

# Welcome

**Name:** Tim Hannigan

**PhD:** English and Creative Writing

**Thesis Title:** *Journeys in Search of Travel Writing: A Creative-Critical Interrogation of Travel Writing as a Genre*

## Thesis Description:

My project reflexively situates itself within the genre of travel writing.

The central work is a piece of creative practice, using the established “quest” format in which a travel writer embarks on a series of “journeys in search of” a particular people, place, historical figure or cultural artefact, and uses the resultant first-person travelogue to tell the story of that subject, and to reveal new information about it in the process. In this instance, however, the journeys will be in search of travel writing itself.

The point of departure for the project is a sense of conflict: how to square my ongoing professional practice as a travel writer and my pleasure as a reader of travel literature, with my discomfort with the genre’s ethical problems, namely its tendency to involve elements of fictionality in what are ostensibly “true” accounts – and which are typically read as such; travel writing’s persistent difficulty in allowing the traveller to speak for itself; and its role in an ongoing Orientalist discourse. These are all issues which have received considerable scholarly attention, but which have rarely, if ever, been directly addressed by practitioners.

It is crucial to the work’s aim that it should not reject the established traditional elements of travel writing for entirely experimental approaches. Optimism in the field of travel writing studies tends to focus on the possibilities of formal experimentation to overcome ethical problems – experimentation which typically sees it diverge from the traditional elements of the genre, and thus does little to test their ethical limits. But there is a disconnect here between the field of travel writing studies, and travel writing itself. Such experimentation remains a peripheral part of the genre, and the traditional form of travel writing, in which a first-person narrator, affecting a tone of authority, describes a journey and in doing so offers ostensibly “new” knowledge about a subject, remains tremendously appealing to both practitioners and readers of the genre. The proposed work is a piece of creative practice, intended to have a natural appeal to consumers of travel writing. The object, then, is to test the ability of the *existing* genre to critically examine itself and to address its ethical problems, rather than to reinvent travel writing.

The work’s “quest” comes in the form of a series of journeys to examine key moments in the history of travel writing, and key problems of the genre. The focus of each of these journeys is a meeting with a notable living travel writer, to discuss with them their own responses to the aforementioned ethical issues. There will also be a close consideration of the work of two deceased authors, Patrick Leigh Fermor and Bruce Chatwin, both seminal and highly influential travel writers whose work has been identified as particularly problematic in terms of its elements of fictionality.

The central challenge in this work is in ensuring that it remains fundamentally an exercise in creative writing, incorporating the usual features of travel writing and designed to be read and enjoyed by its fans, for all that it is informed by issues more usually the subject of strictly scholarly research. It will aim to be both an effective piece of travel writing, and a critique from within the genre itself.

## Supervisors and Institution(s):

Dr Corinne Fowler, University of Leicester

Dr Harry Whitehead, University of Leicester

Dr Sharon Ouditt, Nottingham Trent University

## Publications:

Scholarly publications

- ‘Travel Journalism’ in *Specialist Journalism*, Routledge 2012
- ‘Beyond control: Orientalist tensions and the history of the “upas tree” myth’ in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 2018
- ‘Interview with Patrick Barkham’ in *Studies in Travel Writing*, 2018



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**Other Social Media:** <https://timhannigan.com/blog/>

- *Gale Researcher Guide for: The Travel Writing of V. S. Pritchett*, Gale 2018
- 'Counting up the Lies: A Self-Reflexive Investigation of Craft and Fictionalization in a Modern Travel Book' in *Journeys*, 2018
- 'Interview with Nick Danziger' in *Studies in Travel Writing*, 2018
- 'Robert Macfarlane' in *The Handbook of British Travel Writing*, De Gruyter 2019 (in press)
- 'Beaten Tracks: belatedness and anti-tourism in guidebooks' in *The Routledge Companion to Media and Tourism*, Routledge 2019 (in press)

