## Keynotes

**Steve Mentz, St John's University, NYC**

**Kinds of Blue: Colors, Water, and Ecological Dynamism**

What does the color blue mean? For the Blue Humanities, a critical discourse within environmental criticism, it can mean many things. On a basic level blue indicates the presence of water, even though water is not always or only blue. Blue also signals different kinds of emotions, forms, and practices. Multiple forms of blue speak to efforts to represent ecological dynamism and plurality.

**Bio**: Steve Mentz is Professor of English at St. John's University in New York City. He is among the founding voices of Blue Humanities criticism, and his books include *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities* (2023), *Sailing without Ahab* (2024), *Ocean* (2020), *Shipwreck Modernity* (2015), and *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* (2009). He has also edited or co-edited seven volumes of essays, published many articles and chapters, and written numerous public humanities essays. He is working on a project about ocean swimming as an ecological meditation for the Anthropocene.

**Alexandra Loske, The Royal Pavilion, Brighton & Hove Museums, Brighton**

**Teaching the Basics and Subtleties of Colour: Women Writing and Illustrating for Children and Young Art Students from 1805 to the 1940s**

In this talk Alexandra Loske will bring together two strands of her research within the wider field of colour history: the role of pioneering women in colour literature, and books about colour written and created for young readers and young artists. While in colour history there is no shortage of 'colour literature' in the broadest sense, there is comparatively little material that was composed specifically for children or very young readers until the later nineteenth century. Instruction manuals on painting in watercolour or drawing, handbooks for young art students, school primers, as well as teaching materials for primary school levels are an under-researched and not well documented area of colour literature, and one in which women could and did operate.

Alexandra will begin with the towering example of English flower painter and teacher Mary Gartside (c.1755-1819), whose highly developed colour theory was presented in the form of painting manuals. She will continue with lesser known examples of women publishing with the Milton Bradley and Prang Educational Companies in the US in the late 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ century, including Bonnie Snow (1865–1925), and the highly inventive colour manual *Color Problems* (1902) by Emily Noyes Vanderpoel (1842–1939) followed by some examples from the post-WW1 years, among them the work of German artist and lecturer Carry van Biema (1881-1942), and Dutch artist Galinka Ehrenfest (1910-1979), who together with her husband Jaap Kloot published a simple but visually stunning book about colour theory for children in Amsterdam in the 1940s during the German occupation of the Netherlands. Focussing on women authors and illustrators, the aim of this talk is to provide a first tentative overview of a field of research that deserves more attention: how have complex

aspects concerning colour been presented creatively and inventively in a simplified manner for young readers and young art students.

**Bio:** Dr Alexandra Loske FSA is a British-German art historian, writer, and Curator of the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. She read English and Linguistics at Humboldt University, Berlin, and Art History at the University of Sussex, where she is a Research Associate, working on women in colour history. In 2024 she gave the Mondrian Lecture on colour at the Sikkens Prize award ceremony in Rotterdam.

Alexandra Loske has published widely on colour, including *Colour: A Visual History,* and *A Cultural History of Color in the Age of Industry*. In 2024 she published the substantial *Book of Colour Concepts* (TASCHEN), as well as the first monograph on Mary Gartside (*Abstract Visions of Colour*). Her latest book on colour is *The Artist's Palette* (Thames & Hudson). In June 2025 she published a major new book on the Royal Pavilion with Yale University Press, with the title *The Royal Pavilion, Brighton: A Regency Palace of Colour and Sensation*.

## Panel 1: Impressions and Emotions

**Catherine Maxwell, Queen Mary University of London**

**'Ideal instants' and the impressionist lyric of colour**

The final decades of the nineteenth century see the birth of the short impressionist lyric that encapsulates the 'ideal instant', celebrated in 'The School of Giorgione' (1877), Walter Pater's famous essay on the interrelation of the arts. For Pater, paintings of Giorgione's school show 'that aspiration of all the arts towards music', characterised by 'the perfect identification of matter and form'. As in the Giorgionesque painting that captures the 'ideal instant' – 'this perfect interpenetration of the subject with the elements of colour and design' – colour is also a prime constituent of the short impressionist lyric, with lyric poetry also being for Pater 'the highest and most complete form of poetry' because 'in it we are least able to detach the matter from the form'. The conclusion of my essay 'In the Artist's Studio', published in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry* (OUP, 2013), touched on the short lyric's connections with James Abbott McNeill Whistler, identified as an 'impressionist' by contemporaries, with reference to four lyric vignettes by Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symons, Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, and Michael Field. This paper will extend my analysis to a larger consideration of impressionist treatments of light and colour as reflected in meditative short lyrics by a range of poets that includes Mathilde Blind, Thomas Hardy, Olive Custance, and Rosamund Marriott Watson. Featuring typical painterly topics such as skies, clouds, mists, seascapes, landscapes, gardens, and flowers, such lyrics evoke colour palettes and techniques that suggest the poets' familiarity with impressionist artworks produced in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In this paper I will show how, conjuring mood, emotion, and atmosphere, colour is essential in forming the meditative 'exquisite pauses in time' common to both impressionist painting and the short impressionist lyric.

**Bio**: Catherine Maxwell is Professor of Victorian Literature at Queen Mary University of London, and author of *The Female Sublime from Milton to Swinburne: Bearing Blindness* (Manchester University Press, 2001), *Swinburne* (Northcote House/Liverpool University

Press, 2006), *Second Sight: The Visionary Imagination in Late Victorian Literature* (Manchester University Press, 2008), and *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2017), awarded the 2018 European Society for the Study of English prize for Literatures in English. Her latest project is a monograph titled 'The Flowers of Victorian Poetry: Cultivating the Imagination' contracted to Oxford University Press.

**Nicholas Gaskill, University of Oxford**

**Color and Intensity in Modernist Poetry**

One of the threads left hanging at the end of *Chromographia*, my 2018 study of color and US literature, was how precisely the chromatic techniques and concerns of the late nineteenth century informed the range of modernist poetics in the decades after the Great War. Though I analyzed modernist milestones such as Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* and Jean Toomer's *Cane*, the chromatic practices of Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore were merely mentioned, despite these authors' rich chromatic imaginaries. This talk seeks to remedy that absence. In particular, I will extend the arguments about chromatic intensity that I made in relation to Stephen Crane and Symbolist poetry into modernism proper, showing how an aesthetic effect initially tied to color—*intensity*—came to stand as a more all-encompassing artistic and ethical ideal.

My aim, then, is not only to attend to the way that US modernist poets evoked color experiences in their work but also to present those evocations as concentrated figures for the way poetry as such was thought to work in this period: namely, as an "intensification" of life. I'll begin by giving a brief overview of the role that color played in anti-realist writing of the 1890s in order to clarify the stakes of modernist literary experiments with color and to emphasize the importance of looking beyond the familiar relations between writers and painters when accounting for modernist color. I'll then focus on the poetry and prose of Wallace Stevens, with special emphasis on "Description without Place" and "Large Red Man Reading." Stevens's figurations of color, I will argue, help us to understand his hope that in poetry we can experience an existence "intenser than any actual life could be."

