

Worldmaking around the World: Queer Media and Culture in Circulation

University of Exeter, online 21-22 May 2021

PROGRAMME

May 20th-21st 48 hours online film screening (*Shanghai Queer* (2019))

Friday 21 May

1.45-2.00 pm	Conference opening
2.00-3.30 pm	Keynote 1: 'Animal Anarchy and the Secret Life of Pets' by Jack Halberstam, Columbia University, US Respondent: Mark Steven, University of Exeter
3.30-4.00pm	Break
4.00-5.30pm	Keynote 2: 'Queer World Sensoria' by Ryan Powell, Indiana University, US Respondent: Benedict Morrison, University of Exeter

Saturday 22 May

10.30am-12.00pm	Panel 1: Transgender, translation, transition chaired by Dr Jamie Zhao
	“‘We've called her Stephen’”: Transgender readings of The Well of Loneliness and queer discursive spaces in socialist Czechoslovakia' by Eva Spišiaková, University of Vienna
	'Fansubbing Queer Communities in China: The Translation and Reception of The L Word', Hanyu Wang, University of Edinburgh
	'Transitory Imitators, Transgender and Genderfucks: Male Cross-dressing in Italian cinema, 1909-1919', Emma Morton, Warwick University
12.00pm-1:00pm	Break
1: 00-2:00pm	Round table discussion: From research to practice: International Queer Media and the Circulation of Ideas. (Dr Jamie ZHAO (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool), Dr Hongwei BAO (Nottingham), Dr Benedict Morrison (Exeter), Miss Jiamin HU (Deputy Director of <i>Shanghai Queer</i> , Co-organiser of Shanghai Queer Film Festival), Mr Mengbi YU (QAFone) and Mr Christopher LU (QAFone)) chaired by Dr Jonathan Evans
2:00-2:10pm	Break
2:10pm-3:40pm	Panel 2: Queer media communities chaired by Dr Eva Spišiaková
	'Bingewatching The Drama: Locating the Indian Queer Digital Space Through Web Series' by Srija Sanyal, University of Delhi, and Maxine Mathew, King's College London

	‘Contextualising the Current Self-Mediation of LGBT+ Identities in the PRC: Queer Communities, Media Landscape, and Fansubbing’ Boyi Huang, Dublin City University
	‘Overcoming Challenges of Translating Queer Media in Russia’ Kostiantyn Iakovliev
3:40-3:55pm	Break
3:55pm-5.25pm	Panel 3: Queer Desires in Movement chaired by Dr Benedict Morrison
	‘Dancehall’s Literary Movement’ by Thomas Lockwood-Moran, Nottingham Trent University/Leicester
	‘Inside the “Oscar Wilde Brothel”’: Decriminalising Female Sexual Desires and De-villainising Queer Characters in Ozmafia!!’ by Dee Wu, University of Warwick
	‘Theatre of Cruelty: Performing Queer Desire in East Palace, West Palace’ by Hongwei Bao, University of Nottingham
5:25 pm	End of the conference

Abstracts:

21st May, 2021

Keynote 1:

Animal Anarchy and The Secret Life of Pets

Jack Halberstam, University of Columbia, US

In the animated film *The Secret Life of Pets*,” a guerilla force of abandoned pets, agitate for revolution. These former pets want to make war on humans and they plan to rise up from the sewers, where they currently reside, in order to encourage other animals to join them in the fight against human tyranny. In this underground world, the angry pets reverse the transition from wild to domestic and their revolutionary aspirations are cast in the logic of the film as part and parcel of becoming feral again. Within the same logic however, domesticated pets go feral not by choice or after a fugitive dash to freedom but because they lost the love of their human companions. The film thus opens the door to revolution by critiquing pet owning only to close it again by reasserting the value of the pet-human relationship over and above relations between and among animals. In this talk, I want to explore the wild as a site of animal resistance, animal anarchy and animal revolution.

