick with presence, rupture, erasure, duration, looping or repetition, slow-motion, fast-flashes, and disruption of time. Using time as an aesthetic experience of the dream world allows for the unimaginable to exist—or rather, *co-exist*. At this stage, emotional catharsis and climaxes were not a priority. In some cases, time itself was the narrator of the dream, which overtook logic and form. In others, time became the anchor of the dream as it stretched, warped and compacted moments together. Time, thus, was fragmented and did not move linearly or chronologically—it resisted and recoiled.

The figure—blurry, hard to make out—seems familiar, but as she swims, the shore never gets closer. Time starts to bend, slow down.

ELLA’S BREATHING (HEAVY, UNEVEN)

W h y c a n ’ t I g e t t o y o u ?
W h o a r e y o u ?

FAST PACED CUTS:

WATER COLOURS change—green to blue to purple, blending into each other.

PAST ELLA STANDS BY THE RIVER, CALLING FOR HER CHILDREN.

PRESENT ELLA fights to swim to the shore.

ELLA (V.O.)

Where...
Where are you...?

FAST-FORWARD CUTS, INCREASINGLY DISTORTED:

FAST-PACE: THE HOUSE TWISTS, MORPHS, WALLS WARPING, GROWING TALLER, THEN SHRINKING.

LOOP: CHILDREN’S LAUGHTER ECHOES, REPEATS—RE-RE-REPEATING IN FRAGMENTS, LIKE A BROKEN RECORD.

SLOW MOTION: ELLA MOVES THROUGH THE HOUSE, EVERY STEP PULLING HER DEEPER INTO MEMORY. WATER POOLS BENEATH HER FEET, RISING, FILLING THE ROOM.

ELLA (GASPS)

They— They were— Here.
(slowing, realization dawning)

The Veil
Dreamplay 3
13/10/2024

CLOSE-UP ON ELLA'S FACE:

Her eyes **narrow** as she watches the river. The **bridge** beneath her feet **creaks**, subtly vibrating, as if ready to **give way**. She takes a **step forward**, her breath catching.

ELLA'S VOICE (V.O.)

You w a t c h a s i t f l o w s...
B o t h w a y s.

PAST. PRESENT. FUTURE. ALL AT ONCE.

She squints down at the water, **transfixed**.

FLASHES OF MEMORY INTERCUT:

A sunny **picnic** by the river with her two young **CHILDREN**.

SLOW MOTION:

They laugh as they splash in the water.

With each exploration of dream-writing, each entry was translated into a micro-dreamplay, shifting in form—from journaling to screenplay format. Many shared a recurring theme or motif, or what Bulkley refers to as “root metaphors” (1992), which was a combination of menacing, strange, uncanny, bewildering and haunting. *A mirror with an uncanny reflection of myself; disagreeing with the present me; me—submerged and drenched in water that turns black; an unknown field that screams danger (later becoming a meadow in REVERIE); a wasteland scorched by the sun and her vengeful, fiery tears.* I think back to one of my first micro-dreamplays about a woman struck with sudden amnesia, wondering where her children are.

CLOSE-UP ON ELLA:

Her eyes widen in recognition. Her body is almost fully submerged now, struggling to stay above the surface.

ELLA (FRANTIC)

No— No— They were— I didn't—
(re-re-re-petition)
I didn'tmean—Ididn'tmean—
Ididn'tmean—

SILENCE.

The whole micro-screenplay revolves around her trying to regain her memory until she is faced with the haunting truth that she was responsible for their deaths.

This scene taught me to work with silence that lingers—deepens. Nothing is resolved, but something within my body vibrated and resonated with this silence. Cixous’s philosophy urges writers to engage with writing that emerges “deep in [the] body, further down, behind thought” (Cixous, 1993, p. 118). *I think that was the first time I truly understood what Cixous meant by ‘writing the body’: Writing the inexplicable through the body brought about silence that, when written and read, feels like a thousand tiny paper cuts on the skin.* Cixous’s influence resides in moments where the scene’s poetics take over narration, where the emotional shapelessness and, sometimes, excess is honoured rather than resolved and clarified because “the dream says something that is never said, that will never be said by anyone else and which you unknow; you possess the unknown secret” (Cixous, 1993, p. 85). The scene below follows this principle in how it foregrounds Serene’s bodily experience—the silence in between each onomatopoeic word, her heartbeat, echoing breath, and the Unknown Woman’s steps—letting perception and sensation guide the dream narrative.

REVERIE
Page 105

INT. SOUTHEAST PASSAGE

The room is filled with a hallow darkness. The air is thick,
yet crisp.

Sharp.

The metallic passage doors close.

Shut.

SERENE's heartbeat elevates, notifying her NeuroBand. Her
breath echoes throughout the tunnel.

She takes a step forward.

A few light panels overhead turn on. Cold, sterile, dim.

SERENE
(into the distance,
echoed)
Hello?

Silence.

AN UNKNOWN WOMAN WALKS IN THE DISTANCE AHEAD WEARING A WHITE COAT AND SHARP, BLACK HEELS. THE THUD OF EACH STEP WRAPS AROUND THE TUNNEL. WE ONLY EVER SEE HER BODY - NOT HER FACE.

SERENE (CONT'D)
(to woman)
Hey!
(louder)
HEY!

THE UNKNOWN WOMAN TURNS AROUND.

She stands still.

UNKNOWN WOMAN
(to SERENE)
You're not supposed to be here.

THE UNKNOWN WOMAN GESTURES TOWARDS THE EXIT, OR ENTRANCE, OR BOTH...THE ONE SERENE USED TO ENTER THE PASSAGE.

SERENE turns around. In the distance, a sharp whisper spreads through the tunnel. SERENE turns back to the UNKNOWN WOMAN, but she is gone. Disappeared.

Shifted.

The micro-dreamplays allowed me to delve into the murky waters of dream-writing—writing that is abstract, never-ending, poetic and ambiguous. The work of Madison (1999) has also shaped my rebellious writing as her work advocates for writing that stems from the body as an expressive and political act. I believe the way in which the dreamleeds are written in *REVERIE* is expressive in nature. In their refusal to conform and cohere, the scenes become an act of resistance to apparent linearity. After weeks of creating different micro-dreamplays, I had found a method that paved the way for longer scene creations—stretching time and thus scenes, looping fragments together or apart, writing from the excess of thought, emotion and sensation, writing through and with the dream. On my eighth micro-dreamplay, I had created an otherworldly scene which later served as the foundation of *The Wastes* in my final screenplay, *REVERIE*. I had a dream about being stuck in a scorched world, all alone, while the sun slowly devours my existence.

REVERIE
Page 106

EXT. ENDLESS DESERT - SCORCHING SUN - TIMELESS

A vast expanse of sand shimmers under an oppressive, unblinking sun. No horizon. No end. Just heat. Just burning.

A FIGURE stands in the vast nothingness. It is ME.

MY SKIN

Peeling. Stretching. Splitting. It never stops.

MY BREATH

Thick. Heavy. Dragging. It never fills my lungs.

MY TONGUE

Swollen. Cracked. Lifeless. It never tastes relief.

The sun presses. It seeps. Burrowing deeper. A heat that does not burn away but lingers, clings, grows. The pain is not new. It is old, ancient, endless.

ME (V.O)
The sun presses. It seeps.
Into the skin. Into the bones.
Into the marrow. Into the breath.
And it does not let go.

My lips split. A bead of something wells up-

It does not fall. It cannot. It dries before it can be.

ME (V.O) (CONT'D)
I am shrinking.
Drying.
The sun drinks me. It drinks and
drinks.

The air warps. The world shimmers, distorts, softens. Heat rises in waves, curling the edges of the visible world, twisting it, bending it-

ME (V.O) (CONT'D)
Time bends with it.
A mirage. A memory. A mistake.
A cycle. A loop. A trap.

I blink. It hurts. The skin of my eyelids cracks, thin as paper.

FLASH IMAGES:

- THE SUN, BURNING LIKE AN EYE. A GOD WITHOUT MERCY.

- MY FINGERS, CURLING, STIFF, LOCKED, LOSING SHAPE.

- MY SHADOW-THIN, SHRINKING, THEN STRETCHING, THEN VANISHING. AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN.

BACK TO SCENE.

I sink to my knees. Dust swallows me whole. It slips inside, filling my mouth, my nose. It does not let go. It never does.

FADE IN:

*The Scorch
Dreamplay 8
17/03/2025*

ME (V.O) (CONT'D)
I exhale but there is no air.
Only silence.
Only heat.
Only the sun watching, waiting,
devouring.

Time does not move. Time does not stop. I am stuck in the heat, in the scorch, in the endless grip of the sun.

My skin peels. It does not stop. It never stops. A slow, unraveling thing. I curl at the edges, like paper too long in fire. But the fire never consumes. It only lingers.

ME (V.O) (CONT'D)
I think—I think I am melting.
But I never melt away.

A slow dissolve. My body fades. Not in one moment, but over many. Over all. Over none. And still, the sun presses.

CLOSE-UP: MY LIPS

Moving. Whispering something. The words lost, swallowed by the sun. Always lost.

The above excerpt is titled quite simply *The Scorch* and the world that the character finds herself in draws directly from the dream's residue—which would later become the tonal and structural template for *The Wastes*. I never revised, edited or touched this micro-screenplay again—that would mean changing the dream instead of accepting it as is. Instead, it stayed with me like an emotional artefact precisely because it captured the emotional architecture of a world I could not have invented through rational worldbuilding or well-planned plots or outlines. This world not only represented the physical but the emotional and psychological decay of dreams—my dreams—and the outskirts of SomniCity. *The Wastes* is a landscape built from sensations of being consumed by the illogicality, chaos, and dangers present in my dreams. These emotions are, therefore, regulated through the narrative structure. What I mean by “emotional regulation through structure” is not a suppression or controlling of emotions to regulate or neutralise them, but rather about providing a form—a structure—in which these intense emotions—*anxiety, fear, wonder, disorientation*—find a home in which they can pulse, linger and rupture on the page—and, in turn, *The Wastes*. The *Testing Chamber* process, then, is a way of allowing the emotional content of the dream to shape the narrative's structure, enabling the narrative to absorb and channel the affective energy—the emotional residue—rather than being constrained by a conventional structure.

The micro-screenplays taught me that writing is breathing, and breathing is structure: my writing follows the structure of organic rhythm of release and expansion—my writing breathes through pauses and silences, the pace at which I write them and how I speak their lines. When performing scenes or experiencing emotions as Serene would, the breaths I took—

shallow, deep, sharp, staggered—were directly inscribed into the rhythm, punctuation and flow of the scenes. Here, breath is not only linguistic or typographic, but an echo of the embodied performance. *Interestingly, REVERIE mentions the word “breath” (and its variants: breathe, breathing, breathes) a total of 66 times—a testament to how this breathwork has shaped the rhythm of my writing.* They taught me how to build a scene that does not need to be explained through long sentences or paragraph descriptions but instead felt and sensed.

BACK TO HER FACE:

SHE TILTS HER HEAD BACK TO SWALLOW THE PILL. OVERLAY TWO FAINT DUPLICATES OF HER MOVEMENT: HEAD TIPPING THREE TIMES, ALMOST LIKE DISTORTED ECHOES OR LOOPED FOOTAGE.

A FAINT, HOLLOW RINGING SOUND RISES BENEATH THE SILENCE.

CLOSE UP: SERENE'S FACE

SHE SWALLOWS.

EYES SQUINT.

JAW TENSES.

HER FINGERS GRIP THE EDGE OF THE COUNTER, KNUCKLES WHITENING.

SOUND RETURNS TO NORMAL

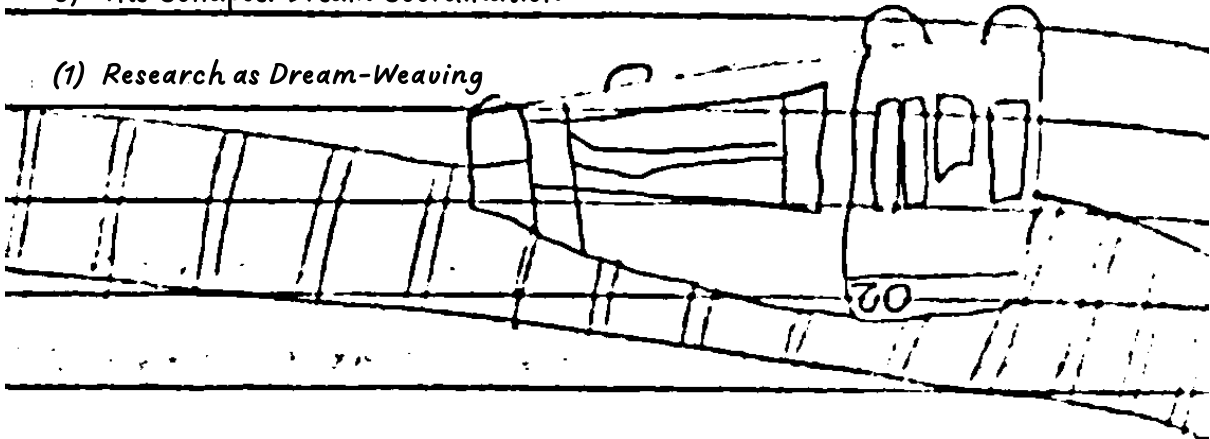
TIME RESETS.

