

## ***Beasts and Children: They Sound Human [Graphic Novel]***

**Introduction:** The scarcity of creative work that engages the problematic issue of female marginalisation in the western/horror hybrid space demonstrates the need to expand her limited framework and develop a new craft approach that privileges the female perspective.

Adapted from my original screenplay, this project argues that the western/horror hybrid graphic novel operates as a creative space that, activated by reconsiderations of craft, can benefit the female position and, in turn, contribute to a post-feminist conversation. My findings present structural and narrative guidelines that provide a contemporary writer a more informed position upon which to continue the sociological, cultural and gender-based conversation that my creative work engages.

**Concept:** As a male screenwriter, I have been influenced by patriarchal models of scriptwriting and this project is an opportunity to test how far a writer can work with and against those conventions within a genre format.

**Methodology:** *They Sound Human*, centres active female characters, including a lead who is empowered and empowering, and draws from Jean-Anne Sutherland's "female-power-model" (2017, 3). Developed from Amy Allen's work (1998), Sutherland elaborated on the concept of three distinct categories of female cinematic power: power-over, power-to and power-with. I have chosen to adopt Sutherland's highest "power-with" tier to test my craft aims, which she describes as demonstrating "the kind of power whereby women come together as a group to challenge systems of oppression and bring about social change" (2010, 117). This post-feminist lens tracks the success and circumstances of *They Sound Human*.

**Methods/Process:** The following craft strategies contribute to the rethinking of feminism in the context of the western/horror hybrid narrative:

1. Post-feminist action stories "depict their heroines like other representations of women in popular culture: capable of success within traditionally male working environments" (*Unbelievable*; see Tasker and Negra 2007).
2. The heroine succeeds through intelligence, determination, and the use of strategy to overcome obstacles as aided by her own physical strength.
3. She is an active agent of the narrative that drives the story forward, physically capable instead of inhibited.

4. The narrative should extend Rosalind Gill's definition of post-feminist sensibilities of "individualism, choice and empowerment" (2016, 153) through Sutherland's "Power-with" model to emphasize collective action. By targeting the female narrative position within western-genre writing space, my discussion of craft proposes strategies a writer could employ in order to extend the power and significance of female characters in western/horror writing.

**Future Work:** It is my intent to expand upon the ideas discussed in *They Sound Human*, and continue exploring the craft approach that best supports empowered centralised female heroes in hybrid narrative storytelling.

**Format:** B/W – 100 pages.

**Authors:** Bryan Ott (writer)

Aaron Schmidt (illustrator)

## Bibliography

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