**Bio**: Nicholas Gaskill is Associate Professor of American Literature at the University of Oxford and tutorial fellow at Oriel College. He is the author of *Chromographia: American Literature and the Modernization of Color*, as well as several articles and essays on color and literature. His writing on aesthetics and US literature have appeared in *American Literary History*, *New Literary History*, *PMLA*, and *American Literature*. He is currently writing a book on aesthetic intensity from Edgar Allan Poe to the present.

**Gwenda Koo, University of Cambridge**

**Katherine Mansfield: A Subjective Experience Coloured by Emotions**

This paper explores how colours and emotions are interwoven in Katherine Mansfield's stories. Her works, which are rich with depictions of light, colours and visual perceptions,

have been noted for sharing affinities with Impressionism. Critics have considered the form and content of her fiction in light of literary impressionism. Melissa C. Reimer observes Mansfield's desire to 'realise painterly effects within a verbal or written medium'. Building on this perspective, the current paper focuses on the connection between the Impressionists' and Mansfield's use of colour. For Mansfield, the aim of literature is to express a truth in life, one that lies in a psychological reality that is subjectively coloured by emotions: 'All must be deeply *felt*.' Her preoccupation with colour goes beyond the representation of an external reality. Colour in her works has the power to simultaneously evoke and reflect the mood, atmosphere and emotions of her characters' inner worlds. Like the Impressionists, Mansfield manipulates colour to present the ephemeral and subjective experience of a fleeting moment. What is striking is the way colours offer insights into the complexity of her characters' emotional encounters. In 'Bliss', Bertha's suppressed sexual desire for Pearl finds expression in the silver pear tree, covering them in all its silver flowers; in 'Feuille D'Album', the world is lit up in pink, encapsulating Ian's self-consciousness and thrill as he pursues the girl he loves but barely knows. In 'Her First Ball', vivid colours reflect Leila's excitement; in 'Miss Brill', however, this visual vibrancy mark a cruel contrast with the old lady's loneliness. The black hat in 'The Tiredness of Rosabel' first evokes envy, then humiliation in Rosabel; in 'The Garden Party', however, Laura's similarly black hat brings shame and embarrassment. Colour, for Mansfield, is vital: its emotive quality gives rise to a rich subjective experience of life.

**Bio:** Gwenda Koo is currently a PhD student in English at the University of Cambridge. Her research interests centre on human psychology in early twentieth century literature, particularly on consciousness. Her PhD project takes a cognitive literary approach to complicate the long established critique of modernism's 'inward turn' and its subjective view of reality. She is currently researching on the expression of solitude and its cognitive processes in the works of Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield.

## Panel 2: Global Encounters (1)

**Dr Lucy Powell, Trinity College**

**Making Whiteness Visible: Behn, Pope, Mignard and the colours of colonialism**

This paper will outline the verbal and visual representation of colour and colonialism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It will examine the new, colonial valences with which the colours of commodities such as amber, coral and pearls were imbued in the poetry of Alexander Pope, in Windsor Forest (1713) in particular, and the prose of Aphra Behn, in Oroonoko (1688). I relate this colonial colourization to a rapidly evolving discourse of racial signification through skin colour. Gary Taylor has argued that the valorization of whiteness was a gendered, rather than a racial value in early modern Europe. Men whose skin was overly pale, he finds, were pejoratively deemed "effeminate". I want to map what Kimberly Poitevin has described as the process by which whiteness "hardens" into a signifier of a "natural", immutable racial characteristic in this period. I do so by comparing

the modes in which the colours of colonial commodities are depicted verbally in Behn and Pope, with the visual depiction of the colours of global commerce: coral, pearls, and crucially the trade in enslaved peoples, that occur in the portrait of Louise de Kéroualle by Pierre Mignard (1682) now in the NPG in London. Finally, I explore Walter Johnson's formulation of "technologies of race" by thinking through the materiality of making whiteness, on the skin and on the canvas, with the same lead-based pigment. When Mistress Birdlime in Dekker and Webster's Westward Ho (1604) proclaims that her home-made "Fucus" – lead-based white paint – can both "weed out freckles" and provide an "excellent ground-work for painting", she underlines the performativity of whiteness in both modalities that later writers would seek to obscure. I will recover these through cosmetics recipes and painting manuals like Constant de Massoul's Treatise on Painting (1797) in which the hardening of whiteness is a cause of perennial concern.

**Bio:** Lucy Powell has been an ECR Leverhulme fellow and a JRF at Trinity College, Oxford since 2021. She was awarded her PhD at UCL, from which her first book, Prison and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Form and Reform is forthcoming in 2025 with Cambridge University Press. The monograph examines the preponderance of prisons in the novels of the eighteenth century, and enlightenment thinking about the self and the social that these scenarios reveal. Her postdoctoral project is entitled: 'The Feather'd Tribe': Birds and the Routes of Empire in the Eighteenth Century. It looks at the ways in which new knowledge about birds enabled British writers and artists to stage themselves in a global context. She is compiling the biographies of seven birds or feathered objects as a way of mapping the material and ideological pathways to empire. She is also a New Generation Thinker for the BBC and has made radio programmes across the network on everything from the social history of the inside loo, to a history of dreams, to a series charting the talented siblings of very famous men: Shakespeare's Sisters. Her writing has regularly appeared in The Guardian, The Times, The Sunday Times and Time Out magazine.

**Anita Raychawdhuri, University of Houston Downtown**

**Shakespeare's Blues: The Significance of Blue in the Early Modern World**

In William Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* a disturbing simile appears where Lucrece is described as: "breasts, like ivory globes circled with blue, / A pair of maiden worlds unconquered." Her breasts are "the world," and a white one at that. The blue veins serve to contrast the "ivory" skin. When Shakespeare was writing, the visual understanding of Earth as "the blue marble" didn't exist. What, then, is the effect of describing Lucrece's breasts as "ivory globes" where the veins are flowing in a watery azure circle?

Blue recalls the bright sky or the shades of marine in rivers, oceans, and lakes. Yet, blue is an unusual pigment in nature. Less than 1 in 10 plants have blue flowers and even fewer animals are blue. Today, due to synthetic dyes, it is possible to have all shades of blue but in the early modern period this was not so. Blue dye was expensive. Like the ocean and sky that it reflects, there is a certain "unknowability" to blue. How did early moderns understand blueness and what did they associate with it?