Keynote 2:

Queer World Sensoria

Ryan Patrick Powell, Indiana University Bloomington, US

This paper looks at films that complicate the relationship between sound, language, and sexuality, challenging the powerful formal organization of these elements in global blockbuster cinema. First, the talk offers a consideration of how heterocentricity is advanced and maintained in the sound style

of films such as *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) and *The Notebook* (Nick Cassavetes, 2004). It will then pivot to how independent regionally-focused films such as *Tropical Malady* (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2004), *Old Joy* (Kelly Reichardt, 2006) and *Ruby in Paradise* (Victor Nunez, 1993) use sound to emphasize place in ways that complicate industrially standardized relationships between dialogue, subtitling and environmental sound. Through an analysis of how these films pursue a thirdist positionality, this talk investigates how cinematic sound design can be used to complicate and, at times, refuse orienting dichotomies such as center and periphery, background and foreground, and homosexuality and heterosexuality.

22nd May, 2021

Panel 1: Transgender, translation, transition

'We've called her Stephen': Transgender readings of *The Well of Loneliness* and queer discursive spaces in socialist Czechoslovakia

Eva Spisiakova, University of Vienna

This paper explores the role of translation in creating discursive spaces about non-heterosexual and non-cisgender identities under totalitarian regimes through a comparison of three Czech reeditions of *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). First published in Czechoslovakia in 1931, the following re-prints mark some of the country's most dramatic historical moments, including the communist coup d'état in 1948 and the Soviet-led invasion of 1968. Despite the pressures of communist publishing and totalitarian censorship, the book remained in circulation among Czechoslovak population, and features prominently in oral testimonies of non-heterosexual people living in Communist Czechoslovakia as a pivotal moment in their process of self-recognition.

However, while the novel is by many considered to be the most famous lesbian story published in the 20th century, it can be also read as a narrative with a transgender protagonist. This is in part supported by the fact that the hero of the story is born with a female body but is named Stephen, creating a sense of gendered dissonance throughout the novel. While the name remains unchanged in the original 1931 translation, the communist censorship alters this name to a feminine variation in the following two reeditions. This paper explores the socio-political changes and publishing norms that have likely motivated this change, as well as the wider role of literature in creating queer discursive spaces in countries under restrictive totalitarian regimes.

Eva Spišiaková is an Associate Lecturer in Translation Studies at Open University and an Honorary Fellow at the University of Liverpool where she works on outputs of the AHRC Theme Translating Cultures. She holds a PhD in Translation Studies from the University of Edinburgh, and her research focuses on the intersection of translation and social inequalities, in particular disability and LGBTQ+ issues.

Email: eva.spisiakova@univie.ac.at

**Fansubbing Queer Communities in China:
The Translation and Reception of The L Word**

Wang, Hanyu, University of Edinburgh

In China, media depicting homosexuality have been strictly banned or heavily censored by official authorities, limiting the possibilities for local queer productions and public discussions on queer identities and issues. In such a hostile mainstream environment, international queer productions that are translated and uploaded by underground fansubbing groups have become one of the main sites for Chinese queer individuals to learn about, confirm, or reform their own identities and values on queer issues. Among the fansubbed works, *The L Word (TLW)* (2004-2009) has been one of the earliest and most influential lesbian-centered American TV series imported to China. It has a presumably huge potential in shaping Chinese female queer audiences' image of queer identity, community and culture, especially when local queer productions are limited, and such an image is mediated to the audience through translation.

Through a case study on the fansubbed *The L Word* and its reception by Chinese female queer audiences, my research explores: 1) how fansubbing mediates the way queer identities and experiences are constructed on screen, and 2) how these mediated Anglo-American identities and experiences are understood and constituted locally by Chinese queer audiences to serve the elaboration of local queer selves and scenes. By working on audiences' perspective, this project seeks to listen to the much neglected voices of queer women about their desires and visual pleasures of watching foreign queer images and practices on screen, their opinions towards the fansubbings, and the impact of the fansubbed queer media in their local queer lives. The project will also address fansubbing's particularly critical role in queer world making, exploring how it works a main site for Chinese queer individuals to find a community and to articulate, negotiate and express their queer identities and values online.

