

CALL FOR PAPERS

Literary Afterlives and Literary Afterlife/ves Studies: Towards a New Discipline IDEA (Interdisciplinarité Dans les Etudes Anglophones / Interdisciplinarity in English Studies)

Université de Lorraine, Nancy, France

1-2 April 2027

Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

Daniel Cook (University of Dundee) and Nicolas Seager (Keele University)

Conference website:

<https://afterlives.sciencesconf.org/>

The study of literary afterlives has gained significant traction in academic circles over the past few decades, yet it remains a fragmented and loosely defined field. The term “afterlife/afterlives”, borrowed from German art history (“Nachleben”, Aby Warburg), has been applied vaguely to encompass adaptations, appropriations, interpretations, reception, influence and legacy. This lack of a precise and useful definition has hindered the development of literary afterlives studies as a cohesive and recognised academic discipline.

The research unit IDEA (Interdisciplinarité Dans les Etudes Anglophones / Interdisciplinarity in English Studies) at the Université de Lorraine is committed to addressing this gap. Through a series of international symposia and conferences devoted to “The Afterlives of Literary Classics”, we have aimed to explore the various ways in which literary classics have been reinterpreted and reimagined across space, time, cultures and media.

Following the successful symposia on “The Afterlives of Literary Classics” held in November 2025 and March 2026 at the Université de Lorraine in Nancy, IDEA is pleased to announce an international conference devoted to “Literary Afterlives and Literary Afterlife/ves Studies: Towards a New Discipline”. This conference aims to synthesise and expand upon the perspectives proposed by scholars from various disciplinary fields and to offer a workable framework for the study of literary afterlives worldwide.

Defining Literary Afterlives

Literary afterlives are characterised by their continuous and global presence, not only in their original forms but also in derived forms such as translations, illustrations, adaptations and by-products. These forms of consumption and perpetuation of literary texts and their authors have been the subject of numerous critical works and academic events. However, these studies have often been isolated, lacking a unified framework or clear definitions.

In the introduction to *Transmedia Creatures* (2018), Francesca Saggini emphasised the need to provide a working definition of the concept of “afterlife” that relates to issues of reproducibility, transmissibility, adaptation and cultural legacy, while moving beyond notions of fidelity and authenticity [1]. This call for a more nuanced understanding of literary afterlives underscores the necessity to establish a dedicated discipline to study these phenomena systematically.

Establishing Literary Afterlife/ves Studies

The project undertaken by IDEA seeks to offer a definition, or perhaps multiple definitions, of literary afterlives through a series of symposia and conferences. These events will allow scholars from various disciplinary fields to reflect on the different forms that literary afterlives have taken and the different meanings that the notion can encapsulate.

The first symposium, “The Afterlives of Literary Classics (1): Textual and Iconographic Re-interpretations and Re-imaginings” (14th November 2025), focused on textual and iconographic afterlives, examining prequels, coquels, sequels, rewritings and visual adaptations of literary classics. The second symposium, “The Afterlives of Literary Classics (2): Audiovisual, Material and Cultural (Re)Interpretations and (Re)Imaginings” (27th March 2026), explored audiovisual, material and cultural afterlives, including stagings, movies, TV series, merchandising, literary tourism and fan culture.

Towards a New Academic Discipline

The culminating conference, “Literary Afterlives and Literary Afterlife/ves Studies: Towards a New Discipline”, will take place in Spring 2027, on 1st and 2nd of April. It aims to synthesise and expand upon the perspectives proposed by scholars from various disciplinary fields and to offer a workable framework for the study of literary afterlives worldwide. The conference will be devoted to establishing literary afterlives as valuable objects of study and afterlife/ves studies as an academic discipline in its own right.

By bringing together scholars from diverse backgrounds, we hope to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration. This conference will provide a platform for defining key terms, establishing methodologies and identifying the core principles of literary afterlives studies. It will also explore the implications of this new discipline for literary criticism, cultural studies and other related fields.

The study of literary afterlives is a rich and evolving field of enquiry that deserves systematic and interdisciplinary attention. By establishing literary afterlives studies as a new academic discipline, we can better understand the complex ways in which literary classics continue to shape and be shaped by our cultural landscape. We invite scholars to join us in this ambitious and exciting endeavour to define and develop this emerging field.

Topics

We invite proposals that address, but are not limited to, the following issues and topics and how they relate to the concept of “literary afterlives”:

Intertextuality and Influence:

- The dialogue between texts across different historical periods
- The influence of earlier literary works on contemporary literature
- Intertextual references and their significance in literary studies

Adaptations and Reinterpretations:

- Modern retellings of classic stories
- Successive retellings of classic stories
- Adaptations of a text across different historical periods and socio-cultural contexts

Intermediality and Transmediality:

- The transformation of literary forms into various other media
- Transmedial adaptations and their implications
- The evolution of adaptations and adaptive media throughout time

Genre and Form:

- The afterlife of literary genres (e.g., poetry, drama, the Gothic novel, science fiction, etc.)
- The transformation of literary forms in different cultural contexts
- Cross-genre adaptations and their implications

Canonical Revisions and Challenges:

- Re-evaluating the literary canon and the impact of such re-evaluation on its evolution
- The link between canonical works and popular culture
- Forgotten or marginalised texts and their resurgence

Literary Legacies:

- New ways of consuming literature (merchandising, literary tourism, literary-themed parks, restaurants, cafés, etc.)
- The enduring influence of authors and their works on subsequent generations
- Literary estates and the management of an author's legacy

Submission Guidelines:

We welcome submissions from established scholars, early career researchers, postgraduate students and independent researchers. Please note that papers will not exceed 20 minutes and that they must suggest one or several definitions of the concept of literary afterlives and should express the speaker's conception of afterlives studies. Shorter presentations (10-15 minutes) are also welcome, as well as interdisciplinary presentations by two speakers from different academic disciplines (20 minutes).

Submission Process:

Please submit your abstracts (300-500 words) and a brief biographical note (150 words) including your current affiliation and contact information to nathalie.colle@univ-lorraine.fr and pauline.schwaller@univ-lorraine.fr in a single Word document titled: LAST NAME_First Name_Afterlives2027.

Submission Deadline: 1st October 2026

Notification of Acceptance: 1st November 2026

Publication:

A selection of articles based on the papers presented at the conference will be considered for publication. More information on the subject will be circulated in due time.

For more information on the project or to submit a proposal, please contact the organisers at nathalie.colle@univ-lorraine.fr and pauline.schwaller@univ-lorraine.fr. We look forward to receiving your contributions and to welcoming you to Nancy next Spring.

Scientific Committee

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Daniel Cook (University of Dundee, RU)
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Brigitte Friant-Kessler (Université Polytechnique Hauts-de-France)
Christina Ionescu (Mount Allison University, New Brunswick, Canada)
Maxime Leroy (Université de Haute Alsace, France)
Ann Lewis (Birkbeck, University of London, RU)
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