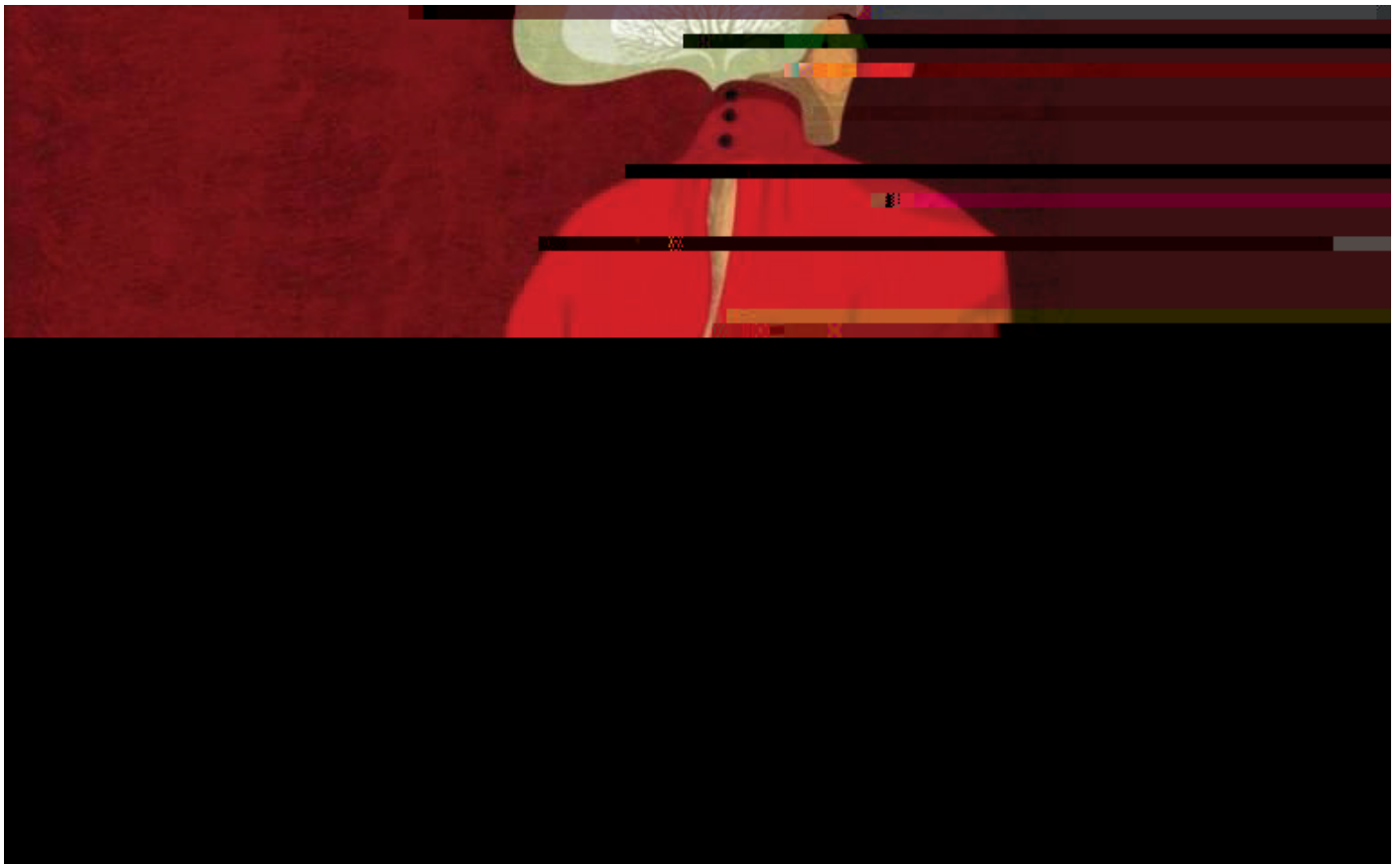


# Material Selves: Gender, Health and Performance

15–16th June 2022, UCL  
Programme and Book of Abstracts

Hybrid Symposium, Online (Zoom: sent to registered participants' email) and In Person at:  
The Common Ground, Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), South Wing, Wilkins Building  
UCL, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT



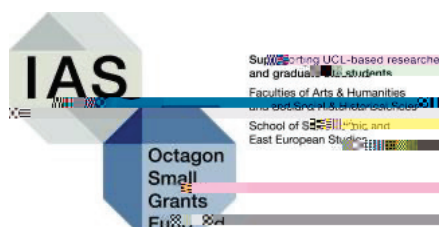
Main image credit: Rita Levi-Montalcini: Wellcome Collection

## Symposium organisers:

Leah Sidi (UCL) and Verónica Rodríguez (Buckinghamshire New University)

## Symposium contact email:

[genderhealthperformance@gmail.com](mailto:genderhealthperformance@gmail.com)



# Day 1

## Wednesday 15th June

9.30-10.00	Registration of In-person Attendees and Welcome by Symposium Co-organisers Leah Sidi (UCL) and Verónica Rodríguez (Buckinghamshire New University)
10.00-11.10	<b>Keynote 1:</b> <b>A Picture of Loneliness: Masculinity and the Art of Lost Connections</b> anna harpin (University of Warwick)  <b>Chair: Leah Sidi</b>
11.10-11.30	Coffee Break
11.30-1.00	<b>Panel 1: Clinical Landscapes</b>  <i>The Most Beautiful</i>