Its in vogue for studies on oceans across art and culture to be called the "Blue" humanities. By extension, is the ocean linked to how early moderns thought about blue and its striking beauty? In an era where oceanic navigation was expanding rapidly—as were trade routes, enslavement, and colonization—how did liquidity and blueness fit in amongst understandings of colonial expansion and explosive discourse on race? Blue's dualistic desirability/sublimity speaks to how race was being made in early modernity as well as often being entangled with metaphors of the natural world. By attending to Shakespeare's varied use of blue, I argue that this alienly natural color was intimately important to early modern race-making and theorizing of ocean spaces.

**Bio:** Anita Raychawdhuri is Assistant Professor of English, University of Houston Downtown, USA currently on leave while completing research in Barcelona, Spain. She earned her PhD at the University of California Santa Barbara, specializing in early modern drama, premodern critical race studies, and queer studies. Raychawdhuri is currently working on a study of early modern conceptions of scale as it relates to race and desire. Secondary interests include Shakespeare and adaptation, particularly in India and Spain, on which Raychawdhuri has published. She has received grants and awards to support her book project including The Folger Shakespeare Library Short Term Fellowship, the Albert and Elaine Borchard Foundation European Studies Fellowship, The University of California Humanities Research Institute Graduate Student Dissertation Support, and the Organized Research and Creative Activities Program from UHD. She is an incoming 2024 Arden Fellow and was a participant in the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies RaceB4Race First Book Institute.

## Panel 3: Global Encounters (2)

**Anne-Valérie Dulac, Sorbonne Université**

### The Chromolithographic Turn: The "Puissance" of Shakespearean Drama in European Trade Cards (1872-1914)

In the final quarter of the nineteenth century, chromolithography found a crucial field of application in advertising, which was entering a transformative new phase. Emerging alongside the rise of mass consumer culture and the growing influence of colour psychology in marketing, chromolithography rapidly established itself as both a commercial opportunity and a strategic visual tool. In this paper, I will examine a distinctive form of commercial chromolithographic production: the illustrated trade card.
Beginning in the 1870s, and inspired by pioneering retailers such as Aristide and Marguerite Boucicaut, founders of Le Bon Marché, businesses began to offer richly coloured, collectible images as complimentary gifts to their customers. The thematic diversity of these series is striking: while early examples tended to favor generic scenes, subsequent productions often took on a more educational dimension, targeting children more specifically, with numerous series devoted to literary subjects. Among these, Shakespearean series—of which there are many—appear to have enjoyed notable popularity.

Despite their cultural reach, these renewed forms of popular imagery have received only limited scholarly attention to date. Drawing on research conducted as a fellow at the Mucem (Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée), this presentation will explore the dramatic 'puissance' of colour in this miniature theatre of chromolithographic images, through an analysis of several European series produced between 1880 and 1914.

**Bio:** Anne-Valérie Dulac is senior lecturer in Elizabethan studies at Sorbonne Université. She is a fellow at the Musée Des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée and a member of Chromotope. She is also the principal investigator of project IRIS (2025-2027), focusing on the rendering of iridescence in literature and the arts between the 16th & 19th century. She has published on the interrelations of miniature painting and drama in the early modern period and is in the process of completing a monograph on chromolithographed trade-cards produced in Europe between 1872 and 1914.

**Béatrice Laurent, Université Bordeaux-Montaigne**

**What to Call a Colour ? The Colour Nomenclature Debate in Nineteenth-Century Britain**

In 1814, the Scottish watercolourist Patrick Syme wrote a book in order to solve a problem he encountered daily in his painting and art-teaching practices. The problem was that 'an object may be described of such a colour by one person, and perhaps mistaken by another for quite a different tint : as we know the names of colours are frequently misapplied ; and often one name indiscriminately given to many colours' (Syme 6-7). His volume, entitled *Werner's Nomenclature of Colours, with Additions,* purported to 'remove the present confusion in the names of colours, and establish a standard that may be useful in general science' (7). As the title indicates, Syme walked in the footsteps of Abraham Gottlob Werner, the German mineralogist whose late eighteenth-century work recorded seventy-nine colours. Syme went up to one hunded and ten. However, Syme's efforts did not result in a definitive terminology, and throughout the nineteenth century, decorators such as David Ramsay Hay, physicists such as Wilhelm von Bezold, ornithologists such as the American Robert Ridgway thought they could improve Syme's nomenclature. To do so, von Bezold sought to confront the proliferation of names which resulted from different professional usages: 'several of the names, which are familiar to the physicist, and entirely unknown to the artist, while dyers and weavers employ still other designations,' (*Theory of Color in Its Relation to Art and Art-Industry* (1876, iv) he explained. This confusion was even increased when he had his book translated from German into English. Tackling this issue, Ridgway compiled a table of colour names in English, Latin, German, French, Spanish, Italian, and Norwegian/Danish languages (*A nomenclaure of colors for naturalists,* 1886). This glossary however, highlighted more than it solved the problem of colour naming as many English names for colours were left untranslated into one or more language.

This presentation will draw on nineteenth-century colour nomenclatures to trace the difficulties in adjusting lexica in an increasingly complex and international environment.

**Bio:** Béatrice Laurent is Professor of Victorian Studies at the Université Bordeaux Montaigne in France. A Pre-Raphaelite scholar, she has edited a volume of essays on William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (2004) and written *La Peinture anglaise* (2006) as well as numerous book

chapters and articles in refereed journals (*The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies, Visual Culture in Britain, Cahiers Victoriens et Édouardiens*). In her books *Provence and the British Imagination* (co-edited, 2013), *Sleeping Beauties in Victorian Britain: Cultural; Literary and Artistic Explorations of a Myth* (edited, 2015) and *Water and Women in the Victorian Imagination* (2021) she explores the interaction between visual art and theoretical discourses. Her broader field of research deals with the conceptual overlap between art, literature, science and society, particularly in Victorian Britain.

## Panel 4: Anxious Modernities

**Angela Dunstan, Queen Mary University**

**Slow Fade: Anxious Chromatic Encounters in Victorian Literature and Visual Culture**

After William Henry Perkin's accidental discovery of Mauveine in 1856, waves of public enthusiasm for synthetic colours' consumer uses were accompanied by quieter ripples of anxiety among those concerned by the instability of these new mediums. In his notorious treatise against aniline colours, William Morris particularly emphasised the unpleasant effects of their fading, lamenting 'that stage of livid ugliness which distinguishes the commercial dyes as nuisances'.

