**BSLS 2025 Online Conference May 8th and 9th**

**Abstracts and Biographies**

**Day 1: Thursday, 8th May**

**11-12.30 – Parallel Session 1**

**Panel 1.1: Digital, Genetic, Scientific Engineering**

**Chair: Jerome de Groot**

**Twinkle Kumar, ‘“They said it was safe...they were wrong”: Genetic Engineering and Individual Identity in S. E. Meyer's *The Dystopian Gene* (2021)’** The theme of genetic engineering is a long running topic in literature. The concept has clearly dominated the sci-fi and dystopian fiction genre; in literature, Brave New World (1932), The Giver (1993), Oryx and Crake (2003), Unwind (2007) and "Gattaca" (1997), "Blade Runner", "Elysium" (2013) in films, are notable examples of it. As time has advanced on, science has likewise progressed by concentrating more on the human body, identity, and control. The Dystopian Gene by S. E. Meyer depicts a cautionary world in which vaccinations are administered as a required part of routine treatment, but individuals are utterly unaware of the additional harm the vaccines are causing to their bodies. This paper aims to examine how the novel addresses the ethical and social implications of genetic manipulation, the role of government and powerful institutions in regulating genetics and how genetic manipulation affects the concepts of personal identity, uniqueness, and self-worth. In the end, this will help us comprehend the various ways that science and biotechnology might impact people more negatively than positively.   

Twinkle is a Ph.D. scholar in the Department of English & Foreign Languages, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, India. Her area of interest is science fiction. Through her research, she wants to contribute to the study of dystopian literature and the future of the society which is being affected greatly by the use of science and technology. She is also interested in studying the aftermath of the introduction of transhumanism in the lives of humans, their identity, and independence.

**Celia Brightwell, ‘Biotechnological Luxury and the Aging Body: Neuralink and “Forever”’** This paper analyzes the Neuralink brain-computer interface through a reading of the science fiction short story ‘Forever’ by xenofeminist theorist and author Amy Ireland. I use the pairing of literary analysis with an STS perspective as a framework to examine how culture and technology shape the aging body. I focus on Elon Musk’s plan for Neuralink to become a general population device that will preserve and enhance the human brain, and situate this claim within longevity ideology. I do so by contrasting the longevity community’s projections on de-aging technology with the experience of it as depicted in ‘Forever’. This story centers a conflict between wealthy male ‘geros’ undergoing radical de-aging procedure, and gray-haired feminist anti-immortality activists that sabotage the procedure. Through my reading of this text as xenofeminist theory-fiction, I interpret the sabotage as directed not towards the material technology but instead the systemic power disparities it risks entrenching in perpetuity. I argue that the story’s aging activists represent a feminist posthumanism capable of politicizing the application of technologies such as Neuralink for longevity. By contextualizing ‘Forever’ and Neuralink together, this paper challenges prevalent narratives about aging with technology.

Celia (she/her) is a PhD candidate and research associate at the Chair of Digital Cultures. Her doctoral research project, cyber crones, examines how age is produced culturally and technologically through a selection of paired science fiction texts and body technologies. As a research associate, her work focuses on the concept of securitization and hacking in healthcare. She completed a B.A. in English literature and an M.A. in communication at the University of Melbourne. Celia has also worked as a user experience writer for European digital health apps.

**Jade Arbo, ‘Science-Fictional Ethical Inquiries: Exploring the Boundaries of Scientific Ambition in *Frankenstein* (1818) and *To Be Taught If Fortunate* (2019)’**

Science fiction has long engaged with the moral dimensions of scientific advancement. Through speculative narratives, science fiction enables readers to examine the potential impacts of scientific ambition and question the ethical responsibilities that accompany it. This paper investigates these themes by analyzing Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818/1831) and Becky Chambers' To Be Taught If Fortunate (2019), two works that address the boundaries and dangers of human aspiration within scientific exploration. Frankenstein provides an analysis of the destructive consequences of human isolation from nature and from intersubjective spaces. In contrast, To Be Taught If Fortunate presents a vision of scientific inquiry grounded in empathy and respect for ecosystems beyond Earth, highlighting a communal approach to discovery. Drawing from feminist epistemology and philosophy of science, this paper argues that science fiction not only critiques scientific hubris but also offers frameworks for an ethical science rooted in relationality and care. By contrasting Shelley’s cautionary tale with Chambers’ vision of ethical restraint, this paper emphasizes science fiction’s capacity to reimagine scientific progress as an endeavor requiring accountability—a vision essential for navigating present and future scientific challenges.

Jade Arbo holds an MPhil in Philosophy and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Literature, Culture, and Translation at the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel, Brazil). Her research focuses on the epistemic value of science fiction, examining how speculative literature provides critical insights into knowledge production, particularly in relation to environmental and ethical questions.

**Panel 1.2: Altered Animals in Speculative Literature, Film and Videogames**

**Chair: Jerika Sanderson**

**Jerika Sanderson ,’ Speculative Futures of Xenotransplantation: Altered Animals, Experimental Medicine, and Transplant Tourism in *Chromosome 6* (1997)’** Xenotransplantation is a rapidly developing medical field that promises to “solve” the organ shortage crisis by supplying organs from genetically modified animals for transplantation into human patients. The FDA approved the use of organs from genetically modified pigs for therapeutic use in 2020, and since then, four American patients have received xenografts. As xenotransplantation continues to develop, it is critical to consider the potential ethical implications of experimental medicine. In this presentation, I will discuss the role that speculative fiction can play in highlighting the bioethical considerations of xenotransplantation. Chromosome 6 (1997), a medical thriller by Robin Cook, explores the formation of “xenotourism” networks. In the novel, the American biotech corporation GenSys opts to base their operations in Equatorial Guinea to circumvent policies about medical research and animal experimentation, and wealthy American patients can travel to Equatorial Guinea to receive an organ from a genetically modified bonobo. In my analysis of the novel’s depiction of experimental medicine, genetically modified animals, and transplant tourism, I will draw on critical posthumanism and animal studies alongside bioethics and postcolonial theory. As I will argue, Chromosome 6 raises concerns about the potential for exploitative practices to emerge around new medical developments like xenotransplantation.

Jerika Sanderson is a PhD candidate in English at the University of Waterloo. Her dissertation investigates depictions of biotechnologies in the media, literature, and popular culture. She has worked as a research assistant on interdisciplinary projects in medical humanities, science and technology studies, and climate change education. Her work has been published in Medical Humanities and Feminist Modernist Studies, on the Genealogy of the Posthuman website, and in edited collections. She is currently a co-editor of a collection that investigates depictions of animals that have been altered using technology in novels, poetry, films, television series, and videogames.

**Samantha Hind, ‘Virtual Reality and Farmed Animals in *Upload* (2023) and *Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget* (2023)’**Imagine a world where farmed animals are happy to be processed. Mind-controlled chickens eagerly step forward onto processing belts and a legless dairy cow is in a “beautiful VR meadow, thank God.” These are the worlds of speculative media’s Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget and Upload’s ‘Strawberry’ episode, where virtual reality (VR) technology has created altered farmed animals who are seemingly happy to provide their flesh and fluids. Outside of speculative fiction, real-world farmers have begun testing VR’s use on farmed cows. As VR becomes a reality for farmed animals, it becomes increasingly important to interrogate its ethical implications. This chapter analyses how speculative media troubles the ethical absolution afforded by VR’s “cruelty-free technology.” The presentation will begin with an exposition of real-world, VR-altered farmed animals, before exploring their speculative counterparts. The speculative media examples actively encourage audiences to critically engage with altered animals’ experiences and challenge VR’s purported ethical benefits. Analysing speculative media’s altered animals not only offers a way to ethically interrogate the use of VR on farmed animals, but it also offers a window into the horrifying reality experienced by farmed animals currently—the simulated meadows are a far cry from the factory farm.

Samantha Hind is an independent scholar who was awarded a PhD from the University of Sheffield. Her forthcoming monograph, Speculative Flesh Ecologies: Flesh, Indistinction, and Speculative Fiction, explores flesh as a facilitator for human and nonhuman indistinction in twenty-first century speculative fiction. More broadly, she is interested in representations of nonhumans in SF. Her work has been published in Interrogating Boundaries of the Nonhuman: Literature, Climate Change, and Environmental Crises (Lexington, 2022), Ecozon@ (2024), and Clarkesworld science fiction magazine, and she is currently co-editing Animality and Horror Cinema: Creaturely Fear on Film (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025).

**Ryan Walsh, ‘Terraforming Aesthetics: Biomimetic Machines and Planetary Rejuvenation in *Horizon: Zero Dawn* and *Horizon: Forbidden West*’** The atypical post-apocalypse of Horizon: Zero Dawn (2017) and Horizon: Forbidden West (2022) presents an interactive digital narrative of planetary rejuvenation configured as a posthuman, ecofeminist, quest. Here, the ruins of the old world nestle among the verdant Earth, flourishing under the ecosystem managing artificial intelligence, Gaia, tasked with resurrecting the biosphere from previous annihilation.     
Gaia oversees multiple AI sub-routines, each responsible for discrete elements of Earth’s terrestrial system. In turn, cybernetic animal forms conduct the physical labour required to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Ranging from herbivore inspired environmental regenerators to simulacra of carnivorous predators hostile to human presence, biomimetic design simultaneously replicates the form and function of lost species. Likewise, their totemic representations of animals familiar to us invoke contemporary stories and myth into this Sci-Fi storyworld.  Employing Bruce Clarke’s neocybernetic systems theory alongside Cary Wolfe’s critique of human-animal ontological hierarchies, this presentation investigates how the biomimetics of contemporary roboticists finds expression in cultural products like the Horizon series. By defamiliarizing biological animal forms and behaviours, players simultaneously encounter the cybernetic animal as both entity and process critical to the health of ecosystems they inhabit, maintain, and enrich.

Ryan is an independent scholar from Ireland, currently residing in Aotearoa New Zealand. His background is in secondary school education and the environmental humanities, bringing ecocritical theory into the classroom when possible. Completing an MA in Comparative Literature through Karlstad University in 2022 with a thesis on gated communities in speculative fiction, Ryan is developing PhD research proposals that concern how climate change as cultural experience and science communication intersect. When not studying narrative representations of climate crises he enjoys hiking, foraging, and playing the mandolin.

