

Cinemas of the Sinosphere: Border Crossing in Chinese Cinemas
20-22 September 2019
University of Exeter

Organized by the University of Exeter and King's College London with the support of the British Council and the UK China Humanities Alliance.

The rapid transformation of cinema production, circulation, and consumption in the Chinese cultural world continues to challenge researchers, both empirically and conceptually. We used to recognize political and cultural diversity by speaking of “Chinese-language cinemas.” But economic globalization and political transformation means it is no longer tenable to speak of separate Hong Kong, Taiwan, and PRC industries. Border-crossing is everywhere. Furthermore, with the appearance inside the People’s Republic of non-Sinitic language cinema such as that of Pema Tsenden, the world’s first Tibetan feature filmmaker, and the proliferation of Chinese filmmakers in the diaspora, even the idea of a shared language cannot be taken for granted. Joshua Vogel coined the term “Sinosphere” to characterize the East Asian world prior to the arrival of European and American gunboats. But can we repurpose it to capture the complexity of today’s border-crossing conditions?

What about the relationship between the PRC and Chinese speaking communities such as Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and diasporic Chinese populations which form a transborder assemblage driven by border-crossing forms? Or the textual, cultural and industrial interplay between the film industries operating in and across the Sinosphere? This event will explore how cinemas of the Sinosphere entail a range of border crossings, whether geographical, political, industrial, metaphorical, or aesthetic. Using the framework of geopolitical border-crossings, this event draws inspiration from the concept ‘glocalization’, first coined in 1992 by sociologist Roland Robertson, who suggests an alternative to globalisation that highlights the complexities of blurred boundaries between homogenous and heterogeneous local and global spaces.

Questions this event aims to address include, but are not limited to:

- How can we adequately define Chinese-language and cultural cinema within or beyond the national borders
- What is the impact of the PRC’s new position on the local, regional and international cinema market?
- What does it mean to be a filmmaker/producer/distributor/academic working on the cinemas of the Sinosphere?
- In what ways do ideological, political and practical concerns related to the PRC affect filmmakers/artists working in the Sinosphere?
- What kinds of textual, cultural and industrial flows and challenges occur in exchanges between the PRC and the rest of the world?
- What new border-crossing narratives concerning identity (cultural, gender, age, sexuality) arise from this current climate?
- What border-crossing aesthetics and narratives have arisen in/out of the cinemas of the Sinosphere and what do they look like?
- How do these border-crossing aesthetics espouse, critique and/or theorise alternatives?
- In what ways do migrants, exiles and diasporic filmmakers/artists explore notions of ‘Chinese-ness’, ‘Taiwanese-ness’, ‘Hong Kong-ness’ and more in their work?

By bringing together key international scholars and filmmakers in the field of Chinese-language cinema and border-crossing challenges, exchanges and flows, the papers, screenings and debates of this 3-day event will open up new perspectives on this critical domain.

Programme

Friday 20 September

19:30: Informal Welcome Drinks at the [Exeter Phoenix](#)

There will be a tab set up at the bar for the “Cinemas of the Sinosphere” conference. Identify yourself to the bar staff, for a free drink. Maximum: 2 drinks per person.

20:30: Screening of *The Crossing*, Studio 74 at the [Exeter Phoenix](#)

Introduced by Chris Berry (King’s College London). Tickets are free.

Saturday 21 September

Venue: University of Exeter Digital Humanities Lab (No 90 on [Exeter Streatham Campus Map](#))

Opening Keynote: 09:30 – 10:30

Lu Xinyu (East China Normal University), “The Portrayal of the Images of the Ethnic Minorities in New China—Concurrently Responding to the ‘Rewriting of Chinese Cinematic History’”

10:30 – 11:00 coffee break

11:00 – 12:50 Panel 1: Border-Crossing Production Cultures and Practices (Chair: Will Higbee, University of Exeter)

1. Gary Bettinson (Lancaster University), “Hong Kong-China Coproductions and the Myth of Mainlandization.”
2. Andy Willis (University of Salford), “Still Hong Kong? Addressing the local within Hong Kong film distribution and exhibition.”
3. Lin Feng (University of Leicester), “Looking for a (Chinese) Mother: The Construction of Pan-regional Chineseness in *Lotus Lantern* (dir. Chang Guangxi, 1999)”
4. Julian Stringer (University of Nottingham), “‘The Best Special Effects Yet of Any Chinese-Produced Film’: Sino-Korean Co-Creation and *The Monkey King 2* (2016)”
5. Keith B. Wagner (University College London) and Qian Zhai (University College London), “Theorizing the Global Chinese Diaspora in Denmark and Sino-Danish Film Ventures: *Kinamand* (2005) and *The Chinese Widow* (2017) as New Cross-Cultural Connections on Screen”

12:50 – 14:00 lunch break (buffet lunch, catered at the venue)

14:00 – 15.30 Panel 2: Border-Crossing Consumption and Reception (Chair: Chris Berry, King’s College London)

Yomi Braester (University of Washington), “The Sinosphere is a Question of Cinephilia: The Rise of Sinophone Film Criticism in the late 1980s”

Ting Guo (University of Exeter), “Chinese cinephilia in the ‘globalized’ digital age: Re-reviewing *Wandering Earth* (2019) and *Ne Zha* (2019) through translation”

Hongwei Bao (University of Nottingham), “The ‘Double-Consciousness’: Chinese Queer Cinema Beyond the Sinosphere”

Luke Robinson (University of Sussex), “CNEX, Sundance, and the Question of Documentary Border-Crossing.”

How Wee Ng (University of Westminster), “Taipei Golden Horse Film Awards and Singapore Cinema: Prestige, Privilege and Disarticulation”

16:00 – 16:30 coffee break

16.30 – 18:00 Panel 3: Solo Border Crossers (Chair: Wing-Fai Leung, King’s College London)

Mette Hjort (Hong Kong Baptist University), “A Peripatetic Talent Developer: On the Ethos and Contributions of Mary Stephen”

Yiman Wang (University of California, Santa Cruz), “Workshopping Border-crossing Authorship: Practicing Female Authorship and Documentary Poesies in The Folk Memory Project”

Julian Ward (University of Edinburgh), “Lewis McLeod’s adventures in China in April 1971.”

