



# The British Society for LITERATURE and SCIENCE

*Dr Barri J. Gold (U of Pennsylvania), Chair; Adele Guyton (KU Leuven), Secretary;  
Dr Laura E. Ludtke (U of Oxford), Treasurer; Dr Jordan Kistler (U of Strathclyde), Communications Officer;  
Dr Louise Benson James (U of Ghent), Membership Secretary; Prof. Sharon Ruston (Lancaster U), Book Reviews Editor.  
Members at Large: Sara Cole (Lancaster U); Dr Lloyd Meadhbh Houston (U of Cambridge),  
Dr Olivia Krauze (U of Cambridge).  
Overseas Representative: Dr Liliane Campos (Sorbonne Nouvelle U).*

## BSLS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE POSITIONS

We are seeking to fill at least three impending vacancies at the April Annual General Meeting, including:

- Communications Officer
- Member at Large
- Overseas Representative (various regions)

Any member of the BSLS is eligible to be nominated for (and serve in) an open post, except that it is expected that overseas representatives will generally be based in the regions they represent. All

openings are open to nominations. The chair will happily have exploratory discussions with interested members.

Any member can propose themselves or someone else. Each proposed candidate will also need two nominations from members of the BSLS, and these proposals and nominations should be sent to the chair, Barri Gold ([gold@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:gold@sas.upenn.edu)) and to the secretary, Adele Guyton ([adele.guyton@kuleuven.be](mailto:adele.guyton@kuleuven.be)).

Expressions of interest and proposals should ideally be received before the annual conference (10 April).

The BSLS promotes interdisciplinary research into the relationship between science and literature in all periods.

### Winter 2025 Newsletter

The BSLS Newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August, and November, with submissions deadlines typically the last Friday of the preceding month.

Editor: Jenni G Halpin

#### 4. OFFICERS

4.5 The membership of the Executive Committee shall be determined by elections held at the annual general meeting of the society. Members wishing to stand for election should be nominated by two members of the society before the start of the AGM. Where there is more than one candidate for any post, election shall be held by a ballot on the basis of a single transferable vote.

4.6 Members of the Executive Committee shall serve three-year terms of office.

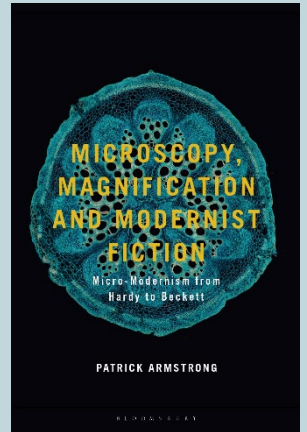
# RECENT PUBLICATION

Armstrong, Patrick, *Microscopy, Magnification and Modernist Fiction: Micro-Modernism from Hardy to Beckett* (Bloomsbury 2025)

Exploring how modernism registered shock experiences of the microscopic and extended vision in prose fiction through the work of four modernist writers—D. H. Lawrence, Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Beckett—this book is the first substantial study of the interrelations between microscopy and modernist fiction.

Illustrating ways in which optical instruments had the capacity to change, displace and reframe ideas of what the world is like, this book argues that encounters with the microscopic are often depicted as thresholds between the human and the non-human, in ways that reverberate through modernist fiction.

Exploring a period of significant developments in microscopical tools and techniques, from the light microscope to the electron microscope, this book traces a shift that reconfigured the limits of the observable.



## UPCOMING LITERATURE AND SCIENCE EVENTS BIOCRITICISM WEBINAR, 2025 BIODIVERSITY AND NEGLECT IN ART AND SCIENCE

I'm delighted to announce the BioCriticism webinar programme for 2025, proposing interdisciplinary approaches to the topic of 'Biodiversity and Neglect in Art and Science'. Each 90-minute session consists of two twenty-minute talks followed by discussion.

We continue to meet on Zoom at 2 pm Central European Time. Abstracts, biographies, and information about the webinar are available [here](#). I will post and circulate the Zoom link closer to each session. All are welcome!