**Raul Martin IV, ‘*Absolution*: The Posthuman Animal and I’**  Jeff VanderMeer’s Area X: The Southern Reach Trilogy has a novel addition to what some scholars have dubbed “ecocritical posthumanism” (Vinci). The new novel, Absolution (2024), takes readers to a time before Area X, before the Biologist saw the boar’s “inner torment”, before Control met “Ghost Bird”, and before the “Crawler” slithered through the disorienting bog that is Area X. The novel’s plethora of altered animals, flora and fauna give the narrative its posthuman sheen. Human hubris is not absent from the novel’s depiction of how Biologists analyze the area and work to understand its mysteries. Alphonso Lingis’ chapter “Animal Body, Inhuman Face” posits that we are attuned to other species around us when we see ourselves as non-teleological—not intentional. When read in partnership with Lingis’s chapter “Animal Body, Inhuman Face,” VanderMeer’s SR world seems more accessible, more alive. My paper “Absolution: The Posthuman Animal and I” takes the representation of animals altered by neo-biological advance technology as fodder to explore symbiotic relationships between and around posthuman animal and nonhuman animal. The interplay between this alien technology and the human psyche crafts a narrative that challenges the reader to circumvent imaginings or how they navigate the Anthropocene environment.   
   
Raul Martin IV is a PhD student of English at the University of Miami. His research interests include environmental and animal studies, popular culture, speculative literature, and digital environmental humanities. His creative writing and scholarship have or will appear in Art Studio INK, Pulse! Literary Magazine, Habits: The Good the Bad and the Ugly, and Gothic Nature Journal. He is also working on a book chapter for a major publisher.

**Panel 1.3: Ghosts and Monsters**

**Chair: Melissa Dickson**

**Rachel Cairns, ‘Subtextually Fat: Reading Fat Embodiment into the Hungry Monster’**  This paper explores the capacity for reading what I term “subtextual fatness” into monster fiction, with emphasis on vampire fiction. Jeannine Gailey has discussed hyper(in)visibility, “whereby marginalised bodies are subjected to both an extraordinary amount of attention and scrutiny and are simultaneously completely disregarded and dismissed” (Gailey, 2023). This paper questions if visibility can be read into monster fiction, wherein monsters are Othered and defined by their hunger, appetite, and eating habits. Some fat studies scholars have posited that liberation can be encountered by embracing the monstrous status of the fat body (White, 2021; Owen, 2015). I question if this is true of vampire fiction, pulling from Victorian and contemporary texts to draw connections between the pathologisation of fatness and hysteria surrounding the “obesity epidemic” (Farrell, 2011) (Dark, 2021) (Smith, 2022), and the pathologisation of vampires. It will consider how reading fat narratives into vampire fiction may subvert dynamics of power, desire, and visibility. However, this paper considers the limitations of subtextual fatness, questioning if fat embodiment (Dark, 2023) is possible in monster fiction, when the body of the monster is physically thin, and if monstrosity, in this case, is a productive tool for fat justice.

Rachel Cairns (she/her) is a second-year PhD researcher at the University of Strathclyde. Her research focusses on fatness and monsters who eat in 19th-century fairy tales and monster fiction. Also at Strathclyde, Rachel received her BA Hons in English, Creative Writing and Journalism and MLitt with Distinction in Interdisciplinary English Studies. Rachel is a recipient of the Peggy Grant Prize and the Global Research Award. In 2019-2021, Rachel served as a Sabbatical Officer, where she rooted her work within liberation work, and received the Strathclyde Women in Leadership Network Committee’s Choice Champion Award.  

**Madeline Dyer Statham, ‘Monster, Mage, Medicine Man, or Myth? Neanderthal Representations in Popular Culture From 1865 to the Present’**

Early archaeological discoveries of Homo Neanderthalensis took place amid concerns of degeneration and racial imperialism, constructing the Neanderthal as uncultured and brutish, a view that survived into 20th century fiction, such as H.G. Wells’s ‘The Grisly Folk’. Neanderthal as Monster held strong until the late 20th century, when discoveries of Neanderthals’ symbolic behaviour led to novels such as Jean M. Auel’s The Clan of the Cave Bear (1980), which incorporate a softer, sympathetic, and spiritual Neanderthal as Mage, however not without overt Othering of Neanderthals due to perceived inferiority. While Western medical knowledge improved into the 21st century, so did our awareness of Neanderthal medicinal practice: their extraction of Poplar trees’ Salicylic acid as painkiller, successful amputations, and bone-healing abilities transformed beliefs around the Neanderthal. Neanderthal as Scientist emerged, such as in Robert J. Sawyer’s The Neanderthal Parallax trilogy (2002-2003), however, this did not reproduce enough in literary, artistic, and filmic representations. Instead, Neanderthal as Monster resurged, this time overtly emphasizing cannibalism and degeneration to dehumanise the Neanderthal—such as in Grendel’s Neanderthalic depiction in Sturla Gunnarsson’s Beowulf & Grendel (2005) and horror film Out of Darkness (2024); instead, Neanderthal has become Gothic Monster, Menace, and Myth.

Madeline Dyer Statham is a postgraduate researcher at the University of Bristol, the author of several novels, and the editor of the upcoming anthology These Bodies Ain’t Broken (Page Street, 2025), a horror collection highlighting disabled teenagers flourishing in gothic stories. She has research interests in experimental fiction, non-linear narratives, and the representation of the Gothic in modern fiction. Madeline’s other research interests include palaeolithic humans and their representations in contemporary fiction, the depiction of prehistoric culture and rituals in modern fiction, collective memory, illness narratives, and folklore.

**Emily Vincent, ‘“[T]he ‘table-talking’ epidemic”: Spiritualism, Influenza, and the Language of Infection’**

Since the rise of spiritualism in the mid nineteenth century, the movement’s early opponents dismissed séance practice using the language of infection. Physicians like William B. Carpenter declared spiritualism to be a widespread ‘Epidemic Delusion’ spawned by an ‘Epidemic belief in the “occult”’, while others warned against its ‘rapidly’ spreading ‘moral infection’. However, from the 1890s onwards, the highly mediatised topicality of real-world epidemics, namely, that of the so-called ‘Russian Flu’, presented the opportunity not only to revive epidemic discourse, but to reimagine its utility for spiritualism’s supporters.   Florence Marryat’s novella The Dead Man’s Message (1894) explored whether ghosts ‘carry their diseases and deformities into the spiritual world’, and Oliver Lodge’s psychical declarations reflected how spiritualism ‘infected’, and thus energised, his scientific colleagues. Arthur Conan Doyle similarly asserted that without figures like psychologist Edmund Gurney becoming ‘infected’ by the principles of psychical research, spiritualism would have remained ‘playing with Poltergeists’, rather than become a new ‘scientific philosophy’.   This paper therefore assesses selected scientific and literary texts published during the inter-pandemic period (between the influenza outbreaks of ‘Russian Flu’ and of 1918) to determine how the topical language of infection was reclaimed by spiritualists as a means of galvanising occult belief.

Dr Emily Vincent is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in English Literature at the University of Birmingham researching historical representations of influenza as part of the international CHANSE and UKRI-funded 'Media and Epidemics' project. She is a Deputy Associate Director of Research at the Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies International, based at Durham University, and a Postdoctoral Representative for the British Association for Victorian Studies. Her research interests include the Gothic, narratives of disease, and maternal grief in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Emily has recently edited the British Library Publishing collection, 'Summoned to the Séance: Spirit Tales from Beyond the Veil'.

**12:30-13:15 Lunch**

**13:15-14:45 – Parallel Session 2**

**Panel 2.1: Relationships and Historical Contexts**

**Chair: Olivia Krauze**

**Inga Peters, ‘Decentering Heterosexuality in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford’*** The anecdotal novel *Cranford* (1851-1853), written by Victorian British author Elizabeth Gaskell, offers a compelling case study on female authority and community. It approaches the topic of women in a patriarchal society and exhibits an unsettling amount of relevance for the 21st century woman. The female authors of the past have turned into unexpected allies as women keep trying to navigate the challenges of female agency and independence. In *Cranford*, heterosexuality is decentered in favour of a multiplicity of female relationships and experiences. Through illuminating the interrelations between networks of ethnography, female storytelling, and patriarchy, the importance of imbuing things with significance beyond gendered dependency will be analysed. The texts’ first person narrator, Mary Smith, will be positioned as an ethnographic author, which gives her scientific authority independent of Victorian women’s historical context. She observes, describes, and interprets Cranfordian culture and acts as a mediator between them and the reader. In consequence, Mary engages in a practice of ethnographic storytelling. The narrative technique that is employed decenters male storytelling mechanisms through favouring the personal, reflective, character-driven, and anecdotal. Through an anthropological lens, *Cranford* presents a nuanced critique of historical gender dynamics while revealing women’s ongoing struggle against male-centered narratives. It highlights the importance of female self-expression and storytelling to infuse meaning beyond patriarchal expectations. Patriarchal systems prevail, in the cultural climate of the 21st century women are more aware of their constraints than ever before. Simultaneously, the perceived lack of progress has led to a mounting frustration. The story of Cranford subtly exposes women’s structural repression. At the same time women’s characters and emotions are centered and empathy is promoted. This showcases the importance of female storytelling and offers insights into how women can create independent spaces for themselves.

My name is Inga Peters and I am currently a PhD student at the Heinrich Heine University in Germany. My advisers are PD Dr. Philipp Erchinger and Univ.-Prof. Dr. Roger Lüdeke and the working-title of my dissertation is Gaskell’s (Literary) Daughters: Redefining Women’s Roles in the Victorian Family.

**Renata Miller, ‘Religion, Science, Nature, and Industrialization: Rereading the Flood in George Eliot’s *The Mill On the Floss* through the Intertextuality of Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behavior*’** The paper puts an exemplar of “lab-lit” in conversation with a Victorian novel in order to better understand a contemporary representation of a woman embarking on a scientific career and to use the intertextual relationship between these two novels in order to read the Victorian novel through a lens of environmentalism. Barbara Kingsolver has spoken in interviews about her indebtedness to George Eliot, and I argue that Kingsolver’s novel Flight Behavior (2012), among its many references to humanist texts, develops a significant intertextual relationship with Eliot’s The Mill on the Floss (1860). I argue that Kingsolver positions her novel in relation to Eliot’s in order to place her nascent female scientist, Dellarobia Turnbow, in the context of behavior that transgresses religious and social expectations for women. Although Maggie Tulliver is not a scientist, her intellectual, social, and sexual transgressions are resolved in The Mill on the Floss when the River Floss floods. This event is echoed in the end of Flight Behavior: Dellarobia, whose transgression of an extramarital affair at the novel’s opening has transformed by the novel’s end to leaving her husband and his restrictive Christian family in order to pursue a college education and a career in science, finds herself stranded as floodwaters around her rise. While Eliot’s flood appears, in a nineteenth-century novel, to be a natural event that stands in contrast to the early industrialization of the novel’s eponymous water-powered mill, Kingsolver’s flood is the climax of a novel that takes climate change as its major theme. Flight Behavior, however, as well as the recent work of scholars in the area of Vcologies, suggest that we should read such 19th-century floods as standing, as Kingsolver’s does, at an intersection of religion, science, nature, and industrialization.