Xuele Huang (University of Edinburgh), “Touring Nanyang/Southeast Asia: Body, Performativity, and Cosmopolitanism in Early Chinese Film History.”

19:00 Conference dinner (Cote Brasserie Exeter, <https://www.cote.co.uk/restaurant/exeter/menus/>)

Sunday 22 September

Venue: University of Exeter Digital Humanities Lab (No 90 on [Exeter Streatham Campus Map](#))

09:30 – 11:00 Panel 4: Migration and/in the Sinosphere: Where Do You Draw the Line? (Chair: Ting Guo, University of Exeter)

Victor Fan (King’s College London), “The Act of Border/Crossing: Sinographies and Biopolitics”

Felicia Chan (University of Manchester), “*The Little Nyonya*: Sinicisation, adaptation and the politics of a return migration”

Leung Wing-Fai (King’s College London), “Representations of Affective Labour in British East Asian Cinema: Female Migrants in *She, a Chinese* and *The Receptionist*”

Chris Berry (King’s College London) and Michael W. Thomas (SOAS, University of London), “The New Americans? The Sino-African Relationship on Chinese and Ethiopian Screens”

11:00 – 11:20 coffee break

Closing keynote: 11:20 – 12:20

Song Hwee Lim (Chinese University of Hong Kong), “Migrant Labour Cinema: Crossing Borders in East and Southeast Asia”

12:20 Closing Remarks (Will Higbee, University of Exeter, and Chris Berry, King’s College London) **12:30 Sandwich Lunch**

In Attendance: Pan Huiqi (ECNU Doctoral Student, working on Shanghai International Film Festival) and Peng Zhixiang (ECNU Doctoral Student, current research: “Capital, Hegemony and Ideology: the Dilemma and Breakthrough of National Cinema in China”).

Abstracts (By Order of Speaker's Family Name)

Hongwei Bao

The 'Double-Consciousness': Chinese Queer Cinema Beyond the Sinosphere

Abstract

Chinese queer cinema is usually understood as films made by, for and about gender and sexual minorities in the Chinese-speaking world. Despite differences in shooting location and the filmmakers' profile, most Chinese queer films are made in various Chinese languages and with English subtitles. They often have an international audience in mind. While the incentive to participate in international film festivals plays a role in the 'international address' of Chinese queer cinema, the international and cosmopolitan disposition of these films also speaks to the imagined identity of Chinese queer cinema: being Chinese (or Sinophone) and cosmopolitan at the same time. This is hardly surprising: most queer filmmakers and audiences in the Sinosphere seem to identify themselves strongly with transnational LGBTQ movements and international queer cinema and see themselves as part of the global picture. What is 'Chinese' or 'Sinosphere' therefore does not exclude these films from being 'transnational' or 'international'. Using *Lan Yu*, *Queer China*, *'Comrade' China*, and *Soundless Wind Chime* as examples, this paper explores how global geopolitics shapes queer identities and representations in the Sinosphere today; it also reflects on the promises and constraints of the Sinosphere as a critical term.

Bio

Hongwei Bao is Associate Professor in Media Studies at the University of Nottingham. His research primarily focuses on queer media, independent cinema and grassroots activism in contemporary China. He is the author of *Queer Comrades: Gay Identity and Tongzhi Activism in Postsocialist China* (NIAS Press, 2018).

Chris Berry and Michael W. Thomas

The New Americans? The Sino-African Relationship on Chinese and Ethiopian Screens

Abstract

In 2009, the People's Republic of China (PRC) became Africa's largest trading partner. The country it took over from was the United States of America (USA). In this presentation, we look at how Africa appears in Chinese cinema and vice versa. Recently, two films about or set in Africa have been blockbuster hits in China. In Africa, the prominence of China within contemporary Africa is nowhere more evident, perhaps, than in Ethiopia. In the past twenty years, ruled by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the country's developmental aspirations and governing strategies have closely emulated the Chinese model. Therefore, we look at the roles played by foreigners in contemporary Amharic cinema from Ethiopia. In both cases, we do find plenty of evidence for a China-takes-over-from-America narrative. The Chinese films appropriate Hollywood blockbusters and repopulate them with Chinese heroes. In the Amharic films, Chinese are now the most commonly found foreigner roles. However, we also find that both the Chinese and Amharic films implicitly and explicitly criticize Americans and Westerners in general. Therefore, they manifest both the West's loss of ethical credibility and a hope that the Chinese century might be different.

Bios:

Chris Berry is Professor of Film Studies at King's College London. In the 1980s, he worked for China Film Import and Export Corporation in Beijing, and his academic research is grounded in work on Chinese-language cinemas and other Chinese-language screen-based media, as well as work from neighbouring countries. Books written and edited include: *Cinema and the National: China on Screen*; *Postsocialist Cinema in Post-Mao China: the Cultural Revolution after the*

Cultural Revolution; Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation; Routledge Handbook of East Asian Popular Culture; Public Space, Media Space; The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record; Electronic Elsewheres: Media, Technology, and Social Space; Cultural Studies and Cultural Industries in Northeast Asia: What a Difference a Region Makes; TV China; Chinese Films in Focus II; and Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After.

Michael W. Thomas is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at SOAS, where he was awarded his PhD on Amaharic-language cinema. His MA was in Film Studies at UCL, and his publications include the co-edited volume *Cine-Ethiopia: The History and Politics of Film in the Horn of Africa*, as well as articles in *Black Camera*, *African Studies Review*, *The Journal of African Cultural Studies*, and more.

