Arts and Philosophy PhD day
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Vrije Universiteit Brussel
U-Residence – Green Room

Policing mobility
Daily interactions between the Brussels police and 'marginal migrants', c. 1880-1914
Ayfer Erkul (PhD Candidate in History)
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Anne Winter
Session: Delving into the past

This project aims to investigate police practices of migration control in the city of Brussels during a period of profound urban change, intense mobility and increased efforts of social control. By investigating day-to-day practices of street-level policing together with the profiles of those subjected to this, we will analyse the extent to which markers of 'strangeness' resulted in differential treatment of certain migrant groups by the police, taking into account interactions with other markers such as age, gender or social class. Particular attention goes to police interactions with 'marginal migrants': mobile poor targeted by vagrancy legislation and other laws of social control. The central question is how the Brussels municipal police implemented the legal framework on mobility regulation that was enacted in the closing decades of the long nineteenth century and how this shaped their day-to-day relations with the urban population in general, and mobile groups in particular. Drawing on a broad range of police archives and using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, the project revolves around practices of the police, profiles of those policed, places of interactions and agency of both policemen and migrants. This will provide new insights into how the state, in its efforts to maintain social stability through its lowest level in the street in a time of profound urban transformation, interfered in the lives of people, and marginal migrants in particular.
The spread of ‘XIA’ (chivalry) culture in Ancient China style video games

Jinjue Li (PhD Candidate in Literary Studies)
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Christophe Collard
Session: Delving into the past

The research content of this paper is to examine the conceptual changes in the traditional Chinese ‘XIA’ culture in the Ancient China Style video games and the recipient's recognition of the new concept of ‘XIA’.

The purpose of this research are as follows:

1. Analyze the changes in the concept of Chinese ancient ‘XIA’ culture in video games; 2. In-depth analysis of the similarities and differences between the ancient Chinese ‘XIA’ culture and the essence of video games; 3. Understand the acceptance and inheritance of culture of Chinese game setters and players in the game; 4. Analysis how Chinese ancient culture represented by ‘XIA’ culture obtains its own new life through cyberspace in the modern world.

The significance of this research are as follows:

1. To understand why ‘XIA’ culture is so popular in video games; 2. To clarify how modern Chinese ‘XIA’ culture is defined and changed, and how do young people understand about the culture. 3. Find a path for how Chinese traditional culture spreads under the new media.

So far, my progress and results on the paper are as follows:

1. Determined the outline of the paper and found the basic theoretical support; 2. Combined the occurrence, development and evolution of Chinese ‘XIA’ culture before the emergence of video games; 3. Conducted a field survey of game players’ acceptance and recognition of the ancient ‘XIA’ culture, collected 300 questionnaires, and interviewed a few key players; 4. A large group of players was selected as the tracking interview object to record the game behavior of the player group online and offline; 5. Analyzed the background setting, the character plot setting and the game text of several typical Ancient China Style video games, and found the basic definition of the ‘XIA’ culture and the expectation of the players' behavior.
The development of pluricentricity in Dutch language history
Iris Van de Voorde (PhD Candidate in Linguistics)
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Rik Vosters
Session: Delving into the past

The Dutch language is traditionally described as pluricentric, with normative centers in the Netherlands (Holland) and in Belgium (Brabant). In the history of the language, however, it is often assumed that this situation of pluricentricity is a recent phenomenon, dating back to the nineteenth century. I will present an overview of how the issue of normative centers across regions is depicted in traditional histories of the language, where the dominant view is that of consecutive monocentrism. The focus is usually placed on one linguistic center for the entire language area, which shifts from Southern Brabant to Northern Holland at the beginning of the Dutch Golden Age. It is not until the early nineteenth century, when the Northern norms are imported in the South as a result of the integrationist movement, that standardization in the South is said to take off, and only from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century onwards, autonomous developments in the South and in the North are claimed to have led to diverging norms and modern-day pluricentricity.

