



COEDA 2019  
UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

## Shifting Worlds: Navigating the global English context

### Book of Abstracts

English and its global study have been in a constant state of flux. The emergence of new fields within the discipline allows for new forms of innovative and interdisciplinary research. Our geographical location affords a unique perspective within these emergent structures, making collaborative research particularly pertinent. In the second annual Coalition of English Departments in Asia conference in Hong Kong, we turn to themes of identity, mobility and place in pursuing our own research and histories in the global English context.

Whether it be linguistics, literary criticism, gender studies or media research, many fields are rapidly expanding and reshaping the study of English. These developments encourage the formation of new methodologies and intellectual networks, inaugurating new possibilities for research. Our coalition brings postgraduates and scholars together within a global English context and introduces participants to future colleagues.

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**You Are Here and Not Here: The Self Re-configured**

During a *dérive* (Debord 1956), a subject drops their usual motives for psychogeographical movement and action. From a *dérive* point of view, cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly encourage and/or discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. But the *dérive* includes both this letting-go and its necessary contradiction: dominating these spaces through acquiring knowledge about their psychogeographical specifications and variations. What, then, delimits space and so-called free movement? There is another type of movement in the landscape where the geography of thought in Asia centers on becoming and re-becoming, where change is central to the constant re-configuration of self. In the Americentric and Eurocentric context, however, notions of self and identity perpetuate the differentiation of the singular, individual “I” more common historically to first person monolingual perspective. Processes of negotiation and conflict on this East-West axis (if an axis exists at all!) are needed to access and widen that aspect of the self that is important to scholarship in the instrument and plasticity of language, as in English itself.

Immigrant as Spy: Comparing Spy Identity in *Native Speaker* and *The Sympathizer*  
*Geo Moon*  
*Seoul National University*

Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) and Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* (2015) both begin with the designation of the main character as a 'spy.' Both of the protagonists are referred to as and identify themselves with a spy, especially "a spy of the culture". While Henry Park, the protagonist of *Native Speaker*, who works as a corporate, ethnic spy who needs "to be a true spy of identity", struggles to assimilate into American society as a second generation Korean immigrant, 'I', the nameless narrator of *The Sympathizer* works as a "double and contradictory" communist double agent in America after the Vietnam War. Here spy functions not as a mere occupation, but as the more complicated symbol of their self-questioning; the protagonists' choice of the role of spy and their struggle to become a spy play an important role in the story and affects their pursuit of self-identification. Both stories explore how the protagonists attempt to define who is a spy and how to become "a good spook", while also share the plot of accusation as a "traitor" which leads to certain '(self) betrayal.' However, 'I's "nothingness" and duality differs from Park's "anyones" and multiplicity, and how they challenge their cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic or ideological boundaries is also different. By comparing how two different texts employ the spy identity, this paper would first explore to analyse the concept of a spy as a metaphor of the identity dilemma as an immigrant. It will further attempt to answer how spy functions as a metaphor or particular identity strategy for people who struggle with their relationship between American and their origin, and later to question whether the spy identity avoidable, or inevitable in comparison with modern cosmopolitan mobility.

*Geo Moon is currently an MA Candidate in English Literature at Seoul National University. Geo graduated from Seoul National University with a major in English Literature and a minor in Aesthetics. Her undergraduate thesis focused on diasporic immigrant identities, and she is interested in continuing to study cosmopolitan diasporic, cross-cultural identities in postcolonial literature. She is also interested in posthumanism, feminism and queer theory.*

## The Third World Woman in Southeast Asian Rape-Revenge Films

*Phoebe Pua*

*National University of Singapore*

In this paper, I explore a small but significant group of Southeast Asian films that tell rape-revenge stories and consider them collectively as a point of entry into conceiving a regional feminist identity. I begin with a brief survey that traces cinematic iterations of the rape-revenge genre as seen in Southeast Asia from the 1970s onward. Following this, I discuss how powerful women are framed in the contemporary period with a focus on three films: Nan Achnas's *Whispering Sands* (Indonesia, 2001), Bui Kim Quy's *The Inseminator* (Vietnam, 2014), and Mouly Surya's *Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts* (Indonesia, 2017). Despite being produced in different spatio-temporal contexts, the three films present similar experiences of rural womanhood that is repeatedly subjected to sexual violence. Evidently, Southeast Asian filmmakers especially (and counterintuitively) women continue to find currency in the Third World woman figure. Interestingly, this goes against the grain of third wave feminist discourse which, since the late 1980s, has cautioned against ratifying the rhetoric of female victimhood as the second wave had previously done. Paying attention to the films' formal qualities, such as their experimentation with chronology and expressionist elements, I argue that Southeast Asian rape-revenge films offer a way to clarify feminist debates. I demonstrate this by reading the films alongside Gloria Anzaldúa's conception of the new *mestiza*, a hybridized feminist identity premised on shifting borders, and ultimately propose that—consciously or not—these films and their filmmakers have created a new mythic hero whom I term 'She of Borderlands'.

