Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Department of Asian
and North African Studies

PhD Symposium

Interregnum - Delving into the possibilities of the in-between

14-15-16 April 2025

Aula Mario Baratto, Ca' Foscari - Dorsoduro 3246, Venice

April 14, 2025

9.00-9.30 **Registration and Welcome Remarks**

9.30-10.30 **KEYNOTE LECTURE**
Francesco Careri (Università Roma Tre)

11.00-13.00 **PANEL 1**
Conceptualizing Interregnum: Philosophy and Critical Theory
Lucia Ferri (University of Milan – Bicocca)
Giacomo Cacciaguerra (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Matteo Garbelli (Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
Fu Haoyang (University of Perugia)
Francesco Pigato (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

14.00-15.30 **PANEL 2**
Speculative landscapes: generative spatialities in the interregnum
Kamilla Sibatova (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Francesca Berni (Politecnico di Milano)
Alessandro Tollari (Università Iuav di Venezia)

16.00-18.00 **PANEL 3**
Connected Media. Exposing the thread between practices
Chiara Mascarello (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Francesco Tormen (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Wang Fengyu (Ruprecht Karl University of Heidelberg)
Lisa Andreani (Università Iuav di Venezia)

April 15, 2025

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Federico Squarcini and **Francesco Gonella** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

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Questioning the self and culture in the interregnum
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Giovanni Giamello (Aalborg University)
Shweta Arora (National University of Singapore)

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Middle grounds: figurative transformation as the interregnum
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Francesco Firth (Sapienza University of Rome)
Martyna Lesniewska (Freie Universität Berlin)

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Tommaso Brusasca (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

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April 16, 2025

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Zones of contact: the interregum and the simultaneity of words
Sena Taha (Ibn Haldun University)
Deepika Gupta (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Aparna Rajan (Indian Institute of Technology)

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Visions of otherworlds: re-appropriating reality through the in-between
Marcel Bouvrie (Utrecht University)
Roberta Bernasconi (Università Iuav di Venezia)
Federico Picerni (University of Bologna)
Marco Del Din (Heidelberg University - Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Organizing committee
DSAAM 39th cycle Ph.D. students
interregnum@unive.it

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Organizing team

CHIARA ALESSANDRINI

Chiara Alessandrini is a second-year PhD student at the Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She is currently also Visiting Research Fellow at the Graduate School of Japanese Applied Linguistics, Waseda University, having been awarded a 2024 Canon Foundation in Europe Research Fellowship. Her research focuses on the social dynamics inherent to language pedagogy, and their reflection on individual and cultural perceptions. Her doctoral project explores learner-centered meaning-making processes in Japanese language pedagogy within higher education.

CHIARA BARTOLETTI

Chiara Bartoletti is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Asian and North African Studies at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. Her research focuses on critical food studies and political ecology, exploring eco-social relationships and power dynamics in agrifood systems, analyzing their cultural, social, and environmental dimensions.

MARIA STELLA BURGIO

Maria Stella Burgio is a second year PhD Candidate at the Department of Asian and African Studies of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, currently visiting student at Beijing Normal University. Her research interests concern the application of Systems Thinking in Ecolinguistics. She holds a master's degree in Language and Management to China and is an alumna of Ca' Foscari International College.

NICOLETTA CIROTA

Nicoletta Cirota is a Ph.D. candidate at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, specializing in Chinese linguistics and Chinese Second Language Acquisition. Her research focuses on the acquisition of Chinese characters by Italian L1 learners of L2 Chinese, with a particular emphasis on individuals with developmental dyslexia in Italian secondary schools. Nicoletta's academic journey began with her experience teaching Chinese in secondary schools in Italy, which sparked her interest in this area of study. Her work aims to contribute to the understanding of dyslexia in the context of second language acquisition, with implications for educational practice.

SERGIO GIANFRATE

Sergio Gianfrate holds a BA and MA in Chinese Studies from Ca' Foscari University of Venice. They are currently a PhD candidate at the Department of Asian and African Studies at Ca' Foscari and the Institute of East Asian Art History at Heidelberg University. Their research focuses on the bodily aspects of Chinese handscroll painting, with a dissertation titled *Scrolling Inside Out. A Symptomatology of Living Practices through Chinese Handscroll Painting.*

RITA MANCINI

Rita Mancini work focuses on the religious and cultural geography of indigenous communities in northeastern Nepal, particularly those with syncretic Buddhist traditions. Through a decolonial and antispeciesist lens, my research explores the linkages between place-based religion and human/non-human relations. By conducting ethnographic and geographical analysis, I aim to examine the boundaries that define the sacred, the human, and the animal within particular epistemic spaces.

AMBER ELISABETH PETERS

Amber Elisabeth Peters is a doctoral student in the double-degree program at Heidelberg University and Ca' Foscari University of Venice under the supervision of Thomas Dähnhardt and Hans Harder. Her research centres on the text and illustration of the seventeenth-century Dakhini Urdu Sufi romance, the Gulshan-i Ishq, by Bijapur court poet, Nusrati. Her Master of Arts thesis was titled The Tale of the Buraq's Tail: Reading the Buraq's Journey Through Indo-Persian Literature in a Comparative Study of Buraq Imagery. She seeks to place the history of Urdu literature within the context of the built and natural environments of the Deccan Sultanates. Her forthcoming doctoral thesis highlights how the aesthetics of Nusrati's poetry bring to light his religious and philosophical framework.

LINDA ANNA PIETRASANTA

Linda Anna Pietrasanta is a PhD student at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and will spend part of her doctoral research at Universität Bern, Switzerland. Her research focuses on the Chinese philosopher Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968), a subject she previously explored in her Master's thesis. She is particularly interested in Xiong's critique of Buddhist thought and his metaphysics of immanence. Her broader academic interests include comparative and theoretical philosophy as well as metaphysics.

SOMITA SABETI

Somita Sabeti is a PhD candidate at the Department of Asian and African Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her research explores the role of cultural-affective spaces shaped by overt and subtle acts of resistance in the Iranian diaspora in Milan and beyond.

Employing a multi-sited ethnographic approach, her work investigates the practices of artists, performers, co-creators, and audiences across three interconnected fieldwork sites, including theatre, coffeehouses and civil society organizations.

FRANCESCO CARERI (Roma Tre University, Italy)

Francesco Careri (1966) is an architect and Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture at Roma Tre University. Since 1995, he has been a founding member of the urban art laboratory **Stalker – Osservatorio Nomade**, through which he experiments with creative intervention methodologies in multicultural cities and informal housing in Rome. His work began with public art actions at **Campo Boario**, continued in **Corviale** with studies and projects on micro-transformations carried out by residents, and later extended to the **city of the Roma people**, navigating between shantytowns, official camps, and the self-recovery of occupied spaces.

His main publications include: *Constant. New Babylon, a Nomadic City*, Testo & Immagine, Turin 2001; *Walkscapes. El andar como práctica estética / Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 2002; Italian translation: *Walkscapes. Camminare come pratica estetica*, Einaudi, Turin 2006; *Stalker / Savorengo Ker. From the Nomad Camp to Everyone's Home*, Linaria, Rome 2015; *Pasear, detenerse*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 2016, São Paulo 2017; *Stalker / Campus Rom*, Altrimedia Edizioni, Matera 2017, with Lorenzo Romito.

1995-2025 Through the Actual Territories

Francesco Careri reflects on the theme of the interregnum by revisiting the exploration of Rome's interstitial spaces carried out by Stalker thirty years ago, in October 1995: "Sleeping outdoors for three nights and walking for four days was the initiatory journey that turned the world upside down and set it forever in a nomadic perspective. For all of us who from that moment on would call ourselves Stalker, that was a rite of passage after which everything was different, forever. We wanted to catch the city by surprise, and we realized that in order to do so, we too had to be caught

by surprise — mutually. The only way was to get lost: urban drifting, transurbance. We had understood that to come into contact with the deepest phenomena of the city's unconscious becoming, we needed to shift our point of view away from the centers of urban agglomerations and place it in the voids of the wild city — what we had called in our manifesto the Actual Territories. And we had grasped that the point of view should not be fixed or linear, but uncertain and in constant motion, like the film we were living. The city had to be observed and described in a nomadic mode — by walking, climbing over walls, asking for hospitality, and sleeping in tents."

FEDERICO SQUARCINI (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy)

Federico Squarcini is a professor of Religions and Philosophies of India at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. He previously taught Indology and History of Indian Religions at the Universities of Florence, Rome 'La Sapienza', and Bologna. He is the director of the master's program in Yoga Studies at Ca' Foscari University. In 2022, he was appointed Visiting Numata Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Among his numerous publications are "Yoga. Fra storia, salute e mercato", co-authored with L. Mori (Carocci, Rome 2008); the complete translation, co-edited with G. Pellegrini, of Patañjali's Yogasūtra (Einaudi, Turin 2015, 2019); the two-volume edition "I testi dello yoga. Un'antologia" and "Le parole dello yoga. Un glossario", published by Corriere della Sera (Milan 2021); and the scholarly study "Gli esercizi di Patañjali. Contro la vorticosità delle affezioni della vita abitudinaria" published by ETS (Pisa 2023).

