



# The British Society for LITERATURE and SCIENCE

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## EARLY-CAREER SCHOLAR'S ESSAY PRIZE

We are delighted to announce that the British Society for Literature and Science and *Journal of Literature and Science* prize for an essay by an early-career scholar has been won by Kimberley Dimitriadis for her essay "Telescopes in the Drawing-Room: Geometry and Astronomy in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*". We offer our congratulations to Kimberley for what the judges agreed was an outstanding and original essay. The essay will be published in the next available issue of *JLS*, and its author will also receive a prize of £100.

The judging panel wrote: "This year's prize-winning essay was, in the view of the judges, a model example of the original research that literature and science scholarship can achieve. By offering an entirely fresh reading of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, Dimitriadis has added a rich new perspective to an already very full critical view. Her rendering of that novel's interrogation of Victorian astronomy showed a subtle understanding of the history of astronomical work in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century as well as an ability to see that work creatively transformed and reassessed through Eliot's own particular interests in women's education and contribution to knowledge."

There was an exceptionally strong field this year and the judges were especially impressed by two other entries to which they would like to give honourable

mentions: Catriona Livingstone for "Experimental Identities: Quantum Physics in Popular Science Writing and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and Richard Fallon for "Literature Rather than Science: Henry Neville Hutchinson (1856-1927) and the Literary Borderlines of Science Writing".

On Livingstone's essay the judges wrote: "This excellent reading of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* via quantum physics not only offers valuable insight into Woolf's reading of popular physical texts of the period but also offers a method of understanding the relationship between literature and science as a feedback loop in which both disciplines inform one another. This balancing of methodological concerns with the specifics of a closely argued historicist reading is the essay's strength, and the analysis of method that Livingstone offers is likely to be not only debated further but employed as a useful tool for thinking through the relationship between other texts, authors and sciences."

On Fallon's essay the judges wrote: "This stylishly-written essay offered up some fascinating insights into Victorian debates on the categorisation of, and relationships between, science writing and popular science writing. As Fallon shows through a detailed case study of science populariser, Henry Neville Hutchinson, there were real concerns in scientific communities about what constituted science and what skills and practices were needed to be called a scientist. In revealing the contexts and specificities of these debates the essay tells us a great deal about the emerging relationship between literature and science and provides further nuance to our understanding of the two cultures."

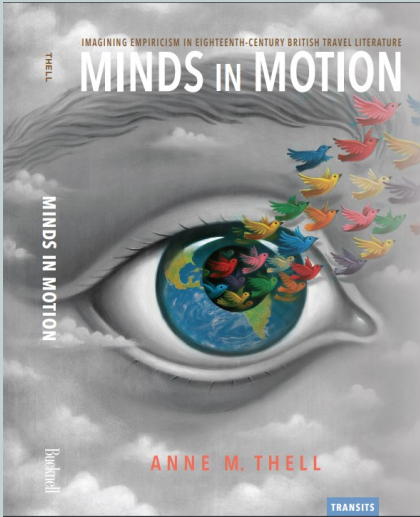
We would like to thank all the BSLS members who submitted essays for this year's prize. The essays covered a tremendous range of topics, from the early modern to the contemporary, with a broad range too of methods and approaches. Together, the articles admirably demonstrated the vibrancy of the literature and science community and its scholarship.

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

**Autumn 2017 Newsletter**

# RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Anne M. Thell. *Minds in Motion: Imagining Empiricism in Eighteenth-Century British Travel Literature*. "Transits: Literature, Thought & Culture, 1650-1850," Bucknell University Press, August 31, 2017.



*Minds in Motion* argues that British travel literature of the long eighteenth century expedites individual engagements with epistemology. Specifically, Anne M. Thell contends that eighteenth-century travel writing is a primary site where authors and readers test emerging models of empiricism while simultaneously seeking out the role of the self and the imagination in the production of legitimate knowledge. Travel literature thus operates at the front line of the period's intellectual developments, illustrating both how individual writers grapple with philosophical ideals and how these ideals filter into the lives of ordinary people. Taken together, travelogues as diverse as Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World* (1666) and Samuel Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) reveal the epistemological circuitry of the eighteenth century and historicize the absorption of the philosophical tendencies that have come to define modernity.

Anne M. Thell is Assistant Professor of English literature at National University of Singapore and President of the Southeast Asia Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (SASECS). She is currently at work on a range of projects that deal with travel literature and intellectual history.