*Phoebe Pua is a doctoral candidate at the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore. Her research is concerned with cinematic representations of Third World womanhood and considers their aesthetic and political implications for feminist theorizing. Phoebe also works on topics relating to gender, sexuality, and race in popular culture and has published writing on the James Bond film series in *Feminist Media Studies*, *Language in Society*, and *Discourse, Context, and Media*. She has contributed to the online film magazine *fourbythree* and the *Asian Film Archive's Reframe* series.*

## Space, Materiality and Reflexivity in Instagram Posts

*Gloria Dou*

*The University of Hong Kong*

In mediated discourse analysis, semiotic resources are cultural tools for people to assume certain social identities and undertake certain social actions (Norris & Jones, 2005). The pictures we share on social media can be taken as semiotic aggregates (Scollon, 2003) within which discourse cycles overlap and interweave. In the meantime, these images are a kind of material presence or semiotic artifacts emplaced in the online space and the physical space in which they are produced and circulated. Considering what Spitzmüller (2015) terms “semiotification of space”, Instagramming is a social practice where people create meanings, identities and relationships in their space(s) by appropriating different semiotic resources. The posts thus possess the capacity to index certain individual identities and power relations. Following Albawardi and Jones (2018), this study regards Instagramming as a kind of “placemaking” and analyzes Instagram posts in terms of their physical space, screen space, embodied space, social space, and cultural space. Close examination of these posts and interview data demonstrate the metapragmatic awareness and self-reflexivity of these Instagram users, who are typically young people in this study. Their Instagramming practice is both material and ideological, and their posts are commodities with both symbolic and potential market value in the era of neoliberalism and mediatization.

*Gloria Dou obtained her undergraduate degree in English Studies with First Class Honors from City University of Hong Kong, and Master of Arts in Linguistics from the Chinese University of Hong Kong with a concentration in Bilingualism and Language Acquisition. She has worked as a research assistant in Hong Kong, Beijing and Michigan on a range of topics in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. Her interests involve multimodality, social semiotics and mediated discourse analysis. Her current research project explores the convergence of signs, space, social actors and ideology in Instagram.*

“I felt like a Global Citizen”: Constructing the Mobile Singaporean Voluntourist in Travel Narratives

*Vincent Pak*

*National University of Singapore*

As a country blessed with tremendous economic growth and an increasingly prominent international presence, Singapore is no stranger to transnational geographical movements, including the form of volunteer tourism, or voluntourism. Particularly, voluntourism as a form of mobility is popular amongst Singaporean youth at the secondary and tertiary levels, and has emerged in the form of Overseas Community Involvement Programmes (OCIP), organised by locally well-known public institutions. This study investigates voluntourism activity directed by a local university in Singapore. The phenomenological experience of participating in the programme is captured in the form of reflective journals and blog entries online, where the voluntourist often reports attaining a sense of achievement and personal development after completing the programme. Using Cresswell’s (2010) notion of a politics of mobility and a narrative analysis and visual semiotics approach, this paper argues for “Mobility as liberty, mobility as progress” (p. 21) in the context of young Singaporean voluntourists. Critically, I venture that the participants’ travel narratives evinces a rather narrowly focused collaborative effort between their transnational mobilities and the subsequent post-trip journaling to construct a neoliberal, globalised, and philanthropic identity, in relation to the underprivileged subject at the heart of such programmes. The visual semiotics of the accompanying photographs complement the narrative analysis to underscore the identity construction strategies opted by the voluntourist in crafting a coherent representation of themselves online. Such an identity is deemed to be culturally valuable, and very much in congruence with the Government’s globalisation project.

