

'I'm always delighted to hear of new releases from **Parthian** because I know they will be of such a high standard. from the selection of its authors and topics covered through to the editing and production of the books, Parthian exudes quality. it puts out a dazzling, stimulating, thought-provoking selection of books on par with (if not better and more interesting than) the bigger publishing houses.' – Jenny White

It is a good quote from a leading Welsh journalist and Parthian has continued to attract good notices in 2023 with books such as *Charles: the King and Wales*, which was published in May and received a lot of press attention especially as the subject was in the news. It also reflected a long-standing connection with the Prince's Youth Business Trust who extended a loan to Parthian as a young start-up company thirty years ago.

2023 was a year of celebration, the company had been trading for three decades but also a period of reflection of the things we had achieved and ambition for the future. **Local Fires** by Joshua Jones is one for the future. Our authors continued to win prizes

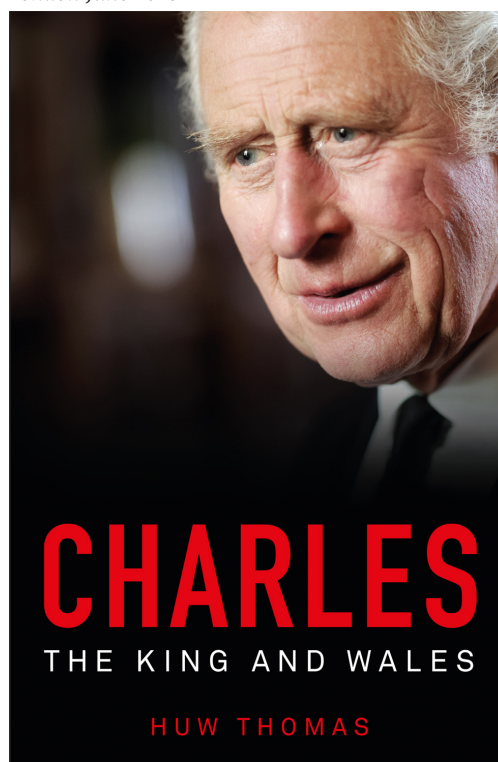
*The Lake* by Bianca Bellova won the EBRD award for translated fiction following a short-listing in 2022



*Published November 23  
Long-listed for the  
Dylan Thomas Award  
2024*



*Bianca Bellova receives the EBRD Award with translator Alex Zucker for the Czech novel **The Lake**. London June 2023*



*In the news  
2023*

Parthian develops new work by young and emerging writers. We also engage with the politics, society and culture of Wales with a range of biographies, memoir and cultural studies.

**Local Fires** a collection of stories by Joshua Jones, a working-class LGBTQ+ young writer from Llanelli is now on the long-list of the Dylan Thomas Award. We have worked with Jones to develop his collection over two years after he was first published in the Rhys Davies short story competition anthologies. We work collaboratively with a number of agencies and editors to offer entry level publication in anthologies to new and emerging writers. Writers such as Rachel Trezise, Tristan Hughes and Deborah Kay Davies were first published in these anthologies and Jones is the latest in that development process.



We have also won prizes including the European Bank of Regional Development Prize for translated fiction with *The Lake* by Bianca Bellova translated by Alex Zucker and an award from the Extepare Institute in the Basque Country for the publication of Miren Agur Meabe's *Burning Bones* translated by Amaia Gabantxo. This will enable us to invite author and translator to the UK in 2024.

We also had books on the long and shortlists of some significant prizes:

*Language of Bees*, a poetry collection by Rae Howells was short-listed for the Wales Book of the Year.

*The Incandescent Threads* by Richard Zimler was highly commended in the Jewish Book Awards fiction section.

*The Half-Life of Snails* by Phillipa Holloway was long-listed for the Ondaatje Award.

We aim to produce a range of books in fiction, non-fiction and poetry that engages with Welsh culture while casting a keen eye on the wider world through the publication of work in translation which included new work in 2023 from Czech, Basque, Welsh and Irish.

However it has been a challenging year for sales with a contracting economy and a cost-of-living crisis. There have been modest welcome boosts with award wins and short listings. The problem is that there are a lot of awards out there that compete for attention and not every book can win an award.

We have looked to work collaboratively with festivals and cultural organisations such as the Hay Festival, The Cultural Institute of Swansea University and the British Council to extend the reach of our books and make the most of a every marketing budget. We have also received support from the Rhys Davies Trust which has enabled us to increase the production quality of art books such as *George Little: An Ugly Lovely Landscape* by Peter Wakelin while awards from Pen Translates has enabled investment in translations from Irish and Macedonian in 2023.

