

“Movement and/in/of the City”

16th June 2017 hosted at the University of Kent

Organised by the University of Kent

Keynote speaker: TBC

Deadline to send your abstract: April 1st

<http://movementcity2017.wordpress.com/>

@MovementCity17

The notion of ‘movement’ has particular pertinence to our present cultural moment: across the globe, we live in a period marked both by unprecedented movements of population and by new popular political movements of all types. Yet the idea of ‘movement’ as a literary preoccupation is as old as the earliest recorded literature itself, defining the quest/journey narratives of the ancient world. Movement can be conceived on the grandest geological or even planetary spatial and temporal scale, but by the same token is also perceived daily and personally in the individual human body.

The issue of movement intersects with that of the city and its representation. The flâneur at the centre of Benjamin’s texts roams the city and merges with the flow of its crowd. Movement and the city thus seem to be related to issues of modernity. Lately, the figure of the flâneur and Benjamin’s stance on modernity has been renegotiated to leave space to the flâneuse, the woman in the city, as Lauren Elkin’s book *Flâneuse* or Lynda Nead’s *Victorian Babylon* illustrate. Movement, the city and writing are closely linked and result in a “rhetoric of walking” such as it is defined by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. The city is at the centre of various writings, from the eighteenth century onwards (one might think of the wandering adventures of Moll Flanders or Dickens’s novels and writing habits for instance), and is a favourite postmodern topos as exemplified by such works as Angela Carter’s *The Passion of the New Eve* and Zadie Smith’s *N/W*, amongst others.

Movement in the city bears witness to changes in terms of its improvement and ordering (we might think of Haussman’s works in Second Empire Paris or the grid shape of New York’s streets) but also to political changes. Thus, movement in the city can be linked to political movement as the marches in various American cities against Trump’s policies are showing. The latter political movements seem to be using the city as a site to ground their plea and thus turn the city in a new text.

We therefore seek submissions on this theme from across the full breadth of literary studies and related disciplines, from the classical to the contemporary. Interdisciplinary perspectives are strongly encouraged, as are creative writing responses.

Topics might include, but are by no means limited to:

- Movement, the city and modernity: Benjamin, the flâneur, the crowd vs. women’s appropriation of movement and the city, the flâneuse
- Revolution and the city: riots, marches, petitions, from the 19thc (Marx, Engels, *tale of Two Cities*, to nowadays protests against Donald Trump, protests in Paris following terrorist attacks.
- Moving on: the city and its transformations, transports, speed, fragmented vision of the city vs. totalised vision.
- Circulation of objects in the city: commodities, letters, refuse etc.
- Psychogeography, mapping the city.
- Migration, immigration in the city: diaspora, postcolonial re-visiting of the city
- Neo-Victorian cities
- Utopian/dystopian cities

This call is open to MA and PhD students from all institutions, and ECRs who have completed PhDs in the last two years. We welcome abstracts for 20-minute academic papers and creative readings/performances. Innovative presentation formats are encouraged. Abstracts should be no longer than 300 words and must be sent by **1st April 2017** to kentpgconference2017@gmail.com as pdf. The conference will conclude with a wine reception.

Please include details of your current level of study and home institution. For creative readings, please send a short sample of your work.