*Vincent Pak is in his first year of his PhD candidacy in English Language and Linguistics, based at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore. Like his undergraduate thesis, his doctoral research is in the field of language, gender, and sexuality; specifically, the relationship between queer lives and religious discourse in contemporary Singapore. His academic interests include queer and feminist theories, as well as scholarship within sociology and philosophy. His dog, Summer, is the love of his life.*

## Unnatural and Inevitable: Home in Elizabeth Bishop's Poetry

*Jahyeon Kwon*

*Seoul National University*

Elizabeth Bishop states that “writing poetry is an unnatural act, it takes great skill to make it seem natural” and that the poet’s object is “to convince himself . . . that what he’s saying is really an inevitable, only natural way of behaving under the circumstances.” This idea of writing as an “unnatural” but “inevitable, only natural way of behaving” significantly overlaps with her idea of home. Bishop’s travel poems question the given concept of home and show that the concept is an unnatural, constructed one. At the same time, Bishop keenly insists that home-building is inevitable. Tellingly, her active reconstruction of home goes along with her construction of literary space. Bishop often technically highlights that her poem is a built artifact, thereby examining the concept of ‘writing as a space.’ This article focuses on how Bishop revises the modern cosmopolitan ideal of “life dedicated to recognition and writing.” Bishop uses her poem as a solid structure to contain the sensory impressions, but never asserts that its cognitive and universal power can replace the actual journey of travelling. By casting questions or understating a phenomenon, Bishop implies that what a text can do for life and traveling is to reveal that it cannot vie with them. This textual self-deconstruction and self-reflection creates Bishop’s postmodern poetics.

*Jahyeon Kwon is a first-year PhD student in English Literature Department at Seoul National University. Her research interest centers around women’s life-writing and autobiography, female subjectivity. Her master’s thesis analyzed how Heloise, Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, and Margery Kempe employ self-narratives to negotiate language and authority vis-à-vis the male-dominated, misogynist literary tradition of the high and late Middle Ages. In addition to her research, Kwon loves to travel around and write personal essays.*

### **Gender and Sexuality**

As a principle of social organisation, Salvatore Cucchiari (1981) writes, gender is historically relative: ‘although the gender system has biological referents or markers, in no way is it determined or made inevitable by those sexual markers’. Despite its illegitimacy, ‘genderless human organization cannot be observed in either present or historical ethnography’, because, in the same way as class and ethnicity, gender distinctions have become an element that determines social hierarchies. Language and literature, art and sociology can offer a fruitful perspective on the way societies and cultures are affected by gender stereotypes: whether they consciously or unconsciously support them, or as witnesses they point out their unjustness. This panel investigates the social construction of gender and sexuality across different societies and cultural groups, questions the legitimacy of heteronormative and male-oriented social structures, and takes a longitudinal perspective to look at feminisms throughout history and global location. It further inspects alternative social configurations, considering historical, linguistic and literary rescriptings of the roles, narratives and possibilities of gender and the ways in which counter-culture and alternative narratives can subvert this dominant order.

On Politics of Traumas in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*  
*Yuhsuan Shen*  
*National Taiwan University*

Doris Lessing's first novel *The Grass is Singing* (1950) revolves around the story of Mary Turner, a white woman murdered by her houseboy Moses in Southern Rhodesia. Through depicting Mary's life, marriage, and relationship with the natives, Lessing demonstrates the tensions in class, gender, and race. Although many critics notice that Mary suffers from her childhood memory and inevitably repeats her mother's life, no one has yet to apply the concept of trauma to analyze Mary's repetition compulsion. Since Mary is simultaneously a victim and perpetrator, I believe that examining her traumas can help readers understand how her traumatic repetition is induced by social structures, and how her traumas can expose the problems of the patriarchal colonial society. Therefore, this paper aims to examine Mary's traumas through Freudian psychoanalysis and to explore the politics of traumas by investigating how Mary's repetition compulsion relates to gender inequality and race discrimination in Southern Rhodesia, and what are the ethics of Lessing's depiction of Mary's traumas. This paper is divided into three parts. The first part will discuss how major psychoanalysts, including Freud, Lacan, Žižek, and Cathy Caruth, establish their notions of traumas. In the second part, through analyzing Mary's childhood, marriage, dreams, and her breakdowns, I will elucidate Mary's traumatic repetition revealed in her fate neurosis, nightmares, and symptoms. The last part of the paper will take Caruth's ideas to explore the ethical connection between traumas and the society by contextualizing the novel within Lessing's biographies and the sociohistorical background of Southern Rhodesia. By carefully examining Mary's repetition compulsion in *The Grass is Singing*, the paper hopes to tease out the politics of traumas with respect to patriarchy and colonialism.