In my PhD thesis, I will both problematize and historicize the central notion of pluricentricity, investigating to which extent a concept such a pluricentricity can be used to describe the history of Dutch from the 1500s onwards. I will present the ongoing project investigating how innovations and language norms spread throughout the language area throughout history, focusing on the development in various types of primary sources, written in two central and two peripheral areas between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century. Presenting preliminary analyses, I will argue that the discursively constructed differences between Northern and Southern Dutch may in fact not be as strong in actual language use as traditional accounts would lead us to believe.
The pictorial pottery from Late Bronze Age Hala Sultan Tekke in SE Cyprus is very fragmented and there are not much diagnostic rims preserved. Nevertheless, it gives an indication of the vessel shapes: the usual kraters, bowls, kylixes and jars are among the assemblage. The context data is limited, but still reveals insights in different occupation phases in the settlement. The quantitative analysis of the figurative pottery assemblage allows associations with other LBA sites in Cyprus and in the East Mediterranean. In this way, a workshop becomes visible which provides insights in the complexity of the socio-economic relations at Hala Sultan Tekke, its hinterland, Cyprus and the involvement within the East Mediterranean exchange networks during the 12th century BCE. Besides the quantitative study, this presentation applies to the interpretation of the bird display at Hala Sultan Tekke. How should we understand bird iconography (which is not only decorative), symbolic functions and ideological roles of bird display? Here, my methodology is more object-based. Bird iconography is common in the East Med, but also very different, leading to a variety of possible interpretations. I expand my view to bird representations on other carriers than pottery. I implement anthropological methodologies and theories to gain insight in the bird display. I turn to environmental research to interpret bird display as possible proxy for climate change.
A study of nomination videos of Chinese elements on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists

Jiyun Zhang (PhD Candidate in Cultural Heritage Studies)

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Marc Jacobs

Session: Crossing cultures, crossing media

UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural heritage has largely extending the sematic field of ‘cultural heritage’ by shading light on the intangible aspect of cultural heritage, which includes traditions or living expressions that have been passed on for generation, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, traditional craftsmanship, as well as knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.

Since the convention came into fore in 2006, until now 508 elements corresponding to 122 countries have been inscribed on the 3 UNESCO ICH Lists: List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, Representative List of the ICH of Humanity and Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

A 10’ minute video is one of the requirements in a nomination file for the representative list of ICH of humanity (article 16 of the 2003 UNESCO Convention). On the one hand, it has to fulfil functions in the UNESCO procedure, closely respecting the bandwidth of appropriate vocabulary and imagery for the 2003 safeguarding ICH paradigm (hence enhancing visibility and awareness of the type of ICH in general). On the other hand, it is a communication tool, a global opportunity for visibility of the item, communities, groups or territories involved (enhancing visibility, visitability and hopefully viability). Several scholars (like Wim van Zanten) have called for a systematic analysis (and re-mediation) of the growing set of 10’ minute films.

In this contribution the set of video’s submitted by China (that has scored most items on the representative list) available on the UNESCO website is examined, not only in relation to the aforementioned bandwidth frames but also in respect to alternative functions and goals, taking into consideration the audiovisual media is a tool to produce, construct and represent knowledge, a form of continuity between fieldwork in academic and applied research, as well as a research subject to examine the meaning and experience that visual media and its practices in people’s life, as well as the implication in the production and dissemination of the ways of knowing.
The Knights Templar and the Hospitallers – two military religious orders – founded in the Middle Ages had extensive properties in the West. Main reason of this was to raise money to fund their primary task: caring for the poor and the sick and protecting pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem.

Information about the Templar properties in the County of Flanders is scarce and fragmented in comparison with other regions. There is in general no central Templar archive. Some archives are lost through fire. There is no 'Inquest of Lands' (AD 1185) with specific information about the commanderies, their donors and tenants as it exist for Great Britain. In that way much information has to be retrieved indirectly from cartularies, donation- or selling charters and from Hospitaller sources postdating the Templars. These Hospitaller documents are divers (land books/terriers, visitations reports, ... and revenue registers) and combine properties of both military orders since AD 1312.

