

Global Media: Sound, Image, Materiality

Queens' College, Cambridge * Fitzpatrick Hall * 10-11 June 2022



Audiovisual automaton ca. 1200 CE: Al-Jazari's Castle Water Clock
From *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*

Global Media: Sound, Image, Materiality
Queens' College, Cambridge - Fitzpatrick Hall
10-11 June 2022

**Made possible by the Global Humanities Initiative, School of Arts and Humanities,
University of Cambridge and Queens' College, Cambridge**

FRIDAY 10 JUNE

10:00 – welcome, Peter McMurray (Cambridge) and JD Rhodes (Cambridge)

10:30 - KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Pooja Rangan (Amherst College)
Listening in Crip Time, or a Countertheory of Documentary Access

Response: Rhiannon Harries (University of Nottingham)

12:00 - lunch break

13:00-15:15 - PANEL 1, Archives & Power

Chair: Seb Franklin (King's College London)

13:00 - Radha Kapuria (University of Sheffield)
Ephemeral Embodiments: The Materiality of Music and Dance in Colonial Punjab

13:45 - Alejandra Bronfman (University of Albany, SUNY)
Towards a media history of post-military ruination in Vieques and Culebra Puerto Rico

14:30 - Stefan Tarnowski (Columbia University/Corpus Christi College, Cambridge)
Archival Matters

15:15 - coffee break

15:30-17:30 - FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION

Rosine Mbakam, *Delphine's Prayers* (2021, 90 mins)
Content note: This film deals with issues of sexuality, including sexual violence.

Response: Julia Michiko Hori (Cambridge)

18:00 - LIVE PERFORMANCE

Mazen Kerbaj (solo trumpet, audiovisual media)

SATURDAY 11 JUNE

9:00-10:30 - PANEL 2, Sensory Techniques

Chair: Michael Lawrence (University of Sussex)

9:00 - Friedlind Riedel (Bauhaus University, Weimar)

Mistaken mediations: Theatrical arrangements and dramatic operations at the royal palace of Mandalay, Burma 1880-1885

9:45 - Vebhuti Duggal (Ambedkar University Delhi)

Intermediality and listening to cinema in India

10:30 coffee

11:00-12:30 - PANEL 3, Ecologies & Circulations

Chair: Heather Inwood (University of Cambridge)

11:00 - Diana Abbani (Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin)

Recorded Sounds Crossing the Borders: Circulation, Encounters and Imaginaries in Beirut and Bilad al-Sham during the French Mandate Period

11:45 - Cassandra Xin Guan (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

From Atomic Light to Ludic Sovereignty: *Havoc in Heaven*, circa 1964

12:30 - lunch break

13:30-15:00 - FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION

Rita Coburn, *Marian Anderson: The Whole World in Her Hands*

Discussion: Alisha Lola Jones (Cambridge)

15:00 – coffee

15:30-17:00 - PANEL 4, Touching media

Chair: Alex Grieve (University of Cambridge)

15:30 - Deniz Türker (Rutgers University)

'Professor Wace's Turkish Sampler': Ottoman Women Embroiderers and Continental Collectors of Woven Archaeologies

16:15 - Kirsty Sinclair Dootson (University of St Andrews)

Lab Work: Processing Global Film Histories

17:00 - concluding discussion

ABSTRACTS, FRIDAY 10 JUNE

KEYNOTE (Friday 10:30)

Pooja Rangan

Listening in Crip Time: Toward a Countertheory of Documentary Access

Access is conventionally understood in documentary parlance in adversarial and transactional terms, as a leveraging of power or resources to gain entry to realms deemed to harbor documentary value. My talk, grounded in readings of Hara Kazuo and Kobayashi Sachiko's *Goodbye CP* (1972) and Jordan Lord's *Shared Resources* (2021), excavates the role of disability expertise in shaping a crip countertheory of access as a shared responsibility: one that demands crucial but generative adjustments to the acquisitive habits of documentary listening. Hara and Kobayashi's disabled collaborators, Yokota Hiroshi and Yokotsuka Kōichi, leaders in an advocacy group of people with cerebral palsy, were important influences on Hara's confrontational and globally acclaimed post-*vérité* aesthetic, whose values and forms come under transformative attack in *Shared Resources*. I position Hara and Kobayashi's adversarial withholding of linguistic access to normate listeners as a precursor of Lord's more invitational embrace of sensory access features as formal and narrative principle. I respond to their efforts to listen in solidarity with the out-of-sync temporal experiences that disability scholars call "crip time" by producing an archive of their listening modes, which I term *dis-entitled listening* in the mode of *crawling* rather than staring, and *sideways listening* that cultivates an appetite for access intimacy.