FRANCESCO GONELLA (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy)
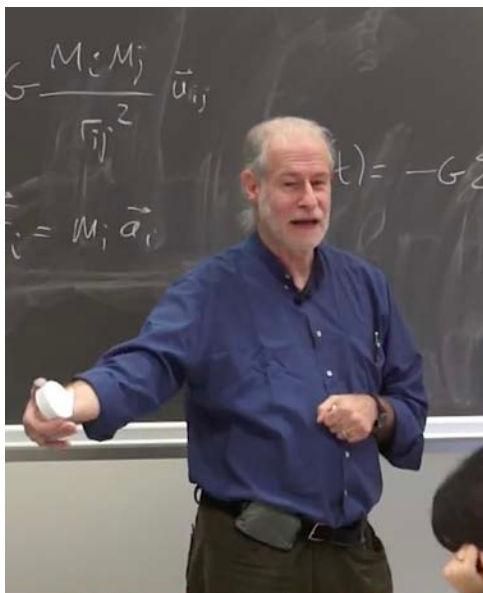
Francesco Gonella is full professor of Physics at the Department of Molecular Sciences and Nanosystems of Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Research interests have been focused in the last 15 years on Systems Thinking application to the analysis of complex systems in different fields, ranging from ecology to biomedicine and to energy production. F.G. is High-End Foreign Expert for the Chinese Academy of Science and lecturer of Environmental Modelling at Beijing Normal University, China. F.G is director of the International School of Emergy Accounting and member of Executive Councile of ISAER, International Society for Advancement in Emergy Research. F.G. is expert reviewer for IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and IPBES

(Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services). Author or co-author of more than 200 publications in international peer-reviewed Journals; F.G. is included in the list of the 2% most influential scientists worldwide in their respective field (Elsevier BV, Stanford University 2022). F.G. held courses or seminars on Systems Thinking at several Universities in Italy (Catania, Torino, Lecce, Bologna) and at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland. Since its foundation, F.G. is the Director of SMAC, Centre for the study of the systemic dynamics of complex diseases.

Between Worlds: Interregnum, Interdisciplinarity, and the Making of Knowledge

The frequent emphasis on interdisciplinarity—especially in academic settings—reflects a growing awareness of the complexity of the realities we are called to study, interpret, and construct. Yet, despite the widespread call to inhabit a vaguely defined "in-between" space, a truly meaningful and productive exchange between different fields of knowledge still feels out of reach.

It is from this starting point that Professors Francesco Gonella and Federico Squarcini have been invited into dialogue, as representatives of two *allegedly* opposing domains: the hard sciences and the humanities. Their conversation will explore this seemingly unbridgeable divide from two angles. First, the theoretical challenge of developing a shared conceptual framework capable of grappling with the complexity of today's world; and second, how this theoretical work can be translated into academic and pedagogical practice.

How do we construct, inhabit, and teach research from within the interregnum? Structured as a dialogue, this encounter offers a provocation: a call to action aimed at outlining a theoretical praxis rooted in recognition and mutual engagement across disciplinary boundaries.

PANEL 1 – Conceptualizing Interregnum: Philosophy and Critical Theory

LUCIA FERRI (University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy)
The environmental emergency as a contemporary interregnum: analysis and overcoming of the subject/object dichotomy

This contribution aims to interpret the present as an interregnum, having the current ecological crisis as a reference point. This crisis is here understood as an urgent reality that has opened the door to a profound rethinking of the epistemological and normative paradigms of the contemporary Western world. The paper's starting point will be the critical reading of the subject/object dichotomy developed by Rationalism and the Enlightenment, sifting through the forms it has taken within this cultural framework. It will be shown how the environmental emergency has raised the need to investigate the structure of this dichotomy starting from the role of object assigned to nature by a subject who has proclaimed himself as such on the basis of his own rationality. Indeed, the principle of rationality has historically been established as a criterion of value hierarchy, both between humans and non-humans, and within humans themselves. Women and colonized peoples were excluded from rationality and placed in the category of nature, which has taken on a symbolic negative meaning through the attribution of predicates elaborated in opposition to reason, like passivity and subordination.

In this sense, the climate crisis is presented both as a moment of subsumption of the dynamics of domination realized on the basis of this paradigm, and as a real problem that shows the need to overturn it after having critically questioned it. It will highlight how the wide range of entities included in the category of nature and the distinction between the latter and the human collide, showing how this division is an abstraction that conceals the actual blurring of the subject into the object. Accepting this perspective implies the deconstruction of the idea of subjectivity derived from the dichotomous system and leads to rethinking the predicates used to describe the world and its actors.

Biography

Lucia Ferri graduated in Philosophy from the University of Bologna and is currently a PhD student at the University of Milan - Bicocca. Her research project focuses on the analysis of concepts used to talk about ecological crisis within the environmental humanities, with particular reference to the intersection with conceptual investigations carried out in the fields of gender and post-colonial studies.

GIACOMO CACCIAGUERRA (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy)
MATTEO GARBELLI (Università di Napoli "L'Orientale", Italy)
In-Betweenness: Young Researchers and the Quest For a Place

As area scholars, in-betweenness informs our activity on multiple levels: since our research draws on several disciplines – a hint at the debate over Area studies itself, which argues for its interdisciplinarity and is haunted by its lack of discipline (Dutton 2012, 8) – we always choose among several routes for approaching the 'object' (air quotes!) of our inquiry. Being young scholars – not age-wise, but experience-wise – further complicates the matter, as we embark on a quest for *our* place within academia. Essentially, we find ourselves at a crossroad – and here lies a second degree of in-betweenness, as well as the root of our occasional sense of loss. "Area studies" comes with its

blessings – interdisciplinarity, potential for articulating dissonant discourses (Dutton 2012) – and its curses – the implications of the very idea of 'area' in terms of governmentality (Walker and Sakai, 2019) – thus triggering several questions: should we try and fit within its existing structure? If so, how? What about our personal inclinations, which might not fit into this structure? What if we do not feel like "Area scholars" at all? Can we create new paths which might lead us outside of Area studies, and towards more 'disciplinary' research? Would our attempt to make (theoretical) claims within a discipline be at all legitimate? We try to tackle these questions, moving from our experiences as trained area scholars with latent disciplinary interests, confronting an academia in which knowledge production is still informed by the workings of coloniality as arbiter of legitimacy (Mignolo 2018, 2020) and, thus, imbalanced across the world. We do so holding that we need to address issues of positionality and reflexivity: in other words, that we need to question the Self *before* the Other. Hopefully, this will initiate an exchange with people who might face a similar predicament or see things differently altogether.

Biography

Giacomo Cacciaguerra

Currently a PhD candidate at Ca' Foscari University (Venice), I earned both my BA and MA from the same institution in 2020 and 2023, respectively. My current research focuses on China-related artistic production outside the PRC, blending art-historical and socio-anthropological approaches. This theme also formed the basis of my MA dissertation, titled "Art as Third Space: third-space hybridity in contemporary art". My interests broadly encompass contemporary Chinese art, with a particular emphasis on cultural identity, self-representation, and visual culture.

Matteo Garbelli

I am a PhD candidate at Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale'. Before joining the PhD cohort there, I got my BA and MA from Ca' Foscari University of Venice (2019, 2022) and an MA in Chinese Studies from Leiden University (2020). Although my interests cover modern and contemporary Chinese literature at large, I mainly research contemporary poetry, also in its entanglement with society, politics and ideology. I have written on Chinese workers' poetry, while my doctoral research focuses on the trajectories of Chinese poets living and writing outside the PRC after 1989.

FU HAOYANG
Rereading Interregnum Through *Wu* in Wang Bi: A Transcultural Perspective

This research reexamines the philosophical revaluation of *wu* (無, "nothingness") within the Xuanxue (玄學, "Neo-Daoism") movement, which flourished during the Wei-Jin period – a historical interregnum marked by the decline of Confucian orthodoxy and the rise of Daoist- influenced metaphysical inquiry. Xuanxue's departure from *Daotong* (道統, "Confucian orthodoxy") catalyzed an era of intellectual awakening by foregrounding ontological questions concerning *wu* and *you* (有, "being") that Confucianism had traditionally overlooked.

