**Literary Networks and Cultural Collaborations: From 19th Century to the Present Day**

**Birkbeck, University of London, Saturday 29th October 2016**

**Confirmed keynote speaker: Dr. Joanne Winning (Birkbeck College)**

Pierre Bourdieu’s work on an ‘expanded field of cultural production’ has done much to widen our understanding of the full range of cultural practitioners who ‘make’ a text, including publishers, patrons, reviewers, salonnieres as well as the writers themselves. The shift away from focusing on the work of the singular artist to a more collaborative understanding of cultural production has also served a recuperative, often feminist agenda that has helped to bring the works of obscure or “lost” cultural practitioners to light. For example, Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers in *Writing for Their Lives* (1987) explore the ‘hidden network’ of women who formed an alternative cultural alliance to the well-documented Bloomsbury Group in the first half of the twentieth century.

Yet there remains more work to be done to fully understand and conceptualise the strategies, technologies and spaces that enable cultural and literary networks to operate. How can we map and make sense of these relationships and the enabling forces that brought them into being? How have these changed over time? After the intense ferment of activity, collaboration and mutual service and reciprocity that is known to have characterized modernist relationships in the early 20th century, how do networks of writers and other cultural figures operate in today’s digital, hyper-global, fast-paced world?

**For this one-day conference at Birkbeck, we invite 300 word proposals for previously unpublished 20-minute papers that inspire new thinking about how we imagine, understand and position the network in relation to literature and other forms of cultural production.**

With the rise of inter- and trans-disciplinarity as a site of study, the network provides an opportunity to bridge gaps between literary theory and exciting developments in cultural theory, anthropology, social science, medical practice, and more. We might therefore ask: what does Foucault’s theory of ‘constellations of power’ mean in the context of cultural networks? How can Bruno LaTour’s ‘actor-network-theory’ be used to re-interpret and re-assess modes of cultural collaboration? What new avenues of thought might Tim Ingold’s anthropological definition of ‘the meshwork’ take us down?

We welcome papers that offer new perspectives on well-known networks as well as those that uncover unusual or less well-known alliances, relationships and cultural constellations. Topics may include, but are certainly not limited to:

* Network theory as applied to literature – social, anthropological, scientific, cultural and political
* Representations of ‘networked thinking’ in literature
* Clinical networks in the field of medical humanities
* Mutual influence, reciprocity and support between groups or writers or cultural practitioners
* The cultural significance of friendships
* The politics of patronage
* Salon and coterie culture
* Epistolary networks
* Postcolonial networks
* Digital Humanities and the network
* Technologies, spaces and geographies that enable networks
* National and transnational networks

**Submission details:**

### Proposals for 20-minute papers should include a 250-300 word abstract and short bio. Please send your proposal to [literarynetworks2016@gmail.com](mailto:literarynetworks2016@gmail.com)

**Submission deadline:** Friday 10th June 2016

**Conference organisers:** Leonie Shanks and Laura Cushing-Harries