



# The British Society for LITERATURE and SCIENCE

*Prof. Martin Willis (Cardiff University), Chair; Prof. Peter Middleton (University of Southampton), Secretary;  
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Overseas Representatives: Dr Folkert Degenring, Europe; Prof. Janine Rogers (Mount Allison University), North America*

## REPORTS ON THE 2015 CONFERENCE

Within the stately setting of the Foresight Centre in Liverpool, the tenth annual conference of the British Society for Literature and Science drew together some of the most exciting and respected names in the field. Amongst the “superstars” of the event, including Dr Claire Preston and Dr Michael Whitworth, Professor Keith Barnum ended the event with a particularly conscience-pricking plenary on solar energy and nuclear power. Through highlighting the less well known Einsteinian formula  $E = hf$ , Barnum was able simultaneously to trace the history whilst introducing the science of solar energy, adamantly yet amiably convincing the room of the necessity for an individual effort to switch to renewable power sources.

Alongside these influential academics, several researchers’ papers stood out as particularly innovative and entertaining. Lena Wänggren’s fascinating examination of the gendered dimensions of dismemberment extended the topic beyond the stale analyses of castration into a sophisticated feminist consideration of the mutilated, gothic body. In the same panel, Chisomo Kalinga’s original exposition of AIDS cartoons and the more recent Ebola cartoons portrayed the vital role of the cartoonist in disease narratives. Friday and Saturday brought similarly exhilarating debates to the fore. Susan Morgan’s thorough examination of anatomical diagrams exposed the misogyny inherent in the depictions of a shameful female body throughout medical history. A panel titled ‘Chemistry and Self-experimentation’ showcased two particularly captivat-

ing papers. Whilst Hannah Brunning’s exploration of self-experimentation in fin-de-siècle literature provided novel and compelling investigations of classic, gothic tales, it was Melissa Dickson’s paper ‘Confessions of an English Green-Tea Drinker’ which stood out as the highlight of the three-day event. Dickson’s presentation not only identified and explored some rather obscure nineteenth-century scientific discourses on tea drinking, but her findings resulted in a masterful and revealing discussion on the previously indecipherable Sheridan Le Fanu short story, ‘Green Tea’. Advancing debates in feminist interpretation, ecocritical studies, and medical history, the conference successfully traversed multiple convergences between science and literature, resulting in an informative and undeniably enjoyable three days.

Aisha Nazeer,  
PhD Researcher at the University of St Andrews

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As a freshly-started doctoral student, this was my first time attending a BSLS conference. The University of Liverpool played a wonderful host for its tenth anniversary. The programme was crammed to the brim with interesting sessions competing for the listener’s attention: with ten sessions in all, and four panels per session, the conference presented a comprehensive overview of current research in all possible aspects of literature and science.

With forty panels to choose from, I am afraid my report can only cover a smattering, and I wish I could have attended twice the number I did go to. I will therefore only be able to offer a few highlights. Literally, in some cases: 2015 being the International Year of Light, many panels focused on light or optics in some way, one example being the engaging panel on ‘Art as Optical Device’ (Natasha Ryan, Robert Daly and Laura Ludtke). Notable was also the SLSAeu panel on ‘Scale,’ which at the same time was a teaser for their own conference on the same theme in Malta in June. Victor Grech managed to

The BSLS promotes  
interdisciplinary research into the  
relationships of science and  
literature in all periods.

Autumn 2015 Newsletter

capture the audience's attention by promising no fewer than three references to Douglas Adams in his presentation. A personal favourite of mine, as someone who is researching physics writing, was the session on 'Physics and the Physicist' (Gi Taek Ryoo, Carina Bartleet, and Natalie Roxburgh).

Still, the conspicuous underrepresentation of science fiction at the conference must be noted. A surprising fact, considering that Liverpool contains the UK's most prominent science fiction library and hosts several of the most influential SF researchers.

The plenary sessions presented three excellent speakers covering wide-ranging topics. Claire Preston opened the conference with an engaging talk on Donne's and Boyle's reflections on their illnesses. Patricia Fara closed the second day teaching most of the attendants an entirely new perspective on Erasmus Darwin and his political views. She included obscure eighteenth-century mathematics jokes, which drew tentative giggles as she compared the explanation of these jokes to 'explaining *Mock the Week* 200 years on.' Physicist Keith Barnham was the third plenary speaker, on the afternoon of the third day, presenting his popular science book/solar power manifesto *The Burning Answer*.

The BSLS roundtable on 'Analogy in Literature and Science Studies' proved so popular that it might have been better to have held this panel as a plenary. Following seven-minute presentations from almost the entire BSLS executive committee (Daniel Brown, Peter Middleton, Janine Rogers, Sharon Ruston, Michael Whitworth and Martin Willis), a discussion ensued that became unexpectedly fierce and required Alice Jenkins's impressive chairing skills to maintain order.

At my own panel, 'Popular Science Writing', I was fortunate enough to be invited to present alongside Oliver Hill-Andrews, who presented on J.G. Crowther's science

## BSLS ON TWITTER

Join the conversation between the conferences and follow @TheBSLS on Twitter.

journalism, and Josie Gill, whose presentation covered the narratives surrounding 'African Eve'. The discussion that followed the panel was engaging and open, and I can confidently say my work has benefited from the helpful insights offered there and during the discussion that continued into the break.

My thanks go out to Greg Lynall and his team for organizing an amazing conference, to the BSLS for the grant which made it possible for me to attend, and to all attendants for the excellent papers and great discussions.

