

# CoSciLit 2026

## Day One - Wednesday 17 June

<b>08:00</b>	<b>Registration with coffee and pastries</b>			
<b>09:00</b>	<b>Welcome from organisers and the Commission on Science and Literature - Atrium</b>			
<b>09:30</b>	<b>Keynote - Jean Walton: Honey Money, Round-ups, and Political Murmurations: Some Metabolic Speculations - Atrium</b>			
<b>10:30</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>			
<b>11:00</b>	<b>Panels 1</b>			
	<p><b>Panel 1A - Atrium</b> <b>Nineteenth-Century Science: Mystery, Complexity, and Discovery</b> <b>Chair: Megan J. Callaghan</b></p> <p>Helen Goodman - The Evolution of the Psychopath in International Psychiatry, Crime, and Literature</p> <p>Zhu Yanchang - Recapitulating the Industrial Revolution: Jules Verne's The Mysterious Island as a Didactic Epic of Applied Science (ONLINE)</p> <p>Blažena Pavlovkinová - From Triumph to Mockery: Science in Fin-de-Siècle Newspaper Snippets</p>	<p><b>Panel 1B - Botanicum</b> <b>At the Borders of the Human: Fembots, AI, and Illusions of Enhancement</b> <b>Chair: Wibke Schniederermann</b></p> <p>Faye Lynch - The failure of metaphor: Fembot Girlfriends in Contemporary Fiction</p> <p>Timothy Ryan Day - AI, Fermentation, and the pursuit of Immortality: From Paracelsus to Brian Johnson</p> <p>Dustin Hellberg - Not Even False: The Semiotic Distinction between Human and AI Generated Texts (ONLINE)</p>	<p><b>Panel 1C - Conservatory</b> <b>Literary Digestion: Biology, Metabolism, and Excretion</b> <b>Chair: Jean Walton</b></p> <p>Liliane Campos - Metabolism as Metalepsis in Contemporary Literature</p> <p>Thomas Constantinesco - Metabolic Dis/orders and Regionalist Fiction</p> <p>Ulta Hvejsel - A New Spin on the Same Old Shit</p>	<p><b>Panel 1D - Das Cabinet</b> <b>Endless Forms Most Beautiful: Science Fiction, Time, and Evolution</b> <b>Chair: Jordi Serrano-Muñoz</b></p> <p>Sean Yeager - "I have seven limbs, so that was very relatable": Interviewing Autistics About Time, Kinship, and Science Fiction</p> <p>Zhang Yang - The May Fourth Literary Revolution and Science: Mapping New Trajectories of Chinese Science Fiction</p>
<b>12:30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>			
<b>13:30</b>	<b>Panels 2</b>			
	<p><b>Panel 2A - Atrium</b> <b>Climate Change: Imagination, Communication, and Action</b> <b>Chair: Jordi Serrano-Muñoz</b></p> <p>Dipayan Dutta - Disseminating Environmental Concerns through Literary and Non-literary Activities – Evidence from the Aravalli Region, Gurgaon, India (ONLINE)</p> <p>V.S. Sruthi - Surveillance, Climate Scarcity, and Gendered Futures in South Asian Dystopian Imaginaries (ONLINE)</p> <p>Abioseh Michael Porter - Cli-lit in West Africa: A Tool for Science and Literature in Dialogue.</p>	<p><b>Panel 2B - Botanicum</b> <b>Science and Visual Storytelling: Communication, Counter-Knowledge, and Pedagogy</b> <b>Chair: Adele Guyton</b></p> <p>Francisco Saez de Adana - Current Trends in Comics as a Vehicle for Scientific Communication</p> <p>Athmika Tarun - Counter-Knowledges in Graphic Memoirs of Madness</p> <p>Alvaro Pons &amp; Noelia Ibarra-Rius - Nonfiction Comics to Explain Science: From its Origins in the Press to Today's Classroom (ONLINE)</p>	<p><b>Panel 2C - Conservatory</b> <b>Grand Unified Theories: Synthesising Knowledge Across History and Disciplines</b> <b>Chair: Zoë Lehmann Imfeld</b></p> <p>Alice Jenkins - Writing About the Unity of Knowledge in an Authoritarian Age</p> <p>Jerome de Groot - 'Neanderthal Mud: Towards a Biomolecular Hamlet'</p> <p>Douglas Basford - "The Weather Was the Great Fact": The Mode of Literary Allusion in Behavioral Science</p>	
<b>15:00</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>			
<b>15:30</b>	<b>Panels 3</b>			
	<p><b>Panel 3A - Atrium</b> <b>Bodies of Knowledge: Aesthetics, Embodiment, and Epistemology</b> <b>Chair: Barbara Bienas</b></p> <p>Muskaan Katiyar - (Un)Feeling Between Pain and Pleasure: Reading Asexuality in Emma Bolden's The Tiger and the Cage</p> <p>Anne Thell - "Living in Pleasure and Delight": Cavendish's Aesthetic View of Nature</p> <p>Sangeetha Balakrishnan and Latha R - Narrating Paradigm Shift: Copernican Insight through an Enactivist Lens in John Banville's Doctor Copernicus (ONLINE)</p>	<p><b>Panel 3B - Botanicum</b> <b>Ballooning: Literature, Science, and Technologies of Transportation</b> <b>Chair: Wibke Schniederermann</b></p> <p>Xia Zijian - Domesticating the Other: the Cultural and Technological Negotiation of Trains and Balloons in the Late Qing and the Early Republican China Speculative Fiction</p> <p>Abhishek Sarkar - Technoscientific Wonder and Comic Topos: Ballooning in Nineteenth-Century Bengali Literature (ONLINE)</p> <p>Steven McLean - A Matter of Levity: Science, Satire, and Perspective in Early Balloon Narratives (ONLINE)</p>	<p><b>Panel 3C - Conservatory</b> <b>Who Speaks Now? Foucault's Author-Function across Materiality, Matter, and Machines (org. Leonie Bradbury)</b> <b>Chair: Leonie Bradbury</b></p> <p>Leonie Bradbury - Artist-Object Entanglements: How Networked Artworks Generate New Modes of Authorship</p> <p>Shana Dumont Garr - New Materialist Authorship: Artistic Alliances with Forests, Beetles, Salt, and Air</p> <p>Jason Hoelscher - The Diffraction of the Author: Textual Swarms and Skeuomorphic Intelligence in Large Language Models</p>	<p><b>Panel 3D - Das Cabinet</b> <b>Figuring Flora: Literature and the Botanical Imaginary</b> <b>Chair: Elly McCausland</b></p> <p>Jasmine Tan Hui Jun - "Enduring Connections Found in All Flesh": Biological Organisation, Form and Poetic Taxonomies</p> <p>Michael Wainwright - Pharmakon, Pharmakeus, Pharmakos: John Dos Passos's Vignette of Luther Burbank</p>
<b>17:00</b>	<b>Panels 4</b>			
	<p><b>Workshop 4A - Atrium</b> <b>Science Stories: A Conversation with Daniel A. Newman on Narrative as "Common Ground" Between Literature and Science</b> <b>Chair: Shannon Lambert</b></p>	<p><b>Panel 4B - Botanicum</b> <b>Mediated Life: Digital Minds, Archival Experience, and Inherited Fictions</b> <b>Chair: Faye Lynch</b></p> <p>Michaela Giesenkirchen Sawyer - "'Many of each kind of them are living'": Gertrude Stein and Turn-of-the-Century Monadology</p> <p>Sowon S Park - Print Minds (ONLINE)</p> <p>Reshma Sanil - Tracing the Sympoietic and Technological Paradigms of Evolution through Select Works of Science Fiction (ONLINE)</p>		
<b>18:30</b>	<b>END OF DAY 1</b>			

## Day Two - Thursday 18 June

<b>08:30</b>	<b>Coffee and pastries</b>			
<b>09:00</b>	<b>Panels 5</b>			
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Roundtable 5A - Atrium</b> <b>The Affordances of Fungi (org. Rhona Trauvitch, the Mycelial Working Group)</b> <b>Chair: Shannon Lambert</b></p> <p>Bryan Dewsbury Rhona Trauvitch Nicholas R. Cabezas Yonina Hoffman Premea Mohamed</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 5B - Botanicum</b> <b>Alternative Knowledges: Zodiacs, Horoscopes, and Homeopathy</b> <b>Chair: Annalisa Volpone</b></p> <p>Divna Manolova - Twelve Verses on the Zodiac and Their Diagrams.</p> <p>Naomi Wynter-Vincent - This Proves Nothing: Exploring Homeopathic 'Proving's', Repertorisation, and Ultradilution as Precursors of the Digital Humanities and Large Language Model GPTs</p> <p>Xueying Zhou - From Horoscope to Soundscape: Virginia Woolf's Cosmic Listening in The Waves (ONLINE)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 5C - Conservatory</b> <b>Illuminating: Error, Gender, and Performance in Early Modern Literature and Science</b> <b>Chair: Şima İmşir</b></p> <p>Barbara Bienias - Terror Errorum: The Culture of Error in the Literature and Science of Seventeenth Century England</p> <p>Alessio Mattana - Theorising Early Modern Women, Scientific Knowledge and Literary Genre</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 5D - Das Cabinet</b> <b>Engineered Imagination: Literature, AI, and Cognition</b> <b>Chair: Lou Braibant</b></p> <p>Elona Zhana - Engineering Memory: Literature as a Counter-Archive to the "Science" of Socialism</p> <p>Jennifer Edmond - Engineered Imaginaries: On the Unconstructedness of AI in Literature</p> <p>Constantin Canavas - The Book of the Ingenious References: Repercussions of Medieval Arabic Techno-Scientific Texts in Modern Turkish Literature</p>
<b>10:30</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>			
<b>11:00</b>	<b>Panels 6</b>			
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 6A - Atrium</b> <b>Women: Reproduction, Regeneration, Writing</b> <b>Chair: Eloise Forestier</b></p> <p>Bela Gligorova - Artificial Affection: Childhood, Care, and Posthuman Narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun (ONLINE)</p> <p>Annalisa Volpone - Cosmic (Re) generation: Poetic Birth in Blake's Milton</p> <p>Nathan Tillman - Women Writing/Riding the Tram: Student Authors, Community, and Seoul's Public Transportation in the late 1930s (ONLINE)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 6B - Botanicum</b> <b>Literary Histories of Evolution: Case Studies (org. John Holmes)</b> <b>Chair: John Holmes</b></p> <p>Ian Hesketh (online) - A Great Evil? Rethinking the "Abstract" Nature of Darwin's Origin of Species</p> <p>Koen Tanghe (in person) - Charles Darwin and the vera causa doctrine: A diachronic approach</p> <p>Maria Zarimis (online) - Investigating Nikos Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel as an Evolutionary Epic</p> <p>Lara Choksey (online) - Stephen Jay Gould's Maverick Theme: Revisiting The Structure of Evolutionary Theory</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 6C - Conservatory</b> <b>Collections and Collectives: Romanticism, Poetry, and Science</b> <b>Chair: Paul Hamann-Rose</b></p> <p>Sharon Ruston - Humphry Davy's Poetry</p> <p>Pauline Lescar - Whitman and Modern Times</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 6D - Das Cabinet</b> <b>Between Page and Screen: Control, Adaptation, and Recovery in Film</b> <b>Chair: Wibke Schniederermann</b></p> <p>Isabel Jaen Portillo &amp; Julien Jacques Simon - Time Traveling with Cervantes</p> <p>Avril Tynan - Recovery: Concepts, Contexts and Challenges</p>
<b>12:30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>			
<b>13:30</b>	<b>Keynote - Sadiya Qureshi: Narrating the Unnatural Histories of Extinction and Empire - Atrium</b>			
<b>14:30</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>			
<b>15:00</b>	<b>Panels 7</b>			
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 7A - Atrium</b> <b>Spaces of Knowing: Domestic, Professional, and Natural "Laboratories"</b> <b>Chair: Sharon Ruston</b></p> <p>Gemma Curto - Entering the Thicket: a Space of Moral Complexity in Iris Murdoch's The Bell (1958) (ONLINE)</p> <p>Anna Dijkstra - "Painting green on green": The Anti-Scientist Mathematics of H.D.'s HERmion</p> <p>Helena Ifill - The Business of Science: Charlotte Riddell's Chemists (ONLINE)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 7B - Botanicum</b> <b>Posthumanist Narratives: Complexity, Enhancement, and Collectivity</b> <b>Chair: Jerome De Groot</b></p> <p>Marco Caracciolo - Playgrounds of Complexity in the Contemporary Novel</p> <p>Simona Adinolfi - Written in The Body: Genomic Writing and Technologies of Happiness in Contemporary American Literature</p> <p>Merin John - Commoning Care in Multispecies Futures: Children as Posthuman Mediators in Speculative Climate Fiction (ONLINE)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 7C - Conservatory</b> <b>Poetics of Knowledge Across History</b> <b>Chair: Vittorio Govahian</b></p> <p>Abraham Enefu - Poetics of Knowledge: A Digital Literary Analysis of Scientific Imagery in Francophone African Poetry</p> <p>Michael H. Whitworth - The Now, The Once, and The This in W. H. Auden and Other Poets</p> <p>Muqadas Batool - The Biophilic Imagination: A Reading of Pashto Poetry (ONLINE)</p>	
<b>16:30</b>	<b>Drinks reception - at the Guislain Museum</b>			
<b>18:00</b>	<b>END OF DAY 2</b>			

## Day Three - Friday 19 June

<b>08:30</b>	<b>Coffee and pastries</b>			
<b>09:00</b>	<b>Keynote - Paul Hamann-Rose: Originality in the Age of the Genome - Atrium</b>			
<b>10:00</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>			
<b>10:30</b>	<b>Panels 8</b>			
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 8A - Atrium</b> <b>In Action: Narrating Medical Practice</b> <b>Chair: Marianne Van Remoortel</b></p> <p>Robert Ponge and Vanessa Schmitt - Medical Practice and Research by the Eponymous Protagonist in Doctor Pascal, a Novel (1893) by Émile Zola (ONLINE)</p> <p>Ilia Chalimourda - Doctors of Uncertainty: The Limits of Medical Knowledge in Sheridan Le Fanu's "Green Tea" and Alasdair Gray's Poor Things (ONLINE)</p> <p>Protichi Chatterjee - Reconceptualising Brain Plasticity during a Psychic Event in Narratives of Mental Illnesses (ONLINE)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 8B - Botanicum</b> <b>From Theory to Practice: Literature, Science, and Pedagogy</b> <b>Chair: Vittorio Govahian</b></p> <p>Yusuf Suleiman - The Role of Indigenous Language Literature in the Popularization of Scientific Knowledge in Nigerian Universities (ONLINE)</p> <p>Megan Callaghan - Bridging Lab and Lyric: A Practical Poetics Workshop for Scientists</p> <p>Jenny Edvardsson - Short stories, individual reflections and joint discussions to open up for diverse perspectives on purposes for science education (ONLINE)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Roundtable 8C - Conservatory</b> <b>Literary Histories of Evolution: Roundtable (org. John Holmes)</b> <b>Chair: Richard Delisle</b></p> <p>Richard Delisle Maurizio Esposito (Online) David Ceccarelli (Online) John Holmes Kirsten Shepherd Daniel Abdalla</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 8D - Das Cabinet</b> <b>Currents of Change: The Literary Imagination of Science and Technology from the Ottoman Fin de Siècle to the 1920s (org. Şima İmşir)</b> <b>Chair: Şima İmşir</b></p> <p>Şima İmşir - Dancing in the Electric Light: Uneven Powers of Illumination in the Ottoman Novel</p> <p>Fatih Altuğ - Translating and Staging Karel Čapek's R.U.R. in Early Republican Turkey</p> <p>Fatma Damak - Wired World: The Imagination of Electricity and World Literature in Servet-i Fünun</p>
<b>12:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>			
<b>13:00</b>	<b>Panels 9</b>			
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 9A - Atrium</b> <b>Medical Margins: Addiction and Contagion in Literature and Science</b> <b>Chair: Louise Benson James</b></p> <p>Sadaf Mehmood - Biopolitics of Syphilis: Women, Contagion and Urdu Literary Imagination (ONLINE)</p> <p>Noemie Robert - Dying for Opium in George Eliot's Silas Marner and Middlemarch</p> <p>Nicholas Griffin - "A Factual Approach is the Worst Possible": Forging Prescriptions in Junkie (1953)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 9B - Botanicum</b> <b>Environmental Entanglements: Speculative Fiction and Science</b> <b>Chair: Jonas Vanhove</b></p> <p>Myles Chilton - Yoko Tawada's The Emissary: The World after Big Science (ONLINE)</p> <p>Jade Arbo - Science Fiction as Regenerative Epistemology: Literary Interventions into Knowledge and Power (ONLINE)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Panel 9C - Conservatory</b> <b>Interdisciplinary Equations: Literature, Mathematics, and the Human</b> <b>Chair: Sharon Ruston</b></p> <p>George N. Vlahakis, Panagiotis Lazos and Iraklis Vogiatzis - Theoretical Considerations for the Relationship between Science and Literature. The Case of Mathematics and Physics. (ONLINE)</p> <p>Simona Bartolotta - Science and Anthropocentrism in Mathematical Short Fiction</p> <p>Emma-Louise Silva - Towards a Neuroliterary Approach to Detail Recall across the Lifespan</p>	
<b>14:30</b>	<b>Coffee and close</b>			
<b>15:00</b>	<b>END OF DAY 3 - Optional visit to the Ghent University Museum (GUM) and Botanical Gardens</b>			

## Abstracts and Bios

### Day One – Wednesday 17 June

#### Keynote, 9:30-10:30

**Jean Walton (University of Rhode Island) - Honey Money, Round-ups, and Political Murmurations: Some Metabolic Speculations**  
**Chair: Louise Benson James**

Bio: Jean Walton taught at Fordham in the Bronx before enjoying a life-long career in the University of Rhode Island's English Department, where she developed courses on Modernism, Film, and Gender Studies, often with an emphasis on psychoanalysis, queer theory, or social activism. Her books include *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference*, Duke UP (in which she probes the unacknowledged whiteness at the intersections of psychoanalysis, feminism, and queer theory), *Buffalo Trace: A Threefold Vibration*, Spuyten Duyvil Press (in which she and co-authors Mary Cappello and James Morrison reflect on their queer intellectual coming-of-age while grad students at SUNY/Buffalo in the eighties), and *Mudflat Dreaming*, New Star Books (a literary non-fiction book about 1970s squatters on the shorefront of her hometown of Vancouver, Canada). This last book shares some of her decades-long interest in matters of waste, human and urban metabolism, and bodily or performative forms of social and political dissidence. She will be talking about some follow up thoughts to her most recent book, *Dissident Gut: Technologies of Regularity, Politics of Revolt* (Edinburgh University Press).

#### Panels 1, 11:00-12:30

**Panel 1A: Nineteenth-Century Science: Mystery, Complexity, and Discovery**  
**Chair: Megan J. Callaghan**

**Helen Goodman (Bath Spa University) - The Evolution of the Psychopath in International Psychiatry, Crime, and Literature**

In 1884 a child murder case in St Petersburg became internationally notorious, making the term 'psychopath' (Psikhopat in Russian) in its current meaning widely known for the first time. It was reported in publications including the Pall Mall Gazette and New York Times, scandalising readers who were nonetheless avid followers of the case. This paper investigates the new nineteenth-century sciences of psychiatry and criminology in dialogue with literary studies. It examines shifting psychiatric definitions of psychopathy (from the Greek 'psyche' and 'pathos', meaning 'suffering soul') via German, Swiss, Italian, British, and American scientific texts, in discussion with popular literary representations including Sweeney Todd, Bill Sikes, Paul Ferroll, Count Fosco, and Lady Audley. Such figures were virtually inseparable in the popular imagination from real violent criminals including murderesses Constance Kent and Maria Manning (dubbed 'the Lady Macbeth of Bermondsey') and double murderer and poet Pierre François Lacenaire (an influence on Little Dorrit, Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, and The Picture of Dorian Gray). The paper demonstrates that in tandem with the evolution of this distinct psychiatric type, fiction depicted a new kind of villain whose depravity shocked readers in radically new, more melodramatic ways. Psychopaths were presented as masked, hyper-rational, remorseless predators who used superficial charm, manipulation, intimidation and, if necessary, brutal violence, to attain their ends. Fuelled by journalistic descriptions of such monsters, driving widespread moral panic, fiction exploded the limits of psychological melodrama with distinctively modern villains.

Bio: Dr Helen Goodman is a postdoctoral researcher at Bath Spa University (UK), specialising in interdisciplinary studies of nineteenth-century literature, culture, and health humanities, with a particular focus on mental health and gender. She completed her PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London. Helen's publications to date investigate subjects including monomania and sexual violence in Victorian fiction, male patients in London's lunatic asylums, imperial masculinities in British adventure fiction, and psychopathic criminology in sensation fiction. She is currently writing a book on madness and masculinity in Victorian literature and medicine, and researching international remedies for stress and nervous exhaustion.