*Yuhsuan Shen is a second year MA student in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures in the National Taiwan University. She holds a bachelor's degree in Department of English and Teacher Education Program from National Chengchi University. Her research project focuses on psychoanalysis, trauma studies, and Doris Lessing's novels.*

Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants: A Portrait of the Wretched Mother*

*July Ban*

*Seoul National University*

From 1792 to 1793, the French Revolution became more and more radical. In this period, many British intellectuals withdrew their support for the Revolution due to its accelerating cruelty and violence. Even though they changed their mind, the progress of the Revolution and its by-products were still a matter of great interest to them. The emigration of the French nobility was one of the hot-button issues in England because many French emigrants were wandering around the coastline of Britain. People in Britain were not fond of these emigrants by regarding them as a symbol of deep rooted corruption in France. Charlotte Smith, one of the major female poets in late 18 century, wrote a long blank verse poem about these "hopeless, houseless, friendless" French emigrants while she was living for a while on Brighthelmstone which was a boarding point for boats traveling to France from the 1760s. In *The Emigrants*, Smith represented Brighthelmstone as a complicated border since to British poet herself, it was the border of her own country; to the French emigrants, it was the place beyond the border. This paper focuses on the description of the wretched mother figure in *The Emigrants*. Among many emigrant figures that Smith described, the mother figure is painted in the most detail. By portraying this mother figure, Smith brings out the mingled question about race, class, and gender. The French mother reclining against the British seashore cliff lost her identity as "French" and "nobility" by fleeing from her own country. However, the duty as a mother remains since she is with her children. This paper will argue that Smith is using the foreign wretched mother figure to understand and explain her labor as a mother which not only matters in the space but also the public space. Unlike the contemporary Wollstonecraft, Smith shows her vindications of a woman by drawing idealized mother. This study examines *The Emigrants* and also the sonnets, letters, and illustration related to female exile to construct a narrative of Smith's Republican perspective of performing a role as a mother in the French Revolution period.

*July Ban is a first-year Ph.D. student specializing in Romantic poetry. She just received her M.A. in English literature from SNU in August 2019. Her thesis is titled "Wandering Mothers: A Study of Charlotte Smith and William Wordsworth's Mother Speaker." Her current interests lie in French Revolutionary presswork including poems, novels, political pamphlets, and illustrations. Her critical interests include the late eighteenth century English literature and women's writing.*

Beyond the Separate Spheres: Intermediate Ground in Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South

*Anneliese Ng*

*University of Hong Kong*

In Victorian Britain, philanthropy was one of the few ways respectable women could participate in contemporary issues. By paying home visits to the working-class and demonstrating sympathy, middle-class women assuaged class tensions brought on by industrial capitalism. While these “friendly visitations” were regarded as a natural extension of the sympathetic, maternal nature of the female sex, they also complicated Victorian gender ideology. What they break down are not merely class barriers, but also the boundary enshrined in the separate spheres ideology that encloses the private sphere of home – where Victorian women belong – from the public sphere of politics and economics. Female philanthropy thus represents an intermediate ground between the private and public spheres, a new terrain that enables women’s public engagement. The emergence of this spatiality testifies to women’s widening sphere of influence. My paper examines the significance of this intermediate ground created by the heroine Margaret Hale’s charitable visits in *North and South* (1854). Her home visits to working-class characters embody reflection on two dominant attitudes in Victorian culture. They evolve from the paternalist and condescending spirit under which philanthropic visits are usually carried out. Second, they express a communal vision and a social commitment that challenges the cash nexus in capitalist society where people and classes connect to each other only in economic terms, with social duty and moral obligation receding from view. My paper explicates on how this intermediate ground, called the social sphere, enables the middleclass heroine to intervene in class dispute and asserts a woman’s place in patriarchal society. More importantly, her home visits anticipate the capitalist John Thornton’s participation in the social sphere. This new site becomes where Thornton and his workers interact unfettered by the separate spheres that depersonalize their interaction. Philanthropy in *North and South* not only represents women’s negotiation with gender ideology; it models a new form of interaction for industrial relations that undermines class line.

*Anneliese Ng is a Master of Philosophy student at the University of Hong Kong. She is currently researching sympathy in Elizabeth Gaskell’s social-problem novels.*

Women Who Fail in Love: Augusta Webster's "Circe" and "Medea in Athens," and Amy Levy's "Xantippe"

*Annie Hojung Hwang*

*Seoul National University*

Taught from a young age that her sole purpose in life is to grow up and become a wife then a mother, the Victorian woman cannot be discussed outside the context of heterosexual love and marriage. Late-nineteenth-century writers Augusta Webster and Amy Levy grappled with this issue of women's worth being inextricably tied to gendered, societal conventions in their poetry. Augusta Webster's "Medea in Athens" and "Circe" and Amy Levy's "Xantippe" all center around Greek female figures who, regardless of their stations of mythological power or intellectual ambition, are bound to the limiting discourse and circumstances of Victorian women's roles. Instead of employing the standard lyric or sonnet associated with the topic of love, Webster and Levy use the form of the dramatic monologue, giving their speakers free reign to express their opinions, unsentimental and politicized at parts, and to defend themselves against their infamous reputations for being cruel, dangerous, or nagging women. By contextualizing the three monologues with contemporary writings, this paper will examine how Webster and Levy use the masks of Greek female speakers to simultaneously adopt and subvert the language of Victorian gender and marriage ideology and attribute the speakers' negative reputations to the fault of the men in their society.