# Day 1

## Wednesday 15th June

2.00-3.30

### Panel 2: Transcending Health and Illness

*Thinking about Music and the Mind from the Periphery. A Psychosocial Introduction to Fluid Conceptions of Music*

Luisa Boada Bayona (UCL)

*Dance, Disability and Premodern Medicine*

Shireen Hamza (Harvard University), Maggie Bridger (University of Illinois, Chicago) and Sydney Erlikh (University of Illinois, Chicago)

*Performance, Books, Breath and Anxiety 2022*

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# Day 2

## Thursday 16th June

10.00-11.10

**Keynote 2:**

**Embodied Knowledges – Performance-making as a Means of Redressing the Act of Being Vulnerabilised**

Katharine Low (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London)

**Chair: Verónica Rodríguez**

11.10-11.30

Coffee break

11.30-12.30

**Panel 4: Performances of Scrutiny**

*Performing Health and Gender Via Human Rights Scrutiny*

Kate Seear, Sean Mulcahy (La Trobe University)

**Chair: Luisa Boada Bayona**

\*This panel will finish sooner than expected due to unforeseen circumstances (panellists cancelling due to health reasons). This panel will finish around 12pm, which will give you an extra 30 minutes, making your lunch break 1 hour and a half long. For those attending in person, take an opportunity to enjoy one of the most charming areas of London, Bloomsbury!

12.30-1.30

Lunch: Lunch is not provided, but there will be a list of nearby places to get your lunch and stretch your legs!

1.30-3.00

**Panel 5: Bodies of Excess**

Baking Cake Daddy: *Whipping Fat-phobia into Fat-positivity with a Sprinkling of Queer Subversive Fun*  
Ross Anderson-Doherty (actor, singer and theatre-maker based in Belfast), Jonathan Grafam (Melbourne-based dramaturg and performer) and Alyson Campbell (University of Melbourne)

*The Ante-Partum and Post-Partum Vulnerability of an Enceinte Being: Articulating Chaos, Quest and Identity Dissonance through Narrativization*

# Programme

## Symposium

“Material Selves: Gender, Health and Performance”, UCL

## Day 2

Thursday 16th June

3.10-4.30

**Panel 6: Visions of the Self**

*Theatre of the Self: Staging Ill Health in Visual Autopathographies*

Claire Hampton (University of Wolverhampton)

*Focusing Screen*

Sarah Sudhof (Cuban-American interdisciplinary artist based in Houston)

**Chair: Alex Mermikides**

4.30-5.00

Coffee Break

5.00-6.30

**Panel 7: Bloody Embodiments**

*Dangerous Desire and the Performance of Blood in Julia Ducournau's "Raw" and "Titane"*

Camille Intson (University of Toronto, St George)

*28 Days Greater: Embodying Acts of Unhiding*

Carolyn Defrin (Artist and researcher based in the UK)

*Performing Endometriosis, a Rehearsed Reading Directed by Magdalena Mosteanu*

Verónica Rodríguez (Buckinghamshire New University)

**Chair: Leah Sidi**

## **Book of Abstracts**

### **Symposium “Material Selves: Gender, Health and Performance”, UCL**

#### **Day 1**

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June

#### **Keynote 1**

## Panel 1:

### Clinical Landscapes

11.30-1.00

#### **The Most Beautiful Invention of the Sick: A Long Durational Performance Project Exploring Illness as a Condition of Thinking Despina Zacharopoulou (Royal College of Art, London)**

"The most beautiful invention of the sick," is a phrase borrowed by Klossowski, as mentioned in his book *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (1969), to characterize Nietzsche's philosophy as a consequence of his psychosomatic condition and the care rituals he invented in the course of his self-treatment.

The present paper uses as its main case study my suggested ongoing long durational performance project called: *The Most Beautiful Invention of the Sick*. It is about the idea of creating long durational performance events at psychiatric hospitals, to raise questions on the performance-philosophy entanglement within institutional environments of mental illness. How might embodied practices - such as

**The Hospital Ward as Theatre: Orchestrating Spaces and Bodies in Nursing and Performance**  
**Alex Mermikides (King's College London)**

The hospital is sometimes imagined as a sort of theatre[1] but what happens when this theatrical metaphor is made literal? This paper introduces a dance-theatre performance, *Careful*, created and performed in a simulated 6-bay hospital ward at Kingston University. In directing *Careful* I became starkly aware of how the ward orchestrates nurses and patients' gazes and how these gazes objectify and aestheticize their interactions. In the performance, we put the audience (some of them nurses) in the patients' beds. The performers, playing nurses, addressed them as though they were patients, breaching the fourth wall that usually divides spectator and performer [2]. In this paper, I analyse theatrical devices such as these from a feminist post-human perspective [3]. This analysis reveals how medical spaces, simulated or otherwise, determine the orchestration of bodies, behaviour and being in ways that are gendered. Through this I evidence the contribution that feminist performance practice can make to the medical humanities' critical reconceptualising medical spaces and their occupants [4]. The paper contains video clips from the performance.

