



The British Society for Literature and Science

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Autumn Newsletter 2012

Welcome to the BSLS newsletter

Welcome to the BSLS autumn newsletter, which we hope you will enjoy. The newsletter will bring a roundup of news from the field of literature and science, and record the recent activity of the Society and its members.

This first issue includes reports of conferences, panels, and events over the past year, announcements of members' recently published books, completed PhDs, results of the small grants bids, and details of the book prize and the essay prize.

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In brief

New flyers advertising BSLS have been produced. If you would like to receive copies to help promote the Society, please contact the Chair, Dr John Holmes (j.r.holmes@reading.ac.uk).

Remember that members are entitled to a 20% discount on academic titles from Ashgate and Oxford University Press. See the website for more details, www.bsls.ac.uk.

Memberships can be renewed through the website, or by contacting the Membership Secretary, Jessica Evans (j.roberts@edu.salford.ac.uk).

The website features a new arts and science blog, for members to leave posts about related cultural events: www.bsls.ac.uk/category/arts_blog/



The English Faculty, Oxford University, which hosted the 2012 conference (photo: Timothy Endicott)

Oxford Conference

The seventh BSLS conference took place on 12-14 April 2012, hosted by the Oxford English Faculty. Michael Whitworth reports.

We've never had a themed BSLS conference, on the basis that we should allow themes to emerge from the aggregate of individual activities and interactions, and the 2012 conference in Oxford was no exception; but as we had reached the significant milestone of our seventh conference, the call for papers actively encouraged reflections on the current state of the field. It suggested this might include 'the state of the field in relation to particular kinds of literature and historical periods; the differences in critical practices in relation to different kinds and periods; differences between British, continental European, and North American approaches; forms of historicism; and the relation of literature and science to neighbouring fields, such as literature and medicine, ecocriticism, evocriticism and other forms of criticism inspired by evolutionary biology'.

At one stage – conference organisers are prone to imagining grand schemes – I had hoped we might have a series of parallel workshops on themes such as science and poetry, science and on the state of the field in different historical periods. Though only a fraction of the idea came to pass, we

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were lucky to have a very high standard of proposals for general papers; the only unhappy concomitant being that we had to turn down some that were very respectable and might very well have led to valuable contributions to the discussion. There was a notable increase in the number of papers on literature and medicine, giving rise to panels on Medicine and the Victorians, Medicine and the Body, and Hospitals, Doctors and Laboratories in the Late Nineteenth Century, as well as other papers that were accommodated in panels conceived in other ways.

Though the grand scheme for parallel workshops on science and different forms of writing did not transpire, Kirsten Shepherd-Barr and Carina Bartleet organised an eleven-person workshop on Theatre and Science, with pre-circulated papers, a novel form of organisation for BSLS conferences, and one that we hope will be repeated. (A fuller report on the workshop appears below.)

We were pleased to revive the practice of special sessions on teaching literature and science; Vike Plock organised one on modernism and science, and we were particularly pleased to be joined by teachers from Radley College, who opened a discussion on how literature and science might be taught at school level.

The first of our plenary speakers, Neil Vickers (King's College, London) addressed the question of the state of the field directly, providing an illuminating historical account of the development of

'the call for papers actively encouraged reflections on the current state of the field... and on relations with neighbouring fields'

different forms of literature and science criticism, noting particularly what eighteenth-century studies owes to Roy Porter and George Rousseau, and what nineteenth-century studies owe to Gillian Beer and George Levine. On the second day, the second plenary speaker, Jonathan Sawday (St Louis University), took as his text Aristotle's notion that 'nature abhors a vacuum', and took us on a tour of blankness and the *horror vacui* from classical times, through the Renaissance (in which period the characteristically modern blank, the blank form, was invented), up to postmodern blanks of John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, and Philip Johnson. The final plenary session of the conference was a roundtable discussing the state of historicism in relation to literature and science. Revised versions of the papers will be appearing shortly in the *Journal of Literature and Science*; I am grateful to John Holmes and Martin Willis for seeing them through to publication.

