Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis
University of Amsterdam

ASCA

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2023 ASCA AWARDS

This year's ASCA Awards Committee (Yvette Wong, Emelia Quinn, and Daniel Loick) nominated **Jana Cattien**, **Divya Nadkarni**, and **Asli Özgen-Havekotte**.

Jana Cattien, ASCA Article Award 2023

The award for the best article by an ASCA member goes to Jana Cattien, 'On not becoming Chinese: The racialisation of compliance' published on *Radical Philosophy*.

Since the fall of 2019, the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic was not merely causing sickness and death, but the renewal of forms and ideologies of lives. The social order and our sense of self were changing. During that period of global crisis, there were a group of scholarships putting focuses on thinking about how to overcome or reconfigure distancing and isolation from the perspective of embodied connectivity and the embodiment of connectivity. Alongside this mentioned line of scholarships, Jana Cattien's philosophical article delineates one of the challenging dilemmas that appeared during the pandemic——the racialized relations between China and the West.

Whilst COVID-19 scripts a unique episode in human history, Jana Cattien hereby unpacks the longstanding racialization between Europe and the East. As she addressed, the fact that East Asian people have been seen as carriers of Covid-19, being obedient to the public health measures rather than preventing its spread, "reflects the persistence of Orientalist associations of Chineseness with compliance and conformity, on the one hand, and disease and bodily weakness, on the other".

Furthermore, by having a dialogue with John Stuart Mill's classic liberal text *On Liberty*, Jana Cattien acutely explicates the nostalgia of pandemic Europe "for an idealised past in which 'our' horror at the 'alienness' of compliance was still untroubled by the uncomfortable fact of 'our' waning superiority". Her article speaks along with both political and philosophical concepts, crucially underling the racialization of different embodiments of health measures. The committee sees this article as an outstandingly timely and influential response to the continuing racist idea of Chineseness.

Divya Nadkarni, ASCA Dissertation Award 2023

Divya Nadkarni's thesis, "Poetic Understanding and Political Community: Actualizing Plurality through Poetry," speaks to a question that has long plagued those who seek to justify the devotion of their careers to the reading and analysis of poetry: what is the point of poetry? This question is increasingly pertinent in the face of the neoliberalisation of the modern university and concomitant devaluation of the humanities, forcing a continual justification of what poetry can do or make happen.

If the perceived difficulty and inaccessibility of poetry is one of the principal drivers of critique as to its ineffectiveness for political influence, Nadkarni offers a corrective: that poetry's difficulty is essential to its

political power, where poetry is difficult in the same way that other people are difficult to understand. In this framing, poetry offers us a way of attending to and appreciating the opacity of others; of forging solidarity across lines of race, caste, and class without seeking to erase difference.

Nadkarni posits the politicality of poetry not as something to be found in the content of the poem, nor in the ambitions of the poet, but as belonging to the act of reading itself and the interaction between reader and poem. The thesis is not therefore about poetry that is explicitly political in thematic content, but views poetry as political through the ways in which it demonstrates "how to facilitate political community through transformative processes of understanding" (9). She advances the concept of "poetic understanding" to consider poetry's contribution to contemporary politics in its offer of a way of radically transforming and reshaping our ways of relating to each other. This involves seeing ourselves as a 'we', a 'we' that does not homogenise but that is constituted by difference in relation.

This thesis is of timely relevance, in an age of increasing political polarization and shocking indifference, particularly in the Global North, to the plight of refugees. Nadkarni's decolonial, anti-racist, and anti-identitarian analysis offers up poetry as a way of grappling with our differences in order to construct new communities in the context of racial othering and the legacies of coloniality. The thesis also contributions to wider conversations about the role and value of literary study, offering a passionate reinvestment in the political importance of the humanities.

The committee particularly noted the sophistication and poeticism of the prose as well as the impeccable presentation of the thesis. Nadkarni demonstrates a deft handling of theoretical material to advance a thoughtful, nuanced, and complex reflection on poetic value and modes of reading.

Asli Özgen-Havekotte, ASCA Book Award 2023

The award for the best book by an ASCA member goes to Asli Özgen's brilliant study *The Aesthetics and Politics of Cinematic Pedestrianism: Walking in Films,* which came out in 2022 with Amsterdam University Press. In this book, Asli investigates a seemingly trivial everyday act – walking – to reveal its uncanny, courageous, insurgent, and willful facets. Utilizing the theoretical tools provided by the interdisciplinary toolbox of urban studies, film theory, philosophy and feminist theories, Asli explores the cinematic aesthetics of walking to shed light on the affective and corporeal experience of the modern pedestrian. Through a captivating array of case studies, the book meticulously dissects iconic archetypes like the flâneur/flâneuse, the vagabond, and the nomad, unveiling how filmmakers have rebelled against oppressive structures through showing the simple yet subversive act of walking. In her book, Asli skillfully employs the theoretical frameworks of a number of heretogeneous thinkers, from Lefebvre via Rancière to Braidottii, to illuminate the hidden narratives surrounding feet, shoes, and audacious wanderers.

