



Institute
of English
Studies



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



The Open
University

REDLetter

The Newsletter of the Reading Experience Database



WINTER 2008

Edited by Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey

Seasonal good wishes from the RED team! As the December freeze takes hold across Britain, our last newsletter, written in the warm afterglow of the RED summer conference, “Evidence of Reading, Reading the Evidence,” seems a long time ago. But we have not been idle at RED HQ since then. We have been busy discussing the possibilities for publishing selected conference papers. Those of you who gave papers at the conference will be hearing from one of us about this shortly, if you have not already done so. We have also been gathering and collating the information provided by users of the database on our RED Questionnaire, in preparation for launching Version 3.0 of the database next summer. Thanks to all those who filled in the questionnaire; we will endeavour to implement the helpful suggestions you have made. The Questionnaire is still available on the RED website. Do please fill it in if you have a moment free. And, because organising one conference just isn’t enough for us, we are currently finalising the arrangements for another event, a one-day symposium on Women’s Reading in the Nineteenth Century, which will take place on 26th March 2009 at the Institute of English Studies in London. Further details can be found below (on p.4) and on our website, at <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/events.htm>.

Much of our time recently has also been occupied in making a concerted push to release more data into the live database, and to build more new search functions, making it possible to search the database in substantially more targeted ways. In addition to all pre-existing ways of searching, our new “Advanced Search” allows users to locate various new types of information more easily. It is now possible to search by the exact time and place of a reading experience, the form in which the work was read, the nationality of the reader, and even by the provenance and publication details of the text being read. We are delighted by the possibilities these new searches open up, and encourage all readers of *REDLetter* to experiment with them.

The new Advanced Search page can be found at http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/search2_advanced.php, and allows me to present the following evidence about seasonal reading in the past. Reading matter throughout the centuries is extremely diverse, though the reading of Dickens’s Christmas books is much in evidence in the database. On 27th December, 1843, Elizabeth Barrett confided to Mary Russell Mitford that she disliked “the machinery” of A

Christmas Carol, “which is entangled with allegory & ghostery” but wrote “I like & admire the mode of the working out – & the exquisite scenes about the clerk & little Tiny [Tim]; I thank the writer in my heart of hearts for them.” In 1854, George Eliot spent a miserably wet Christmas Day in Berlin, reading the *Taming of the Shrew*. Three years later, she and G.H.Lewes enjoyed the Christmas number of *Household Words* together in Richmond. Religious reading, naturally, features in our material – eighteenth-century shopkeeper Thomas Turner read seven of Tillotson’s Sermons during the day and evening of Christmas day, 1756, while, in 1835, in his home in Wellingborough, the publisher John Cole spent Christmas day reading “several Carols from the collection pub. by Parker.” It seems that there is much that does not change over time; an unidentified respondent to a Mass Observation project survey paints a vivid picture of Christmases then and now: “Christmas Day my father was reading his paper. His glass of beer was at his side. He fell asleep and when he woke up his glass was empty. That’s how I had a drink.” In the past, as now, Christmas was not always an easy time of year. Robert Louis Stevenson clearly did not enjoy the festive season, but consoled himself with Thackeray’s *The Adventures of Philip* in Bridge of Allan on Christmas day of 1872: “I have had all things considered and thanks principally to Phillip, a very passable Christmas day [...] then went upstairs and read Phillip till lunchtime (you see I adhere to my own views as to how Philip should be spelt).” Like Stevenson, coffee-broker Gerald Moore found Christmas trying, in Liverpool in 1926, but found a book could make things more bearable: “*Scrambles among the Alps* (Whympster) Trying to get the proper atmosphere in a snow-less Christmas. Certainly, if any book could give it, it is this one. Today has been rather a bore. The usual heavyweight dinner made everybody too somnolent to allow of any attempt at enjoyment. So we slept and read and ate and *finally* slept.” We hope that all readers of REDLetter will enjoy a relaxing, though perhaps less somnolent, festive season.

As always, we have much cause to be grateful to people who have contributed to the RED project in different ways. Many thanks to Kate Macdonald, Tom and Elizabeth Heydeman, Caroline Dakers, John D’Arcy, Alistair Morrison, 3rd Baron Margadale, and Sandra Cummings for help in sourcing useful archival material and permission to use it. Thanks to our technical team, in particular to David Wong, for working so hard on the new searches. Thanks to DeNel Rehberg Sedo for photographs of the RED conference, and to Simon Frost for helping to disseminate our questionnaire. We are constantly delighted by the enthusiasm of our volunteers, and we would like to thank them all for their contributions. Particular thanks most recently must go to Marilyn Ashworth, Gillian Bingham, Helen Chambers, Anna Charlton, Olive Classe, Karen Hedger, Barbara Ryan, Margaret Thomas, and Julie Watt, and to our two indefatigable research assistants, Jenny McAuley and Sarah Johnson.