Renata Kobetts Miller is dean of Humanities and the Arts and professor of English at the City College of New York. She is the author of The Victorian Actress in the Novel and on the Stage (Edinburgh University Press, 2018) and of a book on reinterpretations of The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Her work on the Victorian novel’s response to the rise of science as a discipline has appeared in Victorian Culture and the Origin of Disciplines, edited by Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon, among other places. Her next article is forthcoming in Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film.

**Anne-Marie Millim, “The last new novel”: Valuation Strategies in Reviews of Fiction Published in the Athenaeum (1828-1921) and the Saturday Review (1855-1938), 1850-59.** Literary criticism operates based on a set of deliberative processes for quality evaluation that are geared towards bringing scientific objectivity to the subjective, emotive, and intangible experience of literary consumption. While in Victorian Britain, the literary marketplace is an industry facilitating the sale of objects, what is also being sold is the literary craft of authors, to be actuated by buyers in the reading process. This reading process is naturally different in terms of extent, duration, and appreciation, yet the hoped for outcome of reading is a gain in value (insight, arousal, knowledge, and/or maturation). The function of the literary critic reviewing new additions to the market is the moral and economic guidance of the readers.  My contribution aims to show the conceptual, visual, and structural affinities between accounting practices in the mid-Victorian periodical press as decision-making factors and the practices of literary criticism published in periodicals, seeking to manage the cultural capital of their readers. I will reveal the pre- or non-numerical quantitative thinking underlying qualitative assessment.

Dr Anne-Marie Millim is Assistant Professor in English Studies at the University of Luxembourg. Her research focuses on Victorian literature and early 20th-century multilingual Luxembourgish writing. She has published on life-writing, national identity, national literatures, as well as the genres of the press (feuilleton, newspaper poetry, and book review).

**Panel 2.2: Maps, Digital, Data**

**Chair: Alice Jenkins**

**Stacey Dowswell, ‘You Are Here: Locating the Present in *Birnam Wood’*** This paper considers the evolving relationship between individuals and their digital surroundings, using Eleanor Catton's 2023 novel Birnam Wood as a lens to explore the impact of technology on our sense of self, identity, and connection with the present. The exploration invokes the concept of "New Aesthetic" and how the digital flattens time, creating a surreal sense of the present to highlight the consequences of this temporal collapse, from personal experiences like Google Maps to international implications in political decision-making.    
    
Turning to Catton’s work, the investigation underscores how the novel exposes the distortions inherent in digitally mediated lives, suggesting a need to question the modern gaze and reduce dependence on screens to understand our current position in the world better. Overall, the analysis argues for reflection on the implications of living in a digitally mediated society and calls for a more mindful engagement with the present.

Stacey Dowswell began Ph.D. studies in York University’s English program in 2023 after completing an Honours Bachelor’s with high distinction and a SSHRC-funded Master of Arts degree at the University of Toronto. Her work investigates the down-to-earth ways people weave stories to theorize about existence, the pragmatic structure of narratives, and the human inclination to employ storytelling to grapple with complex concepts.

**Dong Xia, ‘What Does Google Maps Have to Do with Literary Realism?: Informational Imaging from Virginia Woolf to Zadie Smith’** The starting point of this presentation is two chapter in Zadie Smith’s 2014 novel NW. In one chapter, Smith transcribes Google Maps’s walking instructions from one place in London to another; in the following chapter, the author recreates a materially situated experience of walking along the same streets with a full scale of sensory experience. The contrast between the two chapters prompts the question of how media representations of space configure our ways of observing, experiencing and walking through the phenomenological world. To offer a more comprehensive and diachronic perspective, my presentation will offer a comparative analysis of two modes of technologized vision: aerial view and satellite images, which I term as systems of ‘informational imaging’. I argue that Virginia Woolf's aversion to Edwardian realism and Smith’s criticism of contemporary ‘lyrical realism’ are associated respectively with aerial vision in the early twentieth century and satellite images populated by Google Maps. Aerial vision achieves standardization and abstraction primarily through verticality, while computer-generated satellite images employ both verticality and pixel datafication. This presentation will explore how these different modes of informational imaging shape literary representations and our perceptions of reality.

Dong Xia is a PhD candidate at the School of English, University of St Andrews. Their research examines the evolving concept of information in the digital age and how contemporary anglophone novels negotiate a material aesthetics of information. They have published on topics including email novels, meteorological data culture, and nonhuman soundscape.

**Samridhi Aggarwal, ‘“It’s your own house spying on you now”: exploring information as economics and the surveillance of public life in Samit Basu’s *The City Inside*’** In a special issue of Critical Inquiry, Patrick Jogoda calls the contemporary moment as the age of surplus data remarking: “data has become a source of capital dynamics, a means of governance and control of populations” (199). Data as a source of abstraction, valuation, and speculation creates a crisis of information and a lingering impact on pre-existing racialized modes of governance. Under surveillance, data gains a vitality of classifying, differentiating, and circulating these differences in an obfuscated loop that withdraws information from the public eye. Responding to this crisis in information, my paper is primarily an effort to derive a study on the representation of datafication and racial futures in Indian speculative literature with particular focus on Samit Basu’s The City Inside. Basu’s text is set in an increasingly surveillant futuristic Delhi, widespread use of AI and structured as an information economy which allows the religious fascist government to monitor citizens. Data becomes a modality of organisation and racialized differences in terms of caste, class and religion which is subsequently mapped onto the city. Keen on studying the role culture plays in such informational crisis, my paper will analyse the communal connections deployed to act as resistance to data governance.

Samridhi Aggarwal is a fifth-year doctoral candidate enrolled in the joint Ph.D. program between the National University of Singapore and King’s College London. Her current research focuses on the study of mythical aesthetics and racial computational capitalism in postcolonial futurist fictions to propound a discursive intersection between digital media, critical race scholarship, and postcolonial literature. She has presented in various international conferences like MLA, ACLA, and BSLS.

**Panel 2.3: Children’s Literature and Nature**

**Chair:**

**Elizabeth Massa Hoiem, ‘The Origins of Big History in US Progressive Education and Early 20thC Children's Books about Prehistoric Times’** This paper examines the literary and curricular origins of big history in Progressive-era children’s books about earth’s formation and the evolution of life. These include Frederick Van Loon’s Newbery award-winner, The Story of Mankind (1921) and Lucy Sprague Mitchell’s Horses, Here and Long Ago (1921). I trace this genre to forgotten author Katharine Dopp, a doctoral student of John Dewey at University of Chicago, who wrote seven fiction books for teaching prehistoric times to elementary students. Her series responded to an concern of Progressive educators that industrialized nations neglected “the intellectual and moral condition of the worker” who no longer experiences a sense of meaningful collaboration necessary for the survival of US democracy in a globally connected world. The solution Dopp proposed is teaching prehistoric ways of life, when humans met needs through domestic production for immediate use within close-knit communities. Far from rejecting science and industry, Dopp proposes this education will cultinvate an enlarged “social consciousness” sufficient to “live an ethical life in a complex social system. Dopp recommends her readers enact “past activities” of early humans, such as dancing, singing, building shelters, and domesticating animals, thus recapitulating the development of “civilization.” I trace the way labor concerns informed later fiction and history books on prehistoric times for classroom use, and how this literature changed to reflect eugenicist ideas in the 1920s.

Elizabeth Massa Hoiem is a specialist in children’s literature, material culture, child labor, literacy, and science writing. Her book The Education of Things: Mechanical Literacy in British Children’s Literature, 1762-1860 (2024) examines the toys and books that teach science, economics, and manufacturing along with reading and writing during the industrial era. Her award-winning essay “The Progress of Sugar” examines the colonial legacies of stories and videos about how things are made, which she is expanding with an edited collection. Her current project, The Earth’s Childhood, explores the use of children and child development to represent the distant past.

**Angelaki Rosy- Triantafyllia,‘Children’s Literature, Planetarity and Literary Atmospherics in the Anthropocene’**

While environmental scholars frame atmosphere in the material terms of meteorology, air pollution, or global climate change, for literary critics “atmosphere” is a pervasive spatial metaphor implying a literary work’s emotional tone as conveyed by style and form, as well as the general tone of a social or moment . Thinking about literary atmospherics in the Anthropocene requires connecting the two aforementioned senses of atmosphere and perceiving air as an environmental and cultural product that influences all aspects of biological and social life, or, as Tobias Menely puts it, “ as the substance the properties of which, however elusive, will determine the next phase of human and planetary history’ (2014: 96). Children’s literature aims, among other things, to nurture humans’ common bonds to the planet, enabling them to recognize Earth as our only true public space and several authors introduce planetarity in their works as a different order of connection and to present human and nonhuman vulnerabilities so as to make readers aware of the functions of the pale blue dot they live in. This presentation  focuses on children’s books  examines the mutual investment of planetary, atmospheric and literary studies in modeling a mode of atmospheric thinking that can negotiate the planetary, material, and at the same time abstract qualities of our changing climate .

Assistant Professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Pedagogical Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece; she teaches Historical and Critical approaches to Children’s Literature ; her research interests lie in the fields of Children’s and Young Adults’ Literature, History Studies, Memory Studies, Museum Studies, Gender Studies, Trauma Studies, Theory of Posthumanism, Ecofeminism and Cyber Literature; co- editor; reviewer of 12 Greek and international academic journals; author of over 70 publications, including three monographs (the last one, published on September 2023, focuses on nonfiction and fictional informational books for children).