Photographic and sculptural fading were also sources of concern, as was the discovery that the whiteness of Greco-Roman sculpture was itself inauthentic and that 'plain white…statues have come to be admired by accident' (*The Athenaeum*, 1854). This paper examines how anxieties about the legibility of faded colour infiltrated Victorian literature, showing how discourses on colour's instability underpin literary preoccupations with fading, impermanence and artificiality. From controversies arising from 'Scheele's green' to the challenges of accurate pigment replication, the slipperiness of colour's signification generated increasing press agitation in the second half of the nineteenth century. The ubiquity of synthetic dyes further destabilised colour's signification in hierarchies of value and taste. Similarly faded colour became less legible as it no longer solely signified age but sometimes also newness. Press surrounding chromatic innovation similarly increased anxiety about industrial incursions upon manual practices, what Morris termed 'foul blotches of the capitalist dyer'. Reading against consumers' enthusiastic embrace of kaleidoscopic colour fads like 'the mauveine measles', I will examine how representations of fading colour in texts by George Eliot, Henry James and Vernon Lee reveal the extent to which suspicions about the synthetic had infiltrated literary consciousness. I will suggest that literary portrayals of anxious chromatic encounters provide a powerful lens through which larger concerns about the slow dissolve of the Victorian era into modernity became more legible.

**Bio:** Dr Angie Dunstan is a Reader in English Literature and Visual Culture at Queen Mary University of London. She has published widely on literature and visual culture in publications including *Modern Language Quarterly*, *British Art Journal*, *The Burlington Magazine*, and *The Literary 1880s* (Cambridge University Press), and edited several

collections and special editions including the 'Victorian Sculpture' issue of *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Her monograph *Reading Victorian Sculpture* is contracted and forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press, and she has a four-volume edition, titled *Art and Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, under contract with Routledge Historical Resources.

**Michele Brugnetti, Sapienza University of Rome**

**The Aesthetic Experiencing of Colour: Tracing the Connection between aesthetic Bildung and Chromatic Encounters in Walter Pater's Gaston de Latour**

Walter Pater's unfinished *Gaston de Latour* (18 88–94) was meant to be the second instalment of a trilogy of novels that began with *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). Like its predecessor, this work follows the aesthetic education of a sensitive young man in a period of cultural, historical and aesthetic turmoil. My proposed paper argues that Gaston's aesthetic education is deeply shaped through his encounters with chromatic phenomena, both natural and artificial. Lene Østermark-Johansen explains that "the novel is a study in the colours of decadence and destruction" (2020: 27), an insight which I would like to examine within the context of Gaston's aesthetic development in the novel. I propose that the moral conundrum that Gaston faces in the text—"either a consuming decadence or a quickening aesthetic response" (Pater and Monsman, 1995: xlii)—is expressed through his perceptual engagement with colours. The dialogical relationship between past and present, characteristic of Pater's fiction, is particularly discernible in *Gaston* through his treatment of chromatic experience, in which sixteenth-century France is explicitly connected with late nineteenth-century England. Within this context, Pater situates Gaston—a diaphanous, nearly colourless figure—amid decadent French portraits, artefacts, furnishings, and architectural spaces, juxtaposing them with their modern English counterparts. If "by referring to an absent kind of material, colour words point to the idea of materiality, the idea that visual art is corporeal, sensual" (Rey Conquer, 2019: 2), I argue that Pater frames Gaston's aesthetic refinement as dependent upon the way he absorbs, reflects, and refracts the colours he encounters, so that his physical experience of colour becomes the main feature driving the plot of the aesthetic novel.

**Bio:** 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 in the long fin de siècle. He is a member of the Italian Oscar Wilde Society and the International Walter Pater Society.

**Mimi Lu, University of Sydney, University of Oxford**

**Colouring the Idea of a University: The "Secondary and Tertiary Hues" of a Modernising Institution**

The university—concurrently a historical reality, a textual construct, a collective fantasy, and a fulcrum for wider social pressures and anxieties—preoccupied the modern imaginary and was a key figurative site where many of England's ideological tensions were contested. This paper traces how colour was notated in modern literary representations of universities and unpacks the broader implications of authorial decisions to colour these institutions in very specific ways. I will analyse literary writers' responses to – and fine-toned calibrations of – Cardinal Newman's seminal treatise, *The Idea of a University* (1852), which has been a 'silent point of reference' since its publication for all those thinking critically about the value and the purpose of higher education. The paper is bookended by close readings of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), in which a fictionalised Oxford manifests itself as 'a picture of sober secondary and tertiary hues', and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), with its oft-cited but under-analysed rendering of the university town as 'a city of aquatint.' I will bridge these two works by drawing upon other chromatically significant examples from university-centric novels written in the intervening years, including *Zuleika Dobson* (1911), *Sinister Street* (1913-14), and *Gaudy Night* (1935). As a counterweight for Oxford, which vastly outnumbers other institutions as a setting—I will also examine the strikingly monochromatic descriptions of the redbrick university in D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) and of Cambridge in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922) and *The Waves* (1931). As the university in this period was often made to stand synecdochically for England itself, taking these chromatic readings can deepen our understanding not only of the contemporary cultural, social, and political fault lines underlying these novels but also of how colour became a vital intermedial tool for signalling and mediating these in modern literature.

**Bio:** Dr Mimi Lu is a graduate of the University of Sydney and the University of Oxford, with an academic background in literature and law. This paper is drawn from her doctoral thesis, supervised by Professor Helen Small, and which Mimi is currently reworking into a monograph, *The Idea of a University in Modern English Literature*. This book critically examines how literary works in the first half of the twentieth century engaged with the politics of higher education discourses and problematised ideals and narratives about the university as an experience, a mediator of culture, and an engine social mobility. She is also working on a second interdisciplinary research project, *Twentieth-Century English Literature and Tort Law*.

**Leonor-Jo Barnard, University of Oxford**

**Dark and Earthy Shades: Ecological Consciousness in Thomas Hardy**

In my paper, I aim to argue that Thomas Hardy's use of colour in his works expresses a distinctive ecological consciousness within Victorian literature. Hardy's approach and attention to colour transcends what critics have termed his 'verbal painting,'1 infusing his novels with sensory richness where hues are woven into the rhythms of nature's cycles. His novels carry a profound ecological critique which responds to the environmental concerns of the era. They evolve chromatically, beginning with the vibrant lush greens of *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) and *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) then gradually fades to a more

muted palette in *The Return of the Native* (1878), where blacks and earthy shades—browns, greys, and dusky purples—reflect the fragile beauty of rural England under threat.

Hardy was familiar with John Ruskin's works, and his influence is evident in *The Return of the Native*, especially in the exploration of nature's resilience and grandeur, as well as the relationship between the earth and its inhabitants. In *Modern Painters*, Ruskin argues that 'only certain small portions' of the earth are meant for human habitation, while the rest exists 'for contemplation in an uninhabitable magnificence.'2 This perspective celebrates the rugged beauty of untameable landscapes, as illustrated in Hardy's portrayal of Egdon Heath, emphasising the value of preserving nature beyond human control.

