

2026 International Postgraduate Comparative Literature Conference

Abstract Proceedings

Theme

Care

26 May 2026
Run Run Shaw Tower
The University of Hong Kong

Acknowledgements

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Li Jieren: The French Experience as a Path to the Chinese Question - Re-examining Suffering, *Sympathy*, and Transcultural Care in *Sympathy*

Xu, Ziheng

Sichuan University

Abstract

The relationship between Li Jieren (李劫人) and France has long been a central concern in scholarly research. However, existing studies have primarily analyzed the French origins of Li Jieren's works from the perspective of "influence studies", neglecting the more concrete and complex dimensions of his French experience and intellectual evolution. *Sympathy* (同情), as the only novel Li Jieren wrote during his sojourn in France, provides an entry point for recovering the author's authentic experience of "survival" and "existence". The existential pressures of living in France catalyzed his recognition of "suffering" and his enlightenment regarding "sympathy". For him, "suffering" became the pathway to "sympathy", and "sympathy" itself required a fusion of horizons with the Other — only by transcending "selfishness" could one achieve the "true spirit" of equality and universal fraternity. Moreover, Li Jieren employed "sympathy" both as a creative ethos and a practice of mutual assistance, deploying it for emotional enlightenment and moral reconstruction, thereby establishing identity, attending to local needs, and addressing the Chinese question.

From Represented Care to Immersive Care: Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* and Pramoedya's *This Earth of Mankind*

Bi, Baihan

The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This paper compares Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* (1860) and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *This Earth of Mankind* (1980) to distinguish two modes of cross-cultural care. Here, care refers not only to sympathy or humanitarian concern, but also to a narrative relation through which one subject responds to another's suffering, voice, and historical agency. Multatuli's novel exemplifies represented care: it speaks for colonized Javanese, appealing to colonial authority for reform. Yet such representation, as Gayatri Spivak has shown, risks fixing the subaltern as a silent object of pity rather than a subject of history. Pramoedya, who called *Max Havelaar* "the book that killed colonialism," repeatedly invokes Multatuli throughout *This Earth of Mankind* yet pointedly refuses to depict his Javanese protagonist Minke deriving his awakening from it. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature, I argue this narrative refusal enacts a shift toward immersive care. Instead of responding to a European classic, Minke is immersed in the raw texture of Javanese life: Nyai Ontosoroh's courtroom roar and Annelies's testimony of rape. Immersive care does not solicit sympathy from above; it invites the reader to experience colonial violence from within. This shift, I contend, constitutes a genuine ethical advance in transcultural encounter.

Care, Sensory Intimacy, and Fleeting Utopias under Japanese Colonial Rule

Yu, Jingyuan

University of California, Berkeley

Abstract

This paper examines how care and empathy were enacted through sensory and affective practices under Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan and Korea. Focusing on taste, music, and erotic intimacy, it explores how embodied encounters between colonizer and colonized generated fleeting utopian spaces that momentarily softened, yet never dismantled, imperial hierarchies. Drawing on Mark Driscoll's framework of colonial biopolitics, the paper argues that such moments of care were fragile, temporary suspensions of domination constrained by unequal valuations of colonial life. Crossing multiple media, the paper analyzes the Taiwanese novel *"Taiwan Travelogue,"* the short story *"Kannani,"* Korean folk songs—especially Arirang—and Park Chan-wook's film *"The Handmaiden."* In *"Taiwan Travelogue,"* a Japanese female writer's gestures of care toward her Taiwanese translator reveal how intimacy is entangled with colonial power: while seeking friendship "beyond" colonial boundaries, her affection reproduces hierarchy. Shared meals—each chapter named after a local snack—transform eating into a sensory practice where fleeting equality and same-sex intimacy emerge. Similarly, *"Kannani"* stages musical intimacy as a temporary site of shared resonance. When the Korean girl *Kannani* sings in Korean and her Japanese friend responds in Japanese, colonial difference is briefly softened even as inequality persists. In *"The Handmaiden,"* erotic intimacy between a Japanese heiress and her Korean maidservant enables shared escape from intertwined colonial and patriarchal domination, producing fragile care grounded in bodily alliance rather than political reconciliation. By foregrounding sensory and affective practices as care, this paper highlights both their ethical promise and limits. Such moments generate empathetic connections across colonial divides but remain embedded in biopolitical regimes that render colonial life consumable, expendable, and unevenly valued. The paper reframes care not as a redemptive force, but as a contested, ambivalent practice shaped by power.

Failed Expression: The Structural Dilemma and Critical Potential of Body Modification

Yang, Yunzhu

Central China Normal University

Abstract

Body modification—the practice of permanently or semi-permanently altering the body—operates as an act of expression using the body itself as its medium. This essay analyzes the structural dilemmas inherent in body modification through the central concept of "expressive failure." Even before expression occurs, the modified body is already pre-coded within others' interpretive frameworks and subjected to mechanisms of stigmatization. When such expression enters public circulation, it is stripped of its original context by the fashion industry and spectacle logic, reduced to mass-reproducible, rapidly consumable imagery. Meanwhile, the transgressive gesture of body modification remains paradoxically dependent on the very normative structures it seeks to resist. This essay argues, however, that persistent expressive failure functions not merely as negative outcome but as revelatory critical mechanism. Through repeated cycles of failure, body modification continually exposes the limits of signifying regimes and social control, embodying what Halberstam theorizes as the critical potential of queer "failure." While Berlant cautions that such critical potential inevitably coexists with structural attrition, this tension itself constitutes the unavoidable analytical core for understanding body modification as cultural phenomenon.

Governable Shanghai, Unstable Empire: Japanese Guidebooks in the Isolated Island Period (1937-1941)

Qiu, Zifan

The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This study takes the “isolated island” period of Shanghai (1937–1941) as its point of departure to examine how imperial Japan reconfigured the discourse of care through guidebooks in a cross-cultural context marked by contested sovereignties and intensified anti-Japanese sentiment. Adopting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, the study analyzes three Shanghai guidebooks published during this period, representing the perspectives of mass media, official tourism institutions, and the Japanese resident community. Situated within Orientalism as a dominant structure of knowledge and power, the study argues that in Shanghai, a space imperial Japan could not fully dominate yet continuously intervened in, guidebooks functioned not merely as informational media but as discursive technologies that transformed caring narratives of “understanding the Other” and “ensuring safety” into mechanisms of governance. Through route planning, spatial zoning, risk warnings, these guidebooks rendered the Isolated Island period Shanghai “legible,” “accessible,” and “manageable,” thereby legitimizing imperial intervention in the name of care. At the same time, this discursive practice exposed imperial Japan’s ambivalence within the Orientalist structure. In observing and interpreting the Other, Japan was compelled to presuppose the presence of a Western gaze, resulting in repeated acts of self-justification and ethical self-display. This study thus contends that care is not a unidirectional ethical concern, but a contested discursive form that simultaneously produces understanding and domination. By foregrounding care within the specific context of the imperial Japan, the paper offers a historical perspective on care in cross-cultural settings from the standpoint of discourse and media.