Notes:

[1] See for example, Sinclair, S. (1997), *Making Doctors: An Institutional Apprenticeship*, Oxford and New York: Berg Press. [2] For an audience-eye description, see Partos, H. (2016), 'Play The Part: Theatre Show Teaches Student Nurses Compassion', *The Guardian*, 14 December. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2016/dec/14/theatre-show-teaching-st:ri0rhe Guardian>,



## **Mothering at the Margins: Staging Precarious Mothers and Mental Illness** **Leah Sidi (UCL)**

Separated by a gap of 27 years, *Jordan* (1992) and *Iphigenia in Splott* (2015) offer, on the surface, dramaturgically similar critiques of poverty and motherhood in contemporary UK. Both plays are one-woman monologues, which describe the loss of motherhood under the conditions of marginalisation and poverty. *Jordan* was co-written by Anna Reynolds and Moira Buffini and draws on Reynolds's experience of incarceration to stage the true story of 'Jordan's' experience of post-partum psychosis, infanticide and incarceration. Gary Owen's *Iphigenia in Splott* re-imagines the Iphigenia myth in the context of post-austerity England. The protagonist Effie recounts her story of pregnancy loss, neglect and lack of compensation at the hands of state healthcare. She becomes the *pharmakos* who is sacrificed for the smooth running of the state. In both plays marginalisation and deprivation render motherhood an impossibility.

This paper examines the historical relationship between these plays and offers a situated reading of the representation of outsider motherhood in both works in the context of post-COVID19 writing on care and loneliness (Care 2021, Sern et al., 2022). Understanding Owen's play as an example of feminist restaging (Aston 2020), I suggest that by drawing on the feminist monologue/one-woman show form Owen posits a dramaturgical through-line between post-2008 austerity policies and the socio-political conditions of late second wave feminism. *Iphigenia in Splott*

## Panel 2:

### Transcending Health and Illness

2.00-3.30

#### **Thinking about Music and the Mind from the Periphery. A Psychosocial Introduction to Fluid Conceptions of Music** **Luisa Boada Bayona (UCL)**

Music is generally understood as a cultural product, defined in most Western musicological and philosophical approaches as a universal, abstract, and often crystallised concept that includes or excludes certain types of sonic phenomena depending on whether they meet or not inclusion criteria for being part of the definition of music or not. As a constantly changing phenomenon, music contradicts these universal definitions and surpasses the idea that music can be abstracted from its context and practice. I suggest that music does not have only one definition but many, depending on the context, situation and actions involved. Moreover, music can be thought of first as an embodied experience – a phenomenological situation that involves the complexities of human existence in the interactions of biological rhythmicity, emotional exchanges with harmonies of being, and vocal exchanges that map out melodic trajectories. When music is understood, as indigenous sociologist Silvia Rivera suggests, as a ‘talisman’ concept, paradoxical tensions of musical experience are possible, and music can be expanded beyond its cultural significance to make it part of the repertoire of human experience. The work of musicologist Christopher Small is relevant in this migration from crystallised definitions and suggests that music is something we do. ‘Musicking’, as Small suggests, is a verb, i.e. an action that involves people, contexts and collective experiences. Considering music as an action, not a noun, is related to feminist and queer musicology (particularly the work of Susan McClary and Elizabeth Wood), who question the lack of female representation in music performance and research and question the traditional canons on which music is defined academically. Queer Musicology takes a critical turn toward social, personal, and embodied dimensions of music motivated by the need for questioning heteronormative practices in the discipline.

These ideas that question traditional canons in the definitions of music (from indigenous-decolonial sociology, new and critical musicology, feminist and queer musicology) are relevant threads to my central hypothesis, which claims that there is something musical about being humans and that musical aspect of humanity affects the way we develop psychologically and emotionally. If music is not understood as a complex, fluid concept, then this musical hypothesis of emotional development would not be possible. I take two particular aspects of development as directly affected by musical aspects: 1 the notion of oneself – phenomenology of being, and 2 the recognition of someone else’s emotional experience. The musical developmental trajectory touches on core aspects of being and represents relevant insights for thinking musically about humans. I aim to explore the overlaps between music definitions and practice with psychological development by presenting a theoretical idea that thinks critically about the established notions of music.

**Luisa Boada Bayona** is a London-based Colombian Psychologist, currently doing a PhD in Health Humanities at University College London. Her project is mainly focused on designing a theoretical framework that studies the psychobiological and emotional sources of music and how these have an impact on emotional and socio-cultural interactions, including creativity, music-making and music appreciation, but more importantly, as a vehicle for understanding and mapping possibilities for mental health and social restoration through creativity and emotional engagement with individuals and communities. Luisa trained as a clinical psychologist and has experience working with severe mental health conditions in psychiatric hospitals, particularly with victims of the Colombian armed conflict. Although her training is in psychology, she has studied music and fundamentals of music therapy. As a Health Humanities researcher, she has been seeking novel ways of understanding health and illness in society and how methods from the arts and humanities may bring insights to psychological practices and theories.

## **Dance, Disability and Premodern Medicine**

**Shireen Hamza (Harvard University), Maggie Bridger (University of Illinois, Chicago) and Sydney Erlikh (University of Illinois, Chicago)**

How can premodern medicine enable dancers to harness, reflect on, and subvert their own experiences as patients? Historian and artist Shireen Hamza seeks to explore this question through the composition of a series of text-scores, based on her research in the history of medicine in the medieval Islamic world. Each "text-score," a score for performers written in plain language rather than notation, is inspired by a different experience of illness or therapeutic modality from this historical research.

