

**Literature and Science in History:  
Japanese Reception and Reflection**  
**CoSciLit in Asia Hybrid Conference [対面 + zoom]**  
**Japan Women's University, Shin Senzankan**

[日本女子大学 新泉山館] Tokyo, March 2nd 2024

To Register: <https://rb.gy/xlm18>

Conference Organisers: Neil Addison & Nao Takai

How does the study of historical scientific and literary connections contribute towards Japanese scholarly reception of anglophone literature? And how do Japanese literary and critical texts reflect these interrelated scientific and literary influences? This one-day conference, organized by the Commission on Science and Literature (CoSciLit) in Asia, aims to consider these questions and to discuss the opportunities that the field of science and literature affords literary scholarship in Japan.

12:30pm: Opening Address

Akane Miyazaki, Vice-President (Japan Women's University)

Kazuya Sato, Dean of The Faculty of Humanities (Japan Women's University)

1pm: Noriyuki Harada, Professor (Keio University)

Knowledge about Nature, Science, and Literature:  
An Analysis of Jonathan Swift's A Tale of a Tub and Gulliver's Travels

2pm: Masahiko Abe, Professor (The University of Tokyo)

Attention and Perception in Gulliver's Travels

3pm: Yohko Nagai, Professor (Keio University)

Permeable Boundaries Between Popular and Professional  
Scientific Knowledge in George Eliot's Works

4pm: Nahoko Miyamoto Alvey, Professor (The University of Tokyo)

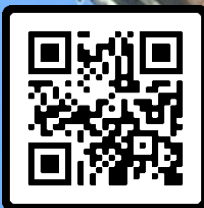
"Am I a Human, Am I Not?": Frankenstein and its Hideous Progeny in Japan

5pm: Online Keynote Address:

John Holmes, Professor (University of Birmingham)

What Can Literature and Science Studies Achieve?

6pm: Closing Remarks



# Commission on Science & Literature

## Knowledge about Nature, Science, and Literature: An Analysis of Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*

Noriyuki Harada (Keio University)

Chair: Masaaki Takeda (The University of Tokyo)

One of the most remarkable aspects of Jonathan Swift's satire is his dynamic reference to nature and science. During the journey to Lord Munodi's estate in *Gulliver's Travels*, for example, Gulliver observes the contrast between barren lands where, regardless of the farmers' diligence, "one Ear of Corn" cannot be found, and the delightful prospect of Munodi's vineyards and Meadows at which fellow countrymen sneer. Swift's criticism of agricultural management affected by the fanciful science of Laputa is clear; he effectively shows the problem with actual and visible descriptions. Plants, animals, climate, landscape, and various natural phenomena are for his literature *lanx satura*—a full dish of various kinds of fruits—and in them he successfully discovers striking similarities to body, emotion, and the society of human beings. Interestingly, Swift's satirical description is always analytical and analogical. In the first section of *A Tale of a Tub*, for instance, he analytically shows two characteristics of the rotten wood of the pulpit; it is full of worms and gives "light in the dark". Then, he dexterously draws an analogy between those two characteristics and "two principal qualifications of the orator". What bolsters Swift's satire is the strong connection between the details of the natural world and the criticism of human society; we may call this analytical and analogical way of description a Swiftian scientific thinking. I will discuss in this presentation how Swift's knowledge about nature and his interest in science play an important role in his writings, largely focusing on *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*.

Noriyuki Harada (Ph.D.) is a professor of English at Keio University, Japan, and a member of the Science Council of Japan. He was the president of the English Literary Society of Japan, 2017-21. His subject is the literature of Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson and other eighteenth-century authors and he has published many articles and books in English and in Japanese. He also published Japanese translations of eighteenth-century English literature including Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and his satirical writings, George Psalmanazar's *Formosa*, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, and an abridged version of Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*.