The registers of AD 1370 and +/- AD 1430 are in fact financial documents giving an account of revenues of properties and charges throughout the County of Flanders. It contains information about who and how much one had to pay in the form of heritable rents, charges on houses or payments in kind to a specific house or commandery. On the other hand the registers contain also information of charges the Hospitallers had to pay to the Count of Flanders and to other (religious) institutions or people.

But most important of all, the registers give an indication where these revenues and properties are located. With additional historical documents, maps and land books or terriers it makes both registers a good starting point to pinpoint the mentioned locations into the physical landscape.
The word “emotion” in the field of art and especially in music presents us with a paradox. On the one hand, the word is widely avoided, on the other hand omnipresent. It is clear, that emotion is consistently present in musical performance. As a composer and as a performer I’m constantly looking for ways to improve the way I connect with my audience. Throughout my research, I’ve thought that learning what emotion is and how it effects people will help me become a “better” performer and composer. However, this last year I’ve realized that doing exactly that, my artistic process becomes obstructed. I’ve concluded that my artistic choices, both as a composer and performer can’t be guided by mere scientific results presented by other fields (music psychology, neurology, etc.). Because of this problem I’ve changed my approach to emotion, by focusing more on the philosophical aspect of this term and by adding the term “expression” to the equation as well. Research into the term emotion and expression in art lead me to the question: “what is the purpose of making and experiencing art”? By trying to answer this question – and by not only focusing on the technical and explainable aspects - my own compositional process has improved drastically. Using improvisation techniques while composing helped me understand the essence of what I want to say/express as a musician. My aim is to continue to investigate the link between the purpose of creating art and the decision making process of it. Doing so by examining not only the notes the composers put on paper but searching for the meaning behind them.
The critical analysis on Confucian sexism through the lens of ethics of care, in the case of household labor division
Bo Zhang (PhD Candidate in Philosophy and Moral Sciences)
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gily Coene
Session: Pushing boundaries: science, gender, ethics

Three national surveys in 1990, 2000, and 2010 reported the unfair division of household labor is a chronic problem in China. Scholars regard the sexist thought in Confucianism as an endogenous element of this unfairness. Some comparisons between Confucianism and feminist ethics of care have begun to emerge in recent years. One striking feature of the feminist care ethics is that it is antipatriarchal. This paper investigates whether and how the ethics of care’s reflection on the masculine dominance could shed light on the ongoing problem of gender-based division of care work in Chinese families. This paper starts from an overview of the ethics of care, mainly referred to the theory of Joan Tronto, to explore how their arguments rescue care from the dangers of patriarchy and hierarchy. Then, this paper tries to reflect and revise on Confucianism through the lens of the ethics of care in the domain of labor division, based on carefully scrutinizing the sexist notion in Confucianism. In the conclusion, this paper will discuss the enlightenments provided by feminist ethics of care on Confucianism to step out from the malady of gendered care.
Feminist and bioethical scholarship has embraced the call for an intersectional analysis. It has highlighted that bioethics would benefit from a deliberate acknowledgment of intersections of power and oppression in patients’ and health care providers’ lives, but has largely left the specifics of what this means indistinct. In this presentation I want to further consider what a bioethics informed by an intersectional approach might look like and what value such an approach might provide for debates regarding reproductive technologies. My argument advances in two distinct steps. First it explores the varied ways in which scholars from different fields have utilised intersectional approaches before turning to consider how an intersectional analysis could be more widely used to inform understandings of core bio-ethical issues, such as autonomy and the integration of empirical research. In the second part of my argument, I refer to the case of social egg freezing as an illustration of the analytical purchase that intersectionality can offer. This approach reveals how interlocking vectors of identity and oppression, such as race and class, change what is morally at stake in a practice that is criticized primarily for its entrenchment in medicalized gendered structures that shape women’s reproductive choices.
The world wandering between Eutopia and Anti-Utopia
A study on Tanbi subculture in Mainland China

Wei Yang (PhD Candidate in Literary Studies)
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Christophe Collard
Session: pushing boundaries: science, gender, ethics

This dissertation traces the changing paradigms through which the ideal model of love and gender relations are depicted in Tanbi texts. It explores how the gender reformation is rendered intelligible through representations of the power structure in the emotional relationship between homosexual couples. It is interested in how the Tanbi subculture responds to, interacts with, and plays a part in formations and transformations of Chinese gender patterns.