Hanyu is a first year PhD candidate in Translation Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Her current research focus on the reception of fansubbed TV series by queer audiences.

Email: s1703234@sms.ed.ac.uk

Transitory Imitators, Trans Figures and Genderfucks: Male Cross-dressing in Italian cinema, 1909-1919

Emma Morton, Warwick University

This paper argues that the popularisation of the cross-dressed male served as a transgressive force that provided an articulation of social tolerance in Italy during the 1910s at a time when gender roles were undergoing renegotiation. Cross-dressed men began to appear in Italian cinema around 1909, as the recession of overproduction forced reform across the film industry. By far the most significant number of films that featured cross-dressed men are found in films from 1909-1919, a period that corresponds to the transitional era of early Italian filmmaking. This period also corresponds with the advent of modernity, urban industrialisation, the rise of feminist activism and World War One, all of which created a general state of panic within the Italian population. While cross-dressed men appeared almost exclusively in comedies, some scholars have dismissed cross-dressing male characters as a form of male dress-up played solely for laughs, whereas cross-dressing women from this period are automatically viewed as transgressive. This essay attempts to redress this balance and identifies three male cross-dressing character types: firstly, the 'transitory imitator', when a male character temporarily disguises his gender for the purpose of entertainment within the context of the narrative. Secondly, the transgender character, who 'passes' convincingly to both the diegetic characters and the audience. Finally, the 'genderfuck', that seeks to subvert the traditional gender binary by adopting both female and male traits in their appearance. The comedy genre provided an ideal arena where non-traditional forms of gender expression could challenge social norms and behaviours.

Emma Morton is a second-year doctoral candidate in the Department of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. Her thesis, 'Cinematic Representations of Racial and National Identity in Early Italian Cinema', examines the representation of people considered peripheral to the core of Italian society on film from 1905-1914.

Email: E.Morton@warwick.ac.uk

Panel 2: Queer media communities

Bingewatching The Drama: Locating the Indian Queer Digital Space Through Web Series

Srija Sanyal, University of Delhi, INDIA

Maxine Mathew, King's College London, University of London, UK

Digitalization is currently an emerging free space in India, which has been mostly untouched by the restrictive censorship apparatus of the Indian media. Thus, the medium has become a space where LGBTQ identities and relationships can be represented and explored. While the mainstream cinema continues with its derogatory and stereotypical show reel of LGBTQ characters, the digital media has been an open gateway embracing these representations. With the proliferation of mobile applications and on-demand entertainment, queerness has managed to evade the severe censorship of the mainstream Indian cinema houses. Consequently, it found a welcoming space in terms of uncensored representation in the emerging digital space of the Indian entertainment industry, thus challenging the dominant heteronormative understanding of gender and sexuality. While the academic discourses thus far have focused primarily on textual, sociological, theatrical and cinematic queer representation, little scholarship was awarded to the digital space. This paper aims to present an overview of the digital India with respect to the media industry and attempts to locate the 'negotiated' spaces of gender and sexuality therein. The paper further attempts to analyze the increasing acceptance of the 'forbidden' tales in the peripheral digital space than in the dominating mainstream as a consequence of transforming sociopolitical landscapes, which has enabled the transgression of didactic boundaries within the intersection of globalization and postcolonial practices. The paper aims to approach the discussion by talking of some of the notable queer-themed webseries, such as Amazon Prime's *Made in Heaven* (2019), ZEE5's *377 Ab Normal* and JLT Film's *The Other Love Story* (2016), among others, in the backdrop of the ever-transforming scenario of queer activism in the country while also attempting to identify the consumerist ideals behind the burgeoning demand for such extensive productions.

