

CALL FOR CHAPTERS

TITLE: *Siri Hustvedt, Gender, and the Critical Medical Humanities*

Rationale and Scope

Siri Hustvedt is one of the most important contemporary American writers working at the intersection of literature, science, medicine, philosophy, and feminist thought. Internationally acclaimed for works such as *What I Loved*, *The Sorrows of an American*, *The Summer Without Men*, *Memories of the Future*, and *The Blazing World*, as well as for her influential essays and memoirs, including *The Shaking Woman; or, A History of My Nerves*, *A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women*, *The Delusions of Certainty*, and, most recently, *Ghost Stories: A Memoir of Love & Grief* (2026), Hustvedt has consistently explored questions of embodiment, illness, memory, trauma, gender, care, and the complex relationships among artistic, scientific, and medical ways of knowing.

Over the past two decades, Hustvedt's work has generated a substantial and increasingly interdisciplinary body of scholarship. Monographs and edited collections have examined, among other topics, relationality, visuality, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, gender, neuroscience, and aesthetics. Particularly noteworthy is the influential collection *Zones of Focused Ambiguity in Siri Hustvedt's Works: Interdisciplinary Essays* (2016), which demonstrated the richness and diversity of contemporary Hustvedt scholarship. However, despite the centrality of illness, embodiment, neuroscience, trauma, gender, and care throughout her oeuvre, relatively little attention has been devoted to Hustvedt's work from the perspective of Medical Humanities and, more specifically, Critical Medical Humanities.

This edited volume does not seek to provide a comprehensive overview of Hustvedt's entire oeuvre. Instead, it focuses specifically on those dimensions of her fiction, essays, memoirs, and interdisciplinary work that speak most directly to contemporary debates in Medical and Critical Medical Humanities: illness, embodiment, trauma, grief, care, neuroscience, gender, patient agency, medical epistemology, and the entanglement of scientific, social and humanistic forms of knowledge.

In recent years, scholars have identified the emergence of a "second wave" of Medical Humanities, commonly referred to as the Critical Medical Humanities (CMH), which represents a shift away from the more instrumental aims traditionally associated with the field.¹ While the "first wave" of Medical Humanities was characterized by the three Es (ethics, education, and experience), Critical Medical Humanities introduces a fourth E: entanglement. From this perspective, medicine and the humanities are not separate domains that merely complement one another; rather, they are deeply and irretrievably entangled in the biological, cultural, social, and political dimensions of human existence.

¹ See, in particular, William Viney, Felicity Callard, and Angela Woods, "Critical Medical Humanities: Embracing Entanglement, Taking Risks," *Medical Humanities* 41.1 (2015): 2–7; Anne Whitehead, Angela Woods, Sarah Atkinson, Jane Macnaughton, and Jennifer Richards, eds., *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); and Julia Kristeva, Marie Rose Moro, John Ødemark, and Eivind Engebretsen, "Cultural Crossings of Care: An Appeal to the Medical Humanities," *Medical Humanities* 44.1 (2018): 55–58.

This understanding of Health/Medical Humanities as a bidirectional, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural space of inquiry is particularly useful for approaching Hustvedt's work. Her fiction and essays repeatedly challenge traditional binaries (mind/body, science/art, reason/emotion, illness/health, doctor/patient) while interrogating the cultural assumptions that underpin biomedical knowledge. Drawing simultaneously on psychiatry, neuroscience, psychoanalysis, philosophy, literature, and feminist theory, Hustvedt offers a uniquely rich corpus through which to examine how scientific and humanistic forms of knowledge continually shape and transform one another.

Moreover, Hustvedt's work is particularly significant for contemporary Critical Medical Humanities because of its sustained engagement with gender. Her writings repeatedly expose the gendered assumptions embedded in medical knowledge, psychiatric diagnosis, scientific authority, caregiving practices, and the social experience of illness. Questions of embodiment, vulnerability, reproductive experience, mental health, trauma, and the medicalization of women's bodies occupy a central position throughout her oeuvre, making her an especially compelling subject for feminist and gender-oriented approaches to health and illness.

