

# INTERMEDIA/INTERARTS WORKSHOP 2

## Exchanging Chinese Cultures

TUESDAY 3rd MAY 2022  
MINGHELLA STUDIOS, UNIVERSITY OF READING, WHITEKNIGHTS CAMPUS  
SHINFIELD ROAD, RG6 6BT, READING, UK  
Sponsored by the British Council  
Under the aegis of the UK-China Humanities Alliance (UKCHA)

### PROGRAMME

#### MORNING

The Studio Space 102

##### 10:30 Welcome Address

Prof. Lúcia Nagib (University of Reading)

##### Introduction to Workshop

Dr Mark Player (University of Reading)

##### 11:00 Phantasmagorical Realism in Bi Gan's Long Day's Journey into Night

Prof. Cecília Mello (University of São Paulo)

##### 11:45 Intermedial Laughter: Hou Baolin and the Crosstalk Film in Mao's China

Dr Xiaoning Lu (SOAS)

Green Room

##### 12:30 Lunch Break

#### AFTERNOON

The Studio Space 102

##### 14:00 'Intermediality as Method': Intercultural Modernity and *Jingju* in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Dr Ashley Thorpe (Royal Holloway, University of London)

##### 14:45 The Translational Imagination: Reading the Work of Xiaolu Guo

Dr Fiona Doloughan (The Open University)

Green Room

##### 15:30 Tea Break

The Cinema

##### 16:00 Film Screening: *She a Chinese*, directed by Xiaolu Guo (2009, 99 minutes).

Followed by Q&A with Xiaolu Guo, chaired by Hsin Hsieh (University of Reading)

Green Room

##### 18:30 Wine Reception, launch of the BC-funded project '(Re)connecting Research in China'

Department of Film,  
Theatre & Television



# INTERMEDIA/INTERARTS WORKSHOP 2

3 MAY 2022 | 10.30am - 6.30pm | MINGHELLA STUDIOS

# EXCHANGING CHINESE CULTURES

A one-day workshop  
that explores cross-cultural  
and interdisciplinary exchanges  
between Chinese film,  
theatre and literature.

## SPEAKERS

### PROF. CECÍLIA MELLO

University of São Paulo  
Phantasmagorical Realism in Bi Gan's  
*Long Day's Journey Into Night*

### DR. XIAONING LU

SOAS, University of London  
Intermedial Laughter: Hou Baolin  
and the Crosstalk Film in Mao's China

### DR. ASHLEY THORPE

Royal Holloway, University of London  
'Intermediality as Method':  
Intercultural Modernity and *Jingju* in  
the Twentieth and Twenty-First  
Centuries

### DR. FIONA DOLOUGHAN

The Open University  
The Translational Imagination: Reading  
the Work of Xiaolu Guo

## SCREENING

### *She, A Chinese*

(Xiaolu Guo, 2009)

FOLLOWED BY Q&A WITH

### XIAOLU GUO (Online)

Novelist, Memoirist & Filmmaker

Booking is free but  
essential. To book your  
place, please visit:

[intermediainterarts2.eventbrite.com](https://intermediainterarts2.eventbrite.com)

for in-person or online attendance

Image Credit: *She, A Chinese* (2009)

Convened by  
Dr. Mark Player, Hsin Hsieh

General Supervision by  
Prof. Lúcia Nagib

Generously supported by



UK-China Humanities Alliance (UKCHA)

## ABOUT XIAOLU GUO

**Xiaolu Guo** was born in 1973 and raised in a fishing village in Zhejiang Province, China. She studied at the Beijing Film Academy and at the UK National Film & Television School, and is currently a Visiting Professor for the Department of Comparative Literature at Freie Universität, Berlin. She has directed several films which have gone on to win prestigious awards. *How Is Your Fish Today?* was in the Official Selection at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and received the Grand Jury Prize at the 2007 Créteil International Women's Film Festival in Paris. Her feature film *She, a Chinese* premiered at the 2009 Locarno International Film Festival where it took the highest Golden Leopard prize. Guo has also written over ten books and short story collections, most recently *A Lover's Discourse* (2020).

## ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

### Phantasmagorical Realism in Bi Gan's *Long Day's Journey into Night* Cecília Mello

My talk will investigate Bi Gan's film *Long Day's Journey into Night* (China, 2018) from the point of view of its at once realist and phantasmagorical aesthetics. The film belongs to a larger trend in contemporary East Asian and Latin American cinemas that incorporates elements of the magical and the phantasmagorical into an aesthetics of realism, alluding to the experience of fear in Latin American cities, marked by social violence, and to the fears and tensions that emerge from unresolved political traumas in East Asian countries, both past and present. As a result, films from both regions open themselves up to the intersection of different temporalities: the present of phenomenological reality; the layers of the past and the realm of memory that belongs to the time of posthumous presences; and the strange occurrences that may belong to the future. As I will argue, Bi Gan's film is exemplary of this trend and derives its complex structure from a fruitful intermedial relationship with literature, sharing narrative strategies and aesthetic resources with Latin American magical realism as well as China's classical novel *The Story of Stone*. The film's 'magical' or 'haunted' dimension signals a mistrust in tandem with what Thomas Elsaesser has called "post-epistemological ontology", and what I term 'phantasmagorical realism'.

