



## Elena Ferrante in *The Guardian* and *Roads and Kingdoms*

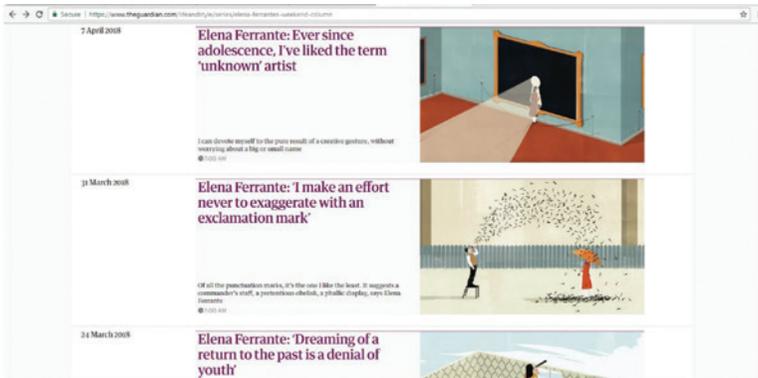
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### ELENA FERRANTE IN *THE GUARDIAN*

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/series/elena-ferrantes-weekend-column>

Elena Ferrante has, in recent years, become a sensation in the UK—and internationally—as readers discover her writings, particularly her Neapolitan quartet of novels. These focus on the lives of two women: their relationships with their city, families, friends, co-workers and, most importantly, one another. For some time after the novels became available in English in late 2012, many conversations about books, or life and culture in general, would circle around the question: ‘Have you read *My Brilliant Friend*...?’

In January 2018 Ferrante began writing a short, weekly column for the *Guardian* about ‘life, love, the female experience and everything in between’. The column is translated from the Italian by Ann Goldstein,



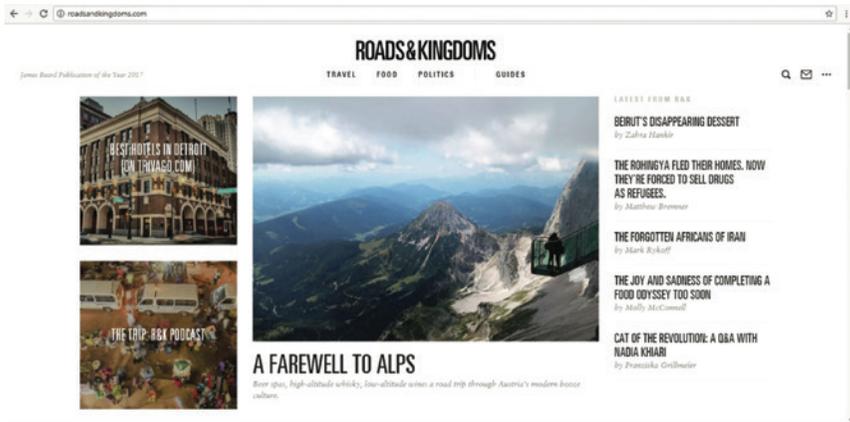
which is important to note, as English readers can access Ferrante's writings more immediately than they have been able to in the past. The concise entries touch on a range of topics: 'first times', youth, death, reality and fantasy, punctuation, anonymity, stereotypes about Italians, laughter and relief, male needs and envy, and 'learning, like a character in Conrad, to accept fear' (1). The column is compelling as a piece of life-writing for how it flirts with revelation, that is, unveiling bits and pieces of what one presumes—but might not be—examples of autobiographical experience. ("Elena Ferrante" may or may not be the author's name; in October 2016 Alexandra Schwartz published an article in the *New Yorker* about the 'widespread consternation' (2) felt by fans at the Italian journalist Claudio Gatti's attempts to pin down the author's identity.) The reader flits between news and opinion articles and Ferrante's interpretation of the weekly "advice" column, here presented as an exercise in critical self-reflection, and a chronicle of 'expressive strategies' (3) for accessing and capturing interior and political life.

- (1) Elena Ferrante, 'The cat brought in a snake and I left it under my bed. Screaming, I chased it out.' *Guardian*, 27 January 2018.
- (2) Alexandra Schwartz, 'The "Unmasking" of Elena Ferrante.' *New Yorker*, 21 January 2018.
- (3) Elena Ferrante, 'Ever since adolescence, I've liked the term "unknown" artist.' *Guardian*, 7 April 2018.

### ROADS AND KINGDOMS

<https://roadsandkingdoms.com/>

*Roads and Kingdoms* is a travel website and online publication. In some ways it fits standard expectations of the genre, offering up city guides and more general recommendations about the best places to eat and stay. But the longer articles, commissioned from writers based around the world who approach their subjects from a variety of creative narrative angles, are unusually nuanced and reflective. For example, Matt Goulding's articles about Spain range from a study of *huevos con chipirone* and the Boqueria neighbourhood (1) in Barcelona to the 'The Battle for Catalonia', which acts as both a diary entry and a political editorial (2). Jacob Russell's article and subsequent podcast 'Dancing with the Dead' (3) is a journalistic account of travelling to Madagascar to witness the Famadihana ceremony; it is also a personal story about reconciling childhood grief as an adult. Alongside podcasts and the weekly newsletter, the varied entries dissect the idea that travel can be a personal challenge to



established political and self-narratives, providing sensical interventions that shift underlying assumptions about human identity and interaction.

- (1) Matt Goulding, 'My Perfect Dish: Huevos con Chiprones.' *Roads and Kingdoms*, 8 January 2016.
- (2) Matt Goulding, 'The Battle for Catalonia.' *Roads and Kingdoms*, 2 October 2017.
- (3) Jacob Russell, 'Dancing with the Dead.' *Roads and Kingdoms*, 10 October 2016. Eponymous podcast, 25 January 2018.

—Alisa Miller

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alisa Miller is based in the English Department at King's College London, where she is Research Associate and Project Manager for the ERC-funded Ego-Media and Beyond Enemy Lines projects. Her research focuses on the comparative development of war cultures in twentieth and twenty-first century Europe and the United States, looking at how evolving literary networks—utilizing different forms of media and technology—influence political discourses and perceptions of violence. Some recent publications include *Rupert Brooke in the First World War* (Clemson and Liverpool University Press, 2017) and 'Modern War and Aesthetic Mobilisation: Looking at Europe in 1914' in the *British Journal of Military History* (2016) Email: [alisa.m.miller@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:alisa.m.miller@kcl.ac.uk).