Gary Bettinson

Hong Kong-China Coproductions and the Myth of Mainlandization

Abstract

Since Ackbar Abbas theorized Hong Kong as a space of cultural ‘disappearance’ in the mid-1990s, critics have debated the extent to which local cultural forms have continued to recede, particularly as a corollary of Hong Kong’s increasing subjection to mainlandization. For several critics, the region’s cinema has already vanished from view, only to re-emerge in a brand new, distinctly Sinicized guise – that of ‘post-Hong Kong cinema,’ a mode of predominantly coproduced filmmaking that effaces traditional Hong Kong aesthetics and routines of film practice. So thoroughly has Hong Kong cinema been subsumed to China that its once ‘unique’ and ‘singular’ identity is no longer discernible. The shackles of PRC censorship now stifle free expression; Hong Kong’s classic genres have become obsolete; and the PRC’s vogue for ‘main melody’ films and the *dapian* (‘big film’) has straitened Hong Kong cinema’s range of storytelling options. Today, critics contend, Hong Kong filmmakers are severely constrained by Mainland bureaucracy and the exigencies of the China market.

This paper seeks to challenge these assumptions, contesting a set of apparent axioms concerning Mainland censorship, Hong Kong-China coproductions, and the dissipation or disappearance of Hong Kong’s local cinema and identity. The theory of mainlandization, I submit, denies the durability of Hong Kong’s standardized craft practices; its aesthetic traditions; and the facile ingenuity of its filmmakers.

Bio

Gary Bettinson is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at Lancaster University. He is the author of *The Sensuous Cinema of Wong Kar-wai* (Hong Kong UP 2015), co-editor of *The Poetics of Chinese Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and *Hong Kong Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh UP, 2018), and editor-in-chief of *Asian Cinema* (Intellect).

Yomi Braester

The Sinosphere is a Question of Cinephilia: The Rise of Sinophone Film Criticism in the late 1980s

Abstract

When did cinephilia become Sinophone? In other words, why do critics ally themselves with certain movies, based on those films' definition as Sinophone? These questions may be broken down further: When did cinephiles become aware of what we now call the Sinosphere? What was their response to an explicit classification of the Sinosphere? Did they create and shape their own Sinosphere based on cinephilic criteria?

The essay explores these questions by tracing how critics demarcated their field of interest, focusing on the late 1980s and early 1990s. I revisit the celebrated moment of the global ascendancy of Chinese-language film and argue that a number of influential critics redrew the outlines of popular following and academic expertise, and thereby molded how we perceive the Sinophone. Moreover, these critics were at the same time resituating themselves in a changing public sphere. The move toward a Sinophone film criticism coincided with the rise of the scholar-cinephile.

Bio

Yomi Braester is Lockwood Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Comparative Literature, Cinema and Media at the University of Washington in Seattle. He is also the co-editor of *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*. His current book projects include *Keywords for the Digital City: New Media and the Reassemblage of Public Space* and *Cinephilia for the Masses: Viewing Communities and the Ethics of the Image in the People's Republic of China*, which is supported by a Guggenheim fellowship.

Felicia Chan

The Little Nyonya: Sinicisation, adaptation and the politics of a return migration

Abstract

In 2008-2009, Singapore's national broadcaster, MediaCorp, produced a 34-episode Mandarin-language television soap series chronicling the trials and tribulations of a 'Nyonya' woman from the 1930s to the present. 'Nyonya' is the descriptor for women of Peranakan (or Straits-born) descent, a community and culture evolving from the intermarriage of early Chinese settlers with local Malay women, predating the European colonisation of the region. In Singapore, the material, feminised culture (beaded slippers, embroidery, homewares, cookery, etc.) of the Peranakan community is frequently celebrated by the nostalgia industry as an exotic remnant of a past whose hybridity appears to signal the uniqueness of Singapore's history, even as the Peranakan people, language and living culture have been systematically sinicised by the state's institutionalisation of racial identities since Independence.

The Little Nyonya series was popularly received by the channel's viewers and won a number of industry prizes. In recent years, *The Little Nyonya* has been remade in China twice, with Mediacorp credited as co-producer both times: in the first, the Peranakan household setting is replaced with a traditional Chinese herbal practice; and in the second, the adaptation reprises the setting of the original series, with some of the characters re-cast with actors from the PRC and Taiwan. In all three cases, the Peranakan culture is fully sinicised, with the Malay influences and other regional hybridities selectively written out.

I am interested in the cultural politics of such apparent 'return migrations'. What does it mean for localised cultural histories of diasporic nations to be repackaged on their 'return' to China for popular consumption? And what does it mean for mainland Chinese producers to seek to reclaim the stories (and the histories) of the diaspora? Where in this dynamic does the space exist for Peranakan histories to assert themselves?

Bio

Felicia Chan is Senior Lecturer in Screen Studies at the University of Manchester where she researches the construction of national, cultural and cosmopolitan imaginaries in film and media. She is author of *Cosmopolitan Cinema: Cross Cultural Encounters in East Asian Film* (2017), co-editor of *Chinese Cinemas: International Perspectives* (2016), and founding member of the Manchester-based Chinese Film Forum UK.

Victor Fan

The Act of Border/Crossing: Sinographies and Biopolitics

Abstract

Between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, Eric Hayot, Haun Saussy, and Steven Yao proposed a conceptual and methodological framework: sinographies. For them, sinography “would be to sinology (a debated discipline in its own right) as historiography is to history, a reflection on the conditions, assumptions, and logic of a set of disciplinary and cultural practices.” In other words, sinographies seek to examine how “China,” with its imaginary interiority, exteriority, territories, extraterritorialities, borders, temporalities, have been written and rewritten by acts of literature and cultural productions. And each process of writing/reading informs an everchanging epistemic space one calls *China*.

Border-crossing is effectively an act that puts a border *under erasure*. The person or a work of media that crosses the border also plays a double role of being an agent and being a patient: “I subject myself to the border, and I hereby release myself from it./I am summoned to an authority at the border, and I am released by the authority from this border.” In this presentation, I first scrutinize how this double role challenges and reconfigures the definition of the border conceptually, and what it means to one’s understanding of Chinese/Chinese-language/Sinophone cinemas. I then examine Bai Xue’s *The Crossing* [2018], a film about a teenage girl who crosses the Hong Kong-Mainland border at Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang in order to smuggle iPhones to Shenzhen. The film dramatizes/quotidianizes the act of border-crossing by enabling the spectators to experience both the triviality and anxiety of the act of border-crossing. In so doing, it gradually displaces the geopolitical border to the relationship between the physical bodies of those biopolitical lives that cross the border, and the imagined authority(ies) that their acts of border-crossing constantly challenges and revises. Eventually, the film encourages the spectators to rethink how these acts constitute *China* in its plurality and multiplicity.

