

TRANSGRESSIVE WOMEN
IN
EAST ASIAN SCREEN CULTURES

23-24 MAY 2024

SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES
CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

PROGRAMME



DAY 1 (THURSDAY 23RD MAY)

10.00-10.30	Registration/Refreshments (Rm 2.22)	
10.30-11.00	Welcome/Introduction (Rm 2.18)	
11.00-12.00	Keynote 1: Irene González-López (Birkbeck) (Rm 2.18) <i>Transgressive desires and pleasures: Rethinking the trope of the panpan sex worker in Occupied Japan</i>	
12.00-13.30	Panel 1: Women and Violence on East Asian Screens (Rm 2.24) Claudia Bertolé (Turin): <i>Asami and Aiko: reflections on femmes fatales in contemporary Japanese cinema</i> Claire Ping (Cambridge): <i>Women murderers and murdered women in contemporary Chinese screen culture</i> Yue Liu (Queen Mary): <i>Contemporary Chinese transgressive women in television drama: Taking Imperfect Victims an example</i>	Panel 2: Reframing Female Performers: Image, Desire & Sexuality (Rm 2.26) Sam Warnock (Edinburgh): <i>The Transgressive Heroines of Okada Mariko</i> Asuka Ozumi (Turin): <i>Sexuality and motherhood in the Japanese rapper Awich</i> Elaine Chung (Cardiff): <i>The Economy of Transgression: How Female Comedians in China and South Korea Talk about Sex and Relationships on Stand-up Comedies Television Shows</i>
13.30-14.30	Lunch (Rm 2.22)	
14.30-16.15	Panel 3: Female Production in the Creative Industries (Rm 2.24) Kate Taylor-Jones (Sheffield): <i>From Transgressive tears to careless moments: women and bodily care in the work of Tanada Yuki and Ando Momoko</i> Federica Cavazzuti (Turin): <i>Transgressive bodies. Photography by Japanese women</i> Junwei Lu (Glasgow): <i>Preserving Indigenous Imagination through Cinema: Perspective from Taiwanese Female Indigenous Director Laha Mebow</i> Akiko Nagata (Ritsumeikan): <i>Redefining Expectations in Japanese Society: An Analysis of Television Drama Series</i>	Panel 4: Cinematic Lesbian Narratives (Rm 2.26) Bérénice M. Reynaud (Jean Moulin Lyon 3): <i>"Ma, I love you and I'm gay": mother-daughter relationships, "coming out" and gender norms in Fish and Elephant (Li Yu, 2001) and Saving Face (Alice Wu, 2004)</i> Yayu Zheng (USC): <i>Identity in Everydayness: A Family Documentary's Odyssey (Online)</i> Yvonne Zhao (Leicester): <i>Against Women: Analyzing the Dissolution of Lesbian Image in Adolescent Narratives within Sinophone Lesbian Cinema</i> Raphaëlle Yokota (IFRAE): <i>The Female Gaze in Kakeru: a lesbian love story under the eye of a woman filmmaker</i>
16.15-17.00	Break/Refreshments (Rm 2.22)	
17.00-19.00	Screening of <i>Deciphering Japan</i> (Rm 2.18) Roundtable: East Asia on Screen, East Asian Women in the Screen Industries Georgie Yukiko Donovan, Haruka Kuroda, Griseldis Kirsch and Forum Mithani	
19.00-20.00	Wine Reception (Lobby)	

DAY 2 (FRIDAY 24TH MAY)

09.00-09.30	Refreshments (Rm 2.22)	
09.30-11.15	<p>Panel 5: Contemporary Social Issues in East Asian Contexts (Rm 2.24)</p> <p>Grace En-Yi Ting (Hong Kong): <i>The Masterful Cat is Depressed Again Today: Unmarried Women, Fantasy, and Feminist Critique in East Asia</i> (Online)</p> <p>Lingping Guo (Southampton): <i>Feminist Analysis of the Leftover Women in Contemporary Chinese Film and Television</i></p> <p>Yiran Ai (Shanghai): <i>Breaking Boundaries: Transgressive Representation of Women in B for Busy</i> (Online)</p> <p>Elizabeth Rajapaksh (La Trobe): <i>The 'Fallen Elite': Transgressive Female Lawyers in Japanese Legal Dramas</i></p>	<p>Panel 6: Transgression, Gender and the Supernatural (Rm 2.26)</p> <p>Teresa H.J. Choi (Korea Institute for Religion & Culture): <i>Transgressive Women in Contemporary K-Drama: A Comparative Analysis of Hotel Del Luna, Mystic Pop-up Bar, and Tomorrow</i> (Online)</p> <p>Jessica Ka Yee Chan (Richmond): <i>Digital Image Processing, Spectacles, and Asian American Transgression in Everything Everywhere All At Once</i></p> <p>Han Geng (Southampton): <i>Transgressing boundaries: reimagining the fox spirit and women in Chinese horror cinema</i></p> <p>Sara Librenjak (York St. John): <i>Transgressive East-Asian drag in competitive reality TV shows</i></p>
11.15-12.15	<p>Keynote 2: Colette Balmain (Kingston) (Rm 2.18)</p> <p><i>Monstrous Becomings in East Asian Gothic: From Parasite Eve to Gyeongseong's Creature</i></p>	
12.15-13.15	Lunch (Rm 2.22)	
13.15-14.15	<p>Keynote 3: Eva Cheuk-yin Li (Lancaster) (Rm 2.18)</p> <p><i>Fandom of A Transgressive Woman: How mainland Chinese fans of a censored singer negotiate identities and transborder solidarity</i></p>	
14.15-16.00	<p>Panel 7: Drag, Crossdressing & Gender-Fluidity (online panel) (Rm 2.24)</p> <p>Fathima Hiba (P.S.M.O college Tirurangadi): <i>The Allure of the Cross-dressed Hero(ine): An Exploration of the Transgressive Crossdressing Women in East-Asian Dramas</i></p> <p>Faye Xiao (Kansas): <i>"We Are Creating a Spokesperson for Ourselves": (Un)Queering Chinese Idols of Female Transgression on Networked Small Screens</i></p> <p>Nan Zhou (Southampton): <i>Unveiling Hidden Femininities: Hermaphrodite Roles in Martial Arts Films</i></p>	<p>Panel 8: Female Agency and Social Change in East Asia (Rm 2.26)</p> <p>Xunnan Li (Leeds): <i>Wang Baochuan's Intermedial Trajectory: from Subordination to Female Transgression</i></p> <p>Kate Allanson Conlon (UCLAN): <i>The Good, the Bad and the Moga: Analysing the Conflicting Depictions of Modern Girl Characters in 1930s Japanese Film</i></p> <p>Emma Horsley-Heather (SOAS): <i>Black sheep of the family? Sazae-san's subtle subversion</i></p> <p>Yong Ja Hong (North Korean Studies): <i>Transgression within Limitations: The Increasing Agency of the Female Athlete in North Korean Video</i></p>

Symposium ends 16.00

For more details, including registration, visit:

<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/modern-languages/events/symposium-transgressive-women-in-east-asian-screen-cultures>

ABSTRACTS & BIOGRAPHIES

Yiran Ai

Breaking Boundaries: Transgressive Representation of Women in *B for Busy*

Released on Christmas Eve 2021, the Chinese film *B for Busy* swiftly claimed the top-rated spot of the year on Douban (China's IMDb). This romantic comedy's success can arguably be attributed to the emergent director Yihui Shao's refreshing perspective on middle-age romance and her unconventional portrayal of women. Focusing on the intimate relationships of middle-aged single women in Shanghai, a rarity in Chinese cinema, the film showcases their defiance of traditional expectations of womanhood through diverse ways, from pursuing casual relationships to carving out independent paths.

This paper explores Shao's innovative approach to representing female characters to dismantle entrenched patriarchal ideology within mainstream Chinese cinema. Drawing on a conceptual framework integrating Stuart Hall's theory of representation with Teresa de Lauretis's insights into the interconnectedness of gender, representation, and film, I first discuss how *B for Busy* meticulously shapes its characters with inherent ambiguity towards gender norms. The strategic ambivalence is manifested through protagonists who simultaneously embody the characteristics of established female identities while subverting gender conventions. This potent representation demonstrates women reclaiming agency by navigating the boundaries, creating unique space on screen for those embracing unconventional choices.

Furthermore, I explore how the representation of women in *B for Busy* contributes to broader feminist discourse. The exploration of alternative gender performances signifies the potential for a new feminist representational system, enabling a vision of gender not as a rigid identity determined by a binary system but as a practice where individuals actively express identities true to themselves, thereby blurring the boundaries of what it means to be 'a real man' or 'a real woman'.