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## Attention and Perception in *Gulliver's Travels*

Masahiko Abe (The University of Tokyo)

Chair: Laurence Williams (Sofia University)

The insatiable human drive for improved vision has propelled the evolution of visual methods over time, fueled by curiosity, survival instincts, and a quest for knowledge. This desire reached a transformative peak during the 17th and 18th centuries, marked by advancements in devices and knowledge that expanded the human eye's potential beyond its original function. This paper investigates Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, where the changing roles of the eye are intricately woven into the protagonist's encounters with unfamiliar worlds. The narrative highlights how the transformation of the eye parallels shifts in the norms of attention, perception, and understanding. However, Swift's tale provocatively suggests that the pursuit of better vision does not always result in a clearer understanding of the world. Even Gulliver, a 'man of the eye' obsessed with seeing, does not necessarily make the world more visible. Examining the fantastic setting of *Gulliver's Travels* from this perspective reveals an intriguing distortion of the gaze, challenging conventional notions of scientific inquiry and the quest for clarity. This paper aims to unravel the complexities of Swift's narrative, shedding light on the paradox that, in the pursuit of improved vision, one may not always see better.

Masahiko Abe (1966-) is a professor in English at the University of Tokyo. He obtained his BA and MA at the University of Tokyo and PhD at Cambridge University. His publications include *On Slow Motion* (2009), *Staring and Literature* (2012), *Discovering Poetry* (2014), *Politeness and English Literature: Examining the Kindness of the Narrator* (2015), *Talking Like Children Helps: Strategy of Infantilism in Japanese Literature* (2015), and *People Dancing to the Music of Paperwork* (2023). He won the Waseda Literary Award for "Going to the Wilderness" in 1998 and the Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities for *Staring and Literature* in 2013.

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## Permeable Boundaries Between Popular and Professional Scientific Knowledge in George Eliot's Works

Yohko Nagai (Keio University)

Chair: Andrew Houwen  
(Tokyo Woman's Christian University)

Through her thorough reading and collaboration with her partner, George Henry Lewes, as well as with her circle of friends and acquaintances, including Charles Darwin, Richard Owen, T. H. Huxley, John Tyndall, and Herbert Spencer, it is no surprise that George Eliot (1819-80) was well versed in the intellectual and scientific culture of her time. Science is an overt issue in many of her novels, and it serves as a suitable schema with which her social and moral vision can be delineated. However, to contemporary and modern readers alike, the novella "The Lifted Veil" (1859), with its supernatural elements drawing on popular science like mesmerism and phrenology, comes as a surprise. There is even a general tendency to dismiss the novella as an aberration or failure. It is worth noting, however, that in the 1830s and 1840s, there was far less distinction between what we would now call "science" and "pseudo-science." This paper first examines the social and intellectual significance of popular science during the Victorian period and how it influenced Eliot's works. It then explores how Eliot's assimilation of popular science forms the basis of her moral vision, extending into a more professional knowledge of physiology and psychology. It is my contention to prove that in Eliot's novels, the boundaries between popular and professional scientific knowledge are less distinct than we assume, thus enabling Eliot to explore the unknown faculty of our minds.

Yohko Nagai is a professor of English in the Faculty of Economics at Keio University and the vice-chairman of The George Eliot Fellowship of Japan. She studied English at International Christian University, Keio University, and King's College London. In 2001-2002, she spent time at University College London as a visiting researcher. The author of numerous papers on George Eliot, George Henry Lewes, and Charlotte Brontë, she is currently completing a project on "Anonymity and Self-Revelation Among Women Writers in the 19th Century." Her paper, "Revelation Through Dissimulation: The Relevance of Pseudonymity in George Eliot's Writing," was recently published in *The George Eliot Review* (2023).