PANEL 1, Archives & Power (Friday 13:00)

Chair: Seb Franklin (King's College, London)

Radha Kapuria

Ephemeral Embodiments: The Materiality of Music and Dance in Colonial Punjab

How are music and dance archived as cultural forms? To what range of archives do historians turn to write histories of performative culture? The slant toward oral, as opposed to written knowledge in South Asian performance traditions has meant that along with traditional archival research, any serious historian must equally rely on several other kinds of archives, including oral testimonies, ethnography, audio-visual recording, memoirs, etc. This vast diversity of source material constitutes what Stuart Hall has termed 'living archives': a necessarily 'unfinished, palimpsestic, and open-ended' repository. Through a case study of researching the material histories of music and dance in colonial Punjab, here I demonstrate evidence from such 'living archives' for the ephemeral moment of performance. Across time, I locate two such instances of performance: one embodied in the female dancer's body; and the second, in the bodies of listeners to *raga*-based music.

The three main sources in the paper are from nineteenth century colonial Punjab: a travel memoir in German translated into English detailing the moment of colonial encounter between an Austrian diplomat and a Punjabi performer; an anonymous artist's sketch revealing indigenous notions of female performers and female patrons, and, finally, a multilingual manuscript in Urdu and Gurmukhi detailing codes of ideal conduct for the princes of Punjab's royal house of Patiala. The final source consists of my 'intermedial' reading of an iconic scene from *Baiju Bawra* (1952), the classic mid-twentieth century Hindi film. By discussing these four very different kinds of archival traces around music and dance, *and* musicians and dancers, I offer an understanding of musical practices in Punjab as embodied techniques, which, while being shaped by colonialism, can equally offer important glimpses into Punjab's precolonial musical pasts. More broadly, the paper demonstrates how it is only through a multiplicity of archival forms ('ever-mutating' and 'unfinished' after Hall) that we can reconstruct histories of performance in South Asia.

Alejandra Bronfman

Towards a media history of post-military ruination in Vieques and Culebra Puerto Rico

This paper will work with three media objects: a 15th century map of the island of Vieques, a painted tank that sits on Flamenco Beach in Culebra, and a 2004 album entitled *Vibroacústica*, to sketch out a

media history of occupation and post-occupation Culebra and Vieques, Puerto Rico. These small islands were taken over and utilized for military training, bombing practice and munitions storage for decades in the 20th century, resulting in the contamination of land and water as well as psychological distress and physiological damage to humans and more-than-humans. How do these objects speak to the processes by which topographies and bodies become conscripts for projects of military violence and ruination? In what ways has subsequent intervention by way of creative expression allowed for remediation, and what are the limits of imagining new futures through these reclaimed media objects? Proliferating approaches in histories of media include media archaeology, ecology, topography and geology. Here, I consider the utility of littoral media, understanding the zone “between land and sea” as a medium in itself as well as a space in which media objects like maps, tanks and sounds can take on distinct meanings. Together they contribute to a counter-archive of reckoning with the ruination of lives and places at the margins of empire.

