

Home, Belonging, and Caravaggio

An afternoon with Xiaolu Guo – for doctoral students and everyone interested

Call for Participation

Friedrich Dürrenmatt Guest Professorship for World Literature

Guests: Xiaolu Guo, Author/Filmmaker, China/England | Friedrich Dürrenmatt Guest Professor Spring 2018

Moderation: Prof. Dr. Michaela Schäuble, Media Anthropology, Bern

Date: Mai 3, 2018, 14.15 am – 17:00 pm

Room: Unitobler, Lerchenweg 36, F -104

ECTS: 1

Registration: Until April 25, 2018 to toggweiler@wbkolleg.unibe.ch as well as on KSL: <https://www.ksl.unibe.ch/> (Login via UniBe account, title search)

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Once we leave ‘home’, we break with our roots. Sometimes, we even lose our identity by leaving this home. Later, in our life, we search for a new home, constructing a new identity, hoping to find somewhere or something to belong to.

As John Berger wrote in the 1970s, one in every seven people in Europe was a migrant. In China, perhaps one in every two people is a migrant. Maybe one day, all of us will be migrants. We might be uprooted and transplanted, like gum trees trying to grow in the northern hemisphere, or like roses sprouting from under snow in a northern climate. The migrant plants might die or they might survive. In most cases, their particular body structures change to reflect and to adapt to their alien environments. This workshop will show some film clips from filmmaker and writer Xiaolu Guo about immigrants, about their life, and about how people find the idea of home and belonging in art, and the idea of their own artistic self image. We will also discuss how people (including the participants of this workshop), not only the ones who have migrated and reconstructed their lives, but also those who have never left home, project their own aesthetic identity into an imaginary world.

We will show Film Clips from ‘FIVE MAN AND A CARAVAGGIO’ AND ‘THREE SHORT FILMS ABOUT HOME’ and participants are asked to read two chapters from Guo’s book ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE EAST: A STORY OF GROWING UP (Chapters: THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY, and EUROPE, IN THE LAND OF NOMADS).



Xiaolu Guo, born 1973 in the south of China, studied at the Beijing Film Academy and later at the National Film and TV School in London, where she has been living and working since 2002. Before her breakthrough as a novelist, Xiaolu Guo gained recognition with her documentary and short films. Her eighth film, *She, a Chinese* was awarded the Golden Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival in 2009.

Also as a writer Guo is internationally successful: In her debut novel *Village of Stone* (2005) Guo tells the story of a young woman in Beijing who is torn between cultural traditions and the wish for a new life. Later, *A Concise Chinese-English*

Dictionary for Lovers (2008), *UFO in Her Eyes* (2009) and *I am China* (2015) followed. Her latest book, the autobiography *Once Upon A Time in the East* (2017) was published last year and earned her the National Book Critics Circle Award. Xiaolu Guo writes in English and Chinese, her texts have been translated into 27 languages. From February to June 2018, Xiaolu Guo is spending the spring term in Switzerland as Friedrich Dürrenmatt Guest Professor at the University of Bern. She gives a weekly seminar on «Hybridism, on Migrant Literature» where she discusses novels of authors who write in a foreign language with her students. Her goal is to find out how artists move between cultural identities, languages and places of residence. Besides teaching her class, Xiaolu Guo participates in public readings and workshops.