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"Am I a Human, am I not?":  
*Frankenstein* and its Hideous Progeny in Japan

Nahoko Miyamoto Alvey (The University of Tokyo)

Chair: Rieko Suzuki (Waseda University)

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the theme of creating an artificial being is explored in literature, medicine, science, and law through the confessions of two main characters: Victor Frankenstein, who is haunted by the idea of creating a new species, and his scientific creation, "the accomplishment of my toils," into which he infuses "a spark of being" and which he immediately abandons once it is alive (*Frankenstein* 1818 Text, 36). As Shelley bids her "hideous progeny go forth and prosper" ("Author's Introduction to the Standard Novels Edition" [1831], *Frankenstein* 1818 Text, 176), the novel (and its main characters) has multiplied, its offspring going across different media and disciplines, and into different countries and languages. This lecture considers Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and its literary, scientific, and cultural influence on Japanese texts. It focuses on one important question raised by the novel: what it is to be human(e). The nameless creature Frankenstein scientifically created recounts his "human" sufferings to his creator. Shelley's attempt in *Frankenstein* to seek what humanizes a being, whether human, non-human, or artificial, has attracted and influenced many Japanese artists and writers. From this perspective, the lecture examines some of the Japanese hideous progenies in translation, comics, and fiction, starting with Osamu Tezuka's *The Mysterious Underground Men* and the first modern translation of *Frankenstein* by Masaki Yamamoto published in 1948, only three years after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Nahoko Alvey is a professor in the British Studies Section, Area Studies at the University of Tokyo, Komaba. She specializes in British Romanticism. Her publications include *Strange Truths in Undiscovered Lands: Shelley's Poetic Development and Romantic Geography* (University of Toronto Press, 2009; pbk. 2020), "Frankenstein and Intersectionality" (in Japanese) in *Intersectionality* (ed. Kazuyo Tsuchiya and Riho Isaka, University of Tokyo Press, forthcoming 2024), and "Empire" in *Shelley in Context* (ed. Ross Wilson, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2024).



# Commission on Science & Literature

Online Keynote Address:

**What Can Literature and Science Studies Achieve?**

**John Holmes (University of Birmingham)**

**Chair: Neil Addison (Japan Women's University)**

Researchers in literature and science studies work across an entrenched cultural and educational divide. For some, this is simply a matter of personal interest. Many literary texts engage with theories, findings or inventions from one or more sciences, so literature and science as a field offers a diverse subject matter for the researcher. It promises a particularly bracing intellectual challenge too, given the disciplinary distances to be crossed. A literary scholar has to become well-versed in the science that their texts and authors engage with, from whatever historical period; a scientist needs to develop the skills of critical close-reading and historical research. But literature and science studies can aspire to do more than just open new lines of enquiry and pose fresh challenges. On the one hand, literary scholarship and theory can keep the hubris of the enlightenment in check, reminding us of the false and dangerous knowledge that has often passed as science in the past and the ways in which science has been used as an instrument of oppression. On the other hand, showing how literature has engaged with science can help to form a common culture, restoring the connection between people at large and a science that is often increasingly specialist or rarefied. Literature offers readers, including scientists, the means to reflect on the implications of science for the individual through poetry, for society through drama and the novel, for the future through science fiction, for the natural world through fantasy and myth. In exploring this vast body of work alongside one another, scientists and literary scholars can reaffirm both the value of science and the values that we share regardless of science. In a society addicted to consumption, fixated on technology and imperilled by environmental crises of its own making, the need for science and literature to learn from one another and to speak together has never been more urgent.