The winner of the RED caption competition is Robert Falconer, who wins a copy of Virginia Woolf’s *The Common Reader* and a lovely RED bag. Thanks to all who entered the competition.

Lastly, in a bid to save trees and costs, all future REDLetters will only be available via e-mail, or to download from our website: www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED. If you currently receive a hard copy of REDLetter, and would like to continue to hear about the project, please send details of your email address to R.H.Crone@open.ac.uk, and we will add you to our e-mail list.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SEMINAR SERIES

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH STUDIES
(SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY)

TRANSATLANTIC PUBLISHING

Organised by the Open University's Book History and Bibliography Research Group, and the Institute of English Studies, University of London.

Wednesdays, 17.30-19.00

Venue: Room ST273 (2nd Floor, Stewart House), Senate House, Malet St, London, WC1E 7HU. Tel: 0207 8628675

28 January 2009 – Kate Macdonald (University of Ghent)

'The American editions of John Buchan, 1875-1940'

Kate Macdonald is a lecturer at the Department of English, University of Ghent, in Belgium. She is the author of *John Buchan: A Companion to the Mystery Fiction* (McFarland & Co, 2008), and teaches British popular culture and Anglophone poetry to Flemish students.

11 February 2009 – Claire Parfait (Université Paris 13)

'Transatlantic Publishing and the Anti-Slavery Debate, 1840s-1850s'

Claire Parfait is Professor of American studies, as well as book history, at the University of Paris 13. She has co-directed two works dealing with book history: *Histoire(s) de livres: le livre et l'édition dans le monde Anglophone* (Cahiers Charles V, n°32, 2002), and *Au bonheur du feuilleton* (Paris Créaphis, 2007). She is the author of *The Publishing History of Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Ashgate, 2007).

25 February 2009 – Caroline Copeland (Napier University, Edinburgh)

'Writing for her life: Katherine Cecil Thurston's exploitation of celebrity'

Caroline Copeland is Programme Leader in MSc Publishing at Napier University Edinburgh, and co-founder of the independent publishing house Ten Book Press. She has recently completed a PhD on the publishing history of the Irish novelist, Katherine Cecil Thurston.

11 March 2009 – Sara Haslam (The Open University)

'Publishing *Parade's End*'

Sara Haslam is Lecturer in English at the Open University. She is the author of *Fragmenting Modernism: Ford Madox Ford, the Novel and the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), editor of *Ford Madox Ford and the City*, (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005) and *Ford Madox Ford, England and the English* (Manchester: Carcanet: 2003). She is Founding Chair of the Ford Madox Ford society, and is currently editing *Parade's End*.

Organisers:

Dr Shafquat Towheed (The Open University), Project Supervisor, 'The Reading Experience Database, 1450-1945' (RED), <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/>

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The 2009-2010 seminar series will be on the History of Reading. Please contact the organisers if you wish to offer a paper at the seminar series.

SYMPOSIUM

Women's Reading in the Nineteenth-Century: A Symposium

Institute of English Studies

Thursday 26 March 2009, 10am - 4pm

Organised by the Reading Experience Database 1450-1945, the Open University Book History and Bibliography Research Group, and the Institute of English Studies.

Confirmed respondents: David Finkelstein (Queen Margaret University Edinburgh), Gill Sutherland (Newnham College, Cambridge)

Confirmed speakers: Christina de Bellaigue (Exeter College, Oxford), Rosalind Crone (The Open University), Ella Dzelzainis (King's College, London), Katie Halsey (IES, University of London), Naomi Hetherington (London Metropolitan University), Mark Towsey (University of Liverpool)

'Much may be learned with regard to lovely woman by a look at the book she reads in.' (Thackeray)

What did women in the nineteenth-century read? How did they read it? What assumptions were made about women's reading at the time? The purpose of this symposium is to consider the different ways in which nineteenth-century female readers reacted to the texts that they encountered, in particular within different institutional and social groups, such as prisons, schools and literary networks. We will discuss the textual matter that women read, and the spectrum of responses to reading that they recorded; these range from compliant devotion to furious resistance. Such responses tell us not only about "lovely woman" herself, but also about the cultural conditions in which nineteenth-century women became readers.

The day will end with a visit to the Women's Library in Whitechapel, including a guided tour of the collections and the exhibition 'Between the Covers: the Politics and Pleasure of Women's Magazines'.

