

Friday Seminar

Spring
2021

Speaking with Spirits of the Dead in Australia: Dynamics of Monologue, Dialogue, and Silence

Date: 26 Feb 2021 Time: 1:00 - 2:30 pm

Speaker:
Prof. Matt Tomlinson
College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University

Zoom Meeting Link:
<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/97740486311>

Meeting ID: 977 4048 6311 Passcode: 807537

As Mikhail Bakhtin pointed out, language is inherently dialogic, with speakers living in "a world of others' words" as they respond to past utterances and anticipate future ones. Yet Bakhtin also noted that speakers can engage in monologic projects, attempting to unify voices and accents in the service of a single "carrier" such as God, truth, or nation. In this seminar, I argue that monologic and dialogicality are co-present tendencies in speech and must be analyzed in relation to silence. Silence, the absence of speech, can be richly dialogic as well as coercively monologic. In ritual speech events, it becomes especially clear how monologic, dialogicality, and silence work together when participants speak in compelling ways and invite or expect others to respond. I examine the case of services in the religion known as Spiritualism. In such events, spirit mediums, audience members, and represented spirits interactively manipulate monologic, dialogicality, and silence for specific ritual effects.

Biography:

Matt Tomlinson has taught Anthropology at Bowdoin College, Monash University, the University of Oslo, and the Australian National University, where he is currently an Associate Professor. He is the author of three books based on his research in Oceania, including *God Is Samoan: Dialogues Between Culture and Theology in the Pacific* (2020) and *Ritual Textuality: Pattern and Motion in Performance* (2014). He has also coedited six volumes, most recently *The Monologic Imagination* (with Julian Millie, 2017) and *New Mana: Transformations of a Classic Concept in Pacific Languages and Cultures* (with Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, 2016).



ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!