

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD



unesco

Chair



University
of Glasgow

CONFERENCE: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON TRAVEL WRITING, MIGRATION AND TOURISM

WORLD TOURISM DAY: 22 NOVEMBER 2023
10:00AM GMT - 5:00PM GMT
ONLINE (ZOOM)

Whose journeys matter?

Whose stories get heard?



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

10:00 - 10:15am : Introduction

By Dr Esa Aldegheri (University of Glasgow) and Dr Sophie Buchaillard (Cardiff University)

10:15 - 10:45am : Keynote

By Prof Charles Forsdick (University of Liverpool)

10:45 - 11:15am : In conversation

By Alexandros Plasatis (The Other Side of Hope) and Dr Maria Rovisco (University of Leeds)

11:15 - 11:30am : Break

Tea and coffee

11:30am - 12:30pm : Postdoctoral talks

By Katherine Mackinnon (University of Glasgow) and Eric Ngalle Charles (King's College London)

12:30 - 1:30pm : Break

Lunch and breakout spaces

1:30 - 2:00pm : Talk

By Dr Esa Aldegheri (University of Glasgow)

2:00 - 2:30pm : Talk

By Dr Kathryn Jones (Swansea University)

2:30 - 2:45pm : Break

Tea and coffee

2:45 - 3:45pm : Postdoctoral talks

By Dr Sophie Buchaillard (Cardiff University) and Cristina Navazo-Eguía Newton (Cardiff University)

3:45 - 4:00pm : Break

Tea and coffee

4:00 - 4:30pm : Taster readings

Short readings by various authors of the conference

4:30 - 4:50pm : Closing statement

By Prof Richard Gwyn (Cardiff University)

4:50 - 5:00pm : End of conference

By Dr Esa Aldegheri (University of Glasgow) and Dr Sophie Buchaillard (Cardiff University)

KEYNOTE 10:15 - 10:45am : Whose journeys matter? From travel writing to travel stories

By Prof Charles Forsdick (University of Liverpool)

Travel writing has traditionally operated as one of the most policed of literary genres. Access to the guild of traveller writers has often depended on carefully delimited parameters relating to gender, ethnicity, class and able-bodiedness. As a result, the literary representation of mobility – one of the hallmarks of being human – has regularly been restricted to only a constricted range of journey accounts. This paper takes the case of the 'Etonnants voyageurs' festival in Saint Malo (founded in 1990) to explore the ways in which such generic policing has been increasingly challenged. The initial emphases of that event – focused on the Pour une littérature voyageuse movement and articulated in its 1992 manifesto of that title – reflected a narrowly defined understanding of travel writing and the travel writer. 'Etonnants voyageurs' has, however, evolved rapidly in recent years to address the existence of what James Clifford has dubbed 'travel stories', notably those of trans-Mediterranean migrants in the twenty-first century. Collective publications such as *Osons la fraternité: les écrivains aux côtés des migrants* (2018) and *L'appel de Saint-Malo: l'urgence de construire un principe d'hospitalité opposable aux États* (2018) – complementing other writings such as Patrick Chamoiseau's *Frères migrants* (2017) – reflect a commitment to diversifying and even decolonizing travel writing. The paper suggests that the implications of such developments are two-fold: on the one hand, they invite the establishment of a new poetics of travel writing, in which the traveller's solipsism yields to a contrapuntal awareness of other, often simultaneous journeys; and on the other, the genre is increasingly prized open to create space for other voices, notably those recounting migration and diasporic travel.

Charles Forsdick is James Barrow Professor of French at the University of Liverpool and Adjunct Professor in Translation Studies, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University. From 2012 until 2021 he was AHRC Theme Leadership Fellow for 'Translating Cultures'. He has published widely on travel writing, colonial history, postcolonial literature, comics, penal culture and the afterlives of slavery. He is also a specialist on Haiti and the Haitian Revolution, and has written in particular about representations of Toussaint Louverture.



IN CONVERSATION 10:45 - 11:15am : Founding The Other Side of Hope magazine

By **Alexandros Plasatis (The Other Side of Hope)** and **Dr Maria Rovisco (University of Leeds)**

Alexandros Plasatis and Maria Rovisco will talk about what prompted the creation of The Other Side of Hope and how this literary magazine has developed since its creation in 2021. They will reflect on the aims of the magazine and how the various editors work together to create a community of refugee and immigrant readers and writers from around the world.