This study argues that *wu* provides a framework for reinterpreting the notion of interregnum. Wang Bi 王弼 goes further than Laozi 老子 by emphasizing *wu* as the ontological foundation for all beings (*you* 有). As a counterpoint to the existential void, wu offers a metaphysical foundation that transcends dichotomous thinking, opening pathways to meaning that both overcome ontological dualism and foster transcultural philosophical dialogue. To illustrate this, the research draws on Nishida Kitarō's concept of Basho ("place") in Japanese Kyoto School thought and Nicholas of Cusa's notion of Non aliud ("not-other") in the Western Renaissance tradition. These parallels underscore

wu's relevance in addressing nihilistic ontological crises and bridge Eastern and Western philosophical perspectives.

By situating Xuanxue within a global intellectual lineage, this project demonstrates how transcultural engagement with *wu* can reframe the interregnum not as a dualistic "in- between" state but as a creative reorientation—a perspective applicable to both historical and contemporary philosophical discourse.

Biography

I am a PhD fellow at the Department of Philosophy, Social Sciences, and Education at the University of Perugia. Passionate about the concept of 'nothingness' in both Eastern and Western philosophy, I completed my Master's thesis titled *The Locus of Nothingness: Following the Footsteps of Bernhard Welte for an Encounter Between East and West*. My research interests focus on the *Xuanxue* 玄學 of the Wei-Jin period in the perspective of a philosophical dialogue between China and the West.

FRANCESCO PIGATO

The Feast: Symbolic Praxis from Jesi to Schürmann

In Roman law, *interregnum* is the ephemeral regime of power which is put in place to fill the gap between the mandates of different consuls or tribunes. In other terms, the *interrex* is the magistrate whose only purpose is to ensure the continuity of the rule of law in the time between two ordinary governments. The *interregnum*, as a consequence, is an alternative form of *imperium*. Quite the contrary of a subversion of law, it is the institution of a temporary law to grant the continuity of order. Such an ephemeral type of order can be recognized in the common occurrence of the feast, a term we use to indicate the events of a celebration, especially a recurrent one like an anniversary or a popular holiday. In particular, the feast can be revealed to be a specific type of *interregnum* thanks to two perspectives, which together show how the feast can represent a continuation of order under a different guise.

To begin, Furio Jesi's essay *Conoscibilità della Festa* points out that the feast and its literary representation is the opportunity to experiment with diversity, to put in place customs different from the ordinary ones. On a similar basis, in his essay *Symbolic Praxis* Reiner Schürmann studies the feast as the institution of an experimental temporality and an experimental semiotics.

The role of the feast as *interregnum* and its literary representation will be analyzed to show that during the celebration of a feast ordinary meaning and rule are not suspended but transformed. In particular, celebration constitutes an example of what Schürmann calls *symbolic praxis*, that is the adoption of shared symbols to charge a moment with a special significance, so that the feast-*interregnum* is not a space and time devoid of sense, but a collective experiment in the production of meaning.

Biography

I am a PhD candidate at Ruhr-Universität Bochum, where my studies focus on the history and philosophy of science. I received both my BA and MA in Philosophy at Ca' Foscari, where I graduated my master's degree with a thesis on Reiner Schürmann's late works. My current research focuses on the production of truth through different means of argumentation, with a special focus on early modern scientific cultures, their roots in classical antiquity, and their impact in the development of modern thought.

PANEL 2 – Conceptualizing Interregnum: Philosophy and Critical Theory

KAMILLA SIBATOVA

Between Growth and Decay/ Wilderness and Timidness: Gardens and Forests as Interregnum Spaces

The concept of interregnum, a liminal state between two established orders, can be compellingly explored through the living landscapes of gardens and forests. These environments serve as natural metaphors and material realities of transition, embodying the tension between control and wildness, stability and flux. As climate crises and environmental upheavals redefine the familiar, gardens and forests become sites of ecological and philosophical study, where competing possibilities for the future emerge and old structures are questioned.

Gardens, meticulously designed yet ever susceptible to nature's unpredictability, represent human efforts to mediate and pause the relentless passage of time. They embody a hopeful yet fragile balance, the dream of utopic futurities, capturing the essence of interregnum — an aspiration for order that remains suspended between growth and entropy. Forests, on the other hand, unfold as dynamic, ancient entities where decay nurtures new life and where the boundaries between past and future are constantly blurred. But not only these boundaries are blurred, also the boundary between gardens and forests can be less obvious and ever shifting. They invite contemplation of time as cyclical, challenging our linear perceptions and offering a natural model for enduring and navigating change. This paper investigates how gardens and forests, as ecological and cultural interregnum spaces, induce critical reflections on human-nature relationships and the paradigms that sustain them. Drawing from environmental philosophy, speculative ecocriticism, and landscape theory, I explore whether these spaces encourage us to embrace transformation or seduce us into a comforting liminality, fearful of what lies beyond.

By examining these questions, the presentation seeks to articulate gardens and forests as potent, transformative spaces that offer lessons for navigating interregnum and rethinking our place within the earth's unfolding story.

Biography

My name is Kamilla Sibatova and I am a student in the Environmental Humanities Master's program at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, I have a background in Oriental Studies, Conflict Studies and Visual Culture. I have been collecting material on gardens and forests for my Master's thesis for some time, but I decided to change the topic. However, I do not want this work to be wasted, because I find it quite inspiring and intriguing. In general, I am very attracted to plant humanities, and I strive to keep it as a

part of my academic interests.

FRANCESCA BERNI

Shanshui as an In-Between Ecosystem: Exploring the Chinese Notion of Landscape through Spatial Implications and Cinematic Narratives

Shanshui (山水), meaning "mountain-water" in Chinese, is often translated as "landscape" in English. However, these terms reflect distinct cultural perspectives on space, time, and transformation. This difference is especially evident when contrasting Chinese and European traditions, particularly in landscape painting, where cultural imaginaries shape the conceiving and inhabiting the environment.

In *shanshui*, water embodies the "in-between" dynamic—an interstitial, transformative matter between mountain and sky, land and flow. As a symbol and a substance, water encapsulates the concept of *interregnum*, the restlessness entity that continually shifts and shapes the space even when it appears to be still.

This research examines water as the aesthetic, technical, and "natural" environment of the project, explored through observing water-related dynamics with the tool of video recording in the framework of Chinese rural areas. Recorded water flows open a window onto the landscape's dynamic "in-betweenness," deepening the understanding of *shanshui* as an ecosystem of continual transition, where boundaries dissolve into interweaves and mixtures. In this sense, water is an agent of transformation, mediating between (and also discussing their edges) the material and non-material, the solid and the fluid. The visual cinematic component foregrounds this "in-between" relationship within a rural Chinese village, presenting a narrative that invites direct engagement with the landscape—untethered from the semantic confines of Western "land-scape" and moving closer to the Eastern "mountain-water" (*shanshui*) way of thinking and. The proposal embraces observation, listening and cinematic narratives as places where the interregnum becomes the laboratory of the present times when that space in between is precisely conceived as an *agentivity* space where the landscape can take place. In this way, water symbolizes the transition between paradigms, evoking a design approach that welcomes the transformative potential of the "in-between." The author will cross the reflection, presenting a series of video recordings filmed in Fujian during her PhD fieldwork, integrated with a selection of Chinese movie frames and literary references to provide an immersive environment for the whole reasoning.

Biography

Francesca Berni is a Milan-based researcher and architect whose work focuses on landscape as both a cultural seismometer and an imaginative realm. She specializes in the intersection of architecture and landscape studies, currently holding a postdoctoral position within the Palimpsest project at Politecnico di Milano's CALL-Cities in Action for Learning Lab. In 2021, she was the Enel Italian Fellow in Architecture, Urban Design, and Landscape at the American Academy in Rome. Her work integrates Eastern and Western perspectives: in 2020, she achieved the PhD title with the thesis *"The Shapes of Water - Discourse around the Architectural Project for Landscape Reactivation in Fujian Province."*

ALESSANDRO TOLLARI

What if a school were an interregnum? Worlding as a fictional practice in-between performing arts and radical pedagogies

This contribution offers a theoretical and practical perspective on central topics from my PhD thesis, a transdisciplinary research-creation project inspired by Manning's methodologies. This project aims to explore transformative possibilities for reimagining schooling, drawing on radical pedagogies and contemporary performing arts.

I first conduct a critical exploration of the school institution's crisis in a broad sense, as outlined in Fisher's concept of capitalist realism, challenging the notion that "there is no alternative." I contrast this with the emerging possible turn discussed by Glaveanu et al. This inquiry poses a central question: what if schooling were re-envisioned not as a site for reproducing existing structures, but as an "interregnum" – a transitional space akin to C. S. Lewis' Forest between worlds – where knowledge yet unknown might be sought, and alternative futures crafted?

In this context, I examine the concept of worlding, which has garnered substantial intellectual interest, by integrating Campagna's post-apocalyptic theses with practical insights from game studies, particularly Cheng's perspectives. Here, the potential of "making worlds" is not only an exercise in philosophical theory or art but also emerges as a pedagogical approach. I extend this framework by reflecting on radical movements in contemporary educational philosophy that emphasize the values of the unknown (Rancière; Biesta), of the marginal (Freire; hooks), and of the desire (Firth; Hodgson et al.).