—Liliane Campos

**28 March 2025, 2 pm CET: Neglected biodiversity in kitchens and fictions** (shared BioCriticism/BioYUFE webinar)

- Prof. Marko Rohlf (Chemical Ecology, Bremen University), 'Caring mothers: the symbiotic relationship between insects and microbes in nurturing their young—in your kitchen!'
- Teun Joshua Brandt (Literature and Culture, University of Groningen), 'Save the Unseen!? Microbial Tricksters in Science Fictions'

**25 April 2025, 2 pm CET: Can participatory art and science help us see biodiversity?**

- Prof. Eliane Beaufile (Theatre Studies, Université de Paris 8), 'The *Democracy of Organisms*: grow and multiply!'
- Dr. Shannon Lambert (Literature, Ghent University), "'I see a starfish!': Charting Excitement and Engagement in Online Marine Citizen Science Projects'

**16 May 2025, 2 pm CET: The biodiversity of neglected spaces in poetry and art curation**

- Dr. Jonathan Skinner (English and Comparative Literary Studies, University of Warwick), 'Ruderal Prosodies: Poetry, Plants, World-Ecology'
  - Dr. Martin Grünfeld (Science Communication, University of Copenhagen), 'Towards a metabolic welcoming: Fungal relations troubling hospitality at the museum'
- Martin's talk is co-written with Simone Cecilie Pedersen who is a curator and art interpreter at *SMK*, The National Gallery of Denmark.

*BioCriticism* is organised by Liliane Campos with the support of PRISMES EA4398 and the Institut Universitaire de France. For information and links, please contact [liliane.campos@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr](mailto:liliane.campos@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr) or check the [BioCriticism](#) website:

<https://biocriticism.hypotheses.org/about>

# RECENT BSLS REVIEWS

Melanie Byron reviewed Julia Langbein, Anne Fuchs, and Mary Cosgrove (eds), *Framing Aging: Interdisciplinary Perspectives for Humanities and Social Sciences Research* (London: Bloomsbury, 2024).

Derek Gatherer reviewed Philippa Nicole Barr, *Uncertainty and Emotion in the 1900 Sydney Plague* (Cambridge Elements: Histories of Emotions and the Senses: Cambridge University Press, 2024).

Chloé Germaine reviewed Abelardo Gil-Fournier and Jussi Parikka, *Images, Plants and Environments of Media: Living Surfaces* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA: 2024).

Jenni Halpin reviewed Jerome de Groot, *Double Helix History: Genetics and the Past* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023).

Vaibhav Pathak reviewed Sina Farzin, Susan M. Gaines, and Roslynn D. Haynes (eds), *Under the Literary Microscope: Science and Society in the Contemporary Novel* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2021).

## CALLS FOR REVIEWERS BSLS REVIEWS

We have the following books for review, some in hard copy and others in pdf. Please contact Sharon Ruston, BSLS Reviews Editor, at [bslsreviews@gmail.com](mailto:bslsreviews@gmail.com) if you would like to review one of these books or any other book.

Anderson-Tempini, Gemma and John Dupré (eds), *Drawing Processes of Life: Molecules, Cells, Organisms* (Intellect Books, 2023)

Armstrong, Patrick, *Microscopy, Magnification and Modernist Fiction: Micro-Modernism from Hardy to Beckett* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024)

Arni, Caroline, *Of Human Born: Fetal Lives, 1800-1950* (Princeton UP, 2024)

Berry, Chelsea, *Poisoned Relations: Healing, Power, and Contested Knowledge in the Atlantic World* (U Penn P, 2024)

Carey, Brycchan, *The Unnatural Trade: Slavery, Abolition, and Environmental Writing, 1650-1807* (Yale UP, 2024)

Christensen, Joel P., *Storylife: On Epic, Narrative, and Living Things* (Yale UP, 2025)

Deniston, Steve, *Settlers* (Steve Denison, 2024)

Desmond, Adrian, *Reign of the Beast: The Atheist World of W. D. Saull and his Museum of Evolution* (Open Book Publishers, 2024)