Kanta Dihal, DPhil Student, Faculty of English,  
St Anne's College, University of Oxford

## LINKS WITH THE SLSAEU

The BSLS has been building up links with the European branch of the Society for Literature, Science and the Arts. In April two members of SLSAeu, Ivan Callus and Victor Grech, came over to the BSLS conference in Liverpool to introduce the work of the SLSAeu by speaking on the theme of their upcoming conference on Scale. In June John Holmes and Martin Willis (the outgoing and incoming Chairs of the BSLS), Folkert Degenring (our European Liaison Officer), and Greg Lynall (our own conference organiser) were welcomed by Ivan and Victor to their conference in Valetta in Malta, where we gave a panel presentation on how the theme of scale permeates our own work with the BSLS. Together the two conferences suggested many synergies between the two societies, and also striking differences between our approaches to literature, science and relationships between the two. To explore these synergies, complementarities and contrasts, and to grow this new and productive relationship, we agreed that we would repeat the conference exchange next year, with a group from the SLSAeu attending our conference in Birmingham in April and a BSLS group attending their conference on the theme of Control in Stockholm in June. At each conference, we plan to continue the dialogue between the representatives of the two societies on the merits and potential of different methods in literature and science scholarship, and the scope for cross-fertilization between them.

John Holmes with Folkert Degenring



By Rept0n1x (Walk to University of Liverpool (106)) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

# SMALL GRANTS REPORTS

## BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES AND THE MATERNAL BODY

*Attendee Fran Bigman reports on the recent Postgraduate Contemporary Women's Writing Network Symposium.*

On Saturday, 21 February 2015, the PG CWWN organised a symposium on 'Biomedical Sciences and the Maternal Body' at the University of Southampton with kind support from The British Society for Literature and Science. There were four short talks by postgraduate students and early career researchers and a keynote, 'Maternal Impressions,' by Professor Clare Hanson of the University of Southampton, followed by a spirited discussion by participants from disciplines including obstetrics, bioethics and medical law, philosophy, and literature.

Giving the first talk, I juxtaposed interwar and contemporary reprodystopias by British women writers in which the oppression of the state is symbolised by the denial—by male-controlled technology—of women's right to mother. While suggesting that these novels naturalise maternal desire in problematic ways, I also read them against the grain as condemnations of the state that deprives women of the right to mother by any means, including the withholding of access to IVF.

Laura-Jane Devanny's discussion of Jane Rogers's *The Testament of Jessie Lamb* (2011) used Susan Bordo's concept of pregnancy as an other within oneself to discuss the novel, in which a virus attacks pregnant women and the teenage protagonist volunteers to be a 'Sleeping Beauty', or sacrificial foetal incubator. The novel, Laura-Jane argued, refuses to cast the protagonist as either a victim or a heroine, deliberately denying us a simplistic answer to the debates around motherhood and autonomy. Discussion focused on examples of nature and technology working together in these novels, the marginal role of fathers in these dystopian narratives, and the return of biological essentialism in 21<sup>st</sup>-century feminism.

Philosopher Elseltijn Kingma contrasted the 'foetal container' model of pregnancy with the idea that fetuses are part of a pregnant organism and that birth can be likened to splitting or budding; it follows that one organism becomes two only at birth. She discussed the incompatibility of the views that the pre-birth foetus is a human entity and the idea that human entities have certain characteristics such as separateness and autonomy.

Charlotte Stroud discussed the work of A.S. Byatt in relation to Iris Murdoch's and the biological turn in New Materialist feminism, demonstrating the influence of biological form on her novelistic form: stories mutate and people interact like cells. Stroud illustrated how Byatt's prose explores her character's bodies on the level of cells

and organisms, allowing her to explore the mind-body problem from new angles. Discussion of these two papers covered topics such as the idea of multiple possible futures, which might help the law distinguish between foetal tort cases and abortion, and Byatt's problematic appropriation of Darwin.

Professor Clare Hanson's keynote highlighted the rise of epigenetics, or the renewed focus on environmental factors instead of genetic determinism. Epigenetic discourse, she argued, is used to blame the problem mother, usually the working-class mother, for not providing her child with the right (home or foetal) environment—pregnant women who are overweight (obesogenic), experience stress or are exposed to certain chemicals or smoke are held responsible not only for the impaired health of their child, but their grandchildren and even further on. Professor Hanson demonstrated how this rhetoric oscillates between the promise of care and support and a neoliberal insistence on individual responsibility and touched on works such as Edwidge Danticat's novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) to illustrate the notion of epigenetic memory.

Thanks very much to the PG CWWN organisers of this symposium and to all the speakers and participants for a stimulating day!

## ABNORMALITY AND THE ABNORMAL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies  
Postgraduate Conference  
7th May 2015

The 'Abnormality and the Abnormal in the Nineteenth Century' postgraduate conference opened with an engaging keynote address by Professor Martin Willis (Cardiff University) entitled 'The Case of the Soho Sleeper: Catalepsy, Care, and the Politics of Seizures'. Professor Willis used a high-profile case of catalepsy from 1887, known to the Victorian press as the Soho Sleeper, to argue that such conditions produce conceptions of the abnormal, and also of the normal from which the cataleptic was understood to have moved away.

Professor Willis's talk initiated a productive conversation ranging from the ethics of care to the methodology of research. The first panel of the day, 'The Social and Political Function of Abnormality', featured three methodologically diverse papers, which each dissected various ways in which a concept of abnormality can be created in the service of a particular ideology. The second panel, 'Abnormality and the Body', offered literary, archaeologi-



cal, and philosophical analyses of bodily and mental deviations from a norm in terms of an implicit association between normalcy and morality. The last panel of the day, 'Gender and Sexuality', addressed a topical nexus between embodiment and social norms; each paper offered an analysis of the construction, communication, and celebration, of a particular instance of gendered or sexual abnormality.

All three postgraduate panels generated stimulating and wide-ranging discussion; the continuity between contemporary and nineteenth-century ideas about abnormality, and the connections between abnormality, morality, and power were recurrent themes. Despite a programme which endeavoured to maximise opportunities for conversation, the conference ended with many more questions than answers. The Abnormality Research Network, launched at this conference, will facilitate the continuation of this conversation; this postgraduate-led initiative will explore conceptualisations of abnormality across disciplines from the early modern period to the present day.

