

# Theresa Levitt

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## Employment

### **University of Mississippi**

Professor of History, 2016 - present  
Associate Professor of History, 2009 – 2016  
Assistant Professor of History, 2002 – 2009

## Education

### **Harvard University**, PhD in History of Science, 2002

Dissertation Title: *The Shadow of Enlightenment: Practices of Representation in France, 1789 - 1848*

Advisor: Peter Galison

Thesis Committee: Peter Galison, Mario Biagioli, Lorraine Daston

### **Iowa State University**, MA in History, 1996

Thesis Title: *Caloric and the Physical Ether in the Thought of Augustin Fresnel*

Advisor: David Wilson

### **Massachusetts Institute of Technology**, BS, 1993

Thesis Title: *The Branching Ratio of  $B \rightarrow J/\Psi + K^0$*

Advisor: Paris Sphicas

major: physics

concentration: philosophy

## Research

### **Books**

*A Short Bright Flash: Augustin Fresnel and the Invention of the Modern Lighthouse*  
(New York: W.W. Norton, 2013)

*The Shadow of Enlightenment: Optical and Political Transparency in France, 1789 – 1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

### **Books in Progress**

*Miracle Waters: Perfume and the Chemistry of Life*, in progress.

*A Cultural History of Physics: The Age of Industry* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, projected to be 2019), co-editing with Iwan Morus, in progress.

## Articles

“When Lighthouses became Public Goods: The Role of Technological Change,” *Technology and Culture*, January 2020.

“The Lighthouse at the End of the World: Illuminating the French and British Empires,” *Itinerario* 38 (April 2014).

“Liberty, Equality, Technology: Virtuous Inventors and Base Profiteers in the French Industrial Revolution and Beyond” Introductory Essay for a special volume of *Technology and Culture* (October 2013) 54:815-819.

“I thought this might be of interest...: The Observatory as Public Enterprise,” *The Heavens on Earth: Observatory Techniques in the Nineteenth Century*, David Aubin, Charlotte Bigg, Otto Sibum, eds., (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009)

“Biot’s Paper and Arago’s Plates: Photographic Practice and the Transparency of Representation,” *Isis* (November 2003): 456-476.

“Organizing Sight, Seeing Organization: The Diverging Optical Possibilities of City and Country,” in *Science and the City*, Sven Dierig, Jens Lachmund, and J. Andrew Mendelsohn, eds., *Osiris*, 18 (2002): 101-115.

“Editing out Caloric: Arago, Fresnel, and the Meaning of Light,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* (February 2000): 49-65.

## Other Publications

“Heaven Descended to Earth: The Invention of the Fresnel Lens,” *Hydro International* (September 2013) vol. 17.

“The Glittering Lens that Brought Me Back to Alaska,” *Zocalo*, May 19, 2013

## Book Reviews

Oliver Hochadel, Agustí Nieto-Galan (Editors). *Urban Histories of Science. Making Knowledge in the City, 1820-1940*. (Routledge Studies in the History of Science, Technology and Medicine.). New York: Routledge, 2018, for *Isis*, forthcoming.

Pilar González Bernaldo and Liliane Hilaire-Peréz, *Les saviors-mondes: Mobilités et circulation des saviors depuis le Moyen Âge*. (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015), for *Technology and Culture* (July, 2017)

James Lequeux, *François Arago: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century French Humanist and Pioneer in Astrophysics* (Springer, Heidelberg, 2016), for *Journal for the History of Astronomy* (April, 2017)

Melvyn C. Usselman, *Pure Intelligence: The Life of William Hyde Wollaston*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.) for *Isis*, 107:3 (September 2016).

“Taking the Long View on Light,” review of Oliver Darrigol, *A History of Optics: From Greek Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century*, for *Metascience* (March 2013)

“Science and Technology Beyond the Barricades,” review essay on Robert Fox *The Savant and The State: Science and Cultural Politics in Nineteenth-Century France*, and John Tresch’s *The Romantic Machine: Utopian Science and Technology After Napoleon*, for *Technology and Culture* (April 2013) 54: 377-381.

Jed Z. Buchwald and Diane Greco Josefowicz, *The Zodiac of Paris: How an Improbable Controversy Over an Ancient Artifact Provoked a Modern Debate Between Religion and Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) for *Metascience* 21.3 (2011).

Jonathan Simon, *Chemistry, Pharmacy and Revolution in France 1777 – 1809* (London: Ashgate, 2005), for *Nineteenth Century French Studies* 36 (2007): 458-459.

Barbara Saunders and Jaap van Brakel, eds. *Theories, Technologies, Instrumentalities of Color* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), for *Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences* 33 (2003): 412-413.

Myles Jackson, *Spectrum of Belief* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), for *Isis* 93:4 (December 2002), 739-740.

### **Conference Presentations**

“Morphine Dreams: Auguste Laurent and the Active Principles of Organized Matter,” History of Science Society, July 2019

“Augustin Fresnel and the Lighthouse Revolution,” American Association of Physics Teachers, Jan. 11, 2016.