Dimick, Sarah, *Unseasonable: Climate Change in Global Literature* (Columbia UP, 2024)

Epstein, Hugh, *Hardy, Conrad and the Senses* (Edinburgh UP, 2020)

Fyfe, Paul, *Digital Victorians: From Nineteenth-Century Media to Digital Humanities* (Stanford UP, 2024)

Gupta, Suman, and Peter H. Tu, *The Practical Philosophy of AI Assistants: An Engineering-Humanities Conversation* (World Scientific, 2024)

Hoiem, Elizabeth Massa, *The Education of Things: Mechanical Literacy in British Children's Literature, 1762 – 1860* (U Mass P, 2024)

Howick, Jeremy, *The Power of Placebos: How the Science of Placebos and Nocebos Can Improve Health Care* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2023)

Kiryushina, Galina, Einat Adar and Mark Nixon, eds., *Samuel Beckett and Technology* (Edinburgh UP, 2021)

Klinger, Sebastian P., *Sleep Works: Experiments in Science and Literature, 1899 – 1929* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2025)

Love, Heather A., *Cybernetic Aesthetics: Modernist Networks of Information and Data* (Cambridge UP, 2023)

Malazita, James, *Enacting Platforms: Feminist Technoscience and the Unreal Engine* (MIT P, 2024)

Sutton-Mattocks, Julia, *Cures for Modernity: Medicine in Interwar Russian and Czech Literature and Cinema* (Peter Lang, 2023)

Yunger Halpern, Nicole, *Quantum Steampunk: The Physics of Yesterday's Tomorrow* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2022)

**WANT TO DONATE TO  
THE BSLS HARDSHIP FUND?**

**HERE IS [A LINK TO DO SO ON PAYPAL](#)**

[https://www.paypal.com/donate?token=vNNJXhyKrfBDKGFX39PdmzEkgrNU7eapir5DKIKN44m3LjeXnO\\_bPfx6tZ5i4LoK4SQ-RwzxFwwHzLN](https://www.paypal.com/donate?token=vNNJXhyKrfBDKGFX39PdmzEkgrNU7eapir5DKIKN44m3LjeXnO_bPfx6tZ5i4LoK4SQ-RwzxFwwHzLN)

More information on hardship fund donations is available at <https://www.bsls.ac.uk/funding/>

# BSLS PGR & ECR FUNDING REPORT

SIXTEENTH CENTURY SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2024  
TORONTO, CANADA, 30 OCTOBER—2 NOVEMBER

Firstly, my thanks to the British Society for Literature and Science for their generosity in awarding this funding—as an early career researcher, I would not have been able to attend this conference without it. The Sixteenth Century Society Conference is an international, interdisciplinary conference that brings together scholars working in literature, drama, translation and language studies, theology, and histories of art, society, religion, the economy, and sciences, amongst others. It was the largest conference of my career so far and was an exciting opportunity to make connections with scholars from across the world.

I was invited to present my research on gender and disability in early modern literature and performance for the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women and Gender's sponsored panel, 'New Voices', featuring work from early career researchers. My paper was entitled 'Performing Gender and Disability in the Tudor Courts: The Movements of Jane the Foole', drawing together the little evidence we have for the life and work of the female court fool, Jane (we have no record of her surname). Beginning with a discussion of her appearance in the sixteenth-century painting 'The Family of Henry VIII', currently on display at Hampton Court Palace, I argued that her position was a uniquely liminal one that encompassed a range of duties and expectations from household servant to entertainer to pseudo-family member. She lived and worked in proximity to some of the most important

and influential women of the royal court, including Anne Boleyn, Katherine Parr, and Mary I.

We know 'foolishness' was understood as a category of disability in early modern England, but we don't know if Jane had a disability, or what the nature of that impairment may have been. The archival record of Jane's life gives us some quotidian details that offer insight into the lived experience of disabled people in early modern England. I'm interested in how expectations of gender may have shaped expectations of disability, and vice versa, in both the early modern period and our world today. I hope that by untangling these connections and constructions, we can bring greater nuance to our understanding of the role women and disabled people played in important and influential courtly spaces.