Stefan Tarnowski **Archival Matters**

Since 2011, there have been many more hours of footage uploaded online from Syria than there have been hours of 'real time'. This is a paper in three parts: the first follows the founding of the Syrian Archive, set up in a nondescript suburb of Berlin to archive this footage in the face of state-led takedowns, updated platform user agreements, and the tragic fate befalling many opposition activists. The paper describes how in its day to day archival work, the Syrian Archive has to navigate a particular articulation of platform, media, and state power. The second part follows a digital forensic investigation into hospital bombings led by the archive, giving an account of the techniques, legal concepts, figure of the expert, and theories of materiality at play. The third and final part of the paper analyses the technical, legal, and political hurdles that would have to be overcome for user generated content to be transformed into legally felicitous evidence. There is an attempt to instigate a shift in war crimes tribunals from the “era of the witness” (Wieviorka 2006) to an “object-oriented” (Weizmann 2017) notion of materiality that both draws inspiration from the past’s evidentiary focus on state documents, especially at the Nuremberg Trials, and that also looks forward towards setting a new paradigm for the relations between materiality, objectivity, expertise, and justice on the basis of open source content.

FILM (Friday 15:30)

Rosine Mbakam ***Delphine’s Prayers* (2021, 90 mins)**

Content note: This film deals with issues of sexuality, including sexual violence.

This film is the portrait of Delphine, a young Cameroonian girl who, after the death of her mother and the abandonment of her father’s parental responsibilities, was raped at the age of 13. She sinks into prostitution to support herself and her daughter. She ends up marrying a Belgian man who is three times her age, hoping to find a better life in Europe for her and her daughter. Seven years later, the European dream has faded and her situation has only gotten worse.

Delphine, like others, is part of this generation of young African women crushed by our patriarchal societies and left with this Western sexual colonization as the only means of survival. Through her courage and strength, Delphine exposes these patterns of domination that continue to lock up African women.

ABSTRACTS, SATURDAY 11 JUNE

PANEL 2, Sensory Techniques (Saturday 9:00) **Chair: Michael Lawrence (University of Sussex)**

Friedlind Riedel

Mistaken mediations: Theatrical arrangements and dramatic operations at the royal palace of Mandalay, Burma 1880–1885

The 1880s not only mark the final annihilation of the Burmese empire at the hands of the British colonisers but also the end of the *mye waing*, a circular stage on which musical dramas (*pyazat*) were presented at the royal palace. This talk will trace the shift from theatre ‘in the round’ to a theatre ‘in the cube’ by interrogating the specific techniques of appearance in these two media milieus. The circular performance space was not only a curiosity to colonial observers but their accounts of it also reveal an eagerness to find their own History reflected in it. Their obsessive pursuit of interpretation, that is, of mapping the relationship between things and meanings, fundamentally obscured the medial and processual logic of the circular stage. In turn, when the first proscenium stage was erected at the royal court of Mandalay for a group of celebrated Parsee performers from Bombay, King Thibaw fatefully misjudged the medium, thus imperilling the threshold between fiction and reality that his predecessors had so carefully guarded. My primary source for the theatrical arrangements at the Burmese courts are water colour paintings on thick fan-folded paper (*parabeik*). These paintings not only depict dramatic performances but are themselves performative: they have to be unfolded, an operation that not only directs the viewer’s gaze but that itself processes appearance and sets up relations of showing and seeing within the image.

Vebhuti Duggal

Intermediality and Listening to Cinema in India

In this presentation, I collocate print, cinema and radio in conversation with each other to examine the film song as an intermedial object. I examine the presence of Hindi film songs in the popular Hindi-language print sphere, c. 1965 - 1975, alongside radio programming and radio listening practices. These comparisons highlight (a) the constitution and training of the sensate public body and (b) the production of an affective public in and across the network of these media forms. More broadly, I consider listening not as a technique only of the ear but also of print and memory, in other words, as an intermedial and an inter-sensory technique.

PANEL 3, Ecologies & Circulations (Saturday 11:00) **Chair: Heather Inwood (University of Cambridge)**

Diana Abbani

Recorded Sounds Crossing the Borders: Circulation, Encounters and Imaginaries in Beirut and Bilad al-Sham during the French Mandate Period

The appearance of commercial recordings in the early twentieth century was a major element in the transformation of the musical and cultural scene in Beirut and Bilad al-Sham. At a time of historical juncture, where Beirut was being shaped as an economic and intellectual hub, and a modern Eastern Mediterranean port city caught between the Ottoman Empire and the European power, the music industry entered the city, then Bilad al-Sham; spreading new musical genres and consumption manners. This talk follows the circulation of 78-rpm records in the region during the French mandate period (1920s-1940s). It focuses on the activities of the first national Arab company, Baidaphon. Recorded in Berlin, Beirut or Cairo by various Lebanese, Egyptian, Tunisian or Syrian singers, Baida records, in particular patriotic songs, were at the heart of the global tensions between great powers (notably France and Germany). They reflected the emergence of national consciousness and reproduced the major debates of the time on identity and modernity that circulated across geographical borders, as well as between the real and the fictional imaginaries.

