

Since then, Professor Rappaport has widened out her studies of the geological research of this period, centering on France, which was then the centre of the scientific world. Her papers have had an influence out of all proportion to their bulk. Her greatest contribution, her book entitled *When Geologists Were Historians* (1977) is a superb survey of the practice of Earth sciences across Europe from the time of the foundation of scientific societies and academies in the late 17th Century to the age of Buffon.

Rhoda Rappaport, for a research career that has thrown light on a remarkably fertile period in our science's history—a period when it truly can be said that new concepts modern geology takes for granted as its foundation stones were first conceived—I am pleased to award you the 2003 Sue Tyler Friedman Medal of the Geological Society.

Rhoda Rappaport replied:

President, may I first express my gratitude to the Society, and say how much I regret being unable to travel to London to receive this award in person? [Martin Rudwick accepted the medal on her behalf and it was later presented to her in the USA by Gerald Friedman.]

Early this year, I informed the President of the Society that I was “astonished, pleased and honored” by this award. I need hardly explain to this audience the honor and pleasure in having my work appreciated by a Society with so distinguished and venerable a history. What may surprise you, however, is that this award has at last reconciled me to the fact that geologists, not historians, are the natural audience for my research.

Years ago, I had persuaded myself that the history of science could serve to bring together C.P. Snow's “two cultures,” and I set out as a missionary. I would surreptitiously teach some science to non-scientists, showing them that the study of nature is but one aspect of human history. The plan failed, as it has failed at American universities where historians of science, not welcome among historians, have formed their own academic departments. At Vassar my students came chiefly from science departments, while my colleagues regarded me as a historian of the French Revolution.

Like most historians of science, I began as a science student, an undergraduate physicist who unthinkingly absorbed the notion that proper science was perforce expressed mathematically. The human dimension, so to speak, came in a history of science class where I found I could study what lay behind the polished results in scientific publications. In that class, too, I discovered in geology a science not wholly mathematized; despite the best efforts of Charles Lyell and his successors, I happily abandoned physics.

In conclusion, I shall not attempt to formulate any profound reflections, but only a glimpse of my current project: an examination of early “catastrophism.” Although geologists have recently been reconsidering the possible role of catastrophes, my interest stems from my own long-standing concern with Noah's Flood and the vocabulary of geological “revolutions.” It has also come to my attention that some French scientists, as early as the 1790s, were accusing their predecessors of being catastrophists. Clearly, the word signified bad science, perhaps prompted by religious bias. But it could also be meaningless polemic, for in one striking case the accusation was directed against a geologist who had rejected use of the Flood and had described his fossil ferns as deposited so gently that they were laid out “as if they had been mounted.”

In due time, I hope to produce a study of the second half of the Eighteenth Century, with a focus on questions of geological dynamics, and some examination of geology and religion. I hope the results—whatever they may be!—will be of interest to members of this Society.

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OBITUARIES

Death of Dr Francisco Javier Ayala-Carcedo, Spanish INHIGEO Member, at Burgos, Spain, 28 November 2004

Born in the town of Burgos, Spain, in December 1948, Francisco Ayala-Carcedo studied at the Mining School (Polytechnical University of Madrid). He worked in the mining regions of Chile, South America, from 1971 to 1973 but was imprisoned for political reasons by President Pinochet. He returned to his home country and in 1973 was appointed to the Geological Survey of Spain. For many years (1973–2004) he worked on geological risk assessment, geotechnical maps, mining heritage, history of geology, etc. He produced three hundred articles, books and memoirs, the best known of which is his *History of Spanish Technology* (2001).

Octavio Puche, Madrid



Francisco Ayala

Francisco Javier Ayala-Carcedo (1948–2004)