Roisin McCloskey

## EXEWHIRR: A WORKSHOP FOR ARTISTS AND ACADEMICS ON THE HUMAN-TECHNOLOGY RELATIONSHIP

*Exewhirr: A Workshop for Artists and Academics on the Human-Technology Relationship was held in Exeter in April 2015. Ryan Sweet, who co-organised the event, comments on the day.*

Conceived as a 'seeding event' that would bring together academics from different departments and various types of artists all interested in the human-technology relationship, Exewhirr took over the Bike Shed Theatre, Exeter, on the afternoon of Sunday 12 July. The event featured two performances, three poetry readings, a mini-exhibition of specially commissioned artwork—including prints, paintings, and sculptures—and a programmed series of talks from museum curators and notable academics, including Michael Hauskeller (Exeter), Francesca Stavrakopoulou (Exeter), Matt Hayler (Birmingham), and fellow BSLS member Jason Hall (Exeter).

BSLS members will be interested to know about the literature and science related aspects of the day. To get everyone in the mood for the afternoon's contributions, my introductory speech began with a reading of the satirical *Punch* poem "To Lydia's Glass Eye" (1881). I ruminated briefly on the cultural significance of this poem in terms of its engagement with the human-technology trope before linking the themes of the poem to the afternoon's other contributions. In Jason's talk, he introduced his new project to restore the Eureka, a Victorian machine for making Latin verses. Jason linked the device and the wider nineteenth-century education penchant for making schoolboys "manufacture" Latin verses to contemporary anxieties surrounding the potential for humans to become automated. Continuing with the medium of poetry, local poets Isabel Galleymore, Sharanya Murali, and Wei Hsien Wan took to the stage to read from Isabel, Wei, and Mike Rose-Steel's Exewhirr-commissioned poetry pamphlet *Paraphernalium*. Using verse as a means to ruminate on themes such as personal relationships with technological devices, techno-eroticism, and the ways that technologies shape our perceptions of the world, the poets enchanted the Bike Shed auditorium with their mellifluous and, at times, touching readings.

Though by no means an event purely about literature and science, Exewhirr showcased the diversity and importance of literary texts as means through which to understand, consider, and problematise the ways that we interact with technology. Highlighting the intersections between our area of study and the work of researchers in departments such as sociology, theology, and philosophy, as well as artists working with various materials, I hope that Exewhirr will provide inspiration for further multidisciplinary and public engagement work involving literature and science.

Many thanks to the BSLS, who along with the Wellcome Trust, generously sponsored this event.

To Lydia's Glass Eye.

" From particulars supplied to the reporter of a Chicago paper by a dealer in glass eyes in that city, it appears that there are as many as a thousand wearers of these eyes in Chicago. . . Twenty years ago there were sold many more dark eyes than light . . . about twenty light eyes are now sold to one dark," — "Times.

Wink at me only with glass eye,

And I'll respond with mine,  
And smile not when the harmless fly

Goes crawling over thine.  
I care not for the colour there,

Dark brown, or black, or blue,  
Or even if you wink, via chere,

With eyes of different hue.

I sent thee late a new glass eye,

Impervious to the tear,  
Tinged with some new aesthetic dye,

And quite " too utter " dear.  
You'll wear it, won't you, when you think

How faithful it must be,  
For it is warranted to wink

At nobody but me ?

Punch. April, 1881.

# NEWS AND NOTES

## **BUILDING THE BOOK OF NATURE: THE POETICS OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

Janine Rogers (Mount Allison University, Canada) and John Holmes (University of Birmingham, UK) have been awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Canada) Insight Development Grant for two years, for the project 'Building the Book of Nature: the Poetics of the Natural History Museum'. This project examines the history, architecture and display strategies of natural history museums in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Canada in order to analyze these institutions as sites of scientific and humanist synthesis.

## **BSLS CONTRIBUTES TO INTERDISCIPLINARITY RESEARCH AT BRITISH ACADEMY**

In spring 2015 the British Academy launched a consultation exercise on the meanings, effects, and consequences of interdisciplinary working across the arts and humanities. You may remember my email to all BSLS members in May inviting you to comment on a series of questions about interdisciplinarity in order for us as a Society to respond. I received a very good number of replies with some very interesting and varied comments from members at all career stages. On behalf of the BSLS I, as Chair, then wrote a letter to the consulting committee putting forward the views and experiences of BSLS members as collated from your emails. My letter stated that BSLS members had both positive and negative experiences of interdisciplinarity – that the positives were largely personal and intellectual and the negatives largely structural or institutional.

On the positive side BSLS members reported that working in an interdisciplinary area such as literature and science had been helpful in giving their research clear definition (to themselves and others) and that the approaches they took to their research made them far more aware about their own (home) discipline and reflective of what disciplinarity might mean. At its best, interdisciplinary scholarship was transformative: it gave a new way of thinking both about existing objects of study and to the researcher involved in their interrogation. Finally, at some universities interdisciplinarity was valued and this meant it was supported, promoted and given the kinds of space it needed to flourish. This was seen as an essential component of successful interdisciplinarity.

More negatively, BSLS members also saw a num-

ber of barriers to interdisciplinarity. There were some institutions that did not support it in any tangible way, preferring to focus on subject areas as their research nodes and making cross-fertilization difficult. Funding could be harder to access as reviewers often felt that one discipline was not being done 'properly'. REF requirements (in the UK) demanded subject area specialisms that mitigated crossing disciplinary boundaries. Finally, it was also felt that having clear disciplinary expertise was more potent in the job market than having interdisciplinarity at the heart of one's work.

I concluded my letter by noting the necessity, therefore, for governmental support and promotion of interdisciplinary work like that conducted by BSLS members. It was, I argued, a clearly intellectually productive way to work that should have barriers removed and further opportunities made available.