Cassandra Xin Guan
From Atomic Light to Ludic Sovereignty: *Havoc in Heaven*, circa 1964

How did animation mediate the revolutionary transformations of Chinese national identity in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward and the Sino-Soviet Split? In this paper, I draw on theories of sovereignty and nationhood from both Western and Chinese sources to reinterpret media spectacles of nuclear power during a period of state-planned industrialization in the People's Republic of China. My reading of the celebrated animation film *Havoc in Heaven* (1961-64) underscores the imperative of "technological revolution" (技术革命) originating from a global environment shaped by Cold War geopolitics and the nuclear arms race. Contrasting the sixties adaptation with its classical literary source, I challenge traditional interpretations of the Monkey King's revolt by recasting the agency of the revolutionary subject as a function of the technical object in animation. Pointing to China's strategic use of the atomic bomb and its unacknowledged appearance in the animation film, I argue that *Havoc* supports a subversive interpretation of the nuclear weapons program as the originary prosthesis of nationhood (民族), a view that undercuts the politically entrenched ideology of popular sovereignty.

FILM

Rita Coburn
***Marian Anderson: The Whole World in Her Hands* (2022; excerpts, 62 mins)**

Born in 1897, Marian Anderson, a granddaughter of enslaved Americans became an international singing star and inspiration for America's civil rights movement. The support of family, church, community, tours and performances led her to Europe in the late '20s where her extraordinary four-octave range featuring both European classical music and Negro spirituals earned her international acclaim. Denied a Washington, DC performance at The Daughters of the American Revolution's Constitution Hall in 1939, Anderson delivered an iconic concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to an unprecedented mixed-race audience of 75,000. In 1955, Anderson became the first African American to sing with the Metropolitan Opera. As a goodwill ambassador and alternate delegate to the United Nations, she enjoyed a marriage postponed for more than twenty years. Exiting the limelight, she gave back to the community that birthed her talent, until her death in 1993.

PANEL 4, Touching Media
Chair: Alex Grieve (University of Cambridge)

Deniz Türker
'Professor Wace's Turkish Sampler': Ottoman Women Embroiderers and Continental Collectors of Woven Archaeologies

This talk pivots around a singular Ottoman embroidery sampler, unusually bearing a long inscription. Its arrival in the Cambridge museum collections in the late-1940s allows us to use it as a window onto two important early twentieth-century developments: on the one hand, the intertwining historiographies of archaeology and the applied arts, on the other, collaborations between private collectors, dealers, scholars, and museums, all part of international networks emerging around the study of the Mediterranean. The sampler as an embroidery type has a well-documented afterlife in the cosmopolitan domain of twentieth-century textile aficionados, but a sampler is more than its embroideries. The talk's objective here is to stitch together the two seemingly disparate strands of the sampler's biography, in order to establish its role within the Ottoman history of embroidery as a resolutely gendered expression as well as demonstrate its outsized presence in the expanding geographies of twentieth-century collecting.

