

# Professor Dominique Jullien

# Wandering Kings and Travelling Tales in Borges

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20<sup>th</sup> September 2019, 5.30-7pm  
Room B102 (Brunei Gallery), SOAS University of London

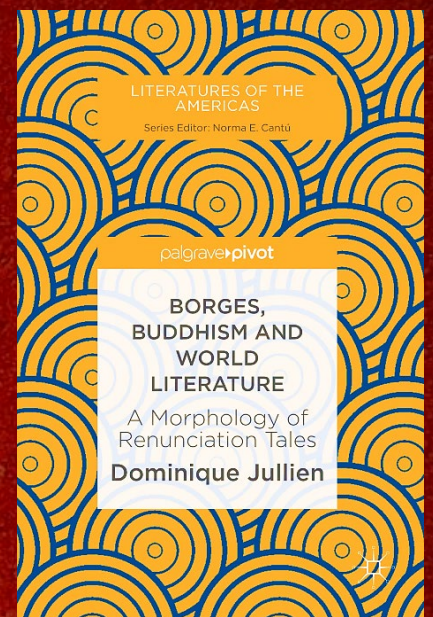
Stories of kings who leave their palaces to become ascetics loom large in the writings of Borges, who devoted several essays and a book to the most famous version of that story, the story of Buddha.

The renunciation story appealed to Borges both for its traveling, adaptable and metamorphic qualities, and as a powerful expression of the perennial political conflict between power and authority.

The cross-cultural circulation of the king-and-ascetic paradigm interfaced with Borges's transnational aesthetics (famously developed in the essay "The Argentine Writer and Tradition"), allowing him to speculate on the possibility of a theory of literature as 'morphology' (a notion borrowed from Goethe) whereby a potentially infinite number of texts were generated by the transformation and circulation of a finite number of "archetypes".

At the same time, the motif of apolitical withdrawal at the heart of the renunciation story also resonated deeply with Borges's own political predicament.

Drawing on my recent book, I propose to explore the relevance of the renunciation story both to our reading of Borges and to contemporary conversations about world literature as a mode of circulation and about the political power of storytelling.



**Dominique Jullien**, author of *Borges, Buddhism, and World Literature: A Morphology of Renunciation Literature*, is Professor of Comparative Literature and French Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara. She has held visiting professorships at Saint Gallen University, Switzerland, and the Harvard Institute for World Literature. At UCSB she founded and directed the Graduate Center for Literary Research, which aims to enhance the student and faculty experience by promoting interdisciplinary dialogue and encounters. Professor Jullien's research focuses on modern and contemporary fiction, with special focus on Marcel Proust and Jorge Luis Borges, East-West relations, particularly Western Orientalism, and the reception of the *1001 Nights* in Western culture. Her most recent book is *Borges, Buddhism and World Literature: a Morphology of Renunciation Tales* (Palgrave, 2019).