We have leased rights to Penguin Random House in two titles in the Library of Wales series to be included in Penguin's Black British writing series edited by Bernadine Evaristo. These were *Dat's Love and other stories* by Leonora Brito and *Sugar and Slate* by Charlotte Williams. These were titles that we had republished after being out of print for many years. They focused on the Black British and Welsh experience in memoir and fiction so were delighted to see them included in Evaristo's selected list of significant titles in the British canon.

# NEW WRITING / CLASSICS/ DIVERSITY/A CARNIVAL OF TRANSLATION

## NEW WRITING

We have identified key areas of work that we feel we are investing in as a publisher

### **NEW WRITING FROM WALES: FICTION AND POETRY AND THE MODERN WALES SERIES**

We continue to offer opportunities for new writers such as Phillipa Holloway whose first novel *The Half Life of Snails* receiving an excellent critical reception and was long-listed for the Ondaatje Award. In addition we look for opportunities for established writers such Tristan Hughes and Rachel Trezise.

### **POPULAR CULTURAL HISTORY:**

**Modern Wales:** A new series edited by Dai Smith which includes a diverse range of commissioned titles engaging with the culture of Wales.

### **THE OTHER WALES:**

In development we have several stand-alone cultural projects including a biography of Philip Burton by Angela V John and a book of essays on the effect devolution has had on the opportunities for women in Wales edited by Emma Schofield.

### **The languages of Wales**

We positively engage in Welsh-language projects such as the dual publication of significant titles such as **Pigeon/Pijin**, (a first time this was done) and in 2021 **The Journey is Home/Y Daith Ydi Adra**. We have always translated books from Welsh, the latest being **The Last Day** by Owain Owain, a lost classic of science-fiction

# DIVERSITY on going

Publications directly reflecting the cultural diversity of Wales and our relationship with a wider world through cultural engagement.

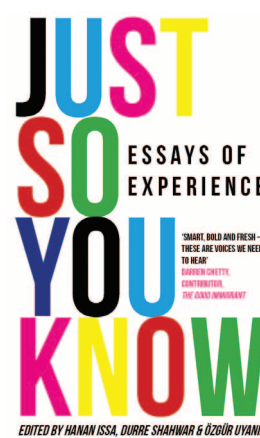
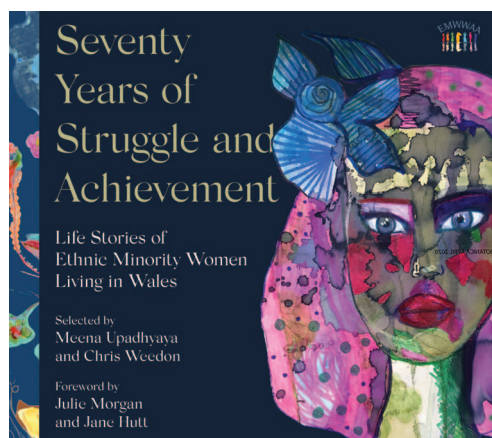
We have been working with a diverse group of writers over thirty years to reflect the cultural diversity of Wales in fiction, creative non-fiction and drama. In recent years we have worked with writers such as Eric Ngalle, Sarah Broughton and John Sam Jones to develop works that reflect a diverse culture of Wales.

In 2021 we worked with the Ethnic Minority Welsh Women of Achievement Association (EMWWA) to produce *Seventy Years of Struggle and Achievement Life Stories of Ethnic Minority Women Living in Wales* (Edited by Meena Upadhyaya and Chris Weedon) and in 2022 we published *Refugee Wales: Syrian Voices* as part of a research and publication project with Cardiff University, the Museum of Welsh Life and the National Museum of Wales to produce a book aimed at raising the awareness of cultural issues of diversity and representation within Wales. This builds on our work with anthologies such as *Just So You Know* (2020) edited by Durre Shawar, Hanan Issa and Ozgur Uyanik and *An Open Door* (2022) edited by Stephen Lovatt that have offered professional

publication opportunities for emerging writers from a diverse group of backgrounds. In 2022 the award-winning *Sugar and Slate* by Charlotte Williams is being added to the Library of Wales series in a new edition through a co-publication project with Planet Books. We have also published *I, Eric Ngalle*, a memoir of migration and this year produced with Spiracle editions an audiobook of the story which Eric Ngalle narrated. We are continuing to develop opportunities for some of these writers to work on further books to be published by Parthian.

We are in conversation with writers who we feel could develop interesting books reflecting Welsh society; several of these are in progress, including a book on the hidden histories of women in the political and cultural life of Wales and a book about the effect of devolution on women in Wales.

As part of our enhanced publication programme for 2023 to 2026 we are aiming to ensure 20% of our list is from writers of under-represented backgrounds. We will work with two consultant editors (Charlotte Williams and Ozgur Uyanik) to ensure that we engage with new diverse voices.