Though I was the sole organiser of this year's conference, it could not have happened without the input of many other people. I would like to thank in particular, the BSLS Executive Committee for their suggestions, and also, in Oxford, Kirsten Shepherd-Barr; the four assessors of the proposals, who will remain safely anonymous; Stella Pratt-Smith and Rachel Crossland for their suggestions for ways of organising the panels; the administrators at the English Faculty, especially Katy MacCurrach; and the Bursary, Kitchen, and Hall Staff at Merton College for our Friday evening dinner. Above all, though, I'd like to thank everyone who presented papers and who contributed to the ongoing conversation.

With thanks to Michael for preparing this report, and for his organisation of the Oxford conference.

Theatre and Science roundtable

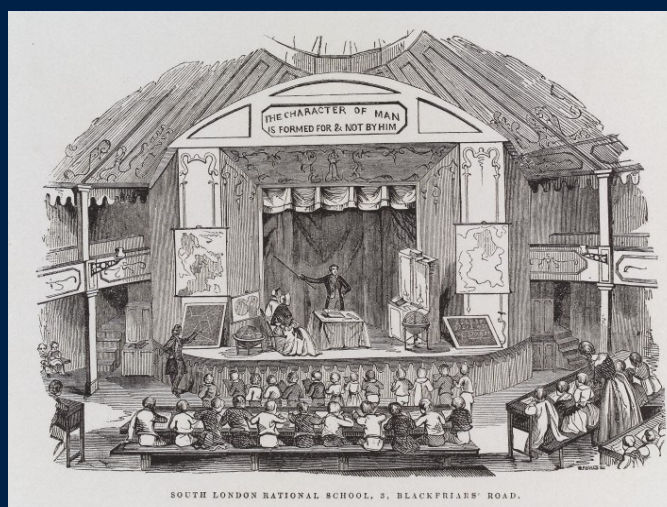
The 2012 BSLS conference hosted a workshop organized and chaired by Carina Bartleet and Kirsten Shepherd-Barr on 'New Directions in Theatre and Science' which drew together an international group of theatre practitioners, theatre and mathematics academics by invitation for a presentation and round table discussion on the field.

The workshop was linked to two special issues of *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* (December 2013 and June 2014) that are being co-edited by Bartleet and Shepherd-Barr with the same aim of charting innovations and new pathways into exploring the links between theatre and science and with a balance between theoretical and performance explorations.

The workshop ran in an open session format whereby anyone interested in the topic could attend as an audience. The papers were pre-circulated to workshop participants facilitating a much shorter presentation time in which papers were summarized and abstracts photocopied for the audience, thus allowing for a wide ranging discussion on the state of the field as well as time for questions. The organizers also circulated with the booklet of abstracts a set of questions relating to the theme of 'new directions in theatre and science' in order to enable a focused discussion and make the most of the allotted time.

The workshop was a successful format overall, which elicited a lively and intellectually stimulating discussion, though it might perhaps have benefited from a longer slot than a normal panel session in order to make the most of the extraordinarily diverse group of scholars and practitioners gathered in the room and to explore the rich and wide-ranging topics that arose from the discussions. •

With thanks to Carina Bartleet and Kirsten Shepherd-Barr for preparing this report.



A teacher on a stage at the Surrey Rotunda, Blackfriars Road, London, 1837
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Literature, Science and Historicism: A Report

The final academic event on the last day of the 2012 conference was a plenary session on historicism in literature and science, with presentations from five leading scholars in the field: Leah Knight (Brock University, Canada); John Holmes (University of Reading, also convenor of the session); Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford University); Michael Whitworth (Merton College, Oxford University); Peter Middleton (Southampton University). Report by Martin Willis (University of Glamorgan).

Leah Knight argued that historicism was vibrant in many areas in literature and science. She noted the emerging interest in formalism or aestheticism – in genre, structure, style and form – which was now coming under renewed historicist attention. She also pointed to growing interest in artefacts beyond the text (a new materialism) linked in part to the history of the book. Yet she also reminded us that not every critic was impressed by these refreshed historicist approaches and cited in particular Rita Felski's article in *New Literary History*, entitled 'Context Stinks!', as one particular example of dissent from historicism. (This article appears in one of the most recent volumes of *NLH*: 42.4 (2011). The entire volume is dedicated to discussions of context.)

