



The British Society for LITERATURE and SCIENCE

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MEMBER ENGAGEMENTS

#LITSCIWRITE FRIDAYS, 2-5 P.M. UK TIME ON TWITTER

On 25th September the BSLS launched a new Twitter-based initiative: #LitSciWrite. Inspired by the British Association for Modernist Studies' weekly #ModWrite sessions, #LitSciWrite is a Twitter hashtag running each Friday, 2-5pm UK time. Twitter users are encouraged to tweet along using the hashtag on Friday afternoons to let other literature and science researchers know what they're working on, whether that be in the form of writing, reading, teaching or thinking. The official BSLS Twitter account then likes and retweets all posts including the hashtag. Over the first 6 weeks of this project more than 30 people have got involved, including postgrads, postdocs, and more-established faculty members. Topics tweeted about have ranged from eighteenth-century working-class poets to cognitive science, from canonical modernist writers to African oral art, from pandemic narratives to tarot cards showing women of science, and all sorts of other things.

The BSLS promotes interdisciplinary research into the relationship between science and literature in all periods.

Autumn 2020 Newsletter

It's proving a great way to get a weekly insight into the wide variety of ideas that our community is currently exploring, as well as a lovely way to keep in touch with and support each other. Our hope is that this initiative will continue to grow over the coming months, so if you're a Twitter user please consider joining us the next Friday that you're free: all you need to do is include #LitSciWrite in your tweet, but don't forget to check out the other tweets using that hashtag each week too.

—Rachel Crossland

WHAT CAN DYSTOPIAN FICTION TELL US ABOUT SURVEILLANCE?

29 OCTOBER 2020

THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK

An invited talk at the Centre for Modern Studies PGR Seminar by Jade Hinchliffe (PhD Candidate, The University of Hull).

Surveillance is, and has always been, a dominant theme in dystopian literature, film and television as this genre is concerned with power, control and human rights. Classic twentieth-century dystopian novels such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) depict disciplinary societies where citizens are monitored and controlled in enclosed spaces by oppressive states. Today, however, we are monitored "on the go" by corporations as well as governments. In my research, I analyse twenty-first-century dystopian fiction from the global north and

global south and discuss the insights that these novels provide us regarding how we are monitored today. In this seminar, I analyse Lauren Beukes' *Moxyland* (2008) and discuss the issues it raises regarding the implications of dataveillance and smartphone technology. Then I will relate this to contemporary concerns about tracing apps and healthcare surveillance in light of COVID-19.

<https://www.york.ac.uk/modernstudies/events/2020-21/autumn/countervoices-29oct/>

THIS BRAVE NEW WORLD: WHAT DYSTOPIAN FICTION CAN TELL US ABOUT LIVING IN A SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY

COSMIA ONLINE FESTIVAL
23 OCTOBER – 1 NOVEMBER 2020

In this short video, I give an overview of the key differences between twentieth- and twenty-first-century surveillance practices and explain how this is portrayed in twentieth- and twenty-first-century dystopian fiction. I suggest some key textbooks and resources for those wanting to research or teach dystopian fiction and surveillance studies. I also list twenty-first-century dystopian novels from the global north and global south that discuss surveillance, which I have come across in my PhD research.

Link to talk on YouTube:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=fjgWNpNoea0>

—Jade Hinchliffe

PhD Candidate, The University of Hull

SYMBIOSIS: ART AND SCIENCE IN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS

ONLINE FROM OXFORD UNIVERSITY
MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

9, 11, AND 13 NOVEMBER 2020

The [Symbiosis](#) network, announced in the last BSLS Newsletter, is holding its next conference online from the Oxford University Museum of Natural History on 9th, 11th and 13th November from 2 to 5 p.m. each afternoon UK time. The conference, co-organised by John Holmes, Professor of Victorian Literature and Culture at the University of Birmingham, and Paul Smith, Director of the museum, will include sessions on natural history museum architecture and design, palaeoart, and the challenges of the Anthropocene. Registration is free and everyone is welcome. For the programme and registration details, visit <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/symbiosis/2020/10/16/symbiosis-conference-9-13-nov-2020-programme-and-registration/>



© Oxford Museum of Natural History

BSLS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Applications are regularly invited for the BSLS Small Grants Scheme and the BSLS Postgraduate and Early Career Conference Fund.