“Science, Lighthouse Technology, and the Public Good,” Consortium on Revolutionary Era, Feb.22, 2014.

Commentary for the session “Scientific Expeditions: Connections between the Old and New Worlds,” Consortium on the Revolutionary Era, Feb.22, 2014.

"The Lens of Empire: Lighthouse technology and the ‘great works to bring peoples together’" Society for French Historical Studies, April 2013

“The glory of the Corps of Roads and Bridges’: Augustin Fresnel and the ethos of French civil engineering,” presented at the HSS/BSHS/CSHPS Three-Societies Meeting, April 2012

“Public Good and Profit Margins: Lighthouses after the Fresnel Lens,” presented at the History of Science Society Annual Meeting, November 2011.

“Radical Almanacs in Nineteenth-Century France: The Amalgam of Social and Natural Kinds,” presented at the Southern Conference in History and Technology, April 2008.

“Astronomy and Idolatry: Eastern Zodiacs and Original Knowledge in Nineteenth-century France,” presented at the Society for French Historical Studies annual meeting, June 2004 (as part of a panel I organized entitled, “Cosmopolitics: Astronomical Utopias in Nineteenth-century France”).

"Polarization and the Mystery of Life" presented at the History of Science Society Annual Meeting, November 2003 (as part of a panel I co-organized entitled, “Sparkling Life: Radiations and the Vital Quest”).

“No More Magic Moonbeams: Astronomy as Public Science in Nineteenth-Century France,” presented at the History of Science Society Annual Meeting, November 2001.

“Contrasting Color Circles: Communities of Color Production in France,” Harvard/Princeton History of Physical Sciences Conference, May 2001.

"The Education of a Regenerated Citizenry: Drawing and Color under the Terror" presented at the History of Science Society Annual Meeting, November 2000 (as part of a panel I organized entitled, “Revolutionary Science”).

"Le rouge et le vert: The Colors of Opposition in Restoration France" presented at the History of Science Society Annual Meeting, November 1999 (as part of a panel I organized entitled, “On Color: Seeing Beyond the Black and White”).

“Arago and Biot on the ‘Chimera of Color Photography’,” Harvard/Princeton History of Physical Sciences Conference, May 1999.

"Clothing the Naked Eye: The photography of Francois Arago and Jean-Baptiste Biot," presented at the History of Science Society Annual Meeting, November 1998.

"Caloric and the Physical Ether in the Thought of Augustin Fresnel," presented at the the History of Science Society Annual Meeting, November 1996.

"The Reception of Thermodynamics in France: The cases of Victor Regnault and Emile Verdet," presented at the Midwest Junto for the History of Science, 1996.

### **Invited Papers**

"Fresnel's Brilliant Idea: Triumph and Contention in the History of Lighthouse Optics," presented at Wood's Hole MLB Falmouth Forum, October 2016.

"Radical Almanacs and the Problem of Seriality," presented at Science and Seriality, conference at Cambridge University, June 2008.

"Prophecy and Madness: The Nineteenth-Century Newton of Jean-Baptiste Biot," presented at the University of Pennsylvania History of Science colloquium, April, 2006.

"Stendhal's Mirror: The Ambiguity of Reflection in Post-revolutionary France," presented at the UCLA History of Science colloquium, November 2004.

"Zodiacs and the Question of Origins in Nineteenth-Century France," presented at the University of Mississippi Liberal Arts Faculty Forum, April 2004.

"The Observatory as Public Enterprise" presented at *The Heavens on Earth*, conference at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, December 2002.

"Economies of Color" presented at MIT Media Lab TTT lunch colloquium, November 2000.

"Electric Girls and Turning Tables: The Revolutionary Spirits of 1848" presented at *Science and Spirits in the Nineteenth Century*, conference at the Dibner Institute, May 2000.

"Scientific Photography: A Great New Instrument, But for Measuring What?" presented at *The Organization of Visibility*, conference at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, January 1999.

### **Public Lectures**

"Industrial Perfume, Organic Chemistry, and the Mystery of Life," Senior Summer Grant Research Presentation, University of Mississippi, Feb. 9, 2105

“Fresnel and the Invention of the Modern Lighthouse” Ocean Springs Marine Lab  
Science Café, August 6, 2013

“Isaac Newton, Alchemy, and the Invention of Gravity,” Oxford Science Café,  
September 18, 2012.

“Fresnel, Laplace, and the Fight for the Soul of Physics,” Physics Colloquium,  
University of Mississippi, November 2010.

“Darwin’s ‘Breath of Life’ and the Problem of Spontaneous Generation,” Biology  
Colloquium, University of Mississippi, October 2010.

“The Pope’s Best Friend: Galileo’s startling astronomy and inadvertent heresy,” Physics  
Colloquium, University of Mississippi, January 2009.