

# **Crossing Boundaries: Language, Culture and Migration**

**28-29 November 2019**

**School of Languages and Cultures  
University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia**



Multilingual people are often the product of multicultural and migrant backgrounds – individuals who have travelled across borders, who have been exiled from their homelands, who have learned new languages and who can navigate a variety of cultures. The process of crossing boundaries – political, theoretical, linguistic, cultural, personal – makes us keenly aware of how parts of one area are dragged, drawn and blended into another. This symposium aims to explore multilingual and multicultural texts, films, art, the classroom, and daily lives, and to understand these spaces in terms of "transcultural" or "translanguaging" practices. By bringing together scholars of diverse fields of study and diverse language and cultural disciplines, we hope to elucidate the powers and pitfalls of translanguaging.

We are especially interested in how translanguaging and transculturing function with relation to translation and cultural studies with some specific attention (though not limited) to documentary and trauma. In addition, we welcome papers that investigate language and migration, exile and identity. We hope to learn how movement across boundaries in a broad sense impacts on the creation of and language use in the texts and cultures examined.

Keynote: Associate Professor Natalie Edwards (University of Adelaide)



*Natalie Edwards is Associate Professor of French at the University of Adelaide. She specializes in contemporary literature in French, especially transnational writing, migrant writing and gender studies. She has published three monographs on these areas, the most recent of which is *Multilingual Life Writing by French and Francophone Women: Translingual Selves* (Routledge, 2019). She currently holds an ARC Discovery Project entitled *Transnational Selves: French Narratives of Migration to Australia*.*

**Abstract:**

Translanguaging and Migration in Contemporary French Women's Writing

This paper analyses the ways in which two contemporary French authors atone for trauma through translanguaging. The two authors develop narrative strategies to incorporate another language into their predominantly French-language writing. Lydie Salvayre is the daughter of refugees from the Spanish civil war. Hélène Cixous was born in Algeria to a Sephardic Jewish father and a German mother. In this paper, I examine how Salvayre incorporates Spanish into *Pas pleurer* (2014) and how Cixous incorporates German into *Une autobiographie allemande* (2016). I argue that these authors develop techniques that defy what Yasmin Yildiz calls the “monolingual paradigm” of literary production. Further, by defying this paradigm, they are able to represent both personal and intergenerational trauma in writing.

Keynote: ITŌ Hiromi (a.k.a. Hiromi Itō)



*ITŌ Hiromi (a.k.a. Hiromi Itō) is one of Japan's most prominent contemporary poets with an extensive range of border-crossing and travel experiences. Since the late 1970s she has published prolifically and received a number of major literary awards including Gendai Shi Techō Prize (1978), Noma Literary Prize (1999), Takami Jun Prize (2006), Hagiwara Sakutarō Prize (2007), Izumi Shikibu Prize (2008), Waseda University Tsubouchi Shōyō Award (2015), and most recently Taneda Santōka Prize (2019). Her works have been translated into English (e.g. *Killing Kanoko* and *Wild Grass on a Riverbank*), German (*Mutter töten. Gedichte und Prosa*) and other languages. Besides poetry, fiction and essays, she has published a number of translations from English and classical Japanese in genres ranging from children's stories to folktales and plays.*

**Abstract:**

“Fiercely intelligent and unstoppably prolific, Hiromi Ito is a modern literary provocateur” (Kris Kosaka, *The Japan Times*)

“Itō is a poet of truly international stature, whose work breaks down barriers of language & gender, bringing an unprecedented erotic energy & eruptions of transgressive & domestic excess into areas of deep myth & shamanistic performance.” (Jerome Rothenberg on the back cover of *Killing Kanoko*)

“Her poems reverberate with sexual candor, the exigencies and delights of the paradoxically restless/rooted female body, and the visceral imagery of childbirth. They leap off the page as performative modal structures—fierce, witty, and vibrant.” (Anne Waldman on the back cover of *Killing Kanoko*)

Experience the power and vitality of bilingual readings of selected poems by the poet herself. The texts will include not only poetry but excerpts from *The Thorn-Puller: New Tales of the Sugamo Jizō* (winner of Hagiwara Sakutarō Prize and Izumi Shikibu Prize), *The Way of Seppuku*, and Itō's transcreation of the Heart Sutra.

