

Light Technologies:

The Materialisation of Light Therapeutics, c.1890 to the Present



University of Warwick

10 April 2013

Convenor

Dr Tania Woloshyn (University of Warwick)

With kind sponsorship from a Wellcome Trust Postdoctoral Fellowship Award



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Modern Records Centre

THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Organised by the Centre for the History of Medicine, University of Warwick

Venue

Seminar Room, Modern Records Centre

The Modern Records Centre (MRC) is located within the University site – it is marked as **building 44** on the main campus map. This can be downloaded at: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/visiting/maps/campusmap/> Please note that the building numbers on printed versions of the map may be different. For more information on visiting the University of Warwick please see our web: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/visiting>.

Accommodation

For those staying in accommodation;

Please be advised that speakers have been booked at **Arden House**, located within the University site – it is marked as **building 1** on the main campus map. <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/visiting/maps/campusmap/> Further information for your stay can be found via the Arden site: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/conferences/ourvenues/arden>.

Attendees will be notified as to their accommodation venue. Further details can be found via: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/conferences/ourvenues>.

Parking

There are multiple (short and long stay) car parks within the University campus. For more information on visitor parking please see our web: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/visiting/directions/car/parking/> For parking maps: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/visiting/maps/parking/>.

Taxis

The University uses Trinity Taxis for travel arrangements.

Tel: 02476 631631

For those claiming expenses, we ask that you please keep your receipts.

Should you have any dietary or access requirements please contact the Centre for the History of Medicine Administrator (Tracy Horton) via email: T.Horton@warwick.ac.uk or tel: 024 765 72601.



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Provisional Programme

Wednesday 10 April 2013

- 9.30 – 10.00** **Welcome - Registration and Refreshments** (*Exhibition space – MRC*)
- 10.00 - 10.40** **Thinking Through Light Technologies: the Material and Materialisation of Light Therapies, c.1890-1940**
Tania Woloshyn (University of Warwick)
-
- 10.40 – 11.00** **Refreshments** (*Exhibition space – MRC*)
-
- 11.00 – 11.40** **“Elves of Light”: the Role of Specialist Nurses in *fin de siècle* Light Treatments**
Annie Jamieson (University of Leeds)
- 11.40 – 12.20** **“Women adore it, Men admire it”: the Hanovia-Kromayer Collaboration and Phototherapy**
James Stark (University of Leeds)
-
- 12.20 – 1.20** **Lunch** (*Exhibition space – MRC*)
-
- 1.20 – 2.00** **Matter of Destruction: Representing the Atomic and Photographic Trace**
Sophia Zweifel (Independent Scholar)
- 2.00 – 2.40** **Light, Health and National Identity in Modern Australian Photography**
Melissa Miles (Monash University)
-
- 2.40 – 3.00** **Refreshments** (*Exhibition space – MRC*)
-
- 3.00 – 3.40** **The Medicalization of Sunlight in the Early Twentieth Century**
Simon Carter (Open University)
- 3.40 – 4.20** **Colour, Culture and Light in the Imagery of Late Twentieth-Century Rickets**
Roberta Bivins (University of Warwick)
-
- 4.20 – 5.00** **Open Discussion**
Future Collaborative Ventures
-
- 5.00** **Closing Remarks followed by drinks on campus**
-
-



Light Technologies: the Materialisation of Light Therapeutics, c.1890 to the Present

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Abstracts

Tania Woloshyn

Thinking Through Light Technologies: the Material and Materialisation of Light Therapies, c.1890-1940

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As an opening to the workshop, my paper will introduce the topic of light therapies, including natural sun therapy (heliotherapy) and artificial light therapy (phototherapy), while also considering X-ray therapy and radium therapy. By focusing on the perceived therapeutic benefits across the electromagnetic spectrum, I wish to explore how rays – both visible and invisible – took an increasingly dominant role in therapeutics during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Light, whether invisible (ultra-violet and infra-red) or visible (colour), became a valued resource in the ongoing fight against diseases such as tuberculosis and rickets, in Britain and abroad. International collaborations fuelled the development and acceptance of light therapies, while the divergent paths of heliotherapy – towards naturism, nudism and tourism – and of phototherapy – alongside technology-driven radio- and electrotherapies – complicate an easy narrative telling of the British history of light therapies. Indeed the tensions and ambiguities of this history are central to my paper, approached through its rich literature and visual and material cultures. The major aims of the paper, and my research project on the subject as a whole, are to grasp how light therapies first emerged, how they became validated as legitimate and advanced forms of treatment, and how they were disseminated to the medical community as well as to the general public. The increasing ‘systematisation’ and technological focus of both heliotherapy and phototherapy were, I argue, imperative to the ‘medicalisation’ of light by the early twentieth century. The dissemination and definition of light *medicalised* (of light as therapeutic) was achieved not only through the written word; images via photography – itself a ‘light technology’ – exposure charts, spectrographs, and the very apparel that made the therapies possible, such as lamps, goggles and specially-designed beds, were objects that actively participated in the ‘materialisation’ of light therapeutics. Special mention will therefore be made of the accompanying MRC exhibition, ‘Irradiating the Sun-Starved: Light Therapies in Britain, c.1900-1940,’ as part of my Wellcome-funded project, ‘Soaking up the Rays: the Reception of Light Therapeutics in Britain, c.1899-1938.’