REVERIE
Page 66

They taught me that writing, like a dream, is a vessel through which emotion is accessed—not rewritten into themes but as rhythms to be written into. *REVERIE* contains this knowledge within its gaps and missed connections, its dissolves and loops. These structures were not happenstance or accidental—they were tuned through trial and error and testing, through a chamber of the dream’s oneiric, sensorial language which I now recognise as the methodology and practice itself. In the extract above, the gaps and missed connections between the text—overlays, loops, dissolves—function as an oneiric rhythm of the scene, allowing the emotional and physiological state of Serene—the tension, fear and anticipation—to pulse through the writing. Physical details (“jaw tenses”, “knuckles whitening”, and so forth) serve as embodied markers of her internal and state, while the subsequent reset of time emphasises the dreamlike elasticity of the moment, looping perception and action in a way that resists linear causality.

c) The Collapse: Dream Coordination

(1) Research as Dream-Weaving



My dreams ~~were~~ *are* menacing, fuelled with angst and fear. Within these differing worlds presented in my dreams:

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unapproachable

b

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n

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city,

A S s C c O o R r C c H h E e D d WORLD,

REVERIE came to life as a culmination of all my haunting dreams. To me, *REVERIE* is not a result of wanting to write a screenplay, but an attempt to give something vast, cellular, and non-linear a shape...or system...or city to breathe in. The screenplay had to follow the method of the dream and not reflect, transcribe or force it, but to coordinate *with* it instead. I sought inspiration from surrealist films and filmmakers who delve into dream-logic either with their techniques of filming or writing, or through their visual aesthetics.

Earlier in my research, I wrote a literature review that included an analysis of three influential films that inspired my dream-writing practice. These analyses investigated *The Substance* (Fargeat, 2024), *Elizabeth Harvest* (Gutierrez, 2017) and *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Deren, 1943). The case studies demonstrated the use of temporal manipulation and/or distortion (looping in *Elizabeth Harvest*, repetition in *The Substance*, fragmentation of time in *Meshes*), dream-logic (non-linearity, flash imagery or symbolic visual interruptions, poetic writing), and some forms of *l'écriture féminine*. Further research investigated Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010), *Divergent* (2014), and the television series *Severance* (2022-present) to understand the overarching genre of dystopia, and Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* (1975). I did not necessarily study these films for their narrative use, but rather explored the methods of rupture, fragmentation, sensory overload and emotional writing. I would like to briefly share some of the case studies that have profoundly inspired me and from which I draw dream-writing and dream-cinema ideas to build upon.

Coralie Fargeat's *The Substance* (2024) serves as an exemplar of dream-writing in cinema through its temporal, aesthetic and structural techniques that blur the boundaries between body and psyche, conscious and subconscious. The film utilises dream (writing) not as narrative but as ontology—a space where performance, body and image converge. Fargeat externalises psychological trauma through the use of body horror and hyper-real imagery. Scenes such as Elisabeth peeling off her own skin or observing Sue's flawless surface act as metaphors for the

subconscious detaching from the body. The *mise-en-scène* functions as emotional and psychological architecture, as depicted through the sterile white bathroom that becomes a mental chamber (and prison) where change occurs. The film utilises manipulation of sound and reverberation (echoing footsteps, distorted breath, a pulsating score) to indicate fluctuating states. Time is fractured too—quick jumps between past and present are continuous, looping occurs after a seven-day cycle, along with repetition and alteration as a structural pattern.

I was deeply drawn to *The Substance*. There was just something about seeing a woman in her body becoming this monstrous figure and seeing the horror of the split-self. It was a grotesque spectacle of desire manipulated by patriarchal images or views of femininity. Although the aspect of female monstrosity was not something I wanted to explore with *REVERIE*, the idea of a split self becoming an untamed, ambiguous whole and identity was intriguing. Pairing the idea of lucid dreaming and control—two opposites in meaning and in function—created an interesting tension to embed

within my character(s), specifically my protagonist, Serene. In *REVERIE*, I translate these central structural anchors—sound, rhythm, temporality, aesthetics—to echo emotional and psychological, subconscious tensions. *The Substance* explores another tension between the self and other—a younger and older version of a woman. The idea of the split self was intriguing and I wanted to push beyond the binary states of “old” and “young”, so I asked myself what this tension would look like if it were in the same state.

On a deeper level, beyond REVERIE, I view my own identity as a split self. Having Irish heritage but being born in South Africa has always created tension within me. I am one with my people but I am also the other. This is a trait I embedded in Serene, my protagonist, having one half of herself be part of the community, of SomniCity, and one part being “other” as a lucid dreamer and as the daughter of her rebellious father figure in The Wastes.

Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010) also furthered my thinking on structuring dreams and as a whole, structuring a dreamplay. The film is structured around the architecture of dreams, which I wanted to challenge further in my own screenplay. Nolan's dream worlds build on top of one another in a loose hierarchy (a dream within a dream within a dream). Within these dream worlds, time expands and loops—crossing over multiple worlds within minutes. Architecture folds in on itself (like the Paris streets bending) and defies not only logic but physics. Dream totems are visible throughout the film (like the spinner top) and serve as anchors for us as viewers. Scenes cut abruptly throughout the film, quickly transitioning from one space-and-time to another. These techniques inspired me to think about transitions as a cut through space and time, past and present. I still wanted to push this further by not only following dream-logic, but dream affect—that is, the emotional, sensorial aspects of dream that may sometimes cause disorientation. Focusing on my own dream structuring led to the decision that my dream-writing would not be scaffolded as one on top of the other, but as one throughout—ever-present and continuous, dissolving and integrating within the actual writing form and typography (and not just in transitions and world design). What *Inception* taught me is how temporal states can be layered to create different emotional states. For example, in *REVERIE* when Serene drinks the pill for the third time before disposing the sachet, her present and past selves overlap in a shot—her choking, panic, and dizziness that she experienced in the past determines how and why she disposes the pill. Or, when she finally remembers the conversation she has had with

Silas, on repeat within her final reintegration, the simultaneity of consciousness (and different temporal states), allows both realities to coexist at once. It is as if Serene’s subconscious self is still trapped in the temporal loop of reintegration, while her conscious self

strives to move forward. The dream, and thus Serene (and her subconscious), is one psychological or internal aspect of her emotions, while her conscious self has a contrasting, or at times simultaneous, emotional state.

The Mirror (1975) by Tarkovsky illustrated the unapologetic use of image and memory without explanation or justification, which inspired me. Tarkovsky constructs memory as a living, sensory landscape instead of a linear reflection of the past. The film employs fragmented vignettes—childhood memories, dreams, footage of newsreels, and poetic narration—that blur the distinction between reality and imagination. Time flows associatively, as a fleeing thought or a snatched breath, rather than chronologically. One scene, for example, sees a woman washing her hair and staring at a mirror as her reflection ages before our eyes. In another, fire spreads across a barn while torrential rain co-occurs. The contradictory images denote the internal emotions and conflicts of the woman but also resist linear storytelling, allowing the dream’s demand of structure and feeling to prevail.

The recurring images, or motifs, of water, mirrors, fire, and wind become a language of emotional resonance—a writing of the subconscious and the psyche. In creating *REVERIE*, the focus on dreams and memory was deeply influenced by images and creating an emotional ecosystem rather than emphasising explanatory narrative or structure. In this way, I began thinking of *REVERIE* as an archive of submerged memories and experiences, much like Tarkovsky submerges the viewer as a participant in remembering through the film rather than directing them. *SomniCity*, thus, became a porous dream-world where memory and narrative bleed into each other like water and ink.

Gutierrez’s *Elizabeth Harvest* (2018) was driven with temporal manipulation—specifically,

l	o	o	repetition	f	r	a	
g		p	repetition	g	m	e	n
n	i		repetition	t	a	t	ion.

The protagonist of *Elizabeth Harvest* finds herself stuck in a horrific loop. She realises she is stuck in a

l	o	o	repetition	f	r	a	
g		p	repetition	g	m	e	n
n	i		repetition	t	a	t	ion

cycle until all her organs are harvested. This is a repetitive cycle: over the span of a few days, she drives with her husband to their mansion on the hill, explores the house, finds a secret door, enters, discovers multiple Elizabeth bodies, freaks out, gets trapped, memory wiped? Start again. This temporal strategy mirrored my own dreams of recurring images, misplaced memory and a cycle that only breaks once forgotten. I carried this dream-logic forward into *REVERIE* for emotional haunting, as seen in the way some scenes are fragmented or displaced, or in the way some characters appear in a dream before they appear in waking life. This shift allowed me to depart from closure and lean into writing the unknown as a prominent method of discovery.

l	o	o	repetition	f	r	a	
g		p	repetition	g	m	e	n
n	i		repetition	t	a	t	ion

As the process continued, this exploration of the unconscious led to questioning consciousness—how memory, emotion, and identity are perceived and how they operate in a technologically mediated world. I found it necessary to research different scientific possibilities of a world driven by—and through—AI. *Not to justify my world of SomniCity, nor to justify my reasoning. That would go against the very nature of l'écriture féminine and I would fall trap to patriarchal ways of thinking and the patriarchal demand for explanation.* This research was another layer of my world-creation process to explore the scientific and technological possibilities within the world—to expand on its imaginative plausibility and possibility. Concepts that are very real possibilities—perhaps even in the near future—include dream-sharing technologies⁸, lucid state navigation (as explored by LaBerge and Rheingold in

⁸ The field of dream research in science and technology explores the possibility of shared dreaming. Currently, dream-sharing and the conscious participation of dreams between participants are being explored by REMSpace.

their book (*Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*, 1990) and the evolution of wearable devices⁹ that are AI-driven. The concepts informed the creation of the NeuroBand watch and guided the control and mechanisms used in SomniCity to monitor and utilise citizens' dreams.

The lucid dreaming training also revealed uncanny overlaps between the dream and the body—its own dualism inquiry. Laberge and Rheingold write that “to our brains, dreaming of doing something is equivalent to actually doing it...[t]his finding explains why dreams seem so real...[t]o the brain, they are real” (1990, p. 16). This boosted my confidence in the technological exploration of the NeuroBand device in *REVERIE* which inherently responds to physical and dream correlations of activity, because neurologically, there is no distinction. The science behind this further validated my speculation and curiosity. More than that, it is fitting to explore the dangers of current technology and its implications for the future within a dystopian setting.

The research undertaken during the process did not offer solutions or answers but instead offered coordinates or anchoring points that allowed me to drift in the writing and discover as I go. This is what I mean by dream coordination. It emerged naturally through *The Testing Chamber* and *The Drift* as a way to navigate between intuitive and critical modes of thinking. The research granted me a chance to test—and ultimately trust—my intuition. I did not allow the research to harden the dream into something tangible, realistic or logical but I chose to weave it into *REVERIE* as textual rather than proof. In this sense, the research became one of many layers of the screenplay's submerged structure or unseen architecture that held up an unstable, fluid, and unknown city. The research, in this way of thinking, was not scaffolded but became a sediment that is invisible but essential to the texture of the world, supporting the unstable, fluid and unknown world of SomniCity.

REVERIE does not use any methodologies or terminology from this research but rather questions and creates speculation around these developments as an extension of current technology and science thought. To indulge in more information on this topic, see: <https://entechonline.com/shared-dreams-the-future-of-rem-sleep-synchronization/> and <https://abc7chicago.com/post/startup-remspace-claims-developed-communication-between-people-dreams/15441710/>.

⁹ Modern wearable technology, such as a fitness watch, is becoming more popular by the day. Currently, these AI-operated smartwatches monitor and track sleep cycles, oxygen and breathing levels, heart rate and many more physical monitoring abilities. *REVERIE* asks “What happens when a seemingly simple device is used with malicious intent? What if there is more to the watch than what is told?” These questions delve into the corporate use of AI, personal data collection and interconnectedness. Xiaoyun Shang's research (2024) into future trends of technology allowed me to explore and refine my imagination of how such a device might function—particularly its implications for identity, personal information, consent and corporeal autonomy within a dystopian setting.

So... I... on... a... t... i... u... g...