Through pathetic fallacy, Hardy gives agency to Egdon Heath, making it 'the principal agent of the action,' a powerful, sometimes hostile force that resists the threat of industrialisation. The landscape is given emotional agency which intensifies its impact on the characters who find themselves at the mercy of a dark environment that both nurtures and challenges them. They endure the silent, vengeful power of nature, which paradoxically becomes an ally in Hardy's critique of modernisation. By incorporating colour into his narrative, Hardy shapes the landscape as both a sanctuary and a reflection of his anxieties about the preservation of rural England, highlighting his ecological concerns in an era of rapid change.

**Bio:** Leonor-Jo Barnard is a third year DPhil student at the University of Oxford. Her research explores the relationship between visual perception, artistic representation, and literary expression. Her thesis, titled 'Thomas Hardy's Artistic Education: Colour, Impression, and Nature,' focuses specifically on Thomas Hardy's artistic education and his engagement with the writings of John Ruskin.

## Panel 5: The Material Book

**Melissa Tedone and Rosie Grayburn, University of Delaware**

### The Poison Book Project: Examining the Colorful Materiality of Mass-Produced 19th-C. Euro-American Bookcovers

Heavy metal pigments containing arsenic, chromium, lead, and mercury vividly color the covers of nineteenth-century bookbindings bound in cloth and paper alike. The Poison Book Project identifies the materials that give many nineteenth-century bookbindings their brilliant hues and explores manufacturing techniques, historical context, and the vulnerability of pigmented coatings depending on pigment type and substrate. While the discovery of high levels of friable emerald green (copper aceto-arsenite) in bookcloth launched the research, the project now explores the prevalence and safety implications of other emerald green bookbinding components as well as other heavy metal pigments used in bookcloth.

During the initial phases of the Poison Book Project, an analytical survey in the Winterthur Library encompassed approximately 500 cloth-case bindings in a range of colors that were

published during the Victorian era (1837–1900). Emerald green was found in approximately 10% of green bindings tested. Emerald green was a popular choice for gift bindings in cloth, but the pigment was also used in paper bindings for a more ordinary range of titles, such as instructional manuals, almanacs, and published lectures. Lead was detected on hundreds of bindings, regardless of color. Lead was also found together with chromium on books colored with chrome yellow (lead chromate). Bookcloths containing chrome yellow range from greens (achieved by mixing chrome yellow with various percentages of Prussian blue) to yellows, oranges, and browns. Chrome yellow was used in larger quantities to color yellow and orange bookcloths predominantly in the 1880s-1890s, a time period that correlates with more affordable pricing for the pigment than earlier in the century. Data gathered to date demonstrate that bright red bookcloth was most commonly colored with chrome orange mixed with organic dyes, while mercury-based vermilion is confined to red-colored book edges and decorative printing on the covers of cloth bindings.

Ongoing analysis combined with bibliographic and historical data thus illuminates previously unrecognized trends in the use of heavy metal pigments in bookbinding history.

**Bio:** Dr. Melissa Tedone is Assistant Professor in the University of Delaware Art Conservation Department and Associate Director of the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. Formerly, she was Lab Head for Library Materials Conservation at Winterthur Museum, Garden, & Library, where the Poison Book Project launched. Melissa holds a doctorate in Slavic literary history from Yale University and an MSIS in book and paper conservation from the University of Texas at Austin. Melissa is an appointed member of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Library Alliance Board of Directors, the lead conservator of the Poison Book Project, and a founding co-chair of the Bibliotoxicology Working Group (BibTox). BibTox is an international cohort of conservators, scientists, librarians, and health and safety professionals working to define best practices for managing potentially toxic library and archives collections.

Dr. Rosie Grayburn is the Head of the Scientific Research and Analysis lab at Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library and Affiliated Associate Professor in the Winterthur/University of Delaware in Art Conservation, where she teaches conservation science and analytical methodologies to graduate fellows in art conservation. In her current role she facilitates research in a broad variety of materials. Her main areas of research are currently Victorian pigmented bookcloth, the optimization and study of treatments for silver and silverplate and the greening of organic solvents used in conservation practice. She is a founding co-chair of the Bibliotoxicology Working Group (BibTox). She was previously a postdoctoral fellow in Conservation Science at the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles. Rosie holds a joint Ph.D. in Physics and Analytical Chemistry from Universiteit Gent and the University of Warwick.

**Giulia Simonini, Technische Universität Berlin**

**The Hayters and the Controversy on Colour**

The painting *A Controversy on Colour or Portraits of Charles Hayter and Three Young Artists* (1823) by John Hayter (1800–1895) captured the interest that his father, the miniature

painter Charles Hayter (1761-1835) had in modern colour theories. The painting depicts Hayter senior holding a prism in his hands demonstrating the laws of colour to Edward Landseer, William Mulready, and Clarckson Stanfield, who is pinpointing the page of a manuscript displaying a colour scheme.

Charles Hayter had published that very scheme at first in black and white (1813) and later in colour in *A New Practical Treatise on the Three Primitive Colours* (1826). He called it "the painter's compass". His son George, also a painter, published a less-known "Diagram of Colours" in *Hortus Ericæus Woburnensis* (1825). Both schemes look rather similar and follow the trichromatic theory of colour mixing. This paper will delve into the context in which the Hayters' developed their colour schemes, namely few years after the appearance of Goethe's *Farbenlehre* (1810), James Sowerby's *A New Elucidation of Colours* (1809) and of the second edition of Moses Harris's *The Natural System of Colours* (1811), thereby trying to explain the controversy highlighted in the title. The paper will also explore their utility, goals, and intersections with previous and contemporary discourses on colour theory.

**Bio:** She is a graduate conservator, art historian, and Ph.D. in the history of science with a thesis on 18th-century European colour charts and their applications. She currently works as a post-doc in the research project *Dimensions of techne in the fine arts* at the Technische Universität Berlin and teaches at the Konstanz University.

**Panel 6: Texts and Textiles**

**Alessandra Ronetti, Sorbonne Université**

**"Eiffel Red": Materiality, Fashion and Urban Experience in Fin-de-siècle Culture**

In 1890, the fashion magazine *Woman's World*, edited by Oscar Wilde, highlighted the burgeoning enthusiasm for a novel shade of red known as "Eiffel red" (*rouge Eiffel*). This name was strategically crafted for marketing purposes, drawing inspiration from the distinctive "terra-cotta" red of the Eiffel Tower, which was constructed between 1887 and 1888 for the Paris Universal Exposition of 1889. This phenomenon exemplifies how the evolving perception and production of industrial colors across Europe and beyond transformed the vocabulary of color. Rather than adhering to traditional classifications, the term encapsulates a new set of modern and popular experiences, embodied in the "red-brown" (*Harper's Bazaar*, 1889) used for the Eiffel Tower's paint and the urban spectacles associated with it, such as fireworks and light displays. The catchy term is adopted in France by the *Chambre syndicale des fournisseurs de modes* in 1889 (F. Gouillon, 1889) and quickly spread in popular press and literary works, embodying a taste characteristic of Fin-de-siècle culture. For example, American writer Amélie Rives, in her 1891 novel *According to St. John* (initially published in *The Cosmopolitan*), mentions "Eiffel-red feathers" while depicting the fashionable "costume" acquired by the protagonist at the Bon Marché in Paris. Various shades of red, whether brownish or more vibrant, had become prevalent in fashion since the 1880s, as evidenced by hand-coloured fashion plates in magazines and garments held in museums, as well as in literature (e.g. Oscar Wilde, Henry James) and art (e.g. Whistler, Sargent). In contrast to other colour terms like "fuchsine," which are seldom