THE BSLS SMALL GRANTS SCHEME offers grants of up to £400 to promote the study of literature and science. We are open to all sorts of proposals with the exception of those that request support for individual personal conference expenses. Examples of activities for which the awards might be used are expenses for a visiting speaker, a seminar series, or a symposium. Applications for support to stage special BSLS panels at appropriate conferences (other than the BSLS 2021 conference) will be considered. The next deadline for applications is expected in early autumn.

THE BSLS POSTGRADUATE AND EARLY CAREER CONFERENCE FUND offers bursaries of up to £200 for BSLS postgraduate student members and early career researchers who are not in permanent posts and are ineligible for institutional funding. Bursaries may be used towards the cost of presenting research papers at conferences.

For details of eligibility and how to apply for either of these funds, please see the Funding page on the website.

For queries about the Small Grants Scheme please contact Rosalind Powell (rosalind.powell@bristol.ac.uk).

For queries about the Postgraduate and Early Career Conference Fund, please contact Rachel Murray (R.E.Murray@lboro.ac.uk).



DOCTORAL DEGREES CONFERRED

Sarah Frühwirth
University of Vienna, Austria

“Discourses of Determinism in British Sensation Novels of the 1860s and 1870s”

Sensation fiction, a genre that briefly flourished during the 1860s and 1870s, contains many references to discourses of determinism. In order to rationalise the transgressive actions of their characters and to negotiate matters of personal responsibility in the context of crimes and infringements of morality, sensation novelists employed a wide variety of deterministic forces, including internal, external, supernatural and natural forces. In my thesis, I relate this emphasis on determinism to the free will vs determinism debate that was raging in the second half of the nineteenth century. By analysing four sensation novels, namely *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Armadale* (1866) by Wilkie Collins, *Not Wisely, but Too Well* (1867) by Rhoda Broughton and *Bred in the Bone* (1871) by James Payn, I show that rather than exonerating their characters from responsibility, many sensation novelists used deterministic forces to make a forceful plea for the individual's freedom of the will. (PhD Supervisor, Margarete Rubik)

Anirudh Sridhar
University of Oxford

“Agon: Poetry's Resistance to the Mathematisation of Reality (1920s-1960s)”

My thesis examines the interactions between Anglophone poetry, and mathematics from the 1920s-1960s. The period bore witness to an unprecedented engagement with mathematics, in the forms of poetic images and metaphors of applied and pure mathematical ideas. The thesis investigates the complex ways in which mathematical terms function in the meaning-making procedures of poems.

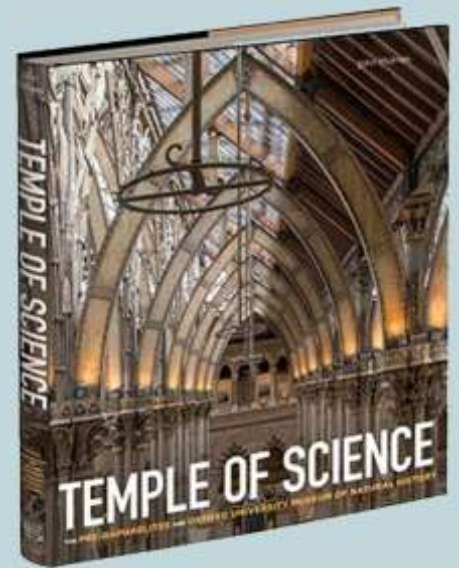
The poets studied are William Empson, Laura Riding, Michael Roberts and Charles Olson. I argue that their engagement with mathematics was in a spirit of competition, against the abstract modes of mathematical representation—that the greater interest was in fact in discursive authority. These poets generally recognised the master discourse of their time to be science and broadly agreed it to be unwise to only regard as true a mathematical account of reality. Their poetry thus always acquires an implicit or explicit attitude of defence and shows their poetic mode of ‘truth-telling’ as unique and essential. (Doctoral Supervisor, Michael Whitworth)



RECENT PUBLICATIONS

John Holmes, *Temple of Science: The Pre-Raphaelites and Oxford University Museum of Natural History* (Oxford: Bodleian Library Press, 2020)