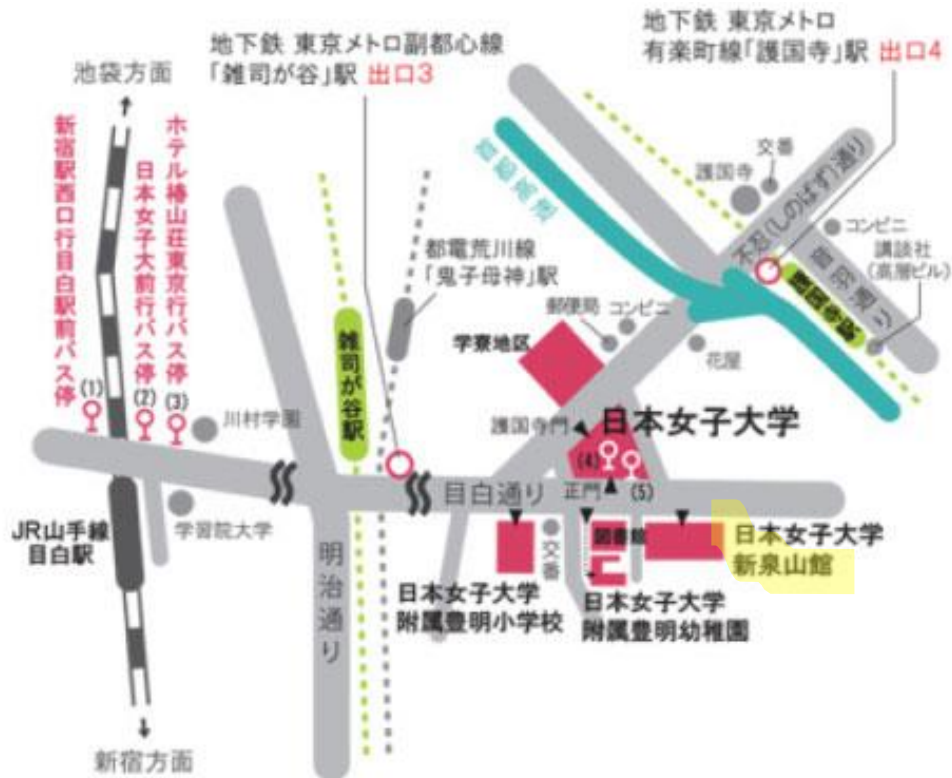
John Holmes is Professor of Victorian Literature and Culture at the University of Birmingham. He is the current President of the Commission on Science and Literature, a former Chair of the British Society for Literature and Science and one of the series editors for Bloomsbury's Explorations in Science and Literature. His own books include *Darwin's Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (Edinburgh UP, 2009); *The Pre-Raphaelites and Science* (Yale UP, 2018), which won the BSLs Book Prize; *Temple of Science: The Pre-Raphaelites and Oxford University Museum of Natural History* (Bodleian Library, 2020); and the edited collections *Science in Modern Poetry* (Liverpool UP, 2012) and *The Routledge Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science* (Routledge, 2017), co-edited with Sharon Ruston. His collaborations with scientists have included co-founding the Symbiosis network to research and develop the role of the arts in natural history museums and working with the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research developing humanities research projects on forests. He will be hosting the International Conference of Three Societies on Literature and Science for CoSciLit, BSLs and SLSAeu in Birmingham and online from 10-12 April this year.



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# Access [交通アクセス]



**Japan Women's University, Shin Senzankan**  
**[日本女子大学 新泉山館] Tokyo,**

**From JR Yamanote Line "Mejiro" Station**  
**Approximately 15 minutes walk**

**Bus: Approximately 5 minutes (see map image for bus stop location)**

**[Toei Bus (Gaku05)]**

**Japan Women's University (direct)**

**Boarding "Mejiro Ekimae" bus stop (2)**

**Get off at "Nihon Joshi University" bus stop (4)**

**[Toei Bus (White 61)]**

**To Shinjuku Station West Exit or Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo**

**Boarding "Mejiro Ekimae" bus stop (1) (3)**

**Get off at "Nihon Joshi University" bus stop (5)**

**From Tokyo Metro Fukutoshin Line "Zoshigaya" Station (Exit 3)**  
**Approximately 8 minutes walk**

**From Tokyo Metro Yurakucho Line "Gokokuji" Station (Exit 4)**  
**Approximately 10 minutes walk**