The study of premodern medicine enables historians to view interactions between patients and medical practitioners beyond present-day configurations, especially

**Performance, Books, Breath and Anxiety 2022**  
**Amanda Couch (University for the Creative Arts Farnham)**

I have suffered with anxiety for as long as I can remember. I worried incessantly as a child and was particularly fearful of poisons, chemicals and germs. I speak openly about anxiety in my teaching, however, until now my art/research practice has not explored this aspect of health. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic my mental health suffered acutely, and my work began to reflect this inner landscape. Using autobiographic methods, I will chart the personal with the theoretical through three of my projects where performance intersects with anxiety.

Firstly, my artist book/performance prompt, *Huwawa in the Everyday: An Almanac* which mimics the function of a medieval folding almanac bidding us to attend to our interconnected relationship with the world. *Huwawa...* initiates a feminist durational performance practice, which helps me to stay present mitigating against anxiety and the obsessive and repetitive thoughts that I experience.

*Becoming with Wheat: Photosynthesis/Respiration Collaborations* were collaborative performances made during the first national lockdown in June/July 2020 enacting the exchange and transformation of carbon dioxide and oxygen between plant and human. My kneeling over the wheat and taking deep breaths for a few minutes each day not only forged a companionship with the plants but also went some way to alleviate the anxiety and agoraphobia I was feeling.

Finally, I will share the beginnings of a new project based on the Nine Herbs Charm of the Lacnunga, a collection of Anglo-Saxon medical texts. My project celebrates the plant companions that I have been foraging since the start of the pandemic to enhance my diet and minimise visits to the supermarket for fear of infection. Through writing love letters to the plants and printing directly with them, the project will be both book and performed as magical speech acts to enact change in the world.

**Amanda Couch** is an

**Panel 3:**  
**Queering/Quarrelling Gynaecology**

4.00-5.30

**The Double Life of The Pill: Embodying Ambiguous Experiences with Contraception**  
**Katie Paterson (Guildhall School of Music & Drama)**

The Pill, standing for all hormonal contraception, lives a double life. It is a technological miracle without which the liberation of women is inconceivable, an inalienable right of the modern woman; and it is a disciplining rod of creeping medicalisation that seeks to regulate the disruptive female body and bring it under male control at any cost. Heather Brook Adams and Tasha Dubriwny, amongst others, have highlighted the complex agential relationship of so-called empowering technology to women and challenged the presumption of gratitude for liberation bestowed through the prescription of body-altering hormones. Curiously absent from the literature is a lineage of performance addressing this highly embodied intervention directly. This research is a small contribution to that gap, analysing a performance piece I presented at the Barbican's Pit entitled First Bite. The piece synthesises creative analysis of feminist standpoint interviews conducted with six women of similar backgrounds, my own autobiography and my attempts to grasp basic endocrinology. Drawing on cabaret structures and verbatim methods, several elements are considered; the use of Vampire as metaphor through which to explore complex resonances across the interviews, the synthesis of experiences to foreground emotional intricacies without singling out an individual, the exploration of embodied pathography in a 'healthy' body. I argue that performance can be a powerful site for generatively absorbing polarised perspectives towards multiplicity, ambiguity and the validation of experience that sits beside the framework of what medicine chooses to value. If, within established scientific practices, it is only by reference to existing studies that our experiences can be validated, how else can we be heard? Embracing Aston's feminist unruliness within a queer, scavenging methodology, performance can work to honour the complexity of hormonetaking without succumbing to definitive claims, answering a feminist bioethicist call to 'multiple rather than unitary solutions' to

**19th Century Gynaecology and the Construction of Racialized Gender**  
**Laura Smith (University of California, Los Angeles)**

This paper considers how performance can materialize the obfuscated histories behind the production of medical knowledge. In 2017, Black Youth Project 100's activist performances at the statue of 19<sup>th</sup> century physician J. Marion Sims made visible the racial violence enacted by the "father of gynecology." Using the bodies of enslaved black women as raw materials, Sims developed medical innovations to benefit his white female patients. Sims's statue monumentalizes his contributions to prolonging white life while erasing the black suffering used to sustain it. Black Youth Project 100's activist performance visually disrupts the monument's attempted erasure of Sims's experiments on enslaved women. Through the performers' presence, they mobilize the history of the denial of the black woman's interiority and situate it in direct relation to the construction of white womanhood and the reproduction of whiteness.

Drawing on C. Riley Snorton's *Black on Both Sides*, Kyla Schuller's *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, and 19<sup>th</sup> century medical archives, this paper asks: How is

**Reading from (2021)**  
**Mojisola Adebayo (Queen Mary, University of London)**

It's a play, a performance, a ritual, about human farming, farming humans, soil and the soul, seeds and cells, selling cells in prison cells prizing open, dividing, multiplying, multi-million incisions, incarcerations, extractions and experimentations – woman-child-man, in the lab, on the slab, in the land, the plantation womb and bred'ren bred for bread, planting and planning escape from living-dead, plotting from the plot to the pot but for the dread of night doctors, organ raiders, head drillers, cigarette smoking cowboys, cops with hands in pockets and the Klu Klux Klan; it's about cancer and capital, capitalism *as* cancer, cervical carcinoma in chicken culture (and the culture of chicken), compost and re-composition, giving of veins given in vain, philosophizing the threshold of black pain, inhospitable hospitals, monitored monetary mortuaries, eugenic medical obscenities, Mississippi appendectomies and the bad