The publication of Hustvedt's most recent work, *Ghost Stories: A Memoir of Love & Grief* (2026), further expands the relevance of her oeuvre for Critical Medical Humanities. Written in the aftermath of the death of her husband, Paul Auster, this hybrid memoir offers a profound meditation on grief, bereavement, trauma, memory, caregiving, aging, and the embodied experience of loss. Like *The Shaking Woman*, it interrogates the relationship between lived experience and scientific explanation, while exploring the ways in which mourning is simultaneously physiological, psychological, cultural, and narrative. In this sense, *Ghost Stories* provides a compelling example of the "entanglement" that lies at the heart of Critical Medical Humanities.

Finally, given Hustvedt's own transnational intellectual and cultural positioning (as an American writer of Norwegian heritage whose work traverses European and North American philosophical, literary, psychological, and medical traditions) this edited volume particularly welcomes comparative and transnational perspectives. We are especially interested in contributions that situate Hustvedt's work within broader international debates on medicine, illness, trauma, embodiment, gender, and care.

This edited collection seeks to bring together scholars working in literary studies, medical and health humanities, gender studies, philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, history of medicine, neuroscience, disability studies, and related disciplines in order to explore Hustvedt's work as a privileged site for contemporary (Critical) Medical Humanities inquiry.

Suggested Topics and Approaches

Contributors are invited to explore any aspect of Siri Hustvedt's fiction, essays, memoirs, and interdisciplinary work through the lens of Medical Humanities and Critical Medical Humanities. We welcome contributions that examine the ways in which Hustvedt's writing interrogates the relationships among illness, embodiment, gender, trauma, grief, care, memory, and scientific knowledge.

Possible areas of inquiry include, but are not limited to:

- illness narratives, autobiography, and autopathography, particularly in relation to *The Shaking Woman* and other autobiographical texts;
- neurological and mental illness, psychosomatic experience, trauma, and psychological suffering, including approaches from psychiatry, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, cognitive science, trauma theory, and affect theory;
- grief, bereavement, caregiving, memory, and the embodied experience of mourning, particularly in *Ghost Stories*;
- gender, embodiment, and feminist approaches to health and illness, including medical sexism, the medical gaze, and the medicalization of women's bodies;
- phenomenology, mind-body relations, vulnerability, dependency, relationality, and the ethics of care;
- narrative medicine and narrative psychiatry, including storytelling as a form of knowledge, healing, and care;
- patient agency, epistemic injustice, disability, and critiques of medical and scientific authority;
- intersections among literature, art, science, and medicine, including comparative and transnational approaches;
- dialogues between Hustvedt and other writers, philosophers, clinicians, scientists, or theorists working at the intersections of literature, medicine, and culture.

We particularly welcome proposals that engage with Hustvedt's recent work *Ghost Stories* and contributions that bring together literary criticism with approaches from medicine, psychology, philosophy, gender studies, disability studies, neuroscience, sociology, or related disciplines.

Submission Guidelines

- Abstracts of approximately 300 words, together with a short biographical note (100–150 words), should be submitted by **30 November 2026**
- Abstracts should clearly identify the primary text(s) to be discussed, the chapter's central argument, and its theoretical or methodological approach.
- Contributors will be notified of acceptance by **12 January 2027**
- Full essays of approximately 6,000 words will be due by **31 May 2027**
- All submissions must be original, unpublished work and written in English.
- Following acceptance of their abstracts, contributors will submit full chapters for peer review and revise them as necessary in response to editorial and reviewers' feedback. Acceptance of an abstract does not guarantee final acceptance of the chapter, which will depend on the outcome of the peer-review process and editorial approval.
- Citation style will be confirmed upon acceptance.

Publication

The editors are currently developing the collection for submission to a leading international academic press in Medical Humanities and related fields.

Editors:

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Please use the subject line:

“Hustvedt CFP Abstract Submission – [Surname]”

We look forward to receiving proposals for a collection intended to offer the first sustained collective study devoted specifically to Siri Hustvedt’s contribution to the Medical and Critical Medical Humanities.