The committee found that this book was serious and light at the same time – it has the two seemingly paradox characteristics of a good walk.

NEW ASCA PHD CANDIDATES

7 New PhD Candidates recently joined ASCA. Warm welcome!

Annemijn Kwikkers, *Transforming Democratic Values in Algorithmic Media*
Supervisors: Beate Roessler, Eva Groen-Reijman
This project will evaluate the extent to which unregulated automated journalism, despite its many opportunities for online journalism and for the dissemination of information, stands to undermine democracy. The ability of automated journalism to decisively influence public opinion has potentially severe political consequences. These consequences are compounded by the ease with which these technologies can be bought and sold, as well as how they can evade existing regulation. Since the providers of automated journalism are privately owned and for-profit entities (e.g. OpenAI), they will enable affluent parties to buy influence and weaken democracy. It is unclear who is accountable for fictitious news stories or deep fake images as the parties involved have plausible deniability. This raises the question of whether the goals and standards of public and private parties are sufficiently aligned for automated journalism to be responsibly deployed to perform such a key public role in a democratic society. It is this unprecedented ethical environment that this article aims to shed light on.

Will di Gavio, *Remix, Reimagine & Reanimate: The Archival Potentials of Videographic Criticism*
Supervisors: Jaap Kooijman, Floris Paalman
My project centers on the potentials of videographic criticism to engage with filmic archives, and in particular reimagine how scholarly engagement with the archive can reach new and diverse audiences. My

project will also explore the possibilities of videographic criticism itself as it relates to form, exhibition, and scholarly practice. I will work with archives that have a substantial collection related to independent and avant-garde cinema. Videographic criticism has certain roots in the avant-garde. My intention will be to understand the history of the avant-garde, but also to unpack how videographic criticism marks a continuation -- and differentiation from -- the avant-garde.

Lisa Schouten, *The sound of Egyptian counterculture: rewriting notions of class, identity and culture through Mahraganat*
Supervisors: Jaap Kooijman, Maaike Voorhoeve
The project will be an analysis of the musical phenomenon Mahraganat. Through a framework of Counterculture and Bourdieu's conceptualization of taste, the music's relation with and influence on notions of identity, class and culture in Egypt will be questioned. The research will be threefold, consisting of an analysis of lyrics' linguistic aspects, a discussion of the artists' complicated legal and social standing (with e.g. the Musicians' Syndicate) as well as a cultural analysis of the identity politics (both top-down and bottom-up) involved in Mahraganat.

Yuko Yoshida, *Silence after Catastrophe: Disaster Survivor Witnessing in Contemporary Japan*
Supervisors: Ellen Rutten, Ernst van Alphen
This project unpacks contemporary survivor testimonies, films, photographs, art works, and collaborative acts of witnessing to examine how cultural silence of contemporary Japan is generated under the discourse of commemoration and recovery practices during the aftermath of a natural disaster. The author examines transformative modes of survivor witnessing to uncover discrepancies between survivors' memories and other kinds of memory, and to contemplate this recovery crisis. These and other acts of survivor witnessing become processes that contribute to break through this crisis and the lack of forgiveness and healing.

Gülce Özkara, My Life in the Bush of Ghosts: Artistic Use of Obsolete Audiovisual Media to Excavate Postcolonial First-Person Narratives
Supervisors: Asli Özgen-Havekotte, Giovanna Fossati
This project explores the use of obsolete audiovisual media in the works of contemporary artists from the SWANA region to articulate erasure, trauma, and silence related to the cultural memory of colonization. Artists use obsolete media in innovative ways: they record, playback and display through the obsolete to examine how the silenced past overflows through the interstices of the
present in the form of spectral images and sounds. They excavate first person narratives and expand the frame of documentary and archival practices. Their works

demand academic scrutiny using theoretical frameworks of ethnography, cultural analysis, decolonial theory, and media archaeology to explore the novel artistic articulations of remembering and restoring absences in the cultural memory of (de)colonization.

Ilker Bahar, *Mirror Dwelling in VRChat, its queer potential and role in community building and intimacy*
Supervisors: Misha Kavka, Toni Pape
This research aims to delve into the social/cultural dynamics of VRChat platform. With a digital ethnography in VRCHat and its Discord servers, it will investigate 1) how users interact with each other, form and maintain relationships, and experience intimacy and sexuality in VRChat, discuss 2) the role VR/AR wearables play in users' perceptual, affective, and embodied experience, and explore 3) the impact of immersion technologies on self-expression, identity, authenticity, and performativity. Hence, it will contribute to our understanding of the prospects of mediated body, identity, and intimacy in the Web 3.0 era by engaging with queer, affect, and cultural theories.