Bio:

Yiran Ai is a postdoctoral researcher at Shanghai University, China. She completed her PhD, 'What Makes a Film Feminist?: Gender Perspectives of Directors of Westernised and Hong Kong Cinema Between 1990 and 2000', at the University of Birmingham. Before concluding her doctoral work, Ai received an MA degree in Media and Cultural Studies from Lancaster University and a BA in TV & Film Directing from Tongji University, Shanghai. Ai's research interests include the representation of diverse gender identities in cinema, as well as issues surrounding postcolonialism and postmodernism. Her writing has appeared in *Asian Cinema*.

Kate Allanson Conlon

The Good, the Bad and the Moga: Analysing the Conflicting Depictions of Modern Girl Characters in 1930s Japanese Film

The Modern Girl, or Moga in Japanese, was a cultural phenomenon which swept across the globe in the 1920s and 1930s. For the people of Japan, Modern Girls represented both the positive and negative aspects of modernisation and globalisation. To some, the Modern Girl was the female embodiment of modernity and women's liberation, who encompassed all things considered sophisticated and luxury. While others saw her as a problematic figure who threatened the long-standing orders of gender, class, race and sexuality. As a result of this confliction, much screen culture from the time portrays Modern Girls both as a character to be adored as well as one to be shunned. Using the anthropological theory of thick description, this research will analyse Modern Girl characters in 1930s Japanese films such as *Woman of Tokyo* (東京の女) and *Dragnet Girl* (非常線の女), in an attempt to understand how Modern Girls were portrayed as both transgressive and progressive. By fostering thick description, the analysis of these Modern Girl characters will also include background and contextual information so that we are able to better understand the relevance and meaning of these

characters and their significance at the time that the films were produced. This research attempts to address how depictions of Modern Girls in film in the 1930s echoed the conflicting nature of Japanese sentiment towards modernity and change.

Bio:

Kate Allanson Conlon is a PhD Candidate at The Institute for the Study of the Asia Pacific, University of Central Lancashire. Her interdisciplinary doctoral thesis, supported by the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation's Postgraduate Studentship, focuses on the evolution of the depiction of 'New Women' and 'Modern Girls' in fashion and women's print culture from Japan and its then colonies Korea and Taiwan, 1919 to 1945. In addition to her doctoral research, Kate is also a collections assistant at the Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, assisting the collections team with the cataloguing, repacking and maintenance of the textiles collection.

Colette Balmain

Keynote Talk: Monstrous Becomings in East Asian Gothic: From *Parasite Eve* to *Gyeongseong's Creature*

This talk argues that monstrous woman in East Asian Gothic function as challenges to the status-quo, their transformations subverting the ideology of the "Good Wife, Wise Mother" which denies women self-determination through subjugation to patriarchal norms and ideals. Utilising a Deleuzian framework of becoming-other, this paper explores monstrous transformations across South Korean and Japanese media. From the sentient mitochondria of *Parasite Eve* (book, film and video game) through to *najin* infected creature of *Gyeongseong's Creature* (Netflix, 2024) woman's bodily transformations into a monstrous m/other are the result of male machinations and medical experimentation. This comparative analysis utilises Iwabuchi's conception of inter-Asian referencing in order to explore the connections between these monstrous beings through the mechanics of production and reproduction.

Bio:

Dr Colette Balmain is a Senior Lecturer in Film and Media & Communications at Kingston University. Dr Balmain's research focuses in on identity politics and the representation of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability in cinema. Dr Balmain is currently completing a monograph on East Asian Gothic Cinema. Previous publications include *Korean screen cultures: interrogating cinema, TV, music and online games* (2016), and *Introduction to Japanese horror film* (2008).

Claudia Bertolé

Asami and Aiko: reflections on *femmes fatales* in contemporary Japanese cinema

Aiko in Sono Sion's film *Cold Fish* (*Tsumetai nettaigyo*, 2010) is a beautiful, intriguing, perverse woman. She is the wife of a dangerous man. Maybe she's something else too.

Asami, the protagonist of *Audition* (*Id.*, 1999) by Miike Takashi, is a very attractive twenty-four-year-old girl, apparently shy and defenseless. She shows up at the audition that a film producer has organized to find the protagonist of a film (he's actually looking for a new partner for his friend).

A powerful seductiveness and an equally intense expectation of violence characterize the two characters.

Asami and Aiko are figures sculpted in a dark past - childhood abuse, psychological slavery or a cage-family from which to escape - who present themselves in a difficult and violence-filled daily life.

This paper aims - after having considered the films in the context of the cinematographic production of the two film directors, and through the analysis of specific sequences - to reflect on some traits of the characters, comparing them with each other and with similar ones by different authors.

Are these *femmes fatales* who fail to complete in themselves those characteristics of the archetypal figure - eroticism, destruction of the 'prey', victory in the struggle between genders - because the Japanese patriarchal system is too influential even for them, or rather are they characters who have made the model their own and pursue diegetic goals, perhaps in a conflictual manner, but with a remarkable personal determination, imagining new gender dynamics?

Bio:

Claudia Bertolé (Torino, 1966) has been dealing with Asian and Japanese cinema for years. Lecturer of Korean and Japanese cinema at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and Modern Cultures of the University of Torino (Italy), she has collaborated with *Cineforum* magazine and the Asian Film Festival in Rome. She has also been part of the jury of the Nippon Connection Film Festival. She has been writing reviews for the Japanese cinema blog *Sonatine* since 2010. Among her publications *Il signore del caos. Il cinema di Sono Sion* (2012, edited by Dario Tomasi and Franco Picollo), *Japan Pop. Parole, immagini e suoni dal Giappone contemporaneo* (2013, edited by Gianluca Coci), *La vergine eterna. Breve storia di Hara Setsuko, musa di Ozu* (2020) and *Il cinema di Koreeda Hirokazu. Memoria, assenza, famiglie* (2022).

Federica Cavazzuti

Transgressive bodies. Photography by Japanese women

The Japanese production is widely considered among the most excellent expressions of photography on a global scale. However, not unlike other international contexts, when analyzed from the gender perspective this practice reveals overlooked issues of invisibility and underrepresentation: photography in Japan has historically privileged the work of male producers of images, considered to be the only users able to master the technique, thus systematically excluding all the other individuals not identifying as such.

In my paper I will discuss some of the works realized by female photographers who started emerging on the Japanese art scene in the latest decades. Merging (self)portraiture, disguise, and artifice, these photographers oppose to patriarchal views over art and photography. In the images produced, the bodies depicted undergo several transformations: they become vessels to declare instances of identity, the manifestations of the artists' desires for safe spaces of emancipation, and the reactions to the conformity of aesthetic standards conveyed by the beauty industry. Crucial elements for these artists are the taboos surrounding images of female aging, ill bodies, disability, reflections on life and death, as well as on the painful experiences endured by most women. Towards a visual culture saturated with representations of tall, slim, young, healthy female bodies, the photographers oppose alternative visions that overturn gendered roles, at the same time strongly affirming their knowledge of the photographic practice and the legitimacy of their authorship.

Bio:

Federica Cavazzuti is currently a PhD Candidate in Archaeological, Historical and Historical-Artistic Sciences at the University of Turin, Italy, and a Visiting Research Fellow at Waseda University, Tokyo. Her PhD research focuses on the developments of photography in Japan across the 20th-21st centuries and has been awarded a Japan Foundation Fellowship for the year 2023-2024. Her main areas of interest are contemporary visual arts, feminist studies, post-orientalism and curatorial activism. For the past 10 years she has been working with art institutions in Italy and UK to organize exhibitions in private and public spaces.

Jessica Ka Yee Chan

Digital Image Processing, Spectacles, and Asian American Transgression in *Everything Everywhere All At Once*

"Is it that I can't be here, or that I'm not allowed to be here? See, I can physically be here, but what you meant to say is you're not allowing me to be here." These lines capture the existential angst of an Asian American in *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, 2022). Joy is a transgressive young woman, who possesses supernatural power in the multiverse, and yet remains powerless in everyday reality as a lesbian daughter of an immigrant mother who doesn't recognize and accept her daughter's sexuality. Evelyn is a transgressive mother, who acquires new identities and talents as she jumps from one verse to another, and yet remains frustrated in her laundromat business and marriage. This essay argues that the production team made a conscious economic and aesthetic choice not to saturate the film with CGI proper, but to use digital image processing to enhance transgressive verse-jumping and visual spectacles that transform, subvert, and poke fun at the male-centered conventions of the action genre in the Hong Kong cinematic tradition vis-à-vis Hollywood. In doing so, the film represents Asian American female transgression in the mother-and-daughter duo in the multiverse.