Facing Algorithmic Precarity: Sexual Accusation, Platform Moderation and ASMR Videos

Sun, Shitong

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract

ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) and the digital videos employing specific performance techniques to trigger these responses are gaining greater public and scholarly attention in recent years. This paper investigates why ASMR, a medium centered on care, embodiment, and intimacy, becomes a frequent target of stigmatization (regarding sexuality), policy intervention, and platform moderation. Diverging from studies focused on how patriarchal politics suppress ASMR production, this paper shifts analytic attention in two ways: first, it highlights the generative capacities of regulatory networks—the ways they incite ASMR creators consciously or unconsciously to produce more sexualized content; second, it examines the technical operations of these networks, specifically the role of nonhuman automation tools. By tracing cases of creators whose videos were either wrongfully flagged by AI screening systems or who migrated to less regulated adult platforms due to systemic precarity, the findings unfold in two parts. First, drawing on Foucault's critique of the Repressive Hypothesis of sexuality, the paper argues that censorship operates not only as repression but as a generative force, which incites the very sexualized forms it seeks to eliminate. Second, the paper contends that AI moderation systems, functioning as measuring apparatuses in Karen Barad's sense, proactively inform the ongoing amplification of ASMR's sexualization and pornification. It argues that ASMR comes to align with accusations of sexual explicitness through its very entanglement with technical tools and institutional regimes of control and regulation. Ultimately, this paper reveals the precarity and resilience of care-oriented media within the landscape of contemporary media and technology politics.

Postmodern Rewriting of Opium Histories: Otherness and Ethics of Care in Timothy Mo and R. F. Kuang

Li, Aize

Nanjing University

Abstract

This research offers a comparative reading of Timothy Mo's *An Insular Possession* and R. F. Kuang's *Babel, or The Necessity of Violence*, examining how English-language writers of Chinese descent deploy postmodern narrative strategies to rewrite the histories of Sino-British encounters. Focusing on opium-damaged city spaces, Hong Kong and Guangzhou, the reconstruction of national and racial otherness, and the protagonists' border-crossing journeys, the study argues that both novels mobilize speculative realism, world-building, fragmentation, and metafictional historiography to foreground an ethics of care toward populations historically scarred by the Opium trade and wars. In this context, Mo's collage of appendices, photographs, and newspaper extracts, alongside Kuang's pseudo-Victorian footnoting in the manner of historian Edward Gibbon, operate as self-reflexive devices that destabilize archival authority while recovering marginalized historical textures. Rather than emphasizing the historical nihilism, these postmodern rewritings refresh imperial history by reanimating suppressed memories and rendering them legible to contemporary concerns: global capitalism, historical amnesia, racial discrimination, and historical injustice. From the perspective of marginalized Others, the texts capture micro-histories of suffering and survival that official narratives obscure. By repositioning marginalized subjects as agents rather than objects of history, both authors transform colonial historiography into a critical space. This study argues that such postmodern re-visioning not only reinterprets the Opium history but also offers a reparative mode of historical imagination that invites today's ethical reflection and future-oriented rethinking.

Post-setting care: the ontology of fiction as ethics - on the narrative and care in *Your Coming* (Television drama)

Xiao, Yanhe

The Education University of Hong Kong

Abstract

The web drama "*Your Arrival*", which will be released in August 2025, has undergone many narrative reversals, constructs a complex narrative structure, and reveals an ultimate proposition for us with the ultimate truth: fictional stories may be an effective mediator of caring behavior in reality. Based on this proposition, this paper proposes the theoretical concept of Post-setting care. Post-setting care refers to the practice of caring ethics for others through fictional media. This does not directly care for the needs of others (first-order care) to reconstruct the narrative world of others, but allows others to gain the ability to reawaken hope in fiction. This paper discusses the narrative identity of identity and ontological exploration. Meta-care actually refers to the expansion of interpersonal relationships to the ontological level of fiction or reality, reflecting the fluidity of the authorship of the caregiver and the cared for, and fictional narrative as one of the important research methods of care practice.

Human-Land Relationship of Plant-Human Interdependence and Cosmos of Equality Between Humans and Deities: On Animism in the Myths of the Zhuang and Yoruba Ethnic Groups

Chen, Tszyin

Sun Yat-sen University

Abstract

The animism in Zhuang myths and that in Yoruba myths represent two specific forms of animistic wisdom in human civilization. By endowing all natural entities with spirituality, ethnic myths establish a framework for regional indigenous cultures to interpret cosmic order, integrating humans into a broader life community. Their animistic worldviews diverge due to varied living environments and social demands: Zhuang's region-specific animism fits village societies, whereas the Yoruba's unified Orisha system adapts to tribal confederations. Both myths echo the pursuit of order and community in their value systems. As natural, humanized and deified spaces converge, they provide modern society with ecological insights and equitable interpretations brimming with human-land vitality.

Bridging Care Ethos with Human Rights - *Doraemon* the Anime Cartoon: Moai Statues on Easter Island and the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change

Sinn, Ming Chun

The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Interconnecting ethics and law through two (seemingly distinct) genres—anime cartoon and legal opinion, this interdisciplinary presentations aims to: (i) illustrate care ethos (or its absence) on the political, ecological and cultural fronts through anime cartoon; (ii) contrast ethical discourse of care with legal discourse of human rights; and (iii) propose the possibility of synergising care ethos with eco-law. I first explain my positionality as an interdisciplinary researcher and give a synopsis. Then, drawing from Maurice Hamington's (2024) monograph *Revolutionary Care* that care serves to repair the world and pursue the good, I argue through the anime cartoon that (a) rapid deforestation and slash-and-burn agriculture upon Polynesian settlement on Easter Island in the 13th century failed to pursue the good but was a grave affront to the environment; (b) the toppling of Moai statues in 18th century due to tribal conflicts failed to repair the community but bespoke polarization; and (c) Japan's assistance to reconstruction to Moai statues illustrated cultural care through fostering inter-state friendship, avoiding ethno-centricism and minimising North-South divide. Next, I contrast care ethos with human right to clean, healthy and sustainable environment by examining legal opinion on state obligations regarding climate change delivered by the International Court of Justice in July 2025. In closing, I discuss the possibility of incorporating the moral/ ethical dimension of care to shoulder human (both individual and collective) responsibility to bridge the gap of the juridical model of human rights through committed action and contextual understanding in a world of connectedness and compassion.

Toward a Transpacific Imaginary of Postfictional Aesthetics: Ethics of Ecological Care in Wu-ming Yi's *The Stolen Bicycle* and Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*

Chung, Po-cheng

National Taiwan University

Abstract

This essay examines the contemporary efficacy of fictional genres under conditions of ecological crisis by reading Wu Ming-yi's *The Stolen Bicycle* and Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being* alongside Timothy Bewes's theorization of postfictionality, in order to analyze how these fictions negotiate environmental ethics while sustaining aesthetic ambition and to assess the success of their aesthetic strategies. I deploy a transpacific critical framework to trace how the imperial afterlives of the United States and Japan shape the present ecological crises, showing how ecological concerns were enlisted into discourses of militarization and national security before and after the Cold War and thereby contributed to conceptual formations such as the Anthropocene and climate engineering. Against this backdrop, I read the two works as aesthetic interventions that enact forms of ecological care. Bewes's account of postfictionality, notably its refusal of instantiation and its emphasis on free indirect discourse, provides critical terms for two interrelated aesthetic dimensions in these texts: first, the mediated materialities fictionalized within the narratives, which are closely tied to moments of narrative reflexivity; and second, the ways the narratives negotiate both the materiality of the works themselves and the materiality of the media ecologies in which they are embedded within transpacific formations. From these analyses I advance the notion of aesthetic equality: an ethics of ecological care that arises from the relations and nonrelations among heterogeneous forms of beings. Under this view, ethics consists in acknowledging difference and sustaining an openness to irreducible heterogeneity.