## Day 2

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June

### Keynote 2

10.00-11.10

#### **Embodied Knowledges – Performance-making as a Means of Redressing the Act of Being Vulnerabilised**

**Katharine Low (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London)**

Women's – especially women of colour – lived experiences of health are ignored and marginalised – forced onto the periphery of society's radar – not seen, not rated: overlooked. If we take the gendered experience of HIV as an example, 53% of the world's population of people living with HIV are women (UNAIDS 2021). In Sub-Saharan Africa, women and young girls make up 63% of those living with HIV (ibid). Similarly, gender-based violence and femicide are urgent public health challenges for South Africa (among many other nations). Yet, these statistics are barely attended to. This lack of acknowledgement and action both sets up a perception of vulnerability which serves to keep women in a particular state and mode of being, an enforced paralysis, and reinforces their existing vulnerability. In essence, through this disregard and lack of attention, they have been 'vulnerabilised' instead of being cast as agents in their own health narratives and experiences.

In this keynote, I discuss how this act of vulnerabilisation – of having your body vulnerabilised - is an attack and a disregard for the Other. Moreover, if the individual does assent to this vulnerabilisation – this constriction or proscribed paralysis – they are asked to demonstrate or perform their vulnerability in terms of their health concerns or pain in order to be accommodated or actually listened to.

While this remains deeply problematic and an untrue representation of women's lived experiences of health, as performance makers, by not challenging the idea of this vulnerabilisation or proscribed vulnerability, we are missing an opportunity to reach a broader understanding of health and empathy.

I will show how vulnerability has knowledge: it has expertise and choice and so can become useful for what it teaches us. I will draw on my experience of working co-collaboratively with two groups of women: the Women's group at Positively UK and the HEXlappies Collective in De Doorns, South Africa. When I consider these two groups of women I co-research with – one in rural South Africa, the other in London – both considering the gendered representations of health, either through gender-based violence or the experience of living well with HIV, what is clear is that they do not let their proscribed vulnerabilities and their rage at being overlooked lead to sickness (c.f. Ahmed's warning that "our rage becomes sickness" (2017: 255)). Quite the opposite: they make, they perform, they continue – quietly at times – and in doing so shift cultural representations of their lived experiences of health. In effect, their performance-making helps to make links, creates a sense of solidarity and empathy, and crucially disrupts perceptions of health vulnerabilities.

Ultimately, in this keynote I consider the role of performance in creating new and alternative modes of embodied knowledge production and I explore its potential for a better understanding of health and empathy.

**Dr Katharine Low** is Senior Lecturer in Applied Theatre and Community Performance at The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, University of London. She is a practitioner, academic and researcher working in the field of socially engaged theatre and sexual health. Her areas of research include feminist-led research, arts in health and theatre-making in urban settings, academia and motherhood, and the role of women in theatre. She is a Trustee, London Arts and Health and author of *Applied Theatre and Sexual Health Communication: Apertures of Possibility* (published with Palgrave in 2020) and co-editor of *Applied Theatre: Performing Health and Wellbeing* (published with Methuen Bloomsbury in 2017).



## **Panel 4:**

### **Performances of Scrutiny**

11.30-12.30

#### **Performing Health and Gender Via Human Rights Scrutiny Kate Seear and Sean Mulcahy (both La Trobe University)**

Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognises that all people have a right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. Across the world, nation-states have different mechanisms for promoting this right to health. Australia is unique among Western nations in that it does not have a national bill of rights; in lieu of this, rights protections have proceeded in a piecemeal fashion, with states and territories and the federal parliament developing their own systems for protecting and fulfilling rights. In short, these systems involve parliaments 'scrutinising' proposed new laws for their compatibility with rights. These rights scrutiny processes are sometimes theorised as performative, in that they bring various material-discursive effects into being. Importantly, these material-discursive effects include the very problems and phenomena that

**Panel 5:**  
**Bodies of Excess**

1.30-3.00

**: Whipping Fat-phobia into Fat-positivity with a Sprinkling of Queer Subversive Fun**

**Ross Anderson-Doherty (actor, singer and theatre-maker based in Belfast), Jonathan Graf am (Melbourne-based dramaturg and performer) and Alyson Campbell (University of Melbourne)**

This paper examines a pair of performance moments that are key to the making of *Cake Daddy*, a queer and fat-positive live performance work (Belfast, Melbourne, Sydney, 2018-19). The first moment: Belfast-based performer Ross Anderson-Doherty emerges onstage in a jockstrap and apron in a production about HIV and AIDS, titled *Tea (Cell) Dance* (dir. Campbell, Outburst, 2016). He senses shock and fatphobia in the audience's response to his naked fat body. This moment—and the unpacking of it—proved a catalyst for Anderson-Doherty to respond in the best way he knows: through performance and his own form of queer performance pedagogy.

The second moment: it is the final part of *Cake Daddy* and Anderson-Doherty is back in jockstrap and apron singing "Cake Daddy's Recipe (Fat is a Verb)"—a striking, powerful, stage-owning reimagining of the first image. He is essentially wearing the same costume (though now pink and gold and spectacular), but the impact, the environment and the audience response is completely transformed. This time the audience is primed for celebration of the fat body.