This theoretical exploration is complemented by insights from a pair of two-year projects, Corpo Docente and School of Wish, co-designed in collaboration with Lavanderia a Vapore, the regional dance centre in Piedmont. These projects engage teachers and students in experimental journeys intersecting pedagogy and performing arts, physical presence and imaginative exploration, embodying a practical application of this pedagogical shift.

Biography

Alessandro Tollari (Torino, 1988) is a PhD candidate student at IUAV University Venice and a high school teacher. His project Schools of Other Worlds. Performative fictionality and practices of educational futures is a research-creation in-between radical pedagogies and live arts that - through utopian studies, critical fabulation, speculative fictionality and worlding practices - explores the possibilities of transformation of the educational imaginary in the contemporary European context. He collaborates for the pedagogical projects of Fondazione Piemonte dal Vivo / Lavanderia a Vapore (Torino) and Attitudes_spazio alle arti (Bologna). He is junior editor for Roots & Routes and author for Loescher Editore.

CHIARA MASCARELLO

The in-between space disclosed by meditative practice in Tibetan Buddhism

The presentation I propose fits within what I would describe as the broad in-between space outlined by Buddhist traditions as the path – a journey of stages meant to lead practitioners from the state of ordinary beings (the base) to one of salvation or awakening (the result). I will focus specifically on Tibetan Buddhism, examining the transformative dynamics that unfold in this space, where one departs from the ordinary state – characterized by ignorance about the nature of phenomena and attachment to personal identity. This transition opens up significant possibilities for change, allowing a progressive movement toward a state where this condition is reversed into a profound understanding of the reality of phenomena and interdependence as the essence of our existence. I will explore how the Tibetan Buddhist tradition guides practitioners through an intentional disruption of interpretive schemas of reality, showing these schemas to be flawed and maladaptive, by means of specific, deconstructive meditative practices. I suggest that these practices can be seen as tools for breaking through the ordinary paradigms of self and phenomena that we typically hold, yet which are misaligned with reality. This process enables practitioners to navigate the experiential interregnum that emerges as transformation occurs. I will select specific practices to illustrate how the tradition seeks to dismantle self and mind paradigms based on mistaken conceptions of their substantiality and misconceptions about the nature of phenomena. Finally, I will discuss how this deconstructive path is traditionally encompassed, supported, and mirrored by a constructive and adaptive transformation on existential, ethical, and relational levels.

Biography

Chiara Mascarello holds a research grant at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where she also serves as an Adjunct Professor of Tibetan Language, and co-directs the Italian Buddhist Union's Research Center. Additionally, she is among the founders and board members of the Contemplative Studies program at the University of Padua and has lectured in various university programs. She has worked extensively as a Tibetan translator and regularly conducts translation workshops. Her research focuses on the Indo-Tibetan contemplative tradition, particularly exploring the nature of mind and the practice of mind training, and its relevance to contemporary societies.

FRANCESCO TORMEN

Tibetan Dream Yoga and Its Contributions to Contemplative Research

In the early 1980s, Stephen LaBerge, a neuropsychologist at Stanford University, together with a group of experienced dreamers who called themselves "the oneironauts," devised an ingenious experimental design that soon led to the scientific discovery of lucid dreaming—a hybrid state of consciousness, a kind of interregnum between dreaming and waking, in which the dreamer is aware of dreaming while still within the dream. In the following decades, thanks to advances in neuroimaging techniques, lucid dreaming emerged as a key phenomenon for the study of consciousness and its various states. But who should be credited for these discoveries?

In this paper, I will attempt to reconstruct the role played by the Tibetan tradition of dream yoga in this enterprise. I will then examine the place of lucid dreaming within this religious context, where the "night practice" represents a key tool on the path toward enlightenment. Lucid dreaming, in this

framework, is only a transitional stage within a much broader and deeper journey aimed at cultivating continuity of awareness across the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep—states which, in the perspective of Tibetan tantra, mirror those of death, the bardo, and rebirth, part of a much larger cycle.

Finally, I will present an overview of the discoveries and applications related to lucid dreaming that have arisen from the encounter between modern science and Buddhist contemplative experience. This exploration will allow us to consider another kind of interregnum—this time epistemological and methodological—represented by the interdisciplinary field of contemporary contemplative research, which, by integrating neuroscience, religious studies, and other disciplines, seeks to bridge the third-person perspective of experimental science with the first-person phenomenological inquiry characteristic of contemplative traditions.

Biography

Francesco Tormen is an adjunct professor of Tibetan Language and Literature at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. He co-directs the Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union and is a member of the Steering Committee for the Master's Program in Contemplative Studies at the University of Padua. He is also a translator and interpreter of Tibetan and the author of *With Open Eyes: Lucid Dreaming Between Neuroscience and Contemplative Experience*, published in 2024 by Il Saggiatore. In addition to his work on this subject, he has published on Tibetan Buddhism, Madhyamaka philosophy, and the relationship between Buddhism, posthumanism, and transhumanism.

WANG FENGYU

Ordering Tea Utensils and National Treasures: Auctions Catalogs in the Early Twentieth-Century Japan

A 1923 sale of a thirteenth-century illuminated handscroll to the Boston Museum of Arts shocked the Japanese public and policymakers alike. The establishment of art historical discipline and institutions after the European model, despite half of century of progress, proved insufficient in preventing the outflows of Japanese cultural properties to foreign hands. Especially in the semi-formal space of auctions, the antiquarian practices were still prevalent. It was in these two contesting paradigms—one of the traditional, indigenous antiquarianism, while the other the modern, imported art historical discipline—that objects of value were re-/categorized and re/evaluated. And it was through the gap between the two that illuminated handscroll (Jp. emaki), a mounting format of both painting and script and a versatile genre of narrative art, was neglected to its peripheral status.

This talk, based on a dissertation chapter, explores the ordering power of auctions and their catalogs in the organization and evaluation of objects in the early twentieth-century Japan. Catalogs, utilizing photographic reproductions to represent objects in specific ways and orders, are potent instruments that both manifest and reinforce the episteme where objects are understood and appreciated. At the turn from the Taishō (1912–1926) to the early Shōwa eras (1926–1930s), not only the social statuses and prestigious collections were reconfigured as the old houses fell and the new riches arose, but also there was a shift of policies, practices, and paradigms. By focusing on three prominent auction sales, this talk analyzes the contesting and transforming epistemes from the dominant antiquarian preference for tea utensils in the 1910s–20s, to the art historical approach centered in periodization of styles; and how the latter was appropriated by the imperialist

historicism in the 1930s, where individual objects of value were eventually subsumed into a national system of cultural patrimony.

Biography

Fengyu Wang is currently a PhD candidate at the Institute of East Asian Art History, Heidelberg University, Germany. His research focuses on the Japanese illuminated handscrolls and how their hybrid, cross-categorical, and multi-purpose nature resists simple categorizations and reproductions. He worked 2019–2023 as researcher in the DFG-funded project "Japanese Handscrolls and Digital Explorations: Materiality, Practices and Locality" and examined the digitization practices of artworks in the museum and research contexts. During the project, he co-organized a Digital Humanities Conference on the specific concerns of East Asian Studies.

LISA ANDREANI
Museum Interregnum: The Remediation of Times

Considering art mediation as a transhistorical device and a times-repository, is it possible to situate this practice not only in the opening period of an exhibition but rather to embed it in a circular time that concerns the entire project? Questioning the art mediation activities as potential new grey zones and conditions of agency capable of activating a new temporalisation that goes beyond the exhibition, the following contribution aims to expand the potential readings of the term "interregnum" to search for a possibility of public access to all the stages of the exhibition and consequently the museum. Analysing two specific case studies – the experience and transformation of the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt by curator Clémentine Deliss in the program entitled *The Metabolic Museum* and the fluid condition experienced in the exhibition *Pierre Huyghe. Liminal* at Punta della Dogana in Venice – I will try to configure a circular temporality called "before-during-after" in which art mediation contaminates and remediates knowledge at all stages of the construction of an exhibition. Art mediation, if analysed specifically to overcome logocentric dynamics and through its imaginative potential, could be a useful tool for repositioning the concept of community and allowing the public to grasp the processes behind the institution and its daily metabolic existence.

Biography

Lisa Andreani is a Curator and PhD Candidate in Visual Arts and Fashion at IUAV University and Palazzo Grassi/Punta della Dogana in Venice. In 2023, she was a co-curator of *:After. Festival diffuso di Architettura in Sicilia*. From 2020 to 2022 she was Curatorial and Editorial Coordinator at MACRO (Rome). In 2019, she was a fellow of the Global Modernism Studies research program at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation (Dessau) and the Victoria & Albert Museum (London). Since 2018 she has worked as Archive Researcher for Archivio Salvo (Turin) where she is part of the Scientific Committee.