From Ruins to Rebirth: “Traumatic Landscapes” and Healing Narratives in Contemporary Chinese Ecoart

Tang, Yue

Sun Yat-sen University

Abstract

Against the backdrop of an increasingly severe global ecological crisis, the “ecological turn” in the humanities has driven artistic creation to actively respond to real-world issues, leading to the vigorous global rise of ecoart. This type of art utilizes diverse mediums to actively express ecological awareness, convey ecological ideals, and pursue the harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature. The paper focuses on how Chinese ecoart reconstructs damaged natural and cultural landscapes, transforming ecological trauma into reflective and interventionist aesthetic objects, thereby achieving the synergistic restoration of natural ecology, social ecology, and spiritual ecology. By analyzing specific practices such as mine site restoration, ecological transformation of industrial heritage, regeneration of urban wastelands, and ecological community gardens, the study explores how artists employ diverse mediums like installations, performances, and video to “enter the site and create the site”, constructing “rebirth sites” where art and ecology coexist. These practices utilize strategies such as the regenerative metaphor of ruins, material recycling, and participatory documentation of ecological processes. They not only deconstruct anthropocentric narratives effectively but also embody “care and restoration” of ecosystems through localized methods like permaculture and ecological farming, promoting ecological aesthetic education and enhancing public ecological literacy. The paper further points out that the healing narratives in contemporary Chinese ecoart does not conceal trauma. Instead, by confronting historical wounds and reconstructing collective memory, it promotes public cognitive empathy and transformative action regarding ecological issues. In terms of intellectual resources, Chinese artists have actively drawn from classical ecological wisdom, the spirit of aesthetics of creating life, and traditional folk customs and rituals. By integrating contemporary life experiences with the rich heritage of Chinese culture, they have forged a distinctive path that sets them apart from Western ecoart. These practices not only create “local certainties” within the locality but also offer an inspiring Chinese approach to the transformation of the global post-industrial landscape. They creatively integrate localized ecological wisdom with global environmental discourse, contributing artistic and humanistic responses to the contemplation of survival resilience in the context of the Anthropocene.

Spectral presence in Kowloon Walled City: negotiation of meaning and post-spatial economic mechanisms from a historical ethnographic perspective

Yang, Jiahua

Hong Kong Baptist University

Abstract

This study examines how Kowloon Walled City obtained a sustained “afterlife” in contemporary culture following its physical demolition in 1994. In response to the traditional view that “physical erasure is the end of culture,” this paper proposes that demolition is not the end, but a prerequisite for the transformation of the Walled City into a Spectral Presence that can be reproduced. Adopting historical ethnography as a central framework, this study considers the Walled City as a field of meaning across time and space. Using “visual discourse analysis” and “close reading” to compare the photographic collection *City of Darkness*, government spokespersons, and specific historical documents (representing past realities and stigmas) with the 2024 film *Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In* (representing contemporary nostalgic reconstruction), and this analysis illuminates how current cultural producers and consumers negotiate the significance of this vanishing space. Theoretically, this study combines Ackbar Abbas’s *Politics of Disappearance* with Jacques Derrida’s *Hauntology* to analyze the dynamics of production that underpin this “afterlife”. The study finds that in the context of globalization, the identity of the afterlife has been transformed into a dynamic path of production. The study finds that, driven by identity anxiety (as cultural knowledge) in the context of globalization, the Kowloon Walled City is reconstructed through media re-creation (as cultural behavior). This process transforms the original “extralegal enclave” into a “Spectral Interface,” (as cultural artifact) a nostalgic utopia between historical loss and contemporary desires. Finally, this paper aims to summarize the mechanism of the “PostSpatial Economy” and explain how economic value is generated from the negotiation of disappearance, selective nostalgia, and the “culture of absence”.

Distress Echoes: The Structural Articulation of Urban Alienation in Hideo Okuda's *Lala Pipo* (2005)

Mujynya, Furaha Pehoua Bangakelo

International Christian University

Abstract

This paper investigates the aesthetic transgressions and narratological strategies adopted in Hideo Okuda's *Lala Pipo* (2005) to address societal norms and challenges in contemporary urban Japan. Drawing upon a typology developed in my master's thesis on Japanese short story cycles, I explore how Hideo Okuda uses polyphony and original linking devices – comprising of “chance encounters” and “sporadic causal effects” – to construct interconnected narratives that reflect the labyrinthine density of metropolitan society. By identifying resonances with the 1930s New Art School's [shinkōgeijutsu-ha] Erotic Grotesque Nonsense [ero-guro-nansensu], this study argues that Okuda deploys the grotesque, dark humour, and visceral descriptions to reveal the alienation, societal pressure, and mental distress of urban daily life. The analysis of the formal properties of *Lala Pipo* demonstrates a congruence between the cycle's configuration and its cosmopolitan storyworld, echoing the isolation of its protagonists through its fragmented and interwoven structure. Findings suggest that Okuda employs a formal isomorphism, where the narrative's fragmentation mirrors the instability of the protagonists' psyche. Moreover, he offers a satirical critique of the norms and expectations of Japanese urban society, denouncing its failure in social support and care. This study expands the understanding of how contemporary Japanese literature engages with social issues through structurally innovative narratives.

Care from the Local and the Migrant Gaze: A Comparative Reading of Filipino Domestic Workers in Cinema

Yu, Nga Ki

The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This paper conducts a comparative reading of *Still Human* (2018) and *Hello, Love, Goodbye* (2019) to examine how care structures the cinematic representation of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong. Focusing on care as an ethical, emotional, and social practice, the paper asks how different national cinematic perspectives shape the meanings of care, belonging, and displacement within a shared urban setting. In *Still Human*, a Hong Kong-produced film, care is represented primarily through the employer–helper relationship. The narrative emphasizes reciprocity and emotional recognition, positioning care as a means of ethical connection across cultural difference. Through this framework, the Filipino domestic worker is incorporated into Hong Kong’s local moral imagination, and displacement is partially resolved through relational intimacy and mutual dependence. By contrast, *Hello, Love, Goodbye*, a Philippine production set in Hong Kong, foregrounds the migrant worker’s viewpoint. Care is depicted as a form of labor tied to survival, family responsibility, and future mobility rather than local belonging. Joy’s caregiving practices—both domestic and emotional—are shaped by legal precarity, economic pressure, and transnational aspiration, presenting Hong Kong as a temporary and unstable space rather than a site of ethical inclusion. Comparing these two films, the paper argues that care functions differently depending on cinematic vantage point. While Hong Kong cinema frames care as a mechanism for extending locality and fostering empathy, Philippine cinema represents care as a strategy for enduring displacement within transnational labor regimes. This comparative analysis demonstrates how care mediates power, space, and recognition in representations of migrant labor.

