

AGENDA

FRIDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2017, 10AM-1PM, AS5 #05-09

Opening Remarks

10:00-10:15

Dr. Tania ROY, Assistant Professor, Chair of the Graduate Programme in English Literature, Department of English Language and Literature (ELL), National University of Singapore (NUS)

PRESENTATION 1

Moderator

Dr. Irving GOH, President's Assistant Professor, ELL, NUS

10:15-10:40

What is a Gene? Empiricism and its Discontents in Biology's Engagement of the Body

Sorelle Ann HENRICUS, PhD Student, ELL, NUS

10:40-11:00

Discussion

11:00-11:05

Break

PRESENTATION 2

Moderator

Dr. John WHALEN-BRIDGE, Associate Professor, ELL, NUS

11:05-11:30

The Sound of Rape in Southeast Asian Feminist Texts

Phoebe PUA, PhD Student, ELL, NUS

11:30-11:50

Discussion

11:50-12:00

Break

PRESENTATION 3

Moderator

Dr. Walter S. H. LIM, Associate Professor, ELL, NUS

12:00-12:25

"I am all the subjects that you have": Reading Ecophobia in *The Tempest*

YU Jing, PhD Student, ELL, NUS

12:25-12:45

Discussion

–End–

What is a Gene? Empiricism and its Discontents in Biology's Engagement of the Body

Sorelle Ann HENRICUS

PhD Student, Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore

Abstract

“The word pharmakon is caught in a chain of significations.”
- Jacques Derrida, “Plato's Pharmacy”

The opening-up of new “interior worlds” of the body by the microscope sets off a trajectory of popular imaginations of the body that, by the end of the twentieth-century, is consolidated into the contemporary narrative of DNA and its accoutrements. This particular account of “science” is overwhelmingly portrayed as confirmation of the irrepressible power of the human intellect. But how does the field of biology maintain the distinction between its objects—“living matter”—and its conceptions of them?

I illustrate how the consolidation of biology into a “molecular” science in the 1940s demonstrates the curious exclusion of the body itself from scientific consideration. Might the paradox of bio-science's desire to abstract the body itself into the conceptual—the cell, the molecule, and the genetic—divulge the movement of knowledge itself? In his work on the self, presence and the inescapable relationally of difference, the work of Derrida best outlines and advises this difficulty.

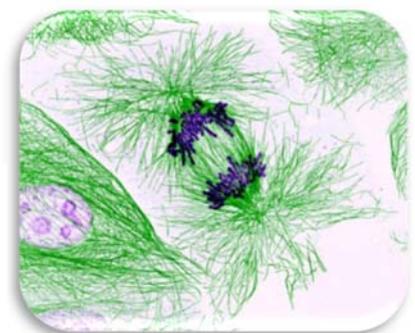
Bio

Sorelle Henricus is a PhD candidate at the National University of Singapore. Her research is in the areas of critical theory, modern and contemporary literature and visual arts, aesthetics and politics, and the philosophy of knowledge—particularly as it pertains to science and technology in culture. Her doctoral work traces the significance of the parallels between deconstruction and molecular biology, particularly converging around the concept of the gene.

Research Interests

critical theory, modern and contemporary literature and visual arts, aesthetics and politics, philosophy of knowledge

*Dividing cells showing
chromosomes (purple) and cell
skeleton (green)*



The Sound of Rape in Southeast Asian Feminist Texts

Phoebe PUA

PhD Student, Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore

Abstract

In this paper, I examine three contemporary works by women from Southeast Asia—*The Woman's Book of Superlatives* (1993), an anthology of short stories by Singaporean writer Catherine Lim; *Whispering Sands* (2001), an independently produced Indonesian film by Nan Achnas; and *The Inseminator* (2014), the debut feature film of Vietnamese filmmaker Bui Kim Quy which was banned her home government. I argue that, despite academic feminism's swing toward cultural specificity, sexual difference remains a key site for feminist fiction. Through analyzing incidents of sexual abuse in each text, I demonstrate that there is a return to sexed bodies as a fertile site to enact feminist critique. However, contrary to interpretations which emphasize the highly visual nature of sexual violence, I contend that to fixate on ocularcentric interpretations is myopic, given the equally aural nature of the act and especially in view of the attention paid to writing rape. With an ear to the texts, I explain how their authors employ sound to contrast male and female voices and, in doing so, shift focus back into the realm of sexual difference.

Ultimately, I advance a reading of the feminism embedded in these texts as universal. The authors seek not to localize experiences but to tap into a collective womanhood unrestricted by boundaries of geography and time. In employing the discourse of universal feminism, while simultaneously cognizant of the prominence of and possible dependence on Anglo-American and European theorists, the authors refuse to represent uniquely Singaporean, Indonesian, Vietnamese, or Southeast Asian female experiences and thus defy the implicit instruction to, in Trinh T. Minh-ha's (2011:13) words, "stay within the Third World".

Bio

Phoebe Pua is a doctoral student at the Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore (NUS). She researches Southeast Asian cinema through the lenses of gender, examining the feminine and the maternal, and sound design. Her writing on race and gender extends into the realm of popular cinema, including "Mediatization of East Asia in the James Bond films" (2017) in *Discourse, Context and Media* and "Iron Lady or old Lady: The neutering of James Bond's M" in *Feminist Media Studies* (forthcoming). She received a BA (Hons) in English Literature from NUS (2011) and a MPhil in Film Studies from the Australian National University (2014).

Research Interests

film, feminist theory, sexual difference, Southeast Asia, sound design

“I am all the subjects that you have”: Reading Ecophobia in *The Tempest*

YU Jing

PhD Student, Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore

Abstract

As conventionally read as exemplifying how the Europeans meet, desire for and appropriate the natural wild non-Western world, *The Tempest* invites an alternative look into the double-voice underlying such desire for possession. This paper draws on the concept of “ecophobia” to interpret the wish of amputating Nature’s agency and asserting an order on a system as equally an anxiety or uneasiness in face of the Other. In cases of controlling unpredictable Nature and restoring an idyllic Utopian world, *The Tempest* thus casts a disturbing voice and reveals Shakespeare’s equivocacy of “civilizing” the nature.

Bio

I am a PhD student, currently in the third year doing research on Victorian globalism and Thomas Hardy.

Research Interests

Victorian globalism and Thomas Hardy, post-colonial and feminist studies