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To the Chair of the Selection Committee,

As a specialist in media-theory, with an established publication record, future publication prospects, experience contributing to the national Research Excellence Framework, experience in teaching both film analysis and film/digital-media production I hope you will consider my application for the position of Lecturer in Film and Screen Studies. As expressed within the application description, my research in media theory, including media archaeology, media-ecology, software studies, interactivity, media philosophy and game studies make me an excellent fit for the department. As a former student of the MPhil programme, I am excited by the possibility of reigniting working relationships with members of staff, including Professors Steven Connor, Emma Wilson and François Penz with whom I previously had the pleasure of working with in developing my MPhil thesis and the early stages of what became my doctoral thesis. I have since gone on to gather extensive teaching experience at The University of Glasgow's Film and Television department, and in the degree program at Fife College, Dunfermline focusing on film studies and digital media production. My interdisciplinary focus, fostered during my research at Cambridge and expanded through my doctoral study at Glasgow, are situated at the locus between screen-media, technology and contemporary philosophy. Given the nature of the Cambridge department, crossing interdepartmental thresholds, I believe my work would further the tradition of cross-disciplinary engagements developing and fostering new and engaging research.

I was awarded my PhD in 2017 from The University of Glasgow. In my thesis, "Videogame Ecologies: Interaction, Aesthetics and Affect", I engaged with a number of international, independently developed digital games, analysing their underlying technical 'ecologies', suggesting how digital dependencies can prompt an engagement with the entanglement of matter and meaning discussed within new materialist scholarship. My interdisciplinary work required a novel methodology that combined the investigative, media archaeological practices inherent in code studies with the performance focused research of scholars such as Karen Barad and Jane Bennett. Engaging with specific game functions, I wrote numerous computer programmes that simulated elements of gameplay then close read the functions I had created, discussing their ecological nature, from the micro level outwards. In all, my thesis found a powerful correlation between the functioning of contemporary videogames and the recent ontological shifts within contemporary philosophy; just as Karen Barad has suggested a fundamental 'entanglement' and a drive to move away from thinking about 'things', focusing instead on phenomena, the digital media I creatively analysed revealed important 'intra-active' qualities that set them aside from other media. Videogames, I suggested – when read through my critical lens – are an invaluable philosophical tool for understanding recent innovations within the humanities.

At present, I am working with Steven Connor and the Open Humanities Press towards a publication of the thesis.

Building on my PhD research, I have begun to shift my focus towards a study of the environments in which digital media are created – the software ‘engines’, ‘platforms’ and API’s that accelerate but also encode contemporary creativity. Within digital games development, to focus on one of many examples, the tendency to develop modern games within these environments – such as Unity, Unreal and, more recently, Amazon’s Lumberyard – has prompted an outpouring of creativity from otherwise disadvantaged voices within the gaming community such as predominantly female development teams, non-white and LGBTQ+ independent developers. At the same time, however, there is a serious lack of study into how developing alongside these environments shapes the work produced or the audiences that consume them. It is my hope to engage in further study of these software environments, including the now more affordable than ever Adobe Creative Cloud, to discuss to what degree creatives working within these fields are generating novel cultures or else simply extending the reach and feature sets of these technologies.

Since receiving my doctorate, I have received a grant from the Scottish Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities to undertake an MSc in Interactive Technology at the University of Glasgow. This funded research has allowed me to work with numerous members of the computer science department including Professor Stephen Brewster and Dr Matthew Barr within the HATII institute for digital humanities. This has enabled me to further hone my doctoral research, developing my software design skills in a manner that enables further experimentation and generating engaging outcomes for my research. I am currently working towards a project aimed to make users more aware of their place within a digital ecology. Although at its early stages, I hope to publish the software online and the findings of the controlled testing in 2018.

I have three years’ teaching experience in a broad variety of subjects. This, I believe, could be an invaluable asset to Cambridge as my teaching interests cross the boundaries of film studies/design but also transgress borders of digital technology and online media. Over the years in The University of Glasgow, I have been responsible for my own courses, lectured on others and provided seminar tuition for others still. In generating materials for the core course, Film Analysis, I endeavoured to stay true to the needs of the module while updating the course as much as possible to engage with contemporary concerns within film and media studies. In a similar fashion, in 2018 I have begun teaching on the Film History, Aesthetics and Genres course where I have helped Dr Rebecca Hamilton shape the course into an object and material focused course, developing new forms of assessment such as introducing a curatorial element into their work. While at Fife College, Dunfermline, in their creative industries department, I taught computer game design, animation, digital modelling, and computer programming. I was responsible for over one hundred students, with varying capabilities. My experiences with teaching conventional, close-reading centred film-studies, less conventional, micro-historical, object-centred film studies, as well as my experience with production and digital-media, have prepared me to contribute to a wide range of potential subjects at any University.

Given the broad scope of the optional modules currently available on the Film and Screen Studies MPhil, as well as the Hollywood module within the English department, I believe that my teaching experience could contribute in exciting ways, extending the depth and

breadth of potential courses at Cambridge. As the MPhil course in particular does not seem to offer any modules with an explicit focus on digital cinema, there is the potential to build on the success of the Moving Image Outside the Cinema option and develop an optional module with a focus on Interactive Cinema and Digital Media. Focusing on the work of installation artists such as Blast-theory, controversial digital artists like Zoe Quinn (*Depression Quest*), Anna Anthropy (*Dys4ia*) or Jason Rohrer (*The Castle Doctrine*), students could be encouraged to engage with these works within the context of other cinema and digital media through the formulation of research papers, or else to engage through more experimental means through the development of video or interactive essays. This module would then open the way for student supervision in the development of MPhil theses, and the potential for project led work, engaging with the technologically-centred methods on which I based my doctoral research.

While I have experience fostering relationships with other academics, students and departments, I continue to work on my public outreach, regularly attending and presenting at conferences and workshops internationally. Having presented more than once at the annual Screen conference, SCMS, having most recently presented at the Games Philosophy conference and with my upcoming paper at the Edinburgh TransImage 2018 conference, to name but a few, I have a proven track record of attempting to bring my research to the attention of a slightly broader academic audience. I also contribute on several boards including British DiGRA (the digital games research association), a contributor to Vector, the British science fiction magazine, and as an editor of the Press-Start Journal in Glasgow. I would like to retain these activities and extend them, generating links between my existing research communities and the academic collectives at Cambridge.

In summation, my numerous publications in peer-reviewed journals, collected books and conference proceedings, several years of teaching experience, drive to develop new and exciting research, pending publications, awareness of REF and willingness to contribute towards maintaining Cambridge's excellent international reputation make me an excellent potential candidate for the position. As stated in the position advertisement, one of the duties expected would be to assist in encouraging the growth of Film and Screen Studies in a broad manner. My interdisciplinary background and experience would enable me to do just that.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope you will extend an invitation to interview to enable us to further discuss how I can contribute in any way towards Film and Screen Studies at Cambridge.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Conor Mckeown