



Review of *The Granite Kingdom - A Cornish Journey*

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Review of *The Granite Kingdom - A Cornish Journey*, by Tim Hannigan. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023, 384 pages. ISBN 9781801108850

Shortlisted for the 2024 Edward Stanford Travel Book of the Year Award, Tim Hannigan's travel book *The Granite Kingdom - A Cornish Journey* (2023) deserves to figure in this issue of *ELLiC Journal* about *Mobility, Virtuality and Transculturality in Travel Literature*. It describes a tour of Cornwall, one of Britain's most popular regions and the author's homeland; yet, the prologue opens with a statement that "You are in a place that does not exist". It is at once "a chartered territory" and "a passing illusion", embodying the interplay of the physical and the metaphysical, the real and the virtual, the commonplace and the mythical, the historical and the personal, the authentic and the perceived, that characterize travel writing and the object of discussion during the international conference at the origin of the preceding articles of this issue.

Hannigan takes the reader on an overland trip across a Cornwall of his own, and though he criss-crosses through the woods of the valley of Tamar river until the far western region of Penwith, and evokes former travellers' view of the place, from Daniel Defoe to Daphne de Maurier, and from reporters to historians, he also blurs the borders of myth, folklore, society and culture. He presents an imaginative reconstruction of Cornwall unhinging it from its historical and cultural reality to become an almost fictional location – a Cornwall of the mind growing out of the geographical reference point. Indeed, travel literature as a special form of writing allows the author to project a psychogeography of the place unto the actual space and to reveal the mindscape in parallel to the landscape.

Questions of self and othering, of stereotypes and biases, of exoticism and homecoming, are central to *The Granite Kingdom* where Tim Hannigan realises that Cornwall was no longer a distant periphery in need of integration but rather a place that is at once abroad and homely, exotic and familiar, the Celts being the "Barbarian other" at home. Despite the fact that in his own "place-sense", Cornish is closely associated with the granite of the title, that is another inherent fluid name for Hannigan's Cornwall, for in his own words, "You'd be forgiven for thinking that Cornwall was made up entirely of granite. It comes up so often as an adjective of place here: the granite cliffs and granite hills of a granite kingdom, as if the stone itself were sovereign. But if you look at a

geological map, you'll be in for a surprise. Only a small part of Cornwall's surface is made of granite. It shows as irregular blotches, spaced down the length of the peninsula, each surrounded by the dark bands of what is sometimes called the 'country rock'. Questions of regional identity acquire a universal dimension and without "counting up the lies" he deems correlated with any travel book in a Chatwinian manner, this account of alterity and self-reflexivity reveals thought-provoking patterns of traveller and travellee in the Kingdom of Granite.