(2) *The Threshold Drift: Initial Capturing of the Dream*

Initially, I thought I would write a three-act structured screenplay and later fragment the words and format to fit the dream. What I soon realised, as early as the first few scenes, was that the dream would not allow that. Any alteration to the fixed writing would feel like an imposition—a forced entry of the subconscious. The words demanded their own feeling and could not—no, would not—be captured in a rigid structure. This realisation came through trial and error: each time I tried to reshape a scene or write a dream through dialogue alone—without any typographic play or fragmented speech—it simply did not convey the feeling—the experience—of the dream. The rhythm of the writing faltered, the sentences felt lifeless and emotionless, as though I had silenced something vital. I would return to sleep, sometimes even drifting into my dreams, with the discomfort shaping them as the dream pushed back against it. Images distorted, dissolved and reshaped themselves. This is how the dream resisted—through dissonance, through the body’s discomfort when I forced clarity where there was none. Eventually, I learnt to listen rather than impose.

This realisation was the key point of Cixous’s philosophy—a resistance to patriarchal thinking, understanding and structure. As she urges writers in *l’écriture féminine*, I had to abandon every urge to explain my writing, my choices of structure and tone, and write from inside the dream in the same language that it spoke to me. I could not control the dream in ways that I was taught. *Meaning could come later but here, sensation reigned.*

*f
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Thinking back to the creation of SomniCity, for instance, I knew that even though it had not yet found its name, it had to be linked to the dream world of *REVERIE*. The pulse of the city was instilled in my dreams and in my body: the static hum, the almost-too-white corridors, dark alleyways, a vibrant city centre that somehow feels like an off-key song. This draws directly on my intention to explore dreams not just as content but as a way of knowing and being—to hold dreams in their own space within the uncertainty. I wanted to hold the dream’s temperature, its disobedience, its strangeness and uniqueness.

To hold the dream, free associative writing became a threshold ritual in itself—a means of crossing from waking logic to dream-thinking. Each writing session began with this unfiltered writing, timed for 30 minutes, where I wrote continuously without pausing to

my finger...
tick

tick
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k*

think, edit, reread or correct. These sessions were treated as an opening: an invitation to let the subconscious think before the conscious mind could interfere. After the 30 minutes passed, I would stop and re-enter the writing with a gentler, more deliberate awareness, tracing patterns or images that recurred or resurfaced across the pages. The timing was not a limit but rather a boundary, or entry point, after which I could shift from spontaneous or intuitive to reflective shaping. This process created a rhythm: first the release, then the return, much like drifting in and out of a dream.

Many scenes still hold these raw origins in their texture. The three opening dreams of *REVERIE* are unedited, raw versions of this free-associative writing and their fragmentary, intuitive flow remains untouched, preserving the texture of my first encounter with those dreams. Even as later drafts shaped the structure, the initial chaos and moments of free associative writing stay intact and part of the final product. Drafting became a process of tethering dream sensation to my internal, bodily language and thought. Meaning, the subtle rhythms, impulses and physical sensations during thoughts and feelings towards or within the writing—create and partially stabilise the world of *REVERIE* in writing. *I say partially stabilise because dreams can never truly be stable.* I was translating my felt, internal experience while writing (being anxious, excited, having quick breaths and short pauses) or about the writing (noticing tensions and releases in my body, speaking lines to feel their weight and resonance) directly into language.

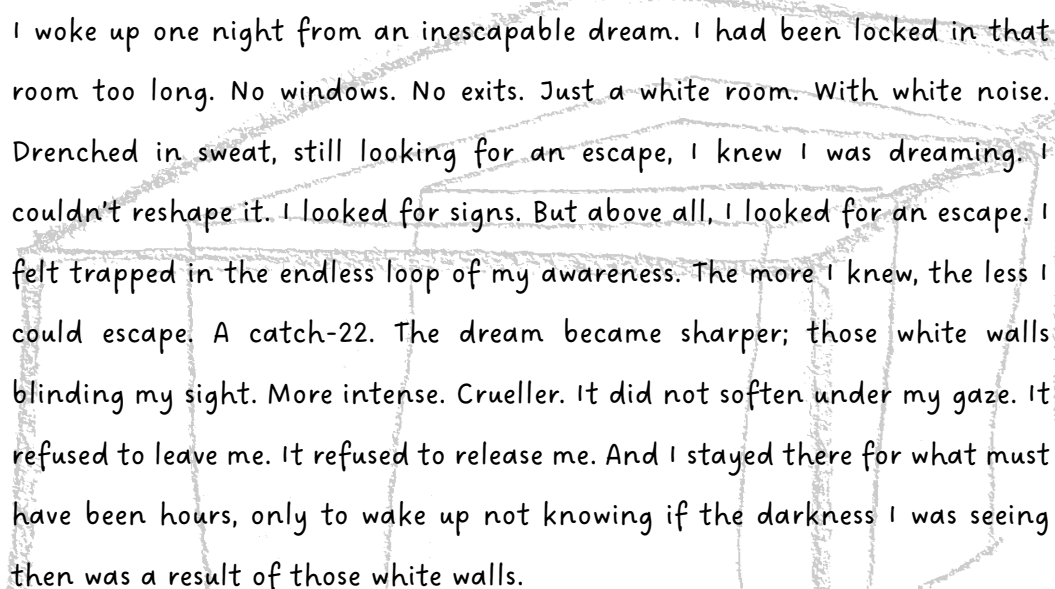
The drafts grew from a layered process of harvesting dream material: first through recording dreams, sensations, and images into a journal, then translating these fragments and snippets into a short, micro-screenplay that experiments with form, temporality, and dream-logic, followed by drafting extended scenes—letting the language, rhythm, structure and tone emerge directly from these accumulated dream residues. In this way, each process fed into one another, creating a flow where raw materials were connected, woven and combined into coherent—but still dream-driven—drafts.

(3) *Lucidity: The Dream That Drowns Me*

Though I had chosen not to partake in lucid dreaming, the concept was alluring as a narrative angle for *REVERIE*. LaBerge and Rheingold describe lucid dreaming as:

empowered by the knowledge that the world they are experiencing is a creation of their own imagination, lucid dreamers can consciously influence the outcome their dreams. They can create and transform objects, people, situations, worlds, even themselves. (LaBerge & Rheingold, 1990, p. 2).

This thought seemed to mirror my intention with *REVERIE*—to find agency in distortion and disorientation, to create worlds within worlds. It was only once I successfully got into the habit of lucid dreaming that I realised this method completely clashes with the foundation of my process. I did not seek to control the dream or to consciously create worlds, or even to coerce the dream into a singular, logical meaning. I only wanted to receive the dream and listen to it without any external or conscious interference—which is also why I discarded Freud’s psychoanalytical practice of dreams. The *Threshold Drift* phase already trained me to write from an embodied perspective, to let the dream speak in its own fractured way, while *l’écriture féminine* taught me that the body of writing must resist domestication. Lucid dreaming, however, suggested a new way of thinking—a mastery of dreams that bends the unconscious realm to my will.



I woke up one night from an inescapable dream. I had been locked in that room too long. No windows. No exits. Just a white room. With white noise. Drenched in sweat, still looking for an escape, I knew I was dreaming. I couldn't reshape it. I looked for signs. But above all, I looked for an escape. I felt trapped in the endless loop of my awareness. The more I knew, the less I could escape. A catch-22. The dream became sharper; those white walls blinding my sight. More intense. Crueller. It did not soften under my gaze. It refused to leave me. It refused to release me. And I stayed there for what must have been hours, only to wake up not knowing if the darkness I was seeing then was a result of those white walls.

LaBerge and Rheingold insist that “lucid dreams can be extraordinarily vivid, intense, pleasurable, and exhilarating” (1990, p. 2). For me, it was the complete opposite. Lucidity only magnified the uncanny qualities of the dream, pressing me further into its terror. I felt claustrophobic in the dream, unable to alter or shift the scene. Although the outcome was rather

terrifying, it did get me thinking about how exhilarating Serene's dreams could be, and this links directly to what Cixous calls *jouissance*. Not only do Serene's dreams spill...

57.

SERENE GRABS SILAS'S HAND WITH EAGERNESS AS HE PULLS HER OUT OF THE INK WATER. HE CUPS HER FACE WITH HIS HANDS TENDERLY, GENTLY.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SERENE HAS SEEN HIS FACE IN SUCH DETAIL.

HIS BIG BROWN EYES, GLOWING LIKE THE SUNRISE.

HIS HANDS, A WARM BLANKET OF FIERCE PROTECTION.

HIS HOLD, AS SOOTHING AS A LULLABY.

SILAS (CONT'D)
(echoed)
W a k e u p S e r e n e .

THE WORLD STOPS TURNING FOR A SPLIT SECOND. IT IS JUST THE TWO OF THEM. SERENE'S HEAVY BREATHING ECHOES THROUGHOUT THE ROOM.

REVERIE
Page 57-59

59.

PROFESSOR STRAY
(hissing)
Serene! You've committed an act of treason against the collective. This will not go unpunished.

SERENE meets PROFESSOR STRAY's gaze, fear exuding her. She receives glances and stares around the room. Some look shocked. Some look disgusted. Some look afraid.

SERENE
(scared, stumbling)
Treason? No. No. I don't know what...Why is everyone staring at me like that?

PROFESSOR SLYNN
(cold)
You know why.
(beat)
Dreaming of a man is not just dangerous. It is forbidden. You've conjured The Other for your own...indulgence. These fantasies are what started the war. They infect the system and threaten our security. You of all people should know that.

SERENE's head slightly twitches at PROFESSOR SLYNN's implication.

...over and erupt, like Cixous encourages, but it also carries the pleasures of being boundless and encapsulates Serene's personal desires. Serene's forbidden conjuring of Silas bears traces of *jouissance* but also echoes the sensation of entrapment—something I felt within my own experience of lucid dreaming. A true paradox that trembles between delight and danger. Serene's lucidity, and the constant taboo return of Silas, tap into that forbidden intensity—she tastes the exhilaration of shaping her dream...but that taste carries danger.

LaBerge and Rheingold note that “we can carry not only knowledge but also moods from the lucid dream state to the waking state. When we awaken laughing from delight from a wonderful lucid dream, it isn't surprising that our waking mood has been brightened with feelings of joy” (1990, p. 6). Although the authors draw connections between lucid dreaming and the waking state, I found this to be especially true with dreams in general. This realisation also became a clear guiding principle for characters' emotional states and their reactions to their dreams. I began to understand that experiences in dreams carry over into waking experiences, as Serene's agitation,

Lingering.
Waiting.
Watching.

anxiety, and fear are haunted by the residues of her dreamworld. Like **Pressure** her body remembers before it even becomes aware. *REVERIE* holds onto this porousness, where dream affects continue to tremble through her waking states.

In my chest. LaBerge and Rheingold claim that dreamworlds are unstable exactly because there is no external source of stimulation from the outside world, making the dreams more volatile than waking life (*ibid.*, 1990, p. 9). SomniCity is precisely that—an unstable world filled with volatility and anomalies. A glitching lamppost that should have never glitched. A fragment of drinking a pill that triggers a sense of déjà vu. A perfectly coded AI device stuttering.

Building.
Unbearable.
Collapsing.

Indeed, their instruction that “your preparation for learning lucid dreaming will help you discover what your dreams are like...to find peculiarities (dream signs) that appear often enough in your dreams to be reliable signposts of the dream state” (*ibid.*, 1990, p. 10) shaped my practice in writing the dream. Bulkley's extends the ideas of dream signs with his concept of the “root metaphor” (1992) or a connecting thread of signs across dreams—an image gathering layers of meaning over time, returning like a heartbeat across the text. These root metaphors or dream signs (water, ink, glitching and looping) became a cinematic anchor for *REVERIE*, a motif and constant return to the dreamworld—symbols of instability and rupture.

Laberge and Rheingold's book opened up a new understanding of the world of dreaming. *It frightened me. It fascinated me. But most of all, lucid dreaming felt like an interference. To bend the dream was to betray it. So, I abandoned the method and kept the dream intact—raw and unfinished—without alterations or conscious adjustments. And in its raw, vulnerable state, it spoke to me more intimately than I could ever imagine.* Thus, lucid dreaming became a method abandoned but a lesson learned. It became an inspiration and provided theoretical underpinnings for certain world-building elements or character details (such as characters' emotional resonance to the dreamworld). Ultimately, though, it clashed violently with my writing ethos. I did not want to dominate my dreams or twist them into clarity. I wanted to write the dream in its rawest form. To let it refuse me. To let it remain sovereign above all else.

d) The Melting Clock: Temporal Strategies & Techniques

Before focusing on dreams as the subject of my research, I was particularly interested in temporality and its application in theatre. *Little did I know that the reason for this interest was that the temporality in my dreams is precisely what made my dreams so uncanny and mysterious.* Hans-Thies Lehmann's seminal work, "Postdramatic Theatre" (2006), identified prominent ways to engage with and create postdramatic work through temporality, aesthetics, structure and the like. I was fascinated by his concept of "durational aesthetics" and how time can be manipulated to transform meaning.