Places are limited – please RSVP to Katie.Halsey@sas.ac.uk and R.H.Crone@open.ac.uk by **1 March 2009** if you would like to come.

CONFERENCE

Robert Burns in Global Culture

22-23 January 2009

Royal Society of Edinburgh www.royalsoced.org.uk

The Royal Society of Edinburgh is organising a major one-day conference on 'Robert Burns and Global Culture' in 2009. The conference will reflect on issues such as the global reputation of Burns, the translation and reception of Burns in world literatures, the influence of Burns on the image of Scotland abroad, and the continuing celebration of Burns in global culture in statues, music and Burns Supper events. As Scotland's National Academy, the Royal Society of Edinburgh has decided to host this conference on Scotland's national bard as one of a series of global events to commemorate Burns on the 250th anniversary of his birth, in Glasgow, Prague, Beijing, South Carolina and elsewhere. There will be contributions from leading Burns scholars from around the world, and there will be plenty of scheduled time for discussion as well as a session on the latest research on Burns. Neal Ascherson will open the conference, and there will be a Burns Supper with internationally known speakers, including Clark McGinn (see seriousburns.com). Sheena Wellington and Kirsteen McCue will perform at a musical lunch in the middle of the day. A number of additional activities are planned to complement the main conference.

For further information, including registration forms, please contact the Royal Society of Edinburgh Events Department: events@royalsoced.org.uk

CONFERENCE

Reading and the Age of Gladstone

23-25 January 2009

St Deiniol's Library

A Gladstone Centre for Victorian Studies in Wales and the North West Conference in partnership with the University of Liverpool's Centre for Victorian Studies.

Several recent and ongoing projects have sought to provide new histories of the book and examine the role and position of readers within that history. This conference not only aims to explore the issues that surround reading in the period c1830-1901, it also seeks to explore the ways in which the Victorian period is read today. Increased literacy, unprecedented developments in publishing, the widespread availability of texts through periodicals and a new library culture: all mark out the nineteenth century as one of the most active in terms of the 'reading experience'. But how did readers of the time set about their task, and how should the modern critic or teacher set about theirs? What engagement did readers in the period have with the whole machinery of producing and disseminating books, with publishing houses, with libraries, with periodicals, and how do such material considerations affect our reading of the Victorians today? What did the act of reading mean for them – and what does it mean for us?

The conference will take place at St Deiniol's Library, which was founded by the Victorian statesman and polymath William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898). The Library is the National Memorial to Gladstone and is both the only residential library and purpose-built prime ministerial library in the United Kingdom. Part of the programme will consist of the official launch of the Gladstone's Reading Database. The research for this project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (2006-09), has been conducted at St Deiniol's, and database represents a virtual recreation of Gladstone's library, and a unique and comprehensive record of his reading of each item. For further details about the database, please contact m.d.bradley@liverpool.ac.uk.

CONFERENCE

Reading Material: Technology, Text, Interpretation

23 January 2009

Postgraduate Conference at Chetham's library, Manchester

Issues discussed will include:

- The effects of technology on the material nature of texts in any historical period. Are concepts such as the 'book' losing their currency in contemporary culture and scholarship?
- The methods & approaches needed to successfully read material. How do established fields of enquiry act as a help or hindrance for interpreting text? Does reading material present a challenge to what have become established fields of study?
- The benefits of a reading of materiality. What sorts of novel interventions in critical discourse can the interpretation of material enable?

Participants will reflect on the place of texts in museums, archives and libraries and their curation, collection and interpretation; the concept of ownership, copyright & materiality; the role of multiple agencies involved in the production of texts - publishers, authors, readers and others - and how these may affect the form, function and reception of the text; the emergence of digital fictions, hypertext, e-libraries, or the implications of technology for archiving.

This one-day conference is intended to foster intellectual and social interaction and we look forward to a diverse range of responses to these themes.

Keynote Speaker: Our keynote speaker will be Prof. William H. Sherman from the University of York.

For more details contact Christopher Plumb - christopher.plumb@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk and Irene Huhulea - raluca.huhulea@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk. Participation in this conference has been generously funded by The University of Manchester School of Arts, Histories, and Cultures, and the Bibliographical Society. Lunch will be provided at the Manchester Cathedral Refectory. Please join us after the conference for a wine reception at Chetham's.