utilized in fashion publications or outside specialized journals for colourists, "Eiffel red" emerged as a distinct "*teinte à la mode*," particularly between 1889 and 1891 (F. Gouillon, 1891). The "Eiffel red" was produced by mixing different kinds of synthetic dyes depending on the type of fabric; for instance, a blend of "marron d'aniline" and "violet RR" was utilized for dyeing wool to achieve the desired shade (F. Gouillon, 1889). My talk aims to question how the name "Eiffel red" was adopted as a scientific and commercial term by professionals and also promoted as a fashionable French colour in literary texts and fashion publications across Europe (e.g. *La Mode illustrée*, *Woman's World*) and America (e.g. *Ladies' Home Journal*). To address this case of colour nomenclature, I will discuss a variety of written and visual sources that illustrate the interplay between literature, the industrial and material culture of dyeing and textile (including manuals, journals, and fabric samples), the urban and spectacular experiences (popular press and imaginary), and the fashion culture of the time (through articles and novels in magazines, fashion illustrations, promotional materials such as the booklets published by department stores).

**Bio**: Alessandra Ronetti holds a PhD in Art history, awarded with honours by University Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne and Scuola Normale Superiore (Pisa) in 2019. She is currently member of ERC Project *Chromotope* (Sorbonne University, Conservatoire des arts et metiers, Oxford University), where she has served as a Postdoctoral Fellow from 2021 to 2023. Additionally, she is an associated member of the HiCSA at Université Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne and the LIRA at Université Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle, and she is also Colour Expert at the Institut Français de la mode (IFM) in Paris. Her teaching experience includes a position at Université Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle from 2021 to 2024, and she previously held roles as a Temporary Lecturer and Research Fellow at University Paris 1 from 2017 to 2020, along with serving as a Visiting Researcher and Adjunct Professor at New York University in 2016. Her forthcoming book, *Chromomentalisme. Art et psychologie de la couleur en France (1870-1914)* set to be published in early 2026 by Les Presses du réel, examines the influence of nineteenth-century psychological theories of colour on visual culture, including visual and performing arts, popular imagery and optical devices. She has participated in international conferences on art history, colour and visual studies, and has published several articles in peer- reviewed journals.

**Suchitra Choudhury, University of Glasgow**

**White (lies): Pale Shawls in Victorian Literature**

This paper will consult works of William Thackeray, Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell and wider periodical literature to argue how colours can make us think more about cultural conceptions of gender and imperialism, and the way in which writers often manipulated them to enrich their fiction. My focus is on Indian shawls that were elite dress accessories in the nineteenth century. Arguably, the colour white in dress has always been a sign of class luxury and privilege as it was required to be kept clean. In works of literature, interestingly, deeper coloured shawls were associated with both moral depravity as well as lower-class luxury exemplified in the imitation "Paisley" shawls that often sold well in darker, striking colours.

I argue that in fiction, pale coloured Cashmere shawls often function as readymade signs of chastity, class, and moral purity. But digging deeper, we also find that this literary aesthetic

often invited a deeper examination of individual characterisation and plot. In William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848), for instance, shawls are iconised as imported colonial luxuries. Yet, displaced onto English domestic sphere, a "white shawl" comes to imply and project gendered ideas of purity and chastity: Amelia Sedley wears a white Cashmere through the course of the novel, and she is carefully construed as a woman of innocence and virtue. But Thackeray also shows the fragility of this discourse as he suggests, via a subtle narrative of fashion and colour, that Amelia perhaps was not vastly different from her much-maligned counterpart, Becky Sharp. Using the scholarship of John Gage, Alexandra Loske and others, this paper will demonstrate how Victorian literary culture used colour to both organise and dismantle popular views of certain fashionable hues.

**Bio**: Dr Suchitra Choudhury is a Research Affiliate with the University of Glasgow. Her monograph *Textile Orientalisms: Cashmere and Paisley Shawls in British Literature and Culture* was published with Ohio University Press (2023), which received Honourable Mention in the Jack Medal prize. Interested in questions of decolonization and how subcontinental objects are exhibited in museums, she has been on advisory panels in Victoria and Albert Museum (Dundee), and Paisley Museum in Scotland. She is currently working on a project on shawls in art.

**Gabriel Saada, Sorbonne Université**

**"A mosaic of pieces of colour" : Romance as Textile in William Morris's late Prose Fictions**

A skilled craftsman, writer, and socialist, William Morris's interdisciplinarity is a defining feature of his productions and activities throughout his life. Morris himself alluded to it in 1868: "If a chap can't compose an epic poem while weaving tapestry, he had better shut up, he'll never do any good at all." (Mackail 1899)

This paper will explore how the encounter between poetry and tapestry, text and textile, is apparent in Morris's later series of narratives (prose romances), applying the colourful description of tapestry he gave in the 1888 catalogue of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society to his prose romances: "it may be looked upon as a mosaic of pieces of colour made up of dyed threads, (...) it also demands that crispness and abundance of beautiful detail which was the especial characteristic of fully developed Medieval Art." These romances are set in pseudo-medieval environments, saturated with references to colour and detailed descriptions of nature, buildings, garments, and various other objects, much like a fifteenth-century tapestry. This paper will argue that, through colourful ornamentation, Morris's prose romances can be read as textiles, in their making as well as in their aim. Given the care Morris devoted to the books in which he edited his fictions —some were written specifically for the Kelmscott Press— the romances can be viewed as intricate decorative artworks that provide aesthetic pleasure to the reader (and maker), as a tapestry would on the walls of a communal hall. In Morris's works, colour weaves pleasure and beauty together, as well as past, present, and future. Morris sought ancient dyeing techniques for his textiles, for he believed the colour they produced to be more beautiful and of better quality than the new synthetic dyes of his time, as they showcased centuries

of craftsmanship. He approached colours similarly in his romances, wishing to colour anew a world he deemed corrupt and ugly, and lead the way to another, fairer society.

**Bio:** Gabriel Saada is a PhD student at Sorbonne Université ; his research focuses on 19th century British medievalism and particularly on the works of William Morris. At a multidisciplinary crossroads between literature, history of arts and ideas, his PhD dissertation is entitled"William Morris and medievalism: conceiving the world between Romance and Arts &Crafts" and directed by Charlotte Ribeyrol and Tatjana Silec.