*Annie Hojung Hwang is a first-year MA student in the Department of English Language and Literature at Seoul National University. Her current research interests center around exophonic English literature and poetry.*

The Pleasures of Fricative Sounds in Hsia Yu's Salsa and Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons

*Constance Hsu*

*National Taiwan University*

Although they compose poetry in different times and different tongues, poets Gertrude Stein and Hsia Yu both utilize innovative linguistic devices that challenge poetic conventions, transgress traditional semantic process, and empower unofficial discourses. Past critics have established how the excessive sound in Stein's work promote pun-generation, collaborative reading, multi-perspectivism, and engages in non-coercive persuasion. Hsia has stated that she enjoys experimenting with the sonorities and semantics of language by "letting words collide with each other, producing new sounds". This paper examines the effects of sound in poems from Hsia Yu's Salsa (2000) and Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons (1914), tracing how they both promote a collaborative, creative, and embodied semantic vision by encouraging the reader to sound out the poem. A comparison of the innovative sonic strategies in these poems reveals how Stein's and Hsia's projects to break free of the static confines of traditional phallogocentric semantics share commonalities beyond feminism. On a fundamental level of language, their experiments with sound connect Anglophone modernist poetry and contemporary Chinese poetry, opening future research avenues into the resurgence of sound and embodied reader experience in poetry as a global phenomenon.

*Constance Hsu is a MA student at the department of foreign languages and literature, National Taiwan University. She is interested in Modernist literature, sound, punctuation, and world poetry.*

Emily's "Aventure of Love": Patriarchy, Amazon, and the Consolation of Love in Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*

*Seonoh Kim*

*Seoul National University*

Since Charles Muscatine's influential criticism, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* has been primarily understood within the narrative framework of "the struggle between noble designs and chaos." This opposition between order and disorder, "destynee" and "aventure" also extends to that of Theseus's patriarchal control and the Amazonian female. While Theseus's attempt to maintain the ever-shifting world within his grasp remains precarious, his conquest of the female stays firm and secure. Despite Emily the Amazonian princess's wish to remain a virgin, Theseus, himself wedded to the captive queen Hippolyta, arranges a marriage between Emily and one of her admirers. The Knight claims the final control over her desire and contains it within the scenario of heterosexual courtship and love by concluding that that "Emelye hym loveth so tenderly" (3103). However, Emily, initially represented as the female other of the male discourse, seems to develop a curious self-awareness during her prayer in Diana's temple: Emily's "destynee" (2323) of marriage and "aventure of love" (2357), or lack thereof, are inseparable rather than opposite, since the latter will always be contained within the former under Theseus's patriarchal control over the female. As Emily submits to the inevitable, she reveals that her marriage and love serve as a mediation between the "aventure" and "destinee" ordained by the Prime Mover; that Theseus's idea of the "noble design" opposing the "chaos" is contingent upon the female compulsory heterosexuality it needs to produce.

*Seonoh Kim is a PhD student in the Department of English Language and Literature at Seoul National University. She wrote her Master's thesis on the construction of the female subjectivity in the medieval romance, where she suggests that the medieval courtly romance is contingent on its construction of the female heterosexual subjects. Currently, she is interested in historicizing the female heterosexual subjectivity in Middle English literature and understanding it within a broader historical context. She presented at the Coalition of English Departments in Asia in 2018 with her paper "Pornography, Subversion, and the Ethics of the Male Gaze in Chan-Wook Park's The Handmaiden".*

**Speech In Society: The Multivalent Lives of Utterances**

Discourse, write Coupland and Jaworski (2014), is ‘language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order’. Its study comprises a host of practices, strategies and disciplines that continue to evolve and to be internally re-structured, yielding a critical field that affords insights into how society is produced and maintained. From conversational analysis to work in multimodality, from pragmatics to theoretical formulations, numerous approaches demonstrate how language can at once index individual identity and fortify assemblages of power. This panel seeks to create linkages across different approaches to language, investigating how the study of speech, in verbal and written utterances and in the absence of each, can generate insights into social class, cultural affiliation, gender and sexuality, commodification and ideology.