In his book, Lehmann describes the techniques of durational aesthetics as "the intention of utilizing the specificity of theatre as a mode of presentation to turn time as such into an object of the aesthetic experience" (2006, p. 156). To turn time *into* an 'aesthetic experience'. Immediately, when considering time as an aesthetic, I transformed these ideas into cinematic aesthetics, because the manipulation of time—slowing, looping, fragmenting, and layering—felt inherently visual and cinematic, something that can only be seen and felt. Film offers a concrete medium to render the elasticity of time: framing, shot duration, movement, sound and time markers can all perform time. Although the book is theatre-based, I believe that durational aesthetics could be translated into film and possibly extended or enhanced to their fullest visual potential. I wanted to show time as an experience, rather than imply it through gesture or dialogue, and the cinematic apparatus mentioned above allows this to be rendered precisely and viscerally for the viewer. Moreover, dreams and temporality have a unique relationship,

filled with tension and ambiguity. Temporal techniques quickly became an apparent choice for a structure that holds the dream intact. Yet, I was left with more questions:

Can the dream be told through time?

How does it function?

How does time exist in dreams?

Durational aesthetics encompass repetition, sequencing, time sculpting (objects that hold a time of their own, such as sentimentality or memory-based objects/persons), simultaneity and temporal suspension (including slow motion and fast motion) (Lehmann, 2006). The techniques focus on temporal manipulation and distortion, inherently resisting logic and linear progressions. Thus, the temporal experience, foregrounding sensation, is favoured over the actual narrative time. This postdramatic thinking felt true to the methodology I sought to create. I incorporated some of these concepts, along with an additional temporal strategy of my own (such as looping), as structural necessities for writing the dreamworld of *REVERIE*.

(1) Repetition

Lehmann describes repetition as “formerly employed for structuring and constructing a form,” and notes its new use “for the de-structuring and deconstructing of story, meaning and totality of form” (2006, p. 157). The repetition I implemented in my writing was twofold: one existing on a sonic level and the other on a narrative level.

Inspired by the essence of *Dream A Little Dream of Me* (sung by Ella Fitzgerald in 1950), a humming of the song drifts throughout *REVERIE* like a lullaby. It is never intact. It is always slightly distorted—a low hum, an echoed hum, a hum in crescendo. The sonic repetition is a moment of déjà vu for Serene, a subconscious reminder that she has been here before. The recurrence of the humming reopens the same sonic space yet also accumulates dissonance, with each hum slightly altered. Working with crescendos, slow-motion, and deepening of harmonies, the song transforms into a menacing, terrifying song, serving as a warning to Serene that danger is approaching. The echoes of the sonic experience form a haunting refrain, something that Freud would recognise as an uncanny return—a “class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (Freud, 1919/1955). The song becomes stuck in its own liminal space, being both the same and never the same, detached from linear time. On a narrative level, repetition became another layer of echoing, one that evokes memory, time and feeling. As Lehmann notes, “repetition is also capable of producing a new attention punctuated by the memory of the preceding events, *an attending to the little differences*” (2007, p. 157). Some phrases (“dream carefully”) or beginning dream-scenes

Stars whispering

Stars whispering above me.
Something soft but don't
you dare tell the city,

fade
away.

Stars whispering above me.

They're gonna take your

MEMORY

AWAY!

It's better if WE just

repeat through a loop, while some camera shots are repeated for the intended purpose of crafting a sensation for the viewer. That is, the (re)drinking of the BlueRose pill, which erases citizens' memories of the past, is depicted through overlaps, creating a sense of a fragmented memory that recurs in the present. The overlaying shots become a superimposition, where the action itself becomes a durational presence, existing simultaneously as present, memory, ritual and foreboding. *This links back to the hauntology of my writing, an ever-present moment—a phantom—that keeps lingering behind the words.*

fade away.

fade away.

Repetition here, punctuates the film's fabric. These echoes form a linguistic loop that unsettles rather than reassures, with their eerie, déjà vu pattern that is persistently menacing. The same applies to frequent dreamscapes of ink, water, and the meadow. The dreamscapes appear fragmented, tying their appearance to Serene's fragmented memory. Using these visual cues as motifs in Serene's dreamscapes, the dreams become anchors—reminders—for both viewer and protagonist, of the temporal slippages of the world.

SERENE closes her eyes, her breath shaking as the headset amplifying her mental projection starts to vibrate slightly.

A beautiful green and symmetrical meadow forms, but quickly turns uneven.

Wildflowers

REVERIE

Page 17

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SHARED DREAMSCAPE - MEADOW:

THE DREAM FRACTURES ABRUPTLY. THE GOLDEN LIGHT SHATTERS LIKE GLASS, AND THE SERENE MEADOW TWISTS INTO A SPIRALLING VOID. SERENE CLUTCHES SHARLA, PANIC FLOODING HER FACE.

SERENE
(screaming)
What's happening?!

SHARLA
(gritting her teeth)
Someone's tampering with the
connection!

REVERIE

Page 70

A MEADOW. LUSH. VIBRANT. A WORLD OF GOLDEN HUES OF SUNRAYS AND ROLLING GREEN FIELDS. THE MEADOW THEY SAW IN CLASS, PRISTINE AND UNTOUCHED, AN IDYLIC IMAGE.

SERENE TOUCHES THE GRASS THAT CURLS UP AGAINST HER PALM LIKE A DOG SNUGLING INTO ITS BED.

BUT THE IMAGE DOESN'T HOLD. THE HORIZON WAVERS LIKE A MIRAGE, FLICKERING BETWEEN PERFECTION AND RUIN.

THE BLUE SKY CURDLES INTO CHARRED SMOKE. IT RETURNS TO CLEAR SKY, ALMOST LIKE A GLITCH.

THEN THE SMOKE APPEARS. THIS TIME, UNWAVERING.

THE GRASS WITHERS TO BRITTLE ASH, STAINING SERENE'S HANDS LIKE INK BLOTCHES ON A CLEAN SHEET OF PAPER.

THE WORLD COLLAPSES.

REVERIE

Page 88

The repetition in *REVERIE* is intentional, illustrating and opening temporal cracks of the screenplay, revealing how memory, emotional residue and dreams are not linear but rather recursive, uncanny, and cyclical. The repetition built into the screenplay is not sequential but layered—an echo that folds back into the present, constantly expanding, unsettling, and haunting.

(2) Fragmentation

<p> Holds.</p> <p> She breathes.</p> <p> Keeps climbing.</p> <p> Seven.</p> <p> Eight.</p> <p> Hands torn.</p> <p> Chest shaking.</p> <p> She reaches the top.</p> <p> Straddles it.</p> <p> Looks back.</p>	<p><i>REVERIE</i> <i>Page 111</i></p> <p>over from experience and</p>	<p><i>SERENE</i> <i>(sinking into chair, limbs heavy)</i></p>
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subconscious into the current reality. Sometimes, fragmentation occurs through dialogue that frequently fractures under the pressure of the dream, especially in moments where Serene’s control over her dream states weakens—as if she cannot fully contain or articulate her experience through the dialogue alone. The extract on the right

REVERIE
Page 143

Wh...
what
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d o n ' t
w a n t
t o ?

illustrates her hesitation, fear and uncertainty, slowing down the rhythm of her speech, and, in turn, the viewer’s experience, echoing her psychological state of despair and confusion. In such cases, fragmentation is the vessel of her subconscious self, faltering under the weight of the dream. Fragmentation is, thus, both a method and a reflective visual: it enacts the refusal of

completeness that the dream insists on, blurring the boundaries between body, thought, emotion and language while still allowing the viewer to inhabit Serene's fractured perception.

The screen

REVERIE

Page 147

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The viewer becomes suspended in a liminal space, with the characters, existing between reality and the subconscious, as every fragmentation trails off into a dream and reemerges later on. The word "viewer" here refers to: (1) the audience and (2) the reader (director, cinematographer, production team). On a visual level, the textual distortion may appear on screen as one-second subliminal flashing (such as the WAKE UP sequence) or can be viewed as coding from the recalibration system, each letter of the WAKE UP sequence appearing in between shots of Serene screaming in silence. For the production team, the actual reading of the screenplay provides them with a deeper understanding of the dream through their editorial and conceptual process. It allows them to immerse themselves as creators, probing questions on how to translate these fragments, typographic play, and slow-motion sequences into cinematic form. The hope is that every person involved with *REVERIE*, whether audience or production, immerses themselves in the characters and the dream world as presented in the

screenplay.

An important decision—or connection—I made early on during my experimentation with fragmentary form, was that each dream fragment would indicate or allude to Serene’s anxious emotional state. The feeling I intended to elicit was the sensational and psychological experience Serene has while these dreams interrupt her mind—and the environment around her. These eruptions intend to destabilise logic and action, becoming cinematic and literary gestures on textual, auditory and visual levels. The fragmentation facilitates and situates the audience/reader inside Serene’s mind because it disrupts the viewer’s expectation of linearity and habits of sense-making; they become not detached, passive observers of a coherent plot, but participants within the corporeal, fluid and affective landscape of her interiority. In this way, fragmentation—and temporality at large—becomes an extension of *l’écriture féminine*, privileging multiplicity, rhythm and bodily experience over narrative cohesion or closure.

(3) Simultaneity

Simultaneity is another extension of a temporal dimension. Lehmann notes the following on the value of using simultaneity, stating that:

Duration, momentariness, simultaneity ... become experiences of time in a form of art that no longer restricts itself to presenting the final outcome of its secret creative process but instead valorizes the temporal process of becoming a picture as a ‘theatrical’ process [or in my case, a cinematic process]. The task of the spectators is no longer the neutral reconstruction, the recreation and patient retracing of the fixed image. (Lehmann, 2007, p. 134).

In simultaneity, different temporal registers (past, present, future, dream, reality), contrasting and complementary, are staged together, coexisting on their own plane. The dream bleed sequences, for example, explicitly signal a collapse of dream and reality. These ‘interruptions’ from Serene’s subconscious world onto her present reality also materialise the simultaneity of different temporal selves and realities. There are moments when Serene sees her past self and meets her future self, both whom appear amongst her present self. These moments echo the dreamworld, where the impossible becomes possible. Serene’s dreams are not confined to solely the past or future, but they bleed into one another, as illustrated below:

SERENE STANDS IN THE CENTRE AS CIVILIANS RUN THROUGH HER,
LIKE GHOSTS. SHE SEES HERSELF, ARMS OUTSTRETCHED, SCREAMING
- BUT NO SOUND COMES FROM HER MOUTH.

REVERIE

Page 114

A BOY (5) tugs on her sleeve.

BOY

You dropped your dream.

He hands her a glass orb.

Inside it, she sees a reflection - COLIN.

Then SILAS.

Then herself.

Then -

REVERIE

Page 154

BLOCK 8: SOMNIHIGH'S HALLWAY WHERE SHE PASSES HERSELF
WALKING THE OTHER WAY.

REVERIE

Page 200

P > a > s > s

s < s < a < P

Serene encounters simultaneity within a class activity. She meets her younger self on the beach, followed immediately by the mysterious Silas, who seems to pop up constantly. In this moment, her childhood memories, present consciousness, and the possibility of a future threat when others discover her dream abilities coexist within the same dreamscape. On the page, this is reinforced by camera instructions, such as PAN or ZOOM IN, or temporal markers, like a flashback or memory, which blur—not clarify—temporal shifts and simultaneity. In conventional screenwriting, flashbacks indicate a jump back into the past, following a linear progression. However, in *The Wastes*, for example, the active time works against these markers. When a scene is marked as FLASHBACK, the present action co-occurs alongside it.

PANORAMIC VIEW: THE WASTES.

A BROKEN, SCORCHED LAND STRETCHES OUT BEFORE THEM. TOWERING METAL CARCASSES OF SKYSCRAPERS, ROADS CRACKED LIKE DRIED SKIN, AN UNBREATHABLE SKY SWIRLING WITH SOOT. SERENE GASPS. THE AIR IS THICK, PRESSING AGAINST HER RIBS. A MEMORY - OR A DREAM - RIPS THROUGH HER MIND.

FLASHBACK:

INT. THE SCORCH - DREAM

SERENE'S FATHER KNEELS IN THE SAND OF THE SCORCH. HIS EYES ARE BLOODSHOT RED. IRRITATED. DRIED. BEGGING FOR OXYGEN. A BEAD OF SWEAT DRIPS FROM HIS FOREHEAD INTO HIS MOUTH. HE IS THANKFUL FOR THE DROPLET SOOTHING HIS PARCHED THROAT.

FATHER
(hoarse, pleading)
*Serene...You have to wake up. You
have to see what's real. They're
using your dreams to restore...*

SHE STANDS FROZEN, HER LIMBS UNRESPONSIVE, THE HEAT LICKING AT HER SKIN.

