

# Mesostic Laboratorium

Alec Finlay

an anthology of poems composed on the names of scientists

after Gustave Flaubert, *Dictionary of Received Ideas*

*SCIENCE:*  
*a little science takes you away from poetry; a lot brings you back to it.*

poeMs  
arE  
compoSed  
Of  
wordS &  
synTax  
formIng  
Compounds

poeMs  
arrangE  
wordS  
tO  
fuSe  
Thoughts  
Into  
multivalenCy

whAt

aRises

In

Scientific

Thought

fOllows

Thorough

Logical

rEasoning

somE

nUmbers

aCt

irrationalLy —

It's

unDerstandable

Copernican  
theOry  
exPands  
grEek  
astRonomy —  
New  
Instruments  
perfeCt  
star-stUdded  
mapS

Change  
yOur  
Position —  
thE  
faR  
suN's  
axIs  
anChors  
yoUr  
univerSe

Maps  
are  
projections  
which  
shape  
The  
world's  
journey

abjure  
Apriority —  
Credit  
your  
senses

Galilean  
Astronomy  
outLasted  
hIs  
papaLly  
ordainEd  
inquisitiOn

espousinG  
A  
hereticaL  
bellef —  
enLightening  
thE  
wOrld

siNce  
applEs  
    Weigh  
    They  
alsO  
pluNge

didN't  
nEwton  
Want  
The  
Orange's  
kNowledge?



fLower  
speclmens  
wiNk  
opeN  
dAily —  
linnaEus  
constrUcted  
flower-clockS

earth's  
sUrface  
Textures  
Trace  
geOlogical  
aeoNs

By  
thE  
wAy  
dUst  
Flows  
Or  
bRanches  
Twist

Forging  
mAgnets  
aRound  
glAss  
anD  
spArking  
electricitY

taxiDermist  
And  
histoRic  
reWriter  
dlsregarding  
coNformism

transmuteD  
Animal  
chaRacteristics  
folloW  
hereditary  
chaiNs

hoMozygous  
gEne  
partNers  
breeD  
truE  
cuLtivators

sMooth  
pEas —  
wriNkly  
poDs —  
inhEritEd  
fLaws

hosPital  
cleAnliness  
enSures  
The  
patiEnt's  
qUick  
Recovery

Pasteur's  
swAn-neck  
glasS  
experiment  
producEd  
invalUable  
Results

While  
dArwin  
Lay  
iLI  
wallAce  
co-disCovered  
Evolution

Wandering  
distAnt  
jungLes —  
deveLoping  
rAdical  
eCological  
thEories

eleCtron  
cloUds —  
x-Rays  
In  
fiElds

Chemistry  
compoUnds  
ouR  
materlal  
knowlEdge

telescopes  
aren't  
necessary —  
Leavitt  
did  
without  
them

blinking  
cepheids  
are  
observed  
without  
astronomical  
telescopes



steLlar  
Explorer —  
unchArted  
adVentures  
In  
pulsatIng  
sTars

*Henrietta Leavitt (1868–1921)*

Exiled  
In  
eveNings —  
Struggling  
To  
answEr  
inflnite  
questioNs

*Albert Einstein (1879–1955)*

einstEin  
compIlcates  
    Newton's  
theorieS —  
    setTing  
    mattEr  
    In  
motioN

univErsal  
relatlVity  
    uNifies  
physicS —  
    Theory  
    progrEsses  
    inventlVely  
    oNwards

hiS

Cat's

sHut —

bReathing

Or

Dead —

In

quaNtum

purGatory

mEwing

indeteRminately

somethinG

incOmplete

could

rEmain

truthfuL

whaT's  
conscioUsness? —  
aRtificial  
intellgence? —  
orgaNic  
thouGht?

Finds  
winE  
tastY  
aNd  
coMposes  
theoreticAl  
phenomeNa

Frozen  
extremEs —  
explanatorY  
aNd  
Methodical  
wAve  
aNalogies

forceFul  
elEctrons  
sashaY  
iN  
hoMely  
memorAble  
combiNations

lovinG  
Obscure  
dinosaur  
baseball &  
Debates

Gould  
now  
doubted  
Charles  
Darwin

inheriteD

behAviour —

Winners

maKe

wInners

Not

loSers

He

hAs

knoWn

black

tlmes

iNner

strenGth

Discovering  
mOons  
occUpy  
maGnetic  
spHeres  
shE  
tuRned  
saTurn's  
eYe

meDal  
mOons —  
satUrn's  
rinGs —  
tHe  
Endless  
solaR  
sysTem's  
storY



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The epigraph is adapted from Flaubert's *Dictionary of Received Ideas*:

'SCIENCE: a little science takes you away from religion; a lot brings you back to it.'

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The composite poems are selected from poetic workshops with students at six secondary schools in the North East of England. These were mentored by Alec Finlay, Tom Shakespeare, Ira Lightman, Eeve Garner and individual scientist mentors.

#### *Copernicus*

Dr Paula Martin (scientist-mentor); Ira Lightman (poet); students of Marden High School: Angella Bownay, Helen Cavanagh, Rory Colthart, Calum Denham, Thomas Dexter, Sophie Donnan, Robyn Dudley, James Dunce, Jasmine Ferguson, Martin Jackson, Sophie Lagan, Hollie Lees, James Manzies, Daniel Maunder, Alex Pollock, Katie Rutter, Jared Simson, Tatyana, Rebecca Varley, Ross Wallace, Christina Whitehead, Carrie Woodall.

#### *Curie*

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#### *Darwin*

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#### *Dougherty*

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#### *Einstein*

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#### *Faraday*

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### *Feynman*

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### *Galileo*

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### *Gould (I)*

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### *Gould (II)*

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### *Hawking*

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### *Helmholtz*

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### *Mendel*

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### *Leavitt (I)*

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### *Pasteur*

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# Mesostic Laboratorium

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Designed by Alec Finlay and StudioLR

*Mesostic Laboratorium (Notebook)* is available from bookshops,  
or by ordering in the *bookshop* section of [www.alecfinlay.com](http://www.alecfinlay.com)

An animated version of selected poems from *Mesostic Laboratorium*  
can be viewed on the *You Are Invited* section of [www.alecfinlay.com](http://www.alecfinlay.com)

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Science  
LEARNING CENTRES

platform projects<sup>pp</sup>



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