## Crossing and Categorisation in Online Videos

*Kelvin Wong*

*National University of Singapore*

In their investigation of identities and practices in borderland communities, Wilson and Donnan (1998) argue that state borders remain an important point of reference in the corroboration of the nation-state narrative, even though they no longer fulfil their historical role in regulating the movement of people, goods and ideas. In sociolinguistics, the notion of “crossing” (Rampton, 1995) refers to the use of linguistic forms associated with a social group to which the speaker does not affiliate. It indexes an act of boundary transgression, and calls into question the symbolic borders that organise people into separate categories. This paper thereby explores the interrelation between crossing and categorisation, not just on an international level, but across multiple scale-levels. The analysis draws on two video clips produced by Hong Kong-based grassroots media channels. It first examines the way explicit commentary and stylisation of named varieties invoke and reinforce existent linguistic boundaries, and how this manipulation of linguistic differences constitutes part of a larger project of social differentiation. It then considers the appropriation of other representations for self-identity management. The distinctiveness afforded by these resources is central to the construction of locality and the taking of an elitist position (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2009), allowing for the anchoring of the self in an increasingly globalised semiotic landscape.

*Kelvin Wong studies sociolinguistics at National University of Singapore. He is interested in language variation in the media, as well as language ideology and policy in education.*

## Stereotypical Dialects in Zootopia and its Implications

*Seogyeong Choi*

*Seoul National University*

This study deals with the use of linguistic stereotypes associated with major English dialects, both regional and social, focusing mainly on their phonetic aspects. It investigates whether stereotypes toward certain ethnic or regional group are portrayed through the usage of those dialects. To achieve such goal this study presents an analysis of behavioral representation of character and English dialect in children's animated movies. Specifying the scope, it aims to look at the use of accents in Disney's Zootopia, an original children's animated movie released in 2016. Zootopia is made with animal characters that do not give away factual representation, so it is possible to give more weight to the link between the characters' accents and the social stereotypes associated with them. The use of accents in this movie is probably intentional, and although the director intended to get rid of those stereotypes as much as possible, we can still see remaining prejudices aligned with ethnic minority characters. This research is not only significant in terms of figuring out the association between English dialects and the stereotypes they reflect, but also because these animated movies target children. Such deeply rooted stereotypes may heavily influence young children in adopting negative attitudes towards people who possess the accents portrayed. It will also touch upon the pedagogy of the relationship between this type of media and its dialectal portrayal.

*Seogyeong Choi is currently a Master's student in English Language and Literature at Seoul National University. She obtained a BA in Hispanic Language and Literature and English Language and Literature at the same school. She is interested in accented speech recognition and processing, with a focus on Spanish-accented English.*

The Potential of Language Objects: The Stylization and Display of Neoliberal Ideology in a Neon Sign

*Andre Theng*

*The University of Hong Kong*

Neon signs have functioned as symbols of urban modernity (Ribbat, 2013) and they have become part of the visual culture and landscape of global cities (Lou, 2016). They have also been stylized (Bauman & Briggs, 1990) in the form of art pieces, with artists using neon as an artistic medium of expression. In this paper, I consider one particular “language object”, (Jaworski, 2015) a neon sign found in an upmarket coffee shop in Singapore. I suggest that this sign which is part of the décor of a high-end coffee shop in Singapore, is a stylization of neon signs as found in both urban landscapes and art galleries and that it takes on new meaning when emplaced in elite spaces of consumption. Following Park’s (2016) enumeration of the ideology of language as “pure potential”, I suggest that such neon signs are not merely aphorismic decor but a means to reproduce neoliberal ideology disguised as a styling resource. Language objects have the ability to encode and propagate neoliberal ideas of individual agency, success and the turning of everyday activities into “projects” (Dunn, 2014), furthering the myth of language as pure potential. Instead of the transformation promised by these language objects, they in fact obscure the inequalities brought about by neoliberalism as the social embeddedness of language is downplayed. I argue that such signs are not merely decorative but contain meaning potential to further the identity construction of these coffee shops as upmarket spaces of consumption for an elite clientele.

*Andre Theng is completing his MPhil at the School of English, The University of Hong Kong where he is working on a sociolinguistics project on the semiotics of artisanal coffee with Professor Adam Jaworski. Previously, he completed a Bachelor of Arts with Honours at the Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore. His honours thesis was a variation study on attitudes to languages in the Singapore university context, supervised by Dr Rebecca Starr.*

