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**Screenplay:**

*In the Voodoo Parlour of Marie Laveau*

Adaptation of the Play “In the Voodoo Parlor of Marie Laveau” by Frank Gagliano

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**Dissertation submitted for the degree  
Doctor of Creative Arts**

**Submitted by:  
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3 February 2010



## **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Maria Cristina Beato-Lanz

## Acknowledgements

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To earn my Doctorate of Creative Arts in screenwriting I have chosen a strange animal – Frank Gagliano’s play *In the Voodoo Parlour of Marie Laveau* (an unsung Voodoo chamber opera) – to transform into an even stranger animal: an unsung Voodoo-ritual opera feature film, thus spawning a new form of dramatic screenplay. That it would take Australia to provide aegis and encouragement for such an outlandish procreation reflects the singular genius of this country and its people, who could so easily fathom *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* when baffled European naturalists declared the animal an elaborate fraud. Neither the jumbled form of this duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed mammal, nor the fact that it lays eggs, nor the unexpected venom in its hind foot, hinder the Australian's appreciation of the outrageous creature who is the sole living representative of its family and genus. Fortunately for me, the same whimsy and originality of mind that unites with platypus and nurtures its progress now supports and nurtures my ornithorhynchean screenwriting creation; and for this I am deeply grateful.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the rare genius and even rarer congeniality of Frank Gagliano and to my supervisor Margot Nash for her cheerful guidance, talent, open-mindedness and creative company. I’d also like to thank my family, in particular my husband Larry, whose sacrificial absence made it possible for me to complete this monumental task; my daughter Dorian for wrestling with Word formatting at those final hours when I was down for the count; my son-in-law Rafael for the emergency M\*C\*S\*H\* services (Mobile Computer Surgical Hospital) which kept me from faking my own death as a viable solution; and my father Dr Virgilio Beato who with great sagacity at the age of 92 asked me, “*Es posible que eso te ayude a ganar más dinero?*”

## Cover Art

(from left to right, top to bottom)

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9. French Quarter, New Orleans. Cigar shop and "Rev. Zombie's Voodoo Shop". Photo by: Flickr photographer JSF36. CC Attribution 2.0.

Note: Symbol on title page and those in screenplay are Voodoo "Veve" symbols.

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## Abstract

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This dissertation presents and works out the creative and practical challenges of adapting a 1969 avant-garde play – *In the Voodoo Parlour of Marie Laveau*, “an unsung Voodoo chamber opera in one long act and a prologue” – into a screenplay for a full-length motion picture. The endeavour was chosen as an attempt to explore, and perhaps widen, conventional parameters of film in an effort to create a lasting impression upon regular moviegoers; one that would deeply convey the theme of the original work and provide the transformational experience described by Aristotle as the requisite and purpose of drama. The search for an appropriate style and analysis of relevant theatrical, film and musical forms – the differences and commonalities between them as well as their relationship with each other – culminated in the creative work, the screenplay *In the Voodoo parlour of Marie Laveau*, an unsung Voodoo-ritual grand opera feature film – a new form of screenplay for the motion picture genre.