**Zhu Yanchang (Huzhou College) - Recapitulating the Industrial Revolution: Jules Verne's The Mysterious Island as a Didactic Epic of Applied Science (ONLINE)**

Anchored in verifiable scenes, this paper reads Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* as a didactic epic of applied science that retraces the technological arc of the Industrial Revolution. Read against contemporaneous technical

discourse and literature-and-science debates, the novel functions as a controlled thought experiment: it compresses the *longue durée* of technics within applied science into a Robinsonade paced by staged experiments, including the extraction of green vitriol from pyrite; the calcination and distillation of the green vitriol via the Nordhausen process to produce sulfuric acid; the saponification of animal fats with seaweed-ash alkali; and the nitration of glycerin to yield nitroglycerin. Simplified and pedagogically resequenced, these procedures accord with nineteenth-century chemistry and serve as repeatable protocols suited to industrial-era instruction. In parallel, metallurgical and engineering enterprises—ceramics, glassmaking, iron smelting, the electric telegraph—coalesce into a graded curriculum linking applied science to material civilization. Set against Captain Nemo’s cultivated isolation, Cyrus Smith embodies an engineer-hero whose practice models mastery of nature through division of labor and civic collaboration. That preference aligns the narrative with the logic of the First and Second Industrial Revolutions, while Nemo’s counter-paradigm foregrounds secrecy, extractivism, and solitary genius. As a roman scientifique, the novel foregrounds the ethics and pedagogy of collaborative making and also serves as an allegory of empirical knowledge and organized labor in the fabrication of modern civilization.

Bio: Zhu Yanchang is a Chinese scholar and lecturer in the history of science and comparative literature. His research examines the history of nineteenth-century science and literature, with a focus on French literature and early science fiction. His current work explores how literary texts reinterpret nineteenth-century scientific paradigms and technological imaginaries.

**Blažena Pavlovkinová (Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences) - From Triumph to Mockery: Science in Fin-de-Siècle Newspaper Snippets**

This paper explores the portrayal of science in short newspaper snippets published in the Austro-Hungarian mass press during the fin de siècle. As scientific advancements rapidly reshaped society, popular media played a crucial role in mediating public understanding and sentiment. Focusing on brief, often anonymous newspaper items optimized for quick scanning, this study investigates how these texts transformed information from the field of science into a commercial commodity and an object of leisure consumption within the context of a confessionally conditioned mindset. The research evaluates how conservative, religious circles balanced technological and scientific modernity with spiritual values, as well as with the sensational potential of science. To do so, it analyzes sample probes of Catholic periodicals across four language contexts of the Dual Monarchy: Reichspost (German-Austrian), Katolícké listy / Čech (Bohemian/Czech), Kresťan (Slovak), and Alkotmány (Hungarian). The study combines narrative analysis to uncover recurring micro-plot structures and character archetypes with a qualitative analysis of the textual and spatial positioning of the snippets. Furthermore, it investigates the rhetorical framing of science within the codes of tragedy and comedy. By dissecting these micro-narratives and their emotional triggers, the study sheds light on the complexity of the cultural reception of science within a confessionally conditioned space during a period of profound technological and social transformation, highlighting how the popular press celebrated scientific triumphs while simultaneously staging their mockery.

Bio: Mgr. Blažena Pavlovkinová, PhD. is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Institute of History (Slovak Academy of Sciences) in Bratislava, Slovakia. In 2023, she defended her dissertation, titled Science and Scientific Progress in the Reception of Slovak Elites at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries. Her research interests focus on the intellectual and cultural history of science and its popular reception within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, specifically in the context of confessionality and scientific nationalism.

**Panel 1B: At the Borders of the Human: Fembots, AI, and Illusions of Enhancement**

**Chair: Wibke Schniedermann**

**Faye Lynch (University of Liverpool) - The failure of metaphor: Fembot Girlfriends in Contemporary Fiction**

Depictions of artificial women as romantic partners to human men is a literary trope with roots in the myth of Pygmalion as recounted in Ovid’s *The Metamorphoses*. From the nineteenth century onwards, authors have used this trope to explore the fraught relationship not just between men and women, but between man and contemporary technology through a specific type of artificial woman: the female-coded robot (fembot). While excellent scholarship has been dedicated to examining these interlocking anxieties in earlier texts, more contemporary iterations of the fembot girlfriend have not received as much attention. This paper examines the fembot girlfriend trope across two contemporary, female-authored texts: Ros Anderson’s *The Hierarchies* (2021) and Sierra Greer’s *Annie Bot* (2024). Through exploring the fembot girlfriend trope in this context, this paper illuminates the connection between tacit cultural understandings of gender, technology and romantic relationships, as refracted through the figure of the fembot. It also evaluates the efficacy of using the fembot as a

metaphorical shorthand for women, and whether these texts critique or perpetuate the cultural issues they examine. As Julie Wosk notes, the story of the artificial woman is one that ‘changes as new technologies become available and cultural perceptions of women change over time’ (Wosk, p. 5). In an era in which the increasing sophistication and popularity of generative chatbots have led to a rash of ‘AI Girlfriend’ services, it is worth appraising the fembot girlfriend trope anew.

Bio: Faye Lynch is a second year PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Liverpool, where she is developing her thesis on depictions of the ‘fembot’ in post-1930 Anglosphere Science Fiction, considering how these depictions illuminate our changing cultural perceptions of technology, gender, and sexuality. She is a lead organiser and social media manager of the Current Research in Speculative Fiction (CRSF) Conference at the University of Liverpool. Faye’s other research interests include Contemporary American Fiction, The Cold War in Literature and Visual Culture, and Twentieth Century Poetry.

**Timothy Ryan Day (Saint Louis University) - AI, Fermentation, and the pursuit of Immortality: From Paracelsus to Brian Johnson**

Certain pockets of our culture are obsessed with how technology might lead to immortality. People like Ray Kurzweil have made a career out of pursuing a potentially endless longevity through digital means. Others like Brian Johnson experiment with their own bodies in an attempt to radically increase their lifespans. To varying degrees, people like Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, and other familiar names have engaged this debate about expanding the reach of individual human consciousnesses deep into the future through technology. Even as technologists have sought to realign our expectations of the line between the biological and the technological, scientists like Lynn Margulis and Merlin Sheldrake have changed our understandings of the microbiological and its relationship to health and consciousness. There is a converging set of ideas around what the human is and is not. AI has generated a lot of anxiety around what it means to be intelligent, human, souled... So have studies in microbiology. In many ways this is nothing new. Early moderns thought of immortality as an achievable aim of science. My aim in this presentation is to connect the contemporary pursuits of immortality to an unbroken tradition of early modern alchemy that moves in tandem—often uncomfortably—with the progress of medicine and science. The talk will consider the work of Paracelsus, Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, Mary Shelly, and contemporary transhuman texts addressing immortality.

Bio: Timothy Ryan Day teaches Early Modern Literature and Creative Writing at Saint Louis University's Madrid campus. His book *Shakespeare and the Evolution of the Human Umwelt* was published by Routledge in 2020. He is currently preparing his third novel for publication with Ybernia Press.

**Dustin Hellberg (University of The Bahamas) - Not Even False: The Semiotic Distinction between Human and AI Generated Texts (ONLINE)**

This article/talk will categorize human-generated and AI-generated texts through Charles Peirce's semiotic system as a way of contrasting their aesthetic value. This will build on several other articles in which I put literary texts and evolutionary theory into conversation by use of Peirce's semiotics. The main point of which was that scientific principles can't be directly used to interpret texts, though certain evolved tendencies may be noticed in (for example) character behavior in a story. Peirce intended his semiotic system to be bridge hermeneutic practice and the sciences. This article will help to further put these fields of knowledge into conversation.

Bio: I am the author of four books and many academic articles. I currently teach creative writing and literature at the University of The Bahamas. I have a master's in poetry, and I hold doctorates in English Lit and Philosophy of Science. I am the US/Caribbean regional officer for Coscilit and have been a member since 2016.

**Panel 1C: Literary Digestion: Biology, Metabolism, and Excretion**

**Chair: Jean Walton**

**Liliane Campos (Sorbonne Université) - Metabolism as Metalepsis in Contemporary Literature**

This paper will analyse the connection between biological knowledge and metaleptic form in contemporary literature. Understanding metalepsis as an interference or contamination of one narrative level by another, I suggest that contemporary poetry and fiction tend to use this kind of interference when they zoom in on the body's biological mechanisms. These metaleptic dynamics convey the contemporary subject's awareness of its own biology – an awareness characterised by vulnerability and porousness. The literary text thus transcribes scientific knowledge not only as content but as form, where strange loops express the self as a paradoxical perception of contaminated and unstable authorship. My main case studies will be Adam Dickinson's poetry collection *Anatomic* (2018) and Maddie Mortimer's novel *Maps of our Spectacular Bodies* (2022). Both works

give metabolism a voice, and imagine metabolic process as metaleptic poetics. Drawing on earlier popular biology texts as well as literature, I will ask what the genealogy of such metaleptic strategies might be, and what sets these twenty-first-century texts apart from their predecessors.

Bio: Liliame Campos is Assistant Professor in English and Theatre Studies at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University in Paris. She directs the BioCriticism webinar (<https://biocriticism.hypotheses.org/>) and her research focuses on ecological and biological imaginaries in contemporary literature, art and performance. Liliame is the author of three monographs on theatre and fiction: *Entangled Life in Twenty-First-Century Fiction: A Multi-Scalar Poetics* (OA, Cambridge University Press, 2026), *Sciences en Scène* (OA, PUR, 2012), and *The Dialogue of Art and Science in Tom Stoppard's Arcadia* (PUF, 2011). She has edited and co-edited several collective volumes, including *Life, Re-Scaled: The Biological Imagination in Twenty-First-Century Literature and Performance* (OA, Open Book Publishers, 2022) and *Microscopic Life in Early-Twentieth and Twenty-First-Century Literature and Performance* (OA, Open Book Publishers, forthcoming).

### **Thomas Constantinesco (Sorbonne Université) - Metabolic Dis/orders and Regionalist Fiction**

This paper explores the links between disability and genre by looking at metabolic orders and disorders in the late nineteenth-century regionalist fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett and Kate Chopin. Historians of medicine usually describe the end of the nineteenth century as a period of transition between the curbing of infectious diseases and the rise of new, supposedly modern conditions, among which metabolic illnesses such as diabetes and obesity. While the concept of metabolism emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century, it gained biomedical traction at the turn of the twentieth, as changes in eating habits and environmental conditions began to take their toll on larger segments of the US population. Among these, the massive increase in sugar intake is perhaps the most visible and links the higher prevalence of metabolic disorders to the longer history of sugar production, chattel slavery, and racial capitalism. Regionalist fiction, by contrast, was often advertised as keeping apart from these global dynamics and as describing, if not celebrating, the health of remote communities, allegedly immune to the transformations of modernity. Recent scholarship, however, has demonstrated the entanglement of regionalist literature with global forces of change. Using metabolism as an analytic to investigate how disability metaphors shape the discourse of local color, this paper joins this conversation and connects and contrasts Jewett's New England and Chopin's Louisiana as key sites where foodways—and in particular sugar consumption and absorption—index biopolitical anxieties about collective health and illness along lines of race, gender, and class.

Bio: Thomas Constantinesco is Professor of American Literature at Sorbonne Université (France) and the author of *Writing Pain in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Oxford UP, 2022). He also guest edited "What Does Literature Feel Like?," with Peter Lurie (*Transatlantica*, 2023); "Pain," with Sari Altschuler (*American Literature*, 2024); and "Melville's Political Energies," with Ronan Ludot-Vlasak and Édouard Marsoin (*Leviathan*, 2024). His research has appeared in such venues as the *RFEA*, *Transatlantica*, *Textual Practice*, *American Periodicals*, *American Literary History*, and *The Cambridge Companion to American Literature and the Body*. He also translated works by Irving, Emerson, Melville, Twain, James, and Lovecraft into French.

### **Ulla Hvejsel (Self-employed visual artist) - A New Spin on the Same Old Shit**

I am a visual artist with a research-based and performative approach. Since 2020, I have worked on a speculative fiction about a future shitty economy where everybody gets paid to go to the toilet - in performances, installations, texts, audiowalks and a lot more. For the CoSciLit-conference, I propose to share this artistic research through a new performance about sewers and modernity, that I will be developing during a residency in Rome this fall. In this performance I plan to investigate, the way in which the idealized roman civilization affected the development of the sewers in the 1800's and connect it with ideas of progress, circular thinking and going in circles, and hopefully, also make our heads spin a little bit. While I don't know yet exactly how I will do that headspinning exercise. I am pretty sure I will mention how it seems like we are now looking towards a future where we circle back to some old ideas for recirculation sewage, and turn to some notes about Catullus talking shit about an acquaintance who was so vain that he would whiten his teeth with pee. I will probably also make some kind of spin on synthetic versions of ancient pee-dyeing techniques and circle around some questions of pee and taxation from 70 AD to the circulus theory of Pierre Leroux from 1853 while I investigate the science and economics of dizzying and dazzling smells in both theory and practise.

Bio: My works are often quirky educational pieces that deal with contemporary folly and seriousness in a humouristic manner. I have for a long time been talking out of my ass, by using my bare butt as a puppet in a series of performances, investigating stupidity, and at the moment I am investigating an idea of a new shitty economy where everybody gets paid to go to the toilet. That may sound a bit funny, but I take it very seriously, and I am currently discovering peers around who also find it worthwhile to pursue this laughable idea. I

graduated Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen in 2006 and I have shown my work both locally and internationally.

### **Panel 1D: Endless Forms Most Beautiful: Science Fiction, Time, and Evolution**

**Chair: Jordi Serrano-Muñoz**

#### **Sean Yeager (Kenyon College)- “I have seven limbs, so that was very relatable”: Interviewing Autistics About Time, Kinship, and Science Fiction**

This paper builds on my recent publication, *Kakokairos*: A not-altogether-unserious theory of time, language, and autism (Poetics Today, March 2025). That publication draws from my background as a physicist to outline my theory of neurodivergent temporalities, using Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse 5* and Ted Chiang’s *Story of Your Life* as case studies. Both of these narratives establish a tension between serial temporalities, which proceed from one moment to the next, and simultaneous temporalities, which experience all of time at once. Yet each narrative’s protagonist occupies a temporality which is a hybrid of the two. I borrow the term *kakokairos* from Remi Yergeau and use it to describe autistics’ unusual experiences of time. I understand these experiences as akin to the hybrid temporalities featured in the aforementioned narratives. That theoretical work served as the foundation for a series of 15 interviews that I conducted in summer 2023. These interviews occurred over Zoom, with participants tuning in from four continents. Interviewees were self-identified autistics who were familiar with at least one of four science fiction narratives: the prior two, along with Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* and Denis Villeneuve’s *Arrival*. The premise is that sharing these narratives allowed us to discuss temporal phenomenology without resorting to the field’s notoriously complicated jargon. The present paper discusses some of my findings from these interviews.

Bio: Sean Yeager is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Science and Nature Writing at Kenyon College. Their data-driven visualizations of narratological temporal structures received the Paul Fourtier Prize for best paper by an emerging scholar at the 2019 Digital Humanities Conference. Their research on neurodivergent reading practices received honorable mention for the Nadal Prize at the 2022 International Conference on Narrative, and their theorization of autistic temporalities received honorable mention for the Bruns Prize at the 2024 meeting of the Society for Literature, Arts, and the Sciences. Sean studies contemporary literature through the lenses of narratology, digital humanities, and neuroqueer theory.

#### **Zhang Yang (Jinling Institute of Technology; visiting scholar University of Leeds ) - The May Fourth Literary Revolution and Science: Mapping New Trajectories of Chinese Science Fiction**

This paper reexamines the transformation of science fiction during the May Fourth Literary Revolution, situating the genre within broader cultural and technological shifts in early twentieth-century China. It first argues that the mutation of science fiction stemmed from a crisis of literary imagination, as traditional forms could no longer address the demands of rapid social change. Whereas late Qing narratives often envisioned political or technological utopias, May Fourth literature generated new modes of socio-technical imagination in which science fiction, though seemingly in retreat, was in fact diffused across literary practices. The second part of the study traces how the everyday assimilation of science—its emergence as a “second nature”—reshaped narrative strategies and altered the genre’s position within modern Chinese literature. Finally, the paper examines the interplay between scientific enlightenment and science fiction realism through translations by writers such as Mao Dun and the creative works of figures including Gu Junzheng. It shows how intellectuals employed technology as a mediating force to construct “chains of truth,” producing realist science fiction that advanced successive waves of scientific enlightenment. Taken together, these analyses suggest that the May Fourth era did not mark the disappearance of science fiction but rather its reconfiguration, expanding its cultural presence and laying the foundation for its subsequent evolution in modern Chinese literature.

Bio: Zhang Yang is a Lecturer in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Jinling Institute of Technology and currently a Visiting Scholar at the Leeds Centre for New Chinese Writing, University of Leeds. Her research focuses on modern Chinese literature, with a particular emphasis on science fiction and speculative fiction, and the interrelations between science and literature. She has published on technology, imagination, and narrative in twentieth-century China, including studies of ceremonial representation in early utopian fiction, and engages with comparative approaches to Chinese literary modernities in a global context.

**Panels 2, 13:30-15:00**

**Panel 2A: Climate Change: Imagination, Communication, and Action****Chair: Jordi Serrano-Muñoz****Dipayan Dutta (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand) - Disseminating Environmental Concerns through Literary and Non-literary Activities – Evidence from the Aravalli Region, Gurgaon, India (ONLINE)**

Situated in the north-west of India, the Aravalli mountains play a crucial role in preventing desertification, regulating the climate, recharging the groundwater, and maintaining biodiversity. But now, due to activities like illegal mining, deforestation, real estate encroachment, and pollution, the region is facing severe ecological degradation. These activities have been supported and enabled by the dilution of the PLPA (Punjab Land Preservation Act), the NCZ (Natural Conservation Zone), and the NCR (National Capital Region) Draft Plan 2041. This paper explores how modes of protest like sloganeering, posters, placards, and other creative activities are used to articulate scientific knowledge and concerns by and to local stakeholders and a wider public. Additionally, online practices such as meme creation, tweetstorms, and hashtag use have proven to be helpful resources for explaining environmental issues and encouraging critical engagement with them. With varied examples from both offline and online practices, this paper aims to use qualitative analysis to examine how literary (poetry, plays, slogans, etc.) and non-literary forms (environmental actions, digital activism, etc.) of critical engagement might help disseminate scientific knowledge, explaining environmental problems and thus triggering motivation for a sustainable future. In doing so, it will explore how environmental stakeholders in this region often meld conventional socio-cultural and religious practices, attaching different connotations to them and employing unconventional creative methods to make their message more didactic.

Bio: Dipayan completed his BA and MA in Comparative Literature from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. Currently, he is a PhD student at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. His research interests include digital ethnography, cultural anthropology, environmental humanities, and STS (Science and Technology Studies). He is inclined to explore the creative/critical/artistic dimensions of understanding and spreading environmental knowledge. With a keen eye for the interplay between culture and technology, Dipayan thinks about the vibrant junctures where storytelling meets sustainability. He envisions a world where art and activism meet, enlightening paths to a greener future.

**V.S. Sruthi (Plaksha University, India) - Surveillance, Climate Scarcity, and Gendered Futures in South Asian Dystopian Imaginaries (ONLINE)**

Prayaag Akbar's *Leila* (2017), and its Netflix adaptation directed by Deepa Mehta (2019), presents a chilling near-future dystopia rooted in environmental collapse, technological control, and socio-gender oppression. The novel's fragmented prose and interiority foreground questions of memory and loss, while the Netflix series translates this into a visual regime of spectacle, surveillance, and affect. The paper investigates how narrative strategies of literary fragmentation, serial pacing, visual framing constructs different modes of imagining dystopian futures, and how these modes shape a political critique. Such an analysis situates *Leila* as a cultural text where storytelling itself becomes a site of struggle as a way to imagine dystopia, contest authoritarian futures, and probe the entanglements of technology, environment, and gender in South Asia.

Bio: Sruthi V S is a PhD researcher in Film and Visual Studies at Plaksha University, India. She holds an Advanced Certificate in Gender & Development from the Women's Studies & Development Centre, University of Delhi. Her academic background includes Masters in Arts & Aesthetics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Bachelors in Humanities and Social Sciences from the University of Delhi. She has worked in academia, media and development communications. Her research interests include cinema, popular culture, gender, technology and politics.

**Abioseh Michael Porter (Drexel University) - Cli-lit in West Africa: A Tool for Science and Literature in Dialogue**

In terms of climate change and its effects, the last decade has been extraordinarily frightening for Africa. In addition to epic weather events such as cyclones, earthquakes, floods and wildfires, there were various other cataclysmic disasters in the continent. The adversities ravaging various African countries in this decade of momentous changes are important because, according to climate experts, "Africa accounts for only about four percent of global emissions but bears the brunt of the consequences of climate change. ..."1 It is also acknowledged that "[...] several fragile states suffer more from floods, droughts, storms and other climate-related shocks than other countries, when they have contributed the least to climate change."2 Although one would have expected that such a dire situation would provide creative fodder for writers from Africa or the diaspora, there seems to be relatively little being done creatively on this issue. I plan to examine how some current writers such as Okorafor. Mbue, Hollist, and Ize-Iyamu are interrogating, reflecting, evaluating, or re-evaluating the presence

and effects of climate change in West Africa. Using science and the power of language as major tools, the authors seem intent on presenting and shaping some of the varied problems, personalities, histories, events, institutions, and ideas that have led to climate change in Africa. I will highlight how the writers use cli-lit to explore the implications of class, racism, misogyny, anti-science, and migration, and language to create and locate spaces, landscapes, and characters that speak to the looming climate disaster in Africa.

