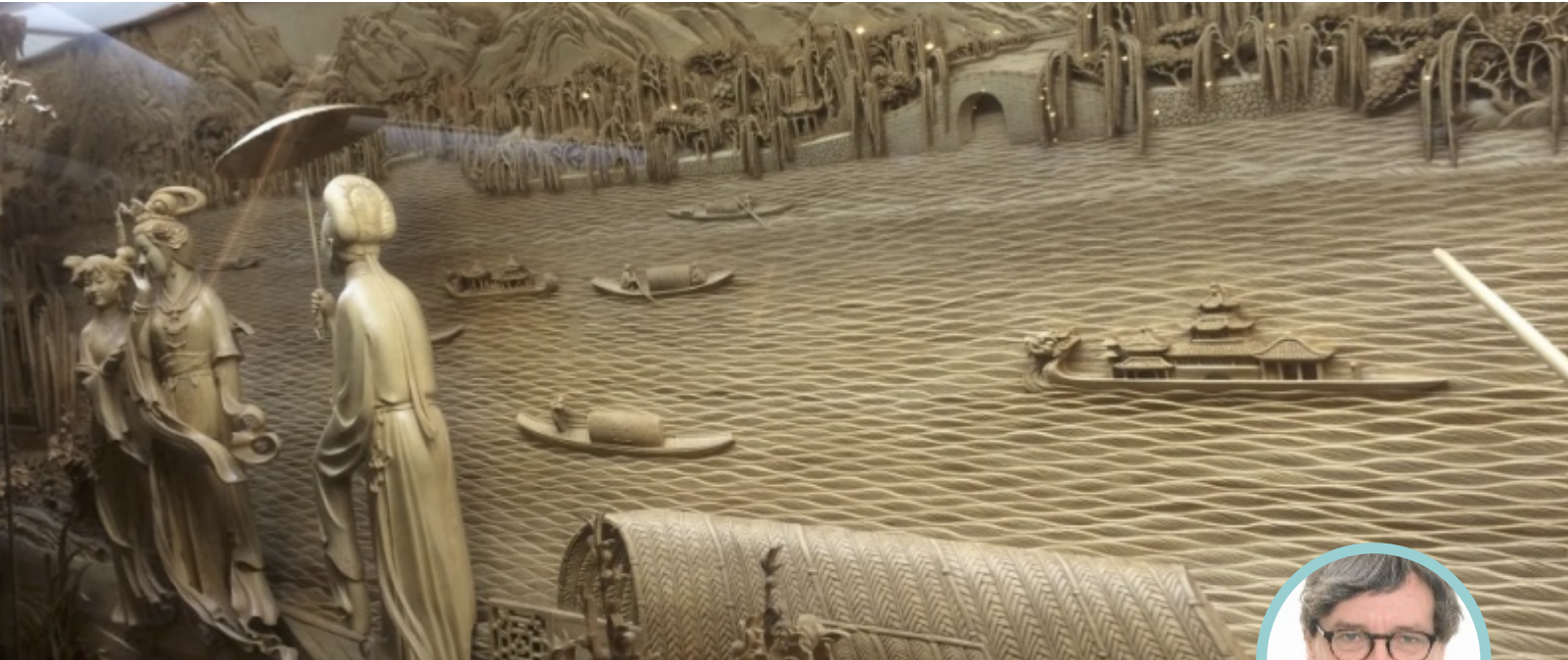


Other Epistemologies Online Lecture Series 2.0

Semester Focus: Innovative Approaches to Gender and Genre: Literature and Women Studies



Bending, Reversing, and Switching: Narrating Gender Transgression in Late Imperial China

09:00-17:30, Friday, 08 September 2023

University of Zurich, Room ZUB-416, Zürichbergstrasse 4, 8032 Zürich

PhD workshop with Prof. Roland Altenburger, Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg

The narrating of transgressions of gender roles in late imperial China has often been put to the service of the clarification, the correction, and even the enforcement of the lines of distinction and of normative notions of gender. So goes a frequently rehearsed argument regarding the ‘carnavalesque’ nature of writing about such topics. Nevertheless, the narratives about the bending, reversing and switching of gender roles and sex identities include an ultimately inextricable element that stubbornly resists any proper resolution or narrative integration. This, it shall be argued, was not only due to the gender-political repercussions of these disturbing themes (‘crisis of masculinity’), but also due to the far-reaching cosmological significance attributed to them.

In our workshop we shall go into some of the most salient themes of gender transgression, including female-to-male cross-dressing, female dominance and violence in marital relations, female vengeful assassination, and male-to-female sex change. A tale from Pu Songling’s (1640–1715) famous *Liaozhai zhiyi* (1766) will serve as the primary source text and the starting point for each of the four themes. These *Liaozhai* tales will be augmented by other source texts that can further deepen and problematize the issues at stake. We shall pay particular attention to the narrative handling of these challenging themes.

The *Liaozhai* tales in question will be the following ones: “Yan shi” (The Yan Clan, no. 222), “Ma Jiefu” (Ma Jiefu, no. 212), “Xia nü” (The Chivalrous Girl, no. 67), and “Ren yao” (The Female Impersonator, no. 494). A reading list along with source materials and research literature will be provided for the course preparation.

Roland Altenburger is Professor of East Asian Cultural History at the Julius Maximilian University (JMU) of Würzburg. His main fields of research are Ming-Qing narrative literature, the cultural and social history of the late imperial period, regionalism and the representation of place in literature, and literary geography. His major publications include the monograph *The Sword or the Needle: The Female Knight-errant (xia) in Traditional Chinese Narrative* (2009) and the co-edited volume *Yangzhou, A Place in Literature: The Local in Chinese Cultural History* (2015). He has been serving as the Dean of Studies of the JMU’s Faculty of Arts since 2017 and as president of the German Association of China Studies (DVCS) since 2019.

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