

# **Gendering and Historicizing Cultures of Memory: Interdisciplinary Workshop**

**Freie Universität Berlin, February 13, 2026**

## **Abstracts**

### **Panel 1: Gendered Memory Practices in the Greek World**

#### **Evangelia Georgedaki (Freie Universität Berlin), “The Role of Women in Ancient Crete Based on the Study of Funerary Stelae and Their Inscriptions”**

This lecture investigates the role of women in ancient Cretan societies from the Classical to the Roman period, through an integrated study of funerary stelae and their inscriptions. These monuments offer valuable insight into how women were represented, remembered, and situated within broader social structures. The research focuses on how female identity, kinship relations, and public recognition are articulated through commemorative practices, as well as how these may reflect broader institutional frameworks, such as those preserved in the Gortyn Code. By examining funerary evidence from several Cretan cities, the study highlights regional traditions and traces changes in gender roles over time. Methodologically, it combines archaeological and epigraphic approaches, bringing together typological, iconographic, and content-based analysis of the inscriptions to reconstruct the ways in which women’s presence was materialized and expressed after death. As part of my doctoral research, this lecture seeks not only to illuminate aspects of female social identity and memory, but also to reevaluate conventional narratives by foregrounding the role of women beyond the confines of traditional historiography.

**Evangelia Georgedaki** was born in Chania (Crete) and completed her bachelor’s degree in Archaeology and Art History at the University of Rethymno. She pursued her master’s degree at Humboldt University of Berlin, where she worked with the *Inscriptiones Graecae* project, contributing both to field campaigns and to the edition of epigraphic material. In addition, she has participated in several excavations in Crete. Her research interests focus on Greek epigraphy and the material evidence of ancient Greece, particularly with regard to the social and historical questions that can be explored through these sources. A special focus of her work lies on the study of gender roles in antiquity.

**Artemis Ignatidou (University of Bayreuth), “Song, Music, and the Impact of Industrialisation upon Women’s Role in Traditional Societies”**

This paper will discuss how the emergence of industry and the push for an increasingly literate workforce affected the role of 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman-Jewish women in their community. Regularly described as a means for emancipation from superstition and a pathway to improved financial prospects in historical sources, literacy was promoted and supported financially by the industrialist class of Ottoman Salonika and was resisted passionately by the religious leaders of the Jewish community, who understood it as a secular challenge to their authority. Examined through the lens of sound and music studies, though, this gradual shift from an oral to a textual culture reveals how mass literacy and secular education had another interesting side-effect: they displaced women from their function as the keepers of the community’s collective memory and their role as community-based educators. For the purposes of this talk I will position this shift from orality to textuality in the context of Jewish traditional learning in order to discuss how memory studies may benefit from revisiting the effects of industrialisation and literacy upon gender relations.

**Artemis Ignatidou** is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Bayreuth, where she also teaches European transnational cultural history. Her research focuses on intercultural responses to national and nationalist musical practices on the continent, the impact of transnational musical institutions upon local cultural identities, and the transnationally shaped evolution of musical production. She is currently preparing a monograph on the national policies, musical practices, and sonic contexts that resulted in the acculturation of the Jewish community in the Greek city of Thessaloniki between 1880 and 1922. In 2018, she completed a PhD in history with a thesis addressing the musical and institutional elements that shaped Greek nationalism in the nineteenth century. During her doctoral studies, she completed two research residencies at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada, where she collaborated in multidisciplinary musical projects, and she has also been a visiting fellow at the Ernst Bloch Centre for German Thought (University of London, 2018 and 2021). Her interests include sonic studies, cultural theory, the philosophy of art and music, critical theory and interdisciplinarity as practice. In her musical life, she is a freelance piano and music history tutor, and she also participates in artistic projects as a performer and musician.

