

Fellows



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PROJEKTTITEL

The Wanderer and the City - Nomadic Figures in the Writing of "das Rote Wien"

PROJEKTBECHREIBUNG

Although nomadic figures feature in literature in an almost infinite variety of forms they are often used to express similar themes: freedom, perpetual movement, marginality or difference, solitude and an intimate relationship with nature. Unsurprisingly, nomads appear more often – both in writing and society – during times of crisis. The aim of the project is to investigate the developments and variations of nomadic figures in Austrian writing 1900-1938. It will examine the creative tension that can be found in the works of many Socialist writers as regards homeless wanderers and their relationship to the idealised collective that was "Red Vienna".

An astonishing number of leading Austromarxist figures were themselves wanderers and wrote about their experiences. These differing experiences already show the contrasts which characterise Socialist writing of the period: some authors were forced to wander, others saw their 'Wanderjahre' as part of their training as future political/cultural leaders. In both cases, however, I will demonstrate how wanderers became an important symbolic part of their writing. On one hand, their comfortless life could be used to represent the economic misery and alienation that Socialism wished to combat; on the other, they offered writers a perspective outside society with a degree of ideological independence. However, "Red Vienna" could not always offer a home to either the real or the written wanderers. A nomadic lifestyle does not only infer resistance to capitalism, but also, ultimately, to most kinds of political organisation. Concentrating on the 'Feuilletons' of the Social Democrat press, I will examine this dual standpoint as the basis for the uneven literary style of much Socialist writing of the time with its mixture of Romantic elements and politically motivated realism. In this respect, wandering figures were also part of the Socialists' overall project of incorporating marginal and oppressed groups into Austria's political and cultural life, or at the very least, drawing them to the attention of the reading public.

CV

Dr. phil, born 1973 in Cherry Burton, East Yorkshire, UK, Studied Modern Languages at Oxford University