Martin Willis

## **BSLS POSTGRADUATE CONFERENCE FUND**

The BSLS is pleased to announce a new funding opportunity for postgraduate student members. The Postgraduate Conference Fund will offer two bursaries of £200 for BSLS postgraduate members toward the cost of presenting research papers at conferences (this excludes the BSLS annual conference, which has its own postgraduate bursary scheme). In addition to funding attendance at literature and science conferences, we would like to fund members who intend to give papers on literature and science at conferences which are not specifically focused on this topic, in order to promote the study of our field more widely.

To be eligible applicants must

- Be a member of the BSLS
- Be a current research student
- Be presenting a paper at a conference

Eligible expenses include conference fees as well as travel and accommodation costs. Applicants must provide an outline of their research paper, justify why the funds are required (i.e. give a break-down of the budget) and state whether they have applied to any other funding sources (and the outcomes of those applications). Applicants should also state why the particular conference they have chosen would be valuable, both for their own career and with regard to the wider objectives of the BSLS. Applications should be no longer than 500 words.

Successful applicants will be expected to write a short report on their paper and experience of

the conference, which will be published on the BSLS website.

The deadline for applications is 15 January 2016. Decisions will be made by 28 February for conferences running from 1 March 2016.

Please send applications to Josie Gill  
<[Josie.Gill@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Josie.Gill@bristol.ac.uk)>.

## BSLS BOOK REVIEWS

Members may have noticed that there is now a list of books for which reviewers are sought on the BSLS website, at <<http://www.bsls.ac.uk/reviews/currently-seeking-reviewers/>>. Please contact Gavin Budge on <[G.Budge@herts.ac.uk](mailto:G.Budge@herts.ac.uk)> if there are any books there you are interested in reviewing, or for which you can suggest potential reviewers (who don't necessarily have to be members of BSLS). Gavin would also be interested to hear about books for which you think there ought to be reviews on the BSLS website. You can find a list of books currently being reviewed at <<http://www.bsls.ac.uk/reviews/books-currently-under-review/>>.

## PROMETHEAN SCIENCE AND ITS ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

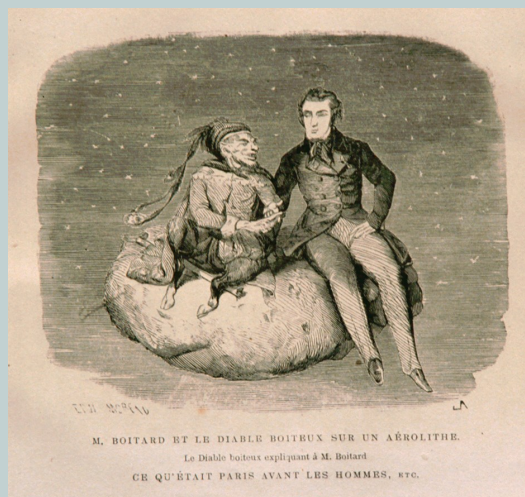
On 29-30 June, 2015, Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys in Canterbury, Kent, hosted their inaugural international symposium: *Promethean Science and its Ethical Implications*. Speakers were: James Gillies, Head of Communications, CERN; Tom Whipple, The Times; Simon Scarrow, novelist; and Blay Whitby, Professor, University of Sussex. Langton students also gave presentations and served on panels discussing subjects ranging from 'Frankenfood' to CERN and science fiction and its predilection for catastrophism, especially in cinematics. The symposium was largely concerned with the possible ethical implications of science when its Promethean ambitions become overweening and potentially dangerous.

The symposium was also the occasion for the newly-founded Langton Press to launch its first book, *Recently Conceived: Essays from the Langton*. This is a collection of 14 essays by Year 13 students on a variety of subjects, from ecstasy to atheism. Langton Press will publish another collection of student essays in May, 2016: *Bicentenary Essays on Mary Godwin's 'Frankenstein'*.

The Langton intends to host an annual event each summer term, the next being *Music and Mental Health*.

Elizabeth Askey

## BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS



## MLITT IN LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND MEDICINE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

This new one-year taught postgraduate programme explores how science, technology and medicine have been represented and imagined in literature, and how literary and scientific practices have interacted, since the Enlightenment. Science has become an integral part of modern literary culture in novels, poetry, life-writing, and science fiction. At the same time, literary forms have often been used in science-writing, especially when aimed at a wide public. This taught Masters explores these varied interactions as a way of understanding the meanings of science in modern Western culture.

- Interdisciplinary: both literary and historical perspectives covered in our modules
- Wide choice of periods, topics, and literary traditions, including the option of independent study
- Taught by leading researchers in the disciplines of English, Creative Writing, History & Philosophy of Science, Hispanic Studies, French Studies, Irish & Scottish Studies, and Film & Visual Culture
- No prior specialist knowledge needed: open to anyone with an interest in exploring this area
- Superb library resources and on-campus facilities at one of Britain's oldest universities
- The only programme of its kind in the UK

For more information about the programme or on how to apply, please visit our webpage at <[http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/courses/postgraduate/taught/literature\\_science\\_medicine/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/courses/postgraduate/taught/literature_science_medicine/)> or contact the Programme Coordinator, Professor Ralph O'Connor  
<[r.oconnor@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:r.oconnor@abdn.ac.uk)>.

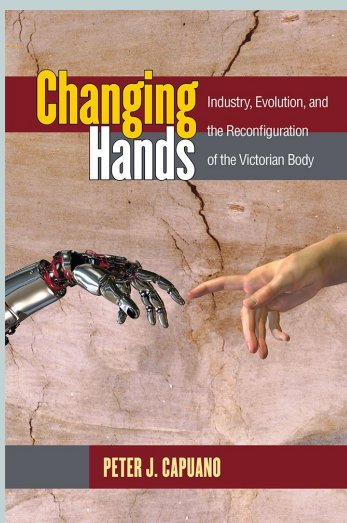
## WEBSITE UPDATE

Note the new links on the BSLS website for the Symposium and for funding opportunities.