## Panel 2: Antique Women in Gendered Memory Practices

### **Sophie Prauschke (Freie Universität Berlin), “The Image of Livia Drusilla in Tacitus’ *Annales* and Its Impact on the Historical Discourse on Women in a Position of Power”**

Livia Drusilla, wife of the first Roman emperor Augustus, has been portrayed on coins, in ancient texts, later in art and movies and of course in historical research. The most scandalous ancient source on Livia are probably the *Annales* by the Roman historian Tacitus. I argue that his work contributes to an image of women in a position of power as obsessed with control, scheming and dangerous for their (male) social environment. Concerning the main topic of the workshop, this raises the question in what way Tacitus’s portrait of Livia has influenced the historical discourse and how this may affect the collective memory on female agency and its consequences in history. To approach this question, I will analyze some defining passages in Tacitus’s *Annales* describing Livia and her actions, with focus on the underlying ideal of how a woman high up in a hierarchy should and should not act. Then I will focus on the way historical researchers (between 19th and 21st century) dealt with Tacitus’s description, how they contradicted it or stabilized it further, and, by interacting with Tacitus’s storytelling, in what way they address his ideal of a woman in power. If there is still time, I would also like to include examples of modern media portraying Livia.

**Sophie Prauschke** holds a master’s degree in history from Freie Universität Berlin and has recently been enhancing her research with studies in Latin and Greek philology at Humboldt Universität Berlin. Her contribution to the workshop will discuss how Tacitus constructs imperial women—particularly Livia Drusilla—through a gendered framework that merges suspicion, intrigue, and moral anxiety, shaping their transhistorical perception as politically dangerous and “unwomanly.” By tracing these narrative strategies, the paper examines how Tacitus’s historiography codifies a durable cultural memory of female agency as inherently transgressive.

**Julia Saegbrecht (Freie Universität Berlin), “Contested Memories: Classical Female Figures in the Italian *Querelle des Sexes* (16th–17th century)”**

In early modern Italy, debates over the social, moral, and intellectual status of women permeated a wide range of literary and scholarly genres. Within this context, commonly referred to as the *Querelle des Sexes* (also *Querelle des Femmes*), references to antiquity played a central role. Ancient female figures were repeatedly invoked as exemplary cases—both to affirm women’s virtue and superiority and to demonstrate their alleged weakness or inferiority. This contribution examines how knowledge of antiquity and the memory of ancient women were selectively mobilized and reconfigured in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian gender debates. Rather than treating antiquity as a stable or authoritative body of inherited knowledge, I argue that ancient women functioned as flexible mnemonic resources whose meanings were reshaped according to argumentative needs. In some cases, mere name-dropping sufficed to activate shared cultural memory; in others, figures were elaborated in detail to guide interpretation and moral evaluation. Drawing on a comparative analysis of texts by early modern women writers such as Lucrezia Marinella and Moderata Fonte, alongside male authors including Giuseppe Passi and Cristoforo Bronzini, the paper highlights both differences and overlaps in the instrumentalization of ancient female figures. Particular attention is paid to how authors engaged—explicitly or implicitly—with one another, revealing a dynamic discursive exchange rather than isolated acts of reception.

**Julia Saegbrecht** is a doctoral candidate in the Doctoral Studies Program “History and Cultural Studies” (HCS) at Freie Universität Berlin. The subject of her dissertation is the functions of ancient female figures in the early modern debate on the value of masculinity and femininity, as well as the methods Italian authors used to underpin their own arguments regarding the superiority/inferiority of the male and female sexes. Her interdisciplinary project combines aspects of ancient historical and early modern (reception) research in a gender-historical perspective. Her contribution deals with the question of how early modern Italian authors—both women and men—mobilized classical female figures as gendered memory resources in the *Querelle des Sexes*. By comparing divergent uses of shared exempla, it shows how gender shaped which ancient women were remembered, reinterpreted, or strategically silenced.

## Masterclass

### **Chris Perkins (University of Edinburgh), “From Abstract to Publication: Editorial Perspectives for Interdisciplinary Research”**

This workshop offers practical insights into the publication process from an editorial perspective, drawing on experience as Chief Editor of Japan Forum. It will explore what journal editors look for when evaluating submissions, with particular attention to interdisciplinary research that bridges area studies with broader theoretical concerns. Key topics include crafting effective abstracts that clearly articulate research questions and contributions, integrating literature reviews that demonstrate scholarly engagement without overwhelming the argument, and structuring articles to present compelling and coherent claims. The session will examine common pitfalls in manuscript preparation and offer strategies for revision and resubmission. Participants will gain understanding of editorial decision-making processes and peer review expectations. The workshop concludes with an open question-and-answer session, providing an opportunity to discuss specific challenges in academic publishing and receive guidance on navigating the path from initial concept to published article.