Kirsty Sinclair Dootson
Lab Work: Processing Global Film Histories

What would it mean to reconceptualise the history of film within the history of print? How would shifting attention from shooting practices in the studio to processing operations in the laboratory rewrite film's histories and reconsider their geographic orientations? While laboratories were the spaces where the aesthetics of film were materially forged, and were crucial to facilitating the flow of raw materials and labour on a global scale, they remain understudied locations for exploring the formal, material, and ideological history of film. This paper therefore takes the laboratory as its focus, considering this industrial space as a site of creative labour, transnational exchange, and [neo]colonial control to explore how closer scrutiny of this understudied space might map new, global histories of film labour, aesthetics, and politics.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Abbani, Diana (Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin)

Diana Abbani received her doctorate in Arabic Studies from Sorbonne University with a thesis entitled 'Music and Society in Beirut at the Time of the Nahda'. She holds double masters in History and Political Science from Sorbonne University and the University of Saint Denis in Paris. She is preparing a book that focuses on the Levant's social history in the first half of the 20th century. In her research, she examines the implications of social, political and technological changes, as well as the emergence of the music industry and the entertainment world, on music and Levantine society. In her study, she focuses on alternative narratives, uncovering the forgotten stories of people who were affected by the sound transition and revisiting the experiences of those marginalized by official narratives. Diana was a EUME Fellow during the academic years 2018/19 and 2019/20. In the academic year 2020/21, Diana was a EUME Fellow of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. She has been associated with the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies at Freie Universität Berlin.

Bronfman, Alejandra (University of Albany, SUNY)

Alejandra Bronfman is Chair, Professor, and Director of Undergraduate Studies Latin American, Caribbean & U.S. Latino Studies at the University of Albany, SUNY. She is a cultural historian of the Caribbean with research interests in the production of knowledge, racialization and technology's role in the amplification of marginalized voices, including histories of sound, environment and toxicity, and the material nature of communications networks. Listening and collaboration guide her work with students, colleagues and researchers. Her third book, *Isles of Noise: Sonic Media in the Caribbean* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), records unwritten histories of broadcasting and sonic technologies in early twentieth century Cuba, Jamaica and Haiti.

Coburn, Rita (filmmaker, United States)

Rita Coburn is the Peabody award winning Co-Director/Co-Producer of the first feature documentary on Maya Angelou, *American Masters – Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise*. An award winning multi-media writer, director, and producer, Rita's television work earned 3 Emmys for documentaries: *Curators of Culture*, *Remembering 47th Street*, and *African Roots, American Soil*. Rita's work has also been featured on C-Span, Harpo, and The History Channel. Rita is the owner of RCW Media Productions, Inc., a multi-media production company. Coburn's value is such that she bridges the gap between generations and preserves African American history.

Duggal, Vebhuti (Ambedkar University Delhi)

Vebhuti Duggal is Assistant Professor in film studies at the School of Culture and Creative Expressions at Ambedkar University Delhi. Her research interests include sound studies, media studies and contemporary Indian cinema. She has recently co-edited special journal issues on South Asian film studies and 'Empire and the Senses'. In addition, she has published on topics related to radio, postcards, and mobile phones. She completed her PhD in Cinema Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University on a CSDS-ICSSR doctoral fellowship.

Guan, Cassandra Xin (Brown University/Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Cassandra Xin Guan is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Science, Technology, and Society at Brown University, where she recently received a PhD in Modern Culture and Media. She is also a faculty member at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. Her publications include "Critique of Flowers: The Exigency of Life in the Era of Its Technical Reproducibility" in *October*, a co-edited dossier on the theme of "Natural Aesthetics" in *Screen*, and a forthcoming book chapter on Ulrike Ottinger's ethnographic documentary *China: The Arts, the Everyday*. She is currently working on a book manuscript about plasticity and animation called "Maladaptive Media: 'Life' and Other Works of Animation." Cassandra will begin a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at MIT's Center for Art, Science, and Technology in Fall 2023.

Kapurja, Radha (University of Sheffield)

Radha Kapuria is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in History at the University of Sheffield, where she is currently researching the impact of the 1947 Partition on Punjab's musicians. Her PhD was conducted at King's College London on a Commonwealth Scholarship, and was shortlisted for the Royal Asiatic Society's Bayly Prize 2019. Prior to this, she pursued her MPhil in History at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her work straddles history, cultural studies, ethnomusicology, and gender studies and her book *Music in Colonial Punjab: Courtesans, Bards and Connoisseurs* will soon be published with Oxford University Press. She is currently also a co-editor and collaborator on projects exploring the intersections of regional, sonic, and environmental histories of South Asia.