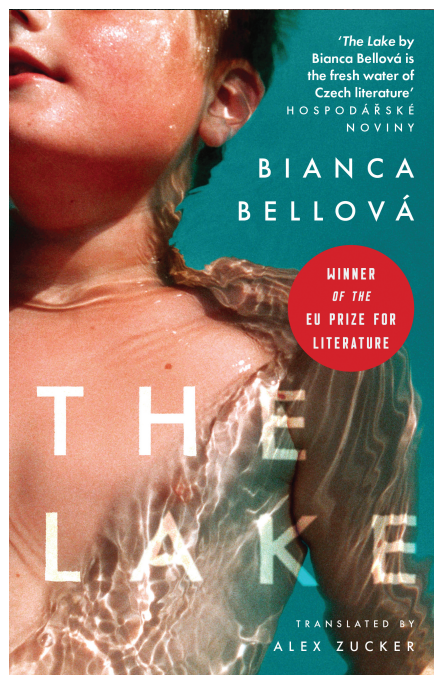
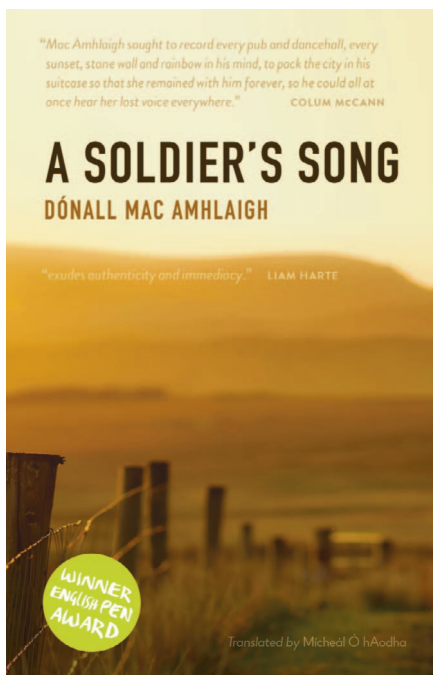


# A CARNIVAL OF TRANSLATION

## PARTHIAN EUROPA CARNIVAL

This series reached its final year with support from Creative Europe. The series in 2021/22 included new titles from Greece, Denmark, Czech, Ireland, North Macedonia and the Basque Country appearing in 2021/22 22/23. We have had good sales of *Exiles* and *Hana* with European-wide interest in the titles. The programme has attracted extra funding from literature funders in Czech and the Basque country while *A Soldier's Song* received translation support from Pen England's programme with a grant of £8000.

The travel restrictions as a result of Covid 19 limited the viability of live events but we concentrated our efforts on online promotion and e-books. We also released two audiobooks. The project is already developing legacy publications with a new book by the Macedonian writer Petar Andonovski supported by a grant from Pen Translates and the North Macedonian Arts Ministry and a further classic text from the Irish writer Donal Mac Amhlaigh published in 2023 with the translators originally commissioned through the Creative Europe fund now supported by Pen Translates and other sources.

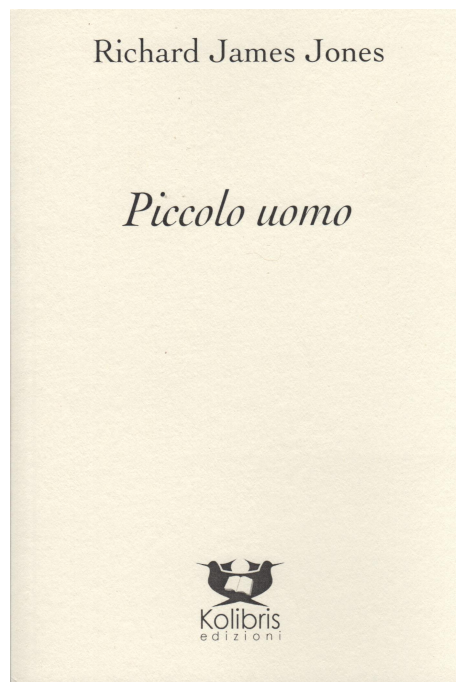
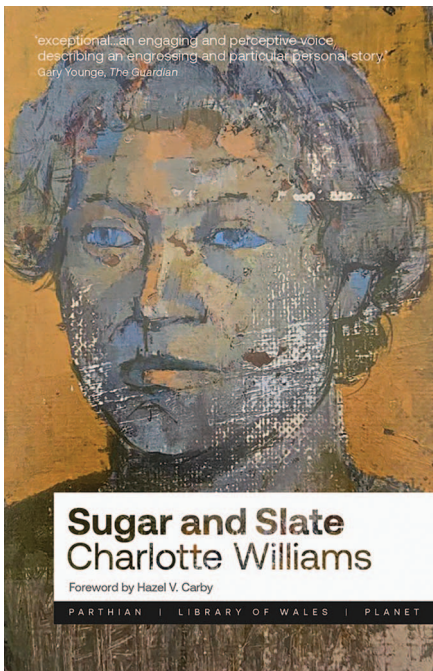


# Rights

We have sold the Arabic rights to Rachel Trezise's novel *In and Out of the Goldfishbowl* and the Italian rights to *Little Man*, *Pearl and Bone*, *MoonJellyfish* *Can Barely Swim* and *Hymnal*, as part of a new Welsh poetry in translation initiative.