Annie Jamieson

“Elves of Light”: the Role of Specialist Nurses in fin de siècle Light Treatments

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An article in the *Nursing Record & Hospital World* in 1900 described the Finsen light treatment for lupus vulgaris as “interesting beyond its medical aspect, inasmuch as it shows how indispensable the services of skilled nurses have become in the scientific treatment of disease.” The Finsen light is little known today but it won for its inventor, Niels Finsen, the 1903 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine, and the expert nurses who carried out treatments at Finsen Light Institute in Copenhagen were popularly known as ‘elves of light’. This paper will discuss the performative aspects of this technology and how these characteristics had important effects on the development of a nursing specialism, especially in the British context. It will argue that the Finsen light treatment provided great opportunities for nurses at the turn of the century to engage with modern technology and can be seen as an example of the ways in which nurses sought to distinguish their activities more clearly from domestic or familial care and thus overcome their cultural invisibility, situating their profession more securely within the realm of modern, scientific medicine.

James Stark

“Women adore it, Men admire it”: The Hanovia-Kromayer Collaboration and Phototherapy

Arts Engaged Research Fellow, School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science, University of Leeds, j.f.stark@leeds.ac.uk

In the early twentieth century phototherapy was an emergent and novel treatment for a number of skin diseases and complaints. Although the Finsen lamp became the most popular device for such therapies, its carbon arc lamp system was by no means the only method available. One of the principal competing technologies was the mercury lamp developed by Ernst Kromayer, a German dermatologist, around 1900. Kromayer practised in Halle and Berlin, and had a successful career as a medical professional. Alongside this, however, he constructed, enhanced and patented devices which claimed to offer superior treatment to those of his rival Finsen. He entered into a productive commercial relationship with the American-based Hanovia Chemical and Manufacturing Company and its later UK offshoot. The Hanovia Company originally made its name in the disinfectant industry, but they agreed to manufacture and sell Kromayer’s new lamps, which bore his name. The partnership was a fruitful one, and the Hanovia Company continued to market “Kromayer UV Lamps” long after the German’s death in 1933. They asserted ownership rights aggressively in court, marketed their products to both public and professional medical audiences, and made Kromayer’s name synonymous with their treatment. This paper argues that through a strategy of patenting, marketing and ownership claims, the Hanovia Company successfully occupied a niche in the competitive phototherapy marketplace. Further, the use of Kromayer’s name gave their devices credibility with both the medical profession and the public, and resulted in a long-lived and significant eponymity.

Sophia Zweifel

Matter of Destruction: Representing the Atomic and Photographic Trace

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In a study that addresses the visuality of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, my research explores the inherent powers of the flash as a photographic exposure. In looking at the cultural framework and undercurrents of desire that existed at and contributed to the onset of photographic technology, significant power structures of visuality are revealed when these frameworks are considered in the light of the atomic force that has been famously described as ‘harnessing the powers of the sun.’ An analysis of the bomb as a camera defines its overwhelming flash to have carried the power to make its victims’ bodies visible while simultaneously fixing them—dissolving their boundaries with a rational, unbending light of knowledge and progress. If the penetration of the body with light culminated with the advent of X-ray technology at the close of the nineteenth century, the atomic bomb took this radiating subjection to new levels. Considering the traces of these bodily exposures as they were burnt onto the surfaces of the city, and looking at several cases of photographic and print media art projects that have addressed the subject, I will utilize photographic theory to examine the undercurrents of visual power present in the detonation of the atomic bomb.

Melissa Miles

Light, Health and National Identity in Modern Australian Photography

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This paper focuses on the belief in the healing, nourishing powers of sunlight in Australia during the early twentieth century, and its links to national mythologies and the development of a distinctly Australian School of photography. Whether it was idealized in paintings and poetry, or transformed into the emblem of the soldiers of the Australian Imperial Forces, sunlight has long served as a potent symbol for Australian identity and place. The convergence of a nourishing and rejuvenating Australian sunlight with photography, as the medium of light-writing, made for a striking partnership. This union formed a powerful national mythology that is inseparable from the nation’s birth and coming of age, but has evolved, been adapted and transformed in the hands of countless Australian photographers ever since. By examining a range of examples of photographic portraits, urban scenes and landscapes, this paper will examine how the long-standing interest in the health benefits of light became entangled with Australian national mythologies in the early twentieth century, and had a lasting impact upon a wide array of photography practices.

Simon Carter

The Medicalization of Sunlight in the Early Twentieth Century

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During the 1920s and 1930s a variety of forces came into play to weave sunlight, as a giver of health, into the fabric of social worlds. This paper traces the emergence of the therapeutic use of sunlight in medicine during the first half of the twentieth century. This was a period of considerable flux in medicine with various strands of practice and theory competing. Drawing on the case studies of natural sunlight therapy (heliotherapy) in the treatment of tuberculosis this paper will explore how medicine was constituted within this therapeutic regime. The paper will argue that therapeutic and clinical applications of sunlight helped establish an association between sunlight and health but also defined a particular and specific performance of medicine. In addition the changing role, evidence and attempts to measure therapeutic efficacy towards the end of this period will be considered.

Roberta Bivins

Colour, Culture and Light in the Imagery of Late Twentieth-Century Rickets

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In the decades between 1963 and 1983, clinicians, researchers, health workers and members of Britain's growing South Asian ethnic communities repeatedly confronted the British state with evidence of persistent nutritional deficiency among British Asians. Rickets – so often described as a 'Victorian' disease – became a high-profile sign of what was variously constructed as a failure of the Welfare State; or of the political parties charged with its protection; or of ethnically Asian migrants and their descendants to adapt to British life and norms. Here I will explore the ways in which (imposed) images of rickets and osteomalacia in this period racialised the 'British disease', how they conflated skin colour and culture, and how they used long-established tropes of light and health. I will compare these externally-produced British images with representations of 'Asian rickets' and the 'Stop Rickets' campaign produced within the British Asian community, and where possible, with representations of healthy nutrition from the Indian subcontinent.