Maria Rovisco was born in Lisbon and educated in Portugal and the UK. She is Associate Professor in Sociology at the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, UK. She has research interests in cosmopolitanism, new activism, citizenship, migrant and refugee arts, and visual culture. Among her recent publications is *Visual Politics in the Global South* (2023). She is currently writing a monograph on cosmopolitanism, art and the political imagination.

Alexandros Plasatis is the founder and lead editor of the other side of hope: journeys in refugee and immigrant literature. He writes fiction in English, his second language. His first book, *Made by Sea and Wood, in Darkness*, was shortlisted for the Edge Hill Prize. This novel-in-stories is based on ethnography, and narrates the lives of the undocumented Egyptian migrants who work as fishermen in a Greek town. Stories from this book have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of The Net. He has a PhD in ethnography-based Creative Writing, and undertakes another one in Refugee Publishing & Libraries.

www.alexandrosplasatis.com
othersideofhope.com



POSTDOC TALK 11:30am - 12:30pm : "I want you to know / that I can't go back." Journeys and travel in refugee lives in Scotland

By Katherine Mackinnon (University of Glasgow)

Drawing on my (ongoing) PhD, 'Oral histories of refugee lives in Scotland 1974-present day', today I will share and explore how participants themselves have spoken about travel and movement within the research. My focus is on everyday life, and I have never asked people to speak about their journeys to Scotland. Nevertheless, despite the absence of direct prompts or questioning, the topic of journeys and travel frequently appears in my oral history recordings and transcripts as well as in the creative writing produced as part of the project. While the long journey to seek safety in this country may seem to be the most significant piece of travel appearing in these testimonies, I would like to also draw out how people describe and understand their experiences of travel, mobility and enforced immobility once in Scotland. I am also interested in looking more broadly at community-based creative writing produced by people with experience of forced migration, and how these works can combine with oral histories and other historical sources to illuminate understandings of refugee journeys and lives.



Katherine Mackinnon is a part-time PhD researcher working on an oral history of refugee lives in Scotland from the 1970s to the present day. In the process of recording life experiences, the project also seeks to develop and trial methodologies for undertaking ethical oral history with refugees. Her professional background includes work in refugee integration, prison education and community development. Alongside her PhD, Katherine is a writer and workshop facilitator, working with groups to read and write poetry, and explore creative ways of documenting everyday life. www.kmackinnon.org

POSTDOC TALK 11:30am - 12:30pm : Migration, Memory, and Language. What we take, and what we leave behind

By Eric Ngalle Charles (King's College London)



Place. Migration, Memory, and Language. The question of what we take and what we leave behind. Through poetry and storytelling, I will attempt to navigate these questions.

It is taboo to tell lies in these societies. Freedom of expression is limited to the Text Committees, the body in charge of literature and all artistic forms, with the king at the helm. In doing so, they have created myopic nations which cannot accommodate the laughter of idiots, of fools like us.

Eric Ngalle Charles is a Cameroonian writer, poet, playwright, and human rights activist based in Wales. A PhD researcher at King's College London, he was awarded a Creative Wales Award in 2017 for his work on migration, trauma, and memory. His autobiography, *Eric Ngalle: One Man's Journey Crossing Continents from Africa to Europe* (2019), recounts his journey to Europe, spending more than two years in Russia. He has edited several poetry anthologies, including *Hiraeth Erzolirzoli: A Wales-Cameroon Anthology* (2018). His poetry Collection *Homelands* Seren Books (2022) was published in April 2023.

Photo courtesy of Billie Charity

TALK 1:30 - 2:00pm : Narrative - Power of images and stories of different journeys across same places

By Dr Esa Aldegheri (University of Glasgow)

Different narratives inform the ways in which journeys covering the same geography are not portrayed equally. Incorporating images ranging from maps to photographs, and considering journeys from Aeneas to current boat crossings towards Europe, this talk will focus on journeys across the Eastern Mediterranean to consider narrative as a key element in addressing why some journeys matter more, or differently, compared to others.

