



The Literary London Society

LLS Newsletter – Summer 2014

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1. [Message from new President](#)

I'm very pleased and honoured to be taking on the role of President of the Literary London Society from here on in! I was at the first Literary London conference in 2002 and I've found the Conference and Journal a source of excellent scholarship and great fellowship ever since, as well as being brilliant reading list generators.

At the close of this year's Literary London Conference, we had the opportunity to offer sincere thanks to Professor Brycchan Carey for his leadership in founding the Society and getting us on such a firm footing for the future. I'll hope to follow Brycchan's lead in continuing to develop the Society's activities, maintaining our sense of the Society as a generous, welcoming community of scholars that promotes research on London within and without the Academy.

If members of the Society have any ideas or comments about the future direction of the Society, I would always be happy to hear from you at jrb203@cam.ac.uk.

Jenny Bavidge
President, Literary London Society

2. [Conference Report by Eliza Cubitt](#)

The successful 2014 Literary London Conference attracted speakers from global universities taking a variety of approaches to the theme, 'Ages of London'. Engaging with neo-historical and more traditional narratives from all epochs of London literature, emphasising the historical layers of the city itself and the lived experience of London characters, the theme set up numerous possibilities.

In one of the opening parallel panels, an interesting re-examination of the flâneur was proposed by Charlotte Stroud (Roehampton). Reading Sarah Waters's neo-Victorian *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), Stroud suggestively used Elizabeth Grosz and New Material Feminism to examine the possibility of alternative understandings of the embodied experience of the urban stroller. Lisa Robertson (Warwick) presented



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an examination of Emily Hobhouse's report in *The Nineteenth Century* (March 1900) on the housing of working women at the turn of the century, suggesting that the misguided need to treat women in model dwellings as children reveals the problem of the anticipated social impermanence of single women. Jane Jordan's paper on the iteration of the site of Lisson Grove, from which Eliza Armstrong was abducted by W.T. Stead for the investigation that led to 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', was suggestive of the palimpsestic nature with which stories about places and the places themselves overlap in our representations of the city. Attempts to raze or reimagine spaces are ill-conceived, as spaces persist in the imagined Londons which superscribe the 'real' city.

Revisionary views of London were presented in the compelling Literary London Annual Lecture, given by Bernardine Evaristo. Evaristo's prose poetry and poetic novels use a fictional re-imagination of black history to re-examine London's past. Her evocative and fun readings from the poem 'Blonde Roots' and the verse novels *The Emperor's Babe* and *Lara* in which she employs multiple historical epochs to retell the imagined city, were a fantastic close to the first day.

Thursday began with a fascinating examination of 'Thomas Hardy's London' by Mark Ford (UCL). Convincingly suggesting the centrality of the city to the writing of an author so often considered pastoral, Ford pointed out that Hardy wrote far more poems about the city than many of his contemporaries and that indeed Londoners were the greatest consumers of his literature.

Lynne Segal's talk on 'Ageing in London/London's Ageing' was suggestive of the indivisibility of the embodied experience of ageing with one's experience of the city. Segal suggested ways in which women have been coded as aged but that despite this, male ageing is the cause of greater disquiet. The succeeding discussion suggested a bitter-sweet 'jaunty'-ness to the ageing experience of women, which, perhaps coming as a counter to their imagined agedness at 40 (!) offers possibility for the ageing experience.

Friday opened with David Skilton's plenary, which explored the city space as a site of associated ruins, histories and fictionalities which we necessarily encounter in our peregrinations. It was followed by the 'Shadow Cities' panel which suggested the effects of order and disorder both within and inflicted upon the city and opened with Andrew Versteegh's talk on the significance of insomnia in Rosetti's poem 'Jenny' (1847-8). Andrew related sleeplessness in the poem to contemporary discourses on the impact of insomnia on the body, offering a reading of sleep in its relation to the urban space. Alex Fitch's exploration of the psychogeographic *From Hell* (1999) considered the simultaneity of 'past, present and yet to come', and thus the hauntedness of the city space. His talk revealed not only the representation of the space of the city but also the significance of how space is rendered on the page in graphic texts.



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One of the final parallel panels, 'Children on the Streets', brought together three lively papers. Lucie Glasheen (QMUL) probed ways in which children not only respond to but produce public space, demonstrating how children uniquely make private space public through interaction and play. Matthew Ingleby took up the theme of the child in the city as a resistant figure, examining the child in relation to both city and empire in the work of G.K. Chesterton. Jenny Bavidge examined the ways in which children in the city are both 'vital and victimised.' The panel usefully brought together ideas about space and embodiment, offering a chance for reflection on the variegated presentations of these issues throughout the conference.

We thank Martin Dines for organising such an enjoyable, productive and exciting conference, and look forward immensely to next year's on 'London in Love', organised by Peter Jones.