**Panel 7: Colour on Stage**

**David Taylor, University of Oxford**

**Kaleidoscopic Dryden: Theatre, Empiricism, Colour**

John Dryden's 1691 libretto *King Arthur* offers a sustained exploration of the experience – thrilling and perilous in equal measure – of the visual. At its heart is the story of Emmeline, Arthur's beloved, who is blind until the exact midpoint of the play, when the magic of Merlin gives her sight. Emmeline's scenes are constructed around a poetics of the senses and a rich language of colour. Early in the play, for instance, Arthur pictures Emmeline's 'lovely Features' to her, describing her 'Lips Carnation … dark shaded Eye brows, Black Eyes, / And Snow white Forehead; all the Colours / That make your Beauty'. And this language of colour is repeatedly caught up in the synaesthetic logic that underwrites Emmeline's understanding of the world. Dryden imagines her as a character who has 'no Notion of Light or Colours' and who at one point asks her attendant which of the colours 'is softest', an adjective she uses literally: colours are something tactile for her. But *King Arthur* is kaleidoscopic theatre even beyond Emmeline's scenes; there are 'gaudy silken wings', 'red cross banners', a 'blue pestiferous cloud' and 'milk white steed', the 'Greens' of Britain's fields, the 'Faint White and Red' of a Saxon's face, 'blue venom', a face made of 'Gold', and much more. Such attention to and use of colour is exceptional within Dryden's large and varied corpus of plays.
In this paper, I argue that *King Arthur* sees Dryden wielding spectacular theatre – a form towards which he was openly ambivalent – as a medium through which to negotiate and test ideas of colour. The significance of Dryden's membership of the Royal Society is usually downplayed; he had little direct involvement in the Society's activities and was expelled in 1666 for non-payment of dues. Yet his interest in and enthusiasm for the new science is clear in many of his works and he would certainly have been familiar with the theories of colour being developed by the likes of Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton from the 1660s onwards. *King Arthur*, I want to suggest, not only bears the impress of such work; alert to the formal affordances of the Restoration spectacular, to what such theatre could do that more conventional empiricist methods and rhetoric could not, Dryden conceives of his play as itself an experiment in and about colour.

**Bio**: David Francis Taylor is Professor of English at the University of Oxford, where he is also a Fellow of St. Hugh's College. He is the author of *Theatres of Opposition: Empire, Revolution, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (2012) and *The Politics of Parody: A Literary History of Caricature* (2018), as well as the co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre*. He has just finished work on an edition of Joseph Addison's plays and is currently writing

a book about the spectacular theatre in Britain from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

**Armelle Sabatier, Université Paris-Pantheón-Assas**

**"Performing Colours in Early Modern Drama: Theatrical Chromaticity in Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen (1613), a case study"**

In a chapter devoted to the colours of costumes in early modern drama, M. Channing Linthicum describes Shakespeare as follows: "Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists mentioned in their plays most of the colours known to their age. Shakespeare was the master colourist". Unlike Italian which used "coloritore" in the 16th century, the word colourist was associated to pictorial art in the English language only from 1685. The literary interpretation of "colourist" as a "writer skilled in the use of vivid and evocative language" (OED) was used in English in 1759. Although there is no denying that colours play an important part in Shakespeare's drama, one may wonder how colours could be materialized and visualized on a stage where scenery was nearly absent compared to nineteenth-century playhouses for instance. By choosing one of the latest plays by Shakespeare, The Two Noble Kinsmen (1613), written in collaboration with John Fletcher, this paper seeks to explore the different strategies used by early modern dramatists to perform colours within the material boundaries of the Jacobean stage, whether it be for open-air performances or for private playhouses. In those days, performing colours relied on the constant circulation between colours on the page and colours on the stage. In this study, the term "theatrical chromaticity" will be used in the wake of the phrase "poetics of colours" that is applicable to the poetical representation of colours. Unlike prose or poetry, theatrical chromaticity results from the combination of what I will term on the one hand "verbal colours", that is, colour terms written in dialogues and, on the other hand, "stage colours" appearing in scenery, on costumes or stage properties. In order to explore the construction of theatrical chromaticity in early modern drama, this paper will highlight three issues in The Two Noble Kinsmen when materiality and immateriality interplay. Act 2 scene 2, located in a garden, is a prime example of the use of flowers (here narcissus and rose) as a theatrical property than can be materialised on stage in different ways. The following point that will be raised is the performance of the colour green in this play, that can be in motion (green dresses) or imaginary (the sound of the green song). At last, the portrait scene in act 4 reveals the theatrical challenges of showing colours that cannot be seen on stage.

**Bio**: Armelle Sabatier is Senior Lecturer at Université Paris-Panthéon-Assas. She is a member of the research group VALE at Sorbonne Université. She is specialized in early modern literature, her main field of research being intermediality and colour studies. She has published many articles and chapters on visual arts and also colours in Shakespeare. She is the author of Shakespeare and Visual Culture. A Dictionary (London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016). She has also co-edited with Camilla Caporicci , The Art of Picturing in Early Modern English Literature (New York and London, Routledge, Routledge Studies in Shakespeare, 2019). Her next monograph explores the colour red in Shakespeare's narrative poems (provisional title: Fleurs de Sang. Poétiques du rouge dans les poèmes narratifs de Shakespeare).

**Nora Galland, Université de Bretagne Occidentale**

**Chiaroscuro Aesthetics in Early Modern Drama: Race, Gender and Class**

Although Moorish maidservants in early modern English drama have been extensively examined, recently by Ambereen Dadabhoy (2018) and Iman Sheeha (2022), the relationship they have with their white mistresses has been underexplored. This paper aims to fill this critical gap to focus on the relation between female blackness and whiteness in three plays, The Knight of Malta (1618) by Fletcher, Field and Massinger, The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba (1606) by Beaumont and Fletcher, and last but not least The White Devil (1611) by Webster. What is the dramatic function of chromatic thinking in these plays? Chiaroscuro aesthetics will be analysed through an intersectional approach connecting race, gender and class to understand the politics and the poetics of colour which pervade the three plays of the corpus. This paper intends to determine the role of racial stereotypes and racist dramatic traditions in the characterization of the Black maidservants Abdella, Zanche and Zanthia on the one hand, and on the other to highlight the delineation of female whiteness. Paradoxically, Blackness appears more transparent than whiteness which tends to be opaque and elusive in comparison. To what extent do race, gender, and class intersect so that we can see through Blackness and not through whiteness? Because whiteness is presented as unmarked, unnoticed and universal, it is more opaque than Blackness which is semiotically saturated and easily identified. Drawing from premodern critical race studies, and more specifically premodern critical whiteness studies, this paper posits that the qualities of Blackness and whiteness, i.e. the chiaroscuro aesthetics, in the three plays, are overturned in the construction of womanhood through class – whiteness, which seems to be transparent at first sight, turns out to be more opaque than blackness.