We have also successfully extended the lease of our titles *The Long Dry* and *Everything I Found on the Beach* by Cynan Jones to Granta Books for another ten years.

We have ongoing rights interest in the novel *Pigeon* for TV and film production. It was first published in 2017, winning the Wales Book of the Year, in 2023 it was dramatized in a bi-lingual production *Pijin/Pigeon* and toured Wales in a well-received production with Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru. We redesigned the cover to match the theatre production which provided a welcome boost to sales.



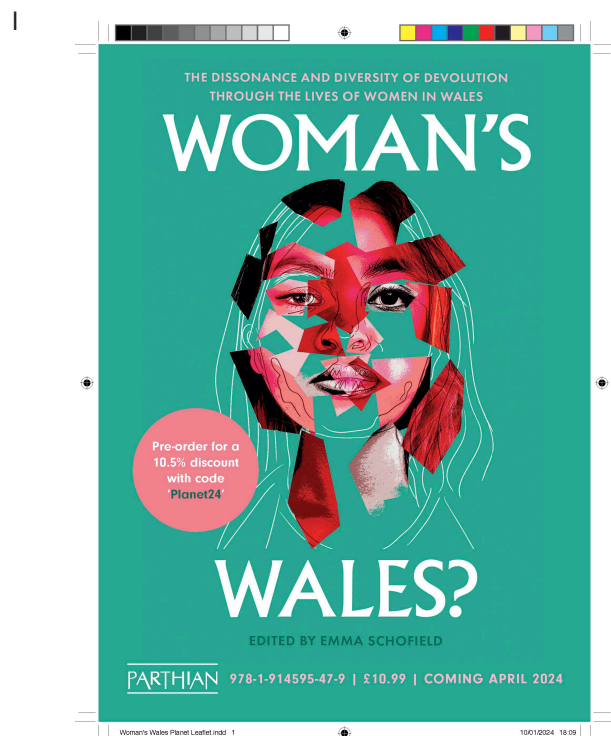
## PUBLISHING AND THE CULTURE OF WALES

Parthian are one of Wales's leading publishers in the English language. We publish a diverse range of books that represent and reflect the vibrant cultures of Wales. Our list includes the Library of Wales series which features a selection of the best of the literary output of Wales in English from the 20th century. We also publish the Modern Wales series which reflects contemporary society in Wales with several new books in 2021 including *Between Worlds: A Queer Boy from the Valleys* and *Miner's Day*, a striking extended edition of B.L. Coombes' 1945 publication introduced by Peter Wakelin and including contemporaneous artwork by Isabel Alexander. We work with young writers to help develop their talents and literary careers. Award-winning writers such as Rachel Trezise, Tristan Hughes, Alys Conran, Deborah Kay Davies, Lloyd Markham, Gary Raymond and Cynan Jones have all benefited from working through our development programme. In 2021 we published Trezise's new novel *Easy Meat* after a long development process supported by a commission grant from Books Council. We are currently working with emerging writers such as Joshua Jones, Grace Quantock and Ozgur Uyanik, all of whom we have first published through our development anthologies. These are exciting voices from diverse backgrounds that we feel are capable of producing significant new books from Wales