Bio

Victor Fan is Senior Lecturer at Film Studies, King’s College London and Film Consultant of the Chinese Visual Festival. His articles appeared in journals including *Camera Obscura*, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, *Screen*, and *Film History*. His first book *Cinema Approaching Reality: Locating Chinese Film Theory* was published in 2015 by the University of Minnesota Press. His second book, *Extraterritoriality: Locating Hong Kong Cinema and Media* will be published in June 2019 by the Edinburgh University Press.

Lin Feng

Looking for a (Chinese) Mother: The Construction of Pan-regional Chineseness in *Lotus Lantern* (dir. Chang Guangxi, 1999)

Abstract

Since its inception in 1941, Chinese feature animation has been a site where the notion of Chineseness culturally, aesthetically and technically has been contested. Although the number of

its productions is relatively small in comparison to other forms of feature-length narrative and documentary films, PRC's animation studios are certainly not short of ambition of making their films appeal to wider audiences who, at the same time, are consuming films from major animation industries around the world, such as Hollywood and Japan. Taking Shanghai Animation Studio's feature films as a case study, this paper examines how the Chinese animation industry responded to the nation's effort of building a unified Chinese cultural identity under the global context during the end of the 1990s. Through a close reading of the studio's fifth feature film, *Lotus Lantern* (dir. Chang Guangxi, 1999), and its production details, I argue that Chinese feature animations, whilst frequently returning to Chinese folklore and classic literature for story inspiration to construct a cultural familiarities cross political-spatial territories, are ready to adapt their content and to carefully select their creative team to achieve a multi-ethnic and multi-Chinese-speaking-community unification of greater Chineseness through the features of regional connection.

Bio

Dr Lin Feng joined the University of Leicester as a Lecturer in Film Studies in 2017. She is currently serving as the Director of Studies of History of Art and Film at the School of Arts. Her research interests lie in the fields of Chinese and transnational cinemas, cinematic cities, star studies, representation and reception of East Asia in Anglophone cinema.

Ting Guo

Chinese cinephilia in the 'globalized' digital age: Re-reviewing *Wandering Earth* (2019) and *Ne Zha* (2019) through translation

Abstract

Despite the growth of literature on the emerging new urban Chinese film audience and Chinese cinematic culture (e.g. Curtin 2007, Johnson et al. 2015 and Zhang 2007), there is limited research on contemporary Chinese cinephiles and the impact of their fan practices on Chinese cinematic culture. In China, as in elsewhere of the world, the internet provides film fans with both a space and a way to discuss films and engage with domestic and global cinematic culture. Many popular Chinese social media platforms, for example, Douban and Mtime, also create dedicated areas for fans to rate and review films, and there are hundreds, if not thousands of, Wechat public accounts run by fans dedicated to reviewing films. Interestingly, apart from providing opinions and sharing viewing experiences, these fans also often translate film reviews written in foreign languages, ranging from lengthy pieces by foreign film critics to short comments posted online by individual film viewers.

Drawing on Graeme Turner's concept of "audience identification" (1988: 114-8) and Yomi Braester's research on contemporary Chinese Cinephiles' aesthetic taste (2015), this paper explores Chinese film fans' translation of the English reviews of two recent Chinese films, *Wandering Earth* (2019) and *Ne Zha* (2019), both of which are very successful commercially in the Chinese market. It investigates how Chinese fans select and translate these reviews by foreign, especially Anglophone, film critics, and how their translation strategies differ from those of Chinese mainstream media. It argues that rather than exploring the reception of domestically produced films in overseas markets as many mainstream media do, Chinese fans use translation to critique the practice of the Chinese film industry that are modelled on Hollywood blockbusters. Their selective translation and creative deployment of the other's voice, be it professional or amateur, in discussing Chinese films demonstrates the increased emphasis on local taste and aesthetics among Chinese cinephiles as well as their intervention in the current commercial trends in the Chinese film industry.

Bio

Dr. Ting Guo is Senior Lecturer in Translation and Chinese Studies in the Department of Modern Languages, University of Exeter (UK). Her research interests include translation and history, Chinese cinema, modernity and sexuality. Her research focuses on the pivotal role of translator in the reproduction and dissemination of knowledge as well as in social and political changes. She is the PI of the AHRC funded project “Translating for change: Anglophone queer cinema and Chinese LGBT+ movement”.

Mette Hjort

A Peripatetic Talent Developer: On the Ethos and Contributions of Mary Stephen

Abstract

A filmmaker, talent developer, and composer, Mary Stephen enjoys an enviable international reputation as an exceptionally gifted film editor. A member of the prestigious Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Stephen collaborated with Eric Rohmer for more than three decades, editing films such as *Conte d'Automne* (Autumn's Tale) and *Conte d'Été* (Summer's Tale) and also co-composing original music for some of the French director's works. Born in Hong Kong, trained in Canada, and with Paris as her adopted home town, Mary Stephen has, in recent years, become more and more involved in what is often referred to as ‘talent development.’ In some instances, this process is simply the corollary of her role as editor, in the context of various transgenerational collaborations. An example, arguably, would be Stephen's collaboration with Du Hai-bin, as the editor of *1428*, an exceptional documentary about the Sichuan earthquake. Yet, Stephen has also been recruited specifically for the purposes of developing the next generation of talents. Indeed, since 2013 her talent development work has taken her to the People's Republic of China (CNEX, Beijing), Hong Kong (Lingnan University; Hong Kong Documentary Initiative Workshop), Japan (Yamagata Documentary Dojo), Korea (Busan International Film Festival's Asian Network of Documentary), Thailand (Salaya Doc), and Italy (Venice Biennale Cinema College). Posting on Facebook, on the first day of the Cannes International Film Festival in 2019, Stephen made reference to a recent, highly traumatic experience involving her work with a young filmmaker in Hong Kong. Stephen's carefully suggested point was that the filmmaker, for various reasons, was ill equipped to defend her work when confronted with egregiously unethical behavior on the part of powerful decision makers. Unable, for contractual reasons, to disclose the details of the norm breaking in question, Stephen has repeatedly used circumlocution, indirection, and other rhetorical devices to draw attention to the troubling case in question, which has clear implications for talent development. Training the next generation, it appears, cannot simply be a matter of developing technical skill sets, for a robust, indeed unshakeable, grasp of norms and values can be a matter, quite simply, of one's personal identity as filmmaker. Drawing on practitioner interviews conducted with Mary Stephen, my contribution to the conference aims to shed light on the ethical and normative dimensions of talent development, especially in the increasingly interconnected spaces of Hong Kong and China.