EMMA MAZZEI
Suspended Identities: Navigating Homosexuality in the Chinese Interregnum

China's rich cultural heritage, deeply rooted in Confucian principles and traditional family values, has long shaped social norms and expectations. However, as the nation embraces globalization and modernization, the discourse on sexuality is also evolving. As Bao (2020,43) phrases it, "the newly invented gay and lesbian bodies manifest the hegemony of discourses of being modern"[1]. This translates into new and diverse sexual identities becoming increasingly visible in the mainstream, thus challenging the dominant heteronormative framework imposed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP, which exercises strict control over many aspects of society, including cultural expression and dissent[2], maintains tight regulations around LGBTQ+ issues, creating a climate where cultural acceptance of homosexuality is both promising and precarious. Once hidden, the queer now resists being forced back into the shadows and is coming up with new ways to resist the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) control and censorship. This resistance has produced an "in-between" space—namely an interregnum—where traditional values are in tension with modern, globalized identities. This paper explores this complex, transitional space, examining how queer identities in China are negotiated between traditional expectations, state repression, and a growing LGBTQ+ movement. Using the concept of interregnum as a framework, the study investigates how Chinese queer individuals navigate this period of cultural and social flux. It also examines the historical and cultural circumstances that have led to this contradictory status. The main question guiding this study is: How do queer individuals in China navigate the interregnum of social and cultural transition, balancing personal identity with pressures of tradition, state control, and the new possibilities for social acceptance? Through this exploration, the study provides insights into the resilience of the queer community as they seek to establish a sense of identity within the evolving social landscape.

Biography

Emma Mazzei graduated from an international degree program and obtained a double title in the sinology interdisciplinary field; in 2018 she graduated from Ca' Foscari University of Venice in Language, Culture and Society of Asia and Mediterranean Africa and, in 2022 she graduated in Chinese Language at Beijing's Capital Normal University. In 2024, she obtained her master's degree in Chinese studies at Leiden University. She recently participated in the international conference "Queer Kinship: Affects, Families, Bonds" in Siena, with the paper "Negotiating Tradition and Modernity: The Importance of Grandparents in Chinese Queer Families".

GIOVANNI GIAMELLO
Becoming Chinese: Beyond in-betweenness and neither-norness?

When I began fieldwork on the children of Chinese migrants in Italy, I quickly encountered a fundamental terminological challenge: how to refer to "them", whether in direct interaction or scholarly writing. While these youth may hold the same Chinese citizenship as their parents', they have grown up in a different sociolinguistic and cultural landscape. Certain individuals have come to claim composite identities, such as "Sino-Italian" or "Italo-Chinese," positioning themselves in between two cultures; others reject such labels altogether. "Chinese identity" thus materializes in relational and contextual ways. It is an external ascription by peers and society at large, blinded by

the phenotypical traits which they see as not compatible in relation to "Italian identity". Simultaneously, it is reproduced by their migrant relatives through expressions (like "我们中国人" or "老外"), adopted by these youth adopt, self-identifying as "Chinese" (中国人) rather than as "Chinese descendants" (华人, 华侨, 华裔). At times, however, the "Chinese" label can be retracted—by themselves or by the teachers—in relation to a lacking proficiency in Chinese language. These observations complicate any presupposition that children of Chinese immigrants are inherently "Chinese"—rather, they may become Chinese. This phenomenon underscores ethnicity as a processual construct, one in which boundaries are both reinforced and contested through interactions. The descendants of migrant thus disrupt dichotomous identities, challenging the static maintenance of boundaries. Trying to move away from the labels "Italian" and "Chinese", the space in between and all around can certainly be a discomforting unknown where multitudinous possibilities compete for existence, where contradictions can coexist in unresolved tensions. Examining "becoming Chinese" reveals a fluid, heterogeneous landscape, where those classified, or self-classified, as "Chinese" navigate multiplicity and contradiction. This nuanced approach avoids monolithic labels and acknowledges the diversity within these ethnic boundaries, embracing the discomfort of an identity in flux.

Biography

Giovanni Giamello is a PhD candidate at the Department of Politics and Society, Aalborg University, Denmark. His doctoral thesis investigates the reproduction of ethnic boundaries—in their varied declensions—by and among young Sinodescendants in Prato, Italy. His research draws on ethnographic fieldwork focused on public high schools and Chinese "afterschools". His fields of inquiry include Chinese migration and diaspora studies. Giovanni holds a BA in Chinese Language and Culture (Inalco, France), and a MSc in European Studies & International Relations with a focus on China (Aalborg University, Denmark & University of International Relations, China).

SHWETA ARORA

Between Now and Then: Liminality and Female Consciousness in Yosano Akiko's Kokyō no natsu (Summer at home, 1911)

This study examines Yosano Akiko's Kokyō no natsu through the lens of interregnum, exploring how the prose captures Japanese women's experiences at the shifting frontiers of urban social life in early 20th-century Japan. Situated within an in-between space marked by socio-cultural transitions, Kokyō no natsu centers on the narrative of a woman whose sense of belonging is caught between the traditional, rural landscape and the emergent urban allure. Employing Gennep's concept of liminality, the analysis decodes Akiko's use of spatial and emotional thresholds to highlight generational tensions in female consciousness. This interregnum in identity and space manifests in the protagonist's tension between loyalty to her fish merchant husband and a longing for the aesthetic vibrance of the town center. Through the observations of her niece, Akiko captures the dual-layered liminality—an adult's stagnation and a child's yearning for the promises of Kyoto's urban beauty. As both characters navigate desires for an idealized life beyond their immediate environments, Kokyō no natsu poignantly illustrates a suspended state that reveals both the fear of change and the pull toward transformation. This work thus illuminates the complexities of transitional periods where individuals oscillate between the past and an aspirational future, evoking broader themes of generational consciousness, place, and identity that resonate across interregnum spaces.

Biography

Shweta Arora is a PhD candidate [ABD] at the National University of Singapore [NUS], specializing in gender studies. She is also currently a Yanai Initiative visiting scholar at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research focuses on Japanese women writers and the reception of Indian media in Japan. Before joining NUS, she was a Japanese language lecturer at Delhi University [India], where she also received her master's degree in Japanese. Her scholarly pursuits have led her to Osaka University [Japan] as a research scholar for two years, sponsored by MEXT [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology], and to Kyoto University [Japan] as a research fellow for a year, supported by the Japan Foundation fellowship.

PANEL 5 – Middle grounds: figurative transformation as the Interregnum

FRANCESCO FIRTH

Reading Between the Lines: a Grapholinguistic Analysis of Expressive Furigana Gloss Usage within Late Edo and Early Meiji Literature

Furigana glosses are a type of interlinear gloss commonly used in Japanese writing. They appear as smaller phonographic characters applied above (or, in the case of vertical writing, to the right side) of logographic characters within texts in order to signal their intended interpretation to the reader. Far from being just a type of reading aid, throughout its history Furigana has played a central role in the development of Japanese writing as a whole. After Furigana-like glossing systems first developed around the eighth century CE, the practice of supplementing texts by including additional information in the form of glosses kept evolving, and by the time the Edo period (1603-1868) began, Furigana had become a highly sophisticated system employed not only to mark word forms with their expected readings, but also to assign unorthodox interpretations to existing words in order to create idiosyncratic bilateral graphical signs capable of expressing in writing linguistic ideas that spoken language could not.

The beginning of the Meiji period (1868-1912) brought on a period of extensive social, economic and political change, much of it in alignment with Western canons. Within such a cultural climate, the type of Furigana glosses seen in the Edo period did not, however, become obsolete: Indeed, the practice of assigning new meanings to old words turned out to be extremely useful during a period of intense and rapid transition from one cultural paradigm to another.

What I would like to discuss in this presentation, then, is what the grapholinguistic inquiry of a phenomenon of Japanese writing often neglected by scholars, such as creative and unorthodox usage of Furigana glosses, can tell us about middle grounds, graduality and the nuances of linguistic expression within a moment in history characterized by change and cultural hybridization such as the late Edo and early Meiji periods.

Biography

Francesco Firth is a PhD fellow at Sapienza University of Rome, where he also earned his bachelor and master's degree in Oriental Languages and Cultures, with a focus on Japanese studies. His research interests include the history and (grapho)linguistics of writing systems within the Sinosphere and its surroundings as well as the naturally intersecting fields of Japanese paleography and Japanese textual scholarship in broader terms. The current focus of Francesco's research is the analysis of the linguistic function of marginal and interlinear glosses within documents composed between the late Edo period (1603-1868) and early Meiji period (1868-1912).