FLAMES IN THE DISTANCE, BUILDINGS CRUMBLING. THE WORLD SCREAMS AROUND HER, AND YET SHE IS STILL.

FATHER (CONT'D)
(straining)
*They've built the city but you can
rebuild the whole world-*

A HIGH-PITCHED FREQUENCY CUTS THROUGH THE AIR. HER FATHER CONVULSES, HIS EYES ROLLING BACK, AND THEN-

The use of temporal markers here is meant to draw attention to time's instability, rather than label or organise time. Time is constructed and performed rather than naturally occurring, as seen in *The Wastes*, where time is stretched and irrational, minutes taking seconds, and distance being shortened by time's magnetic pull. The text resists clear temporal compartmentalisation. Memory is not a "flashback" but rather an active and present experience. The reader experiences temporal collapse between different versions of Serene. This temporal shift marked a transparent, malleable layer to me, reflecting the persistence of memory and emotional residue as living realities rather than sealed or confined pasts.

REVERIE
Page 88-89

THE SQUARE BEGINS TO R I P P L E LIKE WATER.

SERENE NOTICES A LOOMING FIGURE. SHE STANDS.

REVERIE
Page 29

FROM THE SHADOWS, SILAS APPEARS. HE STANDS THERE. AT A DISTANCE. GLANCING AT HER.

HER DRINK

S

Silas—an embodiment of Serene’s the screenplay, reinforcing an unstable there—in the dream realm—nor here and vanishes without explanation, leaving spectator—wondering whether he is a figment or present reality. The shifting presence since each encounter could be a recollection, or a lived moment. Rather than clarifying, these ambiguities and possibilities

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dreams—recurs throughout simultaneity. He is neither—in the present. He appears Serene—and the reader—of her imagination, a dream, of Silas destabilises time, a *rendezvous*, a hallucination the screenplay holds all open at once.

(4) Durational Sequencing & Slow-Motion

Another temporal layer to *REVERIE* is durational sequencing—sequences (or moments) of durational manipulation, such as slowed time, elongated time, or suspension of time, in which the actual experience of time becomes foregrounded. Slow-motion and quick-pacing devices allowed me to exaggerate and explore the experience of the dream. Some moments are suspended, stuck in the in-between, as if the reader-spectator joins Serene in her dream. Other moments are quick and slick, cutting from one moment to the next, sharing the exhilaration or strain that Serene physically feels.

I refer back to the overlaying shots of Serene (re)drinking the pill. The act is not only repeated but slowed down significantly, stretching the moment of routine compliance into something uncanny, forcing the reader to linger in Serene’s embodied discomfort. Time, here, is no longer a flow but instead a weight—heavy, stalled and materialised on the page. At the festival, for example, the page stretches words downwards, creating a distorting effect that not only signals a temporal lag but mirrors Serene’s fractured perception. In these suspended moments,

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The typographic play and cascading text achieve a similar suspension. The page itself holds time open, allowing the reader to slow down, delay and suspend the act of reading. The viewer must undergo the suspension that Serene does (which I will discuss in depth in [Section e](#)). Everything is caught in the slowness of the action and time feels as weighted as the passage itself. This technique inherently resists clear, linear progression as it creates pockets of duration. As Lehmann argues, the postdramatic refusal of totality is not a lack, but “a liberating possibility of an ongoing (re-)writing, imagination and recombination that refuses the ‘rage of understanding’” (2006, p. 88). Each simultaneity or slow durational play refuses resolution and opens ambiguities that hold multiple temporalities, perceptions, and experiences at once with various interpretations. Instead of offering a clear, resolved meaning or unified temporal perspective, these techniques keep the scene alive, open and in motion.

(5) Looping

Looping is one of the most central temporal strategies employed in *REVERIE*. Looping is a repetition of large chunks or sequences or “find[ing] variety in repetition where only the nuance alters” (Rose, 1965). Looping returns to a particular moment with some form of alteration or transformation, whereas repetition remains intact in its original instance. There are moments of constant return—a never-ending cycle—repeated but slightly altered each time. The looping is not solely a structural choice for the screenplay but also alludes to the psychological effect of entrapment and a sense of *déjà vu* for Serene, echoing the disorientation of dreams and logic. The most explicit example of looping is the constant return to the start of the screenplay after Serene gets ‘reset’ or recalibrated into SomniCity. Once Serene discovers the truth, she loses her memory and finds herself back at the start. Offering no resolution, the screenplay circles back to the beginning, suggesting that Serene’s world does not progress but is in continuous motion—in repeat.

The decision of looping the screenplay was intended to evoke the sensation of being trapped in a dream (or a recurrence of the dream)—a reality with no escape. Smaller loops occur throughout Serene’s reset cycle. I refer back to the drinking of the pill, where each shot loops over the other (one being the present, one the future, one a memory). With almost identical staging, each instance is the same but with different focus points: the cup scrapes, white knuckles clench, the swallow occurs, the compliance repeats. What should be a routine act becomes unsettling through its recurrence (and looping), creating the sense that Serene is

caught in an endless cycle enforced by SomniCorp.

Looping reaches a pivotal point in Serene's last cycle. Serene enters the backroom of The Wastes where she is confronted with screens revealing countless cycles of Serene's visit to The Wastes—once, injured and running through the scorched terrain, then resting in an abandoned building conversing with Silas about love, and even a shared kiss with Silas. The multiplicity of these images destabilised her perception of reality. What she thought was a singular, linear event turns out to be a series of countless repetitions, each marked by subtle differences.

SILENCE.

SERENE (CONT'D)

He's gone now.

SILAS

What happened?

SERENE

I'm sorry but do I know you?

SILAS

I wouldn't think so.

SERENE

It's just...you look so familiar.

SILAS

You don't. We've never met.

SERENE FROWNS AND SLOWLY WALKS AWAY FROM SILAS. SOMETHING ABOUT HIS PRESENCE MAKES HER FEEL THREATENED.

SILAS

I like the ocean. Something about it makes me calm. Present. Focused. How about you?

SERENE

(simultaneously)

Calm. Present. Focused. Yeah. I've heard that before. I feel at home here. It reminds me of my dad.

SILAS

Oh. Do you two visit here often?

SERENE

Where do I know you from?

SILAS

I wouldn't know. I've never seen you before.

SERENE

You said your name was Silas, right?

SILAS

Yes...

SERENE

Why did I think your name was Colin?

REVERIE
Page 7

REVERIE
Page 167-168

SERENE IS AT A LOSS FOR WORDS. SHE KNOWS THIS MAN. SHE'S SURE OF IT. HIS NAME SOUNDS SO FAMILIAR. TOO FAMILIAR.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Cat got your tongue?

SERENE
(stuttering)
I...uh...no. I-

SILAS
Can I ask you something random?

She nods.

SILAS (CONT'D)
What is the last thing you remember?

SILAS
Sharla, right? Was your mom working late?

SERENE
(whispering to self)
Sharla...
(normal voice)
Uhm, yeah she was working late. She's the Head Instructor.

SERENE BECOMES FRAZZLED BY WHAT SHE HAS UTTERED.

SERENE (CONT'D)
(perplexed)
Sorry, I...I don't know why I said that. That's not true.

SILAS
What's her name?

SERENE
S...So...Soreya? What?! What is happening?

REVERIE
Page 158

REVERIE
Page 158

A freezing, stark room dressed in wires and screens from top to bottom. On the screens, multiple versions of SERENE's visit to The Wastes are documented:

SERENE RUNNING THROUGH THE SCORCHED TERRAIN OF THE WASTES, LEG INJURED.

SERENE STAYING OVER IN THE WASTES CITY IN AN ABANDONED BUILDING.

SERENE AND SILAS TALKING ABOUT LOVE.

REVERIE

Page 161

SERENE AND SILAS'S FIRST KISS.

She gasps at the screen. When have they kissed? How many times has he lied to her? Who is he really?

SERENE
(to MAN)
What is this?

MAN
These are all the times we've reset
your memory.

Each time Serene visits the interrogation site, the action is slightly different, too. Each cycle restages the interaction between Serene and the mysterious man, shifting according to the choices Serene makes. At first, being naïve, Serene follows the man's instructions, resulting in her reintegration into a new cycle. The second time, Serene becomes suspicious of the man, and the pill he offers her, choosing to disrupt the sequence by secretly not taking the pill. However, a contingency plan is initiated and Serene ultimately gets reset. The third loop, Serene and Silas work on an escape plan where Serene turns the tables on the man, forcing him to drink the pill. She takes control of her own narrative, choosing to destroy SomniCorp's cycle.

The screens stutter with static around her. She takes it in for a last one.

Every loop.

REVERIE

Page 172

Every lie.

SMASH!

She crashes one with a chair.

Glass and static rain down.

SCAT!

She rips the wires on the wall.

The lights above flicker, rumble.

SHUT!

This moment crystallised the screenplay's looping temporality. The smaller loops and repetition—the drinking of the pill, her dream bleeds, Silas' reappearances—could be experienced subjectively as déjà vu, or an uncanny moment. The bigger loops, resets, externalise and objectify repetition, presenting visual proof that Serene's life has been replayed again and again under SomniCorp's control. The psychological effect is disorienting. Faced with versions of herself that she is not aware of, Serene questions her own past. The uncanny arises because each loop is both known and unknown, forgotten and remembered, both her life and not her life. Serene's confrontation with the screens functions as an archive of loops, a chilling catalogue of how many times she has been made to relive variations of the same events, unbeknownst to her.

These looping moments are not just a structural undercurrent of the screenplay but are the explicit subject of the narrative. For Serene, the revelation is a collapse of temporal coherence. For the reader-spectator, the scene stages the terrifying possibility that reality itself is nothing more than an

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controlled and curated by forces outside one's grasp.

Thus, looping in *REVERIE* culminates in both structural and thematic logic that holds the dream. These loops confirm that all apparent progression—from dream to waking, from encounter to revelation—has always been contained within a closed circuit of repetition.

Lehmann's temporality techniques offered a structure to the dream, and in turn, allowed the dream to communicate and dictate the screenplay form through time. Loops, repetition, fragmentation, simultaneity, distortion and duration became the grammar of *REVERIE*. These techniques enabled me to resist narrative neatness and follow Cixous's philosophy of *l'écriture féminine*, letting time be textured by sensation rather than smoothed and clarified into logic. By doing so, the screenplay holds the dream in its raw, disobedient form, creating a temporality that is felt rather than measured.

e) The Body in Dreaming: Embodied Practices and Typographic Play

(1) Embodied Writing

My process involves embodied writing—writing from the body, rather than about it. The writing is marked by breath, impulse, swallowing, tremors, all bodily rhythms that inscribe themselves into the screenplay. The process of evoking the feeling, or overall mood of the scenes, has proven to be challenging to describe, as these qualities arose from the emotional experience while writing. Perhaps an illustration would serve best to showcase these moments. In *REVERIE*, Serene prepares for the festival with her friend, Sangfroid. She takes a moment for herself, staring at her reflection.

THE MIRROR BEGINS TO RIPPLE, FORMING SMALL WAVES...SOFTLY AT FIRST. THEN, VIOLENT WAVES CRASH AGAINST THE WOODEN FRAME THAT HOUSES THE MIRROR.

This image originated from the immediate physical aftershock of waking from my dreams—*heart pounding so hard that it feels like my chest might actually crack open!* I carried the tremor in my chest for the whole day, writing about this violent feeling crashing against my ribcage. When I sat down later to write this part, I recreated this feeling of confusion, introspective questioning and heaviness, writing in bursts that mimicked these sensations. The rippling mirror, here, became a bodily recall of my own heartbeat crashing and pounding. In another dream bleed, Serene sits on the beach, complaining that something is wrong with her eyes. I drew from my own dream that deeply disturbed me:

SERENE (CONT'D)
(to MALE, voice cracking)
There's something wrong with my
eyes.

SERENE COUGHS TO CLEAR HER THROAT. SHE SLIGHTLY CHOKES ON THE SAND GRAINS THAT EXIT HER MOUTH. SHE SPITS OUT THE REMAINING SAND GRAINS IN DISGUST, QUICKLY GRABBING A BOTTLE OF WATER FROM THE PICNIC BASKET TO RINSE HER MOUTH. SHE GULPS HALF OF THE WATER AND PLACES THE BOTTLE BACK INTO THE BASKET. BUT SHE NOTICES ITS CRIMSON COLOUR, REALISING SHE HAS DRUNK BLOOD.

I blink again, rub my eyes, and rub and rub. But it's still there. Falling, falling, falling in big, thin strands, like someone's pulled the thread of the sky and it's unravelling. My vision blurs, smudges at the edge like a half-erased drawing.

"There's something wrong with my eyes,"
I say, my voice cracks.