Towards Sinophone Dance Training: Theorizing the 'Phone' in Sinophone

*Elizabeth Chan*

*National University of Singapore*

My research project seeks to highlight the multiple construction processes of 'Chineseness' which do not seamlessly adhere to that of the People's Republic of China's national Chinese dance. As an anti-hegemonic project, I find resonance in Shih Shu-mei's notion of the Sinophone and posit that Chinese dance training in the places of Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan should be devised with a Sinophone awareness, due to their unique historical, political and sociocultural circumstances. Using a combination of kinesthetic ethnography, critical historiography and practice-based research, my research draws upon scholars of Chineseness studies (Rey Chow, Shih Shu-mei), critical dance historiography (Chen Yaping, Emily Wilcox) and critical ethnography (Brenda Farnell, Georgiana Gore and Sansan Kwan) as well as my own experience as a practitioner with ten years of experience in the genre of Chinese dance. My project looks at the dance training processes of various dance companies and universities in Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, focusing on how their understanding of performing Chineseness – or, in some cases, Sinophone-ness – is constructed both through verbal articulation and embodied performance from teacher to student in the dance studio. In this presentation, I want to discuss the role of language in dance training. By language I mean the Sinitic terminology inherent in the transmission of the Chinese dance genre, as well as 'traditional' methods of transmission. If Chinese dance was first institutionalized as a national dance genre, and its discourse is heavily centred around the hegemonic Mandarin language of the Han Chinese, how can we move beyond, or make use of this to develop a more nuanced understanding of Sinophone performance and to resist the core-periphery notions of Chineseness through practice?

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**Borderscapes: Land, Crossings and Ecology**

According to Johan Schimanski (2015), 'the borderscape concept is a way of thinking about the border and the bordering process not only on the border, but also beyond the line of the border; beyond the border as a place, beyond the landscape through which the border runs, and beyond borderlands with their territorial contiguities to the border'. This panel explores the idea of the border and the history behind border establishments in dialogue with humanity's shifting relationship to the earth, as the Anthropocene edges the world's organisms into a new and unprecedented stage of dangerous mutability. Though migration movements and geopolitical conflicts have long destabilized the hard border of the nation-state, climate change is already accelerating the scale of each. As shorelines are swallowed up by rising seas and intemperate weather, arid zones become desert and the air in cities increasingly unbreathable, the space for human life is shrinking. More than any precedent, the twenty-first century will bear witness to the greatest unsettling of borders, inviting us to reconsider the idea of confines and delimitations.

Traversing (Post)Colonial Heterotopias: Opium, Empire, and Border-Crossing in  
Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

*Ning Lee*

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This paper explores the condition of cross-border possibilities across the Indian Ocean in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, which takes place within the unsettled colonizer-colonized relationship between England and India upon the impending First Opium War. Presenting through a wide range of interconnected subaltern characters, the novel shows how cross-border encounters disrupt the rigid categories of gender, race and class that the British Empire imposed on India across intermixing "heterotopias." Extending Michel Foucault's notion of the colony as an extreme heterotopia, an imagined space Other, this paper will claim how India in *Sea of Poppies* in fact becomes a space of multiple distributed heterotopias, where order, power, and discipline are arranged in factory, prison, and ship. Beyond the geographical border of the colony then situates layers of other constructed borders in such heterotopias. The paper will then argue how within intermixing heterotopias, opium in its cultivation, production, and transportation allows Ghosh's characters to traverse, challenge, and further destabilize borders, where displacement is replaced with relocation, exclusion with intimacy. The paper also seeks to highlight cross-border encounters made possible in the novel as not a temporal experience but an ongoing process of reconfiguration, where categories of difference are continuously open to be contested across the Indian Ocean. By arguing such cross-border encounters, *Sea of Poppies* does not re-place India as an imagined space of heterotopias for the Empire at home but rewrite India as a real space of heterogeneity with flowing differences integrated across land, river, and ocean.

*Ning Lee is a first-year master student studying in the Graduate Institute of Foreign Languages and Literatures in National Taiwan University. Her research interests include postcolonial studies, race and ethnicity studies, contemporary literary theory, and twentieth-century American fiction.*

San1 Nin4/Shōgatsu: trans-cultural spatial discourse of ‘New Year’ in Hong Kong  
*Jasper Zhao Zhen Wu & Andre Theng*  
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The ‘New Year’ is the ‘crossing’ (Rampton, 2007) from one year to another, and many cultures have maintained certain ‘New Year’ customs that mark their cultural identity. In metropolitan contexts, however, the exclusivity of cultural markers is often challenged by the hybridity of trans-cultural practices as a result of the mobility of forms. Through a ‘semiotic landscape’ (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010) approach, this paper explores tensions in the trans-cultural representation and performativity of ‘Lunar New Year’ in Hong Kong as seen through the example of a Chinese/Japanese Lunar New Year display at a middle-high end shopping centre where data consisting of images and videos was collected in January and February 2019. We observe ways in which (traditional) Chinese and Japanese elements are juxtaposed in the display design of the festival. We argue that the seeming semiotic incoherence of the trans-cultural spatial discourses displace the assumed Chinese cultural frame and transform ‘Lunar New Year’ into a heterocultural concept in Hong Kong. Simultaneously, these discourses bring an elite (Thurlow and Jaworski 2017) effect when foreign forms are read as cosmopolitan especially given the prevalence of travel to Japan among Hong Kongers. The semiotic choices in the marketing of Lunar New Year reveals ideological stances towards the currency of cultural forms present in the display and demonstrate ways in which upwardly mobile aspirations are realised. The fluidity of Hong Kong Chinese cultural identity is thus evident in the ‘contact zone’ (Pratt, 1991) of the mall display.