**Chris Perkins** is Head of Japanese and Senior Lecturer in Japanese at the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures at the University of Edinburgh, where he joined as a lecturer in 2011. He is also Chief Editor of Japan Forum and member of the council of the British Association of Japanese Studies. He received his PhD from Royal Holloway, University of London, in 2011. He was recognized for his teaching in the 2012/13 EUSA Teaching Awards and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. His first book, *The United Red Army on Screen: Cinema, Aesthetics and The Politics of Memory* (Palgrave, 2015), analysed media and memory of Japan's radical left. His second book, *The Tokyo University Trial and the Struggle Against Order in Postwar Japan* (Springer, 2024), explores how the largest trial in Japanese legal history became a battleground over legal process and social order in the postwar period. His most recent book (with Ferran de Vagas), *Political Thought and Japan's New Left Movements: Transformations in Radical Theory* (Bloomsbury, 2026), examines the intellectual trajectory of Japan's New Left. His work has appeared in journals including *Japan Forum*, *The European Journal of Social Theory*, *Global Society*, *Television and New Media*, *The Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*, and *Asiatische Studien*, as well as in numerous edited collections.

### Panel 3: Gendered Memory Practices in Modern and Contemporary Japan

#### Andy Astakhova (Freie Universität Berlin), “Remembering *Nanshoku*: Knowledge of Premodern Male Homoerotic Cultures in Modern Japanese Discourse”

Cultures of male homoeroticism (*nanshoku*) flourished in premodern Japan, yet knowledge of these cultures has been unstable, fragmented, and contested since the mid-nineteenth century. This presentation examines how premodern Japanese cultures of male homoeroticism were remembered and put to use in modern Japan from a transwar perspective. I focus on a mode of remembering practiced between the 1920s and 1950s by what I term “the last student *nanshoku* generation”—a generation of elite male transwar authors who came of age in the 1900s and 1910s and carried the memories of homoerotic attachments formed during their student years throughout their writing careers. This mode of remembrance blurred the boundary between individual and collective memory, as personal experiences were often interpreted through historical knowledge about premodern *nanshoku*, and vice versa. Drawing on the writings of these elite male authors that privileged a temporally bounded understanding of queerness over stable identity, I trace how shifting discursive conditions shaped what kinds of homoerotic attachments could be remembered, and how. In dialogue with recent queer memory scholarship that emphasizes memory as a resource for struggles over rights, visibility, and community, I reflect on the writings of the last student *nanshoku* generation as a queer archive in which memory functions in ways that are not primarily oppositional or emancipatory, and consider how this archive invites alternative ways of thinking about the forms and uses of queer memory.

**Andy Astakhova** (they/them) is a doctoral candidate in the Doctoral Studies Program “History and Cultural Studies” (HCS) at Freie Universität Berlin. Combining historical and queer theoretical approaches, they investigate how premodern East Asian homoerotic cultures were remembered, reimagined, and forgotten in modern and early postwar Japan, particularly within imperial and national(ist) discourses. Their research interests include memory, temporality, and the politics of queerness in East Asian and global contexts.

**Nakako Hattori-Ishimaru (Freie Universität Berlin), “Who Speaks for the Himeyuri? Gendered Narratives and the Politics of Peace Memory Cultures in Okinawa”**

The Himeyuri Peace Museum (founded in 1989, Itoman-shi) confronts a pressing inquiry at the eighty-year mark of the Battle of Okinawa (1945): who currently advocates for the Himeyuri girls? This study analyzes how a privately funded museum, founded by former members of the wartime local elite schoolgirls’ corps, has adapted to evolving war memory politics and representation over time. Initial survivor-curators aimed to regain agency from the postwar “sacred sisters” narrative—shaped by media, policy, and the Yasukuni Shinto-shrine commemoration—that rendered them as symbols of purity and sacrifice. However, as the number of living witnesses diminishes, the current custodians encounter difficulties in preserving the collective gendered memory within the larger context of peace memory cultures in Okinawa and Japan. By employing diachronic content analysis of exhibition texts, spatial designs, and curatorial commentary, I examine how the museum manages its authority and authenticity in the shift from experiential to inherited memory. The case demonstrates the persistence of female counter memory, despite its fragility, amidst generational shifts as well as the continuous commodification of war memory.

**Nakako Hattori-Ishimaru** is a research assistant at the Institute of Japanese Studies at Freie Universität Berlin and a doctoral candidate at the Graduate School of East Asian Studies (GEAS). Her main research interests include conceptual history, collective war memories, and peace-security politics of Japan.