Bio: Abioseh Michael Porter was born and raised in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Trained as a comparatist, he was for more than a decade department head of the Department of English & Philosophy at Drexel University where he is currently Professor of English and Director of Africana Studies. The founding editor of the Journal of the African Literatures (JALA), Professor Porter was a Fulbright National Scholar at Univ Paul-Valéry !!!, Montpellier, France, 2019-2020).

## **Panel 2B: Science and Visual Storytelling: Communication, Counter-Knowledge, and Pedagogy** **Chair: Adele Guyton**

### **Francisco Saez de Adana (Universidad de Alcalá) - Current Trends in Comics as a Vehicle for Scientific Communication**

The presence of science in comics can be traced back to practically the very beginnings of the medium. As early as 1840, Rodolphe Töpffer published *Voyages et aventures du docteur Festus*. Since Töpffer's story, scientists have been a constant presence in comics, from Christophe's wise Cosinus in the late 19th century to Dr. Zarkov in *Flash Gordon*, Professor Calculus in *Tintin*, and, of course, the Marvel Universe, where many of the important characters, both heroes and villains, are scientists or science students. On the other hand, comics have also been used historically for scientific dissemination. Along these lines, in the 1970s, the electronics company Radio Shack launched a series of informative comics related to this topic, some of which used Superman to impart their knowledge. Therefore, scientific comics are something that has been present to a greater or lesser extent throughout the history of comics. However, this medium began to develop its full educational potential in the last two decades with an increasingly active incorporation into the educational field in a process that continues to grow to this day. The scientific field is no stranger to this trend, and the number of educational comics related to science and technology that have appeared recently is enormous, with content available for all ages. This paper aims to show some of the most important current trends in the use of comics for scientific communication.

Athmika Tarun - Counter-Knowledges in Graphic Memoirs of Madness

Bio: Francisco Saez de Adana is Professor at the Computer Science Department of the University of Alcalá in Spain. He obtained a PhD in Telecommunications Engineering in 2000. In 2014 he changed his field of study and started working on topics related with visual culture and comic studies. In 2019 he obtained a PhD in communication with a thesis related to this field. He teaches a visual literacy course that tries to show the potential of the image as a communication tool and the need to learn to read and write with images in today's world. He is also working on the potential of comics and graphic narratives as educational tools, particularly in the field of science.

### **Athmika Tarun (Indian Institute of Technology Delhi) - Counter-Knowledges in Graphic Memoirs of Madness**

This paper examines the representations of biomedical and psychiatric knowledge in three comics or graphic memoirs: Madison Clell's *Cuckoo* (2002), LB Lee's *All in the Family* (2020), and Emma Grove's *The Third Person* (2022). These works, which address Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), grapple with the ways in which biomedicine and the so-called psy disciplines (psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy) define and regulate notions of (mental) health and illness for the mad subject. The authors draw on the unique affordances of the comics medium—such as the juxtaposition of the verbal/text and the visual/image, and the ability to register shifting temporalities—in order to document the lived experiences of DID. At the same time, they use the form to resist and challenge the official discourses that have historically framed the disorder, including the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (or simply DSM). This paper argues that these “mad comics” do more than chronicle the embodied experience of madness; more crucially, they expose the epistemic injustices (in Miranda Fricker's sense) that are routinely inflicted by physicians, therapists, psychiatrists, and even family members, often under the guise of care. In this sense, the memoirs function as testimonies of mad suffering, in which the authors bear witness to their pain and enact a pedagogy of suffering. By drawing on the medium-specific affordances of the comics, the mad narrators compel readers to bear witness to their suffering, thereby implicating them in the very structures of violence that render such abuse possible in the first place.

Bio: Athmika Tarun is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, India. His doctoral research examines the autobiographical representation of madness in prose and comics. His broader research interests include critical psychiatry, medical humanities, disability studies, narratology, autobiography studies, and visual studies. He was recently a Visiting Scholar with Project Narrative at The Ohio State University.

**Alvaro Pons & Noelia Ibarra-Rius (University of Valencia) - Nonfiction Comics to Explain Science: From its Origins in the Press to Today's Classroom (ONLINE)**

Comics are recognized today as a valuable classroom tool for their pedagogical potential. However, science has been a protagonist in non-fiction comics almost since the origins of this approach to the ninth art. The appearance in the 1940s and 1950s of popular science series in the American press, such as *Our new age* the *Closer than we think*. They followed a path that successfully led to comic books, with narrative forms very far removed from the classic adventure and fantasy genres that populated these publications. The evolution of these pioneering non-fiction forms, which predated the successful inclusion of genres such as journalism in comics, has been obscured by the undeniable commercial and popular supremacy of others such as superheroes, where, paradoxically, science plays a fundamental role. However, in recent decades, they have found a resurgence, consolidating themselves as a distinct form of transmitting scientific knowledge. The objective of this paper is to review the evolution of the use of comics as a tool for the dissemination of science from a non-fiction perspective, paying special attention to the distinct communicative strategies that can be found in graphic narratives in other common expressions of comics and their possible use in the classroom.

Bio: Noelia Ibarra-Rius is assistant professor in the Department de Didàctica de la Llengua i la Literatura in the University of Valencia. Álvaro M. Pons is assistant professor in the Department d'Òptica i Ciències de la Visió in the University of Valencia. They are the co-directors of the Chair of Comic Studies Fundació SM-Universitat de València.

**Panel 2C: Grand Unified Theories: Synthesising Knowledge Across History and Disciplines**  
**Chair: Zoë Lehmann Imfeld**

**Alice Jenkins (University of Glasgow) - Writing About the Unity of Knowledge in an Authoritarian Age**

Many Victorian British people believed that one day the various strands of knowledge – including literary and scientific knowledge - would stop multiplying and separating, and instead begin to coalesce, ultimately producing unity. If the knowledges produced in (for example) physics and biology were both true, they must ultimately agree with and support one another; and the same was often said to apply to the knowledges produced by more diverse fields, such as physics and theology or biology and philosophy. This belief had a shaping influence on relationships between literature and science in the nineteenth century. My focus in this paper is on the ways in which we can understand the politics of this belief, in its historical moment but also in our own. What parts did the idealisation of unified knowledge play in the politics of the nineteenth century's emerging disciplines, and in the politics of access to them? And how can we make sense of this idealisation within the context of twenty-first century knowledge politics? Above all: how is growing authoritarianism, with its threats to academic freedom and its radical approach to ideas of division and unity, affecting the ways in which we can explore Victorian literature and science?

Bio: Alice Jenkins is Professor of Victorian Literature and Culture at the University of Glasgow, UK. She is the co-editor with Robert Tubbs and Nina Engelhardt of the *Palgrave Handbook of Literature and Mathematics* (2021) and has written widely on aspects of Victorian geometry and culture. Other books include *Space and the 'March of Mind': Literature and the Physical Sciences in Britain, 1815-1850* (2007) and *Michael Faraday's Mental Exercises: An Artisan Essay Circle in Regency London* (2008). She is currently finishing a monograph titled *Victorian Culture and the Unity of Knowledge*.

**Jerome de Groot (University of Manchester) - 'Neanderthal Mud: Towards a Biomolecular Hamlet'**

Over the past decade new biomolecular techniques, from Ancient DNA to proteinomics to synthetic genetics, have enabled us to radically rethink humanness. This paper seeks to understand how those techniques might be used to approach Hamlet, and, indeed, how the play anticipates this reconfiguring. Taking Svante Pääbo's work on DNA in the sediment of Denisova cave as a starting point, the paper considers the ways in which biomolecular investigation refigures our understanding of (quite literal) entanglement and sentience. What is the ontology of the entangling of bodies with other substances, and then the subsequent disentanglement of sediment that is found in Pääbo's work? Furthermore, what happens when the self and the matter of the burial are initially indistinguishable? In the gravedigger scene Hamlet meditates upon mud, dust, dirt, and the legibility of the human. Hamlet expresses his concern with what it is to be human, to be alive, and to be connected to the

dead. Hamlet's serious thinking about the afterlives of humans and their textual production, their archive, and the insubstantiality of it all in the face of death raises questions about how such memorials might work. The paper begins to sketch out ways that a biomolecular reading might be outlined. Does it allow a rereading of Hamlet? Or do these new techniques simply echo concepts that Hamlet himself had articulated?

Bio: Jerome de Groot teaches at the University of Manchester. He is the author of *Double Helix History* (2023), a book looking at the relationship between genetics and the past. He convenes a series looking at the Biomolecular Humanities: <https://manchestersdna.co.uk/biomolecular-humanities>

**Douglas Basford (University at Buffalo, State University of New York) - "The Weather Was the Great Fact": The Mode of Literary Allusion in Behavioral Science**

This paper takes account of a comparatively rare, underappreciated feature of relations between science and literature: the mode of literary allusion as an evidentiary and inferential framework and explanatory strategy, specifically in behavioral science. A significant, if idiosyncratic, example is found in an article on testosterone and occupational choice, published by the American social psychologist James McBride Dabbs, Jr., in 1992, early in a decade of work on the neurohormone and its correlation with behavior that would culminate in a co-authored trade book. Facing the conundrum of explaining how, out of all the occupations represented, farmers and ministers consistently had the lowest testosterone levels, Dabbs turns to evolutionary psychology and sociobiology. He pegs the ostensible choice made by high-T individuals to leave rural areas (without admitting it parallels his own) to a mismatch between their energetic, competitive nature and the "poor climate" that the supposed passivity of farm life represents for them. To clinch his argument Dabbs draws not on empirical evidence but instead on a sentence from Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*, suggesting that habitual subordination to the weather's whims invariably leads to farmers' low T levels. The fact that Dabbs drew the quotation not from Cather directly but from a monograph on Midwestern farming, whose key argument Dabbs entirely misreads, presages his clumsily enthusiastic embrace of literary allusion across the breadth of his career, refracting the life's work of his father, a renowned anti-segregationist minister and English professor, who saw in literature the expression of "the spirit of man."

Bio: Douglas Basford, PhD, is Asst. Director of the Academic and Professional Writing Program at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. His work in the medical-environmental humanities has led to conference papers at Yale University, Rice University, Loughborough University, University of Toronto, Queen's University Belfast/Maynooth University, Technische Universität Dresden, Bournemouth University, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, and Università degli Studi di Catania and is forthcoming in *Medical Humanities and Michel Serres and the Environmental Humanities* (Bloomsbury, ed. Beate Ochsner, Moritz Ingwersen, and Stephanie Postumus). His research has been funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Panels 3, 15:30-17:00**

**Panel 3A: Bodies of Knowledge: Aesthetics, Embodiment, and Epistemology**  
**Chair: Barbara Bienias**

**Muskaan Katiyar (Jawaharlal Nehru University) - (Un)Feeling Between Pain and Pleasure: Reading Asexuality in Emma Bolden's *The Tiger and the Cage***

"Following a "hermeneutics of pain" (Morris) away from medical science, this paper studies the relationship between pain, (sexual) unfeeling and self-configuration in Emma Bolden's *The Tiger and the Cage: A Memoir of a Body in Crisis* (2022). Bolden traces her lifelong engagement with (mis)diagnoses of her menstrual and mental disorders, surgical interventions, and her asexuality. This paper interprets her sexual disaffectivity beyond the sexological vocabulary of dysfunction and the scientific logic of its etiological relationship with her menstrual illness. A critical genealogy of frigidity and sexual coldness within sexology (Cryle and Moore) reveals the "governmentality of sentimentalism" (Yao), which determines one's capacity for feeling(s) in relation to their socio-political status. Only certain subjects are allowed to feel pain and sexual desire proportionately to be rendered legible. Bolden narrativises the cold clinical treatment of two kinds of unfeeling—a depersonalising pain caused by her chronic menstrual disorder and her asexuality. While the numbing intensity of the former is disavowed, the latter is pathologised as a mere comorbidity or symptom in need of medical rehabilitation within the larger socio-cultural order of "compulsory sexuality" (Przybylo). This paper analyses how Bolden's "autopathography" (Couser) critically deploys the literary form of the medical self-report and its scientific conventions of affective neutrality to demystify the politics mobilising the presumed scientific objectivity of clinician judgment. Juxtaposing her lived unfeeling with scientific disinterest, I explore

how pain and unfeeling reconfigure each other; the latter becomes a mode of affective disobedience that interprets the self away from its dominant socio-political and medical epistemologies."

Bio: Muskaan Katiyar is pursuing her Ph.D. from the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research areas lie at the intersection of Affect Theory, Queer Theory, and Visual Studies. She has previously written and presented on the politics and aesthetics of popular drag performances, minor affects within representations of the COVID-19 migrant crisis, as well as within articulations of asexuality.

**Anne Thell (National University of Singapore)- "Living in Pleasure and Delight": Cavendish's Aesthetic View of Nature**

This paper aims to place Margaret Cavendish in the history of aesthetics not only via the lens of the humanities (e.g., her thoughts on creativity, imagination, novelty, or pleasure)—although these are all important aspects of her metaphysics—but also via her ontology. The author posits that a material, intelligent nature produces all figures (i.e., everything) not out of necessity or proscriptive obligation but instead because it delights in novelty, variety, and beauty. Nature's eternal morphology and its infinite formal power—its continuous production and dissolution of forms—operates by embodying or giving shape to sensuous desire, meaning that nature is itself an aesthetic power. While Cavendish obviously predates Darwinian theories of evolution, she nonetheless anticipates an aesthetic view of life that both Darwin and his modern interlocutors espouse. If art is "above all the transformation of the materials from the past into resources for the future" (Grosz 103), and the intentional translation of sense, affect, and desire into material form, then Cavendishean nature is artistic. Importantly, this aspect of her metaphysics is only visible when we sidestep modern institutional divisions between the humanities and natural sciences. Adopting this more holistic view, we can isolate in her writing a material universe that takes as its primary objective—and its chief delight—the embodiment of desire. In this way, Cavendish offers an aesthetic genealogy of life.

Bio: Anne M. Thell is associate professor of literature at National Univ. of Singapore. Her books include *Minds in Motion* (2017; 2020) and the Broadview edition of Margaret Cavendish's *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (2020). She is current president of the International Margaret Cavendish Society.

**Sangeetha Balakrishnan and Latha R (Department of English and Foreign Languages, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Chennai, India) - Narrating Paradigm Shift: Copernican Insight through an Enactivist Lens in John Banville's Doctor Copernicus (ONLINE)**

*Doctor Copernicus* (1976) by John Banville dramatises the Copernican Revolution not merely as a scientific paradigm shift but as an embodied phenomenon in perception. Rather than presenting Copernicus' moment of insight concerning heliocentrism as an abstract concept, Banville renders it in terms of two metaphors: the insight alighting upon Copernicus like a "magnificent great slow golden bird" and the idea turned over in his hand like a "flawless ravishing jewel". These images add more than an ornamental flourish to Banville's prose; they translate conceptual reasoning into sensorimotor and affective events, thus drawing readers into the paradigm changing moment in the history of science, albeit mediated through biofiction. To analyse this narrative strategy, we employ Marco Caracciolo's enactivist approach to meaning-making, which foregrounds how narrative cues scaffold readers' bodily simulation of fictive events. Drawing on Caracciolo's integration of enactivist cognitive science and phenomenology, we bring in the notion of cross-domain integration from conceptual blending theory to show how these metaphors subsume multiple domains—scientific deduction, aesthetic appraisal, and bodily sensation—into seamless imaginative blends. In this way, Banville's prose enacts Copernicus's cognitive leap: the bird metaphor recruits auditory and proprioceptive schemas to simulate emergent insight, while the jewel metaphor engages haptic and visual schemas to invite contemplative inspection. By focusing on these two enactive triggers, the paper explains how *Doctor Copernicus* renders the phenomenology of insight itself, making an epistemological rupture intelligible as a lived experience.

Bio: Sangeetha Balakrishnan holds a PhD in Chemistry from Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany and has done postdoctoral research in Nanoscience at Hanyang University, S. Korea. After six years of teaching Chemistry at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, she transitioned to Literary Studies, aligning with her interest in the (inter)discipline of Literature and Science. She is currently a first year PhD scholar at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, India, where her research explores biofiction based on the lives of scientists and its intersections with scientific discourse. Dr. Latha R, an Associate Professor of English at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, India, has nearly thirty years of experience in higher education. Specialising in English Language Teaching and online pedagogy, she is an award-winning academic who has delivered numerous invited talks on language acquisition and digital learning. She is also actively engaged in curriculum design and development.

**Panel 3B: Ballooning: Literature, Science, and Technologies of Transportation****Chair: Wibke Schniedermann****Xia Zijian (Department of Sinology, Universität Würzburg) - Domesticating the Other: the Cultural and Technological Negotiation of Trains and Balloons in the Late Qing and the Early Republican China Speculative Fiction**

With the spread of Western technology in the late Qing and the early Republican China, modern transportation technologies profoundly transformed social mobility and modes of production, while also reshaping literary imaginaries of the future. This study begins by examining how modern transportation vehicles like trains and balloons emerged in China as sociological “things” and, through complex negotiation among multiple actors, became integral to modern Chinese life. This process of domestication transformed technology from a foreign “Other” into a humanized “matter” that could be depicted metaphorically and lyrically in literature. Furthermore, this study analyzes how the representation of transport technology as an aesthetic form shaped the transformation of modern Chinese literature itself. In the speculative fiction that had just been born, these vehicles became direct carriers of both anxiety and longing for modernity, while also carrying forward traditions of technological imagination from classical literature to construct new utopian landscapes. A comparison of these transport modalities reveals distinct emotions and writing styles, shaped by their different technological methodologies and embodied experiences. For example, the train, running on fixed tracks and adhering to rigid schedules, epitomized a linear, progressive, and deterministic conception of time and technological discipline. In contrast, the balloon, capable of free-floating movement in three dimensions, represented a more fluid, unpredictable, and often liberating potential of technology, reconfiguring spatial perception and utopian dreams. Ultimately, this literary difference embodies the possibility of non-linear and multiple interpretations of Chinese modernity itself.

Bio: Xia Zijian is a graduate student in the Department of Sinology at the University of Würzburg. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in Chinese Language and Literature from Zhejiang University, where he served as the leader of the students’ science fiction society for four years. He is also a member of SFRA. His main research interests are Chinese science fiction of the late Qing period and Taiwan science fiction, and he recently presented papers at the SFRA 2024 and 2025 annual conferences.

**Abhishek Sarkar (Jadavpur University) - Technoscientific Wonder and Comic Topos: Ballooning in Nineteenth-Century Bengali Literature (ONLINE)**

My paper will illustrate how the balloon and ballooning feats elicit comical responses in nineteenth-century Bengali literature when juxtaposed with traditional frames of reference and placed in contemporary cultural contexts. A doggerel by the popular journalist Ishwarchandra Gupta describes Fitzherbert Kight’s successful balloon ride from Kolkata in November 1850 humorously using mythological and Sanskrit poetic tropes. Further, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay adapts Glaisher’s 1871 memoir in a popular science essay on ballooning, which starts with a sarcastic account of the superhuman feats of Hindu mythological figures. Similarly, Rabindranath Tagore satirizes the cultural phenomenon of Hindu revivalism in a dramatic sketch of 1886 where a pedant writes an article comparing the modern balloon and the aerial ride of a mythological figure. Tagore explains the joke in an address to students (published 1905), stating that the cultural-philosophical achievements of ancient India do not depend on whether ballooning was invented in India. On the other hand, the balloon is treated as a supreme symbol of hubris in Gupta’s doggerel and it becomes a tool of misogynist satire in an 1891 farce by Rajkrishna Ray where a married Bengali woman’s solo flight in a balloon is treated as the apogee of female transgression. Reasons for the comic approach to balloons would include the tremendous risk involved, lack of material benefits for everyday life, balloon hoaxes in Kolkata as well as the shock of the new. These Bengali literary treatments of ballooning merit attention since they show complex responses to Western technoscience that are aligned neither with supine acceptance nor with total rejection.

Bio: Dr. Abhishek Sarkar teaches English at Jadavpur University, Kolkata. His areas of specialization are the literatures and cultures of early modern England and colonial Bengal. He is the Joint Coordinator of the “Shakespeare in Bengal” project pursued by the Department of English, Jadavpur University. He has completed a state-funded minor research project on the reception of Lord Byron in colonial Bengal. He has been the principal investigator of a major research project entitled “The First World War and Bengali Self-Representation.” His articles have been published in *Multicultural Shakespeare*, *Actes des Congrès de la Société Française Shakespeare*, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, *The Byron Journal*, *Scottish Literary Review*, *South Asian Review*, *South Asian History and Culture*, *Literature Compass* and *American Notes and Queries*, apart from journals of leading Indian universities. He has presented research papers at the conferences of the *Société Française Shakespeare*, *Asian Shakespeare Association*, *Shakespeare Association of America*, *British*

Shakespeare Association, European Shakespeare Research Association, Nineteenth-Century Studies Association, International Comparative Literature Association and American Comparative Literature Association.