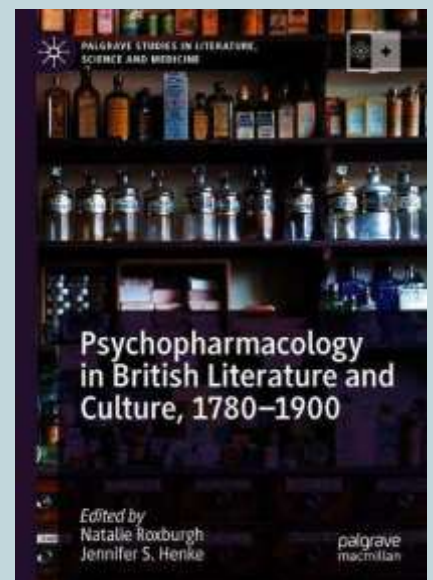
Built between 1855 and 1860, Oxford University Museum of Natural History is the extraordinary result of close collaboration between artists and scientists. Inspired by John Ruskin, the architect Benjamin Woodward and the Oxford scientists worked with leading Pre-Raphaelite artists on the design and decoration of the building. The decorative art was modelled on the Pre-Raphaelite principle of meticulous observation of nature, itself indebted to science, while individual artists designed architectural details and carved portrait statues of influential scientists. The entire structure was an experiment in using architecture and art to communicate natural history, modern science and natural theology. *Temple of Science* sets out the history of the campaign to build the museum before taking the reader on a tour of art in the museum itself. It looks at the façade and the central court, with their beautiful natural history carvings and marble columns illustrating different geological strata, and at the pantheon of scientists. Together they form the world's finest collection of Pre-Raphaelite sculpture. The story of one of the most remarkable collaborations between scientists and artists in European art is told here with lavish illustrations.



To accompany the book, John Holmes has recorded a series of illustrated [podcasts](#) on the art and architecture of the museum.

Natalie Roxburg and Jennifer S. Henke, editors. *Psychopharmacology in British Literature and Culture, 1780-1900*. Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) <https://www.springer.com/de/book/9783030535971>

This collection of essays, located at the intersections of medical humanities and literature and science, examines the way psychoactive substances are described and discussed within late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literary and cultural texts. Covering several genres, such as novels, poetry, autobiography and non-fiction, individual essays provide insights on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century understandings of drug effects of opium, alcohol and many other plant-based substances. Contributors consider both contemporary and recent medical knowledge in order to contextualise and illuminate understandings of how drugs were utilised as stimulants, as relaxants, for pleasure, as pain relievers, and for other purposes. Chapters also examine the novelty of experimentations of drugs in conversation with the way literary texts incorporate them, highlighting the importance of literary and cultural texts for addressing ethical questions.



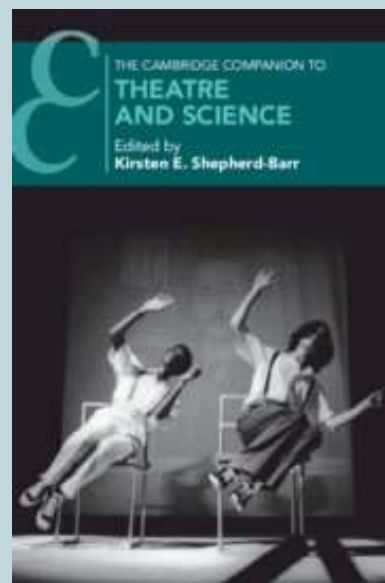
Jennifer S. Henke and Natalie Roxburg. "Situating Psychopharmacology in Literature and Culture." *Psychopharmacology in British Literature and Culture, 1780-1900*. Eds. Natalie Roxburgh and Jennifer S. Henke. Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020): 1-19.

Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre and Science. Cambridge Companions to Theatre and Performance.* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, November 2020) www.cambridge.org/theatreandscience

Theatre has engaged with science since its beginnings in Ancient Greece. The intersection of the two disciplines has been the focus of increasing interest to scholars and students. *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre and Science* gives readers a sense of this dynamic field, using detailed analyses of plays and performances covering a wide range of areas including climate change and the environment, technology, animal studies, disease and contagion, mental health, and performance and cognition. Identifying historical tendencies that have dominated theatre's relationship with science, the volume traces many periods of theatre history across a wide geographical range. It follows a simple and clear structure of pairs and triads of chapters that cluster around a given theme so that readers get a clear sense of the current debates and perspectives.

Chapters by Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr, Dan Rebellato, Jane Goodall, Carina Bartleet, Carl Lavery, Una Chaudhuri, Joshua Williams, Stanton B. Garner, Jr, Fintan Walsh, Jonathan Venn, Mike Vanden Heuvel, Michael Carlin, Rhonda Blair, Amy Cook, and Frédérique Aït-Touati.

The press is offering a 20% discount on the book for BSLS members, on both hardback and paperback. The discount code THEATREANDSCIENCE is now set up and will be valid for use until 31st December.