Can Scars Be Heard? Sound Art as Critical Memory Practice in European Post-Conflict Cities - Focusing on Berlin, Sarajevo, Mostar and Belfast

Cai, Yifei

Peking University

Abstract

Contemporary post-conflict cities are predominantly structured by visually oriented regimes of memory. Monuments, memorials, museums, and architectural reconstructions materialize history through visibility, stabilizing collective narratives while often simplifying complex, embodied, and contested memories into coherent official histories. In this context, sound emerges as a critical medium that transcends visual barriers through its inherent fluidity, adaptability, and pervasiveness. Consequently, sound art assumes a unique and vital role in the transformation and memory politics of post-conflict cities. It not only challenges traditional, visually-dominated memory narratives but also elevates the act of "listening" to an ethical and political dimension, compelling listeners to engage with history through embodied experience. This article examines how contemporary sound art intervenes in memory politics in four European post-conflict cities: Berlin, Sarajevo, Mostar and Belfast. Rather than treating sound art as an aesthetic genre, this paper conceptualises it as a critical cultural practice that reconfigures sensory hierarchies and produces alternative modes of historical engagement. Centring on sound art's critical function, this paper constructs a progressive analytical framework of "Transcendence-Awakening-Reconstruction". Specifically:(1) traverses and destabilises visually inscribed territorial boundaries; (2) activates embodied and affective "counter-memories"that exceed institutionalised commemoration; and (3) generates speculative futures by reassembling fractured spatial and temporal imaginaries. Through close analysis of site-specific sound installations, soundwalks and sonic archives, the article argues that listening functions not merely as perception but as an ethical and political act. Sound art in post-conflict contexts does not simply represent trauma; it reorganises the conditions under which memory is sensed, shared and imagined. In doing so, it opens contingent spaces for reconciliation without reducing memory to trauma alone.

Care in Lightness: Memories of the Cultural Revolution and Intellectual Humor in *The Golden Age*

Jia, Zuhe

The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

The Cultural Revolution is one of the most controversial and dynamic subjects of historical representation in contemporary Chinese literature. In this narrative tradition dominated by gravity and seriousness, Wang Xiaobo's novel *The Golden Age* constitutes a distinctive form of heterogeneous writing through its calm, ironic, and intellectually humorous narrative stance. This paper focuses on the operational mode of intellectual humor at the narrative level and analyzes its core role in constructing the narrative subject and shaping a "light" narrative posture in the writing of trauma. This humor is not an avoidance or dissolution of historical pain, but rather a form of literary care imbued with ethical value. Through intellectual humor, it continuously constructs a subject who maintains rational judgment and spiritual autonomy within an absurd history, preventing the individual from being completely absorbed into the image of a victim. When the characters, narrator, and implied author jointly address violence, humiliation, and power through rational parody and irony, the weight of reality is transformed into an object that can be thought about and scrutinized. It is precisely within this discursive field constituted by humor that grand historical narratives and the discourse of power are deconstructed, and traumatic experience can be reorganized and understood while maintaining a certain distance, thereby preserving space for human dignity and spiritual freedom. The intellectual humor of *The Golden Age* demonstrates a literary possibility of bearing care through lightness, offering significant insights for understanding traumatic narratives and literary ethics within the dilemmas of modernity. 2

Narrating Care after Catastrophe: Cultural Trauma and Collective Memory in NHK's Documentaries on the Great East Japan Earthquake

Wang, Bingxin

Renmin University of China

Abstract

This paper examines how disaster documentaries function as institutionalized media of care in post-traumatic societies. It focuses on two commemorative films produced by NHK on the Great East Japan Earthquake—"With the Ughh "u "luved"une "tn"hetr"earh - Ftve"year "a her"he"dt a her,"a"20-year-uld' "jugrney "behtn"(2016) and"Vtdeu"Recurd:"T e"GreaH"Ea h"Japan"Earh qgake-T e"Ftr h "T ree"Day"(2021)—both archived as broadcast cultural assets within NHK's disaster collection. Representing two distinct commemorative modes—a coming-of-age narrative and an archival witnessing reconstruction—the films provide a comparative lens on post-disaster memory production. Applying cultural memory theory (Jan Assmann), cultural trauma studies (Jefrey C. Alexander), and narrative analysis alongside close visual reading, the paper argues that documentary does not merely preserve the past but reorganizes traumatic memory into culturally legible forms of empathy. The fifth-anniversary film foregrounds intimate survivor narratives and relational continuity, transforming loss into a forward-oriented life story. The tenth-anniversary film re-curates contemporaneous footage into a shared structure of witnessing, consciously regulating graphic violence while reinforcing collective mourning and solidarity. I propose the notion of "curated empathy" to describe how public broadcasting mediates care as both affective engagement and moral orientation. While facilitating the transition from individual to collective memory, these documentaries also shape a disciplined horizon of remembrance—privileging resilience and communal healing over structural critique. The study contributes to cross-cultural debates on how care is constructed, mediated, and institutionally framed through visual culture in late modernity.

How Would You Tell Our Story? The Robe Landing Narrative and the Cultural Memory of Historical Trauma in Chinese Australian Identity

Yu, Yangbeiyao

Australian National University

Abstract

This research examines how Chinese Australians have reshaped the cultural memory of Robe Landing as both a reflection of and response to historical racial trauma. The Robe Landing took place in the nineteenth century, when Chinese gold miners landed at the more distant port of Robe in South Australia and walked hundreds of kilometres overland to the Victorian goldfields to avoid a racially exclusionary colonial head tax. This paper approaches contemporary narratives of Robe Landing as a living cultural memory site and examines how the event is remembered and culturally narrated within the Chinese Australian community. It understands Robe Landing as a medium through which historical trauma is reinterpreted and socially negotiated through cultural storytelling. Using qualitative case studies, the research combines cultural memory theory and critical discourse analysis to examine museum exhibitions, media, literature, theatre, and oral histories. The analysis focuses on everyday narrative practices and affective expressions, highlighting how these creative mediums shape narratives of historical responsibility and racial justice. By reframing these historical narratives, the research found that remembering functions as intergenerational care, fulfilling an ethical obligation to ancestors while facilitating communal repair of past trauma to foster future social justice. Transnationally, Chinese Australians use Robe Landing to construct collective identity and historical consciousness. This retelling transforms trauma into a cultural and political resource that challenges marginalisation and helps prevent the repetition of historical exclusion.

Sound, Image Monad, Historical Redemption: The Philosophical Implications of Benjamin's Broadcasting Practice

Chen, Jiayu

Yunnan University

Abstract

Walter Benjamin's broadcasting practice between 1927 and 1933 has long been regarded as a mere means of livelihood or a "paratext" to his thought. These radio scripts are the auditory realization of his theory of "dialectical images": the acoustic montage of Berlin street scenes, the historical echoes of catastrophe, and the material whispers of childhood toys—distinct sound images form auditory "monads," folding the contradictions of the era and the trauma of the oppressed into instantaneous explosions. The "blindness" of radio strips away visual distance, forcing listeners to be "pierced" by the history of others within the flow of sound. Thus, care is no longer a moral gesture, but an ethical structure realized by media materiality. The programs Benjamin designed for children were precisely a training in this "audibility" itself, shaping a sensitivity to marginal voices and an awareness of the fissures in history. Here, private memory is transformed into public historical imagery through radio waves, and broadcasting becomes a "public theater of memory." In short, Benjamin's broadcasting practice provides a paradigm of "audible care": through the flow and intrusion of sound, radio compels listeners to assume ethical responsibility for the history of the other in the act of listening. This "other" is both the marginalized population in German society during Benjamin's time and the strange experiences in other cultural spaces that radio signals might reach—those cross-cultural others summoned through exotic imagery who demand to be heard.