**15-16:30 – Plenary 1**

**Debapriya Sarkar (University of Connecticut, Avery Point), ‘Physical Poetics: Margaret Cavendish’s Possible Worlds’**

**Chair: Barri Gold**

This talk explores how Margaret Cavendish redefines fiction’s relations to science by producing a physical poetics, creating possible worlds out of her theories of matter. In her early *Poems and Fancies*(1653), she builds worlds out of atomist physics. When she renounces her belief in atomism for vitalist materialism, this physics finds an imaginative enactment in her utopian fiction, *The Blazing World*(1666). Matter’s “self-moving” internalism becomes a principle of generation that emerges “within” the mind of the “authoress.” Taking as my touchstones the institution of changes by the Empress and the characters’ worldmaking ventures in the Blazing World, I demonstrate how Cavendish’s vitalist fictional worlds reject the mechanist ontology of thinkers like Thomas Hobbes and René Descartes. Imitating not objects, but the motionsof nature, her physical poetics realizes the radical promise of *mimesis*.

Debapriya Sarkar is Associate Professor of English and Maritime Studies at the University of Connecticut. She is the author of *Possible Knowledge: The Literary Forms of Early Modern Science*(University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023). Her work appears in *PMLA*, *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, *English Literary Renaissance*, *Shakespeare Studies*, *Spenser Studies*, *Exemplaria*, and in edited collections including *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Race*, *Teaching Social Justice Through Shakespeare: Why Renaissance Literature Matters Now*, and *A Cultural History of the Sea in the Early Modern Age*. She has co-edited, with Jenny C. Mann, a special issue of *Philological Quarterly* on “Imagining Early Modern Scientific Forms” (2019), and her public writing has appeared in *Arcade* and *The Sundial*. She is currently working on a book on the poetics of early modern racecraft, and (with Hillary Eklund) on an interdisciplinary public humanities project that explores issues of environmental and racial justice in early modernity.

**16:30-16:45 Break**

**16:45-18:15 Parallel Session 3**

**Panel 3.1: Biology, Maths and Physics in Literature, Film and Theatre**

**Chair: Jenni Halpin**

**Rachele Cinerari, ‘Mathematics as Modernist Form of Epistemology? The example of Virginia Woolf’s *Night and Day* and Hermann Broch’s "Die unbekannte Größe"’** “If mathematical thinking is defective, where are we to find truth and certitude?” (Hilbert, 2008 [1925], 187). David Hilbert, the founder of mathematical formalism, commented on the state of mathematics at the beginning of the 20th century, a time marked by a foundational crisis in mathematics. As Nina Engelhardt notes in her book Modernism, Fiction and Mathematics, “maths does not only become modern but modernist, that apart from undergoing a process of modernisation, it is part of modernist culture” (Engelhardt, 2018, 2). This paper will focus on Night and Day (1919) by Virginia Woolf and Die unbekannte Größe (1933) by Hermann Broch, with the aim to explore the role of mathematics in these texts, examining how it is metaphorized as an epistemological process. For Katharine Hilbery and Richard Hieck, the protagonists of these novels, mathematics is not merely an objective discipline that offers a definitive way to understand the world; rather, it emerges as a dynamic movement of thoughts. The analysis will focus on the formal and stylistic structures of these works, illustrating how, in modernist literature, mathematics often serves as both a model for thought and knowledge, while also functioning as a language that enables the subject to critically analyze the world in which they live.

Rachele Cinerari studied at the University of Pisa and Turin and has a PhD in Theory of Literature (University of Pisa). Her first book Analogie e incognite. "La matematica come forma di conoscenza in Paul Valéry, Robert Musil, Hermann Broch, Virginia Woolf (Analogies and Unknowns: Mathematics as a form of knowledge in Paul Valéry, Robert Musil, Hermann Broch, Virginia Woolf)" will be soon published by Peter Lang. Her research interests also focus on the use of the fragment in literature, the Essayism, literature as a form of knowledge, space and tool for subverting the norm and maintaining dialectical tensions.

**Maria Terdimou, ‘Science-Theater, Cinema: an interesting connection’** The 20th century was undoubtedly a milestone in the history of science, forever changing people's lives. The 21st is moving even faster. Theatre has existed since antiquity, but cinema and television appeared in the 20th century (their appearance is due to the progress of science) and, as it is normal, they dealt a lot with the scientific achievements of the last 150-200 years, as well as with the life and work of the most important scientists. In 21st century, films about science and its people are increasing dramatically, as a new branch sprung that studies computer science. Some of the worth mentioning films and plays are the following: A beautiful mind (2001) (About John Nash), Angora (about Hypatia) (2009), Creation (Darvin) (2009), Imitation game (Turing) (2014), Theory of everything (Hawking) (2015), The man who knew Infinity (Stinavasa Ramanuyan) (2016), Social network (Mark Zuckerberg) (2010) , Oppenheimer (2023). In Theater, the most known play is Michael Frayn’s Copenhagen and discusses the meeting of Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg which took place in Copenhagen, on 1941. Another one is Peter Parnell’s QED, in which the author chronicles significant events in the life of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman. The gradual integration of science into the theatrical text, from the 17th century until today, brought about an innovative form of writing, which seems extremely interesting to the theater audience. As for cinema, the presentation of the life of great scientists and especially their work, through the image and the particular language used, brings ordinary people closer to science. In this paper we intend to present the way science and art, theater and cinema, are connected and the subsequent reaction of this connection to people.

Maria Terdimou’s first degree is in Mathematics and her PhD in History of Science. She has written five textbooks and edited six scientific works. She has participated in several educational and scientific projects, in many conferences and many of her articles are published in collective volumes, periodicals and conference proceedings. Extensive teaching experience in Mathematics and in History and Philosophy of Sciences, as a tutor at the Hellenic Open University.

**Panel 3.2: Ecocriticism and Pandemics**

**Chair: Jade Arbo**

**Dion Dobrzynski, ‘Vegetable Humanities': Becoming Tree with Olaf Stapledon’** In his science fiction epic Star Maker (1937) and short story ‘The Man Who Became a Tree (c.1940s), the philosopher and author Olaf Stapledon (1886 – 1950) imagines what it is like to be a tree. I explore the otherworldly ontologies of Stapledon’s ‘vegetable humanities’ in his intergalactic myth of human evolution, and his story of a man whose consciousness melds into a beech tree to experience the ecstatic sensations of photosynthesis and ecological intersubjectivity. I argue that Stapledon’s speculation of a more-than-human consciousness offers insights into current scientific debates about ‘plant intelligence’. I will begin by playing a short sample from Becoming Tree (2024), an immersive audio version of ‘The Man Who Became a Tree’ featuring an augmented forest soundscape recorded by sound artists and composers Professor Annie Mahtani and Teddy Hunter. I played Becoming Tree to members of the public under a cluster of beech trees in September 2024. Recorded responses to the piece will be used throughout the paper to explore the value of Stapledon’s speculative imagination in shaping how we feel as well as think about the inner life of trees.

I am an environmental humanities scholar interested in plants and fungi in science fiction and fantasy and, more broadly, the relationship between the natural sciences and imaginative fiction from the nineteenth century to the present.

**Kaya Purchase, ‘Walls of Snow and Crystal: How Richard Jefferies’ Post-Apocalyptic London Condemns the Industrial Pollution of English Rivers’** In the concluding chapters of Richard Jefferies’ post-apocalyptic novel, After London (1886) the hero, Felix Aquila discovers the long-submerged city of London, now a wasteland of noxious fumes, poisonous chemicals and most crucially, blackened waters. The introduction of the capital city so late in the tale disrupts a vision of the future that is otherwise abundant in pastoral medievalism, emphasising the dystopian potential of the most industrialised area of Victorian England. Jefferies was known to have a deep spiritual connection with nature, and he also expressed outrage at the pollution present in the River Thames during his time of writing. His depiction of London resembles contemporary journalistic reports that expressed concern over the discolouring of UK rivers due to chemical waste deposits from factories and coal mines. This essay compares the imagery used by Jefferies to such journalistic reports to propose that Jefferies was pioneering in his concern regarding the long-term effects of human pollution on the natural world.

Kaya Purchase is an English Literature MA student at the University of Liverpool. For her dissertation she is researching R. Murray Gilchrist, a fin-de-siecle writer from Sheffield who blended Gothic and Decadent influences to create uniquely strange speculative fiction that anteceded the Cosmic Weird of Lovecraft. Gilchirst has been overlooked in academia and Kaya hopes her research can contribute towards rectifying this. She is also interested in modernism, postcolonialism and climate fiction. She loves to write both creative pieces and literary journalism and hopes to do a PhD in creative writing next year.

**Archana J. ‘Active Social Forgetting and the Trauma of Uncertainty: Insights on Collective Cognitive Opacity from Pandemic Fiction** Pandemics cause suffering that cannot be assimilated into the meaning-driven paradigms of human cognition. Being an inevitable biological phenomenon, contagion challenges the sense of safety and agency established by humans as social beings. Despite their persistent effort to locate the value of the experience, its inherent lack of meaning instigates cognitive overload, resulting in the trauma of dread and uncertainty. To cope up with the distress, humans tame the experience to fit into their existing cognitive schema. Though this practice assists them to collectively move on, it also causes the uncertainty and severity of the event to be disregarded and overlooked. Such cognitive opacity facilitates the destructive event to be socially forgotten and to be recurrently slipped into historical amnesia. This article examines this condition through the lens of cognitive humanities, answering the question of why and how pandemics are actively being slipped into oblivion. It studies the impact of such practices on individual confrontation of the distress, and how it mediates and magnifies the trauma of dread and uncertainty. It substantiates fiction as a creative resource that accommodates the muted private memory, basing its contentions on Louise Erdrich’s The Sentence and Amitava Kumar’s A Time Outside this Time.

Archana J is a PhD Junior Research Fellow in the Department of English Literature, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India, currently working on her interdisciplinary thesis titled "Cognising Contagion: Metacognitive Dimensions of Trauma in Pandemic Literature" under the supervision of Prof. Jibu Mathew George. Her research interests include cognitive studies, psychology, pandemic and trauma studies. She is a Tamil writer, and she has published a poetry collection in Tamil titled olirum nūlin kadaici iṙai.