Eliza Cubitt
PG Rep, Literary London Society

3. [CFP: Literary London Journal](#)

We welcome submissions to [The Literary London Journal](#). We will consider all submissions that meet the aims of the Literary London Society, which is to 'foster interdisciplinary and historically wide-ranging research into London literature in its historical, social, and cultural contexts, to include all periods and genres of writing and representation about, set in, inspired by, or alluding to central and suburban London and its environs, from the city's roots in pre-Roman times to its imagined futures'.

All submissions are blind peer-reviewed by experts in the field. This means that articles are published on the quality of the research rather than on the reputation of the author. We therefore welcome excellent articles from contributors at all stages of their career, from graduate student to emeritus professor. We also welcome proposals for edited special editions of the journal.

Submissions received by 15 September will be considered for the Autumn 2014 issue

All submissions and proposals should be addressed to the Editor, Susan Fischer, using the following email address: journal@literarylondon.org

Or, if you would like to write a review for the journal, please contact Susie Thomas: reviews@literarylondon.org



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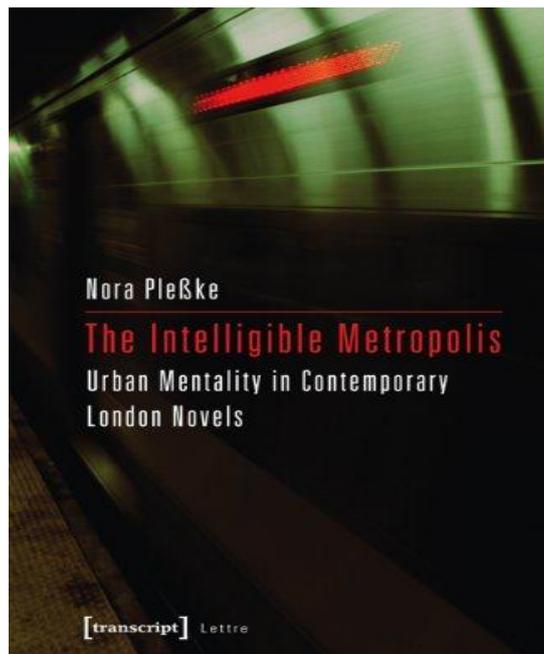
4. [The Reading Group](#)

The Literary London Reading Group is a Postgraduate initiative that meets at Senate House on an almost monthly basis to 'explore those processes that contribute to creation and destruction of an imagined city and its fictional territories'.

Details of this year's sessions will be posted on [our website](#) soon. Feel free to [contact](#) the organisers, Peter Jones, Lisa Robertson and Eliza Cubitt, with any questions.

5. [Publications of Interest to LLS Members](#)

Intelligible Metropolis: Urban Mentality in Contemporary London Novels
By Nora Pleske



Description: 'Writings on the metropolis generally foreground illimitability, stressing thereby that the urban ultimately remains both illegible and unintelligible. Instead, the purpose of this interdisciplinary study is to demonstrate that mentality as a tool offers orientation in the urban realm. Nora Pleske develops a model of urban mentality to be employed for cities worldwide. Against the background of the Spatial Turn, she identifies dominant urban-specific structures of London mentality in contemporary London novels, such as Monica Ali's 'Brick Lane', J.G. Ballard's 'Millennium People', Nick Hornby's 'A Long Way Down', and Ian McEwan's 'Saturday'.

Publisher: Transcript Verlag (22 Aug 2014)



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6. [Events of Interest to Members](#)

- **In Harkness' London: The Life and Work of Margaret Harkness**
Saturday 22 November, Birkbeck School of Arts.

A one-day symposium to convene scholars with an interest in the writer and social activist Margaret Harkness. This event aims to give structure to the ideas and debates that are beginning to emerge around Harkness' literary and historical significance.

Speakers Include: Professor David Glover, Dr Ruth Livesey, Dr Nadia Valman, Dr Lynne Hapgood, Dr Terry Elkiss, Dr Tabitha Sparks, Andrew Whitehead, Dr Victoria Le Fevre, Eliza Cubitt

For updates, follow the symposium blog: www.harknesssymposium.wordpress.com

Contact the organisers at harknesssymposium@gmail.com



Supported by the British Association for Victorian Studies: www.bavsuk.org

Organised by Dr. Ana Vadillo (Birkbeck), Flore Janssen (Birkbeck), Lisa Robertson (Warwick)

- **Source, Tara Arts, Saturday 16 August**

Tara Arts returns with another spectacular outdoor performance to set the streets of Earlsfield and Wandsworth alive in 2014: *Source*. This is a free, interactive show about water and the lost & forgotten rivers of London on Saturday 16 August at 7pm.

An exhibition telling some of the heritage story of London's lost and forgotten rivers will be displayed from Fri 8 to Sun 17 August on the Henry Prince Estate.

Visit <http://tara-arts.com/whats-on/source>