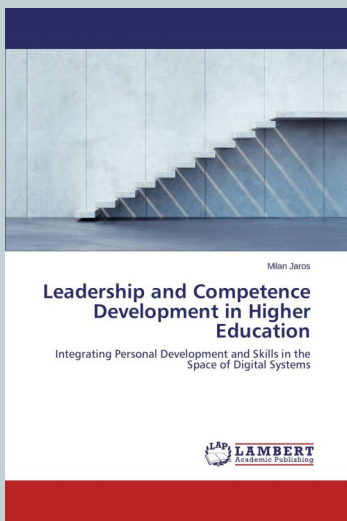
# RECENT AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Alison Adam. *A History of Forensic Science: British Beginnings in the Twentieth Century* (Routledge, November 2015). *A History of Forensic Science* considers the influences that shaped the discipline in Britain in the first part of the twentieth century—criminological, criminalistic, scientific, technological and fictional. A new interest in managing crime scenes arrived on British shores, from the Continent via British India and Egypt and was channelled into the ‘scientific aids’ movement of the 1930s representing Continental and Colonial criminalistics in British clothing. This book charts the strategies of the new forensic scientists to gain an authoritative voice in the courtroom and to forge a professional identity in the space between forensic medicine, scientific policing, and independent expert witnessing. In their attempts to define their roles they enlisted the moral voice of the forensic scientist alongside the cultural authority of the fictional scientific detective.

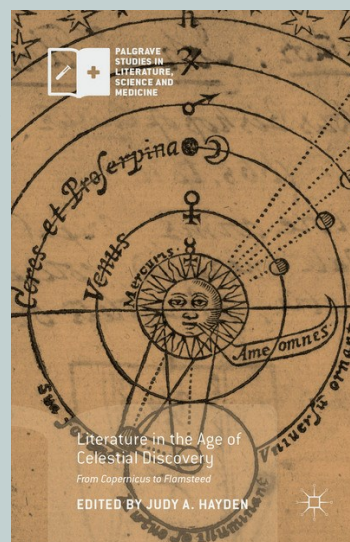


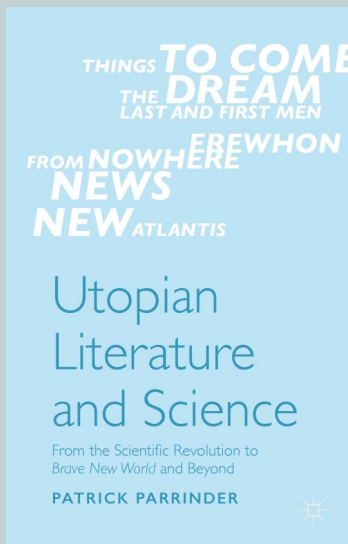
Peter J. Capuano. *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body* (U Michigan P, 2015). In *Changing Hands*, Peter J. Capuano sifts through Victorian literature and culture for changes in the way the human body is imagined in the face of urgent questions about creation, labor, gender, class, and racial categorization, using ‘hands’ (the ‘distinguishing mark of . . . Humanity’) as the primary point of reference. Capuano complicates his study by situating the historical argument in the context of questions about the disappearance of hands during the twentieth century into the haze of figurative meaning. Out of this curious aporia, Capuano exposes a powerful, ‘embodied handedness’ as the historical basis for many of the uncritically metaphoric, metonymic, and/or ideogrammatic approaches to the study of the human body in recent critical discourse. <[https://www.press.umich.edu/8472922/changing\\_hands](https://www.press.umich.edu/8472922/changing_hands)>

Judy A. Hayden, Ed. *Literature in the Age of Celestial Discovery: Copernicus to Flamsteed* (Palgrave, forthcoming). The essays in this collection seek to explore the convergence of astronomy and literary discourse in the Early Modern period. Although this exploration is limited by the very nature of such a collection, these essays seek to demonstrate the manner in which Early Modern literary discourse interrogated astronomy and engaged in debate on a number of Copernican theories, particularly heliocentrism. Included are essays on Doni and Bruno, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Francis Godwin, Samuel Butler and so forth. The essays also demonstrate various ways celestial exploration was used, from New World discovery and colonization to socio-political unrest, and even kingship and regicide.



Milan Jaros. *Leadership and Competence Development in Higher Education* (Lambert Academic, 2015). It is an outstanding intellectual and leadership challenge in higher education to develop effective ‘competence’ in decision making, complementary to and building upon the traditional programs, and fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The key obstacle is the gap between the systems of thought and organization governing the established curriculum and the mechanisms driving thought and power in the space of digital systems. The aim is to establish pedagogy for a re-appraisal of the relationship between human and machinic contributions, and one capable of engendering the human-centred character of University, without depriving staff and students of the benefits offered by the availability of disparate knowledge systems.

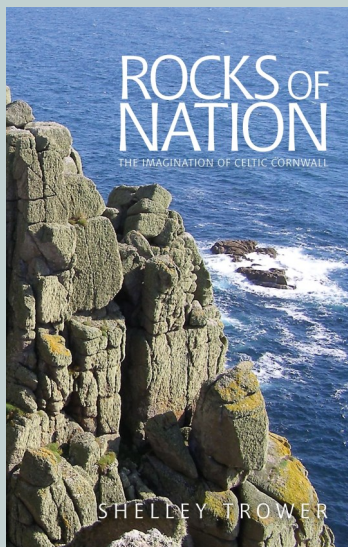
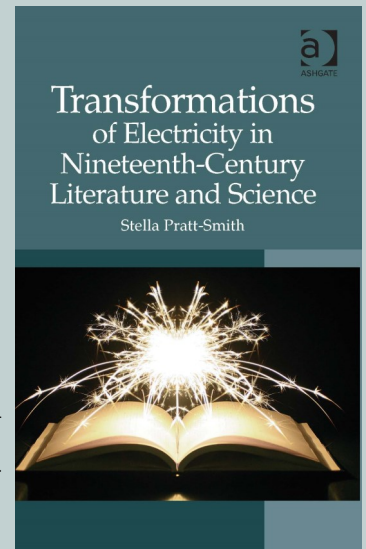