**Panel 3.3: Romanticism and Interdisciplinarity**

**Chair: John Holmes**

**Steve Denison, ‘Poetry and Science in the Science Fiction/Time Travel Novel, “Settlers”’** I have explored connections between poetry and science and the power of literature to inspire change by writing a science fiction novel, “Setters.” In the novel, Anna is an English literature graduate student who wants to live, to settle, in the Pleistocene, 60,000 years in the past, before climate change has made the earth almost uninhabitable. Time travel is discovered when scientists learn to bend gravity waves in an attempt to lessen effects of climate change, including rising sea levels. Bending gravity is found to create a way back in time, an arch through time. In teaching her Introductory British Literature class, Anna discusses themes of nature in William Wordsworth’s poetry, for example in “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey.” To save the earth from climate change, she must travel, after travelling back to both the Pleistocene and Cretaceous periods, to England in 1800 to convince James Watt to slow the use of the steam engine and thereby slow the Industrial Revolution. To succeed, she must travel to the Lake District to ask for Wordsworth’s help in convincing Watt. In this paper I will discuss connections between poetry and science in my science fiction novel, “Settlers.”

Steve Denison is a Professor of Biology at Eckerd College in Saint Petersburg, Florida. In addition to courses in Genetics and Microbiology, he teaches a study abroad course “The History of Science in London and Paris.” His research interests include connections between science and poetry. He has carried out research in this area, mainly on Wordsworth and Darwin, as a Visiting Researcher in the Department of the History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge University and in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University in the UK.

**Annalisa Volpone, ‘Englobing Life: Blake’s Generation Myth, Contemporary Embryology and Deleuze’** This paper examines Blake’s recurring imagery of englobing, folding, coiling, contracting through Deleuze’s concept of the fold. Specifically, I aim to connect Blake’s generation myth, as represented through Urizen’s mental parturition, to Deleuze’s description of the fold where an outside world is continually folded until an inside world emerges. In Urizen’s partus mentis, the void becomes a womb that generates the world—his “ninefold darkness”. This world stands in opposition to the “Fourfold vision” that leads to the Human Form Divine. I argue that through Urizen’s parturition Blake presents an account of generation that aligns with contemporary embryology. Indeed, Urizen’s cerebral foldings evoke the process of invagination that occurs during gastrulation, a stage in embryonic development recently discovered in Blake’s time. For Blake, the substance initiating this process is the skin. Deleuze also discusses the fold drawing from the biological field. He notes that in human embryology the brain originates from the skin; the embryonic brain develops from the ectoderm. The developing brain already establishes an interplay between inside and outside. This relationship isn’t fixed but results in a series of invaginations and foldings of the cerebral surface. Organic development, then, becomes a matter of dimensions, projections, rotations, and foldings. Similarly, Blake describes Urizen’s creation as a complex process of folding and unfolding, mirroring the intricate evolution of biological life.

Annalisa Volpone is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Perugia and co-director of the CEMS (Centre for European Modernism Studies). She has published on Modernism and on eighteenth and nineteenth century British literature. Her research interests include the interconnections between literature and science.

**Dr. Shoshannah Bryn Jones Square, ‘Synesthesia, Aphantasia, and Consciousness: Exploring the Spectrum of Inner Experience Through Romantic-Era Literature’** Romantic-era writers such as William Blake, Samuel Coleridge, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary Shelley, all witness to the birth of psychiatry, were dazzled and confounded by the conundrum of existence and conscious experience and by the miraculously complex interconnectedness of everything. Like the neuroscientist V. S. Ramachandran today, they sought to “unravel” the “mysterious connections between brain, mind, and body,” and they used multidisciplinary perspectives to do so (xi). Drawing on Wordsworth's concept of the “inward eye,” Keats' sensory-blending imagery and notion of negative capability, and Mary Shelley's exploration of emerging consciousness in Frankenstein, this talk will explore how different modes of consciousness challenge our assumptions about “normal” mental experience.

Bryn is an Assistant Professor in Literature, the Environment, and Climate Change at Mount Allison University. Her research focuses on interdisciplinary approaches to fiction, imagination, empathy, and social and environmental justice. Her most recent publication is a chapter she co-authored for the Routledge Handbook of Health and Media, “Climate Health Is Human Health: Working Through Eco-Anxiety with the Written Word in Print and Digital Media” (2022), and her piece for the forthcoming book Hope Circuits 3.0: Conversations with Luminaries will be published in 2025. She received the Students’ Representative Council Community Engagement and Involvement Award for her teaching at Bishop’s University in 2024.

**Day 2: Friday 9th May**

**9-10:30 – Parallel Session 4**

**Panel 4.1: Representations of the Language and Politics of Science**

**Chair: Lucy Davies**

**Melissa Dickson, ‘“The Nineteenth Century up-to-date with a Vengeance”: Spreading Vampirism and Russian Influenza across Bram Stoker’s Britain’** The global influenza outbreak often referred to as the ‘Russian Flu’ began in Petropavovsk in 1889 before sweeping with remarkable rapidity across Europe, Britain, and the United States. It is often cited as the first modern pandemic, moving as it did via major roads, rivers, and railway lines. This paper focuses on the palpable uneasiness that emerges in the British popular press in response to the arrival of influenza in the United Kingdom, a response driven by an anxiety that the weakness of the modern British subject, and the vulnerabilities of its communication and transport networks, had been exposed. I trace fears of invasion and contagion from overseas across British periodical culture, as well as within the Gothic mode of fiction, which played and preyed upon similar anxieties. Taking Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) as my main fictional case study, I demonstrate the ways in which vampirism is imagined as a form of infection, which enters England by exploiting the very networks and technologies of empire that were used to assert its dominance. Re-contextualising the spread of vampirism as a form of pandemic, I argue that Stoker’s novel served as a vehicle for anxieties about foreign invasion on a microbial scale.,

Melissa Dickson is a Senior Lecturer in Literature at the University of Queensland, where she researches and teaches across the long nineteenth century. She is PI of the UK team within the CHANSE/UKRI funded Media and Epidemics Project, and her current research focuses on the reception and transformation of nineteenth-century epidemics across literature, science, and medicine. She is the author of Cultural Encounters with the Arabian Nights in Nineteenth-Century Britain (2019) and Acoustics in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Science (2025), and co-author of Anxious Times: Medicine and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century (2019).

**Sumin Kim, ‘The Political Impact of Jules Verne’s Science Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Korea’** From the second half of the nineteenth century, Jules Verne’s novels became known in East Asia through Chinese, Japanese, and Korean translations. Verne’s Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas (1869-70) was first translated and published for the Korean readers from 1907 to 1908 in a magazine called Taeguk-hakbo. With the advent of the Japanese colonization of Korea, the Korean translators selected the novel for translation to propagate their anti-colonial sentiments. However, further research is required to understand how the specific scientific details in Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas contribute towards furthering the Korean translators’ anti-colonial agendas. Ultimately, this paper seeks to examine how the Korean translation of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas can enrich our understanding of how Verne intertwines science and politics in his works.

**MD Monaem Hossain, ‘Register Shift in Indian English: Moving beyond a Monolingual Western Model’.** A register is a range of styles that represent linguistic choices in various communication purposes and contexts, shaping language use patterns across diverse demographics. The study investigates the attitudes and perceptions of young engineering adults in India towards English registers and their use patterns in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL). The study intended to investigate how young engineering adults perceive and engage with registers in English, fostering different communication purposes such as academic and social interactions (e.g., conflict, celebration, social gathering, etc.), shifting their linguistic ideology to register variation, decolonizing English language norms, and reclaiming linguistic agency. If a change in a person’s behaviour is considered learning, how does this transformation in education and learning imply a fair change in behavioural performance? Wherever the British colonial legacy forms the foundation of English education, there is a Dublin Declaration GE 2050. Considering these Eurocentric strategy frameworks, the study examines how Indian English adapts to local needs and global connections, promoting inclusivity and social justice in education and communication. Qualitative data were collected through unstructured interviews, digital-ethnographic and emic observation of online academic conversations and social interactions, and data from the 16 end-semester answer scripts of the students from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, India. Thematic analysis was conducted considering participants' language use patterns. Findings from the counted registers showed a register shift in Indian students using English, and there are deviations from the British English norms. The shift was from formal to casual, which suggests English holds a de jure status in India, which has led to differing English usage patterns in India, which was a former colony of Great Britain.

I am Md. Monaem Hossain; a PhD research scholar in Linguistics (4t year onwards) at the Department of HSS, IIT Kharagpur, India, and the domain of his PhD research is "cognition and language teaching." As an invited (fully funded) research scholar, I joined the University of Oxford and the University of Essex, UK, and presented my research papers, posters, and PhD research in progress paper. Moreover, I have completed a three-year tenure of teaching in the Riyadh city, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

**Panel 4.2: Ethics, AI and the Female Mind**

**Chair: Olivia Krauze**

**Jenna Xinyi NIU, ‘Technology and Loneliness: Ethics of Artificial Friends in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun*’** Technology amplifies loneliness, prompting society to create more advanced technological solutions to alleviate the feeling of isolation. Sentient robots have already been developed to take care of human loneliness. This technology has proven successful in eliciting appropriate emotional responses, but “there is psychological risk in the robotic moment” (Turkle 55). This study examines loneliness from an ontological perspective and evaluates whether technology can genuinely lighten this uniquely human experience by referencing research that explores the relationship between mankind and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Drawing on Kazuo Ishiguro’s dystopian fiction Klara and the Sun (2021), I argue that we are risking relinquishing essential aspects of humanity when we allow AI to increasingly involve in our narrative. In the novel, advanced androids are designed to accompany children and even serve as continuities for those who have passed away. This intricate relationship questions the nature of companionship and blurs the boundary between humans and machines, as well as between the lived and the dead, which might cause ethical dilemmas. Therefore, I reckon that we need a more nuanced approach to how we engage with technology, especially concerning sentient machines, to effectively address loneliness.

Jenna Xinyi NIU is a PhD student at the Department of English Language and Literature, Hong Kong Baptist University. Her research interests include literature and science, posthumanism and animal studies.

**Jessica McLennan, ‘The Divided Mind: Animal Desire in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"’** Dramatic psychological poetry of the nineteenth century offered forensically detailed accounts of the thought processes of frequently marginalized women. My dissertation uses various theories of mind to interrogate the controlling discourse of Victorian sexual ethics, revealing how Victorian poetry confronted essentialist notions of the female mind as singular. In this paper, I read Christina Rossetti’s poem "Goblin Market" through a Freudian lens; I argue that Rossetti's women characters embody the divided nineteenth-century female personality as they enact both primal erotic instincts and guilty inhibitions. I argue that both characters represent a singular female psyche, which is divided into: a primal id – which revels in animalistic sexual drives; and a regulatory super-ego – celebrating abstinence. Furthermore, the dual structure of the poem uses: (1) the metanarrative as a panoptic regulator that parallels the super-ego’s overarching control; and 2) ambiguous animal imagery and excessive listings to manifest the compulsivity of the Freudian id.)

