

CALL FOR PAPERS

One-Day Symposium

The Afterlives of Literary Classics (1):

Textual and Iconographic Re-interpretations and Re-imaginings

14th November 2025

Université de Lorraine, Nancy, France

The research unit IDEA (Interdisciplinarité Dans les Etudes Anglophones / Interdisciplinarity in English Studies) at the Université de Lorraine, in France, is delighted to announce a call for papers for the first symposium in a series of upcoming international symposia and conferences devoted to **‘The Afterlives of Literary Classics’**, and more particularly English-language texts. This pluriannual, interdisciplinary project seeks to explore the various ways in which literary classics have been reinterpreted and reimagined across space, time, cultures and media, and to better understand the phenomenon of literary afterlives.

Literary classics are indeed characterised by their continuous and global presence, in their original form but also in other, derived forms – such as translations, illustrations, adaptations or even by-products, to name but a few. These forms of consumption and perpetuation of literary texts and their authors have frequently been named ‘afterlives’ by academics, notably in the last few decades. Since the late 1990s, a number of critical works have indeed envisioned the afterlives of a book, a character, an author or even a period of time, or also an artistic movement or a literary genre. Similarly, several symposia and conferences originating from a variety of academic disciplines have looked into this phenomenon yet without ever really defining it. The term **‘afterlife/afterlives’**, which comes from German art history (*Nachleben*, Aby Warburg), therefore remains vague, being used at times to refer to adaptations, appropriations and/or interpretations (Blyth, Dow and Hanson, Grossman and Stephens, Mackie, Mazierska, Howey, Storskog, Vanacker and Wynne), or as a synonym for reception, influence and/or legacy (Kingsley-Smith, Morse, Tsagalis, Wichelns), or even sometimes to refer to all of the above (Clark, Forni, Regis and Wynne, Stahlberg). The notion thus fails to relate to a precise and useful definition. In an unprecedented categorisation of textual and post-textual afterlives in the introduction to *Transmedia Creatures* (2018), Francesca Saggini noted that ‘it is essential to provide a working definition of the concept of “afterlife” as it relates to issues of reproducibility, transmissibility, adaptation, and cultural legacy – while no longer relying on fidelity and authenticity as guiding principles’ (2).

The goal of this project is precisely to try and offer a definition, or perhaps rather definitions, of literary afterlives through **a series of symposia and conferences** which will allow scholars interested in the subject to reflect on the different forms which the phenomenon has taken and the different meanings which the notion can encapsulate. It will also enable us to examine the various forms of afterlives that have been produced by writers, artists and amateurs alike – textual and iconographic (**Autumn 2025**), as well as audio-visual and material (**Spring 2026**). This project also aims at establishing literary afterlives as valuable objects of study, and afterlife/ves studies as an academic discipline in its own right. The ensuing conference (**Spring 2027**) will be devoted to ‘Literary Afterlives and Literary Afterlife/ves Studies: Towards a New Discipline’.

The first symposium, **‘The Afterlives of Literary Classics (1): Textual and Iconographic Re-interpretations and Re-imaginings’** (**14th November 2025**), aims at considering textual and

iconographic afterlives in two consecutive panels. **The first panel** will focus on examples of **textual afterlives of literary classics**. It will concern prequels, coquels and sequels of canonical literary texts, as well as some of their rewritings as novels, short stories, poems, plays, children's books, fanfictions and other textual or digital versions. It will examine how various authors have recycled or upcycled previous works in light of their own socio-historical contexts, sometimes transforming these works into different genres. One of the aims of this panel will be to clarify the plethora of terms used to refer to literary afterlives, such as 'rewriting', 'adaptation', 'retelling', 'revoicing', 're-imagining', 'versioning', 'revisiting', 'reinventing', 'reworking', 'restorying' (Scott), 'reprising' and yet others – a series of terms which, like 'afterlives', are used rather vaguely and interchangeably and which could and should therefore be more clearly defined, especially in relation to each other. Speakers are also invited to consider notions of intertextuality (Kristeva) and hypertextuality (Genette), and especially the links between hypotexts and hypertexts in cases of literary afterlives. At the junction of book history, textual scholarship and intertextuality, this first panel will enable us to study one facet of literary texts' afterlives.

The second panel will focus on **iconographic and visual afterlives of literary classics**. By considering the transformation of a literary text into an iconographic or a visual work of art or amateur production, speakers are invited to reflect on the notions of intermediality and transmediality, and to focus on the different modes of relationship between text and image. The inherent interdisciplinarity of the panel will invite scholars specialised in adaptation studies, book history, visual studies and illustration studies to reflect on possible definitions of 'afterlife/afterlives' through the study of illustrations, comics and graphic novels, and other visual arts (sculpture, painting and digital art).

The second symposium, 'The Afterlives of Literary Classics (2): Visual and Material Re-interpretations and Re-imaginings' (27th March 2026), will examine some of the visual, audio-visual and cultural afterlives of literary classics, while the subsequent conference (**Spring 2027**) will aim at synthesising and expanding upon the perspectives proposed by scholars from various disciplinary fields, and at offering a workable framework for the study of literary afterlives worldwide. The calls for papers for these subsequent events will be launched in due time.

For **'The Afterlives of Literary Classics (1): Textual and Iconographic Re-interpretations and Re-imaginings'** (14th November 2025), we invite proposals that address, but are not limited to, the following issues and topics:

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
- Translations and their impact on the afterlife of a text

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 its evolution
- Forgotten or marginalised texts and their resurgence
- The role of literary criticism in shaping the afterlife of texts

Literary Legacies:

- The enduring influence of authors and their works on subsequent generations
- Biographical studies and their role in shaping an author's literary afterlife
- Literary estates and the management of an author's legacy

Submission Guidelines: We welcome submissions from established scholars, early career researchers, graduate students and independent researchers. Please note that papers will not exceed 20 minutes. Shorter presentations (10-15 minutes) are also welcome.

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_Afterlives2025.

Submission Deadline: 30th March 2025

Notification of Acceptance: 30th June 2025

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

For any inquiries or further information, please contact the organisers at nathalie.colle@univ-lorraine.fr and Pauline.schwaller@univ-lorraine.fr.

We look forward to receiving your contributions.

Bibliographical Elements

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