Martina Raponi, *An acoustemology of the unheard. The technology, the narrative, and the art of listening beyond aurality*
Supervisors: Geert Lovink, Cecile Malaspina
This research aims to excavate what is unheard in sound. The title echoes *unsound* (Goodman, 2012), a now established term in sound studies, but it is disambiguated from it insofar as it focuses on the material and non-sonic implications of sonic phenomena, sound and acoustic processes, perceptual faculties and habits. The relevance of this study resides in the fact that it takes into consideration cultural phenomena and discourses from an acoustemological (Feld, 1992) perspective. This doctoral project aims to elucidate the non-sonic implications of sonic phenomena and their hitherto neglected importance for ways of knowing and producing knowledge; including and especially those foregrounding sonic experience. By privileging the sonic perspective without
surrendering fully to its phenomenological premises, I acknowledge how sound and sonic phenomena can function as effective metaphors and epitomes of the complex cultural, political, and societal systems of our contemporaneity, in a critical tension with the visual paradigm.

GDC PHD WORKSHOP
Taking place in BG1 0.16 on July 3, 09:30 -22:00
Convenors: Thomas Poell (UvA), David Nieborg (University of Toronto), Rivke Jaffe (UvA), Jeroen de Kloet (UvA), and Arturo Arriagada (Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez).
The goal of this PhD workshop is to enable knowledge sharing on global digital cultures, enhance student

mobility, and engage in intercontinental network-building.

In the morning, there will be a series of 1-hour sessions to share best research practices and reflect on methods, approaches, and dissertation writing. Nine PhD students will be asked to present their projects, solicit feedback, and explore opportunities for collaboration.

The afternoon will be devoted to professional development. We will discuss challenges and strategies in making the transition from PhD research to a career in academia or elsewhere. The convenors will reflect on their own experiences and discuss questions from participants.

The day will be finished with dinner and drinks.

Participation is free, but capped at 30 PhD students. You can indicate your interest by sending a mail to Thomas Poell (t.poell@uva.nl).

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON PLATFORMS, EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, AND THE NEWS INDUSTRY

GDC and Humane AI Workshop in Oudemanhuispoort A1.18C, 18-19 July 2023.

Join us for an insightful and thought-provoking workshop on July 18th and 19th, where we will explore the intersection of platforms, emerging technologies, and the news industry from a global perspective.

This event will bring together leading experts in the field who will shed light on the methodologies to study platforms, technologies, and marginalized communities. They will also discuss challenges and opportunities presented by platforms and emerging technologies in shaping the news industry and society, particularly marginalized communities. Through their research and expertise, they will delve into topics such as artificial intelligence, disinformation, digital media, and the role of platforms on society. Professor Tobias Blanke from Human(e) AI will open the workshop.

Keynote Speakers:

- Payal Arora (EUR)
- Bruce Mutsvairo (Utrecht University)
- Thomas Poell (UvA)
- Amanda Alencar (EUR)

Opening Address: Tobias Blanke (Human(e) AI, UvA)

Other speakers include:

- Sina Blassnig (University of Zurich)
- Tomás Dodds (Leiden University)
- Mathias Felip de Lima Santos (UvA)
- Valeria Resendez Gómez (UvA)
- Poonpong Boonbhram (Walailak University, Thailand)
- Attanan Tachopisalwong (Walailak University, Thailand)
- Dr. Yuttana Jaroenruen (Walailak University, Thailand)
- Shiella Balbutin (Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan, Philippines)
- Tang Mui Joo (Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology, Malaysia)
- Tan Ling Ling (Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology, Malaysia)
- Amalia Nurul Muthmainnah (Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia)

Funded by GDC and Human(e) AI | **Registration Link**

SCIENCE-ART SUMMER SCHOOL

Summer school on July 19, 20, and 21 organized by the Science Gallery of the Erasmus Medical Centre in Rotterdam. This summer school is based on research about transplant science, as well as on Moosje Goosen's work *On Wards*, a text installation based on lived experience with donor lungs (on view until September at Kunstinstituut Melly). The summer school is targeted to students, researchers and practitioners of different fields, such as medicine, (health) humanities, art and design. Together we will think about practical, future, and ethical implications of recent developments in transplant science.

Contact: info@rotterdam.sciencegallery.com

MENTORSHIP AWARD: MOVING NARRATIVES!

A pilot programme by the Prince Claus Fund & the British Council

Are you a socially and politically engaged artist or cultural practitioner with ± 7-15 years of relevant professional experience, who believes that culture can play a vital role in questioning dominant narratives and their role in our lives? Then we invite you to apply for the Mentorship Award: Moving Narratives!

Dominant historical and social narratives tend to exclude the experiences and stories of marginalised communities, silence critical voices, and erase, overlook, or at times over-emphasise differences. Presenting one-sided or partial accounts of history, these narratives often reflect systems of power and contribute to social inequalities.

Apply for this year-long multidisciplinary programme and join 12 experienced artists and cultural practitioners, supported by 4 mentors, who will collectively experiment, exchange, and develop artistic strategies that move our understanding of the past and drive our visions of the future in new directions through the affective, discursive, and transformative power of culture.

This pilot programme will adopt various interactive formats that range from workshops, reading groups, guest talks, and peer-to-peer review sessions. Most of the activities will be online, but the cohort will come together twice in person for the Labs (six-day intensive mentoring sessions). Within the framework of the programme, the cohort will collectively create a joint project in the form of a printed publication and an online platform.

Additionally, each participant will receive an award of €10.000 to work on the project or body of work outlined in their application. Learn more.