

Call for Papers

## **Women Travel Writers in Northern Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century**

Conference

Université de Haute-Alsace, Mulhouse, France

27-28 February 2025

By "Northern Europe" we mean all the regions bordering the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, from the United Kingdom to northwest Russia, plus Iceland. The aim of the conference will be to study texts by women writers (in the broad sense of people who have produced written works) travelling in this part of the world during the "long nineteenth century", to use Eric Hobsbawm's expression. We have defined this period as beginning with Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) and ending with Mme Deblangy's *Croisière au cap Nord, voyage en Suède, Norvège, Danemark, à travers le centre de l'Europe* (1911).

We are aiming for a cross-disciplinary conference. Specialists in comparative literature, European national literatures, economic and cultural history, travel literature, gender studies, art history, the relationship between text and image, and sociology are all invited to submit papers.

Possible avenues to explore include:

### **Travel realities**

We will consider the practical and logistical aspects of mobility. Who are these women travellers, why and how did they travel, and by what means of locomotion? Are they alone or accompanied? Are they on a "grand tour" for women? Is their mobility voluntary or forced? We'll be asking what impact these practical aspects might have had on their travel experience.

We may also look at the relationship between women travellers and climatic conditions and landscapes as objects of real or imagined experience. An ecological perspective, in the broadest sense, will show the relationship between natural spaces and social experience.

Papers can focus on the political context, in an area that saw major events over the course of the century (multiple reconfigurations of Scandinavia, Russian domination of the Baltic provinces, division of Poland between imperial powers, Prussian-Danish wars, etc.).

The importance of the religious context is also a topic for investigation, in regions that are predominantly Protestant (Iceland, the UK, northern Germany, Scandinavia, Finland, Latvia, Estonia),

but also Catholic (Lithuania, Poland, Belgium and northern France), or even Orthodox (St. Petersburg and the part of Russia bordering the Gulf of Finland), with areas of friction such as the Netherlands.

### **Cultural approaches**

Papers might explore the specificities of these journeys compared to those of travellers in other parts of the world. What vision of the North is conveyed by women travellers? Does it vary according to whether they themselves come from Northern Europe, or from other parts of Europe and the world?

Can we identify clichés or stereotypes of boreal exoticism? The texts may reveal patterns of influence between the different countries or regions being considered, such as the particular interest of the British in Scandinavia throughout the century, or the relations established between Denmark and Russia on the marriage of Princess Dagmar and the future Alexander III in 1866.

### **Poetics of travel**

We will be analysing the interests of women travellers (geography, politics, society, arts and literature, etc.), as well as their ideological or aesthetic points of view, taking into account the form of their writings: narratives, travel diaries, accounts, diaries, fiction inspired by real journeys, articles or press reports. Particular attention will be paid to the novel, through examples like *Fernande de Lysle*. We will also consider imaginary travel, as in Renée Vivien's poems translated from Norwegian.

Papers might also look at whether these journeys, and the accounts of them, are any different from those of men.

Finally, the study of the pictures that sometimes accompany these accounts will be welcome.

Proposals that, at least tangentially, address the following questions will be particularly welcome: does the idea of a common world identified as "Northern Europe" emerge, either from a sense of belonging or from a sense of exteriority? If so, what are its foundations (geographical, cultural, religious, etc.)? Is the natural environment linked to society, morality or culture? Do these ideas take on particular forms because they are written by women?

Papers (in French or English) may focus on writings produced in any language during the long nineteenth century, from a perspective that may be comparative. All critical approaches are welcome.

## **Submission process**

Paper proposals (in English or French, 300 words maximum + brief bio-bibliography) should be sent by September 10, 2024 to [voyageusesnord@gmail.com](mailto:voyageusesnord@gmail.com)

### **Organisation Committee**

Nicolas Bourguinat, PR en histoire contemporaine, Université de Strasbourg, Arts, civilisations, histoire de l'Europe (UMR 3400)

Corinne François-Denève, PR en littérature comparée, Université de Haute-Alsace, Institut de recherche en Langues et Littératures Européennes (UR 4363)

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Maxime Leroy, PR en littérature britannique, Université de Haute-Alsace, Institut de recherche en Langues et Littératures Européennes (UR 4363)

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