Bio

Mette Hjort is Chair Professor of Humanities and Dean of Arts at the Hong Kong Baptist University, Affiliate Professor of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington, and Visiting Professor of Cultural Industries at the University of South Wales. Mette's monographs include *Small Nation, Global Cinema* (2005). Her interest in the politics of talent development, including “twinning” projects on a North/South basis, is reflected in the two-volume *The Education of the Filmmaker* (ed., 2013) and *African Cinema and Human Rights* (co-ed., 2019). Mette holds an Honorary Doctorate in Transnational Cinema Studies from the University of Aalborg. She has served on the Board of the Danish Film Institute (appointed by the Danish Ministry of Culture) and on Hong Kong's University Grants Committee (appointed by the Chief Executive of Hong Kong).

Xuelei Huang

Touring Nanyang/Southeast Asia: Body, Performativity, and Cosmopolitanism in Early Chinese Film History

Abstract

Nanyang (Southeast Asia) occupied a unique position in early Chinese film history. It was widely known as the most lucrative market for the Shanghai film industry. At the same time, it was made to be the major culprit for the thriving of entertainment films in Chinese nationalist discourse in the 1920s and 1930s. This paper explores some other images of Nanyang through a case study of Shanghai film star Yang Naimei's screening/performance tour in what is now Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia in 1928-31. Yang Naimei's programme, I will demonstrate, was quintessentially hybrid and cosmopolitan, centring on the body of the Chinese woman mediated by the modern medium of film, and encoded in the traditional, exotic, erotic, and progressive guises. In other words, this authentically Chinese female body provided her Nanyang diasporic Chinese audiences with anything but a monolithic and coherent "Chineseness." I argue that the representation of body and performativity in these Shanghai female stars' Nanyang tours unsettled the relationship between self and other in male intellectual discourse. The "frivolous" touch of cosmopolitanism resonated with many other marginalised cultural codes in such an age of nationalist anxiety in China.

Bio

Xuelei Huang is Senior Lecturer in Chinese Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include Chinese cinema, media, and sensory history in modern China. She is the author of *Shanghai Filmmaking: Crossing Borders, Connecting to the Globe, 1922-1938*. She is currently working on a book project entitled "The Cesspool and the Rose Garden: The Social Life of Smell in Modern China."

Leung Wing-Fai

Representations of Affective Labour in British East Asian Cinema: Female Migrants in *She, a Chinese* and *The Receptionist*

Abstract:

This paper examines two London-set films by East Asian British filmmakers: Guo Xiaolu's *She, a Chinese* (2009) and Jenny Lu's *The Receptionist* (2017). Both films centre on a Chinese female protagonist as she attempts to establish a new life in London. In *She, a Chinese*, Li Mei journeys from China to Britain as an illegal immigrant, making ends meet with jobs as a human-billboard, anatomy model, masseuse and finally marrying an older English man in a loveless marriage in exchange for residency. In *The Receptionist*, the eponymous heroine is a Taiwanese postgraduate who cannot find work in austerity Britain. She becomes a receptionist in a Chinese-run brothel as a stop-gap, not realizing that she will become part of the support network of three Chinese sex workers who serve in the brothel. Examining the representation of the women's 'resistance' to affective labour while performing body and sex work in the two films, I assert that they intertextually allow us to understand the political and social significance of the East Asian female migrants' experiences in their adopted home.

She, a Chinese and *The Receptionist* should be distinguished from the limited repertoire of previous British Chinese films, which tend to reflect on a collective identity (see Chan and Willis 2012). In particular, they focus on the experiences of migrants from Hong Kong in traditional job roles opened to them, namely work in the Chinese takeaways, restaurants and laundry business. I argue that *She, a Chinese* and *The Receptionist* demonstrate a 'double consciousness' (Naficy

2001: 22). Firstly, they blend linguistic, aesthetic and stylistic impulses from the cinematic traditions of the filmmaker's home and adopted countries. Secondly, the representations of the women are chronotopic; the private life of the women allows us not only to consider the social and political events in Britain, 'but rather the other way around—social and political events gain meaning [...] only thanks to their connection with private life' (Bakhtin 1981: 107). As examples of border-crossing cinema, these films highlight the emotional labour of the (illegal) migrant protagonists as they are subjected to intersectional discrimination because of their age, gender, sexuality and marginalized status in austerity Britain.

Bio:

Leung Wing-Fai is Lecturer in Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King's College London. She researches Chinese language films and media, gender, intersectionality, sexualities and cultural and creative labour. Her work has been published in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*; *Information, Communication and Society* and *The Sociological Review*. Her monographs and co-edited volumes include *Digital Entrepreneurship, Gender and Intersectionality: An East Asian Perspective* (2018), *Multimedia Stardom in Hong Kong: Image, Performance and Identity* (2014), *East Asian Film Stars* (2014) and *East Asian Cinemas* (2008). Fai is currently researching two book projects: queer media and cultural work in the mainstream, and new British East Asian cinema.

Song Hwee Lim

Migrant Labour Cinema: Crossing Borders in East and Southeast Asia

Abstract

The talk builds on a broader project that seeks to map different practices and conceptualisations of poverty and the cinema in the twenty-first century against the contexts of the Global South, neoliberal capitalism, and digital technology. The notion of poverty has been redefined following the 2008 global financial crisis, with the gulf between the rich and the poor rendered as the numerical opposition between the 1 per cent and the 99 per cent of the world's population, the latter encompassing the precariat in both the Global North and the Global South. Meanwhile, digital technology has democratized as much as revolutionized the whole business (in both senses of the term) of filmmaking and film viewing, equipping the poor with a tool hitherto denied to many of them. The project asks the following questions: How has cinema represented the poor and problematized the issue of poverty? How can it be mobilized to raise awareness about economic inequality and as a tool for activism to fight for social justice under neoliberalism?