In recent years Itō often combines her poetry reading with a Q&A session about life. She answers questions put forward by the audience about various issues, including the body and relationships, in her frank, sincere and comic style. For this event, participants are encouraged to submit questions (3 sentences maximum) in English or Japanese about any aspect of life to the RSVP address by Friday 22 November. Questions that concern any sort of “border-crossing” would be particularly welcome.

Keynote: Emeritus Professor Catherine Wihtol de Wenden (SciencesPo Paris)



*Emeritus Professor Catherine Wihtol de Wenden is a political scientist and Director of Research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris and a specialist on international migration. She has been a consultant for the OECD, the European Council, the European Commission and for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. She has published over 20 major works and over 200 articles on questions relating to immigration, refugees, discrimination and racism. Her visit to Australia is co-funded by the French Embassy and the Alliance Française.*

**Abstract:**

Mobility and Borders

A world without borders? Should this idea be placed among the numerous 21st century utopias or among the list of new rights to be won? Since the birth of nation states, the border has been traditionally understood as one of the attributes of sovereignty. While populations around the world have continued to become increasingly mobile, and while freedom of circulation has been valorised as one of the defining traits of modern humankind, borders have become increasingly closed off, subject to visas and repressive immigration policies. Borders have become both omnipresent and invisible, an objective to attain and to transgress. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised the right to leave any country, including one's own, without defining the right to enter another country. Since that time, rights have progressed for immigrants but at the same time borders have become increasingly closed at the point of entry, with nation states perceiving migration as a threat to the sovereignty of their borders and illegal migration as criminal and a security threat. In 2009, the annual report of the United Nations Program for Development announced that mobility is an essential element of human development and yet two thirds of the population cannot circulate freely. This paper will look at the history of the rights of migrants to exit and to enter countries and the many contradictions involved in the questions of borders and migration, leading to the current situation where the border remains an obstacle to the fundamental human right of migration and of mobility to change one's life.



Keynote: Professor Alison Levine (University of Virginia)



*Professor Alison Levine's scholarship spans the fields of twentieth and 21st century French cultural history and film studies. She is particularly interested in questions of French national identity, including changing attitudes towards the place of rural, colonial, and postcolonial spaces and people in documentary cinema. Professor Levine publishes on nation, space and boundaries in documentary film. Her books include *Vivre Ici: Space, Place and Experience in Contemporary French Documentary* and *Framing the Nation: Documentary Film in Interwar France*.*

**Abstract:**

Documentary's Invisible Subjects: Borders, Crossing, Migration

We are in the midst of an international documentary renaissance. Filmmakers and sound artists across cultures and across the globe are taking advantage of ever-improved sound and image technologies to record, interrogate, narrate, and reinvent their visions of the real world. Their work is poetic, political, and often urgent in its aspirations. Unlike fiction, it asks us to believe that what we see and hear in the film, we could have seen and heard for ourselves, had we been there. But what does documentary allow us to see? And how can documentary's basic materials—sound and image—be used to record what *cannot* be seen and heard? Such as the future? Hope? Silent voices? Or the imaginary lines we call national borders? In this talk, I explore how some recent documentary filmmakers represent national borders and human experiences in contact with them. This exploration is framed by questions of how documentary represents the unseen, the invisible, the inaudible. The talk is liberally illustrated with stills and clips from recent films about borders and border crossing to reflect on documentary filmmakers' 'vision' of borders, both as absolute abstraction and life-and-death reality. The discussion, I hope, will have broader implications for how and what documentary sees, as well as providing material for reflection on the work its practitioners do in the world.