Jessica McLennan is completing a PhD at Macquarie University on Victorian scientific approaches (associationism, monomania and Freudian Personality Theory) to nineteenth-century dramatic monologues and psychological poetry - from a French feminist lens. She seeks to examine literary representations of female psychopathies within the Victorian era. Her interests include: the connection between literary and psychodynamic discourse, transgressive female representations in the long nineteenth century and formalist approaches to poetic literature.

**Panel 4.3: Literary Explorations in Space and Time**

**Chair: Sara Cole**

**Peter Robinson, ‘Prehistoric Fiction and the Control of Knowledge: J.-H. Rosny's *La Guerre du Feu* (1911)’** Scientific interest in human prehistory accelerated at the end of the nineteenth century. Darwinism combined with new technologies and methodologies, forming the discipline of anthropology. Frequent, macabre expeditions, underpinned by racial ideologies, ransacked sacred sites, legitimised by a (quasi-)scientific discourse pursuing the origins of humankind. Punctuating these missteps, advances in forensic science helped isolate human DNA, while psychoanalysis penetrated the minds of our most distant ancestors. This new science of the human past built upon an older fascination: Contract theorists, notably Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau had long wrestled with humanity's first associations. In modern literature, Science Fiction has tackled similar questions, taking us to remote worlds and distant futures. Ominous foretelling and scientific prophesy have both entertained and shocked us. In a parallel genre, Prehistoric Fiction--equally speculative, equally subject to the imagination of the age that produces it--has supplied narratives of progress or descent. If Science Fiction transports us to fantasy worlds and terrifying futures, Prehistoric Fiction, anchored in the present-past, offers a window into what we may have been. It is within these contexts, that this paper examines La Guerre du feu (1911) a Prehistoric novel by J.-H. Rosny which explores the impact of fire on early humans, exploring the ethics of the control and ownership of knowledge, with supporting consideration of the work of Prof. Rene Thevenin.

Dr. Peter Robinson is Associate Professor at Japan Women's University in the Department of English, specialising in garden history, literature, and the history of ideas. Most recently, he lectured on the artist-designer Sugiura Hisui, for the Garden's Trust (Oct & Nov 2023). From 2017-2023 he held a JSPS grant focussed on Book Advertising, and his co-edited book Competing Imperialisms in Northeast Asia was released by Routledge last year. In 2016, Dr. Robinson co-conceived a Heritage Lottery-funded outreach project, "A Southdowns Alphabet". In 2017, he sole-curated an exhibition at Komaba Museum, "Novelists and Newspapers: The Golden Age of Newspaper Fiction, 1900-1939".

**Jasmine Tan Hui Jun, ‘Expanding Universes and Space-Time Warps: Astronomy and the (Non)-Existence of Limits in Rebecca Elson’s Poetry’** This paper examines the poetry of astronomer Rebecca Elson who —like other poetic scientists, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Miroslav Holub— merges science and art in their poetry. In Elson’s opening poem “We Astronomers” in A Responsibility to Awe (2018), she provides a commentary on the blindspots of scientists, highlighting how important it is to maintain a sense of wonderment for the universe as a scientist. Elson states that astronomers spend most of their time looking up at the vast cosmos in their quest to understand it until they overlook what is figuratively and literally around them, until they “forget to ask questions, / And only count things”. Through an analysis of four of Elson’s poems, “Girl with a Balloon”, “Explaining Relativity”, “Let There Always Be Light” and “Theories of Everything”, I explore how poetry enriches scientific concepts (such as relativity and dark matter). By juxtaposing the seemingly infinite scale of astronomy with the small, measurable scale of the human everyday, I argue that Elson brings these abstract concepts about outer space down to Earth, collapsing the space between scientist and artist. This scientist/artist conflation is facilitated by Elson’s aforementioned spirit of questioning, embodying poet/surgeon John Keats’ ‘Negative Capability’.

Jasmine Tan Hui Jun is a part-time lecturer at the School of Humanities in Nanyang Technological University (Singapore) and is one of the Asia regional representatives for The Commission on Science and Literature. She mainly researches on contemporary poetry and natural science but also writes about science fiction, popular culture, monster mythology and ecocriticism. She has a published chapter in Figures of Freedom in 21st Century American fiction and forthcoming chapters in two edited collections: No Harm Ever Came from Reading a Book: Critical Essays on The Mummy Franchise and Hideous Progenies: Adulterous Adaptations of Frankenstein in the 21st Century.

**Steven McLean, ‘Science and Satire: Literature and Aeronautics at the Turn of the Century’** This paper will examine the relationship between literature and aeronautics, from the 1890s to the early years of the twentieth century. Authors of aeronautical romance contribute to debates between proponents of lighter-than-air and heavier-than-air flight regarding the most likely means of achieving controlled flight. George Griffith’s The Angel of the Revolution (1893) suggests that both lighter-than-air and heavier-than-air mechanisms have the potential to succeed, but that heavier-than air craft will have a distinct advantage in terms of speed and manoeuvrability. W. Graham Moffat and John Law’s What’s the World Coming to? (1893) foresees dirigible balloons evolving to make journeys across continents. These late-century aeronautical romances emphasise how fiction elaborates speculation regarding the impact of controlled flight on warfare. Yet authors’ assessments are influenced by their political ideology. Thus, while Griffith portrays a socialist pax aeronautica, the eponymous character of Edward Douglas Fawcett’s Hartmann the Anarchist (1893) fails because of the author’s aversion to anarchism. Satire was never far from literary responses to early developments in aeronautics, as Wells’s ‘The Truth About Pyecraft’ (1903) shows. In Wells’s story, an overweight Englishman’s fervent desire to lose weight motivates him to take a potion which gives him the bouyancy of a balloon.

Steven McLean teaches in the department of English Literature and Culture, at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul. He is the author of the Early Fiction of H. G. Wells, and the editor of H. G. Wells: Interdisciplinary Essays, and George Griffith's The Angel of the Revolution. In addition to numerous articles on Wells, Steven has written on Emile Zola, and literature and aeronautics.

**10:30-11 Break**

**11-12:30 – Parallel Session 5**

**Panel 5.1: Medicine and the Body in the Romantic Period**

**Chair: Louise Benson James**

**Ros Powell, ‘A Risky Business: Narratives of Self-Dosing in Pharmaceutical Trials, 1715-1770’** How do the stories that eighteenth-century scientists and physicians tell about self-experimentation and their own bodies shape knowledge and the boundaries of scientific enquiry? This paper will focus on trials on three natural substances – bezoar stone, camphor, and hemlock – in which medical practitioners used their own bodies as a test-subject. Exploring the relationships between taste and authority and between narrative and measurement, it will also evaluate how risk can play an important but ambivalent role in the textual construction of knowledge. By taking a literary-critical approach to reports by Anton von Stoerck, Frederick Slare, and William Alexander, this paper will show how the presentation of the self could be as important as the presentation of the science.

Ros Powell is an assistant professor in English Literature at the University of Amsterdam. She is the author of \_Perception and Analogy\_ (2021). Ros is currently writing a book about self-experimentation and narrative between 1660 and 1830 and (with Lisa Ottum and Allison Dushane) co-editing an essay collection for the MLA on teaching with scientific texts in the humanities classroom.

**Chloe Wilcox, ‘Shock, stigma, and sympathy: functions and representations of self-injury in British Romantic literature’** Despite some critical focus over the past decade on suicide in Romanticism (for example, special issues of Literature Compass [December 2015] and Studies in the Literary Imagination [March 2018]) and self-injury in Victorian literature (such as Alexandra Gray’s Self-Harm in New Woman Writing), the role and representation of self-injury in British Romantic literature has remained largely overlooked. Drawing on disability studies to analyse the act of looking upon self-injury by characters, authors, readers, and audiences, my paper examines how depictions of self-injury function to elicit shock, sympathy, and stigma. Modern psychological research has repeatedly demonstrated how self-injury can function as a communicative tool, whilst medical sociologists Peter Steggals, Stephanie Lawler, and Ruth Graham have characterised it as a ‘failure of ordinary language’ (‘Social life of self-injury’, 2020). Using these ideas, I argue that self-injury functions as a highly evocative shorthand for desperation that stretches the limits of language. It signals extreme psychological distress in Joanna Baillie’s De Montfort (1798) and Mary Robinson’s poetry. However, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1798) and Mary Shelley’s ‘Transformation’ (1831), characters self-injure not to express psychological suffering, but as a shocking practical tool, demonstrating the extremity of the characters’ crises.

Chloe Wilcox is a second-year undergraduate studying English Language and Literature at St Hugh’s College, University of Oxford. She has previously written on disability studies for the BARS Review and on late nineteenth-century receptions of Mary Shelley for the BARS Blog. She is also a regular contributor to the British Association for Romantic Studies TikTok page, where she has created videos on Percy Bysshe Shelley’s biography and reception.

**Panel 5.2: Empowerment and Identity**

**Chair: Jerome de Groot**

**Jubby Kumar, ‘Reinventing the Fairytale: Technology, Empowerment and Identity in *Mechanica* by Betsy Cornwell’** American science fiction author Rudy Rucker said, “The world is magic. Science is but an insipid style of sorcery.” The term "steampunk" was coined in 1987 by author K.W. Jeter to describe a genre of speculative fiction where technology is powered by steam. While steampunk settings can vary greatly, they are most commonly set in or inspired by the Victorian Era. Mechanica by Betsy Cornwell is a sci-fi retelling of the classic fairy tale Cinderella in a steampunk setting. The female protagonist Nicolette is an ambitious mechanic who fights the obstacles in her life using her inventions. The novel challenges the social norms of a society where women are not recognized as inventors. This paper aims to study: How inventions and technology challenge the need for a Fairy Godmother in the Mechanica. To what extent can mechanical creations fill emotional roles in human lives? How does having access to advanced machines act as a privilege in Mechanica? How does the book blend the classic Cinderella story with futuristic or mechanical innovations? To study the role of technology in self-exploration, and empowerment in the context of Cinderella retelling.   
  