Bio:

Jessica Ka Yee Chan is Associate Professor of Chinese Studies at the University of Richmond, USA. Her recent publications include [*Chinese Revolutionary Cinema: Propaganda, Aesthetics, and Internationalism, 1949-1966* \(I.B.Tauris, 2019\)](#) and articles in the *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, and *The Opera Quarterly*.

Teresa H.J. Choi

Transgressive Women in Contemporary K-Drama: A Comparative Analysis of *Hotel Del Luna*, *Mystic Pop-up Bar*, and *Tomorrow*

This presentation explores the portrayal of transgressive women in contemporary K-Drama, focusing on the protagonists in *Hotel Del Luna*, *Mystic Pop-up Bar*, and *Tomorrow*. The investigation examines the significance of these characters as agents of change and analyses the impact of their transgressive actions on the overall narrative structure of the dramas. Moreover, the study delves into how these characters challenge and subvert traditional gender roles and societal expectations in Korean culture.

The analysis begins by exploring the specific ways in which these female figures, from the wrathful and powerful Jang Manwol of *Hotel Del Luna* to the sassy and entrepreneurial Woljoo of *Mystic Pop-up Bar*, and the grim reaper Goo Ryun of *Tomorrow*, challenge the Confucian ideal of femininity. These protagonists exhibit traits traditionally associated with masculinity, such as strong leadership, ambition, and autonomy. Beyond character traits, the presentation further investigates the religious context underpinning these portrayals. Drawing on Korean shamanism and folk beliefs, the characters' transgressive actions are interpreted as acts of spiritual empowerment. These women navigate the boundaries between the living and the dead, offering solace, and challenging the established social order.

This analysis contributes to ongoing discussions about the changing roles of women in Korean society and the evolving cultural landscape of K-Drama. By understanding how these characters challenge societal norms, the study sheds light on the evolving nature of gender dynamics in contemporary South Korean media and its potential impact on shaping cultural perceptions of women.

Bio:

Teresa (Hyun Joo Choi) earned her Ph.D. in religious studies from the Academy of Korean Studies, Republic of Korea, in February 2021 and has since relocated to Australia. Her research is centred around the nuanced exploration of issues arising from the mutual empowerment between Eastern and Western cultures and ideas in the digital age. Her primary focus lies in examining the resurgence of Korean traditions, ideas, and religions through storytelling in popular culture. Currently affiliated with The Korea Institute for Religion & Culture (www.kirc.or.kr), Teresa is actively engaged in researching the mutual empowerment of Eastern and Western cultures in the digital age.

Elaine Chung**The Economy of Transgression: How Female Comedians in China and South Korea Talk about Sex and Relationships on Stand-up Comedies Television Shows**

In May 2021, South Korean comedian Park Na-rae faced public criticism for making sexual remarks and gestures in her YouTube show *Hey Narae*. Park apologised, and the show was cancelled. A few months earlier, in December 2020, mainland Chinese comedian Yang Li sparked fierce debates on Chinese social media as detractors considered her jokes on a TV show, especially the line 'Why could men be so average yet so confident?', as misandrist. Intel China consequently removed their advertisements with Yang.

Western media outlets, including *BBC* and *the New York Times*, reported the controversies as examples of the predicament of women's rights in China and South Korea. However, the incidents, in fact, demonstrated that female comedians in East Asia are pushing boundaries: Park and Yang have kindled public discussions on the appropriateness of women making jokes about sex and relationships, and both have remained active and popular in the mainstream afterwards.

This presentation explores how female television comedians in China and South Korea transgress gender norms through stand-up shows. It borrows Rebecca Krefting's study of the 'economy of charged humour' (2014) as a framework to understand how they carefully juggle between challenging hegemonic gender values and not alienating mainstream audiences to safeguard the commercial viability of their shows and their personas. It focuses on the cases of Park Na-rae and Yang Li, examining their performances in *Park Na-rae: Glamour Warning* (Netflix, 2019), the first Netflix stand-up comedy special starring a Korean female comedian, and *Rock & Roast* (Tencent Video, 2017-2022), a stand-up comedy competition series via which Yang Li rose to fame in China. I also include examples of two other *Rock & Roast* stars, Niao Niao and Li Xueqin, whose jokes are much less provocative than Park and Yang's.

I will present a discursive analysis of their stand-up lines about heterosexual relationships, which illustrates how female television comedians in East Asia have employed diverse styles to deliver gender-charged humour and, hence, to strategically negotiate with the boundaries of mainstream culture governed by markets, TV networks, advertisers, government censorship, socio-cultural norms, and more.

Bio:

Elaine Chung is a lecturer in Chinese studies at Cardiff University. Her research interests lie in the transnational politics of East Asian popular cultures. Her essays have been published in *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* and edited volumes with McFarland, Routledge, Multilingual Matters, Edinburgh University Press, and MLA. She has co-edited a Special Issue on East Asian media comedies for *Archív Orientální* (2022).

Han Geng

Transgressing boundaries: reimagining the fox spirit and women in Chinese horror cinema

The fox in Chinese culture occupies a unique space lying in between the realms of human and non-human, divine and demonic, light and dark. Sometimes revered as ancestral beings and deities, bestowing prosperity, the fox spirit is more often depicted as assuming human form and sowing chaos and death. The fox spirit's marginality has evolved through popular practices, literary works, and made its way into Chinese cinema. It has been portrayed as erotic figures wielding destructive allure, Daoist guides manipulating powers for personal agendas, vengeful possessing spirits of demonic origins, or amorous ghosts sacrificing everything for love. The complexity and ambiguity of the fox spirit on screen not only enrich our understanding of it in contemporary society but also encapsulate social-cultural conflicts and compromises. However, it has received limited attention.

Through the lens of the fox spirit, this paper will explore how this character has been reimagined and redefined in Mainland Chinese horror cinema, offering insights into the underlying anxieties and struggles within Chinese society undergoing modernization. By examining the fox spirit's significance within the Chinese cultural context, it will first delve into how the fox spirit was generally portrayed in Mainland Chinese cinema before the release of *Painted Skin* (2008). Drawing from Mary Douglas's argument about the challenge posed by ambiguous and marginal boundary-crossing animals and spirits to established norms, this paper will then analyse how and why films like *Painted Skin* exploit and amplify the fox spirit's marginality and create a ghostly femme fatale to challenge the phallogocentric ideology and gender qualities.

Bio:

Han Geng is a SWWDTP2 (AHRC)-funded PhD student in Film Studies at the University of Southampton. She is interested in unraveling the intricate cultural tapestry of modern China through the lens of horror cinema, specifically delving into the representation of ghosts in Chinese-language horror films. She has contributed to the AHRC-funded project for the MAI Special Issue on Women Filmmakers Working in Global Horror Cinema, which she has recently completed.

Irene González-López

Keynote Talk: Transgressive desires and pleasures: Rethinking the trope of the *panpan* sex worker in Occupied Japan

In the late 1940s Japanese society was concerned with the rampant spread of independent streetwalkers known as *panpan*, who often catered to foreign servicemen of the Allied Forces. The *panpan* became ubiquitous in popular media as allegories of the occupied nation and as transgressive objects of desire; and the cinema industry soon jumped on the bandwagon. This talk explores the so-called '*panpan* films' made under the Occupation's censorship to map their connections with other images of the *panpan* found in, for instance, pulp magazines and popular songs of the time. It argues that these films established the first female trope in Japanese cinema to be essentially and primarily defined by sexuality and violence. This talk also contends that a closer look at the films reveals another kind of transgression, one that is concerned with women's relationships, homoerotic desire, and autonomy. While scholarship on the representation of the *panpan* has often emphasised its relation to the crisis of masculinity in defeated Japan and how it served the male spectator, examining the films' engagement with women's bonding and queer pleasure illuminates different ways in which audiences could engage with the trope of the *panpan* and invites us to rethink the gender crisis of postwar Japan.

Bio:

Dr Irene González-López is Lecturer in Japanese Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London. Her research spans Japanese creative industries, with a special focus on postwar cinema and issues related to gender and sexuality, both in front and behind the camera. Her publications explore topics of representation, female authorship, stardom, and reception. In 2018 she co-edited the first academic book on actress and director Tanaka Kinuyo (*Tanaka Kinuyo: Nation, Stardom and Female Subjectivity*; Edinburgh University Press). She is currently working on a book on the representation of sex work in Japanese cinema, and on an edited volume on documentary director Haneda Sumiko. Other recent publications include 'How to sell a remake: The *Gate of Flesh* media franchise" (2023); "'Female Director': Discourses and Practices in Contemporary Japan" (co-authored with Alejandra Armendáriz-Hernández, 2022); and 'Red-Light Bases (1953), a Cross-temporal Contact Zone' (2022).

