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These essays throw new light on the complex relations between science, literature and rhetoric as avenues to discovery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds examine the agency of early modern poets, playwrights, essayists, philosophers.

Subscribe to feed Juliet Cummins and David Burchell eds , Science, Literature and Rhetoric in Early Modern England BSLs members receive a discount on all Ashgate titles This volume brings together ten scholars from various fields in early modern studies to discuss the ways in which science, literature and rhetoric contributed to new forms of knowledge in the early modern world. The introduction by Cummins and Burchell sets out the rationale for the project in a clear and informative way, giving newcomers to the topic a useful grounding in the scholarly background to the work. The editors go on to argue that, this being the case, it is more fruitful for scholars to investigate ways in which both literary and scientific practices worked together to contribute to early modern thought. This is an interesting and potentially very productive line of research, and clearly requires the interdisciplinarity emphasised by the editors. Despite the range of contributors, though, in this particular volume most essays deal with texts that modern readers and, one suspects, early modern ones would class as literary rather than scientific. In fact, most deal with major literary figures of the period – Hobbes, Pope, Behn, Milton, Cowley, Shakespeare, Swift – though of course some natural philosophers also appear, including Robert Boyle. Whilst no doubt extremely interesting and useful, the emphasis on literary texts results in a volume more likely to appeal to literary scholars than historians of science. Harrison rightly points out that although it is easy for modern readers to assume the dominance of science from the outset, the reality was very different. He discusses the various attacks made on the Society in particular and natural philosophy in general by the dramatist Thomas Shadwell, the scholar Meric Casaubon and the polemicist Henry Stubbe. He concludes with the interesting point that discussions of the utility of natural knowledge that arose in the early modern period in Europe may be usefully seen as a step towards the acceptance of science in the West and may explain why other cultures such as China and the Arab world chose not to pursue science as a valuable way of obtaining knowledge. This is an interesting idea, but unfortunately Duran does not provide any supporting evidence for her claim that natural philosophical texts follow a catechistic model. This work was hardly central to the new philosophical movement and Duran mentions it only briefly. Catherine Gimelli Martin also discusses Milton, examining his Baconianism and using this as a lens through which to view his relationship with the Royal Society rhetoricians, particularly Thomas Sprat and Abraham Cowley. Peter Dear argues that Margaret Cavendish based her claims for philosophical authority on her social status, which allowed her to publish her philosophical theories whilst preserving her female identity. Cavendish rejected the experimental philosophy of Hooke, in particular, because she believed that the scientific instruments on which he placed such importance present a false picture: With Hobbes, she emphasised the need to understand the causes of things rather than mere matters of fact. These are useful texts to study in the context of this collection as they represent some of the most obvious early modern literary responses to the new philosophy. On the other hand, they have been much studied in the past, and it may have been fruitful to consider alongside them some lesser-known texts, such as the works of the Christ Church wit William King, who made much the same attacks on the new philosophy and Sir Hans Sloane in particular in his *Useful Transactions in Philosophy and The Transactioneer* The collected papers do give a sense of this interdisciplinarity, although the strong emphasis on canonical literary figures produces a volume that mainly discusses the complex ways in which literary culture responded to the emerging ideas of the new philosophy. Felicity Henderson, *The Royal Society Search this site* The British Society for Literature and Science is a scholarly society which promotes interdisciplinary research into the relationships of science and literature in all periods. Membership is open to anyone interested in the field, regardless of geographical location.

SCIENCE, LITERATURE, AND RHETORIC IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

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4: Table of contents for Science, literature, and rhetoric in early modern England

Juliet Cummins and David Burchell, eds. Science, Literature and Rhetoric in Early Modern England. Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity. Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity.

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Early Science and Medicine 'The editors set out to provide scholars and students of early modern studies with a new way to understand disciplinary interactions of the period. Certainly, they achieve this goal, but this collection is an intriguing and sturdy starting point for more endeavours of the sort, a necessity of the project's vast aim.'

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