**Steven McLean (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies) - A Matter of Levity: Science, Satire, and Perspective in Early Balloon Narratives (ONLINE)**

This paper will examine literary reactions to the hot air balloon, from the ‘Balloomania’ of the late 1700s to the 1830s. It examines a range of hitherto overlooked poems, and other balloon narratives. This paper will show how early balloon poems satirise the balloon's lack of utility, before other narratives explore the narrative perspective opened up by aerial voyages. Numerous early poems satirised the lack of a reliable means of steering the balloon, by facetiously imagining trips to the moon or other planets in the solar system. Robert Burns famously refers to the ‘Lunardi’ to describe the lady’s elaborate fashionable hat in ‘To a Louse’ (1786). (The implication that the balloon was a fashion, or a passing fad, is present in other poems of the time.) The military application of balloons was also satirised in one poem’s response to Napoleon’s plans to use a giant hot air balloon to invade England. One of the most delightful overlooked early balloon poems is 1786’s ‘Paddy’s Trip to the Moon’. The poem clearly draws on reports of an incident in 1783, in which superstitious French peasants attacked a balloon with pitchforks, believing it to be a monster or the moon falling from the sky. Young Paddy helps a stranded aeronaut tether his balloon, before proclaiming he had grasped the moon by the horn. 1835s ‘A Trip Over London’, meanwhile, uses the new perspective generated by aerial voyages to satirise politicians. From an aerial perspective, the Houses of Parliament are reduced to a ‘rabbit hutch’, while great statesmen are reduced to mere specks.

Bio: Steven McLean teaches English Literature at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea. He is the author of *The Early Fiction of H. G. Wells: Fantasies of Science*, and the editor of *H. G. Wells: Interdisciplinary Essays* and *George Griffith's The Angel of the Revolution*. As well as numerous articles on Wells, Steven has published on Emile Zola and literature and aeronautics. His current work includes articles on science fiction.

**Panel 3C: Who Speaks Now? Foucault’s Author-Function across Materiality, Matter, and Machines (org. Leonie Bradbury)**

**Chair: Leonie Bradbury**

**Panel description**

Foucault asked us to analyze notions of writing and authorship by considering the place of subjectivity. This panel explores this with three case studies. The first explores author-object entanglements in art installations that present distributed notions of authorship. The second considers co-authoring with non-human entities particles, salt, and beetles to expand the author function beyond the human. The final presents LLM as a skeuomorphic author, where textuality diffracts into probabilistic performativity and paratextual emergence. Across literature, theory, and science, these panelists consider how ‘the author’ becomes a shifting function of systems: diffraction rather than voice, and emergence rather than origin.

**Leonie Bradbury (Emerson College) - Artist-Object Entanglements: How Networked Artworks Generate New Modes of Authorship**

The network has emerged as a dominant cultural paradigm across disciplines and stands for a decentered, distributed, nonlinear system of nodes and edges that are infinitely connected to each other and inform much of what we experience around us. The network prioritizes the relationships between ‘things’ over the things themselves. American artist Sarah Sze presents site-specific installations that operate at a nexus between architecture, sculpture, and drawing. Her installations are conglomerations of everyday objects, video projections, paintings and found materials that combine to create imaginative worlds. The viewer relates through an embodied mode as they traverse these particular temporal and spatial contexts to become part of the network. Within these subject-object-networks there is a collapsing of the object and the image, the real and the imaginary, which causes its material status to be unclear. Sze questions how and when something, an object or material, speaks as an objet d’art or remains a utilitarian object, a thing. The networked artwork thus functions as a dynamic relational form that includes the author, the subject and ‘the work.’ Foucault’s question, “what difference does it make who is speaking?” is relevant here in that Sze’s objects not only connect to form a network, but that they act as active individuated agents who speak alongside the author, to the subject and to each other, to generate an expanded, dialogic discursivity. It is through this system of complex relationality that a new mode of authorship emerges, namely that of a distributed authorship.

Bio: Leonie Bradbury serves as the Henry and Lois Foster Chair of Contemporary Art Theory and Practice and Distinguished Curator-in-Residence at Emerson College in Boston. She holds a PhD in Aesthetics and Art

Theory from IDSVA and an MA from Boston University. Bradbury directs a platform for contemporary visual art Emerson Contemporary that is focused on presenting moving image works and media art engaged with new and emerging technologies. In 2022, De Gruyter published her essay “The Networked Artwork: The Grid As Dynamic Relational Form?” as part of the anthology *The Arts of the Grid: Interdisciplinary Insights on Gridded Modalities in Conversation with the Arts*.

**Shana Dumont Garr (Emerson College) - New Materialist Authorship: Artistic Alliances with Forests, Beetles, Salt, and Air**

In the context of the climate catastrophe, scholarly circles increasingly recognize the benefits of de-centering humans and integrating the intelligence of non-human beings into critical thinking strategies. The understanding that materials are sentient, or experience a kind of subjectivity, is a key aspect of the New Materialist school of thought. New materialism has roots in animism and Spinoza’s suggestion of a nature/culture continuum in a world made of one substance with infinite attributes. In his essay “What is an Author?” Foucault traces openings uncovered by the disappearance of the author. This paper posits that new materialist attitudes bring new considerations to Foucault’s queries about authorship. Artmakers put new materialist theories into action. This paper emerges from an exhibition curated by the author, a sentient land, that will take place at Emerson Contemporary in Boston, MA, from January to March 2026. Four artists will create immersive installations in collaboration with their mediums, which include forests, beetles, salt, and air. The artists’ respective processes enable the materials to inform the creative process. Their modes of inquiry include oral history, bio-sonification, LIDAR scanning, fumage, and saining, and the works of art explore restoration, time, and scale. The artists’ works evolve the concept of interspecies creativity and raise questions around translation, speculation, and anthropomorphism. Unlike people, materials do not have proper names, so their inclusion in authorship is an advance, rather than a retreat. By making way for the innate intelligence of their mediums, the artists in the exhibition innovate Foucault’s author function.

Bio: Shana Dumont Garr is a contemporary art curator, writer, and educator based in Greater Boston. She is a professor at Emerson College in the Visual and Media Arts Department and an assistant curator of special projects and campus engagement at Emerson Contemporary, an academic gallery specializing in media art. Garr is a PhD Candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, focusing her research on the relationship between spirituality and technology, and bringing form to memory in the context of climate collapse and late capitalism.

**Jason Hoelscher (Georgia Southern University) - The Diffraction of the Author: Textual Swarms and Skeuomorphic Intelligence in Large Language Models**

Large Language Models may be the most significant new authors of our time. If Foucault decentered author into author function, and Barthes disentangled text into intertextual tissue, what happens when authorship expands again—from the solitary genius of old, to the fluid textual networks of Foucault and Barthes, to the skeuomorphic, statistical systems of LLMs? Through close readings of model paratexts, prompts, and the compounded feedback loops of interface design, I propose a model of authorship as distributed, diffracted, and systemic, arguing that LLMs move beyond the author-function to instantiate a generator-function, defined less by identity than by continual stochastic output. Here, author and author-function are redistributed across probabilistic architectures and alignment protocols—less individual or network functions of textuality, than emergent phenomena of big-data infrastructure at scale. This shift to generator-function constitutes the intelligence of artificial intelligence as skeuomorphic—a design metaphor that imitates older forms to make new systems legible: Statistical operations become hidden authors, dataset filters become signatures, and prompting becomes a form of co-authorship—if the death of the author leads to the birth of the reader, skeuomorphic LLM authorship leads to the reader as authorial co-designer. Considered thus, human ideas and A.I. hallucinations no longer register as originality or error, but as epiphenomenal noise patterns within aggregate intertextual flux. Authorship becomes less a voice than a diffraction pattern, emergent across weights, prompts, and contexts, operating with the dynamics of a complex adaptive system: Textuality and authorship less as network than as statistical swarm formation.

Bio: Jason Hoelscher is a Professor of Interdisciplinary Art at Georgia Southern University, in the southeastern USA. He holds a PhD in aesthetics and art theory from IDSVA and an MFA from Pratt Institute, with additional training in complex systems science and information theory from NECSI, and design theory and innovation from Harvard Business School Online. His book *Art as Information Ecology: Artworks, Artworlds, and Complex Systems Aesthetics* (Duke UP, 2021) was nominated for book of the year by the ASA, CAA, and ASAP. Hoelscher has exhibited nationally and internationally, and presented papers at CAA, ICA, SECAC, SLSA, and universities worldwide.

**Panel 3D: Figuring Flora: Literature and the Botanical Imaginary****Chair: Elly McCausland****Jasmine Tan Hui Jun (University of Birmingham and Nanyang Technological University) - "Enduring Connections Found in All Flesh": Biological Organisation, Form and Poetic Taxonomies**

This paper explores how science and poetry characterise biological organisation/classification through structure and language by analyzing two contemporary poems by Pattiann Rogers and Linda Bierds which share a preoccupation with ordering. "The Family is All There Is" (Rogers, 1989) investigates how homologous anatomical structures like veins, mouth, limbs and hair are shared between humans and nonhumans, subverting the reader's understanding of 'family' as a taxonomic rank in the Linnean classification system because it offers a relational view of the kinship between humanity and Nature's creatures. "Sonnet Crown for Two Voices" (Bierds, 2004) further examines the logic of ordering in genetics by charting the movement of spindle poles during mitosis. Bierds scrutinizes both biological form and poetic form, enacted through a "conversation" across time, space and stanza between a poetic persona and a scientist (the fictional Gregor Mendel based on the real life biologist). Both Rogers and Bierds foreground the role of form/structure in scientific and poetic understanding, utilizing poetry as "a means to create order and form in a field unified only by chaos" (Alison Hawthorne Deming 21, "Science and Poetry: A View from the Divide"). For "even in science the object of research is no longer nature itself, but man's investigation of nature" (Werner Heisenberg 24, *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*). In order to account for Heisenberg's 'Observer Effect' where humanity is part of the system we wish to study, I aim to elucidate how poetry presents and comprehends the scientific impulse to classify and categorize.

Bio: Jasmine Tan Hui Jun is a part-time lecturer at the School of Humanities in Nanyang Technological University (Singapore) and has a Master of Arts in English Literature from the same institution. She is currently pursuing her PhD in English Literature at the University of Birmingham (United Kingdom) and is the Singapore Asia regional representative for The Commission on Science and Literature (CoSciLit). Jasmine researches on contemporary poetry and the natural sciences, with a focus on biology and ecology. She has also published essays in edited collections on popular culture, science fiction, ecocriticism and monster theory.

**Michael Wainwright (Royal Holloway, University of London) - Pharmakon, Pharmakeus, Pharmakos: John Dos Passos's Vignette of Luther Burbank**

This paper defers to Jacques Derrida to unearth insights from John Dos Passos's biographical vignette of horticulturalist Luther Burbank (1849–1926). In "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida analyses the Phaedrus, especially the myth of Theuth, who offers his invention of writing for King Thamus's approval as a pharmakon (supplement or cure) for memory. In doing so, Theuth posits himself as a pharmakeus (magician). In "The Plant Wizard" (1930), Dos Passos offers the comparable tale of Burbank's promotion of the hybrid as a supplement or cure (pharmakon) for plant diseases and crop deficiencies. Burbank's success earned him mythical status as the "Plant Wizard" (pharmakeus). In the Phaedrus, Thamus accepts writing as a pharmakon, but interprets Theuth's invention otherwise, as a dangerous supplement that promotes forgetfulness. These differing perspectives attest to the ambivalence of logos. The innocent Burbank, who "had never a thought of evil," failed to appreciate this ambivalence. Burbank, who supported the defence of John Scopes at the Monkey Trial of 1925, "wouldn't give up Darwin and Natural Selection," continued to champion hybridity, and deemed himself an "infidel." Just as the pharmakon is an ambiguous supplement, so is the pharmakeus, for which pharmakos is "almost the homonym." The pharmakos is a poisoner of bodies, minds, and souls, an infidel whom the polis often cast out. Scapegoating was, according to Derrida, Thamus's fate, and according to Dos Passos, Burbank's fate too: the innocently self-styled infidel "brushed down a wasp's nest that time [. . .] and they stung him and he died puzzled."

Bio: Michael Wainwright has long held the position of Honorary Research Associate with the English Department at Royal Holloway, University of London. Previous appointments included visiting lectureships at St. John's College, Cambridge, Lancaster University, the University of Birmingham, and Staffordshire University. His monographs include *Darwin and Faulkner's Novels* (2008), *Game Theory and Minorities in American Literature* (2016), *The Rational Shakespeare* (2018), *Literature, Parasitism, and Science* (2021), and *Kantian Dignity and Trolley Problems in the Literature of Richard Wright* (2023).

**Panels 4, 17:00-18:30**

### Workshop 4A: Science Stories: A Conversation with Daniel A. Newman on Narrative as "Common Ground" Between Literature and Science

Chair: Shannon Lambert

In this session, narratologist Daniel A. Newman will discuss relationships between narrative and science using Jim Kozubek's 2018 article "The Future of Science Storytelling" as a prompt. In conversation with Shannon Lambert, Newman will explore the role of narrative in popular scientific writing and literature in select works. After this initial conversation, the floor will open for a Q&A with participants on how we might deepen interdisciplinary research and the potential for narrative to serve as a "common ground" between literature and science.

Bio: Daniel Aureliano Newman is Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, in the English Department at the University of Toronto, where he is also Director of Graduate Writing Support in the Faculty of Arts & Sciences. He has published articles in journals including *Style*, *Journal of Narrative Theory*, *Twentieth-Century Literature* and the *American Journal of Botany*, as well as the monograph *Modernist Life Histories: Biological Theory and the Experimental Bildungsroman* and the collection *Writing Together: Building Social Writing Opportunities for Graduate Studies*, co-edited with Rachael Cayley and Fiona Coll.

### Panel 4B: Mediated Life: Digital Minds, Archival Experience, and Inherited Fictions

Chair: Faye Lynch

#### Michaela Giesenkirchen Sawyer (Utah Valley University) - "Many of each kind of them are living": Gertrude Stein and Turn-of-the-Century Monadology

Gertrude Stein witnessed the "Battle of the Absolute" that raged in Harvard's Philosophy Department in the 1890s, centered on the question of "The Many and the One." Her mentors—William James, Hugo Münsterberg, and Josiah Royce—developed monadologies that modeled Stein's own. Münsterberg's was most closely related to the descriptive, taxonomic biological sciences Stein was trained in. In *The Making of Americans*, her approach was atomistic like Münsterberg's: parts (states of mind, feelings, concepts, traits, individuals) and collectives (families, groups, kinds) were equally collected and described; an individual part could become a collective and vice versa. Like Münsterberg, Stein initially believed this could yield a complete description of the human world. But unlike James and Royce's monadologies, Münsterberg's depended on hierarchical organization for unity and completability. Stein's approach, by contrast, was not hierarchical but, like James's, democratically pluralistic. Her methods became so diversified and complex that complete description became practically impossible. James's philosophy exerted the most profound influence on her thought and helped resolve the question of completability. As her reflection and the dynamic of language became entangled with what she described, the described ceased to be separate items and became experience as events, each unfolding in a paragraph. Her project gravitated toward assembling the fringed pieces—the thats—which in James's *Radical Empiricism* make up experience, including dependent-independent relations. Composing the novel, she found her way out of a nineteenth-century into a twentieth-century scientific paradigm.

Bio: Michaela Giesenkirchen Sawyer is an associate professor of Humanities at Utah Valley University. She also taught writing, literature, and humanities at Washington University, Boston University, and Kenyon College. Her field of specialty is American Modernist Literature and Philosophy; she has published on Gertrude Stein, Herman Melville, and Ezra Pound. She received her Ph.D. in English from Washington University in St. Louis.

#### Sowon S Park (UC Santa Barbara) - Print Minds (ONLINE)

As digital technologies displace the printed book as the primary medium of knowledge transmission, some of the most pressing questions for contemporary society have concerned the cognitive and epistemological shifts taking place in the human mind. Much recent cultural criticism has focused on the decline of long-form book reading and the rise of new cognitive modes shaped by screen-based media. Recurrent questions include: What patterns of consciousness characterize digitally mediated cognition? What are the cognitive side effects of the digital and AI revolutions? To understand what is new about digitally mediated cognition, however, we must first examine the cognitive scaffolding it is displacing—namely, the 'print mind.' Because the invention of the printing press not only revolutionized how people share information but also gave rise to the Enlightenment worldview that underpins modern liberal democracy. Print culture also formed the modern Western subject, typically imagined as rational, autonomous, individualistic, and politically egalitarian. Within this framework, linear reasoning, sustained attention, interiority, and a strong sense of individual agency have been valorized as normative cognitive ideals to which every educated person is expected to aspire. As we move deeper into the digital age, it becomes increasingly possible to ask: to what extent is this model of the self in reality a downstream effect of

print culture, the end of which is upon us? This paper explores the epistemic and cognitive tensions between two kinds of minds: the 'print mind' and 'digital cognition' approaching both as historically contingent products.

Bio: Sowon S Park (DPhil, MPhil. Oxon) is Associate Professor of Cognitive Literary Criticism, Department of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She directs the Literature and Mind Center and is Co-editor of two academic monograph series: Global Asia (Oxford University Press) and Critical Interventions in the Medical and Health Humanities (Bloomsbury) Previously, she has held faculty positions at Oxford, Cambridge and Ewha (Seoul), and visiting fellowships at ZFL Berlin and UC San Diego.

**Reshma Sanil (Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee) - Tracing the Sympoietic and Technological Paradigms of Evolution through Select Works of Science Fiction**

By juxtaposing the science fiction narratives of Neal Stephenson's *Seveneves* and Nicola Griffith's *Ammonite*, this study analyzes two modes of evolutionary paradigms that deconstruct "reprosexuality," or the linear link between heterosexuality and reproduction. The novels are compared to show how nature-culture entanglements, formed both biophysically and socially, open the body to natural and synthetic gestation, thereby foregrounding non-normative and receptive forms of intimacy with nonhuman alterities such as microbes and techno-apparatuses (Malone 1). Through *Ammonite*, the study explores how "sympoietic" or "becoming-with" microbial entities can create an "unlicensed somatic exchange" by recombining human DNA with viral matter. The novel's sexual and reproductive mechanisms are examined through the lens of posthuman ecological ethics to demonstrate how a "cross-species" sexuete specificity can be constituted in contrast to uniform models of sexual difference. The study identifies a "microbial-gestational" pattern that diffracts the amniotic womb into a trans-subjective web of microbial-maternal-fetal chimera, whose agential intra-actions unfold through complex processes such as parthenogenesis. By contrast, the rhetoric of *Seveneves* highlights the techno-biopolitical prospect of intentionally redesigning or enhancing evolutionary phenomena by situating germline cells in an in vitro environment and isolating them as immortal cell lines. The novel illustrates how the concept of "designer babies" reifies reproductive futurity through the active selection of genetic markers, and how the method of automictic parthenogenesis subverts phallogocentric ideals of reproduction by eliminating the genetic contribution of the male.

Bio: Reshma Sanil is a research scholar in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee. Her research focuses on interdisciplinary issues related to postgenomics and microbiomics from the theoretical standpoints of eco-feminism, material feminism, critical posthumanism, and feminist techno-science with reference to select works of Science Fiction. Her work 'Agent Orange and the Exposed Bodies of Vietnam: Trans-Corporeal Abjection and Embodied Difference', is published in *Posthuman Southeast Asia: Ecocritical Entanglements Across Species Boundaries* by Lexington Press. She is also working as a Teaching Assistant in the University.

*Day Two – Thursday 18 June*

**Panels 5, 09:00-10:30**

**Roundtable 5A: The Affordances of Fungi (org. Rhona Trauvitch, the Mycelial Working Group)  
Chair: Shannon Lambert**

The Mycelial Working Group is a transdisciplinary hub comprised of scholars, scientists, writers, artists, and science communicators, each of whom brings a novel perspective to the study of fungi. At the proposed roundtable, convenor Trauvitch along with five members of the working group will examine the affordances of the fungus—whether formal or literal. Speakers will consider fungi—and/or their components: mushrooms, mycelium, or the mycelium's individual filaments, the hyphae—as protagonists in diverse domains such as literary form, rhetorical fictionality, ecology, climate pedagogy, computing, eco-art, speculative fiction, posthumanism collectives, and emergent storytelling. They will address the question, What can this extraordinary organism enable us to build, to mitigate, to express, to imagine? The roundtable's particular direction will depend on who among these working group members will participate. In whichever configuration it takes, the roundtable will show how creatively exploring the affordances of the fungus—itsself a boundary-defying, taxonomically "problematic" organism—can shape cross-disciplinary research and offer solutions with wide-ranging applications.

**Speaker bios**

Bryan Dewsbury (Department of Biological Sciences, STEM Transformation Institute, Florida International University)

Bryan Dewsbury is an Associate Professor of Biology and Principal Investigator of the Science Education And Society lab. His work explores the social context of education and the factors that allow students to access and thrive in quality educational experiences. He has given over 200 keynotes around the world on his work and is the host of the podcast 'Knowledge Unbound'.

Rhona Trauvitch (Florida International University)

Rhona Trauvitch, Ph.D., is an associate teaching professor at Florida International University, specializing in cross-disciplinary analogical reasoning at the intersection of literature and STEM. Trauvitch developed the fiction-to-science, or fi-sci, pattern mapping model, demonstrating that fictionality has the rhetorical power to promote science accessibility and understanding; her monograph *Fi-Sci: Avatars of Science in Fiction* is forthcoming from the Ohio State University Press. The pedagogical application of Trauvitch's research is led by FIU's Science & Fiction Lab, of which she is Founding Director. She has been awarded a \$150,000 Humanities Initiatives grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and a \$400,000 Improving Undergraduate STEM Education grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) in support of the Lab's projects.

Nicholas R. Cabezas (Rice University)

Nicholas R. Cabezas is a Ph.D. student of English at Rice University. He entwines exile studies, ecocriticism, and aesthetics to read twenty-first-century novels and video games. His work has appeared in *A Profound Waste of Time*, *Variaciones Borges*, and *Philosophy and Literature*. When he's not studying, he can be found writing fiction by morning and fencing by evening.