John Holmes began by asking a question that we all ask at some point in our literature and science scholarship: how do we know that Author A read Science Journal B, and that specific 1924 article? Yet, he continued, is this really a question (one of evidence) that should worry us? Does it not suggest deference to the history of science as a senior partner? Instead, Holmes suggested, we should allow the literary text to tell us something of history, even if that appears to be flawed 'science' or is difficult to evidence. Holmes then turned to ask whether it might

'we should be drawing on our historicist knowledge to speak truths about our contemporary position'

be that demanding a historicism of this kind means we should be against 'presentism'? Quite the opposite, he argued, for if continuity in science is important then so too is the now, and we should therefore be drawing on our historicist knowledge to speak truths about our contemporary position.

Sally Shuttleworth admitted that in her own work she remained a dyed-in-the-wool historicist, and that is was now more important than ever to defend the role of history and historical analysis. The reason for this was that increasing institutional pressures (whether these institutions were learned societies, research councils, universities or the media) were putting at risk the study of the past by allowing science and scientists to dominate debate. Because scientists generally rejected, or were unfamiliar with, the constructed nature of science, the scientific 'presentist' view was becoming the only view. Literature and science as a field therefore needed to think carefully about how it engaged with the present, and with science and scientists so as not to lose sight of the importance of the past.

Michael Whitworth also posed a series of questions about the relationship between individual authors and context: how far can we impose context on a writer? Which histories are legitimate and which are not? Whose history do we impose? What issues are there with becoming anachronistic? These, he

argued, are all very important questions to ask, especially when dealing with relatively recent histories and relatively modern authors. Seeking answers as to how to manage the links between

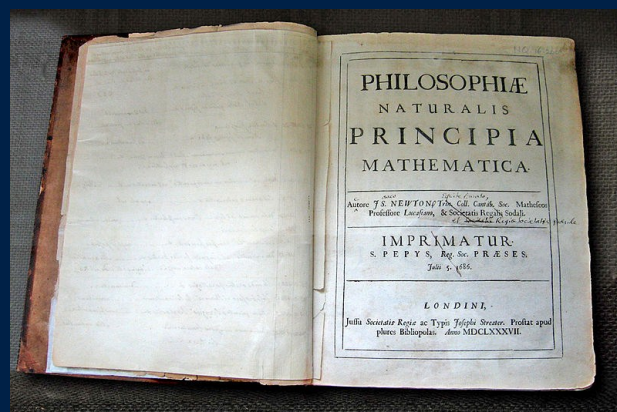


Photo: Andrew Dunn

past and present are vital in this respect, and one way forward may be, as Leah Knight had implied, a new formalism. Whitworth worried that the renewed interest in formalism was being wrongly characterized as resistant to, or a downright rejection of historicism, when it was in fact very much a new kind of historicist project. Indeed this newly historicized formalist study might be a way around some of the problems of which context and whose history.

Peter Middleton offered further arguments for considering the aesthetic qualities of literature alongside their contexts. He focussed on the particularities of textual expression (using poetry as his example) and their affective qualities, and suggested that balancing this aestheticism with the rigour of historicist research was a model approach. In arguing for this as,

'a newly historicized formalism might be a way around some of the problems of determining which context and whose history'

in some sense, a kind of return to the ineluctable, he drew on a quotation from the American poet Lyn Hejinian, who talks of a 'romance with the rigour of science'. This mixing, Middleton concluded, might provide a provocative starting point for new literature and science scholarship and its ongoing activities. ●

With thanks to Martin Willis for preparing this report. Longer versions of the contributors' presentations will be published in issue 5.2 of the journal Literature and Science, with an introduction by John Holmes.

New books

The following scholarly titles in the area of literature and science have been published by members of the Society in the past year:

- Campos, Liliane. *The Dialogue of Art and Science in Tom Stoppard's Arcadia* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011).
- De Bourcier, Simon. *Pynchon and Relativity: Narrative Time in Thomas Pynchon's Later Novels* (London: Continuum, 2012.)
- Demastes, William. *The Cambridge Introduction to Tom Stoppard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Hanson, Clare. *Eugenics, Literature and Culture in Post-war Britain* (London: Routledge, 2012).
- Heymans, Peter. *Animality in British Romanticism: The Aesthetics of Species* (London: Routledge, 2012).
- Holmes, John (ed.). *Science in Modern Poetry: New Directions* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).
- Lynall, Gregory. *Swift and Science: The Satire, Politics, and Theology of Natural Knowledge, 1690-1730* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).
- Ruston, Sharon. *Shelley and Vitality*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
- Schaffner, Anna Katharina. *Modernism and Perversion: Sexual Deviance in Sexology and Literature, 1850-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
- Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence (ed.). *Science in the Nursery: The Popularisation of Science in Britain and France, 1761-1901* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).
- Trower, Shelley. *Senses of Vibration: A History of the Pleasure and Pain of Sound* (London and New York: Continuum, 2012).
- Wagner, Sven. *The Scientist As God: A Typological Study of a Literary Motif, 1818 to the Present* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012).
- Willis, Martin. *Vision, Science and Literature, 1870-1920: Ocular Horizons* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011).

