



Placing the Author: Literary Tourism in the Long Nineteenth Century

Elizabeth Gaskell's House, 84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester
Saturday 20 June 2015

Confirmed Keynote Speakers: Professor Helen Rees Leahy, Director, Centre for Museology, University of Manchester; Professor Nicola J. Watson, The Open University

Image: Drawing Room, Elizabeth Gaskell's House ©Joel Chester Fildes

The nineteenth century witnessed a surge of enthusiasm for visiting places associated with authors and their works, and a related interest in the preservation and consecration of authors' houses. In 1847 one of the world's most famous sites of literary tourism, the birthplace of William Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, was purchased and established by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, while the first blue plaque was introduced in 1867 to mark the birthplace of Lord Byron. What did visitors to literary graves, houses and landscapes seek to experience and how was this mediated by the spaces themselves? How do writers' houses 'place' the author: canonically, within a particular space and time, and in the promotion of a carefully curated image of the author?

Proposals for 20 minute papers are sought, which address topics including (but not limited to):

- **Constructions of space and myths of creation**
Houses designed, built, or decorated by nineteenth-century authors and the relationships between their writing and built structures (William Morris's 'Red House' in London).
- **Preservation and/or transformation**
Campaigns to 'save' authors' houses and the transformations they may have undergone since first opening.

- **Visiting and visitors: expectations, experiences, and realities**

The creative and critical breadth of visitor responses to famous literary sites (including diaries, letters, sketches, travelogues, guidebooks, reportage, and 20th-21st-century fictional treatments of space).

- **Popularity**

What role does a fixed site have in sustaining the popularity of an author? Why do certain authors have 'shrines' and not others? What happens to the many other residences that authors pass through in the course of a life?

- **Interpretations and reinterpretations**

How the visitor experience is conceptualised, marketed and guided – both then and now. Examples of spaces harnessed to serve national and political agendas at a remove from authors' original intentions.

- **Relics, authenticity, souvenirs**

What role do objects once belonging to the author serve within these spaces? How have people sought to appropriate the experience or commingle their own presence with this space? (ash scattering, graffiti, removing objects, souvenirs).

- **Dwelling and indwelling**

Haunted spaces; encounters with the past; the uncanny and the unhomey.

- **Commemoration and dark tourism**

Grave sites; authorial presence in absence; impromptu and informal memorials.

- **Definitions**

Evolving understandings of 'literary tourism' and 'literary tourists' etc.

Proposals limited to 300 words should be sent to placingtheauthor@gmail.com by **1 March 2015**.

Please also include a brief biography of fewer than 200 words. The conference is open to postgraduates, ECRs and academics working in the fields of literature, history, history of art, human geography, cultural studies, and museum studies.

Organisers: Dr Amber Pouliot (Bishop Grosseteste), Dr Claire Wood (University of York), and Joanna Taylor (PhD candidate, University of Keele)