Ms. Jubby Kumar is an enthusiastic PhD scholar with a profound interest in fairytales, currently pursuing doctoral research at Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, India. Fascinated by the timeless allure and cultural significance of fairytales, she is dedicated to exploring their rich narratives and symbolic meanings. Through her unique perspective on her research, she aims to shed new light on these beloved stories and their tremendous impact on human imagination and culture. She seeks to unveil the enduring relevance of fairytales in contemporary society.

**Boróka Andl-Beck, ‘Infiltrating the Unknowable: Ethnography and the imagined Gypsy in George Borrow’s *Romany Rye*’** As opposed to Gothic novels constructed around making the public uncomfortable while reasserting their belief in white superiority, George Borrow’s Romany Rye (1857) omits the thrill of depicting the Other as dangerous and presents readers with a layman-ethnographer’s account of ‘Gypsies’ in Britain. Still pandering to the Orientalist tendencies of the Victorian era, Borrow’s empirical-anecdotal narrative creates the illusion of objectivity and authenticity through striking a balance between tale and case study. By putting on an ‘ethnic mask’ and using an ethnographer’s lens, Borrow provides the audience with an insider perspective on a life led by ‘Gypsies’, the unknowable domestic ‘Other’, representatives of temporal and societal uncertainty. Borrow seeks to establish social relatedness between the observer and the observed, and fellow-feeling between the norm and ‘the Other’, reversing the notion of assimilation and making it the objective of the white researcher rather than the ambition of ‘the Other’ or the state apparatus. The aim of this study is to uncover the methods and the motivations behind this process of infiltration, focusing on both sympathy and the urge to know the unknowable by reading Romany Rye as a blueprint for ethnographer-fiction while attempting to understand its place in the nineteenth-century literary and cultural canon.

Boróka Andl-Beck is an alumna of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) and the University of Vienna currently working on her dissertation as a PhD student in the Modern English and American Literature and Culture doctoral programme at ELTE. Her scholarly work so far has considered the concept of the ‘imagined Gypsy’, the relocalisation of the delocalised Other, examining the Westerners' gaze in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction, ethnographical works, and newspaper articles. In her PhD research, she attempts to uncover the narrative construction of people on the move through the lens of sympathy.

**Tré Ventour-Griffiths, 'Ragnarök: God-Power Microaggressions and Cosmic Body Horror'** “There isn’t a capitalism that does not somehow exhaust the energies and resources of the human and not-human world” ([Gilmore, 2024](https://www.tiktok.com/@gapfilosofico/video/7441003690242166071)). Inspired by Marvel’s iteration of Ragnarök, this paper uses its apocalyptic ‘end of days’ metaphorically for how racial microaggressions’ kill. “Asgard up in flames … and you, Surtur, are at the center of all of them” ([Marvel Studios, 2017](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thor:_Ragnarok)). This paper is one of seven using the infinity stones as eccentric images for this process. Infinity stones are fictional entities that control vital aspects of existence: time, soul, space, reality, power, mind. ‘Ragnarök’ focuses on power: “The stone reacts to anything organic; the bigger the target, the bigger the power surge” ([Marvel Studios, 2014](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guardians_of_the_Galaxy_(film))). Following prior work, this paper entertains racist health outcomes in a broader ‘silly’ multiverse of white supremacy ([Berlant, 1997: 12](https://www.dukeupress.edu/the-queen-of-america-goes-to-washington-city); [Halberstam, 2011: 19;](https://www.dukeupress.edu/the-queer-art-of-failure) [Ventour-Griffiths, 2024](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0RymQUZwXIXVhjBD7ymnXJ3X9wdrLIxh)). Racial microaggressions as terror mob the organic universe inside us maintaining early Black death ([Sharpe, 2016](https://www.dukeupress.edu/in-the-wake)). Ragnarök’s cosmic imagery may be a way to think about racism. In the words of Carl Sagan, “…the cosmos is also within us. We are made of star-stuff … [and] we are a way for the cosmos to know itself” ([*Cosmos,* 1980](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmos:_A_Personal_Voyage)).

Tré Ventour-Griffiths is multiply-disabled cultural theorist, creative writer, and independent researcher with interests in Black lives in the town and countryside. His PhD research is on Caribbean Northants Post-1945. Beyond this, he works in media, screen- and comics studies. Tré is interested in the links between oppression / privilege and cultural production. He has produced work about texts including Jane Austen adaptations, *Bridgerton*, *Peaky Blinders*, gothic horror, and Greta Gerwig’s *Barbie* further to coming-of-age films and television, the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and Disney Princess Films.

**Panel 5.3: Richer Discourses Through Literary Form**

**Chair: Emily Vincent**

**Bosudha Bandyopadhyay, ‘Medical Humanities in South Asian Literature: Exploring Health, Trauma, and Society through the Works of Perumal Murugan, Kamila Shamsie, and Akhil Sharma’** The field of medical humanities bridges the gap between healthcare and the human experience, offering critical insights into illness, healing, and caregiving through the lens of the arts, humanities, and social sciences. In the context of South Asian literature, medical humanities assumes a unique significance, given the region's complex socio-cultural, historical, and political landscape. South Asian literary works often reflect on themes of illness, health, and medicine, offering narratives that illuminate the impact of colonialism, traditional medicine, and contemporary biopolitics on the human body and mind. By exploring novels, short stories, poetry, and essays from this region, medical humanities can engage with issues such as gender, caste, religion, and socioeconomic disparity, which profoundly shape healthcare experiences. Through these narratives, we gain deeper understanding of the emotional, ethical, and cultural dimensions of suffering, resilience, and care, highlighting the interconnectedness of medical practice and the human condition in South Asia. This paper seeks to examine how the works of Perumal Murugan, Kamila Shamsie and Akhil Sharma enriches the discourse of medical humanities, offering diverse perspectives on the lived experience of health and illness in a region characterized by both continuity and change in its medical practices and philosophies

Dr Bosudha Bandyopadhyay has completed her PhD from the University of Mumbai. She is also a recipient of the Gandhian Eco-Philosophy Fellowship, awarded by the Government of Madhya Pradesh. Her research interest lies in Ecocriticism, Gender Studies, Folk and Cultural Studies. Currently she is working as an Associate Professor with Amity University , Punjab.

**Encarnacion Trinidad Barrantes, ‘Medico-literary Interventions: US Periodicals and the Popularisation of Animal Magnetism in the Nineteenth Century’** In his \_Recollections of a Lifetime\_, the highly successful US publisher and writer Samuel Griswold Goodrich (1793-1860) hailed the 1830s as ‘the era in which monthly and semi-monthly Magazines began to live and thrive among us’, leading to ‘great and positive’ literary growth (1856, pp. 383, 382). In the 1830s and 1840s, the US also witnessed an increasing interest in another European import: animal magnetism. This paper seeks to explore the intersection between these two developments. Indeed, browsing through some popular US periodicals of the time reveals that they fed into and from the frenzy around animal magnetism and related phenomena. This paper will provide a tour of some of the ways in which they did so, not just through articles directly discussing the topic but also through literary works drawing on the practices, ideas or affective discourse of animal magnetism.

Encarnación Trinidad Barrantes is a Senior Lecturer for the Department of English and Creative Writing at The Open University. Her main research interest lies in the examination of the extent to which pseudo-scientific and technological developments featured in nineteenth-century US literature, as themes, characterisation aids, or structural devices. Other interests include book history matters, transatlantic and global influences, and contemporary South American writers.

**Michele Brugnetti, ‘The portrait of the Aesthete as a Young Woman: Ouida’s Princess Napraxine as an Image of Cosmopolitan Aestheticism’** This paper examines Princess Napraxine (1884), a novel by sensation novelist and eccentric cosmopolite Ouida (Marie Louise De La Ramee), positioning its protagonist as the representation of the aesthete par excellence. Challenging the conventional association of the interpreter of aestheticism with the English male connoisseur, this analysis instead argues that the novel’s protagonist broadens the scope of aestheticism, offering a more inclusive understanding of the movement by focusing on marginalised figures like women and cosmopolites. By centring on the Russian, bilingual, and cosmopolitan Princess Napraxine as the quintessential aesthete, I present the novel as a key example of the "aesthetic novel," delineating features of aesthetic characters that would influence later writers of decadence such as Oscar Wilde. Building on the work of Joseph Bristow (2015) and Talia Schaffer (2000), who recognise Ouida as a foundational figure in the history of the aesthetic novel, this paper explores how Princess Napraxine embodies the principles of aestheticism within the novel form and illuminates how this intersection opens up new forms of characterisation in the literary tradition of the English fin de siècle.

Michele Brugnetti is a doctoral student enrolled in the PhD program in English Literature, Language, and Translation Studies at Sapienza University of Rome (specialising in Literary and Cultural Studies), in joint collaboration with the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. His doctoral project focuses on the intersection between the British novel and British Aestheticism, particularly in the works of Walter Pater, Vernon Lee, Thomas Hardy, and Oscar Wilde. His research interests, in addition to the English novel and aestheticism include the critical approaches of New Aestheticism and Cognitive Literary Studies. He is a member of the Italian Oscar Wilde Society.

**12:30-13:30 Lunch**

**13:30-15:00 – Parallel Session 6**

**Panel 6.1: Robots, Genes and Prosthetics**

**Chair: Samridhi Aggarwal**

**Kelli Knox, ‘DNA (Determining Natural Anxieties): Representations of Biocapitalism, Genetic Science, and the Posthuman in Canadian Fiction’** We exist within a cultural moment where more and more questions about our use of genetics are arising; the science of our past speculations is here or quickly approaching. One of the central preoccupations of both Margaret Atwood’s Oryx and Crake and Robert J. Sawyer’s Frameshift is the relationship between genetic research and the capitalist system in which this research takes place. In their presentation of biocapitalism, both texts explore the ontological ramifications of genetic science as it relates to the economics of modern life. This paper draws upon various strands of posthumanist thought to illuminate how the novels foreground genetic science while grappling with the nature and status of ‘the human’ in a rapidly changing world. I argue that the characters exist in what Rosi Baridotti terms an “analytical posthuman” space, while the texts operate in a “critical posthuman” (Braidotti) space; encoded within the texts, I read a didactic suggestion that humanity could exist in what I am describing as a “comprehensive posthuman” space. Exploring the novels in this way engages directly with the potential speculative or science fiction possesses to impact a public’s understanding of, and anxieties about, genetic science.

