

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Henry James Society Tenth International Conference Vancouver, British Columbia The University of British Columbia 15-17 July 2026

Jamesian Ecosystems / Jamesian Organisms

In “The Art of Fiction” (1884), Henry James wrote, “A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like every other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts.” In the same essay, he conceives of the novel in geographical terms, cautioning that “The critic who over the close texture of a finished work will pretend to trace a geography of items will mark some frontiers as artificial ... as any that have been known to history.”

James’s conception of the novel as a “living thing” inhabiting a physical landscape invites us to think about the writer and his work in terms of relationships between organisms and their environments. Derived from ecology, a term coined in 1875—a year that could be said to mark the beginning of James’s career as a professional writer of fiction—ecosystem refers not only to “A biological system composed of all the organisms found in a particular physical environment, interacting with it and with each other” but, more broadly, to “a complex system resembling this.” Similarly, ecology, which “deals with the relationships between living organisms and their environment,” in its extended use, might refer to “the relationships themselves, esp. those of a specified organism” (OED).

We invite proposals for papers that explore any aspect of James’s life and work in terms of living systems (literal or metaphorical), environments, interactions, and interrelationships, including but not limited to the following:

- Literary texts as living things that spring from “germs” and develop according to their own “principle of growth”—
 - Character and narrative space
 - Features that convey for James a convincing narrative
 - How James’s critical writing informs our reading of his fiction (and vice versa)
 - James’s incorporation of theatrical devices
 - James’s use of colloquial speech in fiction
 - James’s cultivation of (free) indirect discourse
- Jamesian evolutions and adaptations
- Ecocritical approaches
- Relationships between landscapes and their inhabitants
 - Nature and nature writing
 - Gardens and cultivation
 - Humans and animals
- Relationships between people and built environments
- Mobility, circulation, movement, and exchange within / between environments
- James and the publishing ecosystem
- James and other “ecosystems”
- Social and professional networks / networking

- The local, regional, national, and global as frameworks for thinking about complex systems of interrelationships

Please send a **250-word abstract** of a 20-minute paper along with a **short professional biography** to Ivana Cikes (cikesi@douglascollege.ca) and Sarah Wadsworth (sarah.wadsworth@marquette.edu) by **Nov. 15, 2025**. Please note any AV requests.