Having presented my paper on the first day, I was able to enjoy the rest of the conference without too many nerves getting in the way! It was a privilege to hear cutting edge research across several disciplines and to engage in generative conversations with brilliant scholars, particularly with my fellow panellists. I also benefited from panels on touring performance and representations of royal women in early modern Europe, both of which tie into projects I'm working on.

Thank you again to the Society for their generous support.

—Melanie Harrison

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## *The next deadline for funding applications is 15 May 2025*

- The Small Grants Scheme is intended to support organizing literature and science events, especially those with a public-facing component. Contact Sara Cole ([s.cole@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:s.cole@lancaster.ac.uk)) with queries and/or to apply; please put 'BSLS Small Grant' in the subject heading of e-mails.
- The Postgraduate and Early Career Conference Fund is intended to support PGRs/ECRs presenting literature and science scholarship at conferences other than that of the BSLS. Contact Liliane Campos ([liliane.campos@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr](mailto:liliane.campos@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr)) with queries and/or to apply; please put 'BSLS PGR/ECR Fund' in the subject heading of e-mails.
- The Research Grants are intended to support archival research and similar activities, particularly those undertaken by PGRs, ECRs, and others who are under-funded or precariously employed. Contact Sharon Ruston ([s.ruston@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:s.ruston@lancaster.ac.uk)) with queries and/or to apply; please put 'BSLS Research Grant Fund' in the subject heading of e-mails

Throughout the year the application deadlines for these funds are 30 January, 15 May, and 30 September.

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# CALLS FOR PAPERS

## THEATRE ABOUT SCIENCE

**23-25 OCTOBER, COIMBRA PORTUGAL**

We are extremely pleased to announce the forthcoming edition of the Theatre About Science International Conference.

The conference will take place at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, from 23 to 25 October 2025. This will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of this biennial event, confirming a consistent and a continuously renewed interest in the cross fertilisation between theatre and the sciences.

**The founding objectives of the conference remain unchanged:**

- Map and reflect upon theatre and science intersections around the globe;
- Promote, exchange and enlarge the knowledge on this field;
- Trace the evolution of previous trends and identify new types of intersections;
- Stimulate encounters between the artistic and the science communication worlds.

The previous two editions created a strong feeling of belonging among the conference participants, which laid the foundation for building a network of people who work and/or are interested in blending theatre with science, or vice versa.

We invite you to come and join this community by submitting a proposal for the 2025 edition of the conference.

The intersections of Science and Theatre can acquire multiple forms, address a myriad of subjects, touch several audiences, use varied spaces and venues or pertain to different contexts. Merging all these possibilities together is the intermingling of theatrical and scientific languages, techniques, subjects, concepts, individuals, institutions, methodologies, spaces, systems or ideas.

**We welcome contributions on subjects such as:**

- Theatre about scientific subjects and concepts
- Theatrical subgenres and forms
- Contemporary practice in theatre about science
- Theatre and the History of Science
- Future trends in theatre about science
- Theatrical research processes vs scientific research processes
- Theatre in the training of scientific researchers
- Funding in the arts and in science
- Communicating science with theatre
- Theatre on scientific stages

**That may address questions such as:**

- Can theatre help solve scientific problems?
- Does scientific knowledge transform theatre?
- What kinds of audiences for science in performance?
- Does theatre make sense in science communication?
- What kind of knowledge about science can theatre add?
- Can theatre transform the ways scientists perform their research?
- How does theatre engage with public debates about science and scientific developments?
- Can theatre inspire new scientific research?
- Where are the boundaries between communicating science and performing science?

**Accepted formats:**

- Oral presentation on one of the themes of the conference (15 minutes).
- Workshop related to the themes of the conference (max. 90 minutes).
- Short performance related to the themes of the conference (max. 30 minutes).

