

Wandering and Home

***Skepsi's* Eleventh Annual Interdisciplinary Conference — Call for Papers**

25 May 2018 — University of Kent, Canterbury

Keynote Speaker: Professor Rachel Bowlby

The focus of this interdisciplinary conference is to investigate the ambiguous relationship between the concepts of 'Wandering' and 'Home' by highlighting both the binary opposition of and the possible interrelations between the two concepts.

Many different types of homes and houses can be found in literature: the 'gothic' homes depicted in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Edgar Allan Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*, the country homes of late-Georgian England that feature in Jane Austen's novels, and the stifling atmosphere of the late-Victorian and Edwardian upper middle-class London homes of John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*. Their role, in the history of literature, of symbolising family values, social status and the complex web of family relationships is clearly one of great importance.

Romanticism began to develop the notion of wandering, on the other hand, as a positive opposition to the concept of home. This is particularly true of German Romantic literature which increasingly perceived 'bourgeois homeliness' as being too restrictive. In a broader— and geographically wider — sense, home was also the place where industrialisation took place, the industrialisation from which people wanted to escape through free wandering in nature. The figure of the *flâneur*, as depicted by Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin and to a lesser degree Soren Kierkegaard, in turn, stands in stark contrast to this. The *flâneur* is the emblem of modernity: an urban wanderer figure that no longer wishes to escape from the city but begins to dominate urban public spaces in classical narratives, holding a privileged position and making himself at home in the streets of modern European metropolises.

But wandering is not just a physical activity; there is also mind-wandering, a metaphorical form of wandering taking place in that most intimate and homely dimension of personal space — the human mind. Modernist literature's stream of consciousness writing functions as the means of exploring these wanderings of the mind that, by opening up multiple perspectives of literary texts, results in a wider understanding of mankind and its character.

Our conference will explore these plural facets of 'wandering' and 'home', examining their representation, cultural significance and, last but not least, the relation between the two. We therefore warmly invite contributions.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to the following and their interrelations:

- Wandering in European Romanticism and Modernism.
- Wandering women in European literature and film.

- The figure of the *flâneur* and the *flâneuse* in modern and contemporary literature.
- The connection between migration and ‘feeling at home’; the concept of home viewed from the perspective of a displaced person.
- Home as a social or private spatial dimension, a psychological experience of safety, stability and emotional experience, a practice and/or an active state of being in the world.
- ‘Feeling at home’, or ‘not at home’ as a distinctive emotional experience influenced by the social, political and economic context and by the architectural configuration of domestic environment.
- Feeling at home in our mind; mind-wandering; the boundaries between wandering creatively and getting lost in speculations.
- The internet and virtual wandering as a means of transforming the way we inhabit the non-virtual realm of the home.

The conference is open to all disciplines within the Humanities as well as Psychology and Cognitive Sciences, Sociology, Politics, Architecture and Visual Arts. Papers coming from an inter-, trans- or multidisciplinary background are particularly welcomed.

Papers should last for 20 minutes and will be followed by a 10-minute discussion.

Abstracts of approx. 300 words should be sent as Word documents to the conference organising committee at skepsi@kent.ac.uk by 31 March 2018. The e-mail should also include the name of the author, institutional affiliation and brief autobiographical details. Please also indicate any audio-visual requirements that you may have.

The conference is organised by *Skepsi*, a peer reviewed postgraduate journal based in the School of European Culture and Languages at the University of Kent and funded by the University of Kent (<http://blogs.kent.ac.uk/skepsi/>).