Maxine Mathew

Maxine Pamela Mathew is currently pursuing an M.A. in English from Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi, while simultaneously working as a content writer in a market research company. She has previously pursued her Masters in Shakespeare Studies from King's College London where she wrote her thesis on the Vishal Bhardwaj's Shakespeare adaptation within the context of popular Indian theatrical and cinematic traditions. In future, she seeks to develop her career in research and academics with a focus on adaptation studies.

Email: maxinepamela@gmail.com

Srija Sanyal

Srija Sanyal is Master's degree holder in English Literature from the University of Delhi. She is currently pursuing her research as an independent scholar, while pursuing her second Masters in English Literature with specialization in Indian Folk Studies and Comparative Literature from

IGNOU, and working as Senior Business Editor in a market research firm. She has published research works in various national and international journals, along with presenting her paper in multiple prestigious seminars. She aims to pursue PhD in the long run with a focus on gender and its representation in Indian cinema, along with the role of language in constructing, asserting, and deconstructing power structures in the postcolonial context.

Email: srija.sanyal@gmail.com;

Contextualising the Current Self-Mediation of LGBT+ Identities in the PRC: Queer Communities, Media Landscape, and Fansubbing

HUANG, Boyi
Dublin City University

Abstract

This study is about LGBT+ fansubbing, which contributes to a form of self-mediation of LGBT+ identities by circulating media content of one's own choices. The strictly controlled society and mediascape of the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been a particularly hostile environment for LGBT+ communities to negotiate their intersubjectivity and visibility. Despite some advances that have been achieved through the LGBT+ movement in the PRC, Chinese LGBT+ citizens still enjoy no legal protection from discrimination. More importantly, concerning the current subject matter, sexual minorities are hardly visible in the public sphere, specifically rare representation of queer identities in mainstream media. Despite facing such hostility, fandom communities voluntarily subtitle (fansub) and distribute foreign LGBT+ audiovisual content (e.g., films, TV series) online to numerous people in the PRC. This would suggest a tension between state-controlled media content and the media content that members of Chinese society demand (Li and Zhang 2017). Such LGBT+ fansubbing activities can be seen as contributing to LGBT+ communities by providing a means of self-mediation of LGBT+ identities. By drawing on public discourse, official documents, and current literature, this talk attempts to contextualise the current self-mediation of LGBT+ identities in the PRC from three aspects: the social status of queer communities, the media landscape, and the situation of fansubbing in the PRC.

Keywords

Audiovisual Translation, fansubbing, self-mediation, queer communities, China

HUANG Boyi is a PhD student of Translation Studies at SALIS, Dublin City University. His research interests include, but are not restricted to, audiovisual translation (particularly subtitling), translator's visibility, digital media, activist translation (particularly fan-initiated subtitling), and queer studies. Besides research, he is also an active interpreter and subtitler.
Email: huangb3@mail.dcu.ie.

Overcoming Challenges of Translating Queer Media in Russia

Kostiantyn Iakovliev

The Russian media market still witnesses censorship, among others relating to LGBTQ+ cultures. Its application differs based on distribution models as cinemas, TV and VOD platforms may employ different practices, especially if media are registered in another territory.

The following methods of censorship are observed:

- translation changing: e. g., in *Avengers: Endgame* (2019), the dialogue about dating between male partners was dubbed neutrally. Some broadcasters advise to translate sexual relationships not between a man and a woman as for example characters being friends sharing an apartment and avoid mentioning years of relationships shared by a homosexual couple and work around any details regarding the matter by using neutral phrases as much as possible;
- editing: e. g., in *Rocketman* (2019), the homosexual scenes were removed by the distributor prior to applying for registration.

LSPs are to talk with producers about such content.

However, other films are released in full, e. g., *Portrait de la jeune fille en feu* (2019). Also, an international LGBT film festival Bok o Bok was held many times.

But all this doesn't affect Netflix despite repeating concerns by the Russian authorities. Audiovisual translation for both subtitling and dubbing guided by strict rules functions as a fertile breeding ground for the language evolution.