Reviews

The Society reviews books on all aspects of literature and science on the BSLS website. We continue to provide online reviews of new academic books in the field, including studies of literature, medicine and technology, often covering the latest and most important titles well before print and electronic journals have published their own reviews.

Visit www.bsls.ac.uk/reviews to see the full list of titles, arranged by author, by reviewer, by year, and by period category.

If you would like to become a reviewer, or if you have written or contributed to a recently published book and wish it to be reviewed, please contact the Reviews Editor, Peter Garratt, by email: peter.garratt@northumbria.ac.uk

Books for review may also be sent to Peter's university address: Dept. of Humanities, Northumbria University, 414 Lipman Building, Sandyford Rd, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST.

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Events roundup

Sharon Ruston gave one of the Royal Society's lunchtime lectures on 28 September 2012, on the subject of 'Natural History and the Rights of Woman'. During the two-year period of the composition and publication of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft, the mother of Mary Shelley and early advocate of women's rights, read and reviewed a number of important works of natural history for a periodical called the *Analytical Review*. Wollstonecraft is not generally known for her interest in science, but during the talk Ruston showed that reading these texts helped her to formulate her feminist theory. Close attention to her reviews of natural history revealed her developing thought on issues of equality, education, and what it means to be human. You can listen to this talk and view a slide presentation at <http://royalsociety.org/events/2012/rights-of-woman>.

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On 28 April 2012 Peter Garratt organised a one-day symposium launching the international research network 'Cognitive Futures in the Humanities', with talks from major figures from a range of disciplines, including Mark Turner (cognitive science), Michael Wheeler (philosophy) and Alan Richardson (literary studies). The event was well attended and marked the start of a new initiative to innovate research between the arts and cognitive science. A major conference on the 'cognitive humanities' will be held at Bangor University on 4-6 April 2013 (visit www.coghumanities.com).

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David Amigoni and Sharon Ruston both gave keynote talks at the interdisciplinary conference 'Two Cultures or Co-Evolution? Science and Literature 1800-The Present' held at Keele University on 12 May 2012. View a report at <http://litscikeele.blogspot.co.uk/>.

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Sarah Dillon is a co-investigator on a project about the influence of literature on science and scientists. Funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Scottish Crucible Project Fund, the 'What Scientists Read' project aims to generate and disseminate new knowledge about how literature influences scientific thinking and practice. As well as holding public events, the project team is in the process of interviewing 20 scientists from a range of fields, institutions and sectors across the Scottish Central Belt. The scientists will also contribute vignettes and reflections. For further details visit the project website, www.whatscientistsread.com.

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At the Manchester Science Festival (27 Oct until 4 Nov 2012) Jessica Evans and Sharon Ruston were both involved in public events relating to literature and science, based around Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. Jessica ran a workshop on the question of 'Literature and Drugs', looking at drug use as a spectacle and at the concept of the Orient in the *Confessions*. This followed a talk by Sharon addressing similar issues in De Quincey's narrative. ●

Science in Culture events

This year the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) made a number of Exploratory Awards in the Science in Culture area. Here we feature two of the projects, both involving members of the Society, which received this funding: 'Cultivating Common Ground: Biology and the Humanities' (report by Rachel Crossland) and 'Beyond the Gene: Epigenetic Science in Twenty-First Century Culture' (report by Clare Hanson).