Patrick Parrinder. *Utopian Literature and Science: From the Scientific Revolution to Brave New World and Beyond*. Scientific progress is usually seen as a precondition of modern utopias, but science and utopia are frequently at odds. *Utopian Literature and Science* traces the interactions of sciences such as astronomy, microscopy, genetics and anthropology with 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century utopian and dystopian writing and modern science fiction. Ranging from Galileo's observations with the telescope to current ideas of the post-human and the human-animal boundary, Patrick Parrinder's re-examination of key literary texts brings a fresh perspective to the paradoxes of utopian thinking since Plato. Lucid, concise and highly accessible, this book is essential reading for teachers and students of literature and science, science fiction, and utopian writing, as well as students of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature more generally. Through 31/12/2015 individual members of the BSLS may use the code PM15THIRTY at Palgrave's website for a 30% discount.

revealing electricity as a site for intense and imaginative Victorian speculation, Stella Pratt-Smith traces the synthesis of nineteenth-century electricity made possible by the powerful combination of science, literature and the popular imagination. With electricity resisting clear description, even by those who knew it best, Pratt-Smith argues that electricity was both metaphorically suggestive and open to imaginative speculation. Her book engages with Victorian scientific texts, popular and specialist periodicals and the work of leading midcentury novelists. Pratt-Smith explores how Victorian novelists attributed magical qualities to electricity, imbuing it with both the romance of the past and the thrill of the future. Ultimately, her book contends that writing and reading about electricity appropriat-

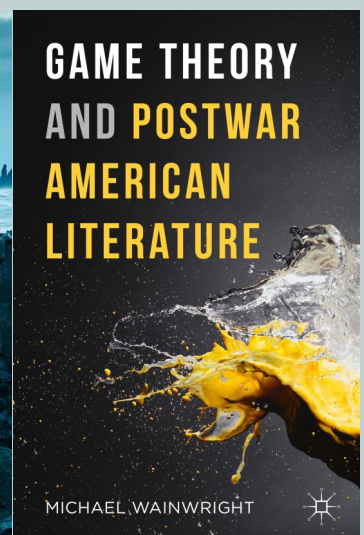
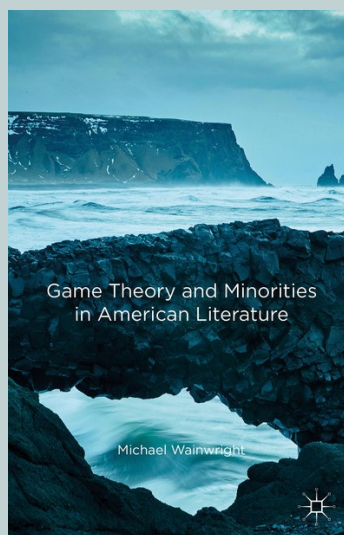
ed and expanded its imaginative scope, transformed its factual origins and applications and contravened the bounds of literary genres and disciplinary constraints.



Shelley Trower. *Rocks of Nation: The Imagination of Celtic Cornwall* (Manchester UP 2015). *Rocks of Nation* reveals how the imagination of nations, and races, is grounded in geology. It provides an in-depth case study of Cornwall and its economy in the wider context of Britain and the rise of nationalist politics, especially in England (UKIP) and Scotland (SNP). Spanning from the early nineteenth to the twenty-first century, it traces the gradual formation of a cultural consciousness of Cornwall as a distinctively rocky nation through a wide range of literatures, including nineteenth-century geological journals and folklore, Gothic and detective fiction, modernist and romance novels, travel narratives, 'New Age' eco-spiritualism and Cornish nationalist writings. <<http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/indexer?product=9780719090967>>

Michael Wainwright. *Game Theory and Minorities in American Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2 March 2016). This pioneering study applies the theory of games of strategy (or game theory), the mathematical simulation of rational decision-making first axiomatically established by the Hungarian-born American mathematician John von Neumann, to a selection of minoritarian texts from the American canon. The discussion introduces the most common social dilemmas, the Stag Hunt, the Prisoner's Dilemma, Chicken, and Deadlock, as a means of interpreting works by Franklin, Douglass, Jacobs, Hurston, Faulkner, Morrison, and Hamid.

*Game Theory and Postwar American Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 23 March 2016). This companion publication provides a detailed yet wide-ranging consideration of game-theoretic social dilemmas in immediate postwar American literature. Authors under discussion include Faulkner, McCoy, Kellogg, Bradbury, Capote, and Hansberry.





# **‘SCIENCE IN THE ARCHIVES’**

## **BSLS WINTER SYMPOSIUM, 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2015**

### **MUSEUM OF RURAL LIFE AND UNIVERSITY OF READING SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

The BSLS’s Winter Symposium, organised by Verity Burke (Reading) and Clare Stainthorp (Birmingham), provided an opportunity for literature and science researchers to reflect and build upon the successes and challenges of finding ‘Science in the Archives’. While archival research has long been a mainstay of literature and science as a discipline, the recent growth in collaborative doctoral awards, collections-based PhDs, and large-scale projects (such as the AHRC’s Constructing Scientific Communities) demonstrate a need to consider more fully the implications of this kind of investigation. This day-long event brought together archive professionals with researchers at all stages of their career to develop their understanding of the practicalities as well as theoretical issues surrounding the uses of such materials.