MARTYNA LESNIEWSKA

Cultural Power and Political Transition: The Evolution of Armor in Early Modern Japan

This paper draws on my dissertation research, examining 17th-century Japanese armor as a material manifestation of cultural transformation during a period of profound political and social transition in early Edo Japan. With the rise of the Tokugawa shogunate (1615–1868), Japan moved from the turbulent Sengoku period (c. 1467–1600) into a new political order, leading to a redefinition of the warrior elite's cultural and social authority. This period functioned as an interregnum, where the focus of armor production developed from functional battle gear to complex artworks that

communicated power and status in ways that transcended traditional military functions. This paper examines how the Nagasone armorers navigated the shift between utility and aesthetics, martial necessity, and cultural expression. Their innovations transformed armor into a manifestation of political and cultural authority, adapting to the new Tokugawa paradigm. In this transitional period, armor bridged old and new worlds, reflecting the evolving artistic, social, and political values of the time. The study of early Edo-period armor thus opens a window into the interregnum's unique potential for cultural redefinition, where armor was crafted not just as protection but as a materialization of the samurai's evolving role within the shifting order of Japanese society. By analyzing the aesthetics and styles of armor during this critical passage, this paper demonstrates how armor transitioned from primary utilitarian object to an emblem of authority, embodying a complex interplay between old martial values and new cultural ideals. This approach sheds light on the interregnum as a fertile period of creative adaptation, where the shifting roles of object and subject reveal the complex transformations within Japan's early modern cultural landscape.

Biography

Martyna Lesniewska is a PhD candidate at Freie Universität Berlin, specializing in Japanese material culture of the 16th and 17th centuries, and samurai arms and armor. Formerly the chief curator of the Samurai Museum Berlin (2017-2022), she is finishing her dissertation titled "Craftsmanship and Cultural Authority: The Nagasone School and the Evolution of Armor Aesthetics in 17th Century Japan." She holds a Bachelor's in Japanese Studies and a Master's in East Asian Art History, with time spent studying at Kobe University (2016). Currently, she contributes to the Samurai Museum's publications and was working as an external researcher for MK&G Hamburg.

MARIANNA DE CARLO
Mastering the 'in-between': the poetry of Yoshida no Yoroshi

As part of a cultural sphere dominated by China, ancient Japan witnessed a continuous flow of textual traditions from the continent. In literature, this led to the introduction of a new language of expression, as well as a rich canon of genres, authors and works, which inevitably came to engage with those already present on the archipelago. However, this was not simply an encounter between two unified, nation-like entities – China and Japan as we understand them today. Rather, what came from China was a diverse repertoire of written texts, varying in terms of time and place of composition, expressive forms, and conceptualizations of 'literariness.' On the receiving end, there was no such thing as 'Japan,' but rather the more circumscribed sphere of the Yamato court, within which even smaller groups were defined by specific circumstances, interests, and identities. In this highly fragmented context, a key role was played by individual authors who were able to exploit the possibilities of the interregnum between the two worlds – those who mastered both literary languages. In the field of poetry, their 'bi-literacy' meant the ability to compose both shi 詩 (poems in Sinitic, i.e., literary Chinese) and uta 歌 (poems in vernacular 'Japanese'). I argue that it is particularly in the work of eight-century poets that we see a significant evolution: through their theoretical and practical endeavors, shi and uta first came to be conceived of as comparable forms of expression, subsumed in a superordinate concept of 'poetry'. Among them, Yoshida no Yoroshi – whom I will be focusing on in my speech – constitutes an interesting case, as he managed to strategically appropriate Chinese sources to inform his poetry, both Sinitic and vernacular, placing it within an illustrious lineage of authors and making it into a tool for crafting ever-changing poetic identities.

Biography

I am currently a PhD candidate at the Università di Napoli "L'Orientale," where I also completed both my BA (2020) and MA (2022) degrees. My research focuses on ancient Japanese literature, with an emphasis on both Sinitic and vernacular poetry. I am currently investigating the reception of Chinese literary theories and practices in early Japanese poetry, specifically within the context of eighth-century poetic circles. My approach aims to combine in-depth philological analysis of primary sources with a broader theorizing effort.

PANEL 6 – Weaving the in-between: representation and potentiality in the Interregnum

ELENA MORANDI

Interrogating Gender and Language in Contemporary China: A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of Evolving Identities

This research delves into the intricate interplay between gender and language in contemporary China, with a particular focus on the reproduction of gender stereotypes. By employing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework (Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 2000; Machin, 2012; Wodak, 2012) and Corpus Linguistics methodology (Sinclair, 2004; Reppen, 2010), the study examines the dynamic relationship among language, ideology, power, and social structures. The research investigates how gender identities are constructed and challenged within contemporary Chinese media discourse. Recognizing the evolving landscape of gender dynamics, including the increasing agency of women, the changing roles of men, and the rise of LGBTQIA+ activism (Cameron, 1992; Barlow, 2004; Herring, 1995; Louie, 2014; Lau, 2024; Qian, 2021), the study explores the ongoing negotiation of gender norms and expectations in Chinese society. The concept of an "interregnum" is introduced to characterize the current transitional phase between traditional patriarchal structures and a future of gender equality. This period is marked by a complex interplay of progressive and regressive attitudes, as individuals navigate shifting gender roles and expectations. The study analyzes how this dynamic context is reflected in language use and discourse practices.

By analyzing a large-scale corpus of Chinese language texts collected from the internet, the research identifies patterns, trends, and semantic variations in language use. It delves into the emergence of neologisms and gendered expressions in Chinese Internet Language (CIL) (Jiao, 2021; Lang, 2023), examining how these linguistic innovations contribute to the construction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes.

This research aims to shed light on the complex relationship between language, gender, and power in contemporary China. By understanding how language shapes and is shaped by social and cultural forces, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of gender identity, inequality, and social change.

Biography

Elena Morandi is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Bologna's Department of Translation and Interpretation in Forli, specialized in Chinese language instruction. Having graduated from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, she brings a robust foundation in language studies to her role as a teacher of Chinese Language.

Passionate about fostering cross-cultural understanding, Elena leverages her expertise in Second Language Acquisition and her deep knowledge of Chinese culture to make significant contributions to the field. Her research interests encompass the cultural aspects of Chinese minorities, the Chinese Diaspora, and Gender Studies. Beyond the classroom, Elena is actively involved in cultural exchange initiatives, enriching the learning experience for her students and promoting intercultural dialogue.

YINGXIN CHEN

Translation as an interregnum stage for change: transformation of traditional Chinese Court-Case fiction

This paper examines the transformation of traditional Chinese court-case literature in the shadow of the Chinese translations of Holmes's stories in the early twentieth-century China. With a background of the concept of 'faithful translation' called in question, Theo Hermans noted all translations reflect a manipulation of source-text to some extent (Hermans, 1985). As Reynolds points out, this reflection on translation includes replacing the dominant metaphor of translation as a "channel" with that of a "prism". It requires to reflect on the very rigid understanding of language difference and to notice continuities between languages. By moving away from the focus to achieve 'equivalent' meanings, multitude possibilities generated in translation also deserve attention (Reynolds, 2023). Translation could be a space to explore a transitional stage of prismatic and creative possibilities, which serve as a fertile ground for literary innovation and transformation. Through a comparative analysis of the original stories, Chinese translations of Holmes's stories, and Chinese court-case fiction, I argue that the Chinese translations of Holmes's stories plot further growth of court-case literature in the contour of adoption of new legal principles and assumptions, scientific and evidentiary research, new relations between people and societies. This research contributes to an understanding of literary innovation and transformation shaped by convergence of local cultural values, practices and knowledge tradition and external influences that emerge in translation.

Biography

Yingxin Chen is a fourth year PhD Candidate in the Department of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures at SOAS, University of London. Her PhD research focuses on Chinese translations of Sherlock Holmes stories 1896-1916. She is looking at how they were understood and interpreted within the historical, social and cultural contexts of China during that transformative period at the turn of the twentieth century. Her research interests include translations studies, comparative literature, popular literature and crime fiction.

TOMMASO BRUSASCA

Interregnum at the dawn of Islam. The ideology of Pre-Islamic qayls

The epigraphic documentation of Pre-Islamic Arabia informs us on the socio-political condition of South Arabian kingdoms, above all Saba, before the advent of Islam in 622 CE. In the so-called Middle Sabaic period (1st century BCE – IV century CE), we witness an interregnum situation. Two kingdoms, Saba and Ḥimyar, fought each other to gain control of the whole Yemen, but for centuries neither was able to get the upper hand. In their shadow, many lesser political actors and warlords, the qayls (Sabaic ʾqyl, generally rendered as 'princes'), prospered in the absence of a real power centre. Although they pledged allegiance to either Saba or Himyar, they enjoyed a practical independence. How could they combine a formal submission with a de facto political autonomy? How does this compromise emerge in their inscriptions? This speech will investigate the rhetorical strategies adopted by the qayls to consolidate their unstable political stance in an era of wars and turmoil. It was not infrequent that a qayl and his tribe could suddenly change alliance, but, at the same time, obedience was the paramount virtue extolled in their texts. Moreover, despite the limited size of each qayl's dominion, the historical records depict them hyperbolically, way more powerful than they actually were. I will show relevant passagesthat will highlight the ideological mechanisms underlying this sort of paradoxes. Finally, I will examine the end of the golden age of qayls: the unification of Yemen under a single, strong dynasty in 400 BCE, marking the beginning of the Late Sabaic period. As the study of the qayls' ideology has been so far neglected, the data that will be exposed are the result of original research.