Yonina Hoffman (United States Merchant Marine Academy)

Yonina Hoffman is Assistant Professor of English at the United States Merchant Marine Academy. Hoffman's first book project, *The Voices of David Foster Wallace: Comic, Encyclopedic, Reverent*, analyzes Wallace's narrative voices, their evolution, and their influences. Yonina's second book project offers a formal history of the global encyclopedic novel, bringing together systems theory and literary formalism. Hoffman has published on Wallace, William Gass, narrative rhythm, the history of the first person, and more in *Fictions*, *Post-45*, *The Handbook of Diachronic Narratology*, and *Style*.

Premee Mohamed (Independent)

Premee Mohamed is an Indo-Caribbean author based in Edmonton, Alberta. She has taught and spoken at institutions including the Carl Brandon Society, the Banff Institute for Literary Arts, Clarion, and the Writers' Guild of Alberta. While currently working independently, her previous institutions have included Alberta Environment and Parks and Agriculture Agri-Food Canada.

### **Panel 5B: Alternative Knowledges: Zodiacs, Horoscopes, and Homeopathy** **Chair: Annalisa Volpone**

#### **Divna Manolova (Ghent University)- Twelve Verses on the Zodiac and Their Diagrams.**

A twelfth-century poem in twelve verses introduces its readers to the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Its authorship is attributed to a certain George from the Monastery of the Holy Forty Martyrs in Constantinople. As a teacher at the eponymous school, he is known to have written two texts on a fire that occurred in Constantinople and possibly some further school exercises. This paper follows the late medieval journey of this poem on the Zodiac through several manuscripts which transmit it independently of its author's name and teaching activity. The poem is often found together with one or more diagrams of cosmological, astronomical, and astrological nature, for instance in *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, ms. gr. 1908 whose sixth quire (16th century) puts together medical astrology, cosmology, a diagram of the universe, the Zodiac poem and narrative and diagrammatic knowledge concerning the sun and the moon. At the same time, a fifteenth-century codex, *Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana*, Plut. 86, Cod. 14 features the poem in a very different context, namely the twelve verses are preceded by a theological diagram and followed both by a circular diagram linking the zodiac and the four elements and a diagram of the Arc of the Covenant. Studying the late medieval instances of the poem hopefully will help me elucidate the place of elementary knowledge concerning the zodiac, as well as of the use of the poetic form, in the late Byzantine educational and scholarly environment.

Bio: Divna Manolova is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions postdoctoral fellow. She studies the teaching and learning of the astral sciences in Palaiologan Byzantium. Her current project COSMOPHOT: Teaching the Cosmos in Poetry and Prose: Aratus' *Phaenomena* and Cleomedes' *The Heavens* in Late Byzantium aims to

rethink the relationship between poetry and astronomy as it investigates medieval Greek solutions to the question as to how to explain the cosmos through literary means. Divna is a co-founder and core member of the History of Science in the Medieval World summer school team which is hosted biannually by the University of Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria).

**Naomi Wynter-Vincent (Northeastern University London) - This Proves Nothing: Exploring Homeopathic ‘Proving’, Repertorisation, and Ultradilution as Precursors of the Digital Humanities and Large Language Model GPTs**

This paper explores method in the homeopathic tradition, focusing on three elements: the homeopathic ‘proving’, the subsequent repertorisation of proving material, and the potentisation of homeopathic remedies through ultradilution. While the tenets of homeopathy are rejected by the medical mainstream, this paper argues that the disparaged (but surprisingly scientific) methods of homeopathy prefigure both the digital humanities and the textual tokenisation used in large language models (LLM) used by AI. The process by which new homeopathic remedies are discovered, known as a ‘proving’, involves the exposure of a group of healthy participants to a new substance in ‘potentised’ (i.e. extremely diluted) form, on the basis that the substance gives rise to transient symptoms in healthy individuals which the eventual remedy will treat in the sick. Following exposure, participants minutely record their physical sensations, dreams, thoughts, and affects over a period of some days or weeks, and this ‘data’ is then systematised and indexed into a repertory subsequently serving as a basis for homeopathic prescription. Homeopathic ‘medicines’ are then created through a process of potentisation involving multiple rounds of extreme dilution. Using a hybrid creative-critical approach, I use these methods to discern unconscious structuring logic in methods associated with the digital humanities, such as thematic analysis, and in the extreme fragmentation of textual corpora at work in LLM GPTs.

Bio: Dr Naomi Wynter-Vincent is assistant professor in Innovation and English at Northeastern University London. Her first book, *Wilfred Bion and Literary Criticism*, was published by Routledge in 2021. Her research centres on theories of thinking and creativity, especially in the work of Wilfred Bion, across literary studies, creative writing and the business humanities.

**Xueying Zhou (Beijing University of Chemical Technology) - From Horoscope to Soundscape: Virginia Woolf’s Cosmic Listening in *The Waves* (ONLINE)**

While Virginia Woolf was neither a systematic practitioner of astrology nor an overt theorist of sound, her writing reflects a cultural moment steeped in both—the early twentieth-century occult revival, with its popular fascination with horoscopes and planetary correspondences, and the contemporaneous transformation of auditory experience through technologies such as the phonograph and the radio. In *The Waves*, these cultural forces are transmuted into a formal experiment. The novel’s six voices rise and fall in cyclical patterns that recall astrological transits and planetary orbits, producing a temporal design that exceeds linear chronology. At the same time, Woolf’s prose orchestrates a sonic texture—waves, hums, silences, and echoes—that immerses readers in an auditory experience of cosmic rhythm. By treating the characters’ monologues as both voices and celestial bodies, Woolf constructs a poetics of resonance in which individual subjectivity is inseparable from larger cosmic patterns. *The Waves* uses pauses, repetitions, and tonal shifts to create an experiential rhythm, in which cycles of birth, growth, and return are rendered audibly rather than narratively. Drawing on Deleuze’s theory of rhythm as repetition-with-difference and Bachelard’s poetics of imagination and elemental forces, this paper argues that *The Waves* enacts a form of cosmos listening: mapping human experience and life trajectories not through predictive astrology but through sonic patterning that attunes readers to cosmic scale. Reading Woolf through this constellation offers new insights into her experimental prose as attuned to the harmonies—and dissonances—of a universe imagined both astrologically and sonically.

Bio: Xueying Zhou is an Associate Professor in the English Department at Beijing University of Chemical Technology, China. She received her Ph.D. in English Literature from Peking University in 2021. Zhou’s recent publications include “Quantum Reality and Mystical Musings on Precarity of Solidity in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*”; “‘Writing Between the Lines’: Style as Walter Pater’s Esoteric Teaching of Queerness”; “Purity and Discipline: Decadents’ Perception of Dirt and Victorian Medical Discourse,” etc. She delivered an online presentation on Woolf and quantum physics in the International Conference of Three Societies on Literature and Science in 2024.

## Panel 5C: Illuminating: Error, Gender, and Performance in Early Modern Literature and Science

Chair: Şima İmşir

### **Barbara Bienias (Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences) - Terror Errorum: The Culture of Error in the Literature and Science of Seventeenth-Century England**

This paper investigates the epistemic category of error in early modern English literary and scientific contexts, with the aim of tracing the intricate connections between the diverse discourses of the seventeenth century. While the treatment of error in the works of Thomas Browne or Francis Bacon has already been extensively studied, this paper turns to less canonical writers to show how the fear and management of error permeated broader literary and scientific practices. Particular attention is given to *hommes de lettres* and natural philosophers, including mathematical practitioners and almanac makers such as Edward Pond (d. 1629), Arthur Hopton (c. 1580–1614), John Gadbury (1627–1704), and Henry Coley (1633–1704). Building on the now-classic methodological insights of Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer regarding the scientific pursuits of the Royal Society, as well as more recent perspectives presented in *Errors, False Opinions and Defective Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* (eds. Marco Faini and Marco Sgarbi, 2023), the paper examines whether error was not only unavoidable but in fact indispensable for the advancement of knowledge in early modernity, and how print culture shaped this process.

Bio: Barbara Bienias is an Assistant Professor at the Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. She holds a PhD in British Literature, and her primary research interests include the history of astronomy and astrology in early modern England, the history of early modern epistemology, the intersection of science and literature (1500–1800), and the history of the book. Her work focuses on the development of scientific discourse, especially within the London circles of mathematical practitioners and almanac makers in the 17th century.

### **Alessio Mattana (University of Cagliari, Italy)- Theorising Early Modern Women, Scientific Knowledge and Literary Genre**

In the study of how women contributed to scientific knowledge in early modern Britain, the main theoretical framework remained unchanged for decades: due to the social and cultural constraints then in place, the involvement of women was an exceptional occurrence. Accordingly, scholars often tended to focus on those women who, gifted with great talent and audacity, stood out in a male-dominated intellectual landscape. While this approach has been challenged in the scholarship, the textual forms adopted by early modern women who wished to intervene in scientific debates remain under-researched. In spite of disciplinary divisions between scientific and non-scientific knowledge being much more fluid at the time, assumptions over the forms scientific contributions took continue to be perpetuated, with scholars focusing on certain well-established genres for scientific writing – such as treatises and articles in specialised journals like *The Philosophical Transactions* – as more authoritative and impactful, while ignoring others that to our contemporary gaze feel less prototypically scientific. This paper seeks to offer a preliminary mapping of the forms used by women writers to intervene in scientific debates in Britain between 1600 and 1800. This will be done to introduce the theory that choosing “literary” genres like the periodical essay, travel narrative, comedy and certain strains of poetry, allowed women writers to intervene in scientific debates within their intellectual networks while modulating their visibility as authors so as to avoid charges of immodesty.

Bio: Alessio Mattana is a research fellow in English literature at the University of Cagliari, Italy. He was awarded his doctorate in English at the University of Leeds in 2020. His research interests lie in the intersections between literature and science in the long eighteenth century, and in 2024 he published *Disciplining the Imagination*, a monograph on the influence of Newtonianism on eighteenth-century narrative. He is the principal investigator of a research project on women’s use of literature as a means to intervene in scientific debates, 1650–1800.

## Panel 5D: Engineered Imagination: Literature, AI, and Cognition

Chair: Lou Braibant

### **Elona Zhana (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles) - Engineering Memory: Literature as a Counter-Archive to the “Science” of Socialism**

This paper examines how authoritarian regimes deploy the authority of “science” to classify, plan, and spatially engineer society, and how literature can reframe these claims from within lived experience. Drawing on the case of Albanian communism — a self-proclaimed scientific system presenting itself as a total social experiment — the analysis focuses on three domains where political doctrine and scientific rationality intertwine. These

domains are explored through my novel *Life Between Bunkers and Pyramids*, which embeds these mechanisms into an intimate narrative:

State Anthropology – The codification of personal life histories (biografi), political rituals, and mythicised origins functioned as a vernacular ethnography of loyalty and exclusion

Planned Economics and Social Engineering – From collectivised farms to the spectacular collapse of 1990s pyramid schemes, economic life was framed as rational and inevitable, yet rested on ideological calculation.

Technopolitics of Space – Bunkers, cooperative buildings, and nationalised urban layouts acted as cognitive anchors, shaping fear, belonging, and a sense of inevitability.

By reframing these infrastructures and classifications through fiction, the paper proposes literature as a counter-archive — one that destabilises the epistemic authority of “scientific” governance and opens space for plural, contested memories. This approach speaks not only to the Albanian case, but also to broader questions in literature and science studies: how narrative form can expose the constructed nature of epistemic regimes, and how the arts can serve as a laboratory for reimagining the social sciences themselves.

**Bio:** Elona Zhana is a writer and lecturer in public finance based in Brussels. Born in Albania, she is the author of the novel *Life Between Bunkers and Pyramids*, published to strong critical interest, which explores collective memory and social transformations in the post-communist era. Her literary and journalistic work examines the relationship between political systems, economics, and intimate narratives. She regularly contributes op-eds and analyses to the Francophone and international press on issues of governance, taxation, and contemporary history. At the intersection of institutional analysis and literary creation, she offers original readings of political legacies.

### **Jennifer Edmond (Trinity College Dublin) - Engineered Imaginaries: On the Unconstructedness of AI in Literature**

In the introduction to his highly influential short story collection, *I, Robot*, Isaac Asimov presents his reader with a journalist in the process of interviewing a prominent roboticist. Even as the roboticist herself seems to struggle with the question of whether her robots have transcended their constructed nature, the stories in this collection maintain a central focus on the flawed humans who design, build and deploy these machines. More recently, however, attention to the figure of the engineer in narratives about AI systems seems to have waned, with autonomous systems more likely to appear as representative of a generic, human-like alterity positioning (such as one of disability or neurodiversity). This paper will attempt to trace the receding role of the engineer in socio-technical narratives, evidenced through both the alternative narratives that displace the constructedness of robots and disembodied intelligent systems and the relative paucity of detail surrounding creator figures when they do appear. It will also highlight examples from the much smaller number of contemporary narratives that do incorporate substantive discourses of the creation, deployment and maintenance of machine intelligence. The presentation will conclude with a reflection on these narratives as formative of wider socio-technical imaginaries able to drive not only literary representation but also public perceptions of technological development. In particular, the role of omniscient, god-like machines in novels intended for young adults (YA) will be queried for the passivity and inevitability it seems to encourage with regards to technological change.

**Bio:** Jennifer EDMOND is Professor in Digital Humanities at Trinity College Dublin. Over the past 10 years, she has been the PI or co-PI of 11 large-scale, interdisciplinary, funded research projects, with total grant capture amounting to almost €15 million. She has also served in leadership roles in a number of European-level policy and infrastructure organisations. Her research explores interdisciplinarity, humanistic and hybrid research processes (with a special focus on the infrastructures needed to support them), and critical digital humanities as a contributor to both research and technology development.

### **Constantin Canavas (Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Life Sciences) - The Book of the Ingenious References: Repercussions of Medieval Arabic Techno-Scientific Texts in Modern Turkish Literature**

Historical novels conventionally develop their credibility by referring to historical events, persons, institutions, and cultural frames. In the case of the novel “*Kitab-ül Hiyalet / The Book of Devices – The Incredible Life Histories of Inventors of Yore*”, published in 1996 by the Turkish author İhsan Oktay Anar and set up in 19th century Ottoman Istanbul, characters and (most of the) events and institutions are fictional, whereas the historical credibility is superficially established through a parody of references in the style of Arabic and Ottoman historiography, as well as through the language of the narrative that engenders Arabic and Ottoman terms. The title itself refers to a classical genre of the medieval Arabic techno-scientific literature, the books of the science of the ingenious mechanical devices (‘ilm al-ḥiyal), that are mentioned as references and sources of inspiration of the main characters in Anar’s postmodern novel. In this tradition the term ḥiyal is used for describing “tricky” machines. The term has its origin in the Arabic-Islamic legal terminology defining legal tricks, and has also been used in military context to describe tricky strategies. The paper shows how the patterns and the issues of these

genres frame Anar's novel, and how they yield the device skeleton of the narrative. Moreover, the analysis shows how the formal element of describing complex hydraulic-mechanical devices is transformed in the novel into a plot engaging fictional inventors in narratives which often result in inverting the rational explanations of physical phenomena, as well as the expectations of the reader.

Bio: Constantin Canavas holds a Diploma on chemical engineering and a Dr.-Ing. on system dynamics and control. He has also followed studies on comparative literature, philosophy, and history of science and technology. From 1993 till 2022 he has been Professor at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences in the fields of control, technology assessment, as well as history and philosophy of technology with a special focus on literary repercussions of scientific and technological issues.

## Panels 6, 11:00-12:30

### Panel 6A: Women: Reproduction, Regeneration, Writing Chair: Eloise Forestier

#### **Bela Gligorova (NOVA International School Skopje) - Artificial Affection: Childhood, Care, and Posthuman Narrative in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (ONLINE)**

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* situates the figure of the child within a near-future society where emotional and cognitive labor is increasingly delegated to artificial beings. This paper examines how the novel reimagines the relationship between AI and childhood through a first-person, homeodiegetic narration that challenges both anthropocentric and humanist narrative expectations. Klara, an Artificial Friend designed to care for children, serves not merely as a companion but as an emotional surrogate, caregiver, and witness to the moral ambiguities of a society that commodifies both intelligence and intimacy. In analyzing the novel's treatment of care, belief, and innocence, this paper argues that *Klara and the Sun* engages in a literary project of reconfiguring posthuman subjectivity through the lens of childhood. Drawing on posthumanist literary theory and affect studies, I explore how Ishiguro crafts Klara's solar devotion as both a literal and symbolic act of faith - a gesture that reanimates the religious and mythic dimensions often erased in techno-scientific discourses of AI. Furthermore, the novel's formal choices - its sparse prose, focalized narration, and deliberate withholding of exposition - create a narrative atmosphere that mirrors the emotional opacity of both human and artificial characters. By foregrounding the child-AI relationship as a site of mutual dependency rather than control, Ishiguro invites readers to reconsider traditional binaries of natural/artificial, caregiver/recipient, and faith/reason. *Klara and the Sun*, I argue, offers a quietly radical vision of care and relational ethics in the context of speculative fiction, one that resonates with ongoing literary inquiries into the boundaries of personhood and the future of human feeling.

Bio: Bela Gligorova is Secondary School Principal at NOVA International School Skopje. Her research areas include: auto/ethnography and critical pedagogy, bo(a)rder narratives of bilingual Eastern European exile authors, graphic memoirs and the third culture kid classrooms.

#### **Annalisa Volpone (University of Perugia, Italy)- Cosmic (Re) generation: Poetic Birth in Blake's Milton**

This paper examines William Blake's representation of Milton's descent into the poet's body in Milton a Poem (1804), situating it at the interesection of Platonic philosophy, eighteenth-century embryology, and astronomy. Plato's Symposium and Theaetetus provide a conceptual prelude, imagining eros as the soul's pregnancy and Socrates as philosophical midwife. Blake reworks these metaphors into a poetics of embodied (re)generation, where inspiration unfolds as impregnation, gestation, and imaginative labour. Milton's comet-like fall into Blake's left foot fuses astronomical and anatomical registers. The image resonates with Buffon's Epochs of Nature (1778), which hypothesised that comets could engender planetary systems, and with William Herschel's 1781 observation of a "new comet" later recognised as Uranus. In contrast to Anna Letitia Barbauld's A Summer Evening's Meditation (1773), where "embryo systems" gestate in the "wombs of chaos", Blake relocates cosmic birth inward, staging Milton's descent into the poet's body. Read alongside William Harvey's theory of epigenesis and Erasmus Darwin's vitalist cosmology, this moment enacts inspiration as embodied gestation rather than external dictation. Figures such as Los dramatize this dual role - at once pregnant and midwifing - collapsing Platonic distinctions between conception and delivery. In Blake's visionary poetics, inspiration is neither transcendent gift nor passive reception but the labour of mental parturition itself: a process at once poetic, anatomical, and cosmic.

Bio: Annalisa Volpone is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Perugia and co-director of the Centre for European Modernism Studies (CEMS). She has published on modernism, postmodernism, and late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature. Her research focuses on the intersections of literature with

science, law, and posthumanism. She is currently completing a monograph on William Blake and the metaphor of mental parturition.

**Nathan Tillman (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies) - Women Writing/Riding the Tram: Student Authors, Community, and Seoul's Public Transportation in the late 1930s (ONLINE)**

Scholars have identified the important role of motorized public transportation in spurring a variety of changes in cities across the world. In Korea under Japanese occupation, trams and trains re-shaped the daily lives of many relatively privileged Koreans' daily lives, opening up commuting options for students, and providing new opportunities for travel, entertainment, and social interaction. Of course, Korean writers of the colonial period frequently included these new transport technologies in their short stories and novels. This presentation shifts focus from well-known authors to student writers at Ewha College, Korea's first Western-style institution of higher learning for women. I use Korean- and English-language student publications from the 1930s to investigate how and why Ewha students used public transportation compared to walking, whether they perceived their privilege relative to many Koreans of the time, and the literary meanings they ascribed to their experiences on trams, trains, and walks. I find that Ewha students in the second half of the 1930s frequently wrote about their experiences both walking and riding public transportation to move to and from their suburban school campus. I find that students' essays frequently meditated on their privilege relative to many Koreans they encountered, but authors also often reported enjoyable and exciting experiences thanks to the city's expanding tram and train networks. This interdisciplinary presentation combines literary and historical analysis to produce a nuanced narrative of the experiences and feelings of a community of young women in the late colonial period. By examining transportation technologies in a colonial context, therefore, this paper offers insight into another aspect of how one local community engaged with global systems.

Bio: Nathan Tillman is Associate Professor of English Literature and Culture at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea. His research interests include environment, transportation, education, and material cultures of 20th-century colonialism, especially in Korea.

**Panel 6B: Literary Histories of Evolution: Case Studies (org. John Holmes)**

**Chair: John Holmes**

Over the last decade, new historiographies of evolutionary theory have been emerging which have challenged previously dominant narratives. For much of the twentieth century, the history of evolution was told through a narrative that began with the 'Darwinian Revolution', followed by an 'Eclipse of Darwinism' from around 1900, which was reversed in the 1930s with the 'Modern Synthesis' of natural selection and Mendelian genetics, itself refined to form the 'Extended Evolutionary Synthesis' from the 1960s. In line with a growing resistance to the dominance of neo-Darwinism among some evolutionary biologists, late twentieth-century historians such as Peter Bowler, Bernard Lightman and Jon Hodge argued that natural selection had never caught on in the first place and that the initial impetus was better understood as a "Non-Darwinian Revolution", to quote Bowler. More recent historians and philosophers of science have begun to show, however, that all these concepts – the Darwinian Revolution, the Eclipse of Darwinism, the Modern Synthesis and so on – are actor's categories through which different generations of evolutionary biologists have defined their own work and laid claim to its significance at the expense of their forebears and competitors. They argue that we need to concentrate not on defining or reversing these terms as descriptions of actual events but rather on how they were understood and used rhetorically by the scientists who coined and promoted them.