Lingping Guo

Feminist Analysis of the Leftover Women in Contemporary Chinese Film and Television

As China implemented the Reform and Opening-up policies at the end of the 1970s, which underwent significant changes in terms of social, economic, and political aspects, the job market thus hugely expanded due to the rapid modernization and urbanization, which had a profound influence on gender roles and family structures - encouraging women to pursue their own education and career paths. Consequently, it led to a delay in marriage, and some women chose to keep their singlehood. According to the report, more than 13 million couples registered their new marriage in 2013, but by 2021, there were less than 8 million newlywed couples, a 43.4% decline (Liang et al., 2022). Additionally, the average first marriage age in China was 24.89 in 2010 and increased to 28.67 in 2020 (Li, 2022).

At the same time, as Western ideologies saw a booming development in China, there was a growing emphasis on individualism and personal freedom, particularly among younger generations, which challenged traditional cultural values that placed a strong emphasis on marriage and family. As part of a plan to meet its demographic objectives of encouraging marriage, planning population growth, and upholding social stability, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) and the Ministry of Education introduced the concept of "leftover women" in 2007, which refers to unmarried women over the age of 27 who are well-educated, highly paid, and independent (Fincher, 2014). My research aims to explore how leftover women are constructed in contemporary Chinese media. This research selects four movies - *The Last Women Standing* (2015), *Send Me to the Clouds* (2019), *Begin, Again* (2019), *Delicious Romance* (2023), and two TV series - *Li Chuntian's Spring* (2011), *Nothing But Thirty* (2020) - as case studies to investigate the difficulties and advancements of depicting women in Chinese media of the twenty-first century.

Bio:

Lingping Guo is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the film department, at the University of Southampton. Prior to her studentship at Soton, she obtained her BA degree in Media Arts and Studies from the University of Kentucky, the United States, and her MA degree in Media Industries from the University of Leeds, the United Kingdom. Lingping's research interest is situated at the intersection of gender and cultural studies of Chinese film and television. She is currently conducting her research on the media representation of "leftover women" and the social phenomena of the increasing single population in Chinese society.

Fathima Hiba

The Allure of the Cross-dressed Hero(ine): An Exploration of the Transgressive Crossdressing Women in East-Asian Dramas

The narrative trope of the 'crossdresser', wherein a character wears the guise associated with a sex or gender they do not primarily identify, is one that is frequently reshaped and reworked in various modes of pop culture all across the world. A resurgence in its frequency and popularity within the 21st century is noted in Asian TV dramas from cult classics like *Coffee Prince* (2007) and *Hanazakari no Kimitachi e* (2007) to more critically acclaimed shows like *The King's Affection* (2021) and *Arsenal Military Academy* (2019). These dramas feature female protagonists that cross-dress for financial, political, or personal gains either due to accidental circumstances or out of their own free will. The trope often subverts patriarchal mandates of gender roles and actively blur the lines of heterosexual attraction often triggering a crisis of identity and sexuality within the characters.

However, while crossdressing remains transgressive act both within the narrative context and to its immediate audience, these women-turned-men enjoy immense popularity in both frameworks. The paper intends to explore the functions, relevance, and impacts of these crossdressing women and the varying perceptions of gender they generate from a relatively conservative socio-political background. Moreover, the paper seeks to examine the allure of the crossdressing women within modes of fiction that are still scrutinized by patriarchal censorships and heterosexual conventions of romance.

While the sociocultural factors that popularise Asian TV dramas and their impact on the globalized world have been studied at some length, academic studies into the narrative structures and conventions of Asian dramas are limited. Thus, the research intends to study such 'transgressive' narrative models within the paradigms of escapist pleasure rather than merely as a liberating discourse. This could further examine the role of fiction in depoliticising the existence and expressions of the otherwise transgressive other.

Bio:

Fathima Hiba is an ad-hoc Assistant Professor at P.S.M.O college Tirurangadi, Kerala, India. She recently obtained her Masters in English from University of Hyderabad, Telangana. She has completed an Academic Internship from Manipal Centre for Humanities. Her research interest includes Early Modern British Theatre, Fan Studies, East-Asian screen culture and Shakesperean Studies. She wishes to re-evaluate the seemingly 'mass, mundane and meaningless' forms of pop culture with academic scrutiny through her research. She is currently residing in Malappuram District of Kerala, India.

Yong Ja Hong

Transgression within Limitations: The Increasing Agency of the Female Athlete in North Korean Video

Despite the North Korean government advertising itself as promoting sexual equality, many societal barriers continue to repress the rights of women. Historically, women have had limited ability to rise to important government-level positions, were expected to take care of many household duties, and have often been the victims of domestic violence. Meanwhile, the heavily propaganda-focused and censored North Korean screen culture has historically not reflected some of the more negative aspects of life as a woman in North Korea, but has consistently reinforced the domestic and societal roles which women were expected to fill. However, that situation is beginning to change with the slight thaw in the leadership cult that has occurred during the Kim Jong Un era. In order to illustrate the increasing agency of women in North Korean Cinema, this paper will take representative examples of female characters in recent film and television series concerning female athletes participating in international competition. Specifically, this paper will examine the gradual increase in individual agency of the main female athlete characters as seen in the film *Run to the Sky* (달려서 하늘까지, 2000), the television series *Our Women's Football Team* (우리여자 축구팀, 2011), and the television series *The Last Ball* (마지막 한알, 2022). This will demonstrate how athlete women in DPRK film culture are transgressing the previous norm by making their own decisions but are still ultimately limited by the strict rules of state

propaganda. This will also have greater implications for the ways in which the state propaganda apparatus is coping with societal changes while also maintaining societal control.

Bio:

Yong Ja Hong is a doctoral candidate in North Korean society, culture and media at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. She also holds a master's in North Korean studies and a bachelor's in unification, diplomacy and security from Korea University. Her primary research area is DPRK athletics, and she has written related articles published by the media outlet NK News.

Emma Horsley-Heather

Black sheep of the family? Sazae-san's subtle subversion

Sazae-san is a Japanese family-dynamic cartoon holding several Guinness World Records, for longest running animated television series in the world and for the longest voice character actor for the same character in an animated series. It is currently still broadcast weekly in Japan. The animation's long history provides ample material for a closer examination of the social discourses that are employed within the programme. In focusing on transgressive women in television animation, I would argue that *Sazae-san's* character and the series does have episodes that push social norms and that the creator, Machiko Hasegawa, tried to touch deeper issues whilst keeping the series lighthearted. Episodes from the early 70's demonstrate elements of societal boundary pushing and questions around the traditional culture of patriarchy that may not be seen in current episodes that could be considered more apolitical or regressive. Hasegawa was a pioneer herself as one of the first women to publish a manga and bringing a wholly original four panel format innovation to manga itself. *Sazae-san* was the first ever female protagonist in Japanese daily cartoons and living with her own parents and not those of her husband was a relatively uncommon arrangement giving her relative freedoms and her unconventional and sometimes irreverent behaviour reflected the new and different possibilities for women of post-war Japan in a rapidly changing society.

Bio:

Emma Horsley-Heather is a media studies PhD researcher with SOAS University, where she also completed her Masters. Focusing on Japanese children's television, particularly broadcast by NHK, she is currently working on her thesis examining the use of children's programming to create national identity in a comparative study between the UK and Japan. She has also been a Graduate Teaching Assistant on the Contemporary Japanese Society module 2023/24 at SOAS. Living in Japan for over six years and returning through business and travel during the last twenty years, Emma has developed a profound interest in Japan, its culture and language. Emma contributed to the *International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media and Communication*.

Eva Cheuk-yin Li

Keynote Talk: Fandom of A Transgressive Woman: How mainland Chinese fans of a censored singer negotiate identities and transborder solidarity

Fans have consistently embraced transgressiveness, from celebrating unconventional interpretations of gender and sexuality to challenging moral and legal boundaries through transformative works. Research on fandom in North American and Western European contexts often assumes the media environment of liberal democracy and focuses on the cultural politics of fans navigating social and cultural norms as well as internal hierarchy and self-policing. This study aims to understand how fans react when confronted with potential conflicts between their national identity and fan identity within an authoritarian context. Denise Ho (HOCC), renowned as the first publicly-out lesbian singer-songwriter in the Sinophone world, a Canadian-Hongkonger performer, and a pro-democracy LGBTQ activist, had garnered a growing fanbase in mainland China before being banned from performing there due to her support of and participation in the pro-democracy Umbrella Movement (2014) and the anti-ELAB protests (2019) in Hong Kong. Drawing from semi-structured interviews

with 32 fans from mainland China, this paper explores how mainland Chinese fans of a transgressive star sustain their transgressive fannish engagement and negotiate civic and queer identities.