By reading four Tanbi texts in close relationship to their gender-cultural contexts, the dissertation will continue to analyze the shifting designs, understandings, and expectations of China’s gender reformation process through the vantage point of studying changing patterns of the perfect imagination of love. According to previous research, I suppose that the changes in dominant Tanbi textual patterns are responses to the overriding cultural and institutional fluctuations in gender issues at different stages and in various aspects. Especially the rise of socio-cultural debates over the issues of gender equality, and the rapidly developing new media systems, as local versions of the overall reform, have in various aspects affected Tanbi stories’ settings, constructions and values.

Textual readings of four fictions - Phoenix in the sky, Blade of the Galaxy Empire, The founder of the demon sect, Defective products - in their respective social and intellectual contexts are conducted to trace the process of China’s gender reformation. This will be an effort to study and understand the constantly changing self-awareness and appeal of Chinese women, which are hidden behind the uncanny Tanbi love fantasies. Moreover, I suppose that Tanbi subculture has, more or less, inspired and promoted the process of gender equality. How this kind of promotion is achieved will also be a supplementary focus of this research.

In short, I would like to unearth and map the gender reformation of China, more specifically the changes in female self-awareness and gender power structure, by tracing the shifting dominant paradigms of the love stories in Tanbi texts; I also hope to answer a core question: Whether Tanbi subculture helps to achieve gender equality, and if so, then by what means?
In recent decades cosmology has been revolutionized. Armed with Einstein’s theory of General Theory of Relativity (GTR) and the Standard Model (of particle physics) an overwhelming number of discoveries has been made. Since 1999 no less than 11 Nobel prizes have been awarded to important developments in cosmology.

It is sensational, that from our specific place in space and at a particular moment in the cosmic history, we have been able to make all these discoveries. Though there remain lots of mysteries in our understanding of the moments after the Big Bang an explosive progress has been made both in theories and observations. Without any doubt our worldview will change radically.

The fact that GTR and the Standard model describe respectively the largest and the smallest is one of the big challenges for cosmology. However, according to most of recent insights, both theories are indispensable to explain the birth of our universe.

In order to reconcile both theories Dutch theoretical physicist and String theorist Erik Verlinde proposed a conceptual model that describes gravity as an entropic force. This model combines the thermodynamic approach to gravity with the holographic principle of Gerard ’t Hooft. According to Verlinde gravity is not a fundamental interaction, but an emergent phenomenon.

The ideas of Verlinde are based upon studies of black holes and String theory. In the seventies Stephen Hawking, Jakob Bekenstein et al. discovered that physics of black holes could surprisingly well be described by the laws of thermodynamics.

Physicists concluded that gravity around black holes is a thermodynamic phenomenon.