Circulating Care: Käthe Kollwitz's Prints and the Transnational Aesthetics of Revolutionary Empathy in Interwar Shanghai

Qu, Fangyuan

University of Münster

Abstract

This paper examines the transnational circulation of Käthe Kollwitz's print portfolios from late Weimar Germany to 1930s Shanghai, where they were reconfigured within emergent Asian revolutionary networks. Rather than framing this as mere artistic influence, I conceptualize these portfolios as traveling media that carried a distinct visual ethics of care—rooted in representations of maternal grief, working-class suffering, and collective vulnerability under oppression. As these images crossed linguistic and political borders, their affective force was not merely transmitted but actively rearticulated. Beginning in 1931, selected portfolios entered Chinese radical circles through Lu Xun's advocacy, including publication in journals such as *Beidou*, exhibitions in leftist bookstores, and his compilation and publication of Käthe Kollwitz Portfolio in 1936. In Shanghai, Kollwitz's imagery was mobilized not only as aesthetic models but as visual technologies of empathy within the burgeoning woodcut movement. Through translation of accompanying texts, mechanical reproduction in periodicals, activist exhibitions, and pedagogy in woodcut workshops, these prints helped cultivate an affective community grounded in shared experiences of loss, oppression, and resistance. By reconstructing the material and discursive pathways of this circulation, the paper argues that care—understood here as an affective ethics of concern for vulnerability and collective suffering—functioned as a transnational connective force linking European and Asian leftist cultures. The case demonstrates that interwar cultural exchange was not a onedirectional transfer but a process of mutual rearticulation, through which revolutionary modernism was reshaped across media, geography, and ideology.

Cinema's Specular Death: The Doppelgänger from Literary Anxiety to Medium-Ontological Autoscopy

Wang, Jiayi

The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

When Nathanael mistakes the automaton Olympia for a living woman in Hoffmann's *The Sandman* (1816), the encounter stages a foundational modern terror, the collapse of ontological boundaries between the human and its copy. A century later, the 1910 Edison *Frankenstein* restaged this recognition scene as a medium-reflexive allegory. Shane Denson reads the creature's mirrored reconciliation as early cinema's passage from animated spectacle to narrative coherence. Yet if literature could resolve the Doppelgänger through narrative deferral, containing the double within the symbolic order of the text, cinema cannot. The photographic image is already a double, and the edited body is already split. Therefore, this paper asks: how does a reproductive technology reckon with its own reproducibility? I argue that digital-era cinema transforms the Doppelgänger from a psychological threat into what I term specular obsolescence, a medium's encounter with its own technological afterlife, in which the onscreen double indexes the medium's impending supersession by synthetic imaging. Specifically, contemporary horror cinema uses it to show cinema's own ontological precarity. Focusing on *Annihilation* (2018) and *The Substance* (2024), I demonstrate how both films construct a gaze in which the viewer recognizes cinema itself as already becoming extinct in its algorithmic successor. Drawing on Otto Rank's theory of the double as preemptive self-mourning and recent media philosophy, particularly Denson's account of dis-correlated images and Stiegler's technics of memory, I contend that specular obsolescence names a medium-specific condition irreducible to literary or psychoanalytic frameworks, showing how to image life at the precise historical moment when the technology of imaging has become indistinguishable from the life it reproduces. In answering this, contemporary horror cinema performs an autopsy of the medium itself.

The Gourd, the Mirror, and the Stone: Optical Devices and Worlds-Remaking in Qing *Dream of the Red Chamber* Sequels

Qiu, Shiyun

Columbia University

Abstract

This paper challenges the long-standing dismissal of the mid-late Qing dynasty sequels to *Dream of the Red Chamber* as aesthetically inferior imitations. Revisiting the sequels from material culture and media technology perspectives, the paper argues that these marginalized works are crucial for understanding how the last Chinese literati-writers mixed vernacular and elite perspectives to reinterpret *Dream* and shape its canonization, while reworking inherited values in dialogue with global technologies and visual culture, laying important preconditions for later cross-media storytelling. The analysis traces the transformation of *Dream*'s central symbolic device, the "*Precious Mirror of Love*," beginning with two foundational sequels. Both introduce a magical gourd modeled on the peepshow, a popular optical performance device that spread across Europe and East Asia during the 18th–19th century revolution in visual illusion techniques. Drawing on archival materials and historical artifacts, the paper shows how the optical devices in sequels not only reconfigure the mythomoral cosmology associated with the "*Precious Mirror*," but also refresh modes of worldmaking and immersive storytelling by synthesizing earlier literary and religious discourse with contemporary sensory experience and knowledge. Subsequently, the sequels' visual hermeneutics encouraged later readers and writers to rethink authorship, readership, and meaning production, reshaping the perception of the relationship between the individuals and the worlds. Ultimately, this paper transcends mere textual adaptation frameworks, reveals the intermedial richness of *Dream*'s afterlives, and provides a lens onto how Qing Chinese literature responded to a glocalized modernity shaped by new objects, technologies, and transnational cultural circulation.

The Necessity of an ‘Unfaithful Conspiracy’ - From Narrative History to Trauma Narrative

Wong, Sze Man

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract

What actually burns in *Burning*—a greenhouse, a body, or memory itself? This unresolved ambiguity, inherited from Murakami’s “*Barn Burning*,” unsettles viewers by refusing to clarify what happened. The motif of fire becomes a displaced symbol through which fractured pasts are reinterpreted, blurring the line between factual memory and imaginative reconstruction. It is in this unstable space that the paper introduces the idea of an “unfaithful conspiracy”: the entanglement of personal and collective histories through narrative acts that are partial, ambiguous, and unverifiable, yet necessary for meaningmaking. To illuminate this process, the paper turns to Hayden White’s claim that historical discourse is shaped by narrative form rather than neutral fact, and to Cathy Caruth’s trauma theory, which sees trauma as an event that resists assimilation and returns belatedly through fragments and images. These frameworks show how both texts construct reality through subjective ordering, symbolic motifs, and recurring sensory imprints—particularly burning— as devices that reshape memory and meaning. Placed in dialogue, White and Caruth suggest that the instability of traumatic memory enables narrative “fabrications” that are not deceptive but vital for psychological survival. Small acts of storytelling accumulate into larger cultural narratives, producing the “unfaithful conspiracy” between individual and collective histories. In this way, *Burning* demonstrates how fiction and historical truth alike depend on unstable processes of memory, symbolization, and narrative desire.

Fragile Connections: Post-Traumatic Care and Relational Ethics in Contemporary Japanese Art Cinema

Xu, Weixu

Chongqing University

Abstract

This paper examines how contemporary Japanese cinema reimagines care in the aftermath of collective trauma, focusing on films produced in the post-3.11 cultural context. Rather than staging recovery through dramatic redemption or heroic reconstruction, these works articulate a relational form of care grounded in fragility, interruption, and everyday coexistence. Drawing on cultural theories of trauma, affect, and Raymond Williams' notion of "structures of feeling," the paper argues that post-disaster Japanese cinema resists restoring a unified subject or stable social order. Instead, it foregrounds fractured subjectivities and suspended temporalities in which care emerges as a tentative, processual practice. Through close attention to visual strategies—stillness, restrained performance, spatial distance, and ambient sound—these films construct what may be described as a "lowintensity ethics": a mode of being-with others that acknowledges vulnerability without resolving it. Care here is neither institutional nor heroic; it unfolds through minor gestures—shared meals, silent companionship, hesitant conversations—through which individuals negotiate coexistence amid uncertainty. In contrast to dominant, often Western-centric disaster narratives that privilege spectacle or narrative closure, post-3.11 Japanese cinema proposes an alternative cultural imagination of care. Rather than framing trauma as a wound to be overcome, these films present it as an enduring condition demanding sustained attentiveness and ethical responsiveness. By situating this cinematic sensibility within crosscultural debates on trauma and relational ethics, the paper suggests that film form itself becomes a medium for rethinking care in times of global precarity.