Special issue 'Doing Science: Texts, Patterns, Practices', *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 42.3 (2017), ed. Nina Engelhardt and Julia Hoydis. <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/yisr20>

The papers in the special issue 'Doing Science' explore interrelations between scientific and literary thought and practices. The issue offers a focus on the practical dimension of science without losing sight of its close, and in many cases even intrinsic, relations to text(s), which not only inform scientific method but also its communication and study. The six authors – bringing to this special issue scholarly expertise from the fields of literature, philosophy, medicine, and history of science – approach the topic of 'doing science' through three main lenses: first, the still important work that comes from looking closely at texts themselves and in their historical contexts, second, the exploration of and philosophical reflection on patterns – or figurations – that can be textual or practical, and last, current interdisciplinary scholarship in practice, that is, reports on projects designed to productively combine knowledge and approaches from the humanities and the sciences.

1. Nina Engelhardt and Julia Hoydis: 'Editorial: Doing Science'
2. Laura Søvsø Thomassen: 'Showing and telling science – the integrated use of literature and images in the works of Erasmus Darwin and Alexander von Humboldt'
3. Anna Rasokat: 'Literature's place in the global public health arena: Graham Greene's fictional translation of leprosy in *A Burnt-Out Case*'
4. Moritz Ingwersen: 'Towards a trickster science/fiction: complexifying boundaries with Neal Stephenson and Michel Serres'
5. Adi Efal-Lautenschläger: 'The figural go-between in the Cartesian conception of science'
6. Julia Boll: 'Is knowledge performative?'
7. Ana Duarte Rodrigues: 'Sustainable beauty for algarvean gardens: cross-boundary solutions between the humanities and the sciences'

Nominations for the **2017 BSLS Book Prize** are now being accepted. To be eligible, titles must be dated 2017. Members may nominate their own books (excluding members of the Executive Committee) and publishers may nominate titles from their lists. The deadline for nominations is 31 December 2017, and the winner will be announced at the annual conference in April. Please email nominations to Peter Garratt  
[\(\[peter.garratt@durham.ac.uk\]\(mailto:peter.garratt@durham.ac.uk\)\)](mailto:peter.garratt@durham.ac.uk).

# BSLS GRANTS REPORT

## ANIMALS AND BORDERS WORKSHOP

“Animals and Borders”, the second meeting of the Northern Animals research collective, took place at Leeds Discovery Centre on 13 October 2017. The one-day public engagement event was organised by Leeds Animal Studies Network to explore links between taxidermy, storytelling, and natural science. It featured a collaboration between academics, curators, a South African novelist, and a Leeds-based walking group.

Overall, the workshop investigated an open question: what are the borders that separate humans and animals, and in what ways if any are these barriers overcome through storytelling? Crucially, the Discovery Centre houses a collection of taxidermic objects that have been confiscated by UK Border Agency. The Centre’s stores therefore served as a fascinating case study for thinking about animals and borders.

Following a theoretical session with the Northern Animals collective in the morning, we were joined by the New Wortley Community Centre’s Walking Group. The group meets weekly to explore urban and natural environments and to tell stories about the city and their lives. We explored the two groups’ mutual interests in storytelling by walking the taxidermy stores with Curator of Natural Science, Clare Brown. After discussions over a vegan lunch, we continued the conversation by making collaborative, creative responses (including group-written stories or ‘exquisite taxidermies’).

The day concluded with a public reading and Q&A with Henrietta Rose-Innes, whose latest novel *Green Lion* was recently published in the UK and explores taxidermy, ecological anxieties, and bereavement. LASN are grateful to the BSLS for their generous support in the form of travel bursaries for early-career researchers; they helped us host a ‘roaring’ success.

*Caitlin Stobie*  
University of Leeds

## LEARNING INTERDISCIPLINARY POLICY AT THE BSLS

On October 12<sup>th</sup> this year I published a short piece in the *Times Higher Education* about the increase in consideration of interdisciplinarity in the next UK Research Excellence Framework exercise, due to take place in 2021. The entire article is precisely 700 words, so it won’t take you long to read. Here is where you will find it:

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/opinion/how-will-interdisciplinarity-be-assessed-ref>

The article was illustrated by a photograph of a group of adventurous souls on a long zip wire over Niagara Falls. This was not chosen by me. It was nevertheless an apt image, I thought, of the kind of interdisciplinary experiences I have witnessed at BSLS events over the last decade.