The following tactics are used to underline new approaches to sensitive topics:

- grammar: in Russian as a synthetic language, Nouns, Adjectives, and Verbs have to be correlated, but this is changing due to new gender variations;
- syntax: for a non-binary character in *Queer Eye*, their sentences are translated in a way not suggesting referring to oneself as either a male or female if not implied so in the original;
- lexical: LGBTQ+ vocabulary is revised on the basis of period (*Mindhunter*, 2019), setting (*Happy Jail*, 2019), and audience (*Tall Girl*, 2019).

Kostiantyn Iakovliev is an English-Russian consecutive interpreter and freelance translator with a wide experience ranging from contracts and manuals to researches and travel guides as well as working in hotspots, but he mainly specializes in audiovisual translation for voice-over, dubbing, and subtitling covering various genres. He presented at several conferences.

Email: ikostello@gmail.com

Panel 3: Queer Desires in Movement

Dancehall's Literary Movement

Thomas Lockwood-Moran, Nottingham Trent University and The University of Leicester

'Dancehall's Literary Movement' examines the impact of dancehall music upon queer Jamaican writing. Specifically, writing by Kei Miller, Marlon James and Thomas Glave and the music of Beenie Man, Shenseea and Vybz Kartel. The movement of dancehall to the global North will be presented as a queer proliferation, through appropriation, disrupting identarian "queer" fixity.

To begin, Critical contentions surrounding the term "queer" in an Anglophone Caribbean context will be unpacked (King, 2014) juxtaposed against dancehall's queering of societal "norms" (Attai, 2019). Purposefully, a contemporary timespan references the post-millennial popularity, of gender non-conforming dancehall artists, amid cultural hyper-masculinity (Bucknor, 2011). Furthermore, emerging queer visibility, framed by the violently opposed first Jamaican Pride of 1989 and the first publicly sanctioned in 2015. Understanding the cultural nuances of Caribbean queerness will be shown to interrelate contemporary Jamaican writing and dancehall. Specifically, a literary mimicry of dancehall's 'reverse panopticon' effect (Moore, 2014) meaning how dancehall's rejection of queers creates understandings that they do not, and cannot, coexist. As a result, an aporia exists through which homophobia lessens heteronormative policing within dancehall subsequently freeing queer expressions. Queer Jamaican writing performs similarly because, for many, queerness rescinds

citizenship so queer Jamaicans do not, and cannot, exist. The latter will be interpreted through loco-specific queer-knowing, 'silent-knowledge' (Lorde, 1982) and Kei Miller's 'A Smaller Song' (2013).

Overall, critically engaging queer Jamaican writing and dancehall aims to underscore the myopia of calls, from global Northern activist, to ban dancehall music. The myopia of the global North will be outlined as complicit with colonial epistemologies of "backwardness". Furthermore, the vital necessity of hermeneutic depth regarding cultural nuance, when interpreting queerness and global southern popular media, to subvert the falsity of singular (white, globally northern) "queer" identity.

Thomas Lockwood-Moran (he/him/they/them) is a PhD literary researcher, funded by Midlands4Cities (AHRC), whose thesis is entitled 'Queer Resistance(s): Contemporary Caribbean Communitarity'. Thomas's project is supervised by experts from both Nottingham Trent University and The University of Leicester. Twitter: @Tlockwood_Moran.
Email: 8thomas.lockwood-moran2019@my.ntu.ac.uk

Inside the "Oscar Wilde Brothel": Decriminalising Female Sexual Desires and De-villainising Queer Characters in *Ozmafia!!*

Wu, Dee, Warwick University

Otome game is a story-based video game genre that specifically targets heterosexual women. The major task is to develop a romantic relationship(s) between the female avatar and several male characters. Interestingly, a Japanese otome game named *Ozmafia!!* (2016) comes as an exception. The game's "Wilde Brothel" route boasts pleasures of unadulterated coitus and BDSM with male prostitutes who are queer fictional characters created by Irish writer Oscar Wilde. Would it be unwise to add gay characters to compete with the female protagonist from a purely marketing perspective? Surprisingly, straight female gamers still rated this game 9/10 on Steam with mostly positive views.