Witnessing Ruins: Queer Survival in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*

Wang, Yi

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Abstract

After the 1990s, the high death rate of the AIDS outbreak, the government's indifference, and the public's fear and helplessness to deal with this terminal disease gave the playwright Kushner a sense of the explosive anger in the air. This paper reads Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* through Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history to rethink care amid epidemic crisis. Rather than defining care only as interpersonal compassion or bedside support, I argue that Kushner expands care into a historical and political practice of witnessing, remembrance, and resistance to erasure in the context of HIV/AIDS in 1980s America. *Angels in America* vividly shows the struggle of American AIDS patients in the late 20th century against "the world of the disease" (Klinkenborg, 1994) through the characters' fates. Beyond the notions of "unclean" (Epstein, 1995) and "stigmatised", *Angels in America* not only depicts the struggle and helplessness of the patient's life through its depiction of illness, but also integrates illness with politics. The AIDS disease threatens the characters' self-definition as they navigate dread, stigma, and the limitations imposed by their health. In this sense, *Angels in America* could be seen as Kushner's resistance to responding to the challenges provided by a sick society. The play, therefore, reframes illness from an individual pathology into a crisis of collective responsibility, in which care involves not only tending to bodies but also preserving histories that dominant political narratives seek to forget. 2

Feminized Migration: A Close Reading of “*After a Long Time Away, a Foreign Land Becomes Home*” by Labor Exchange Band of Taiwan, China

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Abstract

This article takes as its object of study the song “*After a Long Time Away, a Foreign Land Becomes Home*” (日久他鄉是故鄉) from Taiwan’s Labor Exchange Band’s (交工樂隊) 2001 album *The Night March of Chrysanthemum* (菊花夜行軍). Focusing on the transnational marital migration experiences of Southeast Asian migrant brides represented in the song. This article introduces the concept of the “feminization of migration” from Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller’s migration studies to denote forms of migration in globalized labor and marital flows that are predominantly female-led and are discursively framed through expectations of docility, emotionality, and caregiving. It discusses how this form of migration is represented intertextually within multiple texts. Specifically focusing on this song, the study analyzes how its musical language and lyrical text articulate narrative metaphors and intertextual relationships surrounding the transnational marital migration of these brides in Meinong. Second, the study juxtaposes the ethnographic documentary *Migrant Brides in Meinong* (外籍新娘在美濃) with the musical language of the song in order to examine the processes of localized adaptation experienced by the brides. Finally, drawing on transnational feminist critiques of globalization and the structural paradox they identify, namely the simultaneous critique yet dependence on globalization, this article examines how Labor Exchange Band employs the electric bass, the only electronic instrument in the song, as a symbolic marker of globalization. At the musical level, the bass embodies a deliberate contradiction: it functions as the low-register support for the choral sections while its auditory presence is intentionally subdued. Through this tension, the band deconstructs the supposedly binary opposition between localization and globalization as an either/or binary.

Double Dislocation, Fractured Family Structures, and Hybrid Agency: Trans-Pacific Chinese Labourers under Border Regimes in Ling Zhang's *Gold Mountain Blues*

Song, Jianru

University of Alberta

Abstract

Ling Zhang's *Gold Mountain Blues* chronicles over a century of trans-Pacific Chinese diasporic life. Moving beyond existing scholarship on identity anxiety, hardship of subaltern immigrants, transnational social relations, and trans-spatial and intertextual narrative, this study resituates the novel as a border narrative that reveals how state power intervenes in the private sphere. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, "Third Space", and unhomeliness, I explore how institutionalized exclusion functions as a structural indifference of care. Specifically, this study examines how the Head Tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act disrupt the identity belonging and familial structures of Chinese labourers, and how these individuals, in turn, negotiate the tension between border governance and their emotional ties to the homeland. This paper argues that state-sanctioned border governance systematically dismantles migrant care, trapping labourers in a double dislocation where they belong neither to China nor Canada. This regime collapses the boundary between public and private spaces, fracturing traditional families into bachelor societies or split families. However, within the interstices of border control, a hybrid agency emerges. Through letters, remittances, and political activism within what Bhabha conceptualizes as "Third Space", migrants maintain transcultural kinship, navigate political instability in their homeland, and challenge local discrimination. This study seeks to reassess the ethics of recognition for the early diaspora. By highlighting how Zhang's narrative restores agency and empathy to marginalized subjects, the study allows readers to look past cold legal documents to rediscover the "human" within the migrants.

Care and Community in Exile: The German Diaspora Life in Paul Zech's Argentinian Writings

Miś, Krzysztof Paweł

Jagiellonian University in Kraków

Abstract

This paper examines representations of care in form of solidarity and community among German-speaking migrants in Argentina in selected short stories by Paul Zech, himself an exile in Buenos Aires. Focusing on interpersonal relations, it analyses how solidarity is negotiated within the migrant community and demonstrates that it remains fragile and contingent rather than constituting a stable form of emotional recognition or practical support. The article considers different relational constellations, including ideological conflicts, intimate relationships, and forms of friendship, in order to show how solidarity is shaped and often undermined by the conditions of exile. The paper argues that Zech's writings challenge assumptions of diasporic cohesion and instead foreground the ethical and emotional complexities of life in exile, in which belonging remains unstable and solidarity frequently fails to materialise.

Caste-Conscious Care: Reframing Dalit Suffering as Embodied Praxis and Affective Attunement

Poonia, Rubal

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Abstract

The paper advances a caste-conscious turn in care studies. Anchored in the Indian context, it proposes a shift in responding to Dalit suffering: from a mere “matter of concern” to a “matter of care” that demands compassionate, attentive engagement. Drawing on care ethics, affect theory, and decolonial epistemologies, the study examines Dalit life writing that resists reducing care to ritualistic performance, reframing it as an embodied, environmentally situated, and socio-politically embedded praxis. This elicits affective attunement to the violated “human-ness” of the oppressed other, while articulating alternative visions of relationality and care rooted in lived Dalit experience. Central to the intervention is the figure of “cared-for subject,” which counters savarna (upper-caste) framings that objectify Dalits as abject bodies. Key texts include Yashica Dutt's *Coming Out as Dalit*, which depicts the psychological toll of “closeting” caste identity and performing upper-caste-ness, and Thenmozhi Soundararajan's *The Trauma of Caste*, which theorizes “caste soul wounds” as intergenerational trauma inscribed in the body, necessitating care that encompass embodied dimensions. Embodied care, in Dalit context, privileges reconnection with embodied wisdom, ancestral resilience, and contemplative practices. Enriched by testimonies from digital subaltern counterpublics like the Skin Stories platform, where Dalit women share experiences of intersecting marginalities, the study exposes epistemic erasures and frames institutional “carescapes” as contested, caste-saturated spaces marked by power asymmetries. Ultimately, the paper calls for a decolonial reorientation of care studies, centering caste as a constitutive axis of care rather than a peripheral variable.