In this talk I will focus on the groundbreaking ideas of Erik Verlinde.
During my presentation I will present a general overview of my PhD research project so far. My research charts the ways in which contemporary artistic and filmic practices generate questions about filmic images in relation to the colonial and postcolonial history of Belgium and the DRC, through the appropriation of indexical archival documents or through the creation of new images and archives while pointing at gaps in the cinematographic archive. An archival document is understood as, in the sense of Jaimie Baron (2014) evoking an archival effect and does not have to derive from institutional archives. I adopt a transnational approach, which has led to the observation that questions about these images are not only to be found on the axis of Belgium and DRC. I combine practices from the field of contemporary art, artistic film and Congolese cinema in order to demonstrate how these images have significance in a variety of places and contexts, and I am particularly interested in how these images from the past are used to construct the present. I will present some examples of case studies to visualize my research, and I will also discuss some pitfalls.
Interdisciplinary body is an artistic research situated around the concepts of body and interdisciplinarity, both closely linked to the audiovisual arts. From the one side the two types of cinema (reality and fiction), from the other – the subject of cinema: the body or the human, which we portray. Both concepts are finding themselves back in the spectator who’s watching and therefore connecting with or reflecting at what s/he is watching. The relations between the three elements, the body portrayed, the body watching and the discipline are the focal points of the research. In psychoanalytic film theories the screen serves as a mirror (as in Lacan’s mirror stage notion), through which spectators identify themselves with the protagonists on the screen or on the stage. Next to this, scientific studies show that spectators ‘feel’ a film with their bodies due to mirror neurons activated in the brain prior to reflecting on it. The aim of the research is to establish an audiovisual environment in which the ‘imperative’ between the body on the screen and the spectator can be studied. The presentation will drop light on the so-called haptic cinema and the sensory approaches in filmmaking, which form one of the methodological techniques for this research.
In this contribution, we will report on an ongoing project investigating the language use of Chinese immigrants as heritage language users, carrying out research on Chinese communities in multilingual Antwerp and Brussels. Antwerp and Brussels, two major cities in Belgium, are characterized by their highly multilingual environment, and the two ethnic neighborhoods (‘Chinatowns’) attracting Chinese immigrants, who began settling here from the 1920s onwards, have grown into spaces of consumption for both Chinese and non-Chinese people (Pang, 2012, p. 14), gathering migrants of different backgrounds, with distinct languages and dialects.

Specifically, this presentation will focus on the part of our study investigating the linguistic landscape of the Chinatown neighborhoods in both cities, centered around the commercial Van Wesenbeke street in Antwerp, the Dansaert and the Midi area in Brussels. We will first discuss the composition and development of the areas under investigation, and we will provide a short theoretical overview of how the study of linguistic landscapes can be used to investigate the correlation between the language use in heritage language communities and the wide sociolinguistic context. Next, we will present and discuss the first results of our quantitative overview of linguistic landscapes in the public domain in the three neighborhoods. We will focus on comparing these three different Chinese neighborhoods in terms of the language visibilities, functionalities and implications in the public sphere.

Reference
The theme of national identity in Russian contemporary art (1990-2019)

Maria Knyazeva (PhD Candidate in the Arts)
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Hans De Wolf
Session: Crossing cultures, crossing media

Theoretical part

This project is dedicated to the research of specific of Russian National Identity in the context of world globalization during the last 20 years.

According to some critics, Contemporary Russian Art of the post-Soviet period has significantly distanced itself from the range of concerns and motives that encourage Global Art (e.g. social injustice and racial inequality, outsourcing, forced migration, etc.) In comparison to the Contemporary Art of Eastern Europe, which has had the same experience of overcoming and reconciliation of the traumatic moments of the Communist times, Russian Contemporary Art was not involved in the symbolic struggle for the redistribution of the Communist legacy or has turned this struggle into ironic kitsch.

The complex of rejection of the past-ranging from contempt to love, is one of the characteristics of Contemporary Russian Art of the said period, along with an unconscious demonstration of the historically imposed stereotypes or a reception bringing to the point of absurdity Patriotic tenets and icons.

Artistic research

During last year, I have personally met and took a series of interviews about National Identity and Migration with the main contemporary Russian artists, gallerists, writers, musicians and the key figures of Russian Culture.

They gave me different opinions and views on the concept of National Identity in Art. Some of them were sure that National Identity in our days doesn't exist at all, some - supposed that National Identity as a sort of imposed things similar to propaganda legends and fake images. Some are sure that Russian National Identity is deliberate sloppiness and poverty of style defined by Social-Cultural and Historical conditions.

Based on the results of this research I switched to the practical artistic part and represented Russian National Identity as a series of clichés and stereotypes reflecting Soviet traumatic experience, national patriotic images, icons, historical figures and folk ornaments.

After a big technical and ethical research, I have decided to select stretch-vinyl as a visual language and main material. As an artistic form, I have chosen video & installation form.

