Review of 'Fiction Feature Filmmaking. Research and Practice in Screenwriting, Production, Distribution, Exhibition, and Beyond' by Kamran Qureshi (2026) by Dr Orson Nava (Associate Professor at Ravensbourne University in Digital Film Production).

The timely publication of **'Fiction Feature Filmmaking. Research and Practice in Screenwriting, Production, Exhibition, and Beyond' by Kamran Qureshi (2026)** adds to the growing body of work around film practice as research, but as the title suggests it focusses its analysis on fiction film making in particular. The book provides a detailed exploration of the production process behind the author's own fiction feature film 'Only Love Matters', reflecting on both its creative intentions and the theoretical debates that informed its development.

As Professor Richard J Hand writes in the introduction to the book this work reflects the 'growing recognition that practice is not simply an adjunct to theory, nor merely an illustration of it, but a rigorous and vital mode of inquiry in its own right.' (P6). In his book Qureshi proposes the concept of 'Fictsearch' as a methodological strategy for using fiction film production to explore research questions and garner analytical insights. 'Fictsearch', in this sense, operates to bring creative production, distribution, exhibition, and scholarly reflection within one integrated mode of analysis.

Alongside his innovative analytical approach, Qureshi's feature film 'Only Love Matters' (which is the subject of the book) also breaks new ground as the first British fiction feature to place intersex characters at the centre of the narrative. Through his production the film Qureshi 'sought to develop authentic, realistic, and positive portrayals of intersex lives in British cinema, representations absent from the national film industry. The film aims to foster public understanding, enhance visibility, and contribute to both cultural discourse and cinematic practice.' (P16)

The chapter (2.4) where Qureshi explores the research objective of his film project and maps out the concept of 'fictsearch' as a framework for fiction filmmakers is especially relevant in the emerging field of 'film practice as research'. It clearly delineates the way the film development, production and

distribution pipeline can be deployed as part of a process of critical self-reflection, peer review and analytical feedback that contributes to the generation of new knowledge in the field of film practice.

More broadly the book illustrates how an academic publication can successfully engage with, and augment a fiction feature film project, adding context and analysis and expanding the readers understanding of both the film and the surrounding critical debates. ‘Through creative research, filmmaking can move beyond entertainment to become a mode of empowerment, enabling both scholars and practitioners to create works that inform, challenge, and transform. (P7). It also makes a very significant contribution to the understanding of the intersex experience, by extensively analysing existing film texts featuring intersex themes and characters. This analysis highlights the pervasive representation of intersex characters in popular cinema as socially transgressive and threatening antagonists. In this context Qureshi’s own film is highly significant in the way it deliberately counters hegemonic representations of intersex characters through centring them in the narrative and inviting the audience’s identification.

In chapter 4 which focuses on the writing and research for the film Qureshi highlights how the process was designed to ‘include intersex voices and perspectives within the research process, allowing their lived experiences to inform both script and characterisation.’ P130. To this ends numerous activists, advocates and organisations were engaged in the development process, ensuring a participatory production process informed by the lived experience of intersex individuals.

Subsequent chapters convey the profound challenges entailed in financing and distributing an independent feature film and testify to the determination and resilience of the filmmaker in bringing the project to completion. The broader impact, media coverage and festival success of the film is also explored in depth along with a detailed account of audience responses, including quotes and testimonials. These provide a powerful qualitative assessment of how viewers

were viscerally impacted by the film, and how it contributed to cultural debates about the intersex topic. ‘Through cinematic representation, the film provided a space for audiences to confront preconceptions, reflect critically, and articulate new understandings in real time’. (p276). Qureshi’s determination to challenge cinematic representations of the intersex experience that are rooted in “freakishness, sexuality, or medicalisation’ (p326) and ‘create a fiction feature film that would present intersex characters as ordinary, multidimensional individuals rather than objects or exceptions.’ (p326) resonates throughout the whole project.

Overall Qureshi’s book expands the debates around fiction film practice as research, offering academic filmmakers an example of best practice that can inform their own projects and inspire new and exciting research trajectories. As the author says ‘filmmaking is not only a form of cultural production but also a mode of inquiry, a way of knowing and intervening in the world ‘(p26). The book itself, along with the film it examines, makes precisely this kind of intervention, and it also empowers other research academics to make similar interventions of their own. For this reason, it will appeal to a broad range of creative practitioners and researchers but especially to academic filmmakers who are engaged with producing feature length narrative fiction projects and want to understand how those projects can be most effectively positioned as academic outputs in a higher education setting.

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