It was, in fact, the knowledge I have gained within the Society – at our annual conference, in the main, and in reading the scholarship we have produced and reviewed – that gave me the confidence to write about interdisciplinarity, its perils and virtues, in the article. I knew, from many conversations, that it was the adventurousness (expressed often as curiosity) that marks out the best work in literature and science. It marks out the best conference papers, too. I had also learned that working across disciplines can leave you in-between: something to provoke anxiety as well as innovation. And I knew that some of our greatest insights come from eclectic, unusual combinations, stretching far across disciplinary divides and widely over national borders.

I concluded my article by attempting to read the runes for what the REF will try to do with interdisciplinarity. I hope in the main that it manages to maintain the sense of precarious freedom that I have so valued in the Society and does not try to limit it with more traditional categories of research quality.

Feel free to get in touch with me if you have any comments on the article – I am always happy to debate the strengths and weaknesses of interdisciplinary research.

*Martin Willis*

# FUNDING AWARDED

Dr Sarah Dillon has received funding from the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence for a three year project (2017-2020) entitled 'AI Narratives', to be run in conjunction with the Royal Society. Sarah will be co-Project Lead along with Dr Stephen Cave (Executive Director, CFI) and Claire Craig (Director of Science Policy, Royal Society). The project aims to explore how AI is currently portrayed, what impact that might be having, and what we can learn from how other complex, novel technologies have been communicated. Kanta Dihal (who undertook her PhD at the University of Oxford) will be working on the project as a postdoctoral research assistant.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### BSLS WINTER SYMPOSIUM METAPHOR IN LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

King's College London

Saturday November 4, 2017

Keynote speaker: Professor Alice Jenkins, University of Glasgow

The aim of this symposium is to re-examine the role of metaphor in literature and science studies in the light of new developments and questions in the field. The study of metaphor and analogy could prove to have a crucial role in negotiating between historicist and readerly approaches to literature and science. Are metaphors necessarily rooted within a particular historical context, with literary texts employing the scientific metaphors of their time, or is it possible to draw productive analogies between literary and scientific texts from disparate historical periods? How useful is it, for instance, to read the forms and metaphors of modern neuroscience into older texts? We would also like to consider the role of metaphor in emerging fields within the study of literature and science, such as performance studies, medical humanities and animal studies (as well as the connected study of posthumanism). How do metaphors function in texts that extend the boundaries of the human?

### THE WISDOM OF THE CROWD

November 29, 18.30 – 20.00

At [The Royal Society](#), London,

6-9 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG

Join Professor Marcus du Sautoy OBE FRS for a night of interactive experiments exploring the power of crowds in answering certain numerical questions. From guessing the weight of a cow or the number of sweets in a jar, there is evidence that the average of a crowd's guesses can deliver surprisingly accurate results. Professor du Sautoy will carry out a number of live interactive quizzes and experiments to test these ideas and look at how these principals can be harnessed for citizen science projects.

This event will be hosted in partnership with the University of Oxford as part of the AHRC's Constructing Scientific Communities project. Visit [conscicom.org](http://conscicom.org) to discover more.

#### Attending this event:

This event will involve interactive elements - you will need a smartphone in order to participate.

It is free to attend; no registration is required.

Seats are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis

Doors open at 6.00pm

Travel and accessibility information <https://royalsociety.org/about-us/contact-us/carlton-house-terrace-london/>

For all enquiries, please contact [events@royalsociety.org](mailto:events@royalsociety.org)



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



## NEWTONIAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE NARRATIVES OF TRUTH BRITISH SOCIETY FOR EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY STUDIES CONFERENCE

Oxford  
3-5 January 2018

This panel has been engineered specifically to stand at the intersection between science and literature, and it includes, along with Alessio Mattana (as a PhD student studying Newtonianism in eighteenth-century prose literature), Dr Laura Miller from West Georgia University, who will deliver a paper on the aesthetics of Algarotti's *Newtonianism for the Ladies*; and Prof Rienk Vermij from Oklahoma University, who will deliver a paper on the Newtonian narratives of truth in the Dutch republic. The panel will be chaired by Dr Matthew Eddy from Durham University, author of important articles on graphic literacy and interactive acts of reading scientific texts in the eighteenth century.