I created a series of shots and video of people holding Russian National clichés + interviews with explanations what is National Identity for them and why do they prefer or reject one or another symbol.
The linguistic situation in Chinese heritage language schools in Brussels is complicated and diverse owing to widely diverging backgrounds of students and their similarly rich linguistic repertoires. Students are not only HL learners with typically at least one parent of Chinese origin, but there are also leaners without any family ties to Chinese. Moreover, these schools in Brussels attract students with a wide range of Chinese origins from all over the Belgium, whose first languages might be French or Dutch. Hence, multilingual practices in this complex educational setting are common and unavoidable. Factors influencing students’ multilingual practices are multiple, but this paper will mostly focus on the role of language ideologies and policies of the schools and teachers. We will discuss these issues based on an ethnographic study in two different kinds of HL schools: one is run by Taiwanese immigrants teaching traditional Chinese characters, the other is run by immigrants from mainland China teaching simplified characters. On the one hand, we will draw on data from observations of multilingual practices of students in communication with their peers and teachers. On the other hand, we will base our analysis on interviews with the principals of these two schools, in order to delve into the schools’ language policies and ideologies at the institutional level, as well as with teachers, to investigate their attitudes towards students’ multilingual practices and their strategies of dealing with the multilingual reality they face. Combining all of these different angles, we expect to gain a deeper understanding of the differences in terms of ideologies and policies of the two different types of Chinese HL schools in Brussels, but also of the role of multilingualism in the Chinese diaspora context more generally.
Literary translations are produced in large numbers. In 2017, around 10,000 titles have been translated for the German bookselling market. But what role do literatures from Belgium play in this context and how is Belgium perceived as a distinct space of literary production? On German book fairs, Belgian literatures rather seem to be assigned to the “The Netherlands” or “France” depending on the language. Obviously, this has something to do with the traditional idea of national literature which is associated with monolingualism. This leads to the question how literary works from multilingual Belgium are translated into German. Reinterpretations may occur because cultural references to the Netherlands or France are made or because expectations of the target audience differ much from those in the source culture. So far, no specific research has been carried out on Flemish and Francophone Belgian literatures in German literary translation. The main studies on display are those that follow a monolingual approach and either deal with the reception of Dutch or French literature in the German-speaking world. A specific and comprehensive study on the German reception of Belgian literatures is still lacking. This study aims at closing the gap and clearly defining Belgian literatures as separate variants of French and Dutch literature. Also, the study will reflect on promotional measures of Belgian literary institutions targeting the German translation market (e.g. subsidies).
A social constructivist approach to translation education
Developing a practical model

Sajedeh Sadat Hosseini (PhD Candidate in Applied Language Studies)
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Koen Kerremans
Session: Crossing cultures, crossing media

In recent years, translation programs which aim to educate and train students in the field of translating have grown in number in Iran. Yet this growth barely keeps pace meeting the ever-rising needs for trained professional translators. Nowadays, many students in translation programs find the subjects boring, difficult and sometimes unnecessary for their future careers. Even students headed for non-translation-oriented careers need to have an understanding and appreciation of the role translation plays in their lives. Many researchers feel that this difficulty stems from the passive role the students play in traditional training environments. Although training students for their future career is a main goal of translation programs, little effort has been made to adapt the way translation teaching is defined and adapted to the professional demands of the field. Several studies done at Iranian universities (Khoshsaligheh et al. 2010, Lesan Toosi 2013, Ebrahimi 2013, Moghaddas 2016, Nasrollahi Shahri and Barzakhi Farimani 2016, Pourfarhad et al. (2018, etc.) provide strong evidence for the rising need for such a change and call for revising the prevalent approach to teaching and learning. Therefore, we, as translation instructors, should change the way we define and treat the concepts of learning and teaching. My Ph.D. research addresses the above-mentioned anomalies by providing a systematic and comprehensive account of the design, implementation and evaluation of group-learning and project-based techniques in undergraduate translation courses at Iranian Universities. It seeks to make a significant contribution to our understanding as translation educators and researchers of the theoretical and practical implications of converting to constructivist instruction and implementing social constructivist approach in our translation classrooms.

References