This talk will focus on one form of cinema within this broader conceptualization: migrant labour cinema from East and Southeast Asia. Invariably deploying the trope of border crossing, this cinema traces the journeys of migrant labour across ethnic, linguistic, and class boundaries besides national ones. One set of films centres around the works of migrant filmmakers based in Taiwan, from Tsai Ming-liang's *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* (2006) and Ho Wi-Ding's *Pinoy Sunday* (2009) to the oeuvre of Midi Z, which raises questions about the position of both the migrant workers and these migrant filmmakers themselves, while problematizing the dynamic between home and diaspora. Another set of films examines migrant labour cinema from Singapore and Hong Kong, including Anthony Chen's *Ilo Ilo* (2013), K. Rajagopal's *A Yellow Bird* (2016), and Oliver Chen's *Still Human* (2018), with a gendered perspective on domestic helper and sex worker. Taken together, these films demonstrate that border crossing of economically poor migrants is as much about drifting, displacement, and dreaming as it is about intimacy, in(ter)dependence, and ingenuity.

Bio

Song Hwee Lim is Professor of Cultural Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is the author of *Tsai Ming-liang and a Cinema of Slowness* (2014) and *Celluloid Comrades: Representations of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Chinese Cinemas* (2006). He is the founding editor of the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*. He is also the co-editor of *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film* (2006) and *The Chinese Cinema Book* (2011; second edition forthcoming). His latest book on Taiwan cinema and soft power is forthcoming with Oxford University Press.

Lu Xinyu

The Portrayal of the Images of the Ethnic Minorities in New China —— Concurrently Responding to the “Rewriting of Chinese Cinematic History”

Abstract

Through a critical review of the conceptual construction of the images of Chinese ethnic minorities, we can see the problems underlying the overseas research paradigms of Chinese cinemas such as “Chinese Language Cinema” and “Sinophone Cinema”, which are rich and complicated image practice on the premise of masking and negating the political conceptions of ethnic equality in new China. Therefore, it is essential to return to the United Front and class struggle which are the State and national discourse variations of the historical line. Be it the patriotic united front in the regions of ethnic minorities, the support to the Third World's nonalignment or the international aid, all is embodied in the same world pattern with the political perspective of class struggle. How to shed new light on the perspective in the current ethnic policies and international relations? Can the studies of ethnic minorities be divorced from the historical line and practical challenges? These are key questions to the film studies of ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, the paper examines the social and political significance of the documentaries of the ethnic minorities from the view of social development and communication, and revisits the complicated and diverse practice between “scientific documentary” and the “authenticity” the Party has required. Only by clarifying the above questions, can we renew the discussion of image democracy and the subjects of the cinematic history.

Bio

Lu Xinyu is professor and dean of the School of Communication, ECNU (East China Normal University), where she also serves as senior research fellow. Her research is focused on the relationship between visual culture in China, mass media and the social development. Her many writings include *Documenting China: The New Documentary Movement* (Beijing, SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2003), *Writing and What It Obscures* (Guiling, Guangxi Normal University Press, 2008), *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record*, (as two chapters author and co-editor, Hong Kong University Press, 2010), *Academic, Media and Publicity* (Shanghai, East China Normal University Press, 2015/2018), *Dislocation: Chinese Narrative and Visual Politics in the Post-Cold War Era* (Shanghai, East China Normal University Press, 2018)

How Wee Ng

Taipei Golden Horse Film Awards and Singapore Cinema: Prestige, Privilege and Disarticulation

Abstract

Drawing from the idea of national revival, which is closely associated with the term ‘new wave,’ this paper examines the implications of how winning international film awards, with a focus on how the Taipei Golden Horse Awards (GHA) is variously understood by Singapore filmmakers. If film festivals and awards are crucial to constituting the ‘Singapore new wave,’ how does GHA

perceivably shape filmmaking and the way filmmakers understand issues of identity, language, prestige and cultural sensibilities? Based on interviews with ten Singapore directors and a producer-film festival director, media reports, film reviews and social media posts, I demonstrate that the supposed prestige of GHA is fraught with conflicting understandings of ‘Chineseness’, impartiality, inclusivity and credibility. For a sovereign country with a high ethnic Chinese population like Singapore which claims a national identity that is multilingual and multi-ethnic, at stake are the problematics of Chinese geopolitics and the linguistic-cultural practices of exclusion when it comes to GHA nominations and wins.

Bio

How Wee NG is currently Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Westminster. Research interests range from Sinophone visual culture to Singapore theatre. Selected publications include monograph *Drama Box and the Social Theatre of Singapore: Cultural Intervention and Artistic Autonomy* (2011), book chapter “*Rethinking Censorship in China: The Case of ‘Snail House’ (Woju)*” (2015), and forthcoming article, “*Drawing from Grotowski and Beyond: Kuo Pao Kun’s Discourse on Audiences in Singapore in the 1980s*”.

Luke Robinson

CNEX, Sundance, and the Question of Documentary Border-Crossing.

The CNEX-Sundance Documentary Institute workshops in China were a series of workshops established through a collaborative partnership between the Taipei/Hong Kong/Beijing-based documentary production company CNEX, and the Sundance Institute. Initiated in 2011, they sought to introduce techniques around pitching, editing, and storytelling, to independent documentary filmmakers in the PRC. This paper seeks to make some tentative suggestions about the significance of these workshops. It suggests that, while Sundance did use them to introduce an idea of independent documentary as industrial practice to China—a model codified in the US in the 1990s—the workshops’ emphasis on character-based narratives also reflects the centrality of storytelling to contemporary civil society projects, as befitting a series of events originally funded by the Open Society Foundation. The ideal subject of these films thus emerges as the rights-bearing individual, whose “story” is the one that will travel most effectively to “global” (read, North American) audiences: a subject who is supposedly universal, but in practice is quite historically specific. The workshop, a space in which “border crossing” was practiced in various forms, were therefore also the site of a complex negotiation about what kind of “Chinese” films travel, how they do so—and who gets to determine this.