## MEASURE AND EXCESS

INCS International Conference  
University of Roma 3, ROME  
13-15 June 2018

The INCS conference will be on the theme of “**measure and excess**” in the long nineteenth century. From Aristotle’s famous attack on excess in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to twenty-first century denunciations of the dissipations of financial capitalism, the margins of excess have been redrawn throughout the ages. Although the nineteenth century is often associated with ideas of restraint and moderation, manifestations of excess are fostered everywhere in the social, cultural, economic, literary and political realms. The myth of the artist as an outcast who exceeds moral, sexual and aesthetic rules is a nineteenth-century construction; so too is the positivistic notion of the “measurability” of all things, human and non-human, and the consequent project of containing and repressing the potentially subversive “excesses” of the non-rational.



Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Roses of Heliogabalus*, 1888

# CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

## THE LITERATURE & SCIENCE HUB

The Literature & Science Hub at the University of Liverpool <<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/literature-and-science/>> currently hosts: essays, interviews, and opinion pieces; new creative writing, and; ‘classic’ poems introduced by contemporary poets, critics and scientists. The Hub’s latest interview is with Penelope Boston, poet and the director of NASA’s Astrobiology Institute <<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/literature-and-science/interviews/penelopeboston/>>.

The Hub seeks contributors for the following:

- Essays, interviews, and opinion pieces of up to 4000 words, which can be scholarly or non-academic in style
- New creative writing, esp. poetry
- Brief introductions (of around 200 words) to (out-of-copyright) poetry, together with the chosen passage(s)
- Film, theatre, poetry and fiction reviews of relevance to the field.

For further information, please contact the Hub directors Greg Lynall [[gilynull@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:gilynull@liverpool.ac.uk)] and Sam Solnick [[S.Solnick@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:S.Solnick@liverpool.ac.uk)].

Follow us on Twitter: @LitSciHub

## JLS/CONFIGURATIONS “DOUBLE ISSUE” THE STATE OF THE UNIONS



What are the relations between literature, science and the arts within our field today? This special double issue marks a unique collaboration between the *Journal of Literature and Science* and *Configurations*. The first instalment – *JLS* 10:1 – was published this year and can be read [here](#). We now invite short papers for the second issue, to be published in 2018.

The aim of the double issue is to enable scholars of all career-stages to debate the nature of the interdisciplinary relations of our field in short and sharp “position” papers of approximately 2000 words. We welcome papers which respond directly to pieces published in *JLS* 10:1, but we also preserve a more general list of suggested topics from our original call:

- The meanings of interdisciplinarity in the field
- The place of the study of literature and science within the academy
- International variations or international synergies
- Collaborative work between literature/arts and the scientific community
- How do we (now) define "literature" in the dyad of literature and science?
- The relationship between cultural theory and historicism in the field
- How is literature and science evolving in relation to its own splintering (into animal studies, neuroscience, environmental studies, etc.)?
- Speculations: what is the future of the field?
- Reflections: where has the field most profited and where has it gone astray?

The editors also particularly welcome discussion of any of the following with respect to the above topics:

- **teaching and pedagogical practice**
- **material culture and book history**
- **the corporatization of the university**
- **the current crisis in the humanities and/or economic pressures on the sciences**

### Submission information for the second issue:

Length of contribution: 2000 words

Deadline: December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**Send to: Rajani Sudan ([rsudan@mail.smu.edu](mailto:rsudan@mail.smu.edu)) & Will Tattersdill ([w.j.tattersdill@bham.ac.uk](mailto:w.j.tattersdill@bham.ac.uk))**

(Decisions on inclusion in the second issue by February 2018)

# CALL FOR PAPERS

## BSLS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

#### 5–7 APRIL 2018

The thirteenth annual conference of the British Society of Literature & Science will take place at Oxford Brookes University, from Thursday 5 April until Saturday 7 April.

Keynote talks will be given by Professor Kirsten Shepherd-Barr (University of Oxford) and Professor Alex Goody (Oxford Brookes University).

The BSLS invites proposals for 20-minute papers, panels of three papers or special roundtables on any subjects within the field of science, and literatures in the broadest sense, including theatre, performance, film and television. There is no special theme for this conference but abstracts or panels exploring *Frankenstein's* in its bicentenary year are especially welcome as are those in the contemporary period, theatre and performance.

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.200-250 words) and short biographical note to the conference organiser, Carina Bartleet, [c.e.bartleet@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:c.e.bartleet@brookes.ac.uk), by no later than 5pm GMT, Friday 8 December 2017. 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 2018.

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.

Please note that those attending the conference will need to make their own arrangements for accommodation. Information on local hotels will be made available soon.

Membership: conference delegates will need to register/renew as members of the BSLS (annual membership: £25 waged/ £10 unwaged).



Oxford Brookes, Headington Hill  
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