When I had this dream, I woke up with a dry, scratchy throat. I remember journalling and writing about the sensation I felt. This vision is not a metaphor that was consciously chosen for *REVERIE* but instead an embodied transcription of nausea and shock that lingered in my throat, long after the dream ended. In another dream bleed, the perfect meadow becomes disruptive and dangerous. A weed drags Serene down, until her mouth is covered in dirt and ground and the page itself pulls the word "help" letter by letter downwards, suffocating the plea.

IT PULLS HER DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE GROUND, UNTIL HER MOUTH IS COVERED WITH DIRT, HER EYES PEELING JUST BELOW THE SURFACE. SHE TRIES TO YELL-

SERENE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

H
E
L
P

These moments are indicators of the character's external, bodily experiences, yes. But more than that, these are the dream residues that have built up in my body and leaked onto the page. What emerges from this method is writing that not simply describes but induces effects. To expand on this, the recurring FADE TO BLACK or WHITE pattern mimics a deep inhalation

or exhalation (either of Serene or me as writer) after the scene—a moment in time, where breathing becomes rhythmically coded into the screenplay. The intention for these micro moments is to allow the reader to synchronise with Serene's body as they read—to choke, tense, and breathe unevenly along with her. In that sense, I followed Cixous's insistence that writing should return to the body—mine, Serene's, and the reader's. The screenplay, thus, becomes an embodied score of Serene's internal world.

For me, this is precisely what *l'écriture féminine* makes possible—a writing that embraces leakage (uncontrollable spilling of the subconscious, emotion, memory), excess (surplus or surge of feeling or language that refuses restraint) and sensation (bodily impulses, rhythms) as the governing principle, resisting detachment and emphasising experience and sensations as ways of knowing. I do not separate my process from my body. Each tremble, gasp, tightening of knuckles or jaws, all write themselves into the dreamplay.

I feel another warm, thick droplet hit my cheek. I reach out to wipe it away but... my hands - they're missing. I can feel them but... where are they? I collapse to the ground, losing my balance. I land on the pool of blood where the blanket used to be. I try to yell but only a faint whisper escapes my mouth. "There's something wrong with my eyes..."

An ice cold hand reaches out and pulls my top eyelids over the bottom ones, "Ouch!" I yell, as I slap my friend's arm away. I blink.

Everything stops.

(2) *Typographic Play*

One of my earliest thoughts on breaking down the rigid structures of the screenplay structure was the inclusion of typographic play. To me, typographic play means dismantling, combining and fragmenting the actual form and structure of the typography as a way of capturing the essence (or typed visual format) of the dream. Typographic play lends itself as a technique for dream-writing, allowing the dream to appear stretched out, fragmented, and dismembered across the page. Here, I am not talking about the content nor the narrative, but rather about the way the page looks and the experience of reading this.

Typographic play became a form of *l'écriture féminine* in a way, expressing the self and transcribing sensation beyond linguistic or patriarchal language, in how the typography transforms the dream into an experience of writing and/or viewing (reading). Typographic play resists patriarchal language by visually, and linguistically, breaking down the sentence's complete, full structure through disruption, fragmentation, or disjointed alignment. The meaning of the sentence is felt and experienced rather than understood through logical, ordered syntax.

Typographic play became a method for capturing the distortions of dream-time and dream-space. In one dream bleed in *REVERIE*, for example, the word "drizzle" cascades down the page, slowing down the experience of the reader/viewer's eyes into the same measured descent as Serene's perception. Similarly, when Serene undergoes the recalibration into SomniCity, her speech becomes slurred and muffled, with the words stretching out and echoing to mimic this effect and experience. These typographic 'glitches' transforms the page into a site of collapse and, in terms of narrative, a site of resistance to SomniCorp's order. As a result, the page—and reality—become unstable through a surface that resists linear viewing and reading altogether. In this way, the page already warns of structural collapse in both content and form.

SERENE
(desperate, slurred)
W-h-o-

-a-r-e-

-y-o-u-...?

The clock m

e
l
t
s.

REVERIE
Page 146

Her limbs

p p p
r i p p l e
p p p
like

water.

The screen

F
R A
C T U
R E S
into
mirrored derorrim
mirrored derorrim
mirrored derorrim

p
i
e
c
e
s

The choices of typographic play were not made haphazardly, nor were they ornamental. Rather, these choices were made with precision: each moment of disruption was carefully and

delicately

precise and were

definitive

and, at times,

demanding.

I formatted each moment differently, only when the sensation of the dream (or its disruption occurring inside Serene’s consciousness) could not be conveyed through linear prose. In practice, I paid attention to where the felt sensation, rhythm or emotional texture of the dream shifted: a jolt, a rupture, a slip in time. These moments signalled the need for a visual or spatial interruption on the page. There was a tension between the precision of formatting and the freedom of writing through intuition and feeling. The dream’s language emerged through sensation, while typographic choices required meticulous, almost technical calibration. I navigated this tension by allowing the dream material to lead—responding first to the felt disruption—and then shaping the formatting as a precise tool to express what the dream feels like on a more technical, visual, and textual level.

The typography became an additional method, or layer, to the dream-writing, finding its own rhythm and impulse as the narrative continues through visual or aesthetic effects of the camera, or through the experience of reading and embodying the moment... *the feel of the rhythm in the muscles of the neck and wrist. Or to visualise and perceive these moments as a fleeting embrace of the dream.* My aim was for the screenplay itself to glitch, corrode, dissipate and chant, so that the viewer experiences claustrophobia in the loops, vertigo in the echoes and fractures, and delay in the stretched words. This is precisely what I think Lehman would describe as “durational aesthetics” (2006) were his methods be translated into film and cinema. Through typography, time itself becomes the subject of the aesthetic experience, albeit through quick, subliminal flashes on screen, or perhaps through an overlay of camera shots. And because these distortions emerge at precisely the moments of greatest institutional control—the classroom, the interrogation, Serene’s most vulnerable, defiant moments—they resist the mechanical efficiency of SomniCorp’s regime and logic. SomniCorp is built on synchronisation, adherence to logic, productivity and solidarity, yet the screenplay splinters

into drag, stutter, and latency as Serene experiences moments of internal conflict and questioning.

The typography, thus, is another layer of refusal and counter-infrastructure of time and the dream. For me, this is *l'écriture féminine* again—a writing that breaks phallogentric order and invites the noise, rupture and experience to the table. It is also hauntological, haunted by the absences, ambiguity, gaps and the unknown—the quick and sudden shifts that drift away from all that Serene knows. And crucially, it is political. It is the “you versus other” for Serene. The “system versus the truth”. The commands to “connect” are returned with error codes. Institutional clarity is answered with typographic collapse. The format itself becomes resistance and is inherently *l'écriture féminine* in its nature.

IV. Dream Archive Preparation: Remnants of the Dream

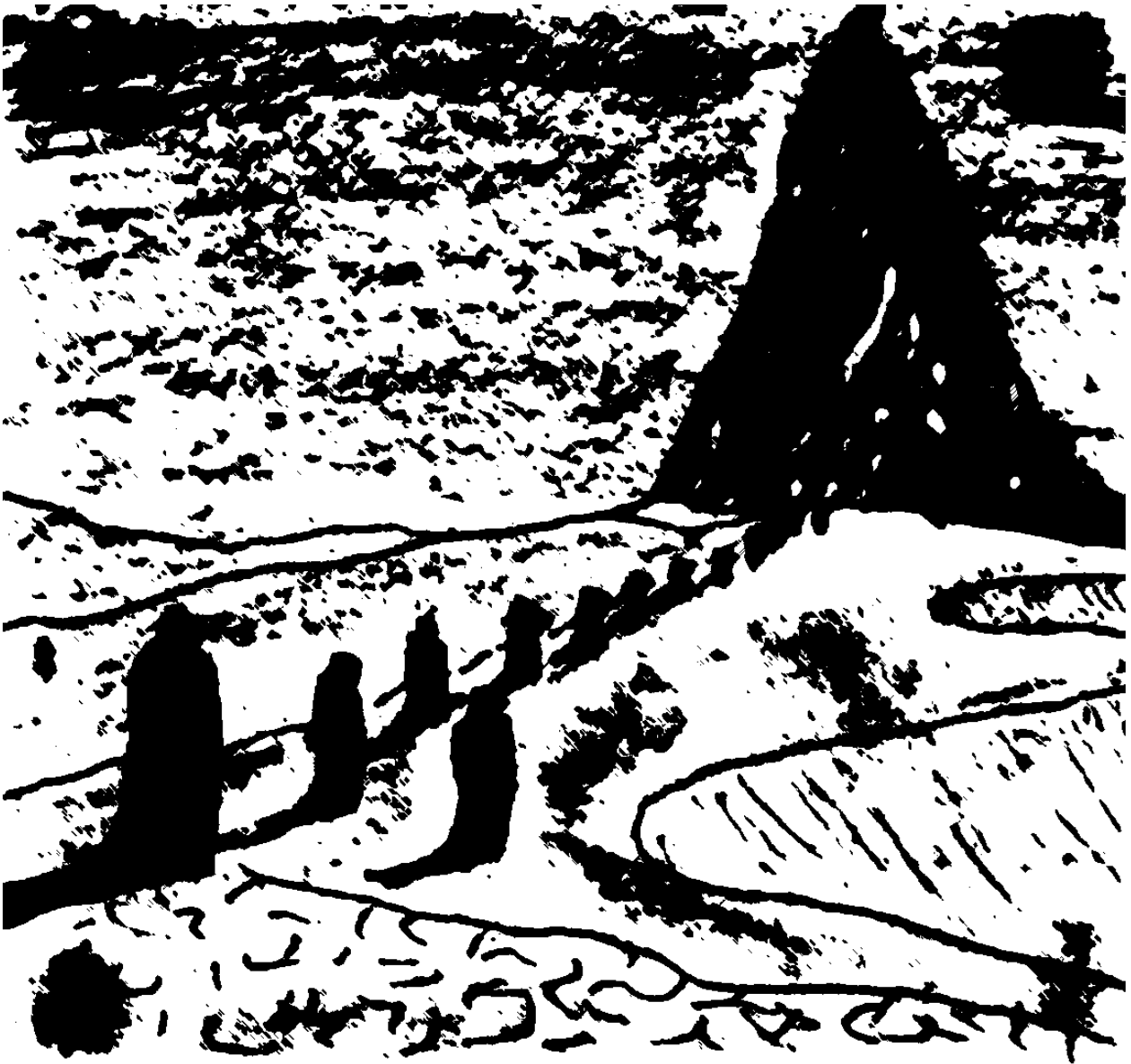
a) Remnant 1: Writing as Disorientation

In true Cixousian spirit, I lay myself bare in front of my reader with a confession. The writing process was not as straightforward as this report suggests. I grappled with a profound sense of disorientation as I was faced with a feeling of being unmoored from the logic that usually anchors creative writing. The writing became faltered. Coherence collapsed. The scenes I worked with arrived only as fragments—half-remembered and too ambiguous for explanation. Initially, the ambiguity felt destabilising—I was both a dreamer and researcher, a vessel that sought chaos and clarity simultaneously. There were moments when I felt displaced from my own text, as though *REVERIE* was writing me instead, and I had not permitted it to delve so deeply into my subconscious. The feeling of estrangement (from structure, sense, certainty) mirrored the atmosphere of the dream world I was trying to hold and pin down. *It was as if I was caught in the same temporal fog that envelops Serene...a world that feels almost known yet perpetually slipping from recognition.* Sara Ahmed's writing on disorientation (2006) gave shape to this feeling. Ahmed describes disorientation as “[t]he unsettling of familiar relations,” noting that “the disorientation of the sense of home, as the “out of place” or “out of line” effect of unsettling arrivals, involves what we could call a migrant orientation...the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home” (p. 10). Many of my dreams resemble an uncanny home or place of belonging, which is connected to the image of standing in between two directions, between the known and unknown. This idea captured precisely the texture of my writing process. Each sentence, however fragmented or displaced, tied together as an act of migration between dream and waking, between structure and free fall, between a language I trusted and one that was still becoming.

This liminality was the foundation of *REVERIE*. Like me, Serene exists in perpetual liminality: awake and asleep, subject and simulation, familiar and estranged. In this way, her being—her disorientation—mimics her creation of a consciousness caught in transit. Writing her world and state of being has—unbeknownst to me—demanded that I inhabit this same “migrant orientation” (Ahmed, 2006), confronted with the familiar act of writing while simultaneously confronted and engulfed in a writing toward the not-yet-home of *REVERIE*'s language. This tension created by writing as an act of disorientation reminded me of Freud's theory of the uncanny (1919) where there is a return to something once familiar that has now become estranged through displacement.