Cultivating Common Ground: Biology and the Humanities (University of Reading)

Questions regarding the nature, value and practicalities of truly interdisciplinary research will be all too familiar to every member of the BSLs. A team at the University of Reading have been tackling such questions by bringing together colleagues from various different departments across the University: Nick Battey (Professor of Plant Development), Dr John Holmes (Senior Lecturer in English Literature), Françoise Le Saux (Professor of Medieval Languages and Literature), Karín Lesnik-Oberstein (Professor of Critical Theory), Dr David Stack (Reader in History) and Dr Rachel Crossland (Research Fellow in Biology and the Humanities), have recently completed an AHRC-funded project entitled 'The Value of the Literary and Historical Study of Biology to Biologists'.

The central aim of a workshop held on 28 July 2012 was to introduce the 30 participants, mostly practising biologists, to work being done in the humanities that engages with biology. The workshop began with short presentations from each of the four humanities scholars after which participants were asked to respond in small groups to a number of questions relating to these presentations, including 'Does history matter for biologists?' and 'How might literature affect the practice of biology?' There was an overall consensus that humanities subjects do indeed matter to biologists, but whereas history was singled out as the discipline most likely to have direct practical applications for biological research, literature and critical approaches to texts were seen as more relevant to the reflection on and communication of biological ideas.

The day continued with a presentation by Dr Paul Hatcher (Senior Lecturer in Applied Ecology) exploring the ways in which humanities subjects can comment upon biological outputs. There was then a choice of breakout activities: constructing an interdisciplinary research funding bid; designing

'there was a consensus that humanities subjects do indeed matter to biologists'

an interdisciplinary module; the use of humanities in museums; and how to read texts. The first and last of these sessions proved the most popular, suggesting an eagerness both to pursue interdisciplinary research and to engage directly with some of the methodologies employed by humanities scholars.

The workshop was very well received, with the majority of participants calling for follow-up events. A full scoping study is now available on the dedicated project website (www.reading.ac.uk/cultivating-common-ground). It concludes that there is real potential for biologists and humanities scholars to work together on mutually beneficial collaborative projects in the future.

With thanks to Rachel Crossland for this report.

Beyond the Gene: Epigenetic Science in Twenty-First Century Culture' (University of Southampton)

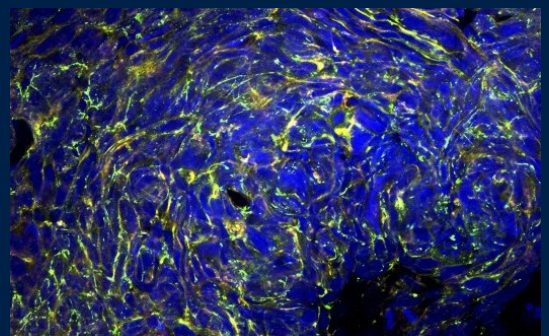
This cross-disciplinary project brought together researchers in the biomedical sciences and researchers and writers in the humanities to explore the implications of moving beyond the genetic model of inheritance that dominated biomedical research in the twentieth century. Two workshops were held at which leading researchers in epigenetics debated these issues with scholars in literature and the history of science, and with creative writers. The workshops were followed by a public event held at the Linnean Society in London. 'Beyond the Gene: New Perspectives on Inheritance' featured Professor Tim Spector (Kings College London), Professor Evelyn Fox Keller (MIT) and the acclaimed novelist Jeanette Winterson.

Our research focuses on the shift that is taking place as we are discovering that fixed genetic inheritance plays a relatively small

'human beings are not the result of a template fixed before birth, but are mobile and dynamic works in progress'

part in making us 'who we are'. Instead, our development is shaped by epigenetic changes to the genome which work in concert with regulatory networks derived from non-coding DNA. Human beings are not the result of a template fixed before birth, but are mobile and dynamic works in process, interacting continuously with their environment. This understanding has major implications which cut across disciplines and the project has provided a springboard and an impetus for collaborative, cross-disciplinary research in the future. As Evelyn Fox Keller has pointed out, epigenetics and post-genomic science require us to question our most fundamental assumptions, notably the dichotomies between fixed inheritance and the environment, and between nature and nurture. Our future research will explore the ramifications of this shift in emphasis for science, literature and culture. •

With thanks to Clare Hanson and Peter Middleton for this report.



Cell adhesion in cell culture © Wellcome Trust creative commons licence

Funding awards

Carolyn Burdett (Birkbeck) has received a Leverhulme Research Fellowship for 2012-13, for her project 'Coining Empathy: Psychology, Aesthetics, Ethics 1870-1920'.