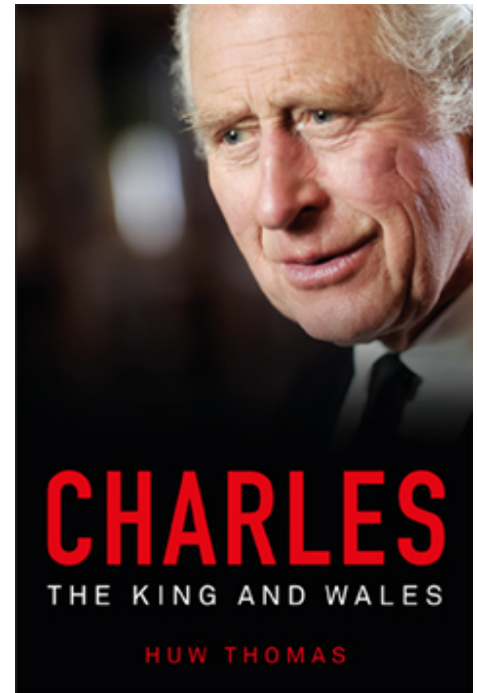
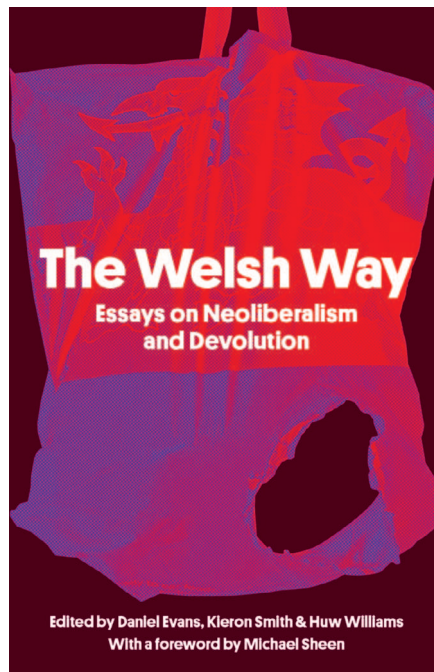
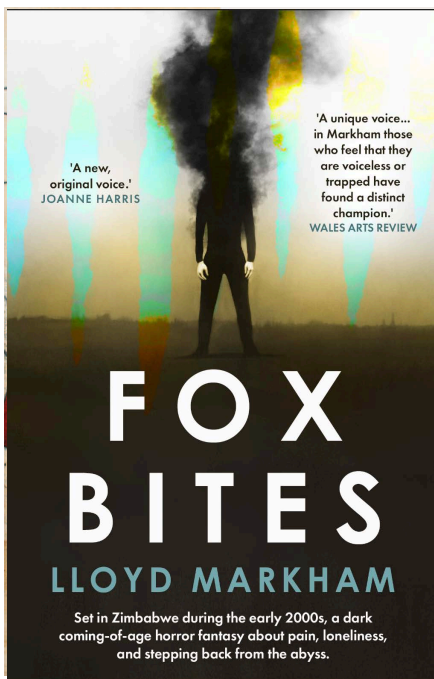
As a publisher we commission, edit and design new work and then print with a specialist printer. We then ensure that our books reach shops and readers throughout the UK and beyond through carefully-designed marketing and promotional activities. We have significant export sales in the US and in 2021 we branched out to the Czech Republic with good sales of our Czech writers back into the East European English language market. We have a fully integrated physical and e-book production system and we also sell rights into the audiobook channels. In 2021 and 2022 with support from the Books Council of Wales and Creative Europe we have produced our first audiobook list including *Ash on A Young Man's Sleeve* read by Griff Rhys Jones, *The Journey is*

*Home* by John Sam Jones and *I*, Eric Ngalle. We also sell rights to our books across the world.

In 2021 we worked with the Ethnic Minority Welsh Women of Achievement Association to publish *Seventy Years of Struggle and Achievement: Life Stories of Ethnic Minority Women in Wales* while also publishing *The Welsh Way*, a book of political essays and challenges to the role and efficacy of devolved government in Wales. In August 2021 we published *Raymond Williams: From Wales to the World*, a book to engage further in the work of this leading critical thinker on the centenary of his birth.



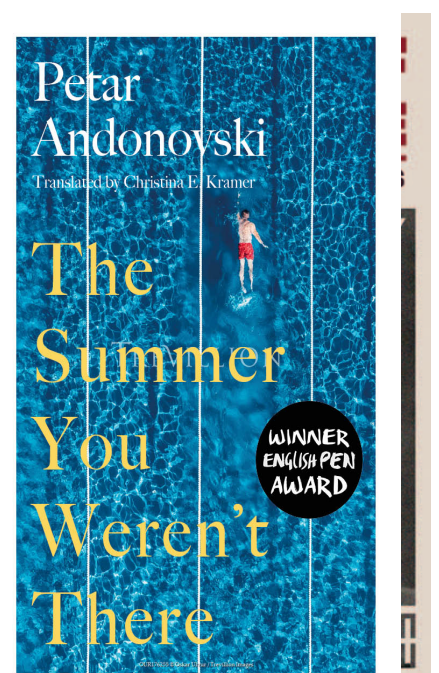
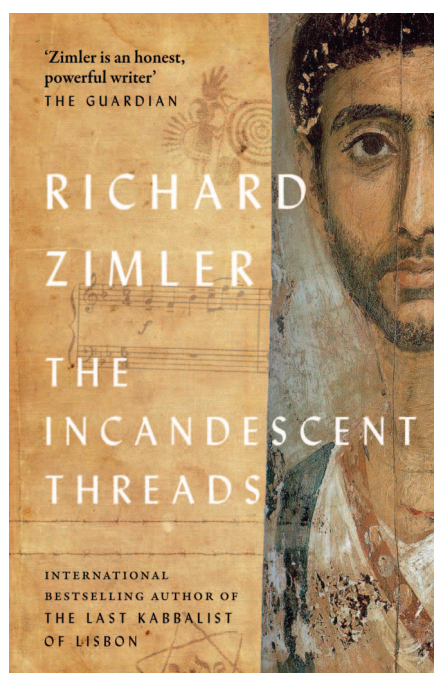
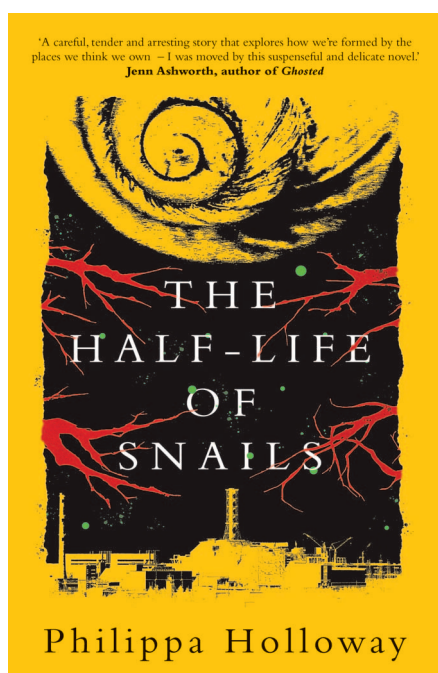




## DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

We aim to design attractive covers which are suitable for the modern book trade both for physical and e-books. We are continually evaluating the success of our covers with our team and the wider public. We have had an excellent reaction to new designs for *The Incandescent Threads* and *The Half-Life of Snails* and a new look to the Library of

Wales series. We include straplines and review quotes and update covers when a reprint is ordered to include more recent notices or a move to the paperback format. We also look at opportunities for re-designs with relaunches of backlist titles such as *Parthian Modern* with new cover designers and cover art appropriate to the form.





## Promotion and strategy

We aim to have an organized launch for each book at least once. Our aim is to work with promotion partners such as the Cultural Institute of Swansea university and festival partners such as Hay and various smaller festivals such as Llandeilo, Machynlleth, Knighton and Caerleon all of whom hosted events this year. The most successful promotion was a four-date tour of Wales with Charlotte Williams to promote the re-issue of *Sugar and Slate*.

We also worked with the Borzello Trust to fund a purchase of four poetry and one short fiction title to be made available to 250 public and school libraries in Wales. This was heavily promoted. John Sam Jones also toured Wales talking about his award-winning *The Journey is Home*.

We publish most of our titles as ebooks except for poetry and art. We developed a programme of selected audiobooks but the investment has not resulted in a return that is sustainable. They are expensive to produce and very difficult to market without a significant budget. Some of the titles in our backlist have been developed by audiobook producers and we have had had some return from these rights sales. We will look to target significant books for audio rights sales.

In 2023 Ela Griffiths has continued developing the reader engagement role for Parthian. New projects include a Parthian Tik-Tok presence while also working with Grace Quantock on a forthcoming travel writing podcast series. She project-managed the Parthian Viet Nam writing project.



Publisher Richard Davies and Ela Griffiths Reading Engagement Editor at the Hanoi European Literature Night May 2023

## Diversity and Inclusion - Ongoing

In 2023 Parthian was part of the UK Viet Nam season supported by the British Council. The writer Joshua Jones who identifies as LGBTQ+ and is neurodivergent was supported to visit Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Viet Nam with a view to collaborating with Vietnamese and Welsh writers in a queer writing project. He took part in the festival of European Literature in April in Hanoi. The project developed over the Summer of 2023 through on-line conference meetings into the Room/Ystafell/Phòng anthology which was published tri-lingually in November. We will continue to work with Jones in 2024 as his career develops with the opportunity of the Dylan Thomas long-listing a welcome boost.

Six writers in the Room project Joshua Jones, Maik Câ, Leo Drayton, Kai Nguyen, Lauren Morais and Xuân Tùng.



'Much of the work in Room reads as affirmation – prayer-like in their reminders of what being capital-Q Queer is, and how to make and embrace the space it needs to breathe. I highly recommend those interested to grab a copy, and read – re-read it again, and look forward to future work from its authors.' – Alex Wales, Nation. Cymru

'What makes Room/Ystafell/Phòng heartwarming and poignant is its ability to traverse through different art forms, effortlessly portraying the spectrum of emotions and experiences within the queer community. The collaboration between Wales and Vietnam is not just significant but also beautifully executed.' – John Evans, Buzz Magazine

Six writers, three from Việt Nam and three from Wales come together in the Room/Ystafell/Phòng to discuss their queer identities and how it has been shaped by world around them. Featuring discussion transcripts, poetry, photography, collages and prose.