**Bio:** Dr Nora Galland is a Teaching and Research Fellow at the University of Western Britanny, France. She is working on Premodern Critical Race Studies, verbal violence, insults and slurs, and more generally on otherness and cultural margins. She is also interested in the intersection of critical race with ecocriticism, but also with gender, class, sexuality, and disability. She is currently working on her first monograph Racist Abuse in Early Modern English Drama: From Racist Weapon to Antiracist Shield (forthcoming 2027, Bloomsbury).

## Panel 8: Chromatic Epistemologies

**Elodie Ripoll, Universität Trier**

**A Literary History through Colours**

While colour notation in literature has mainly been analysed in terms of close reading, distant reading can help to shed some new light on literary history. For example, there is a general increase in the number of colour words in the French novel between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hyperonyms (or basic colour terms) increase while hyponyms multiply in a more significant way. This phenomenon has implications for both narration and description: Hyperonyms have a wider "symbolic field" (Pastoureau), but remain

vague shades, whereas hyponyms have a very limited "symbolic field" and a more complex visual function, since hue is as important as brightness and saturation. In consequence, colour terms tend to emphasise a visual function as opposed to a merely symbolic function, as was previously the case. This increase correlates with the emergence of a new visual epistemology which also reflects with rare acuity the tensions between narration and description and the progressive legitimisation of the novel as a genre.

A similar approach could be applied to other periods but this would require new methodologies. While tools such as Frantext are only capable of analysing hyperonyms (as a short list), computational literary studies are developing new tools that could help investigating hyponyms, a vocabulary that is far more elusive due to its limitless nature.
In my paper I want to present an overview of new quantitative analyses conducted from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Additionally, I aim to present initial exploratory results on hyponyms and formulate new hypotheses on literary history.

**Bio:** Élodie Ripoll is a lecturer in digital humanities at the University of Trier. Her doctoral thesis *Penser la couleur en littérature. Explorations romanesques des Lumières au réalisme* (cotutelle Freie Universität Berlin / EHESS) was published in 2018 by Classiques Garnier and won the Kurt-Ringger-Stiftung Prize of the Mainz Academy of Science and Literature. Her work focuses mainly on colours, animals and literary *topoi*. She was vice-president of the Société d'Analyse de la Topique Romanesque (SATOR) from 2019 to 2022, then secretary from 2022. She is also editor-annotator of ENCCRE (Edition Numérique Collaborative et CRitique de l'*Encyclopédie* de Diderot et D'Alembert) in charge of articles on colours and is part of the editorial team of the *Journal of Computational Literary Studies* (JCLS).

**Arnaud Dubois, CNRS**

**"A Biological Classification of the Colours of Living Organisms": Alfred Russel Wallace and the Categorisation of the Colours of Nature.**

In 1877, Alfred Russel Wallace published two pioneering articles in *The American Naturalist* on "the colours of animals and plants," where he established six functional categories of coloration that remain highly relevant in biology today (Caro, 2017): protective colours, warning colours, mimicry, sexual colours, 'typical colours,' and attractive colours in flowers and fruits. By creating this revolutionary classification, Wallace demonstrated that coloration in nature is not merely decorative but serves critical adaptive functions shaped by evolution. Protective colours, for instance, enable organisms to blend into their surroundings and avoid predators, while warning colours deter attacks by signalling toxicity. Mimicry involves imitating other species to deceive predators or prey, whereas sexual colours play a key role in attracting mates and enhancing reproductive success. In contrast, typical colours may differentiate species without a clear adaptive function, and attractive colours in flowers and fruits draw in pollinators and animals, facilitating pollination and seed dispersal. Wallace's framework was ground-breaking in its understanding of the ecological significance of coloration, showing for the first time that colour is one of the most common forms of signalling in the natural world, used by organisms to convey vital information. This biological exploration reveals that, in nature,

colour functions not as a static sign but as a dynamic, adaptive signal. Unlike conventional signs, colour signals are context-dependent, with meanings that vary based on the perceiver's sensory capabilities and ecological interactions. In this presentation, I will explore how this 'signalling perspective' challenges the classical, simplistic view of anthropological colour classification as a linguistic sign with a fixed meaning (Young, 2018), and instead highlights its fluid, adaptive significance shaped by ecological dynamics.

**Arnaud Dubois** is an anthropologist and researcher at the CNRS. He holds a doctorate in Social Anthropology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and an MFA from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He has been a visiting researcher at the Musée du Quai Branly, a Fyssen Foundation postdoctoral fellow at University College London, and a curator at the Musée des Arts et Métiers. His research interests lie in the anthropology of colour, exploring the intersections between aesthetics, technology, and society, as well as the connections between art, craft, and industry. He has conducted extensive fieldwork and archival research on colour practices within artistic, craft, and industrial communities across Europe, particularly in France. He has authored and co-edited 10 books and special issues, published in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and has curated several research exhibitions in museums and art centers in France.

**Joyce Dixon, University of Edinburgh**

**Charles Darwin's Colourscapes: Chromatic Notation on the Voyage of H.M.S Beagle**

This paper interrogates an extensive corpus of written materials relating to the 1831–6 voyage of H.M.S. Beagle. Charles Darwin's journals, notes and observations, compiled during the Beagle's circumnavigatory expedition, serve as a rich reservoir of chromatic language. As unofficial naturalist to the voyage, Darwin was meticulous in his notetaking, penning hundreds of pages of scientific observations based on biological, geological and meteorological encounters. He also kept a journal and notebooks documenting his day-to-day impressions of the scenery and inhabitants of the southern hemisphere.

Darwin's Beagle manuscripts evidence the application of a complex repertoire of textual filters, through which the young naturalist processed his transient colour perceptions. These range from precise binomial colour terms – such as 'Aurora Red', 'Orpiment Orange' and 'Gamboge Yellow' – to affective and sensorial descriptions of land and seascapes. Navigating between chromatic registers, Darwin's writings traverse literary and scientific expression, enlisting both poetics and precision in the pursuit of accurate colour notation.

In this paper I examine iterations of colour across the Beagle's archival record and in subsequent published accounts of the voyage. I explore the nuanced functions of Darwin's chromatic language, depending on the source, purpose, and the intended readership of the document in which it was inscribed. In doing so, I unpick the significance of colour notation as a crucial mechanism in the refinement of Darwin's observational practices, and for the broader development of scientific knowledge-making in the nineteenth century.

**Bio:** Joyce Dixon is a post-doctoral researcher with a PhD in History of Art from the University of Edinburgh. Her research explores the intersections of art, science and book history in the nineteenth century, with a particular focus on the visual, material and print cultures of British Natural History. Joyce has presented her research at the Royal College of Art, the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, among other venues. Her research to date has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the British Society for the History of Science and the Association for Art History.