

Conference Report

Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change



Tourism and Literature: Travel, Imagination and Myth Harrogate, United Kingdom, 22-26 July 2004



Detail from Book 4, 11, Mercury as patron of travellers, by Maître François

Feedback

"I went to Harrogate and travelled the world... Surrounded by murder mysteries, cafes, gardens, and luxury fit for British Royalty, the lure of Turkish Baths tugged away at me, the quasi-responsible scholar. I resisted (except for the Turkish Baths). James Moir's presentation Broadening the Mind: Exporting 'Inner' Worlds enlightened me to the uniqueness of my tourist experience. I was to import to my mind the travel experiences of my colleagues from all over the world and never leave the Old Swan. And so I travelled to the Rain Forest of the Amazon Basin, to the mountains of the Balkans, to the zoos and gardens of Australia, through the stories and minds of others. It was a wonderful trip. (...) Enough pontificating! You get the idea. Thanks! It was great."

Ellen Rooney, Brown University, USA

"Thanks for a splendid 'do'. A good time was had by all, I believe. Certainly by me."

Brian Wheeler, Breda University, The Netherlands

"You were able to draw in new scholars and the body of researchers grows. Congratulations. I liked the Old Swan, and it is especially thoughtful when the meetings can be held in the same hotel as one's bedroom... Thanks for the visit to the Bronte museum! These, together with a jolly conference dinner, are special highlights."

Elvi Whittaker, University of British Columbia, Canada

In July 2004 the CTCC, in association with the Harrogate International Festival, presented the second in its international conference series focusing on Tourism and Literature: Travel, Imagination and Myth.

Literature, through both texts and authors, has long been an inspiration for tourists. Travel and tourist experiences have, in turn, long inspired literature. This inter-relationship between tourist, tourism and literature was at the heart of this conference which addressed questions such as:

How does literature construct tourist histories and identities? How do tourists 'read' fictional texts? How does literature produce, prescribe and legitimate spaces for tourists? How are tourist expectations and experiences mediated by literature? What is the significance of imagined worlds, fantastic landscapes and mythic characters for tourism? Why do some authors hold a fascination for tourists? Who are literary pilgrims and what experiences do they have?

The conference featured some 130 papers bringing together an international audience of academics, curators, writers, professionals and tourism managers to discuss this increasingly important field. The conference created a multi-disciplinary arena for debate and academic exchange drawing from literary criticism, history, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, cultural geography etc.

Hosted at the Old Swan Hotel in Harrogate, it was opened by two distinguished keynote speakers, Terry Eagleton, Professor of Cultural Theory and John Rylands Fellow at the University of Manchester and Benedict Allen, author, presenter, filmmaker, and one of Britain's best known explorers.

In addition to the variety of academic sessions, delegates were able to participate in a study visit to the Brontë Museum and the charming village of Haworth, a long standing place of international pilgrimage for devotees of the Brontë sisters and their works of romantic fiction.

The conference ran in tandem with the Harrogate International Festival and the acclaimed International Crime Writing Festival. The Director of these events, William Culver-Dodds, is a valued Visiting Research Associate with the CTCC.

The proceedings of the conference (CD ROM) are available for purchase (£19.50 including postage and packing). Please go to our website (www.tourism-culture.com) to download an order form or contact us at ctcc@leedsmet.ac.uk.

Keynote Speaker: Terry Eagleton
Professor Eagleton has been regarded as the leading British Marxist literary critic since the death of Raymond Williams in 1988. He is the author of over thirty books the most recent being 'After Theory' which dramatically suggests that in the face of a new global narrative of capitalism, postmodernism may now be dead!



Delegates enjoyed a Lord Mayor's Civic Reception at the Royal Pump Room, Harrogate

Keynote Speaker: Benedict Allen
Allen has published nine books, two of them bestsellers, and, pioneering the filming of expeditions without a film crew, has made five BBC TV series about his solo journeys in some of the world's remotest terrains. With the help of Matses Indians he's crossed the Amazon Basin and has lived in the Gibson Desert - the first time arriving in Australia by canoe across the treacherous Torres Strait, and almost six months travelling three thousand miles through Mongolia by horse and camel.



Conference keynote speaker Benedict Allen

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