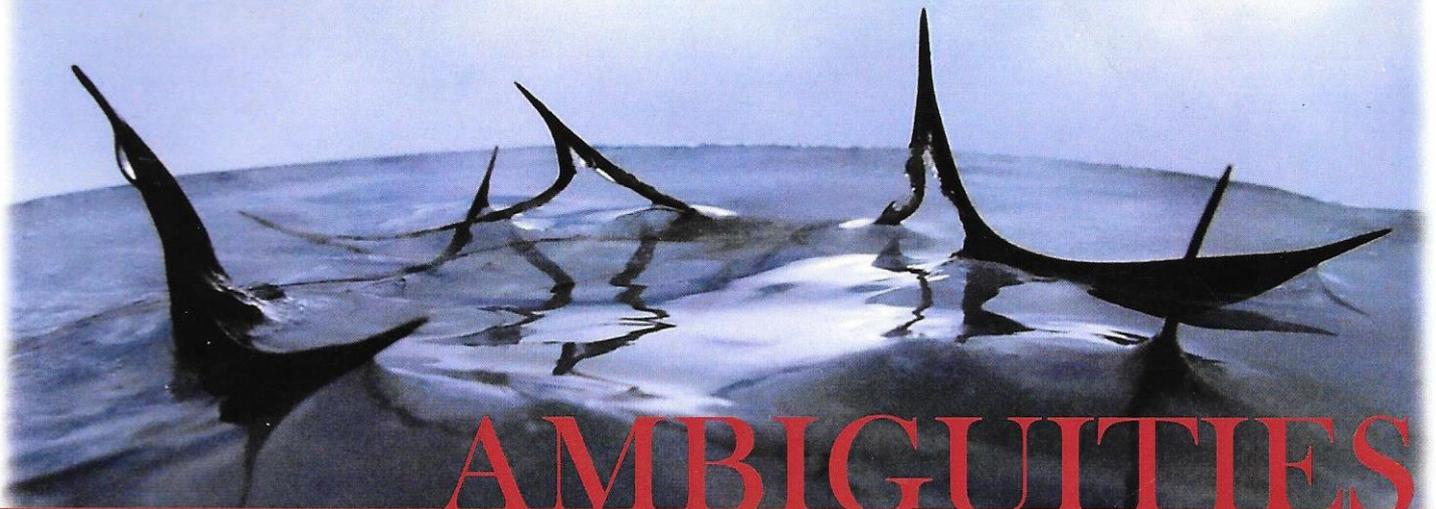


*Skepsi*

Volume 2 (2) – Autumn 2009



## Destabilising Preconceptions

**Where a Silence Is Said: The Ambiguities of Apophaticism**

Duane Williams (*University of Kent*)

**Doubts and Ambiguities in the Transmission of Ideas in a Medieval Latin Bestiary: Canterbury Cathedral Archives Lit. Ms D.10**

Diane Heath (*University of Kent*)

**'Der Gestalt soll überall für mich [...] aktuell sein': the relevance of Hofmannsthal's Sprachskepsis to his Choice of Genre**

Harriet Clements (*University of Kent*)

**Ambiguity of Textual Portraiture in Realism and Modernism**

Kamilla Pawlikowska (*University of Kent*)

**Ambiguity and Idiosyncratic Syntax in the Poems of E. E. Cummings**

Silvia Chirila (*Humboldt University, Berlin*)

**Ambiguous Exhibitions, Ambiguous Institutions**

Connell Vaughan (*University College Dublin*)

**'Is That What Pop Art Is All About?' Visual Ambiguities in Pop Art Collage**

Justyna Stepień (*University of Lodz*)

**Irony, Authority, Interpretation**

Tom Grimwood (*Lancaster University*)

**Coping With the Security Dilemma: A Fundamental Ambiguity of State Behaviour**

Andras Szalai (*Central European University, Budapest*)



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**S***kepsi* is an online research journal based in SECL, the School of European Culture and Languages at the University of Kent, and is entirely run by research students.

The aim of *Skepsi*'s editorial board is twofold: to honour the spirit of SECL by striving to take advantage of its unique position as a crossroads in academic studies in Europe and to become a forum for European postgraduate researchers and postdoctoral scholars by developing collective thinking processes in the context of academic research.

Our title, *Skepsi* — which comes from the Ancient Greek 'σκεψις [*skepsis*]' or 'enquiry' and the Modern Greek 'σχέψις [*sképsis*]' or 'thought' — symbolises our will to explore new areas and new methods in the traditional fields of academic research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Our contribution to the tremendous range of existing academic publications will be to enhance and to promote two aspects of academic research which are crucial: originality and creativity in the approach of thought and of texts.



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We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to John Harris, to whom we owe our website and all the solutions to the technical problems that necessarily arise during the organisation of a conference and the publication of a journal.

*Skepsi* aims to produce a journal of the highest standard and quality. If we succeed in this, no small thanks are due to our devoted and growing team of peer reviewers, copy editors and proof readers, with special thanks to Maureen Speller for her invaluable help and advice with regard to copy editing and proof reading.

Finally, a big and whole-hearted 'thank you' goes to those former members of the *Skepsi* team who worked with us for the realisation of the *Ambiguities* conference: Valerie Auoutourier, Jaume Silvestre Linares and especially Claire Lozier, without whose tireless negotiation skills the conference would have lacked the supreme catering service that it enjoyed.



## Foreword

Every day we encounter ambiguous situations; unclear signals; indecipherable messages. While some of them pass unnoticed and others produce mere misunderstandings, many deeply disturb us. The act of interpreting polysemous signs results in a proliferation and a diffusion of meaning. What is the effect of such a process on human beings? How is the process of subjectification affected by this constitutional interpretative ambiguity?

Arguably, language is the privileged space in which ambiguities playfully and successfully disturb our desire to decipher something we assume to be consistent in meaning. But the uncanniness and the anguish to which ambiguities give rise may also destabilise our preconceived conceptions. This destabilisation could result in our questioning our own perception. To what extent do we need to disambiguate reality in order to protect our sanity? Does an ambiguous message lure the receiver into a maze in which the *promeneur* gets lost? Is reality *tout court* an ambiguous message?

Ambiguous artworks and their attributes were only some of the themes we explored during *Skepsi's* second annual graduate conference *Ambiguities: Destabilising Preconceptions*, as is shown by the selection of papers which *Skepsi* is proud to present in its third issue together with some external contributions. Ranging from post-war politics to the medieval bestiary, from modern Pop-art collage to the poetry of E.E. Cummings, from the 'institutionalising' of graffiti to Hofmannsthal's *Sprachskepsis*, from the significance of the face in realist and modernist literature to the language of metaphorical opposites and to the significance of irony to methods of interpretation, the articles reflect both the interdisciplinary nature of the conference and the wide variety of papers presented at it.

The *Skepsi* Editorial Board,  
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## AMBIGUITIES