Esa Aldegheri is a multilingual scholar, author and activist. She works as a Research Associate at the UNESCO RILA team (Refugee Integration through Language and the Arts) at the University of Glasgow. Her work centres narrative exchange as a critical aspect of intercultural encounter and integration in contexts of forced migration and resettlement. Her most recent research publication, gladly co-authored, is *The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: A report on the local and international dimensions of integrating refugees in Scotland* (Phipps, Aldegheri and Fisher 2022). Her non-fiction debut is *Free to Go*, published by John Murray in 2022.



TALK 2:00 - 2:30pm : A Peripheral Paradise and Post-Industrial Adventure-land: Contemporary Wales in French and German Travel Writing

By Dr Kathryn Jones (Swansea University)

The trope of a hidden, undiscovered and unknown Wales has proven to be surprisingly persistent in European travel writing, with contemporary narratives continuing to portray Wales as a quasi-invisible unknown quantity, a peripheral site of inspiration, alterity and refuge. Paradoxically, Wales's increasing accessibility, through the proliferation of dedicated travelogues, guidebooks and travel websites as well as improvements to its travel infrastructure, has also led to the atomisation and fragmentation of visions of Wales, which is now represented as a place of adventure, freedom and literary connection. This paper investigates these new modes of experiencing the nation in recent travel writing in French and German. France and in particular Germany remain two of the most important overseas holiday markets for Wales and are the focus of much of tourism body Visit Wales's overseas marketing. These new experiential modes include a sensory or physical 'consumption' of Welsh natural and post-industrial landscapes, and the 'Cardiffisation' of Wales. The paper explores the ways in which Wales is now 'read' through Dylan Thomas and Laugharne, as well as the 'book kingdom' of Hay-on-Wye, compared with travel writers' waning interest in the Welsh language and its cultures. Finally, it argues that Wales is portrayed in these travel accounts as a flexible blank canvas for the traveller's own desires and dreams, a backdrop which can be altered to accommodate the weight of the traveller's expectations.



Kathryn Jones is Associate Professor of French at Swansea University. Her research focuses on representations of conflict, memory and travel in contemporary French and German culture, as well as gender and transnational studies. Her publications include *Journeys of Remembrance* (Legenda, 2007), and articles on travel narratives by François Maspero, Leïla Sebbar, Anne Brunswic and Caroline Riegel. With Carol Tully and Heather Williams, she co-authored *Hidden Texts, Hidden Nation: (Re)Discoveries of Wales in French and German Travel Writing* (Liverpool University Press, 2020), the first full-length study of European travel writing on Wales. Her current research is on post-war Welsh cultural-political interventions in Brittany and on behalf of fugitive Bretons in Wales after the liberation of France.

POSTDOC TALK 2:45 - 3:45pm : Between cultures: grief and recovery in women's autobiographical narratives of travel.

By **Dr Sophie Buchaillard (Cardiff University)**

In *The Art of Travel*, Alain de Botton describes male travel writers motivated by a quest for curiosity and entertainment. This paper explores autobiographical narratives of travel by women typically silenced from the genre. Using a series of examples of women with a dual cultural background, and looking at nomadic cultures and vagabondage literature, it illustrates how these hyphenated women embody transculturation in the way they write about the journey, echoing what the anthropologist James Clifford described as travel as culture. The journey of these hyphenated women is internalised, so that its expression is experienced as source of collective recovery. I argue that travel writing by hyphenated women (or women in hyphenated contexts) has the power to subvert and reframe the genre of travel writing, building on storytelling traditions and contemporary nomadic experiences of vagabondage to create what Assia Djebar described as a thinking space in which to articulate modern global challenges.

A Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Hay Writers at Work, **Dr Sophie Buchaillard** is a novelist whose practice-led research centres on the role inclusive travel writing can play in reinventing what we mean by identity, in a world faced with global challenges. Her debut novel *This Is Not Who We Are* (Seren Books, 2022) was shortlisted for the Wales Book of the Year 2023. Her short stories and essays have appeared in a wide array of literary magazines, including *Wales Arts Review*, *Murmuration Magazine*, *Square Wheel Press* and *Modron*. Her second novel, *Assimilation* (Honno) is out February 2024.