We have continued to employ new graduates on paid internship programmes though the Open University offering challenging skill-based placements to extend their skills an employability. These are now supported on-line to allow a wider pool of possible candidates to apply.

# DIGITAL PUBLISHING

We have further developed our digital and on-line resources to reach readers, build communities around our books and our cultural offerings. We have expanded our e-book list and increased direct contact with our reading audience/market/community through digital connectivity via zoom launches and discussions, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook development to increase followers. We are currently developing more on-line content in the form of podcasts. We have also developed our own Parthian YouTube channel which features interviews and short films.

We have invested in access to online promotion platforms such as netgalley for early proof distribution.

## **OUR ON-LINE OFFER:**

Our website and social media profile through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tik-Tok linked to our own website is a major feature of our marketing campaigns. Our website is focussed on sales with all our books featured with covers, summaries, reviews. It also provides a platform for promotion of events and basic press information.

Our success with direct reader engagement has seen our own website direct sales increase again in 2023

## Sustainability

We have adjusted our business model over the last few years to concentrate on publishing in a digital format and only printing modest runs of each title (excluding art book publications). This has allowed us to reduce both the over-production of titles and the consequent energy footprint, our up-front printing costs and also our storage costs.

We have an ongoing relationship with Oxfam bookshops in Cardiff and Swansea and the Ty Hafan Children's Hospice Charity in Cardiff where slightly shop damaged returns and occasional excess backlist titles are donated for re-sale so no books are recycled for landfill. This reduces the energy footprint of our business.





## Parthian Books looks to the future as it hits 30

Still relishing the day job, co-founder Richard Lewis Davies reflects on the joys of indie publishing—just don't mention Brexit

Julie Vuong  
@julievuong



F ledgling publishers might find it reassuring that Richard Lewis Davies can't think of many, if indeed any, losses in three decades of independent publishing. In his experience "meeting fascinating people over the years through literature" has outstripped any negatives. Davies is earnest, looking pleased, albeit chilly, in his study at home in Cardigan in west Wales—although we haven't mentioned Brexit yet, but more on that later. Thirty years on from launching Parthian Press with his partner Gillian Griffiths and university friend Ravi Pawar, Davies is still publishing thought-provoking Welsh writing in English and has added a "carnival of voices from many languages and cultures" to the mix.

Davies is right to be happy given the success of recent titles and initiatives. Take Philippa Holloway, whose debut, *The Half Life of Snails*, which weaves the Welsh landscape with the legacy of Chernobyl, is on the longlist for the Ondaatje Award. Another notable title is Richard Owain Roberts' *Hello Friend We Missed*

TheBookseller.com

*You*, a darkly comic story of Hill, a man who returns home to Ynys Môn (or Anglesey, as most of us outside Wales know it) to tend to his ailing father. It won huge acclaim and scooped everyone's favourite alternative award, Not the Booker Prize, in 2020. Canadian-Welsh writer Tristan Hughes' *Hummingbird*, a coming-of-age tale set in the Canadian wilderness, was Stanford's Fiction Winner in 2018; it generated so much word-of-mouth demand that Nic Bottomley, owner of Mr B's Emporium in Bath, persuaded Parthian to reprint it with a promise to buy half of the second print run of 400, following the first hardback run of 500 copies. Parthian even threw its hat into the podcasting ring in 2021, releasing five episodes around the subject of queer Welsh writing.

Parthian's strength comes from stability. Griffiths continues as financial director; Pawar serves as chair of the board of alongside his job as head teacher of a school in Bridgend. Turning 30 enables Davies to reflect on how far Parthian has come: from the necessary vehicle to publish his own novel *Work, Sex and Rugby* and being "quite ad-hoc for the first 10 years" to a respected indie with a dynamic team of eight. "We're friends with everyone we've worked with," Davies says, offering up another advantage of his line of work—the fact that production editor Robert Harries returned to Parthian after time on London's publishing circuit is testament to that.

Davies recalls applying for a Prince's Trust loan as the moment his pet project became a bona fide business. Then, with the establishment of the Welsh Assembly in 1999, things really



RICHARD LEWIS DAVIES AND PHILIPPA HOLLOWAY OUTSIDE PALAS PRINT BOOKSHOP, CAERNARFON

We've always published new work by Welsh writers because that's where we are, but it's not the only thing we've done

Richard Lewis Davies

took off, enabling Parthian to have direct discussions with funding organisations within the country. "That was a big boost," he confirms. Since then, Parthian has used its funding wisely. It produced the Library of Wales series, a 10-year project with support from the Welsh government and the Welsh Books Council, which featured a list of 50 titles of classic writing, selling almost 100,000 copies.