Through a Practice as Research methodology the authors, who are all members of the *Cake Daddy* creative team, trace the queer and "fat" dramaturgical choices within the creation and staging of this fat-positive and celebratory production. This includes the hybrid cabaret-theatre form of the production, its (at times) conversational/dialogic mode, the visibility and participation of audiences, the virtuosity of Anderson-Doherty's singing and hosting, the sharing of deeply personal material, the flaunting of fat/ness and fat sexuality onstage and the shared act of committing to a fat-positive community pledge: all of these, we assert, lead to a fat-queer utopian performative moment. Borrowing from queer theory's move to see queer as a verb, rather than a noun, Anderson-Doherty's co-option of fat as a *verb* has brought this forth: Anderson-Doherty "fattens" the space—and in the performance's final moments he teaches audiences to conjugate that verb together as a temporary community.

An analysis of *Cake Daddy* offers insight into the queer performance ecology in the North of Ireland, with particular focus on gendered and sexual citizenship and the fat body in performance.

**Ross Anderson-Doherty** (they/he) is an actor, singer and theatre-maker based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He holds an MA in Drama and Performance from Queen's University and is a Certified Master of Estil Voice Training. Ross is known for their queer cabaret residencies in the Cabaret Supper Club, Belfast, and The Maverick in Belfast's Queer Quarter.

**Dr Alyson Campbell** (she/her) is a theatre director and dramaturg whose work sits mainly within the LGBTQI+ community. She is Professor in Theatre at the Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne, specialising in gender and sexuality. She is co-editor of two collections: *Queer Dramaturgies* (Palgrave, 2015, with Stephen Farrier) and *Viral Dramaturgies: HIV and AIDS in Performance in the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave, 2018, with Dirk Gindt). Her current projects include Feral Queer Camp, a radical pedagogy program, and a new performance work *HERD* on queerness, pandemics and social bonding.

**Jonathan Graf am** (he/him) is a Melbourne-based dramaturg and performer. He works as a Research Assistant and sessional Tutor at the VCA, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne, where he recently completed the Technical Assistant and sessional Tutor

## **The Ante-Partum and Post-Partum Vulnerability of an Enceinte Being: Articulating Chaos, Quest and Identity Dissonance through Narrativization**

**Monisa Rajkumar and Dr. V. David Arputha Raj (both Bharathiar University, Coimbatore)**

It is very likely that in a disturbed individual, chaos is experienced from the anxiety caused by a disease, gets compounded, further, by an agencylessness to control physical and mental health, and gets aggravated at an inability to practice naturality and come to terms with normality. The chaos inducing conditions that would be focussed upon here are 'Tokophobia' and 'Labour Dystocia,' (as put forward by the National Center for Biotechnology Information [NCBI]) which bring out the ante-partum and post-partum vulnerability of an enceinte being. So then, chaos caused as a result of the above mentioned conditions or due to any infirmity, cannot continue and must be overcome through the exercise of some kind of agency, which can even be the narrativist revisitation of chaos. So then, the narrativist revisitation of the trauma of chaos and the urge for restoration coupled with a resolved vision for life and a lookout for quest, can result in a physical and mental amelioration. In consequence, a disjuncture in the narrativised fabrication of the chaos, may pave way for an alienation with the existing identity, since narratives and identities are inextricably bound together, with one mirroring the other. The panacea for dealing with fragmented narratives can be got through the stabilisation techniques of progression from the past to the present and movement from the present into the future. When the narratives, thus, expand upon a comprehensible continuity the sifting identity moves towards a reconfigured one. In short, by giving a close reading of Amber Mcnaught's *The Anxiety Filled Diary of a Pregnant Hypochondriac: One Ectopic, One Miscarriage, One Last Chance*, a memoir on 'Tokophobia' and 'Labour Dystocia' – this article brings out how distressed individuals revamp their disintegrated identities by the narrativist (fragmented and stabilised) reconstruction of the subjectival anamnesis of the excruciating pain and focus on the sewing of disfigured temporal dimensions in narrativist presentation, along with the aligning of dissociated identities.

**Ms. R. Monisa** is a UGC - Junior Research Fellow, currently pursuing her Doctoral Programme in Health Humanities at the Department of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore. She hails from Tamil Nadu, India. Her thirst to explore the vital intersection between literature, medicine and healthcare, drives her to work on the role of literary pathographies and iconographic narratives in the alleviation of trauma in gender-related perturbations. She has presented papers at International Conferences and Seminars on the topics of eating disorders and pregnancy and childbirth. She is currently investigating the areas of Tokophobia, Labour Dystocia and Childbirth-induced Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and their corresponding literary contributions from victim authors to gauge their experiential realities.

**Dr. V. David Arputha Raj** is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University, Tamil Nadu. He has a research experience of eight years with areas of specialisation in English Language Teaching, Research Methodology, Disability Studies, Cultural Studies, and Personality and Skill Development. He has authored four books and edited three books so far.

**: Reperforming Trans Medical History Records through Film**  
**Amy Siegel (York University)**

Queering the canon of writing and representation of trans bodies and access to health care, this presentation will examine the performance of historical trans medical records in the documentary film *Framing Agnes*. This presentation will allow for a nuanced understanding of *Framing Agnes* and the mechanisms through which self-determination in trans bodies, both in terms of representation and access to health care, are recurrently regulated and how trans filmmakers and performers are responding to and subverting that discourse.