Dr Buchaillard is Book Reviews Editor for the journal *Intersectional Perspectives: Identity, Culture and Society* (Cardiff University Press); Translation Board Member for *The Other Side of Hope Magazine* an Arts Council England funded magazine showcasing the writing of refugees and migrants; and a contributor to the travel writing collection *An Open Door: New Travel Writing for a Precarious Century* (Parthian, 2022). She holds an MA and a PhD in Creative and Critical Writing from Cardiff University. Originally trained as a political scientist, Sophie previously worked as a policy advisor and a campaigner. In 2016, she co-authored *Talented Women for a Successful Wales*, and advised the Welsh Government as member of the 'Women in STEM Board'.



POSTDOC TALK 2:45 - 3:45pm : Fevered rhizomes & the waq-waq machine

By **Cristina Navazo-Eguía Newton (Cardiff University)**

Who tells the fragmented stories of all the unknown travellers with no voice? Where can they be found? Instead of focusing on the individual traveller, whether named or anonymous, we may need to look at vestiges that are left of encounters with the other, inspect the scattered traces and unravel the tangled mess so we can map fruitful connections. As we let the individual subjectivities recede into the shadows and hand over the limelight to the ideas, images, gestures and other elements of culture whose transmission they were - very often unwittingly - responsible for, we find fascinating protean networks that illustrate the interrelations between cultures and their fluid nature.

In this context, the concepts of the rhizome and of machinic assemblages - borrowed and adapted from Deleuze and Guattari - become useful tools for the exploration and elucidation of these complex and live circuits that trespass territories and override boundaries. For this presentation I follow the charged rhizomes that take us across four continents from Iskandar Two-Horns to Billie Holiday and Nina Simone, through inverted maps, Gog and Magog, talking trees and lusty monks on 'overimagined' islands, and from the thirst of conquest to the hunger for de-colonisation.

I am a Creative and Critical Writing PhD student at Cardiff University, completing my thesis *The Sound of a Stone Thrown at/by a Boy: Mongrel Identities across Arab Medieval and Western Contemporary Cultures*. The third chapter considers space through a range of contexts, including memory, affect, dromomania, 'flaneurism', psychogeography and travel. My first poetry collection in Spanish, *La Frontera*, reflects on the many borders implied in physical existence, while in *Rutas de Largo Recorrido*, awareness of place and relation to the specific locus is a point of departure to explore intensities and alterations of the self. The poems in my English collection *Cry Wolf* seek to dwell where the self isn't and find ways to the 'other'. As a researcher, I am interested in cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, and embodied research, as well as in applying the concepts of the rhizome, nomadic thinking and machinic assemblages. My current areas of investigation include space, scent, and music, particularly flamenco. As part of Flame&co, with guitarist Haydn Bonadie, I am involved in lyric and music creation and singing performance, both as compulsion and as lived-in/living research. I also collaborate with Sociedad Pizarras in the study, recovery, and dissemination of early flamenco recordings.



Image: *Iskandar and the Talking Tree*

Illumination by Nasr al-Soltani of Ferdowī's *Shahnameh* Timurid: Shiraz, c.1430
Opaque watercolours, ink and gold on paper
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ouseley Add. 176, fol. 311v

CLOSING STATEMENT 4:30 - 4:50pm

By Prof Richard Gwyn (Cardiff University)

Prof Gwyn will summarise the day in a handy bite-sized presentation, reminding you of the key take-aways and giving you food for thought as we close the conference.

Richard Gwyn grew up in south Wales, and studied anthropology at the LSE. He lived for many years in Spain, and his travels in Latin America form the subject of his forthcoming memoir, *Ambassador of Nowhere*. His first novel, *The Colour of a Dog Running Away* (2005), set in Barcelona, was published by Parthian in the UK, by Doubleday in the USA and has been translated into many languages. He is the author of two other novels, *Deep Hanging Out* (2007) and *The Blue Tent* (2019). His memoir, *The Vagabond's Breakfast*, won Wales Book of the Year for nonfiction in 2012. He has translated poetry and short fiction by many Latin American writers, especially from Argentina and Colombia. *The Other Tiger*, a major dual-text anthology of contemporary Latin American poetry, containing work by nearly 100 poets, was published by Seren in 2016. His translations of the poetry of Darío Jaramillo, *Impossible Loves* (Carcanet), was shortlisted for the Premio Valle-Inclán in 2020. His alter ego writes about literary and everyday matters on Ricardo Blanco's Blog. He is Professor in Creative and Critical Writing at Cardiff University.