**Cecília Mello** is Professor of Film at the Department of Film, Radio and Television, University of São Paulo, Brazil, and currently Visiting Fellow at King's College London. She is the author of *The Cinema of Jia Zhangke: Realism and Memory in Chinese Film* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019 - Honourable Mention for the 2020 Award for Best Monograph, British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies).

### Intermedial Laughter: Hou Baolin and the Crosstalk Film in Mao's China Xiaoning Lu

Comedy film in the early PRC is a site of negotiation and contestation. In order to tease out an innovative strand of comic filmmaking during the Mao era, this paper shifts the analytical perspective from a diachronic inquiry into medium-specific questions to a synchronic consideration of the links and tensions between parallel cultural practices in 1950s China. In particular, it turns attention to the intersection of and interaction between cinema and the traditional Chinese performing art of crosstalk (xiangsheng) in the mid-1950s. Through a case study of the comedy film of 1956, *Wandering in the Zoo, Awakening from a Dream*, which stars the well-known crosstalk duo of Hou Baolin and Guo Qiru, the paper illustrates how the interplay of crosstalk and film transfigured each of the two media, increased much of the viewing pleasure of this film, and provided an understanding of the specificities of both crosstalk and film. The creative experimentation of dynamical intermediality in *Wandering in the Zoo, Awakening from a Dream* demonstrates that laughter under Mao could be innovative and imaginative.

**Xiaoning Lu** is Reader in Modern Chinese Culture and Language at SOAS, University of London, where she teaches Chinese-language cinema and culture. Her research has been preoccupied with understanding the complex relationship between cultural production and state governance in modern China. She is the author of *Moulding the Socialist Subject: Cinema and Chinese Modernity 1949-1966* (Brill, 2020) and co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Communist Visual Cultures* (OUP, 2020). Her writings on various aspects of Chinese socialist cinema and culture have appeared in journals and edited collections including *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, *Chinese Film Stars* (Routledge, 2010), *Surveillance in Asian Cinema: Under Eastern Eyes* (Routledge, 2019) and *Maoist Laughter* (Hong Kong University Press, Choice's Outstanding Academic Title 2020).

### 'Intermediality as Method': Intercultural Modernity and *Jingju* in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries Ashley Thorpe

This paper advocates 'Intermediality as Method' for several reasons. Firstly, discussions of intermediality in Asian performance are, at least in the discipline of English-language theatre studies, virtually non-existent. Secondly, 'Intermediality as Method' offers the opportunity to recognise intermediality as a network of relations, where the crossing of communicative strategies between media expresses strategic geopolitical alliances, shapes perceptions of imagined community both within a nation and beyond into its wider region, but also marks the effects of political control and the agitational potency of its itinerancy. 'Intermediality as Method' thus invites the consideration of intermediality as connected to trans- and interculturalism, but between locations in proximity rather than between 'the East' and 'the West'. Accordingly, this paper will focus on the development of intermediality in Chinese *Jingju* (commonly translated as 'Beijing Opera') to challenge the dominant historical narrative that intermedial theatre practice is a predominantly Western phenomenon. It will argue that, as early as 1934, intermedial developments in *Jingju*, specifically through film, were conceived of as emerging from the theatricality of the form itself, implicitly challenging the primitivism accorded to *Jingju* by contemporaneous observers in the West (such as Eisenstein and Brecht). The adaptation of performances into film from 1949, as well as the inclusion of digital technology in twenty-first century projects, will demonstrate how 'Intermediality as Method' reveals the tensions between national and regional politics in this 'traditional' performance form from China.

**Ashley Thorpe** is a Senior Lecturer in Theatre in the Department of Drama, Theatre & Dance. He has published a total of seven books, most recently the edited collection of essays *Asian City Crossings: Pathways of Performance Through Hong Kong and Singapore* (Routledge, 2021) with Rossella Ferrari. He wrote, produced, directed, and performed the English-language nō *Emily* (Tara Arts, 2019) about the suffragette Emily Wilding Davison, which has since been translated into Japanese and Chinese. He is currently working on an edited volume of English-language nō texts and critical essays, as well as his third monograph exploring the construction of China as a political entity in twentieth century British playwrighting.

### The Translational Imagination: Reading the Work of Xiaolu Guo Fiona Doloughan

In this presentation I will discuss Guo's literary and cinematographic work through the prism of a broadly translational lens. In so doing I wish to point to a number of features of her work that emerge from and depend upon the resourceful deployment and creative interplay of culturally- and linguistically-mediated sets of narrative and semiotic resources. While acknowledging the different demands of filmmaking and novel writing, I shall demonstrate the extent to which Guo's body of work depends on various translational processes and a conscious interrogation of all kinds of borders.

**Fiona Doloughan** is Senior Lecturer in English (Literature and Creative Writing) at The Open University. She has published widely on aspects of contemporary narrative, producing two monographs (*Contemporary Narrative: Textual production, multimodality and multiliteracies* (2011) and *English as a Literature in Translation* (2016)) as well as several book chapters and articles. She has just completed a third monograph currently in peer review.