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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.

*Skepsi*'s aim 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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School of European Culture and Languages

Cornwallis Building (North West)

University of Kent

Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NF, UK

## *Acknowledgements*

With the publication of this issue, we would like to thank everyone who was involved with our 2014 conference, *The Secret in Contemporary Theory, Society, and Culture*. In particular, we take this opportunity to thank Professor David Vincent from the Open University, who was the key-note speaker. Thanks are due to those who submitted abstracts and articles for consideration as well as peer reviewers, copy editors and proof readers of the ensuing publication process. We thank all of them for their hard work to keep up the quality of the journal.

On a personal note, we must say farewell to several of our members. After many years of good and loyal service, Melanie Dilly, Rocío García-Romero and Adina Stroia leave *Skepsi*. They have not only contributed much to this issue but were also very active in the ‘Secrets’ conference, as well as the 2013 and 2015 conferences: *Ghosts in the Flesh* and *Disgust*. We wish them all well. In their place, we welcome David Bremner and Dominique Carlini-Versini, who have both joined the Editorial Board since becoming involved with our 2015 conference. We would also like to thank Ann Kinzer and Mylène Branco who joined the team in 2016 and who have been involved with the publication of this issue.

## Foreword

This issue had its genesis in *Skepsi's* seventh annual conference, *The Secret in Contemporary Theory, Society, and Culture*, held on 30 and 31 May 2014 at the University of Kent; indeed, three of the articles that appear in this issue were first presented as papers there. A glance at the Call for Papers indicates the breadth of topics that the organisers anticipated would come within the conference's remit; to select but a few, the following were suggested: what kinds of power relationships can exist between a secret holder and those who do not, or wish to, know it? does interpreting a text reveal its secret(s); the question of surveillance; are secrets logically possible; the role of State secrets in history.

That breadth is reflected not only in the Key-note speaker's, Professor David Vincent, paper 'Prying and Privacy in the Nineteenth Century' which concluded the conference but also in the thirteen papers that were selected and the titles of the panels under which they were presented: Secrets and Philosophy, Public/Private, Dreams and Thresholds, Espionage, and Secrets and Literature. It is further reflected in the four articles contained in this issue, which all discuss widely differing aspects of the secret and secrecy, yet nonetheless complement each other, and between which there are, in fact, links.

Guillaume Collett considers the secret in the terms of Philosophy, with particular reference to Deleuze and the concepts of 'Sense' and 'Nonsense'. Deleuze, argues Guillaume, considered that 'nonsense', far from being in opposition to 'sense', is the bedrock on which sense is founded, and one cannot, therefore, be found without the other. Furthermore, it is an excess of sense that discloses this hidden bedrock; Guillaume gives as examples the repetitious attention to detail in Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* and the cumulative descriptions of the eponymous Snark in Carroll's 'agony in eight fits' that recounts the hunting (and disastrous discovery) of that strange and elusive being.

Our species, asserts Keith Scott in his article, is misnamed: we are not *homo sapiens* but *homo volens sapere*, 'the creature that wishes to know, driven by an inherent and irrepressible curiosity'. Herein lies a link between his article and Guillaume's. If *The Hunting of the Snark* is read as a metaphor for our species' seemingly inherent obsession with uncovering that which is hidden, *homo volens sapere* should beware, lest there be revealed not the relatively harmless Snark, which can be 'charm[ed] with smiles and soap' but the altogether more dangerous Boojum, at the first sight of which the beholder will 'softly and silently vanish away', the fate which indeed befell the hapless Baker.

Does not the mysterious disappearance of the Baker lead us to the realms of magic and from there to the arcana of the occult, amongst the adepts of which will be found John Dee, Elizabeth I's official astrologer, and Aleister Crowley, the occultist and member of The Golden Dawn? Both of these feature in Keith's article, which intriguingly links two seemingly unconnected phenomena, the occult and espionage, both in fact, official espionage from Tudor times to the present day, and in fiction, the 'Laundry Files' of Charles Stross amongst many others.

Searching is also at the heart of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, but, argues Daniele Garritano, the real search is, despite what the novel's title might suggest, a search not for time lost or misspent but for what is still concealed from Marcel, the hero-narrator, and therefore secret. Daniele endorses Deleuze's interpretation of Recherche as a *roman d'apprentissage* or *Bildungsroman*, in the course of which Marcel becomes a man of letters; learning how to read the signs that betray these 'secrets' is part of his *apprentissage*.

In the course of his article, Daniele discusses the phenomenon of the '*Segreto di Pulcinella*' or open secret. This leads us to the modern phenomenon of the blog, which Emma Deeks discusses. Essentially, this examines how and why, despite the fact that this veil is a one that can be drawn aside without too much difficulty, people will make use of the ability afforded by the Internet to hide behind a veil of anonymity, a practice which somewhat changes the traditional concept of a secret.

... Or does it? As Congreve has a character say in *The Double Dealer*: 'I know that's a secret, for it's whispered everywhere'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From Act III, Scene 3; quoted in *The Penguin Dictionary of Quotations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960, p. 118).