The day opened with a series of short papers that introduced some of the challenges and benefits experienced by those using archives within their research practice. These ranged widely, spanning a consideration of ‘the ontology of the archive’ by Kate Simpson (Edinburgh Napier), as well as the significance of archival work in the current research projects being undertaken by Alison Moulds (Oxford), Felicity Henderson (Exeter), and Ann Loveridge (Canterbury Christ Church). This panel also provided a forum for Rachel Eames (Birmingham) and Bella Hoffman (Mount Allison) to share their experiences as masters and undergraduate students utilising physical and digital archives respectively. Despite the diversity of starting points, it was notable that speakers drew out similar themes, in particular the scope for personal and emotional reactions to archival materials.

The impassioned discussions stimulated by this first panel were carried into the following ‘Questions and Archives’ session, which provided a new perspective on these. This session was organised as a conversation between the organisers and Guy Baxter and Fiona Melhuish, archivist and special collections librarian at the University of Reading. Guy and Fiona provided practical insights into how collections are organised and how researchers can get the most out of them by drawing upon the expertise of archivists. Wider reaching discussions were also had about the way in which narratives are built around collections and how this can both point to and obscure ‘silences’ in archives. After opening the discussion out to the audience, attendees were able to browse some of the University of Reading’s impressive collection of rare books, a treat that stimulated many further conversations across lunch.

The ‘Projects in the Archives’ panel session

offered the chance to hear more detailed insights into the kind of work academics have been doing with archival resources. This ranged from Janine Rogers’ (Mount Allison) codicological research that demonstrated how mediaeval books on astrolabes worked like instruments, an insight only available upon visiting them in archival contexts, to Katherine Ford’s (Science Museum) reflections on her doctoral research into the physical and rhetorical reconstruction of prehistoric creatures by nineteenth-century members of the Royal Society. Finally, Matthew Wale (Leicester) began his paper with the image of a pressed plant specimen found between the pages of a bound journal, and expanded upon the idea of recovering Victorian scientific practices through natural history periodicals.

The positioning of literature research in the archives of scientific institutions was addressed by Richard Aspin, the Wellcome Library’s Head of Research (whose paper was read in absentia by Martha Fleming), and Mike Finn, Director of the Museum of the History of Science, Technology & Medicine at the University of Leeds. Both papers introduced attendees to several new collections of which many were unaware, such as the archive of the (now defunct) History of Education Museum in Leeds and the Wellcome’s digitised ‘Codebreakers: Makers of Modern Genetics’ resource.

John Holmes (Birmingham) gave a fascinating keynote, which announced the start of a new research project in association with Janine Rogers, titled ‘Building the Book of Nature: The Poetics of the Natural History Museum’. This really expanded the concept of archival literature and science research by considering how buildings can be read like literature, act like scientific instruments, and preserve history like archives. It was notable that throughout the day archival work was often associated with an interest in material culture; discussion often revolved around valuing the materiality of texts and objects, and Holmes’ paper was indicative of this.

Overall the symposium stimulated debate and exchange, raising important questions and looking towards potential solutions to the challenges of archival research while celebrating its many benefits.

The organisers would like to thank the British Society for Literature and Science, the University of Reading Museums and Special Collections, the Department for English Literature, and the Centre for Collections-Based Research at the University of Reading for generously supporting this event.

Clare Stainthorp and Verity Burke

# UPCOMING TALKS, CONFERENCES, AND CALLS FOR PAPERS

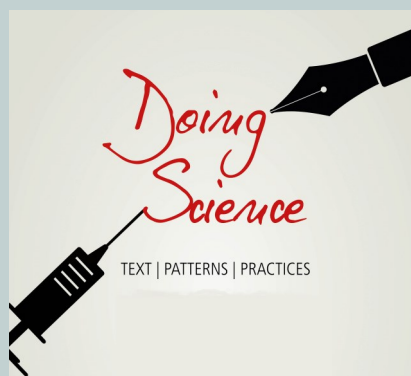
## DOING SCIENCE: TEXT, PATTERNS, PRACTICES

20-21 November 2015, 10:00  
An Interdisciplinary Conference  
between the Arts and the Sciences  
a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne

Further information and programme:

<<http://artes.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de>>

<<http://anglistik1.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/23582.html>>



## THE END OF THE SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL? TRANSFORMATIONS IN PUBLISHING

A one day symposium investigating scientific journal  
publishing—past, present and future.  
The Royal Society, London,  
27th November, 2015

In the early 21st Century the world of scientific publishing is changing swiftly. Online publishing, open access, big data, innovations in peer review and commercial pressures have created a scientific publishing environment very different to that faced by scientists just twenty years ago.

To take just one area of recent change, the move to online publication raises a series of questions. Papers are increasingly being published as soon as they have been peer reviewed, without waiting for a volume to be collated. Will individual articles still speak to each other, or will the idea of a volume be lost? Does online publication offer new possibilities, creating space for more interdisciplinary material or new types of journal content? Most radically, is it still the case that publishing in a journal is the best

way to share results, or establish priority? Or are scientists turning to alternative forms of presentation which bypass formal publishing? And does the rise of citizen science point to new forms of scientific practice, participation and publishing?

The key to understanding these contemporary changes lies in their historical context. The rise of professional science in the nineteenth century was facilitated by an exponential growth in science journals which transformed the ways in which scientific knowledge was constructed and circulated. Such links, between scientific publishing and practice are not only of historical interest, but are of crucial significance now, as we move into the uncharted waters of digital and open access publishing.

This symposium will bring together scientists, historians of science, academics involved in current science journal publishing and editing, and science editors from major publishing firms, to discuss potential developments in science publishing and their historical context.

Invited speakers include

- Bernard Lightman (York University)
- Jonathan Topham (University of Leeds)
- Aileen Fyfe (University of St. Andrews)
- Pietro Corsi (University of Oxford)

Up to 20 places are available, please contact Berris Charnley at <[Berris.Charnley@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Berris.Charnley@ell.ox.ac.uk)> if you are interested in attending, indicating briefly your reasons for attending and relevant experience.