Luke Robinson teaches Film Studies in the School of Media, Film and Music at the University of Sussex. He is the author of *Independent Chinese Documentary: From the Studio to the Street* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and the editor, with Chris Berry, of *Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Julian Stringer

‘The Best Special Effects Yet of Any Chinese-Produced Film’: Sino-Korean Co-Creation and *The Monkey King 2* (2016)

Abstract

In his Introduction to *Willing Collaborators: Foreign Partners in Chinese Media* (Keane 2018, p. x), Michael Keane observes that ‘few media industry professionals throughout the world are unaware of the rapid rise of China’s media and communications industries.’ Moreover, he argues that ‘the “long game” is the future of media industries in the East Asian region...the impact a rising China is having on international audiovisual production.’ Drawing on the vital example of the globally competitive South Korean film industry’s ‘tilt toward China’ (Yecies and Shim 2016), this paper addresses a neglected but key research question: What role does the transfer of Korean ‘know-how’ and ‘talent’ into China play in the production of the contemporary Chinese movie blockbuster?

The case study used to explore this aspect of networked co-creation in China addresses the ‘shadow’ history of relations between South Korea’s digital visual effects (VFX) sector and the assembly of large-scale epic fantasy films. My focus is *The Monkey King 2* (2016), which earned a record-breaking 100 million yuan on its opening day in China and is claimed to have ‘the best special effects yet of any Chinese-produced film’ (Zuo 2016). Produced at Wuxi Studios, VFX for *Monkey King 2* were supplied by Korea’s Dexter Studios via its China offshoot, Dexter China (now BLAAD China). Analysing both Sino-Korean transborder working practices and the movie’s aesthetic characteristics, I illustrate how Dexter’s leaders helped the movie attain Best Visual Effects at the Hong Kong Film Awards 2017, and consider why the project benefitted the studio’s long-term ambition to develop into a full-service regional production centre through its work in China.

The paper draws upon emerging methodologies of production and labor studies (Kokas 2017; Curtin and Sanson 2016) as well as recent work on the global VFX industry (Chung 2018). It incorporates empirical research into Chinese, Korean and English-language sources, including face-to-face semi-structured qualitative interviews with Junshik Raul Yun (Head of Dexter China/BLAAD China and VFX Producer for *The Monkey King 2*).

Bio

Julian Stringer is Director of the Institute for Screen Industries Research at the University of Nottingham – the first ideas incubator and innovation generator for the film and TV industry based at a leading UK university. He is Principal Investigator on the 2019 Arts and Humanities Research Council project *The UK-China Creative Challenge: Co-Designing a Hybrid ‘Creature’ as an Asset for Shanghai’s Performing Arts and Screen Industries*.

Keith B. Wagner and Qian Zhai

Theorizing the Global Chinese Diaspora in Denmark and Sino-Danish Film Ventures: *Kinamand* (2005) and *The Chinese Widow* (2017) as New Cross-Cultural Connections on Screen

Abstract

Today one finds an emerging interdependency at the core of Global South and North cultural collaborations, and in the film industry, this is realized through co-productions. While film co-productions since the 1990s in East Asia have steadily climbed in number (Deboer 2014) and those formed in the European Union equally encouraged (Harrod et al 2014), little engagement has been given to not only emergent South-North cultural productions but also East-West cross-cultural dynamics on screen. As China continues to rise as a new superpower, generating vast amounts of financial and creative capital (Voci and Hui 2017), what does this mean when China shows selective cultural engagement with a smaller nation? How does China’s soft power work in Europe? And what does the relationship look like in reverse when China and Chinese culture is viewed in tandem with Danish culture?

We take Henrik Rubin Genz’s *Kinamand* (2005) as one of our case studies into cultural interdependence and its global Chinese diaspora, exploring this co-venture as a watershed moment in cultural globalization for both nations. Our second case study is devoted to Bille August’s *The Chinese Widow* (2017). Rather than celebrate the cross-cultural connections as they are found in *Kinamand*, we interrogate the dynamics of Chinese soft power on screen, particularly the film’s agenda and use of non-ethnic Chinese to tell a Chinese story of sacrifice under Japanese imperialism. Although the Sino-Danish co-production agreement was put into legislation in 2017, we believe the two countries’ mutual interests in one another and the shared devotion to generic new storytelling—especially the melodrama—will help to unpick the compatibility of distinct elements of Chineseness and Danishness and its occasional osmosis. In contrast to *Kinamand*, the more inward-looking, new nationalism imbued in *The Chinese Widow*—staged during the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), works to rationalize, even promotes a co-cultural logic: whereby

integration and the collaboration of cultures and characters are set at a comfortable and cataclysmic historical distance; that is, the destructiveness of war keeps romance and inter-culturalism from congealing, as the female protagonist, Ying, dies by the bullet of a Japanese sniper. Put differently, we see a genuine relationship symbolically told via the tale of Chinese immigration to Denmark and the love story between two culturally and racially different protagonists in Genz's film: finding an inter-cultural partnership in the face of tragedy; while the twentieth-century Chinese leitmotif war film uses sacrifice and loss brought on by intense guerrilla warfare and states of emergency to keep inter-culturalism apart: something that is fantasized but ultimately unrealized in *The Chinese Widow*.

Bio

Keith B. Wagner is Assistant Professor of Global Media and Culture and Director of the Graduate Programme in Film and Media Studies at University College London. He is the co-editor of *Neoliberalism and Global Cinema: Capital, Culture and Marxist Critique* (2011) and *China's iGeneration: Cinema and Moving Image Culture for the Twenty-First Century* (2014). His monographic study entitled *Living with Uncertainty: Neoliberal Societies and Precarity in Global Cinema* will be published with the University of Michigan Press in 2020. His work has also appeared in *Radical History Review*, *Visual Communication*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Globalizations*, *Race and Class*, *Journal of Film and Video*, *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *Critical Arts*, *Labor History*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* and *Third Text* and in the anthologies *Screening China's Soft Power*, *Japanese Animation: Transnational Industry and Culture in Asia* and *Rediscovering Korean Cinema*.

