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**International Conference**

*Sorbonne Université (VALE, EA 4085) &*

*Université Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne (UMR 7041 – ARSCAN)*

**At the Crossroads of Doubt:**

**Anthropology and Anglophone Travel Writing**

**(XIXth-XXIth Centuries)**

*Convened by Horatiu Burcea, Anne-Florence Quaireau, Haris Procopiou & Frédéric Regard*

**Confirmed Keynote Speaker:**

*Michael Herzfeld, Harvard University*

September 27-28, 2019



The time when we could tolerate accounts presenting us the native as a distorted, childish caricature of a human being are gone. This picture is false, and like many other falsehoods, it has been killed by Science.

Bronisław Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 1922.

L'objet premier de l'anthropologie est la relation entre l'un et l'autre, les uns et les autres. Elle se situe au confluent des histoires, au lieu des crises, au carrefour des doutes : la matière concrète du social et de l'individuel.

Antoine Spire, *Le Monde de L’Education*, 288-298, 2001.

**Description and call for papers**

In the first pages of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski declares the coming of an era where distorted portraits of otherness will no longer be tolerated, an era in which infantile caricatures of foreign peoples will have become obsolete. This announcement was less a matter of self-promotion or positivism than a determination to create a break with armchair anthropology and, to some extent, with travel narratives; after having represented an idealized symbiosis between science and literature, and a pragmatic necessity for anthropologists in terms of sources of information, the latter had decidedly become insufficiently trustworthy. From now on, the anthropologist also had to travel in order to write if he/she wanted to establish any authority.

The purpose of this interdisciplinary and international conference is to examine the causes, the manifestations and the potential reversal of this historical break between anthropological sciences and travel narratives in the anglophone context, while debating the extent of the separation between these different types of discourse on otherness, and examining their continuous interactions and mutual influences. It will also more generally involve a discussion of these (non-exhaustive) questions:

* **Authority**: the ways in which the author-traveler and/or the anthropologist asserts his/her ethos through codified discourses, inventories of facts, knowledge, scientific terms and references, or a "pact" with the reader along with rhetorical promises of veracity. In this respect, we will encourage comparisons between the means of affirming authorial authority and markers of scientific legitimacy and rigor; we may also look at the reinterpretations of the modesty *topos* in these contexts along with the concept of falsifiability. Finally, the *mise-en-scène* of the traveler and/or the scientist, especially through the theatricalization of contact with the Other, can be considered in terms of equality or universality, or on the contrary as an opportunity for asymmetrical comparison and antagonism;
* **Reliability**: the veracity of these portrayals, their foundations and their (critical) methods of verification, as well as the reception and use of travelogues in terms of "data" by anthropologists and other scientists; special attention could be given to travel narratives about peoples and cultures that are now inaccessible, and which are *de facto* the only usable corpus; we may also consider stories that have contributed to distorted views of certain populations, visions that were ultimately challenged by later studies or narratives; the question of artistic license can here be debated, as well as its potential conflicts with anthropological codes of ethics, for example the need to preserve the dignity and the safety of one’s informants, as well as the integrity of one’s observations and analyzes;
* **Identities**: we may question authorial strategies of individuation, representation and selection, and compare them to epistemological debates about the concept of identity in the anthropological context; the question of the reification of the Other, reduced to static and essential qualities can be analyzed, as well as the tendency to idealize or demonize otherness; autobiographical travel writings may deserve special consideration here and be potentially linked to forms of (auto)ethnography; we may also focus on travel writers who, on the contrary, constantly seek to blur their tracks by representing their identity as elusive, evermoving, secret and/or polarized in order to test the critical sense of the reader and/or better reflect human nature’s contradictions, complexity and ineffability
* **Reflexivity :** the idea that the representation of otherness always reflects the author’s self and identity, society and culture of origins; in the same way, we can compare this idea to the fact that the anthropologist most often simultaneously reflects (on) the Other, (on) his/her own culture and identity, and (on) anthropology in terms of methods and theory; in this context, we encourage the analysis of correlations between the implicit representation of the self and the explicit portrayal of the Other, between the description of the visited space and the comparison/suggestion of other territories, with particular attention to the lands of origin of the writers; one may also consider broader "reflections" transpiring from these sources, i.e. visions of the world, reflections on literature, science and the acts of transcribing, creating and interpreting

This conference organized by Université Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne and Sorbonne Université is scheduled for September 27-28, 2019. It is open to researchers from all academic horizons. Literary perspectives as well as the anthropological and archaeological analyses are welcome, along with post-colonial approaches, Cultural Studies, gender studies, autobiographical studies, ecocriticism, and/or communications related to the history of science in its relations with the literary portraits of otherness.

Paper proposals (around 300 words) should be sent in French or (preferably) in English before April 29, 2019 to Frédéric Regard, [flook@orange.fr](mailto:flook@orange.fr), Haris Procopiou, [haris.procopiou@univ-paris1.fr](mailto:haris.procopiou@univ-paris1.fr), Anne-Florence Quaireau, [af.quaireau@gmail.com](mailto:af.quaireau@gmail.com" \t "_blank), and Horatiu Burcea, [horatiu.burcea@gmail.com](mailto:horatiu.burcea@gmail.com), along with a short biobibliography. An answer will be provided before May 15, 2019.

The conference will involve the publication of a selection of articles in a peer-reviewed journal and/or a collective volume.

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