The close attention to texts and language within this new historiography suggests an affinity with literature and science scholarship. In this pair of sessions, organised by John Holmes and Richard Delisle, we will bring some of the architects of the new historiography together with literature and science scholars working on evolution in different forms, places and times to explore the contribution that literature and literary critical methodologies can make to our understanding of this history. At the same time, we will consider the complementarities and tensions that emerge from bringing this literary historiography of science into dialogue with the historiographies of evolution developed by historians, philosophers and scientists themselves.

This session will comprise a set of four 15-minute papers setting out new research within the history of evolution deriving from different disciplines but informed in various ways by literary critical questions, methods and sources. Koen Tanghe will examine the history of the Newtonian doctrine that Darwin employed to structure the 'one long argument' of his theory of evolution and to develop his selection analogy, considering how the doctrine of a 'vera causa' was interpreted in the 1830s. Retaining the focus on Darwin, Ian Hesketh will revisit his determination to publish *The Origin of Species* as an 'abstract' to tease out the implications of Darwin's choice and conceptualisation of this genre. Maria Zarimis will look at the significance of the influential poet and

novelist Nikos Kazantzakis for evolutionary theory in Greece in the twentieth century, centring on a reading of *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* (1938) as an evolutionary epic. Finally, Lara Choksey will bring the focus forward to late twentieth-century evolutionary theory with a study of Stephen Jay Gould's writing on geology. This panel will combine papers presented in person and papers presented online.

**Ian Hesketh (University of Queensland) - A Great Evil? Rethinking the “Abstract” Nature of Darwin’s Origin of Species (ONLINE)**

Ian Hesketh is Associate Professor of History at the University of Queensland. His books include *Of Apes and Ancestors: Evolution, Christianity, and the Oxford Debate* (2009), *The Science of History in Victorian Britain: Making the Past Speak* (2011), *A History of Big History* (2023) and the edited collection *Imagining the Darwinian Revolution: Historical Narratives of Evolution from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (2022).

**Koen Tanghe (Ghent University) - Charles Darwin and the vera causa doctrine: A diachronic approach**

Koen Tanghe is a researcher in the Department of Philosophy and Moral Sciences at Ghent University. He completed his PhD thesis on ‘The non-mendelian revolution: a conceptual reinterpretation of the genetic revolution’ in 2013 and has published several articles since in journals including *Bioscience*, *Notes and Records* and *Journal of the History of Biology*.

**Maria Zarimis (University of Sydney) - Investigating Nikos Kazantzakis' The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel as an Evolutionary Epic (ONLINE)**

Maria Zarimis is the Commission on Science and Literature's representative for Australia. She is Honorary Associate in the School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the University of Sydney. She has taught at the University of New South Wales and is the author of *Darwin's Footprint: Cultural Perspectives on Evolution in Greece (1880–1930s)* (2015).

**Lara Choksey (University College London) - Stephen Jay Gould's Maverick Theme: Revisiting The Structure of Evolutionary Theory (ONLINE)**

Lara Choksey is Lecturer in Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures at University College London. She is the author of *Narrative in the Age of the Genome: Genetic Worlds* (2021) and a co-editor of the Bloomsbury book series ‘Explorations in Science and Literature’.

**Panel 6C: Collections and Collectives: Romanticism, Poetry, and Science**

**Chair: Paul Hamann-Rose**

**Sharon Ruston (Lancaster University) - Humphry Davy's Poetry**

This paper will present new insights into the poetry of Sir Humphry Davy, drawing on discoveries made while editing a forthcoming selected edition of his verse, to be published open access by UCL Press. Although better known for his scientific achievements, Davy considered poetry central to his intellectual life, and the manuscripts of his personal notebooks reveal that Davy often worked hard at his poems sometimes revising them across decades. Thanks to the digitisation and crowdsourced transcription of Davy's notebooks through the Zooniverse platform (<https://digitalcollections.lancaster.ac.uk/collections/davy/1>), it is now possible to trace the development of his poems from first drafts to later revisions. These manuscripts, many previously overlooked or unpublished, show him returning to key poetic ideas and refining his style across his lifetime. The paper will explore Davy's creative process, the evolution of themes, imagery and topics, and the significance of scientific knowledge and concepts within his verse. It will also reflect on his early poetic collaboration with Robert Southey, especially in the context of poems selected and edited by Southey for *The Annual Anthology*. By analysing individual poems in manuscript alongside their published forms, and considering the material evidence of revision, this paper will argue for a new appreciation of Davy as a poet, and reflect on the wider value of editorial and archival work in re-evaluating Romantic-period science writing as literature.

Bio: Sharon Ruston is Chair of Romanticism at Lancaster University. Her research focuses on the intersections of literature, science, and medicine in the long nineteenth century. She is editing a selected edition of Humphry Davy's poetry for UCL Press, co-edited *The Collected Letters of Sir Humphry Davy* (2020), and led the AHRC-funded project to transcribe and study Davy's notebooks (<https://digitalcollections.lancaster.ac.uk/collections/davy/1>). Her most recent monograph was *The Science of Life and Death in Frankenstein* (2021).

**Pauline Lescar (ARTE, research institute of Sorbonne Université) - Whitman and Modern Times**

Whitman is the bard of the natural man but also of the modern man whose merits he extols, the glorious American worker who will create the perfect democracy. As is well known, Whitman is not immune to contradictions. A crucial witness to the upheaval of society in the 19th century, Whitman depicts the birth of the industrial world, the great works, the emergence of noisy and bustling cities, and machines of all kinds that he embraces in his total poetry, linking men and their trades, bodies and machines in the same frenetic yet organic momentum. He sings of the body electric and advocates the equivalence between the material and spiritual worlds. I would like to show how these modern machines resulting from the industrial revolution (locomotives and other steam engines) have, according to Whitman, transformed space—both geographical and political—and time (past, present, future), while also generating a new poetic space. But behind the praise of machines and new technologies, one senses Whitman's doubt and concern about the very purpose of this new geography of the globe where technology replaces know-how and tools substitute for man. And ultimately, it is in the very construction of this new modern poetic space, where poems become similar to autonomous machines, that the critique of modernity appears.

Bio: Former assistant professor at Sorbonne Université (science and engineering faculty). Teaches courses on science and science fiction and on the various influences for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. She is a member of the research unit VALE (Voix anglophones, littérature et esthétique) at Sorbonne Université. Her thesis was on the topic of Walt Whitman and the figures of absence, and she has published a translation of Whitman's short stories with an introduction (éditions Actes Sud 2015). She is co-organizer of the 3rd international conference on science and literature at Sorbonne Université in 2018.

### Panel 6D: Between Page and Screen: Control, Adaptation, and Recovery in Film

Chair: Wibke Schniedermann

#### Isabel Jaen Portillo (Portland State University) & Julien Jacques Simon (Indiana University) - Time Traveling with Cervantes

In this talk, we focus on the link between cognitive science and culture by examining how two recent Spanish screen productions – the TV series *El ministerio del tiempo* [The Ministry of Time] and the film *Cervantes contra Lope* [Cervantes Against Lope] – reinterpret the figure of Don Quixote's author Miguel de Cervantes for twenty-first-century audiences. These works present a generic blend that combines a science-fiction frame with elements from the detective genre and reality television. They stimulate viewers' counterfactual "what-if" thinking and invite them to attribute complex mental states to iconic figures such as Cervantes and Lope de Vega, while also prompting empathic responses across temporal-cultural distances. *El ministerio del tiempo* employs a transmedia structure that spans television, digital platforms, and fan practices, creating interactive environments that reinforce immersion. *Cervantes contra Lope*, in turn, adopts a hybrid docufictional mode that merges interview/testimony with dramatization, heightening viewers' empathic engagement. Together, these narratives provide a metafictional scenario in which viewers not only must exercise their theory of mind (their ability to follow others' beliefs, emotions, and intentions) but also travel themselves between ages and genres. They bring audiences closer to Cervantes while broadening access to early modern literary culture. Ultimately, our analysis demonstrates how an interdisciplinary approach to culture that blends cognitive science and literary criticism can illuminate our understanding of human interaction with artifacts of the imagination.

#### Bio:

#### Avril Tynan (University of Turku) - Recovery: Concepts, Contexts and Challenges

While concepts of health, disease, illness and wellbeing have been interrogated in recent decades, the notion of recovery still lacks any consensus, and its myriad fluctuating meanings are evidence of the need for deeper understandings of recovery as an ambiguous state of being post-illness. Often conflated with meanings of restoration, return or the resurrection of good health, recovery in objective medical terms indicates a stable and recognizable endpoint delineating periods of illness, disease or injury. In literary studies, the generic recovery narrative frames a uniform and teleological story from 'tragedy to triumph' that promotes coherence and closure. Throughout my research however, I have found that recovery narratives bring out and highlight the contingencies, uncertainties and ambiguities of past illness experiences as they continue to impact upon the present. Recovery, I argue, does not mark the conclusion of a well-told tale but invites the question, "what now?". With examples from recent film and memoir, I argue that narratives of recovery are often incoherent, messy and complicated. Across a range of narratives, recovery does not ensure closure but is instead positioned as the starting point to a meandering and inconclusive story. Inviting critical examination of the relationship between narrative and recovery, and presenting new avenues for narrative-critical approaches to recovery in literary studies, this paper argues that the generic recovery narrative must be critically reappraised and reframed if it is to give voice to the myriad stories of recovery as incomplete, ambiguous and messy.

Bio: Dr Avril Tynan is a Research Council of Finland Fellow (2023–2027) at the University of Turku and co-editor of *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*. Her research takes a critical perspective on the role and representation of illness, recovery, ageing and death in contemporary literature, and her current project, ‘Reading Recovery: Narratives of Recovery in Culture, Medicine and Society’ seeks to dismantle the monolithic conception of triumphant story arcs in recovery narratives. Her monograph *Critical Narratives of Recovery: Rejecting Repair, Restoration and Resolution* is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press in 2026.

### Keynote, 13:30-14:30

**Sadiya Qureshi (University of Manchester): Narrating the Unnatural Histories of Extinction and Empire**  
Chair: John Holmes

Bio: Sadiya Qureshi holds a Chair in Modern British History at the University of Manchester. Her latest book *Vanished: An Unnatural History of Extinction* (Allen Lane, 2025) explores the entangled histories of extinction, empire, and genocide in the making of the modern world. She cannot bear the thought of living in a world without birdsong, trees, or tigers.

### Panels 7, 15:00-16:30

**Panel 7A: Spaces of Knowing: Domestic, Professional, and Natural "Laboratories"**  
Chair: Sharon Ruston

**Gemma Curto (University of Liverpool) - Entering the Thicket: a Space of Moral Complexity in Iris Murdoch's *The Bell* (1958) (ONLINE)**

This paper examines the wooded landscape surrounding Imber Court in Iris Murdoch's *The Bell* (1958), a fictional Gloucestershire setting that recalls the temperate rainforests of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean. Dense, shaded, and continually transformed by the seasons, the forest emerges as a terrain where moral, psychological, and spiritual conflicts unfold. Although *The Bell* has been read through metaphysics (Giffin 2007), tragedy (Mason 2009), and the literature–philosophy continuum (Kaehle and German 1967; Levenson 2001), this paper foregrounds the woodland as a site of ambiguity. Drawing on Richard Mabey's *Beechcombings* (2019), which emphasises the cultural framing of human relationships with trees, I argue that Murdoch's forest resists reductive moral codes and opens a space for spiritual inquiry. The woodland functions simultaneously as refuge and labyrinth: a shaded, watery environment punctuated by sudden shifts of light, where moments of clarity are undercut by disorientation. Its cyclical transformations reflect Murdoch's conception of the Good and impermanent. As silent, impartial witness, the forest contrasts with the imposed order of Imber Court, positioning nature as a medium through which postwar British fiction interrogates morality, freedom, and transcendence.

Bio: Gemma Curto is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Liverpool and holds a PhD in English Literature from the University of Sheffield. She is the PG/ECR Officer for ASLE-UKI and co-host of the podcast *Green Listening: Discussions in Ecocriticism*. Her research lies at the intersection of literature, science, and ecology, particularly in contemporary literature from the 1990s to the present. Gemma is the author of articles including ‘The Modern Trend of Time: Prigogine and Stengers on Scientific Progress in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*’, published in *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* (2024), and an article in *Green Letters* on floods in contemporary biocentric graphic novels.

**Anna Dijkstra (Huygens Institute) - "Painting green on green": The Anti-Scientist Mathematics of H.D.'s *HERmion***

Upon her withdrawal from Bryn Mawr College, Hilda Doolittle returned to her family home, where her scientific ineptitudes gave her no peace as its demands echoed through her family: her father and brothers had made their house a large laboratory, of which her mother and sister-in-law were confined to the shadows. Having fashioned herself into modernist figure H.D., Doolittle writes herself (veiled as protagonist Hermione) through this period in her novel *HERmion*. But while this novel is primarily known for its radical exploration of bisexuality, its epistemological engagements are similarly innovative. By tracing the influence of mathematics in protagonist Hermione's pedagogical and family life, I draw out an anti-scientist tendency in the novel that has thus far remained unacknowledged. Her work's poetic character plays a vital part in this obscured rebellion, and I draw out various elements by which the text allows Doolittle to make mathematics her own: in particular, her engagement with geometry as tautological engagement which she echoes through various rhetorical forms of

repetition. H.D. does not outright reject the science; rather, she turns it into an art form, gesturing towards a holistic ideal of knowing. As an art form, science works together with other methods of interpretation to make sense of the world, a symbiosis that reflects her act of life-writing as a research practice. What begins as a processing of failing her mathematics class and subsequently flunking out of school gradually becomes a rich practice of epistemological evaluation of particular poignancy in late capitalist academia.

Bio: Anna Dijkstra is a literary researcher with a focus on modernism and epistemology. After completing degrees in philosophy, English and literary studies at the University of Amsterdam, she has just completed an MPhil in English Studies at the University of Cambridge, researching Wittgensteinian silences and irrationality. Her work has previously appeared in publications including *Echinox Journal*, *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, and *The Modernist Review*, and she is involved with the ERC-advanced funded Moral Residue project.

**Helena Ifill (University of Aberdeen) - The Business of Science: Charlotte Riddell's Chemists (ONLINE)**

Charlotte Riddell is nowadays best known for her ghost stories, but in Victorian Britain she was renowned for her depictions of London businessmen. This paper discusses two *Too Much Alone* (1860) and *Mortomley's Estate* (1874) which both feature professional chemists whose work in chemical manufacturing leads them into different types of trouble. In the earlier novel, Maurice Storn is a domestic version of the literary "mad scientist": driven by ambition and scientific curiosity, he leaves his wife "too much alone" and suffers the consequences. Yet Maurice also has scenes featuring the physical exertion of chemical production, and dialogue which discusses the profits and costs associated with his work; this emphasises the practical, material aspects of science as an occupation, rather than as an intellectual vocation. Archibald Mortomley, contrastingly, is a man who excels at the scientific aspects of his work, but who is less accomplished when it comes to running the business itself. After his bankruptcy and breakdown, his wife must step in and learn both sides of her husband's livelihood. Both chemists are presented as geniuses who struggle to find the balance between scientific accomplishment and the equally pressing demands of home and business. The paper will explore Riddell's depictions of these two men (as well as Mortomley's wife, Dolly), in order to consider how she portrays science as a noble and creative undertaking which is nevertheless tied to the profit-driven world of work.

Bio: Helena Ifill is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Aberdeen. Her research centres on the interactions of Victorian Gothic and sensation fiction and the medical sciences. She is the co-series editor for *Key Popular Women Writers* and co-editor of the *Victorian Popular Fictions Journal*. Her most recent project is on the Victorian novelist and ghost story writer, Charlotte Riddell.

**Panel 7B: Posthumanist Narratives: Complexity, Enhancement, and Collectivity**

**Chair: Jerome De Groot**

**Marco Caracciolo (Ghent University) - Playgrounds of Complexity in the Contemporary Novel**

Complexity is both a central concept of scientific thinking and an important vector of dialogue between science and literature, as evidenced by two landmark edited collections (Walsh and Stepney 2018; Grishakova and Poulaki 2019). Systems as different as the Earth's climate and natural evolution are seen as complex in that they are capable of self-organization and emergent behavior. Most literary approaches to scientific complexity have thus asked whether literary form is capable of capturing this type of complexity, and through what stylistic or narrative means. In this paper, I want to shift the focus from the representation of complexity to its effects on individuals exposed to the workings of complex systems. When encountered in everyday life, complexity can give rise to a broad range of feelings: it can prove obscure, intriguing, threatening, and sublime. Complexity can overwhelm and paralyze us, but it can also inspire us. How does the contemporary novel engage with this affective impact of complexity--for example, in genres such as climate or environmental fiction, or in relation to the "black box" of Artificial Intelligence? Through a close reading of Richard Powers's *Playground* (2024), which speaks to issues of both ecological crisis and computation, I show how engagement with complexity brings into view a broad spectrum of affective responses. Powers evokes this spectrum through the central metaphor of complexity as play, which hints at the significance of playful practices in the larger dialogue between science and contemporary culture.

Bio: Marco Caracciolo is Associate Professor of English at Ghent University in Belgium. Drawing inspiration from cognitive science, the philosophy of mind, and the environmental humanities, his work explores the forms of experience afforded by narrative in literary fiction and other media (especially video games). He is the author of several books, including most recently *Contemporary Narrative and the Spectrum of Materiality* (De Gruyter, 2023) and *On Soulsring Worlds: Narrative Complexity, Digital Communities, and Interpretation in Dark Souls and Elden Ring* (Routledge, 2024).

**Simona Adinolfi (JLU Giessen / Ghent University) - Written in The Body: Genomic Writing and Technologies of Happiness in Contemporary American Literature**

Human enhancement is one of the core ideas of transhumanism. Often linked to biotechnological advancements such as prosthetics, implants, and mechanical limbs, this idea is also controversially tied to eugenics. According to Loredana Filip (2021, 86), transhumanism's fascination and engagement with the possibility of life extension and/or immortality, conceals an interest for the pursuit of happiness with a whole reconceptualization of human identity. Both issues are problematized in two recent US novels, namely Richard Powers' work from 2008 titled *Generosity: An Enhancement* and *Tell the Machine Goodnight* by Katie Williams (2018). In *Generosity*, Algerian refugee and talented creative writer Thassa is thought to have a gene that could possibly explain her permanent elation. This potential discovery made by her teacher of creative writing Russel will result in her becoming a TV sensation and a medical case study which will have consequences for her mental health (and happiness).

William's novel, set in 2035, observes a series of characters as they deal with the consequences of using Apricity, a machine that is able to generate the key to happiness for each individual by analyzing their DNA. Drawing on critical posthumanism, Sarah Ahmed's work on happiness as an affect, and narrative theory, I show how both novels play with formal structure to reflect on genetics, the act of writing, and happiness to reveal a sharp critique of American society. Both novels, I argue, encourage a reflection on the ethical tensions raised by biotechnological progress and on our anxieties about the possibility of happiness.

Bio: Simona Adinolfi is a postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University and at the University of Giessen, where she is part of the project MeDiMi – Human Rights Discourse in Migration Societies. Her PhD dissertation examined contemporary novels of migration using a critical posthumanities framework, to show how canonical themes usually associated to narratives of migration are being subverted and complicated on a formal level. Her research focuses on contemporary literary representations of migration and on investigating how digital technologies may redefine classical narratological concepts.

**Merin John (National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli) - Commoning Care in Multispecies Futures: Children as Posthuman Mediators in Speculative Climate Fiction (ONLINE)**

While intra- and interspecies communication has long been depicted in literature through fables, children's fiction, and comics, recent speculative climate fiction has highlighted the importance of multispecies collectives. Shweta Taneja's short story "Songs that Humanity Lost Reluctantly to Dolphins," from the Solarpunk anthology *Multispecies Cities* (2021), and Donna Haraway's speculative fabulation "The Camille Stories," from *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), are two works of imaginative fiction that present alternative forms of human-nonhuman coexistence that critique anthropocentric communication and infrastructures. While care as a collective common emerges from crisis in Taneja's narrative precipitated by the event of dolphins luring the children into the seas, Haraway imagines care as deliberately organized through social arrangements that reconfigure kinship, such as children born into three-parent networks. Attending to these different modes of emergence, this paper examines 'commoning care' as a collective, multispecies practice in the selected texts, foregrounding how care becomes a shared commons that enables symbiotic relations and multispecies kin-making. The different approaches to technological mediation towards a multispecies, sustainable future also manifest in the selected narratives. While Taneja presents technology as a hubristic force that has severed the relationship between humans and nonhumans, Haraway envisions social technologies as enabling structures for collective care. The paper also examines the representation of children in these narratives as posthuman subjects who function as mediators in a multispecies assemblage.

Bio: Merin John is a research scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at NIT Tiruchirappalli. Her research interests broadly lie at the interface of ecology and literature. She is working on Solarpunk and the sustainable arts for her doctoral research.