Qian Zhai is a PhD candidate in Scandinavian cinema studies at University College London. Her project focuses on the circulation, exhibition and criticism of New Danish Cinema in China since the 1990s, examining the South-North cross-cultural dynamics between a small nation and a big country under globalisation. She is currently co-authoring a book chapter for *A History of Danish Cinema* due out with Edinburgh University Press in 2020.

Yiman Wang

Workshopping Border-crossing Authorship: Practicing Female Authorship and Documentary Poesies in The Folk Memory Project

Abstract

Authorship and the amateur stance constitute the twin focalizer for understanding the originary force behind the making of mainland Chinese independent documentary that have been circulated primarily through border-crossing venues (such as film festivals and university screenings). The gendered formation of this originary force, however, has so far been understudied, despite some practitioners' consistent emphasis on gender issues in intersection with other socio-political concerns.

My article addresses this missing link by tracing and positioning the works of female participants in Wu Wenguang's Folk Memory Project that has been growing cumulatively in close interaction with the practitioners' frequent workshopping at higher-education institutions in Taiwan, Hong Kong, America and Europe. Starting with an analysis of Wu's Caochangdi workstation as a multimedia and multi-sensory base that combines pedagogy and communal living-working, I move on to explore the ways in which the workstation facilitates an authorship position for the post-1980s generation of female collaborators in the Folk Memory Project on China's Great Famine. I specifically focus on Zhang Mengqi (with references to Zou Xueping and Li Xinmin), and examine three aspects of authorship formation: 1) apprenticeship and collaborative relationship with Wu Wenguang—the commonly recognized founding father of China's independent documentary; 2) integration of college education (e.g., dance for Zhang Mengqi) and border-crossing workshopping into the practice; 3) exploration of the gender issue in intersection with issues of history, memory, reparation and futurity in the collective Folk Memory project.

My analysis situates the formation of gendered authorship position in the postsocialist and neoliberal China, and also more specifically, in the unique border-crossing collective galvanized around the Folk Memory Project. I proceed with two focuses. First, I delineate an emerging gendered documentary “poesies” (understood in Heideggerian terms as the “bringing forth” or the “emerging”) that combines amateur field work, oral history collection, and the practitioners’ heavily embodied, participatory (sometimes even instigating) approach. Second, I suggest that the emerging gendered authorship and documentary poesies form an interesting tension with Wu Wenguang’s central position as the “founding father,” the male master, the only person who speaks fluent English in addressing non-Chinese-speaking international audiences. Ultimately, I stress the emerging and experimental nature of gendered authorship that goes hand in hand with border-crossing workshopping.

Bio

Yiman Wang is Associate Professor of Film & Digital Media at University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of *Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai, Hong Kong and Hollywood* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2013) and editor of the Asian Media special issue of *Feminist Media Histories* (2019). She is currently completing a book on Anna May Wong, the best known early 20th-c. Chinese-American screen-stage performer.

She has published numerous articles on border-crossing stardom, transnational Chinese cinema, Chinese documentaries, comedy and animation in *Feminist Media Histories*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Film Quarterly*, *Camera Obscura*, *Journal of Film and Video*, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, and edited volumes.

Julian Ward

Lewis McLeod’s adventures in China in April 1971.

Abstract

In April 1971, the Scottish professional cameraman Lewis McLeod spent two weeks in China, a year before the well documented visits of US President Richard Nixon and Michelangelo Antonioni. Some forty years later, after lying in a garage in the Scottish Borders for decades, the unedited reels of film that McLeod shot in China were donated to the University of Edinburgh. Apart from the three hours or so of film, mostly in black and white but with a few scenes in colour, there is a 20-minute show reel of McLeod’s selection of highlights of the trip. The donation also included a small selection of print documents, comprising shot lists and a number of short essays, with titles such as “700 million: Present and Correct” and “A Living from the Land”, in which McLeod vividly documented his experiences. The images and impressions of a country closed off to an extent that would not be possible today give the footage and the essays great historical value.

Bio

Dr Julian Ward is a senior lecturer in Chinese at the University of Edinburgh. After an undergraduate degree in Chinese, he wrote his PhD on the Ming dynasty explorer Xu Xiake. He was associate editor of the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* from its founding in 2006 to 2016 and co-edited *The Chinese Cinema Book* (2011, with a second edition due to be published in 2020).

Andy Willis

Still Hong Kong? Addressing the local within Hong Kong film distribution and exhibition.

Abstract

Whilst there is a drive to understand film within the rapid changes occurring in production, circulation and consumption across the Chinese cultural world, in this paper I will address the need to make sense of the continued strain of production, distribution and exhibition that can still

be clearly identified (in some way) as emerging from Hong Kong. I will ask if this specific strand can still be discussed as local within the larger frameworks that concern the symposium such as the idea of the Sinosphere.

To begin, I will ask the question, whilst acknowledging the industrial and critical shifts and changes reflected in the focus of the symposium, how far we still need to acknowledge the local and regional strategies of smaller distribution / sales companies based in Hong Kong. I will focus this discussion on the company Golden Scene and the slate of films that they have picked up for distribution in Hong Kong and other territories.

I will go on to explore this question through a more focused consideration of a recent Golden Scene release *Still Human*, a film that seems typical of their releases. Significantly, this film explores an image of Hong Kong that encompasses both the specific experiences of marginalised people in Hong Kong and those of migrant workers who cross borders to make their living in the city. In doing so, *Still Human* creates a more multi-faceted image of the city than many recent films and so offers a more nuanced representation of Hong Kong - one that also proved successful at the local box-office when the film was released.

Bio

Andy Willis is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Salford and Senior Visiting Curator for Film at HOME (Greater Manchester Arts Centre). He has curated a number of seasons devoted to Hong Kong cinema and is a founder member of the Chinese Film Forum UK.