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**How to Live (and Die) in Different Places at Once:  
Transnational Narrative in Itō Hiromi's *The Thorn – Puller***

Although borders shape our existences in many ways, we live in an increasingly transnational, even post – national era. If one collected all people who living outside of the country where they were born, they would form a population only slightly smaller than that of China or India. What does that mean for Japanese literature? Until recently, most assumed Japanese literature was written in Japan by Japanese people writing in the Japanese language, but now that some of Japan's most important and prolific writers are living outside of the country and some of the Japanese language's most creative are not ethnically Japanese, those assumptions no longer hold.

This presentation examines the implications of transnationalism for Japanese literature by looking at the recent work of Itō Hiromi—a fiercely independent poet famous for writing bold writing about motherhood and the female body. In 1990s, she relocated to California but continued to shuttle back and forth across the Pacific to take care of her slowly dying parents. During this time, her literature took a transnational turn as she began to write about the life of immigrants, drawing inspiration from her own experiences.

Her stylistical innovative 2007 book *The Thorn – Puller* is an account of her transpacific life. Weaving together autobiography with Japanese folklore, literature, and pop culture, this imaginative book attempts to forge a new mode of storytelling for our transnational world. The book's richly polyvocal nature reflects the complex, uprooted experience of modernity in which narrative, ideas, stories, and legends shape experience as much as the places where those stories originated. This book shows us our lives can never be reduced to the physical. Instead, we all live within intertextual collections of memories, stories, myths, and tales—a complex multicultural fabric of knowledge that transcends physical experiences and cartological locations.