The Reconstruction of Home Architecture and Female Subjectivity: Spatial Representation from Upper Rooms to Private Bathrooms

Chen, Qianyu

The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This paper examines how domestic space materializes the ambivalent relationship between care and control in nineteenth- and twentieth-century narratives about women. Focusing on the attic and the bathroom, it reads Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *"The Yellow Wallpaper,"* Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Eileen Chang's *"Red Rose, White Rose"* as crosscultural case studies of how architecture encodes gendered power. In the attic, "care" appears as medical rest, seclusion, and protection from the outside, yet the rest cure and the locked upper room restrict women's mobility and authorship and deny them social recognition. In the modern bathroom, care returns as hygiene, cleanliness, and privacy, but tiled surfaces and mirrors stage a different discipline in which women internalize surveillance over bodily functions, sexuality, and respectability in line with patriarchal norms. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space and feminist critiques of domesticity, I argue that these spaces do not simply contain women but function as an invisible prison: by invoking "for her good" to confine women within the home; pathologizing independent thought as "madness" and locking women away, and by turning even the bathroom into a site of self-surveillance, where women may suffer, for instance, constipation in silence and shame while struggling to maintain a clean, proper appearance. By juxtaposing English and Chinese texts, the paper shows how architectures of care circulate and mutate across cultures, and how seemingly protective rooms: from sickrooms to sanitary bathrooms, become mechanisms that care for, control, and marginalize women.

The Politics of the Face and the Crisis of Subjectivity: How “Lazi” and the “Crocodile” Disrupt Cisgender-normative Conventions of Translation in Qiu Miaojin’s Texts

Zhu, Liang-Jing Y.

Arizona State University

Abstract

This paper explores the politics of naming and subjectivity in Qiu Miaojin’s *Notes of a Crocodile* by examining how the figures “Lazi” (拉子) and the “crocodile” (鱷魚) operate as allegorical faces that negotiate lesbian/queer identity within and against cisgenderheteronormative structures. Rather than treating these terms as stylistic devices or transparent equivalents of “lesbian,” the paper argues that they function as abject signifiers through which queer subjectivity is both constituted and endangered. Drawing primarily on Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection, alongside Freud’s concept of the uncanny and queer translation theory, the paper situates Qiu’s naming practices within broader frameworks of shame, visibility, and social intelligibility. Methodologically, the paper combines close textual analysis with comparative and theoretical approaches from translation studies, queer theory, and Sinophone literary studies. It examines the semantic density and morphological specificity of lazi and the crocodile, showing how their derogatory, non-genealogical, and nonhuman qualities challenge stable identity categories. When these figures enter the translational sphere, the paper argues, their abject force is intensified by asymmetries of linguistic power and pressures toward normalization within global literary circulation. By analyzing translation as a second site of abjection, this study critiques domestication strategies that neutralize queer negativity by rendering lazi as a culturally sanitized “lesbian” or the crocodile as a purely comedic allegory. Instead, the paper proposes a queer ethics of translation that preserves opacity, discomfort, and untranslatability as politically meaningful. Such an approach foregrounds translation not as equivalence, but as a critical practice that exposes the fragility of subjectivity and resists the depoliticization of queer texts in world literature.

Care, Culture, and Justice: A Comparative Study of Gender Jurisprudence across Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau

Zhao, Han

Tsinghua University

Abstract

Against the constitutional framework of “One Country, Two Systems,” the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area presents divergent institutional and cultural configurations of gender equality despite shared formal commitments to women’s rights. This study adopts care ethics as a core analytical lens to examine how care is narratively constructed, legally institutionalized, and judicially allocated across the three jurisdictions. It argues that formal legal progress coexists with a structural disjuncture between normative equality and lived social experience, which conventional rights-based frameworks cannot fully address. By integrating comparative constitutional theory, affect theory, and narrative analysis, the research identifies three distinct structures of care: a collectivist and state-mediated model in mainland China, an individualist and juridified model in Hong Kong, and a relational and community-negotiated model in Macau. These structures are embedded in distinctive legal traditions, cultural imaginaries, and judicial practices, shaping divergent approaches to vulnerability, consent, domestic violence, and gendered harm. The study further demonstrates that literary narratives actively define the boundaries of “worthy of care” and influence legal cognition and social perception. It concludes that the plural legal cultures within the region constitute not an obstacle but a normative resource for gender justice. A framework of coordinated pluralism, rather than uniform integration, can facilitate contextualized and inclusive gender governance in the Greater Bay Area.

Remapping the Sensory Topography of Passivity: Body, Space, and Cross-Cultural Care in Hong Kong's Post-SAR New Wave Cinema

Liu, Guanyu

The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This study theorizes the surge of local Hong Kong cinema over the past decade—centering on the marginalized groups such as the mentally ill, disabled, and homeless—as the ‘Post-SAR New Wave.’ Integrating human geography and film phenomenology, this study employs a dual methodology of textual analysis and reception studies to explore how these works reconstruct the perceptual forms and ethical connotations of care through the interaction between marginalized bodies and urban spaces. It posits that these films present vulnerable bodies in a state of ‘I cannot,’ a stark departure from the sovereign ‘I can’ subject emphasized in traditional phenomenology. When these bodies encounter obstructions within urban spaces, they remap a ‘sensory topography’ centered on a sense of passivity. By analyzing audience reviews from major film review platforms in both Mainland China and the Anglophone world, this study argues that this sensory topography facilitates a capacity for ‘sensory translation.’ It transforms highly localized urban crises into universally perceptible embodied experiences, thereby endowing these works with potential for crosscultural resonance. This sensory arousal, rooted in passivity, invites audiences to coexperience the vulnerability of the ‘I cannot’ body. In doing so, it challenges the audience’s privileged position as an ‘able-bodied subject’ and a detached spectator, ultimately generating an embodied empathy characterized by ethical tension. Consequently, the potential for care presented by the Post-SAR New Wave transcends local experience, offering a new comparative perspective on how contemporary Hong Kong cinema reshapes the ethics of care and empathy within cross-cultural contexts.

Degraded Images, Disordered Nations: Jean-Pierre Bekolo's *Les Saignantes* and the Generative Degradation of African Cinema

Chen, Fengxiao

Peking University

Abstract

Jean-Pierre Bekolo's *Les Saignantes* (2005) possesses an unmistakable visual texture of blurred frames, broken colour, and flickering light. Existing scholarship has read these qualities either as the residue of scarcity in African film production or as the passive byproduct of a piracy-saturated media ecology. This article argues that Bekolo does not simply endure the distortions imposed by his technical conditions, and proposes the concept of generative degradation to name his operation. Generative degradation turns the degraded features of the pirate ecology into an aesthetic operation engineered at the point of production, in which distortion becomes the carrier of political critique. Working through Brian Larkin's account of infrastructural poetics and in dialogue with Luise Mörke's recent concept of digital dilapidation, the article shows how Bekolo manufactures distortion from the first frame and inscribes that operation within the genealogy of Third Cinema. In *Les Saignantes*, the degraded image is not a mirror of a degraded state but its continuation in another medium.