**Panel 7C: Poetics of Knowledge Across History**

Chair: Vittorio Govahian

**Abraham Enefu (Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka) - Poetics of Knowledge: A Digital Literary Analysis of Scientific Imagery in Francophone African Poetry**

This study explores the intersection of science and literature through a digital analysis of four seminal poems from Francophone Africa: *Afrique, mon Afrique* by David Diop, *Femme noire* by Léopold Sédar Senghor, *À ma mère* by Camara Laye, and *L'Homme et l'eau* by Jean-Baptiste Tati Loutard. While these works are traditionally celebrated for their lyrical power and cultural resonance, they also contain rich scientific imagery ranging from ecological metaphors and anatomical references to reflections on labor, biology, and natural cycles. Using *Spyral Notebook*, a tool for interactive textual analysis as inspired by Donald Knuth's literate programming, this project

applies computational methods to uncover patterns of scientific language embedded within poetic structures. The analysis reveals how African poets have historically engaged with scientific thought not as a separate domain, but as a poetic lens through which to express identity, resistance, and environmental consciousness. By bridging digital humanities and African literary studies, this research highlights the epistemological depth of African poetry and proposes a new framework for reading science as a poetic force. It invites scholars to reconsider the boundaries between empirical knowledge and artistic expression in postcolonial literature.

Bio: Dr. Abraham Enefu is an early career scholar of African Francophone literature from Otukpo, Benue State, Nigeria. He holds a Doctorate and Master's degree in African Francophone Literature, a Bachelor's degree in French Language and Education, and a National Certificate in Education (NCE) in English and French. He is currently a lecturer in the Department of Modern European Languages at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. Dr. Enefu's teaching and research interests include narrative structure, critical stylistics, and intercultural literary analysis. He also integrates digital tools in literary research, with particular expertise in the use of Voyant Tools for text mining and corpus analysis in digital humanities.

### **Michael H. Whitworth (Merton College, Oxford) - The Now, The Once, and The This in W. H. Auden and Other Poets**

Early in his career, in the poem 'The Last of the Old Year' (1926), W. H. Auden treated an adverb of time as if it were a noun denoting something possessed of agency: "Here scowled at There; the Now and This / Enjoyed at last connubial bliss." As a stylistic trick, this treatment of adverbs spread quickly to his contemporaries: in the collection he published in 1929 as an undergraduate, Louis MacNeice wrote of "watching the Before become Beyond / Down the escalator shifting of the Past." Auden continued to use it, and related variants, throughout his career: as late as 1972, "Unpredictable but Providential" refers to "that Once when ..." The Oxford English Dictionary attests to examples of "now" as a noun as far back as 1393, but "the now," with the definite article, is less common. My paper will consider immediately contemporary sources for thinking about positions in time as substantial, noun-like things, both in the philosophy of the British idealists in the 1880s, and in contemporary popular science writing in the 1920s. It will ask whether this way of thinking about time might tell us anything larger about the aesthetic space of poetry and its relation to historical contingency.

Bio: Michael H. Whitworth is Tutorial Fellow at Merton College, Oxford and Professor of Modern Literature and Culture in the English Faculty, University of Oxford. He is working on a project about science and poetry in the 1920s and 1930s.

### **Muqadas Batool (International Islamic University Islamabad) - The Biophilic Imagination: A Reading of Pashto Poetry (ONLINE)**

Ecopoetics operates at the nexus of literary practice, environmental ethics, and scientific epistemology by highlighting the role of poetic form in mediating ecological knowledge. To explore this, I will focus on Pashto poetry as ecopoetic texts written by Hameedur Rahman Nadaan (2018) and Javed Ihsas (2021). I claim that Pashto poetry aestheticizes ecological symbiosis into imaginative experiences. For this, I draw on Edward Wilson's Biophilia (1984) and Karan Barad's (2007) agential realism to theorize a critical framework for analyzing how these scientific concepts shape the thematic, structural, temporal and rhythmic logics of the poems. I argue that the indigenous writers use their literary space to demonstrate the complex entanglements of humans, non-humans, and ecological systems. By analyzing multispecies agency and ecological interdependence, I will investigate how these poetic works destabilize anthropocentric epistemologies and interrogate conditions of ecological precarity. Through the integration of both literary and scientific methodologies, ecopoetics emerges as a critical site to respond to climate change, and environmental exploitation by questioning power, knowledge and our relationship to other species in the Anthropocene.

Bio: Muqadas Batool is a PhD candidate in Environmental Science at the International Islamic University Islamabad. Her research focuses on sustainable urban green spaces. She teaches as visiting faculty at IIUI and works as a lead researcher with Earthocity, a national project dedicated to conserving urban spaces in Pakistan. She is also active in sustainability and climate advocacy initiatives. Her research interests include pro-environmental behavior and green urban planning. She also has a strong interest in literature, particularly climate fiction and dystopian writing, which she integrates to enrich her research and teaching.

## Day Three – Friday 19 June

### Keynote, 9:00-10:00

**Paul Hamann-Rose (University of Passau) - Originality in the Age of the Genome**  
Chair: Shannon Lambert

Bio: Paul Hamann-Rose is Assistant Professor of English Literature and Culture at the University of Passau, Germany. He studied at the University of London Institute in Paris and at the University of Hamburg, where he received his PhD. His principal areas of research are the legal and cultural construction of authorship across the new media landscapes of British Romanticism, and the interrelations between literature and genetic science. His book *Genetics and the Novel: Reimagining Life Through Fiction* came out in 2024 with Palgrave Macmillan as part of the Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine series. He has been a member of the GetPreCiSe transdisciplinary project on genetic privacy at Vanderbilt University and is currently serving as one of the Officers for Europe for the British Society for Literature and Science.

### Panels 8, 10:30-12:00

#### Panel 8A: In Action: Narrating Medical Practice

Chair: Marianne Van Remoortel

**Robert Ponge and Vanessa Schmitt (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (UFRGS) - Medical Practice and Research by the Eponymous Protagonist in Doctor Pascal, a Novel (1893) by Émile Zola (ONLINE)**

In *Doctor Pascal* (1893), the last volume of the Rougon-Macquart saga, Émile Zola (1840-1902) sought to represent the scientific aspirations and anxieties of his time, drawing the figure of the eponymous protagonist, a doctor and researcher in the fictional provincial town of Plassans. Our work focuses on how he practices medicine: a doctor with limited professional practice, as he devotes himself mainly to research, he observes, collects data, diagnoses, creates or adopts interpretive and/or curative theories, and then experiments with them. Our methodology is bibliographic. Our initial informational and theoretical bases are Mitterand (1967), Jean-Cabanès (1991), Faure (1994), Jorland (2010), Colette Becker (2022). First, we follow Dr. Pascal's footsteps in his field research (the investigation of pregnancy, then heredity, and, on the other hand, the study of the influence of the environment and the effectiveness of hygienism theories, which could combat or compensate for heredity). Then we examine three moments in his medical practice: the treatment given to siblings Sophie and Valentin, which corroborates his theories on hygienism and, in a way, on heredity; the regenerative serum applied to several patients, whose results are initially surprising and then disappointing; his last patient, himself, identifying his own cardiac sclerosis, analyzing its evolution and outcome. Finally, we examine the assessments and lessons that, in the last hours of his life, in the epilogue of a career dedicated to science, he formulates in a conversation with his young colleague, Ramond

Bios: Robert Ponge is agrégé ès lettres, holds a Ph. D. in french literature (São Paulo University – USP, Brazil) and was professor of french-speaking literatures at UFRGS (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil). Now retired, he is visiting professor and researcher at the Graduate Studies Center in Language and Literature at UFRGS, where he lectures french-speaking literatures and translation. Dental practitioner and literary scholar, Vanessa holds a PhD in French and Francophone Literatures (UFRGS, Brazil) and completed postdoctoral research at the Université de Genève (2013–2014) as a Swiss Confederation Excellence Scholar. Her work investigates the intersections of literature, history, and science, with particular focus on the representation of medicine, health, and illness in nineteenth-century French literature, especially the Goncourt brothers. With a dual background in dentistry and the humanities, she brings a unique interdisciplinary perspective to cultural history, realism, naturalism, and the dialogue between scientific discourse and literary form.

**Ilia Chalimourda (Universitat Rovira i Virgili) - Doctors of Uncertainty: The Limits of Medical Knowledge in Sheridan Le Fanu's "Green Tea" and Alasdair Gray's Poor Things (ONLINE)**

Sheridan Le Fanu's "Green Tea" and Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* both reimagine the figure of the doctor in ways that exemplify the limits of medical knowledge. In "Green Tea," Dr Hesselius's case study struggles to reconcile the language of pathology with that of metaphysics, exposing the fragility of medical categories when faced with the unknown. In *Poor Things*, Godwin Baxter's radical experiments extend medicine into the realm of creation itself, blurring the lines between healing, manipulation, violation, progression and care. Both doctors

resist being cast as neutral agents of scientific progress; instead, they become entangled in ethical dilemmas and personal investments that humanize their practices. The narrative forms of both texts—the fragmented case history and the polyphonic memoir—mirror these limits, foregrounding uncertainty, contradiction and instability. By closely examining these figures, this paper argues that the texts do not merely represent eccentric physicians but interrogate medicine’s authority itself, revealing its entanglement with ethics, narrative, personal involvement and the boundaries of human knowledge. Finally, the comparison suggests a divergence in how each doctor eventually deals with the unknown, highlighting not only the limits of medicine but also the varied ways those limits can reinforce, unsettle, humanize or reestablish medical authority.

Bio: Iliá Chalimourda is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English and German Studies at Universitat Rovira i Virgili. Her research focuses on the value of literary study. Prior to this, she obtained her undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature, as well as her master’s degree in International and European Studies, with a specialization in cultural heritage, both from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

**Protichi Chatterjee (Jawaharlal Nehru University) - Reconceptualising Brain Plasticity during a Psychic Event in Narratives of Mental Illnesses**

Brain plasticity, as Catherine Malabou theorises, is the brain’s potentiality to give, retain, and annihilate form. This theorisation of plasticity utilises the de/regenerative capabilities of the brain and becomes a philosophico-literary framework for Malabou. However, I argue that, in closely engaging with her work in tandem with the neurologist Oliver Sacks’ patient case histories and the surrealist artist Leonora Carrington’s mental asylum memoir *Down Below* (1972), a deeper complication of the neuroscientific concept of brain plasticity is revealed. Sacks’ collection, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985), recounts patient case histories which, I argue, reveal the brain’s rhizomatic mode of functioning precisely because of the rhizomatic distribution and form of the neurons. If we think of the brain as a neuroscientific rhizomatic body, then reading Carrington’s memoir about her time at a Spanish mental asylum (marking a significant and destructive psychic event in her life) gives us more insight into the form of her memoir, which is simultaneously destructive and regenerative. This event then mimics a Deleuzoguattarian explosion of virtual potentiality that splits the linearity of brain plasticity, and instead suggests a creative multiplicity that thrives in a milieu of mental subjectivities. Therefore, this paper attempts to complicate Malabou’s theorisations on brain plasticity to suggest that rereading the disruptive psychic event as a rhizome can offer us ways to read narratives of mental illnesses that encompass a much more entangled and simultaneous functioning of the annihilatory and creative functions of the brain.

Bio: Protichi Chatterjee (she/her) is a doctoral scholar at the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. Her thesis engages with autoethnographic narratives of mental illnesses that lie at the intersection of medical humanities, critical neurodiversity studies, and neuroscience. She has presented her work at the Critical Neurodiversity Studies Conference, 2025 at Durham University, UK where she was a recipient of the global Wellcome Trust fellowship grant, and has also published a piece on their online platform "The Polyphony". She has also presented a paper on ADHD and Dyslexia at the CRASSH-funded Crip Kid Lit conference at University of Cambridge, UK in 2024.

**Panel 8B: From Theory to Practice: Literature, Science, and Pedagogy**  
**Chair: Vittorio Govahian**

**Yusuf Suleiman (Al-Hikmah University)- The Role of Indigenous Language Literature in the Popularization of Scientific Knowledge in Nigerian Universities (ONLINE)**

This study investigates the role of indigenous language literature in the popularization of scientific knowledge in Nigerian universities, employing a mixed-method approach. Despite the increasing dominance of English as the medium of instruction, indigenous language literature remains a powerful cultural and educational tool for transmitting complex ideas in relatable forms. The research aims to explore how literary texts written in Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and other Nigerian languages facilitate understanding of scientific concepts, bridge cultural epistemologies, and contribute to interdisciplinary knowledge production in higher education. The quantitative phase involves a structured survey of 358 undergraduate and postgraduate students across selected Nigerian universities, measuring their exposure to indigenous literary texts, perceptions of science-related themes, and the extent to which these texts enhance comprehension of scientific knowledge. The qualitative phase employs semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with literature and science lecturers, alongside content analysis of selected indigenous texts addressing themes such as health, environment, and technology. Findings reveal the extent to which indigenous literature complements formal scientific instruction by contextualizing knowledge within cultural frameworks. Evidence suggests that indigenous literary texts not only demystify science but also foster inclusivity, promote critical thinking, and enhance students’ engagement with global

scientific discourse through localized narratives. The study contributes to scholarship on science communication, indigenous knowledge systems, and higher education curriculum development. It further recommends strategies for integrating indigenous language literature into science education as a means of advancing scientific literacy and cultural sustainability in Nigerian universities.

**Bio:** Dr. Yusuf Suleiman is a renowned academic and accomplished expert in educational management with an outstanding academic and professional record. He earned his B.Ed. and M.Ed. in Educational Management from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, before completing his PhD in Education at Universiti Utara Malaysia. To further broaden his expertise, he obtained a Master's degree in Policy and Strategic Studies with distinction from the Kwara State University Business School. Currently, Dr. Suleiman serves as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Management and Counselling at Al-Hikmah University, Nigeria. He also holds the strategic position of Director, Centre for Research, Industrial Linkage, and International Cooperation at the same institution, where he has played a pivotal role in advancing academic partnerships and research collaborations. His scholarly contributions are widely recognized, having presented papers at numerous international conferences across diverse countries including the USA, United Kingdom, South Africa, Rwanda, Cameroon, Gambia, Liberia, Ghana, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and South Korea. He is the Managing Editor of the International Journal of Advanced Research in Multidisciplinary Studies and sits on multiple editorial boards worldwide.

### **Megan Callaghan (Augusta University) - Bridging Lab and Lyric: A Practical Poetics Workshop for Scientists**

The literature consistently indicates that engaging in forms of creative expression can sharpen key skills in critical thinking, observation, analysis, communication, and empathy. Poetry, in particular, demands attentiveness, holistic and unusual approaches to concepts, the willingness to adopt new perspectives, and the ability to convey complex topics in clear, precise language—all skills that are also vital for scientific thought and practice. Yet despite numerous studies suggesting the value of training in poetic expression for those working in science and health care fields, specific programs conducting this training remain sparse. In this paper, I outline a workshop developed for use at the Center for Writing Excellence (CWE) at Augusta University (AU), a midsize research university with a strong health sciences focus. This workshop uses evidence-based creative activities designed to sharpen participants' skills in higher-order thinking, including critical observation, perspective-taking, and reframing concepts and experiences through narrative and metaphor. The CWE works with many of the nursing and medical students at AU, so health professionals in higher education are the target audience, but the workshop could be adapted for many STEM and health sciences fields. This paper shows how poetic methods of approaching understanding can be deployed to cultivate the cognitive and empathetic skills central to scientific inquiry, communication, and care.

**Bio:** Megan Callaghan is a professional writing consultant at the Center for Writing Excellence at Augusta University, where she provides personalized, evidence-based instruction and support for writers of all backgrounds at all levels, from freshmen to faculty. She is currently completing a Master of Library and Information Science from Valdosta State University and holds a bachelor's degree in English & Creative Writing from Mississippi University for Women and a PhD in English from the University of Georgia. When she is not reading or writing, she enjoys playing complicated board games with friends and spending time with her husband and their two cats.

### **Jenny Edvardsson (Kristianstad University, Sweden) - Short stories, individual reflections and joint discussions to open up for diverse perspectives on purposes for science education (ONLINE)**

Literary texts can have a didactic potential in education (Nussbaum, 1997; 2010; Vygotsky, 2004). Through reading, students can develop narrative imagination (Nussbaum 1997) that enables shifts of perspective and the ability to feel empathy for other people's lives. They can also learn from literature and thus benefit from the knowledge and experiences of others (Vygotskij, 2004). Potentially, they can also learn to use their narrative thinking (Breithaupt, 2025) in order to move through spaces of uncertainty and possibility. By being given the opportunity to reflect individually on a literary text and how it can be linked to scientific content, all students' experiences and understanding can be brought into the classroom. If students then can discuss their reflections with others, multiple voices and perspectives are expressed (Höijer et al., 2024). This can enable increased engagement and understanding of specific scientific content (Edvardsson et al., 2025). During this conference I will present a partial study from my ongoing PhD project. The project explores the potential for using literary texts (e.g. novels, short stories and poems) in science education. The study focuses on how four secondary science teachers use literary texts, individual reflection logs, and joint text discussions in science teaching to

open for multiple and diverse perspectives on purposes for science education. Teachers' experiences of using literary texts will be presented in relation to opportunities and challenges for science teaching.

Bio: Jenny Edvardsson is a PhD-student in Pedagogical Work at Kristianstad university in Sweden. Her research is about using fiction in different school subjects. She is a former teacher of Swedish and History in upper secondary school.

### **Roundtable 8C: Literary Histories of Evolution: Roundtable (org. John Holmes)** **Chair: Richard Delisle**

Over the last decade, new historiographies of evolutionary theory have been emerging which have challenged previously dominant narratives. For much of the twentieth century, the history of evolution was told through a narrative that began with the 'Darwinian Revolution', followed by an 'Eclipse of Darwinism' from around 1900, which was reversed in the 1930s with the 'Modern Synthesis' of natural selection and Mendelian genetics, itself refined to form the 'Extended Evolutionary Synthesis' from the 1960s. In line with a growing resistance to the dominance of neo-Darwinism among some evolutionary biologists, late twentieth-century historians such as Peter Bowler, Bernard Lightman and Jon Hodge argued that natural selection had never caught on in the first place and that the initial impetus was better understood as a "Non-Darwinian Revolution", to quote Bowler. More recent historians and philosophers of science have begun to show, however, that all these concepts – the Darwinian Revolution, the Eclipse of Darwinism, the Modern Synthesis and so on – are actor's categories through which different generations of evolutionary biologists have defined their own work and laid claim to its significance at the expense of their forebears and competitors. They argue that we need to concentrate not on defining or reversing these terms as descriptions of actual events but rather on how they were understood and used rhetorically by the scientists who coined and promoted them. The close attention to texts and language within this new historiography suggests an affinity with literature and science scholarship. In this pair of sessions, organised by John Holmes and Richard Delisle, we will bring some of the architects of the new historiography together with literature and science scholars working on evolution in different forms, places and times to explore the contribution that literature and literary critical methodologies can make to our understanding of this history. At the same time, we will consider the complementarities and tensions that emerge from bringing this literary historiography of science into dialogue with the historiographies of evolution developed by historians, philosophers and scientists themselves.

The second session will consist of a roundtable bringing together three historians and philosophers of science and three literary scholars to discuss the ways in which a literary history of evolution can contribute to the wider historiography of evolutionary theory. How far has literary scholarship on evolution been determined by the prior historiographies developed by scientists and historians? In what ways has it contested them? Are there consistent principles and practices underpinning literary research on evolution which can inform the new historiography, or are the agendas of literature and science work at odds with those of the history and philosophy of science? How has literature itself shaped the history of evolution? These questions will be discussed in person by Richard Delisle, Maurizio Esposito and David Ceccarelli from the perspective of the new historiography and by John Holmes, Kirsten Shepherd and Daniel Abdalla from that of literary studies. Each speaker will give a brief position statement before moving on to a collective discussion which will then be opened to the floor for questions and contributions. In addition to responding to the case studies presented in the previous panel, the six contributors will have shared samples of their own work with one another in advance to inform the discussion. We very much hope that it will be possible for those speakers who joined online for the panel to remain with us in the audience, alongside those panellists who are attending in person, so that they can contribute to the roundtable from the floor.

Speaker bios:

#### **Richard Delisle**

Richard G. Delisle is Professor in the School of Liberal Education and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Lethbridge, Canada, and editor of the Springer-Nature book series 'Evolutionary Biology – New Perspectives on Its Development'. His own books include *Debating Humankind's Place in Nature, 1860-2000: The Nature of Paleoanthropology* (2007), *Charles Darwin's Incomplete Revolution: The Origin of Species and the Static Worldview* (2019) and *Rereading Darwin's Origin of Species: The Hesitations of an Evolutionist*, co-authored with James Tierney (2022), along with several edited and co-edited collections on evolution.

#### **Maurizio Esposito**

Maurizio Esposito is Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Milan. He is the author of *Romantic Biology, 1890-1945* (2014) and co-editor, with Richard Delisle and David Ceccarelli, of *Unity and Disunity in Evolutionary Biology: Deconstructing Darwinism* (2024).

**David Ceccarelli (Online)**

David Ceccarelli is Research Fellow in the Department of Philosophy, Communication and Performing Arts at Roma Tre University, Rome. He is co-editor, with Richard Delisle and Maurizio Esposito, of *Unity and Disunity in Evolutionary Biology: Deconstructing Darwinism* (2024).