Bio:

Eva Cheuk-Yin Li is a Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies in the Sociology Department at Lancaster University. Her research and teaching concern queer media in East and Southeast Asia, and the lived experiences of gender non-conformity in transnational contexts. Her works have appeared in edited volumes, encyclopaedias, and journals, such as *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, *Crime, Media, Culture*, and *Transformative Works and Culture*. She is the Assistant Editor of *Media, Culture, Society*, and the co-editor of the *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* special issue *Androgynous Bodies and Cultures in Asia* (2021).

Xunnan Li

Wang Baochuan's Intermedial Trajectory: from Subordination to Female Transgression

Wang Baochuan, a prominent figure in Chinese classical literature and traditional theatre, has been subject to diverse adaptations across various media, including film, television, and music videos. Her portrayal not only maintains cultural significance but also plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of contemporary gender dynamics, particularly within the realm of female transgression on Chinese internet media since 2022. Noteworthy historical works include the mainland Chinese film *Wang Baochuan* (1939) and the traditional theatre-based film *Wang Baochuan* (1967) in Taiwan. Singer Xu Jiaying's music video *Riding a White Horse* (2009), the television series *Xue Pinggui and Wang Baochuan* (2012), and the short video platform production *Wujia Po 2021* (2021) further contribute to Wang Baochuan's contingency.

A significant development since 2022 has been the use of Wang Baochuan's image as a reference in discussions regarding Chinese women's subordinate positions in romantic relationships. This has given rise to a transgressive movement known as "Wang Baochuan Wa Yecai," wherein Wang Baochuan is depicted as finding happiness in her subordinate role, even sacrificing her dignified life to serve her husband and even accept his betrayal in marriage. The implications of this movement warrant careful examination, including an exploration of its motivations and reception within diverse segments of Chinese society upon feminism. This sheds light on the intricate interplay between classical literary characters, evolving societal norms, and contemporary expressions of gender roles and the Chinese trajectory of online social media female transgression.

This paper aims to analyze the nuanced progression of female transgression in China through an examination of Wang Baochuan's evolving portrayals across traditional theatre, film, television, and internet media platforms. The focus is on how patriarchal values, specifically women's subjugation in marriage, encounter resistance through contemporary Chinese women's pursuit of self-actualization within marital relationships, facilitated by emerging online media modalities. The study also seeks to trace the trajectory of intermedial practices concerning iconic and counter-iconic female portrayals in modern and contemporary China, unraveling the interplay between evolving cultural norms, technological advancements, and the reinterpretation of gender dynamics.

Bio:

Dr. Xunnan Li is a Lecturer of performance and cultural industries at the School of PCI, University of Leeds. He has a PhD in Theatre and Cultural Industry Studies, Royal Holloway University of London. His research interests include intermedial Chinese traditional theatres and films, intercultural performance and immersive technologies in arts experience.

Sara Librenjak

Transgressive East-Asian drag in competitive reality TV shows

This talk will explore East Asian drag in competitive reality TV shows, focusing on the transgressive drag representation in the show *Dragula*, as opposed to the mainstream drag representation in *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Transgressive, underground drag in East Asia is inspired by Western pop culture and queer culture, but there are drag performers that use Eastern folklore and mythology as inspiration. Recent contestants HosoterraToma and Niohuru X represent their cultures of origin (South Korea and China, respectively) in their drag, whilst also being advocates of queer and trans East Asian representation. Their drag is not female impersonation, it's often non-binary, based on a variety of folklore creatures, monsters and demons. Representing nine-tailed foxes, shamans, vengeful ghosts might be interpreted as costume artistry, but these performers often add an element of gender bending, shock value, horror and disgust, clearly differentiating their art from costume-making.

I argue that the extremeness and the shock value of their art is a response to conservative Confucian values of their native cultures, as well as strict gender roles and the expectance of strictly binary femininity and masculinity. Drag in Korea and China is varied and versatile, and many performers could be classified into a mainstream, or rather, Western-inspired, category of drag. On the other hand, the popularity and the success of underground horror transgressive performers such as Niohuru X and HosoterraToma might be a first sign of a new, East-inspired, transgressive drag wave.

Bio:

Dr Sara Librenjak is a Lecturer in Linguistics and Japanese at York St John university in York, UK. She is interested in cultural anthropology of East Asian cultures, media analysis, and teaching methodology of Japanese and Korean, focusing on technology in language learning.

Yue Liu

Contemporary Chinese transgressive women in television drama: Taking *Imperfect Victims* an example

In the Chinese context, although TV dramas are crafted to align with mainstream political discourses and ideology (Cai, 2016), marketization has influenced their central position (Yin, 2001). Therefore, the development of Chinese television drama reflects the realignment and conflicts within contemporary Chinese politics, economy, and culture (Yin, 2014). Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of TV dramas directed by women in China. One of the reasons for this phenomenon may be related to structural changes triggered by changes in prevailing ideology, national economic, cultural policies and the concurrent ascent of market forces (Zhong, 2010). Taking Yang Yang's TV series *Imperfect Victims* (*Bu Wanmei Shouhairen* 2023) as a case study, this article aims to critically examine this unique work directed by a female creator, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamical negotiation of the discourse between female and mainstream. *Imperfect Victims* serves as an illuminating exploration of the disconcerting reality surrounding the maltreatment of Chinese female subordinates by their male superiors and of visualizing instances of domestic violence, a phenomenon often normalized in societal discourse (Fincher, 2023). Given the scarcity of cinematic works addressing such themes in the Chinese context, it assumes heightened significance. This article analyzes how the sophisticated technical applications, including but not limited to female-gazing shots, anti-paternity dialogues and monologues, and meticulous spatial design, facilitate the subjectivity and agency of female characters, particularly those designated as transgressive females who employ assertive actions in response to adversity.

Bio:

Yue Liu is a PhD student at Queen Mary University of London.

Junwei Lu

Preserving Indigenous Imagination through Cinema: Perspective from Taiwanese Female Indigenous Director Laha Mebow

The portrayal of female directors in Taiwan remains incomplete to this day. However, many talented female filmmakers are striving to make their voices heard. In this paper, I aim to explore the intersection of gender and ethnic identity in the works of Laha Mebow. Specifically, I will analyse three of her feature films - *Finding Sayun*, *Hang in there, kids!*, and *GAGA* - which are deeply connected to indigenous and minority identity. In the first part, I will examine how Laha Mebow inherited cinematic language from her predecessors and transformed it into her own unique style. While male-led filmmaking traditions heavily influence her work, she has carved out her own path. The second part of this paper will delve into how she has brought indigenous stories to the forefront, which have been largely overlooked in Taiwan's film history. Despite not being a prolific filmmaker, her works demonstrate a remarkable ambition and a profound understanding of contemporary indigenous issues. I will pay special attention to the characters she has created. Unlike the many male directors who have come before her, Laha Mebow portrays women in a distinctive and refreshing light. Additionally, she utilises child imagery to create a utopian world. I am eager to explore her creative process and understand how she approached her productions. Through my research, I hope to use Laha Mebow as an example to shed light on the struggles faced by female filmmakers in Taiwan and present a comprehensive picture of their contributions to the industry.

Bio:

Junwei Lu is currently a PhD student in Film & TV studies at University of Glasgow. His research interests include Sinophone cinema, popular culture, stardom and film festivals. His ongoing doctoral project is about the genealogy of childhood cinema in Taiwan or considering what that means in the framework of Chinese language cinema and even pan-East Asian cinema. This project will broadly examine different representations of childhood/ children in the cinema and their relationship with the cinema.

Akiko Nagata

Redefining Expectations in Japanese Society: An Analysis of Television Drama Series

Analysing current television dramas offer an understanding of modern Japanese society and culture. This paper explores the portrayal of gender and social norms of society represented in Japanese television, using examples from popular television dramas written by a female screenwriter Miku Ubukata. The drama which was broadcast in 2022, *Silent* (2022), had gained significant attention among the Japanese audience. A love story between a girl and a boy who lost his hearing became a social phenomenon resulting in the top trend on Twitter. The following year, the scriptwriter also creates the television drama, *Ichiban Suki na Hana* (2023), which has also become the number one trending topic on social networking platform X, after the first episode was broadcast. The audience empathizes with the characters in the story, which focuses on friendship and relationship. The importance of the emotional connection between the characters of the television dramas helps the audience better understand the world around us. The difficulties the characters in these stories are trying to overcome reflect issues of society that people are currently facing. Examining popular television dramas provides insights into the prevailing trends and perspective at the time. Through analysing the conversations that the characters have about society and gender norms, we obtain a deeper understanding of what is valued in contemporary Japanese society.