Biography

I am a PhD fellow in Ancient History at Università Ca' Foscari. I have a BA in Classics and a MA in Near Eastern Studies, both obtained at Università di Pisa. My MA thesis consisted of the edition of a series of Middle Sabaic inscriptions. I worked as a Research Assistant in the World History of Rituals project at the University of Oxford, in 2023. I study comparative Semitic linguistics, with a focus on Hebrew and Ancient South Arabian. I am also interested in historical and religious problems of Iron Age Syria-Palestine and Pre-Islamic Arabia.

PANEL 7 – Zones of contact: the Interregnum and the simultaneity of words

SENA TAHA
Refugee Literary Chronotope: Barzakh

Nation-states, NGOs, and the media identify the refugee as a 'problem'. By focusing on the political, social and humanitarian issues in Refugee Studies, the representation of refugees continues to be negative. In this presentation, I aim to push Refugee Studies towards the humanities-a field that has been neglected in relation to refugees-. I hypothesize that literature plays a role in re-thinking the identity of refugees. My PhD dissertation focuses on the literature produced by Syrian refugees who sought asylum in Turkey -where I also found refuge-, and Germany. Syrians constitute the highest numbers of refugees around the world and dozens of them have published stories that narrate their experiences, yet these literary writings remain unnoticed. Syrian intellectuals are writing about their journey into the unknown and their struggles to process their memories and integrate in communities where hospitality too quickly turns into hostility. These works are not the well-known diaspora, exile, or migrant literature, but constitute a distinctive genre of refugee literature. I will present three works: Ḍāhir 'Iṭa's novel Malādh al-'atama (Haven of Darkness), Ibtisām Shākūsh's autobiography Ṭawq Fi ʿunuqī (Necklace around My Neck) and Bilāl Al-Barghūth's short story collection Thalāthatu lāji'īn wa niṣf (Three Refugees and a Half).

I will analyze the characters' complex relationship with space and time through three theoretical approaches: Jacques Derrida's Hostipitality, miriam cooke's Barzakh epistemology that in this case brings together and separates hospitality/ hostility, familiar/ foreign, home/ host country, past/ present and Mikhail Bakhtin's Chronotope that suggests a new literary trope: the refugee literary chronotope. My analysis shows that Syrian refugees keep questioning what is happening between the opposites. They question their barzakh. As they fail to make sense of their space and time, they become active agents, fighting a battle of opposites. They keep remembering, re-imagining their surroundings, re-balancing opposites, and re-creating their home.

Biography

A Palestinian, Syrian who lived two refugee journeys and who recently received Turkish citizenship, I am writing my PhD dissertation on the role of refugee literature in re-constructing the perception of refugees as passive and needy people. I hold a BA in English Literature from Damascus University and an MA in Civilization Studies from Ibn Haldun University. I am currently a PhD student and project assistant at Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul, Turkey. This year, I was awarded the 2024 CARFMS/LERRN Lived Experiences of Displacement Essay Award for my paper on the meaning of home in refugee lives.

DEEPIKA GUPTA
History education and Adivasi children: State apathy, power and ideology

Adivasis (or indigenous groups) in India suffer from extreme poverty, destitution and dispossession. As a consequence, the lives of Adivasi children are mired in unpredictability and vulnerability. The largest Adivasi group in India numerically is the Bhil and its sub-groups which are spread across western and central parts of the country. The history of Bhil Adivasis has been characterized by integration, alliances, subjugation and resistance. In postcolonial India, Bhils continue to resist state policies that deprive them off their traditional resources and livelihoods. Despite a long historical

tradition, Bhil children are compelled to study history of the dominant groups at school. The school curriculum marginalises Bhil knowledge and experiences and presents history from an elitist-nationalist perspective. My paper focuses on the perspectives that Bhil children acquire at school about history in general, history of their village and a popular symbol associated with history of the Indian subcontinent. It examines the ways in which history education unfolds at the school level in a Bhil majority region in India and whether it succeeds in fostering critical perspectives and attitudes amongst children. School history education in India has been deeply connected with the politics of nation- building. With the changing ideological and political landscape, history education could open possibilities for opposition to divisive state agendas. However, in the hands of the state, education becomes a means to strengthen the official narrative. My paper explores Bhil children's learning of history within the interregnum between a state-education-ideology alliance, on one hand, and the transformative potential of history teaching and learning, on the other.

Biography
Deepika Gupta is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her PhD research is related to the intersection between modern education, indigenous knowledge and culture, and Adivasi poverty amongst Bhils in India. She has two postgraduate degrees, one in history and the other in education, from the University of Delhi, India. Her areas of interest include Adivasi knowledge and education, digital technologies in history education, museum education, pedagogy of history and politics and sociology of education.

APARNA RAJAN
The Complaining Woman: Autobiographical Articulations of Gender in Kerala
The paper proposes that 'complaint' forms an important idiom in which gender is articulated in Kerala, India, after the 2000s. Complaint has become a major register by which women negotiate the quotidian. The syntax seems to be quite common: where gender is visibilised as a discontent with the existing state of affairs. The figure of the 'nagging woman' and that of the 'non-complaining ideal woman' already comes gendered in particular ways. The incitement to complain and the stigma against it appear to exist simultaneously. I propose that this coexistence provides a crucial entry point to explore the visibility of gender in public.

My paper would like to focus on a controversial bestseller by a novice feminist writer who uses the pen name of Echmukutty. Packaged as an autobiography by the publishers, the book is titled Ithente Rakthamaanithente Maamsamaaneduthu Kolluka (2019) (which roughly translates to 'this is my blood and flesh, take it'), an allusion to the famous Biblical verse where Jesus asks his followers to partake of his flesh and blood. Interestingly, this work is a compilation of a series of Facebook posts that Echmukutty started posting in 2018, chronicling her life over the past three decades. In what might resemble #MeToo moments, several popular icons of Malayalam literary and cultural spheres have also been exposed as part of her writing. I present the complaining woman - an interim transitional subject- as a bridging figure who is between an 'all suffering' and an 'achiever' woman. I argue that the 'complaining woman' is not so much a sedimented subjectivity, but more an interim one, a bridge linking two states of being. I conceive it as a temporal corridor that extends from the 'what is' to the 'what could have been', through disillusionment to that of a possible potential.

Biography
I'm Aparna R, a Ph.D. Research Scholar (2016 Dec.-ongoing) at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, India. I completed an M.Phil in English at the University of Hyderabad, Telangana, India, in 2015. My Ph.D. focuses on the emergence of the 'complaining woman' in Kerala post-2000s. I look at a set of autobiographical writings by women

from the Malayalam language-speaking world that uses the register of the 'complaint' to negotiate the quotidian.

PANEL 8 – Visions of otherworlds: re-appropriating reality through the in-between

MARCEL BOUVRIE

Tuning in to the Other World: Listening to and as the In-Between in Haruki Murakami's Fiction

Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami's 'other-world' is well-studied and often theorized as an in-between state that explores the dynamics between the physical and metaphysical, the real and the fantastical, and the conscious and the unconscious, and the past and present (Rubin 2002; Strecher 2002; 2014; Atkins 2012; 2021). In Murakami's fiction, this in-between space forms a recurring narrative vehicle through which the character's search for identity and selfhood is explored. Often, music plays an important role within this process and functions as a lever to access this other world. As Jay Rubin notes, "for Murakami, music is the best means of entry into the deep recesses of the unconscious, that timeless other world within our psyche" (Rubin 2002, 3). In this paper, I demonstrate how music can constitute an in-between space that—through the interplay between memory, subjectivity, and affect—inspires moments of self-discovery and anagnorisis within Murakami's characters. By incorporating philosophies and theories of listening I analyse the way Murakami's characters 'tune in to the other world' through music and the introspective insights and transformative potential this may effectuate. In this sense, I argue that Murakami elaborates on a philosophy of listening that is concerned with the dynamics between aesthetic and internal, personal processes (Nancy 2007; Szendy 2008; Dyson 2009; Voegelin 2010). Marcel Cobussen notes that "listening to music is regarded as an act of becoming immersed, a condition wherein the listener is totally enveloped, absorbed, and enmeshed in a musical world in which the boundaries between self and environment dissolve" (Cobussen 2021, 493, my emphasis). By drawing on a selection of Murakami's novels, I argue that Murakami narrativizes and metaphorizes this musical world through the conception of his other world. As his characters traverse this musical realm, they often experience epiphanic moments that create passageways from stasis towards transformative and active agency.

