

# Boston University

Friday, November 1st, 2019, noon-6pm

## BU Travel Literature Research Workshop

### ‘Through Women’s Eyes: Travel and Gender’

School of Theology Community Center (B23-B24)  
745 Commonwealth Ave., Boston University

#### Workshop Presentations (12 noon – 5 pm)

- “The Matriarch, the Duchess, the Queen, and the Countess. Aristocratic Patronesses of the Chinese Catholic Mission and their Role in Early Modern Chinese-European Relations”

*Eugenio Menegon, Boston University, History*

What do a Chinese elite lady in Shanghai, a Portuguese duchess in Madrid, an Austrian queen in Lisbon, and a Bavarian countess in Augsburg all have in common? These women, in spite of distance in time and space, all became revered patronesses of the Jesuit missions in China in the early modern period. This presentation examines four prominent women’s interactions with, and patronage of, the Jesuit missionaries in China, and, how, through their correspondence as well as their political and financial influence, and without physically traveling very much at all, they sustained a far-flung network of male ecclesiastical admirers and expressed feminine spirituality and influence across the continents.

- “Civic Conflict and Gothic Horror in Eighteenth-Century Women’s Travel Writing”

*James Uden, Boston University, Classics*

In the late eighteenth century, a number of female travel writers described their experiences of civic conflict in France, Germany, and India in the then-fashionable terms of Gothic horror. Each of them emphasizes that their own experiences are *true*, compared to the empty fictions of novels and poems. But as I show in this brief presentation, their framework for understanding these conflicts remains indebted to Gothic literature, and the relationship between truth and fiction in these works illustrates tensions in the genre of travel writing itself.

- “A Tent of One’s Own: Travel Narratives by Women in Qajar Iran”

*Sunil Sharma, Boston University, World Languages and Literatures*

Travel writing by Persian/Iranian women suddenly appeared in the late nineteenth century, not exactly as an offshoot of the more established and robust use of the genre by men. My paper will revolve around the general question of why women chose to write travelogues at this particular time. I will look for clues about the physical act of writing--i.e., how women found the space and means to write, and also why they wrote--in the works of writers such as Sakineh Soltan, Mehrmah Khanum, and Alaviyeh Khanum, all of whom were connected to the Qajar court and wrote pilgrimage narratives to Arabia and Shia sites in Iraq.

- **“Reading, Imagination, and Discovery in Rose de Freycinet’s Journal of her Voyage Around the Globe”**

*Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, emerita, Boston University, Romance Studies*

Rose Pinon de Freycinet was the first French woman to circumnavigate the globe. In 1817 she was 23 when she successfully plotted with her husband to secretly board his ship the *Uranie*. Louis de Freycinet was the captain of the expedition, which had been commissioned by the French government for the purposes of scientific exploration and mapping. The voyage took three years. Rose kept her own written record of the trip in the form of a journal addressed to her friend Caroline, and a regular correspondence with her mother. My paper will look at how Rose draws on her reading and her education as a way of framing her experience, and how she constructs her own itinerary as a woman in comparison to other representations of female travellers in fiction and in published reports of true adventure.

- **“Cross-writing the Trip: Narration and Self-Representation in George Sand’s *Un hiver à Majorque*”**

*Mary Beth Guzman, Boston University, Romance Studies*

In November 1838, French author George Sand set out for a winter sojourn in Majorca accompanied by her two children and her lover at the time, Frederic Chopin. Sand was hoping to find a sunny, exotic and inexpensive refuge for the winter where she would have an opportunity to spend time with her children and write. While her 1841 book “*Un hiver à Majorque*,” at first appears to be an autobiographical account of the trip, Sand intentionally cross-writes the trip, using a masculine narrator. This gendered play on narration undermines autobiographical assumptions and raises questions about self-representation in the travel narrative.

- **“Craven Tales: An English Lady Travels to the Ottoman Empire”**

*Roberta Micallef, Boston University, World Languages and Literatures*

## **Keynote Address (5-6 pm)**

- **“The World through Ethiopian Women’s Eyes, from Makōdda to Məntəwwab”**

*Rebekah Mitsein, Boston College*

In the sixteenth century, the Jesuit missionary Francesco Alvares visited Re-ese Adbarat Kidiste Kidusan Dingel Maryam Ts’iyon (The Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion) in Aksum. He found “a most ancient Chronicle, written in the Abissine Tongue” that told the story of “the Queene of Saba, whose proper name was Maqueda.... And it began in this manner: Queene Maqueda hearing of the great and rich building which Salomon had begun at Jerusalem, determined to goe and visite him.” This text, the *Kebrä Nāgāst* or *Glory of the Kings*, tells the story of Makōdda’s journey to Jerusalem and back again, how she matched wits with Solomon until he fell in love with her and then returned to Ethiopia with both his son and knowledge of the God of Israel. My talk traces the influence of Makōdda’s story on both Ethiopian narrative traditions and European ones. Her journey laid the literal and the literary foundation for other globally oriented women like Āleni, who was the first Ethiopian leader to foster diplomatic relationships with both Europe and India, and Məntəwwab, the puissant queen regent of the eighteenth century who facilitated James Bruce’s search for the source of the Nile. These women captured the imagination of travel writers like Bruce, who makes clear that what he knows of Ethiopian politics and geography came largely through Məntəwwab and her daughter Aster Iyesu, and of fiction writers like Samuel Johnson, whose own courageous Ethiopian women in *Rasselas* travel to Biblical lands in search of wisdom.