Website: <http://www.chethams.org.uk/reading09.htm>

CONFERENCE

What Did Mr Miniver Read? The Fears and Aspirations of the "Masculine Middlebrow" Writer, 1880-1950

A two-day conference hosted by the Institute of English Studies, London
13-14 March 2009

Writers of the feminine middlebrow have been studied with increasing discernment and energy since the publication of many forgotten titles by women novelists by Virago from 1977, and by Persephone Books from 1999. Increasingly research has sought to link texts by both male and female writers associated with middlebrow tastes and to identify the kinds of cultural status they were afforded or denied. This conference focuses on the masculine middlebrow: texts aimed at Mr rather than Mrs Miniver. We aim to look in the den, and on his side of the bed, rather than on her bedside table.

'Middlebrow' was a pejorative term by 1925, and can be traced as an increasingly complex social indicator until after the Second World War. The cultural tastes of the 'middling sorts' became increasingly difficult to police and categorise. Though the cultural distinctions reflected in the use of the term persist to this day, we wish to encourage examination of the texts produced during the period when the culture wars were fiercest: the period 1880-1950.

In rereading texts, some forgotten and long disregarded, we also revisit works which are unfashionable and morally repugnant to many in our own time. For a better understanding of middlebrow we need to be open to these aspects, and to understand what the 'ordinary' reader of the day was absorbing from the texts of the 'masculine middlebrow'.

Organisers: Dr Mary Grover, University of Sheffield Hallam (mkg0401@aol.com) and Dr Kate Macdonald, University of Ghent (kate.macdonald@ugent.be).

Enquiries: Jon Millington, Events Officer, Institute of English Studies, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU; tel +44 (0) 207 664 4859; Email jon.millington@sas.ac.uk

CONFERENCE

SHARP 2009: Tradition & InnovatioN - The state of book history / Le point sur l'histoire du livre

23 - 27 June 2009

St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, Canada

The conference theme, Tradition & InnovatioN, provides an opportunity to explore developments in the field of Book History. Professor Natalie Zemon Davis (Princeton and the University of Toronto) and Professor Dominique Kalifa (Paris 1) will deliver plenary addresses.

Topics:

- the future of the discipline
- methodologies: theory versus case studies?
- the legacy of material bibliography

- the 'newmedia' and book culture
- trans-national approaches
- the technologies of reading / assessing readerships
- the evolving nature of authorship
- book history and publishing studies

Presenters must be members of SHARP (by the time of registration) in order to present at the conference. For information on membership, please visit the SHARP website at <http://www.sharpweb.org/>

Conference website: <http://www.utoronto.ca/stmikes/sharp2009/>

CONFERENCE

Romantic Circulations: The 11th biennial International conference of the British Association for Romantic Studies (BARS)

23-26 July 2009

Roehampton University, London, UK

Some of the most productive recent work on the literature and culture of the Romantic period has explored ideas of circulation. The range of scholarship influenced by this approach includes studies of sociability, reading, publishing, anthologizing, conversation, visual and verbal cultures, the history of affect, medicine and disease, and colonialism and slavery. This aim of 'Romantic Circulations' is to investigate the transmission of Romantic ideas, knowledge, cultural forms and literary discourses in the context of changing relations between artist and audience, writer and reader, producer and consumer, elite and popular, national and trans-national.

Topics might include, but not be limited by the following:

- The circulation of sympathy: models of the social as a system of circulation.
- The circulation and transformation of ideas: Conversation and sociability; lectures and debating clubs; education, Sunday schools.
- Reading, reception and audiences: studies of the transmission and reception of visual and verbal texts in the period.
- Visual Circulation: the dissemination of paintings and prints; extra-illustration, marginalia and Grangerization; public spectacle and galleries.
- Circulation of print: Anthologies, pamphlets, publishing, libraries, lending and borrowing; circulation through translation.
- Economies of circulation: money as a material object; economic theory and political economy; the circulation of objects.
- Travel and Technologies of circulation: Transport by road, river, canal, balloon; the post.
- Metaphors of circulation: water, fountains and light.
- Circulation and the body: Blood and medical circulation; contamination and disease; sexual circulation: libertinism and prostitution.
- Trade, commerce and empire: Romantic colonialism; utopias; slavery; orientalism.

For further information contact I.Haywood@roehampton.ac.uk.

Conference organisers: Ian Haywood, Susan Matthews

Conference website: <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/romanticcirculations/>

CALL FOR PAPERS

THE BRITISH BOOK TRADE HISTORY CONFERENCE

The Twenty-Seventh Annual conference on the History of the British Book Trade will take place at **Trinity Hall, Cambridge University** on **28-30 July 2009**.

Council: Catherine Armstrong, Matthew Day, John Hinks, Barry McKay, Lucy Lewis, Lisa Peters

CALL FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCE FELLOWSHIP

Papers are invited on any aspect of the production, distribution and reception of print and manuscript in Great Britain. However, provincial-metropolitan inter-trade connections will be acceptable or on aspects of trade relations with any part of the former colonies & dominions. The theme of the 2009 conference will be **Collectors, Librarians and the Book Trade**, so papers within that area are encouraged, although others will be considered.