Drawing on structuralist discourse, I argue that video gaming is an external "Lacanian mirror" with which players identify. Thus, the depiction of virtual characters has a huge impact on players' perception of human relations in reality. Contrary to horrible depictions of queerness and crude "inclusivity" in contemporary mainstream games, *Ozmafia!!*'s designer(s) have well-researched background knowledge of Wilde's Aestheticism and queerness. Even as it includes sensational topics, i.e., BDSM for shock (commercial) value, the game's approach to sexuality is wholesome, explorative, and even educatory, beyond the pornographic depictions of sexual revelry or (sexual) violence against women and queer demographics in mainstream action games. *Ozmafia!!* Features complicated and multi-layered queer characters without reducing them to a symbol of degeneracy for the homophobic or transphobic players to destroy. Thus, the representation of queers is objective, nuanced, and human.

The game's popularity and the friendly environment, created by the homophile *fujoshi* influenced by popular media works addressing gender-non-conforming subjects, has created a positive cycle in Japanese youth culture, which is also subtly influencing the rest of the world via the booming Japanese gaming industry and also via the rapidly growing *otaku* culture around the world.

Wu is an Early Career Fellow with the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at the University of Warwick where she received her PhD degree in English and Comparative Literary Studies in 2020. She specialises in the Fin de Siècle Aestheticism and its legacy in post-colonial Asia. Her research interests include global circulation of Victorian literatures and cultures; post-colonial studies with a focus on Asian diaspora; sex, gender and sexuality in East Asia; interdisciplinary studies of literature, visual culture, internet culture, and big data analysis applied in literary studies.
Email: D.Wu@warwick.ac.uk

Theatre of Cruelty: Performing Queer Desire in *East Palace, West Palace*

Hongwei Bao, University of Nottingham

This paper examines *East Palace, West Palace* (*Donggong xigong*), the first exilicity queer-themed and publicly performed Chinese-language play in contemporary China. The play was based on the late Chinese writer Wang Xiaobo's script, directed by French director Xavier Froment, produced by le Théâtre des Trois Oranges with a Chinese cast, and performed at the Hart Arts Centre in July 2005 (later restaged at the Star Live Theatre in Beijing in January 2009). *East Palace, West Palace* revisits China's queer history in the 1980s and 90s when homosexuality was still a criminal offence and cruising gay men were frequently subject to police harassment before the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1997. The play dramatises an overnight interrogation of a cruising gay man by a policeman at a police station. In the play, the gay man narrates his own experience and sexual desire, seduces the policeman, and even makes the policeman doubt his own sexuality. Through paying heed to the theatre of cruelty tradition and by enacting sadomasochism on stage, the play depicts the harsh lives of queer people in those years and reveals their longing for love and acceptance. *East Palace, West Palace* therefore paints a nuanced picture of queer desire not simply by proclaiming the legitimacy of gay love, but also by complicating it with acute attention paid to the intricate relationship between power and pleasure, the Chinese state and queer people. As an example of avant-garde theatre practice in China, *East Palace, West Palace* staged taboo topics and issues in a dramatic form in China; it also challenged contemporary China's theatre scene largely dominated by the Stanislavsky style of performance, traditional Chinese opera, commercial theatre and propaganda theatre.

Dr Hongwei Bao is an Associate Professor in Media Studies at the University of Nottingham, UK. He is the author of Queer Comrades: Gay Identity and Tongzhi Activism in Postsocialist China (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2018), Queer China: Lesbian and Gay Literature and Visual Culture under Postsocialism (Routledge, 2020), and Queer Media in China (Routledge, 2021).

Email: Hongwei.Bao@nottingham.ac.uk