Kelli Knox is a PhD candidate and teaching assistant at Carleton University (Ottawa, Ontario) in the Department of English. Her current research focusses on representations within Canadian literature of human and non-human animal relationships situated in rural spaces / agricultural milieus. Her wider research interests include animal studies and animal narratives; biological and genetic science; kinship; intersubjectivity; haptic communication; material ecocriticism; posthumanism; biopolitics; identity and labour in rural and agricultural spaces. When she is not working, Kelli likes to roam outside with her various four-legged friends.

**Matthew L. Reznicek, ‘With Dignity—Yet with Difficulty: Prosthesis, Dependency, and Bodily Norms in *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806)’** Across the entirety of The Wild Irish Girl there is a competition between two forms of embodiment: an English image of the body that prioritises Lockean self-reliance as the key to citizenship and an Irish image of the body that is disruptive and vulnerable, symbolised by the dependency of the prosthetic. \David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder argue that a prosthesis helps to “institute a notion of the body within a regime of deviance. If disability falls too far from an acceptable norm, a prosthetic intervention seeks to accomplish an erasure of difference all together; yet, failing that, as is always the case with prosthesis, the minimal goal is to return one to an acceptable degree of difference.” The prosthetic lean that characterises the Prince of Inismore provides an understanding of the body that is rooted in care and mutual dependency. In this alternative, the Prince of Inismore’s prosthetic lean symbolises a challenge to the disciplinary regime of the politics of health that ultimately achieve and enforce the stability of the Union. The politics of health and, especially, the image of prosthesis are crucial in understanding this first National Tale because they enforce development of the liberal values on which colonial and imperial societies rest.

Matthew L. Reznicek is Associate Professor of Medical Humanities at the University of Minnesota Medical School, where he uses eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature to explore the impact of the social determinants of health on health and care. He has published widely on Romantic-era writers, including on Scott, Austen, Edgeworth, and Owenson. His monograph, Tales of Health: Illness, Disability, and Citizenship in the Romantic National Tale, is under contract with Liverpool University Press.

**Panel: 6.2: Puzzles**

**Chair:**

**Barbara Bienias, ‘Poetic Forms in Seventeenth-Century English Astrological Writings’** This paper analyses the poetic forms in seventeenth-century English astrological writings, including popular almanacks, manuals, and compendia, by authors such as Arthur Hopton (c. 1580–1614), Edward Pond (d. 1629), Sir George Wharton (1617–1681), Vincent Wing (1619–1668), John Gadbury (1627–1704), and Henry Coley (1633–1704). The representative examples examined here include verses on celestial phenomena and cosmological theories, mnemonic poems (e.g. aiding in remembering the order of the zodiac), couplets, poems addressed to readers, and dedicatory poems – such as acrostic and pattern poems – composed by various practitioners for their friends and colleagues. As many of these writings contain references to classical traditions, the analysis will explore potential sources of inspiration rooted in contemporary educational practices of the period. This study focuses on the functions of this poetry within the broader context of literary and scientific discourses in seventeenth-century England. I shall argue that the diverse forms of poetic expression employed by mathematical practitioners were linked to their aspirations for gentlemanly status, thereby elevating the status of astrology as one of the learned sciences.

Barbara Bienias is an Assistant Professor at the Institute for the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences. 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 semiotics of culture. Her work primarily focuses on the early reception of Copernican theory in England, particularly within the London circles of mathematical practitioners.

**Brittany Anne Carlson, ‘Puzzling, Affect, and Ephemera in “The Gold Bug” and “The Man of the Crowd”’** This paper offers a fresh perspective on two of Edgar Allan Poe’s semi-detection texts in the wake of his philosophies and participation in the nineteenth-century puzzle craze. While resolute closure and a confident, stoic detective characterize most detective fiction, “The Man of the Crowd” and “The Gold Bug” shift that paradigm. In both texts, the “detective” figures act more like puzzlists who experience a range of affects that begin with their initial interest in the puzzle and the tension it yields between the known, the unknown, and the desire to document reality. This tension, in turn, spurs further unpleasant affects, including anxiety, confusion, and feeling overwhelmed until the puzzlist develops vital insights necessary to solve the puzzle. Poe’s puzzlists become “absorbed” with the puzzles until they reach satisfactory solutions. To mediate these complex puzzles and the accompanying affects, Poe suggests in “Marginalia” and “A Few Words on Secret Writing” actively reading and constructing ephemeral models of them. This paper traces the affective experiences of both puzzlists as they use ephemeral models to solve their puzzles and their reflections on what remains unsolved.

Dr. Brittany Anne Carlson is an Assistant Professor of English and Writing Coordinator at Westminster College in Fulton, MO.

**Panel 6.3: Poetry, Science and Miracles**

**Chair: Sara Cole**

**Victor Monnin, ‘“I intend to write as long as I wish”: Earl Douglass, the Fossil Hunter Who Wanted To Be a Writer’** The paleontologist and fossil hunter Earl Douglass is famous for having discovered, in 1909, an almost complete skeleton of Apatosaurus at a quarry in Utah which would later become the U.S. National Park Dinosaur National Monument. But while Douglass was tirelessly working, for little compensation, to collect and prepare the fossil treasures that would grace the halls of the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he was also filling up the pages of notebooks with ideas of poems, short stories, and essays to write. This talk presents the early results of a research project involving the transcription of Douglass’ “reflection” notebooks, spanning from 1912 to 1928 and available at the Marriott Digital Library of the University of Utah. Through these pages, Douglass reveals himself as an aspiring author, searching for a way “to get at the real soul and charm of things,” as he wrote on June 26, 1912. Re-situated within the context of Douglass’ employment at the Carnegie Museum, this search for the literary absolute betrays the hopes of a fossil worker to transcend his socioeconomic status and to simply find time to cultivate his thoughts. The notebooks constitute a literary source for a micro-history of paleontological labor.

Victor Monnin is a Substitute Assistant Professor of History at John Jay College, City University of New York. After having pursued graduate studies in philosophy and art history in Paris, he completed his doctoral degree in epistemology and history of science at the University of Strasbourg. His research focuses primarily on the colonial and political history of nineteenth-century paleontology. Victor also researches and writes about the history of paleoart and the depiction of the geological past in popular culture.

**Nicola Angeli, ‘Inventing Poetry and Writing Inventions: The Case of Charles Cros’** This paper centres on the little-known figure of Charles Cros, a nineteenth-century French inventor and writer. Well-integrated in both literary and scientific circles, Cros published poetry while simultaneously working on new forms of technology. He is sometimes regarded as maintaining a claim over the invention of the phonograph—he deposited a lengthy description of a hypothetical device to register and reproduce sounds just a few months before the unveiling of Edison’s prototype in 1877 (Giffard, 1878). My analytical framework builds on the concepts of “scientific persona,” (Daston, Sibum et al., 2003), “literary field” (Bourdieu, 1992), and “posture” (Viala, 1993). By exploring Cros’ literary and scientific works as a congruent whole rather than as two opposed “sides” of his career, I will argue that Cros’ case illustrates the intersections between the literary and the scientific fields at a pivotal moment in which the two started to reclaim more and more autonomy. While the aesthetical aspiration of l’art pour l’art (art for art’s sake) was becoming a distinguishing feature of fin-de-siècle literature, “science” was growingly being institutionalised through the crystallisation of its disciplinary boundaries. My argument draws from and contributes to the current debate that seeks to overcome the entrenched dichotomous view of “discursivity” and “technology” as fundamentally different (Purdon, 2017; Dawson et al., 2020). I will emphasise literature and science as practices that are inherently social inasmuch as they negotiate individual and collective identities as well as create and disrupt material networks.

Nicola Angeli is a PhD candidate in the French Department of Yale University. His dissertation, titled "Sparks of Ink: Literature and Electricity in Fin-De-Siècle France," explores the interactions between literary texts, science, and communities and how fiction shapes our technology-driven reality. His research was awarded the Franke Fellowship (Yale, 2022-2023) and the Édouard Morot-Sir Research Fellowship (Society for French Historical Studies, 2023). He has presented papers at several conferences, including Beijing, Oxford, Detroit, and Niagara Falls. An essay on Proust and the Ritz Hotel is forthcoming in a volume edited by Kevin James.

**Sophio Guliashvili, ‘Evolving Narratives: The Transformation of Main Characters from Old Georgian Hagiographic Texts (5th-8th Century) to Contemporary Literature’** The renewal of hagiographic literature for modern society spans various directions and fields. The texts dedicated to the lives of saints, martyrdom, and miracles from late antiquity and the medieval period have taken on new significance in a modern context, centuries after their creation. Their various dimensions have become relevant and valuable across multiple fields of the humanities. However, the reevaluation and rethinking of hagiographic texts and figures extends beyond scholarly research. The reinterpretation and transformation of the events and characters portrayed in these works can also be seen in contemporary literature, across a range of artistic genres. This phenomenon is explored in the paper presented at the conference, with examples drawn from both Old Georgian literature (such as "The Martyrdom of Saint Queen Shushanik" (5th c.) by Iakob Khutsesi, "The Martyrdom of Abo Tbileli" (8th c.) by Ioane Sabanisdze) and 20th-21st century Georgian writings (including G. Shervashidze's play "Shushanik and The American Dream" and N. Tsuleiskiri's "The Virtue and Martyrdom of Abbo and Ioane", based on which the script for the play "(H)abo" was created).

Sophio Guliashvili is a young career researcher from Georgia, currently serving as a research associate at the Institute of Georgian Studies at the University of Georgia (Tbilisi, Georgia). She is also a doctoral candidate and an invited lecturer at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. Her research focuses on medieval Georgian literature, Rustaveli Studies, and Georgia-foreign literary relations. Over the years, she has actively participated in and organised different (local/international) successful educational and scientific projects.

**15-16:30 – Plenary 2**

**Martin Willis (Cardiff University), ‘Literature and Science in the Age of the “---- Humanities”’**

**Chair: Sharon Ruston**

In this talk for the online conference I will consider the state of the field in literature and science at the present moment, drawing particularly on the 2025 annual conference for examples. Running through the talk will be a key question: what is the impact on literature and science of the continued fragmentation of the humanities into numerous subfields, which I characterise in my title as the '----- Humanities'? Does this granularity of work in the humanities support or hinder ongoing research in our own field?

Martin Willis is Professor of English at Cardiff University. He is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Literature and Science and former chair of the British Society for Literature and Science. His work focusses on Victorian literature and science, especially the medical sciences.

