

Rachel Harker

Education

Birkbeck College, University of London

October 2005 - present

AHRB funded PhD in Seventeenth Century Science Writing

Supervisors: Dr Stephen Clever (English) Professor Michael Bright (History)

"Encyclopaedism and the organisation of natural knowledge in theory and practice in the later seventeenth century: Robert Boyle and his contemporaries."

See appendix for full details of research.

Pembroke College, Cambridge University

October 2004 - September 2005

AHRB funded MPhil in Renaissance Literature

"Robert Boyle: Towards a New Organisation of Knowledge."

Average mark 70%

Keble College, Oxford University

October 2001 - June 2004

BA English Language and Literature.

"An investigation of the philosophical implications of linguistic choices in natural philosophical writing from Francis Bacon to Robert Boyle."

Awarded first class honours

Durham Johnston Comprehensive School

September 1994 - June 2001

A-levels English literature (A) History (A) French (A) Art (B)

GCSEs 9 subjects, all at grade A

Relevant Employment

Birkbeck College, London University

March - May 2006 and May - June 2007

Research Assistant, *Works of Robert Boyle* and *Correspondence of Robert Boyle*.

- ♦ Proof correction and manuscript work, editing skills.

Queen Mary College, London University

September 2006-present

Teaching Assistant

- ♦ Seminar leader on first year Shakespeare course; developing educational and communication skills

Other Employment

KPMG Management Consulting

July - August 2002 and 2003

- ♦ Conducting surveys, editing and compiling reports; gaining IT, networking, professional and communication skills

Academic and Related Achievements

Presentations:

- ♦ Papers at British Society for the History of Science Postgraduate Conferences
 - 2006 'Robert Boyle's Working Papers: 'a Chaos, Rude and Indigested'?
 - 2007 'Natural philosopher or natural historian: creating natural knowledge in the seventeenth century'
- ♦ PowerPoint presentation for course leaders of Queen Mary Shakespeare course (2007)

Professional development:

- ♦ Research Councils UK GRADschool (2007)
- ♦ Invited speaker at the Research Councils UK GRADschool Directors' Workshop (2007)

Administrative:

- ♦ Leader of the intercollegiate Early Modern Reading Group at Birkbeck. (2006-2008)
- ♦ One of six co-ordinators of the Oxford University Women's Open Day (2002). Responsible for publicity, arranging and implementing programme.
- ♦ Oxford University Target Schools Scheme (2002). Visited state schools to encourage more applications to Oxford.
- ♦ Illustrator of Keble Freshers' Handbook (2002)

Other Achievements

Voluntary:

- ♦ Work with homeless people in Cambridge (2005) and London (2006)
- ♦ Charities Officer on the Keble College JCR Committee (2002-3). Responsible for raising and distributing money.

Sports:

- ♦ Rowed in the Keble College first eight, winning blades in the Torpids Regatta in 2003, and coached and coxed novice crews in 2002 and 2003.

Personal and Contact Details

Full postal address

Telephone numbers

Date of birth

email address@server.com

Referees - Full names, addresses, phone number and emails of supervisor and at least one other academic referee.

Appendix: Details of Research Interests

'Encyclopaedism and the organisation of natural knowledge in theory and practice in the later seventeenth century: Robert Boyle and his contemporaries.'

The aim of my thesis is to investigate the structural arrangement of Boyle's works, and its intellectual implications. This has involved:

- ♦ **a theoretical review** discussing whether Boyle's work is best understood in the natural historical or natural philosophical tradition. According to seventeenth-century models, correct ordering validates data, with right organisation emerging as a criterion by which factual discourse (simple history) may attain philosophical status. Apparently editorial decisions about presentation thus emerge as epistemologically significant in the categorisation of texts. Boyle's self-positioning within a natural historical rather than a universalising philosophical tradition thus normalises and justifies his emphasis of individual facts, and his claims that questions of ordering may be legitimately neglected.
- ♦ **an analysis** of Boyle's self-presentational prefatory statements, which strikingly emphasise the failure of his work to conform to literary and philosophical expectations. A literary contextualisation of Boyle's apologetic prefaces allows a reassessment of the extent to which he is actually advertising rather than apologising for his disorderly methods. While Boyle apparently erodes his own authorial credentials, this presentation actually satisfies the contemporary demands of rhetorical propriety as it balances the needs of the particular author, audience, subject, and type of text attempted. Thus presentation of works as disordered strengthens Boyle's claim to experimental expertise, is acceptable given his audience of initiands, and is suited to the factual nature of the subject, and the chosen essay form. To some extent, the 'good' experimenter qualifies by showing that he is a 'bad' author.
- ♦ **an exploration** of the material processes of knowledge creation, assessing whether Boyle's manuscripts reveal a concerted attempt to resist the systematising schemes suggested by the commonplace and diaristic traditions. Detailed bibliographical analysis of the organisation of information within the Boyle archive (in particular the analysis of the various (unrealised) schemes of arrangement present in Boyle's papers) is contextualised by reference to contemporary prescriptions for the organisation of material in general (the commonplace and encyclopaedic traditions) and to advice on archival storage and manipulation specifically directed to Boyle by his correspondents.
- ♦ **an assessment** of the actual structure of the published works which Boyle's prefaces claim are disordered, including a comparison of published works with their manuscript versions. This analysis has allowed an assessment of whether Boyle overemphasises his disorder to advertise it. The study is broadened by comparing Boyle's publications with the emergent periodical literature and the evolution of the encyclopaedia in the period. Future work will investigate whether these developments are driven by similar intellectual concerns to those of Boyle.