Bio:

Akiko Nagata received a PhD degree in Film Studies from SOAS, University of London. She is currently an associate professor at Ritsumeikan University. Her study looks into representation of gender and family in popular culture such as television drama and film. Akiko's current research focuses on the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 and the representation of the 3/11 disasters in popular culture and mass media. Her research explores the narratives of the disasters portrayed in these media, focusing on social and cultural

values as well as socioeconomic factors in Japan.

Asuka Ozumi

Sexuality and motherhood in the Japanese rapper Awich

Female rap in Japan is a hot topic, to the point that the May 2023 issue of the literary magazine *Eureka* was devoted to it. And the most popular artist in the last few years is Awich: from her album *8* in 2017 to her solo concert in the music mecca Nippon Budōkan, the Japanese rapper Awich has established her role as the undisputed queen of Japanese hip hop in a few years. A personal narrative of self-determination in the music industry plays a crucial role in her success story. The storytelling entangled with multiple identities as a woman, an Okinawan, a mother, and a widow is evocative and empowering. At the same time, her lyrics contain explicit references to sexuality, such as the particularly transgressive and provocative *Kuchi ni dashite*, with witty verses with double meanings referring to oral sex. Awich is therefore a controversial figure, caught between the role of mainstream hip-hop feminism representative - if the definition can apply to the Japanese scene - and the accusations of vulgarity and sexual objectification.

The aim of this research is to highlight how the juxtaposition of sexuality with the rapper's role as a mother is particularly divisive in a patriarchal and misogynistic society such as Japan through a content analysis of Awich's haters comments addressed to a specific Instagram story.

Bio:

Asuka Ozumi is Lecturer of Japanese Language at University of Turin (Italy), translator and editor-in-chief of the manga label Showcase run by the Italian Publisher Dynit Manga. Her research deals with gender disparities in manga and Japanese pop culture through the lenses of Gender Studies and Manga Studies. She is also interested to manga translation. She has translated Itō Shiori, Ayase Maru, Torikai Akane, Takahama Kan, Nananan Kiriko and many others.

Claire Ping

Women murderers and murdered women in contemporary Chinese screen culture

Transgressive women feature increasingly in Chinese screen culture, both reimagining and reinforcing gender norms. Murder is a form of transgression that female characters are frequently associated with on screen. Women often appear, in certain cases concurrently, as the culprit or victim in violent crimes. Noting the simultaneous rise of such character types and a surge in popularity for suspense fiction in Chinese media, this paper critically examines several cases of women murderers and murdered women in recent film and web series: Shen Mo and Yin Hong in *The Long Season* (2023), Huang Shu in *Nobody Knows* (2022), and Wu Zhizhen in *Black Coal, Thin Ice* (2014).

The first section delineates the way in which plot, characterisation, and audiovisual elements combine to foreground female transgression via the act of murder in each text. The second section probes the role of transgressive women in works of suspense to explore how their portrayals enhance, shift, or subvert the masculinist conventions of the genre. A final section highlights the setting of all three texts in the post-industrial space and place of Northeast China, an area with complex transcultural links to Japan and Korea, to examine the dynamic interplay of gender, genre, and region in contemporary Chinese media. I question to what extent women and women's bodies have been appropriated to serve a male-centred narrative in relation to the Northeast and its recent history, thus obscuring the experiences of women and other gender identities marginalised by the framework of a predominantly patriarchal and heteronormative society.

Bio:

Claire Ping is a PhD candidate in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge, specialising in contemporary Chinese culture and literature. She holds a MPhil from Cambridge and a MA in History of Art

from The Courtauld, along with a Dual BA from the University of British Columbia and Sciences Po Paris. Her current dissertation investigates ongoing fascination with Dongbei, or Northeast China, in contemporary culture through perspectives of gender and masculinity. Beyond academic work, she is involved in feminist curatorial research and has co-authored a book chapter in *Contemporary Queer Chinese Art* based on the experience.

Elizabeth Rajapakse

The 'Fallen Elite': Transgressive Female Lawyers in Japanese Legal Dramas

Conducting a content analysis of 40 Japanese legal dramas (2001 - present) featuring women in leading roles revealed that televisual female legal professionals fall into either of two stock character types and narrative arcs. One such character type is the 'fallen elite', or a female legal professional who is both confident and competent, and has reached the upper echelon of her career, but has to 'fall' (or lose her legal power) due to male colleagues conspiring against her. Such representations draw attention to the fact that 'punishments' await those who transgress expected gender and workplace norms in society. In most narratives, the 'fallen elite' regains her former position after going through trials and tribulations - particularly a 'maturation' process whereby they reconnect with their femininity and learn the importance of the 'ethics of care'. This paper examines the portrayal of the 'fallen elite' in *Rikon Bengoshi* (2004/2005) and *Onna Wa Sore Wo Yurusanai* (2014) to understand how the narrative trajectory of transgressive female lawyers creates a particular image of the consequences of transgressing social norms, including the effect it has on one's personal and professional life. The paper concludes that the image of the 'fallen elite' can be read not only as a "cautionary tale" (Papke, 2003) reflecting social anxieties surrounding changing gender dynamics in Japan, but also as an articulation of hope, placing certain expectations on women in law in a context where women are increasingly entering the Japanese legal landscape.

Bio:

Elizabeth is a Sri Lankan born, half-Cuban multilingual who speaks over five languages. She is a masters by research candidate at La Trobe Law School, Melbourne, Australia. Her research project examines the representation of female legal professionals in Japanese television dramas. Her academic qualifications include a B.A and M.A in English from the University of Peradeniya, and an LL.B and LL.M from the University of London. She has worked previously as a freelance translator and has also taught English at the University of Peradeniya. Her research interests include cultural legal studies, law and literature, law and gender, and feminist jurisprudence.

B er n ce M. Reynaud

"Ma, I love you and I'm gay": mother-daughter relationships, "coming out" and gender norms in *Fish and Elephant* (Li Yu, 2001) and *Saving Face* (Alice Wu, 2004)

Mother-daughter relationships are a recurrent topic in Chinese women filmmakers' works. The tensions they display are very often representative of the Confucian and neoliberal expectations for women, which raise the issue of transmission of gender roles and norms from one generation to another.

This paper will focus on two films by Chinese or Chinese American women filmmakers, *Fish and Elephant* (Li Yu, 2001) and *Saving Face* (Alice Wu, 2004). Though located in different countries, the plots are pretty similar: both depict a lesbian daughter and her conflictual relationship with her mother who unexpectedly comes to live with her while she has a girlfriend. Both mothers are either oblivious or in denial of their daughters' sexual orientation and pressure them to get married. However, despite advocating for traditional gender roles, the mothers are subversive in their own way: one falls pregnant and refuses to reveal the father's identity, while the other ends up dating and marrying one of her daughter's suitors.

Through a comparison of the scenes where each daughter comes out to her mother and how the tension between them is resolved at the end of the film, this presentation will shed light on how each filmmaker subverts gender norms and expectations in Chinese cultural contexts. Thus, in *Saving Face*, the Chinese community in the USA embodies the preservation of “traditional” Chinese culture and values through the patriarchal figure of the grandfather, while in *Fish and Elephant* the same values are deeply disrupted by the recent economic reforms and the social changes it entailed.

Bio:

Bérénice M. Reynaud holds a PhD in Chinese studies from University Jean Moulin Lyon 3 (France). Her research focuses on feminist cinema, women filmmakers, sex work and masculinities in contemporary China. She has published in the journals *Monde Chinois-Nouvelle Asie*, *The Chinese Independent Cinema Observer*, and *Annali di Ca' Foscari: Serie Orientale*. Her work also appears in the following edited volumes: *La fabrique des imaginaires. Censure, contre-discours et société technicienne* (L'Harmattan, 2023) focusing on censorship in cultural production, and *Women in East Asian Cinema: Gender Representation, Creative Labour, and Global Histories* (Edinburg University Press, 2023).