In practice, I frequently encountered disorientation when trying to translate dreams into screenplay fragments. *REVERIE* captures this uncanny space, introducing familiarity (such as the classroom environment, or the complicated mother-daughter relationship, or the idea of a serene beach). Yet, it carries a shimmer of disorientation as it bleeds into unrecognisable or estranged fronts. For instance, the looping sequences in *REVERIE* resisted linear placement: should Serene's loop occur in the beginning, middle, or end? Or all three? Does the loop carry a deeper meaning/association for her? Was the loop occurrence in the same space each time, or three different loop locations? Thus, to write in this way is to accept that the disorientation is not a failure of my process or methodology, but is, instead, a method in and of itself. It is the lived experience of re-remembering the dream and reliving it, the return to the familiar in a new, disjointed way. My disorientation as a writer, creator and researcher became both the mirror and the driving force behind the screenplay's structure, content, and form. Each disoriented moment became a way of knowing, a way of experimenting with the writing itself. Disorientation, therefore, taught me that clarity is not always the path to the truth; sometimes, it is in losing direction that the truth (and, in this case, the dream) finds the courage to speak. In turn, disorientation is not only affect but also epistemology, reminding us that the dream produces knowledge in its uncertainty and in the unfamiliar.

b) Remnant 2: Writing as Mourning



Drawing from dream journal entry 14, titled Dune Descension (17/10/2024)

Writing is inherently a loss, an inscription of absence as much as presence, as Cixous notes:

When you have lost everything, no more roads, no direction, no fixed signs, no ground, no thoughts able to resist other thoughts, when you are lost, beside yourself, and you continue getting lost, when you become the panicky movement of getting lost...it's in these breathless times that writings traverse you, songs of an unheard-of purity flow through you, addressed to no one, they well up, surge forth, from the throats of your unknown inhabitants, these are the cries that death and life hurl in their combat. (Cixous, 1991, p. 38).

The writing in *REVERIE* carries qualities of mourning. This sense of loss is inseparable from dream-writing process. The dream presents images, sequences, and ideas that are ephemeral,

fleeting, and often incomprehensible. As a writer, in attempting to capture the dream, I am already aware that some elements of the dream will be lost in the process of writing. My methods—recording dreams, journaling, drafting, and incorporating dream-logic into the narrative—negotiate loss constantly. Though this loss is productive—it compels me to trust intuition, linger with sensation and allow the body and subconscious to shape the dream. In this sense, the dream’s elusiveness challenges closure and finality, creating a methodology where the act of writing itself is both an engagement with and a mourning of the ungraspable. It is through the negotiation of absence and loss, presence and feeling, that dream-writing becomes a method of discovery.

Freud defines mourning in his book “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) as a detachment of lost objects—although he attributes this loss as a loss of libido (referring to sexual desire). *Typical Freud: even grief must pass through desire first. But as feminist scholars such as Irigaray (1985) and Cixous (1998) remind us, not all loss is sexual; some belong to language, memory, or the body’s quieter economies of feeling.* The loss that occurs in *REVERIE* is three-fold: (1) at the surface level, there is a loss of something for the protagonist, Serene, (2) there is a loss of something for the writer of *REVERIE*, and (3) the writing itself is an experiential terrain of loss.

(1) The Loss of Serene

Writing is the movement to return to where we haven’t been “in person” but only in wounded flesh, in frightened animal, movement to go farther than far, and also, effort to go too far, to where I’m afraid to go...I write, I extend my hand; without my knowing it, this is already a prayer...it is in this modest, all-powerful way that I begin to save what is lost. When I write I ask for your hand; with your hand I’ll go too far and I won’t be afraid anymore of not coming back. Without my knowing it, it is already love. Love is giving one’s hand. (Cixous, 1998, p. 74)

To lose something—oneself, someone else, something—is what makes us human. Loss reminds us of our fatality and the gift of life. When writing *REVERIE*, I embedded my own personal losses (loss of identity, loss of trust between mother and daughter, loss of someone I once dearly loved and loss of memory due to fear/trauma/memory lapses) into the screenplay and into Serene. In this way, Serene is all the best and worst parts of me. Serene finds herself suspended between reality and simulation (or dream state), grieving not only people and relationships (such as her broken friendship with Sangfroid, or Silas’s sudden death) but also the very stability of her own perception and purpose—everything she was taught was a lie. She

is no longer just ‘student’ or ‘daughter’ but creator and causer of the broken world she lives in (she both creates through her dream architectural abilities but also causes mayhem, and thus, The Wastes, with her unstable dreams). Through every cycle, every loop, every recalibration, Serene finds Silas and inevitably falls in love with him—that is her fate. Yet every time she returns to the start of each loop, she loses the memory of and her feelings towards him. Later, when he dies, Serene is not granted the opportunity to grieve or mourn as she is distracted by the very system they have fought against. In turn, she does not mourn him as lover but mourns the collapse of a shared world between them.

Serene also discovers that Soreya is both her creator (mother) and captor (head instructor), which fractures the few certainties she has left of her reality and what she considers to be true. Reality itself becomes untrustworthy. The domestic space, once a site of care, mutates into an institution of control. These multiple losses—of personhood, truth, and love—echo loss as a theme and, as Freud claims, involve a sense, or “work” of detachment (1917, p. 244). Freud contends that mourning requires the ego to detach gradually from the lost object’s libidinal energy, allowing the subject (who experiences mourning) to return to a stable reality. Thus, closure, for Freud, comes through completing mourning, in which the loss is accepted, the attachment is dissolved, and the psyche is restored to its original order.

Yet, Serene resists detachment and continually clings to fragments of Silas, the dreamworld and the truth. Her mourning, although dressed differently, refuses Freud’s closure. This very refusal of Serene encapsulates *l’écriture féminine* in its non-linear, durational and repetitive nature. Her loss moves in loops, like Lehmann’s temporal techniques that suspend causal progress. In this way, Serene experiences mourning, or loss, as an ecology—a haunted temporality where memory, desire and dread coexist. Serene’s losses become formal devices that are made visible through fractured scenes, overlapping voices and the screenplay’s resistance to closure. Upon reflection, I believe Serene’s loss mirrors my own loss as a writer in which a shared disorientation exists where both subject and author must navigate a world of incomplete knowledge and perpetual absence.

(2) The Loss of the Writer

NOT THE END.

BUT SOMETHING RESEMBLING AN END.

A COMPLETION OF A CHAPTER.

A TURN OF A PAGE.

BECAUSE NOTHING IN LIFE

NO STORY

NO FEELING

NO DREAM

HAS A DEFINITIVE ENDING.

SUPERIMPOSE: "YEAR 2147. SOMNIUM PROTOCOL. DAY
6,432."

A deep, mechanical HUM grows as a colossal
building comes into view—the SOMNICORP
HEADQUARTERS, a fortress of mirrored glass. At
the top, a towering hologram of a faceless woman
speaks:

HOLOGRAM WOMAN

"Rest assured, your dreams are safe
with us."

Her voice is melodic but chilling. Below, workers
in silver uniforms funnel into the building like
ants, their expressions blank.

INT. SOMNICORP HEADQUARTERS - DREAM VAULT

Rows of sleek pods stretch into infinity. Inside
each pod lies a dreamer, their eyes fluttering
under closed lids, strapped into wires and tubes.
MONITORS display fragmented dream sequences—some
serene, others nightmarish.

Above is an extract of the first version ending of *REVERIE* that I ‘stashed away’ and, ultimately, had cut from the final version. I experienced a writer’s mourning—the continual loss of what had been (re)written and what could have been. Fragments that no longer pieced together with the story, scenes that had vanished because the dream pushed another forward instead. Instead of letting this loss devastate me, I used it as a method of inquiry, like Richardson (2000) suggests. In discovering what works and what does not—what was felt and what was thought—erasure was inevitable. Each decision to cut, erase, or keep generated a ghost text—a sort of parallel version of *REVERIE* that lingers unseen. Early versions of SomniCity were discarded:

Lyra scowls and turns to a monitor showing a dream of a lush
forest. A RED ALERT flashes—"UNAUTHORIZED DREAM DETECTED."

LYRA

Unauthorized?

NIX

(quickly)

Shut it down. Now.

Lyra hesitates, watching the dream. A figure in the forest—a
woman in a white dress, unmarked by the dystopian decay—
turns to the screen as if looking at her.

Working, initially, with character names like NIX and LYRA, I had stopped at the last written sentence "...some serene, others nightmarish." The word "serene" popped out, evoking a dream-like quality in the way it is spoken, with its association of calmness and peace. I immediately rewrote the main character as SERENE and the "S" of her name aligned with that in SomniCorp and SomniCity. From there, the unspoken rule of "S" names in this world was

born. These omissions were not trivial. Similarly, the “woman in a white dress” returned to *REVERIE* as Soreya during the last loop as she visits the interrogation chamber in The Wastes and confesses the truth about her identity to Serene. Even the holographic woman, the flying drones, and the sleek pods, manifested themselves into *REVERIE* with different meanings or names. The writer’s loss, then, is not a failure but is a method in itself. It is in the cutting, deleting, rewriting—the active process of creating and revising—that I enacted the very cycles of grief the screenplay hints at. *REVERIE* became both the product and performance of a haunted text.

(3) The Loss of Writing

I believe that one can only begin to advance along the path of discovery, of discovery of writing or of something else, from the point of mourning or in the reparation of mourning. In the beginning, the gesture of writing is linked to the experience of disappearance, to the feeling of having lost the key to the world, of having thrown it away. Having suddenly acquired the precious sense of the rare, the mortal, and having to regain, urgently, the entrance, the breath... We have to do the apprenticeship of Mortality. (Cixous, 1989, pp. 4-5).

The discarded texts marked real losses of my writing. I constantly returned to my stash, trying to incorporate them into *REVERIE*—to make them belong, but the dream resisted. The discards felt tonally wrong and did not fit into the dream’s language or initial feeling. It did not connect to the dream-world in the same way as the S-name law in *REVERIE*, or the 20-30-year-old characters, Nix and Lyra, did not blend seamlessly into the rebellious, curious spirit of dreams in the way a teenager, like Serene, would. What I had uncovered instead was that these earlier thoughts or ideas were actually haunting the screenplay—becoming an invisible meta-page that clung to the periphery of the work. What I once thought was lost had actually found itself rewritten in a new light and language—Nix and Lyra became matriarchs in *REVERIE*, renamed to Soreya and Savrina, for example. This loss became an integral form of the screenplay, where each revision enacted what Derrida refers to as *hauntology* (1994)—the presence of an absence, a trace that never fully disappears, the past always returning to the present. That which was cut continued to influence the creation of *REVERIE* through a ghostly echo. The process mirrored Serene’s own attempts to retrieve her erased memories, suggesting the writer and character shared similar psychic geography.

To write *REVERIE* was to discover and experience the uncanny return of my own discarded writing—phrases returning and resurfacing in new contexts, old ideas deforming into new ones. The writing process became a ritual of loss and return, an aesthetic of erasure that

mirrored the story's thematic journey of forgetting and remembering. This discovery reframed dream-writing as an inherently melancholic practice. It is not about capturing the dream—or recovering it—in full but about writing the trace of what is already lost. In doing so, the text remains unfinished in dialogue, incomplete in memory, and vanished in imagery. The screenplay itself mourns the impossibility of preserving the dream, but only through this loss, does the dream speak, does the dream produce knowledge of how it thinks, feels, and exists as an ever-ambiguous, ever-fading experience.

c) Remnant 3: Writing as Multiplicity

The final discovery was that dream-writing arrives in multiplicity. Any writing that simplifies the dream through one meaning, one experience, defies the very logic of dreams—*this is precisely why Freud's implication that dreams have a universal meaning goes against the nature of my dreams*. A single dream, for instance, can generate various meanings, arriving at multiple versions of a singular image or experience—none of which exhausts its meaning. I take from Deleuze and Guattari's definition of a rhizome, or rhizomatic writing, that “has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows” (2004, p. 23). This rhizoidal writing is characterised by a non-hierarchical, proliferating, cyclic structure where any point can connect to another. I view dreams, and my entire research, as rhizoidal in nature—always returning from one concept to another, always integrating one theory with another. Moreover, *REVERIE* becomes a rhizoidal structure in that it continuously returns to the middle. Even when one loop ends, Serene is recalibrated into the middle of her life—her story. In a temporal sense, she is not recalibrated back into birth, nor is she recalibrated into the future. She is recalibrated back to the first moment where she experiences her most powerful dreams—at the start of the new training programme at school, which aids in harvesting these dreams. Narratively, each recalibration ties together with her discovery and memory, connecting like kintsugi. Each spawn of Serene extends into multiple possible pathways she can follow, as evident in her final loop, where she and Silas create an escape plan.

