

Workshop: Migrant life narratives as place-making in post-colonial Australia



Australian
National
University

27 October, 9am-4pm

There is an increasing interest and need to assess the potential of migrant narratives to expand our understanding of contemporary post-colonial Australia, particularly in the context of ongoing public debates concerning “the cleavage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples” (Curthoys) and more recent discussions on a comprehensive process of truth-telling and constitutional amendments. While Australian migrant narratives have attracted scholarly interest since the 1980-90s, research has focused predominantly on English-language sources, themes dealing with sentimental longing for home and efforts of multicultural homemaking in Anglo-Australia. Diversity and complexity characterising non-Anglo migrants’ place-making in Australia, in the context of settler colonialism, has remained understudied.

Approaching various forms of life narratives from cross-disciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives, this workshop will explore diversity and scope of such engagements to highlight an activity of telling life as an empowering act through which migrant authors not only define themselves in a new context, but also exercise their agency to redefine Australia from their multiple perspectives.

The workshop will revisit the contentious terms that have been considered essential for understanding Australian history, such as “migrant”, “refugee” or “multicultural.” We will reflect on how migrant life narratives, cutting across different genres, languages and cultures, define Australia as home and respond to the power dynamics that underlie the settler colonial heritage. We will also engage with recent criticism of “migrant writing” genre, and address theoretical and methodological questions about how to talk about works produced in Australia by people who apply transcultural lenses to their narratives of place and selves.

HDRs/ECRs and established academics working in different disciplines (incl. literature, languages, history, anthropology, philosophy) are welcome. Select papers will be included in a special issue proposal.

Please address your 200-250-word abstracts to:

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Time

Closing date for abstracts: 1 October 2023
Workshop date: 9am-4pm, 27 October 2023
Final papers due: 1 February 2024

Location

ANU Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies
127 Ellery Cres, Acton ACT 2601