Biography

Marcel Bouvrie is a musicologist at Utrecht University where he focuses on film music, music and media, music and fiction, and music and philosophy. His most recent publication is "The Self-Aware Soundtrack: Music as Metaleptic Device in Comedy Film" in The Palgrave Handbook of Music and Comedy Cinema (eds. Emilio Audissino and Emile Wennekes). His chapter "The Dystopian Impulse in Prog: Cross-cutting Thread/ts in Dystopian Concept Albums" for the Routledge Handbook of Progressive Rock, Metal, and the Literary Imagination (eds. Lori Burns and Chris Anderton) is pending publication. He is currently preparing a PhD at Utrecht University focusing on musical embodiment and the erotic soundtrack.

ROBERTA BERNASCONI

Between educational spaces: Midlines as zones of transdisciplinary becoming

This contribution aims to explore how the interregnum, conceived not as a simple state of transition between phases but as a suspended dimension, can represent an invisible pedagogical space and time for the prefiguration of transformative educational practices. Drawing on historical references such as John Dewey's philosophical approach to learning spaces and the experimental educational environment like Black Mountain College (1933-1957), it examines how the laboratory evolved as a

ground for experimentation, transforming the intermediate space between learning and artistic production into a site of epistemic cultures (Stamer 2007) and of transdisciplinary becoming.

The reflection focuses on Tim Ingold's notion of middle-place, conceived as space of learning that embraces the invisible and unexplored within an «geometrical abstraction» (Ingold 2018, 48). Integrating this concept, the contribution, aims to highlight, through the theoretical lenses of performativity, how the idea of the interregnum can inspire the imagination of new educational models capable of inhabiting a space of uncodified transformation and creativity, enabling embodied knowledge and revealing possibilities generated by chance and the unexpected. This practice-based approach, as highlighted by Rogoff (2021), fosters processes of inquiry to access new forms of knowledge and imaginaries. To examine this, the contribution engages with artistic practices emerging from educational contexts that situate the foundations of learning within the margin of uncertainty represented by this in-between stage. In particular, it focuses on the performance Can we take a moment to appreciate the sunset (2024) by artist Nele Tiidelepp, MA student in Choreography and Performance at ATW-Giessen, which questions the unstable and liminal zone of thoughts and practices of in-betweenness through movement and states of uncertainty. This exploration aims to question the transformative potential of evolving dialogue between education, research, and performance, within the «imperceptible midline» that opens and «unfolds into a universe» (Ingold 2018, 48).

Biography

Roberta Bernasconi is a PhD candidate in the XXXIX cycle of the Doctoral School at Iuav University of Venice, in the field of Visual Arts, Performance, and Fashion. Since 2011, she has been involved in educational projects within significant institutional artistic contexts, including the Venice Biennale and dOCUMENTA(13) in Kassel. She coordinated the work-shop activities for the MA degree program in Theatre and Performing Arts at Iuav University of Venice. Her research focuses on performance pedagogies as transdisciplinary practices within academic institutions. In 2024, she contributed to the establishment of the research unit PerLa | Performance Epistemologies Research Lab at Iuav University of Venice.

FEDERICO PICERNI
The Chinese 2000s as Interregnum? A Possible Response through the Prism of Literature

As a result of the PRC's entry into the World Trade Organization and the unprecedented level of intellectual debates and social critique, the 2000s in China were generally hailed as a time of change and experimentation, possibly anticipating a future where the country would have inevitably taken the road to liberal democracy.

The authoritarian involution that followed Xi Jinping's rise to power in 2012 signaled the end of this process, leading the 2000s to be rather seen as a short-lived parenthesis between two authoritarian moments: either Mao's dictatorship or the Tian'anmen crackdown in 1989, and Xi's rise in 2012. Was it an interregnum, then? This paper addresses this question as part of a broader research project that challenges the commonly held view of the 2000s as a transitory phase (an interregnum) for China, rather interpreting the decade as a time of stabilization. To do so, it investigates how socially-critical literature discusses the socio-economic changes of the time. The paper focuses on the 2004 short story "Na'er" (There) and the 2009 novel Wen mancang (Ask the Boundless) by Cao Zhenglu (1941-2021), works that vividly represent the overhaul of labour regulations in the context of the dismantling of planned economy and state-owned enterprises in the 1990s. What Cao's critical realism shows is that the 2000s saw a settlement of the changes promoted in the previous

decade: rather than representing a time when 'the new cannot be born', as Gramsci described the interregnum, the 2000s stabilized the new order of Chinese capitalism with the 'great variety of morbid symptoms' brought about by market reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. Cao's creative approach transfers the concept of in-betweenness from the 2000s to the 1990s and gives a meaningful contribution to the understanding

Biography

Federico Picerni is an assistant professor with the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of Bologna. He obtained his PhD in Asian and Transcultural Studies from Ca' Foscari University of Venice in a double degree programme with Heidelberg University. His broad research interest covers the relationship of literature and society in China. Specifically, he works on worker-authored literature, critical realism in the contemporary novel, and Sinophone cultural productions in Europe.

MARCO DEL DIN

Queens of the Interregnum: Examining In-betweenness through Kyoto Drag

Usually described as a man dressing and performing as a woman, the drag queen should instead be understood as an in-between creature thriving at the intersections. Operating between genders, between the human and the non-human, she inhabits an interregnum where borders are blurred and categories exist just to be challenged. Her liminal status extends beyond her practice and identity, influencing the club she performs at and the patrons who gather to see her. As her show unfolds, the space itself becomes a liminal one, where both audience and queens can relinquish their identities, take on new ones, and imagine new possibilities and futures both within and without the club. This presentation, therefore, investigates how the drag show creates a liminal space, allowing both queens and patrons to challenge their realities, and imagine and actualize new identities and futures. Based on a year-long fieldwork in a club in Kyoto hosting the longest-running drag show in Japan, this study will first analyze the figure of the queen, highlighting her deeply ambiguous and liminal character. Illustrating the data gathered through participant observation and long interviews with the cast of the show, it will elucidate how the queen is not simply 'a man in a wig,' but a complex figure that challenges categories such as those of 'man,' 'woman,' or even 'human.' Second, this presentation will explore how the drag show influences the club and its patrons. Presenting the results of short interviews with clients, it will show how the show radically separates the club from the outside world, creating a space where pre-established identities can be abandoned, and new possibilities imagined and explored. Thus, the show becomes more than pure entertainment, a co-creative event where new selves, relationships, and communities can emerge.

Biography

Marco Del Din holds a Bachelor's in Languages, Cultures, and Societies of Asia and Mediterranean Africa from Ca' Foscari University of Venice and a Joint Master's in Transcultural Studies from Heidelberg University and Kyoto University. He is currently pursuing a Double Doctoral Degree in Asian and Transcultural Studies at Ca' Foscari and Heidelberg University. As a Japan Foundation Fellow in Kyoto (2023-2024), he has conducted a year-long fieldwork for his PhD project on drag and gender in contemporary Japanese society. His research interests include Transcultural, Queer, and Gender Studies, with a focus on Japan and contemporary performing art.

Dinner and Coffee Breaks

Lunch(s) and Dinner(s)

Feel free to choose your own lunch spots. We suggest staying in the vicinity of the lecture hall, where you will find a wide range of cafes and restaurants to suit different tastes. To strengthen our connections beyond academic settings, we have arranged the social dinner on Tuesday 15th April 2025 at Carovansara.

Coffee Breaks

Coffee, tea, and other beverages, along with snacks, will be provided at the conference venue, in Sala Archivio, in accordance with the aforementioned schedule.

General Information

Location: Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Dorsoduro 3246 – 30123, Venice (Italy) All talks and presentations will take place in "Aula Mario Baratto" (second floor)

Additional details about our enchanting Lecture Hall

The Baratto Lecture Hall is situated within the historical confines of Ca' Foscari University, a venerable Venetian palace erected in 1453 under the auspices of Doge Francesco Foscari. Originally a residence, the palace underwent a transformation in 1868 when it became the headquarters of the Regia Scuola Superiore, ultimately evolving into the present-day University. Currently, it serves as the focal point of the university's main campus alongside Ca' Giustinian and Palazzo Squellini.

Aula Baratto provides an elevated perspective of the Grand Canal, encompassing the vista from the Rialto Bridge to the Accademia Bridge, outlined by an impressive Gothic marble mullioned window. The hall features a wooden platform for the lectern and a marble frame adorned with pedestals bearing a Latin inscription. Two frescoes decorate the walls, with one illustrating futurist mural art and the other presenting a cubist aesthetic.