*Jasper Zhao Zhen Wu is a current teaching/research assistant at the University of Hong Kong. He completed his MPhil in 2018 under the supervision of Professor Christopher Hutton and Dr. Olga Zayts on the discursive processes of community formation in a recent political movement in Hong Kong. The project investigates these processes through the dimensions of spatial territorialisation, communities of practice, and affective community. Wu is now working on further projects related to community formation and territorialisation. He is also working on projects on social mental health. Wu is broadly interested in the intersections between social theories and sociolinguistics.*

*Andre Theng is completing his MPhil at the School of English, The University of Hong Kong, where he is working on a sociolinguistics project on the semiotics of artisanal coffee with Professor Adam Jaworski. Previously, he completed a Bachelor of Arts with Honours at the Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore. His honours thesis was a variation study on attitudes to languages in the Singapore university context, supervised by Dr Rebecca Starr.*

Investigating the Feeling Animal: A social semiotic approach to multimodality and affect in *Our Planet* (2019)

*Christian Go*

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One genre that has strongly influenced representations of animals are nature documentaries. These are of particular interest as there is a ‘presumption of objectivity’ underlying nature documentaries that allows them to occupy a privileged space in relation to truth claims about wildlife (MacDonald 2006: 5). However, Corner (2005) notes that nature documentaries also make use of strategies that stimulate a sense of spectacle when representing wildlife. The current study examines the documentary series *Our Planet* (2019) and the manner in which affect mediates the representation of wildlife. Using a social semiotic approach to multimodality (Kress 2010), the study argues that the use of lexical choices, imagery and music function to anthropomorphize animals as affective subjects. That is, the documentary series invites audiences to construct animals not just as agentive non-humans but also as beings that undergo affective experiences and states. In doing so, the documentary functions as a powerful affective encounter to forward an environmental conservationist ideology. A crucial implication that arises from this affective representation of wildlife is commodification of affect vis-à-vis environmental discourses in media texts. The study argues that affective conceptions of animals within nature documentaries may be an alternative way of engaging with conventional representations of animals.

*Christian Go is a PhD student at the National University of Singapore. His research interests fall under language and sexuality and linguistic anthropology. His current research is on linguistic landscapes, specifically how notions of affect and sexuality are embedded in social movements.*

Bioregional Imagination to Address Climate Crises: Myth, Ritual and Reality at the Bengal Frontier

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For the people living at the Bengal frontier near the Bay of Bengal and the mangrove forest Sundarbans, the impact of climate change calls for the revisiting of a local repository of wisdom that they have been sharing among themselves for centuries. Though separated by a littoral borderline in the forest, the unique geographical location and ecological characteristics of the area create a similar sense of place among the residents of the southwestern Bangladesh and Indian West Bengal region. Moreover, an indigenous mythical tradition that supplies a local pantheon of gods and goddesses, coupled with diverse genres of contemporary literary and cultural productions, permeates a performative living experience for all who reside here and form a bioregional imagination that speaks to particular facets of a global ecological imbalance and climate crisis in the area. Hit by agents of ecological disaster like regular cyclones, gradual rise of sea level, extreme salinity, extravagant development projects and reckless accumulation of forest and aquatic resources, the Sundarbans has already suffered a number of species extinctions, even as local myths have long emphasized co-existence and co-emergence. Employing the concept of critical bioregionalism vis-à-vis global climate crises, this paper aims to explore how literary and cultural productions attempt to connect myth, ritual and reality to give rise to a posthuman consciousness and foster a sense of a place that enables humans to think and act compassionately toward the ecology of that place.

*Monirul Huq grew up in Khulna, a city in southern Bangladesh adjacent to the mangrove forest the Sundarbans and the Bay of Bengal. He is an Assistant Professor (on study leave) in English Discipline at Khulna University, Bangladesh and currently a PhD student in the School of English at The University of Hong Kong, where he is working on his dissertation titled "Indigenous Myth as a Counternarrative to Ecological Crises: The Example of the Sundarbans". He has contributed to the collections *The Great War and Our Mindscapes: Centenary Essays* (2017) and *Translation Studies: Exploring Identities* (2015).*