Kerbaj, Mazen (sound artist, Germany/Lebanon)

Mazen Kerbaj is a Lebanese comics author, visual artist, and musician born in Beirut in 1975. He also works on selective illustration and design projects and has taught at the American University of Beirut. Kerbaj is the author of 15 books translated into more than ten languages and his work has been shown in galleries, museums and art fairs around the world. Mazen Kerbaj is widely considered as one of the initiators and key players of the Lebanese free improvisation and experimental music scene. As a trumpet player, he pushes the boundaries of the instrument beyond recognition.

Mbakam, Rosine (filmmaker, Belgium/Cameroon)

Rosine Mbakam grew up in Cameroon. She chose cinema very early, training in Yaoundé after learning about the Italian NGO, COE (Centro Orientamento Educativo) where, beginning in 2000 she was introduced to image making, editing and production. While there, she collaborated on and directed several films. After a meeting with Mactar Sylla in 2003, she joined the team of STV (Spectrum Television) where she directed and edited several audiovisual programmes. In 2007, she left Cameroon and enrolled at INSAS in Brussels for a training course. In 2014, she founded with Geoffroy Cernaix, Tandor Productions and directed *The Two Faces of a Bamileke Woman*, her first creative documentary. Mbakam's 2019 *Chez Jolie Coiffure*, a documentary capturing the day-to-day lives and concerns of immigrant West African women in a small hair salon in Brussels, screened at several festivals and won the Spirit of the Festival Prize at Light Film Festival 2019.

Rangan, Pooja (Amherst College)

Pooja Rangan is a documentary scholar based in Amherst College, where she is Associate Professor of English and Chair of Film and Media Studies. Rangan is the author of the award-winning book *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary* (Duke UP, 2017) and co-editor of *Thinking with an Accent: Toward a New Object, Method, and Practice* (forthcoming from UC Press, 2023). She is currently completing a book titled *On Documentary Listening*, and co-authoring a book with Brett Story on abolitionist documentary.

Riedel, Friedlind (Bauhaus University, Weimar)

Friedlind Riedel is a PhD researcher and fellow of the Graduate College for Media Anthropology (GRAMA) at the Bauhaus University, Weimar. She is also a committee member of the RMA Music and Philosophy Study Group and an adjunct lecturer at Salzburg University. Her work is situated between music and sound studies, (German) media theory, and anthropology, with particular interest in the music and performing arts in Myanmar. She has co-edited *Music as Atmosphere: Collective Feelings and Affective Sounds* (2019) and *The Oxford Handbook of Phenomenology of Music Cultures* (2022).

Sinclair Dootson, Kirsty (University of St Andrews)

Kirsty Sinclair Dootson is a Lecturer in Film Studies at University of St Andrews. Her research interrogates historical links between materials, technologies, aesthetics and ideologies across a range of media. She is particularly interested in the material and technical history of colour media and the global history of Technicolor cinema. Her current book project *The Rainbow's Gravity* asks how new ways of making colour profoundly transformed the meaning of colour in modern Britain from the 1850s to 1960s.

Tarnowski, Stefan (Columbia University/Corpus Christi College, Cambridge)

Stefan Tarnowski will begin an Early-Career Research Fellowship at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in October 2022. He received his doctorate in anthropology from Columbia University this year. His writing has recently appeared in *World Records*, *Film Quarterly*, the *London Review of Books*, and *Review of Middle East Studies*. He has also worked as a researcher, subtitler, and translator for a number of artists and filmmakers.

Türker, Deniz (Rutgers University-New Brunswick)

Deniz Türker is an Assistant Professor of Islamic art and architecture at Rutgers-New Brunswick, who specializes in late-Ottoman and Turkish visual and material cultures. Her forthcoming book entitled, *The Accidental Palace* (Penn State Press, 2022) traces the architectural and landscape history of Yıldız, the last Ottoman palace in Istanbul. She also has a sustained interest in the history of Islamic art collecting (especially in the nineteenth-century Ottoman and Egyptian domains). Her next project is centered on Yıldız Moran's photographic practice in the context of Anatolia's rediscovery by Turkish humanists in the 1950s.