

AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENTS OF TURKEY JOINT GRADUATE CONFERENCE 2022

April 28-29, 2022
Online

CALL FOR PAPERS

Hosted by
Hacettepe University's American Studies Department

In collaboration with the American Studies Departments of Ankara University, Atatürk University, Başkent University, Bilkent University, Dokuz Eylül University, Ege University, Haliç University, and İstanbul University

The Lure of Science and Technology in American Culture and Literature Past, Present, Future

*A long time ago, there lived a skillful scientist who had
experienced a spiritual reaction more striking than
any chemical one.
--from Hawthorne, "The Birthmark"*

*What is an ansible, Shevek?
An idea. He smiled without much humor. It will be a device
that will permit communication without any time interval
between two points in space. ... So we will be able to use it to
talk between worlds, without the long waiting for the message
to go and the reply to return that electromagnetic impulses
require. Like a kind of telephone.
--from Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed**

Science and technology have influenced American literary and cultural texts, as well as the visual arts, since colonial times. From Hawthorne's short story "The Birthmark" and Thomas Eakins' painting *The Gross Clinic*, depicting Dr. Samuel D. Gross lecturing to a group of Jefferson Medical College students, to countless examples of literary and cultural texts, such as Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital* series, scientific ideas and technological advances have enriched American authors' and artists' oeuvres. Early pioneers of modern science fiction have sought inspiration from, and been shaped by, the imaginative power made accessible through the close connotation between science and culture. This connotation equated the artistic voice of the creative mind with reimagining the world through the lens of science.

Hailed as one of the first examples of modern science fiction, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall," for example, revealed the extent of an imaginatively rich, curious and yet obsessive scientific mind that created a balloon which would take its passenger on a voyage to the moon. In this respect, the employment of the scientific mind as a trope in literature has traditionally

intersected with the human effort to try to understand the unknown. As Solbes and Traver state, “[t]he mutual influence of these two ways of thinking (science and humanities) shows that they are equally human and have constantly influenced each other, and even more so today.”

Contrary to common perceptions, science and the humanities are not at odds with each other, but have been sustained by each other’s unique perspectives and approaches for centuries, across various genres and mediums. In many cases, scientists and creators have worked in tandem with an interdisciplinary focus to perfect both fields by integrating the same methods of control, determination, perception, curiosity, inquiry, analysis and replicability. Sometimes, these two approaches have been embodied through the same person, as evident in literary anthologies such as *Great Science Fiction by Scientists*, in which practicing scientists attempt to capture the human struggle with science in a technologically advanced age with the help of a unique interdisciplinary approach that recontextualizes the past, situates and comprehends the present, and speculates about the future. In other cases, artistic mediums have been created or transformed solely through technological advances, such as the invention of new narrative methods to document each step of this growth. This beneficial symbiosis has created a literary world where scientists and authors draw inspiration from each other’s accomplishments, where the same creativity fuels both scientific discovery and artistic expression.

This conference will address the various ways in which the interconnectedness between science, technology, imaginative power, culture and humanity are reflected through representations of American culture and literature. Proposals may address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- American fiction/visual arts influenced by scientific and technological advances
- Representations of scientific fields (the natural sciences, mathematics, economics, astronomy, astrophysics, biology, ecology, statistics, engineering, archaeology, anthropology, social sciences, medicine, environmental science, political science, culinary science, etc.) in American literature and culture
- American literature and culture and the digital humanities
- Science and technology in American film and television
- The role of American fiction in the development of science and technology
- Representations of science and technology in American detective fiction
- Narratives of science and technology in American nature writing
- Interrelationships between the history of science and American literature
- Narratives of scientific and/or technological inventions and explorations in American literary and cultural texts
- Narratives about the discoveries of renowned American scientists and inventors
- Life writings (diaries, memoirs, letters, autobiographical & biographical narratives) of American scientists and inventors
- Narratives of space technology in American culture and literature
- Representations of science and technology museums in American literary and cultural texts
- Narratives of moral/ethical responsibilities/dilemmas of American scientists and inventors
- Representations of science and technology in American speculative fiction, such as science fiction, utopian fiction, dystopian fiction, and apocalyptic narratives
- New emerging narratives made possible by science and technology (video games, multi-media short stories, novels, plays, etc.)

We ask interested MA and PhD students to send 250-word abstracts and one paragraph bios to the organizing committee (TASD-graduate@gmail.com) by February 1st, 2022.

Important Dates

Deadline for abstract submission:

February 1, 2022

Notification of acceptance:

February 20, 2022

Deadline for participant confirmation:

March 1, 2022