Kate Taylor-Jones

From Transgressive tears to careless moments: women and bodily care in the work of Tanada Yuki and Ando Momoko

This presentation is about the films of Ando Momoko and Tanada Yuki. Whilst both women have respectively presented characters that would easily confirm to Rowe's vision of the Unruly woman as broadly defined, for this in this presentation, I wish to look specifically at ideas of the unruly from the lens of ethic of care and how this impacts the director's representation and engagement with the physical body of their female characters. Via a focus on four of their respective films, I will explore how examining their work via a lens of care opens a new dimension on how we chart and engage with the work of female filmmakers and how they represent and interrogate ideas around the female body. With a focus on care, we draw attention to the often-unequal structure of power and practices in a specific societal/historical-scape that the films are embedded inside, and this is pertinent when we look the representation and narrativization of women's bodies in both domestic and public settings. In the work of Ando and Tanada, we can see that viewing their films via a dual lens of care and the idea of the female disruptor, we are asked to consider “intersubjective dimensions such as affect, emotion or compassion” (Andersen et al. 2019: 569). This presentation has three core questions: firstly, how is a sense of care important to our reading and understanding of the unruly female? Secondly, how is the unruly women as the site of care (and indeed carelessness) shown in the select works of Ando and Tanada? Finally, how does their representation of female body open a potentially transgressive space for social and political critique?

Bio:

Kate Taylor-Jones is a Professor of East Asian Cinema in the School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield. She is co-editor of *International Cinema and the Girl* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and *Prostitution and Sex Work in Global Cinema: New Takes on Fallen Women* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) and has published widely in a variety of fields. Her last monograph *Divine Work: Japanese Colonial Cinema and its Legacy* was published by Bloomsbury Press in 2017 and she is editor-in-chief of *The East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*. Her current project - *Ninagawa Mika, Miyake Kyoko and Ando Momoko: Shōjo Dreams and Unruly Idols* will be published by Edinburgh University Press.

Grace En-Yi Ting

The Masterful Cat is Depressed Again Today: Unmarried Women, Fantasy, and Feminist Critique in East Asia

My paper examines the politics of unmarried women from a transnational East Asian perspective through the 2023 anime series *The Masterful Cat is Depressed Again Today* (*Dekiru neko wa kyō mo yūtsu*), based on a manga by Yamada Hitsuji. From a queer feminist perspective, how might we analyze the fantastical representation of a blissful lifestyle in which a cat prepares dinner everyday for an unmarried young woman?

Leta Hong Fincher's *Leftover Women* (2014; 2024) uses the term *sheng nǚ*—criticizing single women in their late twenties—as a starting point for examining gender inequality in mainland China. In Japan, unmarried women past twenty-five were once called “Christmas cakes” past their expiration date. Recently, dialogue between Japanese and Korean feminists has revealed common concerns. *Two Women Live Together* (2019), an essay collection by Kim Hana and Sunwoo Hwang (Japanese: *Onna futari, kurashite imasu*, 2021) details the cohabitation of two women and four cats.

The Masterful Cat depicts the incompetence of the protagonist, who cannot cook and has an apartment full of trash before adopting her cat. Her marriage prospects appear to be at risk due to the excessive comfort of her life with her cat—indeed, her happiness itself is a form of transgression. Chinese feminists use the term “*hun lū*” (married donkey) to express anger against married women; in contrast, *The Masterful Cat* is humorous while offering its own social critique. Accordingly, I consider divergent roles of humor, fantasy, and anger in resisting heteronormative pressures regarding marriage and reproduction.

Bio:

Grace En-Yi Ting is an assistant professor of gender studies at the University of Hong Kong, specializing in queer feminist approaches to Japanese literature and popular culture, particularly women writers and girls' culture. She also writes on race and gender in academia. Her recent work reorients Japanese literature through transnational encounters with the Sinophone and women of color feminisms, theorizing a queer feminist ethical praxis for marginalized readers in diasporic Asian contexts.

Sam Warnock

The Transgressive Heroines of Okada Mariko

This paper examines the trajectory of actress Okada Mariko's star image from her work in the studio system to her independent work in the 1960s. Okada was primarily known for her youthful roles that often metaphorically positioned her as a symbol of modernity, as seen in the films of Ozu Yasujirō and Kinoshita Keisuke. After making *Akitsu Springs* (1962) with her soon to be husband Yoshida Kijū, the pair sought greater artistic freedom and abandoned the studio system in 1964, forming a production company that would see them go on to make a further ten films together.

Okada's persona underwent a significant shift as her independent work marked a move into more serious roles which challenged the characters she inhabited within her studio work. The women that Okada played within Yoshida's films refused to be neatly boxed into roles such as the mother or the housewife; instead, these characters all actively resisted categorisation, in turn transgressing the boundaries placed upon them by societal expectations.

My paper will closely examine Okada and Yoshida's film *Woman of the Lake* (1966), which sees Okada's character Miyako struggling between two men who position her within their own expectations of her as either a housewife or merely as a sexual object. In contrast with her earlier heroines, Miyako is exemplary of the type of role that Okada would play in her independent period: characters who were no longer bound by the rules of tragic narratives that called for their emotions and desires to remain repressed.

Bio:

Sam Warnock is a PhD student in Film Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He previously studied at the University of Stirling, where he obtained an MRes in Humanities and a BA in Global Cinema.

Sam's current research focusses on the 'anti-cinema' of filmmaker Yoshida Kiju. His project examines the films that Yoshida made with Okada Mariko - one of Japan's most highly regarded film stars - with an emphasis on gender and sexuality. The research project explores their work in three key areas: melodrama, politics, and subjectivity, examining how together they created a subversive and feminist film style.

Faye Xiao

"We Are Creating a Spokesperson for Ourselves": (Un)Queering Chinese Idols of Female Transgression on Networked Small Screens

This paper studies changing gender ideology and female transgression evolving around two tremendously popular reality shows: *Super Girl* (*Chaoji nüsheng*, 2004-16) and *Produce 101* (*Chuangzao 101*, 2018-21). Localizing Euro-American and Korean singing contest reality shows in the Chinese context, both programs have stirred up huge controversies for creating young women idols who bend gender norms and catalyze queer expressions and activism. The 2005 season of the *Super Girl* show produces arguably the first made-in-China young idol Li Yuchun. Her striking star image of androgynous appearance not only subverts the conventional model of femininity, but also constructs an affective nexus to Chinese young women who form virtual sisterhood in a new participatory youth culture to voice their queer desires. Such a queering trend has been continued and enhanced in *Produce 101*, an Internet-based reality show riding the new wave of China's digital economy. Its young fans have gathered in online communities, appropriating queer idol images displayed on the networked small screens of their computers, laptops, tablets, and cell phones to create their own spokesperson and openly support the local LGBTQ movement. However, under the pressure of double censorship, the subversive potential of the latest icons of female transgression has been un-queered, or domesticated and reincorporated back into the mainstream values aligned with the neoliberal market individualism and the state-sanctioned China Dream discourse.

Bio:

Faye Xiao is Professor and Chair in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Kansas. She is the author of *Family Revolution: Marital Strife in Contemporary Chinese Literature and Visual Culture* (2014) and *Youth Economy, Crisis, and Reinvention in Twenty-First-Century China: Morning Sun in the Tiny Times* (2020). She has also co-edited (with Dr. Ping Zhu) the volume *Feminisms with Chinese Characteristics* (2021). Currently she is working on a third monograph tentatively titled *The Hen Cackles in the Morning: Gendered Soundscape and Female Leadership in Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*.

Raphaëlle Yokota

The Female Gaze in *Kakera*: a lesbian love story under the eye of a woman filmmaker

A survey released by the Japanese Film Project in July 2022 showed that only 44 of the 332 feature-length fiction films produced in Japan and released in film theaters in 2021 were directed by women, that is to say 11% (JFP, 2022). In addition, films revolving around queer characters remain scarce in a country where 1 in 10 would identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community despite very limited visibility in public space (Anon., 2019; Ye Hee Lee, Mio Inuma, 2023).

In 2010, Japanese filmmaker Andō Momoko 安藤桃子 (then 28 years old) wrote and directed her first fiction feature-film. Adapted from a manga also authored by a woman in 1996 (*Love Vibes*, Sakurazawa Erika 桜沢エリカ), the film follows two young women, one who self-identifies as a lesbian and another one who sees herself as a heterosexual woman, the latter seemingly experiencing more hardship in today's Japanese society

although she's supposedly a better fit. The film, which does show love between two women, articulates romance with a more complex storyline on the questions of desire and fulfilment.

This presentation will combine film analysis and textual research in order to explore the representations of a lesbian romance in a mainstream film directed by a woman, particularly from the male gaze/female gaze standpoint, before interrogating the possible implications of *Kakera* in terms of reception.