Between gathering and alienating: the ethics of care in the cross-media adaptation of *Another Day of Life*

Tan, Ruiyang

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Abstract

This paper investigates the ethical paradox of "care" as it undergoes a transformation from "gathering" and "dislocation" to "alienation" in the cross-media trajectory from Ryszard Kapusćiński's literary journalism masterpiece *Another Day of Life* to its animated film adaptation. Drawing upon Bruno Latour's theoretical framework, this study shifts the critical focus from "matters of fact" to "matters of concern." It reveals how Kapusćiński "gathers" fragmented war experiences through literary devices to construct a community of care between the author and the reader. However, such care is fundamentally rooted in the author's problematic position of "marginal whiteness." This specific positionality grants the narrator both the privilege of mobility and an absolute interpretive authority, forcing the Angolan "Other" into a selective ethical filter: they are either cared for only when conforming to the narrator's aesthetic expectations or excluded entirely as mere historical background. Consequently, the suffering of the Other is reduced to a commodity for aesthetic consumption. While in the film, this dislocation is further intensified as visual apparatuses and narrative reconstructions serve a specific politics of empathy, causing the act of care to collapse into its antithesis. The trauma of war is thus transmuted into a consumable aesthetic event. Based on this analysis, the paper concludes that genuine cross-cultural care necessitates that the narrator relinquish narrative hegemony, acknowledge the incommunicability of the Other's trauma, and proactively disclose the inherent power imbalances within the text.

Fragile Communities and Aesthetics of Care: Disaster, Illness, and Minor Politics in Post-3.11 Japanese Cinema

Yang, Conger

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Abstract

This paper examines how post-3.11 Japanese cinema reconfigures the notion of care through disaster imagination and minor forms of community, while foregrounding a breakdown in perceptual regimes. Focusing on Shō Miyake's *All the Long Nights* (2024) and Neo Sora's *HAPPYEND* (2024), I argue that contemporary disaster films move beyond representing catastrophe as spectacle and instead interrogate the sensory and political conditions of coexistence. In both films, disaster is no longer an external rupture but a latent structure embedded in everyday life. The earthquake and the red glow cast upon monumental architecture function not as apocalyptic climaxes but as aesthetic dispositifs that reorganize perception. Drawing on Jacques Rancière's concept of the "distribution of the sensible," I suggest that these films expose the instability of perceptual order under conditions of permanent emergency. Building on this, the paper introduces the concept of "sensory misalignment" to describe the disjunction between visual regimes of surveillance and sonic experiences of disaster. While systems of governance rely on vision—through monitoring, recognition, and control—disaster manifests through sound, noise, and vibration, disrupting the alignment of the senses. Following Jonathan Crary's account of the crisis of attention in contemporary media environments, I argue that this misalignment reflects a broader condition of perceptual instability in which mediation fails to synchronize experience. Importantly, sensory misalignment does not remain at the level of perception. Rather, it is translated into regimes of governance that attempt to restore order, producing new forms of social differentiation. In *HAPPYEND*, the school becomes a site of disciplinary control, where visual surveillance determines who is legible and governable. In contrast, *All the Long Nights* stages illness-PMS and panic disorder as a medium of affective recognition that escapes such regimes. Here, care emerges not through institutional authority but through fragile, provisional collectivities. In this context, what Jacques Rancière terms the "police order" reasserts itself. Under conditions of instability, differentiation becomes a mechanism for producing and maintaining social order. pg. 2 Care, conventionally understood as the protection of vulnerable groups, is reconfigured here as a process of estrangement that renders certain subjects governable by marking them as different. Within the broader horizon of disaster, this transformation also calls into question identity-based politics. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, subject formation is no longer primarily structured through repression in a Foucauldian sense, but through a form of estranging differentiation, in which separation itself produces a paradoxical sense of security. Taken together, these dynamics suggest that post-3.11 cinema articulates an ambivalent aesthetics of care grounded in vulnerability, perceptual instability, and the uneven distribution of visibility and audibility. Disaster, in this sense, becomes not only an environmental condition but also a site where sensory order, governance, and the possibility of care are simultaneously reconfigured.

Humans' Empathy Deficiency and Human-Machine Ethical Crisis in *Klara and the Sun*

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Abstract

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence, the prospect of human-machine coexistence is gradually becoming a reality, and concurrent with this is the increasingly serious ethical crisis in human-machine relationship. The Japanese-British writer Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* offers a profound response to this phenomenon. In portraying an AI girl robot Klara with capacities for observing, reasoning and empathy and her interactions with various human characters, the novel reveals humans' empathy deficiency in a posthuman society and the resulting ethical crisis in human-machine relationship. Based on Michael Slote's theory of ethics of care and empathy and Baroncohen's theory of empathy erosion, this article analyzes the empathy deficiency of three human groups of children, parents, and scientists and the resulting human-machine ethical crisis in *Klara and the Sun*. By exposing humans' inadequacies in empathic caring, Ishiguro calls for people to reflect on their ethical responsibilities and to construct a future society imbued with empathic caring, respect, and justice.

Caring Through Things: The Grinder as Hierophany in Tokarczuk's *Primeval and Other Times*

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Abstract

Olga Tokarczuk's *Primeval and Other Times* responds to the modern crisis of meaning through a turn to objects. Drawing on Mircea Eliade's sacred-profane model and Bill Brown's thing theory, this paper examines the construction and disintegration of Primeval as a sacred center, arguing that Tokarczuk locates the possibility of meaning-making in the intimate relationship between human and non-human entities. The novel initially establishes Primeval as a sacred space structured around a cosmic axis, with the grinder functioning as a hierophany for the Niebieski family. However, the violence of twentieth-century history and the infiltration of secular values erode this collective sacred center. When the last generation, Adelka, takes the now-defunct grinder onto a bus and slowly turns its handle, this moment constitutes an individualized, mobile form of modern hierophany. The suspension of the grinder's practical function allows its "thingness" to be disclosed, momentarily interrupting the homogeneous flow of profane time and space. Tokarczuk thus offers a microscale response to the spiritual wasteland of modernity: when the traditional pre-modern framework and the secular immanent frame have successively proven fragile, individuals may still get provisional existential dimensions through sustained relations with non-human entities.

The Collector's Care against Phantasmagoria in *The Bookbinder of Jericho*

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Abstract

This paper reconceptualizes care through Walter Benjamin's figure of the collector, as embodied in Maude's actions in *The Bookbinder of Jericho*, arguing that care operates not as affective empathy or moral obligation but as a practice of rebuilding meaning and connection through collecting under conditions of modern fragmentation. Drawing on Benjamin's analysis of the Paris arcades, the paper situates modern fragmentation within the illusion of phantasmagoria, in which objects' use value, labor, and social relations behind are obscured by the marketing exchange value. This dreamlike illusion not only exists in the nineteenth-century Paris but also pervades the early twentieth-century Jericho. Its insidious erosion of humanity is crystallized in Peggy's alienation through binding labor and her suppressed scholarly aspiration. Against such capitalistic devastations under phantasmagoria, Benjamin figures the collector as the one who decontextualizes objects from the logic of exchange, loosening their confinement within capitalistic definitions under modernity. In the novel, the idiosyncrasy of the collector is manifested in Maude, Peggy's twin sister, whose echolalic communication filters words and grants them a second life to be examined anew. Initially perceived by Peggy as an embarrassment, Maude's echolalia, in fact, compels words to be reconsidered in their singularity. In this light, Maude emerges as the true collector, and her selective repetitions ultimately serve as an alarm awakening Peggy from the mist of phantasmagoria and confronting her with a long-deferred truth. By reframing care through a Benjaminian lens and its literary reconfiguration, the paper presents care as a cross-cultural response to modern fragmentation.