Susie Christensen, a PhD student at King's College London, has secured funding from the Wellcome Trust via KCL's Centre for the Humanities and Health, for the London Interdisciplinary Discussion Group which she leads. The group brings together artists, humanities researchers, scientists and clinicians in order to discuss topics such as memory, transplantation and images using different disciplinary perspectives.



Megan Coyer has been awarded a three-year Wellcome Trust Research Fellowship in Medical History and Humanities for her project 'The Medical Blackwoodians and Medico-literary Synergy in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press'. The fellowship commenced in April 2012 and is based in the School of Critical Studies at the University of Glasgow, within the recently launched Medical Humanities Research Centre.



Sarah Dillon of St Andrew's University has been awarded a Royal Society of Edinburgh Scottish Crucible Project Grant for 'What Scientists Read: How Does Literature Influence Scientific Thought and Practice?', an interdisciplinary project also involving Dr Christine Knight (ESRC Genomics Forum), Dr Pippa Goldschmidt (Creative Writer and Astronomer, Edinburgh), and Professor Miles Padgett (Physics and Astronomy, Glasgow).



Claire Furlong has been awarded an AHRC doctoral studentship for her PhD on 'Science and Gender in Popular Periodicals, 1830-1850' at Exeter University. The studentship runs from September 2012 to March 2015.



Peter Garratt (Northumbria University) was awarded an AHRC Science in Culture networking grant for two years (2012-14) for his project 'Cognitive Futures in the Humanities'.



Clare Hanson was the Principal Investigator on 'Beyond the Gene: Epigenetic Science in 21st Century Culture', a project funded by an AHRC Science in Culture Exploratory Award, with Peter Middleton as Co-Investigator, at the University of Southampton.



John Holmes (University of Reading) has been awarded two grants by the AHRC. He holds a Science in Culture Fellowship on 'The Pre-Raphaelites and Science' (Oct 2012-June 2013), in collaboration with the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, the Natural History Museum, the Manchester Museum, and the Manchester Art Gallery. He has also been awarded an AHRC Science in Culture Exploratory Award on 'The Value of the Literary and Historical Study of Biology to Biologists' (Feb-Sept 2012) as part of an interdisciplinary team led by Prof. Nick Battey at Reading University.



Monika Pietrzak-Franger (University of Siegen) has received a research scholarship from the Volkswagen Foundation for her postdoctoral project 'Visualizing Syphilis in Late Victorian Media in Britain'. She spent last year in the Department of Anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis, MO.



Romén Reyes-Peschl has been awarded PhD funding by the University of Kent for a project on neuroscience and literature in the twentieth century. He is jointly supervised by Charlotte Sleigh (School of History) and Dr Stella Bolaki (School of English).

Completed doctoral projects

- **Rachel Crossland** (St John's College, Oxford): 'Sharing the Moment's Discourse: Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence and Albert Einstein in the Early Twentieth Century'.
- **Gillian Jane Daw** (University of Sussex): 'The Victorian Poetic Imagination and Astronomy: Tennyson, De Quincey, Hopkins and Hardy'.
- **Nina Engelhardt** (University of Edinburgh): 'Mathematics in Literature: Modernist Interrelations in Novels by Thomas Pynchon, Hermann Broch, and Robert Musil'.
- **Josie Gill** (St John's College, Cambridge): 'Race, Genetics and British Fiction Since the Human Genome Project'.
- **Hannah Rogers** (Cornell University): 'The Practices of Art and Science: Nineteenth-Century Glass Scientific Models, Tactical Media in the 90s, and Contemporary Bioart'.
- **Cathryn Setz** (Birkbeck): 'Transitive Birds: Non-Mammalian Animals, Late Modernist Aesthetics, and *Transition* (1927-38)'.
- **Lena Wänggren** (University of Edinburgh): 'New Women, New Technologies: The Interrelation between Gender and Technology at the Victorian Fin de Siècle'.

BSLS small grants awarded

In the spring round of awards, **Harriet Briggs** (Newcastle University) won funding for a one-day postgraduate symposium, 'Moving Toward Science', run by the North-East Postgraduate Research Group for the Long Nineteenth Century (NENC). A full report is featured below.