#### Select Trade publications

- *Murder in the Hindu Kush: George Hayward and the Great Game*, The History Press 2011 (shortlisted for the Boardman-Tasker Prize for Mountain Literature)
- *Raffles and the British Invasion of Java*, Monsoon Books 2012 (winner of the John Brooks Award)
- *A Brief History of Indonesia: Sultans, Spices, and Tsunamis*, Tuttle Publishing 2015
- *A Brief History of Bali* (Introduction and Epilogue), Tuttle Publishing 2016
- *A Geek in Indonesia*, Tuttle Publishing 2018

Other published work includes numerous guidebooks, book reviews in the *Asian Review of Books*, the travel journalism module coursebook for the Open School of Journalism, and a large body of magazine and newspaper travel journalism, as well as short fiction published in *The Parabola Project*, *Storgy*, *Kabar*, *The Jakarta Post* and *Cornish Short Stories: A Collection of Contemporary Cornish Writing* (2018).

#### Conference papers

- 'Foreign country: the othering of the British countryside in "the New Nature Writing"', *Landscapes of Power*, University of Nottingham 2017
- 'Travel writing on the creative-critical frontier: criticising practice, actioning criticism', *Borders and Crossings*, Aberystwyth University 2017
- 'Lone enraptured males, healing women, and the othering of rural Britain in "the New Nature Writing"', *Encounters with Difference*, Freie Universität Berlin 2017
- 'A voice in the wilderness: James Rebanks' *The Shepherd's Life* as a traveller polemic', *Lands Furrows and Sorrows in Anglophone Countries*, University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès 2018
- '"A barren and naked country": Cornwall under the travel writer's gaze, and receiving travellers' texts as a traveller-reader', *Traversing Land, Sea & Sky*, University of Bristol 2018
- '"A Hideous and a Wicked Country": receiving travel writers' representations of western Cornwall', *Orientations*, University of Nottingham 2018
- '"Collateral Damage in the War on Travel Writing": Recovering reader responses to contemporary travel writing', *Borders & Crossings*, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, 2018

#### Scholarly / Public Engagement Activities:

2011-2014:

- Various public and media events around launches of books; talks and writing workshops at literary festivals; media contributions including BBC Radio 4 and Radio Australia.

2015:

- Designed and wrote Travel Journalism module for the Open School of Journalism
- Contributed to Channel NewsAsia documentary 'Raffles Revealed'
- Various public and media engagements in Southeast Asia around the launch of *A Brief History of Indonesia*
- Chaired events at Penzance Literary Festival
- Led writing workshops at Penzance Literary Festival and Looe Literary Festival

2016:

- Contributed to BBC Radio 3 documentary '1816: The Year Without Summer'
- Contributed to Channel NewsAsia documentary 'Inventing Southeast Asia'
- Chaired events at Penzance Literary Festival
- Became a Trustee of the Penzance Literary Festival
- Revised essay 'The Travel Writing of V.S. Pritchett' for Gale Researcher programme

2017:

- Blogged on creative-critical travel writing for Journey Place Narrative study group at Plymouth University
- Contributed a piece of new writing to the Centre for Travel Writing Studies exhibition during Global Week at NTU
- "Travel Writing on the Creative-Critical Frontier" lunchtime lecture at Leicester Adult

Education College

- Appeared as a panelist for a discussion of travel writing as part of NTU's Re:Vision events programme at Broadway Cinema, Nottingham
- Delivered a paper on nature writing as travel writing at the Landscapes of Power symposium at UoN
- Delivered a paper on creative-critical travel writing at Borders and Crossings conference at the Aberystwyth University
- Chaired events at Penzance Literary Festival
- School visits and panel events in Bali and Jakarta

2018

- Talks at Leicester Travel Talks and the Globetrotters Club London
- Events around the publication of the *Cornish Short Stories* anthology
- Chaired events at Penzance Literary Festival

**Other Research Interests:**

- British nature writing
- History of Southeast Asia
- The 1811-15 British Interregnum in Java
- Media discourses on "terrorism"
- Cornwall; literary and media representations of Cornwall; Cornish identities
- Creative writing practice and pedagogy