Bio:

Upon graduating in film studies and Japanese studies, Raphaëlle Yokota completed her PhD in Japanese Studies at the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (Paris, France), which she defended in June 2022. Her thesis examined the work of independent filmmaker Koreeda Hirokazu, in particular the notion of alternative point of view. Her postdoctoral research focuses on the work of women filmmakers in Japan between the second wave feminism movement in the 1970's and the MeToo years. At the crossroads of contemporary Japanese history, film studies and gender studies, this project draws on films both as sources and as a total social fact.

Yvonne Zhao

Against Women: Analyzing the Dissolution of Lesbian Image in Adolescent Narratives within Sinophone Lesbian Cinema

My research focuses on Sinophone Lesbian Cinema as a field of study, examining the Sinophone lesbian community as its primary subject. My research approach involves analyzing textual content through visual symbol. I seek to deconstruct the symbolic language embedded within Sinophone lesbian cinema concerning identity expression, social definition, and self-identification. Simultaneously, my thematic focus pays particular attention to the cultural disparities between Sinophone communities on the periphery of China (such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc.) and those within the People's Republic of China (PRC). I aim to avoid flattening these distinct cultural identities with Sinocentric biases.

In this conference, I will focus on cinema's artistic and literary expressions that gender binaries, sexual orientation, and gender nonconformity. From these perspectives, I argue that current homosexual narratives are diluting lesbian gender consciousness. Although these narratives present an intra-gender category under the representations of women, this intra-gender is accomplished under the patriarchy. In this sense, I need to prove that current Sinophone lesbian films (at least most of them) still don't challenge heteronormativity but re-solidify it in many ways.

Therefore, my methodology is mainly textual analysis of films because my goal is to critically analyse the problematic representations in contemporary Sinophone lesbian films and come up with a possible mechanism that allows a genderless identity free from heteronormativity. To prove how lesbian individuals in queer film narratives are manipulated/co-opted by the mainstream ideology (i.e., the unconscious performance of gender). Meanwhile, I plan to include an interdisciplinary approach to delve into the cultural beliefs and Sinophone studies within contemporary China and show how cinema can work to counter the heteronormative world.

Bio:

Yvonne Zhao (She, Her, Hers) is a first-year PhD student at the University of Leicester. Her thesis is titled: *Against Women: On the Dissolution between Creators and Audiences in Sinophone Lesbian Cinema*. She holds a Master of Arts from the University of Westminster, and a Bachelor of Arts from Xi'an International Study University.

Yayu Zheng

Identity in Everydayness: A Family Documentary's Odyssey

This paper centers on Huang Hui-chen's 2016 documentary *Small Talk*, which tells the life story of Huang's mother A-nu, an older generation lesbian, considering the nuanced experiences of queer individuals and highlighting the interplay of shifting, crossing, and overlapping lives. Huang utilizes the medium of filmmaking to reconstruct her relationship and communication with her mother, who, compelled by family pressure, found herself coerced into a heterosexual marriage, and worse still, marred by domestic abuse. I situate queer sentiment presented in the film as tacit yet preserved through everyday practices, within discussions in Taiwanese society regarding national identity and draws a parallel between the young generation's advocacy for international recognition of Taiwan's sovereignty and the more reserved attitude among the elderly. This parallel mirrors the generational differences in their responses: the youth's passionate advocacy for recognition and equality resembles their fervor for queer visibility and equal rights. Conversely, the elderly, who experienced a complex political and social developmental trajectory, demonstrate a pragmatic, nuanced approach that adapts to shifting perspectives on Taiwan's status. This alignment underscores how generational experiences and the evolving socio-political landscape shape perspectives on various aspects of identity. The production and examination surrounding *Small Talk* are important as it introduces a cross-generational perspective to the discussion through portraying the turbulent life and the current serenity of a lesbian grandmother, emphasizing the intersection of generations in issues such as social protest and rights advocacy and exploring the nuanced dynamics of identity and identification within the sociopolitical landscape of 2010s Taiwan.

Bio:

Yayu Zheng is a Ph.D. candidate in the Division of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California. Her research interests include queer theory, digital culture, media industries, and Sinophone cinema.

Nan Zhou

Unveiling Hidden Femininities: Hermaphrodite Roles in Martial Arts Films

In martial arts films, characters like Dongfang Bubai in *Swordsman II* (1992) and Ji Wushuang in *The Bride with White Hair* (1993) blend male and female traits, challenging traditional gender views. These characters simultaneously possess characteristics of both genders, subverting the traditional binary view of gender in their portrayal. In the former, a female actor plays the role of a castrated martial arts master with a male physiological gender, while in the latter, a male-female pair of characters is chosen to depict this "Siamese twin" symbiotic entity. In martial arts cinema, such gender expression not only satisfies the audience's curiosity but also sparks reflections on where gender truly points while such hermaphrodite roles overshadow women in traditional gender roles, sparking reflections on gender.

In traditional theatre such as Peking opera, performers often cross-dress to portray characters of the opposite gender, aiming for a high degree of resemblance through changes in appearance and voice. Unlike traditional theatre, film costumes often don't hide the actor's biological gender, as seen in Disney's 2020 *Mulan* adaptation. There is awareness of the fluidity of gender, while the power of traditional gender roles still exists in the current society. This paper focuses on the gender perspectives of such film characters and their extraction and preservation of feminine features when addressing gender/sex issues, especially the hidden femininities in these characters. The paper aims to explore the collision between the powerful martial arts techniques pursued in martial arts films and the non-monolithic elements of the female gender.

Bio:

Nan Zhou is a PhD student studying in the film department of the University of Southampton. Her current research surrounds discussing the dualisms of gender, morality and movement in films containing martial arts elements through the perspective of audiovisual aesthetics. In 2023, she attended the 8th Annual Martial Arts Studies Conference and published "Sound in Wuxia Films: The Magic Figure 5". She also organized the "Chinese Culture in International Audio-Visual Culture" conference at the University of Southampton.

Special Screening: *Deciphering Japan* (2020)

Japan is Asia's first industrialised economy, yet it ranks 125th, below Angola and Kuwait, on the Gender Gap Index. In this episode of the award-winning series, *Deciphering Japan*, Journalist Yumi Araki returns to the country to explore what it means to be a woman in a society with an entrenched patriarchy. At a finishing school, it's back to basics with a crash course on becoming the perfect Japanese wife. But this prescribed rulebook that once guided the conduct of Japanese women is slowly being rewritten as Japan's society changes. Yumi meets women who challenge the status quo by choosing career over marriage and others who are forging a new paths by breaking into male dominated industries.

Roundtable Panellists

Georgie Yukiko Donovan

A Japanese-British documentary filmmaker with a flair for telling human stories, captured with sweeping cinematics and intimate portraits. Passionate about bridging intersections and re-centring marginalised voices into their own stories, especially within the East Asian community. Georgie has produced and directed a body of work spanning documentary series, films and podcasts for outlets such as Netflix, BBC, Channel News Asia, Hulu and more. Her award-winning work has screened at over 30 film festivals worldwide. Georgie was selected as a promising industry leader as part of FILM LONDON's Breaking Glass Ceiling '23 cohort.

Haruka Kuroda

Haruka is a U.K. based Japanese Actor, Voice-Over Artist, Fight Director and Intimacy Professional. Since graduating from Guildford School of Acting in 2000, she has had an extensive career in Theatre, TV& Film and Video Games. Her acting credits include: *My Neighbour Totoro* (RSC, Barbican), *Amaterasu- Out of Cave* (Arcola Tent), *Wit* (Manchester Royal Exchange), *Usagi Yojimbo* (Southwark Playhouse), *Better Things* (FX), *The Wheel of Time* (Amazon Prime Video), *EastEnders* (BBC), *Killing Eve* (BBC America) and *Life* (2017).

Dr Griseldis Kirsch

Griseldis is Reader in Contemporary Japanese Culture at SOAS University of London. Her research interests include screen culture and (self-)censorship in Japan, with particular reference to war memory and multiculturalism in Japan. She is author of *Contemporary Sino-Japanese Relations on Screen. A History: 1989-2005* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) and co-editor of *Assembling Japan: Technology, Modernity and Global Culture* (with Dolores P. Martinez and Merry White, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), and *Handbook of Japanese Media and Popular Culture in Transition* (with Forum Mithani, Tokyo: MHM Publishing), but she has also published widely on nationalism and identity in the media.

Dr Forum Mithani

Forum is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at Cardiff University's School of Modern Languages. She has published on topics related to Japanese media and film, motherhood and gender in Japanese culture, Japanese feminism and minority representation. She is currently working on her monograph, *Transgressive Motherhoods in Contemporary Japanese Media and Culture*, under contract with Amsterdam University Press.