*Framing Agnes* is a performative documentary film co-directed by trans filmmaker and academic Chase Joynt and sociologist Kristen Schilt. The filmmakers gained access to archival transcripts from the 1950s, of trans people trying to access sex reassignment surgery. The filmmakers worked with a diverse group of trans and nonbinary artists to reenact the historical transcripts, as well as engage with the archival material on a personal level. Infusing their own subjective contemporary experiences, the actors create a mediation into the hyper-medicalized trans historical record. By troubling the archival representation of trans bodies in the medical case files, in-community discussions are able to take place that focus on access, medical gatekeeping, the desire and pressure to medically transition, and informal networks of support and care. In so doing, the filmmakers' use of re-enactment and documentary intervention complicates and critiques the medical definition of sex and gender in the mid-century, exposing the roots of how policies for trans care were first established and how they continue to impact the trans community today.

This presentation will bring together voices and storylines from *Framing Agnes*, performance theory, queer theory and histories of psychology and medicine, to inform an examination of how access to trans health care is being enacted, represented, and subverted in the film, in the historical record, and in the contemporary media and political landscape.

**Amy Siegel** (they/them) is an artist, academic, educator, and organizer of artistic projects. Amy is currently the Creative Director of the ReFrame Film Festival, a social justice documentary film festival in Nogojiwanong/Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. Amy is also a doctoral candidate in Communication & Culture at York University. Amy's recent published book chapter 'Wradical Wrestling: What Happens When Women Run the Ring' appeared in Sharon Mazer, Heather Levi, Eero Laine and Nell Haynes (eds), *Professional Wrestling: Politics and Populism*, 2020, New York: Seagull Books. Amy's art practice spans film, performance and socially-engaged art.

## Panel 6:

### Visions of the Self

3.10-4.30

#### Theatre of the Self e: Staging Ill Health in Visual Autopathographies Claire Hampton (University of Wolverhampton)

Mobilising what photography and self e scholar Tamar Tembec refers to as 'a politicised dramaturgy of the lived body' (2016, p.1), this paper will consider the complexity of living with (and beyond) serious illness. The analysis draws on autopathography, a branch of autobiography concerned with self-narrating the lived reality of illness and disease, to consider how self e-taking, as an af ective and performative practice, of ers a tangible means of experiencing, living, owning, and communicating the diseased body.

The intention is to illustrate the critical and political value of self-representational images of illness and disease, alongside exposing the historicity of said criticality by drawing on a genealogy of painting, photography, and performance art. The paper considers self-portraits by Frida Kahlo, examples from Hannah Wilke's *Intra Venus* series (1991-93), and Karolyn Gehrig's #HospitalGlam self e campaign on Instagram (2014 – present). Reading these through the lens of Marvin Carlson's performance ontology, 'consciousness of doubleness' (2018), the analysis questions how 'selfes of ill health' (Tembec 2016) might constitute a conscious corporeal doubling, a strategic wielding of theatricality, as a means of introspective self-witnessing, momentarily rendering the ephemeral, phenomenal experience of illness tangible and legible for the self eing subject along with the spectator.

Employing a feminist new materialist lens, the discussion considers the agential entanglement of the ailing subject -body as a performance material, a conscious mimetic doubling of the subject, asserting the artificiality of the constructed pose as intrinsic to this 'performance', a pose which often points to a category of identity seemingly incongruent with illness. The images considered disrupt the familiarity of "feeling bad" for both performer and spectator, demonstrating the liminal potential of self e-taking in the context of personal illness narratives.

#### References

Carlson, M. (2018) *Performance: a Critical Introduction*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Oxon: Routledge. / Tembec, T. (2016) 'Selfes of Ill Health: Online Autopathographic Photography and the Dramaturgy of the Everyday', *Social Media and Society*, pp. 1–11.

**Dr Claire Hampton** recently completed a PhD at Brunel University London. Her research examines self es through the lens of performance studies, specif cally mobilising the concepts of dramaturgy, performativity, eventness, and theatricality, to consider the relationship between self es and feminist newR maAcepts studthe9l es, the and ~ and 9 9o ,

## Focusing Screen

**Sarah Sudhof (Cuban-American interdisciplinary artist based in Houston)**

"Focusing Screen" reframes the objectified female figure through a series of performative black and white photographic self-portraits pictured with the new VieVision mirror designed specifically for women to explore their own bodies and serves as surrogate for the other. This new body of work reflects my ongoing interest in the female body, reproductive health, access to care, and our interactions with medical devices. The device – and in turn, the photographs – aim to facilitate a moment to reclaim familiar knowledge of the most intimate parts of the human anatomy, anatomy that is more mysterious to oneself than it is to others, be they lovers or doctors.

In 2006, I documented my first private performance for the camera, titled "SelfExam". In my gynecologist's office, following numerous consecutive abnormal pap smears and a LEEP -- a surgical procedure to remove cancerous tissue from my cervix caused by HPV -- I used a handheld mirror to guide my hand to perform a self-pap smear and collect tissue samples from my cervix.

Over the last fifteen years, attention to my health and my body have come in and out of focus as the subject of my art. As recently as 2020, my HPV returned, and prompted me to undergo two colposcopies to gauge the severity of the infection. As a divorced, single mother of two children, I have encountered financial challenges in accessing healthcare, relying primarily on Medicaid for care. As a stark reminder of this, in 2021, in the midst of global pandemic, the Texas legislature chose to vote, ending women's right to choose. The photographs and performance aim to serve as a gentle reminder of the strange ways in which we, others, and even disembodied institutions like the state and the medical establishment treat and regulate the most intimate parts of women's bodies.