To expand on this viewpoint, I turn to *REVERIE* for assistance in exemplifying this theory. The meadow dreamleeds that Serene experience recurs repeatedly (*as my dreams so often do*). It starts as an idyllic memory, perhaps, of a place she once visited, then quickly distorts into a projection in Somni-High, and then becomes a nightmare where the grass pulls

her down and suffocates her. One dream, multiple meanings. I view these as proliferations of the dream now. Similarly, the pill sequence repeats throughout the screenplay, overlaying multiple perspectives—numerous experiences of the same action—not to create redundancy but to generate new meaning with each iteration, as Lehmann describes in temporal sequencing (2006). The dream is never exhausted by one retelling. This multiplicity further challenges the closure that conventional screenwriting offers, where each symbol or scene must “pay off” in a single arc. The discovery is, then, that dream-writing is multiplicity. *REVERIE* does not close its images or discoveries but instead allows them to proliferate and refuse singular meaning. This multiplicity is a method and embraces the dream’s endless excess—the impossibility of fully capturing the dream, the continual slipping away that creates an excess of material and potential that dream-writing can explore. Loss—excess—is abundance—it is through that which is lost that the dream’s endless richness is revealed and embraced.

V. The Last Flicker: Recollections of *REVERIE*

If I were to undertake this project again, I would push the resistance to linearity even further by experimenting with the complete collapse of syntax and language. In *REVERIE*, the methods employed—fragmentation, looping, typographic play—hint at this, but sentences and syntax remain intact primarily to ensure comprehension for the viewer. In future, I would like to break down words and syntax, reducing them to nonsensical, absurd configurations or symbols. I would like to explore whether dream-writing remains successful and possible without the safety of language. Practically, this would involve deconstructing dialogue, juxtaposing thoughts and words, or playing with orthography so that the text enacts the dream’s nonsensical elements. This exploration would test whether the subconscious experience of dreaming can be transmitted without formal language and linguistic scaffolding.

I would also introduce a new method of dream-writing, coined “meta-writing” in which the presence of the writer is inserted into the diegesis as part of the dream. Practically, this could envision the writer being written into the screenplay itself—through dialogue and interaction with the characters. At the end of *REVERIE*, Serene addresses the audience, already alluding to self-awareness, but the authorial presence remains mostly external. Future iterations could see Serene interact with the writer, negotiating her dialogue, contesting the narrative, and rewriting her own actions mid-scene. The writing process then truly becomes performative—a recursive feedback loop where dream, author and characters co-exist and co-create. This approach would expand the current dream-writing boundaries, situating the authorial body within the dream. Through this, I can explore how agency, narrative and the subconscious interact and interplay in more radical ways.

This research proposes innovative approaches to future creative engagement with dream-writing. In a world where technology and AI are constantly developing, improving and taking over, it may not be too far off to say that multidimensional and immersive cinematic experiences are fast approaching. Think of the new Sphere in Vegas, USA, an entertainment dome or arena that utilises 360° projections, cinematic sound and 4-D cinema effects. *REVERIE* could be experienced as an augmented reality film or through multi-screen installations such as the Sphere, where the viewer is immersed in a dreamscape and experiences the narrative vicariously: the humid, intense heat when viewing scenes of the Wastes, the water gently sprinkling them during the classroom flood, and so forth. Such experimentation would allow for dream-writing to escape from conventional cinema entirely, allowing the dream to become responsive to the viewer—felt and experienced physically—much like dreams

themselves. The work would move beyond theatre-informed screenwriting into a post-cinematic, hybrid form.

As I currently write this report, I sit with an unwavering sense of loss. I spend my last few days here in Makhanda before my move into the 'big world'. In these flickering moments, I look back on the two years' worth of research that is *Chasing Phantoms*. I am thankful for this type of research that remains open and active, leaving the door open just enough for me to push through when needed. As everything around me is coming to an end—my MA, my life in Makhanda, my life as a student-researcher—*REVERIE* remains a physical and digital testament, an artefact, of my methodology and research that is otherwise embodied and ethereal. Listed below as dreams, some experienced and some inspired, here are my final offerings of what the research taught me:

MIRRORS

I walk through a corridor that rumbles. Bleeping sounds murmur around me quietly. Mirrors line both sides, each reflecting uncanny versions of me—some writing, some crying, some sleeping. A woman, in her late teens, passes by. I think, "Is this Serene?" as I observe her dragging that honey-yellow cup on a nearby table. When I look closer, it's my hand on the cup.

We stare at one another in comfortable silence. Unsure who is dreaming who.

I feel that familiar dizziness—the same disorientation I felt when writing; that tremble of collapse, between coherence and forgetting.

The dream whispers: Disorientation is not failure. It is the breathe, the pulse of discovery

SOOT

I am caught within a scorched land,
crashed by fire, aching and soot. I start
to walk a path - that, come to think of
it, reminds me of the path Serene once
took towards the abandoned building.
Each step feels rehearsed, familiar, like
the echo of a forgotten memory. I realize
I have walked this way before - in my
writing.

My fingers T ... W... I... T... C... H
My breath hiccups.

I speak, but only for a second. I feel the
weight of the wasteland in my mouth.
Its urgency. Its smothering. Thick on
my swollen tongue.

The dream murmurs: The body remembers
what the page cannot. Writing begins
in movement.

(GAPS)

I fill my room with stacks of paper,
A small, thin cut appears on my writing
hand, between my index and middle
fingers. It oozes in a small puddle
of crimson. I move onto the next
stack, the crimson of my fingers
spilling, flooding, onto the stack.
I look at the stack, realising I
had smudged my most precious
written memory with blood. The
writing is filled with

gaps,

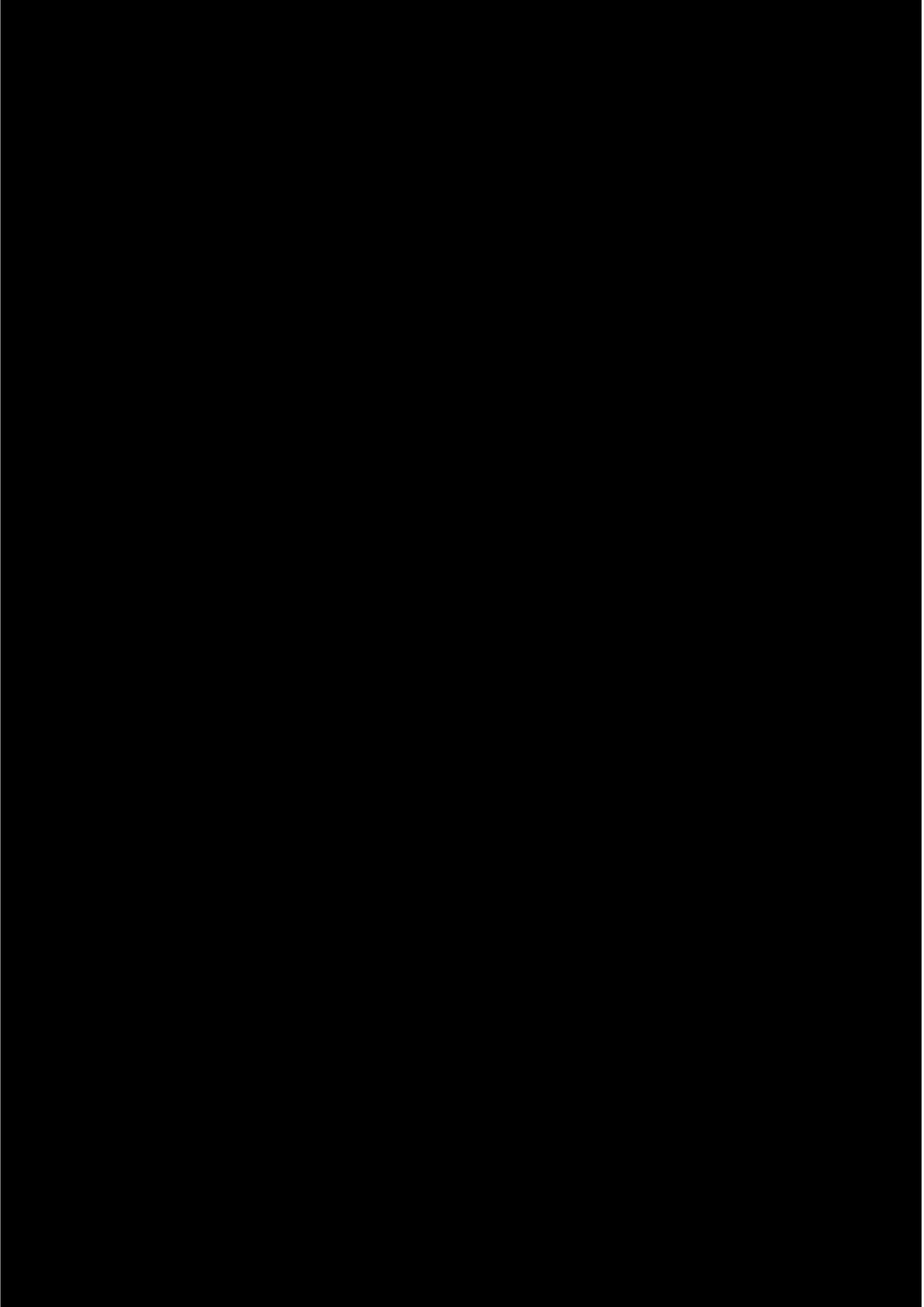
spaces left open. Every word ruined
buries a thousand that could not be.
The stack - the archive - is haunted
by what could not be dared to be seen.
To write is to grieve what you cannot keep.

If this research can offer anything,
it is a small act of rebellion. A way of
writing that refuses to divide person from
reverie, mind from body, intellect from imagination.
It offers a way of knowing through texture, sensation, breath.

A way of thinking that moves
rather than concludes. It proposes
that the screenplay can be a
dreaming form,
capable of holding the residue of
dreams, holding theory, emotion and memory
at once. In this sense, *REVERIE* becomes not
only a story, but an experiment in writing the
dream from within it. It lives as both creative
artefact and philosophical, intellectual
inquiry—a gentle reminder that writing
can still surprise itself, that it can still
love what it does not understand
and shine a light on that which it fears.

These are the dreams I have for *REVERIE*, and at large, *Chasing Phantoms*. It is time for me to close my books, gently place the pen beside them and finish this report. But I cannot end here; endings do not belong to dreams. What has begun in *REVERIE* continues to unfold in thought and shadow—in the gaps of my writing—a slow rippling forward. I leave this project not with answers but with a finer sensitivity to the quiet, the question and the trace of the dream. This research is not closed. It can only change shape from now on. I suspect it will keep doing so; quietly, insistently, each time I write. *As much as it follows me, I secretly like following it back.*

FADE TO BLACK.



VI. DreamLink Authorisation



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

RESEARCH ETHICS DECLARATION

To be included in the Appendices of research papers / dissertations / theses submitted for postgraduate examination where research did not involve interaction with human participants, or the use of animal subjects, and therefore did not require research ethics approval.

Candidates whose research did require ethics clearance must include their ethics approval letter in the Appendix of their examination submission.

Name of Candidate: Caitlin Barton

Name of Supervisor: Ms Tamarisk Glogauer

Degree: MA in Drama

Title of research: Chasing Phantoms: Harvesting Dreams as a Methodology for Radical Screenwriting

DECLARATION

I declare that my research did not require ethical clearance because (tick all that apply):

I did not collect data from human participants or animal subjects	X
I used previously collected data that had already received ethics clearance.	
I analysed documents / open-access digital texts that are freely available in the public domain.	
I did a literature review/analysis of theoretical or secondary material only.	
I used human datasets of non-sensitive information that are either anonymous (identifiers were never collected) or have been deidentified (identifiers have been completely removed).	
I used commercially produced human biological material (e.g. established human cell lines).	
I observed people in public spaces and natural environments where they had no reasonable expectation of privacy and I did not interact with them or intervene in any way.	
I used non-living animal materials (eg bones of already deceased organisms or fossils) while complying with any custody and/or jurisdiction requirements.	
I did a content analysis of public media (newspapers, advertisements, and social media posts).	
I did a simulation study with no real-world consequences and does not involve disturbing or distressing content.	
I observed flora, fauna, and ecosystems without interfering with or disturbing their natural state while complying with any jurisdiction requirements.	
Other (Please provide details):	

Signature of Candidate:



Date:

16/11/2025

Signature of Supervisor:



Date:

16/11/2025

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XI. Epilogue

FADE IN:

I./E. BLACK ROOM

Silent.

Still.

IN THE CENTRE: A MIRROR.

An empty standing mirror floats in the middle of the darkness.
Nothing in its reflection.

Then, slowly, something shifts within the mirror. Faint pulses
of light ripple through its surface, like breath. And for a
moment, we think we see something.

A body? A face? A reflection?

No.

A single page reflects in the mirror.

Nothing written on it.

Only white space.

Only breath.

Only the possibility that this—all of this—was also a dream.

WRITER (V.O.)

(quiet, amused, to reader)

You're still reading?

FADE TO...?

REINTEGRATING SUBJECT 037...