

CASE STUDY ONE:  
SCOTLAND AND

# THE AMERICAS

## A LITERARY ODYSSEY WITH THE OUTRIDERS

A literature delegation at Momentum 2016 provided the vital spark in the creation of Outriders, an ambitious transatlantic project spearheaded by Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF). In this case study, we focus on two Scottish writers who embarked on inspiring journeys across Argentina and Mexico in the company of local authors, with all four then going on to create new work in response to their experiences.

The results of the Outriders project were immediate and ongoing. Festivals in Edinburgh and Buenos Aires have been enriched by the partnerships formed, and these look set to support further exchange between Scotland and the Americas.

## ORIGINS

The Outriders project began taking shape in 2014. Nick met Gabriella Adamo, Director of the International Festival of Literature in Buenos Aires (FILBA), at Guadalajara International Book Fair during a visit for the UK/Mexico Year of Culture. They were interested in each other's festival models and a strong connection was formed. Ideas for collaboration were explored, but the timing of FILBA in September prevented Gabriella from participating in Momentum that year.

Pablo Braun, FILBA's President, attended Momentum in 2016. A series of conversations took place on translating work by authors from Scotland and Argentina. Also on the delegation was Mauricio Montiel Figueiras, Director of Literature at Mexico's National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA). Both delegates attended events at EIBF, met several Scottish writers and visited literature organisations.

'They witnessed how a small country can generate great talent and ideas. Coming from countries where things are done on a massive scale, they saw how focused creative ambition can have more value to a city than some large-scale commercial ventures.'

**Camille Mateos, International Projects Manager, Festivals Edinburgh**

The Momentum partners provided delegates with opportunities to showcase their work to each other. A close dynamic was formed, which let them continue to share their expertise, explore ideas and develop projects. Both Pablo and Mauricio were quick to see the potential of Nick's ambitions for a partnership project between Scotland and Central and South America. Thus Outriders was born.

'The concept was to explore transatlantic relationships at a time when there is a distancing between the Americas and Europe by sending writers on journeys to look at old and new issues. Pablo and Mauricio agreed that the long and very troubled history between Europe and the Americas is changing and there were rich opportunities for writers to investigate and respond to this context.'

**Nick Barley**

## FOLLOW-UP AND DELIVERY

Nick visited FILBA in Buenos Aires almost immediately after his own festival. With support from the British Council, he identified which authors he wanted to connect with. He again met Pablo and Gabriella from FILBA, and talked about his vision for the Outriders transatlantic journeys, with Argentina identified as a port of entry to South America.

David Codling, former British Council Regional Arts Director for the Americas, engaged his team and facilitated in-kind support across the four countries – Argentina, Mexico, the USA and Canada – that would feature in the full Outriders programme.

'The British Council can take a lot of credit for making this possible, not just supporting my visits to Argentina but making them and the encounters there worthwhile, as well as facilitating the Outriders writers' journeys.'

**Nick Barley**

The first Outriders journey got under way in 2016. Scottish playwright Stef Smith went on a trip with Mexican counterpart Ximena Escalante. They began in the US, crossed the border into Mexico then proceeded to Guatemala, all the while receiving support from INBA and the British Council in Mexico.

In Argentina, Lewis-born poet and novelist Kevin MacNeil accompanied journalist and writer Mariana Enriquez on a journey from Buenos Aires to Cordoba. They visited the outskirts of the Argentinian capital, taking in places with large populations of immigrants from Bolivia, Chile and Peru, before heading into the Pampas in search of UFOs. Advice from the British Council in Argentina and FILBA proved essential to planning their trip.

'At the heart of the Outriders idea is the writers' journey together. The Scottish writer got a unique picture from their local partner that they would never experience as a tourist. In turn, the local writer saw their own country through a completely new perspective because they were accompanied by a writer from the other side of the Atlantic. They tested a transatlantic understanding of what is around us through a journey made together.'

**Nick Barley**

Along the way, the writers took photos, made movies, blogged, wrote poems and tweeted, creating a rich multimedia tableau of content about their experiences.

'It showed me that two writers from very different backgrounds (and languages!) can have common ground, work together, and exchange opinions and different readings. Even going to places that I had never visited before was revealing about the relationships between people and literature.'

**Mariana Enriquez**

'I think my journey was life-enhancing, inspiring and both professionally and personally invaluable. We were able to open up tangible links between Scotland's literary heritage and Argentina's. We had many conversations that impacted lastingly on my contemplation of Argentina's contemporary literary scene. We had some serendipitous adventures that are feeding directly or otherwise into a forthcoming scholarly book on Robert Louis Stevenson and Borges, and into two works of fiction I am planning. We also hope to work on some translations together. I feel a greater confidence in my own worth, and mission, as a writer.'

**Kevin MacNeil**

All ten of the writers featured in the wider Outriders project are committed to producing new material as a result of their experiences. EIBF has published an anthology of their work and intends on working with them to further enhance the potential to gain from the project.

## LEGACIES

Works created by the Outriders, whether online through blogs, tweets and films, live via events at EIBF and FILBA, or in publications, are extensive. The writers have formed new connections, embraced international opportunities and helped to create rich legacies for future creative exchange between Scotland and the Americas.

By working closely with his colleagues in Argentina and Mexico, Nick has built up a network of writers and publishers in the region. Connections and programmes continue to emerge. Gabriela from FILBA attended EIBF for the first time in 2017, and both the Argentinean and Mexican delegates from 2016 are working to develop a translation exchange with Scotland.

'Momentum is hugely important to the Edinburgh International Book Festival, the festival's place in the world and Scottish writing in general. It is the best thing there is in terms of promoting Scottish writers abroad and allowing the international work of EIBF to carry much more weight.'

**Nick Barley**

## LINKS

**Edinburgh International Book Festival**  
<https://www.edbookfest.co.uk>

**Filba Foundation**  
[www.filba.org.ar](http://www.filba.org.ar)

**National Institute of Fine Arts, Mexico**  
[www.inba.gob.mx](http://www.inba.gob.mx)