

***Beauty and Belief* Keynote and Plenary Speakers
Education in Zion Auditorium, B-192 JFSB**

11-12 Thursday, Nov 5th

Postsecular Approaches to Literature and the Humanities

Lori Branch, University of Iowa

In the mid-1990s, academia started buzzing about the “religious turn” in the humanities. Some predicted it would be a short-lived fad, but something more substantial has slowly emerged: what scholars are starting to call “postsecular studies.” In this talk, Lori Branch overviews the most important currents of thought in the religious turn in literature, sociology, anthropology, history, and philosophy. She explains how these developments should change our intellectual operating assumptions and breathe new life into the study of literature as well as the humanities more broadly.

4-5 Thursday, Nov 5th

The Unspoken and the Unspeakable in Missionary Literature

Jeanne Moskal, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Pearl S. Buck—missionary daughter, novelist, and Nobel Laureate—proclaimed that her biographies of her parents would finally reveal the untold “real story of life in a mission station.” Placing Buck’s claim in its historical context, Jeanne Moskal tests its accuracy against actual nineteenth-century Protestant missionary literature. Moskal then enlists late twentieth-century missionary novels by Alice Walker, Barbara Kingsolver, and Louise Erdrich in order to reassess the widespread perception that missionary-themed fiction rushes in where actual missionaries have feared to tread.

10-11 Friday, Nov 6th

Finding Milton and Angels in the Downtown Eastside

Martine Leavitt, Vermont College of Fine Arts

When you begin a story, and you know it must end with beauty and belief and above all an angel, the realest angel you can conjure, you must search for a way to tell the tale, a way to draw a reader most resistant to the visitation of angels closer to the fire, a way to say hush, it’s going to be all right, it is your story, too, and I will tell it so you may understand. I will talk about how I found my way while writing *My Book of Life by Angel*.

4-5 Friday, Nov 6th

Beauty . . . Belief . . . and Sadness: An Awareness in Japanese Literature

Van Gessel, Brigham Young University

A belief in beauty. And the beauty of belief. But what are we to make of this statement by a 20th century Japanese author? “The Japanese have the ability to accept and even relish the evanescence of life.” For at least a couple of millennia, the Japanese have had an *awareness* of the beauty of evanescence, an acceptance transformed into a belief by the importation of the Buddhist worldview. As I am using it here, by the way, *aware* is a Japanese word, not an English one; it is the profound, painfully admiring sigh of one who understands how beautiful things are as they perish.

For a complete listing of all conference sessions, see <http://literatureandbelief.byu.edu/>