**Abstracts:**

- Submissions should be in English
- Between 300 and 400 words

**Relevant dates:**

- Deadline for proposals submission: 21 February 2025

- Notification of acceptance: 14 April 2025

<https://theatreaboutscience.com/call-for-papers-2025/>



## EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PLANT STUDIES

### *Plants and Their Perceptions: Vegetal Agency in the Global Eighteenth Century*

For this volume we seek new and current work which puts eighteenth-century plants, as represented by word and picture, under the lens of any aspect of Plant Studies and the 'vegetal turn.' We welcome work which understands vegetal life not as a passive commodity for human use, but as being—in Michael Marder's words—'coextensive with a distinct subjectivity with which we might engage' (*Plant Thinking*, 2013: 8). Famous stories of European plant discoveries and exploitation—such as that of Captain Bligh's breadfruit and of deforestation for naval defence—have had some scholarly attention, as has Enlightenment categorisation and instrumentation of plant life, and there has also been attention to the contributions of female botanists in the period, but we are soliciting work which is energised by the kinds of inversions and revisions suggested by thinking through plants and their kinds of agency.

The projected volume is a collection of interdisciplinary essays on how plants were perceived, represented and understood in the long eighteenth century, with special attention to new ways in which texts from this period can be discussed and understood in the light of twenty-first-century advances in plant sciences and the philosophy of plants. If the long eighteenth century was really the era in which a plant came to be seen, understood, named binomially, and categorised as an 'efficient assemblage of interlocked cellular constituents' (Ryan, *Plants in Contemporary Poetry*, 2018: 67), how do the texts discussed in this volume demonstrate, refute or undermine that claim?

Further information:

We are open to any work which investigates primary material from the long eighteenth century (1660-1832) in the light of recent plant studies and/or vegetal agency. Essays are welcome which may encompass form, content or both, and also those which might ally any other fertile critical perspective with Plant Studies. These may include in various degrees and combinations the following: decolonization; aesthetic or literary theory; eighteenth-century history, politics and culture; rhetoric and literary form; art methodologies and artistic practice; modern and/ or Enlightenment philosophy; network theory; 'plant thinking'; feminism; ethnobotany; queer studies; posthumanism; plant personhood; individual author studies; vegetal geographies; transatlantic and/or global studies; and eco-criticism including 'deep

ecology.' We seek work which is ready to make that shift in which what are taken as objects 'might themselves be thought of as subjects,' in Malcolm Miles's useful formula (*Eco-Aesthetics*, 2014: 3).

A noteworthy feature of this book will be its inclusion of reproductions: the texts under discussion in each essay will be reproduced in the volume alongside them. These could include paintings, drawings, poems in their original publication format, reproductions of periodical pieces, photographs of eighteenth-century objects or artefacts, and more—we are happy to discuss all suggestions. We are already working with a scholarly press who has expressed strong interest in the project.

**Deadlines:** We are looking forward to receiving proposals and abstracts for essays of between 5,000-7,000 words by **15th March 2025**, and full essays by **31st December 2025**.

Please email [min.wild@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:min.wild@plymouth.ac.uk) or [kathryn.gray@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:kathryn.gray@plymouth.ac.uk) with abstracts, or for further information and discussion. Thank you!

## POISON(S) AND POISONING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY POPULAR FICTION A SPECIAL ISSUE OF *VICTORIAN POPULAR FICTIONS JOURNAL*

Guest-edited by Manon Burz-Labrande and Sarah Frühwirth

This special issue aims to explore the manifold ways nineteenth-century texts dealt with the ubiquity of poison in society and the growing awareness brought about by toxicology. Defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'a substance that is capable of causing the illness or death of a living organism when introduced or absorbed', poison also has a figurative sense as 'something that has a destructive or corrupting influence'. The latter meaning rapidly became a staple of literary criticism at the time, tightening the connection between poison and literature as penny dreadfuls were for example labelled 'penny packets of poison' (Greenwood 1874: 158) and sensation novels were referred to as 'poisoned stimulants' (Porter 1871: 232), and many popular-fiction texts seem to revel in justifying this widespread health anxiety by including poison in their plots. In this special issue, we encourage both literal and metaphorical interpretations of 'poison'.