The symposium is organised by the 'Constructing Scientific Communities' project. Conveners: Sally Shuttleworth, Gowan Dawson, Chris Lintott, Berris Charnley, Geoffrey Belknap and Sally Frampton

'Constructing Scientific Communities: Citizen Science in the 19th and 21st Centuries' is a collaborative project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, based at the Universities of Oxford and Leicester, in partnership with the Royal Society, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Natural History Museum. For further information on the project see <[www.conscicom.org](http://www.conscicom.org)>.



## CONSTANCE NADEN'S UNPUBLISHED VOICE: A MANUSCRIPT DISCOVERY

Clare Stainthorpe

Thursday 10th December 2015, 12.30-1.30  
Cadbury Research Library Seminar Room  
Muirhead Tower, University of Birmingham

Constance Naden (1858-1889) is a rare example of a Victorian female polymath. She was an insightful poet, an accomplished philosopher, and a celebrated student at Mason Science College (which became the University of Birmingham in 1900). Three of her notebooks from the late 1870s have recently been discovered; they contain almost one hundred new poems as well as notes on religion, philosophy, and science, establishing for the first time Naden's unpublished voice.

This talk will introduce these new additions to the Cadbury Research Library's Naden collection, showing how they chart Naden's growth from precocious school girl to independent, free-thinking young woman between 1875 and 1879.

Refreshments will be served in the Chamberlain Seminar Room from 12.15pm onwards.

<<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/events/lectures/constance-naden.aspx>>

## THE BODY AND PSEUDOSCIENCE IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

Interdisciplinary Conference  
18 June 2016  
Newcastle University

### Call for Papers

The nineteenth century witnessed the drive to consolidate discrete scientific disciplines, many of which were concerned with the body. Attempts were made to clarify the boundaries between the 'scientific' and the 'pseudoscientific', 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. This conference asks what became lost in separating the orthodox from the heterodox. What happened to the systems of knowledge and practice relating to the body that were marginalised as 'pseudoscience'? Was knowledge and insight into the human condition lost in the process? Or is it immortalised within the literature of 'pseudoscience'?

This conference considers how different discourses of the body were imagined and articulated across a range of visual and verbal texts in order to evaluate how 'pseudoscience' contributed both to understandings of the body and what it is to be human and to the formation of those disciplines now deemed orthodox.

Suggested topics:

- The body as a site of experimentation and scientific contestation
- Pseudoscience and the gendered body
- Trance as a conduit for self knowledge
- The 'scientifically' prescribed body – rationalising the irrational?
- 'Pseudoscience' and the speculative nature of 'science'
- Scientific disciplines – professionalization or loss of universal truth?
- Gender in the séance room
- Visual interpretations of the pseudoscientific
- Victorian periodicals / popular science journals and pseudoscience of the body
- Fiction immortalising the pseudoscientific
- The attraction of the pseudoscientific for C19 poets and novelists
- Visual interpretations of the pseudoscientific

Abstracts of 250 – 300 words, with a brief biography, by 31 January 2016 to <[p.beesley@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:p.beesley@ncl.ac.uk)>  
<<http://pseudoscienceconference.wordpress.com>>

## SEARCHING FOR LIFE AN INQUIRY ON THE SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS OF ASTROBIOLOGY

Fellowships for 2016-2017

Center for Theological Inquiry, Princeton, NJ  
with support from the NASA Astrobiology Program  
& John Templeton Foundation

Call for applications from the humanities and social sciences. More information about the Inquiry as well as the online application can be found on the Center's website at <[www.ctinquiry.org](http://www.ctinquiry.org)>. Questions should be emailed to the Application Manager at <[apply@ctinquiry.org](mailto:apply@ctinquiry.org)>

Application deadline: 15 January 2016

## #COLEX TO BE STORIFIED

The #ColeEx Twitter exhibition of twentieth-century natural history and zoology was based on a collaborative mini-project between the University of Reading's Museums and Special Collections (@UniRdg\_SpecColl), the Cole Museum of Zoology (@ColeZoology), and the Centre for Collections-based Research.

I curated and tweeted (@VerityBurke\_) a digital exhibition of documents spanning around 100 years of departmental life, which can still be viewed and shared by searching for #ColeEx on twitter; the Storify of the media tweets can be viewed at <<https://storify.com/VerityBurke/coleex-media-tweets>>; and a full Storify, highlighting the collaborative nature of the exhibition, will be available in December 2015. I welcome any thoughts or queries via <[v.burke@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:v.burke@pgr.reading.ac.uk)>

Verity Burke



# CALL FOR PAPERS

## BSLS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### 7-9 APRIL 2016, BIRMINGHAM

The eleventh annual conference of the British Society for Literature and Science will take place at the University of Birmingham, from Thursday 7 April until Saturday 9 April 2016.

Keynote talks will be given by Professor Harriet Ritvo (MIT), Professor Sharon Ruston (University of Lancaster), and Professor Alice Roberts (University of Birmingham).

The BSLS invites proposals for twenty-minute papers, or panels of three papers, on any subjects within the field of literature and science.

In addition, we are hoping to put together sessions with looser, non-traditional formats, and would welcome proposals from any person or persons interested in making presentations of approximately ten minutes from notes rather than completed papers. Our hope is that the latter format will encourage longer Q&A sessions with more discussion. If you have a topic or research area which would suit

such a discussion, we would also like to hear from you.

Please send an abstract (c.200 words) and short biographical note to the conference organiser, Will Tattersdill <[w.j.tattersdill@bham.ac.uk](mailto:w.j.tattersdill@bham.ac.uk)>, by no later than 5pm GMT, Friday 4 December 2015. Please include the abstract and biographical note in the body of the email and not in an attachment. All proposers of a paper or panel will receive notification of the results by the end of January 2016.

The conference fee will be waived for two graduate students in exchange for written reports on the conference, to be published in the BSLS Newsletter. If you are interested in being selected for one of these awards, please mention this when sending in your proposal. To qualify you will need to be registered for a postgraduate degree at the time of the conference.

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