**John Holmes**

John Holmes is Professor of Victorian Literature and Culture at the University of Birmingham, President of the Commission on Science and Literature, and a co-editor of the Bloomsbury book series ‘Explorations in Science and Literature’. His books include *Darwin’s Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (2009), *The Pre-Raphaelites and Science* (2018) and the edited collections *Science in Modern Poetry: New Directions* (2012) and *The Routledge Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science*, co-edited with Sharon Ruston (2017).

**Kirsten Shepherd**

Kirsten E. Shepherd is Professor of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of St Catherine's College. Her books include *Science on Stage: From Doctor Faustus to Copenhagen* (2006), *Theatre and Evolution from Ibsen to Beckett* (2015) and, as editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre and Science* (2020).

**Daniel Abdalla**

Daniel Abdallad is Lecturer in English at the University of Liverpool and Deputy Director of the Literature and Science Hub Research Centre. His first monograph, on *Transatlantic American Literary Culture, 1880-1935*, is forthcoming with Palgrave Macmillan.

**Panel 8D: Currents of Change: The Literary Imagination of Science and Technology from the Ottoman Fin de Siècle to the 1920s (org. Şima İmşir)**

**Chair: Şima İmşir**

This panel explores how the Ottoman literary scene engaged with scientific knowledge and technological innovations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From electricity’s prolongation of the night, to a world imagined as covered with wires that collapsed distances, to the emergence of theories on automatons, the transformations of everyday life through science and technology found literary expression in reflections on the limits of what it is to be human. The three papers in this panel collectively trace how the Ottoman intelligentsia grappled with these shifts, capturing the anxieties and possibilities of a rapidly changing world.

**Şima İmşir (Koç University) - Dancing in the Electric Light: Uneven Powers of Illumination in the Ottoman Novel**

During the period when electricity was first introduced in the Ottoman Empire, the circulation of ideas around electric machines found its representation in dream narratives. Ahmet Faik’s 1901 novel *Mosyo Elektrik* is one such dream narrative, where the approaching technology is imagined with awe. The novel was banned by Sultan Abdülhamid II, as it also directed criticism at the sultanate as a sign of its incompetence. By the 1910s, electricity came to be represented as a wonder and as well as a danger—an elite spectacle at high-class gatherings, while the lower classes were kept at a distant spectatorship. Its ability to prolong the night provoked fears of unchecked desires circulating without regulation, mirroring the unruly force of the technology itself. This paper draws on Walter Benjamin’s notion of “shock” and Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters* to examine *Mosyo Elektrik* alongside Peyami Safa’s *Sözde Kızlar* (‘So-Called Girls’, 1923). I argue that electricity in these texts generates a spectral dimension: a matter that unsettles the boundaries between visibility and invisibility, power and desire, technology and control. In so doing, these novels reveal how illumination also exposes uneven distributions of power and the anxieties attached to unseen social currents.

**Fatih Altuğ (Boğaziçi University) - Translating and Staging Karel Čapek’s R.U.R. in Early Republican Turkey**

This paper explores the early Turkish reception of Karel Čapek’s *R.U.R.* (*Rossum’s Universal Robots*), the 1920 play that introduced the word “robot” into global circulation. The play was first rendered into Turkish in 1927 by poet-playwright Halit Fahri Ozansoy as *Âlemşümül Suni Adamlar Fabrikası* (“Universal Artificial Men Factory”) and staged a year later by Darülbedayi (Istanbul City Theatres) under the shortened title *Yapma*

Adamlar (“Artificial Men”). Drawing on archival material, periodical reviews, and theatrical records, the paper reconstructs this early encounter with science fiction drama in the Turkish context. I argue that Ozansoy’s translation strategically abridged Čapek’s philosophical dialogue in favour of fluid stage dialogue, reframing the play’s meditation on technology, labour, and revolt into a debate about intelligence versus sentiment. While contemporary press coverage emphasised concerns that mechanisation might undermine emotional life, his preface and textual interventions placed affect at the centre, situating “feeling” (his) at the heart of what makes humans unique from machines. Simultaneously, the play’s staging was entwined with Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* and journalistic reports on robots, which helped to establish the robot’s cultural imagination in late 1920s Turkey. This study illustrates the localisation, contestation, and emotionalisation of scientific and technological imaginaries in early Republican Turkey by situating R.U.R. within the interconnected histories of translation, theatre, and media discourse. It highlights how the robot figure facilitated discourse concerning emotion, modernity, and humanity at the intersection of literature and science.

**Fatma Damak (Ozyegin University) - Wired World: The Imagination of Electricity and World Literature in Servet-i Fünun"**

This paper examines the conceptualization of electricity in the 1896-1901 phase of *Servet-i Fünun*, a prominent Ottoman-Turkish journal, and investigates how its contributors articulated this natural force through the lenses of science, politics, and literature. During this period when the journal served as a platform for the *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* movement, a cohort of young writers, electricity was a recurring theme across the journal’s popular science columns, literary articles and current affairs columns. Electricity was celebrated as a transformative agent—an engine of technological advancement, a symbol of urban modernity, and a therapeutic force. As its usage expanded, the journal’s contributors began to reconceptualize the world itself: no longer a fragmented space defined by local boundaries, but a global network interlinked by electric currents. This shift rendered the unknown familiar, as speed in communication and transportation redefined spatial and temporal perceptions. The study highlights how *Servet-i Fünun* authors embedded their global imagination within the discourse of electricity and argues that they strategically invoked the concept of “world literature” to position themselves as modern Ottoman subjects within this newly wired global order. Through this framework, the paper contends that they not only theorized a literature reflective of the electrified world but also sought to influence its cultural trajectory.

Bios:

**Şima İmşir**

Şima İmşir is an assistant professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at Koç University. She is the author of *Health, Literature and Women in Twentieth-Century Turkey: Bodies of Exception* (Routledge, 2023) and the co-editor of *Muslim Women’s Popular Fiction* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

**Fatih Altuğ**

Fatih Altuğ is an associate professor in the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Boğaziçi University, where he also earned his PhD. His research focuses on representations of subjectivity, agency, and gender in modern Ottoman-Turkish literature, as well as translation, affect, and cultural history. He is the author of *Kapalı İktisat Açık Metin [Closed Economy Open Text]* and has published on writers such as Namık Kemal, Fuad Köprülü, Sevgi Soysal, and Onat Kutlar. He is the principal investigator of the TÜBİTAK-funded project “The Literary Republic of the More-than-Human: Networks of Humans, Animals, Plants, and Objects in Turkish Literature (1923–2023).”

**Fatma Damak**

Fatma Damak is a lecturer in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Ozyegin University. She obtained PhD degree in 2025 from the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Boğaziçi University. Since 2014 she teaches Turkish Literature courses at Ozyegin University. Her research interests include Modern Turkish literature, historiography of literature, literary theories.

Panels 9, 13:00-14:30

**Panel 9A: Medical Margins: Addiction and Contagion in Literature and Science**

**Chair: Louise Benson James**

**Sadaf Mehmood (Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan) - Biopolitics of Syphilis: Women, Contagion and Urdu Literary Imagination (ONLINE)**

Epidemiology of syphilis became a key mechanism to introduce imperial medicalization and scientific regulation of sexuality in British India. By tracing the axes of colonial medicine, sexological and epidemiological discourses, this paper explores how the pathology of sexuality institutionalized the stigmatization and exclusion of women in prostitution. In so doing, I will focus on Mirza M. Hadi Rusva's *Umrao Jan Ada* (1899) to investigate the ways sexual politics of the British Empire constructed contagion as a referent in controlling female sexuality in the region. I claim that this Urdu novel conceived its existence as a counter-narrative to document the alternative history of sexual life in India. While existing scholarship has explored the medical or epidemiological dimensions of syphilis (Legg, 2014; Tambe, 2009; Levine, 2003), this paper specifically explores how literary narratives refracted these anxieties through the representation of women in prostitution. By bringing together medical science and literary representations, this study investigates how imperial authority consolidated its absolute power by treating women in prostitution as disposable subjects.

Bio: Dr. Sadaf Mehmood is an Assistant Professor of English Literature in the Department of English at Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan. She was awarded a prestigious Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue her Ph.D. at the University of Huddersfield, UK. She has published extensively and has numerous scholarly works to her credit. Her research interests include South Asian literature, Medical humanities, and the environmental humanities.

### **Noemie Robert (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales - EHESS) - Dying for Opium in George Eliot's *Silas Marner* and *Middlemarch***

George Eliot was no opium-eater, yet she took an active interest in its effects on characters, especially in *Silas Marner* (1861) and *Middlemarch* (1872). As an earnest realist author, she inquired closely about opium, deriving her knowledge from scientific treatises and De Quincey's *Confessions* rather than from personal experience. From this eclectic reading, Eliot seems to have concluded that opium was as effective in killing the pain as in killing the patient in the process. Characters in both works are dying from the use and abuse of opium and its derivatives, such as morphine and laudanum. Some of them are also craving opium to death. As this paper will show, although her stories take place at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Eliot rather exemplifies the late nineteenth century's growing concern about opium use, more specifically in the risks of "habit" and of "intoxication". Furthermore, the fact that this chemical substance is used both by lay people and by healthcare professionals makes it a dubious drug, emphasizing the instability of the relationship between patients and carers, as the doctor can become an intoxicated patient and the patient can turn into a doctor through self-medication. In studying characters from *Silas Marner* and *Middlemarch*, this paper will therefore analyse how opium use in Eliot's fiction showcases the sometimes-anachronistic realist attention to details as well as Eliot's ambivalent belief in medical progress, constantly unsettled by uncertain and sometimes deadly practices.

Bio: Noémie Robert is an English teacher and a third-year PhD student at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), under the supervision of Prof. Laurence Talairach (Université Toulouse II, Centre Alexandre-Koyré). My research subject is entitled "Histoires et géographie des maux : la construction du patient dans la fiction de George Eliot." It focuses on the literary construction of Eliot's fictional patients through the history of Victorian medicine. I am interested in pathology and modes of being sick that enable characters to access the ambivalent status of patient, and how this shapes the author's realism.

### **Nicholas Griffin (University of Sheffield) - "'A Factual Approach is the Worst Possible'": Forging Prescriptions in *Junkie* (1953)**

This paper proposes to reexamine *Junkie*, William S. Burroughs' early confessional novel of heroin addiction and its underground subculture in New York City. This will be done to examine the text's representation of scientific discourse as a mode of literary fictionalisation, most prominently depicted in Burroughs' portrayal of doctors as producers of texts. Consequently, the clinic becomes not simply a scientific but also a textual and phantasmatic space. Written at a time in which it was illegal for General Practitioners to treat known addicts, *Junkie* translates this historical circumstance into a postmodern aesthetic of artifice and forgery; the addict becomes a mimetic object, enacting through performance the symptoms of an illness they do not have, to receive the substance that services their true need. The scenario follows Derrida's reading of the *pharmakon*, the cure which is also a poison. Derrida argues that the concept applies to the drug and the act of writing equally, due to their shared proximity to memory, fantasy, and escapism. Furthering his inversive depiction, Burroughs' characterisation of doctors as the authors of falsified prescriptions – that is, as authors of fictions – places them, due to this nearness to the imaginary, into the subject position of the addicts themselves. Accordingly, Burroughs raises questions regarding the interface of literary and scientific knowledge, articulated through the hallucinatory dynamic of the drug as text, and the text as drug.

Bio: Nicholas Griffin is a PhD student in the School of English at the University of Sheffield, UK. His thesis, provisionally titled 'Reflecting on Drugs: Writing and Sobriety in Thomas De Quincey, William S. Burroughs and Kathy Acker', studies the interrelation of writing and oneiric experience through recourse to the literature of drugs and addiction. His research interests include intoxicants, countercultural and continental theory of the 1950s/60s/70s, and the interface of literature with psychiatry and psychoanalysis.

### **Panel 9B: Environmental Entanglements: Speculative Fiction and Science**

**Chair: Jonas Vanhove**

#### **Myles Chilton (Nihon University) - Yoko Tawada's *The Emissary: The World after Big Science* (ONLINE)**

This presentation will explore Yoko Tawada's 2014 novel *The Emissary* as a meditation on the costs of Japan's inclusion in US-led Big Science. Big Science, an analytical category that emerged during the Cold War, was deployed to debate, negotiate and rationalize anxieties about rapid scientific development, particularly its reconceptualization as a social activity with broad political implications (much of it was funded by the CIA's Conference for Cultural Freedom). Big Science contributed not just to an increase in knowledge, but also to the idea that economic performance underwritten by scientific and technological advances was a defining element of modern life – an ideology energized by neoliberal globalist logics. Tawada challenges Big Science utopianism by telling a story of a world rendered unrecognizable through unidentified ecological disasters that have made Tokyo largely uninhabitable, the oldest generation healthy long lifers, and children frail and diseased. In this dystopian Japan, ecological upheavals cause but also reflect socio-political instabilities, including Japan's return to Edo period (1603-1868) seclusion, and other pre-modern political and economic structures. The ecological apocalypse, however, is also global: every country has secluded itself for its own protection. Globalism is therefore over; and it seems that nature is wreaking vengeance over culture – children's bodies take on animal qualities, and sex changes are common. Tawada thus extends the representational boundaries of speculative fiction away from critiques of the present to depict a future of surreal distortions that question our relation to and knowledge of reality, and whether there will indeed be a future.

Bio: Myles Chilton is professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, Nihon University. He is the author of *English Studies Beyond the 'Center': Teaching Literature and the Future of Global English* (2016), and articles in *Comparative Critical Studies* and *The Journal of Narrative Theory*. He is also co-editor and co-author of *Asian English: Histories, Texts, Institutions* (2021); and co-author of *The Future of English in Asia: Perspectives on Language and Literature* (2015), *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative* (2014), *Deterritorializing Practices in Literary Studies* (2014), and *World Literature and the Politics of the Minority* (2013). He has a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

#### **Jade Arbo (Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPel) – Brazil) - *Science Fiction as Regenerative Epistemology: Literary Interventions into Knowledge and Power* (ONLINE)**

This paper argues that science fiction (SF) operates as a regenerative epistemology, offering literary forms capable of revealing and destabilizing the dualisms – nature/culture, reason/emotion, subject/object – that structure modern scientific knowledge and underpin colonial and capitalist logics. Rather than reflecting science neutrally, SF intervenes in the practices and assumptions of knowledge production, opening imaginative space for alternative ways of knowing and relating to the world. By tracing a genealogy of SF from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1831) to contemporary works by Jeff VanderMeer and Becky Chambers, I argue that these texts demonstrate how literary imagination can critique dominant epistemologies, explore the ethical stakes of scientific practice, and propose models of knowledge grounded in care, interdependence, and sustainability. While *Frankenstein* exemplifies the entanglement of scientific ambition with colonial and capitalist projects, later SF, from Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* to Chambers's novels, imagines ethical, relational, and affective modes of scientific engagement with varied levels of hope and optimism. Drawing on feminist philosophy of science (Haraway, Longino, Plumwood), this paper situates SF within literature and science studies as a site for interrogating and reconfiguring scientific discourse itself. Attending to these literary interventions enriches our understanding of both literature and science, showing how imaginative narratives can shape how we know and act in the world.

Bio: Jade Arbo is a doctoral researcher in Literature, Culture, and Translation at the Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil, with a visiting research period at Swansea University, UK. Her research focuses on speculative and science fiction as sites of knowledge production, with particular attention to feminist and intersectional perspectives. Her work aims to bridge literary analysis, feminist philosophy of science, and the environmental humanities to rethink ways of knowing and inhabiting Earth.

**Panel 9C: Interdisciplinary Equations: Literature, Mathematics, and the Human**  
**Chair: Sharon Ruston**

**George N. Vlahakis, Panagiotis Lazos and Iraklis Vogiatzis (Hellenic Open University) - Theoretical Considerations for the Relationship between Science and Literature. The Case of Mathematics and Physics. (ONLINE)**

This paper moves beyond the "Two Cultures" dichotomy to propose a framework of co-construction for science and literature, using mathematics and physics as a primary case study. We argue their relationship is a dialectic where mathematical formalisms and literary devices like narrative and metaphor are deeply intertwined, a process increasingly mediated by computational algorithms. This theory is grounded in the historic encounter between David Hilbert and Albert Einstein. Hilbert's axiomatic approach—a mathematical "narrative" seeking formal completeness—competed with Einstein's physically-intuited "story" of gravitation. This episode exemplifies the narrative competition of formalisms, where mathematical structure acts as an active force in discovery. We then project this framework onto the contemporary era, examining how algorithms intervene in this relationship. From generative models that create scientific hypotheses to natural language processing tools that analyze thematic structures in scientific literature, algorithms are emerging as new, non-human agents in the hermeneutic cycle. They can identify latent narrative patterns in vast scientific corpora or generate metaphorical analogies, thus actively shaping the conceptual and discursive landscape of scientific inquiry.

Applying N. Katherine Hayles's concept of "intermediation," we argue that these computational processes are not neutral; they possess their own structural logics that constrain and enable scientific narratives. The paper concludes that the relationship between science and literature is now a triadic one, involving a continuous negotiation between human creativity, mathematical formalisms, and algorithmic agency.

Bios: Panagiotis Lazos is a Physics teacher in Greek secondary education and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Hellenic Open University. His research interests include the history of scientific instruments, the history of science education, and the use of smart mobile devices and microcontrollers in physics teaching, particularly in school science laboratories. George N. Vlahakis is Professor of History of Science and Philosophy at the Hellenic Open University. He is a former President of the Commission on Science and Literature of the Division of History of Science and Technology (DHST/IUPHST) and a Corresponding Member of the International Academy of the History of Science. Iraklis Vogiatzis is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Hellenic Open University and an Adjunct Lecturer in Sociology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He holds a PhD in Digital Labor from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and researches platform labor, algorithmic management, and the forms of work that sustain Artificial Intelligence. He has participated in research projects on science communication, algorithms, and digital societies, and was a fellow of the Weizenbaum Institute's Data, Algorithmic Systems and Ethics Research Group.

**Simona Bartolotta (Justus-Liebig University of Giessen) - Science and Anthropocentrism in Mathematical Short Fiction**

This paper examines how the short stories "Division by Zero" (1991) by Ted Chiang and "Luminous" (1995) by Greg Egan challenge anthropocentrism through their engagement with mathematics. Both stories go to the core of the foundational problem in the philosophy of mathematics: Is mathematics real? That is, does it exist in the world, or is it only a construction of the human mind? The two principal standpoints on this problem are usually identified in the scholarship as the platonist (realist) and the constructivist (anti-realist) views. In this paper, I connect the stories' reflections on this problem to wider debates about relativism in the philosophy of science and how these have been absorbed in literary studies. Specifically, many literary scholars, adopting a relativist and/or constructivist perspective, tend to view science as deeply anthropocentric—a response that is also observable in the scholarship on Chiang's and Egan's stories. I argue, on the contrary, that an understanding that is open to more current, post-Kuhnian models of scientific knowledge is capable of seeing the anti-anthropocentric potential of scientific thought, and that this potential is exactly what Chiang's and Egan's stories bring to the fore with their complex explorations of the nature of mathematics. In short, the paper argues that through their sophisticated takes on the question of the metaphysical grip of mathematical knowledge, Chiang's and Egan's stories play against current narratives of science as intrinsically anthropocentric, conversely positing scientific thinking as a genuine window into the world beyond the human.

Bio: Simona Bartolotta is a Humboldt Postdoctoral Fellow at the Justus-Liebig University of Giessen, Germany. She holds a PhD in English from the University of Oxford. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Poetics Today*, *ELH*, *Science Fiction Studies*, and *ISLE* among others. Her first monograph, *Mysteries of Science Fiction*, is forthcoming with Bloomsbury Academic.

### **Emma-Louise Silva (University of Namur) - Towards a Neuroliterary Approach to Detail Recall across the Lifespan**

For literary authors who revisit their experiences of youth to write autobiographical books, imaginatively drawing on memories plays a prominent role in the creative process. On the basis of cognitive literary studies and the archival study of creative writing processes, I have examined notes, mindmaps, manuscripts, and typescripts to chart how authors reconstruct their memories. The authors in the corpus, David Almond, Roald Dahl, and Jacqueline Woodson, writing in their fifties and sixties about childhood and teenhood, demonstrated a striking skill for remembering details across the lifespan. This raises questions as to their heightened capabilities for detail recall of what-where-when conjunctions. Studies have argued that whereas semantic memory (our collections of general knowledge and facts disconnected from the spatiotemporal context of learning) shows relatively little decline during the ageing process, episodic memory (our recollections of specific episodes linked to their spatiotemporal contexts) is affected by age-related deficiencies. Yet recollections of the spatiotemporal contexts of past experiences are essential for imaginative autobiographical storytelling, especially in the case of older authors writing about their youth. By drawing on these authors' manifestations of literary craftsmanship, this presentation aims to delve into detail recall across the lifespan by means of a neuroliterary lens.

Bio: Emma-Louise Silva is assistant professor of English literature and literary theory at the University of Namur in Belgium. She defended her PhD on James Joyce and cognition in 2019. Her publications have appeared in *Age, Culture, Humanities*, the *European Journal of Life Writing*, and *Literature* among other journals. She's the author of *Modernist Minds* (2023) and co-author of *Age in David Almond's Oeuvre* (2023). Her current research investigates memory, imagination, cognitive neuroscience, and life writing. She recently launched the Neuroliterary Lifespan Lab.