For the full call:

<https://victorianpopularfiction.org/wp->

[content/uploads/2025/01/Poisons-and-poisoning-VPFJ-CFP-Burz-Labrande-Fruhworth.pdf](https://victorianpopularfiction.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Poisons-and-poisoning-VPFJ-CFP-Burz-Labrande-Fruhworth.pdf)

Please send a proposal of no more than 400 words and a 50-word biographical note to Manon Burz-Labrande ([manon.burz-labrande@univie.ac.at](mailto:manon.burz-labrande@univie.ac.at)) and Sarah Frühwirth ([sarah.fruhworth@univie.ac.at](mailto:sarah.fruhworth@univie.ac.at)) by **30 April 2025**. The submission deadline for full articles is 31 October 2025. Full articles should be between 7,000 and 8,000 words and follow the *VPFJ* Style Guide, which is available on the website and downloadable here: <https://victorianpopularfiction.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/VPFJournal-Style-Guide-updated-June-2021.pdf>. All articles are subject to peer review. Only previously unpublished work will be considered.

Please do not hesitate to contact the guest editors, Manon Burz-Labrande and Sarah Frühwirth, at the above e-mail addresses with any further questions or inquiries.



"Fatal Facility; or, Poisons for the Asking" by John Leech. *Punch* 17 (1849: 49). © Punch Limited.

# BRITISH SOCIETY FOR LITERATURE AND SCIENCE TWENTIETH ANNUAL CONFERENCE LANCASTER UNIVERSITY, 10-12 APRIL 2025



The twentieth annual conference of the British Society for Literature and Science will take place at [Lancaster University](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk) on 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2025 in person.

Keynote talks will be given by: Dr Kanta Dihal (Imperial College London), Sydney Padua (Buckinghamshire New University), and Professor Michael Whitworth (Merton College, Oxford).



[bsls.ac.uk](https://bsls.ac.uk)



The conference will continue online on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> and Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May to enable wider participation; those who attend the in-person conference are welcome to also attend the online conference. The online keynote talk will be given by Dr Debapriya Sarkar (University of Connecticut). There will be a fee of £10 for the online conference to cover admin costs.

**About the Conference:** the in-person conference will be held at [Lancaster University](#), which is a campus university, and we have booked a number of ensuite rooms for delegates onsite. All talks, tea breaks and lunches will take place in the fully accessible George Fox Building (more details here: [George Fox Building - accessibility](#)). The conference dinner will take place onsite at Barker House Farm. Delegates can apply for a pre-school place for childcare at [Lancaster University Pre-School Centre](#).



The George Fox Building – Conference Venue

**Membership:** all conference delegates are required to be members of the BSLS in order to attend the conference (£26 waged/£11 unwaged): <https://www.bsls.ac.uk/membership/join-us/>. There will also be the opportunity to join or renew membership when you register for the conference.

For further information and updates about the conference, please contact Professor Sharon Ruston at [BSLS2025@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:BSLS2025@lancaster.ac.uk) or visit the website: [Conference – The British Society for Literature and Science \(bsls.ac.uk\)](#).

- You are required to be a member of BSLS in order to attend the Conference.  
£26 Waged / £11 Unwaged/PG. **Please join or renew your membership to BSLS** here: [BSLS Membership](#)
- If you wish to **donate to the BSLS Hardship Fund**, please do so here: [Donate to the BSLS Hardship Fund, Lancaster University Online Store \(Lancaster-university.co.uk\)](#)
- **Directions to Lancaster University:** <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/about-us/maps-and-travel/> More detailed instructions to the Conference Venue, the George Fox Building, will be available to delegates.

## FUTURE BSLS CONFERENCES

BSLS 20, LANCASTER, 10-12 APRIL 2025

BSLS 21, STRATHCLYDE, 9-11 APRIL 2026

The Society invites conversations with members interested in hosting upcoming annual conferences. Please contact the chair, Barri Gold ([gold@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:gold@sas.upenn.edu)).