

**Report on the Conference ‘Women in Transition: Crossing Borders, Crossing Boundaries’
Partly funded by the Mellon Humanities and Identities Conference Fund, TORCH
20-22 September 2018, KCL and St Peter’s, Oxford
Organisers Dr Claire Williams (St Peter’s, Oxford) and Dr Maria-José Blanco (KCL)**

The three-day, two-city, multilingual, cross-cultural conference ‘Women in Transition: Crossing Borders, Crossing Boundaries’ took place between 20 and 22 September 2018, King’s College London and St Peter’s College. The three-day structure was intense, but meant that there were no parallel sessions, and delegates could attend all panels and events.

Presentations of twenty-six academic papers were interspersed with a keynote speech on Elena Ferrante by Dr Adalgisa Giorgio (Italian, University of Bath) and Readings + Q & A’s with two acclaimed writers: Marta Sanz (Spain) and Joanna Walsh (UK). Furthermore, the conference hosted an exhibition entitled *Representatives*, showing work by London-based Brazilian women artists, the screening of *Ver a una Mujer/ To See a Woman* (2017) directed by Catalan film-maker Mònica Rovira and a performative lecture by the Istanbul Queer Art Collective. The grand finale was the launch of a volume of short-stories by contemporary Portuguese women writers, in English translation, *Take 6* (Dedalus, 2018), introduced by the editor, Margaret Jull Costa, OBE and Professor Hilary Owen, and in the presence of three of the featured authors (Hélia Correia, Teolinda Gersão and Lídia Jorge) and several of the translators. The film, the exhibition, the Joanna Walsh talk and the book launch were open to the public and very well attended.

The thematic focus on the ‘transition’ in women’s lives as represented through art, literature and film was designed to encourage contributions that cross biological, geopolitical and political borders as well as emotional, sexual, cultural and linguistic boundaries. There was an avowed intention to consider the ways in which the changes and transitions women undergo influence the world we live in, as well as the idea of crossing borders and how this influences identity and belonging, and also the theme of crossing boundaries in the context of motherhood, grand-motherhood, not to mention gender and sexual orientation. There were panels on Body/Mind, Motherhood, Ages, Crossing Borders, Spaces, Genre, Political Transition and Translingualism.

The organisers were pleased to welcome speakers from different language areas and disciplines, from different countries and institutions, and at various stages of their careers.

Papers discussed literature originating in multiple cultures, as well as identifying transnational links and flows. This international, multilingual, cross-genre approach helped to identify and emphasize the links and connections that bind women together as opposed to those that separate them. Delegates came from backgrounds in Literary Criticism, Psychotherapy, Film Studies, Art History, Digital Cultures and Postcolonial Theory. These multiplicities enabled very creative discussion.

As one delegate put it in a blog post: “With the conference’s rich and powerful theme serving as a description of not only its academic focus but also many of its participants’ own identities as *women in transition* (between countries, languages, life-stages, professional quarters, etc), the atmosphere which developed across the course of the three days was one of refreshingly open and engaged dialogue, in which the personal and professional came together to academically and artistically fruitful, thought-provoking and greatly enjoyable effect.”

We are now planning the outputs from the conference: two edited volumes, one of which will focus on Luso-Hispanic cultures.

Of course, such an undertaking would not have been possible without the generosity of our sponsors. We are grateful to the Mellon Humanities and Identities Conference Fund for its support of our conference.

Conference Website: <https://transitionwomen.wordpress.com/>

Tweets and photos from the conference can be seen at: <http://wke.lt/w/s/EWjd0>