The summer award was made to **Laurence Talairach-Vielmas** (University of Toulouse). The grant will support 'Exhibiting Human Remains' (Hunterian Museum, 4 June 2013), the third in a series of conferences in France and Britain on 'History and Cultural Representations of Human Remains.'



Finally, in April 2012 an event was held as part of the University of Virginia's 'Intersections in Science and Literature Speakers Series' with funding from a BSLS small grant won by **Hannah Star Rogers** in the summer of 2011. A report follows below. •

Moving Towards Science in the Long Nineteenth Century: A Postgraduate Symposium

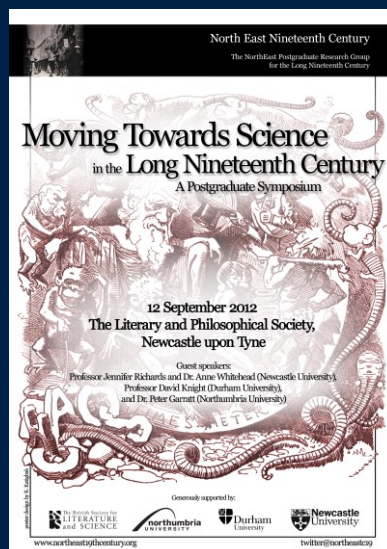
On 12 September 2012, the North East Nineteenth Century Postgraduate Research Group (NENC) held its inaugural event, 'Moving Towards Science', at the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle upon Tyne, a venue whose history of patrons (including Joseph Swan and Oscar Wilde) complemented the aims and spirit of the symposium.

The day consisted of keynote presentations and several postgraduate panels. The opening keynote address, from Professor Jennifer Richards and Dr Anne Whitehead (Newcastle), explored literary and medical discourses, and queried how nineteenth-century thought impacted on twentieth and twenty-first century concepts in the medical humanities. The second keynote presentation, given by Dr Peter Garratt (Northumbria), drew upon a range of Victorian and contemporary texts to question whether the complementary study of literature and science was as harmonious amongst nineteenth-century writers as is sometimes perceived. Particularly illuminating was the paper's interrogation of 'literary Darwinism', an aspect keenly followed up during question-times. Professor David Knight (Durham) gave the final keynote focusing upon the Royal Institution and the career of Sir Humphry Davy. Davy, whose achievements in chemistry were under-pinned by an artistic temperament, suggests for Knight that the two disciplines could be seen as originating from the same kind of inspiration.

The postgraduate papers further considered the various moves towards science evident in the long nineteenth century, with discussions of scientific pedagogy and grammar, the relationship between hypochondria and literature, concepts of science and nationhood, parallels between poetic form and studies into the mind, the issue of scientific correspondence during the Napoleonic blockade, and the influence of neurology upon ideas of morality and race.

The organising committee would like to thank BSLS for supporting what was an extremely rewarding and stimulating day, and for making it possible to cover the travel of several postgraduate presenters who attended from beyond the region. A full report can also be read on the NENC website: www.northeast19thcentury.org/2012/09/moving-towards-science-in-long.html. •

With thanks to Leanne Stokes for preparing this report.



Intersections of Science and Literature Speaker Series

On 26 April 2012 the Science, Technology, & Society Department at the University of Virginia hosted the Intersections of Science and Literature Speaker Series, which received the support of a BSLS small grant. The first speaker was novelist Ros Berne who read from her forthcoming nano-fiction novel *Waiting in Silence*. In addition to fiction writing, Berne has been involved with nanotechnology research and reflects on this work and complications for imagined futures in her novel. A lively discussion followed Berne's reading which included conversations both about her narrative devices and about the ways that fictional accounts of nano influence public perceptions.

The second speaker, Barri Gold, travelled to us from Mulhensberg College discussed her book *Thermopoetics*. Gold drew a variety of scholars and students, both graduate and undergraduate. Her talk was given in the Engineering School and drew English, French, Romance Studies, Physics, Computer Science, Science Technology and Society, and Art History professors, as well as a museum curator, who heard more about the relationship between nineteenth-century physics and fiction. The organiser, Hannah Rogers, notes appreciatively that the financial support of the BSLS covered Gold's travel and accommodation, and allowed for publicity to promote both speakers. •

With thanks to Hannah Rogers for preparing this report.