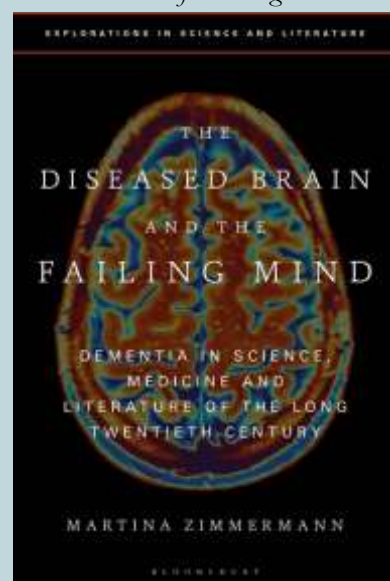
Michael H. Whitworth. "Literature and Science." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature.* (Oxford UP, 28 September 2020). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.990>.

This article, commissioned for the Literary Theory strand in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, argues that historicist literature and science has been open to theory but ambivalent about explicit theorization. Recent theorization focused on the work of Bruno Latour clarifies some tenets of the field but misses others. Although theorization may bring methodological clarity and maintain an alignment between the field and the field of science studies, it does so at the cost of neglecting a wide range of ideas and methods that are embedded in current critical practices. (I'd be very happy to hear from members who would like to read the article and whose institutions don't have a subscription).

Martina Zimmermann. *The Diseased Brain and the Failing Mind: Dementia in Science, Medicine and Literature of the Long Twentieth Century. Explorations in Science and Literature.* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

Thanks to Wellcome Trust funding open access on the Bloomsbury Collections page: <https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/book/the-diseased-brain-and-the-failing-mind-dementia-in-science-medicine-and-literature-of-the-long-twentieth-century/>.

When we think about dementia, we think about it in terms of loss: the loss of mental capacity, the loss of agency, the loss of personhood, the loss of self and life. This book asks where this language comes from. How has it evolved over time? How have disciplinary and institutional knowledge influenced this language and shaped the wider socio-cultural thinking about condition and patient? To answer these questions, this book explores the interplay between literary writing and scientific and medical thinking about dementia and the patient. It delves into the historical grounding of reifying patient presentations as relayed in a number of culturally influential discourses, beginning with its origins in the nineteenth century, when the condition was first described as an organic disease, to the present day, when we think about it as a disorder of cognition. Its central aim is to understand where the cultural path taken by the presentation and perception of dementia is leading the illness and its sufferers to in the twenty-first century.



CALL FOR PAPERS

BRITISH SOCIETY FOR LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE,

ONLINE, 8-10 APRIL 2021

The sixteenth annual conference of the British Society for Literature and Science will be held online from 8 to 10 April 2021, with ongoing access to posted papers through to the end of April for BSLS members. The conference will consist of a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous events.

The BSLS invites proposals for 15-minute papers, panels of three papers, or special roundtables on any subjects within the field of science (including medicine and technology), and literatures in the broadest sense, including theatre, film, and television.

Please send an abstract (200 words) and short biographical note (50 words) in Word or pdf format to <http://bsls.wetransfer.com/> by no later than 18.00 GMT on **Friday 11 December**. Please put your surname then a brief title in the name of the file. Proposals will be reviewed anonymously. Notices of acceptances should be expected by 18 January 2021.

Presentations of accepted papers can be shared as:

- short videos (preferably under 15 minutes and 300 MB; we recommend .mp4 but will accept any widely-used format),
- PowerPoints with or without audio narration (under 300 MB), or
- PDFs of text (2500 words, maximum, excluding citations).

Membership: conference delegates will need to register/renew as members of the BSLS (annual membership: £25 waged/ £10 unwaged). Delegates will need to renew their memberships by 31 March to be assured timely digital access.



"Deskies" from Carina Bartleet, Rachel Crossland, Jenni Halpin, and Jade Hinchliffe

THE BSLS WINTER SYMPOSIUM 2020

IS BEING JOINTLY ORGANISED BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN ON SATURDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2020.

[Register on Event Brite](#)

FUTURE BSLS CONFERENCES

The Society welcomes early conversations with members interested in hosting upcoming annual conferences. Please contact the chair, Greg Lynall.

BSLS 16, ONLINE, 8-10 APRIL 2021

BSLS 17, MANCHESTER, 7-9 APRIL 2022

BSLS 18, EDINBURGH NAPIER, 6-8 APRIL 2023