Parthian isn't just focused on the home front. "We've always published new work by Welsh writers because that's where we are, but it's not the only thing we've done," Davies says. "I've always been interested in other cultures and that's been one of the joys: to bring new work into English, particularly from smaller European languages." Financial support will be crucial

after Parthian's three-year project with Creative Europe ended last year, while the "pain" of Brexit continues to stifle sales from abroad. Davies laments a "tough year" with "reduced production" but is thankful for funding from English PEN.

Yet Parthian has much to rejoice as it hits 30: it made the Nibbies' Small Press of the Year shortlist in 2019 and is expecting big things from this year's cohort of books, including September release *Local Fires*, a short story collection by "a proactive new LGBTQ+ writer" Joshua Jones. Celebrations around the anniversary have so far been local and low-key, and Parthian will continue that intimate tone at festivals including Hay, while a bigger stage is set for an exhibition in Cardiff in September. Davies is not interested in grandiose events—what Parthian is doing provides the only pat on the back he needs. "We've got more expertise, a better distribution network and got wiser over these 30 years."

"A POIGNANT AND VIVID DEPICTION OF LIFE IN THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS... FULL, COMPLEX AND MULTIFACETED"  
POLLY WINN, *THE WELSH AGENDA*

"A TOTALLY ORIGINAL VOICE"  
ANDREW DAVIES

## **A LOOK TO THE FUTURE:**

In 2024 Parthian will have been publishing for thirty-one years. In that time we feel we have had made substantial progress, from one book with a catchy title to a list approaching five hundred books. A list that reflects the breadth and diversity of Welsh culture while engaging through translation, collaboration and exchange with a wider world. Our own carnival of voices.

In the next three and thirty years we are aiming to learn from this experience in developing, adapting and innovating to ensure new voices are nurtured and heard, political and social concerns are interrogated, discussed and written about and the best of Welsh writing is published.

## **IN A BROAD SUMMARY:**

We publish a range of books in the Parthian Carnival engaged with the matter of Wales, diverse in themes politically, geographically and socially, while developing excellence in writing and offering opportunities for younger and new older writers to publish their work in anthologies of fiction and essays which often lead to longer commissions.

A carnival of voices.

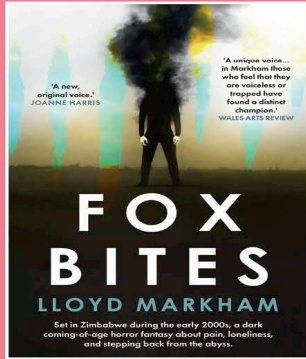
Dr Richard Davies Publishing Director  
1 February 2024

Local Fires New Voices



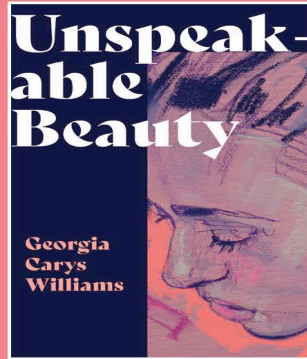
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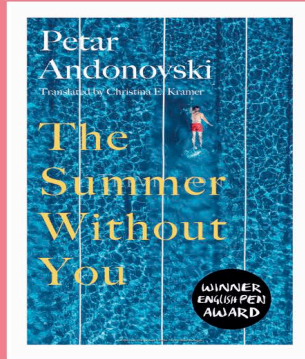
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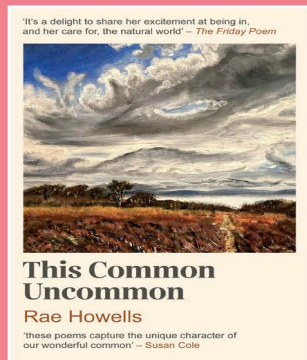
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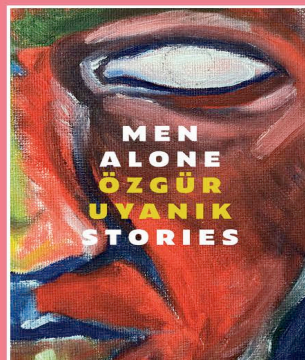
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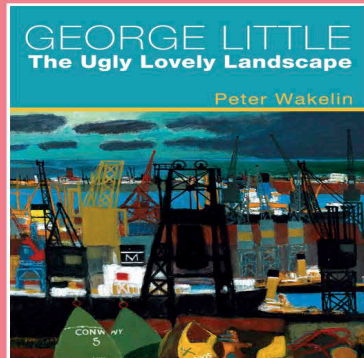


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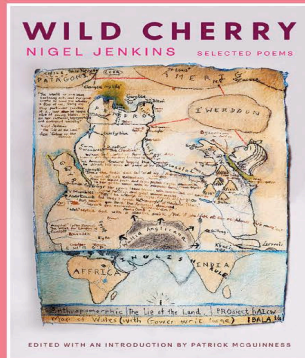
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