**Sarah Sudhof** is a Cuban-American interdisciplinary artist based in Houston, Texas, whose work interweaves themes of gender, science, and personal experience. Sudhof's works can be categorized into these three areas of concern: Ethics of Care, Social Practice, and the Visualization of Data. By using creative practice as a mediator between subjective and objective experiences, her work engages in conversations that address bodies and communities as shared and yet, ultimately, distinct. Sudhof's most recent performances produced during the pandemic, "El Recuerdo," "60 Pounds of Pressure," "Will You Hug Me Forever," "Siloed," and "Focusing Screen" explore inherited memories, the anxiety of isolation, survivorship, familial relationships, and the body as data and material. All feature the female figure as a unifying form. Sudhof's recent exhibitions and performances include; Ivester Contemporary, ICOSA Collective, Collar Works, Houston Health Museum, Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art, Blaffer Art Museum, The DoSeum, Filter Photo, grayDuck Gallery, and the Colorado Photographic Arts Center.

**Panel 7:**  
**Bloody Embodiments**

5.00-6.30

**Dangerous Desire and the Performance of Blood in Julia Ducournau's      and  
Camille Intson (University of Toronto, St George)**

This presentation provides a close reading of the performance of blood within Julia Ducournau's postmodern body horror films *Raw* (2016) and the Palme D'Or-winning *Titane* (2021). By interpreting Ducournau's visual and symbolic autership through Sara Ahmed's theorization of a "queer phenomenology", the issue of gendered excess within genre film, and a transdisciplinary analysis of constructing meaning through corporeal sense, it will explore the viewer's orientation towards the representation of blood as a simultaneous object of horror and desire with complex, competing carnal affects. Through the visual language of blood and violence, this essay essays that these films perform a subversion of cisheteropatriarchal psychoanalytic gaze within contemporary cinema, instead adopting a postmodern gaze (Massumi 2002, Shaviro 1993) with queer-feminist sensibility (Sobchack 2004).

Ahmed's "queer phenomenology" takes up the subject of orientation by redirecting our attention towards deviant object-subjects. Following Merleau-Ponty's concept of "queer moments" of disorientation and reorientation, this paper reads Ducournau's surreal interventions into the body horror genre as transforming moments of excess horror into something other: joy, ecstasy, or the fulfillment of desire. Ducournau's films consider body horror's value in thinking through performances of excess and what Linda Williams dubs the "sensational" (1991). Whereas female subjects are often dramatized as embodiments of excess, particularly through phenomena such as bodily hysteria, emotion, and menstruation, Ducournau's films reclaim this cis-heteropatriarchal trope by centring the performance of blood and violence in her female protagonist's quests for desire. By confating corporeal reactions of horror and desire, Ducournau's genre films turn what is deemed "excess" on its head, exposing their gendered construction through the performance of blood as an expression of queer-feminist desire.

**Camille Intson** (she/her) is an award-winning Esto-Canadian performance and media artist, writer, musician, and academic researcher. As a PhD student within the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information, her research areas include: queer-feminist and anticolonial STS, collaborative and community-based practices of making and repair, design justice, practice-led artistic research, and the integration of emerging (digital, AI) technologies into creative work. As an emerging scholar, Camille has published with the *International Journal of Performance Art and Digital Media*, *Journal for Intermedia and Literary Crossings*, *TDR: The Drama Review*, and *Canadian Theatre Review*. Her academic research comes generously funded by a SSHRC Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship - Doctoral (CGS-D) Award. Camille currently resides in Tkaronto (Toronto) and can be found everywhere on the internet at @thecamiliad, or at camilleintson.com.

**: Embodying Acts of Unhiding**

**Carolyn Defrin (artist and researcher based in the UK)**

After 27 years of having a period, I have only recently recognised it as empowering. Pope's *Wild Power* (2017) introduced me to the menstrual cycle as a secret code for reframing weaknesses as strengths. In response, I created *28 Days Greater* - a collection of 28 short films combining moving image, poetry and music that were informed by each day of my own cycle and conversations with 28 people across age and gender. Premiering at Camden People's Theatre's 'Calm Down Dear' festival of feminism (2021), I now view this performative embodiment of the menstrual cycle less as a formula for well-being and more as an unfolding entanglement of emotional landscapes comprising and revealing nuances of gender and health. In this paper, I will present aspects of *28 Days Greater*, that were my



, a Rehearsed Reading Directed by Magdalena Mosteanu

Verónica Rodríguez

*Performing Endometriosis* is a short theatre piece by Verónica Rodríguez presented at the "Material Selves: Gender, Health and Performance" Symposium as a rehearsed reading (directed by Magdalena Mosteanu). *Performing Endometriosis* started life because, having received a diagnosis of stage 4 endometriosis, I felt the need to write about and understand my illness and body. But the beginning was not easy. I was sick, terrified and depressed, and yet: 1) I started noticing that listening to friends talk about it was helpful; 2) I sensed that I also wanted to communicate about it to both come to terms with it and help others; and 3) I began being more outspoken and doing research on the illness. Leaving aside the 5% of cases where illness seems a genetic given, illness is the result of a process of un-hearing to the body's demands. Whilst receiving numerous treatments and therapies, the shape listening took for me was to start engaging creatively with endometriosis. That is how I started writing a creative writing piece for the