Announcements

Essay prize

The British Society for Literature and Science and the *Journal of Literature and Science* would like to announce a prize for the best new essay by an early career scholar on a topic within the field of literature and science. The prize is open to BSLS members who are postgraduate students or have completed a doctorate within three years of the submission date. (To join BSLS, go to www.bsls.ac.uk/join-us/). The prize will be judged jointly by representatives of the BSLS and *JLS*.

Essays should be currently unpublished and not under consideration by another journal. They should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words long, inclusive of references, and should be sent by email to both Dr John Holmes, Chair of the BSLS (j.r.holmes@reading.ac.uk), and Dr Martin Willis, Editor of *JLS* (mwillis@glam.ac.uk), by 12 noon on Monday, 1 April 2013.

The winning essay will be announced on the BSLS website and published in *JLS*. The winner will also receive a prize of £100. The judges reserve the right not to award the prize should no essay of a high enough standard be submitted.

Book prize winner

Congratulations once again to Martin Willis for winning the 2011 BSLS Book Prize, with his title *Vision, Science and Literature, 1870-1920: Ocular Horizons* (Pickering and Chatto). Martin's book has also recently won the ESSE (European Society for the Study of English) award in 'Cultural Studies in English'. In its turns from microscopes to telescopes, from looking at the past to looking into the future, Willis's book delves into a plethora of different sciences, with chapters on microbial medicine and epidemiology, on astronomical controversy, on Egyptian archaeology, and on optics and illusionism, in figures such as Bram Stoker, Amelia Edwards, Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini.

Nominations for 2012 book prize

Nominations are now open for this year's prize, to be awarded to the best book in the field of literature and science 2012. Members of the Society, as well as publishers, may nominate titles.

To be eligible for nomination, titles must be dated 2012. Members are entitled to nominate their own books for the prize, though please note that for any nomination to be eligible the member's subscription must be up to date (for renewals see page one). Details of the nominated title should be sent to the Reviews Editor, Peter Garratt, by no later than the deadline of 14 January 2013 (peter.garratt@northumbria.ac.uk). Shortlisting takes place in the spring, and the final judging and announcement of the prize will take place, as usual, at the Society's annual conference in early April.

2013 BSLS conference

The Society is pleased to announce that its eighth annual conference will be hosted by Cardiff University and the University of Glamorgan, and held at in Cardiff, 11-13 April 2013.

Call for papers:

The BSLS Conference does not have a theme but especially welcomes proposals on the state of the field of literature and science as well as its relation to other fields. This year we would be particularly interested to receive proposals that reflect upon the interdisciplinary study of literature and science in the context of the debate about the present position of the humanities in academia. However, the Society remains committed to supporting proposals on all aspects of literature and science across all periods.

Proposals for papers of 15-20 minutes should be sent in the body of the email text to bsls2013@yahoo.co.uk (no attachments, please) with the subject line 'BSLS 2013 abstract'. Submissions should include the title of the paper, an abstract of no more than 300 words, a maximum of 3 keywords (placed at the end of the abstract), and the name and contact details of the speaker.

The closing date for submissions is 7 December 2012. (Decisions will be made in January 2013.)

Contributors interested in organising a panel or other special session, or who have suggestions for alternative forms of conference presentation, are warmly encouraged to contact the conference organisers. The organisers would welcome, for example, workshops on teaching literature and science, or on specific themes in literature and science that cross period boundaries, or on specific published works with considerable influence in the field. Please email the organisers on bsls2013@yahoo.co.uk, using 'BSLS 2013 Panel' as the subject line in email correspondence.

A bursary of £150 will be awarded to a graduate student on the basis on the paper proposals. The student must be registered for a masters or doctoral degree on 9 January 2013. The conference fee will be waived for two further graduate students in exchange for written reports on the conference, to be published in the subsequent issue of the BSLS Newsletter. If you are interested in being selected for one of these places, please mention this when sending in your proposal.

Please note that those attending will need to make their own arrangements for accommodation. Information on selected hotels will be available shortly on the conference website. As in previous years, we anticipate that the conference will begin at about 1pm on the first day and conclude at about 2pm on the last.

In order to attend the conference, you must be a paid-up member of the BSLS for 2013. •

The BSLS Executive Committee would like to express its sincere thanks to all those members who contributed information, updates and reports to the Newsletter.