The papers presented will be published as part of the Print Networks series, published jointly by the British Library and Oak Knoll Press.

Papers should be of up to 30 minutes duration. An abstract (of c.300 words) of the offered paper and a brief CV (no longer than one side of A4 in total) should be submitted by **31 January 2009** to: Lucy Lewis (lch08@aber.ac.uk)

The Print Networks Conference also offers one or two annual Fellowships to scholars whose research falls within the parameters of the Conference's brief, and who wish to present papers at the conference.

The fellowships cover the cost of attending the conference and possibly some assistance towards costs of travel. A detailed submission of the research being undertaken accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a tutor or supervisor should be sent to Lucy Lewis by 31 January 2009

It is understood that papers offered to the Conference will be original work and not delivered to any similar body before presentation at this Conference. Please be advised that presenting your work at conference offers no guarantee that it will be accepted for publication in the Print Networks series. Furthermore, it is part of the agreement with the publishers that papers will not be published in any similar collection for one year after their appearance in the appropriate Print Networks volume.

Guest speaker: Ann Thwaite, Whitbread Award-winning biographer, will speak on Edmund Gosse, author of *Father and Son* and sometime Librarian of the House of Lords.

CALL FOR PAPERS

RSS Conference on Reception Study

Sept 12-13, 2009

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind.

Keynote Speakers:

- James Phelan, Humanities Distinguished Professor, Ohio State University
- Steven Zwicker, *Stanley Elkin Professor in the Humanities*, Washington University
- Barbara Klinger, Professor of Communication and Culture, Indiana University. Winner of the Katherine Singer Kovacs Award for best essay from the Society for Cinema and Media Studies
- Michael Bérubé, Paterno Family Professor in Literature at Pennsylvania State University

Suggestions for panels and papers in all areas of English, American, and other literatures, media, and book history are welcome. For a list of possible topics and panels, see the RSS website (<http://www.english.udel.edu/RSSsite/>).

The deadline is May 1, 2009. Please submit proposals of 250 words or less to Philip Goldstein at pgold@udel.edu or University of Delaware, 333 Shipley St., Wilmington, DE 19801, or visit the website: <http://www.english.udel.edu/RSSsite>.

Selected conference papers will be published in the RSS journal *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History*, which is an on-line, refereed journal which publishes theoretical and practical analyses in the related fields of the RSS, focusing mainly but not exclusively on the literature, culture, and media of England and the United States. Submissions are welcome at any time. See the [RSS website \(http://www.english.udel.edu/RSSsite/\)](http://www.english.udel.edu/RSSsite/) for vol.1 of *Reception*.

The Reception Study Society promotes informal and formal exchanges between scholars in several related fields: reader-response criticism and pedagogy, reception history, history of reading and the book, audience and communication studies, institutional studies, and gender, race, ethnic, sexuality, postcolonial, religious, and other studies.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Reading Anthologies in Sixteenth-Century France

A study day at the Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool
Friday 20th November 2009

Organised by

Dr Sara Barker (Department of History, University of Lancaster)

Dr Pollie Bromilow (French Section, SOCLAS, University of Liverpool)

Renaissance anthologies took many different forms: 'recueils', 'oeuvres', 'poésies choisies', song books, joke collections. Whether in printed or manuscript form, many kinds of these anthologies circulated in sixteenth-century France both in Latin and the vernacular. This study day seeks to explore the imperatives that governed the production, circulation and reception of anthologies as opposed to single works in sixteenth-century France. What editorial and commercial imperatives drove their appearance? What cultural practices arose from their publication? How are the cultural practices of the anthology related to or different from those of collected and multi-part works?

Points of departure include but are not limited to:

- collected works ('oeuvres') & 'poésies choisies'
- multi-part works and the development of 'brands' eg. the *Amadis de Gaule*, *histoires tragiques* and *histoires prodigieuses*
- the interplay between Latin and vernacular anthologies
- the interplay between printed and manuscript anthologies
- commercial imperatives
- editorial practices
- the role of translation in producing anthologies
- bibliographical approaches and methodologies

The proceedings of this study day will form the basis of a co-edited volume. Abstracts for 20-minute papers should be sent to Dr Sara Barker and Dr Pollie Bromilow at pollie.bromilow@liverpool.ac.uk by Friday 3rd April 2009.

This Call for Papers can also be found on-line at:

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/soclas/conferences/Anthologies/index.htm>
